

Panel 24

IVSA Conference 2009

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

Panel Title	
Wildernesses and re-wilded landscapes: scopic regimes of 'wildness'	
Description	
<p>For most of human history wilderness was regarded as the opposite of landscape – rather than being a site of cultural identity or accretion, it was terra nullis awaiting conversion into landscape through settlement or colonization. However during the past century and a half wildernesses have become something to be preserved, or protected. Today wildernesses are viewed as threatened rather than threatening environments. No longer are they manifestations of unknown other, but instead have become delicate ecosystems that need close monitoring to detect early signs of deterioration.</p> <p>'Re-wilding' is a phenomenon that has emerged from wilderness appreciation; the term describes a very broad spectrum of land management strategies whereby landscape is returned to some earlier condition with the ostensible intention of recreating, or simulating some semblance of 'wilderness'.</p> <p>Possible subjects:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Re-wilding aesthetics• Representing terra nullis• The post-colonial gaze• Envisioning the deserts of the future• Tourists or travel writers' perceptions of wilderness	
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Final Selected Papers

Name:	Jennifer Swanson, Syracuse University, New York
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Paper Title	
Representations of the global south: 'Wilderness' as a trope in international biodiversity conservation	
Description	
<p>In recent decades, the U.S. conservation movement has 'gone global,' as many conservation organizations focus their missions on maintaining biodiversity, or the sum total of terrestrial and marine species on Earth. Because much of the world's biodiversity is concentrated in the tropics, working globally means that organizations face new political and social terrain. The new global focus also means that international organizations have increasing power to represent the people and places of the Global South.</p> <p>This paper examines how one organization, Conservation International, portrayed the people and places of the Global South in a three part book series highlighting their conservation strategies: "Megadiversity: Earth's Biologically Wealthiest Nations" (1993); "Hotspots: Earth's Biologically Richest and Most Endangered Terrestrial Ecoregions" (1999); and "Wilderness: Earth's Last Wild Places" (2003). All three publications are primarily photographic works, containing many high gloss, full color images. The photographs are crisp, colorful and visually enticing, encouraging the reader to examine the flora, fauna, and people represented. The books also contain text, which conveys scientific information designed to educate the reader about the global extent and distribution of biodiversity and the places most critical for its protection. Content analysis of both text and images in the three books reveals that the depictions of local people changed dramatically throughout the series, shifting from a focus on their potential role as 'conservation partners' to their portrayal as 'threats to landscapes,' and finally to an increasing use of the trope of 'wildness' to describe them.</p> <p>This paper argues that these shifting depictions reflect on going conservation discourse that has not yet reconciled the notion of 'wilderness' with the complex social and political contexts in which biodiversity conservation actually takes place. The paper considers specific motivations for the particular portrayals and comments on the potential effects of these shifting representations.</p>	

Name:	Pat Brereton, Dublin City University
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Paper Title	
Filming nature: into the wild, grizzly man, and into the West	
Description	
<p>Western cultures of travel, tourism and exploration have the general effect of producing the world as scenery, spectacle and landscape (Urry, 1990). In tandem with this process, the act of travelling has increasingly been understood as an act of self-improvement, self-discovery and ultimately self-definition. (Wylie, 2007: 134)</p> <p>Following in the footsteps of Walden and On the Road, Into the Wild (2002) is a counter-cultural eco-road movie which speaks to a new generation that need to experience nature and landscape first-hand and like their predecessors get away from conventional ties of family, tradition and long term employment. Alongside other 'return to nature' stories, including Grizzly Man (2005) and Into the West (1992), all three encapsulate a homage to wild nature and the manifestation of a sublime vision and journey into nature.</p> <p>My readings will focus on the final mise-en-scene from these three films, which can be read as a conservative homage to notions of family rather than escape, while respecting the essentialising pre-eminence of landscape and wild nature. Into the Wild for instance features a powerful scene near the end where the main protagonist just stands still while a visiting bear ignores him, foreshadowing the real life documentary around communing with dangerous wild animals in Grizzly Man.</p> <p>Into the West epitomises the romanticism and mythical glorification of freedom and escape. The mythic white horse can do no wrong; it always knows where to go, carrying the two boys in their quest to find the 'west'. The paper will explore how these films speak to debates around ecology and actively viewing therapeutic nature in their closing sequences, beyond a more conventional sublime engagement. I will explore if such contemporary films have helped to construct new ways of viewing nature and landscape on film as they play out their fraught journeys.</p> <p>APPENDIX</p> <p>Into the Wild was adapted by Jon Krakauer who also wrote the novel and is inspired by the true story of Christopher McCandless (Emile Hirsch) a young man who abandons his life of comfort to pursue the freedom of life on the road, a quest that leads him to the Alaskan wilderness and the ultimate challenge of his life. Alaska also remains the ultimate 'wild natural space' for another American film Grizzly Man, whereas in Ireland, the west is signified as the unspoilt landscape to escape to, evidenced within Into the West and many other Irish storylines.</p> <p>Herzog in classics including Fitzcarraldo (1982) is preoccupied with driven individuals and dreamers who often literally move mountains. The backbone of his new film is made up of a 'found documentary' made up of original footage filmed by Timothy Tradwell, who was an eccentric 'nature lover' who for 13 summers and risked his life living with Grizzly bears in Alaska, until eventually he got killed by one of the bears he sought to protect. The tag line of the story reads: 'in nature there are boundaries.</p> <p>Herzog, who has dramatically foregrounded wild nature in many of his films, suggests in this tale that the key principle of nature is violence, even more so than the survival of fittest, while critiquing the more 'deep ecological' manifestations of harmony with wild nature, as espoused by the main protagonist in the film. This remains in sharp contrast to the more therapeutic and mythic evaluation of nature in the final scenes of a more conventional Irish mythic tale, Into the West.</p> <p>Jim Sheridan who wrote the screenplay for Into the West is most certainly full of mythic excess and consequently the film was heavily criticised for fears of 'collapsing into a kind of historicist nostalgia' through its 'essentially regressive ideologies' (McLoone, 2000: 120). The story concerns the</p>	

