

LAND ART AND AGRICULTURE

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Abstract

The first landscape paintings, called 'paesaggio' were used as backgrounds for portraits. They were sceneries of agricultural fields of the Italian countryside (paese & imagine). Paesaggio became 'paysage' in French, (pays & image), 'peisaj' in Romanian and 'landscape' in English. In our days, the agricultural fields are often part of preserved landscapes, according to their aesthetical character, not only to their natural importance. Rice terraces, vineries or orchards are extremely interesting for the cultural landscape. The natural and manmade landscapes, including agricultural fields, are the field of visual artists and landscape architects. Their installations underline some features of the landscape. Artists Christo and Jeanne-Claude, Andy Goldsworthy, Walter de Maria, Nancy Holt, Maya Lin, Richard Long, Robert Smithson, and many others are famous for their land art works. The 'Power Lines', designed by the well known and awarded American landscape architect Martha Schwartz and German architect Markus Jatsch, located in Gelsenkirchen, Germany, is the most interesting intervention in an agricultural field. This installation will be presented as a case study. The main features of this installation are: a geometrical structure of linear corn-fields, the 'Red Corridor' pointing to the hill in that area and the Bismarck Tower placed on its top and the 'Black Heart', a circular room made of hay bales wrapped in black plastic. This artwork is a symbol of the difficulty in managing the power, politically and environmentally.[10].

Key words: agricultural landscape, art, cultural landscape, land art

INTRODUCTION

The first landscape paintings, called 'paesaggio' were backgrounds for portraits. They were sceneries of agricultural fields of the Italian countryside (paese & imagine). 'Paesaggio' became paysage in French, (pays & image), peisaj in Romanian and landscape in English. In the 20 century, the international legislation evolves: from **sites** (that are defined as "works of man or the combined works of nature and man, and areas including archaeological sites which are of outstanding universal value from the historical, aesthetic, ethnological or anthropological point of view" [3]), to **landscape** (which "means an area, as perceived by people, whose character is the result of the action and interaction of natural and/or human factors" [6]) and to **cultural landscapes** ("combined works of nature and of man" and which are illustrative for "the evolution of human society and settlement over time, under the influence of the physical constraints and/or opportunities presented by

their natural environment and of successive social, economic and cultural forces, both external and internal." [4]).

In the chapter "Definition of World Heritage" of the *Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention* (2008) [8], are presented the definitions of: Cultural and Natural Heritage, Mixed Cultural and Natural Heritage, Cultural landscapes. According to these definitions, agricultural landscapes may be an important part of cultural landscapes if they have an outstanding universal value ("Outstanding universal value means cultural and/or natural significance which is so exceptional as to transcend national boundaries and to be of common importance for present and future generations of all humanity." [4] Agricultural landscape has completed a long way, from the stage of being entirely ignored or being in the background, to the stage of being recognized as part of the World Heritage, according to its value.

MATERIAL AND METHOD

Agricultural landscape was studied as:

a. - ordinary landscape, b. - ordinary landscape in relation with historical monuments, c. - remarkable landscape of the World Heritage, and d. - the place of artistic installations and land art, generating new images and new ideas. The cases are very different and their variety is huge. There were analysed a very large number of cases and the synthesis of this research is presented in the next chapter.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The ordinary agricultural landscape as a result of the interaction between men and nature, get a wide range of images. The pattern of the ordinary landscape is the result of the relation between the geographical features, the climate, the soil, irrigation etc. and the last but not the least, with the type of property. Each of these crucial elements determinate a large range of patterns and the combinations between these elements lead to a huge number of patterns/images/landscapes. A large gallery, which can be found on everywhere and especially on Google, confirm this statement [1] (Figure 1).



