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Landscape Sculpture Parks in the Valais: Towards a Critique of the Economy of Project Work

Benoît Antille

Over the past decade, the canton of Valais in the Swiss Alps has witnessed a true craze for site-specific sculptures or installations linked to the landscape. The predominant curatorial model has been the landscape sculpture park. This phenomenon is emblematic of a real trend in many other rural or mountainous regions, where similar projects are being developed for territorial, political or economic reasons. Commissioned to respond to specific expectations and agendas, these artworks and the parks that they constitute reflect new dynamics in the field of art production, identified as the *economy of project work*. Now, as I will further try to demonstrate through the example of the Valais, this economy might result in problematic outcomes.

Landscape sculpture parks in the Valais: a new trend reflecting a worldwide phenomenon

In the summer of 2012, the Air & Art foundation advertised the “opening of [an] unparalleled event, a unique *rendezvous* in the Swiss Alps between nature and contemporary art” that would be taking place in the canton of Valais. This “rendezvous” was an artwork entitled *Tangential Circular Negative Line 1968-2012*, designed by Michael Heizer, a legend of the American land art. Described in the press release as “the first [...] permanent in situ work on this scale [created by the artist] in Europe”, the piece, which had been commissioned by the foundation, was placed in the vicinity of Verbier, a well-known ski resort. In dialogue with the surrounding landscape and the spectacular hydroelectric Mauvoisin Dam completed in 1958, *Tangential Circular Negative Line* consists of three tangent rings made of steel: one large, measuring 22.9 metres in diameter, and two smaller, measuring 11.4 metres each (fig. 1).

Fig. 1. Inauguration of *Tangential Circular Negative Line* 1968-2012 on 18 August 2012

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As the dates included in the title suggest, *Tangential Circular Negative Line* 1968-2012 refers to a series of ephemeral experiments, including *Circular Surface Drawing* (1968) and *Circular Surface Planar Displacement Drawing* (1970), that Heizer carried out in deserts in the early years of his career. These earlier works informed the design of this later work. Conceptually, however, considering that the sculpture is made of steel, is perennial and has been installed on a site that can be considered a public space, it relates much more to Heizer's public art works, like *Isolated Mass/Circumflex #2* (1972), which he created for the Menil Collection in Houston, Texas.

Tangential Circular Negative Line was inaugurated with great fanfare, as befits a monument of this description. Soon after its unveiling, the sculpture became a landmark, piquing the interest and curiosity of the local audience, tourists and the art world, which is the least that can be expected for such a financial and logistical *tour de force*. It cost about half a million Swiss francs to make, and a special convoy was required to transport the 26 tonnes of steel to the site. Nevertheless, this piece is only the first chapter of a larger project described by Air & Art as "an exceptional contemporary art programme" comprising the commission of 13 permanent site-specific works for the canton's 13 districts over the next few decades – in effect, turning the entire canton into a gigantic sculpture park.¹

Air & Art is not an isolated example. Over the past decade, close to 10 foundations, associations and institutions have been active in this region and employed the predominant curatorial model of the sculpture park in its broadest sense, including installations and multimedia works (fig. 2). While most of them are regional in their significance, some can be compared to international projects.

Fig. 2. Examples of sculpture parks and site-specific projects in the Valais

1) *EAU FIL DE L'ART* FESTIVAL IN MORGINS, 2) THE SCULPTURE PARK OF THE FLORE-ALPE BOTANICAL GARDENS IN CHAMPEX; *INFINITUDES* FESTIVAL IN FINHAUT, 3) VERBIER 3-D SCULPTURE PARK, 4) MICHAEL HEIZER'S *TANGENTIAL CIRCULAR NEGATIVE LINE 1968-2012*, 5) SITE-SPECIFIC COMMISSIONS OF R&ART'S ASSOCIATION IN THE VILLAGE OF VERCORIN, 6) *BEYOND THE TIMBERLINE*, A PROJECT DEVELOPED BY ECAV IN 2012 IN BELALP, AND 7) *LANDART* FESTIVAL OF THE LANDSCHAFTSPARK IN BINNTAL.

