

Symposium II: International Environmental Arts Research Network

21st April 2021

Perspectives: glacial landscapes within contemporary photographic practices

How do we intervene photographically in the Arctic and Antarctic regions? The polar history has many examples of photographers and artists traveling to the Arctic region and Antarctica. Due to environmental change, the last two decades has seen a rise in Art & Science expeditions to these regions. During this event we will unravel various artistic research approaches by some of our network researchers who have worked specifically with glacial landscapes. We will encourage a discussion around the purpose of these practices and highlight why it may be of significance to our understanding of climate change, and how we can further act on positive actions.

8 am – 11 am (UK)

9 am – 12 noon (Sweden)

9 pm – 12 am (New Zealand)

Online via Zoom – Booking via EventBrite

Symposium is initiated, organized and hosted by:

HDK /Valand, Gothenburg University, Sweden

Massey University, Wellington, New Zealand

University of Plymouth, UK

Programme [times listed UK / Sweden / New Zealand]

8 am / 9 am / 9 pm

Welcome

Heidi Morstang, Convener *Arts Research: Land/Water and the Visual Arts Research Group*, University of Plymouth

8.15 am / 9.15 am / 9.15 pm

Keynote: Tyrone Martinsson, Gorki Glaser Müller, Erik Schytt Mannerfelt

Observation through practice: fieldwork and collaborations

9.15 am / 10.15 am / 10.15 pm

Q &A

9.30 am / 10.30 am / 10.30 pm

Break

9.40 am / 10.40 am / 10.40 pm

Jonathan Kay

Dead Ice

10.00 am / 11.00 am / 11.00 pm

Jason O'Hara

Where Memories Sleep - Stealth Science

10.20 am / 11.20 am / 11.20 pm

Plenary / Discussion

11.00 am / 12.00 noon / 12.00 midnight

End

Speakers' Abstracts

Jonathan Kay

Dead Ice

Dead Ice examines two long-term projects (*Ice Field* and *Negative Mass*) that question whether 'photography can facilitate an intimate connection with a fragile landscape so alien to our everyday environment?'. In response to this query, both projects have employed a methodology that simulates scientific 'fieldwork', where observation and data collection provide insights into specific environments. This fieldwork is centred around the unique site-specific possibilities of the photographic medium and goes beyond the expected landscape image. This camera-less process creates a direct relationship between landscape and medium, therefore the photogram becomes the location where site, space and matter are directly connected. The works in *Dead Ice* were made with simple materials but speak to a poignant and layered issue we are confronted with on a global scale: the gradual melting of ice caps and glaciers in this age of climate change.

Jonathan Kay is a photographic artist and lecturer in photography living in Te Whanganui-a-Tara/Wellington, Aotearoa/New Zealand. His practice focuses on blurring the boundaries of art and science to render the unseen and challenge notions of landscape. His methodology employs photographic interventions within the landscape that are site specific and responsive. Exhibitions include *Negative Mass* (Gus Fisher Gallery, Auckland), *WAI - Manga Maha, Awa Kotahi | One River, Many Streams*, (Aratoi -Wairarapa Museum of Art and History) Masterton and *Nothing but Dust*, (Wellington Museum). He completed a MFA with distinction at Massey University, Wellington, in 2013.

www.jonathan-kay.com

Tyrone Martinsson, Gorki Glaser Müller, Erik Schytt Mannerfelt

Observation through practice: fieldwork and collaborations

The content of this talk is 'observation through practice' where fieldwork is a working method that opens for development of a research practice that can be used in and across many fields of research and collaboration. My approach in research practice is that artistic research share a number of approaches with not only humanities but perhaps even more with natural sciences and therefore have a good basis for collaborations within the field of environmental research. I belong to a research group that works across disciplines with contemporary issues of environmental challenges and climate change and share a call for a need to reconnect to nature. Our primary area for our work and expertise is in a wide sense the North. My inspiration for this has been Alexander von Humboldt who argued that art and science need each other and in this further called for a visual language to communicate field science and argued a concern for western societies exploitation of land and people. This current work on ice and glaciers in Svalbard address field collaboration and communicating field research, narrating fieldwork experiences and research results and seeking approaches to communicate research and field experiences.

