

## CALL FOR PARTICIPATION

Deadline: November 29, 2015

Schumacher College and The Sharpham Trust invite you to submit a proposal for participation to the forthcoming symposium Language, Landscape and the Sublime, to be held June 29/30, 2016. This event is part of Schumacher College's Ecological Arts programme. More detailed information can be found at [languagelandscape.info](http://languagelandscape.info)



### Introduction

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*Not me and the landscape, but a kind of oneness* (Maitland 2009)

We are almost overwhelmed with data showing a world under threat and becoming increasingly threatening (a contemporary re-telling of Burke's Sublime?). But science and its knowledges are failing to move us, to jolt us into feeling the true fragility of the planet in which we all live, despite the apparent clarity of the evidence and the increasing

baldness of its language. Science and hysteria are not comfortable bedfellows, but seem increasingly within sniffing distance of one another.

This two-day symposium draws together artists and thinkers from a wide range of disciplines to explore ways in which landscape — and the ways we represent it — connects deeply to our lives and underpins our relationship to the world. The contemporary array of narratives of landscape expose how we feel about (and how we become estranged from) this astounding place we all share. As we contemplate the fragility of our planet fearful narratives confound our complex and worried entanglements with the world around us.

The dark complexity of the post-enlightenment concept of the Sublime (in which ‘the dominant feature is the presence or idea of transcendental immensity or greatness [and which]...inspires awe and reverence, or possibly fear’ (Bell, Lyall 2002)), and the comparative gaiety of the Picturesque were spurs to reshape (literally and metaphorically) the ways in which we saw and lived in the world. Of late dismissed and subsumed by the technocratic tendencies of modernism, Romantic notions of landscape and nature have felt somewhat risible: perhaps it is time to re-kindle the romantic as we begin to understand the need to grieve for what we have already lost and reclaim beauty for an alienated modern world?

The philosophical romanticism of Burke, Poussin and others, and the expression of the sublime through poetry and painting that followed it profoundly shaped our thinking and feeling about landscape and about the natural world. The Americans (Thoreau, Emerson) embraced wilderness, not surprisingly perhaps given the vastness and emptiness of their world; here in Europe the focus seems smaller, tamed, shaped, idealised, if no less numinous. What we perceive as natural ideal landscapes have typically been shaped through deliberate aesthetic design intervention and/or the exigencies of farming and agriculture. It was the ‘epiphanic’ sense of landscape (Wylie) - the revealing of beauty from coming upon it - that gave birth to a newly-romanticised and idealised view of what had until that time been largely ignored as the ‘thing around us’<sup>1</sup>. But the heady days of the Romantics, the Picturesque and the Sublime in both visual and written language created another moment in time from which we have looked at the world around us in a different way.

So what of today? Is our relationship with the natural world and our ability to understand the threats weighing upon it now being transformed: through a still emergent (*new*

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<sup>1</sup> Literatures of nature are certainly extant in the writings of many older civilisations, but in more recent time the increasing alienation from the land brought about by the Enclosures and the Industrial Revolution changed forever our way of living with the land.

romantic perhaps) writing, through other forms of representation such as Hockney's rich exploration of his birthland? Notions of the Sublime helped the Romantics elicit an entirely new set of emotions, rekindling an areligious numinism, awe and sense of mystery and the unknowable in our connection to the natural world. Perhaps we cannot live without this in our lives. Despite decades of rejection, dismissal and even small shudders of revulsion, is it time to re-embrace our love for and fear of the Sublime and in so doing find deeper and more engaged pathways, byways and languages to love the world around us?

*I walked to Rydale after tea, which we drank by the kitchen fire. The evening very dull ; a terrible kind of threatening brightness at sunset above Easedale. The sloe-thorn beautiful in the hedges, and in the wild spots higher up among the hawthorns. (Dorothy Wordsworth's Grasmere Journal, 1802.*

## Topics of interest

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Day 1 centres in particular around language, poesis, and landscape. In Day 2 this focus continues, but with an emphasis on designed landscape and forms of representation, especially the landscape of the picturesque and those of Capability Brown. Sharpham House, the location of the second day, is set within a garden and parkland attributed to Capability Brown whose tricentennial is celebrated in 2016.

