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PART II: FINE ARTS

Artistic Interiorization of the Horizon: A Five-Year Arts-Based Inquiry into Place, Light, and Lived Landscape

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ABSTRACT: This article examines how sustained artistic engagement with the same landscape can transform an external view into an inner structure of perception, attachment, and creative knowledge. Based on a five-year arts-based autoethnographic inquiry conducted from a fixed observational point on Galata Hill, Iași, Romania, the study investigates the author-artist's repeated encounters with sunrise, sunset, seasonal rhythms, atmospheric changes, soil, wind, vegetation, and the lived materiality of place. The research corpus consists of photographs, drawings, paintings, reflective notes, and embodied observations generated through continuous contact with the same horizon. Methodologically, the article combines arts-based research, a/r/tographic inquiry, autoethnography, phenomenological orientation, and reflexive thematic analysis. Five interpretive themes are identified: the transformation of landscape into inner place; light as a mediator of perception; the pedagogy of natural elements; the body as an instrument of knowledge; and artistic practice as a mode of knowing. The article contributes to qualitative arts-based research by proposing the concept of artistic interiorization of the horizon, defined as the process through which repeated visual, embodied, and creative engagement with a landscape transforms an external horizon into a lived, affective, and generative structure of artistic knowledge. By situating a Romanian local landscape within international debates on place attachment, phenomenology, sensory inquiry, and arts-based research, the study offers a situated contribution to the understanding of art, environment, and lived experience.

KEYWORDS: arts-based research; autoethnography; a/r/tography; phenomenology of place; place attachment; landscape; artistic research; sunrise; sunset; sensory inquiry

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Introduction

The relationship between human beings and place has become an increasingly important concern in qualitative research, environmental psychology, art education, and artistic inquiry. In contemporary life, the acceleration of technological mediation, urban expansion, and everyday distraction can weaken the direct sensory relationship between the body, the natural world, and the rhythms of place. Yet places are not passive backgrounds. They are lived, perceived, remembered, worked, drawn, photographed, cultivated, and transformed through repeated experience.

This article explores the transformation of a particular landscape — Galata Hill in Iași, Romania — into an inner horizon of artistic perception. The inquiry began from a long-term personal and artistic engagement with the same place: a hill observed repeatedly over approximately five years from a relatively stable viewpoint. Through this sustained observation, the hill gradually ceased to be merely a visible landscape and became an affective, sensory, spiritual, and creative structure. What might appear to another observer as “a hill” became, through repeated artistic attention, “The Hill”: a lived place, a field of perception, and a source of artistic knowledge.

The study is grounded in a corpus of visual and reflective materials: several hundred photographs, drawings, paintings in watercolor, pastel and pencil, reflective notes, and embodied observations connected to gardening, soil, plants, wind, water scarcity, seasonal change, sunrise, sunset, and atmospheric transformation. These materials were produced through repeated contact with the same horizon and culminated in the exhibition *Dealul. Povești cu Soare răsare și Soare apune*.

The central research problem is not simply how a landscape is represented artistically, but how a landscape becomes interiorized through sustained artistic practice. The article therefore asks: How does repeated artistic observation transform an external landscape into an inner place? How do light, atmosphere, soil, plants, wind, and seasonal rhythms mediate this transformation? And how can photography, drawing, painting, and reflective writing function not only as aesthetic outputs, but also as qualitative data and modes of knowledge?

To address these questions, the article brings together arts-based research, a/r/tography, autoethnography, phenomenological inquiry, place attachment studies, and reflexive thematic analysis. It proposes the concept of artistic interiorization of the horizon to describe the process through which repeated visual, embodied, and creative engagement with the same landscape transforms an external horizon into an inner structure of perception, attachment, orientation, and artistic knowledge.

Theoretical Framework

Place, attachment, and lived landscape

Place is not reducible to physical location. It is constituted through experience, meaning, memory, affect, and embodied relation. Research on place attachment has shown that the relationship between people and places is complex, dynamic, and multidimensional. Scannell and Gifford (2010) propose a tripartite model of place attachment organized around person, process, and place. This model is especially relevant for the present inquiry because the artist's relationship with Galata Hill involves a personal history, affective and cognitive processes, and a specific material environment.

