ABSTRACT. In this paper I explore how rock art, as a fixed depiction, defines and extends landscape and place. I examine how rock art, shaped and placed as gesture and marker by the prehistoric hunter-gathers in the Great Basin, alters the experience of the natural environment. A brief exploration of the ideas of contextual archaeologists Whitley, Ingold, Bender, and Tilley help explain the potential of rock art to our apprehension of landscape and movement. The phenomenology of philosopher Maurice Merleau-Ponty is used to illuminate concepts of perception and sensing. The notion of absence is proposed and explored in order to understand rock art as a process of removal and to consider the presence of the makers as traces now in, and about, landscape.

Rock Art

There are power places on the earth. They have meaning not just because humans associate meaning with them, but because they resonate. They are designated sacred places not only because of stories humans tell about hem, but because of the energies of the places themselves. They are alive. Stone. Clay. Mica. Minerals. They are associated with healing, or other kinds of aid. They may be mountains, they may be a bend in a river, but they are sacred sites.

Linda Hogan (2001 p. 149)

Prehistoric rock art occurs in abundance and with great variability at certain locations in the Northern Great Basin, which includes all of southeastern Oregon. Rock art, carved and accumulated over thousands of years, functions as a site-specific feature and as a regionally distributed pattern. As a symbolic and “in place” phenomenon of the material record, location, placement, and environmental context are as relevant as is the style or design of a particular image. Rock art provides an opportunity to explore how the original makers perceived, encountered, and engaged the environment and bridges the experience of the human endeavor in time and space in a profound way.

The defining characteristic of “rock” art, according to Whitley (1998), is its "placement on the geological substrate, which is to say the natural landscape. With occasional exceptions, we have largely ignored this defining contextual attribute of rock-art in our analyses of it” (p. 11). Rock art sites were and are important symbols in their own right and as symbolically important as the iconography. Without this context – their physical location in the landscape, their features such as rock outcrop, cliff face, rock-shelter walls, and the panel faces – the symbolic content of rock-art cannot be understood. Whitley uses the ethnohistorical record to elucidate landscape symbolism as it bears on the rock-art site, positing rock art sites of North American hunter-gathers as sacred places, and linked to their shamanistic beliefs, world-view and ritual practice. In this symbolic belief the sites were portals in the sacred realm. According to Whitley (p. 17), spirits entered and exited the natural world through cracks in rocks, reflecting the belief that rocks were numinous. As an extension of this worldview, the placement of rock-art images often were in relationship to features...
on the panel face of the rock. Site symbolism implies that the distribution of sites was some function of distributed supernatural power in the landscape. This view is echoed by Ouzman (1998) with his observation that southern African rock art sites represented physical and conceptual places at which the three sacred worlds connected and interpenetrated.

Bradley (1997) points out, for hunter-gathers, tenure is based on sites and paths, and territories are conceived in terms of trails running through landscape and the views across it, and not by enclosed territorial boundaries. This context of landscape for hunter-gatherer peoples includes “consciously navigated journeys across the land and therefore rock art should always be questioned as to whether or not its presence and meaning is related to these journeys” (Ross 2001 p. 546). Their “sophisticated specific and intimate relationship with the natural land upon which they live is based on an acute observation and perception of the environment which is part of an integrative cognitive whole” (p. 545). As David (1992) notes, a “symbolic reservoir” as a referent of culture can help understand the process of change in space and time of a population on a macroscale. The rock art of the Northern Great Basin is a delimited symbolic reservoir of arching potential. Hodder (1982) points out “idea and belief are present, and are reproduced, in all action, however economic or mundane” (p. 213), encouraging the use of symbolic principles to link parts together to seek for a far-reaching concept of wholeness. Understood as part of a symbolic system layered with meaning, rock art, and the landscape it sits within, offers a coherent and enveloping environment.