Besides Air & Art, the Verbier 3-D Sculpture Park and Residency is one of the few examples on this scale in the Valais. Managed by a foundation calling itself a “non-profit organization dedicated to creating a monumental contemporary sculpture to promote art, education, and culture to international audiences”, this project consists of a sculpture park on the Verbier ski slopes and an invitation-only residency at the resort. Between 2011 and 2013, new sculptures were commissioned every summer, but the rhythm is now biennial.

However, site-specific sculptures and landscape sculpture parks are not only popular in the Valais. They are part of a worldwide phenomenon, especially in rural Western European areas, where an increasing number of similar projects have been launched since the 1970s. To have a better understanding of this trend, the *Ecole Cantonale d'Art du Valais* undertook a research project, whose conclusions are summarised here. Entitled *Ars Contemporaneus Alpinus, A Critical Approach to Site-specific Art in Natural Environment* (ACA), this research sought to contextualise the projects carried out in the Valais and provide them with a critical discourse.²

How to understand the popularity of landscape sculpture parks

Public art is a challenging sector of art production and has seen the creation of a number of problematic artworks and projects. In this regard, landscape sculpture parks in the Valais could be added to the list as examples from the Alps, and it would not be

worth devoting time and research to them. ACA's endeavour, however, was primarily to focus not on the works and projects themselves but on the dynamics that favour their production and legitimise them. Three main parameters have been identified to understand the popularity of landscape sculpture parks in Western European rural areas:

1) The first parameter lies in territorial changes, which can be described as an urbanisation and tertiarisation process. Studied at an early stage by French philosopher and sociologist Henri Lefebvre, this process has deeply affected rural territories on an economic, social and cultural level since the 1940s. Three decades after the publication of *From the Rural to the Urban* (Lefebvre, 1970), government reports endorsed the changes Lefebvre was affirming. While the Marxist sociologist was critical of the alienating effects of the urbanisation process and its attendant fragmentation of space, these reports took a positive view of the changes. According to them, one can no longer identify the countryside with a "dying" agricultural world, cities and rural territories are now complementary and intertwined.

In short, the countryside's urbanisation has not only reshaped its identity but also its function. Traditionally intended for agriculture and the exploitation of natural resources, rural areas are now used for residential, tourist, recreational and environmental purposes: In a globalised world, within which local identities are being challenged, the countryside is seen as a refuge where tradition and nature are preserved. In Europe, where tourism is a key economic sector, it has become a destination and a 'brand'. At a time when the urban model is being called into question, city-dwellers look to the countryside for an alternative; they seek its quality of life. Because of these challenges, the future of the countryside is increasingly planned out by regional, national and European policies that have been undertaken to make these new functions more competitive.

2) If the rural territory is being reorganised as an extension of the urban fabric, the field of cultural production has witnessed major changes as well. These changes relate to culture's function in society. In line with the rise of post-Fordism, a new paradigm known as the creative economy spread in the 1980s and has turned art into a perfect expedient to achieve economic growth and territorial development.

Disseminated by influential forces such as British consultant Charles Landry and American urban studies theorist Richard Florida, the notions of *creative industries*, *cultural economy* and *creative economy* (all seeking to demonstrate that creativity in general and culture in particular can be used for economic development and diversity) have infiltrated political circles and started to appear as "a powerful transformative force in the world today [as well as] one of the most rapidly growing sectors of the world economy."³ In this spirit, cities and rural areas look at culture as a way to meet objectives such as increasing their attractiveness or economic competitiveness.

These ideas have had a formidable impact on the art world by becoming an ideological framework in policymaking. Taken first in Great Britain in the 1990s by Tony Blair's New Labour government and progressively in other European countries, this managerial turn in cultural policies clarifies why so many art projects benefitting from public subsidies are being launched in peripheral areas undergoing structural changes.

