

Embodying Landscape: Spatial Narratives of  
Becoming-Artist on the Islands of the Salish Sea

by

Jolene Jackson

Bachelor of Arts in Geography, University of Northern British Columbia, 2009

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of the Requirements for the Degree of

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## **Supervisory Committee**

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## Abstract

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Recent literature in cultural geography has turned its attention to the enactment of landscape through performance. Drawing upon the insights of new cultural geography and non-representational theory, this thesis examines the performative enactments of “place” through the production of landscape representations on the Islands of the Salish Sea. In particular, I adopt a narrative approach to consider how the embodied and discursive performances of becoming-artist and the enactment of landscape are co-constituted. Through a comparative case study of four Islands in the Salish Sea – San Juan, Lopez, Salt Spring, and Pender Islands – the current study provides an embodied account of the practices of landscape representation based upon fieldwork, participant observation, and 13 semi-structured interviews with landscape artists on the Islands. This is followed by a thematic analysis of recurring imagery in landscape paintings with a focus on representations of the rural scene, property relations, nationalism, and “unpeopled” landscapes. I conclude that landscape representations are both discursive and experiential in their performative enactments of place.

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## Acknowledgments

Thank you to Lewis Carroll for writing about a girl who fell down a rabbit hole and chased her curiosity. Since starting the process of graduate school, I have become unsure as to whether *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* is a piece of fiction or non-fiction; the world has become much more complicated than I would have liked. It twists and turns as it gets intercepted by some of the strangest characters. There was always a metaphor to illustrate the intangible mental, emotional, and physical uncomfortable-ness of graduate school. More important than the metaphors, however, are the characters I have come across in the fictionless-fiction of this two-something-year story. Thank you to Dr. Reuben Rose-Redwood for guiding me to the rabbit hole and for being incredibly patient as I navigated my way through the dark. Thank you to Dr. Cam Owens for shining a flashlight down the rabbit hole, as a reminder that it all ties back to the surface. Thank you to Dr. Denise Cloutier for providing some of the best tools for a more strategic and successful adventure. Thank you to my family, especially to my mom, for supporting me and having faith in me even when I could not. Thank you to my friends here in the UVic Geography Department, many of who have fallen into their own rabbit holes – I absolutely could not have survived this wonderland without their warmth, humour, and kindness. And finally, thank you to Bill & Maxine Farmilo for allowing me to grow and play on Pender Island – which is the point-source of my passion for the Salish Sea. I hope that the Salish Sea will continue to be a wonderland which fascinates the artist in each of us.

# Chapter 1

## Igniting the Salish Sea Spark

### Introduction

Seeking warmth and shelter from Vancouver's endless rain, I rushed in to one of the city's cozy book stores. Despite the poor mix of a wet raincoat and paper products, I pretended to be a customer rather than a rain-dodger. Perhaps due to my interest in British Columbia's geography – though, more likely due to my propensity to enjoy a good picture book – I was drawn to the colourful images of British Columbia in the “Local Interest” section of the store. Contrary to the dull gray busy streets I was escaping, the books depicted bright and glistening places. The majority of the books had stories to share about experiences had or to be had within the Vancouver/ Victoria region of the province. Words and images of heritage, wildlife, rainforests, mountains, oceans, and coasts filled the covers; apparently, British Columbia is a place to be experienced outdoors. On the bookshelf sat an intriguing copy of *Islands in the Salish Sea: A Community Atlas* (Harrington and Stevenson 2005) – a lively collection of maps, images, and text which were contributed primarily by local artists. With the clock nearing closing time, and the store clerk getting impatient, I headed back home, with the *Atlas* in hand.

The glossy *Atlas* pages were filled with intricate depictions of place, flora, and fauna, in each artist's medium of choice: anything from watercolours to woodcarvings. Living in the foreground and borders, the plants and animals obstruct my eye from merely surveying the maps below. Creatures fill the land and sea – the region is far from

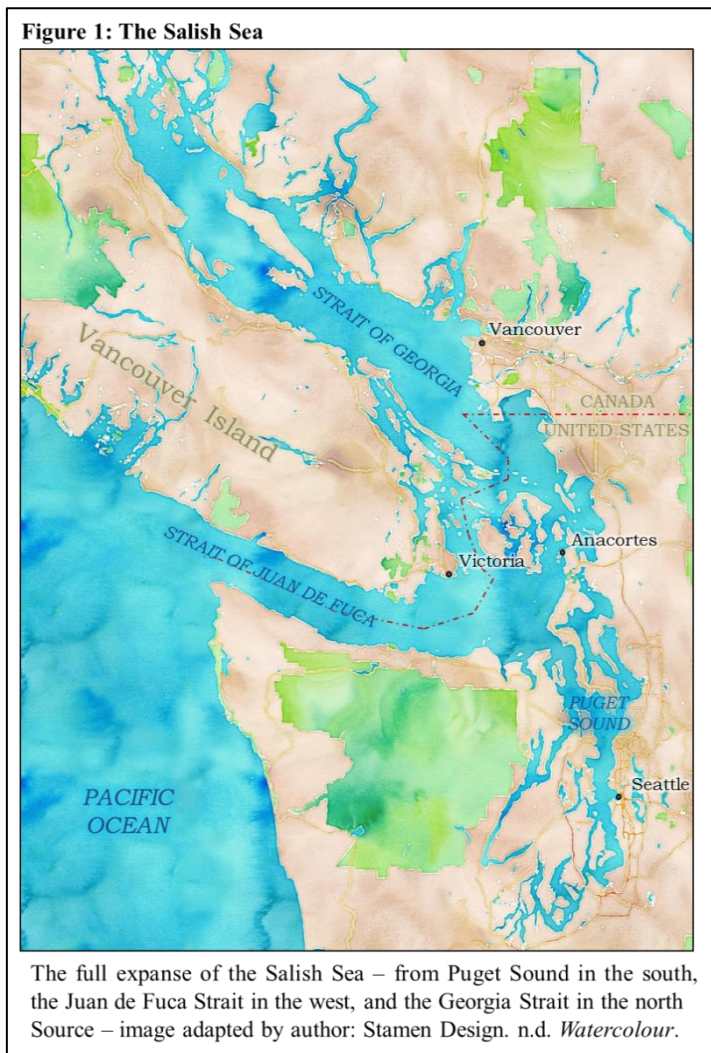


being the *terra incognita* once imagined on European charts. Displaying a kinetic energy so vibrant, it is only my assumption of their immobility holding them to the page.

Through the *Atlas*, the Salish Sea is populated as a place of quaint farms and complex ecosystems – each in need of protecting. The artists' love of the Islands is apparent in the details reaching every corner of their work. The *Atlas* is as much a book of stories, memories, and experiences of the Salish Sea as it is a collection of cartographic representations of space.

Each map depicts a different version of the Salish Sea; most starting with a topographical base then layered with the artist's own imaginings and knowings of the Islands. Some incorporated places of childhood memories, some chose farm fields, some chose both English and Salish place names. When I got to the section on Pender Island (Harrington and Stevenson 2005, 75 – 80), I immediately fell in love with this place all over again. The rich greens and blues, abundant wildlife, and winding roads described on the pages resonated well with my memories of going to my family's cabin. I remember sitting atop my favourite mountain on Pender where, like many times before, I have gone to stare off into the distance and think. A few years ago, I found myself in this spot trying to figure out what I was passionate about – where would I go from here?! I kept wracking my brain – I am interested in many things, but there must be that one passion, that one love. Though unsatisfied without an answer, I headed back down to the cabin when it occurred to me – the answer was right in front of me the entire time. I am passionate about *this place*. I suppose that little idea was what ignited this entire graduate process for me, and has kept me going ever since.

I had some work to do though. I had to start putting that little idea to work. I noticed the name “Salish Sea” popping up more and more – it seemed the more I thought about it, the more it appeared. I grew up in Vancouver, knowing the waters around me as the Georgia Strait. I never thought twice about the name. My family and I would traverse the Strait to Victoria and Pender Island on a regular basis – to visit family, friends, or simply to get away from the “big city.” I only started to hear about this idea of the Salish Sea a few years ago – casually appearing on pamphlets, local chocolate bar names, and



eventually on the BC Ferries and on Google Maps. Its origin to me personally was very much a blur. Upon discovering that I would be spending two-plus years of my life researching this region, I figured I should make this blur into something a bit more grounded.

With the intent to emphasize the interconnected ecosystems and the vibrant Coast Salish communities of the Strait of Georgia, Strait of Juan de Fuca, and Puget Sound

(Figure 1), marine biologist Bert Webber suggested that the region be identified as a

single cohesive region, rather than one fragmented by artificial boundaries (Groc 2011; Tucker 2013). Though Webber first proposed the idea in 1988, the region was only legally recognized by both Canada and the United States in 2009. The recent naming of the Salish Sea opens the opportunity to re-imagine the ways in which the region is interpreted and used.

This idea of a trans-boundary region seemed strange to me. I had never been to the San Juan Islands, and would not have been able to even identify them on a map. The somewhat tedious journey of border crossings and ferry transfers meant that the San Juans have been largely excluded from my previous Salish Sea experiences. Rarely have I come across incentives to overcome this unknowing of the San Juans: for example, few tourism billboards and few trans-boundary publications. The American side of the border was always invisible – a homogenous “out there.” Even in the *Atlas*, the Salish Sea is not presented in its entirety; due to the project’s Canadian funding, it does not include the American side of the border (Tucker 2013). Standing atop Mt. Tolmie in Victoria, San Juan Island is highly visible and physically close in distance; yet, for me at least, it was mentally further away than the Canadian Gulf Islands which barely peak over the horizon. While artificial in its creation, the boundary seemed to significantly cloud my understanding of the San Juans.

The idea of fixed political borders has been well-ingrained in my knowing of the world. The bifurcated version of the area only came to be when, in 1872, British and American settlers determined that a border was necessary. Primarily a disagreement over land, dubbed the Pig War, the third party German Kaiser decided that the border would go through the Haro Strait – as it does today (NPS 2013). Like most colonial borders, this

demarcation of space was at odds with Indigenous<sup>1</sup> social and political interactions of place. Coast Salish<sup>1</sup> ways-of-knowing land and water are far from the neatly delineated Cartesian lines found on maps (Thom 2009). The erasure of Coast Salish territories and the imposition of the Canada/US border changed how people represented and interacted with the “region.” While these interactions have shifted over the last hundred and fifty years, differential Indigenous/non-Indigenous histories within the Salish Sea region are visible in contemporary representations.

Ways-of-knowing the Salish Sea come across in how the Sea is represented. As seen in the *Atlas*, a collection of works by primarily non-Indigenous artists, the Salish Sea is presented as ecologically diverse though fragile. Their intricate knowledge of the islands and waters is largely displayed as pages filled with plants and animals: each of them labeled, categorized, and drawn with visually-realistic detail. The artist seems to be at a detached point of reference.

By contrast, another book of poetry and visual imagery entitled *Salish Seas: An Anthology of Text and Image* (Arnott et al. 2011), presents powerful descriptions of the Salish Sea that contrast sharply with that of the *Atlas*. The *Anthology* is a collection of creative images and text contributed by Indigenous artists, and, unlike the *Atlas*, the black text on sepia tone pages provides little visual guidance for the reader’s imagining of place. The Salish Sea is now the Salish Seas – pluralized perhaps to recognize the multiplicity of peoples and places categorized within the word “Salish.”

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<sup>1</sup> I take significant liberties by using the generalizing terms “Indigenous” and “Salish.” Though a highly problematic term (Shaw et al. 2006), I use “Indigenous” to refer to the peoples and their descendants who occupied the region prior to European contact, and were compromised by the onset of colonization. “Salish” refers to several Indigenous cultural groups of the northwest who are linguistically and socio-economically related (Thom 2009).

One noticeable difference between these two texts is in how the environment is described. Take, for example, the work of Gloria Massé who produced a painting and accompanying text of Gambier Island for the *Atlas*. Massé describes how in her map, “[s]treams were widened to allow for miniature images of the fish found there: coho and chum salmon, rainbow and cutthroat trout” (2005, 54). Massé offers a visual and empirical representation of fish; each is categorized by species, neatly situated in the creeks of Gambier Island. By contrast, in the *Anthology*, Wallace et al. describe being within the movement of the stream:

Breathing water/ breath in water/ like a silver fish/ with gills/ I will/ breath water/ slip, fill, trust/ the stream/ returns/ to gulf/ I will fish, fish, fish/ I will catch my meal/ and enjoy, enjoy, enjoy/ when I am full, full, full/ I will dance some more! ... I want to be the river/ and flow out to the mouth/ oceans, open up/ pour energy light/ flow, like water-wind/ inviting rain to play/ rocks, fish, seaweeds/ singing like a river (2011, 49)

Wallace et al.’s prose emphasizes the embodied interactions with the fish. The fish, narrator, and water are fluid and transitional. Both of these pieces emphasize the importance of the stream and the fish that live in it; however, they take very different approaches in describing them and offer a tiny glimpse into how different ways-of-knowing come to be represented and performed.

### **Research Goals and Objectives**

Landscapes of the Salish Sea are enacted by multiple experiential narratives acting simultaneously within time and space. Representations of land and sea are the outcomes of these differential, culturally-informed, experiences of being-in place. By addressing place-making as an assemblage of performative processes influenced by

power<sup>2</sup>, I illustrate that the products and processes of representation are both experiential and discursive. In particular, the overall goal of this study is to examine the role that landscape painting plays in the performative enactment of “place” in the Salish Sea.

I address the overall goal by focusing on two aspects of landscape paintings: the processes of becoming-artist and the enactment of place. Each of these is constituted by both embodiment (as being-in landscape) and discourse (as iterative action and image). Thus, my first objective is to examine the bodily and discursive performances of *becoming-artist* among landscape painters on the Islands of the Salish Sea. The idea of “becoming” in geography stems from the discussion of non-representational theories and performativity. Here and throughout my thesis, I use the term “becoming” to describe the “process-based ontology of movement, in which the world is conceived of as a dynamic and open-ended set of relational transformations” (McCormack 2009a, 277). Becoming problematizes the notion of pre-conditional *being*, and argues that it “is not what one is, but what one does” (Pratt 2000, 578). Representations (in this case, landscape paintings) are the outcomes of the practices of becoming-artist. The sensory experiences of embodiment, and knowing-through-doing, come into the detailed intimacy of the painting process. The performances of becoming-artist are also discursive in how they are learned, repeated, and used. Therefore, I use the term becoming-artist to refer to the embodied iterative performances that come to produce landscape paintings.

The second objective is to consider how the Islands’ land- and sea-scapes are enacted through embodiment and discourse. Being-in landscape means that the artists are continuously engaging place. The Salish Sea comes-to-be as it is put to use, and becomes

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<sup>2</sup> With the term of power, I refer to the idea that these embodied performances, whether as artist or as researcher, are not simply free-floating actions. Rather, performances are governed and scripted by iterative norms of body and place (Gregson and Rose 2000; Pratt 2000).

a verb instead of a noun. Enactments of place are discursive performances as certain places become more or less accessible; enactments of place are channeled by design. Experiences on the Islands are “officially” and “unofficially” governed: such as through border crossings, property relations, and transportation routes. The landscape is also enacted by the “final” painted scene. The repetition of specific themes and patterns come to perpetuate certain images of the Salish Sea. The performative enactments of place influence the how the landscape is represented.

Throughout the thesis, I also use my experiences of conducting this research to exemplify the research goal; this study is a reflection of my own embodied performances to create this representation (my thesis) of representations (research, art, stories, etc.). The processes of academic practices – interviewing, writing, researching – are prime examples of the performance of representation (Gregson and Rose 2000). My *becoming-researcher* shapes how I experience landscape and representation, and it also shapes the outcomes of my research. The final product of this thesis has grown alongside my coming-to-know landscape and representation, and wrestles with the ideas of plural spatial narratives.

Representations are residual outcomes of performance and practice, and are significant in their cultural resonance. By exploring the performance of landscape paintings as embodiment and discourse, this thesis illustrates how landscape and representation are co-constituted.

### **Navigating the Thesis**

The chapters of my thesis are designed to first provide the epistemological and methodological foundations of my research. They then lead into the discussions based

around my objectives. In Chapter 2, “Reviewing Cultural Geography: Landscape, Representation, and Performance,” which immediately follows this introduction, I delve into the literature on landscape and representation in cultural geography. The concepts of landscape and representation are contentious; the theoretical framework chosen has implications for how these terms are understood and used. I have set the chapter up as a chronological progression, emphasizing the main theoretical “eras” in cultural geography. The discussion opens with the somewhat-recognizable beginnings of cultural geography in the mid-1920s; landscape was seen as an empirical field of cultural imprints. The social unrest of the 1960s disrupted stable ideas of culture, which by the late-1970s made its way into geography. At this time, cultural geography largely adopted a post-modern view of landscape and representation – each as discursive entities laden with symbols of power and regulation. As a way to differentiate itself from the previous “objective” ways-of-knowing, cultural geography gave itself the title of “new” and the former the title of “old.” By the mid-1990s, and still a dominant approach today, cultural geography again set itself apart under the title of “non-representational theory.” Proponents of non-representational theory suggest that new cultural geography assumed too much stability in the role of representation. By emphasizing the embodiment and the doings of landscape and representation, non-representational theory moves away from text and toward performance. Each era of cultural geography has its strengths and weaknesses. I thus conclude this section by situating this project within the context of cultural geography’s literature. It is from this conceptual positioning that I also highlight the project’s significance to geography and the Salish Sea.



Tied closely to the plurality of my epistemological approaches, I then describe the methodologies and methods of my research in Chapter 3, “Choreographing the Research Process: Methodologies and Methods.” This chapter elaborates upon my experiences as a student new to qualitative research as well as the specifics of how my project was conducted. Here, I introduce my case studies, four Islands of the Salish Sea: San Juan, Lopez, Salt Spring, and Pender Islands (Figure 2). On these Islands, I spoke with local painters both about their work and about their experiences of living on the



Islands. While in the field, I extensively documented my experiences through journaling, memoing, and photographing. I also collected samples of the artists’ paintings – as small art cards – which I used as my medium for the next stage of the research process. I spent a fair bit of time with each painting,

noting the themes and patterns in landscape iconography. I was not necessarily interested in the specific form and quantity of contents, but rather their enactments of “place.”

The first of the discussion chapters focuses entirely on the processes associated with becoming-artist. It is a narrative piece based on the parallel experiences described by

the painters I interviewed. This short chapter entitled “Becoming Artist/Being-in-Landscape” (Chapter 4), elaborates upon the bodily-doings of the painter; through these repeated performances, the individual *becomes* artist. This section also draws in some of the effects that these doings have upon landscape experiences, and elucidates some of the processes of representing landscape through painting. Through the narrative voice, I emphasize the artist’s unique relationship to landscape as she translates the scene to canvas.

Becoming-artist and the enactment of landscape are further explored in Chapter 5, “Salish Sea Sojourn.” From my own position as a researcher, I describe the experiential and discursive performances of conducting fieldwork, and the artists elaborate upon the production of their paintings. Like the previous chapter, it is a narrative which ties in the experiences of landscape and being-in-place. I begin in the United States – that unknown side of the border. I end on Pender Island – back home, on the Island which sparked my initial interest in the current project. This section emphasizes the idiosyncrasies of the everyday, and the nuances which shape both time and place. I had to restrain myself from going off on tangents, to stay focused on the spatial narrative. With that said, however, I left these cognitive intersections open, leaving room for the readers to build in their own connections as they travel along with me.

My final discussion chapter, “Painting the Landscape Scene/Seen” (Chapter 6), focuses on the landscape paintings I have collected. Through thematic analysis, I describe themes in the paintings, observations, and interviews which I found compelling in their relation to the research. I divide the discussion into four primary themes: agricultural landscapes, public and private spaces, national inscriptions, and the unpeopled landscape.

While this section is more analytical than the other discussion chapters, it is important to remember that these themes are as much a product of my own interpretations and interests as the narrative chapters; the themes are not determining or exhaustive. I do believe, however, that identifying patterns is valuable in coming-to-know cultural landscapes and representations. Therefore, I expound on the themes which best resonate with my experiences and how I have come-to-know the Salish Sea.

I wrap up my research in Chapter 7, “The End to a Beginning,” providing a brief summary of my project and suggestions for future directions. Although it is a closing of the thesis, I intentionally avoid providing a sense of conclusion. After reflecting upon the process and findings, I use the conclusion to discuss directions that this research may take in the future. The flexibility of both the processes and outcomes of my project make it adaptable to new scenarios and perspectives. As an end to a beginning, I anticipate this thesis to be a catalyst of exploration into the ever-dynamic representations of the Salish Sea.

## Chapter 2

# Landscape, Representation, and Performance

### Introduction

The field of cultural geography has produced a wealth of literature focusing on landscape, representation, and performance. While the publications most pertinent to this thesis range from the 1980s to the present, I first briefly contextualize their emergence within a broader scope of the field. I start by reflecting upon the “origins” of cultural geography in the mid-1920s. I then describe how cultural geography transitioned to a discipline interested in power, symbolism, and discourse – a body of work dubbed “new cultural geography.” By the mid-1990s, cultural geography had started to adopt concepts of embodiment and performance. Largely turning away from the role of representation and power, as emphasized in new cultural geography, “non-representational theory” has become a prevailing paradigm in understanding the relationships of humans in their environs. This chapter concludes by bringing in critiques of non-representational approaches. These critiques are not dismissive of non-representational theories, but are instead cautionary in tone. While the project has taken on a dominantly non-representational approach to landscape representations of the Salish Sea, I emphasize the importance of re-introducing issues of power and discourse into the discussion of performance.

## “Old” Cultural Geography

From the University of California at Berkeley, Carl Sauer’s (1925) publication of *The Morphology of Landscape* founded the recognizable legacy of cultural geography. Sauer’s biography has been written and re-written – situating him and his work as an influential, though contested, celebrity of the discipline. Prior to Sauer’s work, culture was understood to be determined by environment. He rejected this assumption and instead emphasized the complexities of landscapes and cultures, stating “[c]ulture is the agent, the natural area is the medium, the cultural landscape the result” (Sauer 1925, 46). That is, Sauer believed that culture determined landscape, rather than the other way around. Culture and landscape were formulaic in their interactions, and could be drawn out in linear schematics. He was interested in documenting landscape forms – both human and natural – and understanding their origins and dispersals (Sauer 1925; Winchester, Kong, and Dunn 2003). Through the emphasis on fieldwork and methodological diversity, Sauer felt as though elements in the landscape (mountains, rivers, sheep, farms, etc.) should be described by their quantities, patterns, and sequences (Sauer 1925; Williams 2010). While criticized in the latter part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century (Winchester, Kong, and Dunn 2003; Oakes and Price 2008), Sauer made significant changes and contributions to the understanding of cultural interactions with place. Unlike his predecessors, Sauer explicitly integrated history, physical geography, cultural dynamics, academic pluralism, and concerns of environmental destruction into his work – ideas that the discipline today can easily take for granted (Oakes and Price 2008; Williams 2010).

By 1980, the world had undergone the Great Depression, the Second World War, independence movements (and their resulting civil wars), social revolutions, urban sprawl, and massive technological changes (from the moon landing to computers). It seemed as though the Berkeley School's version of landscape could not keep up with the volume and pace of the socio-environmental changes taking place. Empirical explanations of landscape and culture failed to delve into the complexities of the human experience in-place. Sauer presented cultures as static and categorizable, and as finite entities which would eventually reach a climax of civilization (Sauer 1925; Winchester, Kong, and Dunn 2003). Through the absence of social theory, cultural geography seemed artefactual and stuck in the rural past (Williams 2010; Winchester, Kong, and Dunn 2003). It was precisely these limitations that the "new" cultural geography sought to overcome (Price and Lewis 1993; Winchester, Kong, and Dunn 2003; Oakes and Price 2008).

### **Out with the Old, In with the New: The Rise of "New" Cultural Geography**

Geography was not the only discipline in the pursuit of revisiting the notion of "culture"; starting in the early 1980s, the cultural turn in the social sciences was a result of new interests in power, gender, and ethnicity. Much like in the Berkeley School, the idea of landscape as a visual scene was adopted by the new cultural geography. This time, however, the landscape was a matter of textual analysis – a system of signs and symbols inscribed upon the landscape. The landscape could be pulled apart to expose the power structures of which it reproduces. Cultural geographers primarily looked to social theorists to disassemble the previously assumed certainty of culture: namely Karl Marx, Michel Foucault, Raymond Williams, and Edward Said. Culture was re-approached as a

social construction: as a human-process (i.e., not natural or innate) re-asserted through landscape. Cultural geography also wanted to consider who was doing the looking at landscape – the gaze of the viewers as they interpreted the scene before them. Landscapes operated as communication tools – subliminally telling the viewer who controlled the land and who did not. The landscape itself, as well as its representations (paintings, maps, stories), were laden with meaning. Thus, it was the geographer’s job to translate the landscape from an encoded text to spatial explanation. New cultural geography approached culture as a social construction – processes of power and resistance reproduced through discourse and representation (Mitchell 1995). At its foundation, new cultural geography suggests that all landscapes are representations of deeper social structures and power relations (Cosgrove and Daniels 1988).

Discourse becomes normalized through its repetition. Its lineage is embedded in the self-justifying assumptions of the everyday, easily mistaken for commonsense and knowledge (Lefebvre 1974). Material spaces are products of the spatial imaginings of geometry and science – places designed by calculation, categorization, and mathematics (Lefebvre 1974). Ideas of nation (Anderson 1983), ethnicity (Said 1978), gender (Rose 1993), and capitalism (Cosgrove 1984) take on the appearance of being “natural” and are re-produced by embedded-everyday practices (discourses, representations, and actions). While symbols of the dominant cultural group are inscribed upon the landscape, so too is the subordinate culture silenced and removed (Osborne 1988). A favoured example in cultural geography is the colonial expansion of Europe by “taxonomy and the grid [which] effectively prised non-European people away from the land which they inhabited, and once they had been *textually* removed from the landscape, it was

presumably easier to do so *physically* as well” (Gregory 1994, 30). While colonialism has largely been brushed off by laymen as something reserved to the past (primarily by those who benefitted from it), it is through the legacy of discourse (as language, movement, and representation) that the oppression of colonial rule is perpetuated well beyond its official end – made “invisible” by naturalization. Representations are “value-laden images” (Harley 1988, 278), never inert nor objective. Whether as paintings, maps, photographs, or biophysical-terrain, representations are not only reproductions of landscape, but landscape is in itself a representation (Cosgrove and Daniels 1988).

One of the defining features of new cultural geography is the emphasis on the visual. Landscape is something to be looked at (Cresswell 2004). Drawing on Marxist critical theory, cultural geography embraced the idea that the world is a visual feast for an elite gaze (typically masculine and European) (Berger 1972). Culture is defined by the visual – the delineation between the Self and the Other, the normal and exotic, the white and black (Said 1978). Through the envisioning of places and peoples, landscapes are appropriated by and re-designed to appease those who seek to control such spaces (Berger 1972; Cosgrove 1984). Moreover, individuals have differing interpretations of representation and landscape based on their positionality. As a vision-dependent species, humans rely on sight to make sense of experience (Jay 1993). The visual scene is reduced, simplified, and categorized in order for the brain to accommodate the multitude of stimuli found in the environment. As the primary conduit by which we understand experience, sight and language are inextricably linked to each other (Jay 1993). Landscape is as much a way-of-seeing as it is a physical form (Cosgrove 1984). Seeing situates us within the context of environment (Berger 1972). Thus, landscape becomes a



gaze – a surveyance of ownership and dominance over that which is seen (Berger 1972; Gregory 1994).

Perhaps the most readily identifiable visualization of language is text. The ideas of landscape-as-text and reading landscape peaked in cultural geography with James Duncan's book, *The City as Text: The Politics of Landscape Interpretation in the Kandyan Kingdom* (1990). Duncan sets out to establish landscape-as-text as both a way of knowing as well as a methodological approach. While criticized for exhausting the idea of text – by applying synecdoche and other grammar structures to landscape – Duncan succeeds at animating the significance of text-in-landscape (Winchester, Kong, and Dunn, 2003). That is, text is active as a “signifying system embodying cultural practices [that] can ‘act back’ on the competition between discourses” (Duncan 1990, 181). Text can be rewritten and rejected, disobeyed and misinterpreted – meaning that it is continuously changing through negotiation, compromise, and conflict (Mitchell 2000). Through inscription, repetition, replacement, and removal, text becomes a discursive agent of culture.

