

# Panoramas, Immersive Media, and Lost Worlds

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# IOWA

**Pentacrest Museums**  
Museum of Natural History

## PRESENTATION ABSTRACTS & AUTHOR BIOGRAPHIES

### Session I | Lost Panoramas

#### *A Story of Sad Losses: On the Fates of Some 19th-Century Panoramas*

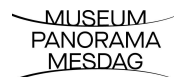
Gabriele Koller, Jerusalem Panorama, Altötting, Germany

**Abstract.** My proposal for a presentation refers to the “lost worlds” of the conference theme. When dealing with the panorama’s history in the nineteenth century one is amazed by how little original material has survived. There are mainly texts and prints, occasionally we find preparatory studies and drawings. But when one considers the quantity of panoramas that once existed it is only the tiniest proportion of the total number of panoramas that survive. The history of the panorama phenomenon is a story of sad losses. Looking at the panorama situation in London, it is striking that none of the 150 or so panoramas exhibited over a period of 70 years in the Panorama in Leicester Square and the Panorama in the Strand have survived. The same goes for Paris. Here from around 1800 onwards only about 30 panoramas were exhibited within 70 years, far less than in London. None of those survive either. What happened to all these panoramas and why do we know so very little about their fates?

Drawing on an earlier unpublished conference paper I will examine the factors which caused the immense loss of so many panoramas that once existed. The presentation will be showing how those incidents came about. The intention is to reveal some of the fates and relate what happened, shedding new light on the tragic loss of several nineteenth-century panoramas. In the main the paper will be dealing with the 360-degree panorama as invented by Robert Barker in 1787.

**Keywords.** Panorama, nineteenth century, loss, fate.

**Biography.** Gabriele Koller is an art historian and panorama researcher. Her MA thesis was devoted to Gebhard Fugel, the artist responsible for the Panorama of Jerusalem and the Crucifixion of Christ, Altötting, Germany. She has published on various aspects of panorama history. For the International Panorama Council of which she is a member since its foundation in 1992 she edited *The World of Panoramas: Ten Years of International Panorama Conferences* (2003), *The Panorama in the Old World and the New* (2010), and *More Than*



Meets the Eye: The Magic of the Panorama (2019). She currently serves as Vice President of the International Panorama Council. She is a member of the Executive Board of the Foundation Panorama Altötting, Germany, and is the Panorama's Curator. Email, [gabriele\\_koller@gmx.de](mailto:gabriele_koller@gmx.de)

*The Kilauea Cyclorama: More Than a Picture, a "Spectacular Cyclorama"*

Suzanne Wray, Independent Researcher, New York City, USA

**Abstract.** The cyclorama of Hawaii's Kilauea Volcano was first displayed at Chicago's World Columbian Exposition of 1893 on the Midway Plaisance. This depiction of "the inferno of the Pacific," accompanied by a Hawaiian Village with musicians and dancers, was intended to promote tourism to Hawaii, to gain support for American annexation of the islands, and of course to create a profit for the cyclorama company that created it. Newspaper articles emphasized that there would be much more to the exhibition than a "mere painting and relief foreground" that had previously comprised a cyclorama, that "every device known to theatrical mechanism and electro-pyrotechnics" would be used: there would be simulated volcanic eruptions regularly, shifting lights, fire effects, and escaping steam. Some of these scenic effects were produced by a Triple Arc Light Stereopticon which had been constructed for use in the volcano panorama.

Walter Burridge (1857–1913), a Chicago scene painter, had visited Hawaii two years earlier to see the volcano in eruption, and take photographs and sketches. Among those working with Burridge was C. H. Ritter, credited with modeling the foreground and lava forms.

The Kilauea Cyclorama appeared later in several other expositions, including the 1894 Mid-Winter Fair in San Francisco, California.

**Keywords.** Kilauea, volcano, scenic effects.

**Biography.** Independent researcher Suzanne Wray has presented her research on panoramas and related "optical entertainments" at conferences of the International Panorama Council and the Magic Lantern Society. Email, [gribble@earthlink.net](mailto:gribble@earthlink.net)

*Panorama, Cinema and Photography: An History of Dead Ends, Forgotten Cameras, Lenses & Social Phenomena*

Luca Vascon, VR Artist, Photographer and Video Maker, Venice, Italy

**Abstract.** There are some interesting and quite untold parts of photography history. Tools and concepts that evolved thanks to the painted panorama. Photography and cinema techniques can be a toolbox in aiding building something else, can be used as a recording device, as a way of translating an experience from a media to another, or even in a different level to tell stories and as a media to create new experiences.

Some of the tools are well documented but kind of lost in collectors cabinets, like Sutton's camera and its unique water optics. Some others like Lumiere periphote had their quirks but were intended for the ambitious Photorama theatre, others like the Kodak Panoram and the Kodak Cirkut became a new language and 1900 cameras are still in use today, and the same concept was continuously updated and sold in many forms, in some times becoming popular, and it's still in use today.

The same thing happened in cinema, and after going through few more or less known examples Cineorama, Imax, etc, I'll focus on a recently rediscovered italian device and concept called "Totalrama",



explaining its function principle and showcasing some “frames” extracted from the continuous frameless movie and translated in a contemporary interactive media.

I’ll show whenever possible an attempt of “media and experience translation” to contemporary VR explaining my process and my opinion in what’s lost and what’s gained.

**Keywords.** Cinema, photography, technology, dead ends, experience translation, social phenomenon, Totalrama.

**Biography.** I’m a 360° VR artist, photographer and video maker, but I’m also a camera and photographica collector. I started at the end of ‘90 with the very beginning of the digital VR pioneering era. I felt as a natural move to research panorama history in order to look for answers about the media’s nature, languages and possibilities. My attitude is to make or adapt my own tools in order to achieve the result that I want, be they cameras, special heads, new techniques, approaches, languages.

At first working as multimedia lab teacher in IUAV university of Venice, then as co-founder and CEO of the visual services company “Officine Panottiche,” then as a self-employed, I took part in major cultural and educational projects in Italy and abroad. A pioneer of digital panoramic photography, I have a thorough knowledge of the technology (hardware and software) related to interactive imaging, high-resolution photo and video, navigable videos and time-lapses, and have developed an extensive network in that particular community through years of active involvement. My fields of expertise include analogical and digital photography (HDR techniques, high-resolution gigapixel images, documentary, scientific, scale models, studio photography, geological and architectural surveys; interaction design (VR photography and video, immersive reality, interaction design for cultural heritage; and photogrammetry for education, research, and development. Email, [luca.vascon@gmail.com](mailto:luca.vascon@gmail.com)

## Session II | The Immersive Worlds of Panoramas

### *Listening to the Aural Heritage of Banvard’s Mississippi Panoramas—A Speculative Re-enactment*

Nicholas Lowe, The School of the Art Institute of Chicago, USA

**Abstract.** John Banvard’s ‘Panorama of The Mississippi River’ is generally understood to have been one of the most influential performative experiences of its time and yet so many aspects of it as a multi-sensory encounter remain illusive. The extant scholarship on Banvard’s work presents his performances through the news print accounts, playbills and interpretative souvenir brochures. It has also been argued that through a sampling of Banvard’s writing an impression of his narrative voice is discernible too. Amongst the range of extant archival materials are two relatively unexplored piano manuscripts. One is titled ‘The Mississippi Waltzes, played during the moving of Banvard's three mile picture’. Dated 1847, it includes five compositions by Thomas Bricher and each of these five pieces carries a title that suggests specific narrative and by implication visual content to which it might correspond. The second manuscript is undated but carries a title that places it in London, early in 1848. ‘The White Fawn of the Mississippi River - From Banvard's great picture of the Mississippi now exhibiting at the Egyptian Hall, Piccadilly.’ Written for Piano and soprano voice it appears to have been written as a dramatic highpoint and was included in the panorama in its London performances. It features words by John Banvard and music by Madame Harriet Schwiesco, who also performed the piece in London.



