

# Wastelands

"From horror vacui to spaces of re-enchantment": art, ecology, and urban wastelands - Workshop

Friday 18th to Saturday 19th May 2018

University of the Arts Berlin // Hardenbergstr. 33 // D-10623 Berlin, R101/102

Program

Abstracts

Organizers:

Professor Stephen Barber, Kingston University

Professor Matthew Gandy, Dr Sandra Jasper, University of Cambridge

Professor Susanne Hauser, University of the Arts

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# Wastelands

## // Program

### Friday, 18th May

#### 10<sup>00</sup> am **Welcome and Introduction**

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Professor Norbert Palz, Vice-President of the University of the Arts  
*Opening address*

Susanne Hauser, University of the Arts Berlin  
Matthew Gandy, University of Cambridge

#### 11<sup>00</sup> am **"Sites"**

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Eduardo Brito-Henriques, University of Lisbon  
*The recent ruins of Lisbon: exploring the emotions of abandonment*

Stephanie Herold, University of Bamberg  
*'Authentic' emotions and curated decay. Urban wastelands as refuges and sights.*

Lucilla Barchetta, Gran Sasso Science Institute, L'Aquila  
*Green is not always perfectly green. Temporality, atmospheres and open spaces in riverside Turin*

Commentary: Matthias Einhoff, ZK/U Berlin  
Moderation: Sandra Jasper, University of Cambridge

#### 12<sup>30</sup> pm **Lunch**

#### 02<sup>00</sup> pm **"Memory"**

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Simone Bogner, TU Berlin/Bauhaus-University Weimar, Adam Knight, Royal College of Art, London  
*Ecologies of Loss - Re-Constructing the 'Monuments of the History of the German Democratic Republic'*

Mathilda Rosengren, University of Cambridge  
*Färjenäs, a wasteland historiography; or, tracing an urban ecology of remembering*

Karen Till, Maynooth University  
*Archive, Remnant and the Repertoire: Embodied Memories of the Irish Nation in These Rooms*

Commentary: Christoph Bernhardt, IRS Erkner  
Moderation: Stephen Barber, Kingston University

03<sup>30</sup> pm **Coffee**

04<sup>00</sup> pm **Interlude**

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Leipzig's Wastelands (1993-2018). Documentation  
Bertram Weisshaar, Atelier Latent, Leipzig

04<sup>30</sup> pm **"Ecology"**

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Anna Storm, Stockholm University  
*Landscape Scars and Industrial Nature*

Alex Toland, Bauhaus-University Weimar  
*Good housekeeping? Urban ecosystem services and other democratic deals with nature in the city*

Commentary: Moritz von der Lippe, Technical University Berlin  
Moderation: Susanne Hauser, University of the Arts Berlin

05<sup>30</sup> pm **Refreshments**

06<sup>00</sup> pm **Screening**

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„Natura Urbana. The Brachen of Berlin“. Director: Matthew Gandy, 2017  
University of the Arts Berlin, Hardenbergstr. 33, D-10623 Berlin, Room 110

08<sup>00</sup> pm **Dinner**

# Wastelands

## // Program

Saturday, 19th May

10<sup>00</sup> am **"Urbanity"**

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Jens Lachmund, Maastricht University

*From 'dog-loos' to flowerbeds. Remaking tree-pits and citizenship in the streets of Berlin*

Henriette Steiner, University of Copenhagen

*'I never promised you a rose garden...' - Trapped in a Gorgeous Flower Field in Copenhagen.*

Peter Arlt, sociologist and urban planner, Linz

*Save the innercity fairgrounds!*

Commentary: Tashy Endres, University of the Arts Berlin

Moderation: Lutz Hengst, University of the Arts Berlin

11<sup>30</sup> am **Coffee**

12<sup>00</sup> pm **"Economy"**

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Gerry Kearns, Maynooth University

*Vacancy and value in Dublin*

Stephen Barber, Kingston University

*The Two Wastelands of the Osaka Expo 70: Razing and Erasing*

Maros Krivy, Cambridge University / Estonian Academy of Arts

*Merely Interesting? Wasteland Aesthetic and Late Capitalist Urbanisation*

Commentary: Susanne Hauser, University of the Arts Berlin

Moderation: Sandra Jasper, University of Cambridge

01<sup>30</sup> pm **Lunch**

03<sup>00</sup> pm **"Arts"**

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Mara Polgovsky Ezcurra, University of Cambridge  
*Wet Times at the Wasteland: A Navel Reading of a Disappearing Lake in Texcoco*

