

In Limbo. Robert Smithson en Europe

Colloque international organisé par Olivier Schefer et Riccardo Venturi

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Université Paris 1 - Panthéon-Sorbonne

Résumés & Biographies

Francesco Careri, *Stalker Rundown. L'Odyssée Suburbaine de Smithson et la pratique de Stalker*

L'intervention est centrée sur l'œuvre *A tour of the monuments of Passaic* de Robert Smithson, en référence à la marche initiatique du collectif *Stalker Attraverso i Territori Attuali*, qui s'est déroulée à Rome il y a exactement 30 ans, en octobre 1995, et dans laquelle Smithson est associé à d'autres références telles que Pier Paolo Pasolini, Guy Debord et Andreï Tarkovski, dont l'action tire son nom.

Francesco Careri est architecte, cofondateur du laboratoire d'art urbain *Stalker* et professeur associé au département d'architecture de l'Université Roma Tre, où il est codirecteur du Master Studi del Territorio/Environmental Humanities et responsable des cours de théorie architecturale, du Laboratoire de Project Architecture and Communauté Émergeantes et du cours itinérant Civic Arts, fondé sur la marche et l'exploration de zones suburbaines négligées. Il est le coordinateur scientifique du Laboratorio di Città Corviale et du Laboratorio CIRCO. Parmi ses principales publications : *Constant. New Babylon, una città nomade*, Turin 2001; *Walkscapes. El andar como práctica estética / La marche comme pratique esthétique*, Barcellona 2002; *Stalker / Savorengo Ker. Dal campo nomadi alla casa di tutti*, Roma 2015; *Pasear, detenerse*, Barcelona 2016, Sao Paulo 2017; *Stalker/Campus Rom*, Matera 2017, avec Lorenzo Romito; *Nomadismo Architettura Ospitalità. Esperienze e azioni dal camminare al CIRCO*, Roma 2020, *Hospedar-se*, Barcelona 2023; *Camminare e Fermarsi*, Mimesis, Milano 2025; *Roma. Guida alla Selva*, Nero Edizioni, Roma 2025 (avec Dario Gentili et Serena Olcuire). (<http://articiviche.blogspot.com>)

Rinaldo Censi, “*Making a point in a designated area*”. Cinéma et mise en site

Dans un texte intitulé “Fragments of a conversation”, daté de 1969, qui traite de Cézanne, Robert Smithson parle de la manière dont le peintre travailla: «Cézanne et ses contemporains ont été contraints de quitter leur atelier par la photographie. Ils étaient en concurrence directe avec la photographie, alors ils se sont rendus sur place (to sites), car la photographie rend la Nature un concept impossible. Elle atténue en quelque sorte le concept même de Nature, dans la mesure où, après la photographie, la terre devient davantage un musée». Avec Smithson, une dialectique s'établit entre le site (un espace naturel) et le non-site (les matériaux recueillis sur place et les photographies exposées dans une galerie, un musée ou, dans le cas d'un film, dans une salle de cinéma). Mais comment définir un site ? Comment le délimiter ? Comment cela se transforme-t-il en un acte de création au cinéma?

Rinaldo Censi, titulaire d'un doctorat en études cinématographiques de l'université de Bologne, enseigne « Restauro del cinema » à l'Académie des beaux-arts de Bologne. Il écrit, traduit et travaille comme *film curator*. Il a écrit un livre sur Yervant Gianikian et Angela Ricci Lucchi (Doppiozero, 2013) et participé à des conférences et à plusieurs ouvrages collectifs (Paolo Gioli, Bruce Conner, Paul Sharits, Martin Arnold, entre autres). Son dernier ouvrage s'intitule *Copie originali. Iperrealismi tra pittura e cinema* (Johan & Levi, 2014). Il a organisé pour la Biennale de Venise (Bibliothèque ASAC) les journées de conférence « Arte nella natura: gli archivi della Biennale e la Land art » (2023).

Markus Karstieß, Eva Schmidt, “Not Exhibition, but Expedition”: Robert Smithson in Europe 1968 to 1973

Between 1968 and 1971, Robert Smithson was part of several legendary exhibitions in Europe. From mid-1971, however, the situation was more marked by the failure of ambitious exhibition projects and by Smithson's decisive refusal to participate in Documenta V in 1972. Our research project, whose findings are currently on display in an exhibition at the Josef Albers Museum in Bottrop, investigates which of his works were shown or produced in Europe during this period, which actors and institutions were involved, and how the experience of traveling significantly influenced his working method.

