

a medium of presence
and reflection

parallax



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CONTEXT



Introduction

Bears Ears land managers have noticed increased impacts on the land as visitation rates have increased causing concern over visitor relationships with the land. This echoes increased environmental impact outside of public lands on a much larger scale and implies cultural complications with human / land relationships.

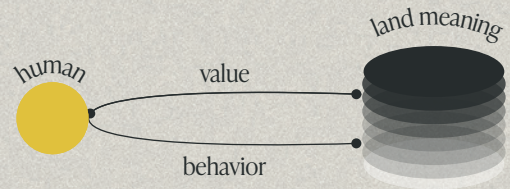
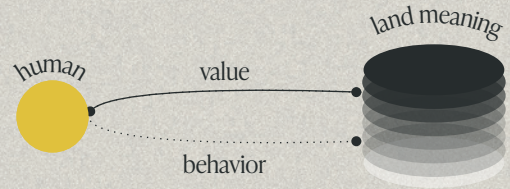
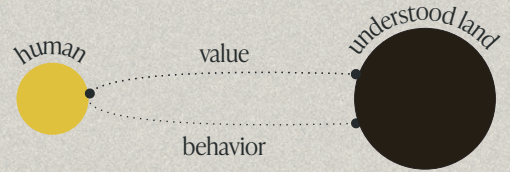
Parallax is designed to bring awareness to the evidence of meaning that exists in the physical world and inspires reflective action. By bringing awareness to physicality, both of the body and of the land, through the mechanism of simulated analog photography, users are inspired and presented with space to reflect on their relationship with the immanent meaning of the land.

Human / Land Relationships

If humans had a way to access the meaning of the land, it might change how they value it. If they understood the meaning and value of the land, they might be more motivated to respect it.

Bears Ears is a place rich with history and meaning and organizations such as the Utah Diné Bikéyah, the Bureau of Land Management and the U.S. Forest Service work to preserve and protect the land. The meaning of Bears Ears comes from its complex, intact ecology, current and historical indigenous connections to the land, and its public land status.

Bears Ears is one of the most ecologically intact places in the Western United States, scoring in the top 10 percent of similarly sized places according to findings by the CAP (Center for American Progress) and the CSP (Conservation Science Partners). With the reduction of the monument by 85% in December 2017, just a year after its designation, previously protected lands became vulnerable to destructive mining and oil and gas development (Rowland-Shea, 2017). Bears Ears' public land status garnered national attention and caused visitation rates to surge. Since the spike in visitation, land managers have noticed increased impacts on the land including trail proliferation, damage to sites, waste disposal issues and fee non-compliance. The existence of these issues raises the question of what relationships visitors have with this land.



Physical Evidences

The manifestation of the meaning of the land is in its physicality and changes made to its physicality.

The meaning of Bears Ears land is evident in its historical and current interactions. For instance, Bears Ears is laden with archaeological sites containing historical artifacts in the context they were used. Though the artifacts are inherently meaningful, their context provides a wealth of information about them that would otherwise be lost. When artifacts are moved by mostly well-intending visitors, the displaced artifacts take on a new, current meaning: an important artifact whose importance can never fully be known (**Friends of Cedar Mesa**).

This concept of meaning as historical and current interactions with the land is not limited to Bears Ears. The physicality of all land and human interaction can be thought of as meaningful. In other words, the manifestation of this meaning is in the physicality of something including its materiality, its context and any changes made to either of those.



Collector piles of fragmented earthware, or sherds, can be found around Bears Ears where visitors displace and display artifacts upon flat rock surfaces.

Everyday Concept of Land

Interactions with the land pervade every aspect of human life. This relationship becomes meaningful as interactions with the land become conscious and reflective. So what does land mean on an everyday basis, or what is an everyday concept of land? How often is the land and its abundance reflected upon? What would happen an everyday concept of land went from a subconscious reliance on gravity to a continual gentle awe of all that it is and provides? How would this shift in everyday thought and intention influence attitudes and actions in protected lands such as in Bears Ears?