### **Methodological Implications: Landscape Iconography**

The adoption of a postmodern perspective became central to the understanding of landscape – that meanings are plural and contested (Mitchell 2000). “Landscape is a connecting term” (Cosgrove 2006, 52), an interdisciplinary petri dish of life and land. Landscapes are both *intertextual* – a woven depiction of multi-layered representations, their meanings derived through other representations (Dubow 2009; Hoelscher 2009) – and *contextual* – a positional way-of-seeing (Morin 2009). As such, the methodological implications for observing landscape differ from the Berkeley School's empirical lists

and ledgers. Cosgrove and Daniels (1988) termed the intertextual geographic reading of landscape as *landscape iconography*. They largely borrow from John Berger and John Ruskin's work in art history in the development of landscape iconography as both a way of seeing and as an investigative process (see also Cosgrove 2008). The departure from art history is in the socio-spatial intertextuality and contextuality of the image; landscape iconography is less interested in the formalistic analysis of the patterns and colours, and more so in the signs and symbols of place (Cosgrove and Daniels 1988). The viewer is to be at a visual vantage point (Winchester, Kong, and Dunn 2003) – a top a hill, in front of a painting, holding a photograph, or hovering over a map. The layers of landscape can then be pulled apart – identifying the historical, social, environmental, and economic texts written, rewritten, faded, or erased (Winchester, Kong, and Dunn 2003). The process must also recognize the reflexivity of the viewer, in this case the literate<sup>3</sup> human geographer, who draws upon and contributes to “irredeemably situated, positioned system of knowledge” (Gregory 1994, 76).

Publications in new cultural geography often use examples to help illustrate their arguments. I have included Thomas Gainsborough's painting, *Mr. and Mrs. Andrews* (c 1750) (Figure 3), partly to elucidate new cultural geography's approach to representation and landscape, but also as an explicit tie back to my interest in landscape paintings. *Mr. and Mrs. Andrews* is a painting commonly cited by a range of social critics and cultural geographers. The image spurs multiple interpretations. Issues of nation, class, gender, property, and religion are read from the seemingly innocent scene.

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<sup>3</sup> In this instance, I use the term “literate” as the ability to decipher encoded landscapes, through familiarization of a landscape's historical and socio-political contexts.

**Figure 3: Gainsborough's *Mr. and Mrs. Andrews***



Mr. and Mrs. Andrews by Gainsborough  
Source: Gainsborough, T. c1750. *Mr. and Mrs. Andrews*.

The painting is of a man and woman (presumably Mr. and Mrs. Andrews) of mid-18<sup>th</sup> century England, positioned to the left of an expansive pastoral scene. Gainsborough was in his early 20s when he painted it and was still considered inexperienced in his craft (Vaughan 2002). He chose to use a wide landscape canvas to show both his skill in portraiture and landscapes to potential clientele in a single painting (Vaughan 2002; The National Gallery n.d.). Portraits such as this were lucrative at the time, popular among the gentry (Vaughan 2002; The National Gallery n.d.). At least, this is one story of the painting.

The image is quintessentially English. The pastel, pacified land and sky are idyllic – a blissfully peaceful country scene (Prince 1988; Myrone 2002). The couple is positioned beneath an oak tree; an oft-used image in English paintings of the time. The oak tree was a patriotic symbol to England – its wood essential to the literal building of

an empire (Daniels 1988). The oak tree also states family lineage – with the family’s generations situated beneath its branches (Daniels 1988). In the distant centre of the painting is a white bell tower, recognized as St. Peter’s Sudbury Anglican Church (Prince 1988) – a building with its own storied heritage. The pale soft-skinned Mr. and Mrs. Andrews are adorned in the finest clothing of the time – he in hunting wear, she in an elegant dress (Prince 1988; Myrone 2002). Indeed, the scene is of a specific place of a specific couple.

The painting is a wedding portrait of Robert Andrews and Frances Carter, and it remained within the family until 1960 (Myrone 2002). Each of wealthy families, Andrews, age 23, and Carter, age 16, had inherited the large estates upon their marriage (Myrone 2002). Gainsborough uses great detail in depicting the land right into the distance, each tree, sheep, fence, and cattle neatly defined (Myrone 2002). He closes the landscape with a rise in the terrain – the entire scene is the “private domain of the young couple” (Prince 1988, 103); even St. Peter’s Church had been relocated in the painting to be within the Andrews’ land (Prince 1988).

The entire right side of the painting illustrates the couple’s productive agricultural land. In the mid-ground are individually defined sheep; their prime breed indicated by their good size and shape, and they are protected from inferior cross-breeding by the recently invented 5-barred fence (Prince 1988; Myrone 2002). The wheat fields in the foreground are constructed and manicured by the latest technologies; the linear wheat stubble the product of a modern seed drill (Myrone 2002). Andrews was notable in his time for his use of advanced farming techniques (Prince 1988). Of course, it was neither Mr. nor Mrs. Andrews who endured the physical labour of farming; rather, the labourers

are removed from the scene, their presence considered unsightly and invasive (Prince 1988; Myrone 2002).

Berger (1972) contends that the smug looks on the Andrews' faces are due to their newly acquired, finely groomed, expanse of private land. Their condescending smirks and piercing eyes belittle the viewer, gloating their youth, wealth, and property. Their expressions, however, may also be directed to Gainsborough himself (Vaughan 2002). Gainsborough, Andrews, and Carter grew up together; while Andrews went to Oxford, Gainsborough was an amateur artist from a bankrupt family bailed out by Carter's father (Vaughan 2002). Their looks of contempt were aimed toward Gainsborough, who they saw more as a charity case than as an established artist (Vaughan 2002).

The positioning of their bodies sparks as much intrigue as their facial expressions. Robert Andrews, with a casually-buttoned hunting coat, nonchalantly leans against the bench while holding a rifle in the other arm – as if posing for the painting was interrupting his day out hunting. He looks impatient and apathetic to the situation, wanting to spend time hunting with his dog rather than with his new bride (Rose 1993; Myrone 2002; Vaughan 2002). Frances Andrews, on the other hand, is seated under the oak tree, immobilized by her large dress (Rose 1993). She is not a landowner like her husband; she is as much an ornamental part of the property as the land beside her (Rose 1993). In her lap is a peculiar unfinished blotch of the painting. Given to the Andrews in such a state, it is speculated that Mrs. Andrews was to be holding either a gamebird of Mr. Andrews, or it was left blank to insert a child in the future (Myrone 2002; Vaughan 2002; The National Gallery n.d.), either way a statement of Mrs. Andrews' definitive role as a wife. She is presented as the reproductive means to the continuation of the Andrews

family (Rose 1993). The naming of the painting, *Mr. and Mrs. Andrews*, solidifies her place as Mrs. Andrews, not Frances Carter. The absence of affection in the bodily and facial expressions of these newlyweds speaks of an arranged marriage – the union is about land and wealth, not love (Vaughan 2002). Their youth and union have defined the future of this land as the Andrews' private playground.

Now at the National Gallery in London, *Mr. and Mrs. Andrews* is displayed as one of Gainsborough's most celebrated works. Ironically, while Robert Andrews continues to look down upon the viewer from his lavish wealth, it is only through Gainsborough's name that he is remembered.

The overlapping stories of peoples and places, such as Mr. and Mrs. Andrews, are the foundations of landscape iconography. Landscape iconography is both epistemological and methodological; it attempts to understand the cultural representations inscribed within and upon landscape. New cultural geography approaches landscape as representation. Their symbols and meanings are fluid and fickle, apparent only in intertextual contexts. New cultural geography distinguished itself from old cultural geography through the rejection of empiricism and the adoption of post-structuralism. Power, representation, and discourse are emphasized in new cultural geography's descriptions of culture and landscape.

### **From New to Non: The Challenge of Non-Representational Theory**

By the mid-1990s, cultural geographers began questioning the discipline's approach to landscape. New cultural geography seemed fixated on representation. Severing meaning from materiality, the geographer's job had become exposing the power constructing landscape (Anderson and Harrison 2010). The world was seen at a distance,

a linear cause-effect spectacle from the representer to the represented (Anderson and Harrison 2010). Through the ideas of performance and embodiment, non-representational theory acts as an umbrella term for the study of cultural geography as perpetual, inter-relational, mobilities.

Non-representational theories approach landscapes as intermediary materializations of life that are “spontaneously generative ... devoid of contemplation and linguistic reasoning” (Butcher 2012, 95). As new cultural geography emphasizes vision as a primary way-of-knowing, non-representational theory emphasizes the entirety of the body as being-in landscape – touch, sound, smell, movement, emotion – in an attempt to destabilize the problematic divide between the seer and seen, the internal and external (Wylie 2002). Landscape is infinitely experiential and cannot be defined by finite assumptions of intention and meaning (Cadman 2009). Life and its interactions in the world are not held together by “structures of intelligibility or ideal types” (Wylie 2009, 276). On the contrary, the experiences of place and landscape are found in the non-discursive networks of interaction among humans and non-humans (Thrift 2000). Space and place are active verbs, not a series of static messages waiting to be interpreted (Dewsbury et al. 2002). Non-representational theory minimizes notions of power and structure operating within landscape and representation. The absence of structure in non-representational theory suggests that landscapes are created through the repetition of practice. Landscape comes-to-be as it is put to use, not as it is seen. Non-representational theory argues that new cultural geography too easily relies upon structuralist frameworks for explanation. Since hegemonic structures are not specific and tangible entities – they

should not be viewed as the prime focus of landscape, representation, and interactions of the everyday.

As an attempt to re-theorize the processes and practices of the everyday, non-representational theory suggests that the world is created through momentary and impulsive re-actions (Thrift 2000; Dewsbury et al. 2002). The unexceptional day-to-day activities of individuals living-in-the-world are non-contemplative and “highly performative” habits (Thrift and Dewsbury 2000). The body is never at rest, it is constantly moving – walking, sleeping, breathing – utilizing and reciprocating its environs and skills (Thrift and Dewsbury 2000; Wylie 2007; Anderson and Harrison 2010). The body not only physically acts and reacts; it also emotes. Emotions, affects, and expressions – notably tied to place – become part of the experience of landscape. Terms like “body-landscape” and “lifeworld” have emerged to emphasize the “anti-Cartesian” sentiment of non-representational theory (Wylie 2007; Macpherson 2010). Bodies become contextual and relational subjects, carrying with them their own memories, emotions, and desires (Anderson and Harrison 2010).

The world becomes unexceptional as the body repeatedly experiences it. In this way, a body can be and act in landscape without registering landscape – like walking down a street and not noticing the details of each house (Harrison 2000; Dewsbury et al. 2002). Surroundings and interactions become simplified and normalized through repetition; we do not “consciously notice ... [the] whole arrays of activities and practices” (Anderson and Harrison 2010, 7) in which we are involved. The body comes to know landscape through continuous doings: perception-in-action, meaning-in-action, thought-in-action, intelligence-in-action (Wylie 2007; Anderson and Harrison 2010;



Dewsbury 2010). The body acts prior to thinking; for example, I can write without having to re-learn the alphabet with each word, and I can walk without consciously putting one foot in front of the other. People act within environments which they inhabit and learn through repetition and practice (Anderson and Harrison 2010; Doel 2010). Through repeated and imitated action, certain practices and environments become mundane, familiar, and authoritative (Doel 2010). Landscapes are not stable formations appearing instantaneously from era to era; they are shaped and formed of each day and night, through both human and non-human bodies (Rose 2002). It is through these day-to-day, second-to-second, interactions in which place is made.

Over the last 15 or so years of non-representational theory's emergence in geography, it has borrowed from and grown alongside ideas of performativity (Cadman 2009). Performativity describes continual becoming through repeated contextual enactments (speech, movement, thought, etc.) (McCormack 2009b). While the facets of performativity are seemingly riddled by esoteric complexities, I have chosen to focus on three elements: embodiment, temporality, and excess. Though artificial, I set these parameters of discussion to be able to explicitly tie the literature back to my interests in landscape and representation.

Judith Butler's work on gender set the foundations for performativity theory. From this perspective, performativity is understood "not as a singular or deliberate 'act', but, rather, as the reiterative and citational practice by which discourse produces the effects that it names" (Butler 1993, 2). Through the repetitious enactments of linguistic identification (as in Butler's discussion of "sex"), matter (the body) becomes "a process of materialization that stabilizes over time to produce the effect of boundary, fixity, and

surface” (Butler 1993, 9). Nigel Thrift, prominent in bringing performance into geography, frequently references Butler’s work, though explicitly rejects the discussion of (textual) discourse in favour of embodiment, stating that textualism has “sometimes infected her work” (Thrift and Dewsbury 2000, 413). Thrift (1997) uses dance as a means to describe the movement and embodiment of being-in-place. He defines embodiment as in-the-flesh, practical, relational, and expressive, and advocates for these interactive mobilities through which place is experienced (Thrift 1997). Non-representational theory, therefore, is concerned with these sustained networks among human and non-human actors as they interact. Landscape *becomes* as it is put-to-task, “contingent upon what it initiates, activates and inspires elsewhere ... it comes to be relevant through practice” (Rose 2002, 456 – 457). Place is process – which we constantly come-to-know as it unfolds around us (Rose 2002). Interactions with these spaces are seen as pre-cognitive, adaptive, and spontaneous – not intentional representations of power (Cadman 2009). Landscape is activated by embodiment, as a contextual and inter-relational kinaesthetic playing-field (Thrift and Dewsbury 2000). It is through *becoming* (becoming-artist, becoming-researcher) that performative practice “makes the materiality of space matter” (McCormack 2009a, 280). By situating landscape as a bodily experience, non-representational theory challenges the internal-external division between the body, landscape, and representation; through the body, theory is situated on-the-ground, rather than in an inaccessible cloud hovering above (Harrison 2000; Dewsbury 2010).

Because the body is only an entity of the “here-and-now,” temporality is important to the understanding of embodiment. Non-representational theory lives in the present, a continuous series of moments with multiple potential outcomes (Dewsbury

2000; Thrift 2000). Through the enactment of body and, therefore, landscape, “there is always immanent potential for new possibilities of life, which may open new spaces of action” (Harrison 2000, 498). Despite the desire to schedule and pre-plan future enactments, there are the intermediary processes to get from point A to B – processes often overlooked though important in their accumulation (Dewsbury 2000). These moments are often brushed off, forgotten, simplified – remembered only in fleeting glimpses of registration (Dewsbury et al. 2002). There is no pre-defined future, no guaranteed happenings – the world is created instantaneously through sustained networks of doings (Dewsbury et al. 2002).

These in-between moments and spaces result in excess. Non-representational theory argues that the world does not “add-up” as neatly as constructivism suggests (Dewsbury et al. 2002); the world cannot be depicted or explained entirely through discourse and representation. Representations are “not causes or outcomes of action, but actions themselves” (Dewsbury et al. 2002, 438). To re-present is to bifurcate (Doel 2010) – a detachment which leaves the re-presentation in excess of or deficient of the previous presentation (Doel 2010). It is through these differentiations, then, that sustained networks of doings evolve and form a sense of identity (Doel 2010). These estranged surpluses mean that representations are forever incomplete – intriguing in their potentials, though instable in their being (Rose 2002; McCormack 2009b; Doel 2010). Re-presentation, thus, takes on its own work in the world, and with it a myriad of active probabilities (Dewsbury et al. 2002). The differentiated imitations of that which came before mean that the body (and its environs) is in constant slippage – unknowable, though essential for becoming beyond the broken-record effect of representational certainty

(Dewsbury 2000; Dewsbury et al. 2002). It is through these differences that the world opens up to potential events, and it is the body which (whether consciously or not) chooses which of these events to follow (Anderson and Harrison 2010). In the wake of excess, the body and the world are “mobile but more or less stable ensemble[s] of practices, involvements, relations, capacities, tendencies and affordances” (Anderson and Harrison 2010, 8). In this way, non-representational theory claims to take representations seriously, as they are seen as do-ers rather than as messengers (Dewsbury et al. 2002).

### **Methodological Implications: Embodied Narratives**

The everyday embodied mobilities of non-representational theory have methodological implications for the way in which research and writing are conducted. Non-representational approaches attempt to “describe and present rather than diagnose and represent” (Cadman 2009, 461). Non-representational understandings of body and landscape enactments suggest that each experience or “example is only an example of itself” (Dewsbury et al. 2002, 439). The research process is as much a bodily enactment as the practices it describes; thus, the division of theory and fieldwork is considered problematic (Dewsbury et al. 2002). The researcher must “become an observant participant rather than a participant observer” (Thrift 2000, 556). That is, the reflexivity of the researcher comes not from disclosing positionality, but rather from being in the experience (Thrift 2000; Dewsbury et al. 2002). While non-representational theories do not prescribe a given methodological approach, they tend to draw upon narrative writing styles to explicate and performance arts to exemplify their discussions, and utilize a variety of qualitative techniques like interviews, focus groups, and participant observations (Thrift 2000; Wylie 2002; McCormack 2002; Cadman 2009; Vannini 2011)

The consistency in the methods entails the interest of elucidating the seemingly-minute processes of the everyday. The increasing ability to (almost) instantaneously document experience, through a variety of media, has opened experimental opportunities for coming-to-know and communicating place (Thrift 2002; Macpherson 2010). The digitization of field work – through the internet, audio recorders, small digital cameras (or smartphones with cameras) – enables a sense of real-time being-there, with which cultural geographers have taken interest.

### **Critiquing Non-Representational Theory**

I bring up some of the methodological implications of non-representational theories for two reasons. First, they help illustrate the context of non-representational theory within the overall evolution of cultural geography. More importantly here, however, is that some of non-representational theory's weaknesses are beginning to show. While non-representational theory succeeds in addressing the unintentional activities of the everyday, there are significant contradictions, hasty assumptions, and problematic absences by which it falters.

Perhaps the most readily apparent concerns are the epistemological-methodological fissures. Little has been suggested as to how to actually utilize non-representational observations – perhaps due to the issue that non-representational approaches require representation (esp. language and text) to communicate (Cadman 2009). Rarely do seemingly non-discursive performances go without words (Rose 2001); dances come with songs or even explanatory pamphlets, cooking comes with recipes, driving comes with speed limits and directional signs. While each of these practices enact doings, questions of power and authority are clearly still the elephant in the room.

Actions and doings are mediated by representations and are highly culturally-informed (Nash 2000). Even if capitalism, patriarchy, etc., do not hold an identifiable physical form, there is both social and academic value in recognizing their real-world impacts. Representations and related discursive practices continue to have material effects in the world (Castree and MacMillan 2004); rejecting them would be rejecting some of human geography's best work (Nash 2000) – especially in terms of addressing the dire adverse effects of colonialism, gender inequalities, poverty, and ill-health. The hasty rejection of new cultural geography's epistemological approaches to landscape and representation means that there is still much left unsaid – there are still valuable directions stemming from new cultural geography that should be revisited (Castree and MacMillan 2004).

Describing the embodied experience is incomplete without addressing the subject and spatial positionalities (Cadman 2009). Embodiment is a luxury. Thinking about embodiment is a luxury. Thinking about the non-thinking of embodiment is a luxury. Non-representational theory seems to fall into the same troubles of mid-20<sup>th</sup> century phenomenology of dividing “academics who think ... and those ‘ordinary people’ out there who just act” (Nash 2000, 662). As a body of literature still dominated by likeminded, well-off, educated, English, men (Cadman 2009), issues of power too easily slip from the pages of non-representational approaches. The poetics of embodiment come at the expense of universalizing experience. Places too must be expressed as positioned within their cultural-historical context. Derek Gregory (1994), for example, juxtaposes his experience of Canadian geography to that of the British system. Concerns of colonialism, Indigenous relations, and gender were much more visible in Canada than Britain. Neither new cultural geography nor non-representational theory can be simply re-

located to universally speak for the geographies of “foreign” places, such as the Salish Sea. Theory must be tailored, selective, and adaptable to different subject and spatial positionalities.

With emphasis on the embodiment of narrative, non-representational theories potentially become lost, tedious, and confused as the reader navigates her way through the meanderings of the author’s experience (Daniels and Lorimer 2012). Even with the most thorough narrative and high-tech media, there is always an incompleteness to experience; writing, videos, and any media, cannot fully capture the lived experience (Nash 2000). The incompleteness of representational significance should not be justification for rejecting symbolic meaning, but rather it is a necessary compromise that all research takes. Speaking of any process or practice removes it from its context – regardless of how it is approached (Castree and MacMillan 2004). While narrative can help bridge conceptual dualisms, it can come at the expense of missing valuable analytical insight (Daniels and Lorimer 2012). Narrative is both “too powerful ... and too powerless” (Daniels and Lorimer 2012, 3), and should be approached with caution.

One of the goals of non-representational theory is to reassemble the dualisms fragmented by Cartesian ways-of-knowing (Anderson and Harrison 2010). However, addressing new cultural geography’s symbol/material dualism by inserting embodiment and minimizing the symbolic is problematic. Glamourizing the materiality of experience while neglecting issues of structure bifurcates the discipline into a state of academic amnesia – understating the relevance and importance of representation which Cosgrove, Daniels, Duncan, et al., brought to the forefront of geography. While claiming to take

representation seriously, non-representational theory tends to overlook the influence and power which signs and symbols within representations carry.

I have presented cultural geography as a series of socio-contextual epistemological shifts from the “old,” to the “new,” to the “non-.” Their differentiation is somewhat artificial, as they each overlap and depend upon the other. Epistemology and methodology are the declarations of the compromises willing to be made as a researcher. The insufficiencies will always be there. There is still much to learn by returning to symbolic representation, though perhaps this time with a twist of everyday spontaneity (Nash 2000; Castree and MacMillan 2004).

### **Room to Grow: Positioning the Research**

Positioning my own work in this tangled web of literature, I have approached my research with a sense of pluralism: narrative and analytical, practical and performative, symbolic and material (as described by Nash 2000). I have set up the research objectives, methodologies, and discussions to reflect this plurality. As my research continues to unfold, I trace the patterns and themes of representation while invigorating the discussion with my own and the artists’ narratives. In ten or twenty years, if and when I look back upon these choices made – the ideas, moments, and themes I have chosen to share – I may not recognize them the same way as I do today; and yet, they seem to serendipitously fall into place within the context of my present ways-of-knowing the Salish Sea.

The theories, methods, and outcomes of this project touch on a few areas of potential growth in geography and for understanding the Salish Sea. As a relatively new concept in the discipline, for the most part, performativity research has yet to explore the



highly-visual media typically adopted by new cultural geography. I see this project as taking paintings out of their frames and into the active spatial *becomings* of creating and experiencing art. I am intrigued by the contradiction of how “[m]ovement is a continuous problem to deal with in painting. A painting is a static image, but the construction of a painting is performative” (Merriman and Webster 2009, 528). I consider the movement of paintings while also seeing them as comparable discursive images. The methodologies employed to achieve this are also significant in their plurality. By combining the narratives of becoming-artist and becoming-researcher with the more analytical comparisons of the paintings through landscape iconography, this thesis illustrates how geographic inquiry is enriched by recognizing the assets of both new cultural geography and non-representational theory. Throughout the research process, I have found that this integrated approach has fit well with my interests in the Salish Sea. The Salish Sea was conceived to re-consider peoples’ relationships to place and with each other. As such, the project reiterates this notion that the Salish Sea is a place of fluid reconceptualization.

## **Chapter 3**

# **Choreographing the Research Process: Methodologies and Methods**

### **Introduction**

Coming into graduate school, my fellow burgeoning geographers and I were given an evenly distributed linear timeline for what the Masters process is expected to look like. The departmental majority seemed to have this luxury of inputting empirical data to a model or theory, conducting digital statistical analysis, and outputting some more data to then discuss quantifiable observations. I was soon to learn that a select few of us had a much different path to follow. Our path seemed to require a bit more bush-whacking and cognitive-exploration – but, there ended up being a path nonetheless. Much like the creative processes I would end up exploring in my interviews, my research process became a matter of trial, error, and non-linear progressive successes. The methodologies that I ended up using to complete my project reflect the flexibilities and uncertainties that are perpetually present in qualitative research. As my theoretical understandings ebbed and flowed, so too did my research processes. To address the interdisciplinary nature of the theory, I chose to strengthen my research with multiple methods. The first methodology which helped focus my research is the case study. By opting for a case study, I was able to narrow my project to a fraction of the Salish Sea, while leaving room for the unexpected twists and turns that my research may have taken. Within the case study methodology, I conducted interviews and participant observations to better understand the processes of becoming- and being-an-artist. Weary of

bottlenecking my observations through a single theory, and methodology, I also used thematic analysis as a way to approach the visual aspects of my project. Along with my interviews, I collected landscape paintings (as greeting cards and online images) to broaden the resources I had to draw upon. With these media, I have been able to find themes and key vignettes which describe the processes, experiences and images of the Salish Sea.

Stepping onto the University of Victoria campus for the first time, I had only the words “the Salish Sea” as an idea for my research project. Within the first four months of being in the program, my peers and I explored social theories – sampling those most pertinent to the evolution of human geography: Marxism, humanism, post-structuralism, and their off-shoots. My interest in art history started waving its hand upon the class’s discussion of representation. The ability of art to “represent complex subjective processes in an extraordinarily objective form” (Grady 2004, 18) has always intrigued me. I started reading the works of Cosgrove, Daniels, and Duncan – learning about landscape iconography and symbolism. I recalled the idea of landscape-as-text resonating with me from my undergraduate studies. The theoretical background of new cultural geography started to give my seedling of “the Salish Sea” some nourishment. I specifically became interested in how English colonial expansion in North America was abetted through spatial representations: especially drawings, maps, and text. Looking back at the West Coast in the 1800s, everything seemed to line up perfectly. As per the role of social theory, shortly into my investigation of landscape iconography came its criticisms and adaptations. While it took a while to sink in, the narrative and performance of non-

representational theory began to push and pull at the stability of my understanding of hegemony and representation.

I was soon introduced to common methodologies and methods in human geography. With the inkling of a project and theoretical perspective, my peers and I navigated the dynamics of qualitative research. Each of us with fairly different projects, we covered a breadth of techniques, each helping the other to comprehend how to go about doing our research. Our projects and perspectives brought up an assortment of research paths: for example, interviews, focus groups, participatory action research, surveys, and case studies. Holding on to my interest in representation, power, and performance, I knew I had to choose methodologies flexible enough to accommodate multi-perspectival backgrounds. Likewise, I wanted my methodologies to reflect my own growth in learning about theory and the Salish Sea (which both seem to be ongoing processes). I ended up selecting the methodologies of a case study and thematic analysis. The case study involved conducting interviews and keeping a field journal to create a rich narrative based around the performances of painting and research. I also collected and analyzed a selection of landscape paintings in order to compare their themes and images.

After eight months of exploring theories and methodologies in a structured classroom environment, my research process hit the ground running upon the commencement of my fieldwork. Based on what I had been taught, I had prepared to conduct semi-structured interviews and participant observations within the case study of four Salish Sea islands. I wanted methods grounded enough that I could feel confident and prepared when on the Islands; however, I wanted the process to be adaptable to potential unknowns. By choosing to individually study semi-rural Islands from two

countries on a minimal budget, uncertainty was present in every aspect of the project; lack of internet connection, navigating obscure ferry schedules, overcoming the social-fear of contacting participants, and finding accommodations at peak tourist season, each removed me from my comfort zone. In addition to the physical aspects of conducting interviews, I was actively observing and contemplating my surroundings. The mental and emotional exhaustion that comes with qualitative fieldwork quickly became me. That is when I knew my field work had been a success.

As my analysis has taken shape, I have opened up room for the ideas and inspirations which are necessary to understanding my observations. Unexpected influences have continued to shape my interpretations; my passive interests in things like psychology, theology, and history crept into the narrative of my experiences. At first I was hesitant to bring in these strange voices from my own cognitive meanderings to interdisciplinary research. I was worried that if I included these ideas that my project would get derailed and become an un-salvageable mess. My eureka moment came when I began infusing my project with these seemingly bizarre details. As I have learned, it seems this is the usually-unusual path that many creative and qualitative projects take. Fortunately, these ideas did not derail my project, but rather re-motivated me and my writing. I have come to realize that without them, my research, and perhaps landscape studies in general, would become inert.

