

CALL FOR PAPERS

NORTHERN LIGHT: CRITICAL APPROACHES TO PROXIMITY AND DISTANCE IN NORTHERN LANDSCAPE PHOTOGRAPHY

Sheffield Hallam University, 2-3 July 2018

To coincide with the publication of our book, *Northern Light: Landscape, Photography, and Evocations of the North* (Chris Goldie & Darcy White (eds.) Transcript Verlag, April 2018) Sheffield Hallam University will hold a second conference around critical issues arising from the photographic representation of the northern landscape. The conference will be accompanied by an exhibition and we envisage both events as an opportunity for creative dialogue between theorists and practitioners. Selected papers from the conference will be considered for inclusion in a publication. A wide range of topics are welcomed for discussion at the conference, and we invite papers from any artist, critical writer, academic or theorist working within this field, whilst proposals can be made as contributions to one of the following potential strands:

- Contemporary photography and the northern Landscape: representation and appropriation
- Climate change and the politics of northern landscape photography
- Northern landscape photography and contemporary consumerism
- The northern landscape and neoliberalism
- Northern landscapes as spaces of liminality
- Documentary landscape photography
- Discourses on the north in landscape photography
- Historical approaches to the northern landscape
- Landscape photography, landscape painting and the northern pictorial tradition
- The scopic regime(s) of landscape photography
- The northern landscape within global media

We emphasise that we are very open to other themes and approaches and particularly welcome any contributions from artists or theorists whose work is centred within a particular geographical location, such as northern Britain, northern Europe, the Nordic countries, Canada, Alaska, Siberia, and Russia. We also invite papers with a topographical theme, such as mountains, forest, wilderness, and ice. Finally, whilst the primary focus is photography and photography as an expanded practice, we also encourage contributions from artists and critics working within other media – cinema, animation, video, painting, drawing, performance – as well as from other disciplines: literary

studies, cultural studies, philosophy, history, cultural geography, anthropology, sociology, and tourism.

We invite submission of a proposal for a 20 minute paper, to be accompanied by a 500 word abstract. Deadline for submission is 16th April 2018. Send to Chris Goldie (c.t.goldie@shu.ac.uk)

There will be a separate call for contributions to the photographic exhibition shortly.

For further details about the conference please go to the website - <https://northernlight2016.wordpress.com/>

DARCY WHITE & CHRIS GOLDIE - CONFERENCE CONVENERS

The rationale of the conference

The aim of the conference is to explore the many ways in which contemporary photography represents, interprets, experiences and appropriates the northern landscape. We understand these different approaches in terms of alternative scopic regimes, ranging from the challenge to Cartesian perspectivalism, to critical methodologies questioning the role of landscape in consumerism, globalisation and environmental degradation. Since Descartes the notion of a mind body dualism has occupied and divided thinkers. Such a dualism has continued to concern those who seek to understand our relationship to landscape as a genre of the visual arts – a genre that perhaps more than ever has a firm place in contemporary visual culture, in the so-called high arts, in popular culture and in the world of commerce. Such dualisms artificially divide our understandings of the relationships between culture and nature; between mind and body; even between work and leisure. Many artists and commentators continue to explore such dualisms, particularly those who are keen to challenge the separation of the visual from the other senses and the promotion of a detached, distanced point of view, who insist instead that sight should be intertwined with other senses in order to produce a direct and fully embodied experience of place and space.

The challenge to the scopic regime of Cartesian perspectivalism has been pronounced within the practice of landscape photography. The direct experience of landscape resonates fully with the inherently indexical character of photography, for where painters can imagine and paint the world from their studio, the photographer has to be in the world in order to photograph it. Landscape photographer Dan

Holdsworth (who has recently been engaged in making work in the Alps, in Iceland and in North America) has spoken about this:

“when you are a photographer you have to be in the world” and “photographers come under a lot of criticism in some ways, strangely, for that ... ”painters in their studios work away very studiously ... and it's a very cerebral exercise ... but I always find photography interesting because you actually have to put yourself into the world ... its no less cerebral for that but you do have to go there and confront it”.

Photographers confront the world and we, as viewers, confront their representations of it. This raises the question: what is it that landscape photography does for us, as photographers and as viewers? What interests, satisfactions or pleasures arise through an engagement with landscape? What personal or social functions are fulfilled through landscape? Can landscape be understood as a site of resistance to the culture of capitalist modernity? Alternatively, given the burgeoning presence of landscape in commercialised leisure and tourism, and its centrality to the process of globalisation, is it now necessary to interrogate the co-option of landscape? We wonder if these two distinct aspects of landscape: as site of human presence, activity and experience, or as a way of appropriating the world in the era of neoliberalism, require different critical modes of engagement, the former based within phenomenology and the rejection of a narrowly visual approach, the latter necessarily embracing a more distanced form of critique. Because of its history as well as its significance in contemporary practice, the northern landscape remains important to these questions.