Presence and Reflection

parallax (pär'ə-läks)

1. a change in the apparent position of an object relative to more distant objects, caused by a change in the observer's line of sight toward the object.

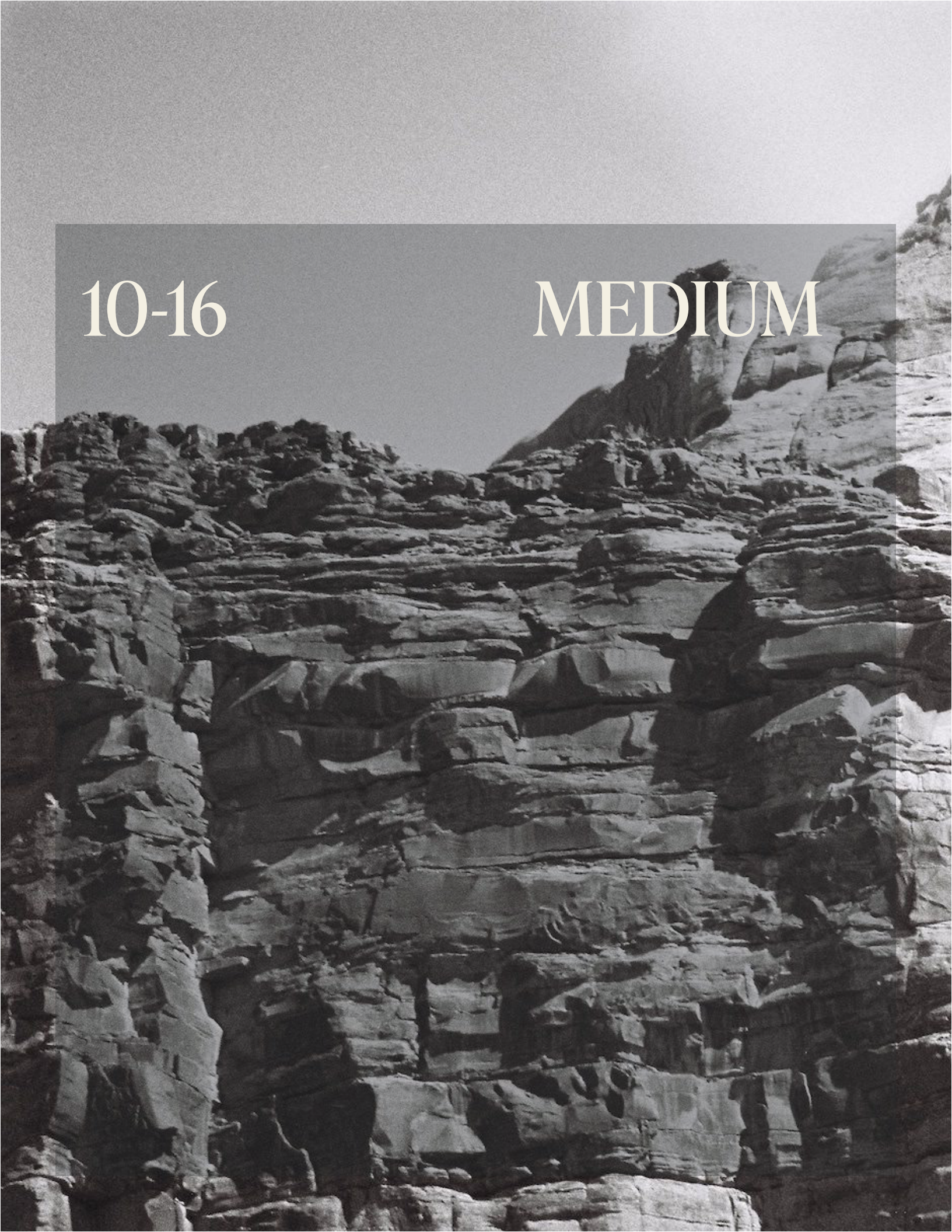
2. the difference between the view of an object as seen through the picture-taking lens of a camera and the view as seen through a separate viewfinder.



