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## **COVER SHEET**

### **The Grand Tour Experiment: A Transformative Traverse of the Picturesque Landscape**

Rebecca J. Squires, Bart Geerts

#### **Abstract:**

The Grand Tour Experiment: A Transformative Traverse of the Picturesque Landscape was a human-pulled carriage journey that re-envisioned the eighteenth-century traverse of the picturesque landscape, the subject-objectification of the view, and the imperialistic impulse behind the voyage pittoresque. This artistic experiment visually, kinaesthetically, and performatively explored the transformation from landscape to image that formed the basis of modern perception, as part of the colonial legacy inherent within the picturesque view. The Grand Tour carriage was pulled by human labour, evidencing the forced labour economy that impelled the European Enlightenment, while demonstrating in human terms, the use, abuse, and commodification of human and non-human animals. The Grand Tour proceeded from Binche to Brussels to Antwerp, Belgium in 2022.

The Grand Tour experiment investigated the eighteenth-century picturesque gaze, which travelled unchecked over the landscape in industrialised Europe, a harbinger of the annexation and enclosure of land that had been commonly owned, traditionally used, or publicly accessible, while portending the colonisation of lands abroad. The picturesque gaze, an imperialist mechanism, still fragments the landscape, excising two-dimensional pictures from the three-dimensional world around us, a vestige and augur of the destruction of lands, cultures, and peoples.

Shifting between early modern and contemporary perception, The Grand Tour bisected space and time in a cleaving manoeuvre, creating new fault lines in which multiple planes of space-time might co-exist. This experiment tested whether a new neo-picturesque framework could be forged in a dimension of space-time that alters according to the perception and orientation of the traverser, casting contingent new imaginaries into physical and psychic realms where they may or may not become realities, according to Arno Böhler's philosophy as artistic research approach (2019). This experiment envisaged a plurality that did not exist in the eighteenth century but may have already been limned in its myriad contradicting, contrasting, and diverging modes of sensing and experiencing the world around us in a relational and now relative notion of space-time.

Keywords:

grand tour, philosophy as artistic research, picturesque aesthetics, the eighteenth-century landscape traverse, Leibniz's relationalism, Alain Roger's artialisation in visu, imperialist gaze, simultaneous and sequential space-time, Condillac's sensationism

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**Page description:**

The page consists of twelve columns of written text, introducing, reflecting upon, speculating upon, and exposing the research project. To the right of the page, a further column lists the literature referenced in the text. Each column of text is headed by an untitled black and white image, which together offer an impression of the project. The text itself is interspersed with illustrative images, accompanied by descriptive captions, and at the bottom of the third column, an eighteen-minute video can be viewed. At the bottom of the page a series of over thirty colour images runs from the left of the page to the right, creating a photographic timeline of the project, from the refurbishment of the carriage featured in the project, to the various stages of the eight-day human-pulled carriage journey through Belgium.

# The Grand Tour Experiment: A Transformative Traverse of the Picturesque Landscape

**Image description:** A black and white image shows a man pulling a carriage, of the kind usually pulled by horses, along a road.

Click on <https://www.researchcatalogue.net/view/3440412/3440256#tool-3440383> to see the image.

**Rebecca J. Squires**

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**Bart Geerts**

Experiment: Rebecca J. Squires

Experiment Adviser: Bart Geerts

Text: Rebecca J. Squires in collaboration with Bart Geerts

Photography and video: Rebecca J. Squires

Logistics and planning: Vincent Degouys

Experiment participants: Nuala Cavanagh, Vincent Degouys, Patrick Schild, Steven Ben Slama

## 1 Impetus

When I began my research into the picturesque landscape garden in Europe, an emblem of eighteenth-century innovation and advancement in the arts, sciences, and philosophy, the garden seemed exempted from the critical re-evaluation of this pivotal period of colonial rule, unlike that of adjacent fields. The Enlightenment, exalted as the beginning of the modern in Western European history, engendered and disseminated a worldview dictated by a European elite defined by geographic position, economic power, social class, inherited privilege, race, and gender. The European Enlightenment's modernizing force spun upon an axis of imperialism, gorging itself on faraway lands, decimating cultures, while enslaving the Other in a cycle impelled by a forced labour economy.

The picturesque eye, cast afresh upon the eighteenth-century landscape, conceived innovative modes of perceiving and *artialis*ing the landscape.[1] However, this marauding eye now seems closed to its misdeeds; thus, it became imperative for me to render visible the duplicitous forces behind the invention of the picturesque, and the picturesque's aestheticizing, deceptive mechanisms. The picturesque not only framed the view, but annexed it, fragmenting two-dimensional pictures from the three-dimensional world around us. These mental picture-making processes are now intrinsic to the way that we see, sense, and experience the world around us, colonizing our perception, while giving rise to the lens-based devices that confiscate the view.[2]

Stephen Bending notes the problematic nature of the term 'Enlightenment' and its inextricable link with imperial expansionism, stating that:

That term, *Enlightenment*, [...] has become a subject of much discussion in recent years, raising fundamental questions not only about ideas of progress, but about historical method, civilisation, nature, nation, imperial expansion, and the relations between Europe and the wider world. (2013: 10, emphasis in original)

The so-called Enlightenment impelled the conquest of the 'wider world' beyond Europe's borders, in a 'civilising' mission of mass cultural extinction.

Colonial spoils were divvied up by colonial powers, which were resected and grafted onto the resplendent form of the European picturesque landscape garden, with its charmingly composed tableaux, wildish intimations, and awe-inducing vistas, which promised a transcendent experience for the garden wanderer (see Figure 1). This garden of beguilement, deception, and elision was now exposed, denuded before me as an arm in the imperial arsenal, a coloniser of not only the known world, but of the world within, as appropriator of aesthetics through the picturesque, diverter of perception through sensationism, and ruler of thought through empiricism. Thus, with the same fervour that I had researched the landscape garden, I was now repugned by its very existence, having once been seduced by its early modern vision of an Arcadian sublime.

