

New Territories (Berlin, 16–18 Jun 17)

Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin, Jun 16–18, 2017

Deadline: Jan 24, 2017

Stefanie Gerke, Berlin

Call for Papers

New Territories: Landscape Representation in Contemporary Photographic Practices

International Workshop

16, 17 and 18 June 2017, Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin

This three-day international workshop provides an opportunity for an in-depth examination of contemporary developments in the genre of landscape and its photographic representation, and the ways in which that genre brings into focus some of the most pressing issues facing our society today. In Europe, urban expansion and post-industrial reconstruction count among the main causes of transformations undergone by our physical environments. In the contemporary period, many artists have turned to photography to record – as well as critically reflect upon – the full range of socio-political, ecological and cultural underpinnings of these changes. Thus, in Germany, several generations of artists linked with the Düsseldorf School (Andreas Gursky, Thomas Struth, Axel Hütte) as well as those associated with Leipzig (Joachim Brohm, Matthias Hoch) and Berlin (Ulrich Wüst, Uta Neumann) developed a significant body of photographic work devoted to a sustained examination of the evolution of the urban landscape and industrial architecture. An aspiration towards objectivity in these works produced a distinct aesthetic, defined by apparent stylistic neutrality.

In Western art, landscape has been hitherto studied predominantly in relation to painted depictions of nature, with reference to the notions of the sublime (Edmund Burke: 1757) and the visual ideal of the picturesque (William Gilpin: 1768). By choosing urban and post-industrial landscapes as their subject, and consciously foregrounding their everyday, ordinary aspects, contemporary lens-based practices appear to break with this tradition of landscape representation. Furthermore, these practices often presuppose an ethical position as they impose obligation to consider the effect of human activity on land. Proliferation of images of wastelands, in natural and urban contexts, seems to relate to post-industrial ruins and sites of ecological disasters, described in a recent study as apocalyptic 'anti-landscapes' (David E. Nye and Sarah Elkind: 2014). Furthermore, the stylistic neutrality of the images of urban landscapes can be perceived as an indication of the troubling patterns of homogenisation in society, culture and built environment.

We invite papers from scholars of all career stages and all disciplinary backgrounds that explore the following topics, in relation to photography and to the context of Europe:

- Use of photographic, lens-based and moving-image technologies in the representations of landscape
- Change and continuity in the genre of landscape, and the visual ideals of the picturesque and sublime
- Urbanisation and de-industrialisation, and its impact on land and habitat
- Ethics and aesthetics of landscape representation
- Everyday and vernacular landscapes
- Wastelands and post-industrial ruins

Please send a 300-word proposal in English for a 25 min presentation, a short biographical statement and full contact information to Stefanie.Gerke@culture.hu-berlin.de by January 24, 2017. All applicants will be notified by February 10, 2017. A subsidy towards the cost of travel and two nights of accommodation will be offered.

We ask all speakers to commit to attending all three days of the workshop. There is no registration fee and the event is open to all to attend. The presentations will be held in English. Confirmed speakers include: Prof. Malcolm Andrews (University of Kent), Prof. Michael Diers (Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin), Prof. Bettina Gockel (Universität Zürich), Prof. Danièle Méaux (Université de Saint-Étienne), Prof. Liz Wells (Plymouth University), Francesco Zanot (Nuova Accademia di Belle Arti, Milano).

The symposium is organized by Dr. Olga Smith and Stefanie Gerke, both based at the Institut für Kunst- und Bildgeschichte der Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin. It is presented with support of KOSMOS Programme at the Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin.

Reference:

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