BE
HERE
NOW

Instagram
and the Feminization
of Wilderness

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Submitted in partial fulfillment for the Master of Landscape Architecture,
School of Architecture and Landscape Architecture,
University of British Columbia.
Release Form

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In less than a decade of existence, Instagram has changed the way we interact with wilderness. From online oversharing to site overuse, social media is often considered “too much,” something that needs escaping from in order to get back to our true selves. In the Western world, wilderness has always been that somewhere to escape. But wilderness ideology has a problematic history of exclusion.

Instagram is adding to the complexity of wilderness and diversifying who gets to experience and define wilderness. Through adding digital layers of representation and discourse, those traditionally erased or misrepresented are choosing how to represent themselves. This thesis, sited in an already viral landscape, imagines a place where technology and wilderness will coexist, where wilderness is not a place to escape the internet, and where relationships between the self and others are reconfigured.
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Outdoor recreation has never been more popular. Visits to U.S. National Parks have grown by 55 million in the past decade (NPS). Social media, in particular, Instagram, which has seen its own meteoric rise over the past decade, has contributed to the increased popularity of outdoor recreation. Now that the majority of North Americans have mobile phones and use social media, nature photography and selfie culture have converged. Instagram users see photographs of friends and influencers in outdoor recreation areas like National Parks and are inspired to seek out these places and take their own photos. When those users then post their own photos, complete with a location tag, they contribute to a feedback loop that is currently making many outdoor recreation areas more popular than ever before.

Loved to Death

Popularity in outdoor recreation can sometimes mean crowding. Parks in Canada and the U.S. including Banff, Yosemite, Yellowstone, Great Canyon, Great Smoky Mountains are struggling with record numbers of visitors. Visitors at these parks often experience long entrance lines, temporary closures, crowded and noisy trails, and lineups for facilities. Ecologically, parks are suffering from trail overuse, increasing wildlife encounters, and garbage buildup.

Along with the increased numbers come a range of damaging and dangerous behavior. This results in littering, traveling in large groups, contributing to noise pollution, harassing wildlife, trampling sensitive areas, allowing children and pets to destroy cultural artifacts and ecological features, and breaking other written and unwritten rules.

But the surge in new park visitors is an opportunity for parks to become more diverse. In the U.S., parks have long struggled with attracting diverse visitors. In 2008, visitors to U.S. National Parks were 78% white, compared to only 62% of all Americans and 80% of NPS employees were white.1

Phones as Filters

In her 1977 essay, “On Photography,” Susan Sontag writes that photography has become a “principal device for experiencing something.” Especially important while on vacation or visiting new places, we use photography to capture what we have seen and take it home with us. But before we have the physical photograph in our hands or on our devices, the act of taking a picture shapes our experience. “Most tourists feel compelled to put the camera between themselves and whatever is remarkable that they encounter,” Sontag writes. “Unsure of other responses, they take a picture. This gives shape to experience: stop, take a photograph, and move on.”

Four decades later, there are higher stakes. We have seen photos of the places we are visiting and likely know where the most scenic views are. We can instantly share photos and get feedback. Many have internalized the Instagram aesthetic - certain colors, content, and angles that look especially good on smartphones and result in more engagement from followers. And then there is the ultimate Instagram shot, the selfie, which is often maligned as narcissistic especially among older generations.

Landscape architects have traditionally worked with outdoor recreation areas on two scales: master park planning and designing viewing, entrance, and gathering areas. In the past decade, many of these facilities have needed redesigns to address parking and traffic issues. But landscape architecture should go beyond managing crowding and engage with the deeper problems of park popularity. As one NPS landscape architect says “we are not going to build our way out of this problem.”

Representation

Using literature review, precedent studies, and social media analysis, this thesis will explore Instagram culture and its effects on wilderness areas and those who visit them. Furthermore, it will explore the new digital layers of experience that now exist via Instagram and the opportunity for greater depth of representation for traditionally misrepresented environments and people.
Instagram, outside
I recently had a conversation with a friend who told me about his hike earlier that day in Cypress Provincial Park, a popular hiking area and ski resort in West Vancouver. Apparently his hike had become unpleasant when one of his friends started playing music from his phone and his hiking group ran into another friend group and they formed a line of more than a dozen people walking along the trail to the summit on a sunny Saturday in November.

The next day, while scrolling through Instagram, I was surprised to see a photo this friend had posted of a lookout from Cypress Mountain. The photo showed no people, but a pretty scene of a bright blue sky and the Vancouver coastline. “Sunny Days in Vancouver” it was captioned, along with “#yvr #sun #westcoast #outside #cypress.” Later, in the “stories” section of Instagram, where users post more casual images and photos, often overlaid with text or emojis, and are automatically deleted after twenty-four hours, I came across another photo of his hike. Taken from the same viewpoint, the scene looked dramatically different. I could see at least nine people who were in varying states of refueling or posing for a photo. This photo seemed much more in line with the experience my friend had told me about.

**Why Instagram**

In less than a decade of existence, Instagram has changed the way many people plan, experience, document, and share their outdoor experiences. The sheer size of Instagram’s user base means that when trends and places go viral online, there can be real and immediate effects felt offline. While there has been some research and analysis done on Instagram with regard to travel, education, and museums, Instagram and its effects have not been widely studied from the perspective of the outside environment or landscape architecture. Perhaps this is because Instagram’s user base is particularly young and female, while older academics and landscape architects are just beginning to explore this platform. As a digital platform, Instagram has dramatically changed the way we experience landscape and it is particularly heavily used while people engage in outdoor recreation. As landscape architects, we should acknowledge the effect Instagram has on landscapes, be able to plan for future effects, and could potentially use Instagram to design or alter landscapes.

**Instagram Users**

Instagram was launched in 2010 and was bought by Facebook for $1 billion (USD) two years later. In June 2018 it became the sixth social media platform to surpass one billion active users. Those users generate an estimated $9 billion (USD) annually from 2 million companies who pay for advertisements.1 Like many social media platforms, Instagram’s user group skews young, 71% of Americans ages 18-24 use Instagram regularly compared with a rate of 35% for all Americans.2 Women are more likely than men to be active on Instagram.3 Researchers Pavica Sheldon and Katherine Bryant explain that, on average, women care more about their personal relationships than men and spend more time communicating with friends.4 Woman use social media networks to show their friends that they care by liking and commenting on photos. Instagram is a more personal form of social media and the visual nature prompts users to post personal images including inside people’s homes and selfies.

