

Mountain of Destiny: Kanchenjunga 1929

Heaton Cooper Studio, Grasmere, Cumbria, 15 November-31 December 2018

Exhibition of photographs from the 1929 German Kanchenjunga Expedition presented to E. O. Shebbeare (private collection) and contemporary paintings of Kanchenjunga by the landscape artist Julian Cooper. Curated by Dr. Jonathan Westaway.

Westaway's innovative curatorial approaches have helped unlock the hidden histories of high-altitude expeditionary labour, redirecting the historiographic focus of mountaineering history towards the contribution of indigenous agency and selfhood. The exhibition provides audiences with new ways of looking at Himalayan mountaineering history, presenting newly discovered photograph albums to the mountaineering community and broader publics as part of the Kendal Mountain Festival 2018. The exhibition forms part of Westaway's ongoing examination of imperial governmentality and knowledge-gathering practices in the trans-border regions of British India, particularly the ways in which the political control of space by the imperial security state (Hevia, 2012) implicated all forms of expeditionary representation (travel writing, cartography, photography and film) in colonial surveillance and knowledge networks. Archival photographs are juxtaposed with contemporary paintings of Kanchenjunga by Britain's foremost painter of mountain landscapes, Julian Cooper.

The exhibition captures a unique ethnographic moment, the photographs on display recording the first encounter between the racially-inflected nationalism of the German mountaineers with the multi-ethnic world of Sikkim, the images registering both the shock of alterity and the enchantment of the encounter with mountain peoples. Uniquely for the period, the photographs of indigenous high-altitude labourers were annotated with the names of the Sherpas by the British transport officer on the expedition (E. O. Shebbeare), enabling us to begin to research the hidden histories of indigenous expeditionary labour (Driver, 2009). A biographical article on Shebbeare linked to the exhibition was published in [The Alpine Journal 2018](#). Exhibition photographs featured throughout the volume.