journey/pilgrimage of two young Traveller boys to the west of Ireland to discover the soul of their dead mother. Many critics including myself find its use of potent 'universal' mythic allusion, using the beautiful white horse as symbolic of freedom, alongside the emotional 'excess' in the text as highly provocative and engaging. Critics often find it relatively easy however to critique 'feel good' movies as a crude exercise in manipulative emotionalism and this can be examined in all three films, which foreground the therapeutic benefits of nature on film.

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Paper Title	
The wet Sahara	
Description	
	<p>The paper develops earlier findings about wilderness and re-wilding in a post-colonial context (Haywood 2007/8) into a consideration of the marine littoral as another form of wilderness that is continually being re-wilded through a natural process of renewal.</p> <p>North-east Canada has the highest tidal resonance (difference between high and low tide) in the world, and the British Isles has the second highest. The account concerns Morecambe Bay, a littoral zone of several hundred square kilometres at the southern end of Cumbria, where ebb tides can retreat by up to twelve kilometres to reveal a flat, but spectacular panorama. The Crown is prima facie the owner of the foreshore between high and low-water mark, but the terrain can only be temporarily occupied by man. The topography of the Morecambe Bay continually shifts through the interaction of rivers and sea. The land itself is fluid and maps of little value: indeed they can be dangerous.</p>

Name:	Stella Hockenull, University of Wolverhampton
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Paper Title	
'The Queen' (Frears 2006) and the British landscape tradition in painting	
Description	
<p>Part way through Frears 2006 film, <i>The Queen</i>, the Queen (Helen Mirren) undergoes an extraordinary magical experience whilst journeying into the Scottish landscape that surrounds Balmoral, her grand ancestral holiday home. Despite the anxious offers from her estate workers to chauffeur her, she drives alone into the mountains by Land Rover and proceeds to break down in the centre of a fast flowing river. Awaiting help, a strange event occurs which is inexplicable through a narrative reading. A stag appears magically as if from nowhere and, unable to hide her admiration for the beast, the Queen gently utters the words, 'You Beauty' before the animal disappears as mysteriously as it arrived. Framed in a painterly way, and providing a marked punctuation to the urban settings that have dominated the film so far, this short sequence presents a series of sumptuous landscape images that elicit a spectator response which is instinctive and intuitive. Here, Frears employs a number of formal strategies to create a landscape composition which draws on the British landscape tradition of painting offering an emotional dimension between the spectator and the film.</p> <p>The <i>Queen</i> concentrates on the aftermath of Princess Diana's death and the hysterical response from the British public in the lead up to the funeral. Emotion is a narrative theme in the film and, in particular, what is perceived by the public as the Queen's suppression of emotion, although this is never fully explicated through a narrative reading. However, by analysing the landscape images which occur as 'frozen pictorial moments', presented in excess of narrative plausibility and more or less as tableaux, proposes a particular kind of 'affect'. This may be located in the Sublime of eighteenth century aesthetic theory, and nineteenth-century Romanticism in painting and the other arts, with their emphasis on the spiritual aspects of landscape and nature.</p>	