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Sheldon and Bryant have studied four categories for motives to use Instagram: information/knowledge about others, documentation, coolness, and creativity. Users keep up with what their friends and others are posting by scrolling through their image feed. All public profiles can be accessed by anyone and users can follow trends through hashtags or explore locations through geotags. The second motive, documentation, stems from Instagram’s visual nature which sets it apart from other social media networks. People are motivated to use Instagram to appear “cool” and to stay up to date with trends, in addition to gaining likes and followers. Sheldon and Bryant attribute this impulse to the psychological need of individuals to feel seen and valued. Teens and young adults especially seek approval from their peers and Instagram is a popular outlet through which to do so. Creativity, the fourth motive, entails not only choosing what to take a photo of, but framing the shot, using photo filters, and adding a caption and hashtags. 7

Well-Being and Biophilia

The benefit of nature for human well-being is both a budding scientific topic and a popular belief among North Americans.8 Paired with this belief if the more recent idea that most people are not spending enough time in nature. In his popular 2005 book, Last Child in the Woods, Richard Louv introduced the term, “nature deficit disorder” in explaining that lack of exposure to nature harms childhood development and continues to affect the physical and emotional health of children and adults.9 Louv believes we are spending too much time in front of the TV and computer and too little time exploring nature which contributes to the rise in obesity, attention deficit disorders, anxiety, and depression. For Timothy Beatley, author of Biophilic Cities, the problem is more than adults who have not grown up exploring nature will not understand or passionately care about nature, nor will they be able to experience the deeper life moments and connections that being in nature can provide.10 He also projects that they will not be interested in protecting or restoring nature.

The biophilia hypothesis adds depth to the idea of nature’s health benefits. E.O. Wilson, who popularized the hypothesis with his 1984 book, Biophilia, believes that humans have an “innate tendency to focus on life and lifelike processes”.11 He believes we are biologically inclined to prefer interacting with plants and animals, including other humans, but our time spent inside, often interacting with screens, is creating a disconnect between humans and nature. More than thirty years later, the average American consumes more than 12 hours of media a day,12 checks their phone every twelve minutes,13 and spends an average of 2 hours and 45 minutes a day using their smartphone.14 When we seek out nature for play or relief, are we bringing with us the very thing we are trying to escape from? Paradoxically, Instagram inspires many to seek out an outdoor adventure in the first place. When someone sees a photo of a seemingly beautiful place he or she wants to go and experience the same thing and also have a photo to post on his or her own account. But does bringing along our phone inhibit our ability to soak in all of that healthy nature? 15

Phones Outside

This topic is being studied by scientists. A recent study, conducted by Bin Jiang et. al., attempted to measure the extent to which the use of electronic devices limit the benefits of nature.16 Building on previous research which has shown that being in or even just having a view of nature can enhance attentive functioning, the study was designed to test whether using devices during nature exposure inhibits that effect. Participants were asked to perform difficult cognitive tasks and then assigned to one of four rest situations: with and without a laptop computer in both green and barren settings. The researchers found that using an electronic device in green settings significantly decreases the mental benefits of nature exposure.

There has yet to be any studies on the psychological effects of using Instagram while participating in outdoor recreation, but a study by Barasch et al. examined the relationship between memory and photography.17 Surprisingly, they found that taking photos actually increased participants’ ability to take in and remember their visual surroundings. Even without looking at any of the photos taken during the study, participants could remember more of what they saw and but less of what they head compared with those who did not take photographs. Participants with a camera even recognized non-photographed aspects of the experience much better than participants who did not carry a camera. These results contradict the idea that we may be “offloading” our memory of our experiences by taking photos.18 However, it does confirm that even just carrying a camera has an effect on our nature experience: it prioritizes our visual sensory experience.

Highlight Reel of a Place

Instagram prioritizes a particular kind of visual experience. There are certain photos with certain views that get posted again and again. It does not take a scientific study to see that some places
are being more popular because of Instagram and some are even going viral. People see a photo and then seek out that place on their own. It is easy to assume that this is a shallow process but for many people, browsing Instagram is a way to get ideas for places to go. I can personally speak to this motivation. When I first moved to Vancouver, I followed popular trail runners on Instagram so that I could find beautiful places to go running. But some spots are more photogenic than others or are easier to get to or lend themselves to being photographed in some other way.

When people are motivated to visit a place based on photos that they have seen of it, they can miss out on other aspects of the experience, whether or not the end goal is to post a photo to Instagram. Casey Schreiner, the editor-in-chief of Modern Hiker calls this phenomenon the urge to see the “highlight reel of a place.” People stick to places that they know will be beautiful and will result in a beautiful photo. If all goes well, they will achieve the experience that they set out for when they first saw a photo (or ten, or a hundred photos) of the spot before they set out. This also means that they may be so focused on getting to that spot and might be missing out on smaller moments within the experience or other opportunities that are less well known.

The Instagram Effect

The effect of this phenomenon is an enormous problem for visitor experience, maintenance, and site sustainability and it all stems from crowding. In Canada, national park attendance has been steadily rising over the past decade. Attendance increased by twelve percent in 2017 when national park admission was free to celebrate Canada’s 150th birthday. Many American national parks are also overwhelmed with visitors. In 2016 they received 331 million visits and attendance in some parks is rising faster than others. Grand Canyon visits have increased from 2.3 million in 1980 to 6 million in 2016. Zion National Park in southwestern Utah, with its picturesque red canyons, is struggling to handle the 4.3 million visitors it gets per year and officials are considering requiring reservations for entry, which would be the first time this strategy would be used for a national park. Visitors at these parks often experience long entrance lines, temporary closures, crowded and noisy trails, and lineups for facilities. Many outdoor recreation sites outside national parks are also crowded and can struggle without the management systems that national parks have when their popularity peaks.

Horseshoe Bend, where the Colorado River meanders into a stunning U-turn surrounded by large sandstone cliffs in Page,
Arizona is located about 1 km from U.S. Route 89. In the 1990s, this overlook was a hidden gem partly because it is several miles away from Grand Canyon National Park. When people began posting photos of Horseshoe Bend and tagging the location, it became incredibly popular and now sees about 2 million visitors a year. In this case, and in many others, Instagram has had a real effect on the landscape. When the lookout first became popular, there was only a small pull-off from the highway for cars and no trail, railing or restroom. Without the infrastructure to keep them to a trail, the crowds were damaging the landscape. The Park Service, along with the city of Page, have since made several improvements to attempt to keep visitors in one area and safe, and encourage visitors to come during off-peak times, before 10 a.m. or after 6 p.m. Still, there have been multiple deaths resulting from visitors accidentally falling over the edge of the cliff.

Instagram can bring out damaging and unsafe behavior. Ecologically, parks are suffering from trail overuse, increasing wildlife encounters, and garbage buildup and along with the increased numbers come people who do not have experience in “wilderness” places, are not attuned to outdoor culture and customs such “Leave No Trace.” This results in littering, traveling in large groups, contributing to noise pollution, harassing wildlife, trampling sensitive areas, allowing children and pets to destroy ecological features and cultural artifacts, and breaking other written and unwritten rules. Visitors often engage in dangerous behavior, sometimes showing off for the camera or becoming distracted why taking a photo.