**Image description:** A colour reproduction of an oil painting shows figures arranged in an ornate garden with lush vegetation and stone steps, pedestals, and sculptures.

Figure 1. Hubert Robert, *Garden of an Italian Villa*, 1764, oil on canvas, National Gallery of

Canada, Ottawa.

Click on <https://www.researchcatalogue.net/view/3440412/3440256#tool-3440383> to see figure 1.

In my interactions with researchers, professors, entire departments of architecture, and even the most prestigious conferences of eighteenth-century studies, it seemed that the linkage between the picturesque aesthetic and imperial expansionism was conspicuously absent. Living in Belgium at the time, with blood-coloured paint strewn at statues of King Leopold II, and colonialism's contemporary manifestation of racialized politics, I was every day confronted by the atrocities committed during and in the wake of the nineteenth- and twentieth-century Belgian invasion and colonisation of Congo.[3]

**Image description:** A black and white image shows the carriage being pulled along the towpath of a canal, passing under a rusted industrial pipeline that spans the canal's width.

Click on <https://www.researchcatalogue.net/view/3440412/3440256#tool-3440336> to see the image.

## 2 Disinveiglement

The picturesque garden arose alongside imperialism as an emblem and endorsement, evidencing imperialism's confiscating views and lecherous land grabs, along with the introduction of purloined plantings from the New World. Thus, the 'political garden' of the picturesque was, in actuality, a representation of empire, with Patrick Eyres calling the landscaping at Kew (see Figure 11) and Stowe Gardens 'a triumphalist celebration of imperial expansion' (2013: 125), with Stowe 'promoting the benefits of commercial empire' in England (2013: 120). Michael Symes writes:

In the late seventeenth-century, and throughout the eighteenth, plantings not only in Britain but across Europe were dominated by introductions from abroad, especially from North America. Colonisation was the enabler, or facilitator, and the results were to have a radical and permanent effect on the appearance of gardens. Introductions [of plantings] can be seen partly in terms of empire, but also in trade and the opening up of new avenues. (2013: 73)

With colonisation as 'the enabler, or facilitator' of the new, modern garden in England (Symes 2013: 73), Patrick Eyres asks 'whether any of these landscapes were *not* created from investments in the slave economy. These investments were not only in the slave trade, but also in shipping, in services to the colonial plantations and their owners, and in their produce' (2013: 120, emphasis in original). Due to this opening up of colonial trade avenues, mid-eighteenth-century British society had begun to span the chasm between the landowning rich and the landless poor, as a middle class effloresced alongside economic expansion and urbanisation, with colonial enterprise underpinning an economy of commerce, domestic manufacture, and consumption (Spooner 2013: 206). Jeffrey Auerbach notes that it was hardly

coincidental that the popularity of the picturesque aesthetic reached its zenith just as the British Empire was undergoing its greatest expansion (2004: 52).<sup>[4]</sup>

**Image description:** A colour reproduction shows a schematic depiction of the layout and features of an English garden, seen from above.

Figure 2. Anonymous, *Jardin Anglais*, c.1785, pen and ink with watercolour.

The author provides the following accompanying note: The eighteenth-century picturesque garden, also known as the landscape garden, or English garden, epitomized the notion of the landscape as a picture, of nature perfected through human intervention. This depiction exemplifies the varied, irregular, and unpredictable elements of the picturesque, with a circuitous passage through garden features, *fabriques*, and follies in a dynamic progression, the garden's sinuous paths opening out onto unexpected, picture-like prospects. This delusive expansion of perspective evinced surprise and sensory disorientation, a requisite for changing consciousness, demonstrating the picturesque garden as a locus of perceptual transformation and deception (Squires 2023: 184).

Click on <https://www.researchcatalogue.net/view/3440412/3440256#tool-3459711> to see figure 2.

Auerbach identified the picturesque as a homogenizing mechanism that united the far-flung, diverse lands seized by the British Empire (2004: 47), while aligning British travellers' experiences along the traverse, or surveyance of their empire. Auerbach notes, even more ominously, that the agenda of homogenisation was to create a sense of familiarity and safety so as to lure English settlers abroad, '[refashioning] that environment — both physically and representationally — in order to resemble the typically picturesque English landscape' (2004: 49–50).

The picturesque aesthetic co-opted sense perception, which Auerbach affirms was used 'to conceal hardships and beautify the frequently unpleasant surroundings that characterised life in the imperial zone, refracting local people and conditions through a single, formulaic lens' (2004: 48). Perhaps no other aesthetic was capable of such thorough inveiglement as the picturesque, which promised lofty transcendence, while artfully conscripting the senses.

**Image description:** A black and white image shows the carriage being pulled in front of an official-looking building hung with flags. Some of the passers-by look on curiously.

Click on <https://www.researchcatalogue.net/view/3440412/3440256#tool-3448266> to see the image.

### 3 Act and Re-Enactment

Movement had always been integral to my research on eighteenth-century picturesque phenomena in art, the landscape, theory, and philosophy, whether along the ramble through

the picturesque garden, the traverse of the European landscape along the Grand Tour, the activation of eye through landscape painting techniques, or the virtual garden walk-through evoked textually in the garden treatises. All of these forms created or re-created movement as a necessary part of their discovery and elucidation.

This performative experiment re-envisioned the eponymous Grand Tour: a southward journey and rite of passage for young men of privilege, taking in the sights of southern Europe, especially France and Italy, with Paris, Venice, and Rome as requisite stops, spanning months or even years. Reaching its apex in the eighteenth century, the Tour was an elite finishing school for the sons of British and European aristocracy, meant to instil continental refinement, decorum, and *savoir faire*, immersing young gentlemen in European history, culture, architecture, and the classical arts. This tourist invasion overran the European landscape at home, echoing the imperialist invasion abroad.

