

JSPS symposia 2011 (5th-6th January)

'Risky engagements: encounters between science, art and public health.'



ABSTRACT:

This symposium aims to explore the complexities, uncertainties and risks involved in the communication of scientific understanding as an issue of art and as an issue of public health. Concerns for the public understanding of science have focused on the idea of participation asking what it involves and what it means to engage with scientific knowledge. Participation may be conceived differently by scientists, policy makers and members of the public and result in a struggle or conflict, with implications for biomedical ethics and for political interests. These struggles bring into question the notion of a uniform 'public' in a globalized context by uncovering the different social processes and national and institutional perspectives that are at play in any situation. This symposia, which brings together viewpoints from Japan with those from elsewhere, aims to show how the complexity of the connections between science and the public are particular but also uncertain and that aesthetic engagements of science with the arts offers an opportunity, albeit a risky one, for turning that uncertainty into a creative engagement that may be critically insightful and also productive for health and wellbeing. An aesthetic approach to the communication of scientific knowledge is dependent on forms of collaboration that involve working across disciplinary boundaries and bringing together different methods and materials. These collaborations have the capacity to draw the public into a more critically involved relationship with scientific knowledge, as its devices, materialities, languages and calculative mechanisms are imaginatively re-worked. In these processes the normative experiences of participants are often invoked and the authority of science and technology and of the expert may come to be considered more skeptically. The danger of such aesthetic collaborations is that trust in science is diminished and the betterment of public health undermined to no clear purpose other than the creation of an un-reflexive ambiguity and an artistic conceit. However, this symposium proposes that such risks are worth taking and aims to show through examples of different kinds of participation and collaboration, the political and ethical imperatives of working so as to combine social responsibility with a critical, creative attitude to problems of public health.

Organisers:

Kozo Hiramatsu, Japan Society for Promotion of Science (UK director)
Rupert Cox, University of Manchester (rupert.cox@manchester.ac.uk)
Angus Carlyle, University of the Arts, London (a.carlyle@lcc.arts.ac.uk)

Delegates:

Takashi Miyakita, Kumamoto Gakuen University; Masami Yuki, Kanazawa University;
Toshio Kuwako, Tokyo Technical University; Harutoshi Funabashi, Hosei University;
Penny Harvey, University of Manchester; Andrew Irving, University of Manchester; Aya
Homei, University of Manchester; Peter Cusack, University of the Arts London; John
Wynne, University of the Arts London; Michael Gallagher, University of Glasgow; Griet
Scheldeman, University of Lancaster.

TIMETABLE

Thursday 5th January: Whitworth art gallery, Manchester. Lecture Theatre.

14:00-16:00: Cox, Carlye & Hiramatsu will present and discuss their project *Air Pressure*.

16.00-17.00: Reception.

17:00-19.00: Sound Art Concert.

Peter Cusack - *Waterlines, the wrong dredger*.

John Wynne – *Part and Parcel*

David Berezan - *Nijo castle*.

Friday 6th January: University of Manchester, School of Social Science, Arthur Lewis bldg,
2nd floor, Boardroom.

9.00-9.30: Opening remarks: Hiramatsu, Cox, Carlyle.

9:30-11.00: Harvey – *Imaging Waste Futures*

Scheldeman - *Making the Arctic, polar scientists at work*

Yuki - *Minamata, Chernobyl, and Fukushima: Literary*

Resistance to a Discourse of Toxic Food

11.00-11.30: coffee break.

11.30-12.30: Homei – *'We Are Not Guinea Pigs': Engaging with radiation
sickness and a US-Japan medical dispute after the Lucky Dragon
incident*

Funabashi – *The Fukushima Nuclear Disaster as a man-made
calamity*

12.30-13.30: Lunch

13.30-13.45: Presentation by Japan Society for the Promotion of Science UK.

13.45-14.45: Irving - *Detours and Puzzles in the Land of the Living: Towards an
Anthropology of Contingency and Necessity*

Wynne – *Risky Practise: Artists in the Transplant Ward*

14.45-15.15: coffee break

15.15-16.15: Miyakita - *Quality of life and community governance in the region facing decade of social hardships-Fifty-five years experience of Minamata disease and revitalization of Minamata and Ashikita region*
Kuwako – tba

16.15-16.45: Break

16.45-17.45: Cusack – *Sonic Journalism*
Gallagher - *Artistic experiments in social science*

17.45: Concluding remarks

OTHER INFORMATION

Exhibition - Air Pressure (5 November 2011 – 12 February 2012)

This symposium is connected to the project and exhibition Air Pressure which the organisers of the symposia have created at the Whitworth art gallery.

A brief explanation of the exhibit is as follows:

Our globalised contemporary world has been made possible and shaped fundamentally by international air travel; but at what costs to our sense of place and our wellbeing? This multi-media installation explores the clash between traditional farming life in Japan and the technology and economy of international travel. Two remaining farming families still live at the end of the runway at Narita International Airport in Japan. This exhibition follows one family who has refused to move elsewhere despite pressure from the authorities since the planning and construction of the airport in the 1970s. Air Pressure uses sound recordings, on-site and archive film, to represent the sonic experience of living and working on this farm, which is surrounded by the airport's infrastructure and constantly monitored by surveillance and sound measuring mechanisms. Air Pressure allows the audience a vicarious, immersive experience of the site and an opportunity to address debates on the impact of aircraft noise on our lives.

Air Pressure is supported by a Wellcome Trust Arts Award. In partnership with Asia Triennial Manchester 2011, initiated by Shisha, a festival of current contemporary visual art and craft from Asia.

For more information visit:

w: www.asiatriennialmanchester.com

w: www.shisha.net

w: <http://airpressure.posterous.com>

Maps and useful links

University of Manchester Campus map;

<http://www.manchester.ac.uk/medialibrary/maps/campusmap.pdf>

Whitworth art-gallery <http://www.whitworth.manchester.ac.uk/>