Each of the musical scores includes specific dramatic notations, the expressive affects of which are intended to be experienced live. This presentation will draw upon the existing scholarship on Banvard's Mississippi Panoramas, and their related visual legacies, to re-situate Banvard's 'lost worlds' with their sonic counterparts.

**Keywords.** Moving panorama, John Banvard, Mississippi Waltzes, the White Fawn, piano music.

**Biography.** Nicholas Lowe is an interdisciplinary visual artist, writer, educator and curator whose work is known for its contextual and documentary approaches. His visual and performance works forefront material research, interpretation and public engagement. He holds an HDFA from the Slade School of Art, University College London and a BA in Crafts Combined Study (Wood Metal Textile Ceramic) from Manchester Met. University. Lowe is a Professor at The School of the Art Institute of Chicago and is the John H. Bryan Chair of Historic Preservation. Email, [nlowe1@saic.edu](mailto:nlowe1@saic.edu)

*Inverting the Panorama: S. P. Dinsmoor's "Garden of Eden"*

Lisa Stone, Independent Curator and Preservationist, Neshkoro, Wisconsin, USA

**Abstract.** Born in Ohio in 1843, S.P. Dinsmoor's early experiences included serving in the Civil War and early initiation into the Free Masonic fraternal order. In 1888 Dinsmoor moved his family from Ohio to north central Kansas. To attract settlers the region had been advertised widely (and spuriously) as "a Garden of Eden." He farmed until 1905 when the Dinsmoors moved into the town of Lucas. At age 64 Dinsmoor spontaneously combusted into a *placemaker extraordinaire*, creating an expanded spatial narrative expressing his social, political, spiritual, and deeply personal beliefs. Using locally-quarried limestone and concrete, his Garden of Eden is an unexpected, grand panoramic environment of unparalleled originality in the dusty Great Plains.

After completing his "Cabin Home" in 1907, Dinsmoor animated the property with an elaborate tree-of-life-like structure upon which mythical and historical figures, animals, and symbols were perched in an elevated, wrap-around display, expressing Dinsmoor's complex ideas in dialectical form. Through decades of participating in fraternal rituals, Dinsmoor was intimately familiar with the power of navigating symbolically-organized spaces. It's possible he was aware of or had experienced panoramas depicting Civil War scenes, popular in his time. Moving through his sculptural spectacle, from Adam (in the Biblical Eden) in his Masonic Apron, to the Crucifixion of Labor, and scenes in between, Dinsmoor's Garden of Eden is an inversive, immersive, openwork panorama, requiring viewers to traverse an outdoor space, looking up in the air, from allegory to allegory. Backlit by ever-changing natural light, enlivened by breezes and the movement of clouds, Dinsmoor's panorama heightens viewer's awareness of one's place on earth, and in the grand arc of history, from one story of creation to the present moment. I will explore the significance of the unique nature of each viewer's perspectives in experiencing and documenting the Garden of Eden over the last century.

**Keywords.** Artist-built environment, S. P. Dinsmoor, Eden, fraternal orders, Kansas.

**Biography.** Lisa Stone is an independent curator and preservationist, and retired (2020) curator of the Roger Brown Study Collection and Senior Lecturer in the Department of Art History, Theory, and Criticism, both at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago (SAIC). Her research, teaching, writing, and curating concern



artists who work independently from the academic mainframe. Stone focuses on the preservation and interpretation of artist-built environments and collections. With Don Howlett she has written and implemented preservation plans for artist-built environments since 1986. She co-curated (with Kenneth C. Burkhardt) the exhibition *Chicago Calling: Art Against The Flood*, shown at Intuit: The Center for Intuitive and Outsider Art, Chicago, touring to Paris, Kaufbeuren, Lausanne, and Amsterdam (2018–2021). Stone has a Master of Science in Historic Preservation from SAIC. She works, seasonally, with soil, plants, and stone in her studio, a garden/ruin in rural Wisconsin. She's currently working on long term curatorial projects with colleague/collaborator and IPC member Nicholas C. Lowe. Email, [lstone@saic.edu](mailto:lstone@saic.edu) and [stonelisa54960@gmail.com](mailto:stonelisa54960@gmail.com)

*Panoramic Inscriptions: Perspectival Typography and Pictorial Lettering in Immersive Ephemera*

Molly Briggs, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, Champaign, Illinois, USA

**Abstract.** Nineteenth-century panoramas were multimedia artifacts whose transporting effects depended on the coordination of painting, architecture, sculpture, stagecraft, and—importantly—printed matter. This presentation examines the exemplary deployment of immersive word/image rhetorics in printed materials associated with panoramas and then traces the appearance of such rhetorics in a wider array of printed geographical media including pictorial maps, tourist guides, bird's-eye views, games and toys, and advertising broadsides. This analysis shows that while immersive rhetorics proliferated during the nineteenth-century, they predate the invention of the panorama and persist in many forms in the present. Attending to the subtle immersive cues embedded in analog media offers tools for interrogating the metaverse that is already here—that is, the complex of representations that fills our field of view over time, in real time to shape our perception at all scales. Electronic media reach wider audiences at a faster pace than their analog predecessors, yet continue to rely for their effects on the deployment of word/image relations in built and social space. This presentation is framed as a primer on attending to immersive rhetorics in word/image relations for use by historians and practitioners of art, design, cinema, education, geography, urbanism, political science, and other disciplines.

**Keywords.** Immersion, perspectival typography, pictorial lettering, graphic epistemologies, social space.

**Biography.** Dr. Molly Catherine Briggs is a design theorist, landscape historian, and studio practitioner who interrogates graphic and spatial epistemologies by studying interactive and immersive rhetorics in historic and contemporary media. She holds a PhD in Landscape Architecture History & Theory from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign and an MFA in Art Theory & Practice from Northwestern University. She is currently an Assistant Professor of Graphic Design and Design for Responsible Innovation in the School of Art & Design at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, where she teaches visual communication and design research methodology. Dr. Briggs has presented her research in peer-reviewed conferences, symposia, and journals throughout the United States and Europe. She is the recipient of numerous scholarly, creative, and pedagogical grants, awards, and recognitions and is a 2023 Fellow of the Maclean Map Library. She is a member of the College Art Association, the Design Research Society, the Design History Society, the International Panorama Council, the SECAC, and the Society of Architectural Historians. Her creative work has been represented by Zg Gallery in Chicago since 2004. Email, [mbriggs@illinois.edu](mailto:mbriggs@illinois.edu)





### Session III | Lost Voices

#### *Pansteroramas: The Colonial Touch, or The Power to Represent Comprehensively*

Blagovesta Momchedjikova, New York University, New York City, New York, USA

**Abstract.** As *Miniature World* prepares to open doors on Staten Island in New York City, thus becoming one of the most comprehensive miniature (pansteroramic) exhibits in the world, questions about what is but also isn't represented in comprehensive exhibits such as this, come to mind. Who decides what is worthy of being represented? Who decides how to represent what is worthy of representation? What agency, if any, do the represented environments carry in their own representation? (For instance, it is a well-known fact that at *Miniature World*, the model environment of Brazil is created by an Argentinian team: what does that mean about the exhibit itself?) How is the power of representation handled at such seemingly innocent exhibits? Is the "colonial touch" still present in exhibits such as these? I will look at *Miniatur Wunderland* in Hamburg, the prototype behind New York's *Miniature World*, as a point of comparison, in an effort to understand if comprehensive pansteroramic representations continuously position themselves as educational, fun environments while darker, perhaps, ideologies lurk behind their carefully put together exteriors.

