

CV77

ART PHOTO MÉDIAS CULTURE

TOURISME CULTUREL L'industrie du tourisme a créé une importante structure culturelle qui oriente le regard. S'attardant tant à des constructions politico-culturelles telle la Biennale de Venise qu'à des sites et institutions qui jouissent d'une reconnaissance officielle, les travaux que nous vous présentons abordent différents aspects de cette structure et offrent de nouvelles perspectives sur un phénomène désormais mondial.

CULTURAL TOURISM Today's global tourism industry has developed a cultural structure that orients how we see. The works presented here address various aspects of that structure and offer new perspectives on a global phenomenon. The subjects approached range from the political nature of the Venice Biennale to the recently acquired monumental status of certain sites.

Antoni Muntadas

REESA GREENBERG

Jana Sterbak

ALAIN LAFRAMBOISE

Jessica Auer

MICHELLE KASPRZAK

+

Projets Web localisation

SYLVIE PARENT

Les vingt ans de Ciel variable

Twenty years
of Ciel variable

+

David Goldblatt
Dubious Views
Contact Festival
Guy Ben-Ner
Yan Giguère
Ève K. Tremblay
Documenta 12
Olivier Asselin

Interview with
Vik Muniz p. 58

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TOURISME CULTUREL

CULTURAL TOURISM

Éditorial Editorial

2 Une refonte du magazine pour ses vingt ans
A redesign of the magazine for its twenty years

JACQUES DOYON

Portfolios Portfolios

6 **Antoni Muntadas**
On translation: I Giardini

10 The Currency of Time:
Muntadas and *I Giardini*
Le cours du temps:
Muntadas et *I Giardini*

REESA GREENBERG

14 **Jana Sterbak**
Waiting for High Water

19 Jana Sterbak: Trompe-l'œil vénitien
Jana Sterbak: Trompe-l'œil in Venice

ALAIN LAFRAMBOISE

22 **Jessica Auer**
Re-creational Spaces

28 Ways Out of the Labyrinth:
The Works of Jessica Auer

MICHELLE KASPRZAK

Gros plan Focus

30 **Projets photographiques pour le Web: reconnaissance des lieux**
Photographic Projects for the Web: Site Recognition

SYLVIE PARENT

34 **La revue *Ciel variable* a vingt ans, un essai visuel**
Ciel variable Magazine is turning twenty, a visual essay

