

LOCWS INTERNATIONAL

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SWANSEA CASTLE

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RIVER TAWE BARRAGE

HELWICK LIGHTSHIP

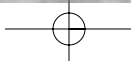
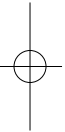
SWANSEA MARINA

SWANSEA OBSERVATORY

SWANSEA BEACH

THE GUILDHALL

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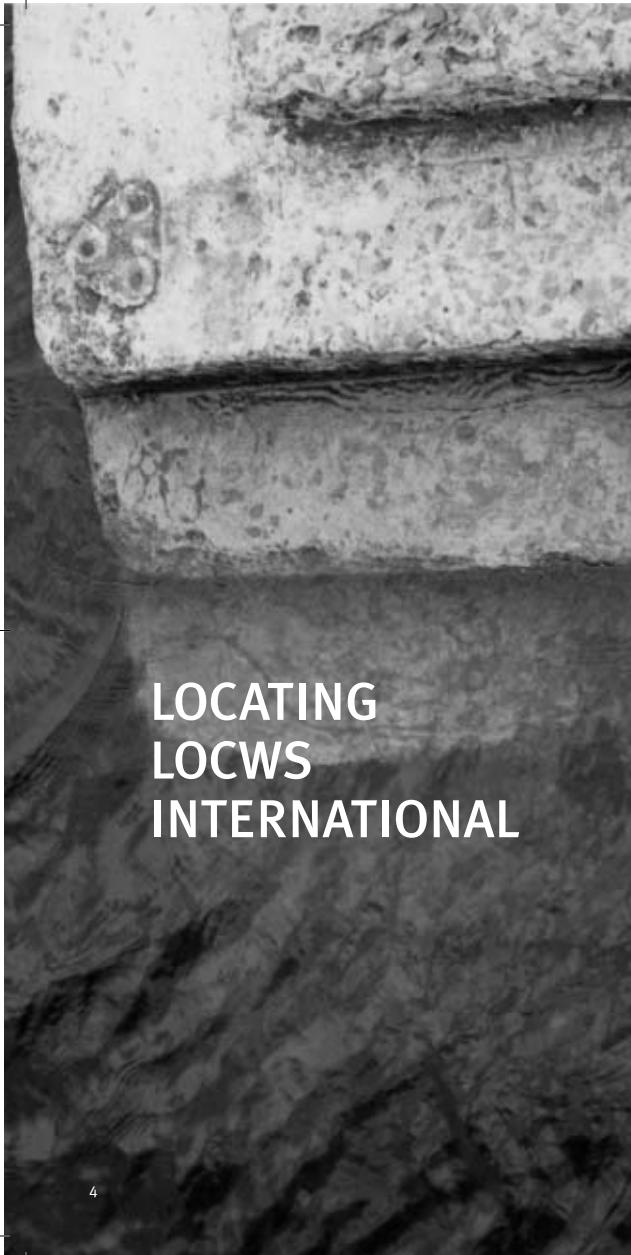
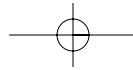
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LOCWS 1
2 SEPTEMBER – 1 OCTOBER 2000

LOCWS 2
7 SEPTEMBER – 29 SEPTEMBER 2002

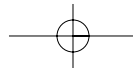


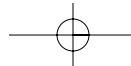
LOCATING LOCWS INTERNATIONAL

Working site-specifically places particular demands on an artist not experienced in quite the same way in other fields, in the sense that the work becomes part of the site, not reflective of it. The site, in this case anywhere in Swansea, becomes your potential studio and material. Although some sites, like Swansea Museum, have an already accessible structure, walls and floors literally, others, like Swansea Barrage or the River Tawe, have none. Invention and negotiation become key factors in the realisation of idea to image.

The artists involved in both the first Locws event in 2000 and Locws2 in 2002, have in the main displayed a real sense of tenacity and commitment. Each installation week was full of ups and downs, emotions running wild and high, but an ability to keep focused and good humoured is a prerequisite of such events and the Locws artists have had no lack of these qualities.

Both of us see Locws as a kind of ongoing time-based event. Although two years have passed between Locws 1 and 2, in our eyes



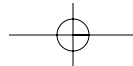


we see them as one. The same gig but spread out over time and place and night and day. A few venues were repeated whilst others were opened up anew, facilitating a dialogue between installations from the same and different sites. So what we perceive is a kind of virtual art map of Swansea. Walking down High Street from the station, we first encounter at number 226 a metamorphic, alchemical sculptural work accessible only by looking through the shop-window (2000), whilst a few metres away at 26 Castle Street we witness a night-time shop-front projection of a lyrical yet political journey up the River Tawe (2002), whilst again a few moments later we experience the transformative potential of light at Swansea Castle where the viewer is invited to question context (2000), and so on. The work is collected and collated in memory. To this end, it is important and relevant to us that the Locws works are only physically apparent for the duration of the events and are dismantled as quickly as possible afterwards. Their ephemerality necessarily transcends fixture and permanence as a nuance of meaning,

allowing a kind of opening up of multi-layered discourses and offering an alternative democratising of the art object. It is the experience that matters, not the commodity.

Sometimes though as either a document or as an introduction to those who did not experience the events in the flesh, a visual record is necessary. To this end this publication acts as both document and further signifier of the strange and sometimes beautiful event that is Locws International. We both wish to thank everyone that has helped in all sorts of ways to make it happen, especially the artists for their works and commitment.

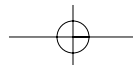
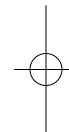
Tim Davies & David Hastie
curators

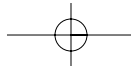


DARGANFOD LOCWS RHYNGWLADOL

Mae gweithio ar safle penodol yn gosod galwadau arbennig ar arlunydd nas profir yn union yr un ffordd mewn meysydd eraill, yn yr ystyr bod y gwaith yn datblygu i fod yn rhan o'r safle, ac nid yn adlewyrchiad ohono. Y safle, sef unrhyw le yn Abertawe yn yr achos hwn, yw eich stiwdio a'ch deunyddiau posib. Er bod gan rai safleoedd, fel Amgueddfa Abertawe, adeiledd sydd eisoes yn hygyrch, waliau a lloriau yn llythrennol, nid yw'r pethau hyn yn bodoli mewn safleoedd eraill, fel Argae Abertawe neu Afon Tawe. Mae dyfeisio a thrafod yn ffactorau allweddol wrth droi syniad yn ddelwedd.

Mae'r arlunwyr a oedd yn gysylltiedig i'r digwyddiad Locws cyntaf yn 2000 a Locws2 yn 2002, ar y cyfan wedi dangos gwir ymdeimlad o ddyfalbarhad ac ymroddiad. Roedd pob wythnos osod yn llawn uchafbwyntiau ac isafbwyntiau, gydag emosiynau'n rhedeg yn wyllt, ond mae'r gallu i gadw ffocws a hwyliau da yn angenrheidiol ar gyfer digwyddiadau o'r fath ac nid yw arlunwyr Locws wedi bod yn brin o'r nodwedd hon.



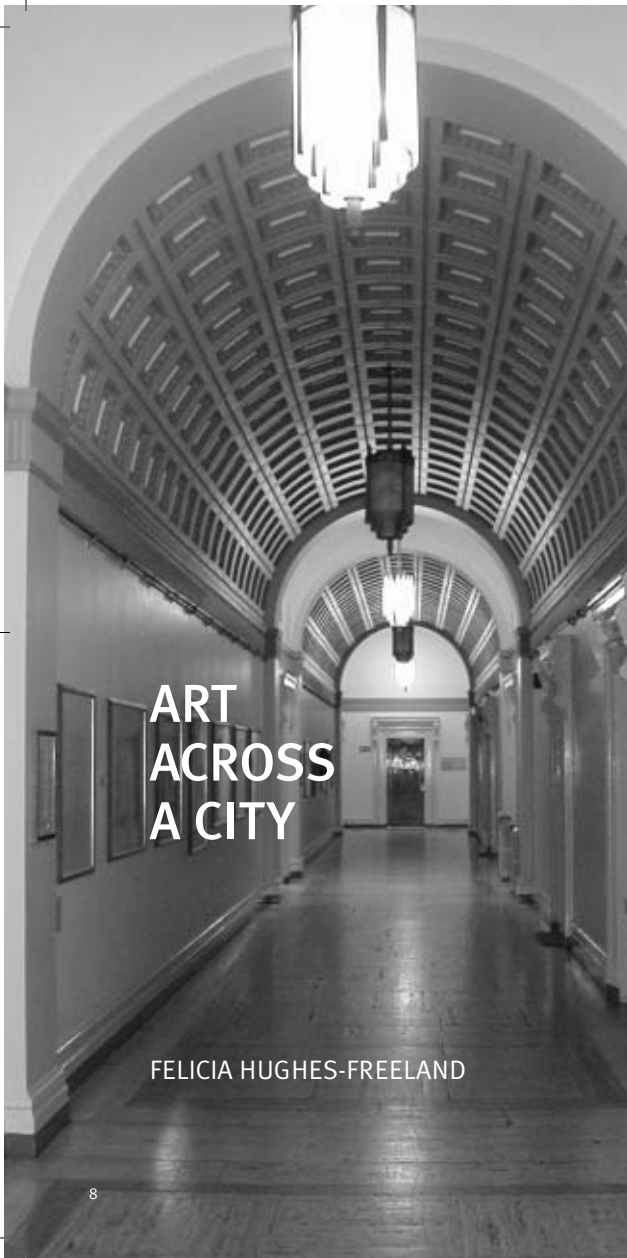
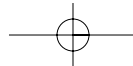


Mae'r ddau ohonom yn ystyried Locws fel math o ddigwyddiad parhaol mewn amser. Er bod dwy flynedd wedi mynd heibio rhwng Locws 1 a 2, rydym ni'n eu hystyried fel un. Yr un digwyddiad ond wedi'i ymestyn dros amser a lleoliad a nos a dydd. Ailddefnyddiwyd rhai lleoliadau ac agorwyd rhai eraill o'r newydd, gan hwyluso dialog rhwng gosodiadau o'r un safleoedd a safleoedd gwahanol. Felly rydym yn canfod math o rith-fap arlunio o Abertawe. Wrth gerdded i lawr y Stryd Fawr o'r orsaf, mae cerflunwaith metamorffig, alcemegol yn rhif 226 sy'n hygyrch yn unig drwy edrych trwy ffenestr y siop (2000), ychydig fetrau i fwrdd yn 26 Stryd y Castell, mae tafluniad blaen siop gyda'r nos yn daith delynegol ond gwleidyddol i fyny Afon Tawe (2002), ac ychydig eiliadau'n ddiweddarach rydym yn profi potensial trawsffurfiol golau yng Nghastell Abertawe lle y gwahoddir y gwyliwr i gwestiynu cyd-destun (2000), ac yn y blaen. Mae'r gwaith yn cael ei gasglu a'i gyfosod yn y cof. I'r perwyl hwn, mae'n bwysig ac yn berthnasol i ni bod gwaith Locws dim ond yn amlwg yn gorfforol am barhad y digwyddiadau

a'u bod yn cael eu chwalu cyn gynted, phosib ar arôl hynny. Mae eu byrhoedledd o reidrwydd yn rhagori ar osodion a pharhad fel awgrym o ystyr, gan alluogi trafodaethau amlhaenog a chynnig democrateiddio'r gwrthrych celf mewn ffordd arall. Y profiad sy'n bwysig, nid y nwyddau.