Because of Swiss federalism, the system of public funding is not planned at the national level in the country. Besides the Swiss arts council, Pro Helvetia (a foundation entirely funded by the federal government and fulfilling a subsidiary role), cultural policies are

mainly managed by cantons and municipalities, which are quite autonomous. Interestingly, over the past decade, the Cultural Service of the Valais had started to implement a cultural policy informed by the concepts of creative economy, thus following the dominant tendency. In one way or another, such a move encourages the development of artistic projects resorting to tourist or communication arguments.

3) When the idea that culture could be seen as a factor of growth started to gain ground in political circles, the art world proved perfectly prepared to play its role. Artists today, like any other creative people, are not only expected to make artworks but commissioned more and more often to develop projects responding to specific demands. In line with the development of the service economy, this phenomenon marks the formidable comeback of the activity of art commissioning.

One of the “services” artists can offer is their ability to do site-specific work. This means producing works tailored to specific contexts and expectations. Site-specificity is a perfect solution for peripheral regions seeking to increase their visibility, build larger audiences and diversify tourist attractions. If local communities are particularly receptive to these types of projects to acknowledge their context, large audiences and tourists are also attracted by them because they are often spectacular and installed in unique places. On a deeper level, site-specificity also helps places that are increasingly homogenised in our globalised world to build a sense of authenticity and uniqueness (Kwon, 2004, pp. 53-54). Likewise, projects like Antony Gormley’s *Angel of the North* (a gigantic sculpture created for Gateshead, in England, that “provid[es] a symbol for the character and strength of the region [as well as] an increase in local pride”) manage to brand a given region by providing it with a cultural landmark. Finally, on a purely practical level, site-specificity is a key element of contemporary mobility: It allows artists to travel light and produce on-site.

These aspects help us to understand why site-specific practices have become a key notion for commissioning agents, politicians, visual art officers and local communities. Therefore, it comes as no surprise that such projects largely benefit from public funding like the *Culture and Tourism Fund*, created by the State of Valais in 2000 to “contribute to creation of professional-quality projects in artistic and cultural fields taking part in tourism development in the Valais”.

In short, if changes regarding territory explain the development of a demand for contemporary art projects in rural areas, then cultural policies informed by the concepts of the creative economy provide the framework for their creation. As for the economy of project work and site-specific practices, they are working modalities that allow artists to best respond to the needs of commissioning agents.

Such dynamics are in line with the development of project management, which, according to French sociologists Luc Boltanski and Eve Chiapello (Boltanski et Chiapello, 1999), is characteristic of post-Fordism. As the predominant working modality today, project management allows different fields – politics, economy, sciences and culture – to merge their interests and work towards shared objectives. That is why it has become a privileged tool of contemporary governance. Now, as I will demonstrate by using the example of sculpture parks in the Valais, the logic of project management, which has been identified as the economy of project work in the field of visual arts (De Vrièse, Martin, Melin, Moureau, and Sagot-Duvaurox, 2011, p. 12), might result in problematic outcomes.

Landscape sculpture parks in the Canton of Valais: a critical analysis

Whether openly claimed or not, the decision to choose the natural environment as the context for monumental sculptures or installations suggests that a certain idea of “land art” serves as a model for the projects developed in the Valais. With regard to the history of site-specific practices, however, such a legacy should be viewed as an anachronism. After works like *Double Negative* (Michael Heizer, 1969) and *Spiral Jetty* (Robert Smithson, 1970), artists, critics and curators challenged the notion of site-specificity by advocating other types of engagement with nature, places or communities (see: Lucy R. Lippard, 2014; Grant Kester, 2005; James Meyer, 2000; Paul O'Neill and Claire Doherty, 2011). Rather than being based in monumental sculpture, emergent practices were participatory, research-based or socially engaged and attempted to address social, political, cultural or ecological issues. The creative economy dismisses this history, however, and legitimises site-specific approaches inspired by land art because they are attractive to the audience and for their ability to brand a given place. This ontological issue is the first in a series of conceptual weaknesses or contradictions highlighted in the following paragraphs.