Starting from a detailed reconstruction of the exhibition contexts in Germany, the study focuses specifically on Smithson's two-month European journey in the summer of 1969 (England/Wales, Rhineland/Ruhr Area, Rome), which proved to be a pivotal moment in his working approach. The specific conditions of working in Europe—site visits, logistical improvisation, and collegial cooperation—led Smithson to open up traditional art production to a mix of planning, delegating, and in situ work. This culminated in 1971 with *Broken Circle/Spiral Hill* in Emmen, Netherlands, the European counterpart to *Spiral Jetty*.

Smithson's European projects are less to be understood as finished works than as situational constellations in which materiality, context, and action are inextricably linked. This opens up a new understanding of the concept of "artworks" in the context of Smithson's practice: The question “What, where and when is the artwork?” becomes a methodological guide that sheds new light on his transatlantic working approach and the aesthetic and conceptual dynamics of his European projects.

Markus Karstieß is an artist, curator, and professor of Fine Art. He studied under Jannis Kounellis at the Kunstakademie Düsseldorf from 1992 to 1998. From 2014 to 2017, he was a guest professor at the Academy of Fine Arts in Munich, and since 2017, he has been Professor of Fine Art Ceramics at the Institute of Artistic Ceramics and Glass (IKKG) at Koblenz University of Applied Sciences.

Since 2014, he has been revisiting the work of Robert Smithson, beginning with excavations related to *Asphalt Rundown* (Rome, 1969). Together with Dr. Eva Schmidt, he was a Research Fellow of the Holt/Smithson Foundation in 2021 and is co-curator of the exhibition *Robert Smithson in Europe* at the Josef Albers Museum Bottrop (27 September 2025 – 22 February 2026).

Eva Schmidt, art historian and curator, was Director of the Museum for Contemporary Art in Siegen from 2004 to 2019, and of the Gesellschaft für Aktuelle Kunst in Bremen from 1992 to 2004. She earned her PhD in 1989 with a dissertation on the media-related and site-specific aspects of Robert Smithson's work. In 2000, together with Kai Vöckler and Sabine Folie, she organized the exhibition *Robert Smithson* at Kunsthalle Wien. On this occasion, the German translation of Smithson's collected writings was published by Walther König Bookstore Publishing in Cologne.

Together with Markus Karstieß, she was a Research Fellow of the Holt/Smithson Foundation in 2021 and is co-curator of the exhibition *Robert Smithson in Europe* at the Josef Albers Museum Bottrop (27 September 2025 – 22 February 2026)

Land Art Lives is an (inter)national program and growing network dedicated to the future of land art. Launched in 2024 with a series of preparatory events, it culminated in the international

conference *Land Art Lives* in October 2024 with speakers like Humberto Moro of Dia Art Foundation, Britta Peters of Urbane Künste Ruhr, Lisa Le Feuvre of Holt/Smithson Foundation and Anja Novak of University of Amsterdam. In 2025, the program continues with a focus on the preservation of original land artworks and the emergence of new forms of land art - for instance with the Holt/Smithson Annual Lecture by artist Susan Philipsz last October.

Within the program we view land art not as a closed chapter in art history but as a living, evolving field. Land Art Lives addresses the development, presentation, and protection of land art, offering a platform for collaboration, knowledge exchange, and dialogue among artists, owners, managers, researchers, policymakers, and the public.

By re-engaging with existing (monumental) works like for example *Broken Circle/Spiral Hill* of Robert Smithson in Emmen (NL) and fostering new (performative) approaches to land art in Flevoland, for example, Land Art Lives aims to strengthen connections between art, landscape, ecology, heritage, and society.

In our talk, we will present land art in the Dutch context as the starting point for an international discussion about maintenance, (land)reclamation and new forms of land art. We aim to explore the Dutch situation within a global context, highlighting strategies for a sustainable future for this unique cultural heritage and reflecting on our evolving relationship with the land and the surface of the earth.

Land Art Lives is initiated by Anne Reenders (Lead Program of Artmuseum *Jij bent M. and Land Art Contemporary*) and Martine van Kampen (director of Land Art Flevoland). Both trained as art historians, we have extensive experience in art and public space as curators and advisors. In recent years, our focus has been on Dutch land art, particularly the Flevoland collection and Robert Smithson's *Broken Circle/Spiral Hill* in Emmen. Since its start, Land Art Lives has collaborated with leading partners including the Cultural Heritage Agency, University of Amsterdam, Stroom Den Haag and Holt/Smithson Foundation.

Lisa Le Feuvre

Robert Smithson's art and ideas vibrate through key questions for the art of the present. In this discussion, Lisa Le Feuvre will introduce the work of Holt/Smithson Foundation, the organization dedicated to the legacy of Robert Smithson. She will discuss how the Foundation understands his creative and critical legacy and highlight the Foundation's attention to working with artists and to thinking outside of the current art historical definition of Robert Smithson. The current construction prioritizes *Spiral Jetty*, overlooks his work in Europe, and pays limited attention to his powerful works on paper. Professors Schefer and Venturi will bring to the conversation key questions from the day, opening Smithson's legacy to the complications of his own terms of his art and ideas.