Rachel McArdle, Maynooth University  
*Political and Artistic Liquid Urbanisms in Post-Crisis Dublin*

T.J. Demos, UC Santa Cruz  
*Urban Frontiers of Waste: Art's Political Ecology*

Commentary: Matthew Gandy, University of Cambridge  
Moderation: Tashy Endres, University of the Arts Berlin

04<sup>30</sup> pm **Coffee**

05<sup>00</sup> pm **Results and Conclusions**

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All participants

06<sup>00</sup> pm **Farewell**

Commentators: Stephen Barber, Kingston University; Christoph Bernhardt, IRS Erkner; Matthias Einhoff, Berlin, ZK/U; Tashy Endres, UdK Berlin; Matthew Gandy, University of Cambridge; Susanne Hauser, UdK Berlin; Lutz Hengst, UdK Berlin; Sandra Jasper, University of Cambridge; Moritz von der Lippe, TU Berlin

Invited Audience: Bergit Arends, Royal Holloway University London; Andreas Ludwig, Centre for contemporary History Potsdam; Timothy Moss, Humboldt University Berlin; Salman Qureshi, Humboldt University Berlin; Gabriele Schultheiß, UdK Berlin

# Wastelands

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*Green is not always perfectly green. Temporality, atmospheres and open spaces in riverside Turin* 09
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KNIGHT, ADAM; Royal College of Art  
*Ecologies of Loss - Re-Constructing the 'Monuments of the History of the German Democratic Republic'* 09
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- HEROLD, STEPHANIE; University of Bamberg  
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# Wastelands

## // Abstracts

PETER ARLT; SOCIOLOGIST AND URBAN PLANNER, LINZ  
SAVE THE INNERCITY FAIRGROUNDS!

linz has the oldest und biggest fair all over austria. it takes place twice a year. the large fairground is located right in the citycenter, on the banks of the river danube. it was used as a parking ground between the fairs but this has been stopped some years ago for ecological reasons. now the site lays waste for most of the year. planners and investors alike want to relocate the fair to some place in the periphery of the city. do we need fairgrounds in the inner city and if yes: what has to be done to save these areas?

STEPHEN BARBER; KINGSTON UNIVERSITY  
THE TWO WASTELANDS OF THE OSAKA EXPO 70: RAZING AND ERASINGS

The Osaka World Exposition of 1970 was intended as an immense 'experimental metropolis' of pavilions at the existing city's edge; innovative architects, filmmakers and artists from Japan and worldwide were invited to participate. 64,000,000 visitors attended the Expo: until then, the greatest-ever concentration of human beings at one event. The Expo site was generated by transforming a forest-area into a vast wasteland. A subsequent, disparate wasteland was created immediately after the Expo's closure, with the obsolete site's urgent destruction. This paper, based on research at the Expo's Archive Centre, explores the status of those two wastelands as illuminating contemporary and future processes of wastelanding.

**LUCILLA BARCHETTA; GRAN SASSO SCIENCE INSTITUTE, L'AQUILA**  
**GREEN IS NOT ALWAYS PERFECTLY GREEN. TEMPORALITY, ATMOSPHERES AND**  
**OPEN SPACES IN RIVERSIDE TURIN**

The paper proposes an epistemological reassessment of the ambiguous notion of 'waste space', by exploring the area around the Stura River, located at the northeastern periphery of Torino (Italy). The basins of the Stura embody diverse spatial and social articulations of publicness, as well as different configurations of marginal space, shaped by multiple stories and socio-ecological trajectories of environmental change. Moving through the river's edges, the present-past circuits of routine practices and memories, the paper delves into the meanings of spatial complexity in urban natures, and offers an ethnographic reading of the socio-political processes and everyday happenings that form multi-temporal atmospheres of boredom, excitement and decline.