Site selection is a key parameter of site-specific practices. But when commissioned to create a sculpture or an installation, this decision is no longer the artist's. Instead, commissioners choose the site. In the case of Air & Art, the selection stems from a curatorial standpoint: Landmarks, like a monumental hydroelectric dam or vineyards, were chosen for their ability to typify aspects of the Valais. Quite ironically, however, such choices correspond with tourist representations of the canton. More frequently, organisers want to develop projects that add value to the places where they live and work. This attitude leads to projects such as the sculpture park created by the Verbier 3-D Foundation, which reached an agreement with the local cable car company to take a trail between two ski lifts as the site for the project. Site selection, in this case, does not stem from a strong curatorial statement but from a pragmatic choice: The site is easily accessible, and the sculpture park adds value to the ski area.

Fig. 3. *Samsara*, 2012, by Kiki Thompson

Sculptures along the trail on the ski slopes, Verbier 3-D Sculpture Park.

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Considered as “finished landscapes for finished art” by Robert Smithson (Smithson, 1972), parks belong anyway to a problematic typology with respect to site-specificity. By definition, a park is “an area designed for a specified type of use (as industrial, commercial or residential use)”.⁴ Considering landscape sculpture parks’ conditions of spectatorship, namely walking or biking along trails with a map to track down scattered artworks, their use is clearly recreational (“Art walks”, says the slogan!). Halfway between urban sculpture parks and amusement parks, landscape sculpture parks thus actively take part in the production of a territory that is being gentrified, museumised and transformed into recreation zones.

Often publicly funded and located on sites that are publicly owned and managed, projects created in this context hang on public policies such as accessibility or inclusiveness. In this regard, organisers do their best to demonstrate how sculpture parks help to democratise contemporary art. According to the Verbier 3-D Foundation, each year “more than 1 million skiers and hikers access the park for free”.⁵ Such an assertion surely helps to convince funders, but it raises “qualitative” questions: On the one hand, one could wonder whether the majority of tourists and temporary residents staying in Verbier – a resort advertised by the official website of the Swiss National Tourist Office as the “most cosmopolitan holiday resort in Valais” – belong to a class of privileged individuals who can easily access culture anyway and, on the other hand, whether the different kinds of audiences cohabiting on-site – such as the skiers, cyclists and hikers – really constitute a public.

No less ambiguous are the ways in which organisers advertise the aesthetic experience provided by their parks. Emphasising the relationship between the works and their surroundings, Verbier 3-D curator Paul Goodwin explains, “the power of art is its ability to articulate human emotions and values such as beauty and truth. On the mountain, faced with such sublime vistas, the visitor can experience these works of

art... completely removed from the gallery or museum, directly confronting the truth of nature.” In this case, the chosen vocabulary skilfully merges the tradition of the Romantic Sublime proper to landscape history with a Modernist approach to art and spectatorship. Described in equally grandiose terms, the landscape and the artworks seem to be part of the same aesthetic experience, the “truth” of Nature mirroring the “truth” of the artist. In terms of public relations, this argument is appealing. Considering the recurrent complaints of the broader audience towards contemporary art, which is often considered too elitist, conceptual or critical, this discourse replaces an understanding of the works with a formal level, the sculptures being advertised as the expression of the artist’s own truth or vision. But such a discourse might be misleading or demagogical when the exhibited works, such as those described below, actually function on a conceptual or critical level.

Now, let us pay closer attention to the works themselves. The policy of Air & Art is to provide the canton of Valais with a collection of monumental landmarks created by “big-name” artists. Such a patronising endeavour aims at connecting the Valais to the historic legacy of land art. But what is left of this heritage if one considers that *Tangential Negative Line* has been installed in a domesticated area destined for tourism, next to a hotel and a parking lot, on an artificially flattened and gravelled surface that turns the mountain into a public square (fig. 4)?