Lewicka (2011) notes that, despite globalization and mobility, places continue to function as objects of strong attachment. However, she also argues that place attachment research has often emphasized the individual more than the place itself or the processes through which place becomes meaningful. The present study responds to this gap by examining how attachment is formed through repeated observation, artistic production, bodily engagement, and seasonal exposure to the same landscape.

Manzo (2003) argues that emotional relationships with places are not limited to domestic or idealized settings. They may include a broad range of emotions and physical environments. This is significant for the present research, where attachment to the hill emerges not through comfort alone, but also through difficulty: wind, drought, insufficient water, waiting, failed growth, bodily effort, and the gradual learning of natural rhythms.

Stedman (2003) emphasizes that the physical environment contributes substantially to sense of place. Meanings are not purely social constructions; landscape attributes matter. In this inquiry, the hill's altitude, openness, wind exposure, soil composition, vegetation, horizon line, and solar visibility are not neutral details. They actively shape the artist's perception, bodily experience, and creative response.

Thus, the article approaches Galata Hill not as scenery, but as a lived landscape: a material, affective, temporal, and artistic field.

Arts-based research and a/r/tography

Arts-based research provides a methodological framework for understanding artistic practice as a way of producing knowledge. Rather than treating art as illustration or decoration, arts-based inquiry recognizes that making, sensing, imaging, and reflecting can generate forms of understanding that are not fully accessible through discursive language alone.

Springgay, Irwin, and Kind (2005) describe a/r/tography as living inquiry through art and text. A/r/tography is particularly relevant here because the researcher is simultaneously artist, researcher, and interpreter of lived experience. The distinction between making and knowing becomes porous: the painting, the photograph, the

drawing, and the reflective note are not separate from inquiry, but part of the inquiry itself.

La Jevic and Springgay (2008) further emphasize the embodied and ethical dimensions of a/r/tography. Their focus on visual journals and embodiment supports the present study's treatment of drawings, paintings, and reflective notes as intertextual spaces in which image, body, and meaning are co-produced.

More recently, Lasczik, Hotko, Cutter-Mackenzie-Knowles, and McGahey (2022) have developed propositional a/r/tography as an analytical protocol, suggesting that a/r/tographic renderings can function as analytical gateways rather than merely as expressive outcomes. This perspective is important for the present article because the visual corpus — photographs, drawings, paintings — is not interpreted as secondary evidence but as an active field of analysis.

Illeris, Fossnes, and Anundsen (2024) propose the concept of “landtimescaping” through a/r/tographic fieldwork with a landscape in Southern Norway. Their work is close to the present inquiry in its concern with landscape, time, land, and artistic fieldwork. However, the present study differs by focusing on a single Romanian hill, a fixed horizon, the recurring phenomena of sunrise and sunset, and the gradual interiorization of place through individual artistic practice.

Autoethnography, reflexivity, and lived experience

Autoethnography allows personal experience to become a legitimate site of cultural and qualitative inquiry. Ellis, Adams, and Bochner (2011) describe autoethnography as an approach that uses personal experience to describe and analyze broader cultural experience. In the present study, the artist's relationship with Galata Hill is personal, but it is not merely private. It opens broader questions about how humans relate to land, light, place, time, ecological rhythms, and artistic formation.

The study also draws on phenomenological orientation because it is concerned with lived experience: how the hill is seen, felt, worked, remembered, and transformed through perception. CohenMiller (2018) demonstrates the value of visual arts as a tool within phenomenological research, especially when visual expression enables access to dimensions of experience that are difficult to articulate verbally.

Reflexivity is essential because the researcher is not a detached observer. The artist's training, affective attachment, bodily involvement, family history, spiritual sensitivity, and long-term contact with the land shape the selection, interpretation, and meaning of the data. Following Levitt et al. (2018), the article makes the researcher's position explicit in order to strengthen transparency and qualitative rigor.

Aesthetic experience and transformation

Klein (2018) argues that everyday landscapes can become sites of aesthetic awareness, mindfulness, and transformative learning. This idea is central to the present article. Galata

Hill is not an extraordinary tourist destination or monumental landscape. Its significance emerges from sustained attention. The ordinary becomes transformative through repetition, artistic sensitivity, and embodied relation.