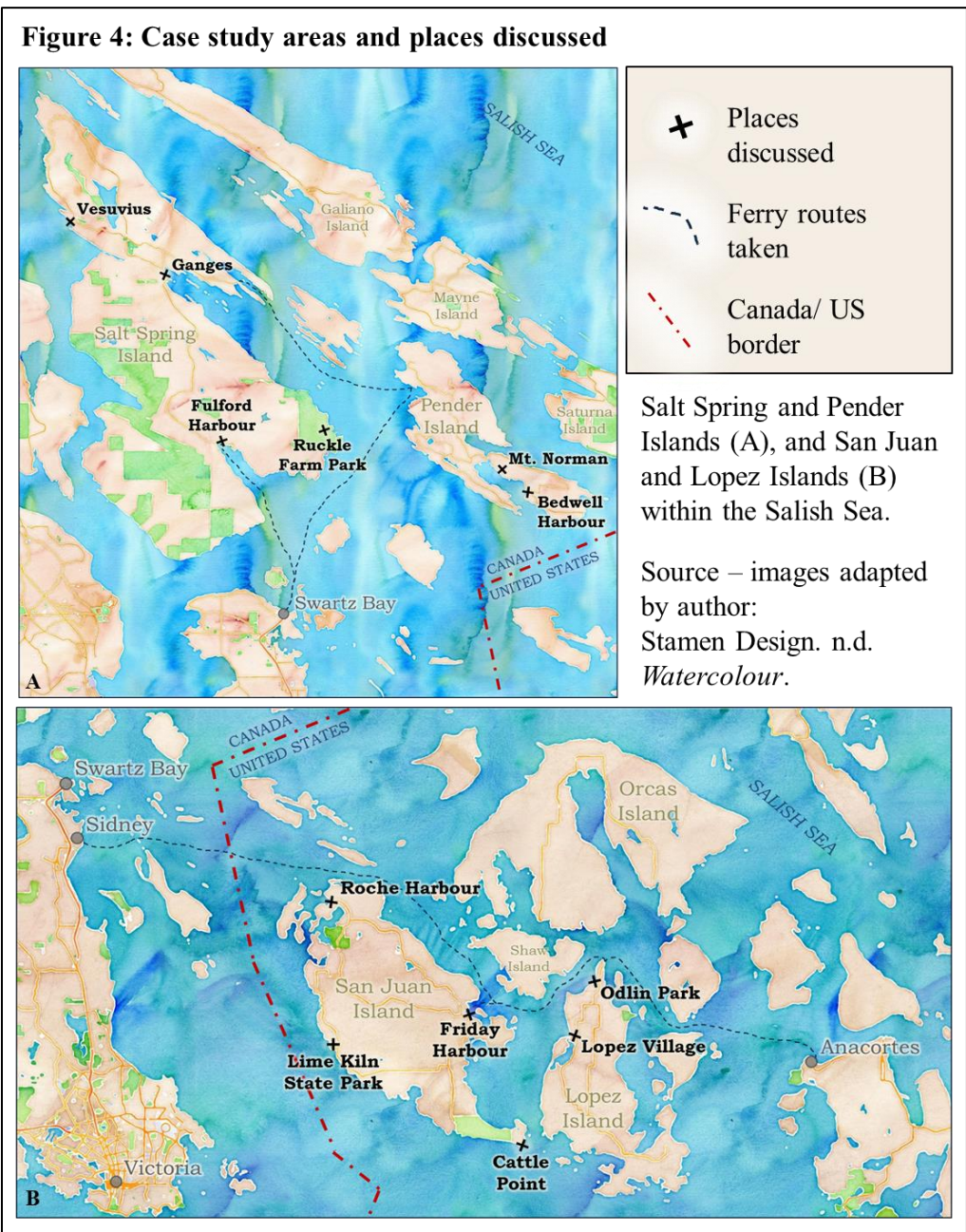
Allowing myself the freedom to explore new territory has significantly benefitted my project. Using a narrative style of writing has shaped the discussions brought up in my thesis. Narrative and descriptive writing are making their way into geography alongside the ideas of performance and movement. These pieces have inspired much of

how I have gone about descriptively incorporating my spatial experiences (see examples Wylie 2002; Merriman and Webster 2009; Vannini 2011). It refocuses the study on aspects that are otherwise fuzzied or ignored by more analytic writing styles – in a way making the process much more explicit. Narrative writing is able to better reflect the experiences of the creative processes which shape the lives of my participants and my research. Through the use of narrative and interdisciplinary ideas, conclusive assumptions are avoided, meaning that potential directions and perspectives are always present. The prose of my discussions, however, provisionally stabilizes potential imbalances of my project – theoretically and methodologically.

### **Setting Up My Fieldwork: A Cross-Sectional Case Study**

The methodological structure of my research is the backbone of my discussions; describing the case study as an embodied process, and the paintings as discursive representations. The fieldwork began with significant preparation at the university; I didn't happen to stumble upon San Juan Island and spontaneously interview artists. Partly due to the size and fragmentation of my study region, I chose to look at a select few Islands of the Salish Sea. Through these specific cases, my project became manageable and tangible – allowing me to delve into the idiosyncrasies of four parallel though unique Islands. By choosing the case study methodology as a means of accessing the information I needed, I was able to draw upon familiar territory in social science research. Case studies are used in both qualitative and quantitative research to focus observations on a specific time and place. Essentially, they seek to take a “snap-shot” of a given situation (Baxter 2010). As an umbrella term for a variety of research techniques, the case study is a broad but adaptable methodology. It offers an intensive and in-depth look at specific

instances of an event as it pertains to the research theme (Babbie 2007, 298); in my case, the cultural geographies of the Salish Sea. For the social sciences especially, case studies help exemplify theory – providing a more digestible illustration of potentially abstract ideas. For this project in particular, my case study is of four Islands of the Salish Sea: San Juan and Lopez Islands in Washington State, and Salt Spring and Pender Islands in British Columbia (Figure 4). These Islands were selected due to specific locational



requirements. First, the Islands are comparable in population size – Salt Spring and San Juan at approximately 10,000 and Pender and Lopez at approximately 2,500 – and are among the most populated Islands in the Salish Sea (Islands Trust 2013; Washington State 2010). Close proximity to the international border was also taken into consideration, as this may indicate greater interaction between the countries. On both sides of the border, the Islands are promoted as places for artists, entrepreneurs, retirees, and tourists (Harrington and Stevenson 2005; San Juan Islands Visitors Bureau 2011). For me personally and as a researcher, the Islands are much more accessible from Victoria as per costs, accommodations, and ferry routes. I also wanted to bring my personal experiences of Pender Island into my research, building upon the memory, emotion, and knowledge of place.

There are active artist networks and communities on each of the Islands, which have established galleries and tours open to the public. This reputation for creativity meant that I had several options in terms of what type of representation I wanted to include. Landscape paintings seemed like an ideal genre because they were a frequent topic of new cultural geography's discussions of art history, political economy, and landscape studies. The technologies of the painting process have not changed as much as other media, like photography or cartography, allowing for greater consistency over time and place. Through pamphlets and websites, I found multiple artists on each of the Islands; therefore, finding multiple participants and conducting interviews would be much more feasible than if I chose a more obscure art form. My own understanding of landscape paintings influenced the images collected. The geometry, colour, and perceived depth of place common in European-style art (Rose 2001), albeit subconsciously at the



time, delineated what I considered to be images of landscape. As an art form, paintings are so seemingly common, banal, and normal that they defy questioning – they are entirely recognizable as art. Paintings also fit my interest in how the image of the Salish Sea is reproduced. Through art cards and prints, paintings are a highly replicable and transferrable medium.

My methodologies and methods consider paintings as both product and process. Within my case study of the Salish Sea, I decided to interview the artists and extensively journal my observations and experiences of being on the Islands. By going out and speaking with the painters about their work, I was able to elaborate upon how their paintings came-to-be, rather than simply seeing them as inert depictions of landscape. I could dissect and interpret their paintings as much as I wanted at home, but it was only through meeting with and talking to the artists that I got to hear how becoming-an-artist is just as important as the final product.

Wanting somewhat specific though fluid interviews with my participants, I chose to use a semi-structured format over fully- or un-structured. The interviews became more conversational, prompted by what I was asking; every so often, we would go off on tangents, and I found many of these unrelated pieces ended up being some of my strongest material. As I became more comfortable conducting the interviews, the better I was at weaving the questions into our discussions, and going over interesting and new ideas. That being said, the interview guide was followed fairly closely; I was sure to always ask the most important questions, especially to ensure some consistency among the interviews.

I came to choosing my participants based upon them being a painter of landscapes, a resident of one of the four Islands, and, more generally, how accessible they were. I avoided being too restrictive in terms of how the artists paint – for example, the type(s) of paint they use or where they paint did not require defining for my sample; they were qualified provided that they frequently incorporated the image of landscape into some of their paintings. Because my research also explores the benefits and challenges to living on the Islands, I only interviewed artists who reside on one of my study Islands for the majority of the year. While some of the images I collected were of elsewhere in the Salish Sea region, I chose to speak with persons living on the Islands of my case study. As such, I could focus my discussions and analyses on the places that I would be visiting. I narrowed my participant list enough that finding artists was relatively easy. As entrepreneurs themselves, I could find artists' names, contact information, and examples of their work published online and in pamphlets. I set up my interviews to be approximately an hour in duration. With a vehicle and a flexible schedule, I was able to meet with artists wherever they felt most comfortable. Most of the interviews ended up taking place at their houses, where I also got to see their studios/galleries. Some of the artists were working at public markets or galleries when I contacted them, and we met before, during, or after hours; we spoke either on-site or in nearby cafes.

Overall, by being well prepared with contact information and a flexible interview guide, my interview process went very smoothly. With the help of an audio recorder, we were able to have fluid discussions about art and artists and living on the Islands. In the end, I am able to use 13 of the 14 interviews I conducted (one participant opted out after the interview was conducted). With 4 interviews from San Juan Island, 2 from Lopez, 4

from Salt Spring, and 3 from Pender, I have been able to draw on themes and use vignettes based on the conversations with the artists. All but two of the participants interviewed are female. This selection was not intentional. From the artist listings found on websites and in galleries, it appears as though the majority of the painters on the islands are women. Men also partake in the islands' arts, though they tend to be carvers, sculptures, or photographers. While all of the artists interviewed have lived on the Islands for at least a decade, they are originally from elsewhere. Most of the artists from the San Juan Islands are from elsewhere in the United States, while a couple came from outside North America (namely Germany and South Africa). Artists on the Gulf Islands were from across Canada, except one from the United States. The commonality across the participants is that they have moved around a fair bit in their lives. They described having felt "at home" when they came to the Islands and have since stayed. The interview process allowed me to develop a sense of becoming-artist and living on the Islands. I was fortunate in that all of my interviews turned out to be informative and in-depth. Not once did I experience that dreaded fear in qualitative research of having an interview turn awkward or go stale. The artists seemed to be as interested in my project as I was in their art, and that reciprocal energy helped motivate the conversations.

Journaling became an essential process not only in documenting my experiences, but also in helping me make sense of the peoples and places I observed. Many of the mental meanderings in my journals verged on prose – elaborations of my thought processes, interpretations, and movements in place. Sometimes I went on tangents, thinking of how interesting it would be to interview farmers and do an entire project on agriculture. Most of my journaling, however, stayed on topic: collecting images,

wrestling with theory, and re-capping my interviews. I made the point of documenting everything (Bradshaw and Stratford 2010), seemingly relevant or not. My notebooks contain as much doodling as they do text; much to the chagrin of teachers past, I rely on visuals, possibly more than text, to comprehend and remember my thoughts and experiences. Part of my journaling process also included using photography and voice memos. My iPhone came in handy for capturing unexpected thoughts and scenes, rather than stopping and pulling out somewhat more cumbersome notebooks and cameras. With it too, I could look up ferry schedules, call participants, and check maps – resulting in my phone bill doubling that month, especially while roaming in the United States. While somewhat unromantic (no one likes to admit how much they rely on their phone), the digitization of my methods became a key part to how I experienced and documented my fieldwork. Between the narrative visuals of my notebook and the instantaneous documentations through my phone, my results chapters very much reflect the dynamic intricacies of my time on the Islands.

### **Interpreting the Paintings: Thematic Analysis**

Back in the research lab, a year into the research process, I sat with a mess of ideas, theories, interview transcripts, observations, and paintings. The narrative approach to my fieldwork served me well in elaborating on the processes of research and painting. When it came to utilizing my experiences, however, I needed a new tactic for analyzing my findings. It was time to start organizing my collection, and figuring out how to put the pieces together. Thematic analysis seemed like an appropriate methodology for my interest in place and paintings. Though I am interested in landscape iconography, I found the formulaic dissection of art, such as the *Mr. & Mrs. Andrews* example, to be a bit too

prescriptive. Thus, exploring comparative and patterned themes throughout the images seemed to better suit my interpretations of representations. I emptied out my rainbow-stocked pencil case and began colour coding themes and interesting quotations in the interviews. By identifying commonalities and relationships, patterns within the data emerge without being completely severed from their context (Lapadat 2009). I went back and forth between the paper version and the digital version; I could read and mark-up the paper transcripts, then search specific words and questions in the digital format. I had conducted my interviews in a consistent enough format that sifting through the dialogue was fairly unproblematic. I physically and mentally noted interesting quotations, patterns, observations, and comments. During these initial readings, I began sorting the text into three themes: cultural aspects of living on the Islands, movement in place, and becoming-artist. These initial categories were broad, but they were a good starting point. I temporarily set the interviews aside to let the ideas percolate, and I focused my attention to the paintings I had collected.

During my fieldwork, I had purchased art cards of landscape scenes of the Islands. Each is a reproduction of a painting by a local artist. I collected 84 cards in total from both artists I had interviewed, and artists I had not. I supplemented my collection with a few images found on artists' and gallery websites, though not many. Without a background in art or art history, I was cautious with how I was to go about analyzing the paintings. I wanted my interpretation of the images to reflect the landscapes and the sense of being-in-place depicted, more so than say the shades of blue chosen or the movement of each brush stroke.

During the analysis process, I had to be prepared, consistent, flexible, and patient. I first prepared for the analysis by familiarizing myself with visual methodologies, specifically what questions I should be asking. I began by referring to the questions laid out by Marcus Banks in the book, *Visual Methods in Social Research*: (1) “what is the image of, what is its content? ... (2) who took it or made it, when and why? and ... (3) how do other people come to have it, how do they read it, what do they do with it?” (2001, 7). I started with a small sampling of the images with these questions. I edited the questions, and considered the themes of the interviews, and went back over the sample images. After a few rounds of tailoring my questions, I eventually had a set of consistent elements I would look at while analyzing the images. I knew my observations would not fit into a simple index of yes or no answers. Instead, I left the response areas in my analysis guide open, providing room for a bit of description. I kept the guide broad at first, and then narrowed it to detailing specific elements in the paintings. Before dissecting an image, I recorded my overall impressions and feelings from looking at it. I noted anything that stood out and the visibility of the image (for example, the details versus fuzzy abstractness of the image). Hoping to avoid overlooking any area of the painting, I worked my way from the background, to the midground, to the foreground; recording somewhat empirical observations of each part. I then moved on to more specific elements of the landscape that I was interested in, loosely based upon the coding process described by Gillian Rose in *Visual Methodologies* (2001). The codes were formulated around what the artists had said in the interviews, as well as my notes from the sample images:

- significant “natural” features (a significant tree or bird, for example),

- the sense of motion/activity of the painting,
- the presence/absence of buildings,
- noticeable water bodies,
- transportation elements (cars, roads, ferries, boats),
- the presence of people (what they are doing, how they are dressed),
- recognizable landmarks,
- any text visible, and
- any spatial delineations (signage or fences)

The importance of the analysis guide was not so much about counting the number of persons, buildings, or ferries in the images; rather, the guide helped me be patient with the images. I wanted the consistency of content analysis, but not its mathematic dissection (Rose 2001). The elements I derived were not to be removed from their context. I used the guide to elaborate upon their situation within each painting. I had to be patient with the paintings, and my interpretations of them. They are the careful expressions of artists' experiences, and they should not be hastily diminished to a simplified system of signs and numbers (Rose 2001; Winchester and Rofe 2010). By slowing down and spending time with each image, I was able to pick up on nuances that I hadn't noticed previously. By focusing my attention on each painting and writing out my observations in a consistent manner, I was able to relate themes, patterns, and absences of the paintings to my interviews and field experiences.

Based on the accumulated experiences and observations from my fieldwork, the interviews, and the paintings, I chose to further explore four themes: agricultural landscapes, public and private spaces, national inscriptions, and "unpeopled" landscapes.

As I proceeded to write, my thoughts developed, and the stories and observations intertwined. The discussions of my findings are a result of my theoretical plurality and my methodological flexibility. Through the case study and thematic analysis, I have left the door open to the multiplicities of landscapes and seascapes. Far from being exhaustive, the observations noted, choices made, and experiences described are each filtered through my own positionality. Instead of hiding behind the often-coveted anonymity of research, I put myself at the forefront of my investigations.

My interest in the Salish Sea stems from my own experiences and knowledge of the region. Through the use of narrative, I encourage and incorporate my own voice, rather than pretend that it doesn't influence my work. I have chosen to explicitly emphasize my own positionality – my own relation to the theoretical backgrounds and field. Through continual journaling and memoing, especially during my fieldwork, I document my reactions, responses, and interpretations to different interactions and observations. My work becomes reflexive as I address the ever-present contextual biases of research (Begoray and Banister 2009). The reflexivity process also means that readers have less of a guessing-game to play in terms of recognizing my personal ways-of-knowing the project and the Salish Sea (Begoray and Banister 2009). Instead of narrowing on a single theoretical background or on a single artist, my project balances upon the plurality of landscape studies and participants. My writing reflects the multiplicity of experiences, and remains flexible in the observations made. My project is strengthened through the flexibility, plurality, and reflexivity of its processes.

The research outcomes and processes have not been isolated experiences; they have been reviewed and amended to various degrees by peers and faculty, and, of course, by



my committee and external examiners. Prior to being able to conduct my fieldwork, my project was also reviewed and approved by the University of Victoria Human Research Ethics Board, ensuring that my inclusion of participants is fair and ethical. The majority of the artists agreed to have their name used in the project, while one opted for a pseudonym. While I am permitted to include their paintings in the thesis, several of the artists requested that I watermark their images to ensure they do not get unlawfully reproduced. For consistency and respect for the artists' work, I watermarked all of the images, even if it was not specifically requested.

The methodological set up of the project ties the processes and outcomes back to my initial investigation into the role that landscape paintings play in the performative enactments of "place." The resulting discussions open with describing the processes of becoming-artist in landscape. I immediately transition into the narrative of my fieldwork – elucidating the connectivity between becoming-artist and being-in landscape. The final discussion chapter then examines the paintings as patterned and cultural expressions of place.

The thesis is a snapshot of academic processes (learning, researching, analyzing), communicating a series of cultural-artistic processes (living, painting, reproducing). While it is easy to get lost in the eternity of these processes, my research is grounded by its methodologies and contextuality. Within this context, the paintings become a collection of analyzable documents – rather than a gift or a commodity, for example. I take on the role of a researcher, and my participants take on the role of painters. Through these assumed stabilities, my discussions begin to take shape. One of the benefits of narrative writing is that these somewhat artificial stabilities do not over-shadow the

complexities of the everyday; without them, however, there is the risk of losing valuable insight into the patterns that do emerge in the continuous making of the Salish Sea.

## Chapter 4

### Becoming-Artist/Being-in Landscape

The artist's attention is caught by a pine branch silently waving in the summer breeze. The movement so gentle and common, it sparks no concern to the laymen's eye. Patiently waiting for that image to imprint on the back of her eye, the artist contemplates how to capture the pine not as simply a pine branch. Through brush, camera, and pen, the artist attempts to record her memory of the shades of green, the scent and texture, the light and shadow, the lines and movements that make up this seemingly banal object. Carrying the weight of responsibility in replicating the complexities of nature on canvas, she sketches a trial image. Her mind wanders to the awe of nature in itself. The tree is so flawed – shaggy and bumpy – and yet it is flawless. Here it is, conducting an entire concert of movement, colour, and light so perfectly and yet it is unseen because of its commonality. The singular event of the tree takes its place within its surroundings. The intricacies of the everyday, of the bird on the branch, of the soil below, of the wind blowing through, each a momentary glimpse of the collective interconnections that make up the world in which she lives. The artist becomes weary of the oil and canvas's ability to recreate not only the branch, but its context too. As an artist, she has the luxury of enframing the landscape on canvas; the complexities of each event are minimized to ensure they don't overshadow the entirety of landscape. Though as an artist, she also has the burden of illustrating a non-sensory feeling of place within the limits of a two-dimensional canvas.

The context of the landscape situates the artist within her-self, and also within the unknown and uncertainties of her own mind and place. Landscape simultaneously

situates her within multiple scales of which she is aware. She is of her body, of the detailed foreground, of the distant background, of the eternal horizon. Landscape both physically and psychologically elevates her. From here, she contemplates the unknown and uncertainties that lay before her. All of the challenges of overcoming distance, all of the details she can't see, all of the haze that shrouds the distance are recognizable and visible. From this vantage point, landscape becomes a glamorous expression of place; the light becomes the projector, and is reflected off of the topographic silver screen. Landscape is exquisitely poised, beautiful, and flawless – but also carries the air of dark mystery; it is an unattainable and untouchable vision that always leaves her wanting more. The painting is no longer about simply replicating a scene through sight, but encapsulating the *je-ne-sais-quoi* of life through landscape.

Her palette of a dozen colours pales to the colours of the view before her. Squeezing the tubes of paint, one at a time, the artist carefully mixes a drop of each Spring Green #054, Lemon Yellow #063, and White Beige #003. Upon perfecting the green shade of the tree branch, she looks up to re-examine the tree. The sun has shifted and the colours have all changed. Compromising with her now outdated green, she puts the brush to the canvas. Being pushed back and forth, the paint finds its place within the image of the tree. The two-dimensional canvas and the single paint tone suggest nothing of depth. She adds grey, purple, yellow, and blue to the branches in an attempt to give the otherwise green-splotches a life-like complexion. The amount of detail for depicting each pine sprig is of delicate concern; too much detail it looks over done and complicated; too little detail and the tree falls into vague abstraction. She's done this before though. Her muscle memory repeats what it has been trained to do – a fine stroke here, a broad stroke

there. She has painted trees before, but not this tree at this time. The physical memory of trees within her hands wants to paint the same lines and curves in which it is familiar. But, this tree is not the same as every other; the branches require different colours, patterns, and textures. The tree has grown since last spring; it fills more of the canvas, more of the view, than if she had painted this same image a year ago. Its green branches don't stand-out like they do in the winter, when all of the deciduous trees are barren. Of course, it doesn't think about being a tree or how to be a tree; its greenness, location, and purpose are all within the context of something else. The soil, sun, genetics, and usage each affect the outcomes of the tree becoming a tree. On canvas, the soil and sun don't matter. What matters in making the tree a tree are the colours and shapes indicative of a tree.

Long contemplating the role and design of the tree, transcribing what she saw through brush to canvas, the artist grew weary. Her mind distracted to the other aspects of her life; she would have to return to her work later. She photographed and noted the colours and light which caught her attention to begin with.

With her photographs, memory, and imagination in hand, the artist returned to her work inside her studio. No longer at the mercy of the wind and weather, the artist was set up to complete the painting. The scene she had left was no longer there. The light and image had changed. The scene could now only be filled in with her memory and imagination of that landscape. She filled in the ocean, field, and flowers. She took few artistic liberties at changing the scene. The outhouse in the field looked better as a barn, especially for whoever may one day hang the image on a wall. She hadn't noticed the power-lines until comparing the photograph to the painting; there's no point in adding

them if they only obstruct the view. Satisfied with the image, she takes a fine brush with black paint and signs her name. She has a hard time finalizing a painting, saying that it is ever complete, but it is complete enough for now as she has already started dreaming up the next.

Proud of her work and confident in her skill, she takes the time to consider how best to share the image. Hesitant of simply commodifying her work, she avoids immediately assigning a price tag to the painting. Not having a print-shop on the Island, she has everything she needs to reproduce the painting as large giclees and small gift cards inside her studio; she prefers it this way anyhow, as she has complete control over how to adjust the image as it is digitized. After adjusting the brightness, contrast, and border, she prints her cards on high-gloss paper. The image has lost some of its detail and some of its intimacy, but the cards serve their purpose. They evoke the peace and wonder that the landscape brought to her. She can only hope that whoever sees the card feels the same, whether or not they recognize the scene depicted. She divides the fifty cards printed into their points of sale: 10 for her studio, 10 for the café, 10 for the market, 10 for the gallery, and 10 just-in-case. Upon delivering her new merchandise to their destinations, she has noticed that some of her previous cards need re-stocking. As she expected, the images of familiar landmarks on the Island had sold better than the others – mid-summer is peak tourist season after all. She knew the new card wouldn't sell as well, but it didn't matter; she didn't become an artist to make souvenirs. She titled the painting "Summer Pine in Willow's Park" – something generic, nothing too personal or political. She didn't want to interrupt someone's own interpretation of the image with a loud name preceding it.

At the weekly market, the artist meets customers interested in her reproductions. The response to the new image is complimentary though not outstanding. Most of the faces she sees every week, and there is no reason for her new image to be particularly extraordinary. With each booth showing off a talent, her art is a small piece of the vibrant market. People come up to the booth and point out certain images. They share their stories with her of those places. They tell her how her work reminds them of another famous artist. Occasionally someone will buy a card or two, and maybe a giclee. One person she recognizes, though not by name, comments on the new painting – how it would be nice to see the original work. The artist invites her to her studio, even though it is open to the public anyway.

The customers never ask what her paintings are. They are art. Their intention is known – to hang on a wall and decorate a room. Their purpose is subconsciously recognized by both the painter and the customers. Paintings have a legacy of being something which serves this function. The only distinguishable factor from the other painters' is her style and subject. The passer-bys claim how they could never produce anything like them; though, she is convinced with a bit of training, patience, and practice, anyone can become an artist. At least, that's what she was told in art school all those years ago. She studied the works of Van Gogh, Monet, and Thomson. How wonderful it would be if one day her paintings were found in a museum alongside the greats. Though, her aspirations are much more humble. She has no interest in seeing her paintings auctioned for a small fortune, though how rewarding it would be for her name to be as distinguished as theirs. She wondered how the market-goers would respond if she was a

famous painter. Would they see her as a more legitimate artist? Would they pay a higher price for the same image? Would they have more interest in her work?

Her concentration broke upon the snap of a photograph. She explained to the perpetrator that taking a photo of her paintings was problematic; with digital and phone cameras, it seems everyone is always just wanting to take pictures. Besides being inconsiderate to the labour of the artist, the issue of unlawful reproduction has been a growing problem for herself and her peers. She is careful about publishing her work online. While she wants people to see her work and contact her about purchasing originals (after all, the internet allows anyone from anywhere to purchase it), the unauthorized copying of the image means that she is neither financially nor personally credited. For all she knows, maybe the image was taken from her website, printed in a factory overseas, and sold en masse! Something Van Gogh wouldn't have had to deal with. The lack of control she has over her work is something that makes her hesitant of using the internet. She tries to overcome some of the challenges by purposefully making the image small or pixelated; however, she hadn't much patience for computers and is sure that whoever is in the business of stealing images is much savvier. Perhaps ironically, she prefers to use the internet to look at other artists' work. Seeing their techniques and ideas, she is never short of inspiration from her peers.

The woman interested in the new painting stopped by the studio that afternoon. She had a ferry to catch early the next morning and requested to meet at the odd hour. She told the artist of her childhood, and how the painting reminded her of the happy and peaceful times of travelling with her family. The calmness in the image takes her to that memory. Now getting older, the concerns and uncertainties of health for both her and her



partner are encroaching faster than she would like. The place in the painting is where she wants to be, where there is no worry or hurt. When her time has come to pass, she wants her grandchildren to see where she has gone – to this place of tranquility. She hopes that the image will be passed down for a few generations, as a reminder of the joyous moments in life. By making an investment in the original painting, she hopes to both emphasize the importance of the message, as well as ensure the image's durability over time; her family will recognize its importance and value, rather than if she purchased a less-expensive reproduction. With a \$3500 price tag, the buyer wants to take no risk in transporting the work. The artist sets up the fragile-shipping arrangements, and gives the woman a card of the painting to take with her for now.

She is always humbled by the stories and lives of her buyers. She has kept in touch with a few of them. Every so often, they email her, thanking her for the painting, and how they enjoy it every day. For her, this is more rewarding than the financial aspect of selling her paintings. It is that sense of fulfillment from sharing the joy of memory, place, and art which motivates her; it is this reciprocal creative momentum which keeps her always dreaming up the next piece.

## Chapter 5

### Salish Sea Sojourn

#### San Juan Island

The ferry pulled into Friday Harbour. Passengers slowly disembarked as the US Customs agents checked passports. Upon the approval of my being in the United States, I proceeded up Spring Street. My destination was on the other side of San Juan Island, meaning that I immediately left the town. Feeling slightly disoriented from the winding roads, I drove along the wide highway, through golden fields and emerald forests, eventually arriving at the Hotel de Haro in Roche Harbour. I admittedly didn't know much about Roche Harbour, or even the San Juan Islands in general. Even though I've spent my life going back and forth among Vancouver, Victoria, and Pender Island, the American Islands were always just that – the American Islands. Their stories hadn't entered my imagination until recently. I assumed they would be similar to those of the Gulf Islands – we speak the same language, have the same ecosystems, and have similar socio-economic systems – right?! As whenever I have travelled outside of Canada, I felt a certain “Canadianness” come over me as I left British Columbia and entered Washington State.