**Keywords.** Pansteroramas, comprehensive exhibits, miniatures, agency, colonialism, power, ideology.

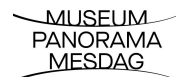
**Biography.** Blagovesta Momchedjikova, PhD, is an urban culture essayist and poet, who publishes on pansteroramas, memory, and the lived city experience. She is the editor of *Captured by the City: Perspectives in Urban Culture Studies* and *Streetnotes: Urban Feel*, and the co-editor of *Sounds and Silence in the Pandemic City*, *The Panorama Handbook: Thoughts and Visions On and Around the Queens Museum's Panorama of the City of New York*, *From Above: The Practice of Verticality*, and *Public Space: Between Spectacle and Resistance*. Dr. Momchedjikova chaired the Urban Culture Area for the Mid-Atlantic Popular and American Culture Association (MAPACA) for 15 years and the inaugural Conference Scientific Committee for IPC for 5 years. She is a founding member of the *International Panorama Council Journal (IPCJ)*, and sits on the editorial boards of both *IPCJ* and *Streetnotes*. She teaches writing, art, and the city at New York University. Email, [bmm202@nyu.edu](mailto:bmm202@nyu.edu)

#### *"Shengjing Panorama": Re-crafting the Urban Ephemera of Colonial Shenyang in Historic Los Angeles*

Weiling Deng and Jonathan Banfill, Champlain College, Burlington, Vermont, USA; Ruby Carlson and Sara Velas, The Velaslavasay Panorama, Los Angeles, California, USA

**Abstract.** One experiences *Shengjing Panorama* (2019), a 360-degree painting depicting the everyday landscape of Shenyang, China circa 1910-1930, after walking into the Velaslavasay Panorama housed in the historic Union Theater (built 1910) in a residential neighborhood on the outskirts of Hollywood. Leaving behind the sun-filled streets of Los Angeles, the visitor moves down a dark passageway to an immersive scene of the past in East Asia. Surrounded by the theatrical effects of painted architecture, streets, and pedestrians, crafted vendor carts, and remixed train horns from LA's Union Station, the visitor travels a century backward to stand in the political and social crosscurrents of Manchuria in the Eurasian continent's northeast.

Entitled after Shenyang's obsolescent name from the Qing Dynasty (1644–1911), the Shengjing Panorama (SJP) revitalizes the transient world-building of Manchuria's war-time metropolis, multiply-colonized by the rivaling Russian and Japanese empires vying over railroad control while becoming the "homeland of exile"



to the Manchu royals who had ruled the Qing court in Beijing. Through integratedly displaying Shengjing's natural and cultural landscapes, the SJP unfolds, quite literally in the space of a rotunda, the historical Eurasian contacts, tensions, and uncertainties to depict what we call a "minor cosmopolitanism" from both shores of the Northern Pacific.

The "minor" falls out of linear temporality and historiography stamped with the "major" events and places in political and cultural domains used to teleologically narrate the inevitability of victorious dominance. Minor cosmopolitanism proposes the aesthetics of staying with/in the socio-geographical periphery to observe canceled connections imbricated in larger colonial networks. It is from such empathy with the loss, messiness, and indeterminacy of everyday life that the SJP attends to the irreducible lived experiences beyond the limelight of the Beijing-Shanghai-Guangzhou modernization axis by re-crafting the stressed absence of Shengjing's memory on the outskirts of Hollywood's geographical and imaginative aura.

**Keywords.** Ephemera, Manchuria, empire, colonial periphery, cosmopolitanism.

**Biographies.** Weiling Deng is Adjunct Professor of Interdisciplinary Studies at Champlain College in Burlington, Vermont. She received her M.A. and Ph.D. in Social Sciences and Comparative Education from UCLA. Her research includes transpacific humanities, Asian diaspora studies, gender and feminism in modern China, socialist and postsocialist education, and critical pedagogy. Her work has been published in multiple academic anthologies, most recently including *Postcolonial and Postsocialist Dialogues: Intersections, Opacities, Challenges in Feminist Theorizing and Practice* (Routledge, 2021). Email, [wdeng@champlain.edu](mailto:wdeng@champlain.edu)

Jonathan Banfill is Assistant Professor of Interdisciplinary Studies at Champlain College in Burlington, Vermont. He holds a PhD in Education from the University of California, Los Angeles, where he worked as a teacher and researcher for a multi-year interdisciplinary educational program, the Urban Humanities Initiative, funded by the Mellon Foundation and is a founding member of the Urban Humanities Network. His research sits at the intersection of pedagogy, urban space, and public humanities fields. Email, [ibanfill@champlain.edu](mailto:ibanfill@champlain.edu)

Ruby Carlson is a Co-Curator at the Velaslavasay Panorama and served as the elected Secretary of the International Panorama Council (2015–2018). She has worked in the field of panoramas since 2008 to elucidate, present and gather funding for panoramas and related mediums. She works as a freelance writer and cinematographer for media and fine art projects. Since 2010 she has participated in PLACE, a critical return to the discovery of Freud and its construction in the topology introduced by J. Lacan. Email, [ruby@panoramaonview.org](mailto:ruby@panoramaonview.org)

Sara Velas is the Artistic Director/Co-Curator/Founder of the Velaslavasay Panorama, a nonprofit museum and garden she established in the year 2000 to present experimental immersive experiences and variations of media popular before the invention of cinema. An artist, graphic designer, curator, gardener, and native Los Angeleno, she is active on the Executive Boards of the International Panorama Council and the Center for Land Use Interpretation with significant involvement in architectural preservation throughout Los Angeles. Email, [sv@panoramaonview.org](mailto:sv@panoramaonview.org)

*Lost Authority, Found Voices: "New Red Order" and the Panorama of the Monumental Grandeur of the Mississippi Valley, c. 1850*

Melissa Wolfe, St. Louis Art Museum, St. Louis, Missouri, USA



**Abstract.** *Panorama of the Monumental Grandeur of the Mississippi Valley* is a moving panorama commissioned by archaeologist Montroville W. Dickeson to accompany his lectures given to audiences in the eastern United States. Although the panorama was advertised as illustrating views along the Mississippi River, its imagined journey actually focuses on the Ohio and lower Mississippi River valleys. Most of the scenes present mounds, many of which Dickeson excavated, built by the ancient Mississippian culture that flourished in the midwest and southeast United States from 900 to 1600.

