

Panel 19

IVSA Conference 2009

Appreciating the views: How we're looking at the social and visual landscape

Panel Title	
Ways of seeing (1) : mediating the visual dimensions of place	
Description	
<p>Animal Studies is an emerging field of visual culture that can be seen as the latest in the series of 'other histories' that have come to prominence during post-modernity.</p> <p>In <i>The History of Animals</i> Erica Fudge argued that 'animals may not have a sense of self-in-the-world that is easily accessible to or recognizable by us, but they can certainly have an impact on the ways in which humans live, think, and represent in that world.' Fudge also cites Anderson who suggested in <i>Agents of Empire</i> that 'the history of North America was shaped as much by animals as by humans (and) it is the human history that becomes, as she notes, a contingent one. If animals can shape the landscape, of the New World as well as of the past itself, then human control over that landscape is limited and subject to animal actions.</p> <p>Today most people are directly exposed to a only a small number of species, yet encounter all manner of animal representations that saturate our culture through advertising strategies, cartoons, museum displays, wildlife documentaries etc. This panel welcomes papers that consider or explore any aspect of this discourse, and/or the environments where they are created, received, or consumed.</p>	
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Final Selected Papers

Name:	Ruth Oren, University of Haifa
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Paper Title	Research and curatorial interpretation: national identity and local landscape photography in Palestine /Israel 1945-1963, the Open Museum of Photography, Tel-Hai, 2006-2007
Description	<p>This paper aims to discuss the content and concept of the exhibition <i>Spatial Borders and Local Borders: A photographic Discourse on Israeli Landscapes</i>" at the Open Museum of Photography, Tel-Hai , 2006-2007. The exhibition, conceived of about 100 historical photographs, and about 20 contemporaneous ones, was the result of a fertile dialogue between a study on the culture and history of photography in Palestine /Israel during 1945-1963 (Ruth Oren) and a curatorial examination of artistic nuances and visual statements on the basis of photographic language and its characteristics (Naama Haikin).ⁱ</p> <p>The exhibition focused on a specific issue in Oren's study: the dualism of the Jewish-Zionist discourse on Palestine/ Eretz Israel and the latter's quality, size, and borders as reflected in the landscape photographs of that period. Two parallel axes cross the exhibition: along the first looms a large mythical country immune to the blight of time and lacking territorial borders; the other showed an actual (empty and hard) country circumscribed by borders and changing in the spirit of modernism. This dichotomy existed also in the Palestine/Israeli reality, and its various images complemented and supported each other.</p> <p>Despite methodological difficulties to temporally circumscribe an apparently continuous period, we have strictly observed the 1945-1963 time span in order to anchor the exhibition within a distinct historical context, as we did not wish to venture into a period that has yet to be properly studied. The study examined Palestine/Eretz Israel's mental landscape and the country's images during its first five years, the period of a state-in-the-making (1945-1949), and throughout the 13 years of "its coming of age" (1950-1963). While the photography of this period did draw on earlier orientations, it marks the beginning of an era that seems to have lasted until artistic photography emerged as an independent branch in contemporary photography.</p> <p>The study addressed cultural, historical, systemic, and thematic issues discerned in the landscape photography published at that time in the popular media – press, magazines, calendars, albums, and brochures – and focused on spatial landscape categories from a geographical-cultural angle: representations of natural vs. cultural (built) landscapes, the human impact on the landscape, how relations with the "other" affected the landscape, specific representations of various regions that created conceptual centers and peripheries. The methodology was both interpretive and statistical.ⁱⁱ</p> <p>The study's central theses were examined also through the photographic features of original bodies of work found in public and private archives: the photographers' position in relation to space, the elements chosen for the frame, aesthetic constructions and visual-thematic links within groups of photographs. The visual interpretation of three distinct categories – natural landscape, built landscape, and the country's borders – points to a spatial dualism between two landscapes: one vast, ancient, empty, inviting, seductive, mythological, and the other small, new, concrete, hard, perhaps even threatening.</p> <p>By its very nature a thematic exhibition highlights those aspects in the works that match its theme. This exhibition stressed a common iconography that reveals a monolithic Weltanschauung despite the personal style of some photographers. As most photographers in the exhibition have neither been studied, nor have they had a one-person show, the specific features of their work have yet to be explored, hence their individual work could not be probed in this exhibition.ⁱⁱⁱ</p> <p>This study offered not only insights but also access to thus far unknown material as a reference point</p>

for a discussion on contemporary artists, even though their work does not directly react to historical photography in Palestine/ Eretz Israel but is informed by the international theoretical discourse on photography. Since many past photographers visually expressed cultural concepts that contemporary photographers examine critically, their joint display expands both the past and the present photographic discourse on the Jewish Israeli landscape and its meaning.

