

Performing Mountains
An international symposium on Mountain Culture

Thursday 22nd March 2018 – Saturday 24th March 2018.
School of Performance and Cultural Industries, stage@leeds, University of Leeds



Keynote Performance: Lone Twin's – *On Everest*, (followed by a curated panel of internationally recognised climbers and artists, including Doug Scott CBE)

Mountains are places of 'great cultural importance' (Price 2015, p.10). Whilst they might appear to be impervious to human agency and intervention - you can't move mountains after all - they are, in fact, constantly being shaped by human hands, sometimes benignly and sometimes with permanent malignance. Culture and the production of cultural objects play an integral part in this process comprising an extraordinarily varied gallery of what might be termed Mountain Arts. The richness of Mountain film, literature and creative writing is celebrated each year across the networks of Mountain festivals (within the UK and internationally) and is contested in hugely popular awards ceremonies such as the Boardman-Tasker. Fine Art dedicated to mountains has a very long history and its more recent extension into Environmental or Land Art in the last forty years, has enjoyed similar growth. Photography competitions promoted by the many popular and specialist hiking and climbing magazines, bring the amateur photographer into the realm of mountain artistry joining evermore ambitious photo-shoots staged in mountains by professionals. The inspiration mountains provide for artists of these media is as unmistakable as the mark they make in the landscape. But where do the live arts fit into this picture, what do they uniquely offer, and what might they contribute in the future?

Drawing an appropriately inclusive audience together to debate and trouble the boundaries of mountain culture, this symposium is dedicated to understanding some of the complexities of this new field of research, extending its interest with a focus on the live and performed.

As part of the AHRC funded fellowship, [Performing Landscapes: Mountains](#), we are delighted to invite proposals for papers, artefacts, panels, workshops, readings and performative presentations for this inaugural *Performing Mountains* Symposium. Building on the success of our evening [Mountainsides](#) events, our aim is to bring together a network of mountaineers, rock climbers, mountain guides, artists, performers, festival organisers, performance-makers, scenographers, workshop leaders/trainers, historians and cultural theorists to share in two days of discussion, observation, questioning and exploration. We want to assess the place of performance within mountain culture and to consider how mountain culture in all its diversity helps performance studies and practice rethink itself.

The Symposium is conceived around four broad themes with every possibility for productive crossover:

- **Makers of Mountain Culture**
- **Providers of Mountain Culture**
- **Mixers of Mountain Culture**
- **Futures of Mountain Culture**

Each of these themes provokes a set of questions and colleagues are asked to address these directly or indirectly in their proposals, and/or to suggest further questions.

Proposals of 200 words, including a short biography, technical requirements and mode of presentation (paper, panel, presentation, exhibition, workshop, reading) are to be sent to performing-mountains@leeds.ac.uk no later than **24th November 2017**.

Performing Mountains: Symposium Themes

Makers of Mountain Culture

This theme explores how mountains have been translated into art, and specifically into the live and performing arts (understood here to include theatre and performance, live poetry and literature, installation, site-specific work and expanded scenography). In what ways do mountain environments inspire compositional strategies? What are the defining features of a mountain dramaturgy and how have they been exploited by dramatists and performance makers, past and present? What specific possibilities do the live arts offer the mediation of mountains? How have mountain artists addressed (and critiqued) the ubiquity of European white males in mountain literature and history? In what ways can mountain art offer answers to the challenges of access to remote and extreme environments? How has mountain culture more widely engaged with questions of sustainability and environmental damage?

Providers of Mountain Culture

This theme invites industry experts and cultural leaders as well as artists and academics to consider the cultural impact of mountain festivals on the UK arts and outdoor leisure scene. What accounts for the growth of mountain festivals here in the UK and abroad? How have festivals evolved over the years and what is their approach to the programming of live work? How do mountain festivals relate to their local environments and are these in tension with their continued growth, nationally and internationally? How do mountain festivals encourage empathy between audiences and non-local environments or communities? Who is excluded from mountain culture and how might we consider wider forms of participation? What new relationships might be beneficial for mountain festival organizers and what further research might need to be done to enhance the impact and sustainability of mountain culture more generally?

Mixers of Mountain Culture

This theme addresses the many hybrid and interdisciplinary practices provoked by mountain environments and technologies. What cultural histories are there to 'new' forms of hybrid practice such as Mountain Light Festivals, Vertical Dance, Mountain Circus or Walking Art?

What kinds of mountain behaviours, practices and technologies have been (or might be) combined with performance-based art forms? How have training regimes for performance borrowed from mountain culture and is there any evidence of travel in the other direction? What theoretical hybrids are possible or already are in use to understand better the boundaries of mountain performance? What kinds of interdisciplinary research are being undertaken with mountain culture as a focus - in Arts and Health, Geology, Cultural Geography or Anthropology for example?

Futures of Mountain Culture

What futures bright or dark are there for mountain culture and what role will festivals play in these? How will technology, material and digital, impact on mountain arts in the future? What will be the landmark mountain art pieces in the next decade? How might the research and practice of Mountain Culture raise its status within the wider field of Mountain Studies?

This theme will help drive the development of a new Mountain Culture Research Network, as part of the ongoing work of the *Performing Landscapes: Mountains* Fellowship.

For more information contact the symposium organising team:

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In collaboration with [Kendal Mountain Festival](#) and supported by the [AHRC](#)