Landscape

*So long as the human consciousness remains within the hills, canyons, cliffs, and the plants, clouds, and sky, the term landscape, as it has entered the English language, is misleading.*

Leslie Marmon Silko (1996 p.27)

*Once in his life a man ought to concentrate his mind upon the remembered earth, I believe. He ought to give himself to a particular landscape in his experience, to look at it from as many angles as he can, to wonder about it, to dwell upon it. I am interested in the way that a man looks at a given landscape and takes possession of it in his blood and brain.*  
N. Scott Momaday (1970)

How rocks and rock art are experienced in a landscape context, how they are seen and in what sequence, and how they elicit and confirm power, all contribute to their meanings. Tilley (2004) argues that abstracted documentation of the rocks abandons the opportunity to consider and respond to the range of choice and placement inherent in the designs. "If we regard rock carvings as just visual things, we tend to abstract their appearances from their material existence and their relational significance to the sensuous qualities of the rocks themselves” (p. 215). Bodily interaction with the patterning becomes a starting point for reinterpretation. He argues for taking a phenomenological approach to studying them, explaining that understandings are objective because they relate to the “material presence of forms that we perceive” (p. 219).

As a philosophy, phenomenology describes. Ultimately this phenomenological approach, according to Tilley, "transcends a distinction between nature and culture” (p. 220) and yields an interchangability with the environment. The rock art, the stones, and the landscape produce the meaning for and with us. This occurs “by establishing connections between ourselves and the disparate material phenomena with which and through which we live, the plants and animals, landscapes and artifacts that surround us, and this is the work of tropic language of metaphor and metonymy” (p. 31). Rock art both makes meaning and is meaning through repeated experiences, whether for the researcher or the prehistoric peoples inhabiting place, and in this emergence of meanings, memory becomes intimately linked to dwelling. We come to understand stones and
landscapes in place and “move from the cognitive sign value of things to the embodiment of things, from the code of the world to the flesh of the world, from symbol to action” (p. 31).

The context of being-in-the-world is physical, active and particular, as described by Bender (2002). Through this embodied interaction we create the categories and interpretations of the encountered and perceived phenomena. Landscape and time are subjective, imbedded with social relations and political intent. Like a segmented landscape, once time is, inevitably, organized, it becomes political and hierarchical. Boundaries arrive to shape an objective notion, but Bender emphasizes that, to make sense of this inherent contradiction, the “untidy multivocality” of the post-modern is welcomed (p. 106). Luckily, landscapes are undisciplined and run rough against our binaries and categories. Bender calls this the “volatility of landscape” which produces a “plurality of place” (p. 107) that is always in the making, each moment being both particular and extended forward and backward in time and place. Hence, Bender (p107) envisions

an embodied phenomenological approach to time and landscape married to a larger political understanding – one that attends not only to how people are socialized through their daily (timed) encounters but to how they negotiate, question, and create those encounters, that recognizes not just experiences of time and place rooted in familiar landscapes but the dislocated but nonetheless always physically grounded experiences of people on the move.

Ingold (1993) brings us closest to integrating landscape with phenomenology in order to appreciate the place of rock art. Through focusing on the temporality of landscape, he seeks to “move beyond the sterile opposition between the naturalistic view of the landscape as a neutral, external backdrop to human activities, and the culturalistic view that every landscape is a particular cognitive or symbolic ordering of space” (p. 152). Ingold argues for a “dwelling perspective.” This privileges “the understanding that people derive from their lived, everyday involvement in the world. Indeed, since “the practice of archaeology itself is a form of dwelling, “for both the archaeologist and the native dweller, the landscape tells – or rather is – a story. It is form of remembering that engages perceptually with the environment. Telling a story is not...a covering up of the world, but way of guiding the attention of listeners or readers into it” (p. 153).

In moving toward a dwelling perspective, similar to Tilley, Ingold (1993) contrasts the landscape, the world known to those who dwell therein, with the environment as a reality of relationship for the organism. Landscape emphasizes form, as the body is the form of the dweller and “like organism and environment, body and landscape are complementary terms: each implies the other, alternatively as figure and ground, an unfolding resulting in formative properties, or embodiment, the movement of incorporation” (p. 157). However, thus far this concept is static. Temporality as passage and movement is called for, “encompassing a pattern of retensions from the past and pretenstions for the future” (p. 157). This carrying forward of the social life constitute activities Ingold names the “taskscape” (p158). After Sorkin and Merten (1937), he recognizes social time as “grounded in the rhythms, pulsations and beats of societies in which they are found.” (p. 158). Ingold acknowledges Merleau-Ponty (1962): “in reckoning an environment, I am “at my task rather than confronting it” (p. 416) and: “the passage of one present to the next is not a thing which I conceive, nor do I see it as an onlooker, I effect it.” (p. 421, Ingold’s emphasis, p. 159). The taskscape becomes the sociability of the landscape and the temporality of the taskscape is perceived as one of participation. Presence is inseparable from the moment, yet provides a vantage of past and future and gathers then to it. Therefore, landscape is not land, it is not nature, it is not space. We live amidst. Landscape is not a set of binaries and it is not a cultural image. Landscape “as the familiar domain of our dwelling, is with us,” not out there or against us (p154). “Thus whereas with space, meanings are attached to the world, with landscapes they are gathered from it” (p. 155.)

