

## The Garden at War: Deception, Craft and Reason (Buckingham, 8 Jul 17)

State Music Room, Stowe House, Buckingham, MK18 5EH, Jul 08, 2017

Registration deadline: Jul 6, 2017

The Courtauld Institute of Art

Bringing together world-leading academics, art-historians, and contemporary artists, The Courtauld Institute of Art and Aganippe Arts present a day-long symposium held at Stowe House to open the exhibition *The Garden at War*. The collaborative event aims to provide a forum for exploring issues and ideas raised by the exhibition on the development and relevance of Stowe and its history of neoclassicism. The primary strand of inquiry which informs the symposium concerns the use of the gardens at Stowe as a collaborative art-form. Looking at Stowe in this manner it is possible to read its design through a number of different frameworks; from the influence of the classical world, to the work of conceptual artists like Ian Hamilton Finlay, to the French landscape paintings of Nicolas Poussin and Claude Lorrain.

The symposium inaugurates a new initiative that puts the significance of art-history into context and opens up its accessibility to a wider audience through public facing dialogue. It also highlights a newly published collection of essays presented in the exhibition catalogue, available for a limited reduced price for symposium attendees to pre-order.

The idea of the garden, as something more than a pleasant retreat, inevitably evokes the eighteenth-century gardens of Stowe in Buckinghamshire. This was a time of classical revival, when the prevailing cultural attitude was to reform the world based on venerated classical ideals. The enlightenment provided a cultural environment which called for a form of art suited to this 'Age of Reason'. The proponents of such a movement saw in the potential of the garden a symbolic embodiment of civilisation and of man's relationship to nature. The garden suggested a lost Arcadia, a stage for philosophical thought, and just as irrationality may be conquered and turned to logical reasoning so too the wild forces of nature may be brought into quite alignment.

This is the use of the garden as metaphor. In its principles of balance and symmetry the neoclassical gardens of Stowe create a visual equivalent of coherent thought. Stowe isn't a garden of flowers or shrubs; it's a garden of ideas.

This symposium aims to consider the gardens at Stowe as a site of conflict between order and disorder by examining a range of architectural, poetic, and artistic production. It brings together new explorations from leading experts on the fundamental nature of artistic collaboration to the production of a garden design. In doing so we may reflect that all artistic production exists within an intricate and complex web of relations and influences; both contemporary, historical, and experiential. In this way the garden can be read as a reflection of the society from which it is born and

that in which it continues to exist.

Aganippe Arts has organised this symposium alongside the University of Edinburgh's conference on the 13/14 July 2017, 'Ian Hamilton Finlay; Little Fields, Long Horizons'.

Disabled access can be booked in advance.

Find out more about the exhibition *The Garden at War*

To find out how to get to Stowe and how to book exhibition tour, visit [stowe.co.uk/house](http://stowe.co.uk/house)

#### Ticket prices

Symposium pass £16.50

Access to the full day of talks including the evening panel discussion. This ticket allows access to Stowe House and the exhibition, including two free tours of Stowe House and Gardens which will be led by members of the Stowe House Preservation Trust. Catering for tea, coffee, and lunch will be available courtesy of Stowe House.

+ exhibition catalogue £5 (optional)

Access to the full day of talks including the evening panel discussion as available with the standard 'Symposium pass' entrance. This ticket allows access to Stowe House and the exhibition, plus a copy of the exhibition catalogue retailing at £10.00. (Catalogue will be provided to holders of this tickets upon arrival at Stowe House on 8th July)

This can be added to your ticket at the checkout on Eventbrite.

+ Lunch £5.00 (optional)

Lunch and refreshments will be provided by Stowe House. Buy in advance or pay on the day. All dietary requirements will be catered for.

This can be added to your ticket at the checkout on Eventbrite.

#### Schedule

10:30 – 11:00 Optional Tours of Stowe House

11:00 – 11:30 Registration and tea/coffee

#### Session 1

11:30 – 12:00 Welcome and opening by conference chair

12:00 – 12:30 James Cahill – *Concrete Metamorphoses: Ian Hamilton Finlay's The Errata of Ovid*, 1983

12:30 – 13:00 Dr Joy Sleeman – War correspondence: artistic encounters in the garden and beyond

13:00 – 14:00 Lunch Break  
(available from Stowe House)

13:30 – 14:00 Optional Tours of Stowe Gardens

## Session 2

14:00 – 14:45 Joseph Black – Nature into Culture; The Garden at War

14:45 – 15:30 Patrick Eyres – Neo-Classicism on Active Service: 18C gardens, imperial warfare and the avant-gardening of Ian Hamilton Finlay