### Consumable Landscapes

With Instagram, we become an extreme example of Susan Sontag’s idea that we use photography “as a principal device for experiencing something.” In 1977, she wrote that “A photograph passes for incontrovertible proof that a given thing happened,” and that “[i]t seems positively unnatural to travel for pleasure without taking a camera along... photographs will offer indisputable evidence that the trip was made, that the program was carried out, that fun was had.”

Today, we have even more incentive to take pictures of our travels and outdoor adventures. Not only do we have the chance to share images instantly with most likely hundreds, if not thousands of followers, but we also instantly get back feedback in the form of ‘likes’ and comments. We are no longer using cameras to shape an experience, but performing experiences for our digital following. In a 2018 paper examining Instagram and travel photography, Sean P. Smith writes that the accumulation of ‘likes’ leads to ‘commodification of
FIG. 7 — Images collected and reposted on the Instagram account @trailfails show people openly breaking rules in outdoor areas, damaging ecological areas and violating the Leave No Trace ethic and, in most cases, posting these actions on their Instagram accounts.

ABOVE visitors at Joshua Tree National Park break explicit park rules to not climb or sit on the Joshua Trees

LEFT hikers at Hanging Lake in Colorado ignore the nearby sign that says “Please Keep off the Log,” most of whom crop the sign out of their photos

Hitting a golf ball into Monument National Park in Grand Junction, CO

Bragging about illegally scaling a rock in Canyonlands National Park, near Moab, Utah

Beautifying posting of a photo of illegally feeding animals in Glacier National Park, Montana

FIG. 8 — The REI 1440 Project screen captures from: https://www.behance.net/gallery/8845299/1440-Project

In this sense, landscapes themselves become consumable as travelers seek locations to take photos of and post on Instagram, in return for the currency of social feedback.

Instagram is a business itself, with 2 million paid advertisers, but any individual or business can create an account for free and accumulate followers. Nike has over 80 million followers and single posts can generate over 500,000 likes. In 2012, REI, an outdoor clothing and gear cooperative in the U.S., worked with an advertising agency called BBDO Atlanta to create a marketing scheme to get people to use a hashtag that they created and build awareness of the brand. The REI 1440 Project, so called because there are 1,440 minutes in a day, is a “celebration of every single minute spent outside.” When Instagram users tagged their photo with the hashtag “rei1440project” a website would pull the photos into a timeline, reading the image’s metadata to determine the time of day that the photo was taken. The project was wildly successful and, though it has been retired for years, users still use the hashtag which now has been tagged to over 3.9 million images.

interpersonal interactions.”


= Ibid.


= Ibid.
Pop-Up Instagram Experiences

The CADO • Candytopia • Dream Machine • Museum of Ice Cream
Museum of Selfies • The Museum of Pizza • The Happy Place
The Egg House • Color Factory • Rosé Mansion • the wndr museum

"Instagram Museums," "Instagram Traps," "Selfie Factories," or "Pop-Up Experiences," these temporary installations are called many names but will be referred to here as installations. Their purpose is clear: provide a fun series of backdrops and props to pose with for photos. Most of these installations are set up as a series of rooms that each have a theme and the rooms (sometimes vaguely) relate to the overall theme of the experience, usually something light and happy or often food. They are often compared to Disneyland with no rides. The Color Factory, for example, calls itself a “celebration of color and creativity” and has a ball pit, dance floor, and balloons.

Candytopia’s website proclaims that it “celebrates the vibrant colors and flavors of our favorite sugary delights” and has more than twelve “environments” that include a “marshmallow tsunami” and a pig that shoots glitter out of its rear end. All of these installations feature bright colors and props that look as though they came from the meme-world of the internet. Almost all of them have a ball pit.

Art critic Ben Davis reviewed one Instagram experience, the Dream Machine in Brooklyn, NY, and came up with three conclusions:

First, the experience of being in the space itself is secondary to the images that come out of that experience. The painted walls, props, and lighting effects appear chintzy in person but photograph extremely well. As Davis puts it, “all the value is in its photographic afterlife,” when the resulting images are posted online and receive their likes and comments.

Second, he writes that the experience is about participation and not observation. This is where these pop-ups differ wildly from museums. The installation is not meant to evoke anything other than the urge to take a picture. And because the installed objects are mostly color and pattern backdrops with props to pose among, the only thing to photograph is a person and group of people interacting with the space.

Thirdly, Davis writes, “individual experience is secondary to social experience.” At first, this may seem contradictory but these spaces are meant to be experienced with other people. The primary activities are to pose for pictures, take pictures, review them communally and then post them and continue to review the photos by interacting with online followers. Davis argues that if the experience was too interesting on its own, it would be less interesting socially because it would demand too much of its own attention. But here is part of the problem with these experiences, that they borrow greatly from art museum installations but the paint and objects here do not much meaning. This makes visiting these experiences a different kind of experience to the ones that these installations were designed to create.

33 Color Factory, https://www.colorfactory.co/about
34 Candytopia, www.candytopia.com
36 Ibid.
37 Ibid.
38 Ibid.
39 Ibid.
installations and many of the resulting photos seem vacuous, shallow, and transactional.\textsuperscript{40} These installations are only popping up in cities and entrance fees are expensive, usually $30 to $40. They cater to urban millennials who greatly influenced by online culture. This case study is included because it offers an extreme example of what an experience designed entirely for with general Instagram culture looks like. Alternatively, it can be reversed to look at what designers should not do if the goal were to suppress Instagram use.

\textsuperscript{17}Be Here Now 18Tory Michak

Wilderness,
#wanderlust
Hiking grew out of a custom of nature walking in nineteenth-century North America. As new modes of transportation allowed people to ride more and walk less, some wealthy urban residents took up walking. Many walkers took advantage of rural cemeteries and city parks where they could experience nature in a safe and predictable way.41

For many, walking was a spiritual or virtuous act. Walkers drew upon ideas of nature and wilderness from transcendentalism and romanticism. For Henry David Thoreau, writing between 1851 and 1860, walking meant freedom.42 In his essay “Walking,” Thoreau writes about how he walks to recover from the damaging aspects of urban living. He argues that humans are a “part and parcel of Nature, rather than a member of society.”43 Capitalizing the word “Wild,” as if he was referring to God, Thoreau writes of “yearning for the Wild” and he rejects the East, romanticizing the idea going West, a place with future, spirit, and enterprise. Although Thoreau did participate in a few mountainous adventures, most of his walking occurred in the meadows, swamps, forests, and farmland near his birthplace of Concord, Massachusetts.

