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# EXPERIMENTS WITH THE ACTIVATED PRESENCE

MAYES, JOANNA LOUISE

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University of Plymouth

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# EXPERIMENTS WITH THE ACTIVATED PRESENCE

BY

JOANNA LOUISE MAYES

*A thesis submitted to the University of Plymouth  
in partial fulfilment for the degree of*

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

DARTINGTON COLLEGE OF ARTS

JULY 2004

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# Abstract

## Experiments with the Activated Presence

Joanna Louise Mayes

This thesis considers how the making of artwork can enhance or develop an experience of *being present*. This is done through researching what it means to be present within the moment and how this can be shared with audience. An exploration and analysis of this way of working is provided, both in terms of the research process and artwork outcomes made as a consequence of it. The entanglement of process with outcome is central, as is the interrelatedness between personal research and artworks presented to audience.

*Activated presence* refers to a way of researching, making and presenting performative artwork; artwork made from a place of *attention to the moment*. This is the expanded moment of Eastern philosophy, Christian mysticism and the new physics; what Varela describes as the 'deep now' (qtd. in Mulder 18). This notion of *activated presence* also refers to, and acknowledges, the collaboration between ideas, materials, artist and audience in the creation of artwork.

My initial approach is to make personal research explorations, utilising the terrain of Dartmoor<sup>1</sup> as a starting point, with walking and documenting as essential tools for this exploration of presence. Initial plans to create outcomes utilising digital technologies are dispensed with in favour of physical exploration of site, utilising audio-visual recording technologies as tools for the documentation of presence. These documentary outcomes form the basis for further investigations, whether through installation or video artwork. A more direct and inclusive relationship to audience is then considered; where the artwork outcomes investigate and acknowledge the notion of activated presence, through audience participation. This practice forms the heart of the thesis, through both critical and reflective writing, and associated audio-visual documentation. Also included are short edits of associated video artwork (DVD and DVD Rom).

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<sup>1</sup> Dartmoor National Park; the high moorland area of central Devon, England and its immediate surroundings.



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Figures marked 🎬 are Quicktime Movies

Figures marked 📀 are available on DVD, in full screen quality (see Appendix 2)

### Credits

Figures marked ♦ are courtesy of Peter Beeson

Figures marked ➤ are courtesy of James McCartney

Figures marked ♠ are stills taken from video documentation by Jo Hyde

Figures marked ♣ are stills taken from video documentation by Nick Zeiher

Figures marked ✱ are stills taken from video documentation by Jo Griffin

Figures marked ❖ are stills taken from video documentation by Jonnie Williams & other participants in *Arcturus Rising*

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- ResCen for commissioning *The Public Record*;
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*This thesis is dedicated to Rach, in celebration of her love of learning.*

# Author's Declaration

At no time during the registration for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy has the author been registered for any other University award.

This study was financed with the aid of a fee bursary from Dartington College of Arts (DCA).

Relevant conferences and seminars were regularly attended; external institutions were visited for consultation and sharing of work, *see below*.

## List of public showings/papers/seminars:

Sept 2003	<b>The Grasses are Singing</b> <i>Rocombe Farm, Stokeinteignhead, Devon</i> <i>Art Farm Project</i> Commission to produce a site-specific installation.
July 2003	<b>Moon Journeys II</b> <i>Dartington Gallery, solo show</i>
June 2003	<b>Moon Journeys</b> Research seminar given, <i>DCA</i>
June/July 2003	<b>Moon Journeys I</b> <i>Dartington Gallery Foyer, lead artist, group show</i>
March 21 <sup>st</sup> 2003	<b>Arcturus Rising</b> <i>Buckland Beacon, Dartmoor</i>
Dec 2002	<b>Wandering Star</b> Paper given to <i>Writing Places</i> – Symposium on art, documentation and place, <i>Exeter University</i>

Sept 2002	<b>The Public Record</b> <i>Greenwich Dance Agency/South Bank Centre</i> <i>Nightwalking Conference, organised by ResCen</i> Commission to produce a collaborative site-specific piece.
Sept 2002	<b>Hidden Treasure – a record</b> <i>9 Days of Arts, Presence Studios, Ashburton, Devon</i>
June 2002	<b>Listening Walk</b> Commissioned by Aune Head Arts <i>Haytor Quarry</i>
1999-2002	<b>Dartington Improvisation Ensemble</b> Various public musical performances given with the student ensemble (leader: Sam Richards)

#### Research Conferences/Workshops Attended

<i>Organised by</i>	<i>Title and Description</i>
ICIA and University of Bath	<b>Speculative Strategies: 'Pleasure and Fear in Interdisciplinary Arts Practice'</b>  ICIA Symposium Bath, Oct 2003, 1 day
Tate Modern	<b>Wireless Cultures</b>  Symposium on radio and wireless technologies London, Feb 2003, 1 day
David Berridge, Exeter University	<b>Writing Places</b>  Symposium on art, documentation and place Exeter, Dec 2002, 1 day
PARIP and Bristol University	<b>Creative Re-use: The Body of Knowledge</b>  Performance practitioners' conference Bristol, Aug 2002, 2 days
Bristol University	<b>Goat Island Summer School</b>  Performance practitioners' intensive workshop Bristol, 2002 2 weeks
ICA, London	<b>Cybersonica</b>  Contemporary sound art conference London, June 2002

University of East Anglia/ARiADA	<b>ARiADA event</b> Seminars, performances by; Ron Kuivla, Matt Rogalsky, Jem Finer. 3 day research visit to UEA
The Slade, LSE	<b>Voice and Technology Conference</b> London, 2002, 1 day
Plymouth University	<b>Artists and Post-Industrial Landscapes</b> Exeter, 2002, 1 day
Sonic Arts Network & UEA	<b>Hybrid Arts Conference</b> Sound practitioners' conference UEA, Summer 2001, 3 days
Royal Opera House	<b>Software for Dancers</b> Showing of choreographer-led research into the use of technology within choreography London, April 2002
DA2	<b>Momentum Conference, Bristol</b> Curation conference, looking at issues around the funding and presentation of new media art Bristol, April 2001, 3 days
Blast Theory/Hoxton Hall	<b>Multimedia Performance Workshop</b> looking at issues surrounding multimedia performance and collaborative working 1 week Feb 01
ICMA	<b>International Computer Music Conference, Berlin</b> Pre-conference workshops: - Digital recreation of David Tudor's <i>Rainforest IV</i> (5 days) - Sound Spatialisation With JMax & Max/MSP - JSyn & JMSL: Computer music programming for the web - SuperCollider: Networked real-time sound and graphics Berlin, Aug 2000, 5 days
DA2 Digital Audio School & MediaLabArts, Plymouth University	<b>DA2 artists' new media learning project</b> Intensive digital cross-training for artists, follow-up week Plymouth University July 2000, 1 week
BAFTA/London College of Music & Media	<b>Sounding Off</b> Sound for interactive media London, July 2000, 1 day
Lumière Research/Westminster University	<b>Interactive Music</b> Symposium on interactivity in music London, July 2000, 2 days

Dartington College of Arts	<b>MIDI technology and Basic Stamp controllers</b> (Mar 2000) 3 day workshop, organised by me.
Chisenhale/SHIFTS 2000	<b>Choreography, New Technology &amp; Interactivity</b> (Jan 2000)
Zoviet France, Bristol	<b>Musical improvisation with electronics and digital technology</b> (Jan 2000)
DA2 Digital Audio School and DCA	<b>DA2 artists new media learning project</b> Intensive digital cross-training for artists Dartington, Nov 1999 10 days
DCA Staff Training	<b>Digital Technology Seminar Series</b> Visiting artist talks and discussion Dartington, 1999-2000
Arte Dansas	<b>Flamenco singing &amp; percussion course</b> Andalucea, Spain, Summer 1999
DCA	<b>Free Improvisation Workshop</b> Dartington, May 2000
DCA	<b>Advanced Voice/Movement Workshop</b> Dartington, October 1999

*Pre-registration preparatory courses taken:*

School of Sound	<b>Sound and the Moving Image</b> 5 days (London, May 1999)
CPR Festival of the Voice	<b>The Voice and Spirituality</b> 10 days (Aberystwyth, Apr 1999)

**Individual Tuition**

- **Supercollider;** with Matt Rogalsky, sound artist (2002)
- **Live Sound Sampling;** with Kaffe Matthews, sound artist (2000)

**Formal external institutional contacts:**

- Simon Walters (UEA)
- Matt Rogalsky (UEA, City University)
- Ron Kuivila, Wesleyan University, USA (at UEA)
- MediaLabArts Department, University of Plymouth  
- employed as part-time lecturer 2000-2001

**Personal staff and/or student contacts included:**

- Plymouth University, Theatre Department
- Exeter; Exeter University, English Department
- The Slade, LSE
- Central St Martins
- City University, Music Department
- Goldsmiths' College Music & Theatre Department
- Leeds University Theatre Department
- Middlesex University
- HyperMedia & Music & Media Department

**Memberships**

- Sonic Arts Network
- Aune Head Arts (Dartmoor arts organisation)
- Dartmoor Sound Project
- ISEA electronic arts e-group
- ICMA computer music association
- DA2 Audio artists e-group

*Janna Mayes* 20<sup>th</sup> October 2004

## I: The Lie of the Land



Figure 1: Gorse on the moors

*"To enable him to learn what Dartmoor really is he needs something beyond notices of the more celebrated, because more readily accessible, places and objects of interest. He should be led from the beaten track, and wander among the hills...."*  
From the Preface to Crossing's Guide to Dartmoor (Crossing 6)

*"A monk once went to Gensha, and wanted to learn where the entrance to the path of truth was. Gensha asked him, "Do you hear the murmuring of the brook?" "Yes, I hear it," answered the monk. "There is the entrance," the master instructed him." (qtd. in Jung 10)*

*"Act, act in the living present!" (H W Longfellow qtd. in Davies, Other Worlds 186)*

*"The poet only asks to get his head into the heavens. It is the logician who seeks to get the heavens into his head. And it is his head that splits." (GK Chesterton qtd. in Barrow 171)*

# Introduction

*A Tor, looking out, smelling the gorse and heather<sup>2</sup>.*

As an artist, my interest has always been in the nature of presence and in particular of the moment as being central to our experience of it. In my work, this had its beginnings in improvising on the piano and extended through playing jazz, as a piano player and vocalist, with other musicians. It is this attention to the moment that is the subject of this thesis; how to be more fully present with/in it and how to share this experience with others.

There is a sense, as an improviser, of time both expanding and compressing within a moment; a sense of moving from self to what Matthew Goulsh describes as 'more-self' (Goulsh 83). This feeling of more, or in the language of Buddhism less, self provides a tantalising glimpse of another way of being with and in the world (Kalu Rinpoche; Conze); a kind of symbiosis. Unfortunately, the realities of performing as an improviser can often conspire against the continuation, or investigation, of spiritual or greater-self principles. I also felt that both the spirit of improvisation and the beauty of work made in the moment could be investigated in a more interdisciplinary way – focusing on the principles of openness and paying attention, rather than on the particular form of any outcomes. I now wanted to return to these principles and make new artistic investigations from there.

Initially, this took the form of research into the nature of presence through improvisation, utilising the voice as my primary tool. This in turn led to an interest in the nature of sound and to the utilisation of new technologies in the investigation of the impact of sound, and particularly voice, on environment. I worked for some time in attempting to find ways in which to use sensors and real-time sound processing to create an increased sense of presence, both for myself and for audience. Although these tools appeared to have great

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<sup>2</sup> Artist's text



potential, I found that the experience of working with them took me too far away from the direct physical experience of presence, within a place.



Figure 2: O Brook, Dartmoor



Figure 3: O Brook, Dartmoor

As part of this way of working, with attention to an experience of *being present* as its focus, I started to make walking explorations of Dartmoor. I did this because I knew that if I was to make work which talked about presence, I needed to reconnect with what this felt like for myself. As a teenager, I had walked regularly on our local beach and it was here that I began a strong sense of connection with the natural environment and landscape. I also experienced restfulness from the usual mind-chatter of day-to-day worries, facilitated by the physical exercise and open spaces<sup>3</sup>.

Human beings need space – whether physical or internally through meditation – to combat the stresses of life in a highly industrialised society that we have not been able to adapt to, as we haven't had the evolutionary time<sup>4</sup>. This space then allows our focus to be lifted from our usual concerns, freeing us to notice other things and to experience our presence more fully. There is a space which can be held, a space in which a direct connection can be made between ourselves and 'other'; that which is not-self. An opportunity to experience our selves and our relationships in a different way.

<sup>3</sup> In Buddhist thought, the true nature of mind is spacious (Kalu Rinpoche) so perhaps there is a reflection of this in open spaces, giving restfulness from the chattering mind of regrets about the past and fears about the future.

<sup>4</sup> For an interesting contemporary discussion of this see both *Straw Dogs* by John Gray and Suzi Gablik's conversation with the environmentalist Christopher Manes in her book of *Conversations Before the End of Time* (84ff).



Figure 4: Dartmoor perspectives



Figure 5: Dartmoor perspectives 2

When I am walking on the moors, I find my attention moves between the broader picture, that of the movements of weather and the seasons, or the formation of the landscape and its natural and human history, and the detail of a flower or a stone. This constant interchange is very important to my work, as I have found that one often refers to and informs the other. For example, the way in which a tree grows is dictated by the prevailing conditions in its location; the colour of a stone wall changes as the light on the moors adjusts with the relative positions of the sun and the earth.



Figure 6: Down Tor, Dartmoor ♦



Figure 7: Butterdon Menhir and Row, Dartmoor ♦

Another important aspect of Dartmoor to my artwork is the way in which past and present intermingle in its landscape. I am particularly fascinated by the way in which granite tors, monuments and ruined buildings melt into each other, bringing thousands of years of history into a single plane of the present. I have also been inspired in my thinking by the tantalising glimpses which ancient settlements, such as Drizzlecome (SX 592 671), give of possible ways in which our Neolithic ancestors may have lived (e.g. Burl 58). While walking through their landscape, I wonder about the way in which they experienced their lives, their location, and how their mind-set might have made their experience different to mine. The contrast between their way of living and ours, led me to



think about the way in which we experience our lives and what we have lost through the speed of urbanisation, industrialisation and population growth. Despite this, in certain locations, Dartmoor still allows a momentary experience of true darkness, of feeling lost in a landscape, of the necessity to rely on senses other than sight and the peacefulness of time without any other human beings.

My research interest therefore moved away from the technological tools which might enhance presence, to wanting to find ways in which to investigate the core principles of presence, based on this experience of Dartmoor. As I started to develop performance and installation ideas, I realised that it was of central importance to me that any audience for my work be active participants within it. I did not want others to simply witness *my* activated presence (or the consequences of it), but to have the opportunity to experience this for themselves. As an artist, I can be a communicator and facilitator, but most importantly I bring my experience of methods and modes of practice which can enhance presence. My experience and my expertise can act as a catalyst for others to extend their experience in ways they might not have thought of. My approach to artwork making is to distil the essence of my practice and experience, and to use this within my interactions with others.



Figure 8: Dartington Grasses



Figure 9: Working with others at Rocombe Farm

### Outline of the thesis

The first chapter, *Topography*, provides a historical context in which this research can be placed, within contemporary arts practice. The second chapter, *Granite*, explores the spiritual, philosophical and theoretical ideas which both inspire and underpin my art making, especially in relation to the notion of activated presence. *Flora and Fauna*

considers my approaches to the making of artwork, based on the principles outlined in the previous section. *Flora* considers my personal research methods and explorations in the field, and *Fauna* outlines my approaches to the making of artwork outcomes for and with others.

This is then followed by detailed documentation and consideration of the making process (the research), relating to the investigation of activated presence in artwork. Particular attention is paid to the relationship of these works to audience and to ways of presenting work that acknowledges and welcomes their active participation. A concluding section then brings together threads from the different artworks, in considering the outcomes of the research project as a whole.

# Definitions

## *Definition of terms used in this thesis*

**Found** (materials/ objects/ sound): The term 'found' is used to refer to the method of location of materials used within artwork; its importance being that they have not been set up or controlled by the artist. There is also a reference to site, in that the term is usually used in reference to materials found, and re-used within site-specific work.

**Presence:** The Collins dictionary's first definition of *presence* is "1 the state or condition of being present" (Thompson 729). This definition's use of the verb *being* is particularly useful, as it could refer both to the *act* of being present, as well as the *existence* of being present, both of which are relevant to the use of the term in this thesis. An interesting extension of this idea can be found in a web-based legal dictionary, of "The existence of a person in a particular place" (Lectric-Law). This relationship of presence to place is also referred to in the second Collins definition of "2 a place where a person is" (Thompson 729). The definition used within this thesis covers these two ideas, of being and of being *in a place*, whilst allowing for the idea that *a place* may not be easily located in a physical plane (with reference to recent theoretical physics and spiritual understandings of existence, see *Granite*).

**Real-time:** A term usually used in reference to technological processing (but now extending into colloquial language), where the speed of processing is so fast as to be near-undetectable. It is also used to refer to film and video works which apparently operate within our usual time frame; i.e. a minute within the film also *represents* a minute. The term overall, therefore, is used to refer to occurrences, within technology, that mirror our experience of time within the world.

**Site:** This term is used to refer to the location at which either field work or artwork is taking place. **Site-specific** is used to refer to artwork which takes site as a key element within it and which is made specifically at/for that place.

# Topography

*This chapter provides a historical context in which this research project can be placed.*

## Bauhaus and performance

A key influence on the progression towards a more process-oriented approach in Western artwork can be found in the philosophy of those artists, in particular of Josef Albers, who worked at the Bauhaus in the early 1920s in Berlin. Albers stated that;

*“Art is concerned with the HOW and not the WHAT; not with literal content, but with the performance of the factual content. The performance – how it is done – that is the content of art” (qtd. in Goldberg 121).*

Albers was a key influence in the Black Mountain College of North Carolina in the 1930s; an interdisciplinary college which developed a focus on performance. Xanti Schawinsky, an old colleague from the Bauhaus, also conducted experiments in what might be described as theatre, but whose focus was the study of fundamental phenomena; “space, form, colour, light, sound, movement, music, time, etc.” (qtd. in Goldberg 121).

Schawinsky’s description of his first staging of *Spectodrama*, from his Bauhaus repertory, is especially interesting:

*“an educational method aiming at the interchange between the arts and sciences and using the theatre as a laboratory and place of action and experimentation.” (qtd. in Goldberg 122)*

This experience was extremely influential on the way in which artists began to see their own art as a place within which to experiment with fundamental principles, not simply as a means to an art-object.

Just prior to this, the work of the Futurists and Dadaists also emphasised experimentation through performance and the creation of temporary art objects and the use of ordinary ‘found objects’ in artwork. For example, Duchamp’s famous artwork, *Fountain* (1917); a urinal.

## Experimental music and performance

At around the same time, composer John Cage and choreographer Merce Cunningham, were also engaged in working experimentally with performance, in New York and on the West Coast. John Cage had a musical composition background, having studied with Schoenberg, as well as having briefly studied Fine Art at Pomona College, California. Cage's initial manifesto was called *The Future of Music* (1937), which was based on the idea of utilising 'noise' as a basis for musical composition. He stated that:

*"..wherever we are, what we hear is mostly noise...Whether the sound of a truck at 50mph, rain, or static between radio stations, we find noise fascinating." Cage's intention was to "capture and control these sounds, to use them, not as sound effects, but as musical instruments." (Cage 3)*

In this statement, we see both the Futurist and Dadaist ideals of utilising *objects trouvés*<sup>5</sup> and later he acknowledged his debt to Duchamp in particular, saying "one way to write music: study Duchamp" (qtd. in Goldberg 122).

Later, Cage re-emphasised this as;

*"..it is clear that ways must be discovered that allow noises and tones to be just noises and tones.....Why is this so necessary that sounds should be just sounds? There are many ways of saying why. One is this: In order that each sound may become the Buddha. If that is too Oriental an expression, take the Christian Gnostic statement: "Split the stick and there is Jesus" (69-70).*

## Experimentation

The notion of experimentation was key to Cage's approach, describing himself as a 'composer' of 'experimental music' (7).

*"What is the nature of an experimental action? It is simply an action the outcome of which is not foreseen." (69)*

The composer Michael Nyman, in his book about Cage, describes experimental composers as being, "...by and large not concerned with prescribing a defined *time-object* whose materials, structuring and relationships are calculated and arranged in advance, but are more excited by the prospect of outlining a *situation* in which sounds may occur, a



process of generating action (sounding or otherwise), a *field* delineated by certain compositional 'rules' (Nyman 4).

Essential to Cage's approach to music was the welcoming in of chance, initially through the use of chance operations as a compositional tool; in particular the use of the *I Ching*<sup>6</sup>. As Cage continued in his career, he adjusted his position from a focus on chance in composing to the importance of indeterminacy in performance;

*"...more essential than composing by means of chance operations, it seems to me now, is composing in such a way that what one does is indeterminate of its performance."* (69)

This brought his compositional work much closer to the concerns of musical improvisers in its interest in the moment of performance as being the central place of becoming;

*"...art as sand painting (art for the now-moment rather than for posterity's museum civilization)."* (65)

### **Musical improvisation and indeterminacy**

In the 1960s, there was a coming together of the ideals of improvisation and those of the artists working with indeterminacy and found materials. John Cage's<sup>7</sup> interest in noise and 'sounds as sounds' (see above) resonated with the concerns of the new 'free' improvisers, such as Ornette Coleman and Don Cherry. The free improviser and composer Cornelius Cardew describes this approach as:

*"We are searching for sounds and for the responses that attach to them, rather than thinking them up, preparing them and producing them. The search is conducted in the medium of sound and the musician himself is at the heart of the experiment."* (Cardew xvii)

The incorporation of the use of chance, the use of elements outside conscious or deliberate control, as well as an openness to environmental context were all elements which these artists had in common.

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<sup>5</sup> 'Found' objects

<sup>6</sup> The Taoist Book of Changes (Wilhelm). This book, along with yarrow stalks or coins, is used as a divination tool. In this context, 'chance' is seen as an opportunity to allow the divine Tao in to the decision-making process.

<sup>7</sup> And that of his circle such as his collaborator the pianist and, later, composer, David Tudor.

Matthew Sansom, in an article for the *Leonardo Music Journal*, also finds links between abstract expressionism in Fine Art and free improvisation in music. He locates the origin of the parallels between these two forms in the Surrealist movement, quoting the first Surrealist Manifesto, written by the poet Andre Breton in 1924:

*"SURREALISM, noun. Pure psychic automatism by which it is intended to express, either verbally or in writing, the true function of thought. Thought dictated in absence of all control exerted by reason, and outside all aesthetic or moral preoccupations." (qtd. in Ades 226)*

He also traces the use, by Breton and others, of automatic writing and the way in which the artists Joan Miro, Andre Masson and Max Ernst developed techniques for utilising similar methods for painting (Sansom 31).

Sansom points out that, following Surrealism there was;

*"...a new emphasis on the 'act of painting'. Appropriating the notion of pure intention within the activity of mark-making (a key interest being Eastern art and in particular Chinese calligraphy), artists emphasized the qualities existing within the activity of painting – it's 'happening'." (31)*

### Fluxus and 'Happenings'<sup>8</sup>

This interest in the 'happening' of artwork is mirrored in the concerns of those artists loosely known as the 'Fluxus'<sup>9</sup> movement. This began in the late 1950s with the work of Allan Kaprow. Kaprow, along with painters, musicians, filmmakers and poets, had attended John Cage's experimental composition classes at the New School for Social Research in New York in 1956. RoseLee Goldberg in her history of Performance Art refers to an untitled event at Black Mountain College, organised by Cage and Cunningham with the painter Robert Rauschenberg as a collaborator, to have "created a precedent for innumerable events that were to follow in the late fifties and sixties" (Goldberg p126), most notably those of the Fluxus artists.

Importantly, in a pre-performance reading, Cage asserted that:

<sup>8</sup> Defined by Kaprow as an event that could only be performed once. (Goldberg 132)

<sup>9</sup> "Fluxus was a term coined in 1961 by Macuias as the title for an anthology of work by many of these artists" (Dick Higgins, Yoko Ono, La Monte Young et al.) (Goldberg, 132). The term was then used to cover many artists working in New York at that time. There was no Manifesto agreed upon, nor definition of what a *Happening* meant when used outside of the context of Kaprow's work.

*Art should not be different [from] life but an action within life. Like all life, with its accidents and chances and variety and disorder and only momentary beauties....anything that happened after that happened in the observer himself."*  
(qtd. in Goldberg 126)

This notion of art being 'an action within life' was central to the philosophy of the Fluxus<sup>10</sup> artists, creating the foundation for contemporary Live Art.

Allan Kaprow created a series of events entitled *18 Happenings in 6 Parts* at the Reuben Gallery, New York in 1959. The invitations were clear that, "...you will become part of the happenings; you will simultaneously experience them" (qtd. in Goldberg 128).

This emphasis on the responsibility of the observer is an important one as it marked the beginning of an increasing interest in the creation of art works which placed a greater emphasis on the role of the audience as active participants. In Kaprow's events, this included a physical involvement, but this did not replace the notion of the artwork happening within the observer as asserted by Cage; rather it served to point to this reality through action.

### **Yves Klein and Piero Manzoni**

The work of these two artists, in the late 1950s, was also key to the development of the use of event as artwork in a Fine Art context. He also had an interest in showing his process as a part of his artwork. Alongside Klein's monochrome paintings, he began to develop his use of other, more performative media, such as the releasing of balloons (Klein, Aerostatic Sculpture) and the lighting of firecrackers (Klein, One Minute Fire Paintings) in order to investigate notions of things happening then disappearing. At the time Klein wrote that 'my paintings are now invisible' (qtd. in Goldberg 145).

Klein, wishing to increase the immediacy of the experience of an artwork, began his series of works utilising models as "living brushes", utilising models to paint *with* rather than *from* (Klein, The Anthropometries of the Blue Period). Importantly, he also asserted that

he saw these demonstrations as a means to “tear down the temple veil of the studio...to keep nothing of my process hidden”. He also sought to sell his “immaterial pictorial sensitivity” (qtd. in Goldberg 147) in return for pure gold leaf. He conducted several sales ceremonies, where the gold leaf and a receipt were exchanged between the artist and the purchaser, “But since ‘immaterial sensitivity’ could be nothing but a spiritual quality, Klein insisted that all remains of the transaction be destroyed: he threw the gold leaf into the river and requested that the purchaser burn the receipt” (Goldberg 147).

Piero Manzoni, working in Milan at the same time, sought to eliminate the canvas altogether, creating artworks such as *Living Sculpture*, where the artwork is created through his signing a model’s body and providing a ‘certificate of authenticity’ and *Artist’s Breath* where balloons inflated by the artist himself were valued monetarily by their size, and thereby the amount of the artist’s breath present.

### **Josef Beuys and ‘social sculpture’.**

Beuys, working in Germany in the late 1960s, believed that, “we have to revolutionize human thought...First of all revolution takes place within man. When man is really a free, creative being who can produce something new and original, he can revolutionize time.” (qtd. in Goldberg 149). Beuys aim was the transformation of peoples’ everyday lives through the experience of artwork. This idea of ‘social sculpture’ involved direct interaction with people through discussion. This took place in various contexts, as a means to “...extend the definition of art beyond specialist activity. Carried out by artists, ‘social sculpture’ would mobilize every individual’s latent creativity, ultimately moulding the society of the future” (Goldberg 151).

### **Instructional artwork and indeterminate performance**

This idea of artist as interlocutor was continued through the work of early conceptual artists such as Yoko Ono, who created artwork through written instructions. For example, in 1970 Yoko Ono instructed the reader to “draw an imaginary map...go walking on an actual street according to the map...” (qtd. in Goldberg 154). This is another place in which the paths of experimental music, free improvisation and Fine Art meet; where the

composer/ artist wishes to remove his/herself from the creation of the final artwork/performance, in order to create an improved, and more engaged, experience for the audience through participation. It can also be used, as in the case of the contemporary minimalist artist Martin Creed<sup>11</sup>, as a way of stripping down the artwork to its underlying principles.

### **Physical presence as artwork**

In the late 1960s in London, a group of sculpture students at the Royal College of Art, were developing ideas around the notion of living sculpture. This manifested in different ways in the work of Gilbert and George, who literally lived their art, and that of Richard Long and Hamish Fulton who worked with ideas of the body in landscape as being sculpture. During the following twenty years, Long has continued to work with ideas of body in landscape, utilising mark making and the creation of sculptures in found materials, whereas Fulton's work has moved in to a consideration of the relocation of the artwork into the walk itself, not its documentation (although he does make and sell this) or any interventions along the way. The work of these artists gives an interesting example of one way in which the notion of artist intervention can be redefined through creating changes in an audience through the provision of vicarious or actual experiences.

### **Redefinition of the role of the artist**

Alongside these changes in approaches to artwork making, was an important change in thinking about the role of the artist, through the critical writings of Derrida and Barthes. Of particular relevance here is Derrida's notion of the 'death of the author', bringing the focus onto the importance of the reader within any written interaction. This was mirrored in the work of Saussure (Lechte) in the field of linguistics, highlighting the importance of the recipient of language in the creation of meaning. These ideas have been influential in the development of post modern thought, where the role of the reader/viewer of artwork is seen as active in the creation of meanings, not simply as a passive observer.

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<sup>11</sup> Winner of the Turner Prize 2001, with the now-famous minimalist piece, *Work No 227: The lights going on and off*, which was installed at the Turner Prize Show of that year.

### **Artwork and everyday life**

In France in the early 1970s, Henri de Certeau began his social research explorations into the actions inherent in everyday life; research that was written up in *The Practice of Everyday Life* (De Certeau) and its sequel by the same name, subtitled *Living and Cooking* (De Certeau, Giard and Mayol). This work was important in the way that it took as its focus the creativity inherent in everyday actions. This formed the intellectual backbone behind contemporary Action Art, which takes everyday actions as its core vocabulary, often as a political act of re-investment. In such artworks, usually the only object-outcomes are the traces of actions made, or the placement of objects utilised within action performances. This has become especially important in freeing artists from the idea of end-product object as being the final aim and outcome of art. Physical outcomes can be a consequence of a process, pointing backwards to the true centre of the artwork – the processes and actions which have been made.

### **Process as artwork**

Artists such as Fulton, whilst physically present, argue that their work is simply pointing to the art object (in Fulton's case, the walk). The consequence of this for artwork makers is that there is a greater freedom and acknowledgement of the importance of a process-driven approach to artwork outcomes.

### **Contextualising my approach**

The performative arts practice cited above, traces the roots of my ideas, creating a context for my arts practice as demonstrated within this research.

## **Moving On**

This section provided an overview of the historical background to the way in which I make artwork. The next section considers the key principles that underlie my approach.

# Granite

*This section provides the theoretical and philosophical background to the methodology I use for making artwork.*

## Being in the Body

### Feeling Presence

As an artist, I am interested in considering the experience of being *in a body in a place at a specific time* – in a physical experience of a moment. Not just the moment in linear time, but an extended understanding of what it means to be present in the world. Once we know what is body we can then consider that which is not.

