

Natureculture Lab (Bern, 27–29 Jan 25)

HKB, Bern Academy of the Arts, Jan 27–29, 2025

Hanna B. Hölling

This international workshop aims to bring together in a hybrid format experts of conservation in two domains: on the one hand, art and cultural heritage conservation; and on the other hand, nature conservation. In both domains the “things”, “items”, “objects” or “sites” conservators and conservationists care for are increasingly recognized as natureculture hybrids. While art conservation, especially in its earlier guise of restoration, primarily considered artworks as the outcome of human—and especially the artist’s—intentions, the field of art conservation has increasingly recognized that the materials of artworks undergo unintentional, and sometimes unexpected, changes and are subject to loss and decay well outside human control. At the other end, while inspired by ideas of pristine wilderness, nature conservation in its earliest instances was primarily geared towards the establishment of national parks and nature reserves fortified against human intervention, conservationists have come to value humans as inherent to the ecosystems they care for. Given that the “things” and “sites” for which (art) conservators and (nature) conservationists hold responsibility are interplays of human and non-human agencies and thus natureculture hybrids, both fields and communities consider ontologically similar objects, and should exchange views.

The workshop will explore questions such as, How should conservation practices in both nature and art be redefined in light of the inevitable and sometimes desirable changes to the material make-up of objects, landscapes and environments? How can new conservation theories that embrace change and transformation, particularly those emerging from contemporary art, inform and reshape traditional conservation approaches that prioritize permanence and stability? Who gets to decide where and how conservation occurs, considering the historical silencing and displacement of human voices in both ecological restoration and cultural heritage conservation? How can the field of conservation expand beyond top-down expert models to embrace decolonizing community engagement, thereby raising questions about the future role of experts?

Contributors: Ravi Agarwal, Lotte Arndt, Jacob Badcock, Marjolijn Bol, Sven Dupré, Josephine Ellis, Noémie Etienne, Rodney Harrison, Hanna B. Hölling, James Kuboja, Felicity Lunn, Emilie Magnin, Daniel Margoscy, Laura Martin, Julia Robles de La Pava, Christian Rosset, Munyaradzi Elton Sagiya, Friederike Schäfer, Anna Schäffler, Maartje Stols-Witlox, Aga Wielocha, Jerylee Wilkes Allemann and Glenn Wharton.

NATURECULTURE LAB, January 27-29, 2025

HKB | Bern Academy of the Arts

Monday, January 27, 12:30-19:00

12:30-12:45 Arrival, with coffee and fruit. HKB Aula, Fellerstrasse 11, Bern

12:45-13:10 Welcome: Sebastian Dobruskin, Hanna Hölling and Sven Dupré. HKB Aula

Public Lectures, Q&A

13:10-14:00 Laura Martin: "Restore / Rewild: Collaborating with Non-Human Species," public lecture and discussion. Moderated by Sven Dupré. Hybrid: HKB Aula and online.

14:00-14:50 Maartje Stols-Witlox, Sven Dupré and Glenn Wharton, "Inspired by Nature: Reflections on Cultural Heritage Conservation Through Restoration Ecology," public lecture and discussion. Moderated by Hanna B. Hölling. Hybrid: HKB Aula and online.

14:50-15:40 Ravi Agarwal: "Rethinking Nature— From Fishing Communities to More-than-Human Relations," public lecture and discussion. Moderated by Jerylee Wilkes Allemann. Hybrid: HKB Aula and online.

15:40-16:30 Break, with snacks

Non-public discussion groups

16:30-17:30 Three working groups will be formed, comprising all in-person workshop participants, to discuss three key questions:

1. How do we deal with change?
2. Who decides where and how conservation occurs?
3. Who is considered an expert?

The discussions will be led by Glenn Wharton, Anna Schäffler, and Sven Dupré, with co-moderators Marjolijn Bol, Friederike Schäfer, and Aga Wielocha. The working groups will convene at the HKB Studio, HKB Small Meeting Room, and Aula.