*The Grand Tour* experiment, as act, re-enactment, and impulse, envisioned the carriage as a moving cynosure of space and time, which re-oriented space-time according to the unpredictable starting, stopping, and deviating movement of the participants. This movement carved out a convoluted passage through the iniquity of the past, while creating new contingencies in space-time. Sven Lütticken affirms the investigative and generative potential of performative historical research, stating that:

Art can examine and try out — under laboratory conditions, as it were — forms of repetitions that break open history and the historicist returns of past periods [...] as potentials waiting to be reactivated in forms that need not resemble anything. Operating within contemporary performative spectacle, if from marginal positions, art can stage small but significant acts of difference. (Lütticken 2005: 60)

This act of difference avails itself of a decolonial option, a critical intervention to the annihilating aesthetic of the picturesque, which Walter Mignolo and Rolando Vázquez term ‘decolonial aesthesis’, a subversion of the hegemonic normativity of modern aesthetics which ‘re-valuates and enacts the aesthesis that have been denied validity [...] that run] parallel to the decolonial epistemic critique being made in the realms of philosophy and academic thought’ (2013: II).

In *The Grand Tour* experiment, the picturesque gaze is redirected back upon itself, illuminating its colonial spectres, inverting the disguise, deflection, and obfuscation that continue to this day, rendering visible the immense toll taken on all of humanity by the destruction of peoples, cultures, and lands, in service of Europe’s colonial conquest. The experiment’s striving toward decolonial aesthesis (Mignolo and Vázquez 2013) disrupts the picturesque gaze from the conversion and consumption of the landscape, opposing the force of *artialisaton* (Roger 1997), or aesthetic domination, restoring sovereignty of the landscape to itself as a multidimensional entity of myriad ontologies and epistemologies, delinking from the picture-like modes of elision created for the delectation and exoneration of the coloniser.

**Video description:** A video documents three people as they pull, push and navigate a carriage, of the kind normally pulled by horses, through urban and rural areas of Belgium.

Rebecca J. Squires, *The Grand Tour: Belgium*, 2022, video, 18 minutes.



Click on <https://www.researchcatalogue.net/view/3440412/3440256#tool-3440358> to watch the video.

**Image description:** A black and white image shows the carriage being pulled and guided along a road by a woman and a man wearing high-visibility vests.

Click on <https://www.researchcatalogue.net/view/3440412/3440256#tool-3440291> to see the image.

## 4 Experiment

In November of 2022, I set out on a human-pulled carriage tour with experiment participants Steven Ben Slama, the main carriage puller; Patrick Schild, carriage puller and navigator; and Nuala Cavanagh, carriage puller and interface with the public. I also pulled the carriage, photographing and filming the experiment at moments less critical to the carriage's operation and passage, which is why there are few photographs on hills, on highways, or in traffic. The documentary photographs form a sequential timeline running along the bottom of this exposition, unlike the photographs above the section headings, which, if considered alongside the text, might evoke Eisenstein's 'third something', projected onto the mind of the spectator (1957: 7–11). While the photographs document a contemporary space and time, they are in dialogue with the picturesque, converging with and diverging from its aesthetic principles. The picturesque, connate with modern perception, cannot be circumvented, as it is intrinsic to the way we see, describe, and compose the landscape today.

Bart Geerts served as adviser to the entire project, from its inception, execution, and analysis, to its exposition here. Vincent Degouys plotted the carriage route through Belgium, a nation enmired in a colonial past inextricable from its manifestation of a colonial present. The *Tour* started in Binche, in French-speaking Wallonia, passing through former mining towns and farmlands, along canal towpaths, roads, and highways (see Figure 3), with the carriage overnighing in the garages, gardens, and pasturelands of strangers. We made it as far as Tubize, on the industrial outskirts of Belgium's capital city. The carriage was then transported by truck to Schaerbeek, Brussels, where we toured and related our experiences at the symposium 'Re-Envisioning the View: Deconstruction of Colonial Perspectives' led by Bart Geerts at LUCA School of Arts. After this, the carriage was transported to the Theaterbuurt in Antwerp, where we re-commenced the *Tour* from Kavka Oudaan, in conjunction with the experimental art platform To Be Antwerp, in Dutch-speaking Flanders.

**Image description:** A colour photograph shows an unfolded map of a region south of Brussels, with a route marked out in red and white striped string.

Figure 3. Rebecca J. Squires, *The Grand Tour Route*, 2022, map with string, digital photograph.

Click on <https://www.researchcatalogue.net/view/3440412/3440256#tool-3440297> to see figure 3.



As the carriage's anachronistic outline crossed the Belgian countryside, the staffage emerged as subjects, no longer objects, while the driver was obscured behind curtains, perhaps spectral, or even non-existent, however, the driver's presence was palpable, and their impulse ineluctable. The carriage, an ever-present encumbrance and burden, could not be parked on the road or abandoned, and as a historical object, could not be destroyed — it could only be borne and conveyed.

The aim of the experiment was to activate picturesque phenomena so that they might be observed, experienced, and engaged with, thereby necessitating a performative approach. The phenomena catalysed by the experiment include the transformation from nature to picture within the eye; the agglomeration of a multiplicity of viewpoints along the traverse; the apprehension of a carriage view that was both aestheticised and blindered by its canopy; the experience of a non-linear space-time; and the excavation of Belgium's past through the stratum of its present.

During the performance of the experiment in the Schaerbeek neighbourhood of Brussels, onlookers warned us, attempting to intimidate us into stopping the filming and photographing of the *Tour*, which we chose to ignore. Spectators slipped out of view, lowering their blinds as I filmed the area around the Gare du Nord. In Antwerp, the performance was met with occasional polite exchanges, but usually with averted eyes, except in the larger squares, when one might stare from the anonymity of a crowd.

