

Call for Papers

Sussex Modernists and Transformations in the Twentieth-Century Landscape

One Day Conference

Wednesday 7th June 2017

Centre for Modernist Studies, University of Sussex

This interdisciplinary conference will explore the ways in which modernist writers, visual artists, composers, photographers and architects, living or working in Sussex in the twentieth century, re-conceived and represented nature, landscape and the coast in an era of the radical transformation of the built and natural environment.

Sussex may have seemed a place of retreat from the city for many leading modernists: Henry James at Rye; Ford Madox Ford and Joseph Conrad at Winchelsea; W. B. Yeats and Ezra Pound in the Ashdown Forest; T. E. Hulme at Rustington; D. H. Lawrence at Greatham; Eric Gill and David Jones at Ditchling; Virginia and Leonard Woolf at Rodmell; Vanessa Bell and Duncan Grant at Charleston, near Firle; John Maynard Keynes at Tilton Farm, near Berwick; Frank Bridge and Benjamin Britten at Friston; Lee Miller and Roland Penrose at Farley Farm, Muddles Green; Edward Burra and Malcolm Lowry in Rye; Graham Greene and Patrick Hamilton in Brighton; Michael Tippett at Wadhurst; John Banting, Grace Pailthorpe, Reuben Mednikoff in Hastings; Edith Rimmington in Bexhill; Paul Nash at Iden; Eric Ravilious at Eastbourne; Peggy Angus, John Piper and Laszlo Moholy-Nagy at Furlongs near Lewes; Keith Vaughan at Pagham; Ivon Hitchens at Petworth. E.M.Forster was at prep school in Eastbourne; Ben Nicholson lived at Rottingdean and was at school in Seaford; Evelyn Waugh was at Lancing College.

Yet the built and natural Sussex they inhabited was one caught up in the transformations of modernity. Wealthy Edwardians constructed large country-houses while towns and villages expanded; in the 1920s speculative developments on the Downs and on the Sussex coast were catalysts in the formation in 1926 of the Campaign to Protect Rural England, a body whose commitments to protecting the countryside through planning attracted the support not only of Sussex landowners and traditionalists but members of the Bloomsbury Group as well. 'They've sold the Down above the village,' Virginia Woolf wrote to Vita Sackville-West, 'and it's all to go in plots, and two bungalows are already being run up, and it's all ruined for ever and ever...don't see any point living here in a suburb of Brighton.'

The inter-war and immediate post-war periods saw a boom in seaside leisure in Sussex, along with the creation of holiday bungalows and holiday camps and the exploration of the countryside through rambling, cycling and motoring. Erich Mendelsohn and Serge Chermayeff's De La Warr Pavilion at Bexhill (1936) was one of

a number of controversial modernist buildings built on the Sussex coast in the 1930s – from Marine Court (1937) in Hastings, designed to resemble an ocean liner to R.W.H. Jones' Saltdean Lido (1938). In 1947, Crawley was named as site of one of the first post-war New Towns, making possible the expansion of Gatwick in the 1950s into a major international airport. Basil Spence's University of Sussex (1962) was the first of the new universities built in Britain in the 1960s, sited in a down-land valley in an area of outstanding beauty. How successfully were utopian designs integrated within their rural or coastal landscapes?

We welcome 20-minute papers from academics, practitioners and activists. Papers on the following and any topics are invited. Please send by **May 5th 2017** a 200 word abstract to the co-organiser of the Conference, Dr Alistair Davies at H.A.Davies@sussex.ac.uk.

- How do the similarities and differences between modernism as a formal practice and modernity as a transforming process play out in the writing, painting, music, photography and architecture of the Sussex modernists?
- How did archaeology, with new readings of the coast and landscape, influence modernist practices?
- How did modernist writers adapt traditional genres – the pastoral, the georgic, the elegy, the country-house novel, the satire – in order to understand and represent the transformation of the landscape?
- How were ecological concerns reflected in modernist practices?
- How were the coast and landscape represented in the wake and under the shadow of war?
- How were the coast and landscape represented in the era of mass leisure?
- How do Sussex modernists explore landscape and memory?
- How do Sussex modernists explore the southern, geographical self?
- How do Sussex modernists link the global with a sense of place?

For further details, please see the Sussex Modernism website:

<https://sussexmodernism.wordpress.com/sussex-modernists-and-transformations-in-the-twentieth-century-landscape/>