I opted to stay at the least expensive room I could find on the Island – in a shared-bathroom, parking-lot facing room in the Hotel de Haro for \$100 per night (Figure 5). The musty smell and creaking floors didn't seem to justify the expense; though, it was peak tourist season and I was in a historic building in Roche Harbour – I suppose I was paying for the sentimental value more than anything. In the quiet of my room, I was

reviewing my notes as the sun was setting. Over the loud speaker came a voice announcing that the Colours Ceremony was about to start. I hadn't a clue what they were

**Figure 5: The Hotel de Haro at Roche Harbour**



My accommodation on San Juan – The Hotel de Haro  
Source: by the author

talking about, or why it was important enough to interrupt my solitude in the room. I went outside, through the well-manicured gardens and to the boardwalk where people had been gathering.

There was a man standing on the roof of the Main Pier with

microphone in hand. The speakers then began to play O Canada and God Save the Queen – they echoed loudly throughout the bay. Marina staff members performed a marching routine and lowered the countries' flags as the respective anthems played. After a blast from the cannon, the Star Spangled Banner played and the American flag was also lowered. After this break from commentating, the man on the roof proceeded to announce the weather, events happening at the resort, birthdays and weddings, and the times for mass at the Resort's church the next day. I chose the wrong accommodation for seeking solitude. Nonetheless, I actually enjoyed hearing and seeing such blatant Americana, as it helped me pin point where my Canadianess was starting to show. Upon returning to my room, I quickly fell asleep, despite the loud wedding party spilling out into the parking lot outside my open window. In case I slept through my alarm, I was sufficiently awoken by the clanging of bells from the Resort's Our Lady of Good Voyage Chapel; mass was

starting. Every morning and every night, the Harbour filled with the pomp and circumstance of horns and bells. Everything seemed to be finely orchestrated and well-rehearsed; through sound, there was no escaping the militaristic celebrations of Colours or the congregations at church.

My early wake up was welcomed as I had a busy day of fieldwork ahead of me. My itinerary was fairly vague – find artists, set-up interviews, interview artists, then



explore art and landscape in the meanwhile. I was pleasantly surprised when I stepped out of the hotel and the small huts had unfolded into market stalls (Figure 6). Admiring the artisanal talents of the vendors, I felt that warm feeling of community which seems to come at local markets. I watched as marina visitors interacted with the artists – chatting about their travels and the Island; strangers seemed to become old friends. I upheld my willpower from buying and focused on the goal of talking. I ended up

interviewing three of the painters who set up shop there every day in the summer. By interviewing Kristy Gjesme on-site, I could tell how busy the market days become:

We're here every day, we're open every day. From weekends in June, and then starting the last week in June it's daily until later days. So, it's hard. I'm in Island Studios [in Friday Harbour]. And there's a little town called La Conner on the mainland, I'm in two shops in La Conner too, so

keeping up with all of that and doing this is a full-time job. In the winter I teach and I work at Island Studios. (Gjesme, Personal Interview, 2012)

From studios, to shows, to reproducing pieces, Gjesme stated how she has “to really work at it to find time to paint” (Personal Interview, 2012). She flitted back and forth between customers and the interview. She and one of the other painters, Beth Hetrick, helped each other out with tending the stalls and talking to customers. It was a lot of work for the artisans to maintain the stalls and talk to customers, but they all seemed genuinely happy in sharing their work in such a dynamic environment:

It’s constantly changing and growing and that’s one of the challenges is to get used to change ... to accept change rather than fight it. When we put these [market stalls] up, I started out as in a tent down there, like fifteen years ago. I had been teaching in the gardens [at Roche Harbour], I had been taking my classes to the gardens. [Roche Harbour] knew me, and so we just talked them into letting us be in a tent down there. I was kind of lobbying for some extra space to put things away, so I didn’t just take everything down every night. They decided to make these [market booths]. People didn’t like them at first ... When I started out here the two big docks weren’t here [either, and there were] way less people. (Gjesme, Personal Interview, 2012)

After the chaos of the market, I was able to interview two of the other market’s painters at their houses. The busy summer is juxtaposed to the calming and therapeutic processes of painting. Through becoming-artist, space and time slip away; “art is a meditation. It’s something that you get into, and you move into a different part of your brain, and you’re someplace else; it’s relaxing, it’s recharging, it’s uplifting, it’s all of those things” (Wilson<sup>4</sup>, Personal Interview, 2012). While the immediate painting process provides a creative outlet, the processes of becoming-artist seep into daily activities. For the artists, painting is not simply an isolated practice, but rather an embedded part of the everyday; “I smell ocean and I smell oil paint all at the same time ... [painting takes]

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<sup>4</sup> Pseudonym used.

perspiration and inspiration” (Hetrick, Personal Interview 2012). From a family of artists, Hetrick explained how art has shaped her entire life – from the production of paintings to seeing and knowing the world:

I really [base my paintings] much more [on] photographs. Sometimes I wonder if I should do more memory ... This is fun to be interviewed because now I realize things I didn't even realize until [now] ... The real fun about being a lifelong artist [is that] you don't even know that your body awareness and your cerebral awareness of something is going to play. Then you're always kind of happily, usually happily enthralled, with the fact that, “Oh my gosh, I really caught that.”... It's really fun. It's really the reason people get passionately into art. I think art is vital ... Art reflects culture. And so if you're studying art you're reflecting really deep, deep things happening culturally, from the politics to the geography (Hetrick, Personal Interview, 2012)

At the door step of Roche Harbour, I came to the Island's Sculpture Park; I couldn't have asked for a more poignant expression of art-in-landscape. Walking through

**Figure 7: Statue at the Sculpture Park**



A statue of a woman at The San Juan Island Sculpture Park at Roche Harbour  
 Photograph source: by the author  
 Sculpture: Unknown

the archway to the open-field museum, I felt as though the sculptures were emitting their own energy. Some reached for the sky, standing tall over others hiding in the grass and trees, each with their own character and story. One woman stood atop her obelisk pedestal, tall and out-of-reach (Figure 7). With her face lifted to the sun, her expression was wise and warm. She seemed to know something that I did not; she seemed to have all the answers. All the secrets she wasn't about to give up were veiled by her closed eyes and Mona Lisa smile. She was

free outside, unrestricted by having a roof over her head as the bright sun lifted her higher.

Near to her was a piece fully utilizing its place outside. It was a large painter's easel with its back to the rest of the park. Approaching it, I was curious to see what the painting would be of; maybe it would be of the sculpture park, or of Roche Harbour, either way it must be a fairly durable canvas if it is kept outside. To my surprise, it turned out not to be a painting at all, but rather a mirror (Figure 8). After the initial shock, its meanings and brilliance started to sink in. Standing directly in-front of it, I was part of the image. The viewer becomes the foreground, the tall grass the mid-ground, and the trees the background. I stepped aside to stop distracting myself. The image changes with every movement. Every swaying branch, every falling leaf, every angle I tilt my head results in a changing image. The mirror immediately documents then forgets the landscape in its image, constantly updating what it sees. If only I could submit this sculpture as my Master's thesis; it describes everything I want to say so perfectly and simply.

**Figure 8: Mirror sculpture**



The mirror and easel sculpture at the San Juan Sculpture Park

Source:

Photographs by the author

Mirror and easel sculpture – Nechak, David. n.d. Untitled.

From the Sculpture Park, I continued on to Friday Harbour to visit Island Studios – a shop where local artists can sell their creations. Browsing the works which filled the shop, I was awe-struck by the diversity of the art; to think, this single Island has so many



talented people! Few of the works were from other places, even any of the other San Juan Islands. I purchased a stack of art cards; any local landscapes I could find from San Juan artists. After explaining to the cashier that I didn't actually have 30 friends or family to send my cards to, but rather I was doing a project on art in the Salish Sea, she introduced herself as Andria Rhine, one of the artists whose cards I was purchasing. I asked if she wanted to be part of my project. She was concerned at first that she wouldn't have anything to say. For her, the everyday practices of becoming-artist seemed unexceptional. I reassured her that her input would be invaluable. We ended up speaking for nearly an hour about the Island, painting, and the Salish Sea. We got on the topic of the processes behind creating a painting and becoming an artist. She described how the final product of a painting is based on a collection of notes and memories:

I'm not big on standing in the rain or having to tie my canvas to the ground, in the wind, but I like to go and start something. I'll do a sketch; I will take a picture, but the picture never gives you all the information you need. You kind of take notes of the information or whatever, you do a sketch or I'll take a little palette, my little easel. I just have that in the car, so then when I drive around I can stop and I can just capture some moment. Then I'll go home and do a big [painting]. Basically it's note-taking: the memory, the light was there, the reflection, the smell, the wave went like this, or the flowers. (Personal Interview, 2012)

For Rhine, transcribing the landscape to canvas was a series of processes occurring both in-landscape and in her studio. The landscapes of San Juan are never short of inspiration, whether the busy summer streets of Friday Harbour or at "night [at home] when it's really quiet, [and she] can hear [whales] ... blowing" (Rhine, Personal Interview, 2012).

As she reminisced, Rhine described how Friday Harbour is a bit like the town of Mayberry from the Andy Griffith Show:

[San Juan] is very inspirational, and it's a small-ish community – compared to what I'm used to [in Los Angeles], and people are very supportive of each other. We were just thinking of this the other day –



a little short story – but Claudia who owns the gallery ... her husband does all the flowers and the plants, and the fish, and everything that were in the gallery, and every day, at the end of the day, he comes in and he waters all the flower baskets, and the fronts, and all the flowers ... His son owns the shop two doors down, The Mystical Mermaid, and so he was out there planting, watering the flowers, and his son, his grandson, came by on a little scooter, with his little friend, and they had some words, and then I just realized that he was gonna go on his little scooter down the street, and there are shops that put out bowls of water for the dogs – I live in this town, you know!? This is like Mayberry ... Where I grew up, there was never that, you would never do that, the grandpa and the grandkid, and they own businesses, and the dog bowls ... it was just so quaint and charming. (Personal Interview 2012)

As it turned out, Rhine had a fair bit to say about painting and landscape. Our interview concluded with a casual discussion about places I should visit on San Juan: American Camp, English Camp, the Lavender Fields, Lime Kiln Lighthouse, and Cattle Point. I had seen each of these locations in paintings, on postcards, and on pamphlets, and was interested in finding out how being at those sites compared to their depictions in the images.

I decided to stroll around for a bit longer in Friday Harbour after Rhine and I parted ways. Going into the small shops, the cashiers greeted me and knew I wasn't from the Island. Asking where I was from, they told me their own stories about going to Canada – how they love our accent and the country's British-feeling. It seemed as though they were talking about an exotic place half a world away; I felt as though I blended in quite well with the locals! Though, like most Canadians cross-border shopping, I spent much longer in the grocery store admiring all the things we can't buy north of the border.

I passed-by the restaurants and cafes that line Spring Street and headed to King's Grocery Store, where I found everything I needed for my stay. I held up a watercolour card of Spring Street that I had just purchased (Figure 9). Some of the shops had changed.

Without chain stores and chain restaurants on the Island, the trial and error of small-businesses keeps the main street changing. On the card, I saw “Amigos” and “San Juan

**Figure 9: Spring Street**



Watercolour painting of Spring Street showing King’s Grocery Store, a Realty shop, San Juan Inn, Amigos, and San Juan Brewery  
Source: Smith, T. n.d. *Friday Harbor*.

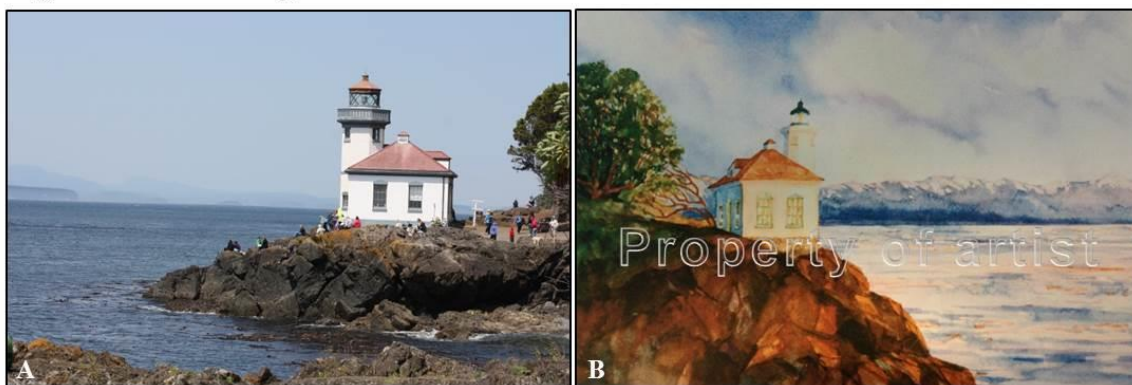
Brew,” what I assumed were a restaurant and a brewery respectively. I had nothing to compare my assumptions to as the shops on the street were now different: a barbecue restaurant and a charter boat business. The scene on the card was quiet. The hustle and bustle

of people and cars that surrounded me was not part of the painting. Around the corner, I came across the Arctic Raven Art Gallery, where Native American artists’ work is sold. Being closed, I peered through the window to see the sculptures and carvings the best I could. As it was after 5:00pm, I noticed that many of the other shops were closing for the night.

On the outskirts of Friday Harbour, I came across a run-down trailer park. It stood out from everything else I had seen so far. I slowly drove around the crescent road. Probably overreacting, but unsure, I felt like I was being watched. I had suddenly gone into a different world; I was no longer in Mayberry. As I exited back onto the main road, I noticed a crime watch sign posted at the entrance. Without much reason or motivation to hang around, I continued my journey around San Juan Island.

I kept the stack of art cards on the passenger seat, comparing the places I was visiting to the paintings on the cards. I suppose I was doing it backwards; most people purchase the cards based on places they have been, rather than where they are going. As I pulled into the busy parking lot of the Lime Kiln Lighthouse, I noticed my license plate was the only one from British Columbia. Most of the plates were from elsewhere in the United States: California, Idaho, Oregon, even New York. After circling around the parking lot a few times, I found a spot and begrudgingly paid the \$10 parking fee; pay parking on a San Juan Island! You've got to be kidding me! This lighthouse had better be worth it. Walking down the wide and well-groomed path, I came to the main attraction. It wasn't the lime kiln or the lighthouse. The shoreline rocks were covered with people looking and pointing out to sea. Contrary to the people-less paintings of the Lighthouse, the site was busy (Figure 10). I soon realized that they were watching a pod of orcas go by. Like a marquee with daily show times, I noticed the signs posted for when the orcas would be passing. Breaching and spy-hopping, temporarily appearing, only to disappear again under the reflective ocean's surface, the orcas become a magnificent spectacle. The

**Figure 10 a & b: The Lighthouse at Lime Kiln State Park**



Two versions of Lime Kiln Lighthouse: a photograph (A), and a watercolour painting (B)

Sources:

Photograph A – by the author

Painting B – Gjesme, K. n.d. *Lime Kiln Lighthouse*.

fleeting glimpses of what's hidden beneath the ocean waves treat the imagination to the elusive mysteries of the sea. The orcas swam off into the distance – into our perceived unknown. Looking at the map in the information kiosk, I traced the whales' migratory route along the west coast of San Juan Island and into Canadian waters. Of course, the orcas themselves do not recognize the border – which is really the bane of any research looking at environmental systems.

I sauntered up the winding path to the old lime kiln. It was quiet there. I spent nearly an hour enjoying the solitude. The visitors from across the United States didn't come to Lime Kiln to see the namesake attraction. The rock face was stained bright white from the quarried limestone. The rusty metal hooks, stone walls, and timber structures were eerily silent. I can only imagine the clanging and shouting that once filled this crude industrial space. The silence felt spooky. It felt as though the labourers were still here, cutting up the cliff face, firing the limestone, and shipping it out to sea.

Getting to the other landmarks on the Island involved a fair bit of driving. Winding through forest and stretching over farm fields, the roads were not terribly pedestrian-friendly. Going from the middle of the Island to the shoreline, the scenery transitioned from the Prairies to the West Coast. With the windows down, I could smell the hay from the farms and the salt from the sea. There didn't seem to be anywhere else to go but from landmark to landmark; though I am sure any local will tell you otherwise. I visited the English Camp, American Camp, and Cattle Point. Each was somewhat less spectacular than the orcas at Lime Kiln, but nonetheless interesting and informative in their own ways. Being the sites of each country's post, English Camp and American Camp each commemorate the Pig War. Like the Lime Kiln State Park, Cattle Point and

its lighthouse commemorate an industrial past, being the site that cattle and sheep were brought to the Island. For me, the stories behind the monuments seemed somewhat trivial: a war that never happened and a livestock port. Nonetheless, the sites were well maintained with fresh paint, well-groomed lawns, and fairly detailed interpretive signs.

Back in Friday Harbour, I had to make a few guesses at how to board the ferry to Lopez Island. The ferry queues were not well defined from the rest of the street, and I thankfully chose the right one. I walked down to the automatic ticketing station to purchase a \$25 ticket, only to later realize no tickets were necessary for this inter-island trip. I had to back down the ramp and go on to the ferry; I became the punch-line of the crowd as I managed to drive into the side of the ramp twice. I was clearly an amateur. Covering in embarrassment for the half hour trip, I couldn't have been happier arriving at Lopez.

## **Lopez Island**

The only accommodation I could afford for my time on Lopez was to tent in a campground on one of the local farms. The cold and rain came with a vengeance. Of course, the only days I was camping, it rained. Having little space to comfortably recollect my experiences, I spent much of my time in the car driving around the Island.

My humble accommodation was located on re-purposed farmland. Every evening, I fell asleep to the gentle baaing of sheep from the adjacent field. The quaint appeal of agrarian landscapes seemed readily apparent. Everything seemed to slow down. The large uninterrupted fields elongated the roads, buffered noise, and mixed with the warm summer breeze; how nice it would have been had it not been raining. Lopez Island has even been dubbed "Slowpez" due to its reputed decelerated pace-of-life. Dodging the

rain, I drove around the Island to see what it had to offer. I headed south through the rolling hay and cattle fields. Bright white chapels intermitted the large red hay lofts and farm houses. Johnny Cash played in my car; his old-time southern twang complemented

**Figure 11 a & b: Spatial restrictions on Lopez**



Private properties prevented me from exploring certain parts of Lopez  
Source: by the author

my drive well. Reaching the shore-lined peninsulas, I seemed to only be hitting dead-ends. The roads were fenced off, and private property signs kept cutting my adventure short (Figure 11a).

Feeling like I had nowhere else to go but the side of the road, I pulled over and strolled the narrow shell beach barely showing above the high tide. The rain had let up and I didn't want to get back in my car right away. I walked past the fences and signage of a private pier (Figure 11b) – “no clamming, no

trespassing, one hour parking, handicap parking” – to get to what appeared to be a pier I could actually go on. I justified risking its questionable structural integrity with my mediocre swimming skills should it collapse from under me. As per the theme of this trip, I reached a dead-end three quarters of the way out as a break in the pier was simply replaced by a couple of planks. Looking for my next destination, the map showed a peninsula in the southeast corner of Lopez only connected by a narrow strip of land. Again, I was barricaded by the private property sign at the land-bridge, keeping me off

the semi-island. Maybe I was doing something wrong. Getting frustrated, I decided to head back to the Island's centre to find the visitor's office.

Despite collecting the brochures and maps on where visitors actually could go on the Island, I became preoccupied with the goals of my fieldwork. I didn't have much time to explore the Island, and I knew I had to start my interviews. In the Island's village centre, I found the cozy but full Chimera Gallery. Being smaller than San Juan Island, I wasn't expecting the same quantity and diversity of art, but the little gallery was certainly testing my expectations. As I had done on San Juan, I purchased art cards depicting landscape. I used my best discretion as to which images counted as "landscape." I purchased the cards of artists whether or not I recognized their name or contacted them for an interview – the more the merrier in this case.

My first interview on Lopez was with Christa Malay. The journey to her house and studio was an adventure in itself. The overgrown country road up to her house felt like an archway to a secret garden. Self-sustainable and built by her and her husband, their property was in-itself a work of art. Birds pranced around us looking for food; they seemed to have as much to say in the interview as we did. As a long-time resident of Lopez, Malay spoke fondly of her home. For her, the quiet of few people, the starry nights, and the opportunity of self-sufficiency are what make Lopez Island. With more people come changes to the Island, some more welcome than others:

[There are more] people that don't know the islands and do weird things ... [like throw] garbage on the road, or they don't say hello, they don't smile at you while you're going to the post office ... or are against things, or are Tea Partiers ... [We] are mostly Democrats, free-thinkers, or very educated people. There are a lot of writers, a lot of retired professors, and doctors and so on. And we're fortunate that we can live here. (Malay, Personal Interview 2012)

She took me to her large studio and gallery beside her house. The collection of bright and impressionist-style paintings lining the walls could have filled a museum. She said how the quietness of Lopez allowed her to produce so many pieces; unlike in the city where she “didn't get anything done ... [being on Lopez meant that she] could work twelve hours a day and ... not get interrupted” (Malay, Personal Interview 2012). While most were of Lopezian landscapes, on the side were portraits of dogs. She explained that people these days will pay significantly for a painting of their pet. I suppose it isn't a far leap from a family portrait; I certainly have become emotionally attached to my pets. Though, I still wondered the justification of the buyers for spending hundreds of dollars on a painting of Fluffy. More familiarly, from examples like *Mr. and Mrs. Andrews*, people are also interested in commissioning scenes of or from their property, which has become part of Malay's painting processes:

I take a lot of photos. I tend to go for a lot of walks and hikes even in the winter – especially in the off-season when all the summer houses are empty. You can walk anywhere, they know me, and I have my camera with me and my sketchbook. It started out [as] we rented a place from an older artist lady on the Island – and there weren't that many artists in those days ... and she didn't do landscapes. I said, ‘Gee, people must want images of where they live or whatever’ – of the water and stuff like that. So I started doing that because – [while] you can't compete with nature – you get your own impressions of a road going down in sunshine and that type of stuff. I started doing that and I sold tons of [paintings]. (Malay, Personal Interview, 2012)

The next day, I returned to Lopez Village to interview Colin Goode. He too had built his own studio-gallery-house, but in the heart of Lopez Village. The new and sleek building was surrounded by large red tulips. Upon stepping in, the room opened to a gallery of art by Goode and other local artists. Through the hallway and around the back, we spoke in the large studio in which he works and teaches. Having lived in England, South Africa, Canada, and now the United States, Goode's collection of landscape



paintings is diverse and dynamic. He described how painting each of these places is different:

[In South Africa] the colours are vibrant ... It's not exaggerated colours but it does kind of give you that vibrancy. The British landscape is more subdued, and it has its own sense of tranquility. Lopez has been a great challenge to me. And in a sense I think it's a kind of a Western version of Prince Edward Island ... There's some similarities. It's slightly different ... I often think back to a visit we had to Prince Edward Island, several years ago, and [Lopez] is not as commercialized as Prince Edward Island has become, and not as big. (Goode, Personal Interview 2012)

Perhaps as a reflection of being an Anglican priest for 30 years, Goode has also started painting Byzantine iconography. The Angel Gabriel watched over us as we spoke. The processes of painting Byzantine iconography is “very different from ... landscape painting ... [which involves] trying to loosen up and not be detailed [like iconography]” (Goode, Personal Interview, 2012). And yet, Gabriel's image complemented the landscape scenes well. Goode's description of painting suggests as to why the images go together well:

Painting with passion is my primary goal, in the hope that through it I will convey beauty, truth, and peace – and that's what I find on this Island ... A couple of years ago a woman came in, ... an older woman, and she went straight to one of my paintings hanging in the front gallery. It was a sunset – I do a lot of sunsets. She said “I want that [painting].” Now this happens rarely. That someone walks in the door and goes boom, “I want that.” But it's happened a few times. She said “my husband is in an advanced stage of Alzheimer's, life is just unbearable for me. I looked at that painting and I knew that I could sit and look at that, and find some peace in my heart through all this.” I feel that to me is music – if people can say “This is what this does for me.” Generally they've been Lopez landscapes that have conveyed that sense of tranquility, peace, and wellbeing. (Goode, Personal Interview, 2012)

I longed for the sunny landscapes in Goode's paintings upon heading back out to the rain. I drove to the large grocery store nearby to pick up water and dinner to take back to my campsite. The supermarket had everything. I managed to pick up extra camping supplies

along with the food. Unfortunately, none of it seemed to be local. Exhausted, I headed straight to my tent instead of socializing with the cyclists at the covered picnic-tables. I packed my bags in preparation for leaving the next day, curled up in my thick-fleece pajamas, and fell asleep.

With a few hours to spare before catching the ferry, I decided to go to Odlin County Park. The sun was out, and the park was busy. As a beach and campground,

**Figure 12: Cannon in Odlin Park**



The cannon at Odlin Park  
Source: by the author

young families were running around, enjoying the summer while it lasted. In the adjacent field sat a war cannon (Figure 12); children climbed on it, using it as a make-shift playground. I felt it was a peculiar place for a war monument; though, it had been there for 65 years so maybe it wasn't as out-of-place as I

thought. I waited for the children to get off the cannon before taking a photo. I suppose like the people-less paintings I had been seeing, I didn't want people interrupting the scene, nor did I want to invade their privacy by taking their photo.

After enjoying lunch at the park, I headed to the ferry terminal. Thankfully, the single-lane queue and forward loading made the process much more user-friendly than my experience on San Juan. The boat arrived and, to my surprise, a parade of John Deere tractors off-loaded. I watched as 17 or so bright yellow and green tractors slowly drove up the road. The drivers were all men – some had their wives and family riding with them – all smiling and waving at the cars waiting to board. Realizing that this was probably not

a coincidence, I looked up July 21<sup>st</sup> in the local events calendar to find, sure enough, that that weekend was a John Deere tractor tour on the Island (Figure 13).

**Figure 13: John Deere tractors**



John Deere tractor tour arriving to Lopez  
Source: by the author

Without a direct route back to Sidney, my transfer destination was Anacortes, on the mainland. After an awkward hair-pin turn around back to the terminal, I parked in the lane I assumed was heading to Sidney. With plenty of time to spare, I walked around the packed terminal. People filled the concession stand and souvenir shop. I crossed to the other side of the terminal which over-looks a bay. The sign described how it had an industrial past, but was now considered a natural area. I went back to my car to find that the large buses which had been parked immediately ahead of me in the queue had disappeared; it looked as if I had stopped far behind the cars at the front, half-way up the lane. To add to my confusion, and not giving me the benefit of the doubt, a vocal older man came up and apparently had a bone to pick with me; “why did you stop here?! You’re supposed to move all the way up,” he scoffed. I tried to explain to him that there were buses parked here when I arrived; but, I kept the conversation short, as my time working in retail taught me well about dealing with the gripes of strangers. After pulling

my car up, I saw him speed his champagne and beige Cadillac sedan around the other cars in line to stop right up behind me.

Not wanting the hot-dog fare of the terminal's concession stand, I decided to wait to see what the boat had to offer. Sorely disappointed, the overly-processed and packaged food on board did little to whet my appetite. Purchasing a container of yogourt, the cashier asked if I would like anything to drink. Taking a moment to understand his question, I realized that the Washington State Ferry serves alcohol – unlike what I was used to on the BC Ferries. Turning down a beverage, I sat down in one of the old cafeteria-style bucket seats. I felt like I was being watched. I looked over my shoulder,



and there were a pair of eyes staring down at me. They were a child's eyes, largely printed on a poster. The advertisement was encouraging passengers to report any suspicious activity, specifically that which may be linked to terrorism (Figure 14).

The ferry's departing

announcement of safety and services was delivered by an over-zealous local news-anchor, who also reminded us to watch their news station later that day. A little into the trip came an announcement that the ship's staff was using this voyage to practice safety drills, and invited passengers to partake. As per the instructions on the speaker, I ignored the ringing alarm and found a seat near the windows.

I was happy to see Sidney Spit as the ferry reached closer. Some kids sitting behind me were excited to be going to Canada – they had never been. I was equally excited to be heading to Canada, though for different reasons. I was exhausted from my fieldwork and was looking forward to a night in my own bed before taking off to Salt Spring and Pender. Happily out of the chaos of the ferry, I pulled into the Canadian Customs line. So close to being home free! As per the law, I declared apples that I had in the truck of my car. Reminding me that it is unlawful to bring such a hazard in to Canada, and going into a fair bit of depth as to the sensitivity of the Island's eco- and agricultural-systems, the customs agent asked me to pull over and that I would be attended to shortly. Another agent came out to confiscate my contraband. He raised an eyebrow when seeing what his partner sent him out for – “apples, really?!” I handed him the Product of British Columbia-labelled apples and continued on my way back home.

### **Salt Spring Island**

On my way to the much more familiar Swartz Bay terminal, I stopped to re-fuel my car; gas prices in Victoria are usually 15 – 20¢/L cheaper than on the Gulf Islands. I felt as though the challenging-half of my fieldwork was over. I knew BC Ferries, and I knew Pender. I had never been to Salt Spring, but I had always wanted to go. I had heard stories of Salt Spring through friends. I purchase the Island's artisanal cheeses, soaps, and coffees when I am feeling flush and want high-quality items. While I had never been to Salt Spring, I felt as though I knew the Island already.