Where to begin?

**The body:** the place from which we begin and end our exploration of the world. Jean Piaget (Piaget and Tomlinson) suggested that we learn about the world in stages, that our brains develop alongside this: from thinking in imagery tied to objects, to the use of language and independent thought. It is interesting to note the relationship between this linear approach to child development and the usual presumption that words are preferable to images and thought preferable to action. That somehow, the world of the physical is inferior to the world of the mind; something to be left behind in the search for intelligence.

### Body and mind

Contemporary cognitive science also appears to treat the mind as being independent of the body, or rather the body as being relevant to mind only in so far as it interferes with 'right' processing and to be modified and controlled with drugs to enable normalisation. This is perhaps a consequence of our emphasis on the written word, rather than oral storytelling and discussion; the disembodied voice of literature.

And yet experience tells us that body and thought are related; if we have a problem, we are told to sleep on it. A walk or a run can create changes in the pathways through thought; coffee can spark bright ideas.

### **Embodied perception**

Merleau-Ponty brought a new perspective to the debate on body and mind, through his emphasis on returning to the body as the site of perception (Merleau-Ponty). His argument questions the ability of experience, and consequently any consideration of its meaning, to be simply detached from the body in which it is made. All experience is therefore 'lived experience' and body is central to our experience of presence.

Antony Gormley has been investigating notions of bodily presence, through sculpture, using our wrapping of skin as a starting point for his investigations into our relationship to other.

*"The skin as that thing that in some way identifies the border between substance and appearance...." (Gormley qtd. in Illuminations)*

This jumping-off point then allows his consideration of our bodily experience through the making of sculptural objects, whilst keeping in mind that this is not all there is.

*"I have never accepted that somehow the actual visible skin in some way is the beginning and the end of the body because somehow I am very aware that we have field perceptions and that our perceptions of others are not limited by the visual, by the skin and I've always tried to express that..." (Gormley qtd. in Illuminations)*

Nicholas Handoll, in his book *The Anatomy of Potency*, writes of the importance of acknowledging the possibility of things we cannot feel directly through our physical sense receptors:

*"I start from the premise that we cannot assume that there are no other additional vehicles of sense or communication in the universe, for which we have no receptors and for which therefore we cannot be aware" (Handoll 50)*

Handoll, as a cranial osteopath, is particularly interested in intuition and talks of this as "perhaps another undefined sense" (Handoll 49), only felt in a secondary way. His



argument is based around both personal experience of other ways of sensing, alongside contemporary understandings of the way in which the world operates, as described by physics.

Recent theoretical physics<sup>12</sup> speaks of other ways of understanding the behaviours of our selves and our environment, at both the sub-atomic and universal level. The key finding, upon which Quantum Mechanics is based, is that matter is both a wave and a particle at the same time. Further, it is difficult to know whether an electron's behaviour will be that of a wave or a particle in any given situation and that the electron makes what appears to be a choice about how to be within any moment. This was proved through experimentation and is known as *Heisenberg's Uncertainty Principle* (Zohr 29). This realisation, that matter behaves in ways unexplained by Newtonian science, has opened a space within which alternative ways of knowing and being, such as those of Eastern philosophy, can be postulated within the framework of science (Berendt; Capra).

### Goethe and intuition

Brian Goodwin, the biologist and holistic scientist, points out that Goethe was also proposing the centrality of different ways of knowing in science as early as the turn of the nineteenth century (Goodwin 18ff).

*"None of the human faculties should be excluded from scientific activity. The depths of intuition, a sure awareness of the present, mathematical profundity, physical exactitude, the heights of creative reason and sharpness of understanding, together with a versatile, ardent imagination and a loving delight in the world of the senses – they are all essential for a lively and productive apprehension of the moment."* (Goethe qtd. in Goodwin 19)

Goodwin proposes the reintegration of thought and feeling in science, through developing what he refers to as 'a science of qualities' (7ff), where qualitative judgements and feelings are given scientific weight and utilised within experimentation<sup>13</sup>.

<sup>12</sup> Or as it is often referred to, the 'new physics'

<sup>13</sup> See also the work of Rupert Sheldrake, in particular his books such as "Seven Experiments That Could Change The World", where he conducts a scientific study of everyday feeling phenomena, such as 'being stared at' (Sheldrake).

## Vedic theory and new physics

When making research into theories around sound, I encountered much interest, especially amongst alternative health practitioners, in the connections between the ancient Vedic sound theory and new physics<sup>14</sup>. A key tenet of this philosophy is that the world is sound, *Nada Bramha*, and that sound is at the core of all being (Berendt). This is paralleled by contemporary understandings of matter as having energy, vibration, at its centre. Clearly, if vibration is at the centre of all things, then matter can be directly affected by sound, through sympathetic vibration. Vedic philosophy goes further, affirming that intention to create sound, the pre-sound, also has a physical manifestation, and hence all pre-action and intentional thought (Shruti). This could also be understood in terms of vibration and the unexplained behaviours of the quantum world, although this takes a greater leap away from Western conceptualisation of the universe and its behaviours.

## The Active Observer

*"..the nature of reality and perhaps the structure of the universe is intimately related to our existence as conscious individuals perceiving the world around us."  
(Davies, "Strange Times" 183)*

The closest relationship between the Vedic notion of action through intention and contemporary physics can be found in the notion of the active observer. The famous experiment, known as *Schrodinger's Cat* (Zohr 22ff) where a cat in a box cannot be proved to be either alive or dead<sup>15</sup>, led to the notion that reality only collapses into one form or the other at the moment of observation, when the lid is removed. The observer is therefore an active participant in the creation of that reality. Some, such as Fritjof Capra (Capra), have taken this as a cue to question the intentionality of the observer and therefore the whole of scientific experimentation, whereas others such as Zohr point to this as being an example of the reality of truth as only being valid within a context; that all truth, and

<sup>14</sup> Particularly useful were two courses I attended, given by Shruti, a teacher from New Delhi, about Sound Healing and contemporary physics (Shruti).

<sup>15</sup> Depending upon whether it makes the choice to eat the poison or food left for it in the box.

therefore experience, is relative. What is certain, is that we are implicit and active in the creation of our own experience whether we realise it or not<sup>16</sup>.

### Body and Environment

A further implication of the new physics is for our view of ourselves within our environment. If as Dana Zohr suggests,

*"Newton's vision tore us out from the fabric of the universe itself" (2),*

then the physics of Einstein's relativity theory and more recently of quantum mechanics, reintegrates us. Zohr argues for a view of human consciousness as being the link between the Newtonian physics of the real world of 'things' and the subatomic level of quantum behaviours which do not conform to similar behaviours. She considers the possibility that,

*"... consciousness, like matter, emerges from a world of quantum events, that the two, though wholly different from each other, have a common 'mother' in quantum reality."*

She goes on to suggest that:

*"If our intellect does indeed draw its laws from Nature, then we have the further consequence that our perception of these laws must to some degree mirror the reality of Nature herself. Thus in knowing ourselves, we can come to know Nature." (6)*

Merleau-Ponty has another way of describing this relationship;

*"To be a body is to be tied to a certain world...our body is not primarily in space, it is of it" (148)*

This is a view of our place in the world which speaks of our direct and intertwined relationship to our environment; the interrelated world of gaia theory, expressed through quantum mechanics.<sup>17</sup>

<sup>16</sup> There are links here to education theory, regarding the view of the learner as being an active participant in the learning process. This also links in to psychoanalytic theory, through both Freud and Yung's different views of our relationships to the creation of our own experience of reality.

<sup>17</sup> There is another contemporary physics investigation which is relevant here – that of the, as yet unexplained, direct links between apparently unrelated molecules around the universe. This has been as a result of investigations into cosmology.

In spiritual terms, this awareness of our interrelationship to all things is known as empathy or compassion. The Dalai Lama points out that:

*"Because our capacity for empathy is innate, and because the ability to reason is also an innate faculty, compassion shares the characteristics of consciousness itself. The potential we have to develop is therefore stable and continuous." (Gyatso 128)*

In this branch of Tibetan Buddhism, the mind is used to work on the individual's capacity for empathy, which is developed through an increasing sensitivity to all beings. This empathy and compassion is strengthened through the realisation that, through an understanding of reincarnation, that each person is all things at the same time. This brings an interesting perspective, much as that of the multi-dimensional universe of contemporary physics, where all layers of being are contained within any one entity at any given moment.

An awareness of our all being part of an indivisible whole is exemplified in Zen Buddhism through the use of *koans*. These are apparently impossible questions, which the student is expected to contemplate in order to grow spiritually. Confusing answers are also given to simple questions, such as that quoted by Jung in his foreword to Suzuki's introduction to Zen Buddhism;

*"A monk once went to Gensha, and wanted to learn where the entrance to the path of truth was. Gensha asked him, "Do you hear the murmuring of the brook?" "Yes, I hear it," answered the monk. "There is the entrance," the master instructed him." (qtd. in Jung)*

This confusion is designed to lead to wisdom through letting go of preconceptions and allowing the student the possibility of enlightenment through personal experience.

The holding together of apparently impossible opposites is also central to the Zen approach to enlightenment. This is a wisdom which has its origins in Ancient Chinese thought, as expressed in the *I Ching*<sup>18</sup> and the *Tao Te Ching*<sup>19</sup>. The familiar concepts of Yin and Yang, as laid down in the *I Ching*, express the reality of indivisible opposites, which are interdependent and combine to create the whole.

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<sup>18</sup> Commonly translated as The Book of Changes, thought to have been written over 4000 years ago.

The whole in Taoism is referred to as the Tao, often translated as 'the way' or 'the path'; it is also used to refer to the order of Nature. As Adeline Yen Mah explains in her book on the history of Chinese thought,

*"As a philosophy, Taoism deals with the unchangeable, eternal and pervasive oneness of the universe; with cycles and the relativity of all standards; and with the return of the divine intelligence of non-being, from which all being has come." (Yen Mah 33)*

The following stanza from Lao Tzi's<sup>20</sup> *Tao Te Ching*, quoted by Yen Mah, exemplifies the philosophy of dualistic thinking, expressed as unified opposites:

*"Thirty spokes are joined at the nave to build a wheel  
But it is the space between that lets it function  
Lumps of clay are fashioned into a vessel  
But it is the emptiness within that renders it useful  
Doors and windows are cut to build a room  
But it is the enclosure that furnishes a shelter  
As we benefit from that which exists,  
Let us recognise the utility of that which does not." (qtd. in Yen Mah 37)*

There is also a more esoteric aspect to the understanding of *Tao*, in the form of the life-death-life cycle of existence (as also expressed in the Buddhist tenet of reincarnation). Just as within inaction is the seed of action, so within life is the essence of death and vice versa. There is a story of the Taoist master Zhuang Zi<sup>21</sup>;

*"He once had a vivid dream in which he was a butterfly fluttering from flower to flower. During the dream he was utterly convinced he was a butterfly. When he woke, he said to himself, 'Am I Zhuang Zi dreaming I was a butterfly or am I a butterfly dreaming of being Zhuang Zi?'" (qtd. in Yen Mah 39)*

Zhuang Zi expanded the principles of the *Tao To Ching*, teaching that *tao* is the way of Nature. Nature in this context refers both to the inherent behaviours and substance of the universe. As Yen Mah explains,

*"Zhuang Zi conceived of the cosmos as a stream in which one state succeeds another endlessly." (39)*

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<sup>19</sup> Translated by Yen Mah as "classic of the Tao and its virtue", this book was written 2500 years ago.

<sup>20</sup> Translatable as Old Master

<sup>21</sup> Master Zhuang. Born 200 years after Lao Zi, died c.300BC. Wrote the important Taoist text *Zhuang Zi*.

This mirrors Einstein's theory of the interchangeability of matter and energy; of a self-balancing system where transformation and change are the only constants.

Clearly, there is a connection between the ideas behind Vedic theory, compassion within Buddhism and contemporary understandings of the world through the new physics. We are part of an indivisible whole.

### **The Great Flow**

Another important aspect of this is experienced within the practice of *T'ai Chi*, where the opposites of emptiness and fullness, action and inaction are investigated and expressed through movement. Only through dropping the *Yang* energy of 'holding' within the body, and allowing the expression of the *Yin* energy of softness and emptiness, is it possible for the true *Yang* energy, which comes up from the earth, to be expressed through the body. (Ch'ing) This energy is experienced within the body as *Qui*, often spelt *Chi* or *Qi*, the practice and experience of which is known as *Qui Gong*. This is the same *Qui* whose pathways around the body form the basis for the practice of healing through Acupuncture<sup>22</sup>. Acupuncture, *Qui Gong* and *T'ai Chi* are all based in the principle of letting go into the great *tao*. An analogy that is often used is of the *Tao* being a river and the *Qui* being the current; it is difficult to swim upstream and wiser to 'go with the flow'. It is important to be clear that this kind of letting go is active, involving effort and patient attention. This is the same in all meditative practices, where effort is required to focus on emptying the mind. This is not emptying for no reason, but to allow the realisation of reality unencumbered by the distraction of thoughts; what is known in Buddhism as the 'true nature of mind' (Kalu Rinpoche).

### **Stillness**

The fourteenth century Christian mystic, Meister Eckhart, was writing of similar concepts, regarding the importance of stillness;

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<sup>22</sup> The insertion of needles at specific points around the body, following the paths known as meridians. These create healing through the activation of the 'blocked' *Chi*, stimulating the body's own healing mechanisms.

*"Stand over flowing water and you cannot see yourself. But supposing it is clear, then where it is collected and still enough for a reflection you can see your form in it."*

*"What is rest? St Augustine says rest is complete lack of motion: body and soul bereft of their own nature." (qtd. in Fleming 24)*

This stillness is mirrored in the Taoist precept of non-interference.

*"The Tao is the ancestor of all things. It is powerful but is also invisible and inaudible. It is hidden and nameless dao yin wu ming, and operates by non-action (wu wei), which means non-interference or letting things take their own spontaneous course: 'Tao takes no action but nothing is left undone'" (Yen Mah 33-4)*

The philosophy of non-interference is central to an understanding the way of being which is espoused in Ancient Chinese thought. Through 'letting things take their own spontaneous course' and not wasting energy on attempting to control outcomes, much greater things can be achieved. It is also important to note that this is not a philosophy of nothing being achieved, it is simply a different way. Also, through following a different way and actions coming from a clear source of energy, then different results are the consequence than if the action comes from a different place<sup>23</sup>.

*"In the Tao Te Ching the tao is compared to water, which accomplishes much while being meek and receptive. It is all-powerful in its humility. Nothing under heaven is softer and weaker than water. Yet nothing surpasses it in battling the hard and strong." (Yen Mah 35)*

Through practicing this openness and softness, much greater strength can be achieved; if the wind is blowing, a piece of grass is in a better position than a tall building.

### **Being in the world**

An underlying theme to all these practices is that of paying attention to what is. This is learnt through practice and has a great deal to do with being in the moment. Zen Buddhism is particularly clear about this aspect of learning how to be.

*"Question: Can you explain here and now?"*

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<sup>23</sup> There is a great deal more that could be said about this, in reference to the human ego, as discussed in spiritual practice and psychoanalytic theory. Suffice it to say that these traditions agree about the harmful nature of self-centred thought and action, both the individual and for society as a whole.

*It is consciousness of time and space. What is happening here and now is what matters. Don't think about the past or the future, but concentrate on here and now. When you urinate, just urinate; when you sleep, just sleep: when you eat, practice zazen (sitting meditation), walk, make love, exactly the same. Concentrate on the present act and nothing else. If you are not happy here and now, you never will be." Taisen Deshimaru, Zen master (Deshimaru)*

Through practice, the student can increase his/her ability to behave in a similar way throughout the rest of their life. This is an embodied experience, through which the quietness of mind allows an increasing focus on the actual experience of being alive, here and now.

### **Everything changes**

An important aspect of 'what is' is the fact that everything changes. A favourite story of mine is that of the title of Adeline Yen Mah's book *Watching The Tree to Catch a Hare*, which is worth including here as it exemplifies this beautifully.

Her Chinese grandfather related this story to her at a time of change.

*"Let me tell you a story that I hope you'll never forget. Once there was a boy who was told by his master to catch a hare. He went into the woods and looked around. Lo and behold, at that very moment, he saw a hare running along at full speed. As he watched in astonishment, the hare ran smack into a tree and knocked itself unconscious. All he had to do was to pick it up. For the rest of his life the boy waited behind the same tree in the hope that more hares would do the same thing.*

*That boy is like you, expecting the same conditions to be waiting when you return to your school in Shanghai. Watching the tree to catch a hare (sho zhu dai tu)!"*  
(Yen Mah 6)

We live in a moving world<sup>24</sup>, where the only certainty is change. If we are not prepared for this, by being clearly in reality and with an uncluttered mind, we also run the risk of failing to focus on that which is important. There is a saying that while one is busy nailing one end of a plank down, the other end is coming up.

There are movement meditations specifically designed to enable the practice of spiritual principles whilst moving. Walking is often performed as a meditation and both *T'ai Chi*

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<sup>24</sup> This expression comes from the title to the catalogue to Richard Long's exhibition at Tate St Ives (Moorhouse)



and Yoga<sup>25</sup> are designed to provide a mental and physical framework for the practice of being in a moving world.

Any form of meditation is not a way out of the world, but a way in to a clearer understanding of our existence and place within it. The practice of meditation is not simply about being present with a moment with the eyes closed and the body silent. It is about learning to live in an enhanced way, within the world of the senses.

Our bodily experience is central to our spiritual one:

*"Such are the eyes and ears and the five senses: these are the soul's way out into the world, and by these ways the world gets back into the soul." (Meister Eckhart qtd. in Fleming 25)*

### Time and the moment

In both contemporary physics and Buddhist and Taoist thought, time is conceived as a series of moments. This is not the moment of clock time, where each instant can be logged in a linear progression, but of each moment as being all-inclusive and of great depth. In contemporary physics, these moments are seen as being interchangeable and, potentially, layered. Time as a linear experience is extended to include the idea of the multiple layers of new cosmology, where the past, present and future are intertwined in ways we don't yet understand.

Einstein's theory of relativity points to the fact that all time is relative, depending upon the location of the observer. There is not simply one 'present' but a multiplicity of presents, at all times and in all places and as Davies points out, 'there is no universal present and no universal reality' (Davies, Other Worlds 194). More difficult to comprehend is the theoretical conclusion, described through equations, that there are many other worlds which potentially exist alongside each other. Everett and DeWitt's 'Many Universes'<sup>26</sup> theory of the quantum universe is that in these other worlds, there is no distinction between past and future, with our world having a strong past-future

<sup>25</sup> The Hindu practice of meditation through the performance and holding of certain physical postures.

<sup>26</sup> Everett & DeWitt 1957 ??

property, but with others where time is neutral or even reversed. In this theory, it is not simply a case of other worlds occurring separately alongside ours, but of our own time-space reality actually splitting (Davies, Other Worlds).

*"In Everett's world model, space is just one three-dimensional subspace from a superspace that really contains an infinity of perpendicular directions, an idea totally impossible to visualise, but with a sound basis in mathematics." (138)*

This is where physics moves into the realms of contemporary philosophy, with its postulation of other worlds and this 'superspace' of infinite possibilities.

## Moving On

This section provided an overview of the key principles which underly the way in which I make artwork. The next section moves on to a more personal explanation of my research journey, in which I investigate ways in which to follow these principles in the making of artwork.

## Flora and Fauna

*This section looks at my approaches to making work, based on the principles outlined in the previous section. 'Flora' considers my personal research methods and explorations in the field, and 'Fauna' outlines my approaches to the making of artwork outcomes for and with others.*

### Flora

*Personal research/explorations in the field*

#### Overview

I start with a research action. This may take the form of reading, walking, talking to people or writing, depending upon the subject under consideration. The work I have made for this PhD is based in my research into Dartmoor and its history. The subject of Dartmoor is useful to me as it provides a place where ideas of the nature of presence can be explored, as opposed to the specifics of place. It is in this way that research on and around Dartmoor could be said to have spawned my site-specific piece in London, *The Public Record* alongside event works whose references might be more easily traced to Dartmoor. It is therefore important to outline the ways of working that I have developed through the course of this research project, out of which the artwork outcomes emanated.



Figure 10: Listening to echoes in Haytor Quarry, Dartmoor (Haytor Quarry Sound Walk) ♣



Figure 11: Listening to a record, GDA, London (The Public Record) ♣

## Activating presence

*The journey is what lasts, the moment...Be where you are when you're there."*  
Paul Silber, member of the Roy Hart Theatre Company (qtd. in Hampton 195)

As outlined in the introduction to this thesis, my approach has been to return to an investigation of presence itself, and to make artistic investigations from there. My initial approach was therefore to spend time in the field, in this case Dartmoor, investigating the nature of presence through personal experience.

## Walking the body walking the mind

*"Walking, ideally, is a state in which the mind, the body, and the world are aligned, as though they were three characters finally in conversation together, three notes suddenly making a chord....Walking allows us to be in our bodies and in the world without being made busy by them" ( Solnit 5)*

I have found walking to be a particularly useful way of being aware of my physical presence in a context or site. During my research on walking, I came across Lucy Lippard's name and discovered her book *Overlay* about her experiences of spending time walking on Dartmoor, and the surprising ways in which this crystallised her practice as an Art critic.

*"In 1977 I went to live for a year on a isolated farm in southern England. I thought I was escaping from art – from a complicated urban life of criticism, organising and activism. I wanted to walk, to read, and to write a novel. Nothing else. The reading and writing went as planned, but the walking led straight back to art." (1)*

But just as Lippard found that what she thought she would be doing was not what she was actually doing, when I began to walk regularly as part of my research process, I found that the walking was not simply feeding my creative practice, but that it was becoming practice in itself and as much a part of my making as my performative outcomes. The idea of walking as an integral part of practice wasn't new to me, as I have been exposed to a great deal of walking practice over recent years<sup>27</sup>, but the idea that this was possibly central to my own work was quite surprising and confronting.

At the same time I came across the work of Hamish Fulton who is uncompromisingly clear that the walk, or the experience of the walk, is the art object itself.

*"...my art is about walking it is not about...US land art or European outdoor sculpture. The differences centre around either constructing something or nothing in the landscape. What I build is an experience, not a sculpture. My wish is to leave as few traces of my passing as possible. My walking experiences are the reverse of creating sculptural changes, subtractions or additions to the land."*  
(Fulton qtd. in Tufnell 16)

Ben Tufnell describes Fulton's work as '...several hundred walks in twenty-four countries, over many thousand miles, across three decades' (15). This covering of distance is very different to the way in which I walk, as it has never been an aspiration of mine to walk great distances; walking is more of a private concern and a way of being immersed within the landscape rather than of travelling through it. In my walking practice, a walk is more an accumulation of moments, rather than an aspiration or acknowledgement of distance covered.

Walking also has a history as a meditation practice. My first experience of this was in a Qi Gong class where we were asked to break the process of walking down into steps and then into smaller units; focusing carefully on each tiny movement in turn. In particular, we were encouraged to focus on our contact with and away from the ground. This is reminiscent of a Zen *koan*, but in the realm of the physical, where the body can't understand why it doesn't know how to make an action which it performs every day, leading to confusion of both the body and the brain. I find the process of breaking down and rebuilding to be an excellent way in which to appreciate the quality of everyday movements and to re-appreciate the continuing bodily experience of presence.

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<sup>27</sup> For example the work of Hamish Fulton, Simon Whitehead and Nic Sandiland.

ways until it became a separate entity, or what might be described as 'more itself'; an abstraction based in a strongly invested premise. These compressed movement documents would often form the basis of sections of choreography. When I saw their performance piece, *It's Shifting Hank* (Goat Island), I was struck by the intensity of the movements and their emotional power; at the same time deeply referential, but completely abstracted from any context.

Despite my interest in their final abstractions, the greatest relevance to my own work lay in the use of an intense focus on everyday actions and the way in which such a focus creates a different relationship to the initial stimulus. I also identified with the documentary nature of the work and the way in which deeper philosophical truths can be found within apparently ordinary experiences.

### **Nothing added and nothing taken away**

The creation of artwork whilst, or as a result of walking, brings up the question as to whether, and if so what kind, of interventions are appropriate in the places through which the artist walks. I strongly identify with Hamish Fulton's wilderness ethic in his work – of adding nothing and taking nothing away from the landscape through which he passes<sup>29</sup>. Although I have not made a decision to work solely within these parameters, it has definitely been a motivation in my choice of materials for making artworks.

Care regarding the making of interventions is also a natural consequence of working within a National Park<sup>30</sup>. Having said this, it is difficult in a working place such as Dartmoor, with a long history of farming and industry, to justify being too precious. Despite this, I feel that Dartmoor is having the opportunity to rest, especially from mining operations, and personally I would not wish to disturb it further. I have therefore worked, during the course of this research project, solely in a way which does not leave any

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and his subsequent resurrection. These tableaux are usually depicted as pictures and are used in Roman Catholic Christian churches to create a journey of prayer and meditation around a church.

<sup>29</sup> Other artists, most notably Richard Long and Andy Goldsworthy, make interventions in the landscape, usually of a temporary and visual nature.

<sup>30</sup> Dartmoor is one of a small network of legally protected areas of land, the management and conservation of which is delegated to the National Parks Authority, in consultation with landowners, tenants and, in the case of Dartmoor, the Commoners who have ancient rights of use on Dartmoor.

permanent mark on the landscape. I was also influenced by the way in which Marilyn Arsem uses performance to create temporary interventions into site, for the purpose of enhancing or changing participants' relationship to that site (Arsem).

### Slowing down

Slowing down is essential to the way in which I create artwork. It is only through slowing, and quietening, down that we make the space for that which is not-us to penetrate our consciousness. I especially like Solnit's phrase, *The Mind at Three Miles an Hour* (14), as a description of what happens to the mind when walking. As discussed in the previous section, the body and the mind are inextricably linked and walking creates a space in which this can be experienced in daily life.

There is an interesting relationship between slowing down and Western notions of boredom;

*"In Zen, they say: If something is boring after two minutes, try it for four. If still boring, try it for eight, sixteen, thirty-two, and so on. Eventually one discovers that it's not boring at all but very interesting." (Cage 93)*

Or as Goulish says,

*"...those who grow impatient may simply be thinking too fast." (Goulish 82)*

He points to the value of what he describes as 'slow thinking';

*"Most of us live in fear of slowing down our thinking, because of the possibility that if we succeed we might find that in fact nothing is happening. I guarantee this is not the case. Something is always happening. In fact, some things happen which one can only perceive with slow thinking." (82)*

Goulish references the work of both Pina Bausch and Tarkovsky, as examples of both exponents and communicators of this (Goulish 8). I also find that Tacita Dean's work with film to be able to communicate something of the qualities available through slowing down (Dean, Tacita Dean: Recent Films and Other Works).

There is also the importance of the fact that when moving more slowly, or not moving at all, that life is able to get at us. As Eckart points out,

*"...we are made perfect by what happens to us rather than by what we do."  
(Eckhart qtd. in Cage 64)*

### Watching and listening

*"I have no formulas, there is no technique. The only 'technique' is listen to what you're hearing, and hear what you're listening to, stand where you're standing, see what you're looking at. That's the technique. But then, that's a very demanding technique". (Paul Silber qtd. in Hampton 195)*

Silber's description of the Roy Hart Theatre Company's technique is an apt description of the way in which I worked in my field research. This is a key aspect of working with what the biologist Brian Goodwyn describes as 'being present with materials'<sup>31</sup>. The methodology that he teaches is that of spending time with materials, observing and documenting rather than making hypotheses and seeing whether the qualities of the materials then fit with that. My approach has been to spend time with materials, which may be within a particular site, and to see what happens – my involvement being to watch, listen and document.

### Working with video

I began working with video as what seemed to me to be a natural extension of working with digital sound; ons and offs as pictures instead of sound<sup>32</sup>.

An early experiment in documentary video was in making a record of a walk from the cliff to the sea at Labrador Cove near Torquay in Spring 1999. I decided to see whether it was interesting for the video to attempt to take my point of view as I walked down a steep path to the cove below. On viewing the footage, although it had a certain charm, I didn't feel that it offered anything unusual or unexpected.

<sup>31</sup> Described during a talk given to Dartington College Research (2001)

<sup>32</sup> At the time I was considering the nature of digitisation and had been making experiments into conversion of digital information into different outcomes.



## Extended time

I was also beginning to experiment with video on Dartmoor, looking at the way in which the visual image could be used to reflect the sense of extended or slow, to use Goulish's terminology, time that I experienced there. I had been captivated by Tacita Dean's film work *Disappearance at Sea* that showed the coming of nightfall, as viewed through the Fresnel lenses of the St Abbs Lighthouse in Berwickshire (Dean, *Disappearance at Sea*). The film is shot using available light and there is an extraordinary sense of the passage of time, which I had not encountered so strongly in an installed environment before. Her use of real-time footage to highlight the drama from slower events inspired me to begin experimenting with real-time video in my approach to Dartmoor as I wanted to create a similar intensity.

## Significance of small things

My first piece along these lines were *Dartmoor Stone*, which was an experiment in making video work from a more conceptual perspective. This piece was based on the paradox between my experience of the deep stillness of such an ancient, dense object and my growing understanding of the reality of its movement (as explained through Vedic philosophy and contemporary physics).

Its premise is the acknowledgement of the fact that a granite tor is moving, alongside our experience of its stillness, through making a real-time video record. It also acknowledges the inability of recording media<sup>33</sup> to make a true record of reality and that by its very nature only the surface of things is attended to.

The parameters I set myself were that I would find a visually interesting close-up shot of the granite tor and that I would then keep the shot for at least three minutes, or longer if I chose. The process was then repeated, using a different shot. There was an element of physical difficulty written into this process, as I did not use a tripod: I was interested to see whether my physical involvement would add another dimension to the piece through,

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<sup>33</sup> This is especially clear in the case of digital media, where all information is reduced to 0s and 1s (ons and offs).

for example, the natural movement of my breathing. I was also interested by the way in which my experience of the difficulty of keeping a position and monitoring my own ability to be still would affect the outcomes.

This piece was significant, as it was my first attempt to make outcomes that were grounded in the way of working with site which I had developed in my walking practice; utilising both investigation through research and physical exploration through my presence. My premise was that this kind of conceptual and physical grounding in site could create interesting conditions within which work can happen. I wanted to know what kind of outcomes could be created from this starting point – where the materials are chosen for their appropriateness to the exploration of the ideas underlying the investigation.



Figure 14: Granite Spider 🕸 📷

The most surprising aspect of working in this way was the way in which it altered my own perception of the significance of events. As I watched through the lens of the camera, small events took on greater proportions. For example, from the same footage I made an experimental piece, *Granite Spider*, where the movements of a spider hanging in front of the tor became the main focus of the footage, but which also serves to highlight the intense stillness of the granite behind. Also, as the minutes ticked by and my body became cramped, I became more aware of my breathing and its relationship to the rest of my body as well as the space which my body takes up in the universe. At the same time, I found a growing identification with the stone itself, just as in meditation the mind opens to the reality of the interrelatedness of all things (see *Granite*).

