

terra_data

terra n. *firma*, firm ground,
incognita, unknown or unexplored region,
data n. *information*



Mining the Archive

Here, the archive is the site for a particular kind of dig. It is a mining of coded information in a search for raw data. The archive presents information – meanings made, histories and organisations – so how to extract the data? The intent seems to be a freeing of substance from signification so that it is active, temporal, differential, continually in the process of becoming. There is a 'de-territorialisation' occurring of the territory of the archive. The archive is one root of a rhizome, a 'point to move out from' and 'something to resist'.¹

Ana Terry's project *terra_data* takes images from 'the stack' within the Hocken Collections as one of its territories. Indeed the stack itself is a territory, as is the archive. Together, the stack and the archive invoke both an ambient stillness and an immersive, temporal experience through time.

Stasis and temporality are further invoked in the cinematic slicing and montage of the landscape images to resemble a filmic sequencing and movement, in a fracturing of established 'framings' of the landscape. Singularly, each 'still' presents a static moment in time. One is reminded of Paul Virilio's ideas concerning the consumption of the landscape at speed.² Virilio discusses this experience in terms of a continual unfolding in the filmic sense, one which involves singular moments where each moment is overtaken by the previous moment to create a dynamic, immersive experience. An experience in which – via the sense of sight – the haptic, the whole body, is involved. The filmic 'slicing' also operates visually as a sequence of pleated surfaces endlessly producing folds, a mapping of one frame into another, a folding in on itself of representational space, in a continual movement between near and far, foreground and background.

Landscape and Territory

Another way of 'seeing', and another territory here, is the genre of landscape itself. The material of *terra_data* is the commodified landscape – whether this is a carefully preserved artifact (here an image of the Mount Cook Range by the 19th-century painter Walter Deverell) or a cheap mass produced reproduction (a faded blue print of some far off place). The ideas of Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari could apply to Terry's interpretations of the landscape, in the sense that there is a relative deterritorialisation and a reterritorialisation³ occurring. That is to say, both forms of representation of the landscape could be viewed as a taking of control from a place (a territory) or land via the imposition of a particular set of values in the

manner in which the landscape is framed. Hence there is an undoing of a prior set of values and the imposition of new orders – a replacement with an alternative set of values or concepts. They represent different forms of Eurocentric commodification of the landscape. So, while occupying very different positions in the territory that is culture, there is sameness in their difference. But Terry's concern is not for the position of the landscape within the cultural psyche, nor with creating a new frame for the New Zealand landscape. She wants to effect her own deterritorialisation/reterritorialisation and she does this by taking the image of the landscape as a cipher for other territories – the archive as a framing territory, the territory of occularcentric experiences and the haptic, the territory between data and information, and of code, the territories of time and space, the territory of seeing. It becomes another of many possible points from which to move out from – another root of a rhizome – 'A rhizome never ceases to connect...'⁴ Terry's intent is to effect a 'de-centering...onto other dimensions and onto other registers.'⁵ These are what Deleuze and Guattari call 'lines of flight'⁶, a viral-like growth or evolution.

Terra Incognita

Deterritorialisation and reterritorialisation can refer to the breaking down of connections between culture and place, the spatial and temporal dislocation of cultural objects. In this sense also Terry is enacting her own form of deterritorialisation and reterritorialisation, to break down or '...to wedge apart...the archival origins, the landscape and its 'composition'...' Her strategy is, as we see in the work *terra_data*, to disrupt the territory through the vertical slicing of reproductions of landscapes and to reassemble them, re-stratifying sections of landscape from different sources in what can be read as a visual analogy to geological core sampling. The work suggests new scopic regimes, ones which are not stable, in the process of taking apart old ones. Terry's stated aim is not to present a critique of representations of the landscape, nor a critique of the archive and its narratives. Her motivation is an attempt to 'generate something beyond but in relation to the boundaries of the Hocken archive; the archive as a point of departure. A plateau to lift off from.'⁸ But there is more than one archive here. Each is several, so there are quite a few, there is multiplication and there is a re-territorialization, 'there are lines of articulation or segmentation, strata, territorialities; but also...movements of deterritorialization and of de-stratification.'⁹ There is no terra firma here, no single fixed position, but maybe there is some terra incognita.

