

Landscapes of the Everyday

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What is landscape? The visible features of an area of land, often considered in terms of their aesthetic appeal? A picture representing an area of countryside? The genre of landscape painting? Or something much broader than a simple dictionary definition might imply? The six papers comprising this session engage new approaches to landscape, its discourses and representations, in ways that transcend and transgress past disciplinary boundaries. This session investigates landscape as the locus of the everyday, actively formed through environmental or anthropogenic changes, and the ways that language and visual culture shape our understanding of the form and meaning of landscape. Topics explore landscape in relation to themes that include labour and production, industrialisation and technology, mourning and memorialisation, cultural heritage, tourism, cartography and colonialism, countryside and cityscape.

These presentations discuss a rich variety of media, exploring found landscapes interpreted in fabric and paper, maps, paintings, prints, film and television, and the topography of the land itself.

Chronologically and geographically this session spans from late 18th-century maps of the Danish West Indies, Famine burial sites in mid-19th-century Ireland, 19th-century railways in England and France, and British post-war prints, to the historical and contemporary landscapes of the Israeli Kibbutz, and self-taught artists Joseph E Yoakum and the Alabama Gee's Bend Quilters Collective in the United States.

As we consider landscape in the expanded field, what constitutes the quotidian versus the extraordinary? How do we reconcile exterior landscapes with those shaped and held within our minds?

Speakers and Abstracts

The Found Landscape

Emily Cushman (The Museum of Modern Art, New York, USA)

The found landscape is of particular importance in the history of the American artist. Whether imagined, remembered, or gathered, these landscapes function as otherworldly places, not identifiable on a map. The Gee's Bend Quilters Collective and Joseph E Yoakum, all self-taught artists, built found landscapes of fabric and paper, respectively, pushing the boundaries of traditional landscape art.

The Gee's Bend Collective fashioned the found landscape through collecting and salvaging discarded materials. The quilts' abstracted compositions are likened to landscapes, as the intricately stitched slivers of colours jive and collide, creating elaborate scenes dotted with memories. Unlike Joseph Yoakum's drawings, the women's quilted landscapes are literal acts of finding. Their discoveries of used fabric are transformed into narratives of the women's lives as they grow in their community of remote Alabama.

Joseph Yoakum was a prolific artist, creating thousands of drawings, and is best recognised today for his imaginary landscapes that he recalled from dreams. Yoakum's past and family lineage is difficult to discern, but his landscapes are well-documented as manufactured

settings in which Yoakum found mental and emotional solace. Like the Gee's Quilters, Yoakum lacked formal artistic training, and embraced his self-taught identity when formulating such found landscapes. For him, the act of drawing was spiritual in nature, and he allowed this to guide him in his adventures.

This paper will examine how Joseph Yoakum and the Gee's Bend Collective each employed different methods and imagery to discover their found landscapes.

Contested Landscape, Everyday Art and Cultural Politics in Post-War British Prints

Michael Clegg (University of Birmingham)

This paper explores how the cultural politics of landscape and of printmaking came together in images created in Britain in the immediate post-war years. It argues that prints, oriented to a popular audience and everyday settings, provided a space in which entrenched meanings of countryside and cityscape could be rethought and reimagined.

In 1951, Lynton Lamb produced a pair of images, one for each of two print schemes aiming to bring art into the everyday lives and spaces of 'ordinary Britons'. One, made for the 1951 (Festival of Britain) Lithographs, treated the traditional subject of a country house set amongst parkland; this was at a time when the iconography of the country house had been appropriated by conservative critics of the 1945 Labour government. The other, published by J Lyons & Co in a cheap edition and used to decorate their teashops, shows a town hall set within an urban streetscape. Its version of the human-formed landscape and of cultural heritage – connoting the quotidian, the municipal and the democratic – is the apparent antithesis of the country house.

The paper considers Lamb's work within the wider context of post-war prints. The images examined show how a simple alignment between countryside, tradition and political reaction, on the one hand, and town, modernity and social democracy, on the other, is inadequate to understand the mood, ideas and visual practice of a moment when democratic aspiration and high-cultural reaction contested notions of both art and landscape.

Landscapes of Mourning: Famine burial sites and topographies of wilderness

Niamh Ann Kelly (Dublin School of Creative Arts, Dublin Institute of Technology)

Across Ireland, burial sites associated with the mid-19th-century British/Irish Famine are variously constituted as destinations for melancholic memorialisation. These sites are enacted within wider commemorative visual culture through local functions, both ceremonial and quotidian, and touristic paradigms. Visiting Famine burial sites as a memorial act is inter-defined by temporal and spatial experiences and is connectively individually felt and collectively declarative. As it is estimated that 1.1 million people died from starvation-related conditions between 1845 and 1855, it is unsurprising that a significant change then took place in burial customs and rituals of mourning. Culturally and socially complex pre-Famine wake traditions gave way to hasty burials at a range of places, including inside and outside demarcated cemeteries, and at mass grave sites located near workhouses. Many of these graves transect everyday significations of landscape, both agrarian and urban, while others remain as unanticipated signs yet unmarked at location. The sustained demographic devastation created by this grievous history might appear underwhelmed by the bleak beauty of some rural Famine burial sites. However, experiences of wilderness are evocatively configured in senses of emptiness underpinned by the presence of the visitor

and landscaping which facilitate memorialisation. This paper considers the extent to which these tropes of wilderness as they pertain to artistic and touristic pictorial legacies are drawn upon, affectively, at some lesser heralded Famine-era burial sites. As such, topographies of wilderness here indicate a representation of the others of history that spans art, documentary photography and visiting these melancholic places.