Landscapes, Bender (2002) reminds us, like time, never stand still, and offers two proposals: “Landscape is time materialized, or better, landscape is time materializing.,” and
“Landslapes and time can never by “out there” they are always subjective” (p. 103.) Importantly, this recognizes that perspectives and awareness of the passing of time is essential or fundamental to any depiction of landscape. In phenomenologically considered landscapes time passes and the time duration is in terms of “human embodied experience of place and movement, of memory and expectation” (p. 103). Or, as Merleau-Ponty (164) states, “man exists only in movement...the world and Being hold together only in movement; it is only in this way that all things can be together” (p. 22).

**Gesture**

*Should we even say ‘thing,’ should we say ‘imaginary’ or ‘idea,’ when each thing exists beyond itself, when each fact can be a dimension, when ideas have their regions? Then he answers, “The whole description of our landscape and the lines of the universe, and of our inner monologue, needs to be redone. Colors, sounds and things – like Van Gogh’s stars – are the focal points and radiance of being. Merleau-Ponty (1964 p.15)*

Merleau-Ponty (1964) observed that Matisse in an act of painting, through a simple gesture, resolved what could have been an infinite problem. Referencing Bergson, Merleau-Ponty likens (p. 46) Matisse’s gesture to a hand in the iron filings, achieving an arrangement which makes a place for it. Perception and gesture become one. As Merleau-Ponty (1964) explains, “Language signifies when instead of copying thought it lets itself be taken apart and put together again by thought. Language bears the meaning of thought as a footprint signifies the movement and effort of a body” (p. 44). Such it is with hands that frequently appear in rock art, in particular emblematic hands produced as instant gesture when the land is laid on the rock and pigment is sprayed against and around it leaving the shadow, the negative, the trace, or outlined as markers pecked into the rock. As Whitley (1998) suggests, this makes a place for the person in sacred space.

Consider Alice Walker (2004 p. 45) when describing her encounter:

> Her hand rested near a carving of a large sunburst. A tiny figure that looked like a goat raided its head as if enjoying the radiance. She had never expected to find signs of human life in the canyons that radiated out from the main one...At a place far from the river that was reached after a long climb that began behind a waterfall they’d come to the place the Hopi claimed as the spot they’d emerged into the present world. The fourth world. The worlds before that had been destroyed. And at that spot, there had been a human handprint. She had felt the impact of that small handprint as if it were a handshake. Someone from centuries, perhaps thousands of years, past, reaching out to her. It was in a very awkward place, impossible to touch, and so she had blown a kiss of thanks. And bowed deeply. Thank you, artist, she had said. You are out help when we can receive no other.

Prints, stencils, and carvings of hands, Ouzman (1998) observes, are one example of the polysemy of rock art images that are not language, not text, but do communicate. In this sense, images are not only something to be seen, but are also an expression of a desire to touch or have contact with the rock surface, which opens new possibilities. Such rock art images “were thus consciously selected for and juxtaposed, superimposed, placed in unusual physical settings and articulated within specific social and historical circumstances so that the synthesis the images represent is considerably more than the sum of its parts” (p. 33).

Depiction arises from intentional gesture. This frozen gesture, a mimic act, is an inscription of the body that forms the basis of reflective language. Depiction by repetition creates memory, which allows representation to observers. The image, by “persisting as sign of the gesture” (Davison and Noble, 1989 p. 130) starts to become language. Art in this way moves immediately into the
metaphorical realm and expression passes directly from the maker to the viewer. This willingness to embrace the sign into memory, Merleau-Ponty (1964 p. 51) refers to as “tolerance of the incomplete,” a useful phrase that gives grace to the act of seeing and remembering. What does this mean? The expression is direct, moves directly, from maker to participant, across time and space. The work of art is not seen as thing, but invites the viewer to “take up the gesture”, to embrace the “invented line” which is called “an almost incorporeal trace,” in an active sense. It is an invitation into the world of the maker, “henceforth uttered and accessible” (p. 51).