Endnotes:

- 1 Terry's discussions about *terra_data* has been influenced by Simon O'Sullivan's book *Art Encounters Deleuze and Guattari*. O'Sullivan experiments with notions of de-territorialisation and demonstrates how to deploy Deleuze & Guattari's suggested methodologies in an arts practice. Terry states "Deleuze and Guattari use geomorphic metaphors in describing processes akin to my own adoption of geological/archaeological methodologies and analogies in my practice." See Simon O'Sullivan, *Art Encounters Deleuze and Guattari*, (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), 33-37.
- 2 Paul Virilio, *Dromoscopy, or The Ecstasy of Enormities*, trans. by Edward R. O'Neill, (*Wide Angle*, 20.3, 1998), 11-22. Last accessed 12/11/07 via http://muse.jhu.edu/login?uri=/journals/wide_angle/v020/20.3virilio.html
- 3 See footnote 1.
- 4 Gilles Deleuze & Félix Guattari, 'Rhizome' in *On the Line*, trans. by John Johnstone (Semiotext(e), Columbia University, New York, 1983), 12.
- 5 Ibid. 13.
- 6 Gilles Deleuze & Félix Guattari, 'Rhizome' in *On the Line*, trans. by John Johnstone (Semiotext(e), Columbia University, New York, 1983), 20.
- 7 Ana Terry, *terra_data and other Lines of Flight*, unpublished notes from a research seminar presented on 7 November 2007 at the Otago Polytechnic School of Art, Dunedin.
- 8 Ana Terry, *terra_data and other Lines of Flight*, unpublished notes from a research seminar presented on 7 November 2007 at the Otago Polytechnic School of Art, Dunedin.
- 9 Gilles Deleuze & Félix Guattari, 'Rhizome' in *On the Line*, trans. by John Johnstone (Semiotext(e), Columbia University, New York, 1983), 2.

This essay draws on Ana Terry's current research and writing on the ideas of Paul Virilio, Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari.

Alexandra Kennedy, November 2007

Images: Left and overleaf: details from *terra_data*, 2007
Thumbnail image overleaf: 'the stack', Hocken Pictorial Collections, 2007
Images © Ana Terry 2007

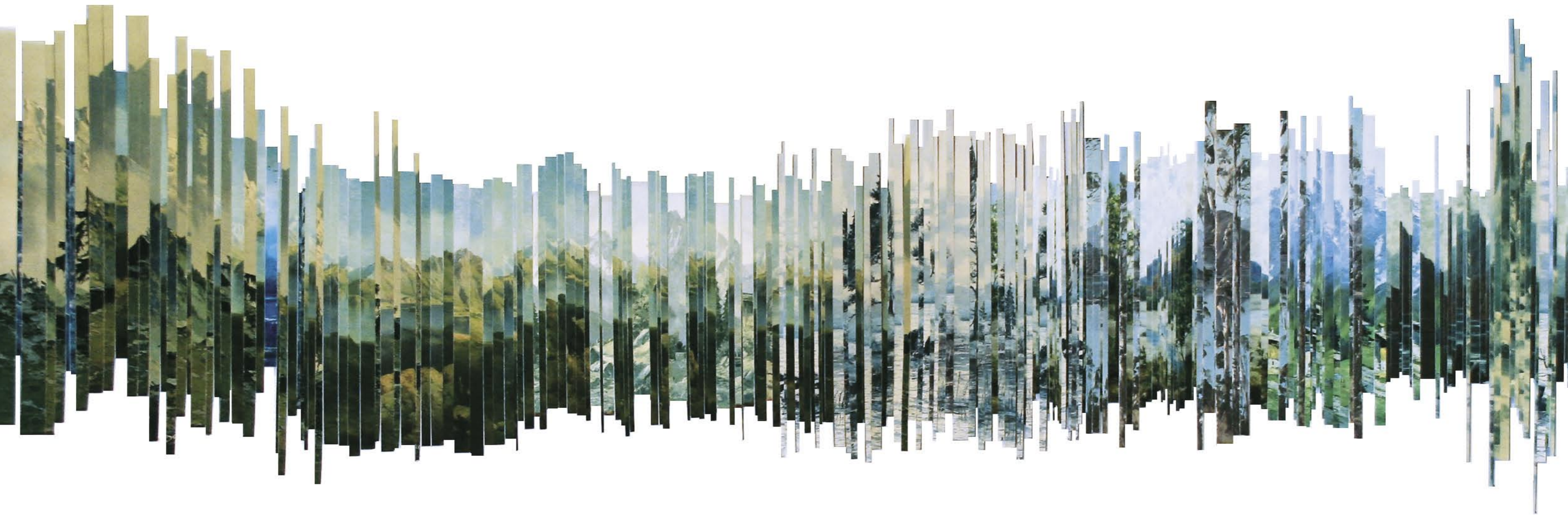
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