This panorama has experienced multiple aspects of loss and, fortunately, recovery. The only known surviving Mississippi River panorama, it had fallen into disrepair until the Museum completed its conservation in 2019. Canvas and paint were restored, and an aluminum, motorized apparatus was built to replace the original wooden rollers. Many extant written and physical clues indicate that the panorama's visual experience had been enhanced by sensational narration, music, and dramatic sound and light effects. The exact nature of what its 1850s audience would have experienced is lost, however, in part because we no longer have the text or stage cues for its performance. It is also so because today's audiences' expectations of verisimilitude in an age of VR and other immersive, heightened reality media imposes on replicating the immersive or transportive powers of the original panorama experience. Yet, this loss is an opportunity for gain. Without the original narration, but with the remaining images that are highly charged with the disempowering agendas of colonialism that structured early archeological practice in the United States, the panorama offers a possibility to replace the narration and experience with a contemporary narrative that enables the painted scenes to speak in ways that are pertinent, and "real," to issues central to our lived experiences today.

The possibility to build on this loss of narrative and narrative context is especially persuasive given the panorama's intended inclusion in an upcoming exhibition on art and illusion in the United States. Seen in the art-historical context of illusion, with its ties to deception and shifting power relationships, the panorama might again be empowered to absorb its audience into a transportive and transformational experience.

**Keywords.** Moving panorama, early New World archaeology, Montroville W. Dickeson.

**Biography.** Melissa Wolfe is Curator and head of the American department at the Saint Louis Art Museum. Dr. Wolfe's interests deal predominately with the visual dynamics of social critique. She has curated a wide range of exhibitions, most recently *Art Along the Rivers: A Bicentennial Celebration*, *Simple Pleasures: The Art of Doris Lee*, and *Subversion and Surrealism in the Art of Honoré Sharrer*, which received an Award for Excellence from the Association of Art Museum Curators. She is currently developing an exhibition on American art in the early Cold War era.

Dr. Wolfe has served as a jurist and as a reviewer for numerous journals, publishers, and granting agencies. She has lectured widely, including at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, Yale University, and the D'Arcy McNickle Center for American Indian Studies, Chicago. Email, [Melissa.Wolfe@slam.org](mailto:Melissa.Wolfe@slam.org)

#### Session IV | Panorama Conservation and Saving the Faux Terrain - Round Table

##### *The Laysan Island Cyclorama*

Liz A. Crooks, Cindy E. Opitz and Jessica M. Smith, University of Iowa Museum, Iowa City, Iowa, USA

**Keywords.** Cyclorama, Laysan Island, natural history, perception, conservation





*The Laysan Island Cyclorama, Iowa City, Iowa*

Liz A. Crooks, Director, Pentacrest Museums, University of Iowa, and Bruce Scherting, Director, Project Art, University of Iowa Hospitals and Clinics, Iowa City, Iowa, USA

*“The Battle of Atlanta Cyclorama,” Atlanta History Center, Atlanta, Georgia*

Gordon Jones, Director, The Battle of Atlanta Cyclorama, Atlanta, Georgia, USA

*Bourbaki Panorama, Lucerne, Switzerland*

Patrick Deicher, President, Bourbaki Panorama Foundation, Lucerne, Switzerland

*Jerusalem Panorama, Altötting, Germany*

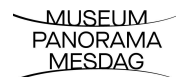
Gabriele Koller, Jerusalem Panorama Foundation, Altötting, Germany, and Ulrich Weilhammer, Weilhammer Conservation, Gangkofen, Germany

**Biographies.** Liz A. Crooks has served as the director of the University of Iowa Pentacrest Museums since 2018. Liz holds an MA in Museum Studies and a Graduate Certificate in Book Arts. Born & raised in Iowa City, Crooks developed a passion for museums while visiting the museums she now oversees. She serves on numerous campus advisory committees, including the Museum Studies Certificate Program. Her other interests include live music, rowing, and more museums. Email, [liz-crooks@uiowa.edu](mailto:liz-crooks@uiowa.edu)

Cindy Opitz manages zoological and anthropological collections at the University of Iowa Museum of Natural History and teaches collections care in the University of Iowa Museum Studies Certificate Program. She has served as secretary of the Society for the Preservation of Natural History Collections (SPNHC) and serves on the Iowa Conservation and Preservation Consortium board, and the Iowa Museums, Archives, and Libraries Emergency Response Team. Email, [cindy-opitz@uiowa.edu](mailto:cindy-opitz@uiowa.edu)

Jessica Smith has served the Communications Department at the University of Iowa Pentacrest Museums since 2018. Her backgrounds in sociology, art, marketing, environmentalism, and non-profit organizing inform and contribute to her work as a museum professional. She teaches students to create access to science and history using creative media, writing, and *joy*. Email, [jessica-smith-7@uiowa.edu](mailto:jessica-smith-7@uiowa.edu)

Bruce Scherting has extensive exhibition development, planning, design, fabrication, and collection care experience from a variety of cultural institutions—history, natural history, art, and healthcare. He also has 20 years of museum studies teaching experience. As Director of Project Art at University of Iowa Hospitals & Clinics (UIHC), Scherting leads a team that partners with Capital Management to select, place and install artwork for new buildings and renovation projects. Project Art collaborates with leadership teams, multiple departments, advisory committees, architects, and contractors to create engagement opportunities with patients and visitors through the integration of art in public spaces for meaningful social interaction, storytelling, or moments of personal reflection, meditation, and respite. While Director of Exhibits at the University of Kansas Biodiversity Institute & Natural History Museum, Scherting was responsible for all phases of exhibition development and project management. He worked with museum education and communication staff, content experts, researchers, and contractors to build exhibits for diverse audiences. Prior to this Scherting was an exhibit developer-designer for UI Museum of Natural History’s renovation of Bird Hall. In Chicago, he worked at the Shedd Aquarium and Field Museum during large-scale expansion projects gaining valuable experience preparing cultural objects for display and developing exhibitions from a visitor-centered approach. Email, [bruce-scherting@uiowa.edu](mailto:bruce-scherting@uiowa.edu)



Gordon L. Jones is the Senior Military Historian and Curator at Atlanta History Center, where he has worked since 1991. He curated the five-year project to move, restore, and exhibit the 1886 cyclorama painting, The Battle of Atlanta. Gordon holds a Ph.D. from the Graduate Institute of the Liberal Arts at Emory University, specializing in the Civil War in popular culture. Email, [gjones@atlantahistorycenter.com](mailto:gjones@atlantahistorycenter.com)

Patrick Deicher studied History and Business Management and holds an MA in History. Patrick is a former curator of Bourbaki Panorama. Since 2019 he is a member of the Board of Trustees and since 2022 the President of the Bourbaki Panorama Foundation. He is working with BDO Ltd. (Switzerland) since 2009 as a consultant in Public Management and is Head of the sector Not-for-Profit-Organizations & Healthcare. Patrick is an active member of IPC's Advisory Group. From 2003 to 2013 he acted as the Secretary-General and from 2013 to 2017 as the Treasurer to the International Panorama Council. He is the former director of the Bruder Klaus Museum in Sachseln and was a member of the city parliament of Lucerne. From 2011 to 2021, he was also a member of the Board of Trustees of the Panorama Altoetting Foundation, Germany. Email, [patrick.deicher@deicher.ch](mailto:patrick.deicher@deicher.ch)