**Sensing**

*For many contemporary Southern Paiute people the search for a scientifically valid connection between the white paintings and the Ghost Dance is largely irrelevant. They simply know that it is so.* (From the Paiute Conclusion of the study Kanab Creek Canyon Ghost Dance site and its white rock art paintings. Stoffle et al. 2000. p. 24)

Sense involves limitation, subordination to a certain field, according to Merleau-Ponty (1962). At the same time beyond vision, which is thought constrained, this belonging to a field, there are things not seen, even invisible. Yet the visible beings standing before, sensed and accessed by virtue of my presence, “are at the disposal of my gaze in virtue of a kind of primordial contract and through a gift of nature, with no effort made on my part; from which it follows that vision is prepersonal” (p. 217).

Abram (1996) discusses sensible phenomena and how we experience and understand time and space, seeking to place the dimensions, by interpreting the philosophy of Heidegger and Merleau-Ponty, and asks, since presence creates absence and the present implies the absent, just what is now and here and what is not? By naming it “reciprocity,” the contingent wholeness is defined. Within this dynamic the future is equated with the beyond-the-horizon and acknowledged as withholding that “holds open the perceived landscape,” while the past folds into the under-the-ground and by “refusing its presence, supports the perceived landscape” (p. 214). To comprehend this description of the tensile moment that embodies and expresses both presence and absence, I suggest a sensible fusion, in which the withholding-that-holds-open becomes open-holding and the refusing-that-supports becomes suffusing. Suffusing permeates and pulses as the saturation of the before and below. Open-holding offers and extends as the incomplete-actual of the after and edge. Open-holding conserves; suffusing preserves. A mirroring sites the present in the depth of care and constancy of past and future, hidden and revealed. The context of rock art is an always true mirroring and this preserves the art from dissolving into only image and only memory.

The rock art depiction becomes the place, the season, the ceremony, the success or failure, the hope and it is the offering, in time, of a moment. The image, for example, a hand or footprint, sun or elk, is frozen but the context always changes. The perception of rock art through its material, contextual presence locates time and space within the sensuous world. The absence surrounding and imbuing the rock art open-holds and suffuses. An unknown rock in an unknown landscape in an unknown time is the face of the mystery brought to it. The rock art is empty, it moves away not toward, just as a mirror image is further than the mirror itself. The rock art can be seen as the rock not there or the voids can be conjoined to lase a gestalt that moves instantly to rock, ground, surround, meaning or naming place. Ridges, lake edges, overhangs, basalt walls, loom as horizons. Time gestures as season, rain, night, day, and moon. Duration hums as energy moves through the sensing.

As Merleau-Ponty (1964) emphasizes, the world and things offer simultaneous faces yet imposed empirical segmentation is a necessity that is not warranted. For whatever is perceived by me is also masked from me because it presents itself to others in time and space. This attitude can be brought to the perceiving of rock art, in its field, in its region, remembering that the gaze is an
infinite number of lateral lines, “a nameless network – constellations of spatial hours, of point-events” (p.15).

**Ab-sencing**

_We can surely learn from the western Apache, who insist that the stories they tell, far from putting meanings upon the landscape, are intended to allow listeners to place themselves in relation to specific features of the landscape, in such a way that their meanings may be revealed or disclosed. Stories help to open the world, not cloak it._ Tim Ingold (1993 p. 171)

Rock art is absent in many ways. Most rock art in the northern great basin are petroglyphs, inscribed forms with the image emerging as a revealing by virtue of removal of the surface of the rock material from the natural base by carving, incising, pecking or scratching. The image is not present as a made thing but as an unmade, an opening, a portal, balancing visible and invisible. The absence of the rock becomes the reach of the image. Rock art is a physical gesture of removal, that reveals figures which recall the presence of the makers now absent. Yet, for others to exist and be recognized, as Merleau-Ponty (1964) reminds us, “they must already exist as outlines, deviations and variants of a single Vision in which I too participate. For they are no fictions with which I might people my desert – offspring of my spirit and forever unactualized possibilities – but my twins or the flesh of my flesh. Certainly I do not live their life; they are definitely absent from me and I from them. But that distance becomes a strange proximity as soon as one comes back home to the perceptible world” (p. 15).

