The Geological Imagination in the Art (San Marino, CA, 4–5 Apr 25)

Huntington Library, Art Collections, and Botanical Gardens, San Marino, California, Apr 4–05, 2025
Deadline: Jul 1, 2024

Nina Amstutz, University of Oregon

The Geological Imagination in the Art of the Long Nineteenth Century.
Organizers: Nina Amstutz (University of Oregon), Stephanie O'Rourke (University of St Andrews).

In the last decade, there has been a surge of interest in geology and its attendant fields – such as stratigraphy, paleontology, and geomorphology – in the arts and humanities, catalyzed by the notion that we have entered a new geological epoch. Yet this "geological turn" in the academy did not originate with the recent public awareness of anthropogenic climate change. During the long nineteenth century – a period widely accepted as the "crucible of western modernity" and the emergence of industrial capitalism – artists, creative writers, and historians were already intensely preoccupied with the deep material history of the earth. Looking to the geological past, in short, was one of the catalysts of European modernity.

This conference will chart the multifaceted arc of this history over the course of the long nineteenth century as it manifested in the visual arts. In what ways can the "geological imagination" be traced across a variety of artistic outlets, such as romantic mining practices and the attendant emergence of new materials and subjects for artists, a new artistic interest in fossils as a form of printmaking and the key to the prehistoric world, the rise of reproductive technologies predicated on industrial extraction, and the ascent of a landscape tradition that was intensely preoccupied with the antiquity of the natural world? How does the recent geological turn in the humanities allow us to see this period anew? And what historical insights can be mobilized in present-day discussions about the role of the arts in shaping our understanding of the earth's past and possible futures?

How to Propose a Paper:
We are seeking papers of 30 minutes in length. This 2-day conference will include visits to the Huntington's collections. The generous support of the Huntington's Research Department will cover accommodation and travel expenses for speakers.

To apply, please send an abstract of 250 words and a CV to:
thegeologicalimagination2025@gmail.com
Deadline for applications: 1st July 2024

Reference:

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