the Whitworth

Organisms/structures/cultures: A symposium on art and science

3 June 2015
2pm–6pm
Grand Hall, The Whitworth

Attendance is free and open to everyone

Abstracts

Noses and skin flaps: Gaspare Tagliacozzo's De Curtorum Chirurgia per insitionem (1597)
Cordelia Warr (Senior Lecturer, Art History & Visual Studies)

Gaspare Tagliacozzi's *De curtorum chirurgia per insitionem* (Venice, 1597) details the method he practiced for nasal reconstruction, which relied on skin flaps from the upper arm being grafted onto the remaining part of the patient's nose. The publication includes a series of woodcuts illustrating the various parts of the procedure. Taking Tagliacozzi's work as a starting point, this paper will consider the implications of skin flaps in medical illustration of the sixteenth century.

What are siphonophores and what do they have to do with music?
Camden Reeves (Senior Lecturer, Music)

My interest in biology started 20 years ago as a source of poetic inspiration (basically: finding weird organisms to inspire strange music!), but it has increasingly become more concrete over the years. I have written many pieces inspired by aquatic organisms: squid and siphonophores mainly. The structure of siphonophores informed the strategies of my two string quartets. Here the inspiration was more than just poetic: it was the ontological questions raised by the ambiguity as to whether siphonophores constitute single organisms or many, which I found analogous to the musical identity of a string quartet: four minds acting as one, yet maintaining individuality.

"And what about you: are you crystallising?": Crystals and crystallography in nineteenth-century art and science
Anirudha Dhanawade (Teaching Fellow, Art History & Visual Studies)

In the nineteenth century, writers and thinkers as varied as Stendhal, Hegel and John Ruskin became fascinated by crystals and by the developing science of crystallography. This paper looks at the scientific work of Rene Just Haüy, the father of modern crystallography, and explores its cultural influence. Particular attention is paid to the images which Haüy produced as part of his work. Haüy's crystallographic pictures suggest not only how science has influenced culture but how cultural history can be used to make sense of scientific representations, and how both science and art can be seen as part of the same, complex attempt to make sense of the world and of material reality.

DNA and RNA sequences as systems for music composition
Mario Duarte (PhD student, Music)

This research explores the generation of self-organizing musical structures from the use of DNA and RNA sequences, in which data could be transformed into musical parameters in order to generate sonic material and

establish a compositional system. This paper proposes to incorporate strong additional features in the use of mapping, while extending the research into musical gesture, throughout the incorporation of typomorphological language into the DNA and RNA coding process.

Tangled lines

David Lomas (Professor, Art History & Visual Studies)

Ranging across science and culture, my talk will explore the tangle as a physical structure and as a metaphor. Tangles are linked with sleep (Briar Rose), dreams (Freud's tangled dream thoughts), and forgetful oblivion (Tau protein in dementia). On the one hand, the tangle is associated with a surplus of life (Darwin's tangled bank) and, on the other, with death and decomposition (myth of Medusa; Medieval imagery of worm-eaten cadavers). As an example of complexity and disorder, the tangle affords an alternative to the modernist grid. I shall also consider the tangled line in mediumistic and automatic drawing as tapping into some of these connotations.

Towards hydrocitizenship: Going with the flow

Stephen Bottoms (Professor, Drama)

'More is currently known about the extremely complex and uncertain nature of the hydrometeorology of floods and its technical aspects than about people's behaviour' (Keogh et al 2011). People remain something of a mystery to scientists, even though scientists are people. Could this be a key insight for humanities research? The fact that we do not behave as engineers would like us to presents all kinds of problems in the communication of flood risk and other hydrological issues. This presentation will reflect on recent and current research in this area, and on various attempts to use theatre, performance and 'curated conversations' in bridging some of the conceptual gaps separating water professionals and local communities.

At the Edge of their Universe: Artists, Scientists and Outsiders at CERN

Camilla Mørk Røstvik (PhD student, Art History & Visual Studies)

An art historical exploration of the European Organisation for Nuclear Physics, CERN. Deemed one of the most important experiments of our time, this talk investigates the role of the artist and outsider amongst the scientists and many interests of CERN, with a particular focus on the lack of diversity within the fields of both high-energy physics and 'SciArt.'

Beyond Dystopia? Fear of science in contemporary theatre

Simon Parry (Lecturer, Drama and Arts Management)

This paper will explore how contemporary theatre offers speculative scenarios about developments in science and technology that draw on and move beyond visions of dystopian futures. Such work, from global blockbuster musicals to experimental solo performance, articulates and often integrates a range of popular fears and anxieties from imagined ecological catastrophe to the controversial limits of medical research.