

LANDSCAPE & GENERAL ECOLOGY

Ecocritical art history poses challenge to anthropocentric, androcentric and exploitative paradigms that reduce the alterity of nature. In particular, the technique of linear perspective, so crucial for the European tradition, comes under scrutiny. This international workshop gathers participants active in this emerging field of research in art practices, art history and environmental studies, working in different cultural contexts and across several historical periods. What forms of (re)presentations of physical spaces, environments and ecologies will be relevant for an ecocritical analysis? How do these forms of the artistic (re)presentation relate to epistemology and ontology of 'nature'?

16. - 17. September 2022

Institut für Kunstgeschichte
Spitalgasse 2
Campus Hof 9
Seminarraum 1

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Faculty of Historical and Cultural Studies



LANDSCAPE & GENERAL ECOLOGY

Workshop

16. - 17. September 2022

Institut für Kunstgeschichte, Spitalgasse 2, Campus Hof 9 (Eingang Garnisongasse), Seminarraum 1

Organisers: Sebastian Egenhofer (University of Vienna), Natalia Ganahl (University of Vienna),
Olga Smith (University of Vienna)

16 September 2022

09.30 - 10.00 Welcome. Sebastian Egenhofer, Olga Smith

10.00 - 11.00 Rachael Z. DeLue (Princeton University)
New Visualities: Landscape Vision and Things that Do Not See

11.00 - 13.00 Panel 1. Chair: Katrin Pirner

Olga Smith (University of Vienna)
The "Terror" of the Sublime

André Rottmann (Europa-Universität Viadrina Frankfurt)

The Possibility of an Island: Notes on the Operative Ecologies of Pierre Huyghe's Variants (2022 -)

13.00 - 14.00 Lunch

14.30 - 16.30 Panel 2. Chair: TBC

Natalia Ganahl (University of Vienna)

Perspective Figurations in USSR in Construction (1930-1941)

Posthuman Studies Lab: Nikita Sazonov, Ekaterina Nikitina (independent)

Quick Guide for Creating Feral Automated Systems

18.30 Dinner at Giorgina: <https://www.giorgina.at/>

17. September 2022

10.00 - 12.00 Panel 3. Chair: Máté Csanda

Yvonne Volkart (University of Applied Sciences and Arts Northwestern Switzerland)

Being Concerned: Sensing a Damaged Forest

Beate Gütschow (Kunstschule für Medien Köln)

The Power of Photographic Spaces

12.00 - 13.00 Lunch

13.00 - 15.00 Panel 4. Chair: Wolfram Pichler

Hannah Baader (Kunsthistorisches Institut in Florenz)

Landscape and Possession. The Alps, Ecology, and Art 1824 and 1937

Sebastian Egenhofer (University of Vienna)

Grid and fractal in the etchings of Hercules Segers

Abstracts (in the order of presentation)

Rachael Z. DeLue

New Visualities: Landscape Vision and Things that Do Not See

Landscape cannot exist apart from the human. Defined broadly as a portion of the Earth's surface that can be seen at one time from one place, or narrowly as an artistic representation of the natural world, landscape hinges on the presence of a human viewer. Or so the story goes. This presentation considers instances of landscape representation from the sciences in the long nineteenth century that may be described as exceeding a human point of view, often inadvertently and against the grain of intention. These images, although created by humans, suggest through a forced dismantling of pictorial conventions a non-human perspective. Considered alongside entities such as the subterranean and animals without eyes, that negate the visual and, by extension, anthropocentric visibility, these pictures imagine how humans might see beyond themselves.

Olga Smith

The "Terror" of the Sublime

The emergence of sublime as a central concept in the aesthetics of landscape coincided with a cultural shift in Europe and North America in the eighteenth century whereas fear of wilderness and extreme weather gave way to admiration and reverence. What of today's extreme weather, particle pollution, rising sea levels and increased risk of pandemics? In this radical new context, I argue, sublime deserves a re-consideration as an aesthetic experience driven by "terror," according to Edmund Burke (1757). I make this argument with reference to contemporary artworks responding to the theme of environmental breakdown to confront the central paradox in the conceptions of the Anthropocene: that humanity is differentiated as a species and at the same time its history is embedded in the history of the Earth.

Beate Gütschow

The Power of Photographic Spaces

Since the invention of the camera obscura, the single-point perspective image has been the dominant ordering principle for the representation of the western world, long before the first fixation of a photograph. This technical view, which today culminates in the complete digital 3D replicas of cities, was only possible through chemical- and camera technology, later through complex computer technology based on extraction activities of the Global North in the Global South. At the same time, the central perspective places the viewer at the center. Beate Gütschow will use her series "HC" to reflect on the parameters of photographic and photogrammetric perspectives and then give an outlook on a new photographic series that has the consequences of the Anthropocene era itself as the subject of the picture.