**Image description:** A black and white image presents an abstract view of a dark shape against a light background. On closer view it appears to be a section of the carriage: the canopy, photographed from the inside.

Click on <https://www.researchcatalogue.net/view/3440412/3440256#tool-3440339> to see the image.

## 5 Picturesque Transformation

The picturesque art of landscape, and the landscape in art is a perceptual transformation of the world around us. This transformation takes place within the eye according to Alain Roger's *artialisation in visu*, in which land is transformed into landscape according to aesthetic convention (1997). Roger differentiates this from *artialisation in situ*, wherein the landscape itself is physically altered to suit the aesthetic dictates of its day (1997). However, it is my contention that this transfiguration within the eye precipitates a physical change to the landscape, irrevocably changing the world around us.

The picturesque transformation from land to landscape within the eye, in eighteenth-century terms, is called a *coup d'œil*, or blink-of-an-eye [glimpse]. In this capturing glance, the scene is instantaneously imprinted onto the retina, fragmenting it from the multidimensional visual world around us. This transformation from land to landscape, or *artialisation* (Roger 1997), impelled the picture-like conversion of the three-dimensional world around us into a

series of two-dimensional views that anticipated the still and moving image. These dissevered tableaux were re-ordered in the imagination, and projected onto the mind of the spectator. Filmmaker Sergei Eisenstein, two hundred years after the advent of the picturesque, identified this juxtaposition of disparate images, or montage, as a ‘third something’ which ‘resembles a creation — rather than a sum of its parts [...]’. The juxtaposition of *those very elements* [...] evoke in the perception and feelings of the spectator the most complete *image of the film itself* (1957: 7–11, emphasis in original). This ‘third something’, according to Eisenstein, arises according to the ‘will of the editor’ (1957: 7–11); therefore, the perceiving individual, as editor of their own landscape traverse, constructs their own singular narrative.

The half-real, half-imagined ramble through the discerned or devised landscape, as an encounter between nature, art, and self, was evidenced as a virtual promenade in the writings of English and French luminaries such as Joseph Addison, Denis Diderot, and Jean-Jacques Rousseau, among others. The virtual garden tour in text became a feature of the mid-eighteenth-century garden treatises into the beginning of the next century. The garden treatise, a former compendium of gardening advice, had been taken over by the lyrical prose of artist-gardeners and picturesque landscape theorists such as William Gilpin, William Chambers, Uvedale Price, William Shenstone, William Mason, Claude-Henri Watelet, Prince Charles-Joseph de Ligne, René Louis de Girardin, Richard Payne Knight, and Horace Walpole, among others.

**Image description:** A black and white image shows the carriage being pulled along a busy shopping street, passing in front of a shop which appears to sell chandeliers.

Click on <https://www.researchcatalogue.net/view/3440412/3440256#tool-3440295> to see the image.

## 6 The Excision of the View

The excision of the view from its three-dimensional environment was an act often performed with the aid of the Claude glass (see Figure 4), a darkened, convex mirror named after seventeenth-century painter and picturesque forerunner, Claude Lorrain.<sup>[5]</sup> The glass was supposed to convert the view into a Claude-like tableau (see Figure 5), reducing its tonal range, coercing the living landscape onto the convex mirror. The Grand Tour traveller played an active role in this picture-making process, turning their back on the three-dimensional visual world to reveal the two-dimensional scene, glimmering from the curved surface of the glass.

**Image description:** A graphite drawing depicts a man in a coat and tricorne hat sitting under a tree, with what appears to be a sketchbook on his lap. He looks into a circular, mirror-like object, which he supports on a branch of the tree with his left hand.

Figure 4. Thomas Gainsborough, Study of a Man Holding a Claude Glass, 1750–55, graphite on paper, The British Museum, London. © The Trustees of the British Museum. Shared under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0

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Click on <https://www.researchcatalogue.net/view/3440412/3440256#tool-3440294> to see figure 4.

**Image description:** A black and white image shows the carriage, viewed from behind, as it approaches a tunnel. The woman pushing the carriage gestures toward the tunnel with her right hand.

Click on <https://www.researchcatalogue.net/view/3440412/3440256#tool-3440343> to see the image.

## 7 A Third Something

‘When does something become a view?’, asked artist and filmmaker Hannes Schüpbach during one of our annual dinners, to which I responded: ‘When someone points to it.’<sup>[6]</sup> This act of designation, of preference for one part of the landscape over another transfigures it, extracting it from the surrounding landscape, separating it from its dynamic state. In the creation of the view, the eye seizes the prospect, instantaneously etching it onto the back of the retina. This discerned or devised tableau is disunited from its environment due to its consonance with picturesque norms, or projected transformation into a consonant state. This excision disembodies the view from its living form, stoppering the volatility of the scene. From this point forward, the landscape is no longer amorphous, it has been cemented into a scene to be projected over and over as Eisenstein’s ‘third something’, a product of the observer and the thing observed, and yet something more than its amalgam, taking on new, unforeseen aspects, ‘[resembling] a creation — rather than the sum of its parts’ (1957: 7–11).

The eighteenth-century picturesque painting tradition, which drew inspiration from the idealized landscapes of seventeenth-century artists such as Claude (see Figure 5) and Salvator Rosa, made use of staffage, or minor figures to both direct the eye, and vivify the scene. These figures, too, were transfixed by the prospect, with one arm outstretched, finger aloft, extending toward the view. This gesture, now universal to the human animal, is a signal to those just outside the frame, a picture-viewer separated in space and time. A signalisation of desire, this gesture longs for the gaze of a future spectator, as the tableau takes its place in a canon of excisions, gestured to by a future observer at a future time.

**Image descriptions:** Two colour reproductions of oil paintings illustrate idealised views of landscape, with minor figures gesturing toward the view:

Figure 5. Claude Lorrain, *River Landscape with Tiburtine Temple at Tivoli*, c. 1635, oil on canvas, National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne.