Maud Maffei, *Les matières du sol : entre archéologie et fiction chez Robert Smithson*

Il s'agira ici d'interroger les rapports étroits entre archéologie et fiction dans certaines œuvres de Robert Smithson quant aux matériaux et matières du sol, notamment ses *material maps*. Nous partirons pour ce faire de questions que soulève Smithson en regardant l'œuvre de Cézanne. Nous verrons combien sa démarche archéologique résonne avec celles de certains céramistes contemporains.

Maud Maffei est artiste et maître de conférences à l'Ecole des Arts de la Sorbonne. A la suite de son diplôme de la Villa Arson puis du Master 2 de philosophie de l'Université Paris Nanterre, elle a mené une thèse de doctorat sur l'œuvre de Robert Smithson qu'elle a soutenue en 2016 entre l'Université Paris 8 Vincennes Saint-Denis et la Freie Universität de Berlin : *Robert Smithson et la cybernétique. Langage, technologie et abstraction*. Ses recherches actuelles portent principalement sur la céramique.

Anja Novak, *Entropic vistas. A shrouded view of Broken Circle/Spiral Hill*

Among Robert Smithson's three surviving earthworks, his "Dutch" piece, *Broken Circle/Spiral* (1971), stands out as his only full-fledged "reclamation work". Yet, in art historical discourse, the artwork has received little attention and is completely overshadowed by the *Spiral Jetty*, completed only a year earlier. Situated in an abandoned sand quarry in the rural northeast of the Netherlands, *Broken Circle/Spiral Hill* has always existed "elsewhere," far

removed from the international art world. One might even argue that it takes the concept of “elsewhere,” which was common in the art world of the time, to a higher level. This paper briefly outlines the work's genesis in the context of Smithson's other works on European soil. I discuss how Smithson adapted his by then familiar formal language to the geographical and socio-cultural circumstances he encountered in the Netherlands. Finally, I will show how the entropic vistas the work offers unleash a dialectic of seeing and blindness.

Anja Novak is Assistant Professor of Contemporary Art at the University of Amsterdam, the Netherlands. Her research focuses on art that operates at the intersection of visual art, performance, architecture, landscape design, and heritage. As a scholar of land art, particularly in the Netherlands, she is interested in the geographical, ecological and socio-cultural situatedness of art. Her research also focuses on how artworks trigger an emotional response in the viewer, and in particular on how art can facilitate encounters and engagement with traumatic histories. Her research is connected to affect theory (in particular the discourse on atmosphere), the environmental humanities, and ecological-enactive cognitive science. Recent publications include “Precarious ground. An experiential approach to Land art in Flevoland” (2023), “Engaging with art skillfully. First steps towards an ecological-enactive account of the experience of art” (co-authored with Geerteke van Lierop and Erik Rietveld, 2022), and “Broken Circle and Spiral Hill. Having entropy the Dutch way” (2020).

Julie Ramos, *Visions d'innocence ou d'expérience ? Robert Smithson et William Blake*

La communication examinera la manière dont l'écrivain, peintre et graveur anglais William Blake a été reçu par Smithson. Elle reviendra sur la référence explicite faite à Blake à propos des peintures et dessins réalisés par Smithson autour de 1960 et en explorera les résonances dans ses projets ultérieurs.

Julie Ramos est professeure d'histoire de l'art contemporain à l'université de Strasbourg. Ses recherches et publications portent sur l'histoire et la théorie de l'art de la première moitié du XIX^e siècle, en particulier sur les relations entre arts visuels et musique, sur les pratiques graphiques et sur les questions transculturelles en histoire de l'art. Elle a dirigé des ouvrages collectifs sur la pratique et la théorie du tableau vivant, sur la participation des objets et des arts décoratifs à l'écriture proustienne, sur l'idée d'art social au XIX^e siècle, sur l'art contemporain et l'écologie, sur le renoncement artistique dans le romantisme et les années 1970. Elle est coéditrice de *Regards croisés. Revue franco-allemande d'histoire de l'art, d'esthétique et de littérature comparée – Deutsch-französische Zeitschrift für Kunstgeschichte, Literaturwissenschaft & Ästhetik*. Son dernier livre porte sur la manière dont la découverte de l'« Inde » est venue perturber la mimésis occidentale entre 1800 et 1850 (*L'Inde des visionnaires. Runge, Blake, Bra, Dijon, Presses du réel*, 2022).