Actualité Current

Expositions Exhibitions

49 David Goldblatt
Galerie Marian Goodman, Paris

CYRIL THOMAS

50 Guy Ben-Ner
Musée d'art contemporain
de Montréal

PATRICE DUHAMEL

51 Contact Festival
Toronto

GARY MICHAEL DAULT

52 Dubious Views
TPW online exhibition

DAVID GARNEAU

53 Yan Giguère
Occurrence, Montréal

SYLVAIN CAMPEAU

53 Ève K. Tremblay
Donald Browne Gallery, Montreal

JAMES D. CAMPBELL

54 Documenta 12
Kassel, Germany

PETRA KALKES

Lectures Readings

56 Le flâneur et l'allégorie
Olivier Asselin, Éditions Dazibao

ELITZA DULGUEROVA

Paroles Voices

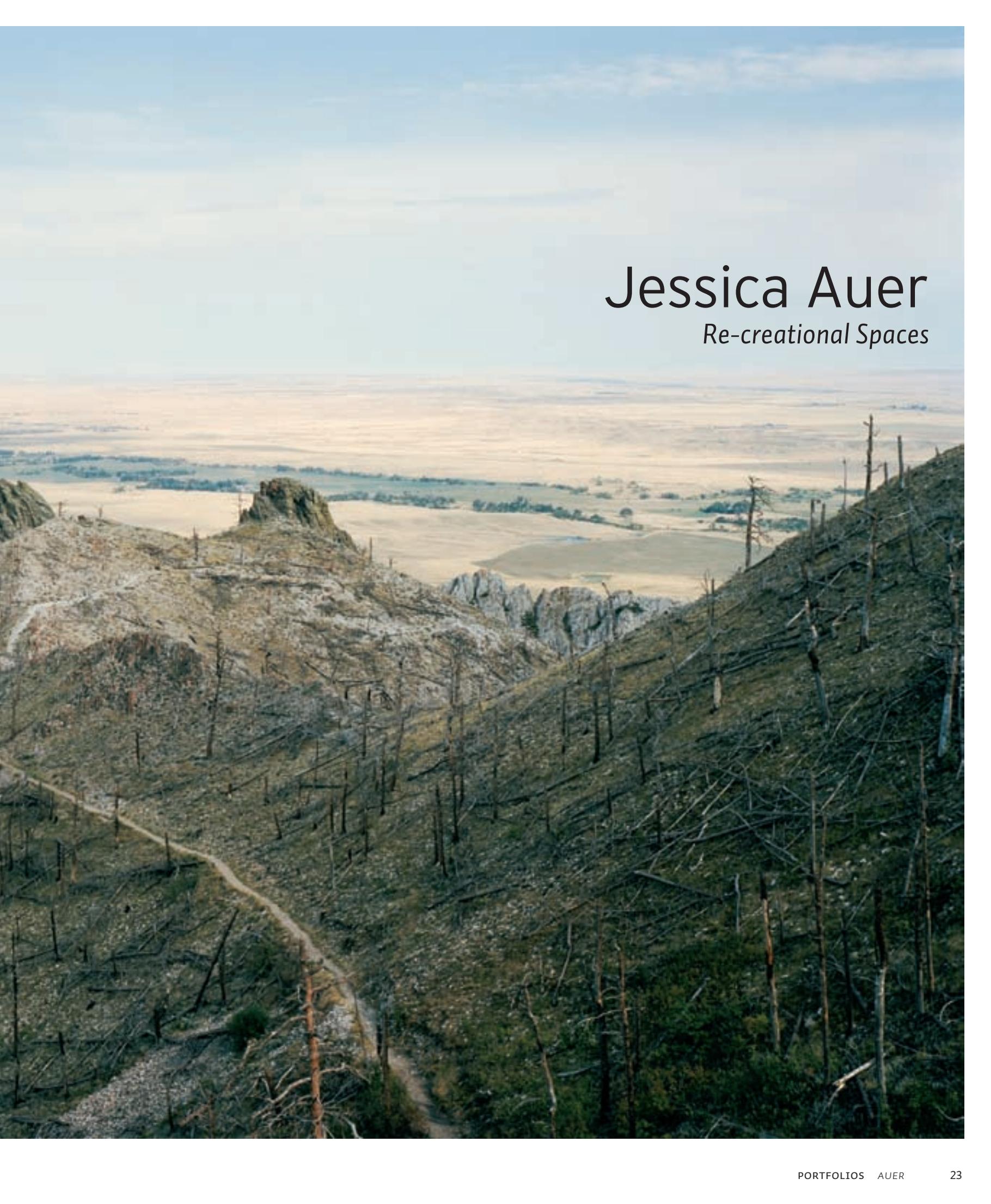
An interview with Vik Muniz 58

JEAN-FRANÇOIS BÉLISLE

Popular sites and tourism fascinate Jessica Auer. She has produced a series of photographic works that were shot in North and South America in which landscapes and architecture have been preserved, renovated, altered, or built from scratch for the benefit of tourism. Through novel perspectives and intriguing details, she invites viewers to appreciate these sites while understanding the importance of their history, cultural authenticity, and role in collective memory. Through her works, Auer offers an opportunity to reflect on and participate in the use of these sites.

Jessica Auer est fascinée par les sites populaires et le tourisme. Elle a produit ici une série de photographies prises en Amérique du Nord et du Sud où les paysages, et l'architecture ont été préservés, rénovés, altérés ou encore construits tout récemment à des fins touristiques. Par des perspectives innovatrices et des détails marquants, elle cherche à intéresser le spectateur à ces endroits tout en tenant compte de l'importance de leur histoire, de leur authenticité culturelle et de la mémoire collective liée à chacun de ces sites. Ces œuvres nous offrent la possibilité de réfléchir et de participer à l'utilisation d'eux.