The study therefore approaches landscape not only as an object of representation, but also as a pedagogical force. The hill teaches rhythm, waiting, resistance, vulnerability, and perception. The elements — earth, water, air, heat, light — become agents in the formation of artistic and inner knowledge.

Methodology: Artistic Research as Phenomenological Practice

Research design

This study adopts an arts-based autoethnographic phenomenological design, informed by a/r/tographic inquiry and analyzed through reflexive thematic analysis. The design is appropriate because the research does not rely on interviews with external participants, surveys, or experimental procedures. Instead, it examines a longitudinal corpus generated by the artist-researcher through repeated observation and creative engagement with the same landscape. The researcher is both the producer of the artistic materials and the interpreter of the lived experience from which those materials emerged.

The inquiry is qualitative, interpretive, reflexive, and situated. It does not aim to generalize statistically, but to produce transferable conceptual understanding regarding the relationship between place, perception, art, and inner transformation.

Research context

The research was conducted on Galata Hill, one of the hills surrounding the city of Iași, Romania. The observational point is situated on a ridge, approximately 133 meters above sea level, with a panoramic opening toward the horizon. From this position, the artist observed another ridge of the hill, a valley-like space with vegetation, old trees, young trees, meadows, shrubs, gardens, scattered houses, and a solitary white house positioned near the edge of the opposite hill.

The site allowed repeated observation of sunrise and sunset, as well as variations in light, atmosphere, wind, seasonal vegetation, and horizon line. The place was also connected to gardening and family life. The artist worked the soil, planted trees and flowers, observed plant growth, experienced water scarcity, and encountered the strong winds characteristic of the hilltop position.

The landscape was therefore not only viewed from a distance. It was inhabited, cultivated, touched, worked, and emotionally invested.

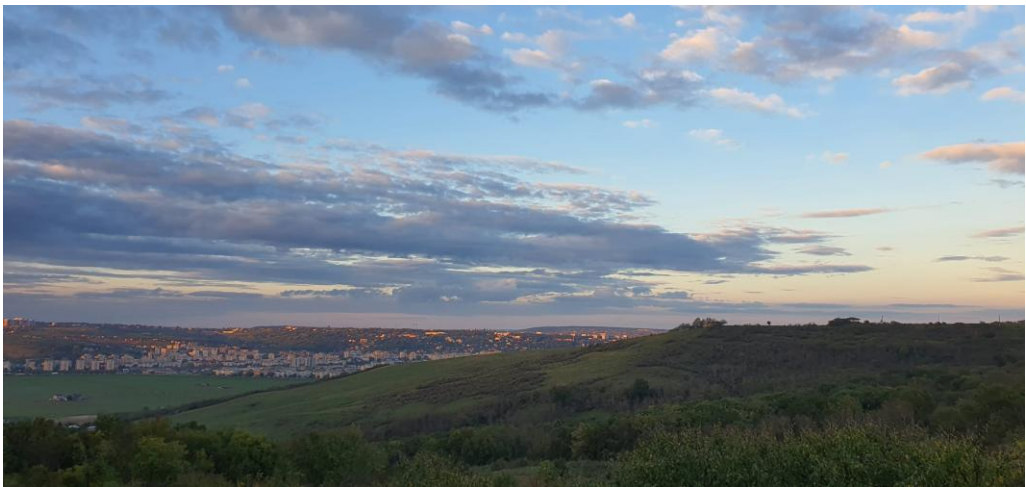


Figure 1. Sunrise observed from the fixed viewpoint. The image illustrates the role of morning light as a temporal and perceptual threshold in the artist’s relation to place.

Data corpus

The empirical corpus consists of longitudinal observations, photographic documentation, drawings, paintings, reflective notes, embodied gardening observations, atmospheric and sensory observations, and exhibition-related material. These data were generated through approximately five years of repeated engagement with the same landscape.