Despite its scholarly underpinnings, which set it in a distinct historical and thematic context, the exhibition was conceptually independent, as it offered another arrangement of the study's findings and highlighted different issues. It addressed also several topics not included in the study, as they were mostly ignored by publications of that time, such as signs, viewers of landscapes, and the photographs of several photographers who hardly published but did work for the funds and institutions or sold their photographs. The exhibition's visual inventory differed, then, from the study's and at times even contested it.

Landscape photography as cultural construction

Starting in the 1970s, philosophical-theoretical works have underpinned many studies in various disciplines that have examined the formation of images in the world. A spate of studies in anthropology, cultural geography, linguistics, communications, literature, art, architecture, film, and photography rest on the assumption that the human being is a symbol-producing creature. Various human and social phenomena are studied through the symbols of cultural, private, or national systems. These endeavors have generated a theoretical tenor that addresses the structuring of nationality, itself a type of cultural structuring. The concept of "national identity" is perceived as a cultural product of symbolic discourse; the nation is a symbolic entity whose cultural cohesiveness is rooted in a certain myth.^{iv} The relationship between national and territorial identity generated the need to cultivate a spatial identity and to invent a culture around place and landscape using various means, among them metaphysical concepts. Territorial definition is moored in myth: a historical land, the land of the fathers, the nation's cradle, homeland, the place of memory of our sages and saints, of our heroes' lives. This is the difference between "space" and "place" / "land" in the Judeo-Christian tradition.

In its various contexts – communications, documentary, press, or artistic – landscape photography to a large extent also views the conception of the human being as a symbolic creature and it may spawn spatial images of the collective identity of those who share a common space. As a genre or specialization within the medium, landscape photography is understood via cultural interpretations. Produced and consumed in various contexts, landscape photographs belong to a discourse that cultivates territorial, national, economic, ecological, and other concepts. Besides the direct gaze at the landscape and one's physical presence in it, there are philosophical or religious texts, literature, music, film, visual arts, popular poetry, graphics, stamps, coins, and many other symbolic products, such as photographs, of course, which select and highlight details in the landscape, endowing them with particular meaning. These photographs create subjective geographical concepts about interpretable places and features of identity or place.^v

As a category, landscape photography is anchored in both documentary photography and the visual genre tradition of Western culture. It reflects pre-photographic pictorial tendencies of illusionist space representation, but also non-genre aspects – ideological, propaganda, political-cultural – of human-landscape relations.^{vi}

Genre-based photography criticism assumes that the photographer follows established formal conventions and that the viewers decipher them according to their expectations of specific forms and content. The visual conventions of landscape photography list, inter alia, the items and topographical structures worthy of inclusion and the proportion between them, with emphasis on the proportion between the human figure and the environment.^{vii} Eretz-Israeli photographers of the period under discussion keenly aware of the universal aesthetic theory of photography, which stressed: choosing a point of view that would represent the landscape within a three-dimensional perspective, use of height differences, creating a frame through the objects in the picture's foreground and, thus,

offering a familiar proportion and a sense of depth, using lighting to underscore dramatic elements, creating compositional balance or tension, choosing between a panoramic view of space and a typical detail in it, creating a central focus of interest.