Ond weithiau mae angen archif gweledol fel naill ai dogfen neu gyflwyniad i'r rheiny na phrofodd y digwyddiadau yn bersonol. I'r perwyl hwn mae'r cyhoeddiad hwn yn gweithredu fel dogfen ac arwydd pellach o'r digwyddiad rhyfedd ac weithiau prydfferth sef Locws Rhyngwladol. Hoffwn ddiolch i bawb a'n helpodd mewn pob math o ffyrdd i gyflwyno'r digwyddiad, yn enwedig yr arlunwyr am eu gwaith a'u hymroddiad.

Tim Davies a David Hastie
ceidwaid



ART ACROSS A CITY

FELICIA HUGHES-FREELAND

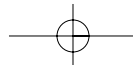
U/W Locws international:
a place – locUs – in Wales – locWs – visited,
invaded, graced by a cast of transient actors:
objects, events, installations, works.

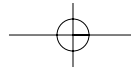
ART INTO LANDSCAPE

Art has traditionally been associated with particular kinds of places, such as galleries and museums, where we go to look at paintings and sculptures. Indeed, a dominant strand in Western art has involved capturing the landscape in a framed two-dimensional artwork, a process of transforming landscape into art¹. Sculptural traditions have taken a different track. While sculpture is often museumized, there have also been the long-established conventions of three-dimensional figures of human or godly forms being set in public spaces in the open air.

Locws International organisers Tim Davies and David Hastie have pushed the logic of the processes of art into landscape and have ruptured the conventions of dimension and context even further, bringing to Swansea two multi-sited multi-media art experiences. Locws International started in conversations and journeys around the urban landscape of Swansea between Davies and Hastie, and then with a number of artists who came to Swansea to select the sites. The works provided the infrastructure for a series of ongoing

1. As in the book of the same title by Kenneth Clark, first published in 1949.





situations and multiple dialogues: the initial dialogue between the artist and the site set in motion a dialogue between the work and the site, realised in the responses of the visitors to the site, to the work, or more accurately, to the site-with-the-work.

So Locws International has not simply been concerned with art as object and end product. From the very outset, the emphasis has been on interaction, negotiation, production, placing, transaction – the very stuff of social relations. Your commentator herself is an outsider from England, and an outsider to art history/criticism, coming from social anthropology, where the intellectual challenge is to understand the many kinds of processes and accretions which produce social relations and structures.

ART AND ANTHROPOLOGY

Social relations are the stuff of anthropological enquiry. Anthropological work expresses a concern with the nature of things and value in a social context, often using phenomenological idioms breaking across conventional oppositions about how we come to understand and inhabit the world which give rise to a meeting of the creative and the analytical, the poetic and the scientific². An anthropologist noted for his commitment to a phenomenological agenda applied to reflections on art was Alfred Gell. He saw art as 'the technology of enchantment', and insisted on the need for what he called

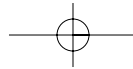
'methodological philistinism'³:

'A purely cultural, aesthetic, 'appreciative' approach to art objects is an anthropological dead end. Instead, the question which interests me is the possibility of formulating a 'theory of art' which fits naturally into the context of anthropology, given the premise that anthropological theories are 'recognizable' initially, as theories about social relationships, and not anything else. The simplest way to imagine this is to suppose that there could be a species of anthropological theory in which persons or 'social agents' are, in certain contexts, substituted for by art objects' [i.e.] 'the theoretical study of 'social relations in the vicinity of objects mediating social agency'⁴. Gell distinguished the Anthropology of Art from Art History: 'The aim of anthropological theory is to make sense of behaviour in the context of social relations. Correspondingly, the objective of the anthropological theory of art is to

2. Phenomenology offers us a poetics of place. As Gaston Bachelard wrote, 'Only phenomenology - that is to say, consideration of the onset of the image in an individual consciousness - can help us to restore the subjectivity of images and to measure their fullness, their strength, their transsubjectivity' (The Poetics of Space, translated by M. Jolas, Boston, Beacon Press, 1964, p. xv).

3. 'The technology of enchantment and the enchantment of technology' in (eds) J. Coote and A. Shelton Anthropology, Art and Aesthetics, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1992.

4. A. Gell, Art and Agency: an Anthropological Account, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1998, p. 4 and p. 7.



account for the production and circulation of art objects as a function of this relational context'⁵.

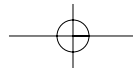
Artists might hesitate in partaking of the 'methodological philistinism' advocated by Gell, but there is methodological commonality in the attitude of anthropologists and artists who participate in projects like Locws International. This commonality lies in an approach based on a readiness to accommodate to existing conditions, in a spirit of empathy. The site-specificity of the Locws works may be compared to the culture-specific focus which has provided anthropology with its distinct voice. The intention is not to be sensationalist or apocalyptic, not to shock but to find a ground of understanding and appropriateness. While anthropologists themselves are far from oblivious to the dangers of particularist accommodations, the readiness to observe and understand instead of noting difference and judging is an attitude which remains central to the way of thinking deemed fitting for the professional outsider.

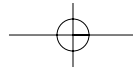
5. Gell, op. cit., p. 11.

Like anthropologists, artists explore the problematic way of thinking about the relationship between nature and culture. Unlike anthropological work which is confined to theoretical operations using words and images, artistic actions materially re-define that relationship. The agenda in Locws builds on the environmental art of the 1960s to 1980s, but in so doing also raises questions which engage with theoretical debates about human existence which concern anthropologists and others⁶. Artists and anthropologists are both interested in the power of material objects to become instrumental in the world, to become actors or agents, in Gell's words. Both reflect on the relationship between these entities and their environment. There can be a meeting between these two different professional worlds, even if the meeting place of necessity is constructed out of concepts which are subject to various constructions and meanings.

One such concept is landscape. The processual, dialogic character of Locws International is one which makes sense to anthropological thinking about the ways human beings interact with one another, and the ways they inhabit their landscape. In contrast to a geographic view of landscape as static, anthropologists think of landscape as dynamic and processual. For a long time, the social landscape was explored in terms of relationships and exchanges between humans and the patterns and habits produced by these processes in different

6. An interesting juxtaposition of approaches to environmental art occurs in a reading of A. D. Napier's 'Environment of an Animated Memory', Chapter 2 in his book *Foreign Bodies: Performance, Art, and Symbolic Anthropology* (1992, University of California Press, Berkeley, Los Angeles, Oxford) in which he argues that cultural health depends on being able to assimilate foreign elements, and Shelagh Hourahane's 'Maps, Myths and the Politics of Art' (chapter 5 in I. Bala (ed.) *Certain Welsh Artists: Custodial Aesthetics in Contemporary Welsh Art*, Bridgend, Seren, 1999) in which she explores how artists have combined ethics with landscape art in a self-consciously Welsh manner.





cultures. In the last ten years or so anthropologists have turned their attention from metaphors of place to describe behaviourally-based processes, to the substantial landscape as the material environment in and through which people act out their lives. Writing about the neolithic landscape, Tilley has drawn on anthropology and other accounts of landscape, place and space to criticise a frequent opposition between abstract versus human space: 'Spatial experience is not innocent and neutral, but invested with power relating to age, gender, social position and relationships with other... Spaces are intimately related to the formation of biographies and social relationships. [So] We move from the irrational abstracted idealism of geometrical universal space to an ontological grounding of a space in the differential structuring of human experience and action in the world... Place is about situatedness in relation to identity and action'⁷. Nature and the landscape are not opposite to culture, but understood through cultural categories.

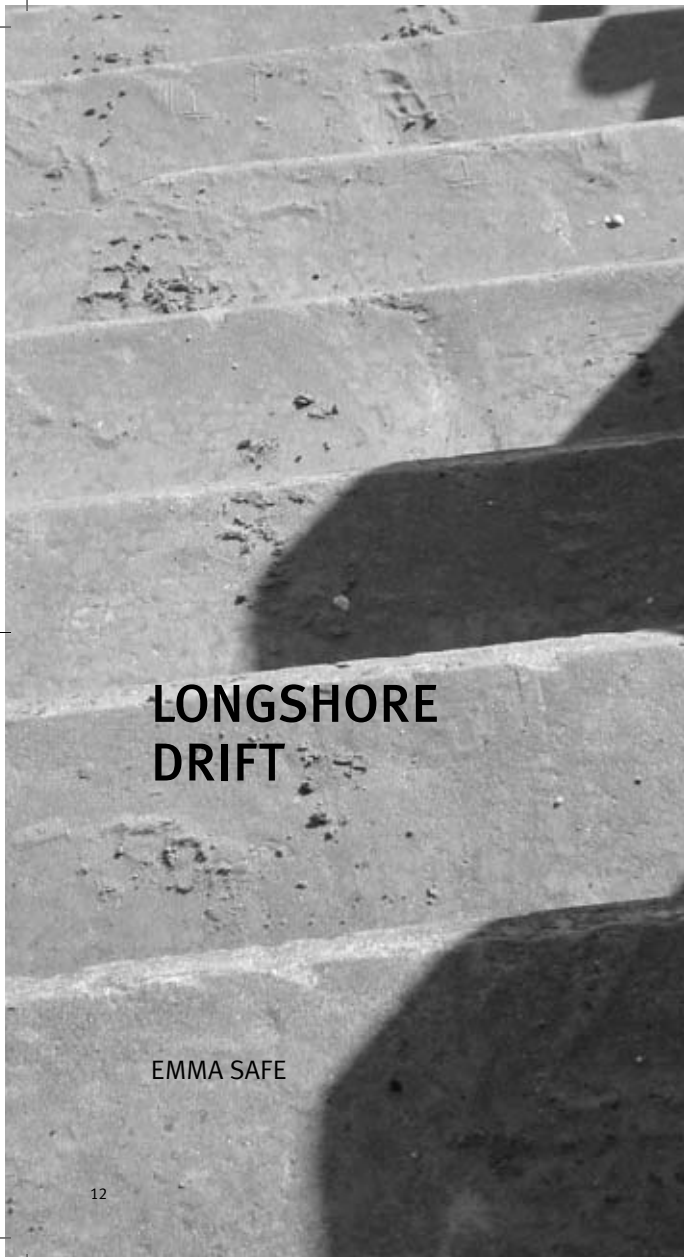
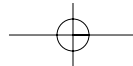
For Marxist critic Raymond Williams, uses of the landscape defined insiders and outsiders. For anthropologist Eric Hirsch, such sharp divisions are seductive but too crude: 'Like 'place' and 'space', notions of 'inside' and 'outside' are not mutually exclusive and depend upon cultural and historical context... There is not one absolute landscape here, but a series of related, if contradictory moments – perspectives which cohere in what can be recognized as a

7. C. Tilley, *A Phenomenology of Landscape: Places, Paths and Monuments*, Oxford, Berg, 1994, p. 11 and p. 18.

singular form: landscape as a cultural process'⁸. The possible landscapes produced by Locws International are the results of social and cultural processes. Local artists and visiting artists come to Swansea to find sites which would inspire them to produce their works of art which would in turn reveal potentialities of landscapes so familiar to local residents as to have become invisible.

It is these three ideas, then, about the agency of art objects in the context of social relations, the cultural reality of the natural or constructed environment, and the transformability between the mundane and the magical, which inform my personal commentary on the cast of Locws International in 2000, which follows art critic Emma Safe's response to the Locws2 event two years later.

8. E. Hirsch, 'Introduction: Landscape: between place and space', in (eds) E. Hirsch and M. O'Hanlon 1995 *The Anthropology of Landscape: Perspective on Place and Space*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, p. 13 and p. 21.



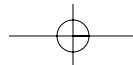
LONGSHORE DRIFT

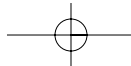
EMMA SAFE

When the city is viewed not as a series of land-use areas designated with commercial profit in mind, but is treated as a ground for investigation, experimentation and playful encounters – something like the Locws events happen.

