

Manifesto for Sustainable Experimentation 21 May-9 August 2025

Reading Groups for Sustainable Experimentation curated by Fran Painter-Fleming

Responding to the exhibition Manifesto for Sustainable Experimentation, this reading group series draws on Beaconsfield Contemporary's 30 years of production. Each session is anchored by a particular performance or exhibition, with each signalling different strategies for thinking otherwise.

Working with film, performance and installation, each of the selected archival projects use these artistic media to challenge the often-hostile environments we find ourselves within, and to cultivate more compassionate ways of existing in the contemporary.

In opposition to dominant, capitalist or colonial constructions of time, each of these sessions also posits more elastic readings of time, bringing in scholars and artists who unpick how landscape, memory, language and gender each leave their own temporal markings.

Bringing together archival materials from the selected projects with contemporary texts, this series fosters dialogue between the recent history and the now, encouraging participants to continue to wield tools of rebellion against dogma or oppression.

Practical notes on each session:

*For those who want to read in advance, the selected extracts for each session will be made available to attendees ahead of each session. We will read the texts out loud together however, so no reading ahead is not compulsory. (Reading aloud is also not compulsory during the session).

Part One: Filmic Landscapes, Ruptures in Time Saturday 14th June, 2:30-4:30pm

"Lightsilver explores the physical, conceptual and historical impact of the landscape tradition on the ideas of contemporary artists. An evolving montage of projections links the cinematic tradition of vista-making with the metaphoric potential of an age-old genre: 'the appearance of that portion of land which the eye can view at once'. Territory that has been conventionally explored through other mediums is here broadly extended to the moving image as a result of the digital revolution".

(Beaconsfield Press Release for Lightsilver, 2005).

The first reading group is in dialogue with the exhibition Lightsilver (2005) which explored the impact of the landscape tradition via the moving image through bringing together nine different artists working with video.

Taking the form of a cinematic relay, Lightsilver took place across Beaconsfield's three gallery spaces. Each week the films would rotate onto another screen, mimicking tidal sequences, or rolling sand dunes — giving each artist three different vantage points or environments to present their work within.

Building on the expansive, cyclical makeup of Lightsilver, the selected texts unpick the pliable potential of time within cinema and natural environments. Dwelling in film history and specific cinematic techniques, Elwes's essay draws out the 'trickster' temporal character of cameras and

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moving image. Jenny Odell's conversation with Emmanuel Vaughn-Lee encourages readers to challenge their understandings of time in broader strokes, digesting the history of timekeeping in relation to extractive land practices, technology and social relations.

Archival materials from Lightsilver will be on display for participants to sift through and return to after collectively reading the texts from Elwes and Odell.

TEXTS:

Catherine Elwes. "Talking Pictures: Narrative, Time, Colour and Sound." Landscape and the Moving Image, NED-New edition, Intellect, 2022.

Jenny Odell "Another Kind of Time" Emergence Magazine, Vol 5: Time, May 2024.

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