Fig. 1. Ordinary agricultural landscapes from space
Source: <http://www.guardian.co.uk/environment/gallery/2011/mar/29/agricultural-patterns-space>

The World Heritage List and the relation between agricultural landscape and a series of historical monuments with the same significance were analysed in detail. Every time, the ordinary agricultural landscape emphasise the historical monument. A large series of historical monuments (castles, bridges, towers etc.) were studied in relation with the

agricultural fields. Bismarck Towers were chosen as exemplary for this research, because of their direct relation with the agricultural fields surrounding them, because of their great number (173 of 240 built between 1869 and 1934 are still standing) and because they are present in different locations (all over Germany and not only) [2]. These towers / fire columns / lookout towers, were placed on the top of a hill to be ignited in order to remember the Unification of Germany (1871), the great achievement of Chancellor Bismarck. They have various appearances, but all of them are emphasised by the agricultural landscape surrounding them: vineyards, rape culture etc. (Photo 1, 2, 3).



Photo 1. Bismarck Tower in Oberg, Germany
Source: www.flickr.com/photos/26261614@N05/3497169849/



Photo 2. Bismarck Tower in Lützenschen-Stahmeln,
Source: www.flickr.com/photos/mha74/4748486104/



Photo 3. Bismarck Tower in Radebeul, Germany
Source: www.flickr.com/photos/mha74/4748486104/

Remarkable landscapes of the World Heritage are real ‘works of art’ generated by simply agricultural behaviours, techniques, relief, climate etc. The World Heritage List includes some remarkable agricultural landscapes as cultural landscapes (Table 1).



Photo 4. Landscape of the Pico Island Vineyard Culture (Azores), Portugal

Source: www.flickr.com/photos/ernstschade/5942144389



Photo 5. Rice Terraces of the Philippine Cordilleras

Source: http://www.scenicreflections.com/download/384325/Stairways_to_Heaven_Wallpaper/

It is important to underline that in the last years, the number of these landscapes is continuously increasing and they are extremely varied: from rice terraces, vineyard terraces, agro-pastoral cultural landscape to coffee cultural landscape, and so on (Photo 4, 5). Even so, there are a lot of remarkable agricultural landscapes which are not included in the World Heritage List, despite their huge cultural value: Vineyards of Lanzarote Island (Canary), Spain (Photo 6, 7).



Photo 6. Landscape of the Lanzarote Island

Source: <http://static.panoramio.com/photos/large/6566085.jpg>



Photo 7. Lanzarote Island

Source: Google Earth

Table 1. UNESCO's World Heritage List - Agricultural landscapes as cultural landscapes

UNESCO's World Heritage List			
Agricultural landscapes as cultural landscapes			
nr.	Landscape	Country	Year of ratification
1.	Rice Terraces of the Philippine Cordilleras	Philippine	1995
2.	Viñales Valley agricultural landscape, particularly tobacco cultures	Cuba	1999
3.	Archaeological Landscape of the First Coffee Plantations in the South-East of Cuba	Cuba	2000
4.	Agricultural landscape of Southern Öland	Sweden	2000
5.	Alto Douro Wine Region	Portugal	2001
6.	Mapungubwe Cultural Landscape	South Africa	2003
7.	Landscape of the Pico Island Vineyard Culture (Azores)	Portugal	2004
8.	Agave Landscape and Ancient Industrial Facilities of Tequila	Mexico	2006
9.	Lavaux Vineyard Terraces	Switzerland	2007
10.	Coffee Cultural Landscape	Colombia	2011
11.	Causses and Cevennes Mediterranean agro-pastoral cultural landscape	France	2011
12.	Val d'Orcia cultural landscape	Italy	2011

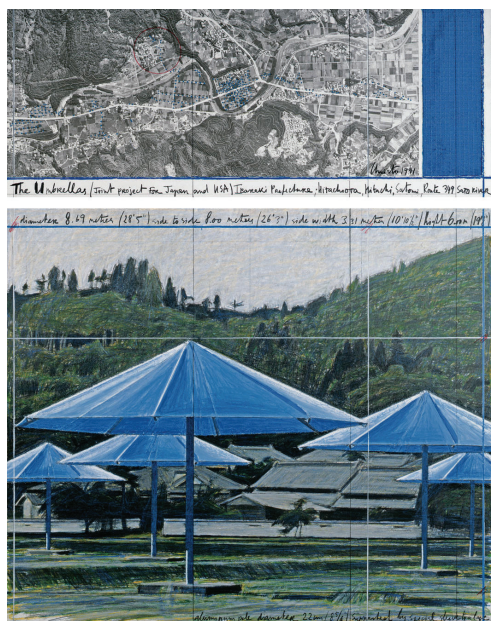


Fig. 2. The Umbrellas (Project for Japan and USA)
Source: www.christojeanneclaude.net/projects/the-umbrellas