The historical and cultural context: fostering the country's national identity

The cultural model of Jewish landscape photography in Palestine from the early 20th century until the establishment of the State of Israel has shown that photography was dependent on the national funds and played a role in the Zionist propaganda mechanism and the institutional system behind it. Already in the early 1920s Jewish photography in Palestine was a rather closed system that consisted mainly of the photography departments of the national funds, a growing number of photographers, and consumers who commissioned photographs for various purposes and were able to define their aims within a cultural context. These photographs were produced within the boundaries of political-ideological institutions and organizations that participated in the Eretz-Israeli and official propaganda activities. Interested in producing photographs, the institutions were crucial in shaping the common images of the place. The system that produced visual images included various interrelated bodies that commissioned and funded photographs, making sure they were widely distributed and presented in various contexts. The widely ranging historiography indicates that during the period Jewish settlement in the country was a dynamically and economically growing enterprise, with an emerging social, cultural, national, and, obviously, territorial identity in terms of separation from the other (the Arabs, the British, state borders). These processes were reflected in photographs published in weeklies and in photograph albums issued by the national funds and the Jewish Agency, by government bodies, or private commercial publishers associated with institutional bodies. Accompanied by tendentious texts, these photographs built state-territorial consciousness and belonged to the discourse that cultivated a Jewish-Israeli identity, but they were also an aesthetic expression in the best tradition of international photography.

Various studies in Israeli culture (the visual arts, music, film, architecture, product design, memorial culture, etc.), which examine the space and collective I of the Israeli nation, have pointed out practices that foster the country's Jewish identity and reinforce the bond between the individual and the land. As a cultural practice, landscape photographs not only offered aesthetic pleasure but played a central role in the formation and reflection of national Jewish-Israeli identity from the early 20th century up to at least the mid-1960s. The country's large organizations abided by the hegemonic Zionist ideology and dominant national political interests, which promoted the country's Jewish character and modernity. They worked each on its own, for the same cause, sharing similar ideological assumptions, and together wove a system of mutually nourishing components that produced culture and consciousness, i.e., "homeland culture" activities that fostered the national identity. Among the promoters of renascent nationhood was the system of photograph production, with the photographers at the center, who harnessed themselves for decades to the building of national identity. Landscape photography fitted well into textbooks as a structured geographical concept, and mainly into middle and high popular culture, which the Zionist establishment produced in order to construct a national Eretz-Israeli territorial identity. Professionally, these photographs, as any others, addressed aesthetic issues. But the content, whether spiritual or ideological, chimed in with space and a specific place. The photographs of virgin landscape and of the human being in the process of possessing and changing it belonged to the utopian cultural space. Landscape photography was meant to reinforce the affinity with the place, to stress its physicality as part of the normalcy option and of the potential inherent in the utopian dream. The landscape photographs produced by the national funds throughout all the periods constituted a "photographic lexicon," a visual heritage whose images served as an iconographic coefficient of the place and the utopian space. Through recurrent representation, the landscape images and their items – the mountain, the sea, water sources, the land, the tree, the path, the house, the city, the village, the field, the factory, the water pipe – became objects of identification with the place and part of the discourse on the new national identity.

Besides representations of a spatial center and periphery, one can discern a paradoxical dualism in the country's images and in the national identity. There were textual and visual images common in Zionist and Israeli propaganda – a small country facing big and hostile "others," which interfered and

made it difficult for the Jewish State to achieve its national goals and fit again into territorial space; or, the nation was presented as a victim or hard-working hero in need of contributions and investment by world Jewry. But there were also visual representations of a large ancient country with the core of a new cultural landscape, modern, dynamic, urban and rural, a place that deserved the West's moral support and sympathy. The landscape sights reflected harmony and modernist progress. Modernism in photography and design converged with modern concepts of state and nation. They helped foster Israeli statehood and its images as part of both modernism and the biblical country: space development, settlement and building, industrialization, urbanization and agricultural settlement, making the wilderness bloom, offering a tourist space, peace and personal security, defensible borders – all these along with the splendor of the desert, mountains, and sea, fixed ancient identities with a transcendental meaning promised to the Jewish people, which is umbilically connected to the place. Thus, idealization of the space (which was part of the processes that shaped the country politically, socially, and economically) turned it into a "place," a national and state territory.

A detailed examination of the photographs, with focus on design elements from a genre and formal point of view, reveals a salient aesthetic meaning. They move with their composition, their prominent formal elements, the rhythms of black-and-white tones, the light, the textural relationships. These representations of the country's landscapes can thus be perceived as an aesthetization of space, artistic expressions akin to photographs of other places during other periods. But within the context of the Zionist myths, they stress the concept of the large country and the ideology of redemption and productivity.

