

DUMBARTON OAKS, GARDEN AND LANDSCAPE STUDIES
PUBLIC LECTURE

WASTELAND AND WILDERNESS

PETER L. GALISON

PROFESSOR IN HISTORY OF SCIENCE AND PHYSICS, HARVARD UNIVERSITY

TUESDAY, MARCH 15, 2011 5:30 PM



Savannah River Site, South Carolina. Demolition of the Colossal K Nuclear Cooling Tower (2010). Photo: NNSA News



Radioactively contaminated rabbit (2010), Hanford Nuclear Reservation, WA. Photo adapted from: Lew Robertson/ Jupiter Images

Dumbarton Oaks and the Environmental Film Festival in the Nation's Capital present a lecture by Peter L. Galison, historian, writer, filmmaker, and the Pellegrino University Professor in History of Science and Physics at Harvard University. Galison won the Max Planck Prize in 1999, was appointed a MacArthur Foundation Fellow in 1997, and a Guggenheim Fellow in 2009.

In this lecture, which anticipates both a book and a film on the subject, Galison addresses speculation as it pertains to inaccessible sites, in particular "nuclear wastelands" and "pure wilderness." As they are usually understood, these designations are opposites; when they converge into nature preserves on the sites of decommissioned nuclear weapons lands we often describe this circumstance as "paradoxical" or "ironic." Taking stock of plans to handle lands that will remain saturated with radionuclides for tens of thousands of years, Galison argues that the categories of wastelands and wilderness are far from dichotomous; that their relation is far more intriguing (and disturbing) than a binary of purity and corruption.

Galison's publication *Image & Logic: A Material Culture of Microphysics* (1998) won the Pfizer Award from the History of Science Society. His book *Einstein's Clocks and Poincaré's Maps: Empires of Time* (2003) was one of the first to draw close links between the young German physicist Albert Einstein and the French mathematician Henri Poincaré, who made parallel attempts to harness time and helped create the science of relativity.

Galison has been involved in the production of two documentary films. He wrote and produced *The Ultimate Weapon: The H-Bomb Dilemma* (2000). The film exposed the political and scientific decisions behind the creation of the first hydrogen bomb in the United States. He also co-directed *Secrecy* (2008) with Harvard filmmaker Robb Moss, which investigated the costs and benefits of government secrecy. He is beginning a new feature documentary film on nuclear landscapes.

Reservations are required. Please RSVP to: Landscape@doaks.org or 202-339-6460.

Please arrive by 5:20 to confirm your reservation.

The lecture will be held in the Music Room at Dumbarton Oaks's Main House located at 1703 32nd Street, NW.