In these conditions, one should not be surprised to see Michael Heizer himself casting doubts on the relevance of this project. William L. Fox, director of the Center for Art & Environment at the Nevada Museum of Art, reported that Heizer “wasn’t sure why the Swiss would want to put art in the mountains, which are already spectacular, or by the dam, as if it was an afterthought.” However, such a commission might have been financially profitable for Heizer, who need funds to keep working on *City*, a monumental project that he began in 1972 in the Nevada desert.

Fig. 4. Aerial view of *Tangential Circular Negative Line*, next to the Hôtel de Mauvoisin and parking lots

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In the Verbier 3-D Sculpture Park, there is no such legendary figure just yet. Most of the commissioned works have been made by mid-career artists. In 2014, the Bureau A collective (CH) created *Antoine*, a fake rock transformed into a viable living unit (fig. 5), and Tarik Hayward (CH) made *Unity Temple*, a massive sculpture made of dry cement bags, designed to formally evolve with the meteorological conditions of the site (fig. 6). At first sight, both of these works can be considered formally and conceptually successful. In both cases, the artists approach the context with some wit and humour. But the results are anecdotal and banal for anyone who knows this context and its cultural representations. Indeed, many artists have addressed the Swiss cliché of military facilities taking the form of natural elements,⁶ the issue of the Alps becoming covered in concrete and the development of the hydroelectric and tourism industries in the Valais. *Antoine* and *Unity Temple* simply represent additional variations on these themes without adding anything to the understanding of the context. Instead, they repeatedly take part in the production and diffusion of existing representations.

Fig. 5. Bureau A, *Antoine*, 2014

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Fig. 6. Tarik Hayward, *Unity Temple*, 2014

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That same year, London-based artist Andrea Hasler (CH) created two installations that are much more dubious: *Avant/Après* consists of a 30-metre-long red carpet leading up the mountain landscape to the edge of a cliff. An intestine-like rope made of resin and wax closes the end of the mat, thus indicating the threshold of an area exclusively reserved for VIPs (fig. 8). The other, *Perishable Goods*, is made up of a pallet of compressed flesh utilising the same process, which is held together and simultaneously adorned with luxury chains (fig. 7). Describing the second work in an interview, the artist explained that she wanted to address the luxury tourism proper to Verbier:

“It’s compressed luxury flesh, compressed onto a palette, chained together with gold chains that you would see on luxury goods. It has literally just sort of been dropped, air-dropped onto the mountain, like the tourists every winter. It also sort of references how, during emergency disaster zones, how they drop emergency food... but here, obviously, it’s just the luxury tourists’ compressed meat.”⁷

Fig. 7. Andrea Hasler, *Avant/Après*, 2014

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Fig. 8. Andrea Hasler, *Perishable Goods*, 2014

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Such site-specific works raise number of issues and prove to be conceptually weak. According to Andrea Halser, *Perishable Goods* embodies an opposition between humanitarian disasters on the one hand and luxury tourism and goods on the other. Highly ambiguous and inappropriately provocative, this statement turns out to be self-

critical, if one considers that one of contemporary art's main audiences is precisely the privileged few she is addressing.

Made of light materials laid out on the grass, as if it was in a gallery space, *Avant/Après* will soon come apart thanks to natural forces and visitors; before long, the work will resemble a collection of junk, abandoned by neglectful tourists on the mountain, thus contradicting the Verbier 3-D Foundation's aim to commission sculptures that are "environmentally conscious".

Such paradoxes are emblematic of the simplifications and misunderstandings that can arise when site-specific approaches respond to the logic of art commissioning. Hasler's works show that a gallery practice developed in a city cannot be "*air-dropped onto the mountain*". Different contexts call for different practices, concepts and critical tools. From this perspective, they show both the tensions at play when urbanisation processes stake their claims in rural areas and the complete fatuousness and hypocrisy of "critique" when enacted in this way.