Parallax is a medium for presence and reflection on personal land relationships. Its routine use inspires conscious action and creates the space to cultivate positive land relationships through highlighting land meaning.

10-16

MEDIUM



User Experience

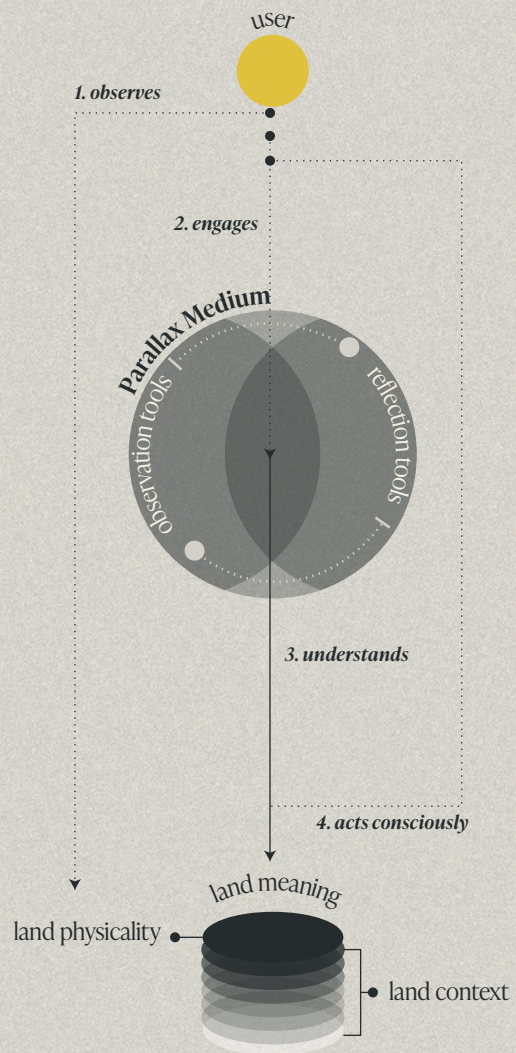
Parallax is designed to be used to reflect on one’s relationship with the land. It is used when a person wants to capture a moment of inspiration. It can be used in place of or in supplementation to any type of camera and/or journal.

Parallax is an enhanced photo-taking experience whose purpose is to engage its users with the physicality of the land through observation and reflection to inspire conscious physical engagement with the land. The experience involves interplay between digital and physical worlds through the translation of an analog camera into the digital realm of a smartphone app. Although the tactility of the camera’s manual controls is lost in translation, it is supplemented with other means of presence.

The interaction between physical and digital worlds in the user experience comes from prompts and feedback that lead up to taking a photo. For example, in the first interaction the app prompts the user to take a few deep breaths into the phone’s microphone. The gradient’s diameter on the screen transforms with each inhale and exhale the user takes. The color of the gradient is determined by the air quality index and the outdoor temperature.

The documentation of perceptions influence the settings of the camera. A photograph taken in Parallax represents the impression the subject of the photo left on the user. Once a photo has been developed, the settings of the camera can be viewed and users have the opportunity to write about their experiences.

Parallax User Journey Map



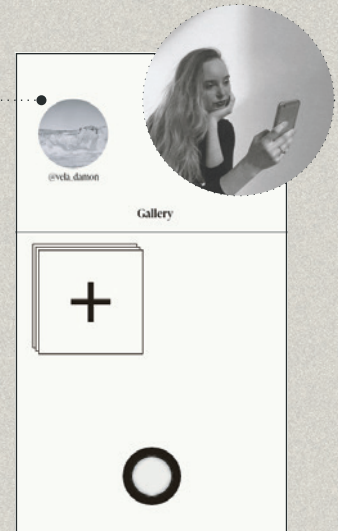
Subject Discovery + Presence



Mara (the user) is outside and is impressed by something she sees. She feels compelled to document it.