I pulled into the Fulford Harbour-bound lane at the Swartz Bay terminal. Beside me, the lane was full of cyclists. I had noticed that cycling was popular on both San Juan and Lopez, too. The hills and winding roads don't seem to be a deterrent. We boarded the

small car-deck ferry and started the 35 minute sailing. Riding the BC Ferries through the Gulf Islands, I am always keen to identify the Islands around me. Prior to having Google Maps and an iPhone, I would stand at the map posted at the side of the cafeteria – in a much less ceremonious location than the portrait of Queen Elizabeth II at the bow of the boat – and estimate which Islands the Queen was navigating us through. My attention was always drawn to where I was and where the ferry routes outlined on the map went.

**Figure 15: Artist display on the ferry**



The Trincomali Community Artists Council show case on the BC Ferries  
Source: by the author

For me, the San Juan Islands were not on the map, they were in the distance – the nameless backdrop to the Islands of my devoted attention. En route to Salt Spring, I passed by smaller islands whose names I could never remember. No matter how often I poured over maps of the area, the names of these Islands never seemed to stick. I browsed the pamphlets on the side wall of the boat. Each Island had its own information about accommodations, attractions, and things to do. I picked up

one of the newer guides – one of the only ones containing information about all of the Southern Gulf Islands. I came across a small glass show-case filled with works by artists of the Southern Gulf Island's Trincomali Community Artists Council (Figure 15). It was nice seeing the local work on the boat, though it was much less extravagant and advertised than the gift shops on the larger ferries.

After disembarking, I headed towards my accommodation in Ganges – the urban centre on the Island. Along the side of the road and at the edge of driveways were hand-made signs advertising studios and stalls selling home-grown eggs and produce.

Reaching the Inn, I unpacked and went to the restaurant downstairs for dinner. It was loud and busy; though, everyone seemed to be in good spirits and everyone seemed to know someone.

At the heart of Ganges, my accommodation provided an excellent outpost for exploring the town. Restaurants and cafes dominated the commercial landscape, but they were diverse – Japanese, Mexican, vegetarian, pubs, and one restaurant that I could not figure out the menu (they only had one thing on it, and it wasn't very good). Checking out the shops, I saw a few familiar signs – Thrifty's, Mark's Work Warehouse, and Home Hardware. However, I was much more interested in the smaller shops – namely the art galleries.

Around the boardwalk, I walked into Pegasus Gallery. I immediately recognized the works. They were selling the paintings and sculptures of some of Canada's most famous artists, both old and new – including Emily Carr and the Group of Seven. Somehow the sales attendant assumed I wasn't about to spend tens of thousands of dollars at the gallery; he welcomed me, but otherwise ignored me as I looked at the art. Around the corner was a doorway to a smaller room of the gallery. I could barely make my way through the narrow passages between the wooden carvings from Indigenous artists. Other than Bill Reid, I didn't recognize any of their names, unlike in the rest of the gallery. Feeling slightly out-of-place, and worried I might break something, I left the

gallery disappointed at the lack of local art. I needed to find another gallery in which I could purchase local artists' cards.

Nearby, I found Gallery 8. Closer to what I was looking for, the gallery hosted the work of artists from Salt Spring and some of the other Gulf Islands. I recognized a few of the paintings from initial online investigations prior to being in the field. On the front wall hung the pastel paintings of Peggy Bagshaw – an artist on Pender who I had yet to meet. RM Dupuy's bright yellow and green oil landscapes commanded attention. Upon closer inspection, I noticed that some of her landscape paintings had two names:

*Quarry/Xwaaqw'um II, Firstcut/Xwaaqw-um V, Remember Remember/Xwaaqw'um X, and Coin Sauvage/Xwaaqw'um VIII.* I assumed Xwaaqw'um was a Salish name for the place depicted, but I wasn't sure of its meaning or origin<sup>5</sup>. Around the corner, the work of Carol Evans caught my attention; her photo-realistic landscape paintings were astonishing. I was out-of-luck, however, as the gallery did not sell the variety of art cards that I needed.

On my way over to the next gallery, I made time to test the ice cream and undergo some retail therapy in Ganges' small strip-mall style shops. The shelves were filled with products from elsewhere, though each shop seemed to highlight some Island-made products as well. I came to the Waterfront Gallery and found exactly what I had been looking for. The Gallery was full of fragile pottery, intricate carvings, fragrant soaps, glittering jewelry, and a plethora art cards. While browsing the racks of art cards, I overheard the cashier speaking with another customer about two delicately-crafted

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<sup>5</sup> My investigation since into the term Xwaaqw'um has come up with a few Cowichan place names: Burgoyne Bay on Salt Spring (meaning place of the mergansers) (Arnett n. d.), Holland Creek near Ladysmith (meaning place having cow parsnip) (Thom 2005), and the mountains near Youbou (home of the lightning serpent) (Hul'qumi'num Treaty Group 2005)



wooden boxes; she didn't know which one to buy. She considered going out to ask her husband, but decided against it as he would have told her to buy neither. After much discussion and deliberation, the woman decided to purchase the larger and more expensive box for a few hundred dollars. The cashier reassured her that as a local non-profit organization, her money would be going to the artist and not some big corporation. I collected as many cards as possible – even a few from artists from other Islands who were selling their cards here.

I came across the bold and bright gallery of Jill Louise Campbell. Her paintings and reproductions filled her own retail space, and I could see more stacked in the back room. Her definitive style of deep colours outlined in gold entertained my imagination of these places. The closer I looked, the images seemed to move and dance around. She helped me pick out some of her paintings of Salt Spring's landscapes. She recommended one series which she painted based on walking around the Island. She described how the landscape changes simply by slowing down and walking, rather than driving or bicycling. By walking, she becomes “more intimate ... [and] much closer to the land” (Campbell, Personal Interview 2012). I ended up purchasing two of her series, which she conveniently sold in boxes: the *Walkabout Salt Spring Island Collection* and the *Gulf Island Collection* (Figure 16). While very similar in style, the Gulf Island Collection was panoramic – elongated and a wide field-of-view. The Walkabout Collection, on the other hand, was much more focused on individual buildings. I found it compelling that Campbell's movement in the landscape would have such profound influences on the image of her paintings. She elaborated on how her painting process and how the images come to be:

Figure 16 a – d: Samples of Jill Louise Campbell's collections



Samples from Jill Louise Campbell's series *Walkabout Salt Spring* (A & B) and *Gulf Island Collection* (C & D)

Sources:

Painting A – Campbell, J. L. n.d. *Vesuvius Store*. Painting C – Campbell, J. L. n.d. *Ruckle Park Farm*.  
 Painting B – Campbell, J. L. n.d. *Beddis Barns*. Painting D – Campbell, J. L. n.d. *Madrona to Ganges*.

For the most part, my paintings are from real places – that's what triggers it. From my walk that I did around the Island this past year, it really gave me a deeper sense of place. But, at the same time my paintings probably can be perceived very much as a fantasy world. I tend to go into kind of a dream state when I'm painting – so that there is a dream quality, or fantasy quality. I don't paint plein air; I paint in my studio and so I rely on my photographs and my memory, and my feelings – it's really all about feelings. In painting the Islands, it's from my experience – either from walking or from boating, because I do like to boat, kayak, sail and power boat. I can see the Island from that perspective, and I paint it from that perspective as well, and all of the Islands. I love gardens, and I really love that carefree English type of garden. The deeper you get into Salt Spring, and the more you get to meet people and go to their homes and little cottages. There's this beautiful abandon, it just feels very much like, well it's very West Coast. At the same time I would think it's closest to something you'd see in England, in the country. (Campbell, Personal Interview, 2012)

I was starting to get a sense of commonalities of becoming-artist. Each of the artists seemed to be describing this process of collecting and noting images then going back to

the studio to complete their work. The paintings then come out of a meditative and creative process.

I drove north from Ganges to meet with Milan Stevulak at his home and studio.

He shared about how being an artist fitted him better than his life-long career in finances:

[My wife] said that when I worked in the corporate world, that really wasn't me. Because I had certain skills, I could do the work and what have you, but I think ... I'm more in touch with my true nature when I'm painting – because I don't have external influences through an employment demand, changing who I want to be, or who I can be. (Stevulak, Personal Interview, 2012)

Some of the artists were full-time painters their entire lives – growing up in artistic families – while others picked it up after retirement from their “other” careers: nursing, biology, and banking, for example. Most of the artists learned their skills through school – elsewhere in the United States and Canada at art schools, supplemented by individual workshops and courses. The internet too came into the teaching, sharing, and selling of art:

Some of the artists are on Facebook, and they communicate with different artists. Some people post their paintings on Facebook, and they get some comments ... or through some other online [platforms] ... The internet helps dramatically because of the ability to see work. I think most artists like to look at work and stick their nose up two inches away from the canvas and see how that mark was made. On the internet you can spend days. There's so much free instruction on the Internet as well. You can go to Youtube and say 'How do I paint a portrait?' or 'How do I...?' ... You'll never leave the monitor. (Stevulak, Personal Interview, 2012)

Like a training manual (Laurier 2010) or an expected set of behaviours (Gregson and Rose 2000), painting is pre-scripted by the accepted forms and techniques of what a landscape painting is, what it does, and what it shows. And yet, the artists were discussing how this somewhat formulaic process is also personal and creative. Through the internet and their own experience, artists continually learn new ways of painting and

sharing, thus “acting back” with their own methods. There is a reciprocal push and pull, teaching and learning, in the scripted-but-amendable practices of painting.

The next day I decided to explore the Island between interviews. After parking, I walked to a beach hidden by bushes and trees. The crushed shell and stone shore was gentler on the feet than most of the beaches I had been to on the Islands. There were some families sunbathing, picnicking, and playing. I waded through the water to the large boulders at the end of the beach. I climbed up as far as I could go before reaching a sign

**Figure 17: Beach on Salt Spring**



A “Foreshore Rights” property sign on a Salt Spring beach  
Source: by the author

reading “Foreshore Rights – No Trespassing” (Figure 17). I sat and enjoyed the view. I watched two children paddle around in a kayak. They came to shore to show their parents the second branch of kelp that they had pulled out of the water. The

parents were okay with it, apathetic at best – they didn’t stop it. “How dare they,” I thought to myself. It brought back a memory of one of my friends from Ontario making fun of me for having a picture of bull kelp as my desktop background. It wasn’t an astounding picture, it was one I had taken looking down at the water from a pier in Sidney; I just love the way light can hit the kelp and you can see it slowly disappear into the depths of the Sea. For him, it was weird – I had no glorious photo-shopped landscape, no group of friends, no palm tree hanging over an artificially blue ocean – I chose to look at bull kelp. For me, as someone who grew up on the West Coast, it seemed normal. Kelp

has a story to me. I grew up playing with the funny bulbous heads which had washed up on the beach. I learned about sea otters and how kelp was their home. I can look down at kelp and see which way and how strong the water is moving. So much of the “natural life” here is in the ocean. It is not always seen, because the water reflects what is above it, rather than the subsurface “aquarium” below. It is perhaps one of the most mystifying and mysterious places left on the Earth. The simple reflection of surface water prevents our gaze from understanding, deciphering, and seeing it; if it can’t be seen, it is somehow less appreciated. The ocean is a place of uncertainty, masked by silt and reflection – even within it, we cannot see it or see through it very well. Perhaps that is why I am so intrigued by kelp – it reminds me that there is a whole other world right beside us.

Disheartened by the careless destruction of the kelp, I proceeded back to the beach exit. I realised that the cut bank was thick with clam shells – some lower down

**Figure 18: Shell midden**



One of many shell middens on the Gulf Islands  
Source: by the author

were finely crushed, while others near the surface were near whole (Figure 18). Similar to the shell middens I had seen on Pender, I guessed that the one here had a similar story; it was the accumulation of discarded clam shells from the First Peoples who

occupied this land. That’s really all I could piece together. I wished I had taken some archeology classes to help complete my story. Without an academic voice able to instruct

my observation, I could only imagine what the beach had previously looked like or been used for.

A short drive from here, I ended up at Ruckle Farm Park. I walked down the overgrown public path, past the turkey and chicken coops. The birds seemed to be running the show. Some hung out in the suggested fenced-off area, while others explored the rest of the farm. I eventually reached the busy shore-line campground. From here, I had a reverse perspective to which I was accustomed; I was used to seeing Ruckle Park from the ferry or from Pender across the channel. Here at the edge of Salt Spring, I had a full 180° view from Pender to Swartz Bay. The water was busy. Ferries, freighters, sailboats, speed boats, and kayaks each wove their way between the islands. Small lighthouses and buoys dotted the seascape, navigating the boats around hazards. Across the water, I could make out some of my favourite spots on Pender Island: Thieves' Bay, Oaks Bluff, and the Peak. The bright summer sun made everything glimmer against the azur sky and sea. I looked down at the rocks; the tide was low and water had evaporated from the surface, leaving clusters of salt crystals sparkling like diamonds. Past the picnickers and campers, my wandering was cut short by a quarantined area made to contain the invasive carpet burweed plant. It was for the better as I hadn't realised how far I had walked until I headed back to my car still parked at Ruckle Farm.

I continued up to the Versuvius Café where I was meeting Jacqueline Meredith. After waiting a while for the debit machine to connect, we sat outside with our tea and coffee under the vine canopy. Quiet and demure in her voice, I hoped the ferry-bound traffic behind us wasn't over-powering the recording of the interview. We talked about

living on the Island, painting, the Salish Sea, and the *Islands in the Salish Sea Atlas* – to which she had contributed. Meredith said that the appeal of Salt Spring is the

peace and quiet ... you can always get away from people. Even the trails and the beaches, there's hardly ever anybody around ... My motto [for painting] is capturing the tranquility of the Islands ... This is the first time I've lived near the water ... I think that the water certainly emphasizes the tranquility of the Islands, and [it gives] me a real sense of being here, where I wanna be, with the water" (Personal Interview, 2012).

We crossed the road to her combined house, gallery, and studio. She shared the gallery space with her husband, who makes pottery. Meredith described how the horizontal orientations of landscapes make them peaceful and calming to the human eye; whereas vertical lines are more energizing and chaotic. This idea was something taught in art classes, and something that I carried with me for the rest of my fieldwork – noticing the ups, downs, sideways, and diagonals of landscapes.

In a way, I was starting to get an idea of how a painter sees. Margaret Threlfall, a painter and sheep farmer on the Island, described what many of the artists had been suggesting in their interviews: “developing into an artist ... I see things differently than I used to ... I'm far more conscious of colours, patterns, light, and shade” (Personal Interview 2012). Her studio-gallery was filled with paintings of landscapes and sheep – pastel, and yet, with a boldness to them. Threlfall described how her paintings are purchased from her studio by tourists, and then are sent “all over the world ... to Japan, to Australia, to New Zealand, to China, [and] ... several paintings to England” (Personal Interview, 2012). Hanging on the wall was a map I recognized from the *Atlas*. She described how contributing to the *Atlas* got her interested in mapping as art, and she has since thought about mapping her own property:



I don't know how much [the idea of the Salish Sea] has influenced me. I think maybe the idea of mapmaking has influenced me. I hadn't ever thought of it before I was asked to do [the *Atlas*]. It was just a new concept and it's a very intriguing one – and now I would like to map our farm, I haven't done it yet ... I think that for just even for just for my family it would be a very nice project to do. So, that has taken me into thinking along, a little different line than I would have done before. I'm very, very interested in all the reports of the Salish Sea, of the marine creatures, but I think that's mainly because we live on an island here and we're surrounded by water and all the beaches and everything. (Threlfall, Personal Interview, 2012)

The creation of the map situated Salt Spring – an agricultural island, as displayed in the map – within the marine environment of the Salish Sea.

Having to catch the single daily ferry from Salt Spring to Pender, I found my way to Salt Spring's third ferry terminal, Long Harbour. I enjoyed Salt Spring, though I was excited to go somewhere I knew by heart.

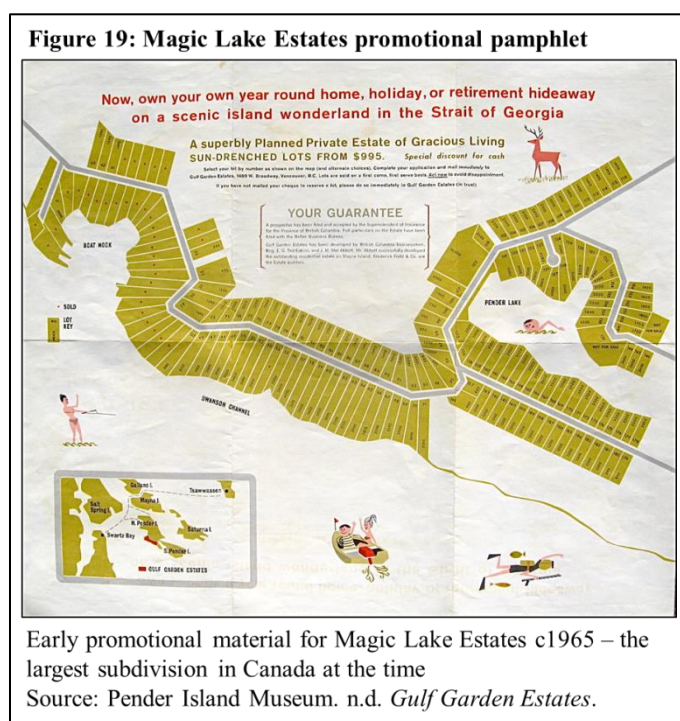
## **Pender Island**

Every night, my dreams take place on Pender. They begin with me clambering through caves, resting in the shade of bushes, and swimming in the crystal clear ocean. I climb back over the rocky ridge and down a bright white and barren path. At the base of the hill, I stand overlooking the water. Orcas are here every day, swimming and playing silently in the calm and clear bay. I walk back up to my family's cabin. An old shed and road were behind the cabin that I somehow hadn't noticed before. I drive up the road to get to the shops located in a muddy farm field. Getting stuck a few times in the mud, I decide to take the road I knew back to the cabin. The concrete ends and the road crumbles into a vertical cliff face. Maybe my subconscious is predicting the fate of the Island's impressive potholes.



This bizarre farce continues every night until I wake up. I never dream about the house I grew up in or where I am living now. My dreams always take place on Pender Island. With its winding roads, moss-covered rocks, stone beaches, and babbling creeks, Pender Island fulfilled my childhood needs of imagination and fantasy. I did not have to learn about idyllic and enchanted places through storybooks; I could see it, feel it, and live it on Pender.

My grandparents bought the property in the 1970s to build their retirement house and an adjacent cabin. They were part of the summer-cottage rush, when Pender Island,



specifically Magic Lake Estates, was advertised to the rest of Canada as the ideal home-away-from-home (Figure 19); at the time, it was the largest subdivision being built in Canada (Magic Lake Estates Property Owners Society n.d.). Suburbia was imprinted on the Island.

Magic Lake Estates still has the

cookie-cutter suburban footprint, though it doesn't feel like suburbia when there. There's a subdued-wildness to it that feels cozy and safe – tall trees, overgrown mosses, and grazing deer.

My family's cabin has always been the most consistent thing in my life, which is perhaps why I felt so drawn to talking about it. Conducting my research from this place-

of-home was beneficial though challenging. I had been to Pender so often that it all seemed normal. Even if I could question what I saw, I felt as though I was betraying a place that was so good to me. I came into my research keen to dissect the landscape. Culture, religion, colonialism, and power there before me – designing the landscape before I arrived. I wanted to see it so badly – and to a large extent, I suppose I did. I read about the erasure of Coast Salish peoples from the landscape. I saw how Christianity, capitalism, and property were inscribed and reproduced upon the landscape through representation. I became anxious that I would miss something – miss a sign or message that was there in plain sight – fooling me into assuming its own natural situation in place. I felt that I was doing a good job of investigating the landscape – interrogating the places and peoples that I observed – occupying land and sea stolen from Coast Salish peoples, filling it with their individualistic “white-upper-class” desires. I was treating it as if they had committed a crime and I had to prove them guilty. Mistaking cynicism for criticism, a cloud of pessimism went to bed with me every night. And yet here I was dreaming about this fantastic wonderland which has always brought such joy to me.

Being there, I also faced the challenge of staying in work-mode. My body is well-trained to shut down upon arriving at the cabin. I brought distractions with me – my computer and iPhone – that always keep me connected to someone else, somewhere else. Within my first two hours of working, I had already received 8 text messages, 1 phone call, 1 request on FaceTime, 2 Facebook notifications, and 4 emails. I shut everything off and proceeded with contacting potential interviewees. The business and busy-ness of elsewhere seemed to slip away.

Some of the participants couldn't meet for another week, which was fine given the free accommodation. It gave me extra time to re-explore the Island I felt like I already knew so well. I went down to Poets Cove on South Pender Island. I hadn't been there in so long. We used to go there as kids, then known as Bedwell Harbour, for the swimming pool and the ice cream. We stopped going after the area was developed into the large luxury-resort, "Poets Cove." It's always so weird to be back there. Everything has

**Figure 20: Engraving at Bedwell Harbour**



British survey marker engraved at Bedwell Harbour reading 1905 HMS Egeria  
Source: by the author

changed, other than the 1905 British survey marker engraved in the rock face (Figure 20). I parked at the top of the graded resort, near the densely-packed time-share mini-mansions, and headed toward one of the restaurants at the bottom of the hill. Down the smooth stone steps, I

passed the empty resort-only swimming pool. Through the heavy lobby doors, I bypassed the reception desk and went down the stairs to one of the restaurants. The walls in the stairwell were adorned with the paintings from a local artist whose studio-gallery neighbours the resort. Alongside her work was a reproduction of Alex Colville's *To Prince Edward Island* and a photograph of canoes. I headed through the empty restaurant and found the last table on the busy patio.

Waiting for my \$20 burger and salad, I eavesdropped on the others around me, stealthily typing my observations on to my phone. Most of the patrons were families and older couples; I felt a little out-of-place. Some were from Ontario, while others from the

US. I noticed a small dog who kept trying to come into the patio, only to be shown back to the other side of the fence. Underwhelmed by the people here, I stared at the Poets Cove cursive stone and metal sign; the lack of apostrophe quickly began to frustrate me. I looked over at the waterfall built at one end of the resort; it seemed much more spectacular than the barren cliff face at the other end as it is covered in chain-link fence and “no climbing” signs.

I sauntered down to the white-shell shore line. Hanging low on the dock was a sign telling me to “leave sea creatures in the sea”; I smirked as I imagined myself dragging whales and seals onto the shore, and then realized that they probably meant clams, oysters, and other more accessible creatures. People were out on the docks tending to their boats and yachts; getting ready for the next leg of their journeys (Figure 21). The

**Figure 21: Poets Cove Resort at Bedwell Harbour**



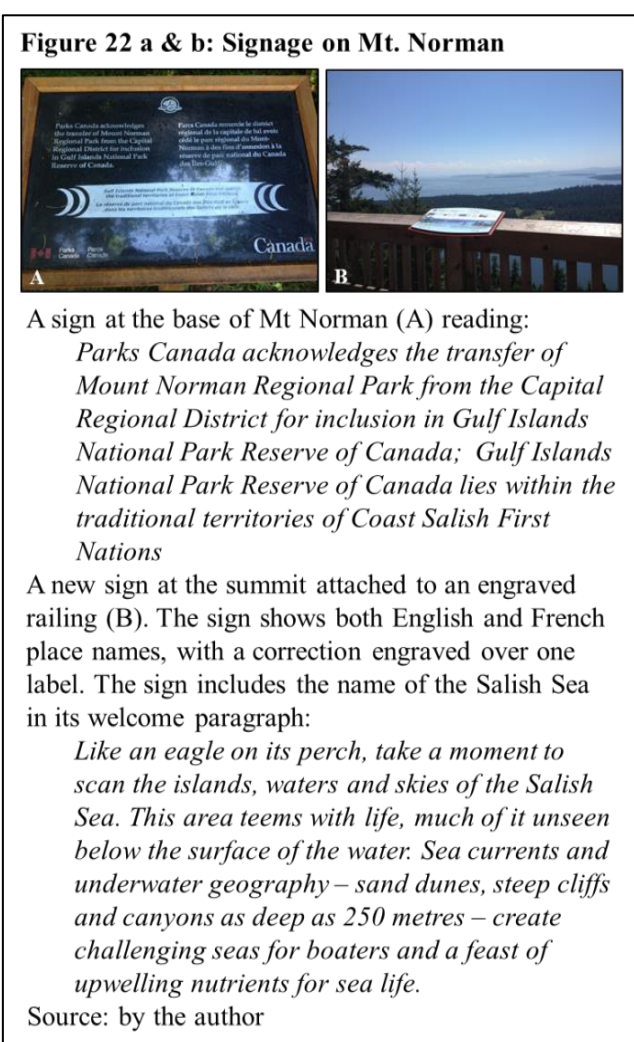
A view of Poets Cove Resort from its marina docks  
Source: by the author

old Canadian customs shack atop a smaller pier appeared vacant; though I assumed the security cameras located around the resort would catch any faulty behaviour. Heading back up the main road, I stopped at a cairn tucked away at the side. The plaque

commemorated an Indigenous burial ground, which had been destroyed by the construction of Poets Cove – a news-making fiasco in which the company was fined \$50,000 for using the burial remains in the road on which I was standing. I was getting

restless by how manicured, safe, and dull everything felt. I returned to my car convinced that I wouldn't find any redeeming qualities in the resort. I immediately put on some David Bowie in an attempt to revive some of the creative energy I had lost in the vapid resort.

Looking for some post-burger exercise, I pulled into the parking lot at the base of Mt. Norman. Approaching the entrance to the hike, I noticed a sign that wasn't there before. It stated the inclusion of Mt. Norman into the Gulf Islands National Park Reserve,



and the location of the park within Coast Salish territory – of course, in both English and French, as per any Federal signage in Canada (Figure 22a). The hike always feels longer on hot summer days, but I was accustomed to it. I knew the twists and turns, the ups and downs, and I knew what to expect. At the summit, I was met with another sign that Parks Canada had recently installed, front and centre on the wooden look-out platform (Figure 22b). The backdrop of the sign was a photograph of the

view. It labeled each of the islands visible on a sunny day. The caption at the bottom was a cheesy paragraph likening the viewer to an eagle gazing over the Salish Sea. Despite its

awkward use of simile, I was excited to see the water body labeled as the Salish Sea. It had the English and French names of key landmarks, even the American Stuart Island on the far left. I found it a bit ironic that though introducing the hike as on Coast Salish territory, the sign at the summit failed to have any of the Coast Salish names – the closest being the Salish Sea. Upon closer inspection, I noticed that they labeled the land in the immediate foreground incorrectly as South Pender; someone had since scratched an N over the “South” to correct it. I suppose the Ottawa-based Parks Canada has a difficult time identifying small and scattered Islands in British Columbia. The wooden railing of the look-out was carved up with initials, hearts, names, and dates. It was a spectacular view, and this was how some hikers choose to display their accomplished hike, or preserve their memory of the place; it acted as a guest book, collecting the signatures of visitors.

I unintentionally came to Pender at the right time. In addition to the weekly community market – in which the Island’s artisans and farmers sell their goods – there were two art shows going on that weekend. I stopped in at the Anglican parish, which was having a show and sale of Island painters; everyone got to vote on their favourite piece. The room was small, but busy with people and paintings. The patrons, primarily older adults, pointed out friends’ work and were excited to see new pieces: “this one looks like Helen sitting there looking – can’t you imagine,” “Oh here’s Ron’s!” To my enjoyment, many of the paintings were of land- and sea-scapes, though none mentioned the Salish Sea in their titles.

At the Red Tree Gallery I met with Mae Moore – singer, gardener, environmentalist, and painter. She was working there, simultaneously greeting customers

while we spoke. She described how the summer is busy with markets and music, and the quieter winter is typically the season for painting:

I paint generally between November and February. That's when I do the bulk of my painting. Then music generally tends to happen in sort of March-April or July-August-September, when the summer festivals are happening. It's kind of a nice, happy, rhythm I get into ... I look at things differently when I'm in my painting mode ... I think art really can ... move people on an emotional level. (Moore, Personal Interview, 2012)

While Moore sells her paintings at the Gallery, she says that she will “only paint for [her]self” (Personal Interview, 2012) – rather than painting an image to sell. She doesn't feel pressured to produce an image that someone will buy, partly because what she paints is often what buyers are looking for in an image:

Visitors are attracted to the fact that I do a lot of Pender paintings ... I think they like to take home a little memory of their trip here, and so it just works out that that's what I do and that's what they like – it's a subconscious decision. I'm not a commercial painter so it's just [that] what I like to paint is what they like [to see]. (Moore, Personal Interview, 2012)

The next day, I stopped in at the Port to Starboard Studio Tour. Houses on the two roads, Port and Starboard, opened their studios to the public. I browsed pottery, photography, sculptures, and paintings, with each of the artisans busy speaking with guests. The artists' houses were in themselves works of art. Their creativity came through in both the designing of new houses and in the re-purposing of basements and garages. The rooms they converted into galleries were full, though neatly displayed, with finished worked, gilcees, and cards. Off to the side or in a next room were areas somewhat more chaotic. With paint splatter managing to get in even the most peculiar places, brushes too busy to be put back in their containers, and large print machines filling their share of floor space, the studios illustrated the labour behind the glossy galleries. By this stage in the fieldwork process, it had become fairly clear that becoming-artist was as much about



becoming-entrepreneur as it was about the art. Especially living on semi-remote islands, the artists take it upon themselves to promote, share, and sell their works. Through the processes of reproducing and selling, painting becomes only a small fraction of the artists' entrepreneurial endeavor.