Figure 6. Hubert Robert, *Paysage d’Italie*, 1779, oil on canvas, Château de Maisons, Maisons-Laffitte.

Click on <https://www.researchcatalogue.net/view/3440412/3440256#tool-3440292> to see

figures 5 and 6.

The pointing gesture is more than an indication or expression of marvel, it stakes a claim on the land at the moment of visual apprehension (see Figures 5 and 6). The eighteenth-century picturesque view, vista, or outlook was also termed a 'prospect', as a future site of prospecting, or extraction. The term 'prospect' is an assertion of an absolute Newtonian time, seizing perspective from the moment of sighting into infinity, the future's vanishing point. W.J.T. Mitchell affirms that: 'Empires move outward in space as a way of moving forward in time; the "prospect" that opens up is not just a spatial scene, but a projected future of "development" and exploitation' (2002: 17).

**Image description:** A black and white image presents an abstract view of a dark space with a single square of light in its centre. On closer view it appears to be a view of the inside of the carriage, with light entering through the small rear window.

Click on <https://www.researchcatalogue.net/view/3440412/3440256#tool-3440370> to see the image.

## 8 Philosophy as Artistic Research Approach

This performative study takes inspiration from Arno Böhler's philosophy as artistic research approach wherein *poiesis*, or 'letting something come into being' might occur (2019), allowing for a practical experimentation and examination of the aesthetic, perceptual, and theoretical phenomena of the picturesque. Böhler's 'doing of aesthetics' (2019) seemed apropos in the realisation of a contemporary Grand Tour in which picturesque modes, mechanisms, and experiences might be investigated first-hand, testing the automatic image-making processes inherent within contemporary perception, striking out on a path of converging planes of space-time from the past and present, while limning contingent and speculative forms.

Speculative and interpretive tools along the traverse include Étienne Bonnot de Condillac's sensationism ([1746] 2001), which conceived of a sensation-to-knowledge cycle wherein all knowledge was the product of transformed sensation. Condillac's sensationism, a more radical outgrowth of John Locke's empiricism (1689), rejected the role of reflection in Locke's process of knowledge creation. Empiricism exalted the human as oculus onto worldly and otherworldly phenomena, while sensationism defined the inner and outer world strictly by sensation, becoming the basis of all that we know and can know, forming Condillac's worldview around this.

Condillac's sensationism described a synaesthetic mode or mood present at an early stage in human development, prior to the ability to differentiate sensory phenomena, wherein one might hear colour, or see sound in association with other perceived phenomena in a mode inseparable from self. According to Condillac's theory, it is only through pleasure and pain that we learn to distinguish one sense from another ([1746] 2001). Now that we have learned to differentiate between sensory phenomena, it is the picturesque that brings us back to a state in which the senses work in concert, overwhelming, disorienting, and eliciting a maelstrom of

sensations, drawing upon eighteenth-century concepts of sublime awe as speculated upon by Burke, Kant, Chambers, and seventeenth- and eighteenth-century translations of pseudo-Longinus from the ancient Greek.

In the examination of picturesque theory and phenomena, numerous dialectics arise, including the apparent contraries of nature and art, landscape and picture, the three-dimensional visual world and the two-dimensional visual field (Gibson 1950: 26–27), the single prospect and multiple views, and linear and non-linear experiences of space and time. The picturesque, in its vacillation between dualities, spans a third space, an interstitial space in which these dualities might be transcended. Hegel's dialectical method forged this in between space through a 'unity of distinctions', wherein being, as a stable moment, passes to its opposite: nothing, and is destabilized, forming a newly-joined concept ([1807] 2019). This more essential and durable concept takes on new meanings over time through a continual process of sublation (Hegel [1807] 2019). History proceeds, according to Hegel, not through Plato's discarding of contradictory notions, but through this process of becoming, or sublation.

At this nexus of coexisting contradictions lies a picturesque tableau described by Sigfried Giedion wherein each fold of the landscape creates lines and angles that extend outward into infinite planes of space-time. These units of space-time, envisioned by the cubists, lay waste to the single reference point, while the futurists traversed these opened-up planes kinaesthetically, demonstrating 'inner and outer space penetrating each other inextricably' in a continuous process of anticipation and fulfilment (Giedion 1941: 436).

*The Grand Tour* proceeded both sequentially and simultaneously, in a space-time that Diderot described as operating 'as a whole and all at once' (1751: 123, my translation). This experiment was, therefore, not only a re-enactment of eighteenth-century phenomena, but a contemporary endeavour, generating contingent new imaginaries that were cast into physical and psychic realms, where they may or may not become realities (Böhler 2019).

**Image description:** A black and white image shows the carriage in an urban environment, a paved, concrete-walled courtyard of a school. The man pulling the carriage has halted at the base of a flight of stone steps as two passers-by descend the staircase.

Click on <https://www.researchcatalogue.net/view/3440412/3440256#tool-3440337> to see the image.

## 9 Space-Time in the Picturesque

The picturesque, a liminal space at the juncture of nature and art, landscape and picture, and the three-dimensional visual world and two-dimensional visual field (Gibson 1950: 26–27), enabled at least three distinct modes of non-linear movement in space-time, along with various hybrid forms, challenging a sequential notion of space-time.

The first mode of non-sequential space-time I posit is an oscillating, back-and-forth movement between the historical picturesque landscape and the contemporary landscape, linked by reminiscent outlines or vestiges in the landscape, as well as the propensity to view contemporary scenery through the picturesque norms set out in the eighteenth century. This

visual vacillation between past and present may be associated with the painting technique of *papillotage*, in which myriad prospects, or contrasting patches of colour, light, or pattern appear side by side within a painting, so that the eye flutters between juxtapositions, postponing the settling of the view (see Figure 7), creating an optical interstice that brings the ‘self back to self’ in the blink of an eye (Hobson 1982: 52).

