

In The Eye of the Beholder: imaging and imagining UFOs

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'In The Cloud of Unknowing – Encounters with the UFO Phenomenon'

A Symposium, July 17-18, 2024, at Mildred's Lane (Beach Lake, PA.)

ABSTRACT

In The Eye of the Beholder: imaging and imagining UFOs.

David Clarke & Andrew Robinson, Centre for Contemporary Legend, Sheffield Hallam University



Image - 'We Want To Believe' (variation on the original X Files poster based on a photograph by Billy Meyer) - © A Robinson, 2024.

Everyone has an idea of what a UFO might look like but where do these ideas originate and how have they become so influential? Reflecting on his unprecedented access to British Ministry of Defence UFO documents and drawings, along with his recent experience of discovering and publishing the only known photograph of the Calvine UFO sighting of 1990, Dr David Clarke along with colleague and photographic analyst Andrew Robinson from the Centre for Contemporary Legend at Sheffield Hallam University, examine the history, visual folklore and legend surrounding UFO sightings and photographs that often do as much to obfuscate as to reveal a possible explanation for such phenomena. This insider's view of contemporary UFO analysis and debate includes a practical demonstration of how UFO photographs may have been faked along with a participatory activity.

Biographies:

Dr David Clarke is Associate Professor at Sheffield Hallam University and a co-founder, with Dr Diane Rodgers and Andrew Robinson, of the Centre for Contemporary Legend. From 2008-13 he acted as curator for the UK National Archives open government project that oversaw the release of the MoD's UFO archive. His most recent book, *UFO Drawings at The National Archives* was published in 2017 by Four Corners Books.

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Andrew Robinson is a photographer, artist, and senior lecturer in photography at Sheffield Hallam University, where he co-founded the Centre for Contemporary Legend (CCL) with Dr David Clarke and Dr Diane Rodgers. His art practice investigates expressions of identity, folklore and related material culture through a visual anthropology of people, place, and trace. Related research explores the folklore, myth and legend associated with photographs and photographers including subjects as diverse as the Photography of the Crimean War; Lover's Leap Legends; English Calendar Customs; A.I Generated Imagery, and the Calvine UFO.

Recent publications include chapters in; 'Behind the Mask: Vernacular Culture in the Time of COVID' (Utah State University Press, 2023) and 'Folklore and Nation in Britain and Ireland', (Routledge 2021) along with papers presented at 'Off The Shelf Literary Festival' (Nov 23) 'AI and Photography' Royal Photographic Society (Oct 2023); 'International Society of Contemporary Legend Research Annual Conference' (June 2023).

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