**Hiking Clubs**

Some adventurous walkers explored places farther from the city and formed clubs to organize trips, report back, and build trails.44 Many small walking clubs were organized in the 1860s and the Appalachian Mountain Club was founded in 1876 in Boston, followed by the Sierra Club in San Francisco in 1892 (founded by John Muir) and the Mazamas in Portland in 1894.45 Many of these clubs were inspired in part by the male bonding that occurred during the American Civil War but most of them were inclusive of women as well. Female members not only held official club positions and went on regular club walks but were vital members of even the most extreme expeditions.46

Women and men wrote about their outings in newspapers and the clubs’ own publications and inspired others to go for walks and hikes across North America. The closing of the frontier and the conservation movement inspired walkers and infused walking with greater meaning. By World War II club-based hiking culture was very popular and after the war, hiking levels increased even more as North Americans grew more affluent and had more leisure time.47

Hiking clubs and hiking culture were influenced by the conservation and environmental movements but their organizational structures gave them a degree of political power. The Sierra Club was particularly active politically and led efforts on preserving forests,
water, species, and creating and expanding parks. Those who spent time outdoors drew upon what they believed was a deeper understanding of the natural world and fought for the protection of the places where they went hiking and camping and also campaigned to preserve wilderness areas.

But as hiking became more popular than ever in the 1960s and 70s, hiking culture was struck with a number of contradictions. First, it became clear that the practice of hiking itself was contributing to environmental degradation. Even with the introduction of a Leave No Trace ethic, hiking involved the consumption of gasoline, cookware, tents, maps, magazines, and other outdoor clothing and gear. Furthermore, crowded trails seemed at odds with the "back to nature" aesthetic of earlier hiker days. As hiking clubs grew larger, membership morphed into a commitment to paying membership dues in exchange for trail upkeep and advocacy and fewer members participated in trail building or did any advocacy themselves. Hikers became net consumers instead of net producers and trail access came to be seen as a right, paid for in tax money.

Wilderness Preservation and Environmentalism

Silas Chamberlin, the author of *On the Trail: A History of American Hiking*, believes that much of the victories that hiking culture inspired, including preserving and expanding parks, building trails, and protecting wildlife, "came at the expense of broader environmental protection and a cultural shift toward meaningful environmental stewardship." This matches up with William Cronon's 1995 contention that our idea of wilderness is damaging because it allows humans to distract themselves from taking responsibility for our unsustainable practices closer to home. To Cronon, much of North America's conservation movement is related to the history of our problematic concept of wilderness, which has transformed from an idea of a place that was considered desolate, barren, and savage in the eighteenth century to one that was idealized in the nineteenth. This transition happened as our sense of sublime landscapes, which had been scary places where people felt insignificant, such as mountaintops, chasms, and waterfalls, were domesticated into spectacles where people could experience pleasure and awe instead of horror.

The idea of the frontier also contributed to our change in the perception of wilderness. As a greater number of people were living in urban areas, nostalgia for a more primitive lifestyle led many to believe, like Thoreau, that there was something unnatural about living in society and that wilderness was the "last bastion of rugged individualism." Safety, species, and creating and expanding parks. Those who spent time outdoors drew upon what they believed was a deeper understanding of the natural world and fought for the protection of the places where they went hiking and camping and also campaigned to preserve wilderness areas.

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When Lyakh, and many, many others on Instagram, influencers and not, use the word Wanderlust, they are hinting that they are not happy where they are for long and that they would feel more like themselves somewhere else. Often this means on a mountaintop or a beach. To Cronon, the belief that we should get away from the pernicious influences of urban life and find our true selves in wilderness just contributes to our problematic relationship with the idea of wilderness. Only those who have the financial means, the time, and the cultural background have the ability or urge to leave their jobs and enter wilderness. For those whom the landscape was a site of productive labor, the wilderness does not hold the same kind of mystical appeal. Furthermore, the people who lived or continue to live in these wilderness areas that are now places of recreation get idealized or forgotten. For wilderness to be natural it must not have previous human interference, but Cronon maintains that humans have been “manipulating the natural world on various scales for as long as we have a record of their passing.”

For example, the Miwok of Yosemite, who were members of the Ahwahnee, lived in Yosemite Valley before miners came to the Sierra Nevada during the gold rush. There were an estimated 300,000 people living in California before Spanish missionaries arrived in the 18th century. In 1851, a band of miners, calling themselves the Mariposa Battalion and sanctioned by the state, entered Yosemite Valley and burned villages and the food supply, and forced all Native Americans that lived there from their homes. Some survivors from this genocide did come back to live in Yosemite in the next few years. They rebuilt their homes and in the 1860s and onward made a living providing fish, wood and cleaning for tourists. Still, when tourists visited in the late nineteenth centuries and onward, they did not perceive Yosemite Valley as a home to Native Americans, but rather as vast wilderness landscape open for recreation and other possibilities.
Mather Point, Grand Canyon National Park

Landscape Architect: DHM Design
Completed: 2016
Visits: Attendance rose from 4.5 million per year between 1992-2013 to 5.5 million in 2015.
Goals: Expand parking capacity, find a contemporary aesthetic that reflects the locale’s natural environment and historic architecture, restore degraded habitat while adhering to park service policy requiring plants to be sourced on site; address stormwater issues, and minimize expansion.

Mather Point is a popular tourist destination within Grand Canyon National Park. The site functions as an access point to several overlooks along an edge of the canyon. The views are spectacular. Layers of strata reveal 2 billion years of geological history in bands of neutrals, oranges, and reds. The Park Service has had to deal with crowding at Mather Point over the past decade. The parking lot and roads were redesigned in 2012 but by 2016 were already becoming overwhelmed as the hundreds, often thousands of daily visitors made their way to the trails and viewpoints from vehicles. Ecologically sensitive areas were being overrun because paths were not wide enough to contain the crowds.

DHM Design was commissioned to redesign the roads while adding capacity to the parking lots and redesign the visitor center, washrooms, and the trail and overlooks along the canyon edge. The design brief called for minimizing the expansion of the developed footprint while restoring degraded habitat and fixing stormwater issues. The design also had to fit within the larger aesthetic of the park and the National Park System and be compliant with the American Disabilities Act. DHM met with the eight Native American tribes that have inhabited the canyon or hold it at the center of their creation stories.

 Perhaps because of the many restrictions, the resulting design is not exciting or innovative but it is nice. Few big moves were made except for moving the road back from the cliff. The details are aesthetically appropriate. Care was taken to harvest seed and transplant plants to restore some ecological

FIG. 18 — LEFT The main viewpoint at Mather Point
FIG. 19 — ABOVE DHM’S Plan for Mather Point
areas and reduce the flow of pollutants and control erosion.73 The plaza outside of the visitor center is designed to be an "interactive discovery area" to be explored by individuals or by guided tour.74 Also near the visitor center is a sculptural place with engraved local Kaibab limestone slabs with that local native designs.