I stopped in at Peggy Bagshaw's studio-gallery, attached to the house that she and her husband built. Guests stopped on the porch before going in to admire the view, each pointing and asking, "which island is that?" One man even exclaimed that he could see right to the edge of the world. Bagshaw explained that by now she was used to it – everyone always wants a name for the island in the distance. That sought-after identification of place at times comes into the paintings:

[T]alking about iconic landmarks, specific places on Pender ... if you're going to [paint a] specific [landmark] you have to be *specific*. I mean a tree has to look like a tree, [so people think] "Oh yes, I recognize that tree. I was there" ... [places like] Brooks Point, Gowlland Point, Oaks Bluff ... Where everybody goes when they want to be here – and that's where I send everybody too, to those places. (Bagshaw, Personal Interview, 2012)

I found it interesting that Bagshaw's version of landmarks was different from the landmarks on San Juan Island. On San Juan, the landmarks were identified with the buildings there – namely the lighthouses. By contrast, the identifying features in Bagshaw's iconic landmark paintings were specific trees and views. In addition, these landmark paintings of Pender seemed to be unique to Bagshaw – none of the cards I had collected here had a recurring landmark among them.

Her pastel paintings filled the gallery walls from floor to ceiling. Keeping watch over the house was her terrier named MacDuff. His love of running across the open field provided the namesake of one of Bagshaw's paintings *Gowlland Pt from MacDuff's Moor*



– though, being one of her landmark views, I immediately recognized the scene as Gowlland Point from Brooks Point. Some of her paintings had people, though not many – a trend I was noticing throughout my fieldwork. I sat down with Bagshaw later that evening for an interview. Her husband paced the kitchen as we spoke at the table; I was used to this by now as most of the artists’ spouses hovered during the interviews – I assumed out of curiosity and security. Bagshaw described art as a cyclical system, continuously growing and evolving:

Art is like a circle. You start off by learning how to do it, going to school, and then you start to paint, and you evolve into getting better and better, but if you think you’re at your best you’re wrong because there’s always room for improvement. The only way the circle will come to a full circle is when someone appreciates it enough to buy it, and then the circle is complete (Personal Interview, 2012)

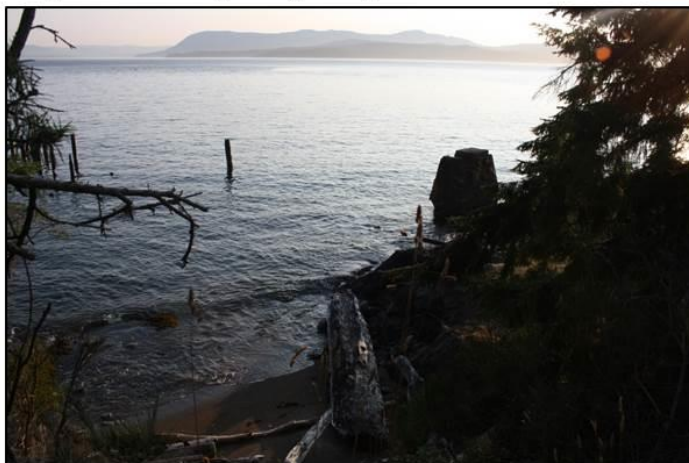
By the end of our interview, the sky had turned dark and the last glimpses of sunlight were waning over the horizon. Still running on post-interview adrenaline, I decided to take a drive around the Island, rather than head straight back to the cabin (though, the winding roads could barely be described as going straight to anywhere on Pender). With the trees and bushes growing up to the side of the road, even the last specks of sunlight were shadowed. The moon was the only potential streetlamp, and it was nowhere to be found. My high-beams did little to overcome the disorienting hills and turns. With deer grazing at the sides of the roads, I kept slow and alert. Even in broad daylight, navigating the narrow and crumbling roads turns into a game of dodging potholes. The roller coaster of roads on Pender was the best drivers-education for me and my sisters. Safely back at the cabin, I looked up at the sky before going back inside. The sun had fully set and stars filled the sky. They twinkled brightly through the iridescent Milky Way. I waited for a shooting star, though I was out of luck that evening.

I woke up and could smell the salty ocean air being blown ashore. I began my next morning with a walk. Beside my cabin, I knew the trails well. Just like Mt. Norman, the area had been annexed into the National Parks Reserve. The trails and lookouts were relatively unaffected by the transfer. They began as deer trails and logging roads. By hiking, the paths became well-trodden and defined by the absence of plant growth. Their loose brown soil is mixed with rocks, leaves, and pinecones – dry and dusty in the summer, wet and slippery in the winter. The new signs at the trail head were little help to anyone trying to navigate the mountain for the first time. They imposed no fires, no camping, and no dogs off-leash; but, they failed to indicate somewhat important cues, such as the turn to the summit camouflaged by salal, and the hair-pin turn necessary for not ending up on the other side of the Island. I was somewhat happy that it wasn't clear, because the less easy it is, the less people to interrupt my hikes. I went a short way up the now official path, but instead of continuing, took a sharp left turn off the suggested route. Less defined, but distinguishable, I followed a small, steep, trail toward the ocean. I went passed the private-property sign like I had many times before; I didn't think twice about it. My destination was worth breaching the property line; I may even go so far as to say that it is my favourite place in the world. I was heading to the ruins of an old fish plant which quietly stand at the end of the trail. The burned logs, undercut pillars, and brick rubble were slowly being washed out to sea. Not much was left after the plant burned down for the second time in 1959. I reached a point which overlooks the ruins and saw someone standing at the site – in my spot, my place! But I was the one trespassing – I stood still, hoping he wouldn't notice me – how would I justify to him as to why I was on his property?! How could I explain to him that my family and I have been trespassing for

years – enjoying sunsets, watching the boats, absorbing the tranquility that this place brings. The man walked away – towards the secluded house nearby. I inched closer to the site, hoping the bushes would hide me enough not to be seen. But it didn't matter, the crumbling trail gave way, and I ungracefully – and noticeably – slid into the open clearing. But, he kept walking – I could see him further up the beach; he didn't stop me from trespassing. Maybe he knew exactly why I was there. He knew the peace and calm that this site brings – and was willing to share it with me. He could also probably tell that with only a camera in hand, I wasn't there to tag the ruins or throw beer bottles around as someone else had. This spot brings back memories for me – of friends and family – and it also brings forth inspiration and hope for the future.

With the sun shining bright over the ocean, I could see Prevost and Salt Spring Islands. From here, Salt Spring seemed so permanent and placid (Figure 23). It was a mute backdrop to the seascape vista before me. From here, only my sense of sight was able to experience it. What I could touch, hear, smell, and taste was of the immediate

**Figure 23: Shingle Bay fish plant**



Remnants of the fish plant on Pender with Salt Spring Island in the distance  
Source: by the author

landscape and surroundings – rather than of the distant Islands. The background was silenced – it was land, air, and water without noise, texture, or odor. It entered my subconscious, and situated me within relation to these other Islands – faint and undetailed.

And yet, from just being there, I knew that Salt Spring was teeming with life. The visual image of the other Islands acted as a reminder that I was not alone in an open sea – there were other islands and other people – so close yet so far away. The water between acted as a buffer, separating, but not isolating, us.

Like any relationship, intimacy to this place has required patience. I have had to spend time with it, come to know it, and see it through the best and worst of times. There before me, the Salish Sea situated me within the context of ocean and the distant Islands. It is simultaneously the greatest divider and connector of the Islands. Even from my vantage point, overlooking the water and Islands, all I see of the ocean is the reflection of the sky, and the boats that travel along its surface. Like Salt Spring in the distance, I have been told stories and have seen glimpses of the Sea's activities. The Salish Sea surrounds each of us on the Islands; though, no matter how close I get, the intangible Salish Sea remains to be a mysterious neighbour.

## Chapter 6

### Painting the Landscape Scene/Seen

#### Introduction

Being on the American versus Canadian Islands was like visiting a parallel universe – like a dream where everything is simultaneously so similar and yet so different. By taking a thematic approach to my observations, this chapter elaborates upon themes found in my experiences of being on the Islands, as well as from within the interviews and paintings collected. I have chosen to focus on themes which resonate with the ideas of place-making – rather than other routes, such as art history or Indigenous relations. While these ideas come into the discussion, I tie them back to the overall emphasis on place and landscape. I have categorized my observations under the themes of agriculture, public and private property, national inscriptions, and the people-less landscape. As illustrated through the narrative experiences of being-in-place, it should be re-stated that these categories are leaky-containers, each seeping into the next. The benefit of compartmentalizing, however, is in deriving tangible discussion pieces from the Islands. That is, while the narratives of the previous chapter reflect upon the embodied performances of art and landscape, this chapter picks up some of the pieces overlooked by a non-representational approach. This broader look at the Islands specifically reflects landscape iconography by tying in issues of power and discourse. The landscape paintings are experiential and discursive as cultural representations.

## **Agricultural Landscapes and the Rural Scene**

The Islands have not had stable footing in any specific industrial niche. They have seen a dabbling in relatively small and diverse enterprises: fishing, farming, mining, tourism, and, as it seems, everything in between. Despite the relatively low output of agricultural products, agrarian landscapes have taken up large portions of both the physical spaces and the mental imaginings of the Islands. I first briefly introduce agriculture as a practice of colonial origins – an alteration of the physical environment to impose a European/American social order. I then describe how the representation and practice of agriculture on the Islands has transitioned from a parceling of imperial-industrial land to areas of quiet “non-urban” spaces and local food production. While the origins of agriculture on both the American and Canadian sides of the border are similar, the rural scenes on the Islands have since evolved somewhat differently due to their political/national influences. Both Canadian and American artists celebrate the “softening” of landscape through their paintings – small-scale agricultural spaces are seen as vital to the social and environmental well-being of the Islands.

### **Agriculture as Colonialism**

Understanding how agriculture came to be on the Islands requires a short introduction to the industry’s presence in the region. During the latter half of the nineteenth century, the West Coast of North America was being incorporated into the growing British and American territories. Agriculture was instrumental in the success of colonial expansion. Beyond simply supplying the European settler populations with culturally-recognizable foods, farming secured large tracts of land as property. That is, delineating well-defined and fenced parcels of land was as much a matter of taming the

rogue landscape, removing Indigenous persons, selling taxable assets to settlers, and securing it all within colonial territories, as it was about feeding people. Within what is now known as the Salish Sea region, agriculture was the most promoted and prominent industry (Harris 2002; Murton 2007). When immigrating, settlers actively sought land that resembled the picturesque agrarian scene – or, at least, land that could be transformed into the English countryside with a bit of hard work (Little 2007; Murton 2007). Agrarian lifestyles were seen as virtuous and family-oriented, and as the foundations of social stability (Harris 2002; Murton 2007). The ideal of being a property owner was promoted and promised to settlers (Harris 2004); it was a system that European immigrants valued and understood – the individual could define and regulate who and what belonged where (Harris 2004). Despite dry, rocky, and infertile soils, settlers in the region pursued agrarian lifestyles, as they reflected the romanticized landscapes of “home.” With the growth of agriculture in neighbouring regions (Vancouver Island and the Mainland), and the importation of food from afar, the need for food production decreased on the smaller Islands – meaning only small-scale agriculture remained.

Since Indigenous peoples were seen as out-of-place in the English countryside, they were restricted to miniscule reserves in order to make room for European settlers and industries (Harris 1997). Agriculture was used as a means by which Indigenous peoples could be “civilized” and “grounded” (Harris 2002). It was believed that Indigenous peoples were not using the land properly, if at all; only “civilized” Europeans could make the land “modern” and “valuable” by opening it to investment and industrialization (Harris 2002; Murton 2007; Reimer 2009). The on-set of civilization

was seen as an inevitable process that was led by the individual pioneers who defeated wilderness and replaced it with predictable and productive enterprise. Indigenous peoples were seen as bystanders of civilization who were “undeveloped,” “backward,” and “ancient” (Reimer 2009). By introducing farming on reserves (which were often too small to be commercial), Indigenous “advancement” could be measured based on their participation in farming (Harris 2002). The clearing and commoditization of land was taken-for-granted and eventually became a self-regulating system (Harris 2002, 2004).

Calculative visioning simplified and quantified the land, primarily to assess its industrial value (Braun 2002). European/colonial representations of the landscape at this time were deemed scientific rather than artistic. Prior to Emily Carr, European-style art and the West Coast seemed to be at odds. The small sketching and painting societies of Victoria and Vancouver operated primarily as social leisure-groups for women (Shadbolt 1979). Art was of Europe, Toronto, and New York – not the “uncultured” and “unsightly wilderness” of the West; even the urban centre of Victoria was too young to be considered as a place for art (Shadbolt 1979). The coniferous trees, industrial landscapes, and rugged coast line were not something to look at, let alone paint.

### **Reimagining Agriculture**

The tilled landscapes have checkered the Islands for nearly one and a half centuries, and agriculture has worked its way into the collective memory of the Islands. I was therefore curious to see both how agriculture is perceived and if the artists felt what they painted influenced the land. I felt as though describing these paintings strictly as perpetuating colonial relations seemed to be flawed in its interpretation. Much like the historical representations of North America’s landscapes, the artists I was interviewing



were primarily non-Indigenous painters. Though, something was different. Some of the artists with art history backgrounds were well-reversed in the not-so-innocent history of landscape paintings, and set their intentions apart:

All those people that painted the Western movement in the United States, that reflects that whole idea that suddenly now Manifest Destiny “This is our land.” And it reflects that they were huge, much bigger than I’m doing. Mine’s just a little piece of South Beach, or just a little piece of the sky. They were painting these humongous paintings, because it was all about “This land is our land now.” You’re taking it from the Indians. No, that’s my own bent. I think art is a beautiful tapping into what’s going on culturally (Hetrick, Personal Interview 2012)

Pin-pointing the change in why these contemporary images of agriculture differed from historical images eventually came down to positionality. Historical agrarian images of North America were prescriptive and promotional – important political and imperial materials in a time prior to modern media (Lewis 1988); the paintings were used to define a future, rather than reflect on the past. As farmers themselves or as friends of farmers, the artists I spoke with saw local farming as a way to reconnect to each other and to the land.

### **Agriculture as Local Food Production**

The Islands are not entirely fed by local farms. The grocery stores on the Islands are as much a part of global food industries as anywhere. The artists, friends, and families I have come across on the Islands each rely on imported foods – purchased at the supermarket or, often, off-island where prices are cheaper and options are greater. Several of the participants stated that “food’s more expensive, a lot more expensive, because the gas [price] is horrible” (Gjesme, Personal Interview 2012). Yet, most of the artists also brought up how the Island communities make efforts to buy from local

farmers for the socio-environmental benefits, but also as a sense of security “if something [were to] happen” (Malay, Personal Interview 2012). The artisanal and hobby farms on the Islands are not necessarily the most profitable or easiest endeavours, and yet they are pursued and cherished.

Some of the artists actively grew their own food, collected rain water, and some even produced their own energy with solar panels. Overcoming the potential challenges of farming and gardening on the Islands means continuous adaptation. For example, “the soil is not that great, so [it has to be] amend[ed] all the time” (Moore, Personal Interview 2012). The upkeep of the properties also requires a lot of “energy ... maintenance ... and there are always repairs” (Threlfall, Personal Interview 2012). Farmers work within their means, keeping their operations small, thus “most people who’ve got animals don’t have huge herds or flocks” (Goode, Personal Interview 2012). Despite the labour and costs, local food production was emphasized as a rewarding part of each Islands’ identity:

I think we need to work very hard to maintain the agricultural base here. And we are doing that ... there’s a lot of people who are doing that. And I was very pleased to see ... that there’s two community gardens now that have just started up (Threlfall, Personal Interview 2012)

Through organic and small-scale farms, the agricultural practices are seen as a way to support the region’s ecological well-being.

Even though agriculture is not a “natural” occurrence, it is adapted on the Islands to avoid the heavy ecological footprints of conventional agriculture. Across the Islands, artists spoke of the natural environment as being an important part of the identity of the Islands and the Salish Sea – and local food production was seen to be a part of that:

We’ve got a concern for the environment ... We’re green, you know?! Which I think is great. It’s expensive sometimes to be green and to be environmentally responsible and active in following out those

convictions but I think we all need to do that ... the land is very important for a lot of people ... [and] the seascape is as well. (Goode, Personal Interview 2012)

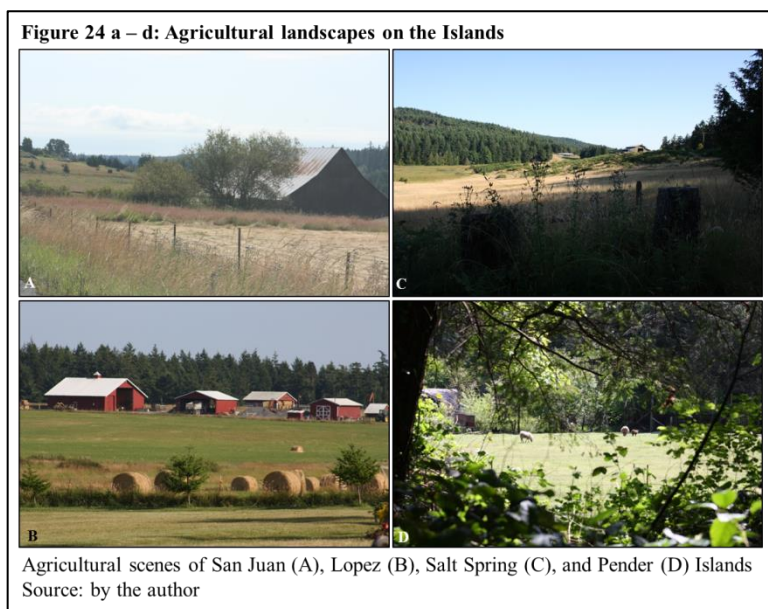
Through painting agricultural and ecological scenes, some of the artists felt as though they could help promote the idea of local agriculture:

I think it does help ... I do paintings of the old barns and I paint vegetable gardens and what have you ... Yeah, I think it all does help. That's part of the charm of when people come to visit here is that they can drive down to the Fulford Valley, and they can drive through all these, see all these farms in one side or the other. (Threlfall, Personal Interview 2012)

Artists felt as though promoting local agriculture is important to the social and environmental well-being of the Islands. In general, they saw their images of rural scenes as a way to support local food production.

### The Rural Scene

I have a hard time seeing the fields on the Islands as anything but normal. For me, the agriculture scene (Figure 24) has always been there – as a backdrop to my adventures on Pender or as a source of some of the most delicious foods from Salt Spring. Looking



back upon my journey from San Juan to Pender, farming played a key role in both the distant and immediate spaces in which I interacted.

To my surprise, the visual appearance of the

rural landscapes on the Canadian and American Islands offered a considerable contrast. On the American Islands, my surroundings were bright, open, and highly visible. Large, golden, round hay bales speckled the rolling farmed hills of both San Juan and Lopez. In comparison, Salt Spring and Pender were overgrown and harder to see. US mailboxes were perched tightly along the top of the old wooden fences (compared to the utilitarian brown-cubicle mailboxes contributing little to the aesthetics of the Gulf Islands) (Figure 25). On the San Juan Islands, large red barns and white churches stand out as focal points. The wide, well-paved, and painted roads gracefully meander between fields. Everything seems purposive – perfectly arranged and well-manicured. The San Juan Islands have “rural idyll” down to an art form in itself.

**Figure 25 a & b : Island mailboxes**

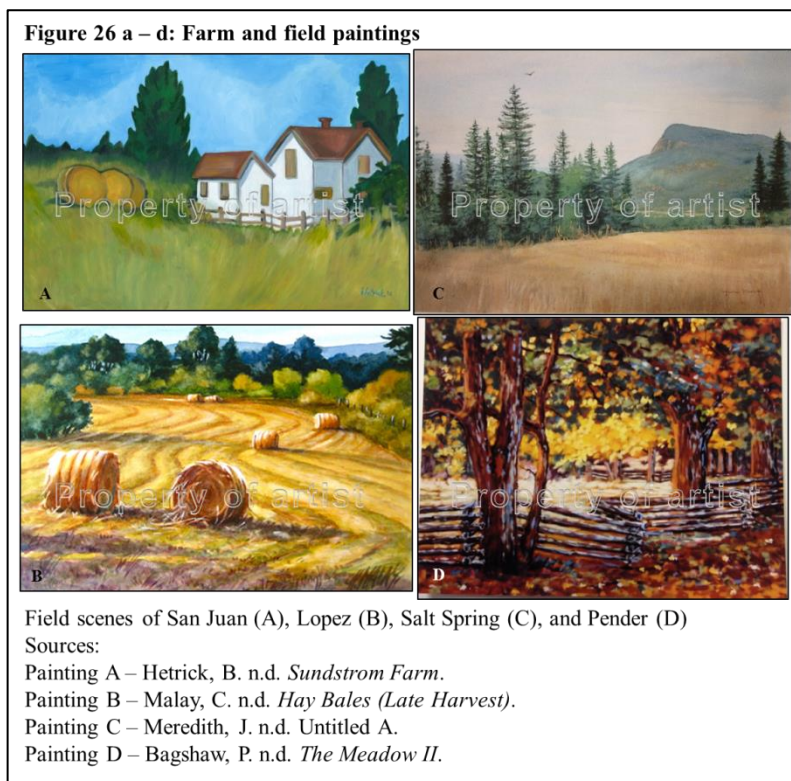


Mail boxes on San Juan (A) and Salt Spring (B)  
Source: by the author

The differences in the Islands’ landscapes are not haphazard. The appearance of the Islands is influenced by the San Juan Preservation Trust (SJPT) in Washington State and Islands Trust in British Columbia. While different in structure and agency, the Trusts have similar objectives for the preservation of natural and historical areas; large

developments are seen as threats to the Islands, and the Trusts work to impede hasty or undesirable projects. The SJPT (n.d.) and Islands Trust (2013) each open their mission statements with “to preserve and protect.” The tools and authorities utilized by each organization affect the methods by which each meets its goals – thus, influencing the Islands’ landscapes. With emphasis on agriculture, for example, the SJPT ensures that agrarian scenes are visible by clearing obstructions from the view. Seeing active farms in the landscape is part of the preservation ideal for the San Juan Islands. The image of farming is imprinted in the memories of place; they therefore work their way into the reproduction of place through paintings.

The paintings shown in Figure 26-a – d illustrate field scenes on each of the Islands. Looking at the paintings of these Island scenes, they are each peaceful and



charming – rarely do people, livestock, or noisy machinery enter the scene. There is little movement – maybe a bird here or there. I had several farming paintings to choose from for San Juan and Lopez; whereas for Salt Spring and Pender, my choices were

slim. With few indications of agricultural operations in the Canadian paintings, I instead termed them as “field” scenes.

The tidiness of San Juan’s and Lopez’s agricultural practices comes through in the paintings. The neatly rolled hay bales and rows of lavender fill the paintings of artists from the US. Other than Ruckle Farm Park, the painted fields of Salt Spring and Pender are scruffy and overgrown – much like in my memory of the Islands. Margaret Threlfall, farmer and painter on Salt Spring, explained that with her farm tucked away, visitors “don’t really know it’s a farm until they come up [the] driveway” (Personal Interview, 2012). As a wool farm, her gallery was full of sheep paintings – macro portraits of individual farm features, rather than expansive rolling fields. On Salt Spring, the farms are “not right in your face ... [the Island has] some of the farms and the rolling fields, but not the same as the Prairies have” (Stevulak, Personal Interview, 2012). So too on Pender, while gardening and local food production were an active part of artist Mae Moore’s life, the idea of expansive agriculture was very much absent from our discussion of the overall image of Pender.

There is a fondness to the land emoted in the paintings. Artists on San Juan, Lopez, and Salt Spring spoke of the importance of maintaining agriculture as a vital part of the Island – both for building a sense of community and for food security. Most felt that by painting these scenes, they may help preserve the Islands’ farms. Despite fields possibly lying fallow, artists do not want to see the land re-purposed into buildings or kitschy hobby farms.

Agriculture on the Islands began as imperial place-holders on the West Coast. They are a view of nostalgia, tying the landscape back to a romanticized “simpler time.”

They have upheld their image of virtue; though, they have now taken on the role of hobby and heritage. The apparent innocence of farming comes not from being recognizably European, but rather as a symbol of the “rural life.” The fallow fields in a way “give purpose” to the landscape. They ward off the noise, smells, and chaos that come with more people. By maintaining faux-agriculture, for the look instead of the product, the landscapes can be displayed as being-in-use, rather than as “wasted-space” open to “development.”

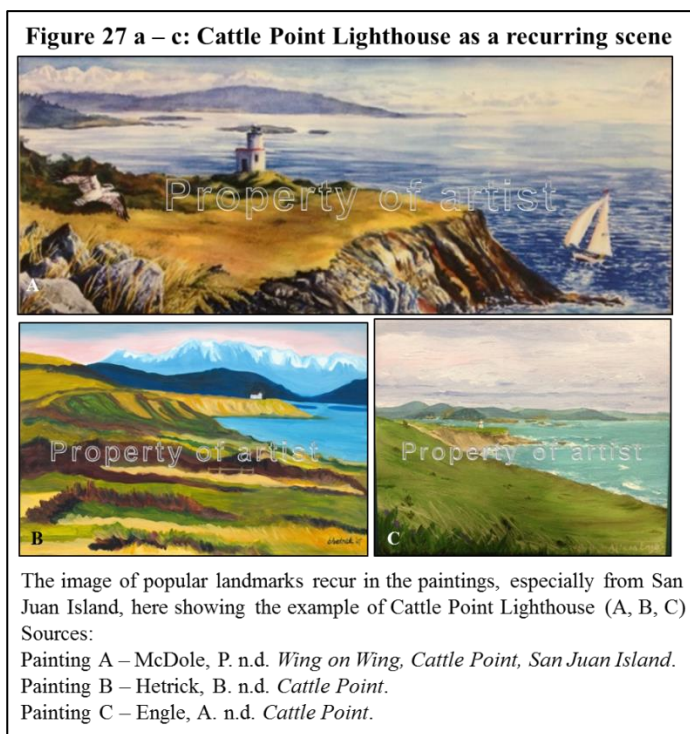
### **Public & Private Spaces: Image and Property**

The Islands were decorated by two signs in particular: “no trespassing” and “for sale.” My experiences were channeled along the sides of farms and housing lots. Without permission to access the land properties, my time was spent within public areas – each surrounded by places where I could not go. By having family on Pender, I took for granted having some place to go on the Island; not only as a home-base, but also knowing the best trails and lookouts. Divided up into suburban-style summer cabins and semi-agricultural lots, the Islands are labyrinths with dead-ends, trick corners, and suggested passageways. I am not recalling these imposed routes as necessarily a negative experience – privacy is as appealing to me as to anyone, especially for those choosing to live in semi-rural areas. However, these blocks of “no-go-zones” profoundly shape the experiences of visiting, living, and painting the Islands. Over twenty-plus years of visiting Pender Island, I have noticed the increase and permanence of for sale signs lining the sides of roads – the maintenance and cost of the properties seem to outpace their upkeep. The Islands’ non-porous large properties have resulted in an inadaptability and inaccessibility of the landscape.