**Image description:** A colour reproduction of an oil painting depicts, in dramatic style, onlookers observing an avalanche.

Figure 7. Philip James de Loutherbourg, *An Avalanche in the Alps*, 1803, oil on canvas. Tate Britain, London. Presented by the Friends of the Tate Gallery 1965. Photo: Tate.

Click on <https://www.researchcatalogue.net/view/3440412/3440256#tool-3440351> to see figure 7.

The second mode of non-sequential space-time is activated by the movement of the spectator through the landscape. In this mode of space-time, the wanderer bisects the topography, constantly re-orienting, and re-positioning themselves, forging linear and non-linear flows, creating new passages, itineraries, or patterns in the landscape (see Figure 8).

**Image description:** A reproduction of an engraving shows finely dressed people, traversing winding pathways through a garden, amongst trees and monuments.

Figure 8. L. Lesueur after Louis Carrogis de Carmontelle, *Vue du bois des Tombeaux, prise de point L.*, 1779, engraving on paper. In *Jardin de Monceau, près de Paris, appartenant à son altesse sérénissime monseigneur le duc de Chartres* (Paris: Delafosse, Née & Masquelier). Source: gallica.bnf.fr / Bibliothèque nationale de France.

Click on <https://www.researchcatalogue.net/view/3440412/#tool-3440350> to see figure 8.

The third mode of non-sequential space-time is a plunging manoeuvre, diving into follies, *fabriques*, or landscape features evoking other times and places. This pattern correlates with the *coup d’œil*, or blink-of-an-eye [glimpse] wherein the three-dimensional scene is instantaneously apprehended and imprinted onto the retina. This apprehending glimpse was deployed in one of the earliest European museums, the Musée des Monuments français, created in 1795 by Alexandre Lenoir as a repository and exhibition space for artefacts safeguarded or displaced during the French Revolution. At the Musée, the spectator was plunged into rooms redolent with artefacts evoking a particular period of time, progressing from the Middle Ages to the Renaissance to the eighteenth century (see Figure 9). This immersion fostered an immediate uptake of the scene, implicating the visitor in the seizure and naturalisation of local and non-local artefacts from regional communities in France. The windows of the Musée opened out onto a Jardin Elysée (see Figure 10), offering peephole glimpses onto an admixture of tombs, relics, and monuments fabricated by Lenoir from Revolutionary ruins, agglomerating scenes of all times and all places in the blink of an eye.



**Image descriptions:** Two colour reproductions of paintings illustrate museum and garden design in Paris, at the start of the nineteenth century.

Figure 9. Jean Lubin Vauzelle, *Salle du XIII<sup>e</sup> siècle* [Musée des Monuments français], c. 1805, watercolour, Musée du Louvre, Paris. © Musée du Louvre, dist. GrandPalaisRmn / Laurent Chastel.

Figure 10. Hubert Robert, *Le Jardin du Musée des Monuments français, ancien couvent des Petits-Augustins*, 1803, oil on canvas, Musée Carnavalet, Paris.

Click on <https://www.researchcatalogue.net/view/3440412/3440256#tool-3440349> to see figures 9 and 10.

The eighteenth-century garden, whether alive in the landscape or evoked textually in the virtual tours of the garden treatises, suspended time through visual or textual devices, calling upon the wanderer or reader to re-imagine, re-enact, or re-vivify these spectral rambles in space and time. Prompted by the commonly understood visual cues of the time, such as exotic scenery, or re-created ruins, the *promeneur* responded in prescribed modes. The spectator colluded in this performance, primed for the serendipitous happening, participating in a seemingly spontaneous traverse that had, in actuality, been plotted and planned, innervated through the sensation-inducing visual language of the picturesque.

**Image description:** A black and white image shows the carriage being pulled along the towpath of a canal. Coming towards the photographer the carriage is passing under a bridge spray-painted with graffiti.

Click on <https://www.researchcatalogue.net/view/3440412/3440256#tool-3458250> to see the image.

## 10 As a Whole and All at Once

Newton's prevailing concept of an absolute space and time independent of the existence of a perceiver (1687) was contradicted by Leibniz's relationalism (1717), which described a sticky web of coexistences between objects and sensed successions, drawn together by human perception. Leibniz writes, 'relations are not an absolute reality within the things, but a determination that thought, intellect adds to things' (Leibniz 1717 quoted in Evangelidis 2018: 2).

Within this fluctuating dimension of space-time, places and events intersect with the movement of the traveller, who cleaves a traverse of historical, contemporary, and contingent future strata. Therefore, it is our perception that gives shape to space-time, a phenomenon whose spectres may be vaguely limned, flit in and out, or manifest all at once upon a moving traverse. *The Grand Tour* moved in both a sequential and simultaneous space-time continuum which, according to Denis Diderot, operates 'as a whole and all at once' (1751: 123, my translation; see Figure 11). Thus, the picturesque exists in a relational dimension populated by



coexisting objects, in a space-time physically altered by our perception as well as our passage.

**Image descriptions:** Three reproductions illustrate picturesque landscape design.

Figure 11. Heinrich Joseph Schütz after Franz Joseph Mannskirsch, *A View in Kew Gardens of the Alhambra & Pagoda*, 1798, aquatint with watercolour, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York. The Elisha Whittelsey Collection, The Elisha Whittelsey Fund, 1963. The author adds the accompanying note: William Chambers' architectural constructions at Kew Gardens conceived of a simultaneous space-time wherein an Alhambra, Chinese pagoda, and Turkish mosque (not pictured) could exist side by side along the picturesque landscape traverse. This garden of all times and all places is evidenced by Patrick Eyres to be a representation of the British Empire's expansionist crusade (2013: 125).

