



Theme G: Living in The Arctic
Abstracts

ID: 75 - Arctic Voices in Art and Literature

Conveners

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Gendering Arctic Memory: Understanding the Legacy of Josephine Diebitsch-Peary

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Keywords: Arctic, Gender, History, Memory, Exploration literature.

The study of memory cultures often foregrounds the recovery of denied historical truths, with the recognition that social and cultural norms not only shape canonical versions of the past, but continue to be complicit in legitimised forms of forgetting and erasure. This paper investigates the intersections between personal archives and other forms of cultural expression in acts of collective memorialization and forgetting. Using the personal archives of Josephine Diebitsch-Peary, the research introduces the concept of coloniality to studying Arctic memory cultures by examining the role of gender in the context of Arctic exploration literature. The paper concludes that an understanding of the coloniality of knowledge and its connections to epistemic violence is crucial to the study of memory and historical legacy in the Arctic.

Mapping and Materiality: Inuit Cartography in Greenland

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Keywords: Inuit, Greenland, Map-Making, Art History

This paper situates examples of Inuit map-making from across Greenland in contrast with Anglo-American imperial cartography from the nineteenth century; and considers how these pressure the connection between cartography and art making, colonialism and Indigeneity. The primary focus is on the Inuit hunter Silas Sandgreen's driftwood and sealskin Map of the Crown Prince Islands, Disko Bay, Greenland (1926), identified as a mediator between Inuit tradition and colonial geographical aids. Located at the entrance to Disko Bay on the west coast of Greenland, the now-abandoned Kronprinsen Ejland, or Kitsissut and Imerissoq Islands, and previously Whalefish Islands, have operated under many different names and existed across many colonial frameworks. They mark a critical and centuries-long meeting point between the local Inuit community; the Dutch and British whalers; expeditionary Anglo-American attempts to navigate the North-West Passage; and the Danish colonial settlers. Sandgreen's map, commissioned by the U.S. Library of Congress, contrasts with other known forms of Inuit geographical representation, notably the Ammassalik wooden maps of East Greenland, through its adaptation of western styles of map-making to an indigenous perspective on materiality and spatial representation. As such, this paper addresses how these tangible and tactile aids adapt an indigenous engagement and relationship with materiality, to colonial and Inuit traditions and audiences alike.

Masters of the Arctic. Art Historical and Political Dimensions of a Touring “Inuit Art” Exhibition (1989–1994)

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Keywords: Inuit Art Exhibition, Climate Summits, Agency, Imperialism

The travelling exhibition *Masters of the Arctic* was first inaugurated in New York City in 1989 on the occasion of World Environment Day and then travelled until 1994 to various locations in the US, Canada, Latin America and Asia. The exhibition contained mainly contemporary small soapstone sculptures by “Inuit artists” from Canada, Alaska, Greenland and Siberia, and was sponsored by the US-American multi-level marketing company Amway. How and to what extent were “arctic voices” made visible or limited through the exhibition? To what extent did this exhibition employ or legitimize neo-colonial, imperial practices? In order to address these issues, I will problematize several art historical and curatorial as well as political and economic aspects of the exhibition.

Samuel Hearne's Arctic Animals: on cultural blindness, knowledge transfers and hope

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Keywords: Samuel Hearne, Animals, Traditional Knowledge, Science, Knowledge Transfer

Samuel Hearne's celebrated early contact narrative, *A Journey to the Northern Ocean* (1792), has in recent years been challenged by scholars pointing out how Hearne's journey to the Coppermine River supported the structurally violent colonialist enterprise of the Hudson Bay Company and served the company's need to show off its strategic geopolitical worth (Cameron 2015; Milligan and McCreary 2011). This paper attempts to do justice to the Indigenous people with whom Hearne traveled by getting beyond analyses that reduce his representations of the natural environment to mere tools in a colonialist inscription of the Canadian Arctic as empty space. I argue that our (Western) cultural blindness towards animals should not block our acknowledgement of the fact that Hearne's text is rich in both human and animal life. With this comes a recognition not only of other cultures' more intimate relationships with animals, but also of the transfer of knowledge from Denésquliné culture – via Hearne's *Journal* – into the scientific discourses of his time. Hearne's engaged and ecologically informed portrayal of Arctic animals was ahead of its time. It might today inspire a more sustainable development of the region, but only if we recognize how it is at present – partly due to the activities of the Hudson Bay Company – ecologically as well as culturally emptier than in the past.

Un-highlighting icons from museum collections

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Keywords: Art, Art History, Decolonization, Sápmi, Museums Are Not Neutral

This presentation sets out to decolonize the Nordnorsk Kunstmuseum in Sápmi, Northern Norway, through an analysis of French painter François-Auguste Biard's *Le Pasteur Læstadius instruisant des Lapons* (The Pastor Læstadius Teaching Laplanders), a nineteenth-century (1840) painting and an iconic work from the museum's collections. Based on Biard's travels with a French scientific expedition (the *La Recherche*) to the Arctic in 1839, the imaginative aspects of the painting underscore his outsider view of Sámi people. Taking this painting as my reference point, I start by discussing the object within the colonial context it was painted. From there, I examine the 2002 acquisition and subsequent display of the painting by the museum. Contextualizing the painting against these two backdrops, the colonization of Sápmi and the institutional history of the museum, is crucial to acknowledging the histories from which, I argue, the artwork is inseparably connected. The problem is rooted in the need to evaluate the painting contextually, paying close attention to the historical contexts and being aware of my own situatedness. Positioned in this realm exposes institutionalized colonial legacy and thereby inherent need to disrupt the painting. My investigation uses decolonial theory as a framework to acknowledge institutional blind spots, counter museum neutrality, and recognize the interwoven complexities of the past, present, and future of Sámi and Norwegian co-existence.