## Documenting process and presence



Figure 15: Videoing in the field, Dartmoor ♦



Figure 16: Videoing in the field, Dartmoor (2) ♦

A video recording is a symbiotic process; in order to make the record of an object; I must also be there. The video recording is therefore also a record of my actions: whether these be lying in the ground becoming cold, or setting the camera up and walking away. In either scenario, my actions are directly related to the outcomes produced. Even in the case of remote recording, I must have set the situation up, programmed the computer and my attention is presumably still on the recording in some way. Conversely, I do not have the intention of presenting my video works as being 'true records'<sup>34</sup> of the experience of those exact moments during which I have been pointing my camera at an event. My intention is to point at the event and through this, to encourage others to experience other moments or events, in their everyday lives, in a similar way<sup>35</sup>.

## Documenting process

My first work with specifically documentary video was as part of my *Easter Stations* investigation into the documentation of presence. In this instance I invited a colleague to make video documentation of my walking process. On watching the video footage I was intrigued by what it did and did not show. What this documentation did well was capturing the general atmosphere of the moors at that time and certain aspects of my process, but I did not feel that it demonstrated my experience of what it was like to be present at that time and in that place. The video created an external view of myself and my work, whereas I wanted to find a way of documenting my *experience* of being present.

<sup>34</sup> In the sense of its being a mediation of the actual event (See Auslander).

In my piece *Hidden Treasure*, I also worked with video as a documentary medium, taking footage of the sculptor Anne-Marie's working process, an excerpt from which was incorporated within one of the treasure boxes that formed part of the final installation. It was during the making of this piece that I returned to the idea of taking footage of a piece of stone, in this case the piece of stone being sculpted. There is something about the quality of watching and stillness that I find intriguing and captivating, as well as the unfolding of events, be that stillness or something very small, in real time.

From that point, I have been working intensively with video as my primary medium for documentation of presence – my presence and that of other beings. Although I would argue that the video works I have made are artworks in themselves, I was aware that they might be difficult for others to engage with as such. My work with video at this time was a very personal experience, not made with any thought of audience or even their significance as artwork. It was only as I continued to plan and make event artworks, where a great deal of focus was on the involvement and needs of the audience/participants, that I wondered about ways in which to link these two ways of working together within artwork.

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<sup>35</sup> See discussion of Fulton's work earlier in this section.

## Fauna

*This section outlines my approaches to making artwork outcomes, especially in relation to working with, or presenting work to, others as audience/participants.*

### Overview

After having worked for some time in the field, with the focus in activating myself as an artist, I turned my attention towards the creation of artwork from and with these experiences. Although this is the subject matter of Part Two of this thesis, there are certain key ideas which underlie the approaches I took to the creation of these event artworks. This particularly relates to the notion of audience and the way in which they are approached and/or involved in the artworks.

### Art and communication

In modern teaching and learning theory, it is pointed out clearly that teaching is not the same thing as learning. This is also true of communication theory, which points out that communication is a two-way process<sup>36</sup>. Jeff Kelley, in his introduction to Kaprow's *Essays of the Blurring of Art and Life* talks about the relationship between artist, artwork and audience;

*"Of course, we can say that an artwork, no matter how conventional, is 'experienced' by its audience, and that such experience, which involves interpretation, constitutes a form of participation. But that's stretching common sense. Acts of passive regard, no matter how critical or sophisticated, are not participatory. They are merely good manners (esthetic behaviour?)." (xviii)*

Although I agree with the general tenor of Kelley's argument, I would not dismiss the idea of viewer as active participant so quickly (see *Topography*). I feel this is fundamental to an extended notion of artwork, which includes process in its fullest sense. But I would agree with his assessment that;

*"...in the arts, communication tends to flow in one direction, from the artist through a medium toward an audience. We the audience find we've been*

<sup>36</sup> As taught on the Education Degree at Goldsmiths' College (1985-9) and at in-service training, when working as a Communications Coordinator for the BBC.

*'communicated' to, and what has been communicated to us is something of the artist's creative experience. But implicit in communication is reciprocal flow, and reciprocity in art, more verb-like than noun-like, begins to move esthetic experience toward participation." (Kelley xvii-xviii)*

As an artist, I feel that the logical place to go with the acknowledgement of the importance of the viewer in the creation of meanings is in encouraging physical participation of audience/participants in artwork. I also feel that this is particularly pertinent to current our social situation, where, despite for example technology's promise of greater interactivity, individuals are feeling increasingly out of control of their own destiny; true interactivity is only available when power is willing to be relinquished.

### **Relinquishing control**

Although to give up a level of control over artwork outcomes may be unappealing, or frightening, to many artists, my perspective is that this is simply an extension of what is already the case. I cannot control other peoples' reactions to my work; as a controller of outcomes, I can only imagine what their reactions might be, or hope that theirs will align with mine. Personally, I actively enjoy the fact that I don't know exactly what is going to happen, and that I am not the sole contributor or factor in the making of outcomes. This is not to suggest that I am not fully engaged as an artist in the processes which lead to the creation of outcomes; in fact, to create a situation which is conducive to effective participation in artwork is extremely skilled. I do not see this as an abdication of responsibility, but as a relinquishing of control. This relates more to my approach to the making of artwork, and the living of life, in general – as outlined in the previous sections. I see people/viewers/audience as other elements within a situation, whose contribution and presence I value, just as I value the contribution of all other elements in the equation. What is important to me is that the artwork experience continues to point in the direction of the subject of the piece, rather than to the human involvement in it.

### **Experience-led artwork**

Any events that I am creating for audience/participants are based in experiences that I have had myself. This is important to me, as it is the essence of the experience itself which I am interested in passing on, or sharing, with others.

I have found that it is easy, in event-based work, to end up planning events or situations that do not relate back to the experiences which initially inspired the work. An example of this can be found in my proposal for creating a sound environment within Hay Tor Quarry (OS 7577), using sounds within the quarry as the starting point for a live sonic performance. As part of this, I prepared samples from the quarry and created a computer-based version (using *SuperCollider*), in which I used the movements of the computer mouse as an input to change the way in which the sample was processed. I enjoyed playing with this as a sonic sculpture, but I was clear that a large part of the enjoyment was that of playing a game. I wondered whether the environment I would create in the quarry, where people wandering about would alter the treatment of the samples by their movements, would also feel like a game. I have no issue with gaming in artwork, in fact quite the reverse, or even with the idea for the piece itself, but I did not feel that it adequately addressed the initial inspiration for the piece; that of enhancing an experience of being present on Dartmoor. In a way, what I had been doing was taking my interest in Dartmoor and that in interactive electronics and live processing and forcing them together. It was at this point that I decided to move away from working with live processing for a time and to return to my initial inspiration and to work from there, using whatever materials or methods felt most appropriate.

The importance of this approach was confirmed for me, when I was asked to take a group of Aune Head Arts<sup>37</sup> members on a 'listening walk' to Haytor Quarry<sup>38</sup>, as part of their Sounding Dartmoor project. I arranged it to take place during the hour before sunset, initially gathering at Haytor car park, where I gave a short introductory talk about the quarry and the history of the area.

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<sup>37</sup> A Dartmoor-based contemporary arts organisation.

<sup>38</sup> A Dartmoor quarry, active in the late 19<sup>th</sup> Century, last opened to provide granite for the Exeter War Memorial after the Second World War. It is now a popular beauty spot, with a pond which has accumulated since the quarry was last used.





Figure 17: Haytor from the old granite railway ♣



Figure 18: Spreading out along the granite railway (Haytor Quarry Sound Walk) ♣

We then made a walk towards the quarry, across an area covered with grasses and gorse bushes, roughly following the route of the old granite railway<sup>39</sup>. I had found in the past that my experience of this walk was completely different if I was alone than with other people, be it one other or a group. Although the natural tendency to talk amongst ourselves was part of this difference, I was also aware of the way in which animals and birds would avoid a group of people, especially if they are moving and/or talking. My idea was to provide the group with a taste of the experience of walking alone along this path.

I explained my thinking to the group and described the ways in which we would attempt to achieve this. Initially, we set off in silence so that we could listen more carefully to what was happening and as I suspected, there was not a great deal of wildlife to listen to and the noise of our clothing drowned out the smaller noises and feeling of complete quiet, out of which the smaller sounds appear. I then asked people to spread out, just away from the path, and to crouch down as quietly as possible. As we settled down, the sounds and atmosphere of the moor which I am used to experiencing on my solo walks began to appear and I could see from peoples' faces that they were beginning to be captivated by what they were hearing. There was a level of excitement showed by the participants as well as a level of engagement displayed by their demeanour and their willingness to stay quietly in one position. A secondary theme of the walk was that of the balance between

<sup>39</sup> This was the famous granite railway, put in place by Stover to facilitate the removal of granite from the quarries in the immediate area and to take it down to the canal near Newton Abbot, for shipping out via Teignmouth (Devon).



listening and seeing and the way in which at dusk this subtly begins to alter. Again, I was keen for the participants to have the personal physical experience of the process of change both within the natural soundscape and their own perception.



Figure 19: Participants sharing knowledge, Haytor Quarry ♣



Figure 20: Participant shouting into Haytor Quarry ♣

We then walked on to the quarry and made various experiments with sound by shouting across the water in the quarry<sup>40</sup> and listening to the qualities of the echoes created by the flat walls of the inside of the quarry. In an attempt to enhance the experience of the walk for the participants, and to give them food for thought, I gave a short talk about the work of Hamish Fulton and showed them a copy of *Wild Life* (Fulton, *Wildlife: Walks in the Cairngorms*) which I had brought along with me. Altogether it was an extraordinary experience and the feedback from the participants was that they thoroughly enjoyed it and felt that it had changed them in some way. I particularly enjoyed the wide range of people who came on the walk and the way in which people shared their knowledge and experiences, thereby enhancing the experience as a whole.

<sup>40</sup> I first encountered this in 1990 in a park in central Beijing, China, where middle-aged ladies with smart hairdos were shouting across the lake as part of their early morning Qui Gong practice.



Figure 21: Participant with Fulton postcard ♣



Figure 22: Giving a talk on Fulton, Haytor Quarry ♣

### Questioning myself

The Haytor Quarry sound walk elucidates a way in which the passing on of an experience to audience/participants can be made in a direct way. But the experience of leading this walk during the time I was preparing the proposal for the Haytor Quarry sound event led me to question the methods I was proposing to use and, in the end, my plans for the event itself. I had to ask myself questions such as: What was the purpose of the technology and the altered sound? If I was not considering the exploration of these materials to be the artwork, then where did I think that the artwork lay and how would the materials I was planning to use help to create this? This type of questioning is vital to my artistic process; what matters to me most is that I am happy that the artwork I present is followed through from an initial concept and is attempting something which I believe to be of value. The most important aspect of this for me is that I am happy with my process and the way in which this has led to the work; that I feel the artwork has integrity.

In essence, my concern is with the passing on of a lived experience. I also do not feel that providing all audience/participants with the experience itself is necessary. In fact, I enjoy a more multi-layered experience and enjoy the play of recontextualisation and memory. Just as in the Haytor Quarry sound walk, it is impossible to re-play an experience lived in a particular time and place but it is possible to give a taste of what it was like and to encourage others to try it for themselves. Hamish Fulton speaks eloquently of this in his photographic piece on the cover of the booklet accompanying his Sainsbury Gallery exhibition:

*"An object cannot compete with an experience" (Fulton, Catalogue to Hamish Fulton Exhibition 2001),*

where this text is superimposed over a photograph of his tent pitched on a snow-covered mountain. Fulton's contention is that the *experience* itself is the artwork, not the object.

Just as for Fulton, for me, the artwork which I produce does not need to pass on my initial experience in such a way that its re-experiencing is equal to the original experience itself; it is impossible for a picture of a mountain to *necessarily* produce an impact in the viewer that is equal to that of the person witnessing the view him/herself. What is possible is that the art object triggers a personal experience in the viewer, be it through memory or the coming together or changing of existing ideas to create a powerful, or revelatory experience within the viewer. Perhaps it doesn't. But I learnt from singing jazz music to people whose musical experience differed to mine that my job as an artist is to be true to that which moves me, whether it is directly popular or not.

### **Private experiences made public**

*'Fulton's walks and the resulting works are private experiences given public form which, thereby, develop the potential of wider meaning for their viewers' (Tufnell 15)*

This description of Fulton's work could easily be a description of the solo improviser's work, as described by Paul Dunmall in my interview with him (Dunmall; Mayes, "Interview with Paul Dunmall").

Take for example, the photographic and text work entitled *Thirteen Miles to Brecon*, as shown on page fourteen of the catalogue to the retrospective exhibition *Walking Journey* (Tufnell). The key image in the piece is of an old stone waymarker with the text 'Brecon 13' inscribed on it, surrounded by mud and stones, with scrub grass and apparent wilderness behind it. This waymarker is an apt description of Fulton's work; that of a signpost, not of an object to be desired or lionised. Another artwork, which features on the cover of the *Sainsbury Gallery* exhibition mini-catalogue is 'An object cannot compete with an experience'.



There is something delightful to me about the compression of huge expanses of experience into one piece of paper and so few words, which occurs in Fulton's work.

Again, *Thirteen Miles to Brecon* is subtitled:

*'A TWENTY ONE DAY 604 MILE COAST TO COAST ROAD WALKING  
JOURNEY FROM SOUTH WALES TO NORTH EAST ENGLAND*

*BY WAY OF SEVEN HILL TOPS LATE SUMMER 1987*

*BRECON BEACONS CADER IDRIS BLEAKLOW HEAD CLEVELAND  
HILLS YORKSHIRE DALES HELVELLYN CHEVIOT HILLS'. (Tufnell)*



Figure 24: Sparkling Water

### Activated audience; process, ideas, plans

I have a growing interest in the idea that my artwork is as much about the process of researching and talking to people about my ideas and plans, as it is about any final event. An example of this is that I did a large amount of research into the quarry at Haytor when thinking about the kind of event and material to use within the work. My home town of Ashburton is full of people who are very knowledgeable about the moors and local history, and I found myself talking to many local people about my ideas for work, almost as a reciprocity for the information they have given me. I remember specific moments when I felt wary of attempting to explain about the relationships between sound, Hindu philosophy and granite (!) but felt obliged to make the effort in return for their time. I was constantly surprised that people who I thought might not be interested, or find it hard to understand what I am doing overall, seemed to really connect with the ideas and that they appeared to make perfect sense to them. This showed me many things - one of which being not to underestimate people. On the other hand, I think that a large part of this is

the person-centred education theory of 'going from where the learner is'<sup>41</sup>, in that by finding common ground to start with, this creates resonances between us and a natural sympathy with the work.

This experience encouraged me to produce the piece *The Grasses are Singing*, which relied upon the interest and participation of the visitors to the installation. My experience is that if the right connections are made initially and the work is presented in the right way, difficult ideas can be engaged with in a non-threatening way. I am personally interested in finding gentle ways of working with or looking at difficult issues. For example, the star project is partly about life, death, life cycles; *The Grasses are Singing* addresses the momentary nature of life. Of course, my personal view about these things are that these are facts of life which once encountered give a different kind of freedom.

## Moving On

This section outlined the key approaches which I took to the process of creating final artwork outcomes. This completes *The Lie of The Land*. The second part of this thesis describes and evaluates the artworks that came out of the principles and methodologies outlined in *Part One*.

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<sup>41</sup> As taught by my tutors on the Bed Hons in Early Childhood Education, Goldsmiths College (1985-9)

## II: Artworks



Figure 25: Finding North

*"Remember an early paradox, that we make the path as we tread it. As we are changing, in body, emotion and consciousness each second of time, and walking on, so does the path we are treading." (Humphreys 44)*

## Introduction to Part II



### *How the chapters are organised*

Part Two presents key artworks made during this research project. The aim of these write-ups is to provide description, analysis and critical reflection of each work. These artworks chart the course of the research journey, where each work is both a consequence of, and a response to, questions raised by the previous work/s. This process has therefore resulted in a clear chronological sequence of works, as presented here.

**The artwork** is organised in the following format:

- In blue: The title, location and date of the artwork performance/installation
- **Overview** provides an outline of the work together with any specific aims.
- **Starting Points/Key Concepts** presents and considers any central themes or research context within the artwork.
- **Planning/Preparation/Process** provides any useful information and analysis regarding planning and preparation, or in the case of *Hidden Treasure* the making process for the piece.
- **Performance/Installation** covers the physical, technical issues and progress of the performance/installation itself.
- **Reflections/Analysis** considers any issues arising from the work, along with further critical analysis/reflection.

*Quotes from my personal journals are shown in maroon.*

Illustrative video documentation is provided both within the electronic version of this text, shown by the symbol  (Electronic Word document on DVD-ROM entitled *Thesis master*), in medium quality format, and on DVD in high quality format (for viewing in full screen size or on a television), shown by the symbol .

**Conclusion:** A concluding section, reflecting on the research project as a whole.

# Hidden Treasure – a record

*Presence Studios (September 2002)*

*Nine Days of Art 2002, Devon*

## Overview

This project was designed to investigate the possibilities inherent in the recording of a process and the finding of new ways to interrogate and highlight relationships between process and outcomes.

## Starting Points/Key Concepts

### Sounds and stones

The background to this piece is located in my research and experiments into the resonant properties of materials. This had partly been inspired by my encounters, through reading and discussion, with the ideas of both the new physics and Vedic sound theory (see *Granite*). My particular fascination was with the way in which activity at sub-molecular level is qualitatively different to that which occurs on the surface of things (Zohr; Zukav; Davies, *Other Worlds*). At the same time I was continuing to read around Hindu ideas of sound and vibration as being central to all aspects of the world (Shruti; Berendt). Whilst researching Dartmoor quarrying, I discovered that its granite is one of the most dense to be found in the world<sup>42</sup>, but my readings into physics were telling me that even *this* granite was moving, albeit very slowly. As I continued to research the subject, I came across links between pre-historic peoples and ritual sonic practices, where the resonance of ritual, or communal, spaces were possibly used, or retro-fit, to enhance the low frequencies present in male voices (Devereux 75ff). There are examples of this in Cornwall (Chun Quoit), Berkshire (Wayland Smithy) and most notably at the Newgrange burial chamber in Ireland (79-81). There is also the suggestion that the shaping of the outer stones of Stonehenge were designed to enhance the sonic experience for those standing

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<sup>42</sup> Hence the use of Haytor and Merrivale granite beneath the water-line of the original London Bridge (the bridge was sent back to Merrivale quarry, once it had been sold to the Americans, so that the front few inches of the granite slabs could be  
*Footnote continued overleaf*



outside the circle (103), whereas the 'recumbent' stone at the head of the stone circle at Easter Aquorthies, in Aberdeenshire in Scotland, is shown to increase the resonance of any sound made in front of it, within the circle itself (95).

### Sound, change, performance

At the DA2<sup>43</sup> Winter School (1999), I encountered the work of sound artists such as Matt Rogalsky and Kaffe Matthews. They were working with live sonic processing, utilising environmental sound sampling and real-time processing with SuperCollider<sup>44</sup> and LiSa<sup>45</sup>. Both artists utilised microphones to collect 'live' samples and Rogalsky created controllers with Basic Stamp, which could convert a signal from analogue to digital/MIDI<sup>46</sup> data in real time. This information is then be used to control other computer outputs or actions which then are merged to create a live performance or installation.

In order to learn more about live processing, I attended a workshop on David Tudor's *Rainforest IV*, led by Ron Kuivila and James McCartney, as part of ICMC<sup>47</sup> 2000 in Berlin. Tudor's original versions (1968-1973, I-V) incorporated tape players and large sonic transducers with a vibrating mechanism attached (Adams). These transducers were used to relay the sound from the tape players, while the vibratory mechanism enhanced the ability of the material on which it was placed to act as a resonator. *Rainforest IV* entailed attaching the transducers and vibratory mechanism to various found objects that might be hung or placed in a space. These objects then act as resonators for the sounds which were relayed through the transducers.

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sliced off and it was only this granite facing which was eventually shipped to Arizona, now reassembled across a river in the desert...

<sup>43</sup> South West Digital Arts Agency

<sup>44</sup> SuperCollider was written by James McCartney as a programmable software environment, specifically for use with real-time sound processing.

<sup>45</sup> Live sound processing software created at Steim Research Centre, Amsterdam for Matthews' use with a violin which had been modified for use as a computer controller. This software was then developed further and released for sale to the general public. Written by Tom Demeyer and others.

<sup>46</sup> Musical Instrument Digital Interface; a standard agreed between manufacturers of musical instruments and related hardware and software, allowing digital communication, via a system of notes encoded as numerical values.

<sup>47</sup> International Computer Music Conference



Figure 26: Rainforest workshop: Sound objects ➔



Figure 27: Rainforest workshop, small group work ➔

At this workshop we took these same principals, but introduced a digital sound source which could be processed in real time through the software synthesiser SuperCollider. The main advantage of this was of creating greater flexibility in live sound processing, as well as the ability, through networking, to send different sounds to different objects in real time. I found the experience of hearing the ways in which the objects altered and added to the initial sounds, through the quality of their materials and shapes, both sonically and conceptually fascinating. I was particularly struck by the possibilities inherent in the creation of sound worlds for particular objects, as well as the conceptual integrity of treating objects as site.

### Sound and Granite

This workshop encouraged me to make use of these same principles, but to find some way in which to relate it to my experience of walking on Dartmoor. I had been walking around the quarries near Haytor and decided to investigate the possibilities of using these principles to make a sonic piece in one of the quarries. Would it be possible to create enough vibration so that even Haytor granite, an extremely dense material, could be used as a resonator? Conceptually, I also enjoyed the possibility of making a link between the sonic concerns of pre-historic peoples (Devereux) and contemporary scientists (Berendt), adding another layer to the sonic investigation of the site. By focussing on granite, a key element in Dartmoor's qualities and history is also brought into the work.

## Resonant qualities of materials

As part of my research, I looked into the resonant qualities of materials and the way in which they behaved. I found out that each object, relative to its material and size, has a fundamental frequency at which it resonates. If a sound at this frequency is introduced into the object, a resonance 'spike' is created whereby the loudness of the sound is increased exponentially (Winstanley; Wishart; Devereux). This occurs through the effect of the sympathetic vibrations<sup>48</sup> between the introduced sound and the frequency at which the object itself resonates. My plan was to use these same principles, but using the granite walls of the quarry as the resonator.

I also planned to enhance this, through using the sound of the granite itself being struck as the initial sound source. This sound would then be reintroduced into the granite through playing it through the audio transducers, attached to the granite. There was a technical as well as conceptual reason for using the sound of the granite itself being struck, as there would hopefully be a greater quantity of the same resonant frequencies within the sound and the granite itself. This would help to increase the audible sound through the effects of the increase in amplitude of the sound wave through the joining together of the sympathetic vibrations. (This was the same principle I eventually used in *Hidden Treasure*).

Sound would therefore be used to create a physical link between our experience of stone as still and the reality of it moving, through using the stone's natural vibrations as a resonator. Through our experience of hearing the way in which the stone can increase the level of sound, I hoped to point out, through experience, the difference between the deep reality of materiality and our surface experience of it.

## Finding a microcosm

I was becoming increasingly aware, especially as autumn was approaching, that attempting to realise any piece involving electronic equipment out on the moors would be

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<sup>48</sup> Vibrations which are of the same frequency, or from the same harmonic sequence. When joined together, they create a larger wave; with sound waves, this creates a greater volume.

difficult. There were also a number of factors involved in the creation of the proposed Haytor Quarry piece which would be new to me; in particular the practical aspects of creating an outdoor installation which uses electronic equipment. I therefore started to look for ways in which I could investigate some of the same ideas but in a more controllable situation.

I first met Anne-Marie Moss at her sculpture studio in Ashburton, during the *Nine Days of Art* festival in 2001. At the time I noticed that she was working with stone and that she was currently carving a piece from granite. I was struck not only by the fact that she was a woman working with one of the hardest stones, but that each time she struck the chisel with her mallet the stone and the chisel between them made a wonderful sound. As the Haytor Quarry piece became increasingly complicated to plan, an idea grew for ways in which I could work with Anne-Marie to create a simpler piece, which could demonstrate the same themes.

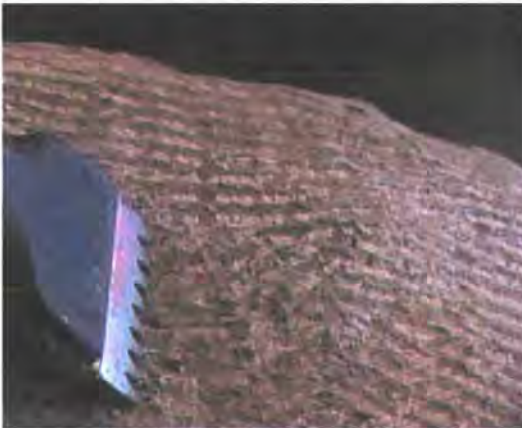


Figure 28: Tool on stone



Figure 29: Tiny piezo speaker attached to sculpture

### Recording process

This new piece also presented the possibility of being present with a complete making process, in an extremely controlled environment. I was intrigued as to what may be revealed through focusing in on this process, creating documentation and seeing what came out of it, rather than planning an end-product and working towards that. This approach was inspired by the performance company *Goat Island's* approach to the making of outcomes, where the material used in the creation of outcomes is created within the

devising process (Goulish), often through research, improvisation and documentation, with structure only being added later, as a frame for the material (see *Topography*).

There are also interesting questions which can be addressed through this type of piece, regarding the nature of recording itself, or the record as an object, within the sonic outcomes themselves. I wanted to create a piece, which utilised sound, but which addressed *within its outcomes* the questions of authenticity of recording (see Auslander) and its relationship to its source.

### **Preparation/Process**

Anne-Marie and I agreed that I would make a sonic record of the process of making her new sculpture and that this would be installed with the finished sculpture and shown as part of *Nine Days of Art 2002*.

### **From Granite to Polyphant**

A major change which happened initially was that Anne-Marie's next sculpture was not to be from granite, but a local Cornish stone – polyphant. Although this was a disappointment, I realised that any clear connections with prehistoric peoples were already lost, once the piece was being made and shown within a studio, rather than on Dartmoor. This created a greater clarity for me that this piece was now independent of my initial ideas for *Haytor Quarry* and must stand on its own within its new context. This enabled me to focus more clearly on the potential inherent within this new situation, rather than seeing it as a smaller version of a previous idea.



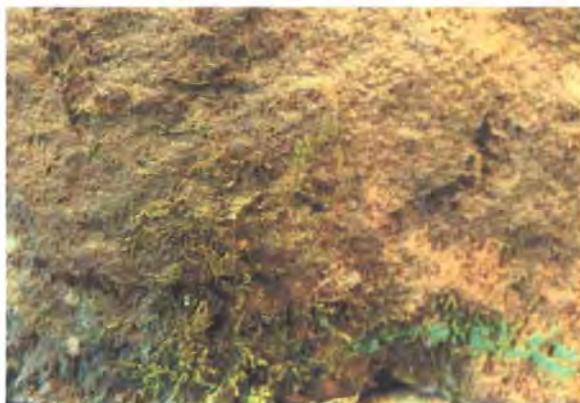


Figure 30: Original surface of the stone

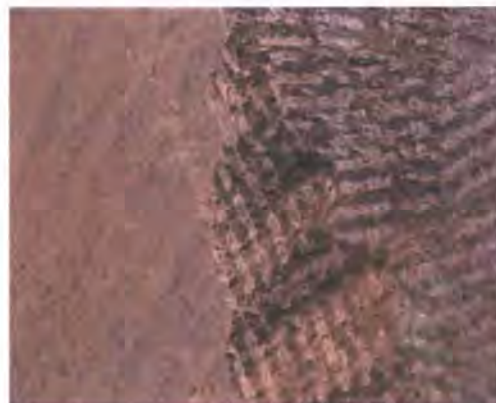


Figure 31: Rough and smooth

### Immersing myself

I decided to take the same approach to recording Anne-Marie's process as I did to working with site on Dartmoor, that of simply being present and allowing events to unfold. I made great efforts to be as close to her process as possible and to take on her perspective as much as possible. Interestingly, by the end of the recording process I had the feeling that it was not only Anne-Marie's perspective that I was taking on, but also that of stone itself<sup>49</sup>; that I was recording its experience of being carved. I think this comes partly from Anne-Marie's intense focus on the stone, enhanced my own, and the fact that the piece of stone had a pre-existence as an object, with its own presence, which was then being acted upon.

### Planning recordings

Initially, we discussed ensuring that all key stages of the making of the stone carving would be recorded. We discussed our schedules and arranged possible times at which I could come in to her studio during the process. Anne-Marie offered to let me know if there was an important change of tools, (as this would affect the sonic record if I missed one) outside our pre-arranged times.

<sup>49</sup> Later I found links with Gablik's conversation with Manes, entitled "Making Art About Centipedes" (Gablik 84ff).



Figure 32: Anne-Marie working on the sculpture

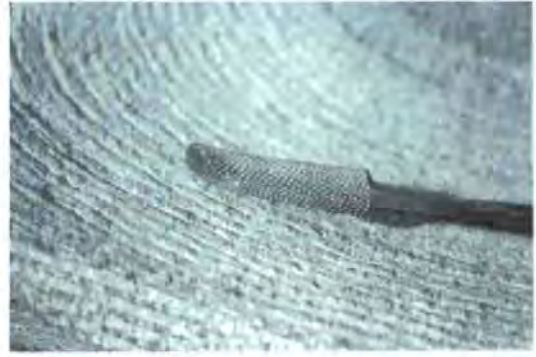


Figure 33: Anne-Marie's finishing tool

### Planning outcomes

Although my piece was entirely process driven, the nature of Anne-Marie's particular process meant that it would have a clear end-point, as she planned to show and sell the work. This meant that if I wished to complete my piece it would need to happen alongside her process, including its exhibition at her studio for *9 Days of Art*. This necessitated my planning my outcomes, especially in terms of the technical materials, alongside the making/recording process. There were also negotiations to be made regarding the presentation of the final piece, so that the sculptor's vision for the piece was not changed negatively through my intervention, whilst ensuring that the piece I had planned could be integrated with her finished sculpture. It was therefore important that clear discussion took place during the making process to ensure that the key element of my piece, that of re-introducing the sound of the making back in through the finished sculpture, could be realised.

### Making a record

Although sound was my primary recording medium, I wanted to experiment with the use of other recording media; photography and video. As a consequence of making *Easter Stations*, I was interested in the qualities of different documentary recording media and what they did and did not show. Although I came to the piece with the idea of working with the resonant properties of stone, I was equally interested in the nature of recording, itself, and the attempt to document what is happening within any moment, or series of moments.