15:30 – 16:00 Prof. Stephen Bann – Gardens Great and Small: Finlay and Shenstone

16:00 – 16:45 Break

16:45 – 18:00 Panel Discussion

Joseph Black and Antoine Espinasseau in conversation

18:00 Closing by conference chair

## Speakers

Prof. Stephen Bann CBE, FBA was Professor of the History of Art at Bristol University from 2000 to 2008, and is currently a Senior Research Fellow there. Professor Bann joined the University of Kent in 1967 as Lecturer in History and, during this time, was Deputy Editor, then Editor, of 20th Century Studies. He was subsequently appointed Professor of Modern Cultural Studies at the University of Kent, where he was also Honorary Professor from 2010 to 2014, before becoming Chair in History of Art at the University of Bristol. He has been appointed Slade Professor of Fine Art, University of Cambridge, for 2017–18. Since 2008, he has also served as a guest curator for major exhibitions at the National Gallery in London and the Musée des Beaux-Arts in Lyon. He was elected Fellow of the British Academy in 1998 and appointed CBE for services to Art History in 2004. He first met Ian Hamilton Finlay in 1964, and became (in the words of Finlay's son Alec) his "preferred commentator".

Joseph Black is an artist and writer based in London. He obtained a Masters Degree in Conceptual Art from the Courtauld Institute of Art in 2016. He has since founded and continues to work as Senior Curator at Aganippe Arts, a curatorial company specialising in managing exhibitions of historic and contemporary art in locations of cultural importance. He has worked as Senior Curator on The Garden at War exhibition programme, is a contributing artist, and is the editor of the exhibition publication. His work has previously been exhibited in other independent curatorial projects in London and his writing has been included in a number of arts publications.

James Cahill is currently completing a PhD at Cambridge University on the relationship between contemporary British art and classical antiquity. He has contributed to publications including *Art in America*, *Apollo*, *The Burlington Magazine*, *Elephant*, *The Erotic Review*, *frieze*, *the TLS* and *The White Review*. He is the author and co-author of monographs including *Richard Patterson* (Anomie Publishing, 2017), *Maggi Hambling: War Requiem and Aftermath* (London: Unicorn Press, 2015), and *Angus Fairhurst* (London: Sadie Coles HQ / PWP, 2009). He is the contributing editor of a major new book on classical myth in western art, forthcoming from Phaidon. Other current publications include an anthology of interviews with contemporary artists, due next year from Laurence King Publishing.

Antoine Espinasseau lives and works in Paris. He is a contemporary French artist and architect exhibiting work in the The Garden at War exhibition. Before working as an artist he studied at the

National Superior School of Architecture of Versailles (École nationale supérieure d'architecture de Versailles). Working as a visual artist his work has been shown in private and public institutions, such as La Fondation Ricard in Paris and Le Consortium, Dijon. Recently his practice has explored the relationship between people and their environment, with a focus on gardens and representations of nature.

Dr Patrick Eyres is editor and publisher of the *New Arcadian Journal*, which engages with the cultural politics of landscape gardens. He has published in numerous books and journals, and co-edited *Sculpture and the Garden* (Ashgate, 2006). He knew the poet-gardener Ian Hamilton Finlay (1925-2006) for almost thirty years and is thus a member of the Little Sparta Trust, which seeks to safeguard Finlay's unique garden. Patrick is also on the board of the Garden History Society and Leeds Art Fund, and a member of the Yorkshire Gardens Trust, Public Monuments and Sculpture Association and Folly Fellowship.

Dr Joy Sleeman studied History of Art at University College London and has a PhD from the University of Leeds, Department of Fine Art. Her research embraces aspects of the histories of sculpture and landscape and these two areas of interest coalesce in her work on the new forms of landscape art that emerged in the 1960s, often referred to as 'Land Art'. Sleeman's work on land art includes a major exhibition, *Uncommon Ground: Land Art in Britain 1966–1979*, co-curated with Nicholas Alfrey (Nottingham University) and Ben Tufnell (independent curator and writer). Since 2000 she has been a member of the editorial board of *Sculpture Journal*, the leading academic journal for research in sculpture.?

Reference:

CONF: The Garden at War: Deception, Craft and Reason (Buckingham, 8 Jul 17). In: ArtHist.net, Jun 13, 2017 (accessed Apr 2, 2026), <<https://arthist.net/archive/15798>>.