A figurative removal creates another form of absence. is be. Rock art images as icons are easily commodified, packaged, bought or sold, and may be removed from context and used to promote or enhance contemporary commercial art and craft, advertising, or as symbols to lend an aura of authenticity and primal spirituality. This ab-sencing-from-place as borrowing, appropriating, and presenting, alters and dis-places the rock art only as image, yet launches traces in the perceptual environment now out of context and in new context. Somewhere though, the stones remain silent in the landscape.

Merleau-Ponty (1968) says the reversibility of seeing and the visible is “always imminent and never realized in fact” (p. 147). The experience of the visible world is “the exploration of an invisible and the disclosure of a universe of ideas” (p. 149). The invisible “cannot be detached from the sensible appearances and be erected into a second positivity” (p. 149). The power of ideas plumbs the depths of the invisible, through the transparency of the visible. What is absent is presented, it is “a furrow that traces itself out magically under our eyes without a tracer, a certain hollow, a certain interior, a certain absence, a negativity that is not nothing” (p. 151). Content is not posited and an uncloseable dimension is opened. He reminds us at the end of *Intertwining* (p151), “we do not have to reassemble them into a synthesis: they are two aspects of the reversibility which is the ultimate truth.”

In the absence of the maker is the visible presence of the gesture. Rock art functions as the ghost, as the trace, as the depiction inscribes memory, by reflecting and deflecting. The rock that lived before as a natural rock surface now lives as a mirror. What was “said” in the original gesture exists as a negative or reflective possibility, a space to be filled with the apprehending gaze. Apprehension is pre-explicit. Rock art exists in mostly remote environments, near horizons, where the viewer is absent and distanced from usual personal or cultural constraints. The illumination of an untranslatable language yields communication, a shared experience of human beings embodied on this planet at a particular place in some-time. Perception is encounter and perception opens with tolerance of the incomplete.
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The Rock Art shows communication between the world of the living and the worlds of the spirits, and gives insight into the cosmology of prehistoric hunters and gatherers. There is an exceptionally high number of human figures and compelling portrayals of prehistoric social life, dancing, processions, and rituals. Moreover, the Rock Art provides a unique testimony to the interaction of hunter-gatherers with the landscape. The panels show hunting, fishing and boat journeys, and are thought to represent micro-landscapes. Nearly all the Rock Art sites known in Alta are included in the World Heritage property. All the different motifs, styles and chronological phases are represented by the inscribed components. The rock art was created close to what was the shoreline in prehistory. Nearly all the Rock Art sites known in Alta are included in the World Heritage property. All the different motifs, styles and chronological phases are represented by the inscribed components. The rock art was created close to what was the shoreline in prehistory. Rutland tolerance landscape. Collection by Dai Luong. 75. River Rock Landscaping Landscaping With Rocks Backyard Landscaping Backyard Ideas Luxury Landscaping Walkway Ideas Dry Riverbed Landscaping Outdoor Walkway Large Backyard. Landscape Archives ~ Bless My Weeds. Landscaping ideas, landscape tips and tricks, DIY yard, backyard ideas. French Cottage Garden Cottage Garden Design Cottage Style French Garden Ideas Country Garden Ideas Garden Design Ideas Cottage Front Garden Cottage Garden Plants Cool Garden Ideas. A complete landscape design to replace a portion of the lawn and replace with decomposed granite pathways and garden rooms for peaceful relaxation in a beautiful garden setting. Pinterest. Explore. View credits, reviews, tracks and shop for the Vinyl release of "Landscape Pictures In Rock" on Discogs. You may exercise your right to consent or object to a legitimate interest, based on a specific purpose below or at a partner level in the link under each purpose. These choices will be signaled to our vendors participating in the Transparency and Consent Framework. More information. Allow All. Studying rock art as material traces implies that meaning is not external to the imagery, but intimately related to the practice of making, remodelling, and re-interpreting the images (Jones Reference Jones, Chapman and Wylie2015). We argue that much of the engraved rock art in southern Scandinavia was intended to be experienced by people who had close contact with the engravings, i.e. kneeling down and mobilising different senses when perceiving the images. We will discuss certain design principles, such as the size and position of the engravings, the occurrence of unfinished motifs, and the us