**SIMONE BOGNER; TECHNICAL UNIVERSITY OF BERLIN**  
**KNIGHT, ADAM; ROYAL COLLEGE OF ART**  
**ECOLOGIES OF LOSS - RE-CONSTRUCTING THE "MONUMENTS OF THE HISTORY OF**  
**THE GERMAN DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC"**

In the presented project, we re-construct an East-German landscape of memories by complementing an unpublished typescript from 1989 with our contemporary photographs. The 360 places in the script challenge the traditional understanding of monuments and preservation, which served to convey a chronological narrative in the emergence of a sovereign nation. The selected places offer a variety of partly unusual types, which include objects such as factories, or memorial sites for GDR heroes. Our approach deals with memorialization processes in built space and the possibilities of their depiction. By juxtaposing texts and photographs, we simultaneously focus on the state of these spaces in the present - making local differences of remembrance visible - whilst leaving open the background of current interactions. The photographic update adheres to the principle of "as found"; irrespective of whether the object described in the text is still there, has been moved or destroyed, thus leaving behind metaphorical, physical and cognitive wastelands. By introducing the term 'ecology of loss' we would like to take account of the complex interactions between forgetting, preservation and the environment and to think about the varying losses as being interrelated. We've chosen to speak about three specific sites that demonstrate this.

# Wastelands

EDUARDO BRITO-HENRIQUES; UNIVERSITY OF LISBON

THE RECENT RUINS OF LISBON: EXPLORING THE EMOTIONS OF ABANDONMENT

In the last two years, my research group and I have been studying wastelands in Portuguese cities. We were interested in investigating the causes of abandonment and, above all, the material and affective transformations that ruination induces and life that exists in a supposedly uninhabited ruin. Through the visits we made to wastelands we found the ruins to be frequented by people in search of different types of experiences and emotions. In this presentation, my proposal is to explore the emotional affordances of the modern ruin based on three examples from Lisbon.

T.J. DEMOS; UC SANTA CRUZ

URBAN FRONTIERS OF WASTE: ART'S POLITICAL ECOLOGY

Wastelands have increasingly merged with urban sacrifice zones at the frontiers of impoverishment, environmental degradation, structural racism, and police brutality. This situation is revealed in urban areas formed at the catastrophic convergence of extreme weather, climate change, and impoverishment, as in post-hurricane Houston, Texas. As investigated by the New York-based collective Not an Alternative, Houston provides a revealing optic into shifting conditions of resurgent urban gentrification, environmental injustice, and the petrocapiatist narration of crisis. They also propose modes of intervention that build on the intersectionalist political ecologies of contemporary art.

STEPHANIE HEROLD; UNIVERSITY OF BAMBERG

'AUTHENTIC' EMOTIONS AND CURATED DECAY. URBAN WASTELANDS AS REFUGES AND SIGHTS

Although the importance of emotional approaches to historical places (and as such urban wastelands are considered in this talk) has long been acknowledged in various disciplines, systematic investigations of emotional perception and valorisation patterns are still underrepresented - and methodically difficult (2015 the anthropologist Laurajane Smith called them 'the elephant in the room', referring to their well-known omnipresence on one hand and the lack of scientific investigation on the other). The talk aims to explore different emotional aspects of the 'encounter' with urban wastelands, discussing different scientific approaches connected to the so-called 'material turn' and/or 'emotional turn'. The 'encounters' with urban wastelands are thus defined as emotional processes in which the interaction of humans and objects create a fluctuating field of tension, formed by various processes of perception and valorisation, which are constantly influencing each other, and which are partly emotionally motivated and mostly emotionally effective.

**GERRY KEARNS; MAYNOOTH UNIVERSITY**  
**VACANCY AND VALUE IN DUBLIN**

Vacancy presages place devaluation. Yet there are many varieties of vacancy and equivalent processes of devaluation. I will illustrate this with a typology of varieties of vacancy and associated devaluations, illustrating my argument from Dublin since the eighteenth century.

**MAROS KRIVY; UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE / ESTONIAN ACADEMY OF ARTS**  
**MERELY INTERESTING?**  
**WASTELAND AESTHETIC AND LATE CAPITALIST URBANISATION**

This paper inquires into the salience of 'wasteland aesthetic' to late capitalist urbanization, proposing an urban political aesthetics approach. Drawing on the work of Vittoria di Palma and Sianne Ngai, I ask how aesthetic appreciation of wastelands as interesting underscores politico-economic sense to interest as a form of appreciating urban land values. Wasteland aesthetic resonates with distinct typologies, such as globally circulating post-infrastructureal linear parks (the High Line Effect). Wasteland aesthetic is also a topology, the paper argues, reminiscent of certain strands to new materialist, neo-vitalist philosophies, and overextending the resilient nature metaphor, as a model of controlled spontaneity, to urban, political and economic realms.