She takes her phone out.

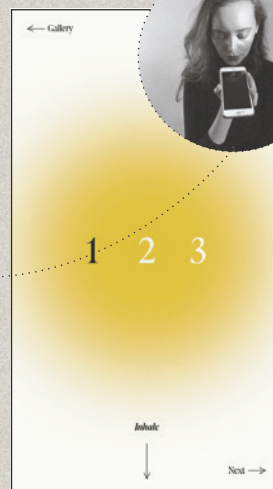


She opens up the Parallax app and presses the camera button at the bottom of the gallery screen.

Inhalation / Exhalation cycle is repeated at least three times or until relaxed

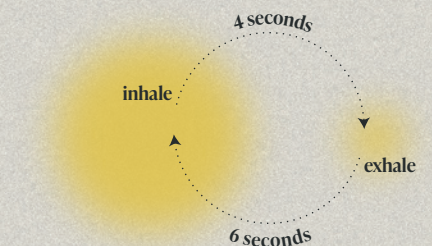
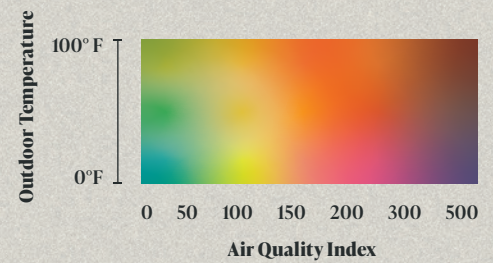


She is taken to a screen that prompts her to take three deep breaths with her mouth next to the phone's microphone.



As she exhales her breath into the mic, the gradient grows and as she inhales it will shrink. The gradient fluctuation portrays a digital manifestation of a calming and grounding physical act.

Gradient Composition

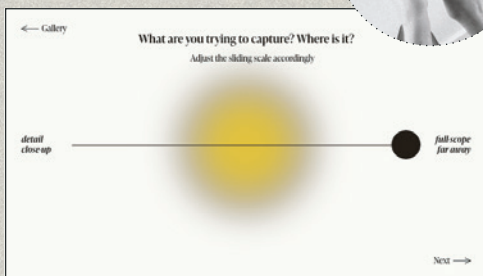
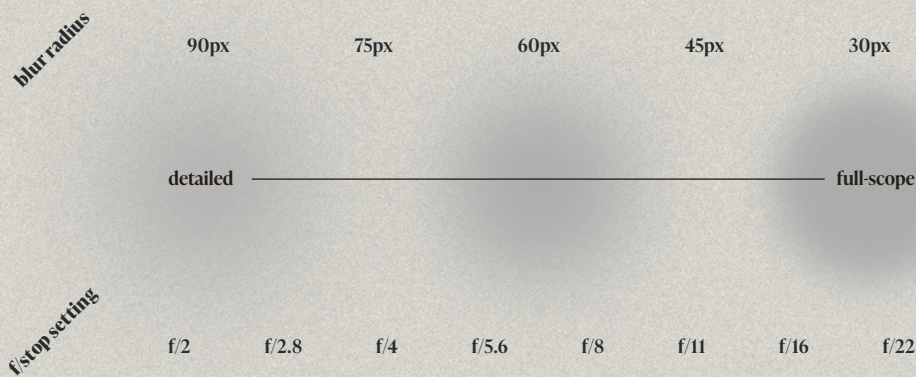


F/Stop + Scale Perception



The f/stop setting on a camera is the focal length of the lens divided by the diameter of the aperture and is standardized so that the same volume of light enters a camera lens even if the focal lengths and apertures diameters differ (Bellamy, 2017).