We have no desire to be prescriptive or proscriptive, but here are some possible topics:

- Literatures of nature
- Nature, representation and meaning
- Re-kindling the romantic gesture
- Conflicted and contested relationship to the natural world
- Poetics and Poesis
- The Picturesque and Sublime today
- Nature and fear
- Walking
- Phenomenology of nature and landscape
- Being in nature, nature and Being
- Live writing, live drawing
- Living today in yesterday's landscapes
- Alienation and estrangement from the land
- Climate change and the landscape of the anthropocene.
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## Location and shape of the days

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Mornings are given to more formal presentations: confirmed keynoters to date are Capability Brown scholar Dr Laura Mayer and renowned architect Hal Moggridge OBE; the final lineup of keynote speakers is still to be confirmed and will be posted on the website at [languagelandcape.info](http://languagelandcape.info). Afternoons are more fluid and will include hands-on workshops and exhibitions and work in small groups in and around our landscapes. Charlotte Rathbone's Soil Tasting Bar will be open at various times throughout the day. Each day ends in a brief plenary session. The evening of Day 1 will include a number of outdoor activities including an overnight sit by the River Dart and early morning meditation. At this time of year, night begins after long sunsets at around 11pm, but as we are so near to the solstice, darkness never completely prevails and there is always a hint of the summer daylight at these northern latitudes. We encourage submissions to take advantage of this particular ecology, including artistic and other forms of intervention.

**Dartington Hall** / Schumacher College is located on a 1,200-acre mixed estate outside of Totnes, in South Devon. Dartington has a 70-year history as a place for thought and creativity and for challenging the conventions of rural sustainability and rural life; Schumacher College provides transformational education across a number of fields of thought, and this year celebrates its 25th anniversary. In 2016 the College launches a new postgraduate programme in Arts & Ecology<sup>2</sup>. **Sharpham House** has been a private home for most of its life; the estate now houses the Sharpham Trust, a working farm, and multi-award winning artisan cheese-making and winery. Both sites comprise a rich mixture of formal garden, parkland, wooded areas, grazing and open pastureland. Both sites are on the edge of the River Dart.

Various priced accommodation is available at [Dartington Hall](#)<sup>3</sup> and at [Sharpham House](#). See the website for further details on how to book. The nearest rail station is Totnes.

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<sup>2</sup> For more information visit [www.schamachercollege.org.uk/arts-ecology](http://www.schamachercollege.org.uk/arts-ecology)

<sup>3</sup> transport to Sharpham House will be provided for those attending both days of the conference.

## Family-friendly context

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If you are planning to attend the event with your partner and family, the area is filled with activities, attractions, beaches, walks, and support for visitors. If you are attending alone with a young child, neither of the venues is able to provide childcare facilities onsite.

There are a number of private providers in Totnes, the nearest market town. If the cost of covering childcare is a barrier to attending the conference, please contact us. We have a small amount of money set aside for this instance.

## Types of submission

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Submit any ideas that inspire you and which you think may have a place during this event. Given its deliberately constrained scope and size, there will be limited slots available, so please inspire us.

We are interested in submissions that embrace the following formats. Note that in each case we will add time for Q&A, but please think about how interaction with the audience can be built into your offer. Formats might be:

- traditional paper presentations lasting no more than 20 minutes
- panel discussions, live interviews, and other discursive formats, lasting between 30-50 minutes
- presentation of artwork, indoor or outdoor
- walking and other outdoor activities, particularly ones that engage with theoretical or philosophical thought in addition to their creative content
- workshops, lasting no longer than 3 hours
- if you are geographically distant, you can send papers for **inclusion in the publication only**. These submissions will be considered along with all others, on the understanding that you are unable to attend the event itself. There will be a nominal registration fee to help cover publication costs.

We will produce a refereed online publication from the event that will include formal papers as well as other forms of record. You can submit 2,000 to 2,500 words for presentation at the conference and/or for inclusion in the publication. We are currently seeking a publication partner with a view to producing a print edition.

**The deadline for submission is midnight on Sunday November 29, 2015.** At this stage we are only requesting 250-word abstracts, which must be submitted through the event website at [www.languagelandscape.info/submit](http://www.languagelandscape.info/submit). We're sorry that we are unable to accept any submissions after the deadline.

## Curation

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The Organising Committee is responsible for curation and comprises academics, artists and others. The panel is chaired by Dr. Richard Povall, who is also the Symposium Convenor.

- Prof. David Crouch (Prof. Emeritus University of Derby)
- Dr Mandy Bloomfield (Plymouth University)
- Alicia Grace (independent artist and researcher)
- Dr Mark Leahy (Plymouth University, Falmouth University)
- Dr. Camilla Nelson (Schumacher College)
- Mat Osmond (Falmouth University, poet)
- Dr Richard Povall (Schumacher College)
- Charlotte Rathbone CLMI (Rathbone Partnership)
- one other TBC

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