17:30-18:00 Convenience break

18:00-18:50 Group leaders feedback to forum, plenum discussion follows. Moderated by Hanna Hölling and Sven Dupré. HKB Aula

18:50-19:00 Conclusions Day 1 and overview and tasks for Day 2. HKB Aula

Tuesday, January 28, 12:45-19:00

12:45-13:00 Arrival, with coffee and fruit. HKB Aula

Public lectures, Q&A

13:00-13:50 Lotte Arndt "Bees, Bugs and Beyond," public lecture and discussion. Moderated by Anna Schäffler. Hybrid: HKB Aula and online.

13:50-14:40 Daniel Margoscy "The Challenge of Conservation: Worms, Timber and Deforestation," public lecture and discussion. Moderated by Christian Rosset. Hybrid: HKB Aula and online.

14:40-15:30 Break, with snacks

Public presentations

15:30-17:20 Moderated by Felicity Lunn

Julia Robles de La Pava: "Beyond the Culture of Reason in Conservation: Art and Eco-Cosmology in the Patagonian Wetlands," [16:00-16:30] Hybrid: HKB Aula and online.

Anna Schäffler, "Preservation in the Atomic Age: Practices Anticipating Artistic and Environmental Futures," [15:30-16:00] Hybrid: HKB Aula and online.

James Kuboja: "Community Based-Conservation in Tanzania: Its Efficacy and the Position of Culture," [16:30-17:00] Hybrid: HKB Aula and online.

Rodney Harrison: "Beyond Natural and Cultural Heritage: Rethinking Heritage Conservation Practices in the Carbocene," [17:00-17:20] Hybrid: HKB Aula and online.

17:20-17:45 Convenience break

17:45-18:45 Discussion with all speakers of the second block, moderated by Aga Wielocha followed by a Plenum, moderated by Jerylee Wilkes Allemann with all in-person participants. HKB Aula

18:45-19:00 Conclusions Day 2 and preview Day 3. Hanna Hölling and Sven Dupré. HKB Aula

Wednesday, January 29, 12:45-19:00

12:45-13:00 Arrival, with coffee and fruit. HKB Aula

Public lectures, Q&A

13:00-13:45 Munyaradzi Elton Sagiya: "Beyond Wildlife: Re(imagining) conservation of protected areas in Zimbabwe," public lecture and discussion. Moderated by Christian Rosset. HKB Aula and online.

13:45-14:30 Jacob Badcock: "'Conserving 'Sodom and Gomorrah': Nature, Urbanism, and Technology," public lecture and discussion. Moderated by Noémie Etienne. HKB Aula and online.

14:30-15:15 Josephine Ellis: "Situating the Conservation Object, or the New Object of Conservation," public lecture and discussion. Moderated by Emilie Magnin. HKB Aula and online.

15:15-16:00 45-minute break, with snacks

Non-public discussion groups

16:00-17:30 Three working groups will be formed with all in-person workshop participants to discuss three key questions, following a similar approach to Day 1 but with participants arranged in distinct groups. The discussions will be facilitated by Glenn Wharton, Anna Schäffler, and Sven Dupré in collaboration with Marjolijn Bol, Friederike Schäfer, and Aga Wielocha. The groups will convene in the HKB Studio, HKB Small Meeting Room, and Aula.

17:30-17:45 Mini convenience break

17:45-18:30 Plenum with all participants. Group leaders feedback to forum, plenum discussion fol-

lows. Moderated by Hanna Hölling and Sven Dupré. HKB Aula

18:30-19:00 Conclusions workshop and discussion of tasks for the writing retreat for selected participants. Group leaders, with Hanna Hölling and Sven Dupré. HKB Aula

Organization

Natureculture Lab has been organized by Hanna B. Hölling (HKB Bern Academy of the Arts) and Sven Dupré (Utrecht University/University van Amsterdam) with the support of the Swiss National Science Foundation Scientific Exchanges Grant, the Bern University of Applied Science Network Grant, the Institute Materiality in Art and Culture at HKB Bern Academy of the Arts and the Center for Critical Conservation.

Register here for the public part of the workshop: <https://tinyurl.com/5n838byb>

Reference:

CONF: Natureculture Lab (Bern, 27-29 Jan 25). In: Arthist.net, Dec 10, 2024 (accessed Dec 19, 2025), <<https://arthist.net/archive/43507>>.