Background Gradient

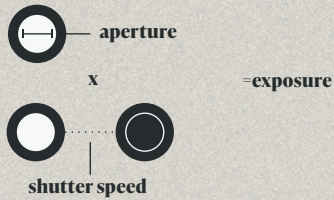


After the breathing exercise, Mara is asked to determine her physical proximity to what impressed her and the scope of what she wants to capture. This prompt invites her to contemplate what it was about her subject impressed her.



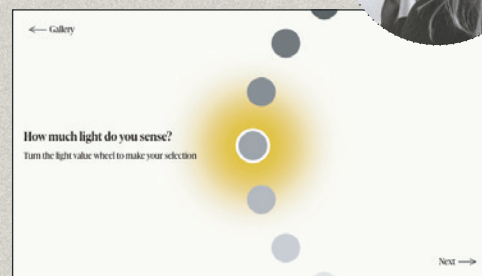
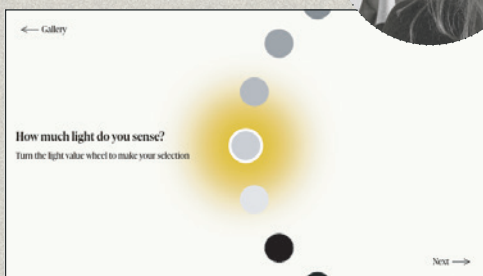
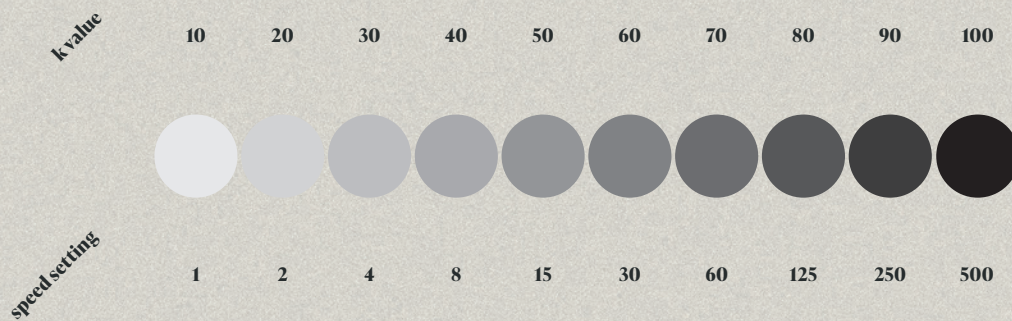
As she moves the sliding scale, the gray gradient's blur radius shifts, representing the f/stop setting selection which influences the depth of field the lens will capture.

Exposure + Value Perception



Exposure is the amount of light that reaches the film and is determined by shutter speed and aperture settings. The speed determines the duration of light while the aperture controls the volume of light exposing the film. (Bellamy, 2017).

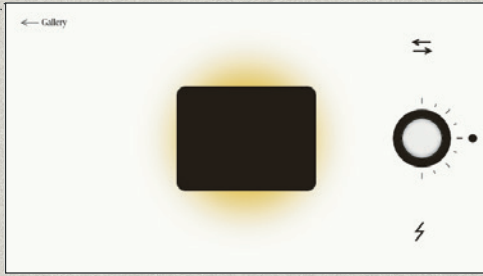
Viewfinder + Light Value Perception



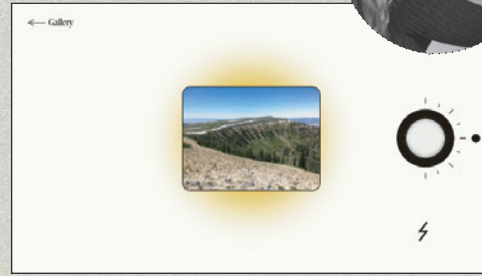
Once the f-stop is set, Mara is prompted to sense the amount of light she perceives and to select a value accordingly. This prompt brings her back from a contemplative state and into a sensing state.