## Perpetually Picturing Public Places

Being on San Juan, Lopez, and Salt Spring Islands, I set up temporary bases at the Hotel de Haro, Lopez Island Farm Camp Ground, and the Salt Spring Inn, respectively. Like many visitors to the Islands, I had a bed to sleep in at night, but no specific destinations during the day. Other than interviewing artists in their homes, I kept myself out of trouble by visiting public and tourist spots: shopping centres, heritage sites, beaches, and trails. I started thinking about what I was experiencing and where I was having these experiences. Visitors, outsiders, and weekenders like me are often restricted to certain areas, and so too are our memories of the Islands. These places in the paintings have a name and a story; they are a place of memory to which we outsiders can relate. It seemed the more “touristy” a place was, as a repeated action of going to and being at



these sites, the more often it occurred in the paintings. Sure enough, specific sites reoccur in the paintings collected: Roche Harbour, Lime Kiln Lighthouse, and recognizable views from popular hikes. Interestingly, San Juan Island had the most recurring landmarks in its images (Figure 27) – and it was on San

Juan that I saw the greatest assortment of license plates from across the mainland. Some of the artists on San Juan stated how painting the same scenes can be “a little maddening



... [but] they want something that reminds them of where they are, where they've visited ... Everybody has painted the lighthouses ... [albeit] their own version of that image" (Rhine, Personal Interview 2012). The artist is tasked with not painting her own memory of that place, but someone else's. Avoiding simply creating souvenirs, the landmarks and recognizable views sometimes act as a backdrop for local birds and flowers:

I'm apt to throw flowers in. I like to add some of our local wildflowers to things where I can. I like to throw in some of our local animals; if I can add an osprey or an eagle, or shooting stars, or Indian paintbrush, or something like that, I'm apt to do that, and make it often the focal point rather than the scenery. The scenery's more a backdrop for it ... Some of my scenic paintings, "This is Roche Harbour. This is Limekiln Lighthouse. This is..." Those are purchased often by people who have a happy memory with that [place]. They've come out here to Roche Harbour, and they're having a good time, and they want to take it home with them. Or, they came up here to Roche Harbour as children, and here is something that they want to send home to their parents, to let them know that they've been here, and that they still love the place, and they have happy memories from their childhood. So I get a bunch of that that goes on. Then there are people who are living here and just love the places and want something, and then the churches of course for all the weddings. (Wilson, Personal Interview, 2012)

Painting is not purely economically motivated. As stated by several of the artists, they won't do a painting if they do not have an emotional connection to that place and the painting.

These accessible public places only get incorporated into paintings if the artists have an emotional connection to that place. This connection, or lack thereof, is visible in the comparison of two large resorts on the Islands: Roche Harbour and Poets Cove. The sites are similar in many ways. They are similar in size, each is a destination for tourists, and each has a customs building, marina, fairly posh accommodations, and restaurants. Yet, Roche Harbour was abuzz with activity with both local Islanders and visitors, while Poets Cove was much quieter and everyone seemed to either be working or staying there.

As semi-public places, the resorts have the potential to be the sites of Islander and visitor interminglings – and therefore prime sites for artist-buyer interactions. While Roche thrives on the porous nature of its property, Poets Cove has a lot of catching up to do.

I reminisced with the Pender artists about the time before Bedwell Harbour became Poets Cove. Mae Moore described it as “family-oriented and accessible” but has since “brought a new genre of tourist to Pender, and it’s very exclusive” (Personal Interview, 2012). Peggy Bagshaw explained some of the initial tensions between the Island and the resort:

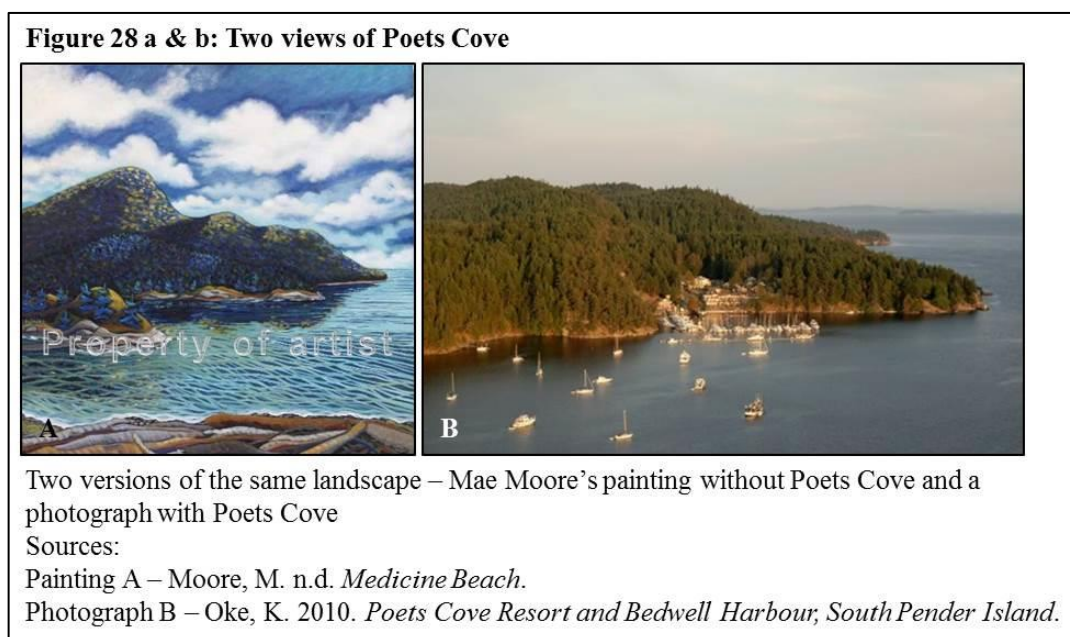
A lot of people who were long time dwellers on this Island were not pleased when Poets Cove came along. I remember the first couple years when I would go down there and encourage them to bring their clients up here by van to show, not just here, but to show them the Talisman Gallery, to show them whatever. The girl at the front desk, who’s probably the wrong person to speak to anyway said, “Oh, our clients aren’t interested in seeing the rest of the Island,” and my jaw just dropped. Now, they have a new manager who thinks it’s important that, if he wants his clients to come back, they have to be shown the Island. Otherwise, why would they wanna come back? So I think it’s evolving slowly. There’s this wanting to be part of the rest of Pender because for the first four years, Poet’s Cove was just, a little, all by itself. It didn’t have much to do with the rest of us, at all. I remember they were selling hats down there saying, “I love Poet’s Cove” and I thought to myself, “Why aren’t they saying ‘I love Pender Island?’” (Bagshaw, Personal Interview, 2012)

After 5-or-so years and under new management, the resort has been trying to be more inclusive, though the implications of the rough start linger. There is little, if any, interaction between the Poets Cove visitors and the peoples and places of Pender. Poets Cove showcases a single artist whose studio is next door to the resort, Dorset Norwich-Young; Norwich-Young has offered artists less prominent locations in the resort – down the hallways away from the public areas – though, considering the time and energy it takes, “it’s not worth while” (Bagshaw, Personal Interview, 2012). Although the resort

has tried to better integrate itself with Pender, there remains significant social distance between the resort-goers and the Islanders:

They've gone a long way to open themselves up to the community, and they provide discounts for the community. I don't go there very often but I have gone there. I think any time you get timeshares people buy them and they don't necessarily invest in the community like people who live here full-time or even have permanent summer residences here. People that have timeshares, they don't necessarily invest [in and get] involved in the community and that's a shame ... They've held art shows there, they're very open to that, but of course it's good business for them too. It's not necessarily a totally philanthropic thing on their part. They're trying to be good community citizens ... I think that the people, like I say, who just come for a month or two out of the year, other than buy their groceries, they don't really get involved in community. (Moore, Personal Interview, 2012)

Without having experiences at Poets Cove to reflect upon, Pender artists have not brought the resort into their work. None of the Pender artists had images of Poets Cove in their repertoire – not from what I saw in galleries, studios, cards, online, or at the art shows. Moore painted Poets Cove out of one of the scenes in which the resort should be present (Figure 28). She emphasized her interest in the look of landscapes without buildings and



without human influences:

My painting *Medicine Beach*, it's from the vantage point of being on Medicine Beach and looking towards what is now Poets Cove. Well, I took Poets Cove out. I like to imagine the landscape as it was before people built [on it]. I think I've done one barn painting in my whole life but I like the landscapes unadulterated ... I think any time you introduce a building into a painting it becomes a bit of a focal point. I just like to imagine the landscape ... and if I were to keep the building in there, it would detract from that I think. (Moore, Personal Interview, 2012)

As a result, Poets Cove is removed from her imagining of Pender Island.

Sixteen kilometers south of Poets Cove is Roche Harbour on San Juan Island.

While Roche Harbour has probably had its share of ups and downs, they were not visible in the interviews and paintings. Promoted as a historical site – with the upkeep of landmarks like the Hotel de Haro and industrial stone kilns – Roche Harbour has worked its way into the social memory of San Juan Island. Even with the construction of large time-share cottages, hotels, and gift shops, the resort has been successful at integrating the Island's arts community within its image and visitor experience. Artists emphasized the importance of interaction amongst each other and with guests. The semi-public location helps break down some of the social barriers of going to the artists' private studios:

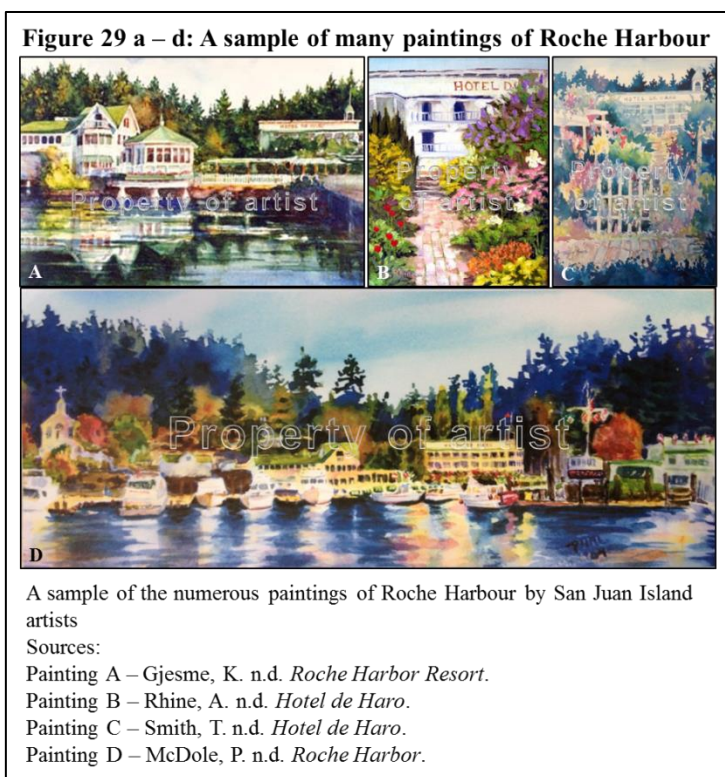
The ideal would be to have [my] studio be one of twenty to fifty to a hundred artists who open their studios all summer and allow people to just come in or call ahead ... Open our studios to people knowing we'd be able to sell out of our own studios. That would be like the ultimate [but it is] not easy to do. Even when I was visiting [another artist] and taking his class – it's almost embarrassing to just go up to someone's door, even though you know they're an open studio. So it's again commerce. How to make art accessible, commercially viable for you and the enthusiast or the buyer, and at the same time have your own personal privacy. It's hard to do. (Hetrick, Personal Interview, 2012)

Having permanent, though seasonal, booths at the heart of the resort, the artists prosper from the financial, social, and professional benefits of being on-site. Through the

immediate interaction with guests, they are continuously gaining feedback from customers, hearing stories, and, in return, talking about the Island and resort:

It's fun to be out there at Roche Harbour because people come by and look at the artwork that's there, and all of us that are up there doing artwork, are doing different stuff. What appeals to one person, will not appeal to the next person. This person thinks, "Oh, this artwork is fabulous, oh this one's great." It's interesting to see how different people's tastes are, because everybody's work out there is different, you get a lot of different feedback. And the kids. I love the kid's reactions. (Wilson, Personal Interview, 2013)

In addition to hosting painters, jewelers, and food vendors at the marina, Roche opened part of their land as the Sculpture Park; Roche Harbour is "very, very good to [the artists]" (Gjesme, Personal Interview, 2012). In this "win-win" relationship (Hetrick, Personal Interview, 2012), the artists are able to build their own memories and stories of the resort. As such, each artist has paintings specifically of Roche Harbour (Figure 29) –



albeit her own version of the resort. Long-time Roche Harbour artist Kristy Gjesme described the resort as a constant source of inspiration from both its guests and its landmarks (Personal Interview, 2012). While Roche Harbour is technically private land, by being savvy with its inclusion of San Juan's artists

and residents, the resort has built positive and durable relationships with local residents – and has, therefore, made its way into the watercolour memories of the artists.

### Painting Private Property Poses Potential Problems

The division of public, semi-public, and private spaces influences both what landscapes get painted and how they are presented. On the properties themselves, paintings of private buildings (houses, farms, etc.) are sometimes commissioned by the owner – and, thus, the painting specifically includes that property. By contrast, private building may be removed as they impede the desired landscape view. The design of suburban style lots also influences artists' access to landscape scenes. On Islands already conscribed by water, these large lots take up significant portions of the land. While these properties can limit the scenes accessible to the artists, their owners can also be an ideal market for local landscape scenes.

Property influences where and what gets painted. Privately-owned buildings are altered or removed based on the desired image of the landscape. Take, for example,

**Figure 30: *The Beach House***



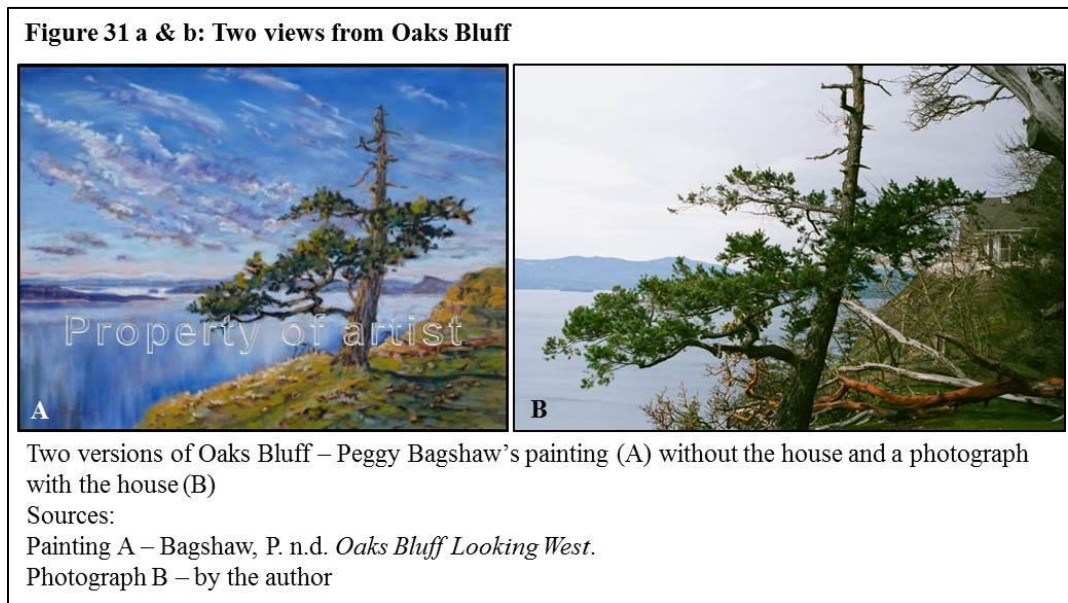
Margaret Threlfall altered the image of her friend's house by adding a wing to the house in the painting.  
Source: Threlfall, M. n.d. *The Beach House*.

Margaret Threlfall's painting of a friend's residence in her work, *The Beach House* (Figure 30); even though the painting was requested by the owner, Threlfall added a wing to the house as painting it as-is felt awkward – like an invasion of privacy (Personal Interview, 2012).

Similarly, while in Peggy Bagshaw's studio on Pender Island, I recognized the view from



one of her paintings from Oaks Bluff. I noticed that a house atop Oaks Bluff had been removed from the painting (Figure 31). She explained how painting a person's property is problematic for a few reasons; one being that technically, the artist should have the property owner's permission to paint their property.



On relatively small Islands checkered by private lots, accessible locations can be scarce. Finding new places to paint requires some locals-only knowledge of which properties they can traverse in pursuit of a new view and a new landscape. Because the Islands are bounded by water, “one of the difficulties is actually finding new places to paint ... and the topography is fairly simple. I mean there are some beautiful places and I've painted most of them ... So what I do to overcome that is I take a scene or location and I paint it in different ways” (Goode, Personal Interview 2012). Property lines become more permeable as cabins empty out for the winter – as the space becomes unregulated. It is not necessarily the image of the property that people want, but rather the view from their property (Malay, Personal Interview 2012). Another way the artists overcome the restriction of places to paint is by compiling “different things, different ideas, and then

I'll incorporate those ... an arbutus tree from here, and the water from here, and the mountain from here. Cut and paste ... different places" (Meredith, Personal Interview 2012). While Island landscapes are circumscribed by water and divided up into private lots, the artists have come up with creative ways in finding new landscapes to paint.

The relatively large, privately-owned houses on the Islands can also be beneficial for the artists. Local residents and "weekenders" (a term used to describe people with cabins on the Islands, but who live elsewhere) are cited as the primary purchasers of original pieces of art. They typically have the wall space, the ability to transport, and memories associated to the places painted. The main competition the painters have here are the expansive windows overlooking the "actual" views.

Owning a house or cabin on the Islands is neither easy nor cheap. As the peoples and properties on the Islands change and age, the upkeep of the lots becomes increasingly costly and labour intensive. "For sale" signs on the Islands seem to be popping up faster than the market can sell:

I think [Pender] Island is actually in the process now [that is] slow [and] evolving. You have lots of [property] sales right now and no buyers. So everything's actually come to a standstill. But if there were sales, you'd find like a lot of the houses improving, as far as architecture or stuff like that. (Bagshaw, Personal Interview, 2012)

The flux of people is noticeable when living in the small Island communities. Many of the artists, especially on the smaller Islands of Lopez and Pender, expressed concern in terms of the social well-being of the Islands with these changing demographics:

People keep moving away. New people do keep coming. Although the new people that come nowadays are definitely younger than we are. And we get older but the people that come are younger. It doesn't mean that we can't talk to them, and we do, but we are definitely the older ones now and it's good that this happens. It's nice to have new ideas and a new slant on just about anything. It's nice to listen to them, if they want to talk to us old fogies. Mostly people are pretty good ... The fears are



that the ferries are going to fail us again and the government is going to fail us again. I can only hope that the young people that are coming on the Island will stay on the Island and not just leave, because this Island is a great place and we're happy that we live here – as long as we are able to continue to function and be a community. The hope is that we will not get lost with all of the government stuff that goes on ... The hopes and the fears are all meshed in there together. (Frate, Personal Interview, 2012)

These changes also affect the artists looking to sell their work. Walls fill up, and potential art buyers are no longer looking to adorn a property they can no longer afford or maintain. People were “scaling down all the time” (Goode, Personal Interview 2012) in the interest of finances, wall space, and window space.

The landscapes painted are influenced by the allocation and permeability of public and private spaces. Highly accessible tourist sites are repeated in the paintings; however, they are only painted if the artists have an emotional connection to them. Private residential lots can be problematic for painters as they can restrict access to some of the best landscape scenes, yet it is these same properties which provide some of the best business, as the houses' walls are big and the buyers are local.

### **The Great Divide: The United States, Canada, and the Salish Sea**

The Salish Sea is politically divided by the Canada-US border. I have come to know the Canadian side well – its history, ecology, peoples, and places. But, like many Canadians, I have a hard time defining what makes us different from Americans. There are, of course, the cliché responses of health care and British-relations – which do play a role. However, I wanted to pick up on the subtleties and nuances which shape the experiences of being on the Islands and being artists. Things like landmarks, terminology, and the border each come into the “Americaness” and “Canadianess” of being-in-place. This section takes a brief look at nationalism in the landscape by considering visible

influences of the border. Despite the overwhelming similarities between the United States and Canada, the invisible dividing line which runs through the Salish Sea does come into play.

### **Arbutus/Madrona/Madrone**

Take, for example, a tree of three names; it is known as “arbutus” in British Columbia, “madrona” in Washington State, and “madrone” in Northern California. Unique to this part of the world, its eye-catching golden scroll bark and waxy broad leaves seem out-of-place in a region dominated by towering pines and douglas firs. The side of a hill you are standing on can determine whether you are surrounded by arbutus/madrona/madrone trees and dry grasses, or evergreens and thick mosses. Thriving in the obscure pockets of dry micro-climates in an otherwise wet-coast, arid climate flora, like the arbutus and even wild cactus, stand out.

While choosing to define the tree by arbutus, madrona, or madrone is relatively inconsequential (other than the American participants and I flipping back and forth over the name), the Scotch-English (arbutus) and Spanish (madrona/madrone) lineages of the names reflect the colonial ties of each country. That is, the tree becomes nationalized through its naming. Similar to the oak tree as a national symbol of England (Daniels 1988), the arbutus tree is readily associated with the Salish Sea. Within the paintings, conifer pines are clustered and seem to act as a backdrop, while the deciduous arbutus stands alone. For example, in Jill Louise Campbell’s painting, *Madrona to Ganges* (Figure 32), the arbutus/madrona tree takes a prominent position in the foreground and title of her painting. Though Campbell is a Canadian artist, she uses the American name of “madrona” to identify the tree.

**Figure 32: Arbutus/Madrona to Ganges**



The arbutus tree takes a distinguished position in Jill Louise Campbell's painting *Madrona to Ganges*

Sources: Campbell, J. L. n.d. *Madrona to Ganges*.

Perhaps because of its distinctive bark and leaves, the arbutus is notoriously difficult to paint. Since moving to BC in 1972, Salt Spring artist Jacqueline Meredith stated that “after all this time I’m trying to learn how to paint arbutus trees” (Personal Interview 2012). Increasingly, “people keep asking for arbutus trees” (Meredith, Personal Interview 2012), no matter its label. Likewise at the Roche Harbour markets, the painters spend “good part of [their] time talking to people about madrona, you know, arbutus, douglas fir, cedar ... [they are] as much about the science of the area as [they] are about the art” (Hetrick, Personal Interview 2012). For the production of the art, it doesn’t matter the name – the national affiliation – of the tree, but rather its unique ecological situation.

When I brought up the recent naming of the Salish Sea, and the idea of a trans-border region, the artists generally felt as though it ecologically made sense. Speaking of spending time in the Salish Sea, San Juan artist Andria Rhine described loving “the inside [passage] to Alaska ... it’s all the same ... so that would make sense in that it’s all just a

geographical group” (Personal Interview 2012). While on the water, the spatial indications of nation disappear:

[Especially for those who have] never been here before, you get out in a boat, you have no idea where you are, especially if you’re not much of a sailor or a boater ... People come in all the time and ask if they’re in America or ... Canada ... We fly flags, and we always fly but it’s like “Ah, what the heck. We don't know. (Gjesme, Personal Interview 2012).

Socio-ecologically, the Salish Sea was generally responded to with enthusiasm:

I love the fact that the Salish Sea ... is something that we have now ... because it does connect. It’s a shame that we have any borders at all in my opinion, because water knows and the air knows no borders. So when you have this concept of ... a transnational thing, I think that that’s really great. We have things that we can learn from our American counterparts with regard to – they’ve got a much better whale habitat protection than we have in Canada, for the Salish Sea. They enforce theirs. We don’t do that here.” (Moore, Personal Interview 2012)

The idea of a transnational, multinational, nation-less Salish Sea was favoured especially in terms of ecological systems. However, when it came to the daily lives of the artists, and even in my own journeys through the Salish Sea, national identity came to play a significant role. The artists and I become nationalized bodies as we move through landscape and seascape. Especially with the requirement of having a passport to cross the border since 2001, the artists described not going to the “other side” as often:

I’ve been to Salt Spring, I love Salt Spring. I love Salt Spring and I’ve been to Victoria but just less and less. After 9/11 I never renewed my passport. I keep meaning to do it and it keeps getting more expensive. I got to do that because I miss Victoria, I really want to go over there. (Gjesme, Personal Interview 2012)

Any shopping and medical care that the artists described having to go off-island for was always within their own country; San Juan artists went to Anacortes, and Gulf Island artists went to Victoria or Vancouver. These trips are described as necessity. Purchase

limits, tariffs, and customs restrictions impede the flow of goods and people of the Salish Sea as much as anywhere. Going to the other side, which many had done several years ago, was seen more as a vacation than as routine or business. The daily-routines of Salish Sea artists are very much contained by the US-Canada border. It seems as though within the Salish Sea, bodies become nationalized as they travel.

### **Nationalizing the Salish Sea through the Ferry Systems**

Both the BC Ferries and Washington State Ferries play a significant role in defining the border. The ferries, which cross through my research area and are a large part of the Island experiences, are nationalizing both in their inscriptions and the routes taken. Both ferry systems originated from the private Black Ball Ferry line; though they split when the ferries became Provincial/State systems in the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century when Black Ball could no longer afford the wages demanded by the unionized workers (Black Ball Ferry Line n.d.; WSDOT 2013). Since then, the two ferry systems have developed somewhat differently under their respective governments.

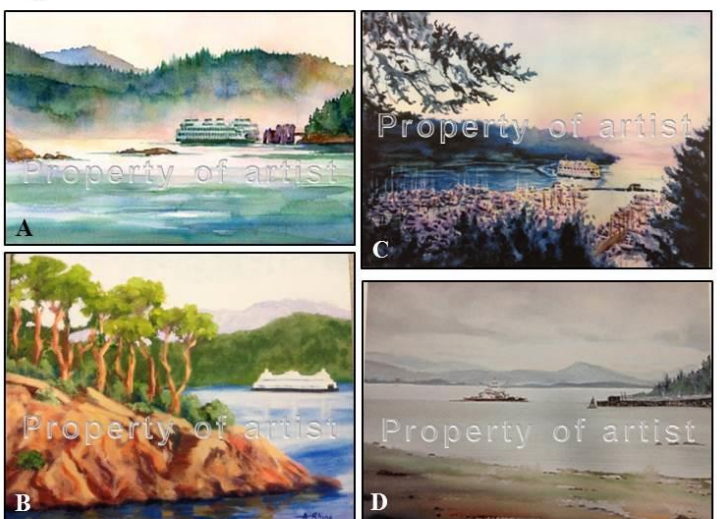
Though their presentations differed, I came to see the ferries as giant floating billboards. As an entirely public system, Washington State Ferries are seen as part of the highway system (WSDOT 2013). Perhaps due to running at a deficit, the ferries carry little adornment. Their interiors are somewhat bare – a few old photographs hang on the walls, but they otherwise seem utilitarian in their design. In somewhat small and inconspicuous lettering, the Washington State Ferries label each of their boats at the bow and stern. They are given Salish names (though phonetically English) like Elwha, Kaleetan, Hyak, and Chelan. The types of names have not changed from the first ferries

in the 1960s to the newer ferries built in the 2000s (WSDOT 2013). Their hulls are a simple white and green, with little indication of the ship's name or affiliation.

The BC Ferries, on the other hand, seem to be much more garish – especially on the main Vancouver-Victoria route. Scrawled across the sides of each vessel is *BC Ferries* in large blue italicized lettering. The smaller inter-Island boats, from the 1960s, have names like Queen of Nanaimo, Queen of New Westminster, Mayne Queen, Skeena Queen, and Bowen Queen. The names are not as large as the BC Ferries logo, though they are still visible at a distance. Some of these are retired boats from the main Vancouver-Victoria route. They were replaced by sleeker and larger ferries in the 1990s and 2000s which have names like Spirit of Vancouver Island, Spirit of British Columbia, Coastal Celebration, and Coastal Renaissance. With heavy debt, a few scandals, and poor organization, the BC Ferries became a semi-private corporation in 2003. Perhaps to make the service seem less political, the patriotic emphasis on the Queen was shifted to more marketable names.

Other than the once-a-day Washington State Ferry sailing from Sidney to Friday Harbour, these vessels dock exclusively within their own countries. The scheduling and fares of the ferries for both the San Juan and Gulf Islands were cited as the primary challenge to living on the Islands. Even with the animosity or frustrations toward the ferry systems, the paintings by both the Canadian and American artists sometimes include a ferry (Figure 33). The ferries in the paintings appear to be stripped of their names and national identities – no text on the hull and no flags fly in the wind. They are an integral part of the Island experience and scenery – both as a passenger, and as a viewer looking out to sea.

Figure 33 a – d: Painted ferries



Washington State Ferries and BC Ferries occasionally appear in the paintings.

Sources:

Painting A – Gjesme, K. n.d. *Ferry at Shaw Island*.

Painting B – Rhine, A. n.d. *Red Eye*.

Painting C – McDole, P. n.d. *Friday Harbor Morning*.

Painting D – Meredith, J. n.d. *Untitled B*.

From my own observations, both on board and through interviews, it seemed as though the Washington State Ferries had much less to do directly with the Islands' artists. The BC Ferries sometimes have glass showcases with Island art work; and, one of the Salt Spring artists, Jacqueline

Meredith, used to do art shows on the Ferries. However, BC Ferries' support of local artists (both as artists and as residents) has significantly decreased in the last few years.