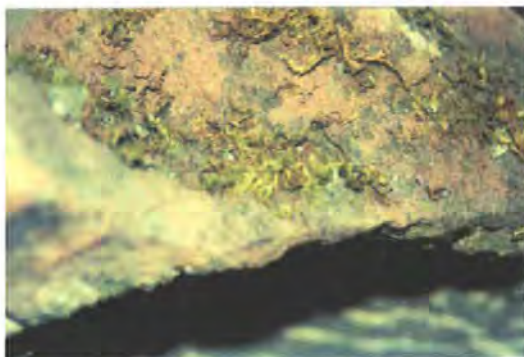


Figure 34: Documenting moments (1)

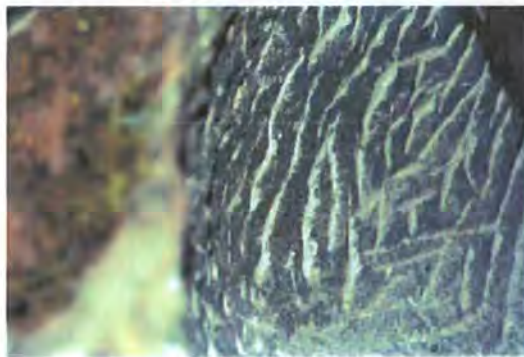


Figure 35: Documenting moments (2)

I wanted the final sonic piece to give a sense of the durational nature of the sculpting process, usually hidden to the viewer of the final sculpture. This durational process would be compressed through the use of samples taken from the initial recordings, edited together in a linear fashion. I decided upon a duration of around ten minutes for completed sonic record; long enough to give a sense of the durational nature of the work, but short enough to be experienced within the time-frame usually given by visitors to an exhibition such as this. Accompanying pictures and video would also assist in the compression of this temporal process into the shorter time-frame of an exhibition visit.

During the recording process I became increasingly intrigued by the physical and visual changes in the stone/ sculpture during the process. There were in fact many different sculptures which appeared and disappeared during the process and I was impressed by the sculptor's ability to continue to work through the layers of what could be described as end-moments, in order to reach their vision of a finished piece.



Figure 36: Centre of the sculpture; early version

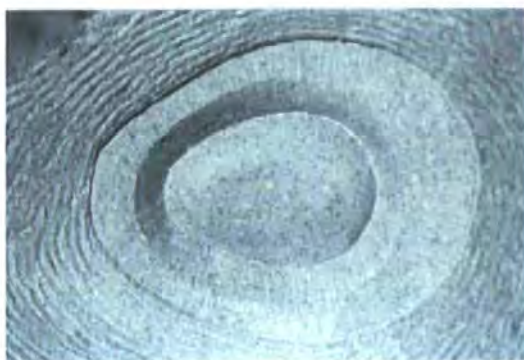


Figure 37: Centre of the sculpture; later version

During the process of the making and its recording, Anne-Marie told me she was pregnant, and that this piece was about that her experience of this.



I began to think about this relationship between the stone and her hidden child, which also explained the name she had given to the piece, *Hidden Treasure*. During the making process, Anne-Marie went to have a scan of her unborn child, which she showed to me. We did consider making sonic recordings of the baby's heartbeat, which she heard during her ante-natal visits, to mix in with the sonic recordings, but the time constraints made this too difficult. Instead, we agreed that I could make a copy of the baby's scan to make prayer flags to hang around the exhibition. These would create a direct connection between the sculpture and its hidden subject, within the framework of making a record of moments within the process. I also came up with the idea of making treasure boxes, which would contain both sonic and video recordings from the sculpting process, again referencing the hidden child as well as the hidden making process.

## **Performance/Installation**

### **Reinstalling the sounds of process**

The key concept of the installation of this piece was reinstalling of the sounds of the stone carving with (and through) the final sculpture. As the piece developed, I had a strong sense of the way in which the piece of stone had been acted upon, and the sculpture created through the collision of metal with the stone itself, the sound acting as an aural document of each encounter. The record of these sounds almost act as a memory of the stone's experience of being carved, as well as the tools' experience of carving. I was intrigued by the relationships this suggested between the final sculpture and human experience and the mechanics of memory; the way in which are current selves could be said to be formed by past experiences.

It was important to me that any technology used in the installation would be hidden from view. This was because I wanted the stone/sculpture and the sound of its making to be the main focus of attention, as opposed to the mechanics of the technological production. I also liked the idea that the sound of the making, which was being played in the same space in which it was recorded, would initially appear to be happening within the present

moment. This was an aspect of the installation which I felt worked particularly well, as when the studio was empty, the sound of the sculpting could be heard outside in the courtyard and on entering the studio, all that could be seen was the stone sitting on a plinth.

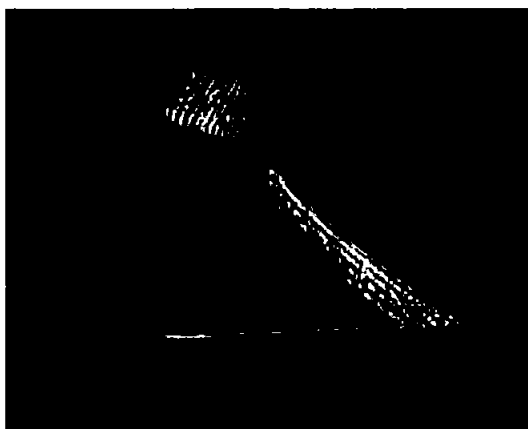


Figure 38: Hidden Treasure

### Technical production

As discussed above, the final sonic piece was created by editing samples of the collected recordings of the sculpting process together in a linear way. Each change of tool or technique was documented and included in the finished piece. The final piece was ten minutes in length, which was then copied to minidisk.

As in the planned *Haytor Quarry* piece, the sound of the stone being struck was used as the sound source, which was then fed back through into the stone. The resonant qualities of the stone would then be activated, enhanced through the presence of its resonant frequencies in the sound source (*see above*). This presented some difficulties, it would have been inappropriate to attach materials in such a way as would damage the sculpture itself. The compromise I chose was to attach a large audio transducer<sup>50</sup>, of the sort used in the *Rainforest* pieces (*see above*), to the plinth on which the sculpture was standing. As the plinth was made of wood, this was an excellent resonator, which would then transfer its vibrations to the stone. Whilst not as effective in activating the stone's resonant properties as having the transducer attached to it, this offered a compromise which was conceptually

<sup>50</sup> These audio transducers are in effect a speaker without a cone or a case. The sound output is of high quality, but of low volume. These complete units were designed for use underwater, for military sonar output, but are now used to create hidden speaker systems by attaching them to walls, utilising the resonance of the wall to increase the level of the sound.

acceptable to me. In addition, I attached two mini piezo speakers<sup>51</sup> to the sculpture using blu-tack. The piezos functioned in two ways: firstly, in assisting the activation of the resonance of the stone, secondly in creating a stereo image, through being placed at opposite ends of the speaker. The stereo image was important, as I wanted the sound to feel as naturalistic as possible and to be located in the stone itself, not in any one speaker.

The sound was then played through these piezos and the transducer, simultaneously, from a sound system hidden in the adjoining room. All wires and other technology was carefully hidden.



Figure 39: Audio Treasure Box



Figure 40: Video Treasure Box

I also created accompanying ‘treasure boxes’, described by one child visitor as ‘magic boxes’, of sound and video. These were presented with headphones. The video in the first box was of Anne-Marie carving the stone, with the accompanying environmental sound. The second box was audio only, which when opened contained a few chippings, collected during the sculpting process. A note invited visitors to “put the headphones on to listen to a short interview with Ann-Marie about the relationship between sound and stone carving”. This interview was taken from one of various conversations which I recorded with the sculptress during the making process. The sound of the making can be heard in the background.

<sup>51</sup> A piezo speaker is made from a piezo-electric crystal microphone; usually used as an on/off switch in electric circuits. Their main advantage is that they are a very simple technology and cheap to buy. These were turned into tiny speakers  
Footnote continued overleaf

A book of documentary photographs was presented alongside the sculpture and ‘baby-scan prayer flags’ were hung around the space. These flags were printed with images of Anne-Marie’s baby scans, alongside flags which were printed with pictures of the centre of the sculpture (representing the hidden child), taken during the sculpting process.



Figure 41: *Hidden Treasure*, installation



Figure 42: *Private view*

## Reflections/Analysis

### Watching the process

This piece was an example of the way in which the watcher affects the watched; how an increased sense of presence in one person can be activated through the attention of another. Whilst I did not make any direct interventions into Anne-Marie’s work, the fact of my presence and my interest in her making process changed her relationship to that process. Anne-Marie’s feedback to me was that my focus created a new awareness and focus in her; that she became more intensely aware of her making process, her presence and the way in which she is affected by both internal and external factors. The way in which I worked, of simply being present with her process and not making clear decisions about outcomes before I started also served to highlight this and we had interesting discussions about the nature of process and the ways in which we both work.

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through attaching a step-up transducer, thus increasing their output (I was taught how to do this by the sound artist Matt Rogalsky).

### **Change and flexibility**

An important element in this piece was of staying open to Anne-Marie's process, whilst working within my own. For example, the new information regarding the subject of the piece, that of her unborn child, may have necessitated a change in my approach out of sensitivity to the subject-matter. Working with process requires flexibility, both personally and in the planning of processes and outcomes.

### **Studio as site**

During the making of this piece, I found myself increasingly aware of the nature of studio as site, with its own characteristics and properties. This may have been highlighted by the fact that the origins for this piece were in *Haytor Quarry*, where the qualities of the site itself are a more obvious consideration. In the same way as the work in the quarry was designed to be made and presented within the site itself, this piece was also created in and for this specific location. A clear difference is that the stone itself could be described as site and the finished sculpture is designed to be removable from its studio context, and as such its documentation could be taken with it. Although I did consider a recontextualisation of the piece, with the sculpture, to a gallery situation, I have been hesitant to do it. This is partly due to the considerations outlined above, where the presentation of the piece within the place of its making brought out the characteristics of the studio as site, in particular as a place of work and making. Although the space was partially cleared to allow for the exhibition of works, of which *Hidden Treasure* was one, the space still retained its atmosphere as a studio. Conversely, the studio atmosphere enhanced the quality of the sound work, locating it within its context, as an aspect of the site rather than as a discrete set of sounds. The dual effect of seeing the work in the place of its making and hearing the sound if it being sculpted, emphasised the process-based nature of the work and added positively to the piece as a whole.

### **Documentation and artwork**

Although my intention was to document Anne-Marie's making process, I was aware, especially during the show, that there was issues which come up around this kind of work, regarding its nature as pure documentation and artwork. One argument could be



that it is the presentation of the documentation, and its recontextualisation within a gallery, which activates the piece as artwork. Perhaps if this piece *had* been taken out of its original context and placed in a gallery, it would have taken its place more clearly as artwork especially regarding its conceptual content. But, as discussed above, I was happy for this piece to stay within its original context. Interestingly, I had a great deal of positive feedback from people from the local community who visited the piece, in particular as to the way in which it helped them to appreciate the sculpture in a different way. Although this was the intention of the piece, I did end up feeling that perhaps I had stepped back a little too far in the making of the piece; where my voice and intention as an artist had been drowned out through working to keep the sculpture in the foreground. In some ways my piece was placed as documentation of the, apparent, main event; that of looking at the sculpture, and that I was making the equivalent of audio-visual accompaniments. I was aware that if I wanted to have more attention paid to the other layers of my work, in particular of attention to the moment, that I would need to find ways in which to make this more apparent within the outcomes of the piece and the way in which these are engaged with by audience.



Figure 43: Anne-Marie with sculpture, early on



Figure 44: Final installation, sculpture centre

## Moving On

This piece gave me the opportunity to work with process, but in a contained and controllable way. My next piece, *The Public Record*, also takes place in a controlled space, but with greater levels of difficulty and lack of control written in to it. The way in which this piece worked with the recording of process and its reintegration within, and *as*, the final outcome, set the model for my work throughout the rest of this research project. My experience, even within such a controllable context, of changes which take place within any process, prepared me for the more complex nature of the following pieces.

# The Public Record

*Nightwalking Conference, Sept 2002*

*Greenwich Dance Agency (GDA)/South Bank Centre*

## Overview

This piece works with the idea of audience as active participants in the making of the piece, as a way of creating a more active engagement between site, artists and audience. In order to achieve this, I chose to set up a piece that involved the audience as a *necessary* part of the process of creation, highlighted through making and breaking the piece in a day. I was also interested in investigating the use of the model of group musical improvisation as a starting point for the creation of a collaborative, process-based artwork.

The initial submission for this piece was in response to a call for artists to create a site-specific, collaborative and interdisciplinary piece to be shown at the South Bank Centre in London, as part of the ResCen<sup>52</sup> *Nightwalking Conference*. The focus of this conference was the process of making creative work, providing an excellent forum for the making of experimental work.

In order to create a proposal for this collaborative artwork, I invited Nic Sandiland, artist/choreographer/technologist and Clive Austin, writer/performer, to work alongside me to create a framework for the piece as a whole.

## Starting Points/Key Concepts

### Improvising Ensemble as collaborative model

I was aware that we were attempting to make a potentially complicated piece, involving artists from different locations, working to create a site-specific piece in London. The parameters we set ourselves was to create a piece which was based upon the qualities of



the site, whilst writing in enough flexibility to allow for the fact that we were working remotely and would need to work separately and from a limited amount of site visits. We therefore needed to find a model for collaboration that would be appropriate to our situation, which would facilitate an openness of approach, rather than creating simplicity through control.

As a musician, I have experience of working in various improvising ensembles, with different levels of structural freedom for both audience and musicians. For example, there may be a strict format within which each musician may have the opportunity for a solo improvisation, at a given time and/or in a given way. At the other end of the spectrum each musician may be free to play as much, or as little as he or she likes, only constrained by the length of the gig, the stamina of the musicians or the interest of the audience. There are also differing amounts of freedom or encouragement given to audience members to participate in the proceedings. In this case, I thought that the model of a modern jazz improvising group would be useful, in that it has a level of structure, in this case a journey and certain themes, within which there is room for solo and group improvisation which the individual prepares in any way they choose.

Another level of opportunity and challenge was written in to the piece through the request in the commission for interdisciplinary teams. Despite the fact that each collaborator worked between disciplines, there is a potentially greater difference in approach between artists who have backgrounds in different disciplines. My approach to this is to leave the collaborative process as open as possible in order to allow as much richness of contribution to occur, making for a more interesting experience both for both artists and audience/participants. When considering the creation of outcomes and their reception by audience, the performance group *Goat Island*, speak of the creation of a multi-layered experience and of 'leaving the complication in' (Mayes, Lecture Notes from Goat Island Summer School) and the importance of allowing the audience to create their own experience, rather than forcing the work down any particular track for the sake of tidiness or ease of reception. I think this way of working also creates a direct

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<sup>52</sup> ResCen – A research centre for the arts based at Middlesex University

acknowledgement of the way in which audience creates its own version of a piece (Lechte 150)<sup>53</sup>.

In addition, it is important to acknowledge that each performer is also audience, albeit from a specific perspective and that our experience and perspective on the event as a whole would feed back in to the process, in the same way as we all brought our own experiences and contributions to the event in the first place.

### **Audience as active participants**

Bailey in his book on improvisation points out that, whatever level of direct participation is involved, an audience for any improvisation is unusual in that:

*“Undeniably, the audience for improvisation, good or bad, active or passive, sympathetic or hostile, has a power that no other audience has. It can affect the creation of that which is being witnessed. And perhaps because of that possibility the audience for improvisation has a degree of intimacy with the music that is not achieved in any other situation.” (Bailey 44)*

This relates back to questions of how to enhance presence in performance artwork. This applies not only to the audience/ participants, but also to the performers<sup>54</sup>.

This model of improvisation is reminiscent of the series of concerts given by Derek Bailey and his collaborators during the 1970s and 80s, where the audience were encouraged to participate directly in the musical improvisations and to bring along objects to use as instruments or to find sound makers around them in the concert hall. In this situation I was particularly interested in using this extended model of improvisation where the audience are encouraged to become active participants in the creation of the piece.

Another aspect of utilising the model of an improvising ensemble is that way of working, where it is the accumulation of focused moments that is seen as the artwork. Clearly the event and improvisation can be looked back at, as a whole and remembered, and aspects

<sup>53</sup> This references the notion, taken from Saussure's theory of linguistics, that significance is arbitrary and is equally dependent upon the experience of the person receiving the sign (language, or in this case, theatre).

<sup>54</sup> My experience as a musician is that the musicians themselves are as much audience as participants and often the players are performing to each other rather than for the audience *per se*.

of the performance (whether sonic or visual) can be recorded, but these are seen as only memories of the event itself. Within musical improvisation circles, there is an ongoing debate about the value of making recordings of such events and there are those who have an adamant political objection to it as the commodification of an essentially spiritual experience (e.g. Bailey 103-4). Most improvising musicians have some discomfort around the recording of improvisation, considering it to be a pale shadow of the event itself, but which may masquerade as a true 'record'. Despite this, most are also aware that the tradition in jazz improvisation is that much of the transmission of its history is through recordings, and that most young players learn through listening to records and attempting to play along<sup>55</sup>. In *The Public Record*, through focusing on making and breaking of the work in a day, we would be attempting to highlight the transitory nature of the event. Also, through using a complicated journey to create a relatively simple outcome (the CD recording), we are making the point that the projected outcome is seen as a primer for the real event, *the experience*, rather than the other way round. I also set up the CD record, through the use of manual and 'single take' methods of recording, to be clearly referencing the live event through the errors, scratches and unexpected interventions fixed within it.

Finally, the use of an improvisatory model, for this piece, was designed to bring a heightened sense of presence for both performers and audience. This comes from my personal experience of musical improvisation as a place in which I feel extremely focused and aware of each moment; there is a feeling of excitement and fear at the potential impact of any interventions I may choose to make, leading to a heightened sense of focus and presence. Alongside this, I have a great sense of fun when improvising. It was extremely important to me to convey this atmosphere of enjoyment, to make a safe space in which people could enjoy taking risks and taking pride in and laughing at their own, possibly unexpected, choices.

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<sup>55</sup> There is an interesting discussion in Auslander (Auslander 1999) regarding the changing nature of 'liveness' in an increasingly mediated society. and Auslander argues that even those artforms attempting to create a direct sense of 'liveness' are also referring, if negatively, to recordings. I would argue that jazz improvisation in particular has been working with this dichotomy and have been living with, and actively discussing, these questions since the advent of vinyl recordings.

ET Ferand also points to the deeper aspects of improvisation, which are not referenced directly in this piece, but which in some ways underlies the whole enterprise;

*"This joy in improvising while singing and playing is evident in almost all phases of music history. It was always a powerful force in the creation of new forms...The whole history of the development of music is accompanied by manifestations of the drive to improvise." (Ferand qtd. in Bailey ix-x)*

That joy of improvisation being the intrinsic joy of making and playing.

## Proposal

Our original proposal for the South Bank Centre states its intentions as follows:

### *"Conceptual Overview*

*We are interested in "turning up" the experience of stair-walking; working with the nature of the communal "passing" spaces of the South Bank Centre – the stairs and landings which are usually an adjunct to another much "louder" experience.*

*Sound is a subtle, but compelling, way in which to alter a space without changing its appearance. Through working in a minimal way, using sound as our primary medium, we hope to be able to draw attention to the nature of the site itself and the way in which we, as audience, actively participate in our own experience of a site. It is this collaboration between site, artists and audience/participants which we wish to explore, as well as the ways in which we shared meanings or experiences are created." (Mayes, Sandiland and Austin)*

I have always been fascinated by the stairs and foyers in the entrance to the Festival Hall in the South Bank Centre; I enjoy the ambiguity of these spaces and the fact that the entrance halls and foyers are multifunctional, being used to provide additional or unusual spaces for performance. I have often attended jazz gigs, or other performance events in the main foyer or the 'ballroom' below, and have gradually become aware of a whole different audience beginning to appear around the edges, followed by the sound of the bells calling people to the start or resumption of a different performance taking place in the Festival Hall itself. This blending of audiences and the possibility of 'catching' parts of other performances potentially offers unusual perspectives on performance, especially as the so-called foyer events are by eminent specialists in their own field; these are not side-shows. The foyer bar, in front of which the so-called 'commuter jazz' happens (at 5.15pm on a Friday) is a particularly unusual performance space. Without the performance, it would be a corridor between other spaces. The performance space is created by the

performers and their audience, where its previous function as a passing space is rendered impossible through social and sonic constraints—it would clearly be unacceptable to walk directly between the audience and the performers, despite being physically possible.

In the Festival Hall foyer spaces, the stairs perform an unusual function, in that they both contain and are part of the other spaces. For example, the foyer bar, and the performance space discussed above, sits below and between the two staircases that lead up to the Festival Hall itself. And yet, wherever you are in the foyer area, the staircases remain present whether through the way in which they define the other spaces even from underneath, or the view of the people passing up and down them. I also remember the significance placed on being given directions to spaces around the Festival Hall; which staircase you entered and where to exit from them. This always heightened my concern about getting lost, or missing the start of an event, when I was less familiar with the overall layout.

My initial idea for the piece was to work with this confusion and to allow the passing space of the stairs to become simply another of these transitory spaces. Sound would be used to create a temporary performance space, in which the passers by would become the performers. I would use my sound equipment to turn the wooden handrails into ‘gently vibrating sound makers’ (Mayes, Sandiland and Austin) which would in turn create the sense of a discrete space through the use of sound. Having come up with this initial concept, I worked with my collaborators to create a proposal for a site-specific performance event which would work with this idea of shifting spaces.

We decided to use the idea of a ‘fun run’ as a bizarre yet familiar event, which could provide a pivot around which peoples’ imaginations could turn. I had the idea of recreating the numbers from the fun run at my home town of Ashburton in Devon which I had helped out at in the summer. My role had been to hand numbers and safety pins out to the participants and we liked the idea that my role at the fun run could be directly

reproduced and re-contextualised here<sup>56</sup>. We also enjoyed the idea of providing the accoutrements which traditionally accompany a fun run - plastic cups of orange squash, marshals, lists, medallions etc., to help to create associations within the audience/participants. School sports days have strong resonances for most British people, so we hoped to create an atmosphere and a performance which would then take place in peoples' heads, through their sensual memories, as much as in actuality. We felt that the re-contextualisation of such strongly associated objects, as well as the race format itself, would also be disorientating, especially as we would be indoors and walking not running (as in fact many people end up doing in fun runs).

## Planning/preparation

### Changing site

Our proposal was accepted, but the South Bank had Health and Safety issues with a number of the performance/installations, of which ours was one, and ResCen therefore decided to relocate half of the conference to the Greenwich Dance Agency (GDA).

Although we were concerned about the relocation, we agreed to do this, subject to any changes that we may need to make to the piece to work with the new context. We had been told that there were various staircases in the GDA and we were hopeful that we would be able to find a way of adapting the work. Having made our first visit to the site, Nic and I realised that the initial idea was completely specific to the South Bank site, both in terms of the function and physicality of the spaces in question. Firstly, the wooden banisters at the Festival Hall were perfect to act as sonic resonators, whereas the banisters to the central staircase at the GDA were metal and would be more difficult to work with. Secondly, the frequency of passers-by, all attending different events was also key; without this, the nature of a passing event turns into a performance which people visit with the intention of being audience to.<sup>57</sup> Finally, the staircases to the Festival Hall are very open, so the 'performance' can be watched from below or above and the notion of creating or

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<sup>56</sup> The title of 'fun run' is an intriguing one, which brings into questions peoples' ideas about running in general; to those who do not see running as fun in any way, how could any run become fun, just by giving it this name? It is interesting to note that there is no such phrase as 'fun walk' or even 'fun art'.

defining a performance space with sound would be lost in a stairway which was already discrete and enclosed.

Nic and I therefore, at our first site visit to the GDA, decided to continue to work with the idea of stairways, but to allow the site to dictate the performance, rather than attempting to force a proposal made for a different place onto it. This is absolutely fundamental to the way in which I work, and I was happy that Nic felt similarly (by this time, Clive found he was unable to continue with the project, due to time and financial constraints).

As time was short, we chose a stairway which appealed to us both and appeared to have the most potential. At this stage, we were still thinking of working with similar ideas; that of changing the space completely through sound and performance. We also thought that we could keep the idea of the fun run, as we liked the idea of the audience finding themselves to be *participating* in an event (no actual running involved...), when they thought they were only viewers. This again resonates with Arsem's idea of 'implicating the viewer' (Arsem).

### Changing collaborators

By this time, we had invited Jerome Fletcher, a writer/performer/lecturer from Dartington College of Arts, to join us and the second site visit was made by myself and Jerome. Having a new site to work with and a new collaborator, we decided to keep the process as open as possible, to allow for new ideas and the natural process of change. On making return visits to the site, the idea for the fun run as a pivot became subsumed by an interest in the specific features of the GDA site itself. This does not surprise me, as it is very much a part of making work from a proposal that ideas which have been thrown around or developed away from the site may feel less appropriate as time goes on. I have learnt from other artists who work with site, especially from Nic Sandiland, that it is important to have clear ideas to start out with, but to ensure that the wording of proposals or early publicity allow enough space for changes to be made which might appear as the

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<sup>57</sup> . Although the conference participants would clearly be a knowing audience in both situations, the notion of a well-used passing space would be missing as would the passers-by.

piece develops. Especially when a site is involved and this is taken as being key to the nature of the installation or performance, it is vital to allow this space (as discussed in *Hidden Treasure-A Record*). There is a moment I recall, when Nic and I sat on the cold concrete floor at the entrance to the basement stairs of the GDA, discussing how we felt really hopeless about the piece; very little time to spend on it and a great deal to achieve. This is a moment that I recognise from the making of other work; where the process which has been set in place must be trusted and, in the case of site-specific work, to trust that the site will give up its secrets if we are prepared to continue to work, and listen, hard enough.

### Archiving and site

During the second site visit, Jerome brought a completely different perspective to the site, through his interest in archiving. As I was showing him around downstairs, he commented on the large amount of interesting junk that had been left there. On closer inspection, this revealed itself to be an archive of sorts, as it comprised items which had been stored at the time when the GDA housed the Greenwich council offices. Our lucky break was that sitting neatly in old cardboard boxes was the remnants of what looked to be a record library.



Figure 45: Record library, hidden in GDA basement



Figure 46: Record library, GDA basement (2)

On closer inspection, these appeared to be records which had been earmarked for sale from the Council's library, but which had not sold. This was thereby a collection of the unwanted records, from the records discarded in the 1980s from Greenwich Council's



record library. This find, along with our discussions about the importance of Time in the history of Greenwich and the fact that we were moving out of British Summer Time (BST) into Greenwich Mean Time (GMT), led to our decision to invite our audience to participate in the creation of 'a soundtrack for the missing hour between BST and GMT' (Mayes, Sandiland and Fletcher).

### **Creation of a 'soundtrack'**

The starting point for my contribution was this found record library and the creation of a journey which would provide the mechanics for the creation of the central 'soundtrack'. This journey, described in detail in the following section, involved the audience/participants being invited to pick a track for inclusion on our soundtrack, from the library of disused records. A physical journey was created for the audience/participants, by their being asked to physically go down into GDA's basement, to pick their record and track from the library, and to bring their choice back up to me at the booth at the top of the stairs. This journey also represented the journey of the music back into the air, from having been shut away, unplayed, in the basement. The fact that these records, and those tracks which they did not choose, would be returned to the basement was also highlighted as part of the journey; an aspect which would hopefully heighten the importance of the choice that they were making.

I was also very keen that if nobody participated, there would not be an event, in other words that there was no distinction between audience and participant. This was ensured by the fact that if nobody participated in the journey, or chose tracks, there would also be no end product.

### **Creating interlocking artworks**

Due to time and distance constraints, we agreed to create interlocking artworks which could be worked on separately but which would create a greater whole when placed together. I also preferred the idea of creating a piece which contained the richness of different layers of material, rather than attempting to force the different contributions and backgrounds of the artists involved into one simple concept.

### **Interactive clock**

Nic decided to create an interactive clock which would take the current time as its starting point and would then move backwards by up to an hour, depending upon where the viewer was standing. The aim was to invite a movement sequence from the viewer, 'choreographed' by their wish to play with the movement of the hands on the clock face. The clock face was created by projecting a picture of a clock which we found in the basement and which we placed in the booth at the entrance hall. The projection also highlighted the fact that the whole basement space was symmetrical, as we projected it onto the stairs which mirrored those the audience had just walked down. The interactivity was created by Nic in collaboration with Tim Sayer, an artist/technologist colleague of mine at Dartington, who we invited to join the collaboration.

During the creation of the soundtrack, samples would be taken down to Nic and loaded into the system which would randomly pick excerpts to create a unique sound sculpture, related to the movement of the viewer. In this way, an integration would be created, through sound, between the recording which was happening upstairs and the pieces happening downstairs. Once Nic and I had discussed, by phone, email and site meeting, what we wanted to achieve in the final installation, Nic and Tim worked collaboratively together to create the interactive programme.

Jerome contributed an interactive computer programme, created for a previous installation, which could be loaded with text and/or images. The programme then turns the input into layers which can then be worked with to create new amalgums of text and/or images. A digital projector can also be used to present the changing results, which in this case Jerome bounced from the wall opposite his station behind the cloakroom counter. Jerome invited audience/participants to pick a line from their chosen record which was then inputted into the interactive layered text.

We also paid a great deal of attention to the atmosphere of the space as a whole, to facilitate the creation of a liminal space within which we could create the journey

experience. Nic is very experienced at working with site and was able to provide a great deal of input into how to transform the space into one which feels more transitional. The lighting downstairs was old strip lighting, which did not blend well with the 1930s architecture of the building and the idea of archives and old paperwork which we were trying to highlight. As there was no natural light to work with, we used angle-poise lamps (found in the basement) and birdies with hidden cabling to create a more interesting atmosphere. This was all created on the day before opening and on the morning before we opened. Although it was time-consuming, I believe it was absolutely essential to the effectiveness of the piece; we needed to create an intriguing atmosphere which would encourage people to enter into the imaginative spirit of the piece.

## The Performance/Installation



Figure 47: *The Journey* 📷 📷

### The journey

The performance/installation was based around a journey from the old entrance to the Small Hall, through the foyer, down the stairs to the now unused basement cloakroom and back up again. The journey through the space would incorporate the choosing of tracks and texts from the record library, as well as a chance to contribute to the accumulative text piece and interact with the clock piece (*See figures below*).

The audience/participants were asked to arrive at the side door which used to be the entrance to the Small Hall, where a small queue formed. They were then allowed in a few at a time and asked to go to the booth for directions (*see Figures below*). The journey was set up so that all visitors to our event were given a ticket at the door to enable them to

take part, which would be given up as part of the choosing and recording process. This notion of ticketing came through from the initial fun run idea, as providing some of the 'business' of events. There was something about the formality of the process, and the slightly ridiculous level of officialdom which led a heightened sense of presence to the proceedings. This also referenced the building's history as a council office, with its history of official procedures and archiving. We highlighted this by creating a waiting area in the entrance foyer with chairs and a table and by placing a 'found' sign half way down the entrance stairs, which gave instructions about where to wait for the registration of births and deaths (*see Figure below*).



