

4

The Altered “Scape”

embracing the eccentric/ absurd/ improbable/ strange/ bizarre

Digital Imaging in the Visual Arts: Prof. Claudia Esslinger

*Gabriel Garcia Marquez has defined Magic Realism as
“destroying the line of demarcation that separates what seems real from what seems fantastic”*

Introduction: Imagining the world in a way that it cannot physically exist has inspired artists throughout history. These flights of fancy have often started with dreams, desires, humor or terror and have been entertaining, provocative and inspirational for viewers. Because photographers point their camera at “real” subjects, photographs have historically been believed as more “real” representations of the world than a painting or drawing, yet we know a photograph can be distorted/changed/edited. Now digital tools make those manipulations even easier. We just experienced this with our manipulated portraits. Now you will turn your imagination to SCAPES. These can be landscape or interiors, miniatures or magnified. Although there are many styles and degrees of creating eccentric images, we will focus on a *semi-believable approach* similar to *magic realism*. In this tradition, common or mundane forms are changed but they maintain a degree of believability. They often hold meaning that is personal/ political in nature and have a poetic/ multi-layered interpretation. You may add human forms if necessary, but the emphasis is on the space.

GOALS:

- imagine a space as it cannot be
- show your camera and lighting skills
- develop your Photoshop compositing skills
- understand the work of other artists who work this way.

Process:

- Make a list of ten possible vistas you could create. They could be broad as a landscape or small as a shoebox, *a refrigerator, a bathtub, a field of sunflowers, a glass case, a fish bowl, an ice field made of blue foam insulation? You could use your ability to capture a panorama or to change the size of relative elements.*
- By changing something about the context, or adding things that don't belong, it could seem unnatural or unusual, magical, yet almost real.
- For your top idea, make sub-lists of colors, textures, music, compositions, materials, that would populate this place.
- Photograph, construct or “appropriate” this new context and compose the image.
- Use all your Photoshop skills and learn new ones to composite your image.

The result should be compelling, *almost* believable and either strange or humorous but not clichéd. If you've seen something like it on a greeting card, the web or a movie, its probably clichéd. The combined images should hint at something you are or wonder about that might not be readily apparent. You don't have to tell a whole story with this image, just provoke a response in your audience by being compelling, sustaining and surprising. Print the image at least 16x20" so make sure your original photos and scans are high resolution (at least 300 dpi, more if enlarging).

Here are some artists who work this way and sometimes even more distorted than magic realism:

Changing Visual Qualities:

Magritte
Cattelan
Do Ho Suh
Michael Samuels
Ron Mueck
Hiraki Sawa
Kaoru Motomiya
Alida Fish
Guiseppe Arcimboldo
Abelardo Morell
Sherrie Markovitz
Merrit Oppenheim
Sandy Skogland

Combining Unusual Elements or Materials:

Hieronymus Bosch
Ann Hamilton
Rebecca Horn
Rodney Graham
Man Ray
Hans Bellmer
Salvador Dali
Frida Kahlo
Dora Maar
Gerlovina

Jamie Baldridge
Laurie Simmons
Mark Slankard
McCarthy
Robert and Shanna
ParkeHarrison
Frederick Sommers
Mark Thompson

Distortion:

Gilles Barbier
Joel Peter Witkin
Janaina Tschape
The Chapman Brothers
Ida Applebrog
Maggie Taylor
Sarah Lean
Aziz and Cucher
Gillian Wearing
Buetti
Urbano
Inez Van Lamsweerde
Radisic
Motohiko Odani
Jack Stezacker
Nancy Burson
Maira Kahlman

Lauterian
Rudd van Empel
Keith Cottingham

Imaginary Situations:

DeChirico
Magritte
Zeke Beerman
George Tooker
Parke Harrison
Eisa Ahtila
Rene Cox
Li Wei
John Divola
Gaskell
Toni Hafkinsheid
Sherin Neshat
Laila Essaydi
Catherine Chalmers
Allora and Calzadilla
Uelsmann

Appropriation:

Kathy Grove
Greg Crewdson
Yasumasa Morimura
Jeff Wal