The Canadian artists were much more vocal about the notorious BC Ferry system:

The fears are that the BC Ferries are going to continue to withdraw their support of the Islands. I've written letters and emails to people at BC Ferries, the Premier, about [how] the government has not supported the Island communities by what they've done in the last number of years, with ferries. And they, well, their results demonstrate that hasn't worked because traffic is down dramatically, and because people can't afford it. Especially when you have an economic downturn – they haven't really changed that philosophy yet. (Stevulak, Personal Interview, 2012)

The ferry systems play significant roles in emphasizing the US/Canada border in the Salish Sea. With obscure scheduling and high expenses, all of the artists described little communication and travel with the "other side." For the fieldwork, the quickest and cheapest way for getting from the San Juan Islands to the Gulf Islands required a transfer

in Anacortes and an overnight in Victoria. With both ferries' fares and gas money, my travel expenses easily matched that of my accommodations. The journey between Islands was pleasant at first, though it soon became incredibly tedious: especially waiting at the terminals and crawling through customs. Though often burdensome, the ferries are an integral part of the Salish Sea experience. As such, the ferries make their way into the painted seascapes, though they are void of the texts and flags that directly associate them to national affiliations.

### **Mt. Baker and the International Border**

The lack of trans-border interaction means that the other side is still somewhat left up to the imagination. The perspective of "our place" versus "their place" comes into the imagining of the Islands and the Salish Sea. The border becomes an "Othering lens" through which the artists' gaze of the other side gets transferred to the canvas. The border is visible in the paintings through the paintings' titles and styles.

Mt. Baker, on the mainland in Washington State, provides an interesting example as it is the only landmark that is painted by both American and Canadian artists. Visible from both sides of the border, the elusive peak dodges in and out of the field of view – depending on the individual's location, angle, distance, elevation, and any obstacles in between (including the weather). The San Juan Islands are about 10 km closer to Mt. Baker, resulting in it appearing larger in the background. Rather than simply concluding at this empirical observation, the importance is instead in the difference that these 10 km and the international border make in how Mt. Baker is adopted in the imaging of place.

In the American paintings, Mt. Baker is the subject and focal point of the painting (Figure 34). As emphasized by titles, Mt. Baker is the images' subject matter: *Mt. Baker*



**Figure 34 a – d: Mt. Baker from the San Juans**



Paintings of Mt Baker by American painters

Sources:

Painting A – Simpson, S. n.d. *Mt Baker 1*.

Painting B – Engle, A. n.d. *Mt Baker from the San Juan Islands*.

Painting C – Engle, A. n.d. *Patos Island Lighthouse and Mt Baker*.

Painting D – Simpson, S. n.d. *Mt Baker Sunrise*.

*Sunrise, Mt. Baker 1, Patos Island Lighthouse and Mt. Baker, and Mt. Baker from the San Juan Islands.*

From here, it does not matter where in the San Juans the viewer is standing, but rather that they are looking at Mt. Baker.

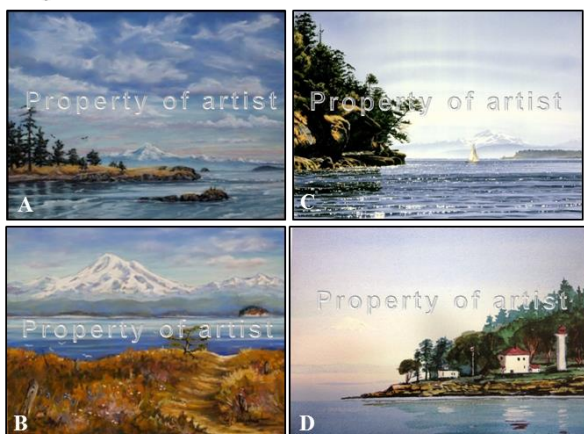
By contrast in the Canadian images, Mt. Baker appears as a fainter, smaller,

feature situated within the broader context of the distant background (Figure 35). The

Canadian artists name their paintings based on the foreground – the position, within

Canada, that is accessible to the viewer: *Brooks Pt from Drummond Bay, The Gowlland*

**Figure 35 a – d: Mt. Baker from the Gulf Islands**



Paintings of Mt Baker by Canadian painters

Sources:

Painting A – Bagshaw, P. n.d. *Brooks Pt from Drummond Bay*.

Painting B – Bagshaw, P. n.d. *The Gowlland Point Experience*.

Painting C – Evans, C. n.d. *Leaving Tumbo Island*.

Painting D – Meredith, J. n.d. *Untitled C*.

*Point Experience, Leaving Tumbo Island, and an untitled work recognized as Active Pass Lighthouse from the ferry.*

The name of Mt. Baker only appears in the US paintings, suggesting that it is the subject of each – the viewer's attention is to be drawn to the mountain. By bringing in a distinguishable and

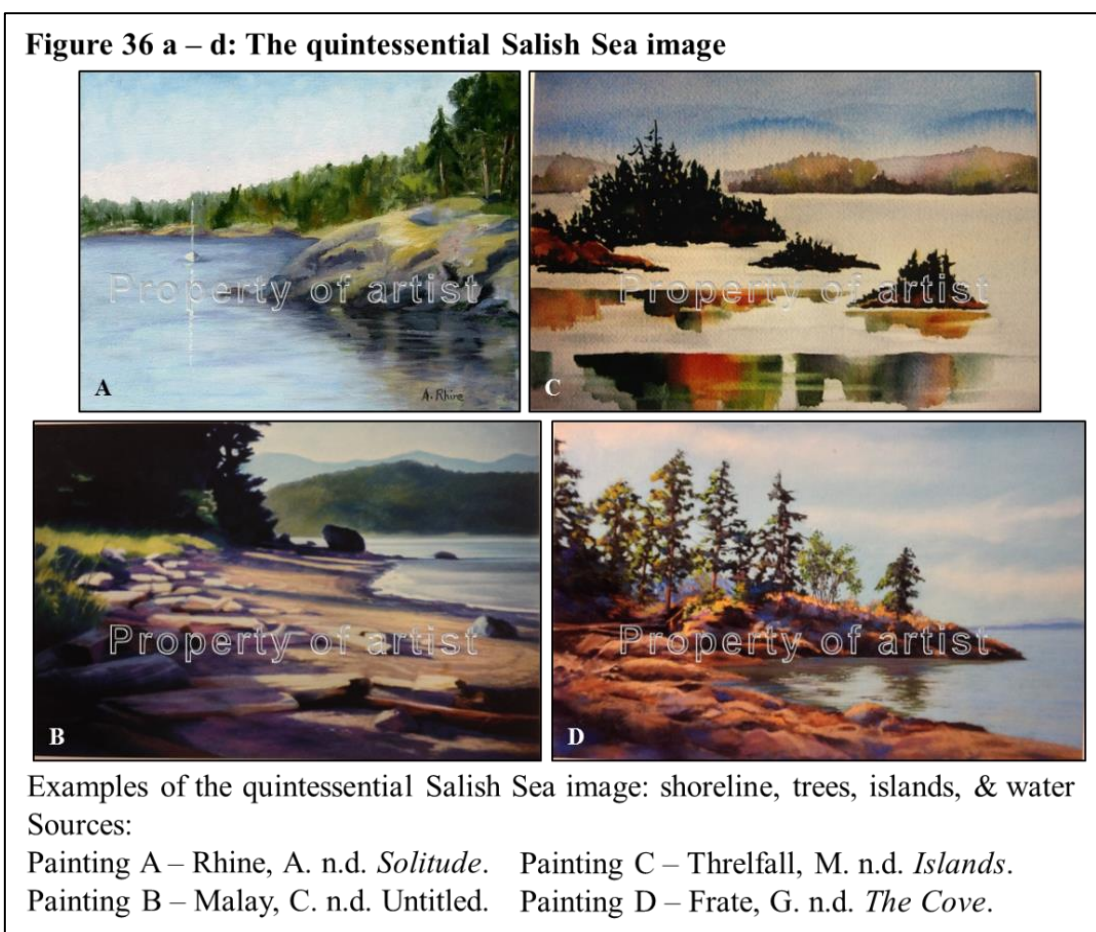
highly visible marker from the mainland to the immediate imagining of the San Juan Islands, the viewer is reminded of her connection to the continental United States. By locating Mt. Baker in the distant background, the Canadian images position the viewer within Canadian territory, while Mt Baker and the United States are somewhere “out-there.”

### **The People-less Landscape: Erasure, Emotion, and Embodiment**

The removal of people is one of the most notable absences in the paintings. Very rarely do people appear in the painted landscape scenes of the Salish Sea. Prior to speaking with the artists, I was keen to adopt the idea that this removal of people is considered problematic as it assumes an “untouched” and “true” nature; the pristine environment is set at the “other” to undesirable industry and development (Braun 1997). This vision of detaching the viewer and people perpetuates non-Indigenous (colonial) relations to the environment – the idea that to save the environment is to not touch it, to not interact with it (Braun 1997). As I conducted my fieldwork, my head-strong post-colonial explanations of the unpeopled landscape began to loosen their grip, though not disappear entirely. Through the interviews and being-on the Islands, I became somewhat more optimistic in the envisioning of peoples’ relationships to place. Place and landscape are inextricably linked to the processes of becoming-artist – in the processes of creating these representations. While the narratives of becoming-artist I came across are informed/governed by Western knowings of art, the processes themselves are irreducible to an Indigenous/non-Indigenous binary.

Across the Islands, there is a recurring image of the Salish Sea. This quintessential image of the Islands and Salish Sea is of “seascapes – sunsets with a little island in front

of it” (Bagshaw, Personal Interview, 2012), to give it “the island feeling ... [with] that blue island, or a little bit of water at least” (Malay, Personal Interview, 2012) (Figure 36). The pattern seems to be a literal-empirical rendering of the landscape scene: “trees, rocks, mountains, and water ... that’s what makes a landscape, or a seascape” (Stevulak, Personal Interview, 2012). Much like in the *Islands in the Salish Sea Atlas*, the artistic renderings of place are from a detached point-of-view. The landscapes and seascapes are presented as visual experiences, with “scientific-realism” dedicated to defining one feature from the next.



The scene is deceptively unpeopled, absent of human intervention and “culture.”

The paintings, however, are very much culturally-informed renderings of place. The

definitions and use of “art” and “landscape” are Western in their origin. It is through the reiteration of these practices and the repeated image of the “uncultured” coast that the paintings re-colonize the Salish Sea. The image, as a re-presentation of place, situates the Salish Sea within a non-Indigenous envisioning of landscape.

There is also the concern that seeing the Salish Sea as “untouched” is a lingering consequence of the reservation and residential school systems. The Coast Salish were physically dislocated from the Islands, and re-placed on reservations elsewhere. Thus, the absence of people on the Islands is in-itself artificial. Landscape paintings are a cultural practice and product.

Had I not interviewed the artists, I could have wrapped up my results with these conclusions. The problems that I soon ran into with this approach are the issues of embodiment and emotion. Through the processes of *becoming-artist* and *becoming-viewer*, the artists and their audiences are intricately connected to place – they are not simply detached bodies exerting an authoritative gaze upon the landscape. That is, power comes into the precognitive reproduction of the landscape; however, it is not the linear end-point of these representations.

Through embodiment, the landscape and the artist become co-constituted; the landscape is enacted as it is painted. Becoming-artist means seeing the landscape’s colours, textures, and pattern with a patient and keen eye. This intimacy with the landscape comes through artistic exaggeration; bold and bright colours seemed to be the trend in achieving this. Making colours “pop” was the most noted exaggeration in replicating the landscape:

If something’s really kind of grey ... I’ll take it a little farther. If it’s grey, I’ll make it a purply-grey. If it’s a hay colour, I might make it a

little more reddish ... Greens have plagued me. I really try and see the differences in the greens ... It can make you crazy ... There's nothing green where I grew up in Southern California, so when you get here you just go "Oh my god it's green!" But you gotta really get into it ... If I just put what I really see, it comes out really, it can be really dead ... So really, really look at it and see. So it is what I see, but you can't just take it at face value and go "It's green." Otherwise it's just dead. It's dull. There's no life. (Rhine, Personal Interview, 2012)

The scenes are altered based at the discretion of the artists. While natural features and colours are emphasized in the Salish Sea image, so too are certain elements removed. Human-made features such as buildings, power-lines, and people are removed, unless the features can be made to look soft, natural, or historical:

I'm not too keen on [including] technology ... unless it had a specific reason for doing so. I wouldn't include telephone poles and lines, and that sort of thing. I tend to just ignore those, just for the aesthetics. Although, I have done paintings with specific things like mailboxes, old mailboxes. I do like anything that has a little bit of a tie to the past. (Threlfall, Personal Interview, 2012)

Human-made features, buildings especially, are removed because they too easily become the focal point and detract from the feeling of the place (Moore, Personal Interview, 2012). So too are people removed from the landscape. If and when people are included in the paintings, they are often undetailed or turned away "so the viewer can decide who that person is on their own if they want ... and they can place themselves into that person" (Bagshaw, Personal Interview 2012). Other than a few exceptions, people and human-made features are completely removed from the scenes.

I found it interesting that both Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples are removed from the paintings. Based on my discussions with the artists, I have a feeling that the removal of people is a removal of "conflict" and "taboo" subjects. In the interviews, the artists felt as though they did not have the authority or knowledge to "speak" on Indigenous topics. When asked about Indigenous peoples on the Islands, the

artists shared what they knew followed by a statement of uncertainty: “don’t hold me to the history of the Lummi, it’s something that you could look up,” “I’m sorry I can’t talk, I can’t really say anything,” and “how did other people answer the question about the, uh, Natives<sup>6</sup>?” (Personal Interviews, 2012). In general, the artists did not feel like they had the background, knowledge, or experience for including Indigenous themes in their work.

Despite not “knowing” Indigenous peoples, the idea of Indigenous inclusion in the Islands and arts was generally enthusiastic:

I would like to have my paintings ... to have that feeling ... of everything that goes on. That includes First Nations even though I don’t know them that much. I don’t know that many of them. I haven’t been that involved but I mean they are part of it, they’re part of everything. I like Pender Island because it has a great sense of community ... I think [the Salish Sea] is something that should be there. I don’t know how feasible but I sure hope all of it happens. (Frate, Personal Interview, 2012)

Pender artists noted the late Tsimshian artist Victor Reece, who carved the poles for the entrance to the Island’s Community Hall. Likewise, some of the San Juan artists brought up the Coast Salish Canoe Journey which stops at Roche Harbour:

Every year they have a potlatch, and they come through, and they come from all over in their canoes ... [they] met up at Roche Harbour and they spent the night. There’s a big lawn there at Roche Harbour, and they bring their own stuff, their tents, and all that stuff, and they spent the night, and then they all went off to meet up ... It was amazing! (Rhine, Personal Interview 2012)

Within the art communities, the artists felt that Indigenous and non-Indigenous work was too divided; there are non-Indigenous galleries and shows, and there are Indigenous galleries and shows, and it seems that never shall the twain meet. The galleries that do specialize in Indigenous work – specifically Pegasus on Salt Spring and Arctic Raven on

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<sup>6</sup> Interestingly, I found it most appropriate to use the colloquial terms “First Nations” in Canada and “Native Americans” in the United States, versus using “Indigenous” in the thesis.

San Juan – do “not [have work by] local artists” (Stevulak, Personal Interview, 2012).

Defining art as Indigenous or non-Indigenous seemed problematic for the artists:

There’s a really strong tendency to separate Native American art from other art, which I find is sad. They have some incredible historic art forms that I think are wonderful. There’s people like [Haida artist] April White who has modern watercolours, and she incorporates a lot of the Indian images in her stuff, too. If you walked into Island Studios, she doesn’t have it there, but if she did it would fit right in. You wouldn’t have to go to Arctic Raven to see her stuff and to have it fit. She has had it at Arctic Raven, but it would fit elsewhere, too. (Wilson, Personal Interview, 2012)

By speaking with the artists, I realized that even though power influences the re-production of landscape, it is not the definite conclusion to the discussion of landscape representation.

I was curious to find out what the paintings were supposed to show by not showing people. Therefore, I asked the artists what messages they hope that their painted landscapes evoke. Two answers were consistently given. The first is a sense of joy and tranquility. The second is the beauty and preservation of place. Being able to capture the spirit of a place through painting is the challenge the artist faces when replicating a scene (Hetrick, Personal Interview, 2012). The image becomes less about the exact features of the landscape – each tree and fence post – and more about the feelings the place evokes. Landscape is as much about emotion as it is about vision. The image is altered based on each element’s ability to contribute to the feeling of the painting:

[What I hope for is that] I’ve captured the essence of somewhere where they’ve been, and it makes them happy and gives them pleasure ... I hear back from people and ... I have people send me emails or I had this lady in the Midwest ... and she sent me this little handwritten card and [she] told me how wonderful the flower [painting] was, and there was a story behind ... I’ll never forget it. I keep all that stuff. I think really, too, that when people come in here and they don’t have the kinds of sunsets we have, because we have a weird atmosphere ... And if they see something like that, it really ... takes them to a place

they don't usually get to go, and they feel that magic of it. Even if they're not religious, they have kind of a spiritual feeling about it. I think that really helps people be able to connect with something ... A lot of them don't know that that's all happening, but I think so.  
(Gjesme, Personal Interview 2012)

For the artists, the removal of people and human-made elements was not about severing the relationship between people and place. Rather, landscape is described as a solitary, even spiritual, experience. While I sympathize with Braun's (1997) concern for the reiterated erasure of peoples from the West Coast through representation as part of a neo-colonial/Western envisioning of place, my fieldwork reminded me that this is only one version of the story. Indeed, Braun (2002) cautions against this assumption. In addition, Braun reminds his audience that the binaries of incorrect/corrective art and Indigenous/non-Indigenous are problematic. Thus, while the paintings I looked at are products of "Western knowings-of-art," the static notions of Indigenous/non-Indigenous are challenged at the individual level of becoming-artist.

When I mentioned the Salish Sea in the interviews, participants immediately associated it with the Indigenous peoples of the Islands. The name has impact. The Canadian artists who participated with the *Islands in the Salish Sea Atlas*, for example, described how it inspired new ways of thinking about art and place: Dupuy naming her paintings based on the Cowichan names, and Threlfall looking to combine mapping and art. Art is taking on new ideas of place, and new ideas of place are taking on art. The terms Indigenous, non-Indigenous, art, and artist are blurry – very, very blurry. Rather than obsessing over defining the undefinable, the slipperiness and flexibility of these terms should instead be seen as opportunity to better integrate multi-cultural forms of art. Because art is undefinable, it is adaptable and fluid. Art is personal, political,



transferable, and accessible. Therefore, it is an ideal medium for coming to re-know the land- and sea-scapes in which we live.

There were several instances in my searching of contemporary West Coast paintings that I came across the inclusion of Indigenous peoples and places. Had my case study and interviews been expanded, I expect the presence of Salish artwork would have been much greater. The paintings and images of landscapes are connected to the places depicted through the processes of becoming-artist.

The idea of living simultaneously in Indigenous and non-Indigenous spatial narratives is unbalanced and contentious. I am at once conflicted. Post-colonial approaches seem too unforgiving in their description of art, while non-representational approaches seem too naïve. Erasure and restriction of Indigenous peoples, places, and activities came from being-in landscape: the trampling of shell middens, “no clamming” signs, the building of Poets Cove on a scarred burial ground, and commemorative landscapes which ignored Salish stories. Indeed, there have been significant tensions within the Salish Sea region as to how land should and should not be used. For example, the Gulf Islands National Parks Reserve originally denied any access to traditional harvesting, but has since re-negotiated the terms with Coast Salish peoples (Thom 2012). Yet, the artists spoke of deeply emotional connections to place. The removal of people from the “quintessential Salish Sea” image is not about only erasing human activities from the landscape; rather, it is also an attempt to foster an uninterrupted emotional/spiritual relationship to that landscape.

I suppose this conflict of spatial narratives should be expected by the plurality of my research approaches. As stated earlier, epistemology and methodology are the

declarations of the compromises willing to be made as a researcher; what I have come to sacrifice is certainty, to make room for plurality – and I have found exactly that. The Salish Sea’s flexibility of identity means that there is the potential to create and re-create places based upon hybrid and multi-dimensional narratives. I came into my research clinging tightly to post-colonial literature – defining the Self and the Other, the oppressor and the oppressed. When I got into the field and began exploring the stories and experiences of the Salish Sea, my grasp had to loosen as the single narrative of colonialism began to unravel.

Through art and through landscape, the intangible complexities of peoples and places are communicated. Whether an agricultural scene, a posh resort, a disorganized ferry system, or a heritage museum, the places in which we interact become the trails our footprints leave behind. The more these trails are used, the more permanent, normal, and stable they seem. Sometimes they gain authority, as the proper way to go, with fences, signs, and names. The designation of the Salish Sea reminds us that there is something intangible right beside us – shrouded by the trees and bushes lining the trail. With only faint glimpses through the trees, “finding” the Salish Sea requires a jump over the fence, and off the suggested path. Guided by stories, art, and hand-drawn maps, the new bushwhacked route twists and turns; getting lost and muddy is all part of the adventure. With perseverance, we may find the most magnificent view at the top. The longer I keep looking, the more I believe it is there. Along the way, I have come across artists from the Islands who have each carved their own paths with their own stories, skills, and experiences. The trails in our wake resemble that which we left behind – though they are built upon new ideas and ways of knowing. While our routes may diverge, I expect I will

see them again; exhausted and unsure of our way back, the climb was worth the view over the land and sea each of us call home.

## Chapter 7

### The End to a Beginning

Finding a conclusion for this project is a challenge. After spending two years dedicated to the ideas of landscape and representation, the story doesn't want to end with a simple "happily ever after." All aspects of my research – the literature, methodologies, and discussions – are overlapping evolutionary processes culminating in what has become a seemingly linear thesis. Through a narrative steeped in ideas of discursive themes, I have illustrated representation as a fickle trickster who, although unpredictable, has important things to say.

The goal of my research was to go on a journey with this imp – to spend some time exploring the performances of the Salish Sea's places and paintings. By considering the concepts of becoming-artist and the enactment of place as both discursive and embodied, I illustrate how landscape and representation are co-constituted. I use the discussion chapters to demonstrate how the seemingly contrasting approaches of new cultural geography and non-representational theory can not only be better integrated, but can actually enrich each other. The conflicts between these theoretical approaches create uncertainty. It is through becoming entangled within these spaces of conceptual uncertainty that cultural geography is pushed to pursue enticing, reflexive, and insightful research.

The stories I had to tell from this adventure first focus on the performances of how these paintings come-to-be. The second story is of the reflexive processes of being-in-place and how they came to shape the outcomes of my research, and my understanding

of becoming-artist. The last discussion is of the patterns and themes throughout the paintings collected. These three discussions directly reflect the evolution of landscape representation in cultural geography, and illustrate where the subfield could go in the future. That is, “cultural geography” eschews a singular definition, a singular “being.” The *becoming* of cultural geography is a contextual accumulation of thought, process, and product as much as the concept of *becoming-artist*.

Looking back, the tangible lineage of “what became” cultural geography presents a discipline in constant flux. In the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century, culture and landscape were seen to be in an empirical cause-effect relationship. With the social unrest of the 1960s and the emergence of new ways-of-knowing, cultural geography re-approached cultural representations as product of power and discourse. Landscapes became symbolic regulating systems meant to be decoded. Perhaps with too much assumed stability and intention, the idea of landscape as representation was rejected by non-representational approaches. Instead, non-representational theories focus upon the mobilities and embodiments of the every day, with representation and landscape as active by-products. The tendency of non-representational theory to be ahistorical and apolitical is problematic. The absent discussion of discourse and power leaves a gaping hole. Consequently, I chose to situate my research somewhere between new cultural geography and non-representational theory.

Through the processes of becoming-researcher, I found that each approach has its strengths and weaknesses – epistemologically and methodologically. Relying entirely on new cultural geography or non-representational theory seemed to only hit dead-ends and left my research imbalanced. Thus, my discussions of representation and landscape are

somewhat hybrids of pattern and performance, meaning and mobility. This thesis, therefore, demonstrates the value of drawing on *both* new cultural and non-representational approaches as a way forward for cultural geography.

Situating my research in an epistemological transition zone has methodological implications. I have used both narrative and analytical writing styles to elucidate the plurality of representation and landscape. Through my fieldwork in the Salish Sea, I was able to conduct interviews and participant observations within my case studies of four Islands: San Juan, Lopez, Salt Spring, and Pender. By meeting with artists and by keeping a detailed journal, I was able to delve into the processes of how landscape paintings are created. I also collected art cards to use as a sample of images of the Islands. Through comparative thematic analysis, I traced patterns and consistencies throughout the paintings, emphasizing those between American and Canadian artists.

As an outcome of my epistemological and methodological choices, my discussions became multi-scale illustrations of the Salish Sea. I briefly opened the discussions with the doings of a fictional artist constructed by parallels in the stories of the interview participants. Through this narrative, I describe both how the artist sees the landscape – from the minute details, colours, and light – to how she then transcribes it to canvas. She becomes an active part of place in the processes of creating, reproducing, and selling her work.

The second discussion chapter elaborates upon becoming-artist as told in the interviews. Here, I also bring in my own embodied experiences of documenting and being-on the Islands. Though written as an embodied narrative, it highlights particularly discursive concepts: for example, the restrictions of landscapes through signs and fences,

the celebration of non-Indigenous historic sites while Indigenous sites are destroyed or ignored, and the regulation of nation by the international border. I highlight my experiences and interactions of acting within an inherited landscape.

The final discussion chapter then looks more closely at the collection of landscape paintings. I focus upon four themes that frequently came up within the paintings and the interviews: the rural scene, public and private spaces, nation, and the people-less landscape. Though this section is particularly analytical, it is speckled with concepts that are typically associated with a non-representational approach: namely embodiment and emotion. I specifically integrate quotations from the artists to illustrate that though my thematic analysis provides one explanation of the paintings, there is always another interpretation. While covering a breadth of themes, this chapter focuses specifically on landscape and how it is represented in the paintings; there are several routes that could have been taken, though I chose to focus on those which resonated best with my experiences, interviews, and interests.

This sifting of information and deciding on which to attend to is one of the common limitations of any qualitative research. By choosing to adopt certain epistemologies, methodologies, and themes, the research conversely leaves others out. These limitations are partly due to time and budgetary considerations. As a two-year Masters' program, the expected timeline moves at a rapid pace, and compresses the amount of time that can be dedicated to any aspect of the research. Within a limited budget, several aspects of my study were restricted – my time spent as a student, the paintings collected, and especially my fieldwork. By keeping focused on four Islands

within close proximity to each other, I was able to stay within these limitations while collecting in-depth information.

Disclosing these limitations also means opening opportunities for future directions with this research. As mentioned, there are many different angles from which this research could have been explored. One of the most intriguing directions I would like to see this research go is toward Coast Salish representations. While I touch on these briefly, the limitations to my study proved to be too much of a barrier to thoroughly bring in Coast Salish spatial representation. This direction alone immediately brings in new issues of nation, landscape, knowing, and art. Another issue that occasionally came up was ecology. The Salish Sea is founded upon the idea of cohesive ecosystems, and yet American and Canadian practices and policies differ at times. The natural environment is also a highly contested issue on the West Coast right now as the United States and Canada seek trade routes and pipelines – especially for crude tar sands oil. The third direction that intrigues me is to look at a different medium of representation. I chose to focus on landscape paintings, though it would be interesting to see how the stories would change had I looked at dance, photography, or poetry.

Sitting here trying to figure out how to sign off seems to be one of the most difficult parts of this entire process. Conclusions are said to sum up everything learned. But this research, in all of its ups, downs, and in-betweens, has been a profoundly formative experience whether or not I am able to express it within these pages. I suppose that is why the artists' works are so intriguing to me; they are able to encapsulate so much within a two-dimensional canvas. I have come-to-know the Salish Sea through the multiple layers of stories, each linking, conflicting, and overlapping. Representations of



the Salish Sea are both experiential and influential. Even within this relatively small-scale study, so much came out of the processes and paintings. From here, I hope local paintings and arts continue to shape the way the Salish Sea is represented. One idea that was reiterated by several of the artists, and in my own experiences, is how fortunate we are to live here. That blessed feeling that flows through the Salish Sea – in the water, ground, and air – flows through the brushes of the artists as they paint and through my figures as I try to express the humbling beauty of this place.

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## Appendix A

### List of Interview Participants

All but one of the following interview participants agreed to use their real names for the purpose of this study. The participant who did not want to have her real name used agreed to have a pseudonym in its place.

1. Andria Rhine, Artist from San Juan Island
2. Beth Hetrick, Artist from San Juan Island
3. Christa Malay, Artist from Lopez Island
4. Colin Goode, Artist from Lopez Island
5. Grace Frate, Artist from Pender Island
6. Jacqueline Meredith, Artist from Salt Spring Island
7. Jill Louise Campbell, Artist from Salt Spring Island
8. Kristy Gjesme, Artist from San Juan Island
9. Mae Moore, Artist from Pender Island
10. Margaret Threlfall, Artist from Salt Spring Island
11. Milan Stevulak, Artist from Salt Spring Island
12. Nadine Wilson<sup>7</sup>, Artist from San Juan Island
13. Peggy Bagshaw, Artist from Pender Island

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<sup>7</sup> Pseudonym used.