



Casper David Friedrich, *Wanderer above the Sea of Fog*, 1818

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The Contemporary Sublime: Progressing the Human Environment Relationship

The environmentalist movement faces a number of obstacles in acquiring greater support from the general public. Environmental issues are not easily noticed, they operate at scales which challenge comprehension, and the message they offer us often carry a dismal and dreary air about them. As we face these challenges, we are also tasked with stewarding for the well-being of society and the natural world alike. Looking to the work of philosopher Edmund Burke and the concept of the sublime, my thesis looks to answer these questions of stewardship by connecting an 18th century idea to a 21st century context. Adapting this concept of the sublime for a contemporary context requires new dialogues which challenge the traditional notion of man as separate from nature. Through this re-framing, I find that a landscape of the contemporary sublime can be understood as landscapes in which direct and immediate threats to nature are apparent. With this concept I examine the landscape restoration projects of Fresh Kills Park in New York, the Welzow Süd coal mine in Germany and the Quarry Garden in Shanghai China and evaluate their potential for an experience of the contemporary sublime.

Click here for the full thesis:

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Samuel Ferrara has graduated from Rutgers University as a Master of Landscape Architecture in May 2020. He received his bachelor degree in Geography in 2017, with minors in Environmental Studies and American Studies. He has work experience in the greenhouse industry and the Central Park Conservancy. His research interests include, aesthetic philosophy, landscape monuments and memorials, and landscape history.

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