

Making Animal Afterlives:

a seminar bringing together work by artists and geographers using zoological collections

On: November 22nd, 2006, 12.30 pm - 5.30pm

At: the Zoology Museum and Lecture Theatre Two, Graham Kerr Building,
University of Glasgow, G12 8QQ

Introduction

Of late, zoological collections have become a meeting place, and a departure point, for interdisciplinary work involving artists, geographers, zoologists and curators. This seminar is an occasion for the comparison and critical review of recent work that has gone some way towards 'making animal afterlives'. The first session focuses on artists' engagement with museum collections. The second session uses an exhibition *in situ*, 'Blue Antelope', as the starting point for commentaries that draw on research in cultural and historical geography.

In hosting this event we're conscious that sustainable working relationships between museum curators, artists and academics require opportunities for critical dialogue, and this seminar is planned to provide such a space. By bringing together practitioners from different disciplinary backgrounds, we hope to generate discussion, and consider possible themes and concerns for future work.

Programme

12.30 pm Coffee (Zoology Museum, University of Glasgow)

1 – 3.00 pm Session One (Lecture Theatre 2, Graham Kerr Building)

Welcome to the venue - Maggie Reilly (Curator of the Hunterian Zoology Museum)

Introduction - Hayden Lorimer (Lecturer, Human Geography, Glasgow University)

Discussant - Chris Philo (Professor of Human Geography, Glasgow University)

Artists' presentations - Kate Foster, Andrea Roe, Bryndis Snæbjörnsdóttir/Mark Wilson

3.00 – 3.30 pm Tea (Zoology Museum)

3.30 – 5.30 Session Two (Lecture Theatre 2, Graham Kerr Building)

Introduction - Maggie Reilly

Discussant Chris Philo

Geographers' presentations:

Starr Douglas, Merle Patchett, Hayden Lorimer

5.30 – 6.30 Drinks (Zoology Museum)

Please let us know if you can join us for a meal out after at the [Partick Dosa](#) at 7pm

Additional notes about the seminar and presentations

All are welcome to attend this seminar. It will be of special interest to artists interested in the relationships between animals and people, societies and 'nature'; to cultural and historical geographers, and researchers with an interest in animal geographies. The participation of museum curators, taxidermists and zoologists adds further scope to this event. We welcome viewpoints grounded in experiences of the public presentation of 'natural' worlds.

All seminar participants are warmly invited to bring a summary of their work or interests in a format they find most convenient (e.g. postcard, leaflet book, paper). A table will be available for people to arrange and peruse this material during tea break and over drinks. (If you bring a specimen copy - and not a 'freeby' - please make this clear.)

Session I: Artists' engagement with zoological collections

Each artist has pursued projects which have endured beyond short-term funding, nurturing inter-disciplinary links. Their presentations will place zoological collections in their respective artistic practices.

Kate Foster's preoccupation with the relationship between animals and humans in an unstable world led to a Leverhulme Residency in the Department of Geographical and Earth Sciences at the University of Glasgow. Working with Hayden Lorimer and Merle Patchett, the outcome was a 'monograph' in the form of a website, blending research paper with public art project. The project Blue Antelope was an intervention in the afterlife of a largely forgotten and complex history of an extinct South African animal. Geographer, curator and artist found shared goals as well as discrete areas of interest.

Further info: www.meansealevel.net www.blueantelope.info

Andrea Roe's long-term engagement with the craft of taxidermy recently was supported by a Leverhulme Residency on the Royal Museum of Scotland. A series of works revisit the encounter of human with animal, typically with a deceptive light touch. These technical and sculptural interventions require close work between different specialists. Prototypes for museum displays point to dislocations, fairy tale shadows lurk in our relationships to appealing animals.

Bryndis Snæbjörnsdóttir and Mark Wilson have been collaborating since 2001. Their work explores issues of history, culture and the environment in relation to the individual and his/her sense of belonging or detachment. Their work is installation and process-based, utilizing photography and video. For the project *nanoq: flat out and bluesome*, Snæbjörnsdóttir /Wilson have re-presented British taxidermic polar bears within art and museum settings. The accompanying book contains a convergence of writing from different disciplines, probing the cultural position of these specimens and these animals. Other recent work has used the example of the thylacine or Tasmanian tiger to examine human behavioural responses – to the unfamiliar, to fear and to loss. The artists' investigations have continued in their scrutiny of pet environments within the city of Reykjavik, and the shifting position seals occupy in Icelandic culture.

Further info: www.snaebjornsdottirwilson.com

Session 2: Cultural and historical geographers and zoological collections

This session will focus on the Blue Antelope – and in particular a skull belonging to the Hunterian Collection whose history to date has been a zoological object. This is an immensely valuable object, as it is believed with good evidence to be one of only two such remains of the extinct blue buck. The specimen was collected in the days of pioneering natural history and colonial enterprise in the Cape of South Africa. Presentations will draw out other dimensions of the skull – cultural, historic and artistic – to enrich its ‘afterlife’.

Starr Douglas is a geographer working on an interdisciplinary project at the Hunterian Entomological Collections, supported by the Leverhulme Trust. Starr will present an overview of eighteenth century explorers in the Cape of Good Hope, South Africa and will focus on Robert James Gordon.

Merle Patchett

When is it that an animal becomes an object? In the case of a taxidermy mount, is it when the animal is set in a rifle site, or at the moment of death? When it is mounted, or added to a collection? Or perhaps when it is put on public display? These were the questions that came to mind when I encountered a mounted specimen of the Blue Antelope at Naturalis in Leiden. Through a consideration of the afterlife of this particular taxidermy mount the notion of animal as object will be explored and an argument will be made for a ‘geobiographical’ approach to the study of taxidermy collections.

Further info: www.ges.gla.ac.uk:443/postgraduates/mpatchett

By accident, rather than grand design, **Hayden Lorimer** has developed a passion for animals with antlers and horns. Red deer, then reindeer and recently blue buck have given occasion to think critically about the making of landscapes, the placing of scientific knowledge and the different ways that geographical research can be done. Horns and antlers have proved adaptable tools to quarry for out-of-the-way facts and fictions.

Further info: www.ges.gla.ac.uk:443/staff/hlorimer

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Directions:

From the Main Gate on University Avenue go to the **Graham Kerr Building**.
The **Zoology Museum** is inside the Graham Kerr Building.
The presentations are in **LT2**, just next to the Zoology Museum.
For a campus map see <http://www.gla.ac.uk/general/maps/campusmap.html>

PLEASE INDICATE IN ADVANCE IF YOU PLAN TO ATTEND:

Contact: merle.patchett@ges.gla.ac.uk

The seminar is free, and has been supported through an Artist’s Residency funded by the Leverhulme Trust.

*making animal afterlives: seminar information
Version Two (November 15 2006)*