Moving so quickly from small, closely-knit communities through the smelter of the machine age into our world of accelerated information has left us all a little dizzy – and a little mad. In the city, where the crush of people and life is at its most concentrated, the madness is at its clearest; retail therapy, fast-everything, kids finding solace in drug cocktails or skateboarding in desolate asphalt corridors, the same anodyne chain stores in every city, a seemingly insatiable appetite for immediate pleasure and the little space remaining for private thought invaded by the mobile phone. Amidst all this, contemporary art has been struggling to find a foothold, often dumbing itself down for easy digestion, adopting the language of popular entertainment or advertising in order to attract funding bodies and draw bigger audiences – for many people, accustomed to pre-washed, pre-packed convenience, if art doesn't make you laugh, isn't conventionally beautiful or takes more than three seconds to understand, you can forget it.

Locws2 set out with both city and audience in mind, commissioning twelve international artists to produce site-specific works in response





to the city of Swansea, its history, architecture and people, building on the success of the Locws International event in 2000.

On the surface of things, nothing in the city seemed unusual, lunchtime strollers sauntered along Swansea's Marina, shoppers-shopped, commuters rushed home to make way for the evening street-drama; clubbers-clubbed, deals were made, sorrows were drowned and successes celebrated. But interspersed with the usual hub of daily life a series of unusual, temporary interventions interrupted the city's customary flow; something was different.

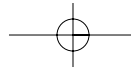
Amongst Swansea's usual crowd, a duo going by the names of Paul & Paula, dressed to kill in borrowed designer gear, restaged the Situationists' theory of the drift; taking an unplanned 24hr psycho-geographical wander around the city in the pursuit of anarchy, play and poetry. Moving between shops, bars and clubs to illustrious drinking dens before collapsing onto the beach at dawn, they found all three – sometimes in the most unexpected places. Photographs charting their impromptu encounters are integrated with displays in Swansea Museum; some seeming fresh from early Hollywood fashion shoots, others like extracts from a contemporary club-zine. For a brief period, history-hunters visiting the museum would find not only the conventional text-

book history of their town, but also a more recent, subjective history revealing Swansea's unspoken personal side.

The Situationists' *dérive* or drift; 'locomotion without goal' was conceived in the late 1950s as a way to release the sociable and unpredictable sides of city-living normally repressed and hemmed in by capitalist structures¹. More than thirty years on, their ideas still have resonance; now more than ever we move through the city with tight schedules, fixed rendezvous; our navigation of city space generally reduced to a limited series of timesaving routes between regularly visited places – rarely do we have time to walk without fixed goal or to walk only to see what the city offers forth.

I enter the city from the east, starting a *dérive* of my own at Fabian Way/Quay Parade, where the M4 crosses the River Tawe. Car drivers queuing to enter the city, pause impatiently at the traffic lights, eager to be somewhere else.

1. Guy Debord, 'Theory Of The *Dérive*',
Internationale Situationniste, No. 2, December 1958



Looking toward the docks and westwards across the city, I can make out smart dockside apartments, warehouses, superstores, commercial office towers – the cleaned-up horizon of a city based on leisure and service industry; not the fiery, black furnace skies Victorian Swansea dwellers would have learnt to live with. Tawe Bridge makes a good vantage point to consider Swansea, a place of hard contrasts; Dylan Thomas's 'Ugly Lovely'² town, a cosmopolitan maritime centre where industry and commerce have always rubbed shoulders with stretches of beautiful, untouched coastline.

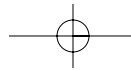
As my thoughts drift across Swansea's horizon, for just a short while I feel the presence of a small boy, sculpted Donatello-thin, a ghost white shadow perched on one of the piers of the long-defunct railway bridge across the river. Beside him on a second column is strewn a line of cheerful red bunting – the remnants of yesterday's party, left abandoned. The boy doesn't notice me, solitary and forlorn he remains motionless, head downcast, slumped

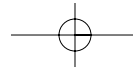
like one of Dylan Thomas's ragged boyhood characters struggling to grow up and fit in against a backdrop of social decline and change. Just as lost in the Swansea of today, perched upstream from Sainsbury's superstore with the crowded dual carriageway at his back, the boy looks ready to jump.

Swansea's identity, like that of any city, is formed as strongly by fiction and fantasy as it is by historical and socio-political events. Deciding not to dwell on the boy's despair, my drift carries me along the Tawe to The Dylan Thomas Centre, where I hope Thomas could supply an answer to the boy's desolation – or at least provide me with a good time. The notorious drinker, womaniser and genius wordsmith once said 'It is spring, moonless night in the small town, starless and bible-black, the cobblestreets silent and the hunched, courtiers'-and-rabbits' wood limping invisible down to the sloeblack, slow, black, crowblack, fishingboat-bobbing sea'³ – with a thousand remembered quotes like this, I wanted to meet him; but Enrica Borghi, an artist, an Italian woman, had beaten me to it. Her book, *Zapping in love*, integrated seamlessly with the displays in The Dylan Thomas Centre, describes through letters, diary extracts and collected memorabilia her entirely fictional – and entirely real – love affair with Swansea's literary hero. The book reveals a passionate and desperate account of their liaison against a backdrop infused with life's hedonistic pleasures – wine, sex and indescribable chocolate

2. Dylan Thomas, *Quite Early One Morning*, *Broadcasts by Dylan Thomas*, 'Reminiscences of Childhood First and Second Version', p.1. & p. 8, London, Dent, 1974.

3. Dylan Thomas, *Under Milkwood* p.1, London, Penguin, 2000.





confections, complimented by the alluring surrounds of northern Italy's cities and mountains.

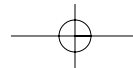
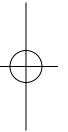
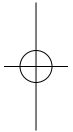
The romantic myths that surround Dylan Thomas and his lifestyle have reached such epic proportions that it is difficult to discern truth from legend. Borghi, like a folklorist in a treasure trove of stories intermingles his words and her own to create a book that brings the past into the present tense – transporting the viewer to a dream world somewhere between lived experience, socially constituted legend and memory.

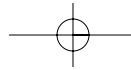
I drift to Swansea Museum where Alice Maher has invited Mnemosyne, the Greek Goddess of memory and mother of the Muses to cast her eye over Swansea's history. In the museum's main gallery space, caught in dramatic spotlights like a Joseph Wright Of Derby experiment, is a glittering white, heart-shuddering ice form; part-bed, part-sofa, part-sarcophagus but all-knowing, the sculpture hums disquietingly to itself, feint refrigerated ribs shivering beneath its icy skin. Maher's initial inspiration for the piece is a Victorian painting tucked modestly in a museum corridor, Sarah Dillwyn On Her Deathbed, a copy of which hangs in the gallery with the ice-bed. Sarah Dillwyn, the daughter of an influential Welsh landowner, scientist and MP, 'an angel made ready for heaven' is shown poised on the verge of

death, relatives gathered at her bedside to say their farewells.

Echoing and transcending its source, the ice-bed also draws contemporary viewers close to its crystal bedside, triggering contemplation on humankind's most intimate moments, from death, through sacrifice to fertility. Maher's work freezes time and memory, at once a timeless thing of beauty, a response to a particular historical moment and an enveloping sinister-white presence.

A little way from the main gallery, I am drawn by the predatory stares of Ruben, George, Luke and Joseph – four head-only portraits of bulls watching over the main staircase displayed like family ancestors on the stairwell. Inspired by a trophy head of a buffalo which hangs amidst historical portraits and phrenology heads in the museum's Victorian collection, Daphne Wright's four named bulls, coiffured for show and photographed too-close for comfort are like old friends; all-too human. In their eyes we see





ourselves; the agony of foot of mouth, BSE, technological developments in farming methods; mass-produced meat. Collectively we know the importance of agriculture to the cultural, physical and economical landscape, but these bulls, with their accusatory glares, curly forelocks and pet names, make it personal.

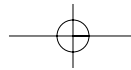
Still with Swansea's history in mind, I drift a little way south to the Maritime Quarter, once the thriving South Dock at the hub of Swansea's nineteenth century industrial success, then a decimated ghost-port, today it is an entirely revamped leisure and pleasure zone complete with modern residential properties, ships – now for recreation not commerce – and a pleasant marina promenade. The historical remnants of the seaport's former lives are available for public scrutiny within The Maritime & Industrial Museum.

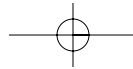
Amidst the exhibits an area is devoted to the woollen industries; previously one of the most important and widespread of Welsh industries.

With mass-production and the mechanised-weave, the machinery of nearby Neath Abbey Mill was imported into the museum to live out its remaining working days as a museum-curio. The fated mill, set to close when The Maritime & Industrial Museum becomes the National Maritime Museum of Wales, is a maze of unfathomable machines and apparatus where we can learn the traditional processes behind the humble woollen weave – fulling, willeying, carding, spinning, dyeing, weaving, winding to skein. Eager to preserve the magic of these methods, Angharad Pearce Jones has created a forty-foot blanket sculpture; a checkerboard lament of pink, blue, yellow and white that hangs high above the machinery. Heritage, like fashion, will have its changing fads, as Jones observes, but 'skill once lost is lost forever'.

Annie Lovejoy preserves traditional skills and stories differently by giving them a public voice; capturing enchanting sea tales from Fred Evans, a hardened seafarer who for some eighteen years has maintained the Helwick Lightship⁴ – once a working ship now a floating tourist exhibit anchored in front of the museum. On board, his stories reverberate through the air vents; ghost stories, shanty tales of sailors jumping ship and burning in their bunks. But the ship also holds less sinister stories, a muffled broadcast of Welsh and English voices echoes from the opposite deck recounting the Helwick's system for logging weather – from B for unbothered blue skies (awyr las) to Z for hazy (tes).

4. Light Vessel No: 91 "Helwick" built 1937, acquired by Swansea Maritime and Industrial Museum 1977.





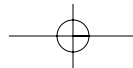
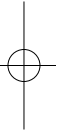
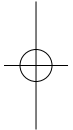
One voice sounds clearly, 'I can't see anymore' the weather is thickening. I hide below deck in the radio room, where I am for once comforted by communication; the radio voices of Swansea Amateur Radio Society exchanging weather and navigational information with people on lightships and lighthouses world-wide.

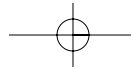
I leave ship for shore, drifting to Swansea Beach, where Sergio Leone, the father of the spaghetti western is waiting for me, silhouetted against the poetic sweeping backdrop of Swansea Bay -- he looks me straight in the eye. We start politely, discussing his movies, gunfighters, men without names, fistfuls of dollars. He spins short stories into long sprawling epics of great beauty, stories without endings of lost dreams and loves, of Western Civilisation's technological dreams gone bust, death by progress. I wanted to ask him how he thought we should go on from here, what he made of Swansea's post-industrial world, but by then he had gone.

In his wake, the wind whistles spectral patterns in the sand and a tiny boy runs across the beach beneath two giant inflatable cactuses. Harmonica-heavy music provides a fitting backdrop for the weird coastal inflatables -- the nostalgic and eerie soundtrack from Leone's classic spaghetti western *Once Upon A Time In The*

West. An army of men clad in clinical white bodysuits, each carrying a metal detector, file onto the beach with foreboding nonchalance. Resembling forensic scientists or moonwalkers from a futuristic age, clad in radioactive body gear to scan our era for signs of life, they search, stop to dig, chat, cluster in groups or wander off to the sea's horizon to follow a solitary metal trail. Bemused passers-by join primed art goers to watch the slow, languid brilliance of Davide Bertocchi's performance unfold. Although they don't know it yet, the suited researchers -- actually members of Swansea's local metal detecting club -- will find twelve metal letters forming a message from the past *ARE YOU READY?* -- the world's first ever radio message which was transmitted from the Welsh coast by Guglielmo Marconi in 1897.