All of the aforementioned contradictions and conceptual weaknesses highlight the gap between the 1960s/1970s – when a group of artists expanded the field of sculpture, addressed the paradigm of Modernism and challenged the commodification of the art object by experimenting with site-specific approaches – and the present, when these approaches have become a service, a PR strategy or a political tool. My position, however, is not to hold artists, curators or organisers individually responsible for these discontents but rather to focus on the dynamics of project work itself as a problematic production system. In the same vein, the goal of this essay is not to directly address projects such as Verbier 3-D and Air & Art but to take them as illustrations of a wider phenomenon – the economy of project work – present in the countryside as much as in big cities, in the public space as much as within institutions.

Problematic dynamics at the heart of the economy of project work

Addressed in its early stage by American artist Andrea Fraser and German critic Helmut Draxler, the economy of project work shows a number of structural issues:

In such a context, the final outcome or artwork is the result of a collaborative process involving a network of actors (including artists, curators, commissioners, cultural officers, PR agents, cultural mediators, local politicians or communities etc.) whose criteria and agenda can be antagonistic. This chain of decision making challenges artists' ability to maintain the consistency of their projects, not to mention their authorship (Boutinet, 2010, p. 83), and explains the presence of contradictory value systems. This is why so many art projects can be valued, funded and legitimised even when their goals are not primarily artistic.

Directly related to the service economy, the economy of project work imposes specific working conditions: Artists have become nomads and flexible workers connected to an international network. If this economy opens up an increasing number of opportunities (see the number of calls for projects released every day on the Internet), artists and curators must also create favourable conditions for self-employment: The more projects they participate in, the more visible and legitimate they will be within the network. However, in order to get projects funded, they first have to get the consent of

the commissioners by deploying persuasive rhetorical arguments (Groys, 2002). Such dynamics might encourage compromises, calculation and, in some cases, opportunism.

As the terminology of project making suggests, artists and curators' work is becoming increasingly bureaucratic and constrained: They have to devote part of their time to demanding application processes and meetings; in order to be carried out, projects must be approved and possibly reformulated; during their execution, commissioners can evaluate projects and ask for modifications. Such a managerial turn in the domain of art not only constrains artists and curators but also affects cultural production on a deeper level. According to American sociologists Paul J. DiMaggio and Walter W. Powell, "highly structured organizational fields provide a context in which individual efforts to deal rationally with uncertainty and constraint often lead, in the aggregate, to homogeneity in structure, culture, and output" (DiMaggio and Powell, 1983). That is why so many projects end up looking uniform and interchangeable.

The economy of project work also imposes schedules and deadlines, which do not necessarily fit the temporality of an artistic project. Artists and curators used to responding to calls for the project do not always have the time that is necessary to undertake thorough research on the given context and to develop relevant works. Once on-site, they might only have a few weeks or months to carry out the project. This pressure to create fast and constantly might favour the development of artistic "methodologies", "protocols" or "tricks" and lead to the production of secondary pieces by "big names" that are conceptually weak works by artists jumping from one commission to another, or even low-stakes pieces by local artists.

In terms of finality, the economy of project work can be seen as a problem-solving process in search of short-term solutions and quantifiable results. In such a framework, art projects are often funded to meet specific objectives, whether openly claimed or not, that are often informed by the concepts of the creative economy. Such deterministic logic, however, runs fundamentally counter to the very idea of creation or artistic experimentation, which resists quantification and planning and presupposes risk taking, doubt and failure.

Conclusion: towards a critique of the economy of project work

This analysis of landscape sculpture parks in the Valais can be concluded in two different ways: In socio-economical terms, it is emblematic of the changes that the mountainous regions are undergoing. Developed by creative workers such as designer Jean-Maurice Varone and visual artist Kiki Thompson, who decided to settle in the mountainside after working for years in large cities, projects such as Air & Art and the Verbier 3-D Sculpture Park illustrate the dynamics that are at stake in relation to the modern urban exodus.