**JENS LACHMUND; MAASTRICHT UNIVERSITY**  
**FROM 'DOG-LOOS' TO FLOWERBEDS.**  
**REMAKING TREE-PITS AND CITIZENSHIP IN THE STREETS OF BERLIN.**

Urban street-trees are often planted in unpaved patches on the footpath, the so-called "tree-pits". In many cities, one can observe that residents, shop-owners, or street-based communities, transform these spots into beds in which they grow flowers, herbs, and shrubs. For example in Berlin, such tree-beds have become a widespread feature of the streetscape, notably in some "trendy" inner-urban districts. Tree-pit planting is promoted by environmental NGOs and community organizations, which emphasize its positive effect on street-trees, biodiversity, and the aesthetics of the street. Also public authorities that originally have been hostile to these plantations, and sometime removed them, have increasingly taken a more tolerant or even facilitating stance. However, the meaning and material form of tree-pit plantations remain contested among their creators, the authorities, and other users of the street. This presentation investigates the tree-pit as a site in which new forms of urban order and citizenship are co-produced. As I will show, the politics of space and of citizenship that is implied in the appropriation of these small wastelands can be neither reduced to a subversion of the neoliberal city, nor does it simply instantiate the rationale of an overarching governmentality.

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RACHEL MCARDLE; MAYNOOTH UNIVERSITY

## POLITICAL AND ARTISTIC LIQUID URBANISMS IN POST-CRISIS DUBLIN

The "temporary use" of urban spaces is either celebrated, through concepts like tactical urbanism and urban acupuncture, or criticised as reifying a neoliberal agenda. Yet classifying these as "temporary" limits the possibilities of what 'urban' is. I introduce the liquid urbanisms concept to consider the unique legacies, temporalities and impacts of these spaces. Using qualitative data gathered for my PhD research on fourteen case studies in Dublin from 2013-2018, I developed a typology of creative, community-based and anarchist liquid urbanisms to discuss how groups are appropriating urban spaces. I discuss two different case studies, Dublin's first pop up urban park, Granby Park (2013), and the radical Grangegorman Squat (2013-2016), both of which challenge capitalist property value systems. This paper envisions liquid urbanisms as more than short-term interventions but as projects that can have long lasting legacies that expand our considerations of the urban, and how wastelands can add to urbanity.

MARA POLGOVSKY EZCURRA; UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE

## WET TIMES AT THE WASTELAND: A NAVEL READING OF A DISAPPEARING LAKE IN TEXCOCO

Mexico City stands on a basin dried out artificially as part of a colonial project. Signs of immoderate desiccation are inscribed throughout today's megalopolis: in the yearly sinking of the city centre, in the names and trajectories of its main avenues, in repeated episodes of flooding. The salty plain that remains in what used to be one of the region's main lakes, the Texcoco lake, became for over twenty years a large open dump. As piles of waste accumulated and permeated the soil, Pritzker prize-winner Teodoro González de León and Alberto Kalach reimagined that space as carrying the future of a more sustainable city, a wet city, in which long-gone lakes and rivers could be resurrected. Yet in 2016, this project was scratched out when the government announced the building of a new ultra-modern airport in Texcoco. My "navel reading" of the place of the Texcoco Lake in the urban and symbolic matrix of today's Mexico explores the metaphoric significance of a "false [urban] centre attracting attention to its void" (Mieke Bal). Its colonial spectres being periodically reawakened by a denied moisture, this is a space of disposal, semantic dissemination, and rebirth.

MATHILDA ROSENGREN; UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE

FÄRJENÄS, A WASTELAND HISTORIOGRAPHY; OR, TRACING AN URBAN ECOLOGY OF REMEMBERING

Established and destroyed, just at the cusp of the becoming of the city, Färjenäs is arguably Gothenburg's first urban wasteland. Throughout the centuries, the area has once and again returned to states of "waste" - of fallow lands, brown and green fields, and uncultivated gardens - thus crafting an alternative tale of the city's industrialisation and urbanisation.

Following the fluctuations of Färjenäs, this talk will address several conjunctures in the history (and prehistory) of Gothenburg. Here the wasteland(s) emerge as both reproductions and contestations of the city, reflecting an urban ecology of remembering where the human writing of history and the propagation of urban nature are tightly interlaced in the shaping and retaining of contemporary urban narratives.

