

Ruskin's 'Good Looking': Ruskin Seminar Series, Michaelmas 2018

Thursday, 4.15pm-6pm, Ruskin Library & Research Centre for Culture, Landscape and Environment, Reading Room

In matters of art and science alike, Ruskin repeatedly voiced his interest in the epistemology of observation. This term's Ruskin Seminar series explores observation in Ruskin's writings across a range of disciplines and fields, including sensory perception, draughtsmanship, and evolutionary theory. Collectively, these presentations explore variations of what Ruskin described as a 'patient' and 'delicate method of work' that, for him, constituted the ability to perceive the world precisely.

25th October

'Ruskin's Good Looking': Drawing, Looking and Seeing

Sarah Casey, Senior Lecturer in Drawing and Installation, Lancaster Institute for the Contemporary Arts (LICA) and Rachel Dickinson, Principal Lecturer, Department of Interdisciplinary Studies, Manchester Metropolitan University

8th November

'The village showman': Ruskin, Whitehead, and the Darwin Problem

Alan Davis, Editor *Ruskin Review*, and Robert Hewison, Cultural Historian

22nd November

'A life which was not theirs': Natural History and Memory in Ruskin and Eliot

Timothy Chandler, University of Pennsylvania and Humboldt University Berlin and Andy Tate, Reader, Department of English & Creative Writing, Lancaster University

6th December

Conceptive Cartography: The Sense(s) of Mapping Ruskin

Jo Taylor, Manchester University, Jen Southern and Linda O'Keefe, Lancaster Institute for the Contemporary Arts (LICA)

Image: John Ruskin, *Gypsywort* (detail), n.d.

Ruskin Library and Research Centre for Culture, Landscape and the Environment

For more information, please contact us on 01524 593587 or ruskin.library@lancaster.ac.uk



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'Ruskin's Good Looking': Drawing, Looking and Seeing

Thursday 25th October, Ruskin Library Reading Room, 4.15pm-6pm

Sarah Casey, Senior Lecturer in Drawing and Installation, Lancaster Institute for the Contemporary Arts (LICA) and Rachel Dickinson, Principal Lecturer, Department of Interdisciplinary Studies, Manchester Metropolitan University

'Ruskin's Good Looking!' is the title of a current research project using drawing to closely examine items of Ruskin's dress. This responds directly to Ruskin's statement in *The Elements of Drawing* (1857) that "I believe that the sight is a more important thing than the drawing; and I would rather teach drawing that my pupils learn to love Nature, than teach the looking at nature that they may learn to draw." Good Looking is the starting point for this seminar, which will look more broadly at contemporary uses of drawing, by artists and others, to enable seeing and understanding the world. What is it about drawing that continues to make it a valuable tool of investigation in fields ranging natural history, medicine, archaeology and object-based research in fashion? Dr Rachel Dickinson will act as respondent.

Image © Sarah Casey

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'The village showman': Ruskin, Whitehead, and the Darwin Problem

Alan Davis, Editor *Ruskin Review*, and Robert Hewison, Cultural Historian
Thursday 8th November, Ruskin Library Reading Room, 4.15pm-6 pm

Where Darwin is concerned, Ruskin has often been regarded as a reactionary, who stubbornly resisted the description of the world provided by the Theory of Evolution. By considering the philosophical aspects of the scientific method (with particular reference to the philosophy of A. N. Whitehead), this paper examines whether this is an accurate assessment of Ruskin's attitude, and whether he did indeed lose the argument against Darwinism. The importance of 'showing' the truths of nature is demonstrated as being central to Ruskin's work, and the implications of this are considered in the context of the scientific process. Robert Hewison will act as respondent.

Image: John Ruskin, Flower study (detail), n.d.

