



ICS SEMINAR SERIES 2024

Film screening and discussion

Signatures of Earth an Antipodean road trip to space

23 May 2024 | 11:30am - 1:30pm

Room: EA.1.31 Parramatta South Campus

Abstract

The moon's shadow was set to fall upon a remote peninsula in Western Australia at 11:27 am 20th April 2023. Isaac Newton had predicted it 300 years ago. It was the one thing I knew for certain. Signatures of Earth documents encounters with cuttlefish and quasars, and much else in between, happened upon during a transcontinental journey to film that event. I meandered over 25,000 kilometres there and back, while listening to an audio book narrated by the ghost of Neil Armstrong.

Juxtaposing the ingenuity and hope of mankind's heavenly gaze against quotidian, Earth-bound situations, the film is a response to human centred perspectives in the space age and proposes an alternative to western, neoliberal documentary narrative hierarchies. The ontology of Science (in particular geochronology) is placed in direct narrative contact with local histories. Signatures of Earth avoids the authoritative control exercised by contemporary western documentary film rhetoric; the film's narrative impulse is open ended and partial. The lens gimbles, with an eye for environmental histories, glimpsing worlds that are usually overlooked and marginalised by political and cultural hegemonies. The timeline is non-linear and the way-points charting the route are space inflected places, though not to be found in google maps. The film's form draws from observational/landscape cinema and literary influences, in particular modernism. Counterpoint/contrapuntal audio-visual editing is employed, and the use of B-roll is explicitly avoided. Images and sound design carry the reading of the film. A dialectic is sought between overlapping voices and images, following Bertolt Brecht's dictum to make the familiar strange. The collage of narratively unresolved fragments aims to create a palimpsest and the film, as an object, becomes a gestalt.

Biography

Robert Nugent is a filmmaker and Doctorate of Creative Arts student, at the ICS under the supervision of Prof. Juan Salazar and Prof. Hart Cohen, with funding from the ARC project, Australia as a space faring nation. His previous films grapple with entanglements, mainly between human and nonhuman places and situations. For more information:

www.viafilm.org

https://www.westernsydney.edu.au/ics/projects/australia_a_space-faring_nation_imaginaries_and_practices_of_space_futures

Film Maker: Robert Nugent

Chair: Charles Barbour

Research Alignment:
Environment & Technology

**NEXT SEMINAR:
30 MAY**