



“An Imitation of Nature Herself:” Models, Metaphors, and Artificial Earths

Dr. Nicholas Buchanan

Program in Science and Technology Studies, University College Freiburg
Program in History of Science and Technology, University of Minnesota

27 October 2016, 14 – 16.00 Uhr, Peterhof R 1

In this talk, Dr. Buchanan will discuss the history of two artificial environments, each of which was designed to keep organisms alive in places where they otherwise would have perished: aquaria beginning in the mid-19th century and spacecraft in the mid-20th. Together, these engineered environments offer a window onto changing perceptions about the human ability to know the natural world and to use that knowledge to control and manipulate it. In both cases, scientists, engineers, and enthusiasts used emerging knowledge about the earth and its inhabitants to create technologies that were envisioned as “an imitation” of the earth itself. He will argue that scientists saw these artificial environments as models and metaphors of the natural world, and that their construction was an important activity from which scientists, engineers, the public, and (even) policy-makers learned about the systemic complexity and fragility of the environment.

Part of the Science and Technology Studies Colloquium Series
Sponsored by the Program in Science and Technology Studies | University College Freiburg