

Dr Craig Martin, University for the Creative Arts

The Force of Elemental Imperatives

Monday February 11th, 4pm Halford Mackinder Lecture Theatre, School of Geography and the Environment, Oxford



John Ruskin, 'Study of Clouds in Turner's 'Campo Santo, Venice'' (1859-60)

This presentation addresses ongoing debates on the nature of matter and materiality, including recent assertions regarding the potential allegiances between social and physical thought. It also engages with the anti-correlationist agendas of Speculative Realism, where the agency of matter is not reliant on human-centred verification. In particular, Alphonso Lingis' work on the directives of natural agents such as sun, wind, fog, ice, or rain is used to consider the role of elemental force in determining the atmospherics of place. Such arguments will be located within the geographic traditions of environmental perception, more specifically with how things summon our gaze, or our touch. Finally, the methodological concerns of how to access the lively forces of the elemental will be dealt with, including the continued speculative potential of the material imaginary.

Dr Bradley L. Garrett, School of Geography and the Environment, University of Oxford

Secrets of the Hidden City

Monday February 18th, 4pm Halford Mackinder Lecture Theatre, School of Geography and the Environment, Oxford



In this talk, I will work through four years of ethnographic immersion with urban explorers in London in three distinct urban strata. First, I will work at street level through current interests in ruins and derelict space to discuss desires to tap into alternative urban heritage and histories. We will then move into subterranea to examine what I call “the meld”, architectural encounters that entangle the body of the explorer with the organs of the city. Finally, we will take to urban rooftops and construction cranes to discuss “edgework”, urban verticality and the politics of closed space. In each city layer, I will speak broadly about urban explorer photography (including my own) to unpack the ways in which that imagery does more than represent moments in time, foregrounding connections across affective registers and experiences that shape collective identities and practices in the contemporary city.

Dr John Wylie, University of Exeter, and Catrin Webster, Leverhulme Artist in Residence, University of Exeter

Eye-opener: plein air geographies of colour, light and shadow

Monday 4th March, 4pm H O Beckett Room, School of Geography and the Environment, Oxford



What can the practice of en plein air painting and drawing bring to our understandings of spatiality and visuality, landscape and materiality? This presentation will reflect upon a year-long visual arts-based collaboration between myself and a fine artist (Catrin Webster). Our collaboration has involved a primary learning process (for me), ongoing professional practice (for Catrin), and extended conceptual conversation. The presentation will focus upon the skills and habits of visual and spatial apprehension which the incorporation of painterly practice affords. We will also discuss the specific materialities of different painterly mediums and processes - for instance, the surface matter of the canvas, the sheen/smudge of charcoal, the wash/dry of watercolours. More widely, addressing the practice of painting at the intersection of cultural geography, spatial theory and fine art enables critical reflection on a number of perennial conceptual issues for both geographers and visual artists. These include the character and formatting of landscapes and objects in visual perception, concomitant wider questions of proximity, distance and relation, and finally the overarching issue of spatial representation or 'semblance' in visual art (Massumi, 2011). The presentation will be illustrated throughout by paintings and drawings from the collaboration.