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Institute of the Arts

Arts Research Initiative ARI:027  
University of Cumbria, Inst. of Education, Arts & Society  
Brampton Road campus

November 20th 2024. 13:00-17:00

- 13:00**      **Welcome & Introduction:** Dr. Martin Fowler
- 13:10**      **Keynote:**  
***The Art of Resistance: Authenticity & The World***  
Sarah Fisher, Executive Director Open Eye Gallery, Liverpool & Co-Chair  
Contemporary Visual Arts Network (CVAN), North West  
Q&A
- 14:00**      ***Being Angry: Rhetorics of Rage in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century***  
Prof. Tom Grimwood  
Q&A
- 14:25**      ***All May Be Fictions: Becoming A Camera in the Ai Age***  
Morwenna Kearsley  
Q&A
- 14:50**      **BREAK**
- 15:10**      ***Eilean na h-Óige (Eriskay - A Photographic Study)***  
Rob Sara  
Q&A
- 15:35**      ***Drawing the Weighman: negotiating the historical gaze in the comic-book  
adaptation of the literary memoir Pilgrimage from Nenthead***  
  
Dr. Nick Dodds  
  
Q&A
- 16:00**      **Plenary**
- 16:30**      **Closing remarks:** Dr. Martin Fowler

## **Abstracts:**

**Rob Sara**

### ***Eilean na h-Óige: Eriskay - A Photographic Study***

Resisting forced emigrations, clearances, economic isolation and existing on the peripheries of politics and opportunities, the communities living the Western Isles of the Outer Hebrides have grown thickly bonded, both to each other and the land on which they have depended.

Affectionately known as the Island of Youth, Eriskay has undergone considerable cultural change and challenge since the construction of a causeway and establishment of a ferry route, connecting it to neighbouring South Uist and Barra in 2002.

Adapting to and embracing the shift in the definition of the Island, has been accredited with 'saving the Island'. The old school is being developed into a heritage and community centre, initiating reflections on what to share, to say, to celebrate and highlight about its past, present and possible future.

The research project has sought to both trace the historical infrastructure, social narratives and changing land use, but also to invite participation in a photographic study that echoes and contributes to the community .

My Father came to study its population, geography and social fabric in 1958, as the crofting culture and a traditional way of life was in inexorable decline. The report he made has informed and motivated my methodology and brings a comparative model to our documentary processes.

[www.eriskayphotographicstudy.com](http://www.eriskayphotographicstudy.com)

Supported by University of Cumbria IRF and Impact Funding.

**Morwenna Kearsley**

### ***All May Be Fictions: Becoming A Camera in the Ai Age***

For me, photography is an augury and a barometer for contemporary anxieties. I will argue that the current conditions of photography reflect something of the lives of the average citizen. Characterised on the one hand by a renewed fetishisation of "traditional" analogue materials and on the other by the emergence of "contemporary" synthetic Ai-generated images, photography mirrors the fractured image of "Britain", as a nation state and a disputed identity. Using techniques of disruption, from collage to rephotography, my recent work positions the camera and the operator as fused entities, where the apparatus echoes that of the state (hidden in plain sight, immovable, omnipresent) but is also a site of experimentation and potential new futures. Retracing the lineage of the "surreal" image, I circle back to practices of collectivity and camEra-derie.

**Tom Grimwood**

***Being Angry: Rhetorics of Rage in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century***

Traditionally, Western thought has aligned anger with deficiency: blindness, immaturity, and an obstacle to calm, reasoned dialogue. However, In contemporary culture, the experience of anger is a far more complex endeavour. For, on the one hand, there is much to be angry about, for reasons far from 'blind' and which do not preclude dialogical experience. On the other hand, there is a question as to how anger can be enacted effectively in a world that has confirmed the end of history as the stultification of revolution; rationalised the psychological mysteries of our inner depths; harnessed the energy of rage into myriad forms of self-improvement regimes; and arranged upset as a tool of behavioural insights to be nudged and channelled for strategic ends. Is it really possible to express an authentic anger that dissolves any self-aware ironies or complicities in today's media ecology? Beginning from a question anonymously posted on the Quora website—'I am so angry all the time, what should I do?'—this paper follows a line of inquiry into contemporary anger, and the possibilities of a hermeneutic engagement with it. In doing so, it address what Gadamer notes is a modern 'transition from the rhetorical tradition to the psychology of experience' (2004:503) in the interpretation of anger's expression. Instead, building on hermeneutic insights alongside recent scholarship reappraising the philosophical value of anger, the paper considers the ways in which mood, medium and language interact, potentially challenging the traditional alignment of anger with blindness the way to a hermeneutics of rage.

**Nick Dodds**

***Drawing the Weighman: negotiating the historical gaze in the comic-book adaptation of the literary memoir Pilgrimage from Nenthead***

This presentation addresses the adaptation of the literary memoir into a long-form comic book, and in particular, the inherent challenges faced by the practitioner in transforming the linguistic source into the tri-modal medium of comics\*; in surmounting the constraints to fidelity that define real-life accounts, and how historical subjects may be represented or performed. The *Pilgrimage from Nenthead* narrative dates from 1938 and is a fascinating one — all the more so for me personally, because the author, narrator, and chief protagonist, is my great-grandfather Chester Armstrong. Consequently, there is a familial and emotional connection to negotiate in the process of interpretation. The adaptation, from the literary source into the comics vernacular, presents an opportunity to engage *with* and intervene *in* my great-grandfather's testimony; to process through the act of image-making; to expand, to question, to interpolate through the lens of the present.

\*comics — image/text/sequential design

For further information see Polysèmes, 29: <https://doi.org/10.4000/polysemes.10835>