Tyrone Martinsson, Professor in Photography, HDK/Valand, University of Gothenburg, Sweden

Gorki Glaser Müller, filmmaker and virtual narrative developer Visual Arena, Gothenburg, Sweden

Erik Schytt Mannerfelt, ETH Zürich, Laboratory of Hydraulics, Hydrology and Glaciology
MSc in Geology

Jason O'Hara

Where Memories Sleep - Stealth Science

Where Memories Sleep is an immersive cine-dance production that tells the imagined legend of the Aurora in Antarctica. Blurring the lines between dance, theatre, music and film this exciting installation is a creative output inspired by the 2016 Scott Base, Antarctica residency by visual artist Jason O'Hara and musician Warren Maxwell. The project's goal – to introduce new audiences to Antarctic science.

In this presentation, O'Hara will take us through the strategic and creative process in this highly collaborative production.

Legend = fact + time + imagination

Extensively researched, the project draws upon traditional non-written storytelling from around the world, celebrating the international constitution of Antarctica while retaining a uniquely New Zealand perspective. It reinterprets the story of our scientific relationship with Antarctica with beautiful creative licence into a contemporary pūrākau (Legend) with a strong environmental message.

The narrative centred around the epic adventures of a young explorer who answers the call to venture south where she discovers an icy realm of exotic creatures, falls in love and is gifted the memories of the world by a powerful kaitiaki. It concludes with her return home leaving her heartbroken love to sing a song of lament so beautiful that it lights the night sky until her return.

Jason O'Hara (MDes) is a Senior Lecturer at the Wellington School of Design, Massey University, New Zealand. He is an internationally exhibited and awarded multi-disciplinary designer/artist.

His practice-lead research seeks to connect people with place and time, primarily through lens-based visual storytelling. Jason has been to Scott Base Antarctica twice and was instrumental in the 2011 art-science project 'Kermadec - Nine Artists Explore the South Pacific' which toured New Zealand and the Pacific for over five years. Current projects include the cine-dance installation 'Where Memories Sleep' (with noted musician Warren Maxwell), the 'What if climate change was purple?' sci-art project and he is on the design team for the National Erebus Disaster Memorial.

Background: *International Environmental Arts Research Network*

In 2019, *Arts Research: Land/water and the Visual Arts Research Group* at the University of Plymouth, UK, hosted the first international conference to establish a network with three universities that share common interests within environmental artistic research.

We would like to expand on and question how art can contribute to understanding contemporary environmental issues and challenges.

Artistic research practice has a unique capacity to offer crucial insights informing our understanding of environmental issues in the era of the Anthropocene. The reflexivity inherent in arts research along with an emphasis on expressive communication as outcome offers significant scope for bringing crucial yet complex

relationships between vulnerable species, human action and climate change to wider appreciation amongst general audiences and key stakeholders.

Placing artistic interpretive methods alongside scientific interpretive methods carries some risks and challenges, particularly as artistic approaches may invite an open-ended, contemplative engagement with the scientific, sensorial and political layering of the environment, that is not typical of mainstream science communication. Ways in which arts practice complements and extends scientific insight will be centrally addressed.

We aim to organize research events at the different institutions, however the global pandemic of 2020 has provided us with the incentive to organize our meetings online which is an exciting prospect for a more environmentally and sustainable way to meet.

Therefore, we aim to coordinate a series of international symposia during 2020/21 to bring our researchers and our postgraduate students together to share common research interests and advance our knowledge and ways of working in this domain. As artists, writers, curators, researchers, scientists, educators and global citizens, we would like to initiate projects and share good practice. We hope our discussions and meetings may result in tangible outcomes in the future including joint exhibitions, publications and collaborative projects.

We will meet at a mutually convenient time for our global locations but at this stage we hope to establish a schedule of three symposia each year. The inaugural event is scheduled for the 25th November 2020.

The aim of the Network is to foster the development of an online forum for researchers to share ideas, methodologies and concerns within environmental arts practice in order to critically engage and reflect upon the theme 'Futures' in response to environmental concerns and climate change. Conversations and discussions may result in future projects such as exhibitions and publications, and jointly funded research bids.

We acknowledge that the Environmental Arts Research Network may or may not result in tangible future collaborations, although we aspire to foster a growing network that wishes to engage with current environmental challenges.

The network will function as a forum for independent researchers, and researchers affiliated to universities. The network welcomes postgraduate students.

www.plymouth.ac.uk/research/landwater