The corpus was not produced for a conventional research project at the outset. Rather, it emerged through artistic life-practice and was later organized as a qualitative research corpus. This is consistent with arts-based and autoethnographic approaches, where lived practice and research inquiry may develop in interwoven ways.

The research corpus was organized into several categories of qualitative data. These categories include visual, textual, sensory, embodied, and artistic materials generated through repeated engagement with the same landscape. Table 1 summarizes the main data types, their mode of generation, analytical function, and contribution to the study.

Table 1
Data Corpus and Analytical Treatment

Data type	Source / mode of generation	Approximate scope	Analytical function	Contribution to the study
Longitudinal field observations	Repeated observation from the same viewpoint on Galata Hill, Iași	Approx. five years	Documents continuity, repetition, seasonal variation, and perceptual	Supports the analysis of how a landscape becomes an inner place through sustained attention

Data type	Source / mode of generation	Approximate scope	Analytical function	Contribution to the study
			transformation	
Photographic documentation	Photographs of sunrise, sunset, atmospheric change, vegetation, horizon, surrounding houses, and seasonal transformations	Several hundred photographs	Visual archive; comparative observation of light, weather, and temporal change	Supports the themes of light, horizon, temporality, and visual transformation
Drawings	Pencil and other graphic studies based on direct or remembered observation	Multiple works produced across the observation period	Slows perception; translates visual experience into line, rhythm, and structure	Supports the claim that artistic practice functions as a mode of inquiry
Paintings	Watercolor, pastel, and other pictorial works inspired by the hill, sunrise, sunset, plants, and atmosphere	Multiple works, including works related to the exhibition	Transforms sensory and emotional experience into color, composition, and pictorial atmosphere	Supports the theme of artistic interiorization of the horizon
Reflective notes	Written reflections on perception, place, light, atmosphere, emotional states, spiritual relation, and artistic process	Notes accumulated throughout the process	Provides reflexive access to the artist-researcher's lived experience	Supports autoethnographic and phenomenological interpretation
Embodied gardening observations	Manual work with soil, plants, water scarcity, wind exposure, heat, shade, growth, and seasonal cycles	Recurrent observations over several years	Connects visual perception with bodily, ecological, and material experience	Supports the theme "the pedagogy of natural elements"

Data type	Source / mode of generation	Approximate scope	Analytical function	Contribution to the study
Atmospheric and sensory observations	Observations of wind, fog, rain, heat, air quality, light intensity, and bodily sensation	Repeated observations across seasons and times of day	Captures the multisensory dimension of place	Supports the argument that the body is an instrument of knowledge
Exhibition material	Works and conceptual material connected to <i>Dealul. Povești cu Soare răsară și Soare apune</i>	Exhibition, August 2025	Serves as artistic synthesis of the research process	Shows how long-term observation culminated in public artistic expression

Alignment between research questions and data sources

To strengthen methodological transparency, the research questions were aligned with the main data sources and analytical focus. This alignment clarifies how each category of data contributes to the interpretive claims of the study.

Table 2
Alignment Between Research Questions, Data Sources, and Analytical Strategy

Research question	Main data sources	Analytical focus	Expected finding
RQ1. How does repeated artistic observation transform an external landscape into an inner place of perception and meaning?	Longitudinal observations; reflective notes; drawings; paintings	Repetition, attachment, interiorization, affective relation to place	The landscape becomes an inner horizon through sustained artistic attention
RQ2. How do light, sunrise, sunset, atmosphere, soil, wind, vegetation, and seasonal rhythms mediate the artist's relationship with place?	Photographs; atmospheric observations; gardening observations; sensory notes	Light, temporality, natural elements, bodily perception	Natural elements as mediators of perception and inner transformation
RQ3. In what ways can photography, drawing, painting, and writing function as notes?	Photographs; drawings; paintings; reflective paintings; exhibition notes	Artistic process, visual analysis, reflexive knowledge	Artistic practice as both method and result of inquiry

Research question	Main data sources	Analytical focus	Expected finding
qualitative data and material modes of artistic knowledge?		production	

Researcher positionality and reflexivity

The researcher is an artist whose long-term relation with the hill shaped the research process. The observations are not neutral recordings of an external object, but situated perceptions shaped by artistic training, bodily presence, emotional investment, and repeated exposure to the same place.