HENRIETTE STEINER

'I NEVER PROMISED YOU A ROSE GARDEN...' - TRAPPED IN A GORGEOUS MEADOW IN COPENHAGEN

This presentation focuses on a highly event-oriented design strategy, supported by social media, that is being used in the ongoing transformation of a vague open space close to a motorway flyover just outside Copenhagen. The plan is to create an 'urban forest' on the site as part of the city's strategy to plant 100,000 new trees by 2025. As part of this transformation process, the soil at the site has been prepared for the planting of trees by using non-mechanical methods, e.g. spreading wildflower seeds on the area so that the flowers' roots will penetrate the ground and enable the new trees to settle. This has transformed the site into a gorgeous meadow, and in the summer of 2017 Copenhageners were invited to the site to pick flowers. I will critically examine different aspects of this project - e.g. the role of design, 'nature' and the flower-picking event - in relation to my personal experience of visiting this meadow, as regards both the site itself and its representation in digital media. The different temporalities that clash at the site give rise to conflicting interpretations, including, as I will show, a feeling of entrapment.

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**ANNA STORM; STOCKHOLM UNIVERSITY**  
**LANDSCAPE SCARS AND INDUSTRIAL NATURE**

This paper explores the potential of the "scar" (Storm 2014) metaphor in relation to ecological-cultural conceptualizations of "industrial nature" (Kowarik 2005). As "scar" is a noun as well as a verb - you have a scar, cause a scar or become scarred - it signifies both an object, or marker, and a process. It therefore enables a simultaneous understanding of materiality, meaning and change, and steers our view to ambiguous and important pasts. Industrial nature, in terms of spontaneous overgrowing, is one way in which scars in urban-industrial wastelands are "healed", but also a way in which difficult pasts and contemporary injustices might be concealed.

**KAREN E. TILL; MAYNOOTH UNIVERSITY**  
**ARCHIVE, REMNANT AND THE REPERTOIRE: EMBODIED MEMORIES OF THE IRISH NATION IN THESE ROOMS**

Among the artistic projects that challenged the state's masculinist pagentry and heroic narratives of the 1916 Easter Rising in Dublin was ANU Productions and CoisCéim Dance Theatre's 'These Rooms' (<http://theserooms.ie>). This intimate performance transformed an empty building in north Dublin through the forgotten stories of the murder of 16 civilian men and boys by British soldiers during the Rising. Inspired by the testimonies of 38 women who witnessed these acts, the artists reconsidered Irish acts of remembering and forgetting rebellion which led to a remapping of the city. Set near the historical location of the murder - an empty, unmarked lot in 2016 - and moving between multiple pasts and presents, the performance called attention to the inability of a city to remember amidst the forgetful narratives of national commemoration and neoliberal 'recovery'. By (re)animating the possible ways civilians dealt with (and ignored) the legacies of colonial violences in their homes and city in 1916, 1966 and 2016, the artists created scenarios that moved between the objectivity of the archive, material remnants of the city, and the repertoire of body memory so as to invite audiences to bear witness to the violences and possibilities of mourning in a post-colonial wounded city.

ALEX TOLAND; BAUHAUS UNIVERSITY OF WEIMAR

GOOD HOUSEKEEPING? URBAN ECOSYSTEM SERVICES (ESS) AND OTHER DEALS WITH NATURE IN THE CITY

This paper comments on the ESS paradigm through the lens of artistic research. Specifically, the presentation focuses on the 2-year multi-disciplinary research project, "Dust Blooms", which investigates the dust filtration capacity of flowering plants in heavily polluted urban areas. The presentation exposes some of the ironies of ESS: once prized medicinal plants too filthy to use for consumption now perform healthful housekeeping "services" of minimizing atmospheric dust and holding erosion-prone soil in place. While millions are spent on the R&D, production, and purchasing of cleaning and hygiene products each year, wild urban flora execute many such services for free. These services were studied in a measuring campaign of 11 roadside sites in Berlin, a microscopic analysis of flower surface morphology types, a series of botanical sculptures made out of Swiffer microfiber cleaning wipes, and a series of digitally rendered historical engravings made out of street dust and gold, most recently exhibited at the Prix Ars Electronica Hybrid Arts Exhibition in Linz in 2017.

BERTRAM WEISSHAAR; ATELIER LATENT, LEIPZIG

LEIPZIG'S WASTELANDS (1993-2018)

The city of Leipzig and the Leipzig region were shrinking for a long time. Wastelands showed traces of past endeavours and failure in many places. But views on wastelands offer more than perspectives on the past: They also offer views into an open future and leave room for one's own imagination, for imaginations of a desired future. In the now growing city of Leipzig wastelands vanish. Newly built structures become real while the imaginations vanish.

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