Messy episodes. Indigenous countersigns in Ludwig Choris's ethnographic portraits of Kamchadal, Aleut and Chukchi (1822)

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Keywords: Aleut, Kamchadal, Chukchi, Indigenous Portraits, 19th Century

Examining representations of Aleut, Kamchadal, and Chukchi people in Ludwig York Choris's *Voyage pittoresque autour du monde* (Paris 1822), my presentation discusses methods of aesthetic and scientific visualisation in an early nineteenth-century research expedition. The album was the outcome of Choris's participation in the second Russian circumnavigation (1815-1818) and is an invaluable ethnographic record of indigenous cultures in the North Pacific. I use the concept of "indigenous countersigns" (Douglas 2014) to investigate whether Aleut, Kamchadal, and Chukchi agency is inscribed in this little studied European work on indigenous peoples. Going beyond the common binary between "us" and "the others", I discuss how indigenous presence is still traceable in these images. Further questions addressed concern the illustrations' intended purpose and the influence of the contact zone wherein Choris and the indigenous actors had to meet for the drawings to be made in the first place. Besides the album *Voyage pittoresque* my presentation relies on Choris's private journal (published for the first time in 1999), unpublished letters of Choris to Adelbert von Chamisso, another member of the Russian circumnavigation (to be found in the Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin – Preussischer Kulturbesitz) and around thirty, hitherto unknown watercolours by Choris (part of the Beinecke Collection, Yale).

Social Encounters: Portraits of the Yup'ik Women of Taciq, Alaska, 1850-51

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Keywords: Indigenous, Portraits, Arctic, Nineteenth Century, Women

During the mid-nineteenth century, over thirty maritime expeditions searched for the infamous Franklin expedition sent by the British Admiralty in 1845 that had vanished into the Northwest Passage. Several of these expeditions and individuals had extensive and sustained contact with Indigenous peoples who lived in the region. The officers of these expeditions, particularly surgeons and assistant surgeons, were expected to keep accurate visual and written records and in the case of the latter, were encouraged to keep details on natural history, including ethnographic information. The overt racism of many of these documents speaks to the attitudes of the era, yet despite this they are replete with valuable, if flawed, information. Through examining a selection of portraits that depict the women of Taciq (Saint Michael) in Norton Sound, Alaska, complexities of visual encounters can be revealed as inherently social encounters, often leaving traces of Indigenous agency. This paper is organised in two main sections. The first deals with the complexities surrounding visual interactions between outsider and insider in the Arctic during the early to mid-nineteenth century; the second looks in more detail at specific portraits, or visual encounters, drawing out the possible circumstances surrounding their creation.

The portrayal of Inuit and Sami in the Nordic polar exploration literature of the late 19th century

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Keywords: Inuit, Sami, Nansen, Astrup, Sverdrup,

I would like to contribute to the 'Arctic Science Summit Week' by discussing my Master's Thesis on the portrayal of Inuit and Sami in the Nordic polar exploration literature of the late 19th and early 20th century. The subject of the study are three expedition reports: Fridtjof Nansen's *Paa ski over Grønland* (1890), Eivind Astrup's *Blandt Nordpolens Naboer* (1895) and Otto Sverdrup's *Nyt Land Bd. 1 and 2* (1903). The analysis is based on the premise, that all three texts – even if they do not contain openly chauvinistic or pejorative statements about the indigenous peoples of the Arctic – are permeated by the colonial discourses of their time. To unveil these text-inherent discourses, I concentrate on the narrations of nature and culture and the role that space plays as a discursive framework. In conclusion, the study finds that Sami and Inuit are functionalised as 'Other' for the negotiation of the authors' own cultural identities in all three texts. Their portrayal of the indigenous people is inseparably intertwined with their imaginations of the Arctic space and the ambitions they have towards it.

Traces of an Arctic Voice: the Case of Qalaseq

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Keywords: Qaanaaq, Qalaseq, Exploration, Contact Zone, Concurrences

This paper analyses the portrait (artist unknown, National Maritime Museum, London) of a young Inughuit, Qalaseq, who involuntarily was brought back to England from Qaanaaq (Northwest Greenland) with H.T. Austin's expedition in 1851. Although never displayed as an ethnographic image, it seems easy to denounce this portrait as a clear-cut expression of European colonial dominance. Representing the sitter in two views, en face and in profile, and as wearing a black suit and white shirt, the portrait betrays an interest in nineteenth-century racial and civilizing ideologies. Alongside the problematic content of this painting is the simple fact that the portrait testifies to his presence and participation in British society and an as of yet untold story in the history of Arctic exploration. Bringing in the trail of Indigenous and European sources that this portrait connects to, I trace the nature and terms of Qalaseq's stay in British society. As a decolonizing strategy, I use the concept and methodology of concurrences (Fur 2017). Examining moments of entanglement and competing truth claims in the European and Arctic sources about or relating to Qalaseq, my intention is to voice the concurrent (Arctic) perspectives on the Arctic, exploration and British imperialism contained in this material.