2009

Vernal

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VERNAL

abstract
introduction
history
methods
evaluation
new directions

J Vernal Dilworth
Richmond, VA
2007–2009
Culminating with a dream, this project transverses theoretical and geographical boundaries with explorations into the message-carrying potential of video, sound, performance, print, and web. Stories and content are extracted from an autobiographical history of one small western town turned boomtown. That town, the center from which the project emerges, is Vernal, Utah.

Specifically, this is a project about Vernal, a noun in the true sense of the word, for Vernal is among many things a person, a place, and an idea. Generally, this is a project about confronting the memories everyone has of their childhood and the effort that must be exerted to preserve them in an ever-changing world.
To assist you in learning more of this project is J Vernal, the narrator, protagonist, and author. Vernal is a white male a hundred years old. He is from Vernal by descent, he loves Vernal more than anything, yet despises certain aspects of her, and is ashamed of this love.

It is 11:30 and he is just now eating breakfast. He wonders why it has taken him so long to decide what to eat. He wonders if he should have just fasted today. He wonders why certain decisions are easier to make than others. He once read a book about a man who stopped eating because he no longer found anything he liked. That would never happen to him. He likes too many things.

On the counter he has arranged a bunch of green garlic, some spinach and kale, three eggs, and a glass of milk. He is cutting the garlic, and washing the other greens in a large mixing bowl placed in the sink. The greens are soft and tender, from new plants in cool weather. He thinks it is nice to be here in this place with so many opportunities and so much time. It is March 21, it is the Vernal Equinox.

Myriad geological processes have altered Vernal, both in composition and appearance. Of notable significance is the presence of one inland sea called Lake Uinta. The sediments deposited from this sea have resulted in vast reserves of oil and natural gas. From 1986 to 1999 Vernal lived in Vernal. He lived simply enjoying all aspects of life. Every canyon begged to be explored, and Vernal answered their cry. He swam naked in the rivers and streams. He would walk for hours on end till he was lost in the maze of junipers and cedars. He did everything, and took it for granted. He knew Vernal was his, and he thought it would always be his.

He will open the box and see one thing, everything. The smell of dried sage present early on but growing weaker with each opening. He will slowly pull each item out of the box placing it on the table next to him. First, there is a single sheet of paper, folded two times. Next a pamphlet. Then a book with a stab binding with a paper dust jacket. He will notice sand, dirt, clinging to the cover of the book. After lifting out the book he will see the source of the detritus. He will see more items too, a rock, a small piece of drift wood, a fishing lure. He will now have a little of Vernal on him, and be ready to engage with the objects.

In 2006 Vernal had traveled home to visit his parents when he came to the realization that time does not stand still. The home he knew so well had become surrounded by new suburban tract homes, each one a mirror image of the next. A frustrating sense of powerlessness came over him. He knew he needed to do something. This is when the seeds for the project were planted.

As a youth he struggled to find a footing in either world (the natural or constructed), pulled in opposite directions by both. Now in the fragments caused by the collision of the two worlds, he is left to walk amongst the debris and collect artefacts and experiences. He does this as a way of finding meaning in the tortured relationship with nature he has developed as a result of existing between the two worlds. He does this as a way of coming to understand himself.

Introduction

In 2006 Vernal had traveled home to visit his parents when he came to the realization that time does not stand still. The home he knew so well had become surrounded by new suburban tract homes, each one a mirror image of the next. A frustrating sense of powerlessness came over him. He knew he needed to do something. This is when the seeds for the project were planted.