While, on the one hand, the canton encourages the development of artistic projects that contribute to the tourism economy, on the other, curators are strategically using arguments surrounding tourism to get their projects funded. This win-win situation establishes careers or personal endeavours while at the same time generating value for a given territory. Manfred Perlik, who specialises in Alpine gentrification and urbanisation, explains these dynamics as follows:

“Regions have to search possibilities and strategies to attach the new (part-time) residents to their chosen region and to motivate them to deploy their skills and networks in the mountains’ interest. [...] These strategies are in line with new regional policies that set their focus on innovative regions [...] Their recommendations stress the means of devolution and are mainly market-driven.” (Perlik, 2011)

The same analysis also leads to a critique of the economy of project work. About 30 years after Fraser and Draxler’s critical inquiry, this essay has sought to demonstrate that the managerial dynamics they identified within the institutional framework in the 1990s have continued to develop and become predominant in the art world today. Illustrating the positions of scholars such as French Canadian philosopher Alain Deneault (*La Médiocratie*, 2015) or Belgian sociologist Pascal Gielen (*Creativity and other Fundamentalisms*, 2013), both of whom hold present working conditions and production modes responsible for a formidable dumbing-down of the political, social and cultural fields, this essay suggests a link between the logic of project management and the creation and legitimisation of low-stakes cultural “products”. Ultimately, such a determination should call for the re-examination or actualisation of the notions of authorship or autonomy, which, ironically, have frequently been undermined by contemporary art.

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NOTES

1. One of the most famous figures in British land art, Andy Goldsworthy, has been approached by the foundation to create the next sculpture.

2. Carried out between 2013 and 2015, this project included research trips, a seminar, a movie, 16 interviews, an essay and collaboration with four artists. Methodologically, the ACA relies on case studies (from France, the UK, the USA, Morocco and Switzerland), interviews, an analysis of primary sources (such as government reports, application guidelines, strategic documents etc.) and a cross-disciplinary approach (including fields such as art criticism, institutional theory of the art world, cultural policy studies and critical geography). See: <http://www.ecav.ch/fr/projets/projets-de-recherche/ars-contemporaneus-alpinus-304>

3. See: <http://www.unesco.org/culture/pdf/creative-economy-report-2013.pdf>, pp. 9-15.

4. For instance, see: <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/park>
 5. See <http://www.3-dfoundation.com/index.php/about/sculpture-park/> for this quotation and the one that follows.
 6. Such as the work of photographers Leo Fabrizio and Christian Schwager.
 7. Interviewed by ACA in 2014.
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ABSTRACTS

Over the past decade, the canton of Valais in the Swiss Alps has witnessed a true craze for site-specific sculptures or installations linked to the landscape. The predominant curatorial model has been the landscape sculpture park. The decision to choose the natural environment as the context for monumental sculptures or installations suggests that a certain idea of “land art” serves as a model for the projects developed in the Valais. This model is seen as a way to develop cultural content in response to the structural changes affecting the rural and mountainous regions. The *École Cantonale d’Art du Valais* undertook a research project to gain a better understanding of this phenomenon. The project’s conclusions are summarised here. The main goals of this research were to identify the conditions that explain the rising number of art projects in response to territorial issues and to propose a critical analysis based on case studies from the Valais. Three main conditions were identified: an urbanisation process at play in the countryside, the development of managerial cultural policies in line with the concepts of the creative economy and the development of an economy of project work in the art world. In short, the analysis of the case studies from the Valais suggests a link between this economy of project work and the creation and legitimisation of low-stakes cultural “products.”

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Keywords: Landscape sculpture parks, Valais (Switzerland), site-specific practices, land art, territorial development, economy of project work, creative economy

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