Landscape, Place and Identity:
a multi-disciplinary symposium

School of Art, Stroud College
9.00-17.30, 10 October 2009

The ‘landscape genre’ – in the visual arts, performance and writing – is enjoying a renaissance as it reinvents and extends itself conceptually into enquiries around space, place, and individual and collective notions of identity. It is developing ever-more complex, cross-disciplinary methodologies, in the wider and urgent context of the sustainability of our planet and our relationship to it.

The School of Art is hosting a one-day symposium to examine the idea, nature and significance of ‘landscape’, by exploring some of the exciting and emerging contours, layers and boundaries of the field. The symposium brings together leading local and external practitioners actively engaged in understanding and interpreting ‘landscape’ from across a wide range of disciplines - from artists, writers and curators to practitioners in geography, geology, and archaeology.

In order to explore the relevance and importance of the concept and actuality of landscape today, the day will unpick their distinctive theoretical approaches and current work, through a series of presentations and conversations. It will also look at current debates preoccupying research networks focused on landscape and place, and explore the prospects and conditions for future projects and collaborations.

Participants will have opportunities to engage in debate with presenters through the day and to view a selection of their current work at the opening of an exhibition at the School of Art to coincide with the symposium. The symposium, exhibition and programme of related practical workshops (Sunday 11 October) are the result of a collaboration between PhotoStroud, Walking the Land, Stroud Valleys Artspace and Stroud College, and build on new creative initiatives in the Stroud Valleys and beyond.

Themes will include:
• How can and do the arts engage with and challenge established concepts of ‘landscape’?
• Has landscape become an idealised concept/conceit or is there a place for a critically aware and necessarily politicised Romanticism? And, if so, how might this manifest in practice?
• What of the physicality/materiality of landscape; how is this relevant to our understanding of landscape and to expressing a concern for the sustainability of the planet we all share?
• Can an attachment to place and an awareness of nature, aesthetics and societal belief systems be drivers for discussing issues about changing landscapes on a local and global scale?
• How can critical analyses and theoretical ‘tools’ help our understanding of evolving cosmopolitan geographies and the power relations they reflect?
• How might the various disciplines inform each other in broadening the scope and range of engagement in contemporary debates concerning landscape?
• Can art be a useful catalyst and prompt to action?

The symposium and associated programme of activities will be of interest to students, academics, artists, photographers, curators, writers, landscape researchers, geographers, planners – indeed, and anyone concerned with the landscape and our place in it.

Speakers/Chairs:
Jem Southam (Professor of Photography at the University of Plymouth whose photographic images have been exhibited widely and texts published extensively)
Andrew Langford (Research Leader in Fine Art and Design at the University of Northampton. His image making involves a wide range of photographic and digital technologies/conceptual approaches to collage and to document)
Carolyn Black (Projects Director for the Forest of Dean Sculpture Trust. Carolyn is currently pursuing a PhD relating to curatorial decision-making and its impact on the visitor experience)
James Dixon (Archaeologist who over the past three years has been examining links between public art and contemporary archaeology. James is currently completing his doctoral studies at UWE Bristol)
Owain Jones (Research Fellow with the Countryside & Community Research Institute. Owain is interested in developing approaches to landscape that focus on memory, emotion, affect and performativity)
Hellen O’Connor (Geologist attached to Gloucestershire Geology Trust and to the Museum in the Park, Stroud)
Bronwyn Platten (Artist and curator who has exhibited internationally and is currently undertaking a PhD at the University of Salford)
Colin Glen (Artist and writer based at SVA, Stroud. Colin is currently reading for a research degree at the University of Bristol)
Suze Adams (Multi-disciplinary artist who is part of the PLaCe doctoral research team at UWE, Bristol. Associate member of Land2 who exhibits regularly throughout the UK and Europe)
Anna Saunders (Cheltenham based poet who works as a freelance writer. She is currently studying for an MA in Creative and Critical Writing, and has recently been published in Poetry International)
Louisa Fairclough (Artist based at SVA, Stroud. Louisa’s recent work involves creative exploration and interpretation of the landscape around the River Severn)
Justin Gregory (Head of School of Art, Stroud College)
Philip Rush (English teacher and writer. His poems have appeared in reputable and disreputable magazines, both here and in the United States, and he is represented in the Carcanet anthology, New Poeties IV)
Simon Ryder (Co-founder of artNucleus, a collaborative agency set up to produce site-sensitive artworks for challenging locations. Over the past decade he has completed a wide range of residencies and commissions)
Dominic Thomas (Lives and works in Stroud. His practice spans installation, performance, web-based and site specific works, collaborations and curatorial projects)
Fran Wilson-Copp (art historian and lecturer at Stroud College)

Symposium Organisers:
Suze Adams, Justin Gregory, Richard Keating, Kel Portman, Carlos Ordonez

Cost and payment details:
£25 (£15 student concession). Cheques should be made out to ‘PhotoStroud’ and payment sent in advance to:
PhotoStroud,
Homeward,
Oxlynch Lane,
Standish,
Gloucestershire GL10 3DE

Lunch and refreshments are not included – the College canteen will be open throughout the day.

Further information and bookings:
info@photostroud.co.uk or 01453 824212
www.walkingtheland.org.uk
www.photostroud.co.uk
www.stroud.ac.uk

Associated Landscape events:

11 October 10.00am-5.30pm
Museum-in-the-Park and
Stroud Valleys Artspace
A day of innovative hands-on workshops by
local artists, engaging with the landscape genre.
Free - £3/ - places limited

12-23 October 9.30am-5.30pm
(Monday-Friday)
Stroud College
An accompanying exhibition featuring new work
by artists, writers, researchers and curators.
Free - details on 01453 763424