

SHENANDOAH UNIVERSITY

“THE ARTS, SCIENCE AND THE SACRED IN NATURE: HEALING FORCES IN A CHANGING WORLD”

Hester Auditorium (Henkel 105), 9 a.m. to noon

Geraldine Kiefer, Assistant Professor of Art History, Chair and Moderator
Creative Scholarship Day, March 24, 2004

Participants in this panel will explore mutual and intersecting concerns that touch upon art, science and the sacred, with a fulcrum in images of the natural world. Presentations will focus as well on how research, experimentation, writing, art-making, liturgy, performance, activism, and the exchange of ideas across disciplines might bear creative spirit for healing and change in a conflict-ridden world. An art and literature display will accompany the presentation, and be on view throughout the duration of the session.

OPENING REMARKS (9-9:05): Geraldine W. Kiefer, moderator: Introduction of panel and speakers

1. (9:05-9:35): Geraldine Kiefer, Assistant Professor of Art History.
“Collage and Matrixiality: Sacred Precincts, Bounded Chaos”

Considered within the evolution of modern art, the history of collage foregrounds materials and their formal contrasts and conjunctions, and takes Cubism, along with the pre-1915 work of Picasso and Braque, as its key point of reference. In this talk alternative frames of reference and alternative artists, specifically women artists concerned with identity formations and interfaces, will be adduced for contemporary collage. The speaker’s experience as a facilitator and speaker on the topics of collage and spirituality will be brought into the presentation.

Geraldine Kiefer, an art historian and artist, has been a full- and part-time resident of Kauai. In Hanalei she has painted and drawn the wild mountain landscape, fertile valleys and moist taro fields, focusing on transient effects of color, wind and rain. In Haena she has worked with the exquisite, exotic flowers of the National Tropical Botanical Garden and, from Tunnels beach, the sharp ridges of Makana. In Poipu she has explored the ridges and craters of the Koloa volcanic plain and the cacti of the Moir Garden. For Gerry, the Hawaiian landscape conveys the primary and primal fount of life.

2. (9:35-10:05): Luis Espinasa, Assistant Professor of Biology.
“Prehistoric Cave Paintings: Was There Composition 30,000 Years Ago?”

Among the great masterpieces of prehistoric art are the decorated limestone caverns of Lascaux (17,000 years old) and Altamira (15,000 years old). Regardless of their beauty, all of these "floating" animals might give the impression that the

cavemen who painted them lacked a precise idea of composition. Their apparent randomness in position, sometimes even with images over-crowding one another, could be interpreted as an absence of intention for place. Was artistic composition already present in prehistoric Cro-Magnon? A much older site, the cave of Chauvet Pont d'Arc (30,000 years old), discovered in 1994, has an amazing group of animal collages that gives the answer to this question.

Luis Espinasa holds a Ph.D. degree from New York University and a Postdoctoral Fellow from the University of Maryland. Before coming to Winchester, he was a professor of Biology at the Morelos State University, in Mexico. His primary area of specialization is evolutionary biology using cave organisms as model systems. His hobby, as you might have guessed, is caving. This hobby has led him to the discovery and exploration of many new caves in places such as Mexico, Thailand, Brazil, and of course, the U.S.

**3. (10:05-10:35): Warren Hofstra, Professor of History.
“Landscape as Historical Metaphor”**

Past landscapes can be unpacked for important information about settlement geography, economic activities, social relations, political practices, and applied ideologies or ways of viewing the world. This presentation will focus on research into the landscape of the eighteenth-century Shenandoah Valley and cultural performances articulated with it.

In addition to his work in vernacular architecture and the history of English colonialism, Warren Hofstra has published in the fields of material culture, geography, archaeology, economic history, imperial history, and social history. He is interested in how all aspects of material and non-material culture contribute to the historical development of communities and has been engaged in an extended research project on settlement, social evolution, and landscape change in the early Shenandoah Valley.

HIATUS; QUESTIONS; AUDIENCE COMMENTS (10:35-10:45)

RECONVENE SESSION (10:45-10:50)

**4. (10:50-11:20): Donna Woodford, Assistant Professor of English.
“Shakespeare for my Grandmother: Healing, Art, and Nature in King Lear”**

Shakespeare’s King Lear is set in a world of chaos. This chaos is reflected both in the natural world, with its storms and eclipses, and in the human world, with its acts of senseless cruelty. But the final scenes of the play, though tragic, offer some glimmer of hope, since they suggest the potential for spiritual healing through art and through the triumph of human compassion over cruelty. In this talk I will discuss the process of writing the final chapter of my book on King Lear. This chapter was largely inspired by my grandmother, and I will explain what she, unknowingly, helped me to understand about King Lear, what King Lear helped me to understand about my grandmother, and what both my grandmother and Shakespeare taught me about healing.

Prior to coming to Winchester, Donna Woodford taught at the University of New Orleans. She has published articles on Shakespeare and English Renaissance literature in *English Language Notes* and in an edited collection titled *Performing Maternity in Early Modern England*. She is also active in several scholarly societies and has presented papers and conducted workshops at national conferences. She recently completed her book, *Understanding King Lear: A Student Casebook to Issues, Sources, and Historical Documents*, which places the play in context by providing relevant historical documents and by discussing the play's relevance to current issues.

**5. (11:20-11:50): John Copenhaver, Professor of Religion.
"Cultivating Awe: Nature as a Window to the Sacred"**

The elusive experience of awe is nearly universal in human experience. It is an especially useful concept in helping students understand the experience of the sacred/the holy. There are many sources for awe but nature is one of the most accessible and most common. This presentation explores the ways nature inspires awe and sometimes mediates religious experience. SU students have been reading the initial chapter of a book Prof. Copenhaver is writing about awe and his presentation will incorporate their reflections.

Ordained in the United Methodist Church, John Copenhaver earned the Master of Divinity degree at Fuller Theological Seminary. His key areas of academic interest are spirituality, interfaith dialogue, the contemporary dialogue between science and religion, and the philosophy of nonviolence. His current project is investigating the category of awe as a cross cultural experience that can help students grasp the nature of religious experience. Awe is not necessarily a religious experience, but it can mediate it.