

Visualising the Environment

– Environmental Photography Workshop

Monday 9 July – Wednesday 11 July 2018

Location: Studienhaus Schönwag

Presenter: Alison Pouliot

Workshop Program

Day 1 Monday 9 July 2018

15:00 Introduction to environmental photography.

Discussion of participants' environmental photography interests and projects, issues and challenges, and desired outcomes from the workshop.

Illustrated and interactive seminar covering:

Purpose of the image – 'informational' and 'inspirational' images – pinpointing whether an image aims to impart information or to elicit emotional responses. From here we will explore the tensions and intersections between aesthetics, ecology and environmental photography.

Developing visual concepts – Environmental issues are often complex and abstract and the photographer needs to have a developed notion of the subject, the 'message' and the potential audience. Some environmental subjects are more suitable to visual representation than others. Knowing what to photograph (and what not to photograph and describe in words instead) requires an intimate understanding of the subject, the principles of photography, and the dynamic between images and text.

16:30 Coffee break

16:45 Seminar and discussion continued with suggested themes:

The role of photography in communicating environmental history – A photo is never a neutral representation of reality. In what ways is it influenced by the interplay of politics and power and different practices of representation?

Literal and allegorical images – Conveying visual metaphors and the importance of cultural context. How can we develop visual concepts using literal and allegorical images, to express ideas as powerfully or more powerfully than words? We'll also examine the 'invisible space' between text and image.

From conservation to commodification – Photography has been used since the mid nineteenth century to document the natural environment, especially in conservation contexts. Mass reproduction has seen many images become iconographic, for example, those taken by the American photographers Ansel Adams, Eliot Porter and Galen Rowel. The majority of people will never visit the places captured in their images. How have such images shaped our collective mental envisioning of those places? How have they influenced our contemporary visual and geographical preferences regarding nature as a whole? Is the commodification, idealisation and even the destruction of nature being perpetuated by photography?

18:00 Close

Day 2 Tuesday 10 July 2018

9:00 Critique Session – Working in cross-disciplinary groups, we will critique a series of hardcopy images in the light of yesterday's conversations. What makes some images convincing and compelling and others banal? What are the most important compositional elements that determine the power, impact and authenticity of an image?

What is the role of photography in the production of meaning? How can images be used to bridge the different interpretations of environmental concepts across disciplines? How can images help calibrate issues that occur on different temporal and spatial scales?

How have environmental images defined and popularised abstract scientific concepts such as global warming, biodiversity or acid rain?

How has the popularisation and visualisation of the environment, especially the notion of biodiversity, influenced public knowledge and engagement in environmental issues?

11:00 Coffee break

11:15 Developing photographic skills and visual stories. An illustrated overview and demonstration of key photographic considerations and a few handy tips and tricks.

12:30 Lunch

13:30 Field Trip – The field trip will focus on developing observational skills and critical awareness, identifying suitable subjects and being able to anticipate photo opportunities in both space and time. We will collectively determine a couple of pertinent themes and participants will be encouraged to provide two images for tomorrow's critique session.

15:30 Image selection for critique session. Participants will review their images on their laptops and be assisted with image selection.

17:00 Close

Day 3 Wednesday 11 July 2018

9:00 Critique Session – Through a guided and constructive critique session we will view and discuss participants' images (this can be anonymous) and whether they were able to achieve what they intended, and if not, how we can help them achieve their aims.

11:30 Close