How could Marconi have imagined the communication explosion that was to evolve from his innocent broadcast? How could early Swansea industrialists have envisaged the pace of change and the devastating effects that





would ensue from their nascent copper smelting? Crucially, sitting on the beach, watching the waves, watching future, past and present merge, how can we prepare for the consequences of our own contemporary actions – where will our plastic throwaway, shopping mad, entertainment world ever end? Whatever unimaginable fate awaits us, a message for Marconi: NO, NOT NEARLY.

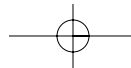
I drift along the beach to Swansea Observatory; a domed tower-hideaway on the shoreline, purpose-built for the study of space, time, motion and other exquisitely mind-blowing matters. Einstein greets me at the door, guiding me through Swansea Astrological Society's scale model of the solar system to one of the building's external balconies. Dropping a stone over the balcony's edge, he asks me to imagine we are in the carriage of a fast moving train. Here in the carriage we watch as the stone falls in a straight trajectory – yet an observer at the trackside would observe the stone fall in a sweeping parabola on account of the train's

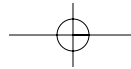
movement. He goes on at length, explaining how motion is always relative to the position and movement of the body measuring it, how it is that moving clocks run slow, light bends, distances change their length.

Inside the observatory, amidst a maze of cosmological gadgetry Grace Weir plays out her own experiments with time and space, destabilising a few further scientific and mathematic 'truths' using video. Just as much part of our experience of her projects are the astronomers themselves; several of whom delight in taking people around and telling visitors facts about black holes, big-bang theory and man's utter, incomprehensible insignificance in galactic terms.

In the astronomers' dark room Distance AB, based on a text in Einstein's *Relativity The Special and General Theory*⁵, gives visual form to Einstein's theory of place specification. A man lies flat on his back beneath a cloud in Potsdamer Platz, Berlin, raising a measuring rod perpendicularly above him to the edge of the cloud, he manages to ascertain the precise distance of the cloud from the earth's surface. Completely impossible and entirely ridiculous, but with profound implications, Weir simultaneously gives visual solidity to Einstein's theory and reminds us of the fictive possibilities of film.

5. Albert Einstein, *Relativity The Special And The General Theory*, trans. Robert W. Lawson, London and New York, Routledge, 2002 (first published 1916).





Climbing higher into the observatory, Weir invites us not to fictionalise but to rotate truth, disrupting our usual spatial orientation in *The Clearing*, a video that draws us into a 360° circle cutting vertically through the horizon line. Perhaps this is what infinity really feels like, a tight perpetual circle through sky and sea.

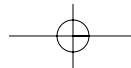
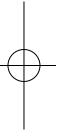
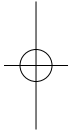
In the dome of the observatory a third video *The Darkness and the Light* makes humankind's struggle to explain the inexplicable tangible. One element of the film shows an astrophysicist attempting to explain the composition of matter with paper and scissors. He makes a cut into the paper at the half way point, then another at the quarter point, then at the eighth, after 31 cuts he explains, we are at the billionth mark and are splitting atoms. He continues, albeit with some frustration through electrons, quarks, to inconceivably tiny entities of matter, 'strings', probing the fundamental composition of our world beyond the knowable and provable and long beyond the point where practical demonstration for his conceptual system would be possible, even with the most powerful particle accelerator.

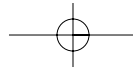
As I drift west along the beach, the complex equations and numerical explanations swim around in my head, but of course there is no answer, no 'truth' is really possible. There is no direct

experimental evidence that such things as 'strings' actually exist, apparently nobody has ever actually found a black hole, you can't catch a sunspot any more than a star, these are the inventions of astrophysicists, imagined to give sensible explanation for other phenomena.

My westerly beach-drift comes to an end and I turn back city-ward crossing Oystermouth Road to join St Helens Road. Here stands Swansea's neo-classical Guildhall, an austere and foreboding presence configured in clean geometrical lines with scant exterior decoration.

The building's privileged interior; home to Swansea's decision makers of past and present – ordinarily something of an unknown universe in its own right – is today open to members of the public courtesy of *Passage*, a new video work by Anthony Shapland. Our movie unfolds without action, a thriller without thrills, comprising only the poignant inter-scenes between narrative and dramatic effect. Filmed both in Swansea's clattering market hall and in



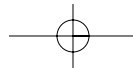


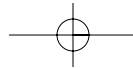
the interstices of the Guildhall itself, despite the disparate functions of the two spaces, the ordinary actions of people going around their daily lives have a close correspondence. Early morning cleaners mop down floors, wipe down tables; setting up stall for the day, the Guildhall is hoovered and polished ready for business. We pan slowly through corridors, past empty chairs, we hear footsteps in corridors, the background hum of voices, doors opening and closing – nothing special – happens – and yet, invariably visitors entering to watch the film lower their voices, affording the thickly carpeted space of the council chamber the same reverence they might a lofty cathedral. Sanctified by the lavish surrounds, life's mundane details take on heightened significance and correspondingly, as viewers we gain a sense that our own status too has somehow been elevated. Borrowing the ornate leathered interior as a cinema for a while, we sit amidst the ghosts of councillors behind personally initialled desks with individual microphones, ready to cast judgement on

matters of great import. Without Shapland's reminder of the minor daily-drab particulars of everyday life, it is easy to imagine how we might miss important details in our decision-making.

I am nearly home, I drift up 'long St Helen's Road'⁶ and along The Kingsway, peckish from my long shore drift, I enthusiastically accept the offer of a chocolate love spoon proffered by a passer-by. As I nibble the elaborately carved handle of my sweet-treat, I reflect on the deep-seated custom of spoon giving and its significance to Wales. Traditionally devised as a heartfelt gesture of amorous intention, symbol of love and gift of commemoration, in our commercially driven world the love spoon's standing has slipped to something more like tourist gimmick than serious token of love. Styling an effective metaphor for this shift, Catriona Stanton casts endless love tokens in the contemporary world's best-loved quick-fix comfort food distributing them freely on Swansea's bustling streets. This is not as easy as it sounds, as Stanton discovered – the intricate design of the love spoon does not lend itself as readily to casting processes as does the ergonomic chocolate bar shape we are more accustomed to. As testimony to this, a pile of broken chocolate remnants are displayed like precious archaeological artefacts in the entrance foyer of Swansea's Central Library. Gathered in their cabinets in one of the city's most widely visited spaces, these imperfect chocolate rejects provide the perfect epitaph for the love

6. As Dylan Thomas referred to it, quoted in James.A. Davies, Dylan Thomas's Swansea, Gower and Laugharne p.65, Cardiff, University of Wales, 2000.





spoon's mass-produced fate in the hands of the tourist industry.

By now it is dark and I turn my drift toward the bright lights of the city's commercial centre where the evening's bars and clubs are warming up for their regular Saturday night carnival. At the top of Castle Street I am pulled abruptly from the escalating mêlée, once again finding myself back with the River Tawe and with Swansea's industrial past. Projected onto one of the rain-smearing shop fronts, the street's neon merges with an image of ebbing waters and the soothing sounds of a harpist playing from the riverbank. The lively conversation and traffic on the street is infiltrated by voices from Swansea's past; 'You know our names; Morris, Mackworth...Villiers, Vivian, Dilwyn, Grenfell...' As the faces of Swansea's industrial heroes fade we are left with the Tawe itself.

Once a beautiful oak-lined valley with clear flowing waters, the onslaught of industry left the lower Swansea valley brutally devastated, transformed into slag-heap wasteland where not even weeds would grow; the largest area of industrial dereliction in Britain. After more than three decades of restoration and reclamation work, the valley has been resuscitated and is once again a place of green beauty.

Not quite believing it, I book a seat on Annie Lovejoy's boat trip to see for myself. Leaving the Maritime City, we drift beneath the Tawe Bridge where my journey began. The boat floats upstream passing riverbanks which really are green, kingfishers and herons flying above. Along the route however, the scars of industry are still clearly visible, as are the scars of our own era – plastic bottles, trolley skeletons, the rusted shells of burnt-out cars.

Our journey pauses for thought alongside the deserted Vivian and Son's engine shed where harpist Nia Jenkins dressed in glittering blue serenades us from the riverbank. We survey the romantic scene; simultaneously soaking in the very present beauty of the harp music, the valley's industrial past, its restoration and reflecting on the city's future we have yet to create.





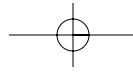
IWAN BALA
Cernunnos.
The Horned One.
History Truly Imagined



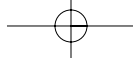
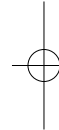
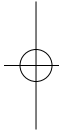
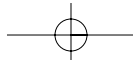


PHILIP NAPIER
Dead Again





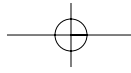
ROSE FRAIN
Brighter Than The Stars



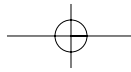
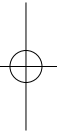


TINA O'CONNELL
Untitled





DAVID HASTIE
Untitled

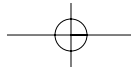






DAVIDE BERTOCCHI
Are You Ready? (Once Upon a Time in the West)





TIM DAVIES
Blue Funk II





ANGHARAD PEARCE JONES

Fashion forever goes round and round;
skill once lost is lost forever





LOIS WILLIAMS
IV
A different kind of light



BENOIT SIRE
Untitled



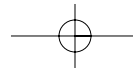
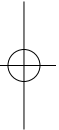
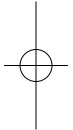
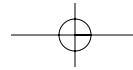


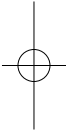
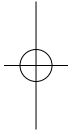
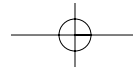
CRAIG WOOD
Leeds to Carmarthen returned



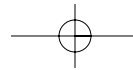


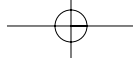
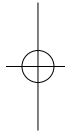
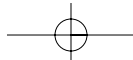
CRAIG WOOD
27 Seconds of Silence