This all leads to the canyon rim, which really is why all of the visitors are there in the first place. Here, DHM asserts in a booklet published on their website, that along with adding safety measures and accommodating a wide range of abilities, the goal was to "facilitate varied forms of events from personal contemplation and star-gazing, to storytelling, presentation, and performance." While it is reasonable to assume that all of these activities will occur at the canyon rim, the cover photo chosen for DHM’s booklet gives away the activity that will most likely be performed most often (see Fig. 21). The image that they have chosen to represent their project is of two people. The first figure, a woman, is positioned near the edge of the rim where there are no guardrails or signs of human intervention. She looks toward a man who is taking her picture. Here, DHM signals that they have given visitors what they really want, a chance to take photographs of themselves in front of the canyon.

The Grand Canyon actually has a long and complex history with photography. The first non-native visitors were Spanish explorers in 1540 who had a hard time perceiving the scale of the canyon.75 Standing from the top rim, they underestimated the Colorado River, thinking that it was only a few meters wide. The first American explorer, Joseph Christmas Ives in 1858, explored deeper and was better able to understand the scale of the canyon. "The plateau is cut into shreds by these gigantic chasms and resembles a vast ruin." He wrote about his trip, considering the region "valueless" and thinking his group of explorers will "doubtless be the last party of whites to visit this profitless locality."76 In his essay on the history of visualizing the Grand Canyon, David Nye explains that "eyes trained to admire alpine scenery or verdant river valleys had difficulty seeing either the sublime or the beautiful in this enormous cavity with its fantastic landforms."77

Photographers first entered the canyon

74 Ibid.
75 Ibid.
77 Ibid, 76
78 Ibid, 78

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in 1871, around the same time that photographers were making Yosemite and Yellowstone famous, but the Grand Canyon was harder for photographers to represent and for the public to discern. Unlike Yellowstone and Yosemite’s waterfalls and geysers, the beauty and shock of the canyon was the scale and the color of the exposed rock which was not easy to represent with late nineteenth century photographic technology. The weight of the camera, tripod, and glass plate box made carrying equipment difficult along the narrow and steep trails that were being developed and the unstable film had to be fixed after exposure, meaning that photographers had to carry a portable dark-room with them.

Unlike Yellowstone and Yosemite, early photographs of the canyon did not result in the creation of a national park. But people slowly did catch on to the wonder and beauty of the Grand Canyon, partly due to the fact that photographers eventually found ways to photograph the canyon so as to give more accurate representations of scale, showing the river and the rim in the same photo and imbuing the layers of exposed rock with the meaning of geography and time. The Santa Fe Railroad built a line to within a few hundred meters of the rim in 1900 and built a hotel there and would give photographers free rides and accommodations. The railroad would purchase the resulting photographs and use them in pamphlets, calendars, and cards. At the time, photography was thought to tell the truth whereas words and paintings could exaggerate.

Tourists did catch on to the beauty of the canyon and now here we are today with quite a bit of crowding occurring at the more popular viewpoints. When DHM was asked to redesign the Mather Point visitor area to accommodate more visitors but not enlarge the ecological footprint, the brief exemplifies the problem of parks trying to achieve two things at once conservation and recreation. Large portions of national parks are not developed and even areas only accessible by trail require backpackers to stay on marked trails. This means people are concentrated in smaller areas and as visitor numbers increase, the same areas get more and more crowded. Can landscape architects address this problem by designing beyond typical master plans or designing viewing areas? Maybe internet platforms like Instagram can help manage visitors or find another way to alter visitor experience.

FIG. 23 — Page 6 from ‘Titan of Chasms,’ a pamphlet by the Santa Fe Railroad, 1910

FIG. 24 — Selfies from Mather Point
we all take the same photos
doing it for the gram
In his book, *Examples: Making of 40 Photographs*, Ansel Adams describes the day in 1927 when he created the photograph “Monolith, The Face of Half Dome.” His bag was heavy with his 6.5x8.5 inch Korona View camera, two lenses, two filters, a wooden tripod, and twelve Wratten Pan-chromatic glass plates.83 His fiancée, Virginia Rose Best, and two friends hiked up Le Conte Gully, 2,500 feet above the valley floor, with Half Dome above them. The gully was rocky with patches of ice and snow and Ansel describes this period as “pre-roping times” when “nothing daunted us.” 84

Along the way, he made several negatives, including one of Best standing on the “Diving Board,” which was an overlook on the lower part of Half Dome (Fig. 26). Keeping track of the plates he was using, including a few that were ruined from overexposure or improper placement in the camera, he had only two plates left by the time Adams set about taking photos of Half Dome. He used the eleventh plate for a shot of Half Dome with a slight wide angle lens and a Wratten No. 8 yellow filter but Adams realized he could not convey “the brooding form, with deep shadows and a distant sharp white peak against the sky” with the yellow filter.85 “Monolith” was made using the only plate he had left and his deep red Wratten No. 29 filter.85

Although Adams suspected that he got a good shot, he had to wait until he got home to his darkroom to develop the photo to see if it had worked as he wanted it to and it did. The photo is spectacular. For Adams, this moment represented the first time that he had visualized a photo before he took it.86 This photograph and the one published in the San Francisco Chronicle from the same day are examples of Adam’s sublime depiction of Yosemite.86 The winter harshness, the implied risk, the rocky cliffs and peaks reaching toward the dark sky, all produce feelings of awe and terror.

**Photography is Political**

Ansel Adams is known for his environmental conservation beliefs and using his photography for the cause. The Sierra Club credits him with popularizing the movement to preserve wilderness and scenic areas and Adams served on the board of directors for 37 years.87 But
his photography is not without its flaws. He did not often put people in his photos and therefore participated in idealizing a pristine wilderness untouched by humans.88 During the span of Adams's life, including the time that he spent living in Yosemite Valley, there were also Native Americans living there.89 Among Adams's famous photographs are Navajo people and their pueblo buildings in Arizona but he chose not to photograph, or at least not to publicize, the Ahwahneechee who lived in Yosemite. This decision has repercussions. Ansel Adams presented an image of Yosemite to America and how he chose to portray the place, one of pristine wilderness, meant the erasure of the Ahwahneechee.

Ansel Adams thought that vast landscapes like Yosemite Valley landscapes demonstrate America's scope, wealth and power, and in that sense, he militarized the landscape.90 Landscape photographers also commodify landscapes when they profit from their craft.91 Although Adams's photographs can be credited with conserving 'wilderness' areas, this took place during a time period where environmental destruction was taking place on a mass scale throughout the rest of the country.92 Adams is proof that photography can transform not just our perception of landscapes but actual landscapes. It is a common perception that his photography put John Muir's words into pictures but Muir visited and wrote about a much larger range of landscapes than Adams, for example, wetlands.93 By choosing what landscapes to photograph, Adams contributed to the collective decision to preserve some kinds of landscapes and not others.

