MODERNISM, EAST SUSSEX, & LONDON

or

Why come to Brighton for MSA 15?

(a presentation delivered at MSA 14 in Las Vegas)
Vegas is a tough act to follow.
If only there were somewhere seedier,
more sinful,
more lowdown,
vulgar,
and full of pleasure....
welcome to Brighton!
“Human nature doesn't change - like a stick of Brighton rock you bite all the way down and still read 'BRIGHTON'!”

- Graham Greene

Sir Richard Attenborough (left), Chancellor of University of Sussex, 1998-2008
Brighton is a seaside town very close to London, and one of the original homes of what the British call “the dirty weekend.” As with so many British traditions, this one began with the royalty. The first purveyor of the Brighton dirty weekend was arguably George, Prince of Wales, who started building the Royal Pavilion, a spectacular seaside retreat, in 1787. The Pavilion is a monument to leisurely excess and joie de vivre that continues to define Brighton.
The Royal Pavilion, Brighton.
If Vegas is the home of postmodernism, then Brighton is home of the Mods.
The Mods were the clean cut, suit-wearing, ska-listening British youth subculture who were in constant enmity with the Rockers, lovers of motorcycles and rock and roll.

Brighton is proud home of the Mods and Rockers riots of 1964, which sparked a moral panic about British youth, although the riots seem largely to have involved tossing about some deck chairs….
Mods vs. Rockers: 
Riots of 1964, Brighton Beach
Brighton has long been renowned as the English San Francisco, replete with a significant and influential lesbian and gay community—as evinced in the following photo of Walter Hood, a miner in ‘drag’ in Brighton in 1937-38. (Hood is in fact seated in the Mass Observation headquarters run by Charles Madge & Tom Harrison.)
Brighton: LGBT Capital of the UK

Humphrey Spender's "Worktown” photographs, part of the Mass Observation Archive
Today, Brighton is celebrated for its pebble beach and pier –
MSA 15 : BRIGHTON, UK
....and for its wealth of tourist facilities.

What follows are samples of the wide variety of accommodation that will be available to MSA 15 delegates, from boutique hotels to bed and breakfasts, to larger starred hotels – most right on the waterfront, and all easily booked through the VisitBrighton tourist website (see http://msa.press.jhu.edu/conferences/msa15/).

A city of over 300,000 residents, Brighton houses any number of good eateries, pubs, and excellent shopping.
Visit Brighton
http://www.visitbrighton.com/
The University of Sussex is a part of the South Downs National Park, an area of outstanding natural beauty—
South Downs National Park

Seven Sisters
Brighton also has many modernist connections. Famous modernists who wrote about or came from Brighton and Hove include:
Salome
AUBREY BEARDSLEY AND OSCAR WILDE

TRANSLATED BY LORD ALFRED DOUGLAS WITH ALL 10 BEARDSLEY ILLUSTRATIONS AND DESIGNS

Aubrey Beardsley
Vanessa Bell
Duncan Grant
Leonard Woolf
Virginia Woolf


Charleston, Sussex
home of Vanessa Bell
and Duncan Grant

Edward Carpenter
Ivy Compton-Burnett

Ivy Compton-Burnett (1964) by John Vere Brown
Bromide fibre print,
National Portrait Gallery

The Ivy Compton-Burnett Bus
Sir Arthur Conan Doyle

Sherlock Holmes

THE ADVENTURE OF THE SUSSEX VAMPIRE

and other stories

Read by Christopher Lee

HarperCollinsAudioBooks
Specimens of typefaces by typeface designer Eric Gill
MSA 15: Brighton, UK

Patrick Hamilton
MSA 15: BRIGHTON, UK

Henry James

Lamb House, Rye
MSA 15 : Brighton, UK

David Jones

David Jones
In Parenthesis
Faber Editions

Queen Mary
University of London
Malcolm Lowry

Rudyard Kipling
Lee Miller
Roland Penrose

Lee Miller in Hitler’s Bathtub.
Lee Miller Archive, photograph David E. Scherman and Lee Miller.