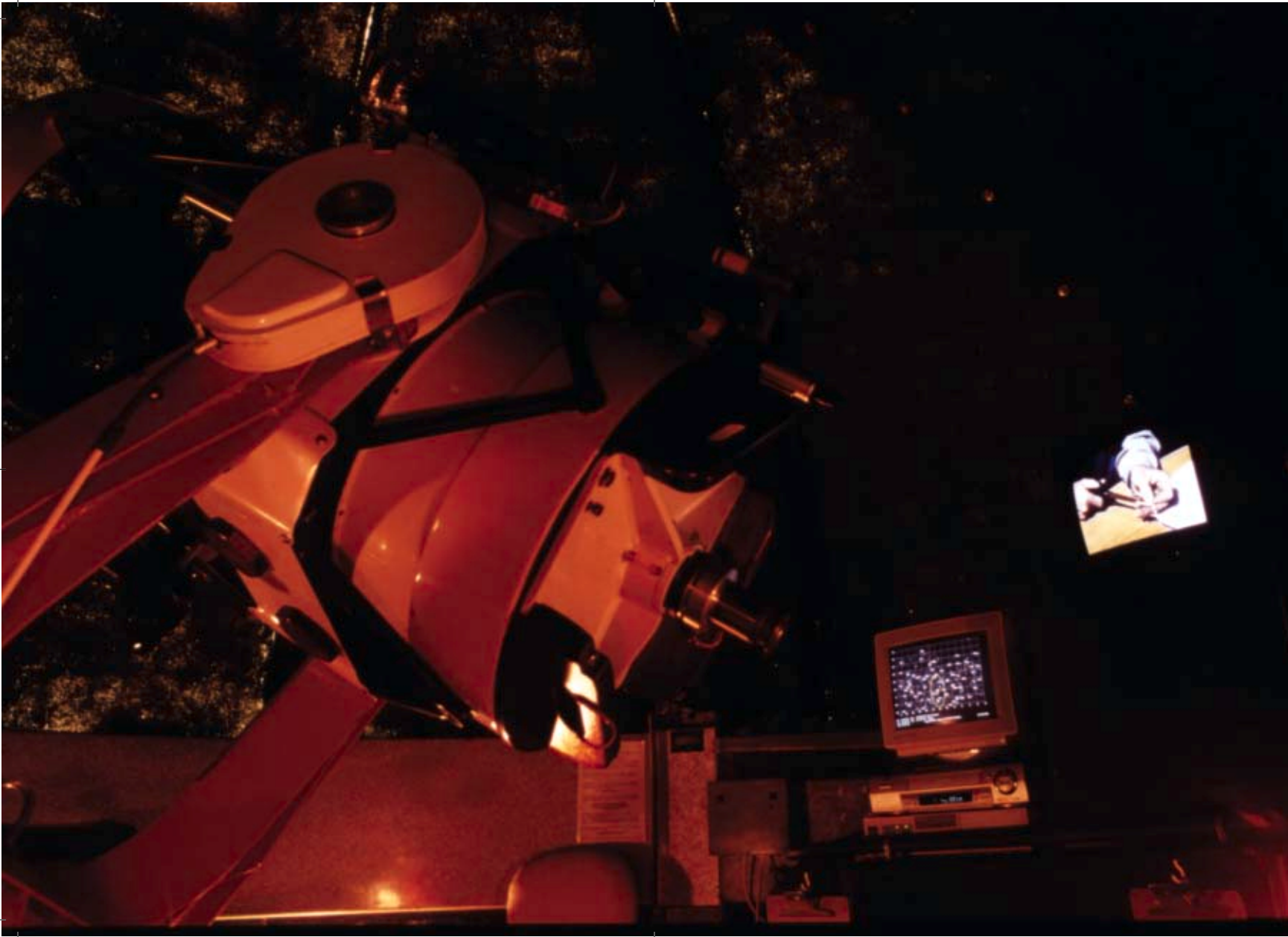
ANNIE LOVEJOY
Reverberations

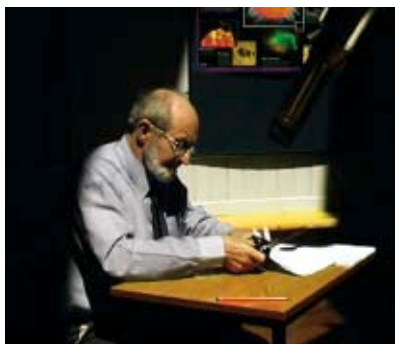
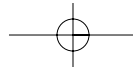




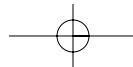
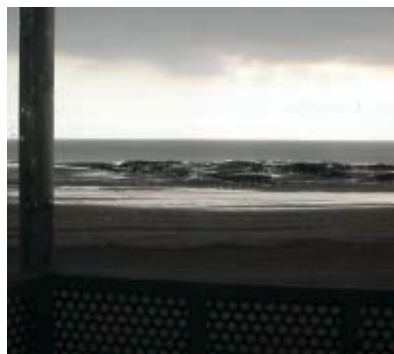


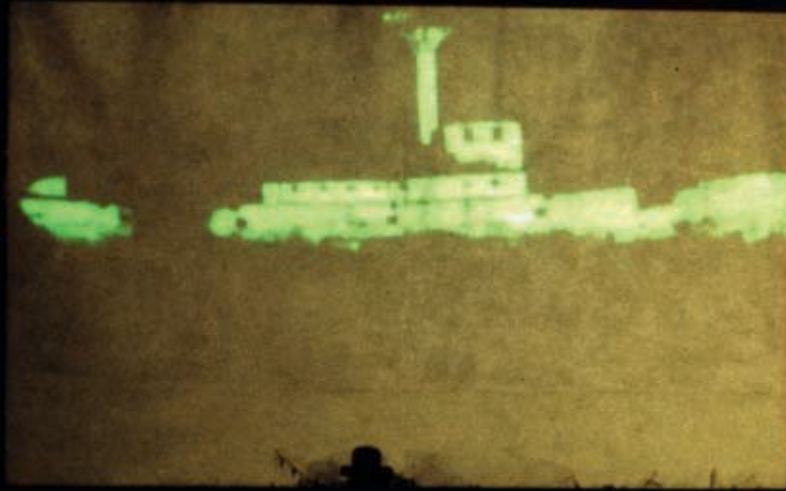
HUGHES GERMAIN
Locks Gate



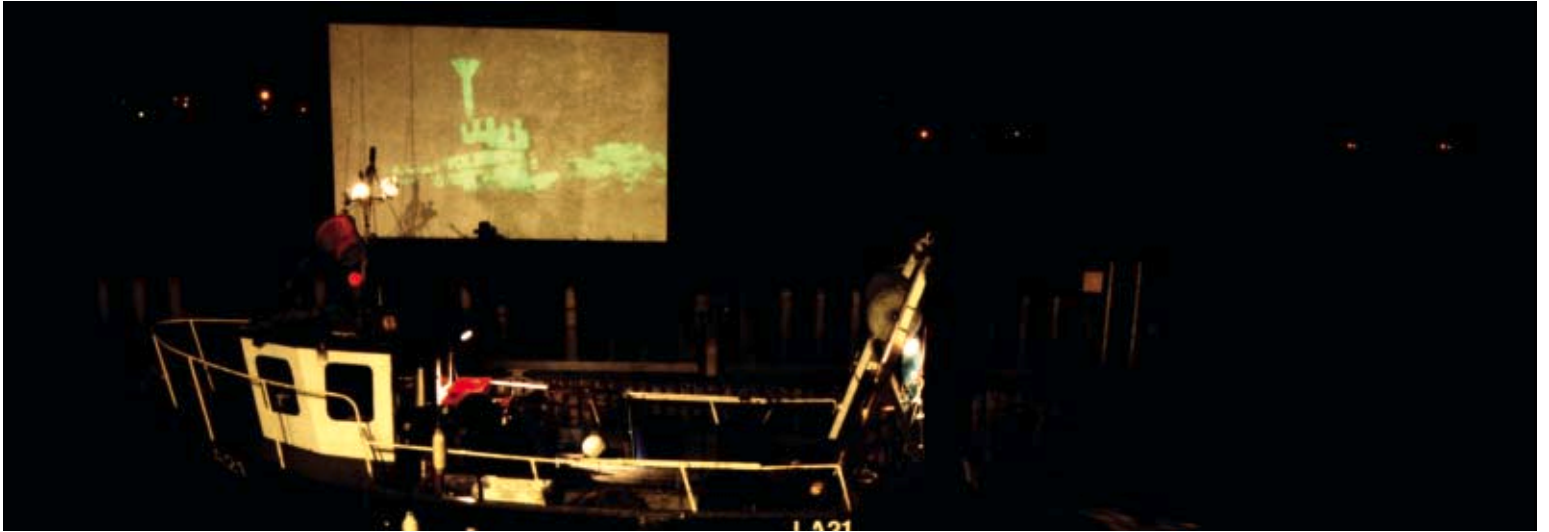


GRACE WEIR
The darkness and the light
Distance AB
The clearing





RIVER TAY



DOROTHY CROSS
Ghost Ship



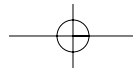
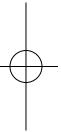
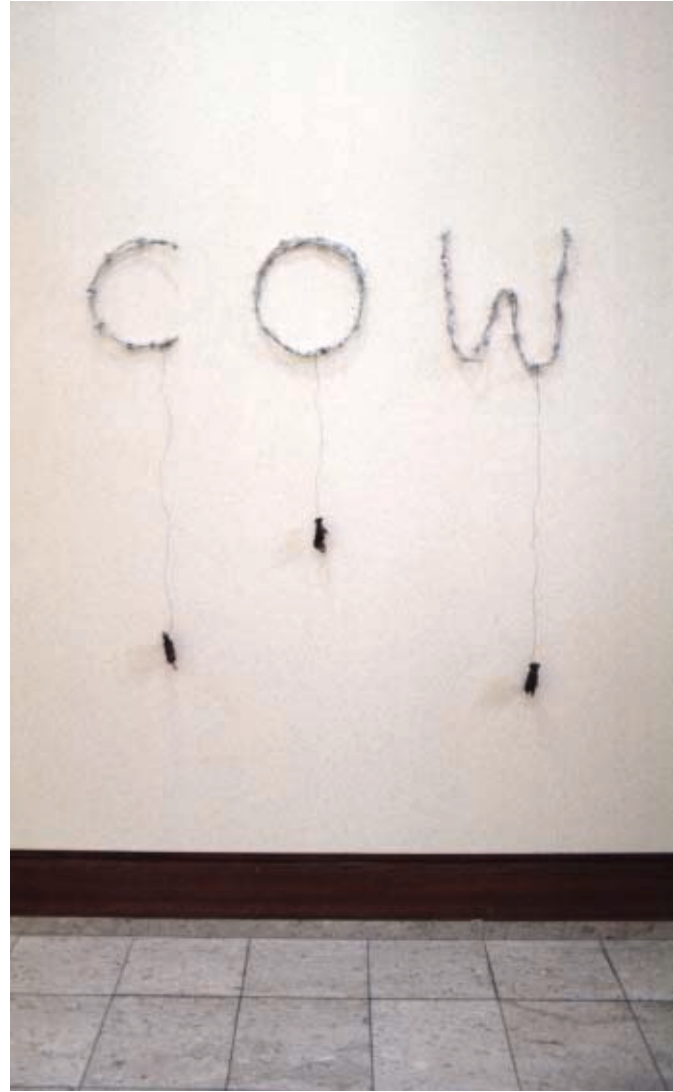
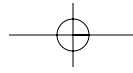


ERIC ANGELS
Untitled





ENRICA BORGHI
An Artist's Private Diary





PETER FINNEMORE

The Shed

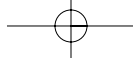
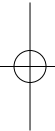
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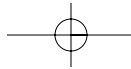
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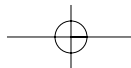
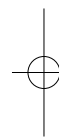
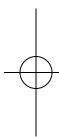


BRIGITTE JURACK
Junge mit Jacke





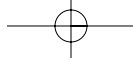
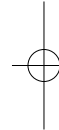
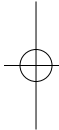
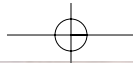
TIM DAVIES
Blue Funk I





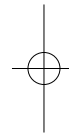


ANNIE LOVEJOY
Up The River Tawe





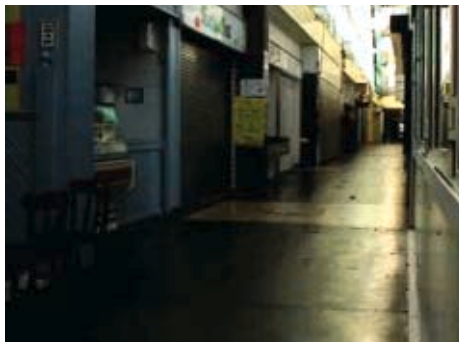
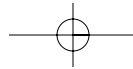
MAUD COTTER
Of Things Gathered and Things Missing