As a youth he struggled to find a footing in either world (the natural or constructed), pulled in opposite directions by both. Now in the fragments caused by the collision of the two worlds, he is left to walk amongst the debris and collect artefacts and experiences. He does this as a way of finding meaning in the tortured relationship with nature he has developed as a result of existing between the two worlds. He does this as a way of coming to understand himself.
The radio is in town again. His eyes scan the skies as he sees the last train from town. It has been raining for months... It has been raining for the sun is just breaking through the clouds. Air is clean and fresh yet he feels dry. He has just come back from a walk up to the canyon behind his house. The desert is blustering. Everything is trying to take advantage of the unusual rain. Large chunks of clay still cling to his shoes. His hands are raw. He bought them for the trip. They are cross trainers with specially formulated rubber soles that are supposed to give extra grip on sandstone.

He has been stuck to his feet like this since he left Vernal ten years ago. Cheeseweed has flourished, an invasive species, glossy bright green in the afternoon sunlight that feels more like dusk. While in the canyon he climbed a small plateau. The hill was steep, he saw the UP land years ago. From there he can see the entire valley. He likes the view from the hill, and while he knows he isn't the only one who has come to visit, it feels like it is just him. Because of the rain there is no need to wait for the garden so he wonders what he should do with his time. He is floating his time, adjusting to being back in a strange familiar land.

Three months ago he was at the Green River. He has forgotten the exact date. He has become used to the dry heat air again. He has become used to the deserts, which is now brown and dry, and that gets stuck in his stockings and shoes. The tomates in his garden are just ripening. He is excited to try something besides summer squash and zucchini. He is given up explaining everything. He has given up trying to record everything. He likes that he cannot explain why he loves the place. He is planning a river trip with some friends. They will paddle a section of river that he has never before. He thinks he will go to the monument tomorrow. He is finishing watering the last of the potatoes, and he is not sure if he will go to the monument. He is planning a river trip with some friends. They will paddle a section of river that he has never before. He thinks he will go to the monument tomorrow. He is finishing watering the last of the potatoes, and he is not sure if he will go to the monument.

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Through the process of petrification, organic materials are slowly replaced by inorganic molecules. This is how organic materials are slowly replaced by inorganic materials. This is how the process of petrification happens, but aside from those things have not been preserved in the process. The project has had its conception, its birth. It has gone through adolescence, maturity, and eventually death. What is left is only a hint of the whole, a fossil. And it asks for your engagement. It has been here for days, I can see everything. My feet and body are pressed against the water. I can feel the sun on my back. It is warm. My skin is clay. I am one of them. I have been here so long. I have gone everywhere, even though I have stayed here. It feels like we are moving, like we are going up.

Speaking in One Word Sentences:
It is late afternoon and the summer sun has made his shadow entirely disappear. I am in Dry Fork to build a stone oven. His father is helping him gathering rocks at the river. He knows he will fish. father's car. The two are going fishing. The sun has made his shadow entirely disappear. It is late afternoon and the summer sun has made his shadow entirely disappear. I am in Dry Fork to build a stone oven. His father is helping him gathering rocks at the river. He knows he will fish.

Background Left: He is preparing to work with gilsonite® to tell a simple story of meeting a man dying of COPD. Background Right: His father is helping him gathering rocks in Dry Fork to build a stone oven.
Last night I dreamt a dream that unfolded into the most complex narrative anyone has ever seen. It is his desire that you could have been there to experience it, for the telling of dreams is never as good as truly experiencing them. In the dream, the streets of Richmond, normally filled with leaf litter, have a thick yellow clay covering them. The clay is similar to that of the Mancos formation of Vernal. The dream continues and soon the usual drudgery of Richmond becomes replaced by the sight of much larger diesel engines. Frantically searching to find the source of these changes, he makes his way to the Lee Bridge where he knows he can have the best view of Richmond. Upon crossing the river he sees the cause. Richmond has become an oil field, the dream continues and soon the usual drone of Richmond is similar to that of the Mancos formation of Vernal. The leaf litter, have a thick yellow clay covering them. The clay remains of several fish. The fossil cost more than $2,580 and was as unattainable as she was. He loved going to the store even though he could not afford any of the merchandise. The store was only open for a few summers. Then one year she did not come back. When he left Vernal for the first time, the sign for the shop was still attached to the side of the building. He always wondered if she would come back, if he would.