Figure 12. Felipe Cardano after Constant Bourgeois, *Manoir antique changé en un Château Elegant*, 1808 (flap closed), Bibliothèque de l'Institut National d'Histoire de l'Art, Collection Jacques Doucet. The author adds the accompanying note: With the flap closed, Bourgeois' design, engraved by Cardano, depicts the landscape prior to Hubert Robert's picturesque landscape intervention.

Figure 13. Felipe Cardano after Constant Bourgeois, *Manoir antique changé en un Château Elegant*, 1808 (flap open), Bibliothèque de l'Institut National d'Histoire de l'Art, Collection Jacques Doucet. The author adds the accompanying note: With the flap lifted, Bourgeois' design, engraved by Cardano, depicts Hubert Robert's picturesque landscape conversion.

Click on <https://www.researchcatalogue.net/view/3440412/3440256#tool-3440381> to see figures 11, 12 and 13.

This suspension and subjectification of space and time can be discerned in picturesque landscape design, exemplified in the 1786 transformation of the gardens of Méréville by artist Hubert Robert, as seen in Figures 12 and 13. Constant Bourgeois' depiction, engraved by Felipe Cardano, showed the 'before' and 'after' views of the estate through the use of an overlay or flap, that folded over the illustration. Thus, an optical transfiguration from formal to informal garden was effectuated within the image itself, reproducing the blink-of-an-eye glimpse, or *coup d'œil* in an instantaneous apprehension of the scene.

In Robert's conversion, time, like the garden path, is no longer predictable and calculable; it is now contingent upon the roving perception and unpredictable movement of the spectator in space-time, evinced through the darting, point-by-point eye movement of *papillotage* (Squires 2022: 1704–07). This contrasts with the symmetrically-disposed French formal or Le Nôtre-style garden (Figure 12), where the path, prospect, vanishing point, and destination of the *promeneur* converge in a predetermined, choreographed promenade.[7]

**Image description:** A black and white image shows the carriage being pulled away from the photographer, down a city street. The woman pushing the carriage looks back toward the photographer, while a man pulls the carriage, the harness over his back and shoulders

evident.

Click on <https://www.researchcatalogue.net/view/3440412/3440256#tool-3440334> to see the image.

## 11 Conveyance

The carriage was braced by a steel chassis, its body part-wood, part-metal, conveyed on rubber tyres rather than the wooden carriage wheels of the picturesque. The *calèche*, made in Enghien, Belgium, around the time of the Second World War, and in use by 1947 (see Figure 15), had later been dismantled and stored in a barn in Wallonia for decades, then reassembled and restored in the 1970s. The carriage, resting on two wheels, required a third resting point, its mass triangulated on the shoulders of the carriage puller.

Opposed to continuing the subjugation, exploitation, and commodification involved in the historical Grand Tour, the use of non-consenting animals was beyond contemplation; therefore, I sought voluntary human labour. However, a partial lack of volunteers made the use of a paid participant necessary, continuing the subordination of the human animal through the exertion of economic might, in a capitalistic system founded upon power imbalance.

The burden of this experiment, borne by the harnessed carriage puller, was an act of domination, a re-enactment of trauma that neither I, nor the others involved would fully comprehend at the outset. Played out day after day, this trauma contaminated all those who participated, spreading culpability over all of us, not only me, the designer and instigator of this deed. We pulled or pushed the carriage alongside the puller, goading him onward, while he traced the physiological phases of the enslaved state. The farther our troupe progressed, the tighter this constellation was bound, our view narrowing as the miles were counted, until the resolution of the *Tour* crowded out all other thought.

**Image descriptions:** Two colour photographs show details of the carriage exterior.

Figure 14. Rebecca J. Squires, *The Grand Tour Carriage*, 2022, digital photograph.

Figure 15. Rebecca J. Squires, *Carriage-Maker: Bosmans, Enghien, Belgium*, 2022, digital photograph.

Click on <https://www.researchcatalogue.net/view/3440412/3440256#tool-3440296> to see figures 14 and 15.

**Image description:** A black and white image shows the carriage passing under a dark tunnel to the illuminated back courtyard of a school.

Click on <https://www.researchcatalogue.net/view/3440412/3440256#tool-3440338> to see the image.

## 12 Conclusion

In a space-time whose relational potential is actualized through human perception, the landscape is forever altered by casting an eye over its terrain, creating a pattern between objects past and present. This relationship necessarily includes the spectator, who, according to John Macarthur, '[projects] subjectivity onto the object' (2002: 138), which in this case is the landscape, subjectified through the human gaze. This relationship is a mutable constellation wherein serendipity is compounded in the intersections between manifold views. Alain Roger's *artialisation in visu* (1997), the aesthetic transformation of land into landscape according to the aesthetics of the time, drives *artialisation in situ* (1997), the transfiguration of the physical landscape. The eighteenth-century projection of the picturesque view onto the contemporary landscape shows the distinction between *artialisation in visu* and *in situ* to be a superficial one. *Artialisation* happens within and through the eye, acting upon the landscape; the mere application of the eye to the contours of the landscape engraves it, incising a relationship between self and objects. This movement of the eye and body alters space and time according to the orientation of the body as leading edge of the traverse, joining dimensions.

Leibniz envisioned space and time as having no set sequence, but a relationship — an order of potentialities, therefore the will acts as the cynosure of the space-time continuum — directing what may be seen, sensed, and transported, along with the concomitant movement of the body. Space-time is thus imbued with a corporeality, a corporeality that extends along the traverse, its sinuosities forging a non-linear path through the landscape. *The Grand Tour* experiment, while taking place in a contemporary expression of space-time, bisected the trajectory of the eighteenth-century Grand Tour, transforming its panorama, re-directing its confiscating gaze. The subject driving the carriage is unseen, and in the experiment, absent. However, it becomes clear that the carriage is driven by an ineluctable force that turns its wheels, propelling it into the ruts of a well-worn path. The inertial force of the carriage cannot be stopped, the mechanism cannot be deviated, however, those who pull the carriage, who gather the trauma of the object, are now consecrated as subject, while still subordinate to the colonizing force.