Figure 48: Sign and lighting on the stairs ♣

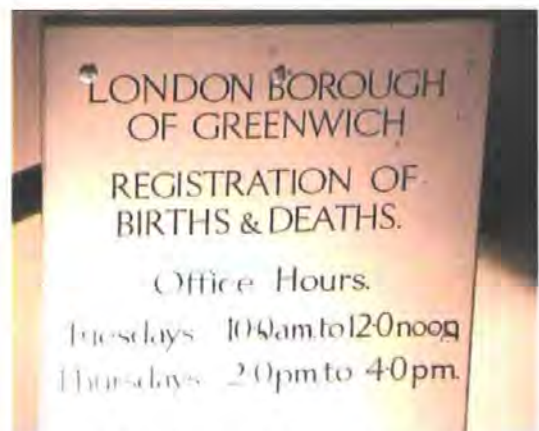


Figure 49: Sign found in the basement, placed on stairs ♣

As they were ushered through, the audience/participants saw me standing inside the original 1930s booth (*see Figures above*) with an old-fashioned glass screen and a round hole for speaking through. I took on the persona of an administrator, dressing smartly and putting my hair up and welcomed them individually to the *Public Record* and asked them to take their ticket down to the record library downstairs where they would be shown what to do. Ushers were at hand to direct them down the stairs to the basement below.

Initially the staircase was quiet, but as the process continued, people would hear the sound of music being played from within the staircase. This was coming from two speakers which we had placed just behind the swing doors above the stairs. These were two floor to ceiling speakers which we had found in the basement that had been taken out



of the Small Hall and subsequently forgotten. We tested them; found they were in working order, and added them to the installation.



Figure 50: Close-up of clock projection on the stairs ❁



Figure 51: 'Interactive clock' and 'runway' ❁

As they came down the stairs, the audience/participants were confronted by our transitory clock and as they approached it, the hands began to move. Nic was on hand, in the persona of an usher, to explain about it and to lead them across to the record library, which was housed in cardboard boxes behind the cloakroom counter, where Jerome was waiting to assist them.

### Choosing a record

Jerome took on an air of formality, asked for their ticket, and explained that we were creating 'a soundtrack for the missing hour between Greenwich Mean and British Summer Time'. He also explained that each person would have the opportunity to pick a single track which would be 'saved' from the record library by being added to the sixty minutes of sound which would comprise our soundtrack.



Figure 52: Choosing a box of records ♣



Figure 53: Taking the record upstairs ♣

At all stages of the process, we wanted to emphasise the fact that these records had been unplayed since the 1980s and that they would be returning to the basement to an uncertain future. This was another way in which we attempted to make it clear that the content of the final piece, and potentially the fate of the music on those records, was up to the audience/participants themselves. At this stage, people were also asked to pick words or a phrase from their chosen record sleeve to add to Jerome's piece.

### Making the recording



Figure 54: Jo and participant listening to a recording ♣



Figure 55: Jo with participant announcing a track ♣

Once they had chosen their record and track number, the audience/participants were asked to return to the booth upstairs, taking the record with them. Once upstairs, they came individually to the booth and I formally asked them what the name of their record was and which track number they had chosen. I then explained that I would be making a recording of their chosen track and asked them to pass the record to me under the glass. The record was placed on the turntable and the sleeve placed against the glass inside the

booth, so that everyone could see which record was being recorded. I then asked them to introduce it for us by speaking into a tie-clip microphone which I had attached to the circular 'speak-through' hole in the booth glass. I then shouted 'silence for the recording please'; highlighting the sense of drama and importance of the event at the same time as enabling a recording free of background chatter. Again, I wanted to emphasise the personal relationship between the chooser and what they had chosen; it also adds an intimate quality to the final soundtrack which particularly appeals to me. Most people didn't choose to introduce themselves; only the record, and there is a beautiful disembodied quality to the voices, where all we hear is their enthusiasm for their chosen recording. Interestingly, nobody refused to have their voice recorded, and there is a palpable sense of enjoyment and often pride in the voices which we hear on the CD. I think there was also something about the formality of the process, which removed much of the sense of questioning or embarrassment which might have been present under different circumstances.



Figure 56: Recording setup in the booth ♣



Figure 57: Jo in the Booth ♣

I then made a direct recording of the track, utilising the recording system which I had devised. I had wanted a clear sonic relationship between my presence there, that time and place and the final recording, so I chose to manually place the needle on the track so that this particular recording was dependent upon my involvement. There was also a time constraint of an hour and we wished to allow for everyone at the conference to contribute if they wished. This meant that each recording could only be 30 seconds long, including the announcement as there were 120 people at the conference. At each stage, the choices about whether the recording was good enough and so forth was made by the participant,

and not by me, and there are cases where a slightly squiggly needle placement by me was considered to be appealing by the participant and therefore left in.

Although the recording of the introduction was also done live and unedited, if someone didn't like the sound of their voice or what they said, we could make a second attempt at the announcement. The recording of the chosen track was then made directly after the announcement, so the chooser and the chosen were inextricably linked. No editing was made by me to any of the tracks or announcements. On the first track, at the beginning of the process, I found that I had not recorded the announcement by mistake, so no announcement is heard, as I was unable to relocate the participant.

### **The sonic experience of the process**

A key aspect of the experience of this piece was the fact that each recording was played out into the space via the large speakers during the process. This created a sense of excitement and anticipation within the queue of participants waiting to have 'their' track recorded. There was a definite sense of performance about the playing of each track as everyone listened to the announcement and then looked at the person who had chosen it while it played. The nature of the record library, being the unsold remains of a sale of unwanted records from Greenwich Record Library, meant that there were some very unusual recordings in it. This gave rise to much laughter and surprise as some people chose tracks they hadn't heard before or simply because the title intrigued or amused them.

### **Accumulative installation**

As the process continued, the samples loaded into the interactive clock began to be heard from down in the basement, sounding as if they were being 'scratched' by a DJ, creating an unusual soundscape of different moments from the day alongside the recording being made at that time. Once the recording part of the installation had been completed (around four hours), the installation began and the speakers by the recording booth were silent. The only sounds were coming from the basement, where people could come in and



interact with Jerome's text piece or listen and play with the different samples of the interactive clock.



Figure 58: Participants choosing text ♣

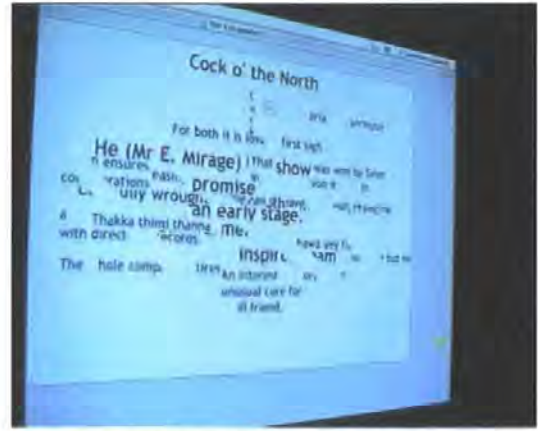


Figure 59: Projection of amalgamated text ♣

### Returning the records

The record was then given back to the participant to place in racks on the foyer table, ready to be replaced in the library downstairs. By the end of the day, all of the records had been returned to the basement and as far as I'm aware, they have not been played since.

### The new Public Record

The 'soundtrack' we created was designed to create both a snapshot of the record library and a documentary of an aspect of the performance/installation. Each person who participated is recorded on the soundtrack, and the final CD recording holds their voices and sonic choices. From an artistic point of view, I was happy for this to become the *Public Record* itself, once the performance/installation had finished.

### Reflection/Analysis

#### Issues highlighted by relocation

It is an extremely unusual situation, where a site-specific piece is accepted and then the site is changed! As previously discussed, this presented particular challenges, but the move highlighted the fact that to me it was important to stay true to our approach to site rather than to attempt to force the work into a new situation inappropriately. I realised

that site has a 'personality', which must be considered and given space in the same way as that necessitated by the change in artist collaborators.

Fortunately, the conference organisers were sympathetic to our concerns and encouraged us to make any changes we felt necessary. Through focusing on the deeper concerns of the piece—as stated in the initial concept statement at the beginning of this section—it was possible to transfer the piece from the South Bank Centre to the GDA without losing the essential spirit of the piece and the collaboration itself. In making the move, it became clear that while the stated concerns of the piece could still be addressed, the framing concept, the 'story' of the piece so to speak, would need to be altered. In the end, the change from the framing of the fun run to that of creating a soundtrack for the missing hour between BST and GMT worked well, as the new framing concept was still about time and a journey was also completed, but with a more direct outcome of a contribution to our 'soundtrack'.

### **Active engagement through intimacy**

A key realisation that came out of the making of this piece was an understanding of the importance of intimacy to its effectiveness.

My personal experience of the event was that of the creation of an intimate relationship between myself and each participant and their choice of record and track. Once I was inside the booth I was very busy and unable to leave my station and I had a feeling reminiscent of my teenage Saturday job working behind the counter of a busy shop. There is a feeling of intense engagement with each interaction, which in this case was enhanced by the nature of the work involved. In addition, I had a feeling of privilege and that I was being brought gifts by each person. I still have a very strong sense of my experience of each person and their relationship to their record choice. I don't remember everyone's face, but I have a memory of the collective experience of so many individuals. Jerome, downstairs (and unseen by me) was also working in a very personal way with people as he assisted them in making their musical and textual choices. Nic and Tim's interactive clock also created a direct relationship between each individual and the installation itself,

resulting in a different and personal experience depending upon their chosen relationship to the runway and the clock projection. Nic was also on hand to explain the nature of the work and the technology involved, which again added to the friendliness and openness of the work as nothing was hidden.

The creation of an intimate relationship between the individual performers and the audience members was absolutely essential to the mechanics of the piece. It was through this direct and personal interaction that the atmosphere of the piece was created. The tone of the piece was designed to run the fine line between an atmosphere of friendliness and light-heartedness, partly created through our taking on a slightly teacher-like helpfulness, with a feeling for the importance of the undertaking itself.

### **Moving On**

As set out at the beginning of this project, the aim was to consider ways in which to increase the active engagement between site, artists and audience. As noted above, a key outcome of this piece was the realisation of the place of intimacy in the creation/encouragement of more highly engaged relationships. As an educationalist, I would have to question my, or anyone's ability to actually create relationships; rather that an artist can act as catalyst or educator (in its sense of *educare*, to 'draw out') in assisting those who are interested in doing so to engage more directly with the concerns of the piece – in this case the site and its contents. I would also suggest that we, as artists, insinuated ourselves into the site and as such became a part of it for the duration of the event. If you like, we were acting as advocates for the site, so although the contact was made with us, we were continually pointing towards the site, its history and its qualities.

The relationship of the sonic outcome—the recording 'for the missing hour between Greenwich Mean and British Summer Time'—to the process itself also intrigued me, an issue which is also highlighted in my piece *Hidden Treasure*. In both these pieces, a play on the word 'record' and a reinvestment of the notion of recording as documentation of process as well as end point, remains a key concern of the outcomes themselves.

Finally, I was aware at the end of this piece that I had purposefully left a tantalising record of the people involved in this piece, through the CD recording. Although I enjoyed the poetic quality of this, I found these short recordings of an intimate moment so intriguing that I wanted to attempt to extend this in some way within my next piece. Although it wasn't possible within the constraints of the event itself, I wondered what effect specific recordings of their experiences and thoughts would have had on the overall experience of the piece, when viewed as documentation.

For example, part of the rationale of the booth was to create an intimate experience for both artist and audience/participant and to encourage the sharing of confidences and memories around the choices of records and personal histories around listening to records, which were not recorded. At one point, I did consider this, but I was against the idea of making what would be in effect surreptitious recordings of a private interaction which, in this situation, felt inappropriate. I therefore decided to think about ways in which to address and acknowledge the active participation of the audience within the documentation of the piece in a more extended way within my next piece (*Arcturus Rising*). I was encouraged in this by speaking to Marilyn Arsem, who included video interviews with audience/participants, after each initial journey/experience as part of what she describes as her 'piece' *Red In Woods* (Arsem).

# Arcturus Rising

*Arcturus Rising (March 21st 2003)*

*Buckland Beacon, Dartmoor, sunset, Spring Equinox*

## Overview

A key aim of this event was to create experience-led artwork which would enable audience/participants to extend their understanding of a site through personal experience. This would be done through taking people out to a site, having first provided them with information relevant to that site, and then to perform collective actions there. This event forms part of my ongoing interest as to how and whether it was possible to change people's lived experience through presenting them with an opportunity to re-evaluate their relationship to their environment. In this particular case, there was also an aim of creating a sensual link between our experience and that of our Neolithic and Bronze Age ancestors, through attempting to mirror their interest in the rising and setting of stars (*see next section*).

This piece was also designed to extend the notion of including the audience within the creative process, as addressed in my previous piece *The Public Record*. In this project, the audience were physically taken to a site, as part of the artwork. A documentary record was made in video and sound, with audience/participants being overtly recorded as a part of the event. Three audience members were also interviewed at length after the event about their experiences of, and around, the event.

*Arcturus Rising* was originally designed as the first event in *The Star Project*, which was planned to take place between the spring (Vernal) and autumn equinoxes of 2003.

*Arcturus Rising* was planned to create an opening for the Project and to act as a catalyst for other activities within the project's timeframe.

## Starting Points/Key Concepts

### Enclosed by stars

The idea for the *Star Project* came from my experience of connecting with the way in which the nights were drawing in and the move from autumn into winter. As I had been spending a great deal of time on the moors that spring and summer, I was aware that it would be difficult to work in exactly the same way over the winter period, with its shorter days and inclement weather, and was wondering what to do next. As I drove home from work in the late afternoon, I became increasingly aware of the stars, as the evenings started earlier, and that this was the time of year when they have a more obvious presence in country people's lives, as they drive to and from work<sup>58</sup>. Instead of feeling surrounded by trees and mountains, I felt enclosed by stars. In particular I noticed a bright orange star hanging in the sky as I was driving west to Ashburton from trips to Exeter or Bristol<sup>59</sup>. What surprised me was that I hadn't been aware of it before, but that it must have been there all the time. This led me to begin to research the movements of the stars, or more specifically, our movement relationship to them, as well as the ways in which our ancestors viewed the stars prior to the advent of modern astronomy (see the following section, *Research Phase*).

I became increasingly aware of the way in which my focus on my environment was sensitising me to other aspects of my surroundings that I had not noticed, so wondered whether I could find a way of repeating this experience for audience/participants in a performance event. The experience of noticing the stars, and then becoming aware of the way in which their appearance demonstrates our changing relationship to them, created a change in my perception of my relationship to my environment, in particular of how I am attached to a particular planet which is part of a greater galaxy. This change was brought about largely through information (see *Research Phase*); a change in my experience of my physical existence brought about through an intellectual experience (of reading, researching and thinking).

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<sup>58</sup> There is also a greater chance of seeing them than in Winter, as the weather is generally better and therefore the skies are clearer.

I was also interested in creating a piece that would address contemporary experiences of 'place' and the way in which we locate ourselves in our environment. I planned to do this through taking a group of people up on to Dartmoor at night and encouraging them, through experience, to wonder how our predecessors might have located *themselves*. I was also interested in seeing how the audience/ participants reacted to the experience of being 'under the stars' and what significance this may hold for them.

### **Dartmoor, stars, stones**

At around the same time, I was researching ideas as to the history of the prehistoric stone circles and rows on Dartmoor and found that there was a suggestion that many of these were aligned to the star *Arcturus* (*North*). Some of the newer books referred to computer models which could 'turn the clock back' and see which stars were where at any given date and time, which is how theorists were making advances in their thinking about the alignment of these rows and circles. Through using the computer programme *Starry Night Back Yard*, I was able to achieve the same experience myself and to see not only contemporary star information, but also compare these with star charts from nearly 4000 years ago. I was amazed to see that the star which had captured my attention on my drives home was the same star, *Arcturus*, that John North suggests certain Dartmoor rows and circles are aligned with. He also points out that, as the relationship between the Earth and the star is constantly changing, prehistoric peoples would be particularly aware of the rising and setting of stars and the way in which this relates to the changes in the seasons. There are also certain stars whose setting and rising at the horizon occur within a relatively short time frame, allowing for the possibility of a ritual interest in these events, possibly as a type of resurrection experience (especially if their religion sees the Earth as sacred or the gateway to an underworld (Chapman)). I very much like the idea that some stone rows are aligned to these happenings at the horizon. His suggestion is that the rows are either double or kinked so that both the setting and rising positions of a star at the horizon would be indicated.

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<sup>59</sup> This particular star is very prominent in the autumn early evening sky.

This led me to a sense of a feeling connection between myself and the people who lived here 4000 years ago as well as an awareness of how much, and yet perhaps how little, has changed. Here I was, now, watching the same star, at the same time of year as they must have. I sometimes drive over the moors at night and the stars give me a great sense of safety and of home. In spending time out on the moors at night, I find it unsurprising that the prehistoric peoples paid so much attention to the movements of their 'local' stars, as their presence is so powerful.

A key way in which this relates to my experience of being present is this realisation that the way in which I experience my environment is directly related to what I choose, or have learnt, to pay attention to. It also is due to the collective choices of our society, which values outdoor electric lighting over our ability to see the stars. In *Arcturus Rising*, I was interested as to whether, and how, it was possible to change people's lived experience through presenting them with the opportunity to encounter their relationship between themselves and an aspect of their environment in an experiential way, as well as encountering their relationship to the choices that our society is making around light pollution.

### **Acknowledging Process/Process and audience**

A key concern in my work is that of finding ways in which the process of making can be shown as being intertwined with outcomes. This may seem obvious, but so often the process is seen as the preamble to the real event and documentation as an afterthought or a historicisation of an event that has passed. In this piece, I set out to acknowledge, at least to myself, the importance of considering the process 'end to end' (to use business terminology), and to look for ways of incorporating this directly within the piece and what I describe as the piece. This was a concern that I addressed directly, but from a different perspective, in *Hidden Treasure*, where the process of making was recorded and became the piece itself, in collaboration with the sculptural outcome. In this piece, I wanted to incorporate the audience within the process and to extend the notion of what I consider to be the piece into the way in which the audience is informed and then begins to process that information, as evidenced through the use of documentary recordings.



## Planning/Preparation

### Leaving no trace

Throughout this piece I was aware of a fundamental difference between my aims and those of my predecessors; that of permanence/impermanence. The use of granite stones implies a concern with longevity, in particular when considering the earlier practice discovered by archaeologists of creating wood henges and rows (see North. Re: Mere Heath, plate 6 and the section *Pits and Posts* 230ff). At some time, a decision must have been made to create more lasting structures. My concern was with the creation of impermanent structures as I felt that we had intervened enough with the moors for now and to respect their rest. Although I initially considered the use of posts, I didn't want to even make holes in the ground at that time (which is not saying that I would never do that in the future) as I had been very aware, that winter, of the erosion being created on the moors through horses' hooves on soft ground and noticed how long these apparently temporary marks remained for.



Figure 60: Down Tor stone row and circle, Dartmoor ♦



Figure 61: Butterdon Menhir and Row, Dartmoor ♦

I therefore wanted to look at ways in which I could create an event in which participants could engage directly with the possible concerns of Dartmoor's Neolithic and Bronze Age inhabitants, without making permanent marks on the land. When walking on *Butterdon Moor* at dusk, I had the idea of using lanterns and inviting the audience/participants to create their own experience of a stone row, through light. Rows, such as those at *Butterdon* (see Figure above) and *Down Tor*, were made by people for their own community and presumably spiritual purposes, as many of the sites incorporate burial mounds (Burl 55ff), and a great deal of communal effort was involved. We would only need a very small

amount of this effort to create our small version using light, but I felt that this effort would be a key ingredient in creating identification between the participants and our predecessors. I also imagined that if rituals had been carried out, part, or all of the performance of these rituals would have been made with the participants carrying braziers of some kind. Perhaps if cloud obscured the view of the star, the rows of processing light would be used to create a dramatic atmosphere. I had also been told, when I mentioned these ideas, by an ecologist friend of a *deep ecology*<sup>60</sup> exercise which involves the practice of actively imagining we are a star in order to create identification between us and the stars (of which we are partly made, through stardust being in our DNA). I liked the idea of setting up a situation where, without it being made explicit, we would be identifying with the experience of being a granite stone in a row which points to a star. I therefore decided to invite participants to create a row of lights, creating a reflection and our own version of a Neolithic or Bronze Age stone row. I was quite happy for this row to point to the setting and rising of a different star if that was most relevant to our time and location, but in fact we ended up marking out the rising of *Arcturus* itself, which felt appropriate (see below).

### **Being in a moving world**

I also liked the idea of making other relationships between ourselves and the apparent movement of the stars, through the physical experience of making actions. This came directly from my experience of bodywork such as *Tai Chi* and *Alexander Technique* (see *Granite*) as well as learning and teaching piano playing and singing. In these practices it is clear that the body learns in deep ways, sometimes bypassing the thought process of the brain. I am very interested in the idea of physical ways of knowing and wanted to give audience/participants the opportunity to experience the moors physically in the way in which I had done.

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<sup>60</sup> A form of environmentalism holding that nature and the natural order should be valued over individual human happiness

## Watching Time

I originally conceived the idea for the *Star Project* as a series of events entitled *Star Land Actions*. These would happen between the Spring and Autumn Equinoxes, of which *Arcturus Rising* would be the opening event, which would hopefully set up the future ones. The idea of creating a clear timeframe, within which we would follow events and create our own reflections of them, was to create a physical, lived experience of change. I was concerned that our relationship to time would not simply be that of one night, but would be seen within the context of the greater changes and movements within which we live.

## Research Phase

As mentioned above, I began to research more closely the relationships between the stars and the ancient monuments of Dartmoor. I found the literature in the field to vary widely from detailed scholarship to popular and alternative theorising about the relationships between ourselves, stars and 'other'. There is some mention of these relationships, in reference to ancient Dartmoor and its monuments, in the research literature of Dartmoor. Although these are popular reference books, they are extremely scholarly and Worth's *Dartmoor* (Worth) includes a great deal of detailed information regarding the locations and the view at the time of the possible uses and meanings of the sites. Burl also provides an excellent overview of the locations and current research ideas regarding the stone circles of the moors (Burl). I also enjoyed *Gods in the Sky* by Allan Chapman, for an overview of the mythology surrounding the stars across different cultures, and *The Star Mirror* by Mark Vidler is a good example of the more popular approach to the study of the relationships between star locations and ancient structures (Chapman; Vidler). As mentioned earlier, I came across John North's book on Stonehenge and in it he used certain stone rows on Dartmoor as comparisons in his theories about the relationship of the monuments to astral bodies (North). This influenced me greatly, especially as he is 'Professor of History and Exact Sciences' at a Dutch University rather than being an enthusiastic amateur, and I made visits to sites mentioned in the book, in particular *Butterdon Row* (see figure above). Since my first encounter with this book I have discovered that there is a great deal of controversy about this type of theory and that contemporary

researchers, in the new field of astro-archaeology, find the idea of star alignments too specific. But I decided not to be swayed from my inspiration and to enjoy the possibility that it might be true, rather than attempt to become an amateur specialist in the subject.

I extended my research to making visits to other sites he mentions such as *The Long Man of Wilmington*. This fed my thoughts about making contemporary versions of the stone rows and to look at ways in which we might create our own star/land relationships.

The following journal extract gives a sample of the type of astronomical research that I carried out as part of this project.

*"I have just been printing out the star charts for the rising and setting of stars for different years. I used the consumer star charting package "Starry Night" which gives a very clear idea of the movements of stars around the North/Celestial Pole, through the use of computer animated graphics. The most surprising aspect of this experience for me was the realisation that as the alignment of the Earth to the Celestial Sphere changes (due to the fact that the earth tilts as it rotates), so does the location of the Pole Star (Polaris). From the detail which I can see on the star maps, there was no bright star which stayed at the North Celestial Pole, which could therefore show the way at any time of night at any time of the year. The fascinating aspect of this experience for me was the way in which I imagined it might have felt to be living, and navigating across the Earth, in a time when there was no Pole Star. How much of our certitude and fixity (and belief in our ability to fix ideas and understandings) comes from our erroneous assumption that we can, and will always be able to, "know where we are"?*

*The fact that, around 1600-1500BC at the latitude of Dartmoor (around 50 degrees) Arcturus rises and set around the direction of Celestial North – the unmarked place around which all stars rotate – must have appeared to be of great significance. Vega also does the same. Depending upon the relationship of the local topography and the declination of the stars, then the setting and rising would have appeared to happen at slightly different times. Journal entry Winter 2002/3" (Mayes, Research Journal)*

### **Planning the events**

This close scrutiny of the relationships between topography and the setting and rising of stars was important in the choice of a location for any event which would involve star watching. I worked out two important factors: firstly that as the movement of the earth in relation to the stars gives the impression of an anticlockwise movement around the Pole star and hence the closest timings between the two events of rising and setting of stars are to be found between a star setting and then rising again (hence the resurrection theme); secondly, that this happens around the Northern horizon, as this is the place at which the stars appear to 'brush' the horizon.

When I began to plan an event in earnest, I realised that compromises would necessarily need to be made around timings and location. I was keen to 'get the project going' but I was aware that there would be issues around the weather, both from a viewing perspective and the willingness of participants to stay out on the moors at night!

Although it heralds the beginning of spring, late March can be very cold and snowy, even on lower parts of Dartmoor. The first event therefore needed to take this into account and not involve long periods of waiting on the moors at night. I decided that despite this, I wanted the first event to involve star watching, so taking people up to the moors at dusk seemed a good compromise. I then looked for a suitable astral event and viewing location.

I worked out that at the time of the Spring Equinox, the only possibility of seeing a star setting and rising within a short timeframe after dusk would be *Vega*. The difficulty is that the sooner after dusk it happens, the less likely we are to see a star at the horizon, even if the sky is clear. During the preparatory visits, I realised that there was not only light pollution, but also atmospheric pollution which, once I had spotted it, a colleague suggested might be due to the prevailing North Easterly wind bringing pollution from Europe. This was a factor I hadn't accounted for and which made viewing stars at the horizon particularly difficult. Although this was disappointing, there was no way of changing the location of the site to a more remote one as there were safety considerations in taking a number of people to a more remote site on Dartmoor at night in March. I therefore decided to make the rising of *Arcturus*, a brighter and more significant star to Dartmoor's prehistory, the main event with the hope of experiencing the rising and setting of *Vega* if we were very lucky. I had also thought of adding spectacle to the event by including the setting of the sun over the moors as part of the event, but once I tried to stay out on the moors from sunset to starlight I realised that the participants would be freezing cold, which would not assist the general atmosphere of experience of the event, which wasn't planned to be a Dartmoor survival expedition. I therefore decided to take people out just after dusk so that it would be dark when we arrived.



Having decided to plan an event which involved watching stars and making some kind of reciprocal actions to the position and movement of the stars, I needed to find a site suited to the viewing of the Northern and North Eastern Sky. This was chosen by close consideration and site visits to locations on Dartmoor which fitted the criteria of being accessible by road and having a clear view of the North/North Eastern horizon. As I was planning some kind of action event, I was also looking for somewhere that had a clear space within which we could make actions on the land. At the time I was also planning other possible events (my favourite being an, as yet unrealised, row of light-filled tents across Dartmoor) as well as other Star/Land actions involving the temporary marking/walking out of constellations on the ground. In this case, remarkably, the most suitable location was one I was very familiar with, that of the path between *Buckland Beacon* and *Cold East Cross* which stood out on the OS<sup>61</sup> map as having a clear North-facing path<sup>62</sup>. It has excellent clear access to parking from which the path can be joined at the middle and within five minutes we would be out of sight of the cars and the closest road. I was very concerned about the safety of people walking in the dark and this location seemed excellent with relatively few hazards.



Figure 62: Path looking North from Buckland Beacon ◇



Figure 63: Continuation of path, North from the Beacon ◇

<sup>61</sup> Dartmoor map references are from Ordnance Survey (outdoor leisure 28)

### **Working with the weather**

Clearly, at an event such as this, the weather cannot be ignored, nor would I want it to be. I made a decision, having spoken to friends and potential participants about their views on this, that the event would take place at the time and date specified, whatever the weather. The compromise on this was that I checked the long-range weather forecast and only finally made the event definite once I was reasonably sure that storm conditions would not be prevailing (about a week before). My plan was also to meet initially at my house, so that if the weather changed, we could still have an enjoyable evening away from the moors.

### **Preparatory seminar**

A second reason for meeting at my house was to provide the audience/participants with a summary of the research that I had done prior to the event. This would comprise a pre-event supper and talk about the history of the moors and the apparent movement of the stars across the sky. I particularly wanted to do this as part of the event, in order to bring the idea of research as part of the process and as an enhancement to the experience of the event itself. In addition, a key aim of the project was to “create experience-led events which add to participants’ knowledge through this experience”. The definition of experience which I chose to take was one which included the giving of information through this informal seminar, prior to going up to the moors. I also wanted to ensure that all participants had a level of understanding about the background to the event, as well as an outline of the simple plan for the evening as it would be difficult to do this at the site.

I also liked the idea that we would set out together as if on an adventure, giving the event a heightened sense of importance, which would hopefully improve the receptivity and sensitivity of the audience/participants to the site. I wanted to do everything I could to enhance a sense of immersion in the site and its atmosphere.

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<sup>62</sup> This path follows/forms the boundary between Buckland and Ashburton parishes so this may account in some way for the clarity and direction of the path.

### One-to-one visits

During the week running up to the event, I invited different friends (all of whom happened to be artists) to accompany me to the site as a way of investigating the physical reality of the site at night, and my plans for actions. Although these visits were initially designed as preparatory site visits, they quickly became more important than that, and on reflection were more successful in some ways than the larger event, leading directly to the creation of my next piece *Moon Journeys*.

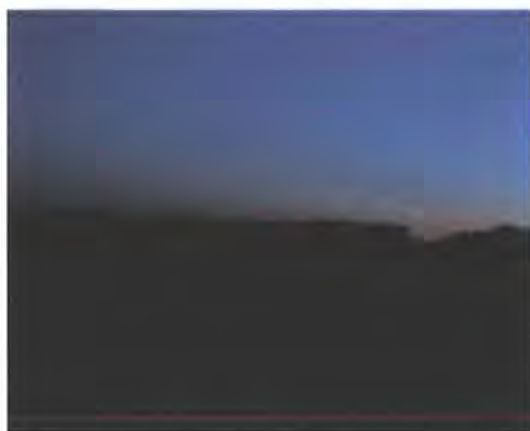


Figure 64: Stone wall at dusk



Figure 65: Last light over Princetown

During these site visits, we experimented with different types of light sources for the creation of 'light rows'. I also experimented with different modes of video documentation utilising both night-vision and low lumen video and decided to use two cameras at the *Arcturus Rising* event, one of which would be operated by an artist friend, so that I could use both technologies. We also experimented with the effect that holding the torches in different ways had on the documentation.