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Paper Title

Reconfiguring ruin: creative interpretations of landscape and the environment

“Potential objects of the tourist gaze must be different in some way or other. They must be out of the ordinary. People must experience particularly distinct pleasures which involve different senses or are on a different scale from those typically encountered in everyday life” – Urry

Ancient urban remains of past civilizations frame the landscape of analysis. Conscious to preserve repositories of culture we overlook their potential as portals into the unconscious. In 1839 the debris of the temple at Baalbeck in Lebanon’s Beqaa Valley inspired David Roberts, to paint conquest. My recent oil painting of the same site transforms the Great Court into a vision of heightened experience an imagined visual remembrance intended to evoke reverie on crisis and collapse. The paintings silent melancholy meditation on, the “irresistible process of decay” position these unconscious encounters with previous traditional conventions and structures of landscape painting as “ruinous” images that threaten the viewer to a concentration on ‘fear, desire,’ and longing.

Unconscious destinations attract artist/travelers as reliquaries of a questionable past then seen as sublime and awaken the trauma of colonial cultural frames, to reflect the current ruinous collapse of trust in socio-economic models. Painting allows insight into the growth and emergence of new myths. Viewed through the lens of emerging technologies, urban landscape depicting abject surface patina, suggests other unconscious processes. Exposed to erosion, the “ruin” does not describe inherent features of objects or landscape but exposes the conscious nihilism of our age to uncertainty and dream.

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Paper Title	
Earthrise: how man first saw the earth	
Description	
	<p>The discipline of animal studies draws on earlier concerns for 'otherness', including post-colonial theory. The public zoological garden was a nineteenth century European product of imperialism and modernity, as were the phenomena of rural population drift and estrangement from Nature. Present day sub-Saharan Africa is now experiencing much that northern hemisphere countries underwent in previous centuries and the zoo has become the principal means by which African city dwellers, who are usually too poor to visit game reserves, can experience indigenous animals.</p> <p>The paper investigates a varied series of representations of animals in the Johannesburg Zoo from the past hundred years, which evidence its passage from colonial zoological garden to post-colonial edutainment centre.</p>

Name:	Camille Sutton-Brown, Georgia State University
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Paper Title	
The power of 'seeing'	
Description	<p>Visual methods research is situated within a realm of power; more specifically, a realm of power differential. The person behind the research lens, be it a camera lens, video lens, or naked eye lens, often assumes more, or at least equal, power than the subjects whom the lens captures. Conceptualizing lived visual data according to Emmission and Smith's (2000) description, my paper examines slum tours through a post-colonial framework to explore how power is embedded in various facets of research.</p> <p>The interplay that occurs within the (un)negotiated space of power determines who can 'see', who can be 'seen', and how the 'seeing' is narrated. I conceptualize 'seeing' in this paper in terms of an academic visionary sense, where it refers to being able to see and frame our observations according to academically-sanctioned frameworks. Thus, 'seeing' is the process of interpreting visual data and co-creating its meaning in a way that is considered valid knowledge within the academic discourse.</p>

ⁱ See exhibition catalog "*Spatial Borders and Local Borders: A photographic Discourse on Israeli Landscapes*"—photography exhibition at the Open Museum of Photography, Tel-Hai, 2006. See also Ruth Oren, *System and Themes: Aspects of Jewish Landscape Photography in Eretz Israel, 1945-1963* (Ph.D. diss., Geography and Environmental Studies Department, University of Haifa, (2005) (Hebrew); Also: Ruth Oren. Zionist Photography 1910-1941: Constructing a Landscape. *History of Photography*, **9/3**, (1995): 201-209; Ruth Oren, "Photogeography of Center and Periphery: Israeli Places and Regions as Depicted in Photographs 1945-1963," *Ofakim Begeografia*, **65-66** (2005): 407-424 (Hebrew). See more: Ruth Oren "The Customers Want to See the Buildings and I am Looking for Something Beautiful": Three Utopian Visions of Zionist Landscape Photography in Israel 1898 – 1963". In: Ilana Zinguer & Ruth Amar (Eds.) *Utopie: memoire e imaginaire*. (pp. 235-261) . Essen: Verlag die Blaue Eule. (2008).