Instant Photography

In 1948 Polaroid released their first instant camera. At the time, Polaroid instant cameras were seen as items of fantasy and wonder, part of the wave of new technology available for mass consumption after World War II, including washing machines and television sets, that promised to change people's lives.94 Polaroid sold over one million instant cameras in the first six years after they were introduced and by the 1960s, half of all households in the U.S. had a Polaroid instant camera.95 In 1972 Polaroid released the SX-70 camera which used their signature "one-step photography" system. The camera ejected a square 3"x3" photograph that would develop in daylight, instead of requiring peeling off a negative like earlier models. The SX-70 made photography more instant than ever. Processing time was down to a matter of seconds.96 It brought a revolution in interactive picture taking because any person could easily take a photo and see the result quickly. This new way of taking pictures made instant photography more of a social experience. Both the photography and

FIG. 28 — Polaroid Selfies, Andy Warhol, 1960s
the subject would hover over the photograph as it developed and comment on outcome. The Polaroid could be shared, given as a gift, or traded.97 The white box around the edge could be used to mark the occasion or write messages, much like Instagram’s caption.

**Selfies**

Like Instagram today, Polaroid cameras and photographs were thought to have a toylike quality.98 Despite, having Ansel Adams as a consultant, the small size of most Polaroid cameras and lack of settings made it seem amateurish.99 Still, it was trendy, and Polaroid encouraged artists, like Andy Warhol who used his Polaroid as a “mini-factory for photographing friends, patrons, celebrities, fashion, icons, fashion goods, and himself.”100 Warhol famously embraced superficiality and playing with his identity and other artists now do the same. Ai Weiwei went through a period of posting a lot of selfies on Instagram, 684 of which were included exhibition of his work at the Museum of Contemporary Photography in Chicago in 2017.101 Ai Weiwei’s selfies may be poorly composed, unimportant, or even silly, but they represent defiance in the face of his country’s internet censorship.

When male artists take selfies it is often considered subversive art but selfies have been a point of ridicule and debate since they became more common with the introduction of camera phones. Many consider selfies a sign of poor taste or a plea for attention and affirmation.102 People of all ages and genders take and post selfies on Instagram, but they are most commonly thought of as something done by teen girls and young women.

**Digital Layers**

Looking at a random selection of images taken from the three peaks on the Chief, in Squamish, B.C. and posted on Instagram, most of the images are not selfies. Most of them are individuals or groups posing in front of the view overlooking Howe Sound. Like Polaroids, these images were created as part of a social routine in which people often take turns taking pictures of each other and then trade sharing the images online with those that were part of the physical experience and those that were not. The striking thing about the images when seen together is that they all look so similar. The images serve as a document, or a memento from an experience. As Sontag wrote, they are proof that the experience happened.103 The creativity of each image stems from the act of performing the experience, not the composition or editing of the actual image. In fact, there is something

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97 Yanes, 60.
98 Bonanos, 192.
99 Yanes, 60.
100 Rebekka Reuter. “Before there was Instagram, there was Warhol: Staging the Self in Instant Photography” in The Polaroid Project: At the Intersection of Art and Technology, edited by W. A. Ewing (University of California Press, 2017) 224.
102 Murray, Derek Conrad. Notes to self: the visual cultural of selfies in the age of social
about the similarity of the photos that is unifying. Thousands of people visit the Chief every year and make their way up to one of the three peaks but only a few people are ever on the peak at the same time. It is through our digital traces that we can unite over our common experience.

When a random selection of ten of the Chief photos are overlayed on top of each other, another feature becomes noticeable. Most of the photos are of women. Having been to the top of the Chief many times, I can say that women are not overrepresented in the physical world of the Chief, but in this digital overlay, women have made their presence known. In the world of hiking, women have not always been represented or welcome since their initial acceptance in the early days of nature walking and hiking clubs. Likewise, ‘wilderness’ areas have a long history of erasing and misrepresenting people and environmental issues. Maybe, with the ability to layer digital images on top of physical areas, we can start to represent a broader range of reality.

![FIG. 33 — OPPOSITE Randomly selected images from Instagram using the geotag 'Stawamus Chief'](image1)

![FIG. 34 — ABOVE Image overlay of 10 photographs found on Instagram using the geotag 'Stawamus Chief'](image2)
Ansel Adams first visits Yosemite, at the age of 14 and begins taking photographs with a camera given to him by his parents. He will continue to visit Yosemite every year for the rest of his life.

1934
Ansel Adams elected to board of directors of the Sierra Club

1949
Ansel Adams becomes consultant to the Polaroid Corporation

1935
Korona View 8x10

Size: 8 x 10 x 16 inches
Weight: 12.2 lbs. without tripod and plate box

FIG. 35 — Ansel’s Camera
1948
Polaroid introduces the first instant camera

1949
Ansel Adams becomes consultant to the Polaroid Corporation

1960s
Half of all households own a Polaroid camera

1972
Polaroid SX-70 introduced

1975

Polaroid SX-70

Size: 6.9 x 3.9 x 1.0 inches when folded
Weight: 2.2 lbs.

FIG. 36 — Instant Camera
2000
The first smartphone with a camera, the Sharp J-SH04 j-Phone is sold in Japan.

2003
Manufactured with a front-facing camera intended for business meetings, the Sony Ericsson Z1010 is introduced.

2010
Instagram is launched.

2018
Instagram reaches 1 billion active monthly users worldwide.

2018
Size: 5.65 in x 2.79 in x .30 in
Weight: .38 lbs.

FIG. 37 — iPhone Camera
going forward
## Plan of Work

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- **Literature Review**
- **Writing**
- **Research Drawings**
- **Site Analysis**
- **Design Strategies**
- **Conceptual Design**
- **Detail Design**
- **Final Production**
- **Booklet Design**

*Be Here Now* Tory Michak

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*going forward*
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part 2
Several weeks later you find yourself kayaking through the teal water of Clearwater Lake. As you paddle, you notice that your eyes have changed focus. You realize that you are gazing into the distance more easily and your eyes focus less on what is immediately in front of you.
Perceptual Orienteering

Writer, Greta Gaard, has a name for the ways in which we locate ourselves in relationship to our environment - she calls it “Perceptual Orienteering.” Through this realignment, our senses and perception of time and space become radically realigned. Through this realignment, humans can take a better look at our place in the world and envision the kind of relationships that we want with other humans, animals and the Earth itself.