We found that most torches were fine, so long as the beam was direct or strong enough. I had also considered using some kind of braziers or lanterns. From a safety and moors-care perspective (especially at this time of year as it was damp), tea lights would have been acceptable, but the quality of the light under the prevailing conditions, a little foggy, would have been difficult to work with. In the end, I found that I was happy with and possibly even preferred the idea of using contemporary light sources, since this was a way of planting ourselves in the present while thinking about the past. I also liked the idea



that we were using simple walkers' equipment, so it had the feel of completely temporary action art which is simply reframing ordinary actions, that of walking in a row, as art.

## Performance/Event

On the Monday before the Spring Equinox on Thursday 21<sup>st</sup> March 2003, I checked the weather forecast and confirmed with the audience/participants that the event would be going ahead. The way in which I chose the audience/participants was that I invited people who had previously shown an interest in my work. I was aware that this was an experimental piece and wanted a group who would be sympathetic to any potential difficulties caused by the weather etc.



Figure 66: Pre-event supper

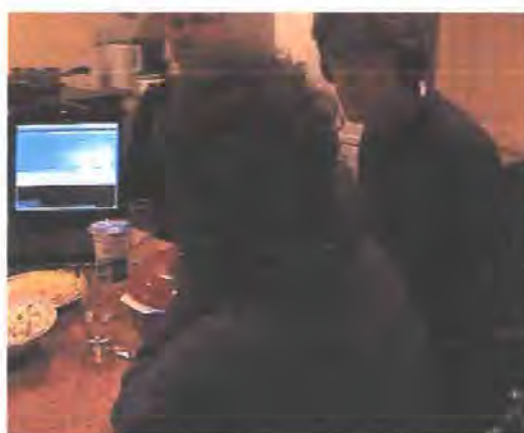


Figure 67: Participants talking about the star charts

I invited people to meet at my house just before dusk for a warming supper, since during the previous nights' visits, we had rapidly become very cold. During supper, I gave a sort seminar, as outlined above, giving some of the information gleaned from my research and an explanation of how this would relate to the night's action event. If the event had taken place at a warmer time of year, I would have given this talk at the site, as in the *Haytor Quarry Soundwalk*. I was quite worried about people getting too cold, as not all participants were familiar with the moors. I therefore spoke to everyone prior to the event and offered people additional clothing at my house. We also all checked our torches, which participants had been asked to bring with them, and ensured that everyone had a suitably bright torch.

The focus which I gave to the event itself was the making of a row of lights to reflect the alignment of certain stone rows on Dartmoor, but in a contemporary setting. The idea of this was really as a focal point for the experience of star-watching and as a physical expression of the research ideas which I had been working on and had shared with the group. Once we arrived at the parking spot, I gave a brief reminder of what we would be doing and then asked people to be quiet for a moment and to feel the atmosphere of the place. I then asked people for their thoughts on being at this site and the main feedback was about the excitement of being on the moors at night and about the weather. It was quite dark and there was a thin mist, which added to the atmosphere. We then set off up a small hill that had a stone wall which we could follow round. Most people found the terrain reasonable, with the aid of their torches. I was surprised at how much light came from the torches collectively, and also how the atmosphere changed through having a larger group of people, eleven in total, rather than the two people of the previous visits.



Figure 68: Watching stars in the cold ❖



Figure 69: Pointing out the stars ❖

Once we all reached the *Buckland Beacon/Cold East Cross* path, I attempted from there to help people to locate themselves via the stars and to give the audience/participants a sense of directionality. Initially we looked at the Plough constellation and I explained how to find the Pole star<sup>63</sup>. I also pointed out Orion in the Southern sky and there was some discussion of constellations, weather conditions etc. I then asked people to begin to line up and start experimenting with their torches, while we set up the recording equipment. I also gave one of the participants a compass and asked him to see if they could start to

direct their line towards magnetic North. After this we would then adjust our line slightly towards terrestrial North by aligning ourselves to the Pole star.



Figure 70: Using a compass to find North ❖



Figure 71: Star chart ❖

The idea was that we would start by creating a line facing the Pole Star and then use this as a way of locating Vega and then Arcturus, which are in the North Eastern sky. Unfortunately, the sky was pretty hazy to the North as discussed earlier, and there seemed little hope of finding Vega so we concentrated on finding Arcturus. The lining up towards North(s) I hoped would also help the participants to feel physically located in the site and to notice their changing relationship to the stars. We then made the first line and the participants found various ways of playing with the torches to make interesting effects. Although the fog was not helpful from a stellar observation point of view, it did make for some visually interesting light beams, giving them a kind of intensity as there was something for the light to catch. Once I had suggested a couple of experiments, I opened it up to other members of the group and asked for suggestions/improvements. One of the most productive methods of highlighting the line and its creators involved each person holding their torch in front of them and pointing their light beam towards the head of the next person in the row, usually an angle of around 45 degrees. People then began to play with the line and the lights and a kind of impromptu line dance began to take place, under the direction of one of the participants, with various methods of people moving up and down the line.

<sup>63</sup> First find the plough and imagine it as a pan sitting on a stove. Extend the line upwards made by the stars on the right side of the 'pan' and this will lead you to a bright star, the Pole star.





Figure 72: Light row ✧



Figure 73: Light row 2 ✧

Once this had been played out, I suggested that we walk to *Buckland Beacon* to warm up and to enjoy the night and the stars. At the beacon the fog was very noticeable in the valley and the discussion turned to the surreality of the scene and talk of fantastical stories, as well as memories of being out at night in the dark. The invasion of Iraq had just begun and the first bombing raid had happened the night before, so there was also talk of the difference between being here and what it must be like to be there. We stayed for a while and then walked briskly back to the cars and then on to the pub for a de-brief and socialising. The general atmosphere was extremely cheerful and I was reminded of adventure courses, where difficulty and group activities are used to help a group to develop and form new bonds.



Figure 74: Arcturus Rising 🌌

## Reflection/Analysis

### Was the event successful?

I find this an interesting question, as the answer depends upon the way in which I choose to look at it.

The event itself went well from an event planning perspective; everyone was in the right place at the right time, we successfully made the rows of light and the documentation came out well. The audience/participants appeared to have an interesting time and the video interviews demonstrate this.

If I had set out with the idea of taking a group of people out on the moors to 'see what happened' it certainly was a fascinating event. It was almost as if the making of the row and even the whole contextualisation of Dartmoor, stones and stars would have made an excellent ruse for actually studying something different, that of what happens when you take a group of people, and more specifically artists involved in research, onto the moors on a cold and foggy night. This reminds me of Marilyn Arnem's piece *Red in Woods* where the performance events themselves were there as foils to the real concerns of her piece, that of memory and how this is affected by context and emotions. In *Arcturus Rising* I did have thoughts about a secondary theme, that of the way in which we all create our own perceptions of an event, which I wanted to investigate through the recording of interviews etc. But the main theme of the piece, as I saw it, was my attempt to pass on the changes in my experience of being present with a site through active engagement with the site and its history, both physically and intellectually.

It is an interesting question as to how far, as an artist, I am prepared for the artwork to take on a life of its own. Prior to making this event, my answer to that question might have been, 'completely', but after this event I was aware of a feeling of personal disappointment, despite the fact that it was successful on many levels. Once we were on the moors, I quite quickly found that the experience I had hoped people would have was not the one that they were having. This was particularly obvious in the way in which the event that evening appeared to have the opposite effect on the participants than I had expected; rather than facilitating a heightened sense of presence *with* the site, the focus of the conversation was on flights of fantasy *away* from the site—possibly brought on by an excitement and fear response to the dark and misty night.

I had planned an intellectual and physical experience that I had hoped would create a greater feeling of connection between the audience/participants and their Neolithic and Bronze Age predecessors. It seems likely that the experience of being on the moors on a cold misty night was too overwhelming in itself, as was the experience of doing this with a group of colleagues. Certainly from the video and anecdotal responses I felt that the audience/participants were not able to engage with the concerns of the piece in the way in which I, and my one-to-one participants, had been able to. Clearly, the context of the main event, whether this be the people involved, the weather, or the nature of the larger group event, did not lend itself to the investigation of the ideas which formed the core of the piece.

What I did achieve was the provision of a context within which the audience/participants had an interesting and creative time, on their own terms. My feeling of lack was about the way in which the audience/participants appeared to experience the same elements that I did in a completely different way; again this may well be due to context and previous experience, or lack of it, of being on the moors at night. The general flow of the group was towards a fantasy relationship to the site and the experience; using the event as a jumping off place for the sharing of stories and fantastical meanderings.

### **Documentation of experiences**

My secondary idea of working with the notion of documenting audience/participants' experiences through video recordings was not particularly successful. One idea I was particularly exploring was that used by Arsem, or recording as much as possible, with as little intervention from her as possible. When I made interviews with audience/participants after the event, I attempted to use her method of simply asking the interviewees to talk about their experience of the event and allowing the tape to run. Firstly, the interviewees found this confusing and looked for greater direction, so I explained that I was interested in their experiences of the event, what they had expected, what it was like for them and also whether there was anything which it reminded them of, or which they thought of. Again, as the event had not taken the focus which I had hoped for, that of stars, prehistoric peoples, stone rows and rituals, the talk was more

about the weather and the experience of being with other people. Again, although this was fascinating in some ways, it moved the focus away from the interests which I was following through in my artwork, so decided to leave this approach to this type of documentation as a potential extension of the artwork and to keep my focus on creating more effective physical artwork experiences for myself and audience/participants.

### **Moving On...**

I think this is a very interesting example of the way in which work can take on a life of its own – a possibility which I enjoy – but that this may take it in a direction which does not fit with my own interests, which was the case in this situation. Instead of taking on this direction I decided to let the results of this piece drop and move on to creating another piece which engaged with similar ideas, but in a different way. I think this was partly due to the enjoyment that I had felt of the one-to-one preparatory visits and how much closer they had come to the aims and atmosphere I had intended for the piece. I therefore took the opportunity presented by my next piece, *Moon Journeys*, to replicate these one-to-one journeys that I had found so fruitful.

### **Star-land Actions**

Envisaged as the first of many, the aim of this was to experiment with attempting to experience more directly the relationships between ourselves and stars through action. In particular, to attempt to consider the movement and existence above us of stars in the daytime, using the Equinox and the position of the sun as a marker.

This piece was an experiment in taking the original ideas of the Star Project and approaching it in a different way to that of Arcturus Rising. It would also create a balancing piece to that of the Spring Equinox as this was designed to mark the Autumn Equinox of the same year (September 21st 2003). I was also aware that my attention had turned away from my original ideas for the Star Project and I wanted to take the opportunity of the Autumn Equinox to readdress some of my initial ideas.



I arranged a meeting with one participant/ collaborator at Holne Moor; an ancient Dartmoor field system, which is relatively clear of boulders, gorse or, at this time of year, bog. I chose this site as being suitably positioned in relation to the constellation of the Plough, through which the moon and the sun would pass at solstice. The aim of this action was to create a record of our journey we make around the site in order to mark out a reflection of the constellation. We took with us various materials, such as blue wool, so that we could experiment with different ways of marking our path as well as both video and minidisk recorders for experimenting with the making of visual and sonic records.

Once we arrived at the site, we realised that the grasses were long and the land was hummocky, so it would be difficult to produce anything meaningful with the aid of wool etc. so we decided to document our journey through static video and close-recorded sound. Although the event was interesting, the idea of it was more interesting than the realisation and I personally felt very little connection with the idea of the constellation as I felt 'lost' in the field and in the scale of the constellation; a feeling which is reflected in the video documentation. The sonic documentation also gives an impression of the moment-by-moment nature of our experience, but does not manage to make a record of the shape of the experience as a whole. I also realised that I had no clear idea of what I would do with these documents once I had created them; I had initially thought of creating an installation from the products of the Star Project events, but during the making of these pieces I became clearer about the fact that I wanted any installation outcomes to be more closely related to the making process and not just a showing of work done.

The combination of these experiences of making event-based artwork led me to a wish to engage more directly with audience and outcomes, in order to attempt to find ways in which the outcomes could more directly reflect the concerns of the piece and the experience of the making.

# Moon Journeys

Moon Journeys (June/July 2003)

*Dartington Gallery Foyer, group show*

*Dartington Gallery, solo show*

## Overview

*Moon Journeys* was inspired by my noticing, during the preparatory site visits for *Arcturus Rising*, that the moon was rising at times that I didn't expect. This led me to a consideration of how it was possible not to know about the movements of such an important part of my environment, and to plan a piece which would consider this issue by presenting other artists with the dilemma and to work with their responses.

This piece was also an experiment in how to bring the experience of a live event (that of going to the sea to watch the moon rise) into a gallery space, whilst retaining the spirit of adventuring. My ultimate aim in this piece was to inspire audience/potential-audience members to go out and watch the moon rising and setting for themselves, rather than witnessing the product of my watching.



Figure 75: Moon over Torbay



Figure 76: Plinth made with Adele Levi

## Starting Points/Key Concepts

### Moon and sun, sea and moors

The overall idea of the piece was to mirror the apparent movement of the moon in the seven days leading up to full moon in June 2003. As mentioned above, during my preparation for *Arcturus Rising* I realised that I had no idea when the moon would be rising, or by how much it changed every day. I was fascinated by the fact that I didn't know this, despite the fact that I was so interested in the movements of stars and had been spending so much time studying it. I had also been aware, from my *Easter Stations* investigations, that when the moon was full, it rose at around the time the sun was setting and that both events could be seen at the same time up at Buckland Beacon. I then began to think about the topography of the local area and realised that there was something special about the way in which both the sun and moon rise over the sea and set over the moors. I felt that this described a deep relationship between the moors and the sea and must affect the way in which people living here experience the world. This was a piece that could only be done in this area.

### Sun days and moon days

Tim Sayer, an artist colleague, and I had discussed the idea of aligning my waking day to the movements of the sun<sup>64</sup>; how would it be to strictly follow the sun's days, even in the winter in our modern society? I became intrigued by this idea, but at the same time was beginning to watch the movements of the moon, finding a website which gives the rising and setting times for the moon in any given location, and I was able to compare these to the times for the sun.

Having checked the moon and sun rising charts, I decided to make a piece involving my following the movement of the sun and moon by making journeys to video their setting and rising. In order to reflect this movement within my day, I needed to find timings for the moon and sun's setting and rising, which would allow me enough time to travel between the moors and the sea. I noticed that during the week before the full moon in

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<sup>64</sup> Whilst on the preparatory site visit that we made together in the week before *Arcturus Rising*.

June, the movements of the sun and moon were at times which would just allow me to video the sun setting over the moors, with time to travel to the sea (45 minutes away) to video the moon rising. This proposed piece was entitled *Seven Days of Sun and Moon*.

My initial plan was to create a gallery piece, which would show the footage resulting from my sun and moon watching. This would be shown on fourteen portable televisions (two per day, showing the previous day's sun setting and moon rising). These would be borrowed from friends and colleagues, creating an additional engagement with the piece through their willingness to deprive themselves of television for the duration of the project. The televisions would appear in twos throughout the week, showing the latest video footage from my visits to the moors and the sea. The gallery lay geographically between the sea and the moors, so gallery visits, to display that day's footage, were written into my daily schedule for the week. The televisions would sit opposite each other on the gallery floor, accumulating into a row of sun and one of moon. The footage would be timed to show the difference in time between the sun's rising each day (around one minute) and that of the moon (varying between thirty minutes and an hour).

I was aware that a piece such as this would be weather-entwined/ dependant and I was initially concerned about this in reference to the video outcomes, but chose to enjoy the possibility of dark screens and to enjoy the risk and hope that the audience would enjoy the spirit of the work, with simple outcomes referencing a complicated process. I liked the idea of such enormous and momentous events being reduced to the size of a portable television screen, which for me points to the necessity of going outdoors and experiencing the event rather than watching it in a gallery. I hoped that by the end there might be no audience for the gallery piece as everyone might be outside watching the movements of the sun and moon.

Due to issues regarding safety testing, it was impossible to use televisions in the gallery as planned. There was no alternative projection equipment available, which meant that I had a gallery space booked and no way of showing the work I had planned to produce. I decided not to waste the opportunity, but to create an alternative installation, based on

the same journeys, through inviting friends and colleagues to accompany me and to document the experience in any way they chose. The only constraint was that any technology used in the installation must be battery-powered<sup>65</sup>. I also enjoyed the idea that the whole gallery piece would be referencing an action (videoing) which is designed to be viewed, but which would not in fact be shown.

### Working in a passing space

Disaster, or opportunity, struck again, when I found out that the Dartington Gallery had been double booked. I had the choice of cancelling, rebooking or relocating. As friends and colleagues had already made great efforts to be available to come down during that week, I did not feel that cancelling or rebooking was an option, so I looked for other options for continuing with the piece as planned.



Figure 77: Door to reception & gallery foyer



Figure 78: Installing in the gallery foyer

Since a subtext of this piece for me was to look at ways of bringing the process of journeying into a gallery context, I felt it important to keep this element if I possibly could. The gallery foyer space was available and whilst small, it had the advantage that an accumulating artwork would be more visible here, in all its stages, than in the gallery itself. Visitors to the main gallery show and talks would also become involved in my piece, in passing. I also liked the idea of working in a 'passing space', reminiscent of the ideas which I was wanting to address in the original *Stairwalking* proposal for the *Nightwalking Conference*, at the South Bank Centre. The main change which I made to the

<sup>65</sup> Again, due to Health and Safety constraints.

framing of the piece was to provide standard white plinths, one for each day, as I was concerned that the foyer did not provide enough 'weight' to the artwork and that small gestures may be lost in a space with an amount of extraneous objects which interfered with the space. The foyer was also carpeted which gave less room for manoeuvre. In the end the plinths created an interesting challenge for the artists, although I was disappointed not to be able to create a single piece, in which the edges between each day's contributions, could be blurred. This in some ways set up a more difficult relationship between artists and process-based object, as the plinth spoke of finished artwork – although this could be, and was, subverted by the artists<sup>66</sup> (see below).

In addition, I was offered another slot at the gallery two weeks later (when the moon would have been dark and then new and difficult to see, so would not have been suitable for the original piece), when the gallery would be free and at which time I could have access to projection equipment and televisions (although not the fourteen I had originally envisaged). I therefore decided to use this opportunity to relocate any outcomes from the initial journeys, including my video work, to the main gallery space. I therefore re-titled the initial piece, which would accumulate in the foyer, *Moon Journeys 1* and the gallery installation, *Moon Journeys 2*.

### **Intertwining process & outcomes**

The choice to work with one artist at a time was a conscious one, leading directly from my experience on *Arcturus Rising*. I had particularly enjoyed the one-to-one relationship of the preparatory visits to Buckland Beacon, and wondered whether this would prove to be fertile ground for the creation of artwork. I was also aware that most of the ideas for artwork which were discussed during this event had not been realised<sup>67</sup>, and I wanted to create a context within which ideas which are stimulated by an event can be realised within the framework of the artwork as a whole. I became quite excited by this idea and enjoyed the thought that this could provide an opportunity to show, in a more direct way,

<sup>66</sup> For example, by drilling holes in the plinth and creating an artwork within the plinth itself, as in the piece created with Adele Levi.

<sup>67</sup> Part of the initial plan for the *Star Project* had been to create a series of works, possibly in collaboration with other artists, for which the *Arcturus Rising* event would act as a catalyst (see *Arcturus Rising*).

the way in which ideas flow through artwork and people. My view of the gallery outcomes was that my interest was in highlighting the process of making: my concern was less with the apparent quality of making in the individual pieces, than about the depiction of process contained within it. This was particularly the case in *Moon Journeys I*, where the pieces and accompanying documentation could be seen accumulating in the gallery foyer over the course of seven days.

Another theme of this artwork/experiment was to look at the creation of final artworks which are created in a more improvisatory manner, in the hope that they would contain something of the spirit in which they were made. I certainly found that the spirit of the making, when the panic of working to such tight timescales was not prevalent, was more enthusiastic and childlike. It definitely had the feel of a field-trip, and I personally enjoyed the discipline of working in the field and making – the model of artist as worker/artisan. I was interested in attempting to bypass the layers of fear and comparison which can prevent artists from being productive, and was hoping for the making and presenting of objects which might usually be seen as a maquette rather than a finished piece.

To return to Fulton, this piece was based in the idea he expresses so succinctly as 'an object cannot compete with an experience' (Fulton, Catalogue to Hamish Fulton Exhibition 2001). The main object of the piece, in particular of the first accumulative version, was to encourage anyone involved, whether as collaborator, passer-by or intentional viewer, to notice the apparent movement of the moon and to go outside and watch it. My hope was that the action of going to the sea to watch the moon would be highlighted through the creation of artworks within Dartington Gallery Foyer each day.

### **Detailed planning and preparation**

When I re-planned *Seven Days of Sun and Moon* as a collaborative work, I realised that attempting to make the journeys between the sea and the moors to watch both the sun setting and the moon rising would be impracticable. I therefore decide to simplify the piece and to keep the focus on the moon, as this was the original inspiration, and created the most intriguing relationship, through its visual subtlety and the more complicated nature of its movements, between the journeyers and the watching. I also simplified it



further by only making one round-trip from Dartington gallery, down to the sea, reframing the piece as journeying to watch the moon rising over the sea. It was at this point that the piece became *Moon Journeys*.

The area of sea which faces the Eastern moors is called Torbay and I located a few sites for watching the moon rise over the bay<sup>68</sup>. These were found by a combination of computer model<sup>69</sup>, compass and site visit. I found the beauty spot above Labrador Cove and Babbacome Down, above Babbacome and Oddicome beaches to be particularly good. During the week prior to the journeys, I made test visits and videos and was concerned about the lack of visual and sonic interest at these sites when, as was often the case, the moon was not visible. I realised that the overview across the sea did not give much of a feel of 'sea' when recorded and I decided to find locations at the water's edge as an alternative.

## Performance/Installation

*Dartington Gallery Foyer, group show*

The artists I invited to work with me were as follows:

- Peter Beeson (Fine Art Painter)
- Joanna Griffin (Digital Artist, Printmaker) & Clifton Evans (Digital Artist)
- Cath Grimaldi (Fine Art Illustrator)
- Edward Lear (Sound Artist)
- Adele Levi (Choreographer, Multimedia Artist)
- Richard Povall (Multimedia Artist, Composer)

Each day, I arranged to meet that day's collaborator/s at the Dartington Gallery. In the case of Edward Lear, he lives in Torbay so I arranged to meet him there and make the journey in reverse. Each artist brought with him/her any materials they wanted to use to create their documentation of the journey, and before we left the gallery I showed them

the gallery foyer space; any outcomes from previous days, and the empty plinth that we would be working with on our return. Each journey was made in my car, with me driving, so that the artist would feel more strongly that they were *being taken* on an adventure. The intimate space of the car also created an opportunity for a conversation about the piece and its aims, as well as filling them in or recapping key background, such as the timings and location of the rising and setting of the moon and the research I made to discover this<sup>70</sup>. I also restated the personal frame which I was taking for my video work and that I would be switching the video camera on at the time of the moon's rising, despite the expected invisibility of the moon in most cases (being in the daytime and so close to the horizon, where light and atmospheric pollution is at its greatest).



Figure 79: Adele Levi at Babbacombe Beach



Figure 80: Ness Cove, Torbay

During the course of the week, the focus of the moon-watching tended towards Babbacombe beach, as this was easily accessible and there was enough activity, both in terms of the sea and humans, to provide creative inspiration while we waited for the moon. An unanticipated aspect of the piece was the importance of waiting and the energy and focus which this brings. There was also an unexpected difficulty in locating the moon as it rose, as my viewing direction was planned for watching it rising at the horizon, whereas the moon was not visible until it rose higher in the sky (where the contrast is greater). Unseen by us, the moon was rising quite quickly and in a steep arc, so that on the first few days of clear weather, we actually missed the first appearance of the moon as we

<sup>68</sup> Which at this time of year is in the South East

<sup>69</sup> *Starry Night Backyard*, the same model as that used in planning *Arcturus Rising*.

<sup>70</sup> This was partly organised around the schedules of the artists involved. Although we had conversations and/or emails prior to the event, most of my collaborators were very busy with other work and requested to keep their involvement to that day only. I therefore made a decision to treat all collaborators in a similar way, providing a reminder of the outline for the day and overall aims and framework of the piece as a whole. I also liked the way in which this added to the improvisatory concept of 'making within one day', an idea utilised in *The Public Record*.

were expecting it to be further to the East, whereas it was actually appearing further South. On the last day of the project, Richard Povall and I decided to go to Ness beach, which faces South East rather than East, and by watching the sky intently, were able to see the moon's gentle emergence in the sky.

### **Making and installing outcomes**

There were various different approaches to both the making and installing of outcomes. Firstly, as discussed later, there were key differences in the approaches of different artists to the collaboration itself; some had already planned to create their own plinth, whereas others were only willing to be involved if the outcomes were a true collaboration. This also relates to the distinction which became apparent between those artists who were used to working alone and those from a more collaborative background; also between those who were used to creating fine art outcomes and those who were from a more performance-orientated background, or were less experienced in creating outcomes which would have to stand as such in a gallery setting.



*Figure 81: Cath Grimaldi making at Oddicombe Beach*



*Figure 82: Cath's plinth, put together on her return*

As lead artist, I was happy to go along with whatever my collaborators preferred. I was also aware that, as far as I was concerned, all the pieces would be outcomes of a collaborative process, as I provided the context for the artwork both personally and physically. My wish was to give as much freedom to the artists as possible within the constraints of the framework of the piece (of the journeys to watch the moon and the making of outcomes each day utilising a plinth, or the space given to each plinth).





Figure 83: Plans for a sound piece (Edward Lear)



Figure 84: Recording key ring used in installation

Each day, we returned to the gallery, and within the constraints of available time (and tiredness), we set about working with that day's plinth, knowing that we must create some kind of record of or response to that day's moon watching. On the day with Edward Lear, unfortunately we had a series of technical failures, which meant that we were unable to create the sonic piece that Edward had planned, as our field recordings had corrupted. This forced some quick thinking as the constraints of the piece meant that we had to complete something for presentation the next morning. In the end, I found a recording key-ring at home on which we recorded an uncorrupted section of the sonic recording, where Edward is describing an aspect of the piece that he had been planning. On the plinth, we placed a series of snapshots of him describing his ideas to me, by drawing in the sand with a stick.



Figure 85: Moon Journeys 1: Installation

As the plinths accumulated, I worked to arrange them in an interesting way, ensuring that each night when we left, the piece had reached some kind of completion up to that point. The foyer had constant traffic through it from nine in the morning, and I felt it was an

important part of the piece that the installation would feel complete at the end of each day. As the days progressed, the piece began to feel more settled after I had experimented with different modes of display of the plinths and associated documentation. It therefore became more obvious that there were more plinths to come and where the end point might be, as an arc of plinths was appearing in the space. I also placed a marker on the floor, in tape, to show the direction of North and South. The first plinth, which I created alone, was placed, directionally, as if it were the rising moon in the South East and the viewer is watching it. I then placed the plinths in an arc from this point, mirroring the movement of the moon from South East to North West.



Figure 86: Day 1 Plinth, facing South East

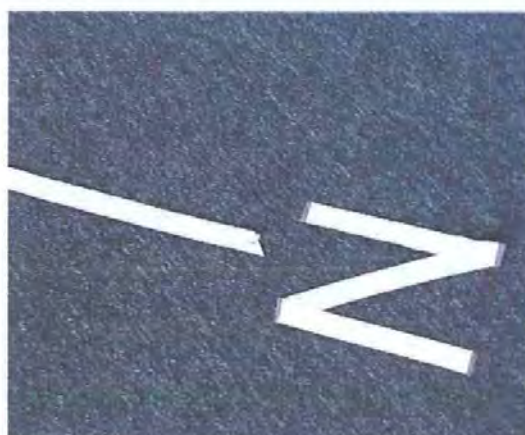


Figure 87: Floor marker, showing the direction of North

*The installation and making of Moon Journeys 2 are discussed at the end of this chapter.*

## Reflections/Analysis

### Watching what happens

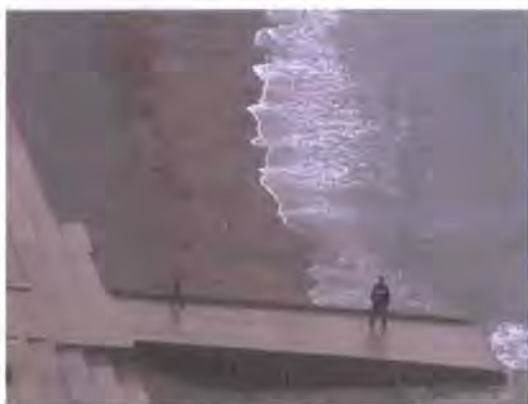


Figure 88: Man and boy from Babbacome Downs (Day 1)



Figure 89: Public telescope, Babbacome Downs (Day 1)

On the first day of moon-watching, I was surprised by the amount of visual interest I could find, despite the rain and the invisibility of the moon itself. I realised the importance of sticking to my personal frame of actually switching the video camera on at the time of the moon's rising, despite my knowing that the moon could not be seen at that moment. Although this framework was not apparent in the creation of my video works, I found the discipline to be creative. I definitely would not have watched the things I did if I had not forced myself to switch the camera on at the arranged time each day. During the week I played with this idea and spent time thinking about what is and is not considered to be 'worth' videoing or recording in some way and became more aware of my interest in recording those things that don't shout for attention. Conversely, I enjoyed the way in which, on the second day down at Babbacome beach when I was attempting to video a visually stunning scene of sea mist and red-sailed dingys, my attention was constantly taken by a couple in full diving gear, where the man was attempting to teach the woman how to dive. Their interaction was so intriguing and loud, both sonically and visually, that it would have been a distortion of the true scene to cut them out.





Figure 90: North from Babbacombe Beach (Day 2)



Figure 91: Diving lesson (Day 2)

This was reminiscent of my experience of visiting the plains of China (in 1990), and being amazed at the fact that there were what appeared to be huge wooden telephone poles, in fact carrying electricity as part of one of Mao's ten year plans to take electricity to everywhere in China, running across every scenic vista. I had never once seen one of these poles in a picture of China. Since that time I have reminded myself not to pre-judge what is interesting and edit out in favour of a romanticised view of the world.

### **Moon watching**



Figure 92: Just risen (Day 7)



Figure 93: Late Moon (Day 7)

Watching the moon is a magical experience. During the week I became mesmerised by the charm of the moon and the difficulty of 'catching' it. The moon's light is very subtle and it takes a great deal of careful planning and attention to be able to see it appearing in the sky, especially in the day. I was therefore delighted that by the end of the week I had actually been able to do this; an enjoyment heightened by its difficulty.



An important part of the piece itself was the experience of making the work, both for myself and the artists. In some ways, were all audience to the moon, as well as being audience to each-others' artwork activities. There was also a great deal of talk about the moon along the way, which I felt to be a significant part of the artwork making. This was both between ourselves and with passers-by or people working at the beach. Jo Griffin and Clifford Dunn made a recording of our conversations as part of their artwork, along with their own fantastical thoughts and songs.