The artist’s sensitivity to color, light, form, atmosphere, and composition influenced what was noticed and how it was interpreted. At the same time, manual work with the land — digging, planting, watering, waiting, observing growth and failure — introduced a bodily and ecological dimension to the inquiry. The researcher’s position is therefore not a limitation to be erased, but a condition of knowledge production.

Reflexivity was maintained by treating the visual materials and notes not as transparent evidence, but as interpretive traces of a relationship between artist and place. The analysis therefore attends to how perception was formed, not only to what was perceived.

Data analysis

The data were analyzed using reflexive thematic analysis, following Braun and Clarke (2006, 2019). The analysis involved five main stages.

First, the visual and written corpus was reviewed repeatedly to identify recurring perceptual, affective, and material motifs. Second, initial codes were generated, including: light change, horizon, waiting, wind, soil, plant resistance, bodily calm, sunrise movement, sunset color, water scarcity, artistic translation, and attachment. Third, these codes were grouped into broader interpretive themes. Fourth, the themes were reviewed in relation to the visual corpus and reflective notes. Fifth, the concept of **artistic interiorization of the horizon** was developed as a theoretical synthesis of the findings.

The themes were not treated as discoveries that simply emerged from the data. In line with reflexive thematic analysis, they were constructed through sustained interpretive engagement between the researcher, the corpus, the artistic process, and the theoretical framework.

Findings

From landscape to inner place

The first theme concerns the transformation of the hill from an external landscape into an inner place. At the beginning of the process, the hill could be perceived as a geographical form: a ridge, a view, a natural scene. Over time, however, repeated

observation changed its status. It became a point of orientation, a site of return, and an affective structure within the artist's inner life.

The distinction between "a hill" and "The Hill" is central. This linguistic shift marks a deeper phenomenological transformation. The place is no longer interchangeable with other landscapes. It becomes singular. It acquires density, memory, rhythm, and presence.

This transformation occurred through repetition. The same horizon was observed under changing conditions: morning, evening, spring, summer, autumn, winter, rain, fog, heat, wind, silence, and sound. Through repetition, the hill became familiar, but not exhausted. Each return revealed difference. The landscape remained the same and became different at the same time.

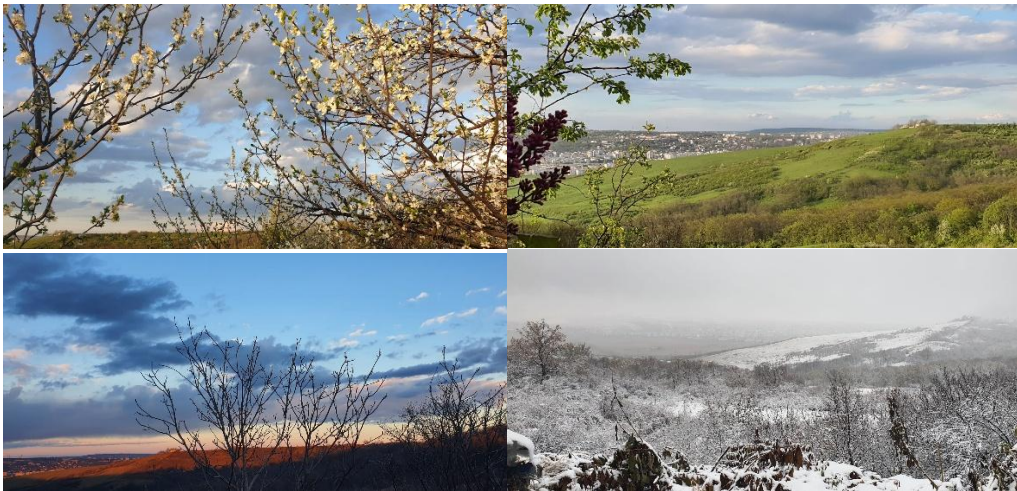


Figure 2. Seasonal variations of the same observational horizon: spring, summer, autumn, and winter. The panel demonstrates the longitudinal character of the visual corpus and the changing atmospheric identity of the place

This finding extends place attachment theory by showing how attachment is not only an emotional bond with a location, but also a perceptual discipline. The artist learns to see the place by returning to it. The hill becomes interior not because it is possessed, but because it is repeatedly encountered, attended to, and re-created through artistic practice.

