

Light and Darkness (online/Oxford, 26–27 Jun 25)

School of Arts, Oxford Brookes University, Oxford/Online, Jun 26–27, 2025

Registration deadline: Jun 23, 2025

Manila Castoro

Light and Darkness: Imaging the Night in the British Empire.

Join us for a two-day conference exploring how British imperialism mobilised light as a metaphor for enlightenment and control while casting the colonial night as a space of otherness, fear, and disorder. Grounded in visual culture but supported by intersecting representational forms that inform and extend its visual regimes, this event examines how depictions of night shaped and legitimised imperial narratives, and how these narratives were, and continue to be, challenged through decolonial or counter-visual practices.

Registration Deadline: 23 June 2025

Register through:
<https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/light-and-darkness-imaging-the-night-in-the-british-empire-tickets-1389662470859?aff=oddtcreator>

The event will take place in person; however, remote participation may be arranged for attendees based outside the UK or those with circumstances that prevent in-person attendance. If you wish to attend online, there is no need to register through Eventbrite, please contact Dr Manila Castoro at mcastoro@brookes.ac.uk directly.

CONFERENCE SCHEDULE

DAY 1 – 26 JUNE

11:00 | Arrivals and Coffee

11:20–11:30 | Welcome and Introduction – Manila Castoro

11:30–12:50 | Session 1

- Isabelle Lynch (University of Pennsylvania) – Freezing Polar Night: Magnesium Flash and Orientation at the Lightless Edge

- Aayushi Gupta (University of Cambridge) – Calling from the Shadows: Missionary Visual Culture and the Promise of Light in Late-Colonial India

- Q&A

12:50–14:00 | Lunch

14:00–15:20 | Session 2

- Nitin Sinha (Leibniz-Zentrum Moderner Orient) – Night and Law: Early Colonialism in Calcutta, 1760s–1820s

- Arun Kumar (University of Nottingham) – Sleeping Master; Drowsy Servant: The Violence of Summer Sleep in British India

- Q&A

15:20–15:40 | Comfort Break

15:40–17:00 | Session 3

- Louis Kaplan (University of Toronto) – Nachum Tim Gidal's Night of Meron (May 1935): Moonlight Reflections from Nazi Germany to British Mandate Palestine (Zoom)

- Haig Aivazian (Leiden University) – In Defense of Darkness: A History of Palestinian Technology in Words and Numbers

- Q&A

17:00–17:30 | Coffee Break

17:30–18:30 | Keynote Artist Talk and Open Conversation

Helene Kazan (Oxford Brookes University) – Decolonial Archival Practice: 'Under Multiple Suns' and 'Clear Night'

DAY 2 – 27 JUNE

09:30 | Arrivals and Coffee

09:50 | Welcome to Day 2

Speakers will present via Zoom, with session chairs attending in person

10:00–11:20 | Keynote Lecture

Niharika Dinkar (Boise State University) – Seeing in the Dark: Imperial Optics and the Nocturnal Flaneur

11:30–13:30 | Session 4

- Nicole Davis (University of Melbourne) – The Light & Dark of Urban Life: Electricity, Gas and Perceptions of Safety in Colonial Melbourne

- Ritam Sengupta (O.P. Jindal Global University) – Contesting Urban Sensibilities: Public Lighting and Night Life in Colonial Calcutta, 1850s–1900s

- Tatiana de Albuquerque (Universidade Federal do Rio de Janeiro) – Nocturnal Landscape of Rio de Janeiro in the Nineteenth Century by British Eyes

- Q&A

13:30–14:30 | Lunch

14:30–15:50 | Session 5

- Patrick Alexander (Oxford Brookes University) – Illuminating the Night: Symbolism in Hong Kong's Neon-Lit Streets

- Maria Ridda (University of Kent) – Sacred Games in the Nighttime Narcopolis: Representations of Underworld Mumbai

- Q&A

15:50 | Final Remarks

Drink Reception

Reference:

CONF: Light and Darkness (online/Oxford, 26-27 Jun 25). In: ArtHist.net, Jun 7, 2025 (accessed Apr 15, 2026), <<https://arthist.net/archive/49445>>.