

Spiritual Landscapes and Photography (Florence/online, 15.–16. Oct 24)

Kunsthistorisches Institut in Florenz - Max-Planck-Institut, Florence / online, Oct
15–16, 2024

Natalie Arrowsmith

Spiritual Landscapes and Photography: An Exploration from the Caucasus to the Mediterranean
(Florence/online, 15-16 Oct 24)

Conference organized by the OSCOP project

The scope of the OSCOP project is to study and promote the collection of photographs of South Caucasian art and architecture taken by the research group of Adriano Alpago Novello between the 1960s and 1980s, now preserved in the Centre of Study and Documentation of Armenian Culture in Venice. The photographs show the monumental and natural heritage of Georgia and Armenia, in particular the so-called 'crystal churches' (Brandi 1969). With their pure forms, geometrically defined spaces, and central dome, they offer a highly articulate expression of 'architectural spirituality' in which the landscape takes part. Alpago Novello's collection is particular in its context. Together with his colleagues from Italy and the Armenian diaspora he recorded the Armenian and Georgian historical landscape at a time when the territory was politically and theoretically part of the Soviet Union, and any reference to the sacred and spiritual was excluded from the critical discourse on the natural and monumental heritage.

Beyond this, the photo collection raises questions about the specific elements that make a landscape 'spiritual'. What prompted people to define a landscape as spiritual rather than sacred? The study of landscape involves the consideration of the role of human interventions in its shaping, the perception of geomorphology, and of the interplay between human and non-human agencies, such as vegetation. Under which premise and in which ways is a spiritual dimension attributed to them? What is the role of architecture in the making and marking, as well as experiencing of, hierotopic landscapes (Lidov), or vice versa? While contributing to the discussion of these and related questions, the workshop will also engage with photographic images and ask if photographs can stimulate or convey a religious, mystical, or ascetic experience – and, if so, how do photographs mediate such a 'sense of spirituality', for instance, through light, composition, scaling, proximity, or distance. Can strategies of 'spiritualization' (or 'de-spiritualization') be identified, which are site-specific, regional or transcultural?

Photographs, with their own forms of spiritual engagement require, imply or promote specific settings and dynamics of spectatorship. There may be a spiritual dimension to the personal experience of the photographer regarding her or his interest in capturing markers from the past (such as churches or khachkars), and also the spirituality of local communities around them.

The conference aims to cross-examine photographs of spiritual landscapes from various point of view, with the double lens of seeking innovative methodological approaches to study the interplay between nature, humans, artifacts, and the underlying transcendental relations on the one hand and the role of the spiritual in related photographs and photographic aesthetics on the other.

/ Program /

I 15th October 2024

10.00 h: Welcome, Gerhard Wolf

10.10 h : Introduction, Stefano Riccioni, Università Ca' Foscari di Venezia, and Annette Hoffmann, Kunsthistorisches Institut in Florenz – Max-Planck-Institut

Perceiving – Documenting – Archiving | Chair: Angelo Maggi

10.30 h: Making Memory Image: Dmitri Ermakoff's photographs of Arates monastery from the Gabriel Millet Photo-Archive, Ioanna Rapti, École pratique des hautes études, Paris

11.00 h: Spiritual Landscape through Surgical Gaze: Medieval South Caucasian Monuments in the Thierry Archive, Sipana Tchakerian, INHA – Institut national d'histoire de l'art, Paris

11.30 h: Coffee Break

11.50 h: Spiritual Landscapes of North-Eastern Türkiye through the Lens of Wakhtang Djobadze and David Winfield, Irene Giviashvili, Kunsthistorisches Institut in Florenz – Max-Planck-Institut

12.20 h: Zooming in on the Enspirited Landscapes, Churches and Icons of Medieval Svaneti, Bella Radenović, The Courtauld Institute of Art

12.50 h: Discussion

13.20 h: Lunch Break

Reading and Comparing Adriano Alpago Novello's Shootings | Chair: Stefano Riccioni

15.30 h: A Church, a Mountain and a Lake: The Third Eye of Adriano Alpago Novello in Aghtamar, Beatrice Spampinato, Kunsthistorisches Institut in Florenz – Max-Planck-Institut

16.00 h: Seeking Sanctuary in the Sacred: Sites of Worship in the Photographs of Ursula Schulz-Dornburg, Lucy Rogers, University of Westminster

16.30 h: Discussion

17.00 h: Coffee Break

I Film projection

17.30 h: In this World - Sayat Nova Outtakes by Daniel Bird, Film director, producer and editor

Introduced and moderated by Bella Radenović, The Courtauld Institute of Art

I 16th October 2024

Experiencing Landscapes through the Camera | Chair: Annette Hoffmann

10.00 h: Immersing in Bygone Realities. Camille Enlart's Photographs of the 'Villes Mortes' in Cyprus and Beyond, Thomas Kaffenberger, Université de Fribourg

10.30 h: Capturing the Sacred: Photography, Symbolism, and the Resava Monastery in the Age of Despot Stefan Lazarević, Jasmina S. Ćirić, University of Kragujevac

11.00 h: Coffee Break

11.30 h: Genius Loci and Travel Photography: Robert Byron, John Donat, and G.E. Kidder Smith. Landscapes of Intimacy, Angelo Maggi, Università luav di Venezia

12.00 h: Launch of the OSCOP Database, Stefano Riccioni, Francesca Penoni and Beatrice Spampinato, Università Ca' Foscari di Venezia and Kunsthistorisches Institut in Florenz – Max-Planck-Institut

12.30 h: Discussion and Conclusion

This will be a hybrid event.

I Venue

Palazzo Grifoni Budini Gattai

Via dei Servi 51

50122 Firenze, Italia

To participate online please register in advance via Zoom:

https://eu02web.zoom.us/join/u5MlduyorzMiHdOzI_A0ZnfErFoc8XunDxm_#/registration

After registering, you will receive a confirmation email containing information about joining the meeting.

--

Kunsthistorisches Institut in Florenz – Max-Planck-Institut

Via Giuseppe Giusti 44

50121 Firenze, Italia

+39 055 24911-1

info@khi.fi.it

www.khi.fi.it

khi.fi.it/newsletter

[instagram.com/khiflorenz](https://www.instagram.com/khiflorenz)

[facebook.com/khiflorenz](https://www.facebook.com/khiflorenz)

[x.com/khiflorenz](https://www.x.com/khiflorenz)

@khiflorenz #khiflorenz

Reference:

CONF: Spiritual Landscapes and Photography (Florence/online, 15.-16. Oct 24). In: ArtHist.net, Oct 3, 2024 (accessed Aug 31, 2025), <<https://arthist.net/archive/42826>>.