

Visualizing the Urban Jungle & the Urban Oasis (Washington 5-8 Nov 09)

Catherine Zuromskis

Call For Papers

"Visualizing the Urban Jungle and the Urban Oasis: City Space and the American Environmental Imaginary," panel for the American Studies Association Annual Meeting, Washington D.C., November 5-8, 2009

Deadline: January 1, 2009

This panel seeks to explore tensions and parallels between American conceptions of urban space and wilderness, both within and outside of the United States. On the one hand, urban space may be conceptualized as an alternative to nature, a man-made environment designed and practiced to civilize or domesticate the wilderness. Yet at the same time, the new kinds of physical, social, and cultural relations brought about by the industrial and post-industrial urban environment often figure in the cultural imaginary as natural, primal, wild, or other-than-human. How have urban American residents, agencies, artists, and reformers conceived of their social and built worlds in terms we might currently call environmental? What kind of visual practices are in play in the navigation and/or depiction of outdoor urban environments such as streets, public squares, parks, gardens, waterways, and zoos? How have artists, urban planners, architects, civil engineers, and members of the general public defined and re-imagined "unnatural" spaces in the city through particular visual and spatial aesthetics? In what ways do differences of class, race, gender, and sexuality shape and express these constructions? To what extent can we speak of the urban jungle and/or oasis as a co-production between human and nonhuman organisms and what purposes do these co-productions serve in the politics of cities and environmentalism more broadly?

Paper topics for this panel may include (but are not limited to):

- Surveillance and social control as a mode of urban "sustainability"
- Rooftop gardens, urban farming, and the greening of urban space
- Urban architecture as a metaphor for the natural world, and vice versa

- Social Darwinism, class difference, and species difference
- The City Beautiful movement
- Natural rehabilitation of urban spaces in public art and urban design (e.g. NYC's High Line project, urban "earth art")
- Urban ruins
- Suburbia and New Urbanism
- Lawns and other domesticated landscapes
- Urban interspecies encounters and the spaces that frame them (e.g. zoos, dog parks)
- Natural history museums and botanical gardens
- Trans-species disease (e.g. avian flu, mad cow) and the global city

Please submit a 500 word abstract and CV to both Catherine Zuromskis and Lisa Uddin at zuromskis@unm.edu and lisa_uddin@brown.edu by January 1, 2009.

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Reference:

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