It Remains To Be Seen, was the name of a fossil shop that opened in Vernal when he was a teenager. He had a crush on the owner. She was a paleontologist, she was from Montana, and she sold fossils. To him, she had everything, including a fossil containing the remains of several fish. The fossil cost more than $2,580 and was as unattainable as she was. He loved going to the store even though he could not afford any of the merchandise. The store was only open for a few summers. Then one year she did not come back. When he left Vernal for the first time, the sign for the shop was still attached to the side of the building. He always wondered if she would come back, if he would.

Miles away from home he found himself walking today. Heading anywhere for no particular reason. He is simply walking. The sun is warm on his skin. The strap of his sandals too tight. Five days ago he left the United States to travel to a new place, a world foreign to him, a world where here he will have to rely on the generosity and trust of others to communicate and to survive.

The web has become one big waste of space. Noisy, flaccid, and full of unlimited potential.

So many people are talking, and so few are willing to listen.

The sound of a printer pulling the last sheet of paper from a ream, it is rhythm.

Dream
Believing is simple.

It has been taught from his youth to find meaning from stories told, read, or experienced. His religion taught him this. Canonized text were read to remind him of eternal truths. The promise of a returning deity always hung in the air. He remains confused by many hasty oversimplifications.

Society teaches us to guard our past, avoid embarrassment. This model offers little happiness for Vernal. He is only happy when there is a tinge of fear inside him, when he is doing something new for the first time.

While documenting a fragmented world, trying to make sense of the parts he has come to the conclusion that hierarchies are not sustainable, nor valuable for mankind. He will explain in another project.

He likes to travel alone; this type of travel suits him. He is a flâneur and he can walk for hours unnoticed. He may be hungry, but the desire to walk is stronger. He will head south until he becomes lost. He will feel his stomach tighten; at this realization he is lost. He enjoys feeling afraid. It means he must now regroup and take a survey of the landscape. Can he see any memorable landmarks? Where will he head next? He is open.
In the more desert portions of the Vernal vegetation is sparse, but comprises many species of some plant families: Artemisia (sagebrush), Atriplex (salt bush, shadscale), Sarcobatus (greasewood), Chrysothamnus (rabbit brush), and those typical of the Mixed Desert Shrub Zone. Cottonwoods, boxelders, willows, alder, and birch dominate stream bottoms, with buffalo berry, Hymenocallis, squawbush (Rhus illustrata) and others common. Dry lowland areas (especially alkaline, poorly-drained soils) are dominated by Atriplex (shadscale), Tetraneura (horsebrush), Sarcobatus (greasewood), and many other species of the Chenopodiaceae (goosefoot) family. These plants, together with Eucria (white sage), and Artemisia which occurs over a wide range of elevations, make excellent browse for livestock.

Following winters of considerable precipitation, wildflowers bloom from May to September in a profusion of brilliant hues.

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<th>Flora</th>
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The writings of Barths play an important role in the development of the camera Lucida. Barths writes about society from the perspective of one detached, a model Vernal is working towards. In Camera Lucida, Barths' critique of society within pictures becomes a more personal exploration of the role of photography in one's life.

After the death of his first wife, Barths' Journals is a collection of essays written in the 1980s. It contains Barths' thoughts on photography and its role in society. The book is a reflection on Barths' own work and his views on the role of the photographer.

The work of Barths is an important influence on the development of the camera Lucida. Barths' critique of society within pictures becomes a more personal exploration of the role of photography in one's life.


What can be learned from Barths' collection of hundreds of photographs taken during the course of Vernal's graduate studies? Probably the best way is to make three simple stories about photographs and what one can learn from them.


Inspiration for Vernal, and other artist to begin again to return to take inspiration from the environment.

Other Books Vernal has enjoyed throughout the two years of this project, their importance is noted.


