

Report to BAFTSS

Event: **Journeys through Colour: experimentation, realism and artifice in non-fiction travel film**

Main participants

Professor Jeffrey Geiger (University of Essex, organiser)
Dr Liz Watkins (University of Leeds, BAFTSS Colour & Film SIG co-convenor)
Jan Faull (Royal Holloway, early career researcher)
Dr Natasha Eaton (UCL, scheduled to chair but unable to attend)

Weblinks

RAI - <https://raifilm.org.uk/event/journeys-through-colour-experimentation-realism-and-artifice-in-non-fiction-travel-film/>
BAFTSS (includes photos of event) - <https://colourandfilm.wordpress.com/abstracts-journeys-through-colour/>

This event was held at the Royal Anthropological Institute on Fitzroy Square in London on 27 February 2017. (Note: This was a free, public event, developed in conjunction the RAI, an independent charity organisation. It was not affiliated with UCU actions.)

The event was open to academics, members of BAFTSS, and members of public. It was free of charge but registration through Eventbrite was requested. It was a well-attended and smooth running event, though due to inclement weather (the ‘beast from the east’), London was covered in ice and snow and getting around was less convenient than usual. For this reason, the attendance was recorded as over 40 at its height by the organiser, though initially 99 had signed up through Eventbrite (maximum of 100 allowed by the RAI), with 8 people in reserve (a registration screen shot is attached to report).

The papers were developed from the panel which fortuitously brought this group together at the BAFTSS conference in Bristol, 2017. It was an excellent opportunity to feature the work of the BAFTSS colour SIG at a non-academic venue along with members of the public. The RAI is a registered charity, with a legacy dating back to its establishment in 1871. The RAI runs a regular series of well-advertised public events, seminars, and exhibitions, along with the biennial RAI International Film Festival.

The event was followed by an informal reception where it was possible to make further links with attendees and members of the RAI, as well as discussing BAFTSS Colour & Film SIG issues.

The organisers and members of the BAFTSS colour SIG are immensely grateful to BAFTSS for the funding which made this event possible.

Overview of event content

A study of colour in film – its multifarious technologies and practices – offers a way to question teleological film histories that have written of a progression toward ‘colour realism’. This event explores the aesthetics, rhetoric and meaning of colour in travel films of the 1920s and 1930s. Colour is entwined with the practices of film making, representation and exhibition which associate spectacle and the fantastic as integral to the formation of images and narratives in non-fiction film. The presentations begin to unpick a complex of materials and techniques utilised to mediate views of the world to geographically diverse audiences. Colour signals a discourse of fiction and non-fiction, realism and expression, nature and artifice in travel and expedition films. The speakers discuss topics from the rhetoric of Kodachrome’s ‘living color’ in amateur travel films of the Pacific to the observation and interpretation of ‘natural colour’ in early 1900s expedition films to Everest and the Antarctic. How are landscapes and travel represented in film?

Participant presentations

Jeffrey Geiger, 'Cinematic Gestures: Flows and Disruptions on the *Yankee Voyage*, 1936-38.'

Jan Faull, 'What Colours Are at the Top of the World?'

Dr Elizabeth Watkins, 'Photographic experiments: colour and spectacle in early 1900s non-fiction Polar expedition films.'

Financial breakdown

Grant awarded: £235.20

Catering: £50 paid to the RAI (coffee and tea, biscuits, wine, water)

Speaker travel costs:

Jeffrey Geiger £72

Liz Watkins £19

Jan Faull £0 (lives locally and has a travel card)

Bursaries: 2 x £60 offered but not claimed (UCU strike day and weather). In consultation with Anna Claydon, the bursaries were offered to support travel and accommodation for postgraduates/ early career researchers who were speaking at the Colour and Film SIG's Colour in Context Symposium.

Outcomes and follow-up

The event was extremely useful as a networking platform and for disseminating research of BAFTSS members and the colour SIG, and the participants will be exploring further funding options for collaborations on the theme of colour photography, cinema and travel. Each paper presentation will be adapted for publication. Future outputs would involve a larger conference on the theme of journeys in colour.

Again, the participants want to express their gratitude to BAFTSS and the SIG fund for making this event possible.

Yours sincerely,

Jeffrey Geiger

Director, Centre for Film and Screen Media
University of Essex