

SONJA HINRICHSEN

Artist Statement

In my artwork I examine environments - urban, industrial as well as natural environments. I am interested in the intersection between place - city or nature - and human perception and utilization thereof, throughout history. As an artist I feel the responsibility to address subject matters our society tends to neglect or deny, including adverse environmental impacts. I aim to provoke thought and engage my audiences intellectually. I am not interested, however, in creating lasting artworks, as I believe that our planet is over-saturated with man-made products. I like to unfold my work into large immersive experiences, however I prefer that it live on in its documentation only, and – hopefully – in the memories of my audiences.

Some of my works rely on photo-and video mappings, sound recordings, note-taking, and research about places and their historical, societal and ecological circumstances. I am especially drawn to environments that may seem inhospitable, such as wastelands, deserts, high mountains and snow/ice landscapes. Mythology and local legends play a particular role in my research, as they bear invaluable information about places and how people(s) have lived in and with them in past eras. Despite an overall documentary character, these projects have a very personal focus, as they draw from my experiences and perceptions. While the attention may sometimes reach beyond the reality observed, and venture into hypothesis/fantasy, my pieces usually relate to issues pertinent in our modern, consume-oriented world. With the summary of the audio-visual materials and information collected I create video pieces and immersive media installations with multiple video projections, sound collages and narrative.

Other projects are subtle expressions created directly in the environment. Typically these are simple performances or rituals that result in ephemeral art pieces. While nature erases them within a short time, they live on only in their documentation and are later used in video installations or become photographic pieces. An ongoing project is “*Snow Drawings*”, large designs that I “draw” into pristine snow surfaces by walking lines with snowshoes. I have been working with community volunteers, which has enabled me to create vast pieces while at the same time offering possibility for community to participate in the making of art during exciting outdoor experiences in exhilarating landscapes. It is important to me that participants experience the elements of nature while they help me transform their own familiar snow landscape into a piece of art. Since the work itself is extremely temporary I take aerial documentation right after completion of each piece. I hope that the large-scale digital photo prints and video pieces I create can demonstrate also to a larger audience how the landscape becomes a piece of art. This changes our perception and accentuates the beauty and magic of the natural environment, and thus inspires awe and appreciation for art as well as for nature.

I hope that my works help arouse appreciation and consciousness for the natural world. Modern society is becoming increasingly disconnected from nature. I believe, however, that for a successful future of humanity it is essential that we re-gain a greater awareness of our planet’s life and tune ourselves in with the natural world, understand it better and take better stewardship thereof.