My favourite interactions were with the gentlemen working the lift at Oddicome beach (the other side of the bay to Babbacome beach). They were genuinely interested in the project and in the idea of watching the moon in the daytime. I particularly enjoy the thought that they may now be watching for the moon as they go about their work. There were other passers-by too who noticed what we were doing – an additional audience which I very much value and am interested in; these people were there and involved in the event in a much more direct and real way than anyone seeing outcomes in a gallery could be.

Figure 94: (Right) Oddicome Bay Lift, Day 3

There was also a great deal of interesting conversation about the moon and how it works in relation to other bodies and that we were in fact watching a reflection of the sun's light on the moon, and in my case, I was watching that through another layer of mediation, that of my camera's lens.

### Moon rules

I find it interesting that a topic which appears repeatedly in my journal writings during the *Moon Journeys* project, is about the



necessity and difficulty of making decisions about the framework of the piece as a whole. It was through the process of being questioned about the wisdom, or otherwise, of sticking to the frame which I had created for the piece, that I realised how essential it was to the piece itself. The first element of this takes me back to the consideration of the 'point' of the piece, in that the piece and the journeys are there to direct attention to the apparent movements of the moon itself, and through this to the realisation that we are also moving through space, and that is movement is in fact an expression of the relationships between ourselves and the moon and ultimately, the sun (as both the earth and the moon travel around it). If the journeys and effort to follow the timings of the moon were dispensed with, then this focus would be lost.

This came out in a conversation with an artist/ technician at Dartington who was witnessing my time pressure to finish creating the plinths for the daily artworks, while keeping an eye on the time to get down to the sea to watch the moon come up especially as it was obvious that the weather and time of day would make this impossible to view. Below is my journal entry from the first day of the moon visits.

*"11.36, Sitting in my car at Babbacombe Downs.*

*Been thinking about the point of rules. Realising that they make me do things I don't want to do. There is no way that I would have come down here at this time in this weather if it hadn't been for the self-imposed rule of coming down here for the moon rising at 10.59am on Friday 6th June 2003.*

*"As I was preparing to leave the workshop, I volunteered to Richard that I was going to the sea to watch the moon rising, making a wry face. He said, well why go then? And my reply was "because that's the rules". He responded, "do you have someone coming with you?" no "so that's alright then, you don't have to go" but that's the game "but don't you make up the rules" yes "so why don't you change them then?" "Because that's the game that I'm playing and if I don't do it then there would be no point."*

*My friend's mum said that the project sounded crazy. My response was that it's a game, that's all. I felt like saying that it was no different to any other pastime - gardening, DIY etc. Not much point to that either, or to the rules that people make for those games either. Why have a lawn, or not? Tending flowers and not growing vegetables could be considered to be completely pointless." Journal Entry for June 6<sup>th</sup> (Mayes, Research Journal)*

### **Collaboration, communication**

I realised early on that the frame for the work was absolutely vital to the creation of a piece such as this; so much is up for grabs and I felt that there had to be some formal delineation. I found it fascinating how much difficulty this caused with the other artists,

and in fact the whole week reminded me of the experience of directing a play, mixed in with being stagehand and performer all at once! There were some interesting issues around what was considered to be control on my part as well as what was seen by others as being an abdication of responsibility for 'my' artwork by handing over control to the artists, if they wished it. The main issue here is communication and the assumptions I made about my collaborators. I was constantly surprised by the different ways in which different people receive the same information and the only answer to this is to have communications which are increasingly clear. It is interesting that I had worked professionally in internal business communications and had learnt a great deal there about this issue, so perhaps I was particularly sensitive to it. Having said this, I think I was taken off-guard by the fact that most of the people I had invited to take part were friends and colleagues, and I think I made assumptions about the way in which we understood the world, and in particular the making of artwork.



Figure 95: Wall, sea, metal ring



Figure 96: Peter Beeson at Babbacombe Beach

### Control and responsibility

There are issues of control and responsibility which I now realise are inherent in a work such as this, which deliberately attempts to create situations where certain key choices, in particular the way in which we would work together, are left open. The two extremes of response were from one artist thinking I was 'playing god' in the world I was creating, and another saying that I wanted them to 'do my PhD for me'. From my perspective, I had moments when I felt that I was being shut out of the creative process of what I had envisaged as a collaboration, and others where I felt that my input of time and ideas was not being accounted for as contributions. I was very aware that whatever happened, I had



a level of responsibility in it, in the way in which I had set up the situation and my description of my intentions which then created expectations which may, or may not, have been realised for the other artists. My response to these difficulties was to attempt to stay present with the experience and not to make judgements, as this was a particular situation that I had devised and the process of negotiation was all part of the artwork. Happily I found that any miscommunications or difficulties were overcome during the day and that each day was enjoyable for itself and all the collaborators appeared to enjoy the experience overall.



Figure 97: Jo Griffin and Clifton Evans, Day 3



Figure 98: Lunacy, sound piece Day 3

### *Back to today*

*Very calming sitting with someone making things. Being in the presence of things being made. Nice energy to be around.*

*Talking about miniaturising. Making a little world within each plinth.*

*Clive mentioned about the whole idea of the piece. Creating an epoch. Cath thinks I'm god within this world. I've chosen the people, the location and the rules.*

*Talking about making an interactive environment, but one that can change or be changed.*

*Talked about enforced doing - setting up situations.*

*Talking about editing - how not to pre-edit, but how to edit as you're going along.*

*The idea of working in a day, making work come out" Journal Entry June 11 (Mayes, Research Journal)*

### **'Writing in' difficulty**

I also wrote an inherent difficulty into the piece, by choosing to work with people from different disciplines. I did this partly because I enjoy this dynamic and hoped that it would enhance the installed aspect of the piece. I had also been thinking about the way in

which process is manifested into artwork in different disciplines and hoped this may provide another layer of interest within the piece. This very layer would, of course, lead to different ways of perceiving outcomes and although the people I chose were all sympathetic to the idea of giving increased value to process, there was a range of concern about the quality of the outcomes. This in turn created different dynamics regarding both the way in which the creation of artwork was handled and the level of collaboration in each day's outcome. Some artists came with ideas for ways of working and others wanted to work without preconceptions. There were moments in each day when concern about the outcomes surfaced and this was dealt with differently each day. It just happened that my collaborators early in the week were from visual arts backgrounds and more used to working alone. This meant that the level of direct collaboration on the day's outcome was lower, but that they were less afraid of being asked to complete an artwork. On the other hand, their eventual level of concern about the outcomes tended to be greater. Having said this, my role as guide and support was equally time-consuming, but creatively less engaging.

In conclusion, I would say that any tension around these issues was set up by my determination to leave the internal structure of the piece loose (that is, the method of making the individual artworks, mode of collaboration etc.), whilst keeping the external framework tight. This left room for negotiation, as well as misunderstanding. For me, this creates interesting artwork within the process itself, as the nature of creation of shared meanings (in the sense of their being shared between artist and audience/participants), is highlighted and the model of artist as creator in a studio, who presents clear meanings in the form of artwork outcomes, to audience/receivers, is brought into question (see *Topography*). This was also evident to the audience, in particular to the office staff and regular visitors to the foyer as they could witness the negotiation of outcomes and meanings as an accumulation of different views, creating a piece in itself.

### **Process and audience**

I am reminded of the introduction to the *ResCen Nightwalking Conference* when thinking about the nature of process and its relationship to audience;

*"The themes of the weekend have been chosen to enable fluid and salient communications centred around issues of process and the re-presentation of those processes. Magic (mess and misery); Making trouble; Collaborations; Confessional; Toolbox, box of tricks, tricks of the trade; Porosity and Deadline/lifeline/timeline all offered points of reference within the overarching notion of the artist navigating the unknown." P4 (ResCen)*

There is an essential level of bravery in creating artwork at all, in the willingness to take risks and then take ownership of the consequences of these choices and actions, and I was especially aware of this during the seven days of the initial project. The hard work and commitment by the artists to the process of creation was commented on by the office staff. Interestingly they also found this inspiring for their own creativity. This engagement with the process of making appeared to give this audience a particular sympathy with the work, which had been an intention of mine – how to bring people who are not used to this type of artwork into the game, and to find an appreciation of work which has a tendency to alienate non-initiated audiences. I have been influenced in this by the work of dance groups such as the Seven Sisters Dance Company, who have created interventions into public spaces, such as dancing amongst the commuters at London Bridge railway station, and Richard Layzell who has worked extensively in offices and institutions (Layzell, Enhanced Performance). I find Layzell's project (Layzell, Infiltration), at Warwick University particularly inspiring (92ff). In a similar way to the situation at Dartington, where the office staff are not often brought directly in to the creative life of the college, the non-arts students were encouraged to participate in live art interventions and performance. This is taken one step further in *Ballroom dancing for the cleaners* where students from the ballroom dancing club danced for the cleaners.

*"I had this major ambition to target another group in the University and decided on the cleaners... This is their treat. I welcome them. This event is just for you, no students invited. Thanks for coming. This corridor that you keep so clean is being animated, appreciated, its' a credit to you. The chemistry is a combination of place, performers and audience. It's not the quality of the dancers that matters, good though it is, nor the appreciation of it by the cleaners. It's that an art project has facilitated this combination of disparate elements, no other context would have brought them together. And everyone felt good about it. What's wrong with that? It was barely art and it was the essence of art, on the verge of life. A subversive tea break with cleaners made visible and students excluded, feeling in the way. Although this became the wider audience without realising it." (Layzell, Enhanced Performance 95)*

My piece did not intentionally exclude others, but by the nature of its location, this did in fact happen. There was a growing feeling by the office staff that this was almost a performance being created just for them and I was happy about that.



Figure 99: Interviews with office staff 🗨️ 📷

For once, the gallery and office foyer was the focus of attention, and the artwork was not shut away from the office area, but was integrated within it. This clearly needed particular skills and there was careful negotiation with the staff, which rather than creating distance created a sense of engagement between the staff and myself.

*"Back to the gallery. Am intrigued by the negotiations involved in placing the artwork in a reception space. Reminds me of the original "stairwalking" proposal - the renegotiation of meanings in a shared space. What does communal space comprise of? Am reminded of the drift through Exeter with Rites and Sites, where we attempted to "go for a walk" through apparently public spaces, which are in fact "private" or governed by "private" rules. Firstly there was the furniture warehouse store, where our clothing (hiking clothes and backpacks) appeared to give the impression that we were not shopping. Also, the "welcoming" greeting which can appear so friendly when one is in fact shopping, can have a completely different aspect to it when one is simply going for a walk. "Welcome, shopper" is the subtext. Again, in the supermarket, I felt much more comfortable when I was conforming to the actions of shopping, even though I was not intending to see the routine through to completion (ie, purchasing). I felt that I was in fact shopping, which then needed to be undone by "un-shopping" and replacing the items on the shelves." Journal Entry (Mayes, Research Journal)*



## Moon Journeys 2 (gallery show)

*Dartington Gallery, solo show*

### Overview

This gallery show was designed as an opportunity to look at the possibilities and challenges of re-presenting process-based outcomes in a more formal gallery setting, away from the original process.

### Video works

*Sparkling Water, a 3 television video piece and  
Moon Journeys, a 3 projector video piece.*

As mentioned earlier, my initial intention with this piece was to create process-based video works which would be installed within the gallery throughout the duration of the piece. This was then adapted to the making of journeys to the sea to video the moon rising, where this would create the framework for documentary artwork. From the beginning of the planning of the piece, *Moon Journeys*, I was aware that the video work would not be shown alongside the plinths, but I had the idea that I could take stills from my videos and perhaps use them within the foyer show, which I did. As my focus was going to be on the work in hand, that of making the collaborative artwork, I decided not to have any preconceptions about how I would work with my video camera, apart from making a rule that I must turn the camera on at the time of the moon's rising, even if the moon was invisible. My video work therefore became largely about whatever captured my attention, however small, at that time. In the end, I made no direct attempt to be representative of that time or even that place, but simply to honour the fact of being there through documentation. I then used this as a starting point and followed through any ideas which came about during the time we were waiting for the moon to appear.

Although I initially had some idea of possibly creating a piece around the frame of the timing of the moon's rising, I found the footage to be very mixed and felt that although if it had been shown throughout the week of the journeys, it would have been interesting to look at, it did not stand well as a piece away from this context. I therefore chose to work with the video footage in any way I chose, simply taking it as source material. Having said that, the pieces I came up with were deeply related to my experience of the journeys, and I was aware that they would form an important part of the main gallery installation so wanted them to work together with the artwork plinths to create an atmosphere of my experience of moon watching (*see below*).



Figure 100: Projections and plinths (Gallery show)




Figure 101: Sparkling Water and plinth (Gallery show)

The two aspects I worked with were the full moon rising across the sky, the speed of which mesmerised me, and the sun sparkling on the water as we waited for the moon to rise. In both cases, the outcomes were dependant upon the medium used to capture them; the moon's movement being clarified by the unmoving frame of the camera and the sparkling of the light on the water being distorted into 'stars' by the digital camera's attempt to make sense of it.

In both cases, the video was a watching eye which intensified the experience of seeing through its presence. This was very much my experience of taking the video footage, that through watching the movement through the camera, I became aware of it more strongly and this was an experience I wanted to pass on to the viewers. I therefore decided to choose a piece of footage from each experience and to repeat this, uncut, across three screens or in the case of the moon footage, three projectors. I placed the footage of the sparkling water onto three DVDs and played them, slightly offset from each other,

through three portable televisions, which I placed in the same visual plane. The intention of this was to highlight the movement of the light and the water, as well as their relationship to the accompanying environmental soundtrack (again, unedited) and to create a pattern between them. In the case of the footage of the moon, I used the same methodology, but projected them on to the back wall of the gallery. When they were installed, I particularly liked the combination of the small, intensified sparkling water with its soundtrack of laughing boys on the beach, and the calm almost imperceptible movement of the pale moon across the sky. The paleness of the moon was also highlighted by the use of projectors and I scaled the projections differently to create an interesting visual rhythm within the room.



Figure 102: Sparkling Water 

The plinths from *Moon Journeys 1* were then placed in the middle of the space in an arc along the length of the room. I then placed a strong stage light below them at the front to act as the 'sun', creating a reflection of the phases of the moon with the plinths. Next to each plinth I also added the time of the moon's rising on its day of making, written in chalk on the floor.



Figure 103: Gallery installation ♦

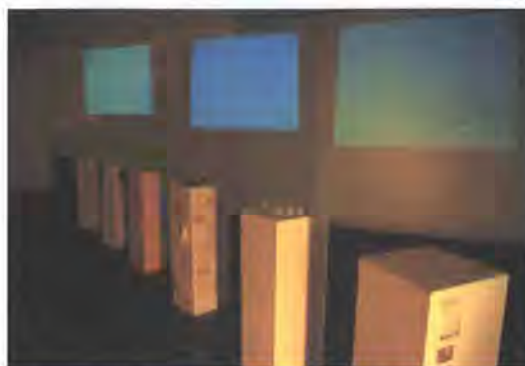


Figure 104: Gallery Installation (2) ♦

### Reflections/Analysis

I found the experience of working to create a gallery show outside the context of the making of the piece to be a useful one, which brought into focus issues around process and outcome. I certainly enjoyed the opportunity to take some time with the outcomes of *Moon Journeys 1* and to play with the creation of an installation which could only hope to deal with certain layers or aspects of the experience of making *Moon Journeys 1*. The approach I decided to take was of returning to the initial inspiration for the piece, as I felt that the transmission of the experience of *making* the piece and the journeys had been effectively shared, through opening the process to inspection in the foyer. I was reminded that for me the best way to engage people in the process of making is to invite them to be involved and inside that process in some way. As discussed in *The Public Record*, even if that involvement is an audience to the process, this in itself creates an active engagement which can change the process itself and contribute to the making of the piece. I therefore concentrated on attempting to bring my experience of the atmosphere of moon-watching into the gallery space. I also felt this created a contrast to *Moon Journeys 1*, with its activity and changing nature – one which was appreciated by the office staff who had been present with the whole process. One member of staff came in and sighed, saying “Ah! An installation for tired office staff!” which I felt very happy with.

### Moving On

This experience of working with the intertwining of process and outcome, and the positive response from the office staff, encouraged me to work more directly with the



audience as agents in the process of making. I was also interested to further explore ways in which the process of making can be brought in to a gallery or installation space in ways that assist in engaging an audience. I was also encouraged to work with non-artists and to look at ways to engage a broader public in a collaborative process with myself as lead artist. This led me on to the planning and creation of *The Grasses are Singing*.

## The Grasses are Singing

*The Grasses are Singing (5th-14th September 2003)*

*Art Farm Project: Rocombe Farm, Devon*

### Overview

*The Grasses are Singing* was produced in response to a commission to create a site-specific installation in the old dairy at Rocombe Farm, Devon as part of *The Art Farm Project 2003*. The farm was a working dairy farm and ice-cream factory until the herd was moved elsewhere, two years previously.



Figure 105: Rocombe Farm buildings ♦



Figure 106: Installation: entrance to Old Dairy ♦

My mode of exploration was similar to that of the site for *The Public Record*, of spending time at the site and immersing myself in it. In this case I also used documentary video, with the idea that this might be useful in the creation of the installation.

On first visiting the site, I was captivated by the quality of stillness, and the way in which the gentle movement of the grasses around the farm highlighted this. The experience of crouching down in a meadow and watching the grasses moving, also reminded me strongly of my own childhood in the countryside; an experience that I hoped would resonate with visitors to the project.

I was also aware that if large quantities of visitors arrived, the atmosphere of stillness would be lost. I therefore planned to create a piece which would encapsulate a little of



that quality of stillness in the installation itself, through a close focus, through video, on the movement of the grasses from a child's eye viewpoint. This was also reflected in the final installation, with the use of body-height projection of the grasses, creating a sense of scale and presence reminiscent of childhood experiences.



Figure 107: Rocombe grasses

I was also very keen that, despite the anticipated large visitor numbers, the piece would invite audience intervention, and that the audience would become participants in the extension of the piece that I had started. This was my first experiment in working this way and I was aware that the planning of the piece, especially in the light of the number of potential participants would be vital to the success of the piece overall and the quality of each individual interaction. I was also unable to be at the site for the duration of the piece, so that, whilst being invigilated, the installation needed to function with minimal intervention or maintenance.

## **Starting Points/Key Concepts**

### **Subject and audience**

Part of my rationale for taking on this particular commission was that the audience would be a large and varied one, where the point of contact between myself and them would be more about any shared experiences of the countryside or of childhood, rather than an interest in contemporary live art or performance. This followed on from my experiences with audience in the making of *The Public Record* and in particular, *Moon Journeys*, where the audience/participants were mainly made up of people who were involved in similar artwork practices to myself. I also found that in my previous projects, some of the most

enjoyable interactions were during the research phase (for example, *Arcturus Rising* and the planned work with granite at *Haytor Quarry*), where I was discussing my ideas with people who loved and knew the subject of my work, rather than being knowledgeable about the *mode* of my artwork making. I found that once we had made contact through our shared interests, people were extremely open to hearing about the ways in which I explore these same ideas, through artwork.

In *Hidden Treasure*, I had experienced the follow-through of research ideas into an installed outcome, and had extremely positive feedback from what may have been a challenging piece, if placed in a different context. I therefore felt encouraged to take the more participatory elements of *Arcturus Rising* and *Moon Journeys 1* into a broader arena, whilst ensuring that there were enough points of contact between myself and the potential audience, in order to facilitate the interactive nature of the piece.

### **Stillness and movement**

As in *The Public Record*, I initially simply spent time at the site, sitting and being present with the space, before making any decisions about how to move forward with the piece. On my early site visits to the farm, I became aware of the presence of patches of long grass around the buildings and into the fields. These patches had the feeling of quietly beginning to extend into the buildings, giving a sense of a place that is resting from human involvement and where nature is beginning to reclaim the space. I also noticed that the gentle sound of the grasses moving served to increase the atmosphere of stillness that contrasted so strongly with my experience of the sound and atmosphere of a working farm. This sound had a special quality to it, being one which could easily be drowned out or changed by walking through it. I therefore decided to use the grasses as the focus for my installation, representing stillness both before and after activity.

### **Watching the grasses**

During my site visits, I began to spend time making video recordings of the grasses, focusing both on the visual and the sonic aspects of recording. I made a decision not to use separate sound recording equipment, choosing to keep the video camera as being my

sole mediation tool. I had started to work with the idea of the camera as 'watcher' (especially in the light of its ability to take on aspects of human attention and memory through its audio/visual recording abilities), as experienced during my video recording during *Moon Journeys*, and wanted to continue to work with this idea.



Figure 108: Dartmoor grasses, Sharptor



Figure 109: Dartington grasses

I also started to take footage of grasses wherever I was, both on the moors and around Totnes and Dartington. I was initially interested in creating some kind of comparison between different types of grasses, locations and habitats, experimenting with different ways of depicting the grasses through the positioning of the camera. I found I was repeatedly coming back to the idea of placing myself, and therefore the viewer, in the visual world of the grasses; taking on the perspective of the grasses themselves<sup>71</sup> (this relates directly to the way in which I approached the granite in the sound piece *Hidden Treasure*). This perspective, that of lying in the grass, reminded me of lying in meadow grass as a child with my grandfather watching ants going about their business. I have a recollection of great stillness and of the world expanding down into the grasses, where leaves are buildings and anthills, mountains. I hoped that the audience, especially being those who choose to come to a country farm, might well identify with this and be drawn into a remembered perspective.

### **The creation of intimacy**

In *The Public Record*, the collaborative team worked with the creation of an intimate relationship between the individual performers and the audience members, and I

described it as 'absolutely essential to the mechanics of the piece' (see *The Public Record*).

In *The Grasses are Singing*, I wanted to use this same idea, but utilising mark making as the link between the audience/participants and the piece itself. I was also looking at finding new ways of engaging audience in the concerns of my video pieces and thought that the making of physical actions is an interesting way in to creating direct links between the audience and the subject of the piece.

### **Mark making and the body**

Mark making is one of the simplest and direct ways in which human beings know to interact with their environment. When learning about child development at University<sup>72</sup>, my tutors taught about the importance of simple mark making in the development of the child's awareness of his/her place in space, and his/her relationship to environment. Mark making was described as being a fundamental urge for all small children, whether it be with their food or in the sand or mud. I still remember pictures we were shown of a tutor's research into his child's early development, depicting a very small child squatting on a large piece of paper, making marks in an arc around his body, where the crayon was being used as a direct extension of the child's arm and body. I also remember my own fascination with painting on large sheets of paper at school, and my enjoyment of being able to make body-sized marks. These experiences encouraged me to ensure that the mark-making I offered would provide the space not usually available to people (most schools provide very small pieces of paper to draw or paint on), and where marks could be made which relate directly to the length and span of our arms.

### **Active engagement, not passive appreciation**

The majority of the Art Farm exhibition was of finished artwork, carefully presented. I was keen to provide an opportunity for visitors to not simply be passive admirers, or critics, but to participate in the creation of a group piece which would be valued as artwork. I also hoped that participants would have the opportunity to reconnect with

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<sup>72</sup> This idea involves an element of anthropomorphism, but is intended to have the opposite effect, that of my attempting to take on aspects of their experience. This is a subject discussed in Gablik's conversation with Manes, entitled "Making Art About Centipedes" (Gablik 84ff).

their early experiences of mark making, where they were simply having fun and enjoying their ability to engage directly with their environment. I wanted audience/ participants to feel actively engaged with the artwork and its subject, and to hopefully take this experience away with them and feel encouraged to make artwork, or simply engage more directly with their environment through paying greater attention.

### **Group improvisation**

I was also interested in the idea of creating a kind of visual group improvisation. As a musician, I have always been aware of how little Western artists tend to create artwork outcomes together, especially in the area of drawing and painting, as evidenced by the individualistic nature of the majority of artworks held in galleries. Even as children, we tend not to be encouraged to make collaborative drawing or mark-making.

My intention was to create a space in which, through the shared nature of the experience, individuals would feel less pressure to create something they considered to be complete or perfect, and thereby circumventing some of the more negative messages which they may have been given in the past about the value and/or relevance of their artistic contributions. I wanted to set up a situation where the emphasis was on expression and contribution, and where consequently, as is often the case in free musical improvisation groups, it is difficult to get things 'wrong' if the contribution is genuinely felt.

Additionally, the premise of the piece, that of 'attempting to capture the movement of the grasses' from the video projection created a clear level of difficulty which most visitors would know to be impossible using 'still life' drawing. It therefore set up the parameters as being outside the usual ones for drawing and taking it into the area of a challenge, or of fun. A bit like trying to pin the tail on the donkey or shooting down ducks at a fairground stall; most people play to take part, and not because they are assured of success. I hoped that the inability to clearly describe a 'right' way to 'capture the movement of the grasses',

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<sup>72</sup> My first degree was in Early Childhood Education at Goldsmiths' College (1984-1989). This degree also gave me qualified teacher status.

might help people to let go of the idea of a 'wrong' way and encourage participation and experimentation.

### **Stillness and movement**

I was also interested in investigating, and encouraging the audience to participate in investigating, the relationship between the still and moving image. This also references the illusion of authenticity in video footage, which is often treated as a direct representation of movement, whereas it is in reality a series of still frames. Conversely, I am also interested in considering the new physics view of reality as a series of momentary 'snapshots' (see *Granite*), within which the universe stands still for a moment. In this view of the universe, time is more like a 'washing line' of moments which are interchangeable, not fixed as we might usually, or have learnt to, experience it (Davies, Other Worlds 188ff).

These two-dimensional series of moments, which are captured by the participants on the tracing paper, accumulate for as long as the paper remains over the screen, but are then peeled off and re-placed in a series alongside it. These layers of moments are then layered upon each other by being placed one in front of the other, creating an accumulating record of the movements, happenings and atmosphere of the each day in the installation. Lights would be placed both above and behind the sheets in order to facilitate the viewing of the sheets as a whole as well as individual group drawings.

### **Outcomes as artwork**

The collected sheets would then become a piece of artwork in their own right, within which each person's participation and moment by moment experiences are recorded, as are some aspects of their relationship to the moving grasses. I also suspected that the participatory aspect of this piece would make it more acceptable and understandable to the visitors than if it had been produced by me as a studio piece, then displayed as artwork. In this way, I hoped to engage the audience in the concerns of contemporary fine art practices in a non-threatening and personal way; not merely as an educational tool but



as a way of enabling others to share in the enjoyment and deepening of their understanding of their own presence through experience.

## **Performance/Installation**

### **Choice of drawing materials**

When planning the installation, I was aware that I was leaving a great deal of the aesthetics of the final outcomes completely to chance. I was also aware of the risk to the audience/participants' sense of achievement, if their own mark-making and group outcomes were not intrinsically satisfying in some way. I spent a great deal of time (and asked for advice from a friend who has more experience with drawing and painting than I do), in making my choice of materials. After much deliberation, I decided upon good quality pastels, pencils and charcoal. Although these were more expensive, I am aware from my experience of working with children that beginners are often given materials which are more difficult to work with and give less satisfying results, on the basis of cost and that they might be 'wasted'. I have found that higher quality materials, whether in drawing or music, greatly enhance the experience for those who use them, both through their greater responsiveness and quality of outcomes which is in itself encouraging. It also makes a statement of importance about the work in hand, that it is worthy of the use of high quality materials, hopefully leading to a greater care and attention being paid by those participating and viewing the work.



*Figure 110: Close-up of collaborative drawing*



*Figure 111: Finished sheets, hanging*

I decided to limit the colour palette through my choice of drawing materials, providing a set of colours which were within the range of those usually found within grasses, as

reflected on my video footage. I was aware that this reduced the possibilities for colour mixing, but I felt that most people would not spend long in the installation, and my primary concern was to assist the inexperienced in having a satisfying experience. It was also a way of ensuring that the group outcomes had a level of cohesion, both internally and with each other.

### Setting up the installation space



Figure 112: Screen, tracing paper, pastels, projection



Figure 113: Screen, drawing, hangings, hay

The installation space I used was the Old Dairy. Although the room had performed a key function within the dairy process, it was a relatively clear space, having been a hygienic processing space rather than one in which animals were housed. I also felt it was a place where a discrete environment could be created within the hubbub of the rest of the project; where the quietness of the farm, prior to the project, could be evoked.

I set up one side of the room with a large white 'screen' made of chipboard attached directly to the wall, over which two sheets of A1 sized draughtsman's tracing paper had been attached. The pieces were placed next to each other and hung 'portrait' over the larger 'landscape' screen. I then projected a video of grasses, onto the screen (and hence the paper), roughly from torso to head height. A sign next to the screen invited visitors to try to "capture" the movement of the grasses.

A key decision regarding the projection material, was to include three different edits of video I had taken of grasses. All three were linked by the fact that they were close-ups, but differed in tone (colour and texture) and speed of movement. This was designed to





create a more engaging experience for the participants, as well as a more dynamic character to the collaborative drawings. (See *grasses*  )



Figure 114: Talking about the process

Initially I, or a steward, showed, by example or encouragement, where the drawing materials were and that the intention of the installation was that everyone be encouraged to participate through drawing. There were also books of detachable A4 sheets of drawing paper and additional drawing materials available for those who wished to make their own textural observations and drawing. This was particularly popular with children, and I also provided blue-tack so that they could stick their picture straight up on the wall if they wanted to.



Figure 115: Talking about the projection with children



Figure 116: Anna, 5, with her drawing (collaborative drawings hanging, front)

I wanted to engage as many of the senses as possible and I was aware that smell is renowned as some of the strongest memory-associations for humans. In this context, I felt that grasses without smell would be only a poor shadow of the real experience, so looked for the best way in which this could be included. Straw and hay was an essential part of the life of the farm and I hoped that its smell and appearance would have strong

associations for the visitors, as it does for me<sup>73</sup>. I therefore placed loose hay around the edge of the installation space, saving a few bales so that people could sit and look at the video, watch other people drawing, or make their own individual drawings.



Figure 117: Feedback/contribution tags (left)



Figure 118: Basket, pencils, twine, tags, lucky heather ♦

Written feedback was invited, alongside any other written contributions that visitors chose to make to the installation. I wanted this to feel integral to the installation, as another opportunity to contribute, rather than as something to be ‘completed’ at the end. The system I chose was to hang pieces of twine within the installation, to which parcel tags could be tied. I provided a basket of blank tags and graphite pencils, attaching a tag on which I had written ‘feedback please’ to one length of twine and on a second length I attached a tag with ‘quotes or thoughts’ written on it. I also added a few tags with quotes I had collected as part of my research into grasses (the title of the installation was a reference to one of these). I was especially pleased with this idea, as I liked people having to commit to the act of tying their tag to the string, making a greater level of involvement and statement of intent, than just making a comment in a book. It was also necessary to discover the possibility of contributing in this way through investigating the installation and what it had to offer. Interestingly, all contributions were positive and relevant to the themes of the installation; those of presence, grasses, quietness and childhood.

<sup>73</sup> When I was a child, my family occasionally helped to bring the hay in at friends’ farms. I have strong memories of the smells, sights and sounds of the hay and haymaking.