SIGHT

- visual adjustment makes us less shortsighted, one's gaze goes to the distance more easily
- looking for signs of others (footprints, scattered fur or feathers, trampled grass)
- distinguishing among categories of plants (shade, poisonous, healing, edible)

SPACE

- sense of expansiveness
- vulnerability to the weather
- distance must factor in measures of altitude, terrain, etc.

SMELL

- smell becomes vital part of way-finding
- comparing smells found in wilderness to those associated with consumer products (dish soap, perfume, lotion, “air freshener”, etc.)
- smell of the human body becomes inescapable

TIME

- schedule becomes centered around the sun’s daily patterns
- cycles become relevant such as animal migrations, ebb and flow of tides, bird song, etc.
- life is lived in the present
- time loses its connection to money
- as we become less busy, and we stop working towards future profits, we are free to just be

SOUND

- learning the difference between sound and noise
- seeking out healing and calming sounds such as the human heartbeat, wind through leaves, water, bird calls
- way-finding through sound


Camping

A campground is situated at the Eastern end of Azure Lake, where Azure River reaches the lake. A dock is installed on the beach to accept the Water Taxi because this is as far as it can go. This would also be where visitors dock their kayaks or canoes in preparation for the long hike up to the pit.

A circular campsite is proposed, so as not to promote any kind of hierarchy. The sleeping area is over 50 meters from the cooking area, a tactic used to avoid inviting curious bears into the sleeping zone. There is also a compost toilet and Tech Pack “Azure,” which provides internet, energy, and a lookout to the campsite.
The journey you are on will take you three to five days to reach your destination and then another three to five days to return. Starting in Clearwater, BC, you have driven up to end of Clearwater Lake. You will kayak 28 km until you reach the end of the lake where there are rapids, portage for 1 km to Azure lake, kayak another 24 km, then hike for 15km with over 1500 meters of gain to reach the pit.

Because not everyone is able to do this, there are two skip points along the way. You could have skipped the kayak portion by taking a water taxi to the campground at the base of the hike. Or you can take a helicopter directly to the helipad next to the pit. All three ways of approaching the pit are equal and authentic ways of experiencing wilderness and the pit.
Wells Gray Provincial Park Branding

BRAND MOTTO
"The Canada You Imagined"

BRAND DEFINITION
‘In the heart of BC lies a land of unspoiled Canadian nature at its most rugged and beautiful. Wells Gray is a place of supreme grandeur and adventure, a place that conjures up the idealistic thoughts of what the “real” Canadian wilderness was, and still is.’

British Columbia Branding

BRAND ESSENCE
Wild at Heart

This journey takes place in the rarely visited mountainous Northern region of Wells Gray Provincial Park, in Eastern BC. The park’s branding, calling itself “the Canada you imagined” taps into our conception of wilderness as a place untouched but open and ready to be explored or to be conquered. In this case, the “conquering” is done by recreating.

Wells Gray’s branding is very similar to Destination BC’s 2015 rebranding of British Columbia, “Super Nature British Columbia.” The brand book places emphasis on photography as the center of brand representation. Landscape photography is BC’s visual brand. The brand book goes into great detail and describing techniques that represent BC the proper way.
BC Brand photography

> Nature as a central theme

> Authenticity

> Emotional impact

"Mood-filled photos and videos are already loved by the masses. The popularity of Instagram’s desaturating and focal-obsurring filters are living proof of this. People are not impressed by the picture-postcard images of the past. They are looking for moments of life captured in an instant, unearthing unposed and effortless beauty. This applies to landscape as well as people.

With wilderness imagery, people may be part of the shot, but the landscape is the star, and there is a strong sense of one-ness between the person and the landscape within which they are positioned."

- BC Brand Book
As you hike through the forest you realize that the time on the clock is not as relevant to your current experience. Your schedule depends on the position of the sun in the sky.

As you walk along the trails toward the pit, you are furthering the creation of the trails. You are walking to create, creating meaning as you walk.
Tech Packs

The Tech Packs that you encounter throughout your journey come in two forms.

The Buoys, which float in the lakes and have a battery charged by a small hydro generator. The battery powers a light and is able to recharge your phone.

The Towers, are powered by solar panels and have satellites to receive Wilderness Wifi. They also have a photo station where you attach your phone, then post it along with the given geotag. Now you can compare all of the photos that have been taken from exactly the same place and marked with the same geotag.
Intervals

Distance, Nearness, Repetition
Connecting and Disconnecting
The Spaces in Between

The tech packs serve as checkpoints, but there is more than one way between them. They are important times to connect but finding your way through the spaces in between is the center of your attention.

Tech packs seen from afar, showing where you have come from and where you are going.

Digital Overlay: The tech packs are surrounded by their own WiFi connectivity zones. Throughout your journey you are always connecting and disconnecting.
Water’s Path / Our Path

Your relationship with water will constantly change during your journey. It is crucial, a transportation method, power generation, and drinking water.

Much of the water in the lakes comes from the snow and glaciers at the top of mountains.

Smaller streams form into a surge of glacial melt that enters the pit at 15 cubic meters per second, falling into the unknown depths.

Deep below the ground, the water makes its way through karst rock formations and reappears 2.3 kilometers away, at an elevation 5,000 meters lower.

As you trek uphill, you notice the point where the stream disappears and you know it is somewhere beneath you.
Instead of continuing towards the mountaintops you prepare to descend into the pit.
You are now in the Hemiarctic Subzone. This is the fourth vegetational sub-zone you have passed through since starting in the Lower Boreal Subzone and making your way through the Middle and Upper Boreal.

As you hiked you noticed that landscape changed from one supporting mostly deciduous plants to mostly evergreens. Douglas Fir became less common in the Middle Boreal Subzone, along with Western Red Cedar and then Western Hemlock. Finally Spruce and Subalpine Fir are the only mature trees left.

The forest thins and the understory gives way to dense thickets of Mountain Rhododendron and False Azalea. Now, a few clumps of trees persist but the forest has mostly given way to flower meadows, along with batches of low heathers, willows, and sedges.

This pit has been known by humans since the Wells Gray area was a valued hunting ground for the Simpcw, Chilcotin, and Canim Lake First Nations. But the pit was recently “rediscovered” by biologists during a helicopter caribou survey last spring.

In the area of the Park, there are many mountains that have ascents or are unclimbed but have been named. These names were almost all given by men, often named after other men, after ascents, by men.
Viral & Unknown

The biologists called the cave “Sarlacc’s Pit” because they thought it looked like the pit from Star Wars: Return of the Jedi. In the movie, the Sarlacc is a multi-tentacled gigantic alien beast. It has an immense mouth, lined with sharp teeth and waits for prey to stumble into the pit. Neurotoxins induce hallucinations and victims and these monsters can steal their victim’s consciousness. Although you never see the full body of the Sarlacc in Star Wars, Sarlacci became iconic and were subject to merchandising, fan art and fan fiction.