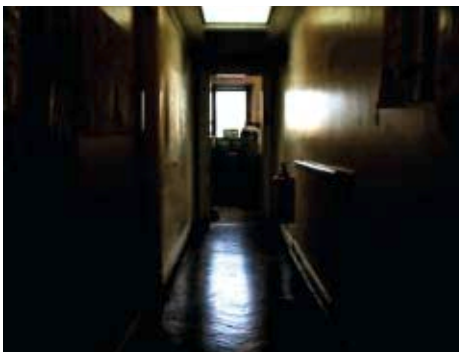


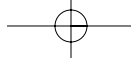
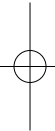
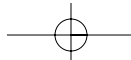
CATRIONA STANTON
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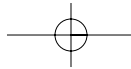




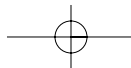
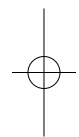
ANTHONY SHAPLAND
Passage







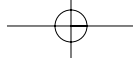
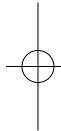
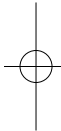
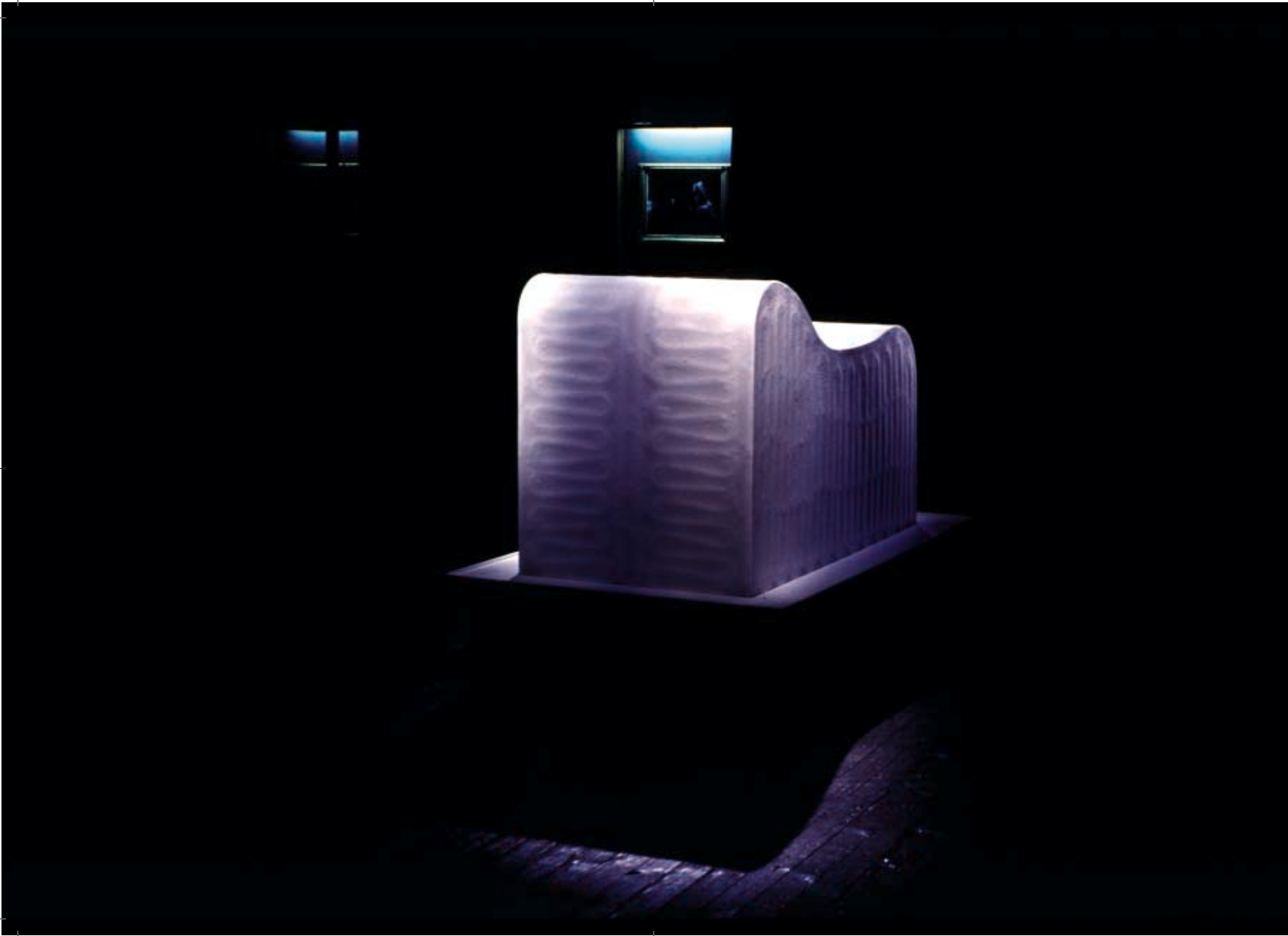
KAREN INGHAM
Untitled

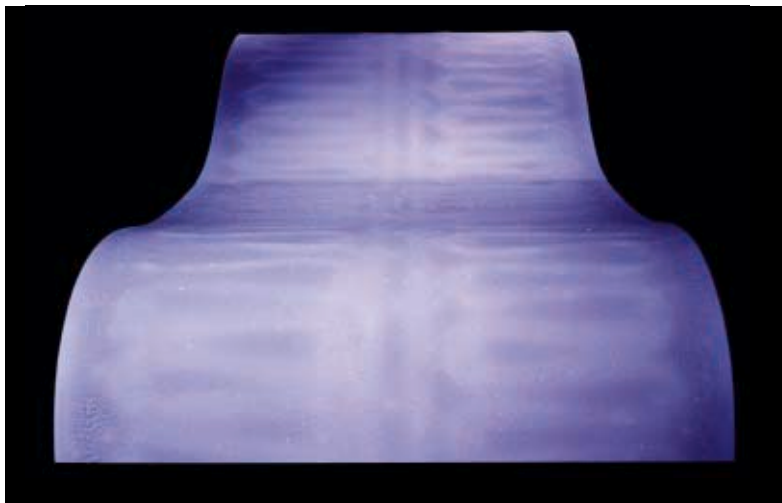




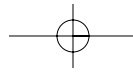
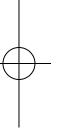
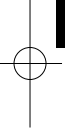
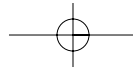


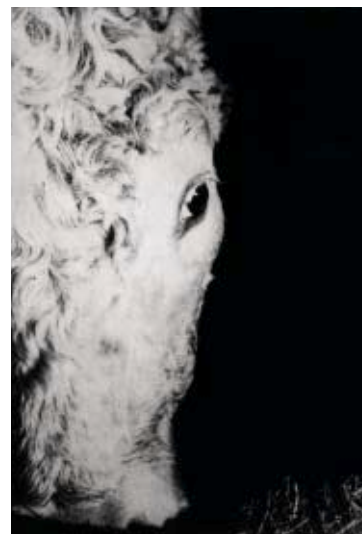
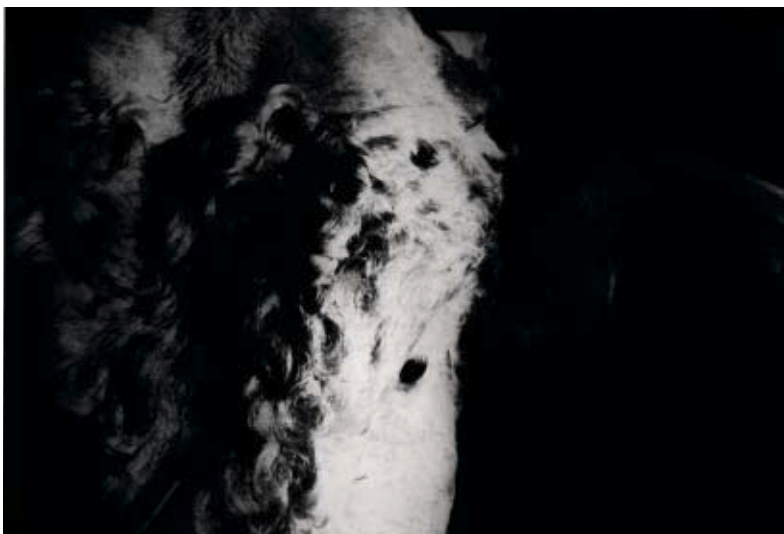
DAVIDE BERTOCCHI
Are You Ready? (Once Upon a Time in the West)





ALICE MAHER
Mnemosyne



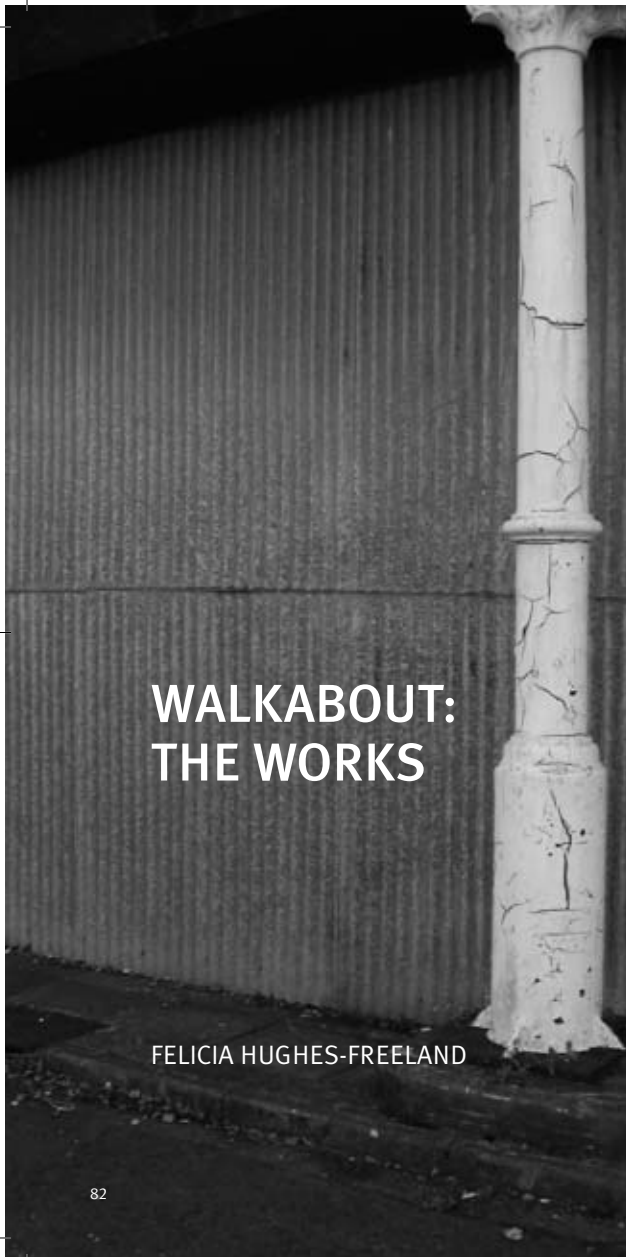
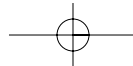


DAPHNE WRIGHT
The Bulls
George, Rubin, Luke, Joe





PAUL & PAULA
The Drifting Document



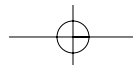
WALKABOUT: THE WORKS

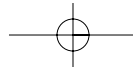
FELICIA HUGHES-FREELAND

NIGHT TIME

On the face of it, there are two ways for the public to experience the Locws works: to come upon them accidentally, or to pursue them deliberately, with the aid of a map obtained from the Swansea Museum. But there are a number of constraints on accidental discovery. Many of the works are temporal; switched on at particular times, they can only be seen for particular durations. They are time specific as well as site specific.

