

“Between distance and proximity is an empty space”

Michel Serres ¹

The Poetry of Earth Art

Earth art uses planet Earth as the raw material for emotional and introspective expression.

The appeal of distance is in the very loss that defines it. The tools that we use, even the very sophisticated ones, are unable to adequately convey the sense of distance. Our senses must be at their most alert to be able to conceive of the other or of elsewhere. Being absent wakes our senses up by reorganising perception: consciousness participates with the mental reconstitution of an emotion-filled puzzle. As touch is useless, it becomes virtual; unfathomable, it is exacerbated.

Fingertips become useless: we must touch with the heart, the soul, the body. Perception reorganises itself. Sight and touch are no longer supreme. The ears and voice become the vectors of exchange, of interactivity.

Loss, reconstituting a void: no longer is there a vision or distorted vision.

In Orient Express, the picture taken every hour on the hour prompts us to reconstitute the intervals. Orient Express makes holes in space and time. The conception of time has been exacerbated by a focus on points.

In Thaon/New York, sound is transmitted by satellite and image by slow-scan. The sounds mix, especially during the transatlantic interactive music piece.

With the collage of sounds, spatial references are lost.

The image is blurred and sequential and is therefore only partial in time and space. These lace-like holes in sound and image become a shadow theatre with shades of images and shades of sounds. Here, removal and loss is what creates art from reality.

Why is this pleasurable and why is ubiquity so moving?

It is the beauty of distant presence: I share my consciousness. My body is here, but my consciousness is shared between this place and elsewhere, between me and others. Here again there is a loss, an exchange. It is the beauty of communication with another place, with another

person: I participate in that elsewhere, I participate in the «else». In this intent, this virtual gesture, there is love: spiritual love because it is disembodied. There is eroticism because senses are sharpened and fantasy exacerbated.

It is the sublime pleasure of distance. Uncertain distance: in-between, ambiguity, ambivalence, shared value.

Creating emptiness, a space of possibilities, the utopia necessary to every birth, to all creation.

Earth art is a form of art that takes Earth in its planetary dimension, as material for artistic reflection and emotion.

Earth art is sublime because it mixes fear and a sense of wonder.

To imagine on a planetary scale is to resize one's consciousness.

Human consciousness can now extend to a planetary scale. Consciousness extension.

We are at once infinitely big and infinitely small, lost and found. In *Le bleu du Ciel*, the viewer looking at the average of the two skies—the one above him and the one a thousand kilometres away—mentally reconstitutes the colour of the far away sky from grey to blue. The spectator reconstitutes the atmospheric cloud cover and his consciousness spreads over the globe.

Ozone, each sound makes us shift from one antipode to the other.

Oscillating movement with a 20,000-kilometre amplitude. Sounds from the automobile pollution in the city of Lille, and sounds from the riddled atmosphere. Interactions between man, air and sun. Network and noosphere. Planetary interdependence.

We change our point of view : at the same time it develops in space, consciousness is extended. Cosmic consciousness. The ego is finally abandoned. The self vanishes. Our point of view is now a point of fractal being, at once distant and involved, particular and infinite.

Perspective no longer limits our vision. We are in another place inside us, another place in the other, up there. The you and the me meet between Earth and sky.

Here is thus a lesson on distance and on wisdom: it is a lesson for the spirit.

Stéphan Barron

(1) SERRES Michel, *Atlas*, Ed. Julliard, Paris, 1994, p.24