Jessica Auer

Re-creational Spaces





*Re-creational Spaces,
Chromogenic prints
Courtesy of Galerie Thérèse Dion
épreuves chromogènes
Avec la permission de la Galerie Thérèse Dion*

*PREVIOUS PAGE / PAGE PRÉCÉDENTE
Bear Butte, South Dakota, 2006
101,6 x 132,1 cm*

*Iguazu National Park, Argentina, 2005
101,6 x 132,1 cm*

*Glacier National Park, British-Columbia, 2006
101,6 x 132,1 cm*



Machu Picchu, Peru, 2005
121,9 x 152,4 cm



Uxmal, Mexico, 2006
101,6 x 132,1 cm



Dinosaur Provincial Park, Alberta, 2005
101,6 x 132,1 cm



Tulum, Mexico, 2006
101,6 x 132,1 cm



Niagara Falls, New York, 2004
121,9 x 152,4 cm

Historic Quebec City, Quebec, 2005
101,6 x 132,1 cm



Jessica Auer was born in 1978 in Montreal, where she currently lives and works. She recently obtained a master's degree in studio arts from Concordia University. Her work includes a series of photographs and a video installation that examine the outer edges of Montreal Island. With the assistance of a Roloff Beny Fellowship, she is currently creating and has recently exhibited a body of photographs concerning popular tourist destinations in North and South America.

Jessica Auer est née à Montréal, où elle vit et travaille actuellement. Elle a récemment terminé une maîtrise en beaux-arts à l'Université Concordia. Ces œuvres récentes comprennent une série de photographies et une œuvre vidéo sur les frontières de l'île de Montréal. Grâce à la bourse Roloff Beny, elle poursuit la production de photographies sur les sites touristiques et populaires de l'Amérique du Sud et du Nord.



Ways Out of the Labyrinth: The Works of Jessica Auer

BY MICHELLE KASPRZAK

At one point or another, we've all played the role of the tourist. When standing on the threshold of a sight that is truly breathtaking – for either its natural beauty or its spectacular urban construction – each of us has also perhaps been guilty of just standing and looking, without ever deeply exploring the sites that we have travelled so far to see. As Lucy Lippard notes, “The scene beckons you in, but just so far. This is comforting. You don't have to go there; no need to climb that mountain, struggle down that slope, get muddy shoes on that trail, stand in the rain for long. The average tourist probably spends a few minutes gazing out into each place s/he will never really see.”¹

Montreal-based artist Jessica Auer has physically trodden some of the same ground as the archetypical tourist whom Lippard describes. Auer is driven by a desire to provoke reflection on these sites, which has inspired her to sensitively capture them in photographs that ask us to really look at places that have been endlessly gaped at and documented. Her *Re-creational Spaces* series depicts several prominent tourist destinations, including Las Vegas, Yellowstone National Park, Niagara Falls, and Quebec City. About her approach and motivation, Auer says, “This method of recording sites soothes my anxiety of forgetting, but as an artist, I create these images to provoke reflection on personal experience and cultural authenticity. My images question the collective memory of specific sites.” The places that she has chosen to photograph are so heavily trafficked that collective memory demands to be questioned: it clings to these sites like so many layers of invisible calculus. These layers are invisible at the site itself, but they are made material in the dozens of snapshots, postcards, and other documentation of a site that tourists take home. In a way, these souvenirs that people bring back with them, particularly of their own smiling faces unceremoniously parked in front of a marvel of nature, are comforting and affirming, for as Susan Sontag notes, “...people in industrialized countries seek to have their photographs taken – feel that they are images, and are made real by photographs.”²

While people may seek to be photographed, especially in fabulous and exotic locales, and be “made real” by this evidence of their journey, the site itself becomes overexposed. When a single place has been

subjected to so many blinks of the shutter and careless stares, this level of regard renders the core image of the site both iconic and impotent – iconic because the endless reproduction means that the very words “Las Vegas” conjure up a mental image of that sign by the side of the road; impotent because the mental image of that sign, and of a few other endlessly reproduced views, is ultimately hackneyed and inarticulate because its ubiquity has made it into visual shorthand. Viewing dozens of postcards of that same sign in Las Vegas affords us no deeper knowledge of that place; it only flattens and reinforces a static notion of Las Vegas in our minds, making it ever harder to look critically at that site again, even when confronted by it in person. Or, as Mark C. Taylor puts it, “As we move back into the future, always searching for the past that was never present, which forever approaches as the future that never arrives, we are consumed by the images we consume. Consuming images create a labyrinth from which there is no exit.”³ Of course, the particular labyrinth that concerns us as we consider the context for Auer's work is the one composed of images of tourist destinations from around the world, and, fortunately, her work does provide the viewer with an exit from this repetitious image loop.