Three works are strictly nocturnal, so the first journey takes place after dark. Waiting near the barrage, watching the last fishermen come ashore and people walking their dogs, silent cars crossing the Tawe in the distance, a screen suddenly lights up. So this is what Locws International is about. A video projector is perched precariously on the balcony of the Pilot's House. On the screen, mounted on a pier, set against the sea and Kilvey Hill's red tipped television mast, manifests the image of a ship. A green ship, luminous, bobbing up and down, coming in and out of focus. With eyes half-closed and some imagination, the ship is there on the water beyond the barrage wall. In reality what we see is Ghost Ship as both appearance and concept, the merest trace of a former being. In 1999 Dorothy Cross had painted the light vessel moored at Dublin, sister ship to Swansea's own Helwick, with fluorescent paint. Having bombarded the paint with light to activate it, she filmed the resulting





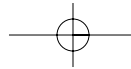
apparition while Dubliners enjoyed the magic of the ship glowing in the dark. Visitors to Swansea barrage could enjoy the ghost of that event on the five occasions when the video was screened, the image of the ghostly ship joining in the normal barrage nightscape, enhanced by the sound of the sea, halliards, wind, sluicing waters of the Tawe, and warning calls – wee-ouh wee-ouh wee-ouh wee-ouh – as the Swansea-Cork Ferry prepared to set sail. By the time the looped images have played for an hour, the ferry is gone and darkness doubly restored to the barrage. The ghost ship heightened your senses to everything around you – a recurrent feature of the Locws International walkabout.

Travelling back from the barrage at the margins of the city to the centre there is moonlight on the ground of the car park behind the Leisure Centre – but no moon. Without my guide, I can't understand why. Standing on the nearby bank, it is possible to read a set of three projections of rail tracks which emerge almost hologrammically from the ground. The dialogue between this image and the site is simple but unobvious except to those familiar with Swansea's past: David Hastie's Untitled tracks sit on the site of former railway sidings and Victoria Station. Rail tracks evoke journeys remembered. Tracks carry us on journeys towards an unknown future, but in those journeys are also implied losses¹. Hastie's projection triggered a number of

associations, contributing to a poetic of loss/ memory which resides in a simple image of everyday technology of transport.

Hastie's site is hidden, the art moment so subtle as to be almost secret, but even in a maximally public site, installations are not immediately visible or necessarily difficult to experience and understand. Everyone in Swansea is familiar with its castle, a permanent fixture of the city centre and backdrop to the recently landscaped Castle Square. Floodlit at night, not everybody notices that during September 2000 the castle turns blue. It also regains its interior, illuminated in heraldic violet, luridly and gorgeously Gothic. This simple adjustment of Swansea's heritage landscape transforms a two-dimensional backdrop to the busy or playful traversing of normal life across Castle Square to a place solid with a sense of its own past: inhabited interior, site of defence, site of oppression. Romanticised by the lightscape into pageantry, the gorgeous royal purple also echo the tones of shed blood.

1. For example, Tim Davies used an image of the fateful tracks at Auschwitz as part of his installation for the performance of Oliver Messiaen's 'Quartet for the End of Time' at Prime Colours, a concert held at All Saints Church in Oystermouth during the 1999 Swansea Festival.



But metaphors aside, for a month Swansea Castle is a shell no more, restored by Davies' art to interiority and history, in an act of intimate immensity.²

This nocturnal piece, Blue Funk I, revealing in a fresh way the material memory of Swansea's history of defence, has a counterpart. In Blue Funk II, Davies explores aggression by draping in cobalt blue organza the massive 40 m.m. Bofors gun in the Swansea Maritime and Industrial Museum. (The direct counter point to the castle is the gun by the bridge across the Tawe as you enter the city, but there were civic objections to calling into question the function of guns in so public and monumental a place.) The two very different sites both refer to the processes of war in human history, by processes of veiling – in blue light and blue cloth respectively. Veiling is formally related to the wrapping made monumentally famous by Christo, and wrapping has an important social and cultural function, revealing as much as it conceals³. Davies' art illuminates this insight,

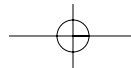
going beyond site specificity into universal processes of both human creativity and destruction. If the act of embellishing or decorating a pre-existent object seems like postmodern irony, the messages carried by these site-specific performances are themselves more than irony.

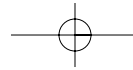
WALK ON THE BRIGHT SIDE

Three sites are only alive at night, so people intent on experiencing Locws International are compelled to make more than one outing. This is art that takes time and effort, that impinges into the visitor's daily routine just as it impinges on the city's spaces, more than formal visits to an art gallery ever do. It is not the sort of art 'event' which became popular in the 1960s, a one off spectacle for a shared audience, reinvented in Fourth Wall, when artists and film makers projected their works onto an outside wall at the National Theatre at London's South Bank on Thursdays and Saturdays during May 1999. Although spectacle is certainly a feature of many of the works – Ghost Ship, Blue Funk I, and also Brighter than the Stars – Locws International is not a show presented to a unified audience but a personal process of discovery. I suggested earlier that this process can be understood more generally as a social process, rather than a categorically art-experiencing process. The process in this case is a perceptual journey in a landscape, a walk around Swansea which is both time travel and self-discovery. Environmentally, Locws

2. G. Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space*, translated by M. Jolas, Boston, Beacon Press, 1964, pp 183 ff.

3. See anthropologist Joy Hendry's *Wrapping Culture: Politeness, Presentation and Power in Japan and Other Societies*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1993.





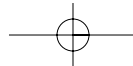
International brings art into the landscape which is revealed anew through the process of re-visioning it through artistic interventions; but it also makes it possible to understand how the boundaries between in and out, between special ritualised time and space and the undiscriminated tedium of everyday routines need not inevitably be so separated, so ultimate⁴. The relationship between walking and memory reiterates the theme of many works in this project, works which are 'acts of remembrancing', a phrase Bala uses of Tim Davies' work, *Capel Celyn*⁵. The centrality of this theme is a reminder that Locws International is building on well-established certain Welsh artists' concerns with history, memory and identity.

The daytime sites extend from Swansea Central Library to the south side of the Marina. Working south, I begin at the Library where a room has been given over to Maud Cotter's *Of Things Gathered and Things Missing*. This is one of the most cerebral of the sites, in both content and location. Cotter refers to the organisation of the natural world through scientific classifications which allow its manifold elements to be categorised, labelled, and contained. But while Cotter uses the packaging of scientific enquiry/scientific presentation of knowledge in her work, what is displayed is far from clear-cut and controlled. The objects challenge the boundaries between nature and technology; the

forms are unsettling, ambiguous in their resemblance which is confused between organism and ornament, animal and adornment. The classic triad of animal-vegetable-mineral is taken apart in this exploration of the worlds of things which the title suggests is the result of Cotter's interaction with the world of things. The encounter of the personal consciousness and the material world produces forms which are neither natural nor unnatural, but ideas in things (to coin William Carlos Williams' resonant phrase). Cotter's idea is Swansea-specific: one case contains objects in metal and forms associated with metallurgy; another develops her previous use of corrugated cardboard forms. Juxtaposed with the tall card form which looks as if it has grown organically is a breeze block found during her own walk about in Swansea, cast in lead, reiterating the metallurgic theme; cardboard also provides the base layer for each case. Another case contains objects in wax; another a beehive with a dish of mercury and some straw; and another two jars with elusive contents: is it coral? is it bone and

4. F. Hughes-Freeland (ed.) 1988 *Ritual, Performance, Media*, Routledge: London; and see polarities in Hirsch 1995, discussed in 'Art across a city'.

5. I. Bala (ed.) 1999 *Certain Welsh Artists: Custodial Aesthetics in Contemporary Welsh Art*, Bridgend, Seren, p. 22.

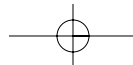


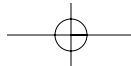
coral? is it a root? The case with the two jars focuses the questions raised by the whole installation of how our assumptions about the classifications of natural objects become unsettled through the reconstruction of natural forms in different media. Cotter reverses the processes of metallurgy which transforms natural resources into technological ones, by returning technologically processed materials and forms to a post-natural condition.

The meeting of transformation through technology and natural process is also the subject of Tina O'Connell's Untitled. Rather than making material allusions to Swansea's industrial past, O'Connell's work is formally site specific: 220 High Street has been formally refurbished to resemble the minimalist chic of a Tribeca style gallery in New York City. Looking through the window you see on the stylish grey carpet two large blobs, one white, one black. On the wall near the front window is a sequence of Polaroid photographs. The blobs have begun as cubes of bitumen polymer; the

Polaroids represent their daily decay, recorded non-stop for the first three weeks on video. Watching the cubes decay is both intriguing and mystifying. The persistent public assumption that art represents something resists the very deconstruction which O'Connell's art explores, going beyond representation and modernism to reveal what is possible after the formal containment of the cube: a pure, material, post modernism. Set in a reconstituted space in a High Street whose decay has been the subject of much civic debate and anger, these decaying forms also implicate processes in the actual urban landscape, as well as exploring abstract aesthetic principles.

We move from the High Street to the Dylan Thomas Centre (Ty Llen) chosen by two artists as a fitting site for their statements. Welsh artist Peter Finnemore presents a number of pieces which in their different ways celebrate the work of Dylan Thomas and the meaning of his life for South Wales. Shed is a shed located so we can also see Thomas's own writing shed in the permanent exhibition; the exhibition notes tell us that 'the space within the shed becomes a metaphor for the creative mind' including those of Wittgenstein and Mahler, identified by Finnemore as shed users. Finnemore's creative mind is playful, and he hangs his shed with plastic cows from a farm animals set. These cows are the leitmotif in works shown along the corridor walls of the Centre. The Passion No. 1 is spelt out in cows; The Passion No. 2 consists of three cows hanging; Genetic Blob is a



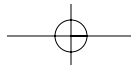
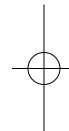
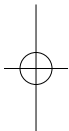


herd of cows. Finnemore's play conceals seriousness. Welsh farming is in crisis, decimated by BSE - and since the first Locws event, foot and mouth -- and political ineptitude. Plastic cows may seem silly but they contain and express the passion of an artist who has also used sheds as burning material to speak of Welsh problems. Finnemore has produced a visually idiosyncratic but emotionally sensitive tribute/site/homage/offering to Dylan Thomas and to Wales.

Initial randomness is also apparent in Eric Angels' Untitled video installation, but unlike Finnemore's work, this reveals no immediately obvious underlying coherence or political stance. Instead Angels gives us a flow of interwoven dissolving images, which break down conventional narratives and also conventional viewing. Not one but three monitors shelved amid the idiosyncratic piles of books in this most excellent bookshop show tapes of collages of extensively processed and deconstructed images ranging from Asian rice fields to Dylan Thomas memorabilia: letters, manuscripts, bills filmed by Angels on his preliminary visit to Swansea from Paris. So numerous, rapid and overlaid are the images that their potential associations seem unlimited, unleashed on the viewer who moves between the screens in an attempt to divine a connection between the three tapes as well as seeking out a narrative theme within one

sequence. For me, the installation makes sense in relation to the bookshop, which also contains more information and images than anyone can process in one visit. Angels' installation requires a balance of tactic and distance, not a sustained viewing. Tactic produces a gaze, distance provides the medium for choosing to take that focus, on that screen, at this moment.

