

Rethinking the History of an Expanding City through Its Images: Birmingham, England, the Nineteenth Century

Authors : Lin Chang

Abstract : Birmingham, England was a town in the late-eighteenth century and became the nation's second largest city in the late nineteenth century. The city expanded rapidly in terms of its population and size. Three generations of artists from a local family, the Lines, made a large number of drawings and paintings depicting the growth and changes of their city. At first sight, the meaning of the pictures seems straight-forward: providing records of what were torn down and newly-built. However, except for being read as maps, the pictures reveal a struggle in vision as to whether unsightly manufactories and their smoking chimneys should be visualized and how far the borders of the town should have been positioned and understood as they continued to grow and encroached upon its immediate countryside. This art-historic paper examines some topographic views by the Lines family and explores how they, through unusual depiction of rural and urban scenery, manage to give form to the borderlands between the country and the city. This paper argues that while the idea of the country and the city seems to be common sense, the two realms actually pose difficulty for visual representation as to where exactly their borders are and the idea itself has dichotomized the way people consider landscape imageries to be.

Keywords : Birmingham, suburb, urban fringes, landscape

Conference Title : ICA 2018 : International Conference on Astrobiology

Conference Location : Bangkok, Thailand

Conference Dates : January 18-19, 2018