The Simpcw and Canim Lake First Nations have responded by saying that they find the name offensive and expect a naming ceremony or revitalization of an existing name to occur collaboratively.

Still, the pit went Viral as Sarlacc’s Pit after it was discovered. Then, only a handful of living people had ever seen the pit but we had all heard of it. It is a viral landscape - yet “untouched.”

Throughout the history of the Western World’s view of wilderness, it has offered Men a place to escape to. But this often means erasing the representation of others. Especially those who live and make their home in so-called wilderness

This holds true for women as well. But looking at outdoor Instagram photos, there is a very different story being told. Women are posting photos of themselves at a higher rate than men are. On Instagram, wilderness has become feminized.

But it is still worth asking what kind of photos should we post. And how do we represent both wilderness and ourselves in it? Do we have an obligation to share photos that are better represent our true experiences? What even is an authentic photo?

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The Globe and Mail
Trespassers Could Face Fines Up To $1-Million As Newly Discovered Cave In B.C. Closed Off To Public

cctvnews.com
Newly Discovered B.C. Cave, Nicknamed ‘Sarlacc’s Pit’, Might Be Largest In Canada

cbc.ca
Local Geologist Among Experts Studying Massive B.C. Cave

National Post
How The Only Man To Explore This Enormous B.C. Cave Made His ‘Once In A Lifetime’ Milestone Descent

Globalnews.ca
Huge Cave Found In B.C. Park Closed To Public, Scientists Hope To Return Next Fall

New York Times
A ‘Honking Big’ Cave In Canada Lures Geologists To Its Mouth

The Independent (UK)
‘Sarlacc’s Pit’: Enormous Unexplored Cave Accidentally Discovered In Canada

Huffington Post
Cave Discovered In Wells Gray Provincial Park Might Be The Biggest In Canada

Sarlacc’s Pit, Star Wars: Episode VI-Return of the Jedi (1983)

Pit Plan
Looking down from the walkway into the pit, you can feel the humidity from the nearby waterfall and smell the damp rock.

You pose for a photo, which will later join hundreds or thousands of other identical photos online.
French Philosopher, Luce Irigaray, proposed that women should employ a tactic that she calls “Productive Mimesis.” This is a form of resistance where women imperfectly imitate stereotypes about themselves in order to undermine the stereotypes. It is a playful imitation, a strategic performance, an imitation of an imitation. The goal is to reveal the artificial construction and performative character of the original photographs and begin to create a new social form.

TOWARDS CREATING
A NEW SOCIAL FORM

Luce Irigaray, This Sex Which is Not One, Cornell University Press, 1985
Here is a list of stereotypes that have to do with women using technology in nature.

Below and on the next page, these stereotypes are paired with photo techniques from the British Columbia Brand Book and applied to photos from Wells Gray to create filters, or "Productive Memes." For example, "unoriginal / basic" gets paired with the photojournalistic technique in which we are advised to be more intriguing with anonymity, to deprioritize faces. The "Obscuring" filter obscures the subject of "Earth Mother" stereotype using the "Shallow Depth of Field" technique to aid "Can Put Down Phone." "Extreme Cropping / Cutting into Faces" goes to "Misrepresenting Real Life" And "Afraid of the Wilderness" separates the subject into lines surrounded by darkness, using "Smudgy Blacks."

Expectations

- Too Consumerist
- Prefer Nature's Simple Pleasures
- Prefer Short Trips
- Lacking Outdoor Skills
- Nurturer / Caretaker
- Physically Weak

Afraid of the Wilderness

Misrepresenting Real Life

Narcissistic

Unoriginal / Basic

"Having people in our shots does not always require a group of people, nor do they always have to be shown as having "so much fun". It is totally acceptable to show reflection and one-ness: an individual taking in the moment and absorbing the beauty of the land. Your subject(s) can have eyes off camera or even back to camera. The emotion is not lost and in some cases can be more intriguing with anonymity. Deprioritize faces."
"Gently obscuring the subject with back light or veiling (with airborne particles such as snow, mist, or dust) can bring dimension and mystery to the shot. If the veiling effects random portions of the image to differing degrees, you’re left with a nvice contrast to the areas left unveiled. In line with our other principles, veiling can soften light and shadow, soften colour tones, and create depth and layers."

"Shots created with a shallow depth of field provide dimension and a tangible sense of “being there”. When you throw the foreground and/or background out of focus, it reflects the way the human eye perceives the world, and can bring a stronger focus to your subject."

"Avoid prominent pure blacks – shadows can be deep colour shades. Pure black is not wrong, but is most acceptable with soft edges, surrounded by deep, rich tones, or seen in smaller doses."

"Cropping into a photo can provide an obscuring effect similar to light/shadow play and mist cover. Don’t be afraid to experiment with breaking traditional rules like cutting into faces or more deeply into the frame. This exploration can lead to unexpected success."

"Can’t Put Down Phone
: SHALLOW DEPTH OF FIELD

"Earth Mother
: OBSCUERING

"Mistrepresenting Real Life
: BOLD CROPPING

"Afraid of the Wilderness
: SMUDGY BLACKS

Tory Michak Part 2

Enter
As you continue to descend into the pit, the sound of the waterfall echoes off the rock and surrounds you like darkness.

The walkway runs out into a series of ladders and rungs. You climb down into the depths and reflect on how this journey has changed you and in extension, those who follow you on Instagram. Some of those people will find themselves here later or will be inspired to visit another a wilderness spot.

The filtered photos you have shared are one piece in a larger conversation.
Cyborg

This project is inspired by Donna Haraway’s Cyborg Theory. The cyborg is a theory appropriated from the military and it allows us to explore alternative ways of being human. Through the cyborg, we can explore more fluid identities and break down boundaries.

The theory is playful in that it is an argument for taking pleasure in the blurring the boundaries. But it is also responsible. It is a call for being responsible for the representations of ourselves that we generate.


Monster

You are aware that there is a monster in the depths. Haraway writes that monsters are at the boundaries between human and animals. After days spent on this journey your perceptual orientation has changed. You are interacting differently than before with the sights, smells, and spaces around you. You have become more like an animal.

Monsters lie at the boundaries between human and animals.
Or maybe the monster is the cyborg, the idea that we can use technology to become more than a self, to explore boundaries, myths and meanings. This journey, or pilgrimage, culminates in a viral, spreading conversation that continues when we leave the physical site. Technology is not damaging or breaking our relationship with nature. It is not preventing us from being something that we ought to be.

This project, sited in an already viral landscape, imagines a place where technology and wilderness coexist, where wilderness is not a place to escape the internet, and where relationships between the self and others are reconfigured.