

Program

Introduction (**Kerstin Schmidt**)

Prof. **Eric J. Sandeen**, Ph.D. (American Studies, University of Wyoming):

Exploring a Wasteland of *Violent Legacies*: Richard Misrach and the Nuclear Landscape of Nevada

Prof. Dr. **Christoph Ribbat** (American Studies, Paderborn):

Edward Burtynsky's Epiphany: The Photobook's Ecological Footprint

Prof. Dr. **Anke Ortlepp** (American Studies, Munich):

Clipped Wings and Broken Noses: Documenting the Limits of Mobility

– Coffee Break

Prof. Dr. **Christof Decker** (American Studies, Munich):

Modern Photography and the Aesthetics of Abandonment

Dr. **Anna Flügge** (American Studies, Munich):

The Waste Land in Walker Evans' Photography

Susanne Leikam, M.A. (American Studies, Regensburg):

Navigating Urban Disasterscapes: Photographic Representations of Natural Disasters in San Francisco's Bay Area at the Turn of the Nineteenth into the Twentieth Century

– Coffee break

Prof. Dr. **Christoph Wagner** (Art History, Regensburg):

The Constructed Documentary: Land Art and Photography

Prof. Dr. **Stefanie Diekmann** (Theater Studies, Munich):

"Pictures of Garbage" – The Work of Vik Muniz and Lucy Walker in *Waste Land* (2010)

PD Dr. **Kerstin Schmidt** (American Studies, Munich):

Manufactured Landscapes – Aesthetic Resistance

Contemporary documentary photography has been preoccupied with the effects of globalization, technology, and industrialization on landscapes as well as cityscapes in North America. What photographer Edward Burtynsky calls "manufactured landscapes" or historian David Nye refers to as "anti-landscapes" has come to define our understanding of both supposedly pristine, 'natural' environments and of urban areas that are defiled by the waste of a consumerist, industrial life-style. Photographers such as Richard Misrach, Edward Burtynsky, Stan Douglas, Lewis Baltz, Terry Evans, or Mitch Epstein have frequently explored the conditions of our public places, our housing conditions, our industrial parks and commercial areas. Despite great differences in their work – some, such as Richard Misrach's *Violent Legacies: Three Cantos* (1992), are more apocalyptic than others – all of them investigate the marks and traces of human presence and human intervention in these 'altered', often decaying landscapes.

New documentary photography has produced complex works of art whose aesthetic beauty stands in stark relief with the obvious horror/negativity of contemporary "waste lands." In a comment on his own work, Terry Evans says that the photographs reveal "the prairie in all its disturbed, cultivated, inhabited, ingratiated, militarized, raped, and beloved complexity." By the same token, Burtynsky and his fellow photographers question the notions of engagement and truth commonly associated with the documentary mode. Instead their works are saturated with self-conscious gestures toward the "making of a place" in progress, thereby suggesting ideas of 'documentary invention' rather than observation.

As Miles Orvell observes in his history of American photography, these pictures remind not only Americans but people regardless of citizenship of the "responsibilities of civilization." In discussing the complex aesthetics of 'waste lands' frequently found in contemporary documentary photography this one-day symposium thus also emphasizes the politics of photographic representation and aesthetic sensibility as well as ethical/ecological concerns.



in cooperation with American Studies, Regensburg

For more information, contact KerstinSchmidt@lmu.de