

Investigation

by stephen hastings-king

There is something he wants to know but he is not sure what it is.

1. In the first movement, using maps and chance operations, he selects a space to investigate. When he arrives at the site he lays out a grid with string. Each subdivision is roughly $\frac{1}{2}$ the size of his living room floor.

Each grid is a magic square; the numbers refer to each other as parts of a series that adds to 34. He determines which sector is center procedurally.

He sets up multiple cameras and uses different magnifications to record different scales of interaction between systems within the center. He supplements the recordings with a diary of observations and gathers detailed pedological, hydrological, meteorological and astronomical data along with spectrographic documentation of magnetic fluctuations using very low frequency radio.

After several days of continuous observation, he breaks down the equipment.

In the second movement, he removes the section from of the ground. He clears space around it then using specially adapted tools with fine sharp blades makes the cuts. He works into position a Plexiglas sheet to serve as a bottom, then attaches sides to it of a width that matches the depth of the horizontal cut.

In this way a section of a marsh or weapons testing range, a forest or corporate landscape is transported into his living room.

In the third movement he subjects his data to permutations so that the conditions experienced by the abstracted sector are within

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the same boundaries as in the field but are new and do not repeat.

He enjoys making the calculations, arranging the equipment, going to the trouble.

Every time, he hopes that the various systems will live longer if they are not aware of the change in their location to the greatest possible extent just as test tubes that issue bubbles, plaster houses treasure chests and plastic pirates standing beneath polyurethane tiki ferns extend the lives of tropical fish in aquariums by persuading them they are still in the ocean.

2. When the preparations are complete, he turns on the climate. Then he sits in a chair near its center.

He watches the sector of field on the floor and waits for the meteorological, astronomical and magnetic parameters to reach the desired balances.

And, weary from his labors, he falls asleep.

When he dreams the square is transformed into an expanse of black and brown curves and spirals beneath which giant crumpled metal leaves lay on a soil of cornflakes and mirrors.

His viewpoint moves through soil, shrinking and picking up speed. Soon he is in a network of tunnels through which move transparent organisms, sequences of geometrical structures suspended in water that reach him then wash over, testing and tasting.

He is a pattern of indentations on the surface of the liquid then the outline of a water strider then an oval form the inside of which is

an arrangement of gears and levers through which pass tiny white ribbons covered in numbers.

When he looks away from his reflection an immense pillow worm is arriving which opens its mouth to reveal row upon row of feathers upright, twitching and anticipating.

The breath of the worm is a soundscape; when he moves into it he is looking at either the geometric tracers of subatomic collisions or rocks and radios hurtling through the vacuum of outer space.

As the waveforms from magnetic fields creep toward the foreground, he is waking up in his chair.

His re-entry drains the color from the things on his living room floor and sends a contracting smothering death over everything like frost.

But for him there is only the sound of the machinery that controls the climate he has built.

Each time he knows that the project is already over, that his dream of penetrating material has destroyed it and that it is only a matter of time before the colors leak from their objects, form into puddles and disappear.

There is no place. There is no non-place. There is only in-between.