Photo 7. The Umbrellas, Japan-USA, 1984-91
Source: www.christojeanneclaude.net/projects/the-umbrellas



Photo 8. Running Fence, Sonoma and Marin Counties, California, 1972-76
Source: www.christojeanneclaude.net/projects/running-fence

Sometimes, ordinary agricultural landscape is the place for artistic installations and land art, generating new images and new ideas. 'The Umbrellas' and 'The Running Fence' by Christo and Jeanne-Claude (Fig. 2. and Photo 7, 8) and many other installations offer a new perspective upon the landscape and especially upon the agricultural landscape.

In 1999, three of the four mentioned hypostases of the agricultural landscape (a, b and d) were combined in a single work of art: the 'Power Lines' designed by the well known and awarded American landscape architect Martha Schwartz and the well known and awarded German architect Markus Jatsch. Their work of art was part of the German program for the Ruhr Region: the Emscher Landscape Park, in the north side of Duisburg, Mechtenberg Landscape Park, on the borders of Gelsenkirchen, Essen and Bochum and many other landscape parks on Ruhr and Emscher Valley, tributary to Rhine River.

There are not many hills in this region, but one genuine hill and one hill constructed from the waste soil of the neighbouring mines are situated on Mechtenberg Landscape Park. Since 1899, the top of the genuine hill, 80 metre high, is crowned by one Bismarck Tower. Starting with 1990, a new project was implemented in this location, for preserving the agricultural areas and for creating new recreational areas. The 'Power Lines', the installation designed by the two great creators, implemented in 1999, was chosen as a significant case study for this research.

Martha Schwartz and Markus Jatsch created a link between the agricultural landscape and the historical monument in a contemporary work of art: a temporary installation. In this work, they approached the theme of power, involving: the German mythology - referring to God Wotan, God of Nature, God of wind, wisdom and fury [7,10]; the politics - with reference to Bismarck-myth and the unification of Germany in 1871 [7,10]; the technology - including the network of high-voltage cables in their work of art [7,10]; and the care for environment - with its wide range of issues [7,10] (Photo 9, 10, 11, 12, 13).



Photo 9, 10, 11, 12, 13.

Bismarck tower on Mechtenberg Hill, Gelsenkirchen –
The relation monument - agricultural landscape in
different seasons

Source: <http://static.panoramio.com/photos/large/68368462.jpg>

Source: <http://static.panoramio.com/photos/large/47185347.jpg>

Source: http://www.flickr.com/photos/der_dennis/5558940257/

Source: <http://www.flickr.com/photos/ruhrblicke/5068662683/>

Source: <http://static.panoramio.com/photos/large/66779701.jpg>



Photo 14. Mechtenberg Landscape Park, Gelsenkirchen,
before the implementation of the 'Power Lines',

Source: Spaeth, Renate, 2011, p.22



Photo 15. Mechtenberg Landscape Park, Gelsenkirchen,
after the implementation of the 'Power Lines' installation

Source:

www.biblio.polito.it/architettura_arte/osservare/suggerzioni/sito_suggerzioni/frameset.htm

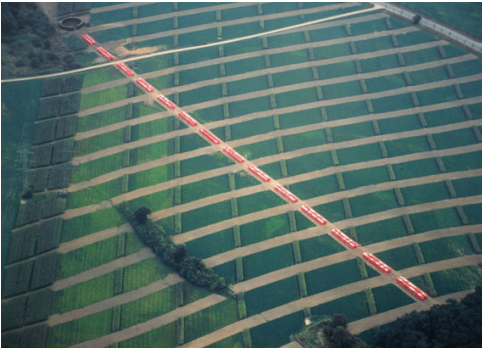


Photo 20. The 'Red Corridor', part of the 'Power Lines'
Source: <http://www.marthaschwartz.com/projects/powerlines.html>



In their work, we can find a lot of 'power lines', concrete and abstract. The high-voltage cables, the linear corn-fields and the 'Red Corridor' are the concrete 'power lines'.