Natalia Ganahl

Perspective Figurations in USSR in Construction (1930-1941)

Central perspective, criticized by the avant-garde during the 1910-1920s, was put to new use in the portrayal of socialist economy in propaganda journal USSR in Construction (1930-1941). The subject function of perspective was reflexively challenged, indicating the displacement of the agency into the immanence of the material-economic production according to the materialist conceptions of nature. In the course of the 1930s, perspective hardened again into classical representational structures of totality. Two holistic models collided in the narratives of the mastery of nature.

Posthuman Studies Lab: Nikita Sazonov, Ekaterina Nikitina

Quick Guide for Creating Feral Automated Systems

The to-be-presented speech will be dedicated to the question of unity — both ecological and political — on the edge of the good old human world. Considering technological and conceptual history behind the introduction of new plant species into the Soviet economy and the creation of the OGAS (All-State Automated System), the speakers will present an alternative scenario in which plants and machines actively collaborate to build bonds and connections between different creatures.

Yvonne Volkart

Being Concerned: Sensing a Damaged Forest

At present, an increased interest in the use of sensing technologies as media of 'nature mediation' can be observed: Eco medial apparatus are intended to help make other-than-human modes of existence, which have hitherto eluded human attention, perceptible. This is associated with the hope that measured data can be used, on the one hand, for the factuality and politicization of unknown or denied environmental phenomena and, on the other hand, that they generate new forms of relationality toward the 'environment'. However, I maintain that the transversal potential of technologies of sensing is less to be found in the use of innovative technologies than in aesthetic experiences of co-existence with our fellow beings, and in the audience's participation at an aesthetic surplus. Technologies of Sensing would thus be less sensing technology than practices, methods, and aesthetics of sensing.

André Rottmann

The Possibility of an Island: Notes on the Operative Ecologies of Pierre Huyghe's Variants (2022 -)

Earlier this summer, Pierre Huyghe's site-specific and permanent installation Variants was first presented on an island at the fringes of Kistefos Museum's sculpture park located in the north of Oslo. Beyond a case study on this most recent of the artist's projects – and on the equally "environmentalized" works he conceived for Skulptur Projekte Münster 2017 (After ALife Ahead) and Serpentine Galleries 2018/19 (Umwelt) – the lecture makes an attempt to define contemporary artistic practices as manifestations and reflections of a "general ecology" as conceptualized by recent media theory. Against the backdrop of related arguments concerning the "non-conscious" operations of digital or machine assemblages, it will also raise, in more systematic terms, the question of the methodological implications of an ecologization of thought and art, not without taking into account the transcriptions of a surrealist aesthetics of the unconscious in Huyghe's techno-geographical landscapes.

Hannah Baader

Landscape and Possession. The Alps, Ecology, and Art 1824 and 1937

The paper will investigate two different, but related instances of ecological and aesthetic practices, and will discuss their relation to the making of landscapes, theories of nature and the History of the Anthropocene. Around 1825, the German painter Caspar David Friedrich finished a canvas showing an alpine mountainscape, known as Der Watzmann. As scholars have shown, the image is constructed from least two drawings, representing (or referencing) two distinct environments. The talk will discuss Friedrich's artistic strategy, together with contemporary controversies on geology and the history of the natural world, but will also look into the later history of the painting. In 1937, the canvas was sold by its owner, to Berlin's Nationalgalerie. The talk will discuss this second moment, and will connect it to theories and appropriations of nature and culture in the 1930ies, the perception and the making of landscapes, together with the politics of (dis-) possession.

Sebastian Egenhofer

Grid and fractal in the etchings of Hercules Segers

In the 17th century, the Republic of the Netherlands extend their trade network and colonial grip worldwide. Internally, land reclamation is massively advanced. Hercules Segers (1589 to c. 1640) is with Essaias van de Velde, Salomon van Ruisdael and Jan van Goyen one of the founding figures of the specific „Realism" of Dutch landscape painting which reflects this relation of dominance towards Nature and the non-European Other in multiple ways. His admired and mystified etchings, however, indicate the ambivalence of the modern epistemic paradigm associated with the spatial grid and the perspectival representation of space. Their excessive precision and technical control is explicitly countered by processes that subvert measure and control. Is this staged self-subversion to be read as an indication of a self-critique of modern rationalism, in whose heyday Segers operates as an artist? Is there even something as an ecological consciousness at work?