What is an Everyday Landscape? The railway scene as a case study

Ed Lilley (University of Bristol)

JMW Turner's *Rain, Steam and Speed*, one of the earliest examples of a railway landscape in oils, is emphatically not an everyday scene. When first shown at the Royal Academy in 1844, WM Thackeray opined that it 'out-prodiged all former prodigies'. It is arguably less concerned with the passage of a train over the Maidenhead viaduct than with the enduring subject of humanity versus the elements. This expansive theme was not to be continued, however, in later British art, where depictions of the new form of transport largely shifted from landscape to genre. The situation was different for French art, where railway landscape became an important sub-genre for the Impressionists, but where the material was treated with striking banality. It is difficult to imagine a motif more resolutely mundane, for example, than Pissarro's *Near Sydenham Hill*. I want particularly to consider the anomalous position of a little-known British artist, Thomas Harker (1842–1926), who produced scenes of trains forging through floods under dramatically lit skies, and images of wrecks with locomotives and carriages strewn across the countryside. The themes sound apocalyptic enough for Turner but I suggest that Harker's position as a professional railwayman and an amateur artist gave him a particular perspective. As a train guard, he witnessed the scenes that he depicted on a more than once-in-a-lifetime basis, and they were thus, for him, more on the side of the quotidian than the extraordinary. The definition of the everyday must depend on one's perspective.

From Believable to Memorable: Landscape of the Israeli kibbutz as represented in film and television

Inbal Ben-Asher-Gitler (Sapir Academic College / Ben-Gurion University of the Negev, Israel)

Amir Har-Gil (Netanya Academic College / Haifa University, Israel)

The kibbutz, an innovative Zionist-Jewish settlement type based on communism, is renowned for its distinctive layout, conceived as a landscape embodying community, nature and collective production. Being a central aspect of Israeli culture, the kibbutz is a recurring theme in fictional realistic drama in film and television. On-site cinematography of kibbutz landscapes is dominant in such productions, forging meaning for viewers of films whose plots take place on a kibbutz.

In this paper, we investigate six productions filmed on location in Kibbutz Yakum. Kibbutz Yakum's landscape is compared with its filmic imaging in order to explore the representation of kibbutz settlements ('kibbutzim') and the role of their everyday landscape in cinema. These include landscapes of labour and production – crop fields, cowsheds and workshops – as well as the designed landscapes of community: neighbourhoods and public spaces of collective life.

Using Michel de Certeau's concepts of 'believable' and 'memorable' spatial practices, we demonstrate that the landscapes of the everyday in kibbutzim are mediated by a cinematography that immortalises the settlements' communal 'classical' image, while concealing the dramatic changes that these landscapes have undergone: changes resulting

from privatisation and suburbanisation, as well as new production processes, all of which have transformed the kibbutzim. Consequently, the actual contemporary landscape of Kibbutz Yakum is manipulated, and an imaginary filmic space representing fictional kibbutzim is created. It is a believable filmscape that memorialises everyday landscapes long gone: historic spaces that represented labour, asceticism and communality – milestones of a new society that over time has irrevocably changed.

Cutting the 'Contact Zone': Boundaries, bodies and temporality in late-18th-century maps of the Danish West Indies

Helene Engnes Birkeli (University College London)

This paper explores visualisations of landscape in the late-18th-century Danish West Indies, primarily focusing on cartography. Its main object of study is Peter Lotharius Oxholm's cadastral and topographical map of St Croix from 1799, which functioned as an important visual administrative tool for the Danish colonisation efforts in the Caribbean. Reading the map, its cartouche and Oxholm's writing on sugar production 'against the grain' arguably reveals an anxiety about the economic and social instability of slave society. 'Cutting' is repeatedly evoked in this material, epitomising the violence of the plantation system, imperial landscaping, and the potential for the enslaved to resist their conditions. 'Cutting', the paper argues, invokes multiple modes of action as sites of cultural encounter: the cultivation and harvesting of sugar, imperial landscaping (seen particularly in the map's road system), surveying of land for cartographic representation, and the technique of engraving itself. The limits of the 'map body' is saturated by colour, suggesting, I argue, that it is a living organism vulnerable to damage. The paper further explores the medium of print as a vehicle for notions of blackness and race, arguably engendering a threat to the overall ordering of the landscape. The presence of enslaved labourers in the map's cartouche suggests this is a body in time, in which its actors display a potential to transform both landscape and history. Exploring this material alongside the visual culture of slavery from the wider region, this paper complicates our understanding of the Caribbean colonial landscape imaginary.