The German mythology, politics, technology and the care for environment and human being are the abstract 'power lines' of this installation. All these 'power lines' are organically linked in a whole, creating a work of art full of significations. Each of the real components has its own signification.

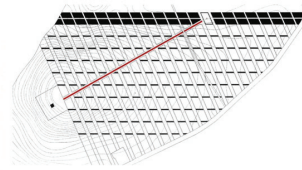


Photo 16, 17, 18, 19. 'Power Lines'

Source: www.markusjatsch.com/projects/installations_power_lines.php

Source: www.marthaschwartz.com/projects/powerlines.html

Source: www.marthaschwartz.com/projects/powerlines.html

Source: www.mai-nrw.de/Mechtenberg.46.0.html?&L=1



Fig. 3. The metamorphosis of the agricultural landscape (bottom) in 'Power Lines' installation (top)

Source: Google Earth (bottom)

www.markusjatsch.com/projects/installations_power_lines.php (top)

The 'Red Corridor', pointing the Bismarck Tower, crosses the geometrical network of linear corn-fields (Photo 14, 15 and Fig. 3). Its starting point is high-voltage line. So, the 'Red Corridor' creates a link between history and our days. This corridor is made from straw bales wrapped in red plastic. The authors of this installation have chose red as a symbol of power and also of blood and sacrifice. They have chose to create a very narrow hallway in order to force the visitors "to think consciously about who can pass when two people meet. In a very direct and immediate way, it presents the difficulty of dealing with power." [7,10] (Photo 16, 17, 18, 19, 20). The intersection between the 'Red Corridor' and the electric power line axes is emphasized by the 'Black Room' or the 'Black Heart', a circular room made from straw bales wrapped in black and paved with coal, as a remembrance of the main occupation in this region. (Photo 19) Martha Schwartz explains the symbol of this room: "Within this room, one might contemplate the high price we pay for power, both politically and environmentally" [10].

CONCLUSIONS

At the beginning of the 1990s, a national programme for central Ruhr area began with studies for the outline planning of regional green corridor C in the Emscher Landscape Park. In 2010, 'Two Hills - One Man-Made Landscape', the project for Mechtenberg, was part of 'Essen for the Ruhr', the European Capital of Culture 2010. The implementation of 'Power Lines' installation was possible with the civil society implication and with the support of the owners of the agricultural fields surrounding Mechtenberg. The aim of this project is "to unify agricultural areas and disused industrial sites, nature and art, the beautiful and the useful" [5]. This project contains some important elements: the 'Sky Stairs', Rheinelbe Sculpture Wood in Gelsenkirchen, the steel bridge designed by Frei Otto, the 'Power Lines' installation and some facilities: footpaths and cycle ways.

The safeguarding of the biotopes, the reassessment of the landscape through reforestation, tree planting and orchards were some other targets of this national project.

The belief of Martha Schwartz is worth to be mentioned here: "Through design, we can create a 'sense of place' and engender a sense of belonging and individuality. Through design we can enable people to make an emotional connection to a place by imbuing it with character, memory, identity, orientation and individuality." [9].



Photo 21. "Take a seat ... relax ..." Mechtenberg, 2010
Source: Spaeth, Renate, 2011, p.6



Photo 22. Corn maze, 2011, Lowell, Michigan
Source: <http://www.heidisfarmstand.com/cornmaze.html>



Photo 23. Straw bales maze, Maryland, 2007
Source: http://blog.patricksmithphotos.com/2007_10_01_archive.html

Important things can be emphasised by simple means. In our days, land art becomes a mass sport and the agricultural field becomes its place. Mazes and 'crop circles' are to be found everywhere in the world, maybe trivializing the sense of land art and installations, but in the same time they are the sign of a new opening onto the true art. (Photo 21, 22, 23)

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