Light as a mediator of perception

The second theme concerns light as a mediator between landscape and inner experience. Sunrise and sunset functioned as temporal anchors of the inquiry. They marked the beginning and ending of days, but also opened a field of visual and affective transformation.

The artist observed the changing position of the sun across the year, the quality of morning light, the chromatic intensity of sunset, the emergence of fog, the movement of

clouds, and the way atmosphere altered the visibility of the hill. Light did not merely illuminate the landscape. It changed the meaning of the landscape.



Figure 3. Sunrise observed from the fixed viewpoint. The image illustrates the role of morning light as a temporal and perceptual threshold in the artist's relation to place.

Morning light was associated with emergence, freshness, and awakening. Sunset light was associated with closure, contemplation, and intensity. The horizon became a threshold: a line where the visible and invisible, the material and spiritual, the exterior and interior met.

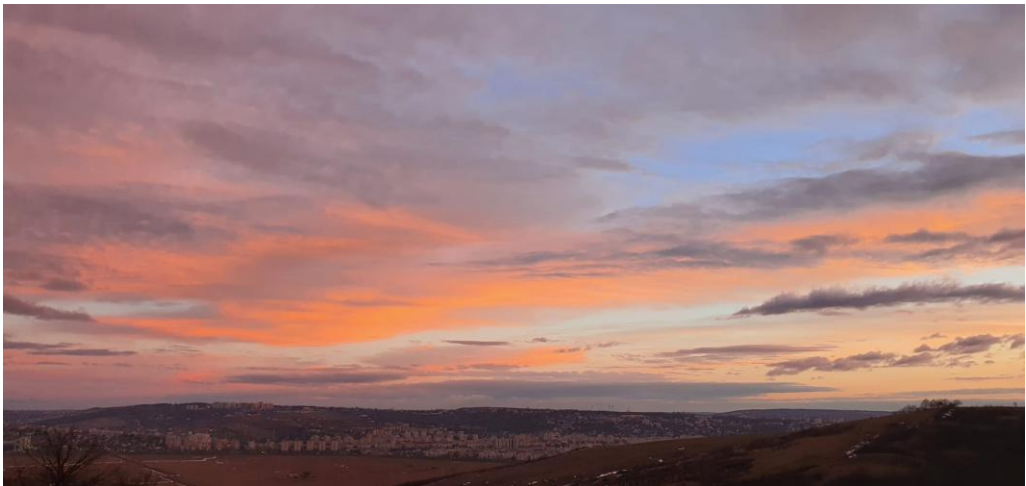


Figure 4. Sunset over the Galata Hill landscape. The chromatic transformation of the horizon reveals how the same place becomes visually and affectively different across the day.

Through painting and drawing, light was not simply recorded. It was translated. Artistic practice transformed light into color, gesture, surface, and rhythm. The act of

painting required a second mode of seeing: not only seeing what appears, but seeing how appearance becomes form.

In this sense, light became a teacher of perception. It revealed that the same place is never visually identical to itself. The landscape is temporal. The hill is not a fixed object, but a changing relation between atmosphere, solar movement, season, and the perceiving body.

The pedagogy of natural elements

The third theme concerns the formative role of the natural elements: earth, water, air, and heat. These elements were not abstract symbols. They were encountered materially through gardening, weather, soil, plant growth, and bodily effort.

The earth was experienced through digging, planting, touching, cultivating, and observing differences in soil composition. Some areas were more clay-like, others more sandy or dry. The land demanded attention to specificity. It did not allow general assumptions. Each plant required a particular relation to light, shade, water, and soil.

Water appeared through scarcity. Because the site was located on the ridge of the hill, access to water was limited. This scarcity shaped both gardening and perception. Plants that required abundant water struggled. More resistant, woody, deeply rooted plants adapted better. The absence of water became a condition of knowledge: it taught the limits of desire and the necessity of understanding the place on its own terms.