She selects her perceived value which corresponds to the film speed setting, changing the amount of light that goes into the camera's aperture, affecting the exposure of the film.

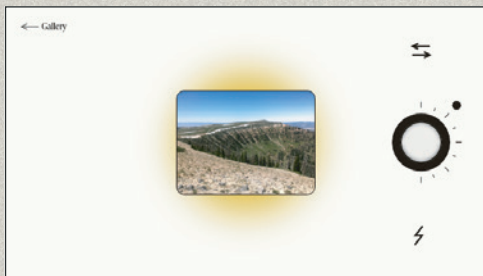
Focus, Composure + Capture



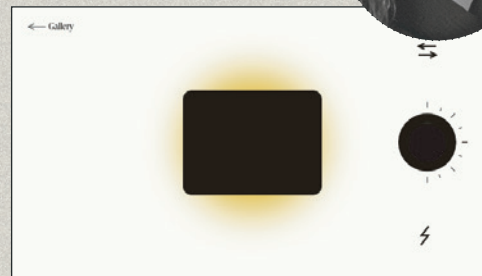
Mara clicks next and she is taken to the camera screen.



The shutter opens and she composes the shot through the viewfinder.

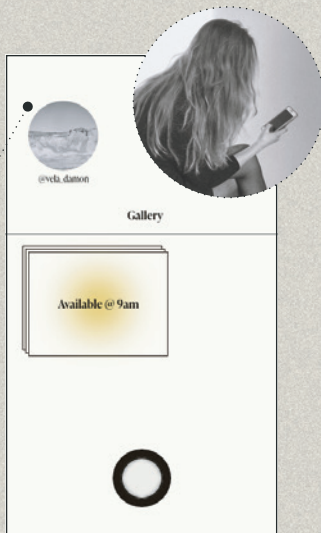


Once the shot is composed, Mara turns the focus dial to increase the overall sharpness of the photo.



All of the settings have been adjusted so she presses the shutter release button to take the photo.

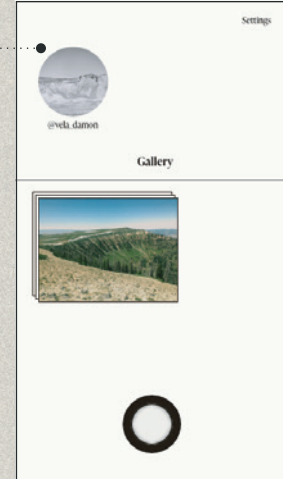
Development + Reflection



The gallery page opens and she can see that her photo will be developed the following morning.



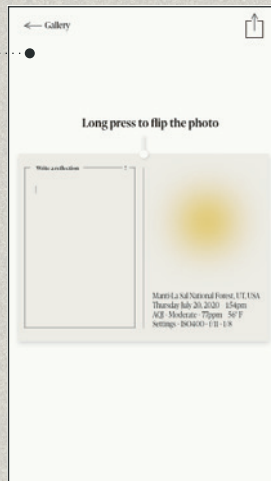
At 9am, the Parallax app notifies Mara that her photo has been developed.



She opens the app to view the photo.



She clicks on the developed photo to get a closer look. She that her perceptions influenced the settings in her favor -- the photo turned out. Upon seeing the photo, she is reminded of the impression she had and wants to write about it, so she taps on the photo.



The photo flips to reveal information about the location, date, time, air quality index, temperature and the film settings used. She taps on the left side to write her reflection.



She writes about what inspired her to take the photo and how she felt. She feels inspired to continue going outside to cultivate a stronger relationship with the land.