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'A life which was not theirs': Natural History and Memory in Ruskin and Eliot

Timothy Chandler, University of Pennsylvania and Humboldt University Berlin and Andy Tate, Reader, Department of English & Creative Writing, Lancaster University
Thursday 22nd, November, Ruskin Library Reading Room, 4.15pm-6pm

The theories of realism formulated by John Ruskin and George Eliot in the 1840s and 50s posit society as both historical and embedded in nature. This has implications not only for the representation of society but also for that of nature, which thus becomes both determining and determined with respect to history. For Ruskin, the natural world has no meaning outside of human history; for Eliot, society, understood as embodied history, is to be explained in naturalistic terms. While the importance of history and collective memory to Ruskin and Eliot is well established, I intend to focus on the role of personal memory in the representation of nature and the natural. Taking the opening recollections of 'The Lamp of Memory' and *The Mill on the Floss* as starting points, I hope to show how the invocation of memory calls into question the totality of nature and continuity of history posited by natural history, even as it underpins natural history as a form of knowledge and mode of representation.

Image: John Ruskin, Study of quatrefoil fringed gentian, 1882

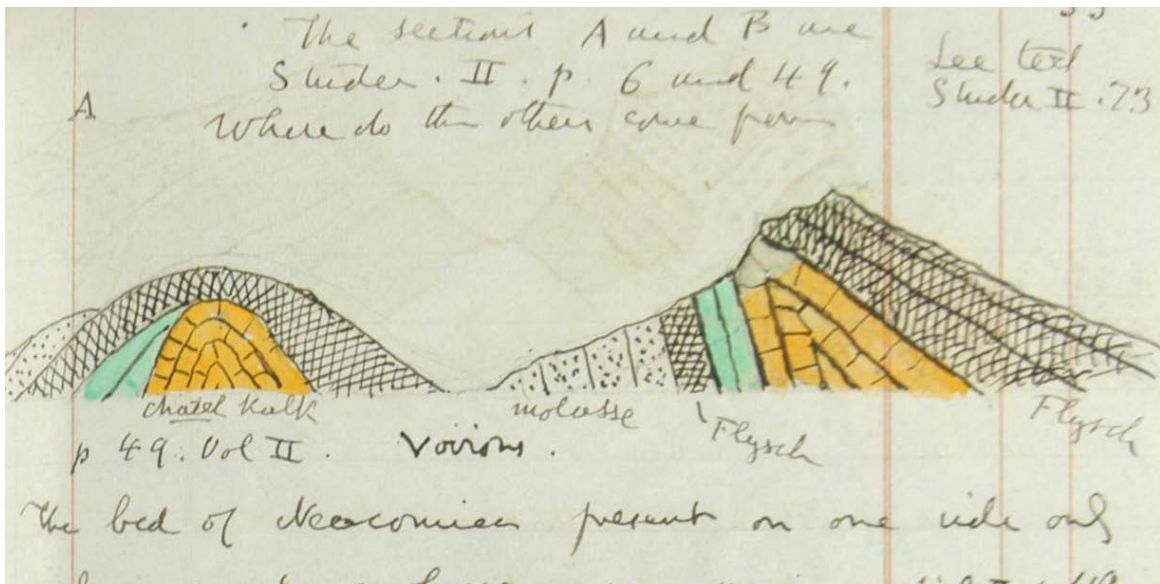
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Conceptive Cartography: The Sense(s) of Mapping Ruskin

Jo Taylor, Manchester University, Jen Southern and Linda O'Keefe, Lancaster Institute for the Contemporary Arts (LICA)

Thursday 6th December, Ruskin Library Reading Room, 4.15pm-6pm

In 1870, Ruskin concluded the third of his *Lectures on Art* with a hope that his audience would take it upon themselves to enhance a central theme of his speech. He hoped that they would consider the ways in which the 'great Imaginative faculty' might help them to '[m]ap out the spaces of [their] possible lives' and 'measure the range of [these lives'] possible agency!' This was a post-Romantic, proto-phenomenological recognition that the world was a different place for each person who dwelt in it. In this seminar, we explore what roles sound and – more importantly – a particular mode of Ruskinian listening played in mapping out this 'conceptive faculty'. We will situate Ruskin's understanding of sound in its nineteenth-century context, but go beyond this to ask how listening like Ruskin might help us develop a more profound – yet everyday – ecological awareness today.

Image: John Ruskin, detail of a page from his diary, 1861–63 (RF Ms 12)

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