Farley Farm House,
Home of Miller, Penrose, and occasionally Picasso
Edward Burra, *Soldiers at Rye* (1941)
Gouache, watercolour and ink wash on paper. Tate.
Wyndham Lewis, *Ezra Pound* (1939)
Oil paint on canvas, Tate
H.G. Wells

Uppark, West Sussex

H.G. Wells on the cover of Time, 20 September, 1926
These are just some of the associations between East Sussex and modernism, and they perhaps explain the existence of a great deal of local modernist architecture, including the De La Warr Pavilion, which was constructed in 1935 and is widely considered the first modernist public building in Britain.
At MSA 15, we will be offering group tours to Virginia and Leonard Woolf’s Sussex home, Monk’s House.
Monk’s House, Rodmell
Home of Virginia Woolf and Leonard Woolf
We will also offer tours to the nearby home of Vanessa Bell and Duncan Grant, Charleston, which houses frescoes and paintings by these two key members of Bloomsbury.
MSA 15 delegates can register for workshops with Sussex Special Collections, which include work by Virginia and Leonard Woolf, Kipling, Charles Madge, and the world-famous Mass Observation Archive, now in its seventh decade – what follows is a photograph taken for that archive, which emulates Bloom’s and Stephen’s micturition in the “Ithaca” episode of Ulysses.
At Stephen’s suggestion, at Bloom’s instigation both, first Stephen, then Bloom, in penumbra urinated, their sides contiguous, their organs of micturation reciprocally rendered invisible by manual circumposition, their gazes, first Bloom’s, then Stephen’s, elevated to the projected luminous and semiluminous shadow.

- James Joyce, *Ulysses*
MSA 15 is co-hosted by the University of Sussex and Queen Mary, London.

The conference will take place at the University of Sussex, a campus designed by the celebrated modern architect of the post-war era, Sir Basil Spence.
“Bricks and mortar can provide a background that is sympathetic to young and energetic minds which are growing and developing apace.” – Basil Spence
More specifically, MSA 15 will utilize two brand new, state-of-the-art buildings at the heart of the Sussex campus – the Jubilee Building (completed September 2012) and the Fulton (less than 2 years old).
Brighton is less than an hour from the centre of London, and 30 minutes by train from Gatwick International Airport.
Travel

9 minutes by train from the centre of Brighton
55 minutes from Central London by train
30 minutes from Gatwick Airport
90 minutes from Heathrow Airport
London – the home of our co-sponsor, Queen Mary – is on our doorstep – with all of its famous resources.
MSA 15: Brighton, UK

- British Library
- National Gallery
- Tate Britain & Tate Modern
- The V&A
- British Museum
The dates of MSA 15 are as follows:
The conference email address is:
MSA 15 : BRIGHTON, UK

msabrighton@gmail.com
Our conference theme is:
Everydayness and the EVENT
Our conference theme celebrates both the banal and the spectacular aspects of modernism.
“The event” expands and invites interventions into the everyday, suggesting as possible topics the newsworthy, the public and widely publicized, and modernist responses to happenings of local, national and international significance. Modernism itself was an event, and one that roused public response, from the Armory Show in New York to the Dreadnought Hoax perpetrated by members of Bloomsbury in 1910.
This theme is also particularly reflective of the host institutions, Queen Mary, University of London and the University of Sussex; each university has prominent life writing centres, and scholars dedicated to modernism’s cultural history, autobiographical writings, spirituality and democracy, leisure time, childhood, and emotions or affects.
Our poster includes an image taken in a pre-war industrial British town for the Mass Observation archive around 1937; we use this image with kind permission of the Bolton Museum and Archive Service. (see: www.boltonmuseums.org.uk/ & spender.boltonmuseums.org.uk/history_humphrey_spender.html)
Everydayness and the Event

University of Sussex, Brighton, UK
August 29–September 1, 2013
We look forward to seeing you at MSA 15, and leave you with a quotation from Graham Greene.
With immense labour and immense patience they extricated from the long day the grain of pleasure: this sun, the music, the rattle of the miniature cars, the ghost train diving between the grinning skeletons under the Aquarium promenade, the sticks of Brighton rock, the paper sailors' caps.

-Graham Greene, *Brighton Rock*