Gabriele Koller is an art historian and panorama researcher. Her MA thesis was devoted to Gebhard Fugel, the artist responsible for the Panorama of Jerusalem and the Crucifixion of Christ, Altötting, Germany. She has published on various aspects of panorama history. For the International Panorama Council of which she is a member since its foundation in 1992 she edited The World of Panoramas: Ten Years of International Panorama Conferences (2003), The Panorama in the Old World and the New (2010), and More Than Meets the Eye: The Magic of the Panorama (2019). She currently serves as Vice President of the International Panorama Council. She is a member of the Executive Board of the Foundation Panorama Altötting, Germany, and is the Panorama's Curator. Email, [gabriele.koller@gmx.de](mailto:gabriele.koller@gmx.de)

Ulrich Weilhammer studied History of Arts in Munich/Germany and Conservation of Easel Paintings and Polychrome wooden Objects in Berne/Switzerland. After earning his degree in 2001, he has been working on numerous conservation projects in Europe, Asia and the Americas. From 2004 until 2007, he was Assistant Professor and Head of the Department of Polychrome wooden Sculpture and Easel paintings at the Conservation Center of the Tainan National University of the Arts in Taiwan, R.O.C. and gave lectures at the Shanghai Institute of Visual Arts at Fudan University and the University of Applied Sciences in Berne/Switzerland. Since 2007, he has been running his own studio in Germany. The Cyclorama-projects he was involved include the Murten-Panorama and the Bourbaki Panorama in Switzerland, the Panorama of the Crucifixion of Christ in Altoetting/Germany and the Gettysburg Cyclorama in the US. From 2015 to 2018, Ulrich led the relocation. Conservation and restoration of the Atlanta Cyclorama. E-mail: [contact@weilhammer-conservation.com](mailto:contact@weilhammer-conservation.com)

## Session V | Panoramic Vision

*"Mysterious Barren Lands": The Panoramic Legacy of Arctic Documentary Films*

Lora Maslenitsyna, Yale University, New Haven, Connecticut, USA

**Abstract.** The collective imagination of the polar regions requires new perspectives in order to conceptualize a future for the Arctic during the ongoing climate crisis, as the rapidly defrosting ice exacerbates ecosystems, sea levels, and migration. This paper explores the convergence of imperial and sublime panoramic visions that have constructed the Arctic landscape in paradigmatic documentary films such as Robert Flaherty's Nanook of the North and Walt Disney Productions' White Wilderness. I trace the panorama's proliferation



of Arctic images in the nineteenth century that perpetuated an immersed gaze objectifying the Arctic through realist and theatrical elements. I show how this objectifying gaze cultivated the sense of the Arctic as a hostile and illusory landscape. Examining the development of photography at the height of Arctic exploration and panorama exhibitions, I contend that the panorama's influence on photographic moving images extended to the particular use of the panning shot in Arctic documentary films. Drawing on the photographic moving image as idealized objective evidence, Arctic documentaries perpetuate the panning shot as a means of dominating the landscape in order to reveal the presupposed truth of its mysterious environment. To oppose these paradigmatic Arctic films, I examine the subversion of the panning shot's objectivization of the Arctic landscape in Viktor Kossakovsky's 2019 film, *Aquarela*. Through a close reading of Kossakovsky's film, I contend that *Aquarela*'s innovative elaboration of the panning shot disorients the viewer's desire to anthropocentrically objectify the Arctic landscape and encourages the emergence of a subjective, Arctic perspective. This transformation of the panoramic legacy in *Aquarela* provides a novel method for representing and conceptualizing the Northern polar region that exceeds the restrictive mythologies that led to this crucial moment of environmental degradation.

**Keywords.** Documentary, Arctic, pan shot, landscape, climate crisis.

**Biography.** Lora Maslenitsyna is a Ph.D. student in the combined program in Film Media and Studies and Slavic Languages and Literatures at Yale University. Her research focuses on documentary and nonfiction media, the construction of historical identity and historical memory, and the way that relationships between forms of representation influence and construct the perception of daily reality. She received her M.A. in Comparative Literature from University College London and B.A. in Liberal Arts from Soka University of America. Email, [lora.maslenitsyna@yale.edu](mailto:lora.maslenitsyna@yale.edu)

### *The Images in Circarama as Evidence of a Historical Moment and Place*

Silvia Mascia, University of Udine, Udine, Italy

**Abstract.** The panoramic device of Circarama, later called Circle Vision 360°, is proposed as a system capable of visually presenting a nation. It is an immersive device that manages to take its viewers on a journey through the places that characterize the nation. It thus works on the common visual imaginary, trying to stimulate other senses as well, and not just the sense of sight. The viewers of the panoramic show are both citizens of the world - in transformation - and visitors to the very Expos in which the immersive films are presented. Their being women and men of the 1960s cannot be forgotten and should instead be emphasized and brought out. It is because the 1960s is a time of global and historical change that inevitably affects the evolution of visual culture as well.

The films made with this system aim to bring on the widescreen the United States, Italy, Switzerland, and Canada. The choice of locations is important but also the manner and technique through which they decide to show them. In fact, through Circarama technology, nations decide to present themselves by offering new



viewpoints on the big screen that would otherwise be difficult to achieve. In fact, filming is done using different means of transportation such as cars, trains, gondolas, and airplanes.

The panoramic cinema thus becomes a witness to the nation and its evolutions. Some of the images also depict the expo itself so that the film becomes a testimony to the architectural evolution not only of the nation but also of the expo and its host city.

**Keywords.** Circarama, panoramic cinema, widescreen, Expo.

**Biography.** After a three-year degree in Economics and Management of Cultural Heritage at the Ca' Foscari University of Venice, Silvia Mascia obtained her master's degree in Film and Audiovisual Studies at the University of Udine. Now she is a PhD candidate in History of Art, Cinema, Audiovisual Media, and Music at the University of Udine. Working on a research project that aims to expand her master's research about Circarama, she is looking on the stages of the dispositive in the Expos of the '60 around the world and focusing on the reconstruction of transnational industrial relations linked to the experimentation and global diffusion of the panoramic device. In addition, she has been in charge of the Sergio Amidei Award (Gorizia) catalog for 7 years and oversees parts of the festival organization. Email, [mascia.silvia@spes.uniud.it](mailto:mascia.silvia@spes.uniud.it) and [masciasilvia3791@gmail.com](mailto:masciasilvia3791@gmail.com)

*Immersive Illustration to Recreate Lost Worlds: 360° VR Documentaries for The World War II Foundation*  
Chiara Masiero Sgrinzatto, Independent Artist, Venice, Italy

**Abstract.** I present three examples of recreation of environments through immersive illustrations I made for 360VR documentaries. Each whole spherical panorama is created from a fragment by integrating non-panoramic archival material with immersive illustrations. The archival pictures usually cover a tiny portion of the entire image: the task is to reconstruct the rest of the environment in a useful way for the narration, as close as possible to the historical facts, keeping a pleasant and balanced composition.

The spherical illustrations were made\* for a series of 360VR documentaries directed by Uli Futschick for The World War II Foundation. With the voice-overs of veterans and 360° footage from today's environments, combined with archival photos and film clips, these 360VR documentaries allow the viewer to experience the hardship and difficulties the soldiers had to endure to fight the war.