Air appeared through wind. The hilltop position exposed the site to strong gusts. Wind was heard, felt, and endured. It shaped what could grow and how the body inhabited the space. Wind also made the invisible visible: through movement of leaves, bending of plants, sound, resistance, and bodily sensation.

Heat appeared through summer light and the intensity of the sun. It affected plants, soil, bodily comfort, and the rhythms of work. Heat was not simply temperature; it was a condition of exposure.



Figure 5. Embodied engagement with land: soil, plants, and growth conditions on Galata Hill. The image supports the analysis of natural elements as pedagogical agents in the artist's process of perception and transformation.

Together, these elements formed what may be called a pedagogy of natural elements. The hill educated perception by resisting control. It taught waiting, adaptation, humility, and attention. The artist's initial impatience with plant growth gradually changed

into a deeper understanding of natural rhythm. Germination, flowering, fruiting, drying, and returning to seed became temporal lessons.



Figure 6. Fog and atmospheric diffusion over the observed landscape. The image illustrates how partial visibility contributes to the phenomenological experience of place.

This theme is especially important because it differentiates the study from purely visual approaches to landscape. The hill is not only seen. It is worked, touched, endured, and learned from.

The body as an instrument of knowledge

The fourth theme concerns the body as an instrument of perception and knowledge. The inquiry began with looking, but it did not remain visual. The body became a site where the hill was registered.

The artist felt the wind directly, experienced the texture of soil through the hands and feet, sensed heat, fatigue, calm, impatience, and emotional transformation. Bodily contact with the place altered inner states. Working the land for a few hours could bring calm. Waiting for plants to grow moderated impatience. Observing seasonal change produced a different relation to time.

This bodily dimension complicates the idea of landscape as an object viewed from a distance. The artist was not outside the landscape. She was situated within it. The hill entered perception through skin, breath, movement, gesture, and effort.

The body also mediated between observation and artistic production. Drawing and painting are bodily acts. The hand translates perception into line, color, pressure, and rhythm. The artwork therefore carries traces not only of what was seen, but of how the body responded to seeing.

This theme aligns with a/r/tographic and sensory approaches to research, where knowledge is produced through embodied relation rather than detached observation.

The body does not distort knowledge; it makes a particular kind of knowledge possible.

Artistic practice as a mode of knowing

The fifth theme concerns artistic practice as a mode of knowing. The photographs, drawings, and paintings are not merely representations of the hill. They are ways of thinking with the hill.

Photography allowed repeated documentation of light, atmosphere, and temporal variation. It captured moments that could later be revisited, compared, and interpreted. Drawing slowed perception. It required selection, simplification, and attention to line, proportion, rhythm, and structure. Painting introduced color, atmosphere, affect, and translation. Through painting, the hill was not copied but re-experienced.



Figure 7. From photographic observation to artistic translation. The juxtaposition shows how the observed landscape is transformed through drawing or painting into an interiorized visual structure.

The visual corpus therefore functions simultaneously as archive, interpretation, and transformation. Each image is a trace of encounter. Together, the images form a longitudinal record of how perception changed over time.

Artistic practice also made visible the movement from exterior to interior. The hill seen in the world became the hill carried in memory, imagination, and gesture. The artwork is the site where this transformation becomes perceptible.



Figure 8. Exhibition view from *The Hill: Stories with Sunrise and Sunset*. The installation presents the artistic synthesis of the five-year engagement with place, light, and horizon.

This finding supports the claim that arts-based research can produce knowledge

that is neither reducible to verbal explanation nor separate from it. Image and text work together. The article itself, like the artistic corpus, is an attempt to articulate what occurs when a landscape becomes an inner horizon.

Discussion

Artistic interiorization of the horizon

The central contribution of this article is the concept of artistic interiorization of the horizon. This concept refers to the process through which repeated visual, embodied, and creative engagement with the same landscape transforms an external horizon into an inner structure of perception, attachment, orientation, and artistic knowledge.

The concept has four components.

First, it is **visual**. The process begins with looking: observing sunrise, sunset, light, atmosphere, color, and form.

Second, it is **embodied**. The place is not only seen, but felt through wind, soil, heat, fatigue, work, and bodily presence.

