



***Heritage Site: materializing an unreachable heritage*
Proposers: Nicky Bird and Dr Stuart Jeffrey¹**

This contribution centres on a major industrial heritage landmark in central Scotland known as the 'Five Sisters' on the edge of West Calder, a small town in West Lothian. Two hundred and forty metres high, the Five Sisters are spoil heaps (or 'bings'), products of the oil shale mining industry active in this area in the nineteenth century. Since the demise of this industry the site has been the subject of various Land Art, Geo-Science, and community-led town planning activities. Once considered eyesores, the Five Sisters have now completed their transformation from utilitarian industrial structures to being a nationally recognised heritage site by being given Scheduled Ancient Monument status in the 1990s.

This fascinating transformation is the context for *Heritage Site*, a new media art and archaeology project provoked by local community memory of a house that is buried deep within the Five Sisters bing. This living memory – belonging to the familial, domestic sphere - will soon become 'history' as a generation passes. In terms of intangible cultural heritage and social identity, as well as the practicalities of visualising an impossible to reach site, the project faces compelling challenges. Informed by these challenges, the paper addresses two pertinent questions: how can the practices of new media art and heritage visualisation come together to investigate this site of layered histories and shifting identity politics? How might the project work with fact and hard evidence as well as memory, imagination, and speculation?

Possible Conference Themes

- IM/MATERIAL CULTURES
- Haunting, hybridity, and the interpretation of the material and the immaterial
- Digital materialities and practices
- The seen and the invisible, the disappearing and the lost

¹ Note for organizers: our contribution will also reference the work of artist Clara Ursitti, who will be working on olfactory memories related to the site.

**Abstract, *Material Culture in Action:*
Practices of making, collecting and re-enacting art and design
Glasgow School of Art, September 2015**

Short Biographical Notes

Nicky Bird is an artist whose work investigates the contemporary relevance of found photographs, their archives and specific sites. She has explored this through new photography, bookworks, and the Internet creating artworks that make visible the process of collaboration with people who have significant connections to a hidden history. Her latest project *Peripheral Visions: Photography & Placemaking at Scotland's Rural Edge* proposes to bring together the themes of land, photography and other interdisciplinary practices to enable dialogue about pasts and futures related to Scotland's 'fragile' rural communities. Recent exhibitions include *Family Ties; Reframing Memory*, The Peltz Gallery, London (July 2014); *Seduced by Art: Photography Past and Present*, National Gallery, London & CaixaForum Barcelona, Madrid (2012-13); *21 Revolutions*, CCA, Glasgow & The Royal Scottish Academy, Edinburgh (2012-13). Published works include Beneath the Surface/Hidden Place (Edinburgh: Stills, 2010), and 'Looking a Gift Horse in the Mouth: Generosity and the Digital Exchange of Family Photographs' in The Photograph and The Album: Histories, Practices, Futures edited by Jonathan Carson, Rosie Miller & Theresa Wilkie (MuseumsEtc, 2013). Nicky is a PhD Co-Coordinator at the Glasgow School of Art. She is also a member of The Family Ties Network, a research group of writers and artists.

Stuart Jeffrey is Research Fellow in International Heritage Visualisation at the Digital Design Studio of the Glasgow School of Art. Stuart studied a combined honours degree in Computer Science and Archaeology at the University of Glasgow and completed his PhD in three-dimensional modeling of early medieval sculpted stones, also at the University of Glasgow, in 2003. His work at the Digital Design Studio covers all aspects of heritage visualisation and the use of new technologies to create records, analyse, interpret, re-interpret and represent every form of heritage from built to intangible. Current projects and research interests focus on uses of new technologies for digital recording, data visualisation and information gathering; how these processes transform and impact on the relationships between the individual, academia and broader communities of interest and the heritage being studied. Before joining Glasgow School of Art Stuart worked for a number of years for the West of Scotland Archaeology Service and joined the Archaeology Data Service (ADS), based at the University of York, in 2006. As Deputy Director at the ADS he managed a number of major digital heritage research projects funded by JISC, the AHRC, the European Union and the NEH. Stuart has published extensively on diverse topics in archaeology and computer science, including, medieval sculpted stones, archaeological informatics, visualisation techniques, digital preservation, resource discovery and reuse, linked data, natural language processing, and the use of social media in archaeology.