In "Omaha Beach VR" the goal was to give the audience the picture of how many men and crafts were involved in the operation. The 360° filmed backgrounds were already set by the Director, as well as the archival pictures "to be extended" with illustrations in the scene. The drawn parts consist mainly of US landing crafts and soldiers, German beach obstacles and defense barriers, in a style that could complete the environment without distracting the viewers from the story and the historical documents.

In "Hold at all Costs" the illustrations of the training field, the camp and the soldiers loading the trucks to get to the siege, were drawn completely by hand because there was no 360° footage available. The scenes were reconstructed matching the archival films placed in the spherical canvas by the Director. Although the rest of the documentary is in colour, the illustrations are made in a sketchy b/w style that blends well with the old films.

**Keywords.** Spherical drawings, immersive illustration, 360° reconstructions, VR documentaries, time-travel panoramas.



**Biography.** Chiara Masiero Sgrinzatto is a visual designer based in Venice, Italy. An architect specialising in Visual Arts, her work is focused on the representation of environments through immersive hand-made drawing. She has been working in the VR industry for over a decade, creating photo, video, illustrated 360° content for many clients and institutions worldwide including the European Union, La Biennale di Venezia, the Italian Ministry of Culture, Venice World Expo Committee, the Guggenheim Collection, Ricoh Japan and USA, The World War II Foundation. She has planned and coordinated the Media Design course at IED Venezia and taught in the same school. She also collaborates with panoramic photography manufacturers on equipment beta-testing and specialised software houses on the design of immersive interfaces. <https://www.chiaramasierosgrinzatto.com>; email, [chiara.kiro@gmail.com](mailto:chiara.kiro@gmail.com)

## Session VI | Panoramas and Historical Context

### *125 Years of Agony and Revitalization of a Czech Panorama*

Jean-Claude Brunner, Independent Researcher, Vienna, Austria

**Abstract.** 2023 marks the 125th anniversary of both the unveiling of the Battle of Lipany 1434 panorama in Prague and the premature death of its main creator, Luděk Marold. The young Czech painter, recently returned from a successful career in Paris, proposed and created the largest painting for the 1898 architecture and engineering exhibition in Prague. All over Austria-Hungary, panoramas sprouted as expressions of the national revival. The Czech panorama featured the final defeat of the Hussite Wars. Marold died while preparing a painting of the second traumatic Czech defeat at White Mountain 1620. The Marold panorama survived the ravages of the 20th century and is currently in need of restoration.

The presentation will highlight the artistic career of Luděk Marold, discuss the panorama's place in Czech national revival (including infighting between Czech socialists and communists) and present the Výstaviště Praha organization's current plans.

**Keywords.** Battlefield panorama, 19th century, Czech Republic, Hussites, national revival.

**Biography.** Jean-Claude Brunner is a Swiss business analyst living and working in Vienna, Austria. His research interests are social and technological change in the 15th and 19th century in Central Europe. He is treasurer of the Weltmuseum Wien Friends association. Email, [jc.brunner@gmail.com](mailto:jc.brunner@gmail.com)

### *Rebuilding a Lost World: Trompe l'Œil, Panorama and Staging an Exhibition on Illusion in America*

Stephanie Heydt, High Museum of Art, Atlanta, Georgia

**Abstract.** In 1795, two similar but unrelated events—the introduction of illusionistic painting in the form of trompe l'oeil and panorama—forever changed the experience of Art in America. In Philadelphia that spring, curious crowds marveled at Charles Willson Peale's *The Staircase Group*—an illusionistic painting of his two sons ascending a staircase, and the first trompe l'oeil deception presented in America. That same season, audiences in New York were treated to a different form of illusion. A massive view of London—displayed and experienced in the round—promised to virtually transport viewers to the distant city.

The parallel introduction of these two forms of illusionistic depiction in the United States is worthy of note. Americans were not only fascinated by these 1795 deceptions, but these origin events became





prototypes for a persistent and increasingly present role for illusionistic experiences in American art and culture through to today. Scholars have investigated this late-eighteenth century moment and the decades and centuries to follow, unpacking the relevance of illusionism to better understand how it was deployed within the social and political circumstances particular to 19th and 20th century America. Some have traced the influence of the illusion within the fine arts, while others have investigated how it fed the particular brand of American spectacle that catered to mass audiences and low brow entertainments. Yet no single project has reviewed the broader scope of illusionistic depiction in America—specifically the intersecting trends of *trompe l'oeil* painting and panorama, the developing world of the fine arts and parallel emergence of mass entertainment—starting with this point of origin and carrying forward to today. The ambitious exhibition *Art and Illusion in America, 1795—Present* [Working Title] currently under development at the High Museum of Art in Atlanta, proposes to do exactly that.

This paper aims to present for feedback a summary of this developing project on illusionistic art in America and our attempt to understand (and reconstruct for our audiences when possible) trends of illusionism specific to the American scene. The exhibition aims to recenter these influential arts within the American story, considering not only audience, but their impact on the development of art, culture and entertainment writ large. The enduring fascination Americans have with illusion will be a central axis of the show, which will unfold chronologically from the early 1800s to present times. Because these arts are expressed in many forms—painting and sculpture, but also film and the decorative arts—the project will be multimedia, with moments of connection between past and present at pivotal intersections along the way.

**Keywords.** American art, illusion, 19th century, exhibition

**Biography.** Stephanie Mayer Heydt is the Margaret and Terry Stent Curator of American Art, overseeing a collection program spanning over two hundred years of historic paintings, drawings, prints and sculpture. With her academic specialization in nineteenth century print and popular culture, Stephanie had expanded her area of interest to address the full scope of the High's diverse American collection. Her current projects include further investigations into issues of race, gender and popular culture with a reassessment of post-Civil War representations of women, and the reception and evolution of immersive and illusionistic art in American from the 19th century through to the present.

Before coming to the High, Stephanie held positions at the Gulf Coast Museum of Art, Harvard University Art Museums and the Terra Museum of American Art (now the Terra Foundation for American Art), in addition to numerous fellowships. Stephanie's exhibitions at the High Museum include *Rising Up: Hale Woodruff's Murals at Talladega College*; *Go West! Art of the American Frontier from the Buffalo Bill Center of the West*; *Simple Pleasures: Still Life and American Art*; *"Something over Something Else": Romare Bearden's Profile Series*; and *Joseph Stella: Visionary Nature*.

Stephanie has contributed to publications at Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art, the Harvard University Art Museums, the Terra Foundation for American Art, and the Smithsonian American Art Museum. Her work has been supported by the Terra Foundation for American Art, The Henry Luce Foundation, Historical Society of Pennsylvania & Library Company, the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, and the National Endowment for the Humanities. Email, [Stephanie.Heydt@high.org](mailto:Stephanie.Heydt@high.org)

*"Come with Me": Grant Wood's Imagination Isles Panorama*

Sean M. Ulmer, Cedar Rapids Museum of Art, Cedar Rapids, Iowa, USA



**Abstract.** Grant Wood, painter of *American Gothic*, the most famous American painting in the world, was a man of many talents. A metalsmith by training, he largely taught himself the art of painting, but was also adept in sculpture, interior design, printmaking, and murals.

*Imagination Isles* is a 12-inch by 155-foot-long landscape painting (28 feet of which survives) designed by ninth-grade boys in Grant Wood's art class at McKinley Junior High School in 1924. The scroll was presented to the school as a theatrical performance, much as moving panoramas were in the 19th century, with dimmed lights, musical accompaniment, and a spoken narrative. Throughout his teaching career, Wood emphasized such cooperative endeavors as well as independent work; the relationship of community and creativity was central to his belief that art could be achieved by "a group of people painting harmoniously together, each contributing his own images to the forming of an accumulated vision."

