

Abstract

This study places research detailing the scientific and political underpinnings of the kind of viewing employed in the British landscape painting tradition against its deployment in the British colonies of South Africa and Australia. This research was used to examine how sensing 'home' and sensing a 'different place' occur. The 'embedded' experience of a specific landscape as exemplified by the established artistic traditions of Aboriginal and San cultures is set against the practice of a distanced, externalized viewing developed in relation to optical technologies and the detached vision required of the colonial traveller.

This thesis explores three modes of relating to the landscape via representation and their construction of home. It looks in detail at British landscape representation, then at San and Aborigine representations of their experiences of the landscape. I then follow the person of Thomas Baines, an expedition artist, in order to briefly explore the confrontation of the British settler with an unfamiliar, foreign landscape in the colony.

Concomitant to this exploration is the consideration of the possible sensual biases at play in the articulation of landscape. The experience of spatiality is predominantly defined in terms of sight. Touch bears on this experience not only in its literalisation in the arts as a response to 'texture' or emotive feeling, but it has effects beyond this, or in the depth of this, specifically its involvement in constructions of 'proximity'. Being cultivated are degrees of sensitivity to what comes to happen in 'close space' – where the event occurs, one that is hoped by the settler to be reciprocal, although never fully so, to his perception at that moment.

The articulation of sensuality involved in constructing landscape representation traditions offers crucial insights into how present orientations to landscape operate.