Third, it is **temporal**. Interiorization requires repetition. It occurs across days, seasons, years, and cycles of return.

Fourth, it is **creative**. The transformation becomes visible through artistic practice: photography, drawing, painting, and reflective writing.

The horizon is therefore not only a visual boundary. It becomes an inner axis. It organizes attention, memory, affect, and creative response. The artist does not merely observe the horizon; she is gradually shaped by it.

Contribution to place attachment research

The study contributes to place attachment research by showing how attachment may be formed through artistic repetition and embodied practice. In contrast to studies that measure place attachment through questionnaires or analyze it through interviews, this inquiry examines attachment as a lived and creative process.

The findings support Scannell and Gifford's (2010) view that place attachment involves person, process, and place. However, the present study emphasizes that artistic practice can intensify all three dimensions. The person is transformed through perception; the process unfolds through repeated observation and making; the place participates through its material and atmospheric characteristics.

The study also supports Stedman's (2003) argument that the physical environment matters. The hill's openness, wind, soil, light, and vegetation are not incidental. They shape meaning. Attachment is not projected onto an empty surface; it is negotiated with the material specificity of the landscape.

Contribution to arts-based and a/r/tographic research

The article contributes to arts-based inquiry by treating visual practice as both method and analysis. The artwork is not an appendix to the research. It is part of the research process itself.

Springgay et al. (2005) describe a/r/tography as living inquiry, and this study extends that understanding into a long-term relation with a specific landscape. The artist's practice is not separate from daily life, gardening, family history, spiritual reflection, and ecological observation. It is a living inquiry formed through repeated contact with place.

Lasczik et al. (2022) suggest that a/r/tographic renderings can become analytical gateways. In this study, the visual corpus functions precisely in this way. The photographs, drawings, and paintings allow the researcher to return to moments of perception and to identify recurring structures of experience.

The study also resonates with Illeris et al. (2024), who explore a/r/tographic fieldwork with landscape. However, the present article offers a distinct contribution by focusing on the horizon as a repeated visual-spiritual threshold and by situating the inquiry in a Romanian landscape.

Contribution to art education and environmental aesthetics

Although the article is based on an individual artistic inquiry, it has implications for art education and environmental aesthetics. It suggests that artistic formation can be cultivated through sustained attention to ordinary landscapes. Students and artists may learn not only by studying techniques or images, but by returning to the same place, observing its changes, and allowing perception to deepen over time.

The study also suggests that aesthetic experience can support ecological awareness. The artist's relation with the hill did not remain visual or symbolic. It became practical and ecological through soil, plants, water, wind, and seasonal limits. The place taught through resistance and care.

In this sense, artistic education can be understood not only as training in representation, but as training in relation.

Conclusion

This article examined how sustained artistic engagement with Galata Hill transformed an external landscape into an inner horizon of perception, attachment, and creative knowledge. Through a five-year arts-based autoethnographic inquiry, the study analyzed photographs, drawings, paintings, reflective notes, and embodied observations related to sunrise, sunset, light, atmosphere, soil, wind, vegetation, and seasonal rhythms.

The analysis identified five themes: the transformation of landscape into inner place; light as a mediator of perception; the pedagogy of natural elements; the body as

an instrument of knowledge; and artistic practice as a mode of knowing. These findings show that place is not simply observed, represented, or remembered. It is gradually interiorized through repeated sensory, bodily, and creative engagement.

The article proposed the concept of artistic interiorization of the horizon as its main theoretical contribution. This concept names the process through which the horizon becomes more than a visual line: it becomes an inner axis of orientation, attention, memory, affect, and artistic creation.

The study is limited by its single-site and first-person design. However, this limitation is also its methodological strength. The depth of the inquiry depends precisely on sustained, situated, and reflexive engagement with one place over time. Future research may apply this concept to other artistic practices, ecological settings, or pedagogical contexts, especially where repeated observation of the same place becomes a means of artistic and existential formation.

Ultimately, the article argues that a landscape becomes meaningful not only because it is seen, but because it is returned to, worked with, endured, drawn, painted, remembered, and allowed to transform the one who sees.

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