The momentum generated by this experiment, astride the annihilating force of the eighteenth-century so-called Enlightenment, unsettled the debris in its path — resulting in a subject-object inversion, a substitution of human for animal labour, leaving behind a chimeric taxidermy of human and non-human animal, puller and contrivance, and subject and object. This admixture of being and carriage along the landscape traverse has tilled the soil, upending its substrate, unearthing its pillage, exposing to the air our imperialist legacy, however, in a new order of potentialities.

The eye is the centriole of this experiment through the view of the traversers as well as those traversed, bearing witness to our passage through Leval-Trahegnies, La Louvière, Fayt-lez-Manage, Feluy, Seneffe, Ittre, Clabecq, Tubize, Schaerbeek in Brussels, and the Theaterbuurt in Antwerp. *The Grand Tour*, received as a spectacle or publicity stunt, provoked disregard, curiosity, amusement, and perhaps occasional discomfort. This act and re-enactment took place along the byways, streets, towpaths, and highways of Belgium, invoking the legacy of plunder, enslavement, and death wrought upon Congo by Belgian King and nation. The wheels of the carriage gained traction, digging down to the strata of sixteenth- to twentieth-century atrocities carried out by European colonial powers, excavating their bedrock,

exhuming their skeletons, disinterring their war trophies, conjuring their spectres and exposing them to the air, so that they might eventually decompose. Embedded in the soil of Belgium, ensnared in the Museum of Tervuren, the so-called Africa Museum, these phantoms do not find their way to the ether. These artefacts, enmired in the soil that has fertilized European abundance, are still impacted in its roots. Newton's premise of a linear space-time disposed of a history considered finished and faraway, enabling a policy of non-restitution and non-reparation for colonial brutality manifested in the here and now, continuing this colonial desecration.

While it is unknown whether *The Grand Tour* experiment has impacted the spectators along its traverse, or the tectonics underlying the landscape, it is clear that the *Tour's* participants are forever changed, having re-invoked, re-lived, and re-inflicted its trauma upon themselves and the landscape, as both a vivisection and autopsy in a relational space-time. As we speculate upon the outcome of the experiment, reflecting on the bodily strain, the road hazards, and the fomentation of rage set off by our passage through Schaerbeek, Brussels, we have not emerged unscathed. *The Grand Tour* journey was cut short near Brussels, halfway along its planned route, while the carriage and participants were transported to Brussels and Antwerp, out of fear for permanent damage to the psyches and bodies of the participants. There is, however, potential in this assay, which, according to Arno Böhler's philosophy as artistic research approach (2019), may bring contingent new realities into being.

**Image description:** A colour image shows the carriage being pulled and guided by three people along the towpath of a canal.

Click on <https://www.researchcatalogue.net/view/3440412/3440256#tool-3440357> to see the image.

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[1] Alain Roger's *artialisisation* involves the complicity of the spectator, transforming the landscape *in visu* and *in situ*, in accordance with aesthetic convention. ↩

[2] Eighteenth-century glass- or lens-based devices include the camera obscura and Claude glass, along with surveying equipment such as the theodolite. The picturesque transformation of the three-dimensional landscape into the two-dimensional picture anticipated, or even impelled, the development of the still and moving image. ↩

[3] Belgium's riches were amassed through King Leopold II's 1885 invasion of Congo and the establishment of his so-called Congo Free State, which, in 1908 became a colony of Belgium, lasting until 1960. The colonisation of Congo 'made possible the king's coveted architectural annexation of public space at home' according to Debora Silverman (2024), transforming Antwerp into a pole of ostentation and menace, constructed from the spoils of the plundered Congo Basin. The pillage of Congo's ivory, timber, and wild rubber accumulated heretofore unknown wealth in Belgium. Atrocities perpetrated at the hands of Leopold II and his band of powerful cronies ensured a steady flow of capital to the palace, and later on, as an official colony of Belgium, incriminated the nation itself in the murder of ten to fifteen million Congolese people. ↩

[4] Mignolo and Vázquez trace the Eurocentricisation of modern aesthetic sensibilities to the 'imperial structure of control that began to be put in place in the sixteenth century with the emergence of the Atlantic commercial circuit and colonisation of the New World, and that was transformed and expanded through the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, and up to this day' (2013: I). ↩

[5] Claude Lorrain (1600–1682), also known as Claude Gellée, or simply Claude, created landscapes and seascapes that would come to epitomize the picturesque ideal a century later. The Claude glass was probably never used by Claude, as it only came into popular use in the eighteenth century. ↩

[6] This particular conversation, transpiring on 23 August 2023, was one of many discussions on the picturesque view, which occupied not only my thoughts, but intersected with those of Hannes Schüpbach, whose film *L'Atelier*, photographic series *Screens*, and text *Among the Trees*, created during his artistic residencies at Sceaux and Fontainebleau, navigate themes of picturesqueness. ↩

[7] The Le Nôtre-style garden, named after André Le Nôtre, the most celebrated of the seventeenth-century landscape architects of Versailles, featured grand axes that sliced the garden into symmetrical segments, culminating in converging sightlines contrived by engineered prospects. While the French formal garden seemed to contrast the visual effects produced by the variety, irregularity, and wildness of the picturesque garden, the Le Nôtre garden, in actuality, introduced many of the features and visual devices that were later elaborated in the eighteenth-century picturesque garden. In the seventeenth- to early eighteenth-century Le Nôtre garden, surprise and astonishment were elicited through manipulated views or technologically advanced water features, while the dappling of light and shadow between parterres activated the movement of the eye as in *papillotage*. ↩

**Image descriptions:** A series of over thirty colour images runs from the left of the page to the right, creating a photographic timeline of the project.

Click on <https://www.researchcatalogue.net/view/3440412/3440256#tool-3440268> to see the photographic documentation.