Four artists have chosen Swansea Museum, reminding us what a heterogeneous and multiply meaningful space such a museum is. Like bookshops, museums contain an abundance of information, but the artists here are controlled and deliberate in their use of the site, although varying in the scale of their responses. Rose Frain uses a large room used for temporary exhibitions on the ground floor for her Brighter than the Stars, one of Locws's more spectacular sites. She creates immensity in the room by leaving it empty, and generates a sense of mystery with pink neon strip lights set in each wall-case and taped music of Adelina Patti's recording of Tosti and Lotti and



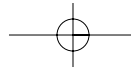
the Morrision Orpheus and Treorchy male voice choirs. Every wall-case contains pieces of black diamond anthracite. The images are repetitive and atemporal, but are cut across by the narrative of the music. The two strands are brought together in an image, set like a decentred altarpiece to the top of the room: a photograph of a family: father, mother and child. This Italian family represents an association with the Italian-born opera singer with whom Frain identifies, having come to Swansea after a period of study in Rome. The Italian connection is the clue to the meaning of the title, explained in her exhibition notes as a phrase by the poet Horace which Frain interprets as the richness of a culture composed of different elements. Frain's multi-media installation combines nostalgia and technology and, at the heart of the Locws International project, the theme of journeying: her journey to Swansea to create an art work and the journeys of so many which have created Swansea, product of processes of migration, mining and music-making.

Iwan Bala uses a room to explore history, but his work is inserted into a room which is already full. Cernnunos: The Horned One. History Truly Imagined is interwoven around the Museum's miscellany of stuffed animals, reconstructed Welsh kitchen, and engravings of Singleton Abbey. Male and female ritual figures – statuettes of Santes Mariona, the Welsh Lady; drawings of Derfel Gadarn, Santes Dwynwen, and horses – are connected by pieces of string. These are playful interventions in the pre-existent history room but they seriously add a Celtic strand, mythologies founded on male and female fertility, the other older parallel history of Wales. Bala cannot resist inserting one of his paintings into the Welsh kitchen, creating an echo with his Field Notes (Dresser), part of his one-man show in the Glynn Vivian Gallery, Offerings and Reinventions running at the same time as Locws International, also with the Mariona image as a dominant image⁶. Around Field Notes runs the inscription: 'Perhaps there's no return for anyone to a native land, only field-notes for it's reinvention', providing further resonance to the gist of History Truly Imagined. Bala notes that this quotation is taken from the writings of James Clifford, anthropologist and latterly cultural critic⁷.

The range of pieces in Locws International are astonishingly varied in their visibility. The landscape they enter and recreate is not necessarily on the monumental sculptural scale of traditional public

6. Works by Davies, Finmore, Hastie and Williams were also included in a second show, Certain Welsh Artists curated by Bala in the same gallery. There are useful discussions in the publication associated with the show, Bala (ed.) op. cit.

7. I. Bala, Offerings and Reinventions, 2000, Bridgend, Seren, p. 77.

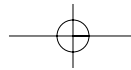


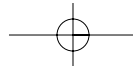
landscape sculpture. This is demonstrated by the work of Welsh artist Lois Williams in the Museum. A Different Kind of Light consists of four string forms displayed in the same kind of case as Maud Cotter (above), creating an unobtrusive parallel display to others in the permanent exhibition. In Williams' distinctive work sculpture meets textiles – their technology and their products. Wool is the material used in her other pieces, hung over the mechanical looms which form part of the permanent exhibition in the Swansea Maritime and Industrial Museum (which, to my shame, I am visiting for the first time). Like the piece in the Museum, they barely intrude, becoming part of the exhibition where they have been displayed – and yet they are not simply the fruits of the loom, but remind us instead of the original fleeces from which the wool has come, backed onto cloth. This approach is typical of Williams' discovery through 'the mingling of memory and the manipulation of material'⁸.

A close connection between the work and the technological setting also characterises Benoit Sire's Untitled. This floor piece is a geometric design made up of squares and triangles of wool, coal, salt, sand on which have been laid found objects such as bits of brick. Of particular interest to his involvement in Swansea is the salt. A Breton artist, he discovered during his research for Locws that salt had been exported from Brittany to Swansea in

mediaeval times, a connection which motivated the final work. To my mind the most effective part of his installation was a collection of objects casually set next to the Museum's large blue alternator from Swansea's power station: a simple assembly of sacks, shovel and salt. Simple, but telling. Unusually for Locws, Sire's work is awkwardly situated, and a number of visitors, somewhat wilfully, step on it. Williams' works by contrast slip into the site so subtly that it is easy to miss them, but even more invisible at first sight are Craig Wood's contributions. These are especially hard to chance upon. His Painted Feather painting is set next to the Maritime and Industrial Museum's permanent collection of feather paintings, and framed in the same style. Only a very sharp eye will notice that the painting of a rail ticket from Carmarthen to Leeds is not from the usual repertoire of images sent by sailors to their loved ones on the fragile medium of a bird's feather. The image comments on the sailors' art while at the same time sharing the material used in their tradition. It speaks also of

8. Williams quoted in Bala's interview, in Bala (ed.) 1999, p. 135.





journeys, particularly Wood's journeys to Carmarthen from Leeds where he has been holding a Henry Moore Fellowship.

To see Wood's other work I have to ask at the museum desk to gain access to the Helwick Light Vessel. Only someone intimately familiar with the ship and its very particular system of wall signs is able to read Wood's installation as an intervention in the normal signscape of the ship. Wood copies as closely as possible the materials (plastic, and in one case brass), proportions, and fonts of the signs in the ship. Even the screws used to attach the signs to the walls are the same: but in order not to leave damaging traces on the ship's fabric, Wood has sawn off the screws behind the signs which have then been attached to the walls with blue tack. These details, and details of the significance of the signs need to be mediated. For example, we read '3 seconds of sound', '27 seconds of silence', and '0.5 seconds of light'. These refer to the different codes used to signal the Helwick sand bank. '650,000 candles' – the

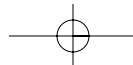
only sign made in brass – refers to the power of the beam; the candles were replaced by a 375 watt bulb which was intensified by a lens to the stronger power⁹.

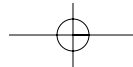
Wood's works reinforce my sense of the importance of Locws International's processual nature, and how powerfully it compels an awareness of what happens when the non-everyday is introduced into the everyday, and of how inattentive we often are to our surroundings. It also forces me to think very hard about the way in which our environment as landscape can be public but also minuscule. 'Miniature is one of the refuges of greatness', writes the French physicist and philosopher Gaston Bachelard.¹⁰ The miniature deploys to the dimensions of a universe. Once more, large is contained in small¹⁰.

Smallness of scale leading to the miniaturisation of a perception of the landscape is a recurrent surprise in my experience of Locws International. A different perception is stimulated by one work which remains invisible: situated in the marina, Hughes Germain's Untitled is an installation addressed to the ear, a soundscape of seven speakers attached to lamps along the path by the marina leading towards the barrage. We hear the throbbing sounds of ship engines which fade out as we walk along the path, to be replaced by the calls of gulls and then the sounds of machines --all intertwined

9. The relationship of Wood's signs to the technical role of the ship was elucidated admirably by our guide Brian Evans, whose contextualisations were more than worthy of the light vessel! (as he insisted, not 'ship') and the art that sailed on her.

10. Bachelard, op. cit., p. 154 & p. 157.

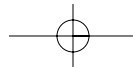
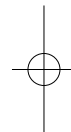
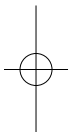


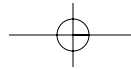


symbiotically with the ambient sounds of the site: the sea birds, the rattle of the wind in the halliards. It is difficult to describe how Germain's superimposition of sounds, some not very different from those in the environment in which they have been placed, intensify one's experience of the everyday soundscape, imbuing the atmosphere of remembered sound and all the nostalgia such sounds are capable of with an elusive power. Anthropologists have written of the crucial importance of smell and its symbolism for evoking memories. No one has chosen to create a smellscape in Locws International, but Germain's work amply expands our understanding of the emotional force of sound. Invisible it may be, but it inspires us to visualise while, standing outside looking at boats, our ears take us inside on a journey, even as we stand still, listening to the birds. It is a journey to the past. Where Hastie's rail tracks evoke traces of a past industrial landscape, Germain's sounds are ghostly echoes, literally, of a defunct maritime industry, sonic traces of the lost docks -- a rendition for another sense of the ghostly traces of Cross's ghost ship, projected round the corner from Germain's site, but at night.

Journeys are a recurrent theme in Locws International, journeys both through time and space. The journey into the past is a theme I have already considered in relation to varieties of

history and of nostalgia. There is also a third expression of the past in the present, destruction and transformation. This is the subject of two remaining works. Philip Napier creates his Dead Again from a case of incinerated stuffed birds which he found in a bombed pub in Belfast. This case is encased further in glass and wire, evoking the extreme defences built around police stations in northern Ireland. A final element is the use of materials to camouflage and integrate the sculpture into the site: its structure is painted grey, meticulously matched to the code for the paint for the urban furniture around the work. So integrated is it that drivers passing along the road to the Swansea Museum don't even notice it. Sites can produce responses of different scales, and not all are appropriate. This site, more than any other, caused local controversy in the press, while the probation service whose building happened to be behind the piece was anxious in case the art work would be seen as a negative comment on their work. Napier's treatment of the traces of destruction may be



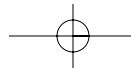


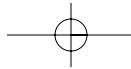
compared with that of O'Connell's decomposing bitumen blocks, and also with Cross's luminous ship and Germain's soundscape, diverse traces evoking change and loss.

Destruction is a theme in Karen Ingham's video installation in St Mary's Church. In the Trinity chapel she projects a video loop inspired by the bombing of St Mary's during the Second World War. Here too are binarism and decay, but unlike O'Connell's impersonal bitumen and Napier's irredeemably blackened birds, Ingham's images are gentle, delicately toned in romantic greys, blues and whites and the rhythms of her meditation soothing. Whitening ashes melt into water back to life; a white flock of birds flying across the church is a literal sign of movement away from the stasis of death, and also bear recognised spiritual associations of grace and the presence of the holy spirit. These dissolving images of church, water, fire and ash are presented on a split screen,

formally suggestive of the three panels of an altarpiece. The religious setting for her lyrical film is a fitting site for her expression of cycles of death and rebirth, a cycle which links the past to the future in a way which includes a measure of hope and optimism. Nostalgia is there, in the images of children playing outside the church; history is there too: the destruction of fire alludes to the bombing of the church. But despite the violence of the past and the suffering it caused, transformation is possible. Anthropologist Suzanne Kuchler has written about the relationship between landscape and memory as follows: 'The alternative to landscapes as inscribed surface and aide memoire, is a perspective which holds landscape to be implicated as template in the process of memory-work'¹¹. This emphasis on process and memory rather than products associated with particular memories strikes me as relevant for the overall project of Locws International, as well as Ingham's piece in particular, and the way in which landscape is revealed as the site for and of myths, memories and history. Out of a specific site of destruction, she interposes a meditation drawing on images which allude to that moment, but her work creates a new and transformative landscape of memory which is far more than a war memorial or an elegy. Like so many of the works in Locws, she takes us forward by casting back as we stand precisely in a specific place at a specific time, journeying, as it were, on the spot.

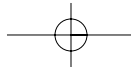
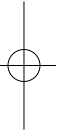
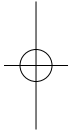
11. S. Kuchler, 'Landscape as memory: the mapping of process and its representation in a Melanesian society' in B. Bender (ed.), *Landscape: Politics and Perspectives*, Berg, Providence/Oxford, 1993, p. 86.

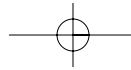




ART ACROSS A CITY

Chancing upon or pursuing the seventeen productions which make up Locws International might raise questions about meaning, but I prefer to understand it as a series of processes and interactions... For me, Locws has not been about looking at public sculptures in obvious places, but a journey of discovery, with the variety of scale providing one of the unexpected pleasures of seeking and finding the different parts of a landscape.





CREDITS

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