17-19

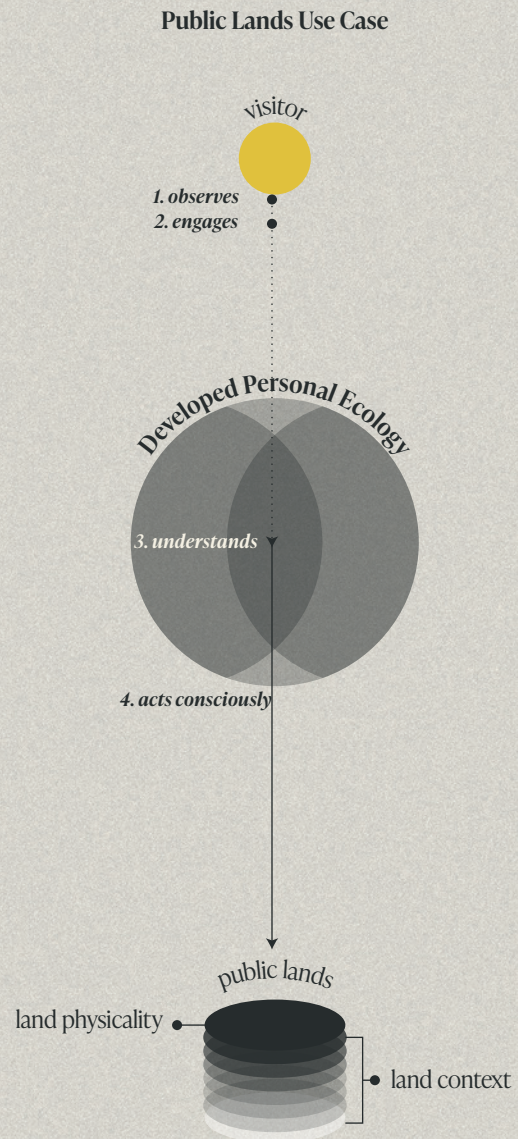
IMPACT



Use in Public Lands

Consistent reflection on personal land relationships creates a personal ecology or code of ethics which influence future thoughts and behaviors toward the land. As someone with a developed personal ecology comes across various land scenarios in their life, their personal ecology is both activated and expanded.

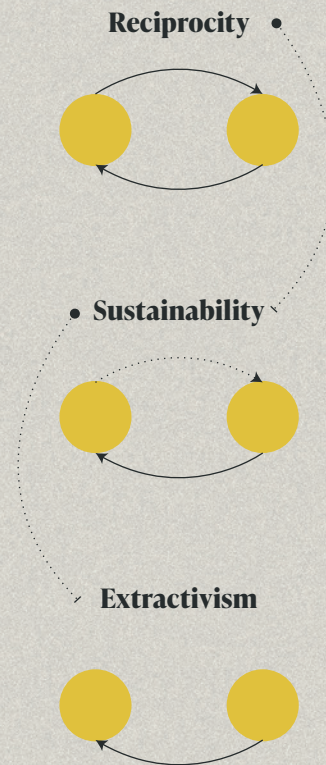
For instance, if a person were to visit public lands, protected lands or lands with intact or delicate ecosystems, the groundwork of a cultivated land relationship would have already been laid down to ensure minimal impact during visitation. Future visitors of these places may not only act consciously and with respect to the land but they may also have enriched experiences because of their strengthened land relationship.



Collective strengthening of land relationships can shift unconscious and detrimental cultural paradigms of the land toward ones of hope and reciprocity.

Parallax was designed in response to several concepts including ecological culture, land ethics and personal ecologies with the hope of changing the way land is viewed and treated. The project exists within several landscapes including personal wellness, ecology, philosophy and art. Reciprocity is at the core of this work and the designer intends to continue exploring this way of relating in the continuation of this project and in future work.

Reciprocity in all ecologies and in life, has the potential to heal on all levels.



“We are our world knowing itself. We can relinquish our separateness. We can come home again—and participate in our world in a richer, more responsible and poignantly beautiful way than before.”
—Joanna Macy

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