Both in war-torn Europe, Weingart Life has been one lived and defined by his work. He never tries to draw a line dividing accident from opportunity. It was seeing the many elegant spreads contained in this work that Vernal found validation for much of his work.


Vernal never went to see his camera.


Admiring this book to the point of putting it on a shelf was the first full-scale project Steiner undertook. More than 60 years after it was written, Steiner's insights are as relevant as ever. Steiner takes us on a journey through Utah, exploring its history, culture, and landscape. The result is a book that is as much a celebration of the state as it is a reflection on the human experience.


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SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF THE SCHOOL OF THE ARTS AT VIRGINIA COMMONWEALTH UNIVERSITY
IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE MASTER OF FINE ARTS IN DESIGN: VISUAL COMMUNICATIONS

VERNAL
Jason "Vernal" Dilworth
Bachelor of Fine Arts
Weber State University
Ogden, Utah
August 2006
Virginia Commonwealth University
Richmond, Virginia
May 2009

ROB CARTER / PRIMARY ADVISOR
PROFESSOR / DEPARTMENT OF GRAPHIC DESIGN

STEVEN HOSKINS / SECONDARY ADVISOR
ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR / DEPARTMENT OF GRAPHIC DESIGN

BOB KAPUTOF / READER
ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR / DEPARTMENT OF KINETIC IMAGING

MATT WOOLMAN / CHAIRMAN
ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR / DEPARTMENT OF GRAPHIC DESIGN

DR. RICHARD TOSCAN / DEAN
SCHOOL OF THE ARTS

DR. F. DOUGLAS BOUDINOT / DEAN
SCHOOL OF GRADUATE STUDIES

VERNAL Jason "Vernal" Dilworth Bachelor of Fine Arts Weber State University Ogden, Utah August 2006 Virginia Commonwealth University Richmond, Virginia May 2009

ROB CARTER / PRIMARY ADVISOR PROFESSOR / DEPARTMENT OF GRAPHIC DESIGN

STEVEN HOSKINS / SECONDARY ADVISOR ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR / DEPARTMENT OF GRAPHIC DESIGN

BOB KAPUTOF / READER ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR / DEPARTMENT OF KINETIC IMAGING

MATT WOOLMAN / CHAIRMAN ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR / DEPARTMENT OF GRAPHIC DESIGN

DR. RICHARD TOSCAN / DEAN SCHOOL OF THE ARTS

DR. F. DOUGLAS BOUDINOT / DEAN SCHOOL OF GRADUATE STUDIES
It is 9:00 and the sun is just going down. He doesn’t know what to expect, but already feels uncomfortable. He can’t tell if it is like a concert, or a circus, or a state fair. Teenagers walk around with glow-in-the-dark bracelets and necklaces. Children run with cotton candy mounds attached to their arms. “Cowboys. Where are the cowboys?” He asks himself. He had seen a poster advertising a tightest jeans competition and he thought that would be something he would like to go to, but now is only thinking that he will stay for a bull ride. Then he can leave. The stadium is nearly full and there are cowboy hats. There are cowboys. “What time did this thing start?” He asks himself. Most of the crowd is enjoying themselves and several of the riders have already ridden. He is still excited he will see his first bull ride. The voice over the PA is loud, western, and harsh. It announces the next rider, Caleb Lewis, and the bull he will be riding, Casey’s Shadow. There is a long wait and then a buzzer and the gate is opened. Even from the top of the stands he can tell that there is a lot of anger in the animal. He once protested the rodeo, 10 years earlier, believing that the way the animals are treated is inhumane. He is reminded of this, but he is trying to be objective. He is looking for his story. He takes some photographs. That was it. The event is over. He can’t believe that it ended so soon—just ten o’clock. Wanting more out of his $16, he begins to interview others. Some people are loyal fans and others are experiencing the rodeo for the first time. (beginning p.6)