*Imagination Isles* is a fictitious panorama. It was not only inspired by 19th century precedents, but also by more local and contemporary mural painting. It is all the more interesting given Grant Wood's later position as head of the Iowa PWAP in the 1930s. Unpopulated by figures, the viewer's spirit was invited to journey into the panorama, which was installed in the school's cafeteria for all to enjoy after the initial theatrical performance.

**Keywords.** Grant Wood, Imagination Isles, landscape, mural, Cedar Rapids.

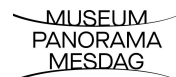
**Biography.** Sean Ulmer is the Executive Director of the Cedar Rapids Museum of Art, owners and operators of the Grant Wood Studio. Prior to becoming Executive Director in 2014, he served as the Curator of Collections and Exhibitions at the CRMA for nine years. He has more than thirty years of curatorial experience, including organizing over 120 exhibitions and acquiring numerous works of art. He is also responsible for several exhibition catalogues. Prior to his position at CRMA, he was Curator of Modern and Contemporary Art at the University of Michigan Museum of Art from 2001 to 2005. Before that, he was at the Herbert F. Johnson Museum of Art at Cornell University, where he had a broad curatorial portfolio as Assistant Curator of Painting and Sculpture. His five years at Cornell were preceded by his position as Exhibitions Coordinator at The Ohio State University's Wexner Center for the Arts. Ulmer received a B.A. in Art History from the University of Toledo/Toledo Museum of Art and a M.A. in Art History from The Ohio State University. Email, [sulmer@crma.org](mailto:sulmer@crma.org)

## Session VII | Virtual Reality and Recovering Panoramas

### *VR Remediation of Invisible Panoramas*

Christl Lidl, Guest Artist Laboratoire MINT, Université de Lille, Belgium

**Abstract.** The relationship between the physical immersive space of panoramas designed in the 18th and 19th centuries and that offered in Virtual Reality (VR) headsets is very strong. As in immersive headsets, the scenographic space of panoramas causes the viewer to lose his or her spatial reference points and plunges him or her into a fictionalised landscape, the setting of the false terrain accentuating the real effect of the painted subject. The virtual space created for VR headsets offers a very similar type of experience, making it possible to envisage a remediation of panoramas. The history of panoramas reveals that the canvases that constituted them were not always dedicated to a single place of display but could, through the normalisation of their size, "travel" and be exhibited in existing architectures.



Based on the experience of the immersive and interactive remediation project Cinemachina VR created with the IIVIMAT (Interactive and Immersive Video Making Tool), the project VR Remediation of Invisible Panoramas aims at creating a scenography in a 3D model of panorama architecture. This will be accompanied by a database and will virtually present panorama canvases, in particular those preserved by institutions but whose exhibition is made impossible by the absence of an architecture for their installation. The virtual space being entirely modular, the scenography will propose a reading of the canvas in multiple layers allowing the superimposition of existing archives such as preparatory drawings and photographs, and will integrate a spatialized sound design. This "nomadic" panorama is conceived as a tool for research on panoramas and, at the same time, a unique museum experience for the public.

**Keywords.** Virtual reality experience, remediation, VR scenography, immersive research tool.

**Biography.** Christl Lidl is a multimedia artist. As a professor of video-multimedia at the Ecole Supérieure d'art et de Design de Valenciennes, she set up a research and creation studio on [360° films](#) (2009–2018). In the framework of a tripartite research, art, science and semiology around immersive scenographies, [MAVII](#) (2018–2020), she collaborates with Christophe Chaillou, computer scientist (Laboratoire CRISTAL) and Matteo Treleani, semiologist, lecturer in communication at the University of Lille. Together they have developed a VR prototyping tool, [IIViMaT](#) (Interactive and Immersive Video Making Tool). With this tool, Christl Lidl is making the *Cinemachina VR* prototype, a project for a virtual museum of cinemas, presented at Laval Virtual (2021). She has published : *ESPACE(S) 360°/VR, une recherche création sur les écritures immersives et leur espace scénique* in Cahiers [Louis Lumière n°13](#).

Christl Lidl is also a doctor in Art and Art Sciences (2021). Her [thesis](#) led to the creation of artistic pieces in augmented reality (AR) dedicated to *Life a User's Manual*, a literary work by Georges Perec. She created the AR application for the exhibition "[Cinéma de Bruxelles augmentés](#)", created for the Heritage Days (2022) and presented in 2022/2023 at the Royal Cinematek in Brussels. Email, [lidlchristl@gmail.com](mailto:lidlchristl@gmail.com); <https://www.linkedin.com/in/christl-lidl/>

### *Virtual Reality for Cultural Heritage: How 3D Models, VR and Gaming Technology Extend the Reality*

Karolina Wójtowicz, Independent Visual and Architectural Designer, Wrocław, Poland

**Abstract.** I would like to tell a story about my vision of transferring cultural heritage to virtual reality not only by creating digital twins but also by showing its spirit, its history, people behind the history and how it is surviving in present times. I will show the Virtual Project of Church of Piece in Świdnica, Poland, Virtual Tours created in a few Stave Churches in Norway, a plan to create a Virtual Museum for Panoramas - those who are on display and those in storage bringing them alive again, 3D model of the altar in Kamieniec Ząbkowicki in Poland and for what reasons it was created. Also, what actions and additional products we can create with modern technology that can help to understand the plan and structure of the buildings, to educate the audience in a more visual way than from books or just help monuments gain income in times like pandemic. I will demonstrate the products like 3D printed models and tactile maps which are helping to include people with disabilities to experience cultural heritage without ability to see or walk. I would like to also show how we can emphasize the work of art conservators who take care of preserving historical buildings and panoramas. At last, but not least I will present the technology behind it—what techniques (3D modelling, photogrammetry etc.), software and equipment were used for these projects and how the technology from



the gaming industry can advance and widen the way we experience reality. Those techniques are creating the full image of the beauty of monuments, introducing them to the wider public and also showing us their future.

**Keywords.** Virtual Reality (VR), 3D models, cultural heritage, virtual tours.

**Biography.** I am a Visual and Architectural Designer. I graduated in Architecture and Urban Planning from the University of Technology (Wrocław, Poland). For my diploma I created a new building for the panorama painting of the Battle of Murten. I gathered experience in architectural studios and international companies developing skills in design, 3D and 2D graphic. After a few years of working as an interior designer (own company) I received a grant in 2017 to create a Virtual Project of the Church of Piece in Świdnica (Poland). The church was given a detailed computer survey, full 3D model and a Virtual Tour for Oculus Quest platform. After the project I worked for almost 2 years in University of Technology creating 3D printed Tactile Maps for the visually impaired students creating for them safe environment to move and study and also developing unified tactile maps standards for all universities. Then I was granted funding for a trip to Norway to study their biggest cultural heritage – stave churches and find a way to capture its greatness and transfer to digital world. Currently I am working as a freelance designer on companies branding and creating 3D projects like a model of the altar in Kamieniec Ząbkowicki (Poland). Email, [karawojtowicz@gmail.com](mailto:karawojtowicz@gmail.com)