### **The progress of the installation**

From the beginning, I found people to be extremely open to the idea of making marks on the paper and had very positive feedback from the visitors about their enjoyment of doing so. Any resistance appeared to come from fear of 'not getting it right' or of inexperience. An aspect I especially enjoyed was the performative nature of participation in an activity when there are others watching. This was especially the case on the opening night, where there was a constant throughput of people laughing and joking with each other about participating, or their relative inabilities to draw and so on. In this collective situation, there was a feeling of fun and performance by participants, to each other and to me.

After the opening night, the character of the installation changed somewhat, as there were generally less people in the space at any one time. This meant that there was time, alongside the bouts of large groups enjoying the installation and participation together, for individuals to experience the space alone. This created a very different installation space, offering a more intimate relationship between the participant and the installation itself. I often found, when I popped my head round the door, that there were one or two people settled into the hay, drawing intently. Some elements of the group drawings show a level of attention and detail given by individual participants, adding a different quality to that corner of the piece, only made possible by having the space and time to do this.



*Figure 119: Drawing, sitting on hay bales (1)*



*Figure 120: Drawing, sitting on hay bales (2)*

### **Integrating outcomes**

A key idea of this piece was that drawing-outcomes would be hung up as soon as they were finished, creating a dynamic piece which reflects the activity within it. In order to

achieve this easily, I prepared a hanging rack alongside the projection screen, utilising picture wire and small dog-clips on which the large drawings could be displayed. This explains the use of translucent paper, as it meant that the previous days' drawings could be made out behind the current one. I also chose to place the rack in this location as there was a draught created between a window at the side and a door behind, which would make the paper move in gentle waves, reminiscent of the way in which grasses move in the wind. The hanging of the collaborative drawings alongside the drawing area at the end of each day also served as a record of the previous day's experiences, which accumulated as the days passed. Visitors could also look through the different sheets if they wished. These group-outcomes were designed to create a piece in itself, which grew and changed as they accumulated.



*Figure 121: Viewing collaborative drawings (side)*



*Figure 122: Viewing collaborative drawings (front)*

The individual drawing aspect of the installation gained momentum throughout the ten days, especially among children. I had not anticipated such a large interest in making these, but as they appeared, I found more spaces in which to place them. My single wall for showing small drawings turned into every free space in the room, which felt wonderful and I especially enjoyed the changing nature of this aspect of the installation and the way in which the space began to feel like it was being 'taken over' by the people who had contributed to it.





*Figure 123: A child adds her drawing to the installation*



*Figure 124: Small drawings on the wall*

Over the 10 days, 25 A1 drawings were produced in addition to over 120 individual A4 drawings being placed on the walls.

### **An outdoor reference space**

I also had the idea of choosing an outdoor space which could act as a reference point for the indoor installation. After my initial few visits, the tidying up operation began, prior to the start of the project itself, and I was concerned to see that much of the long grass around the farm had been cut down. Although there was still time for some of this grass to re-grow, the only space that had been left untouched was a rough area behind the old ice-cream factory. I sought permission to use this area and have the grasses left untouched and began taking video footage in this area, which I eventually used as part of the installation.

My plan had been to demarcate this space as being one which could create references both to and from the indoor installation; visitors would be pointed to the outdoor space from the installation and vice versa, as it was only just across the road from the Old Dairy. We planned to cordon off the outdoor space from the main activity of the project by marking it out as an area for watching the grasses, with a rug for lying on and places to sit. This idea of watching the grasses, in situ, also extended into the idea of providing drawing materials and paper so people could make their own observations and comparisons with their mediated counterparts in the installation.

Parking requirements and the demands of dealing with so many visitors meant that I was eventually unable to keep this space, as it was thought to be too difficult to create a suitable space in this area. I therefore made a pragmatic decision to simply create a space using a sign and a picnic blanket next to a hummock of long grass, down at the main sculpture field, with a basket of drawing materials which could be borrowed from reception and taken down to the field.

Interestingly, my thought that people would want to make individual drawings of grasses in the field rather than from the projection, was wrong in this case. Perhaps it was because the outdoor space did not have the safe, cosy feel of the indoor one, or simply a matter of logistics. Certainly, the outdoor grasses were not in a particularly private or beautiful spot, so perhaps people preferred the atmosphere of the installation for making investigations into drawing. My hope is that people took away the idea of close observation of grasses and that they might experiment with this kind of drawing at home.

Towards the end of the ten days, I began to ask people what they would like to happen to the group drawings. People came up with wonderful ideas for the way in which these drawings could be displayed, my favourite of which is shown in the footage below.



*Figure 125: Natasha's ideas (movie)*

## **Reflection/Analysis**

### **Opening up the process**

Jeff Kelley, in his introduction to Kaprow's *Essays on the Blurring of Art and Life*, speaks lucidly on his view of the use of participation in artwork:

*"Actual participation in a work of art courts anarchy. It invites the participant to make a choice of some kind. Usually that choice includes whether to participate. In choosing to participate, one may also be choosing to alter the work – its object, its subject, its meaning. In choosing not to participate, one has at least acted consciously. In either case, the work has been acted upon (which is different from thinking about acting). Though the artist sets up the equation, the participant provides its terms, and the system remains open to participation. To Kaprow, participation is whole: it engages both our minds and bodies in actions that transform art into experience and esthetics into meaning. Our experience as participants is one of meaningful transformation." (Kelley Pxxvii)*

When planning this installation, I was aware that I was leaving the content of the drawing outcomes completely in the hands of the audience/participants. As described above, there were different ways in which individuals participated, from choosing not to draw at all, through attempting to follow the movement of the grasses to making drawings of other things. I particularly like the reference above to the way in which participants can choose to 'alter the work', and I was aware of the way in which different participants, or groups, made their choices and the impact which this had upon the drawing outcomes. I also felt that the choice of a restricted colour palate helped to create a sense of unity between the marks, despite the different approaches and subjects. This was important to me, as I wanted to encourage the sense of a 'community' of participants, which could be experienced by audience/participants, rather than the work serving to emphasise solely the differences.

### **Why is open process important to me?**

I see myself as coming from a tradition where any act of creativity is a form of self-expression. I have found the work and fundamental ideas of Michel de Certeau and Allan Kaprow (De Certeau; Kaprow) extremely influential (see *Topography*). Their perspective of appreciating the artwork inherent in everyday life reflects the values of child-centred education, where all creative actions or contributions are valued equally. A large part of the process of learning to teach in this way, is the deconstruction of the teacher's ego structure and in particular in the area of personal prejudice. We were taught that prejudice is a natural social construct for most people, but which needs to be identified and deactivated through awareness. I therefore see the opening up of my making process



to be both a political<sup>74</sup> and spiritual act, based in the acknowledgement of the importance of each person's contribution (whatever their level of experience with the materials).



Figure 126: Adult and children drawing together



Figure 127: Siblings drawing together

Another root of my happiness to open up my creative process to others, is from my experience of free improvisation groups. There is a particular quality to artwork which involves the participation of those who are unfamiliar with the constructs and conventions of a particular form. Usually, in these groups, there is a variation of levels of experience, as there was in the participants of *The Grasses are Singing*, and this blend can make especially vibrant and interesting artwork.

I am also very keen on allowing elements of chance into artwork and life in general and I find that the knowledge of risk and its associated freedoms can bring a heightened sense of presence to an experience. This also returns to the theme of play, where risky behaviour (such as exposing our inexperience) is made safe through the creation of boundaries. In the case of this installation, the boundary was that this was purely for fun<sup>75</sup> (as opposed to for work or for monetary gain); we were all trying to achieve the impossible and that there was no wrong way to respond (so long as the marks stayed on the paper...).

<sup>74</sup> It is also a strong part of my liberal political background to believe that the empowerment of the individual is seen as both desirable and necessary.

<sup>75</sup> 'Fun' is an important element to me of the creative process. Personally, I only make artwork for the fun of it. Not that I'm not serious about it, but there are deeper and longer kinds of fun than short sharp 'hits' of pleasure.

**Moving on**

*Figure 128: Close-up of collaborative drawing*



*Figure 129: Close-up of drawing over the projection*

This piece created an appropriate end-point for this research project, in the way in which it sought to tackle key themes regarding the moment and our place within the world. The layering of an accumulation of actions, created within moments, displayed together within other moments, addressed a central concern of this research project – that of finding ways in which to extend an experience and appreciation of the moment. As an artist, I found this extremely gratifying, particularly in the way in which the group outcomes, through the careful creation of an open structure, worked both as individual pieces, together as a sculptural hanging, and within the installation as a whole.

The quality, and quantity, of the audience interactions, also shows that audiences respond well to appropriate collaborative artistic experiences. Children, and their parents, also told me that they had come back to the project for a second time, and sometimes more, in order to see what had happened to the installation and to show off their contributions.

## Conclusion

*Walking; suddenly skylarks*<sup>76</sup>

### How can presence be activated?

#### Overview of the research journey

Spending time on Dartmoor was used as an initial primer for an investigation of approaches to the investigation of presence, through physical experience. This was then extended through research; reading, conversation, site investigation and documentation of experiences. This resulted in the beginnings of an investigation of presence through personal artwork; modes of practice included drawing, photography, sonic and video recording. My concern was to work experimentally, giving myself the opportunity to investigate appropriate mediums through experience (see *Flora*). This personal investigation of presence continued alongside, and within, the planning and creation of other works, resulting in an accumulated documentation of presence, largely through video. Once I had developed this method of working, researching and documenting presence within my own practice, I considered the question as to how this might be communicated to audience, through artwork. These artworks are documented and considered in *Part Two* of this thesis.

#### The meaning of presence

Although I entered in to this research process with a notion of what the word *presence* (see *Definitions*) actually means, my understanding of the term has developed during that time.

Firstly, there is the *personal* sense of being present—of what it means to be human, to be here. During the course of this research, this aspect has extended through into the consideration of non-presence, or put more simply, *not* self. My initial conception of what Goulish might mean by the term *more-self* (see *Granite*), was that an increased sense of



presence would lead to a greater sense of one's self, but a purer less cluttered version. But in fact, there is another way of viewing *more-self*, in that the more-self is in fact less *self* and more *other*. Paradoxically, then, the more we focus on purely being present, without the noise and clutter of thought or interaction, then the less self there appears to be. This is the essential emptiness referred to by Zen Buddhism, or the great stream of Taoism or Watt's mystical Christianity (see *Granite*).

*"You live in illusion and the appearance of things. There is a reality, but you do not know this. When you understand this, you will see that you are nothing.*

*And being nothing, you are everything. That is all." (Kalu Rinpoche qtd. in Kornfield 73)*

This is when another sense of presence appears; that of interconnectedness with all things – what the Buddhists refer to as the net of Indra.

My work is about accessing this sense of interconnectedness, but through another door—in the sense of being present *with*. This emanated from personal experience of spending time being present with *not-self*, through immersion in what might be termed as the 'natural world' on Dartmoor. This in turn led to the making of the artworks, and the way in which I made them, which are presented within this thesis.

### **Making field research**

A key outcome of my field research was a realisation of the importance of *paying attention* in the activation of presence. For example, the act of walking, in itself, does not create a sense of presence; in fact, it is quite possible to walk without paying much attention to anything but one's own thoughts. A more activated sense of presence can only be achieved through being more available to that which is *not-self*. As Goodwin points out, in reference to Goethe's thinking on science,

*"The whole process of experiencing and knowing involves direct engagement between an active, intentional agent and whatever natural process is being attended to." (Goodwin 18)*

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<sup>76</sup> Artist's text

In order to achieve a greater sense of presence, it is important to be *actively engaged* with the moment-by-moment nature of process. It is this engagement with the moment which brings with it the ability to step out of oneself and to be present *with* materials.

I found physical experimentation to be key; to actually try something out, not just thinking or planning something but actually spending time *being* there. This involves both observation and action – sensing, in fullest meaning (including Handoll’s ‘sixth sense’ of intuition). To bring, as Goodwin says, our full humanness to the interaction and not to only use certain aspects of our selves (Goodwin). This involves an openness of approach, which leaves room, and sets up the conditions for intervention. This intervention could be by so-called ‘natural processes’ or by audience/participants. This then allows the *process* of being, creating or acting, to be at the forefront of the artwork with the artist as active collaborator with these processes in the creation of artwork.

### Incorporating process in artwork

One way in which to manifest this attention to processes is to actually incorporate them *within* the artwork itself<sup>77</sup>. My piece, *Hidden Treasure*, worked with this notion, through reintroducing the sounds<sup>78</sup> of its making into the finished sculpture. Once this mode of working with process was established, it was followed through into all the subsequent artworks. This was made especially clear within *The Public Record*, where the installation only came alive when people participated in the process, which could *then* be documented through recording (in both sound and text). In *The Grasses are Singing*, I worked with process in a slightly different way, where my involvement was as instigator and facilitator of processes, which then took on a life of their own and completed the artwork (although I also found my own endpoint through the action of *Taking the Hangings Down* 🎨🔊).

<sup>77</sup> Initially, I investigated the ways in which sensor technology could be used to reflect natural processes within sound works (plans for *Haytor Quarry Sound Event*). While interesting, I felt that the transformation of sensor information into control data, then used to control sonic events, was abstracted too far from its original context and did not *feel* like the original source (the wind, the temperature etc).

<sup>78</sup> i.e. recordings of the sounds.

### Activating audience

It is of central importance to me that any audience for my work be active participants within it. I did not want others to simply witness *my* activated presence (or the consequences of it), but to have the opportunity to experience this for themselves.

My first experiment in finding approaches to making work in this way, was the *Haytor Quarry SoundWalk* (see *Fauna*). This positive experience of the direct interaction between artist, site and audience, inspired me to take this further and write this element in to *The Public Record*. Participation was also essential to *Arcturus Rising*, where the participants were the 'light rows', and the gallery installation of *Moon Journeys I* was completely dependent upon the involvement of artist/collaborators (who were audience to, as well as participants/collaborators in, my moon-watching journeys).

### Artwork as the consequences of experience

In my research I have found that the more direct the relationship between my own experience and that which I present to others, the more successful the artwork. For example, in *Arcturus Rising*, the most effective aspect of the project was the research element, where I was sharing my research findings and questions with others. I found a greater level of interest and awareness in these interactions than in the group action of making the 'light rows'. The making of the actions only had an indirect relationship to the subject matter which, whilst being a physical experience, was based in a concept (that of recreating the stone rows, with light) that sounded more interesting than it was in practice. This piece also taught me to pay attention to potential distractions from the main concerns of the event; that the reality of participation necessitates careful consideration of the context within which the actions will be taking place.

### The importance of structure

I took what I had learned from *Arcturus Rising* into the planning of both *Moon Journeys* and *The Grasses are Singing*. In both situations I created an element of control through the application of structure. In the former, the journey itself, and the constraints of the moon-watching, created a clear framework within which we could operate. When circumstances

changed, I added the element of the plinths to facilitate the creation of a more effective installation, within a less well-defined exhibition area (the gallery foyer). In *The Grasses are Singing*, I made use of the focus offered by the room itself, choosing to work in a space which was clearly defined and set apart from the other rooms. I also worked hard to create a peaceful atmosphere within the room, reminiscent of the calm of the farm before the exhibition, which would hopefully suggest a similar approach to the artwork. The choice of colours within the materials, as well as their quality, also helped to create a positive environment for interaction, which would allow for a diversity of approaches whilst creating a sense of unity within the installation. Again, the fact that the footage, on which the collaborative drawings were based, was a direct result of my earlier interactions with the farm and my personal experiences with grasses as a child, created a clearly identifiable link which could be made between my experience and that audience/participants.

### Noticing audience

I have also found, as Cunningham says of his dance and its audiences,

*"Between the two they can produce something else, something, say I, myself, wouldn't have thought."* (qtd. in Sontag 31)

I found *The Grasses are Singing* to be particularly encouraging of my efforts to invite direct interaction between audience and installation. When I returned to the piece, after having left it to run for a few days, I found it almost unrecognisable as the one that I had set up. There was a change not only in the quantity of marks and pictures which had been contributed, but also a qualitative change in the atmosphere of the room, a kind of softness; the result of so many personal interactions with the space. I felt that the drawings and marks left by participants, whom I had not met, created a reciprocal gifting process; where they left me gifts of drawing, in return for my (and the ArtFarm Project's) gift to them of the installation. Just as in Gormley's *Field* (Gormley), there is something very touching about the accumulation of individual interactions; a feeling sense of our collective existence. When there was nobody in the installation room, with the sound and projections of the grasses, with the smell of the hay and the evidence of our human

creativity all around, there was an emergent sense of the interconnectedness of all things; a re-placement of our selves within our true context.

### Activation of self and others

My most important realisation, from the making of this research project, is that nobody can *make* anyone else be, or feel, a greater sense of presence. I believe that a sense of presence is innate, as is our knowledge of the true nature of our interconnectedness<sup>79</sup>. My aim is therefore to create artwork which invites others to an activation of their own presence, through resonance with mine. What I therefore get from this is the opportunity to continue to work on my own experience of an activated presence, through the process of artwork making, and to be more fully present within my own life. As Paul Sibler points out,

*"The journey is what lasts, the moment...be where you are when you're there."*  
(qtd. in Hampton 195)



Figure 130: Dartmoor Dancing 🌿🌿

<sup>79</sup> This reminds me of an ancient Zen koan, "My original face now".

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# Appendices

## Appendix One: List of contents of DVDs

Joanna Mayes video illustrations (Thesis DVD ☺)

### **Hidden Treasure – a record**

*Hidden Treasure* 🎨

### **The Public Record**

*The Public Record* 🎨

### **Arcturus Rising**

*Arcturus Rising* 🎨

### **Moon Journeys**

*Moon Journeys 1* 🎨

*Sparkling Water* 🎨

*Moon Travels (install)* 🎨

*Office Staff Interviews* 🎨

### **The Grasses are Singing**

*Grasses (installation footage)* 🎨

*Woman drawing* 🎨

*Drawing with Natasha* 🎨

*Taking the hangings down* 🎨

### **Other footage**

*Granite Spider* 🎨

*Dartmoor Dancing* 🎨

*Granite, clouds, grass* 🎨

Joanna Mayes electronic thesis (Thesis DVD ROM ☺)

### **Electronic thesis (folder)**

*Readme.doc (how to use the electronic thesis)*

*Thesis master (shortcut to electronic thesis)*

## Appendix Two: Conference paper

Paper given at *Writing Places* conference December 2002 (see below)

Conference Paper given to Writing Places conference December 2002

I was born under a wandering star.....

### **The importance of wandering**

*A good traveller has no fixed plans*

*and is not intent on arriving.*

*A good artist lets his intuition*

*lead him wherever it wants.*

*A good scientist has freed himself of concepts*

*and keeps his mind open to what is*

*first stanza of a poem by the Chinese Taoist master, Lao-Tzu (571?-?BCE) in*

*(Mitchell 1993) P16*

I am not a great walker, but I am a perpetual wanderer. I have learnt now not to say to friends that I am inviting them on a walk, in case they get the wrong idea. As a child, being the youngest and smallest of the family, I always longed for the day that I could walk at my own pace and not everyone else's; their walk was my skip. Sometimes I refer to the kind of walks some of my friends like to make across Dartmoor as "strides". So now I make my own terms; would they like to come for a wander? Fortunately for me, I have some friends who are happy to wander, or walk gently and quietly; but most of the time I prefer to walk by myself.

Wandering, as a concept, is extremely important to me. The gentle meander and the hunt for treasures. Covering distance has its place, but it's a joy I have yet to fully appreciate. There are physical reasons for this, as I have a history of problems with my back – history which I carry around with me and creates tension and pain if I walk too strenuously. My

physical capacity creates limits which set up interesting creative dynamics. Friends who are more physically able and love to be outside, perhaps naturally choose to make more direct and quantifiable journeys across the landscape. I find it interesting that although they have the option of yomping or wandering, that people who can stride, seldom tend to stroll. Perhaps if I had been a natural strider, or I had felt the necessity to walk long distances, I would have built up the necessary muscles and aptitude earlier in my life whereas instead I sat for hours at the piano creating musical landscapes around me and patterns of stress in my back. So here I am now, a little older, and preferring to walk than to play the piano but my history confines my abilities and therefore my practice. This is neither a good nor a bad thing, just how it is. Wandering, I find, creates an opening – an ability to see with a fresh eye through the willingness to be led by the experience of being present in a place, with materials and with myself.

#### *The life-changing wander*

During some research on walking, I came across Lucy Lippard's name and discovered her book *Overlay* (Lippard 1983), about her experiences of spending time on Dartmoor and the surprising ways in which it crystalised her practice as an Art critic.

*"In 1977 I went to live for a year on a isolated farm in southern England. I thought I was escaping from art – from a complicated urban life of criticism, organising and activism. I wanted to walk, to read, and to write a novel. Nothing else. The reading and writing went as planned, but the walking led straight back to art." (Lippard 1983)P1*

she then relates a story of walking on Dartmoor and coming across a stone which formed part of a stone row:

*"...I leaned down and touched the stone. Some connection was made that I still don't fully understand, and that led to this book – an overlay of my concern with new art on my fascination with these very ancient sites." (Lippard 1983)P1*



In fact, I had a remarkably similar experience when walking on Dartmoor, supposedly for inspiration. I had found as a teenager that regular walking helped to clear my mind and allow thoughts to come into my conscious mind which didn't otherwise get a chance to be heard. A process of musing and allowing my mind to wander and come to conclusions which I might not have done under other circumstances. Also, over the past ten years or so, I have found that mind-centring bodywork works well for me, so I practice weekly Tai Chi or Chi Gong or Yoga, as well as having worked intensively with an Alexander Technique teacher. I was interested to come back to walking to see what how it would work for and within my art practice.

But just as Lucy Lippard found that what she thought she would be doing was not what she was actually doing, I found that the walking was not simply feeding my creative practice, but that it actually was my practice and as much a part of my making as my performative outcomes. The idea of walking as an integral part of practice wasn't new to me, as I have been exposed to much walking practice over recent years (Simon Whitehead, Nic Sandiland) but the idea that this was possibly central to my own work was quite surprising and confronting.

At the same time I came across the work of Hamish Fulton who is uncompromisingly clear that the walk, or the experience of the walk, is the art object itself.

*"...my art is about walking it is not about...US land art or European outdoor sculpture. The differences centre around either constructing something or nothing in the landscape. What I build is an experience, not a sculpture. My wish is to leave as few traces of my passing as possible. My walking experiences are the reverse of creating sculptural changes, subtractions or additions to the land."*

*(Fulton 2002)P16*

This led me to a reappraisal of where my artwork lies, a subject which I had been considering a couple of years previously in the context of digital artworks and the part played by software programmers in the creative process. Is the artwork the finished

product, or sound object for example, or the programming which creates the ability to feed in chosen sounds and create the finished product?

## Catching Traces

Ron Kuivila, the American Sound Artist, on looking at my documentation of my walks from Cold East Cross to Buckland Beacon (photographs, drawings and text) suggested that my work was about traces<sup>80</sup> At the time, I could see how this related to my work, but was not convinced as to its central relevance to my existing work. Perhaps it is only one layer, but I have been finding it an increasingly helpful lattice to place across my work, shedding useful light across my interests in time, mark-making and journeying. Looked at from this angle, it is also possible to see clear connections with my previous interests in voice, improvisation and gestural control.

### Collecting traces

I remember encountering the work of Cornelia Parker who was working at the time with the collection of human residues, in the form of dust and fluff, from the Whispering Gallery at St Paul's Cathedral. These hidden traces of human activity are given added poignancy by the idea of the passing nature of most visits to the gallery as well as the likelihood that human detritus has been allowed to lie here possibly for hundreds of years. The creators of the dust are possibly now dust themselves – thus creating resonances with the Christian burial service "Ashes to ashes, dust to dust". The material which she collects is displayed in gallery-style boxes, giving weight to the subject-matter which is not usually given to such small signs of human presence.

Over the years since first encountering this work, I have regularly returned to the thought of these collections of dust and the way in which there are accumulations of human dust everywhere (it reminds me of the standard sales technique of power-vacuum cleaner salesmen, who vacuum your mattress and then show you the contents of the bag in order

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<sup>80</sup> His suggestion was that I could think about ways in which the older marking of territory – or having been somewhere – has been transferred into an urban environment. He was also interested in the idea of the ways in which humans use sound to mark their presence.

to shame or horrify you into buying into their image (and therefore their product) of the desirability of total “cleanliness”). We are completely, humanly, unable to be remnant free – there are lines and traces wherever we go, just as in the fairy story of Hansel and Gretel, if only we could see them.

### **Prehistoric traces on Dartmoor**

Some years ago, on my first visit to the area, some friends took me for a walk on Hound Tor in Dartmoor and told me stories of the Hounds of the Baskevvilles. They also showed me the remains of a medieval village on the far side of the Tor. When I eventually moved to Ashburton and began to walk regularly on Dartmoor, this became one of my regular stopping-off places<sup>81</sup>.

On one of my first solo walks I walked around the Eastern side of the rocks, and by chance came across a low stone circle with three larger flat stones creating a small three-sided enclosure within it<sup>82</sup>. This I found out later to be a Bronze Age Kistvaen (a burial chamber with an outer circle of stones, thought to have been covered by a mound of earth(Thurlow 1993)). The experience of sitting inside the circle and the atmosphere which was contained within it made me think about the people who created it and what their intentions may have been. Since then, I have spent a great deal of time at Neolithic sites on Dartmoor and am aware of my experience of being present with the legacy of the people and the way in which the materials have been imbued with a certain spirit. It is impossible to say whether this is a construct of my mind or whether this is essentially true. As Lucy Lippard says,

“What interests me most about prehistory is precisely what cannot be known about it. The new “speculative hisotory” of the megalithic cultures offers a way back into the labyrinth partially closed off by traditional archaeology and its fear of the unproven”.P1(Lippard 1983)

<sup>81</sup> Also partly for a cup of tea at the “Hound of the Basket Meals” tea van....

<sup>82</sup> map ref: Manaton, 741788

## Traces in the Natural World

### Trace and pattern

Looking out of my window, I can see a flock of birds wheeling around, creating patterns with their movements. If the “rules” of flocking which have been surmised by scientists are correct, then each individual flight path is determined by rules of relationship between each bird and its neighbour. This then creates connections in my mind about human behaviour patterns and their relationships to society as a whole. On experiencing the road and people traffic in London, I would often think about what other people might be doing which could create congestion in particular places. This might be in response to existing traffic, or in an attempt to anticipate busy periods or places. A game I used to enjoy playing (whilst waiting in a jam) was how apparently irrelevant factors may have led to the particular traffic jam I was experiencing. This is, of course, entirely relevant – current scientific theory appreciates the potential importance of the movement of a butterfly’s wing in the creation of other events within the physical world.

Hindu Vedic philosophy is alive to the potential importance of intention to the eventual physical outcomes of actions. In the Vedic view of creation, the pre-physical was a vital part of the eventual creation of physical entities. The contemporary philosophical scientist Rupert Sheldrake postulates the existence of “morphic fields” which resonate around the globe, creating invisible pathways, evidenced by the routes of migrating birds.

### Artist as mark/trace maker

This materiality resonates strongly with Richard Long’s use of mark-making, especially within his gallery pieces. Richard Long has been working with extended notions of sculpture since the 1960s. In the online accompanying text to his recent exhibition at The Tate St Ives, the curators speak of Richard Long’s “dynamic, physical involvement with landscape. Experiencing nature directly through the act of walking, Long creates sculptures from natural and elemental materials. Since 1970, he has used mud to make works in gallery spaces. These have a spontaneous impact and are intimately connected to the most ancient forms of human mark making.” (the Tate 2002). I was also particularly influenced by an artist friend, Ian Rawlinson, who created artworks with paint, but only

made marks which were created directly with his fingers. His path had moved to here from printmaking and it always made me think of the essential nature of making prints with out bodies.

### **Leaving No Trace**

Yet, this human fascination with making marks and leaving traces also leads to its opposite – the idea of ‘leaving no trace’. Hamish Fulton uses what is currently known as a ‘wilderness ethic’ in his making and he speaks of “My wish to leave as few traces of my passing as possible”(Fulton 2002).

There is a famous internet artist<sup>83</sup> who burnt all his possessions as a piece of artwork and I heard that he now only has the clothes he is wearing and a CD data disk around his neck (He now only creates online artworks – often involving activism created through internet communities). I find the impossibility of this act to be a fascinating one. Those possessions are effectively dead to his material use, but is it possible to erase his memory of them? Does the piece end up being about the traces left within memory, as much as about the burning of possessions?

### **Memory and physical traces**

There are many ways in which memories are held. I am personally acquainted with kinetic memory, the memory held within muscles and muscle patterns, through having played a great deal of classical music when I was young. Much of the teaching of learning pieces for performance was in learning them well enough that they are contained within the muscular memory (as well as other deep physical memories) and, once started, will assist in the continuation of the performance without direct brain intervention as to “what comes next”. Also, through my experience of having long-term issues around my back and continuing muscular and soft tissue tension, creating enough difficulties over time to encourage me to spend time working with my physical memory and patterns of behaviour and being. I have direct experience of the links between memory and physicality and the patterns of behaviour within a physical entity. Alexander Technique

talks about the way in which humans tend to hold on to physical responses to stress, even when the initial stress has passed. The classic example used by my Alexander teacher was of “doing the washing up as if we are about to be attacked”; re-presenting physical responses which are no longer appropriate.

Through my early research, which was more directly into improvisation, I became acutely aware of the way in which these physical patterns and programming are strongly influential in the final outcome of a supposedly “free” improvisation. My piano playing, and general musicality, is necessarily a product of everything I have heard, thought and played. Clearly, the uniqueness of my playing comes from the interplay between these elements within my own personal psyche and physical being. The difficulty comes from the way in which free playing enforces my own patterns so that these then become a source of frustration and intransigence. I find this to be a fascinating paradox.

### **Trace in/as Sound**

#### *How I hear myself and how others hear me*

Having regularly been in a performance situation, I have become increasingly aware of the difference between how I experience the sound of my own voice and the way in which others’ experience it in a “live”<sup>84</sup> context (Auslander 1999).

I found the experience of learning to sing was a strange one and I am still fascinated by the discrepancy between my own internal “tuning” and how it sounds when it is recorded. “Tuning” is an interesting subject as it is at the same time both relative and absolute. Initially, I used to sing without amplification and encountered the strange experience of believing that I was singing “in tune” and found that, when singing solo, I wasn’t.

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<sup>83</sup> I was introduced to his work at a Blast Theory Workshop at Hoxton Hall in 2001.

<sup>84</sup> This brings up Auslander’s thorny question regarding the veracity of the “live” event in a truly mediated society.



Gillian Wearing, in the recent publication "Gillian Wearing: mass observation" (Molon 2002) notes her own fascination with this disparity between the private and public voice and its centrality to her early work. The original idea of taking the photographs of people with a text of their thoughts (as chosen by them) was rooted in her own experiences of the public and private voice – stemming from thoughts about how our own voice sounds different to others (using the recorded voice as a comparison; most people find that their recorded voice sounds "different" to their own experience of their voice, whereas others tend to recognise the recording as being very similar to that person's "voice" as they experience it).

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