ⁱⁱ For a "cultural geography" discipline see commentaries on landscape photographs as a system that produces spatial concepts and images, such as: Stephen Daniels and Denis Cosgrove, "Spectacle and Text: Landscape Metaphors in Cultural Geography," in J. Duncan & D. Ley, eds., *Place/ Culture/ Representation* (London: Routledge, 1993), pp. 57-77; Daniel Cosgrove, "Landscape and the European Sense of Sight-Eyeing Nature," in K. Anderson, M. Domosh, S. Pile & N. Thrift, eds., *Handbook of Cultural Geography* (London: Sage, 2003), pp. 249-269; Derek Gregory, "Geography and the World-as-Exhibition," in Derek Gregory, *Geographical Imaginations* (Cambridge MA: Blackwell, 1994), pp. 15-69.

ⁱⁱⁱ Previous group historical exhibitions considered Zionist iconography. See for example, Batya Doner, *To Live with the Dream* (Tel Aviv: Tel Aviv Museum of Art, 1989) (Hebrew); Nissan Peretz, *Time Frame: A Century of Photography in The Land of Israel* (Jerusalem: The Israel Museum, 2000); Rona Sela, *Photography in Palestine in the 1930s-1940s* (Herzliya Museum of Art and Hakibbutz Hameuchad, 2000) (Hebrew); Vivienne Silver-Brody, *From Mirror to Memory, One Hundred Years of Photography in The Land of Israel 1900-2000* (Haifa: Mane Katz Museum, 2000); Batya Doner "The Transparency of Visible Power," in *Majesty and Splendor: Ceremonies of Israeli Sovereignty, 1948-1958* (Tel Aviv: Eretz Israel Museum, 2001)(Hebrew); Rona Sela, "Conquering the

Mountain: Photographers and the Israel National Fund,” in *Keren Kayemet Umetzalemet, Pictures from the Blue Box*, catalogue of an exhibition held at the Reading A power station, 2003 (Hebrew); Guy Raz, *A Landscape Mold: Notes on Local Landscape Photography* (Haifa: The Art Gallery, Haifa University, 2005)

^{iv}For theories on the structuring of nationhood, see Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities* (London and New York: Verso, 1991), pp. 1-7; Homi K. Bhabha, “Introduction: Narrating the Nation,” in Homi K. Bhabha, ed., *Nation and Narration*, Routledge, London, 1990, pp. 1-7; Mike Featherstone, “Localism, Globalism and Cultural Identity,” in L. M. Alcoff & E. Mendieta, eds., *Identities – Race, Class, Gender and Nationality* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2003), pp. 342-360.

^v See Debora Bright, “Mother Earth and Marlboro Men: An Inquiry into the Cultural Meaning of Landscape Photography,” in R. Bolton, ed., *The Contest of Meaning: Critical Histories of Photography* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1989), pp. 125-143. On British and German national identities in the mid-19th century as reflected in landscape photographs of the period, see Jens Jäger, “Picturing Nations: Landscape Photography and National Identity in Britain and Germany in the Mid-Nineteenth Century,” in J. M. Schwartz & J. R. Ryan, eds., *Picturing Place: Photography and the Geographical Imagination* (Tauris, London and New York) 2003, pp. 117-141. On the function of the Canadian Railroad Company photographs in constructing the perception of the State, managing the corporation, and immigration in the years 1925-1930, see Bryan Osborne, “Interpreting a Nation’s Identity: Artists as Creators of National Consciousness,” in A. Baker & G. Biger, eds., *Ideology and Landscape in Historical Perspective* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), pp. 230-255. On the American Grand Canyon photographs, see David Nye, “Visualizing Eternity: Photographic Constructions of the Grand Canyon,” in J. M. Schwartz & J. R. Ryan, eds., *Picturing Place: Photography and the Geographical Imagination* (London and New York: Tauris, 2003), pp. 74-96.

^{vi} The geographer Meinig suggested categories for the contemplation of landscapes very similar to those proposed by Jussim and Lindquist-Cock, in their *Landscape as Photograph* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1985). who come from the world of photography. See Donald William Meinig, “The Beholding Eye,” in Donald William Meinig, *The Interpretations of Ordinary Landscapes* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979), pp. 33-50.

^{vii} On the photographic view of space, even prior to the invention of the camera, see Henri Schwarz, *Art and Photography: Forerunners and Influences* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1985). See Henri Peach Robinson, *Pictorial Effect in Photography: Being Hints on Composition and Chiaroscuro for Photographers* (New York: Helios & Pawlet, 1971 (first edition 1869, London: Piper & Carter).