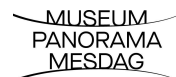
*The Panorama of Rio de Janeiro by Victor Meirelles and Henri Langerock: Part 6—Exploring the Virtual Faux-Terrain in a 360° Experience by Game Engines*

Thiago Leitão de Souza, Universidade Federal do Rio de Janeiro, Brazil

**Abstract.** This paper proposal is related to the ongoing research project "The immersive experience in 360°: investigation, representation and digital immersion in the city of Rio de Janeiro in the 19th and 20th centuries", developed at Programa de Pós-Graduação em Urbanismo in Laboratório de Análise Urbana e Representação Digital in FAU-UFRJ, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. The present work will investigate a Game Engine Experience in a digital 360° Panorama. This proposal belongs to the investigations of "The Panorama of Rio de Janeiro by Victor Meirelles and Henri Langerock: Part 1—A City Memory's Representation or a City's Invention?", "Part 2—To render or not to Render? Maybe we need to surrender!", "Part 3—"360° virtual layers of atmospheric perspective", and "Part 4—A Game Engine Experience", "Part 5—Gamifying the 360° Experience by Game Engines" presented respectively at 27th, 28th, 29th, 30th and 31st IPC Conferences.

The *faux-terrain*—false terrain in French—was one of the main characteristic elements of the 360° immersive experience of Panoramas in the 19th century. The large surrounding three-dimensional scenario was built just below the viewing platform and composed of real objects related to the painting's theme. It was a transitional space between the canvas and the platform, where the gaze was accommodated, an idea of connecting the visitor's real world to the pictorial world of the experience, a continuum space where illusion became immersion. But how could a 360° immersive experience with this space continuum's sense in the 21st century be developed?

The virtual world's promenade of today is not restricted by a gaze's simulation anymore. The virtual traveler can easily operate with his body and reach out the six degrees of freedom with up/down,



forward/back, left/right, pitch, roll, or yaw movements by either translating linearly, or rotating axially, himself through the whole scenario. In this way, it is possible to state the faux-terrain's idea still remains with the gaze's simulation and also can be improved with the virtual traveler's body movements in different levels.

This paper will investigate 360° immersive experiences through different virtual *faux-terrains* developed in *The Panorama of Rio de Janeiro by Victor Meirelles and Henri Langerock Game Engine*. The experiences established in previous essays will be improved. In order to achieve this, several digital and analogical systems of representations will be applied: computer graphics techniques, 3D models, 3D renderings, sketches, virtual reality glasses, and some programming codes will be also investigated.

**Keywords.** Panorama of Rio de Janeiro; Victor Meirelles; Henri Langerock; game engines; virtual reality.

**Biography.** Thiago Leitão is full Professor of sketching and computer graphics techniques of Faculdade de Arquitetura e Urbanismo of Universidade Federal do Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. He holds an undergraduate degree in Architecture and Urbanism (FAU-UFRJ, 2006), Master of Science in Arts (PROURB-FAU-UFRJ in Rio de Janeiro, co-realized at Sint-Lucas Architectuur, Hogeschool voor Wetenschap & Kunst, Brussels, 2009), and PhD (PROURB-FAU-UFRJ in Rio de Janeiro, 2014). Since graduation, Thiago Leitão's research areas include: panoramas, the history of panoramas, panoramas of Rio de Janeiro, 360° experiences, and how its conversion to digital media can offer contributions, developments, and new experiences, for Architecture and Urbanism's graphic representations and design studios. Email, [leitao.thiago@fau.ufrj.br](mailto:leitao.thiago@fau.ufrj.br)

### *Unveiling the Secrets of the Panorama du Congo*

Leen Engelen, LUCA School of Arts (Brussels) /KU Leuven (Leuven), Belgium, and Victor Flores, Lusofona University, Lisbon, Portugal

**Abstract.** Last year, we presented the first stage of our research on the Panorama du Congo, a panorama painting by the Belgian artists Alfred Bastien and Paul Mathieu. The work was commissioned to promote the Belgian Congo at the World Exhibition in Gent, Belgium in 1913. At the upcoming IPC conference, we would like to follow up on the previous presentation and show some of the results of the photography and the Virtual Reality application that is being developed by the team..

Our research and valorization approach to the panorama resonates with the notion of 'lost worlds', central to this year's CFP in multiple ways.

First, as was the case for many panoramas, the Panorama du Congo was painted to be exhibited at a World Exhibition. Due to the close connection between the canvas and the temporary purpose-built rotunda, the exhibition of the painting ended when the World Exhibition closed and the building was demolished. It was once more exhibited some twenty years later at the World Exhibition in Brussels in 1935, but after the closing of the exhibition and again the dismantling of the rotunda, it disappeared from public sight. The elements of the faux-terrain were scattered or destroyed and the painting was rolled up and stored. It remains in storage until today. Along with material constraints (the need for a rotunda, restoration of the canvas, reconstruction of the faux terrain), the changing colonialist attitudes – especially after the Congo's independence in 1960 - prevented the painting from further exhibition. The panorama, as it was conceived and constructed, is thus lost. The team is currently working on the virtual recreation of the panorama (building, canvas, platform, faux terrain) to bring this lost world back to life.





Second, the panorama painting still exists but has been inaccessible to the public for over 80 years. As part of this project, we photographed the canvas, enabling us to create a digital twin. This allowed the team to investigate the painting and the image in detail. Previous research was largely based on small-scale images of very poor quality, such as contemporary postcards and ephemeral documents, such as guidebooks and sketches. Studying the digital images of the actual panorama and relating them to archival research unveiled many new elements and heightened our understanding of the painting and the way the faux terrain was initially constructed. While the actual faux terrain is (most likely) lost and its paper trail in the archives is scarce, we were able to reconstruct parts of it digitally and in VR.

Lastly, from our current post-colonial perspective and decolonial theoretical framework, the image of the Congo presented in the panorama painting can be debunked as a colonial fiction, an invented and dreamed representation of the Belgian Congo, invested by and representing colonial power relations. It depicts a country that never existed outside of the minds of the colonizers. Our decolonial perspective presents us with many challenges regarding its future public exhibition. The recreation of the panorama in VR is the first step, to be followed by the introduction of multi-layered polyphonous narratives on that imaginary pictorial world. This talk will also allow the conference audience to experience the Panorama du Congo with a Virtual Reality headset available during the IPC conference days.

Our presentation will be developed along the axes of the archive, virtual reality and contested heritage.

**Keywords.** Panorama du Congo, Alfred Bastien, Paul Mathieu, virtual reality, imperial panorama.

**Biographies.** Leen Engelen is a professor of film and media history at LUCA School of Arts/KU Leuven in Belgium. She published widely on film, media and visual culture in the nineteenth and twentieth century, including immersive media such as panoramas and the Kaiserpanorama. An overview of her publications can be found here: <https://www.kuleuven.be/wieiswie/en/person/LeenEngelen>. She is currently Principal Investigator (with Victor Flores) of the research project “CongoVR. Decolonising the Panorama of Congo: A Virtual Heritage Artistic Research” (H2020). Leen is an honorary academic at the School of History (University of Kent) and is currently the president of the International Association for Media and History ([www.iamhist.net](http://www.iamhist.net)). [Leen.engelen@luca-arts.be](mailto:Leen.engelen@luca-arts.be)

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