



TOPOGRAPHIES OF THE OBSOLETE

A one-day symposium
exploring inter-disciplinary
perspectives surrounding
North Staffordshire's post-
industrial landscape.

Saturday 7 November 2015, 10-5pm

Ashmolean Museum of Art and Archaeology
University of Oxford
Beaumont Street
Oxford OX1 2PH
www.ashmolean.org





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In 'The Natural History of Staffordshire', Dr Robert Plot, the first keeper of the Ashmolean Museum describes an early account of the county's pre-industrial pottery manufacturing during the late 17th century. Apart from documenting potters' practices and processes, Plot details the region's natural clays that were once fundamental to its rise as a world renowned industrial centre for ceramics. Yet in recent decades, the factories and communities of labour that historically developed around these natural resources have been subject to dramatic downturn. Global economics have resulted in much of the region's ceramic industry outsourcing to low-cost overseas production.

Today, despite ongoing attempts to regenerate the city of Stoke-on-Trent, the economic fallout and human cost of the decline of traditional industry remain omnipresent throughout the six towns. Plot's pre-industrial mapping of North Staffordshire in the 1680's, has been echoed through the artistic research project *Topographies of the Obsolete**, which has recently surveyed the region's post-industrial landscape through a range of multi-media responses primarily centred around the former Spode factory site. Through various phases of on-site practice-led investigation, interconnected strands of discourse emerged that examine the socio-economic impact of globalization upon community and place, the contemporary ruin, and the artist as post-industrial archivist/archaeologist.

Topographies of the Obsolete frames a particular point in time through which artists have opened up a different perspective to the complexities of socio-economic decline addressed by politicians, economists, historians and ex-employees. It documents both the aftermath of the Spode factory closure and the repurposing of its post-industrial fabric through processes of culture-led regeneration.

This one-day symposium will reflect upon this recent history. The topics uncovered through *Topographies of the Obsolete* will be expanded upon by a panel of experts previously unconnected to the project, from the fields of art and design, anthropology, urban sociology, critical theory and cultural geography. It will offer a broad range of inter-disciplinary perspectives surrounding the effects of de-industrialisation upon communities and landscapes, and the urban renewal of such cities through art and culture-led strategies.

Speakers include:

Dr. Tim Edensor (UK), Dr. Alice Mah (UK), Prof. Maris Boyd Gillette (USA), Prof. Anne Helen Mydland (NO), Prof. Neil Brownsword (UK), Prof. Jake Kaner (UK), Prof. Malcolm Miles (UK), Prof. Juliet Simpson (UK).

Tickets:

£45

£25 students.

Tea / coffee provided. Lunch not included, but details of local eateries will be available on the day.

Booking:

Online: www.oxfordplayhouse.com/ticketsoxford

By phone: (0044) 01865 305305

In person: Oxford Playhouse Box Office

The symposia 'Topographies of the Obsolete' is organized by Bucks New University and Bergen Academy of Art and Design in collaboration with the Ashmolean Museum of Art and Archaeology, and in association with the British Ceramics Biennial and The Clay Foundation.

**Topographies of the Obsolete* is an international artistic research project initiated by Bergen Academy of Art and Design that explores the post-industrial landscape and its associated socio-economic histories, industrial architecture, production remnants through a range of interdisciplinary artistic practice. The project primarily explores how ceramic and clay can be understood as both material and subject in contemporary art practice. Website: <http://topographies.khib.no>



Topographies of the Obsolete is funded by the Norwegian Artistic Research Programme and Bergen Academy of Art and Design