Auer has tasked herself with the highly ambitious goal of making us see places that we feel we may already know very well, lost as we are in the labyrinth of images produced by tourist boards and snapped by other tourists. Glossy, crisp, and precise in their visual focus, Auer's images manage to break through the sedimentary readings that we carry of these places. One of



Inca Trail, Peru, 2005
101,6 x 132,1 cm

Icefields Parkway, Alberta, 2006
121,9 x 152,4 cm

Las Vegas, Nevada, 2004
121,9 x 152,4 cm

The international currency of images of significant places ... provides just the right balance against which this work can stand out, as Auer's images ask us to consider ourselves as participants in the global tourist industry.

her photographs of Yellowstone National Park, for example, highlights the gorgeous horizon, but also takes in the shabby wooden walkway snaking across a rock face in the middle of the frame, reminding us once again of our limited paths as tourists – our unwillingness to “struggle down that slope,” in Lippard’s words. In Auer’s photograph of Igazu Falls in Argentina, the beauty of the falls is positioned at a distance, while the deckchairs and swimming pool of a nearby hotel are foregrounded, directly confronting the concept of eco-tourism in a single impeccably framed image. In these two images in particular, Auer’s concern with cultural authenticity is apparent, and the gulf between the landscape and the worn path through it that we tread as tourists is tangible.

Demonstrating a sharp visual wit, Auer’s photograph of Las Vegas includes a view of the Mirage Hotel, with the word “MIRAGE” appearing three times in the image. Las Vegas, a city that deals in images, is an appropriate focal point for considering Auer’s body of work. Vegas reflects the glory of recognizable sites around the world, such as the pyramids, Paris, France, and New York City, by importing their core images into the city as the basis for complete reproduction.

Dissecting the characteristics of another nearby hotel and casino complex, the Egyptian-themed Luxor, Mark C. Taylor comments, “At the far end of the casino, stairs descend to the lowest level of the structure, where King Tutankhamen’s tomb and an adjoining museum gift shop are located. ...But, of course, the tomb buried beneath the Nevada desert is empty – not because resurrection has occurred but because the body has disappeared or has become nothing but the semblance of a body that was never present in the first place. Between the darkness of the crypt and the light of Râ lies the scene of virtualization where the real becomes immaterial.”⁴ Empty tombs, entire fake cities, and simulations of simulations – it seems that the Mirage Hotel is not the only mirage in Vegas, and Auer’s stunningly beautiful photograph wryly makes this point.

Ultimately, the model images of these places that are so commonly available need to be overcome by nuanced studies like Auer’s *Re-creational Spaces*. The international currency of images of significant places, each one building upon the other and culminating in a massive, fractal perception of these sites, provides just the right backdrop against which this work can stand out, as Auer’s images ask us to consider ourselves as

participants in the global tourist industry. While we battle our way out of the labyrinth of images that consists of all the simple representations that came before, Auer’s work reminds us that if we are not going to struggle down that slope, the least we can do is take a few steps back to consider the larger view.

1 Lippard, Lucy. *On the Beaten Track - Tourism, Art and Place*. New York: The New Press, 1999. p. 139. 2 Sontag, Susan. *On Photography*. (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 1977; reprint, New York: Anchor Books, 1990), p. 161. 3 Taylor, Mark C. *Hiding*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997. p. 245. 4 Taylor, Mark C. *Hiding*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997. p. 245 & 248.

Michelle Kasprzak is a curator and writer based in Edinburgh, Scotland. Her recent curatorial projects include an online exhibition for *Virtual Museum of Canada/Gallery TPW*, and a programme for a video billboard in Melbourne, Australia. She completed her MA at the *Université du Québec à Montréal* in 2006.