HERITAGE/DESIGN – THEATRE/ARCHAEOLOGY



I am in Amsterdam delivering the

Reinwardt Memorial Lecture

at the Reinwardt Academy for Cultural Heritage in the Amsterdam School of the Arts [Link] [Link]

This annual event commemorates the birthday of Caspar Georg Carl Reinwardt (3 June 1773 – 6 March 1854), after whom the Reinwardt Academy is named. The Academy is the foremost international professional school for museology and heritage management in the Netherlands.

Reinwardt Academy
Amsterdam School of the Arts

Heritage – that awkward concept that covers our relationship with material pasts, sites and collections of goods, personal, private, ethnic, national.

The Heritage Industry – a massive component of tourism and the focus of Ministries of Culture in every nation state.

Heritage – the legacy of the past, property to be cherished?

I take up again my current argument that heritage is a field of design, emphasizing the dynamic and creative relationships that are the heart of our engagement with what remains of the past – where people take up what is left of the past in crafting their identity, as in memory, in crafting senses of place, in forging the future out of what remains of the past. *Creative* relationships – design as arts practice. [Link] [Link] [Link] [Link]

Is this is so, how are we to deal with the notion that the past accompanies us as property we have inherited, that can be bought and sold?

Many of the issues are captured, for me, in my relationship with those places that carry a certain allure of the past. I obsessed about this somewhat last summer: [Link] [Link] [Link]



Hadrian’s Wall, the northern frontier of the Roman Empire, central section. Early morning, July 2011. Reconstructed under the ownership of John Clayton, Town Clerk, landowner, antiquarian, conservationist. Now in the care of the National Trust, protecting the landscapes of English heritage.

My concern – something of an ascetic moment, a *Methodist* moment, as I encountered these extraordinary landscapes. I reacted against what I knew were guilty pleasures in landscapes and ruins that attest not to the realities of history, but to what the wealthy and powerful have done to turn labor on the land (and sea) into aesthetic allure. A reaction against the picturesque past, because such a past is ideologically compromised (even if the picturesque in the eighteenth century could break with the associations with landed property).

Here (Roman) empire and occupation become the picturesque.

Places carry so many memories. How are we to redeem those hopes, now not even whispers on the breeze (I think of Ossian), in the face of this power of the aesthetic? Of conservation and care?

(I treat this as a question at the core of what is now being called *critical* heritage – the task is one of *ideology* critique.)



My answer comes after Brecht – reveal, uncover the making, the construction of these works of heritage. By interrupting the flow, the consistency, the coherence of accounts and representations of the past.

Verfremdungseffekt.

This is what were were doing in the theatre/archaeology of Brith Gof. Mike Pearson and I defined it as – “the rearticulation of fragments of the past as real-time event”. Take the remains, the sites and finds, the sources of history, and work them explicitly into works that make transparent the reception of the remains of the past.

Not static accounts, but dynamic engagements or mediations. Turn the static account into dynamic representation, by stopping and offering commentary and criticism. Ask the audience. Break the illusion. Turn it into event. Place/event.

Above – Tri Bywyd, a work of theatre/archaeology, Clwedog, west Wales 1995, a work by performance company Brith Gof – the animation of three forensic portfolios of evidences about three lives and deaths, at the ruined farmstead of Esgair Fraith.



Be mindful, experiment, iterate, for there is no final answer, no definitive account that this happened here – share with others, ask and pursue the conversation …

this is design thinking …