

2021

Intuitive Interventions: Constructing Documentary Cinematic Narratives

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<http://hdl.handle.net/10026.1/17384>

<http://dx.doi.org/10.24382/783>

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**UNIVERSITY OF
PLYMOUTH**

**INTUITIVE INTERVENTIONS:
CONSTRUCTING DOCUMENTARY CINEMATIC NARRATIVES**

by

HEIDI CATHRINE MORSTANG

A thesis submitted to the University of Plymouth

in partial fulfilment for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

School of Art, Design and Architecture

JULY 2021

Copyright Statement

This copy of the thesis has been supplied on condition that anyone who consults it is understood to recognise that its copyright rests with its author and that no quotation from the thesis and no information derived from it may be published without the author's prior consent.

Acknowledgments

I wish to thank several people who have been inspiring and supportive during the process of making the films since 2011, and writing the integrative summary for this PhD on the basis of Prior Published Works. The films submitted for this PhD have been created with various collaborative aspects, and I wish to thank everyone who has taken part in the projects.

First, I would like to thank everyone who have contributed to the films in some way.

There are some I do not know their names as meetings have been brief and sometimes serendipitous: fellow passengers on trains and flights that I had thought-provoking and inspiring conversations with, and audiences in film screenings who asked questions that opened up for new thinking.

Thanks to my long-term creative collaborators on all my films since 2011: cinematographer Patrik Säfström for the consistent poetic images and making every expedition an adventure; sound designer Paul Donovan for asking challenging questions regarding sound and creating affective soundtracks; Christian Short for seeing the invisible in raw footage and drawing out colours and tonalities I did not know existed in the material; and Miles Hall for guiding the post-production process in a seamless manner.

Thanks to all the people who facilitated access to locations, and to everyone who feature in the films. The openness and generosity to share knowledge has enriched the filmmaking processes. The many interviews filmed in challenging locations always felt genuinely open and sharing.

Thanks to my colleagues and students in the photography department at the University of Plymouth who have supported the work in so many ways: by interesting conversations, questions, suggestions and advice. In particular thanks to Dr Simon Standing and Professor Liz Wells for their continuous advice and support. Thanks to colleagues in Arts Research: Land / Water and the Visual Arts Research Group for providing a research infrastructure to develop the projects. I am particularly grateful to Professor Chris Bennewith who, as Head of School, has supported my research and enabled this PhD.

Thanks to Sue Matheron and her team for the research support on the film projects.

Thanks to Dr Hannah Drayson for her thoughtful comments during the process of writing.

Thanks to Dr Joanna Griffin for advice and thoughtfulness in the many conversations about film as research. Thanks to colleagues in Transtechnology Research Group for the many illuminating and inspiring insights into different research practices.

This PhD submission would not have been possible without the generous guidance, advice, thinking and questioning by Professor Michael Punt. Not only did I find a joy for writing again, but conversations opened a new avenue for filmmaking and seeing new perspectives, and I will always be very grateful for this.

Finally, thanks to my family and friends for extraordinary conversations and support.

Without the encouragement and generous practical support from my family, none of these films would have been made.

Author's Declaration

At no time during the registration for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy has the author been registered for any other University award without prior agreement of the Doctoral College Quality Sub-Committee. Work submitted for this research degree at the University of Plymouth has not formed part of any other degree either at the University of Plymouth or at another establishment.

The research for the submitted films *In Transit* [2011], *Prosperous Mountain* [2013], and *Pseudotachylyte* [2019] took place at the University of Plymouth between 2011 – 2020. They were filmed on location in Karelia and Mga. Russia; Longyearbyen, Svalbard, Norway; and Nusfjord Plateau, Lofoten Islands, Norway, and at the Electron Microscopy Centre, University of Plymouth, UK.

All films were made in collaboration with cinematographer, sound designer, colourist and post-production facility; each film involved collaborations with subject disciplines during the expeditions. All research is conducted independently as a filmmaker and the films are authored art works that form a coherent body of work.

Word count of main body of thesis: 12552

Signed and Date: Heidi Cathrine Morstang, 21st July 2021 [electronic signature]



Abstract

Heidi Cathrine Morstang

Title: Intuitive Interventions: constructing documentary cinematic narratives

The argument in this summary concerns intuition as creative decision method in observational documentary film practice and is based upon three films produced, directed, edited and published by the author: *In Transit* [2011]; *Prosperous Mountain* [2013]; and *Pseudotachylyte* [2019]. The films are created with digital technologies employing state of the art High Definition Video cameras, and digital post-production software¹.

This summary will use reflection and analysis to make explicit three aspects of the documentary cinematic process of creation: image, sound, and edit. It will highlight where a space is created to facilitate intuition. The summary will revisit some processes of creation and production by identifying key moments of decision making where the act of filmmaking draws out new understandings of the topic. It will present an account of practice and insights to the possibilities of creating a poetic space in documentary filmmaking by identifying effective technical and rhetorical strategies for opening a space for intuitive interventions when constructing documentary cinematic narratives. In this endeavour, it will

¹ The published films have not been driven by the rapid technological developments since 2011 nor embracing the newest technologies. However, available state of the art camera formats suitable for Arctic expeditions and dependent on available production funding have determined the choice of digital High Definition Video format and digital post-production facilities.

In Transit [2011] was filmed with Canon 5D MKII; *Prosperous Mountain* [2013] was filmed with Canon 5D MKII; *Pseudotachylyte* [2019] was filmed with Arri Amira 3.2k, with Leica Summitcron-C. Premiere Pro was used for editing, and Pro Tools editing system with Avid S6 for sound design and mix was used in post-production.

The long-standing artistic practice employs both analogue and digital format in film and photographic works.

contribute to an enriched understanding of our environment² and the place of humans in the world that benefits from creative practice.

The three films focus on interdisciplinary interventions in expeditions to the Arctic and have their contextual relevance outlined below. The enduring interest in the environment is shared by the philosopher Arne Naess, and is inspired by a network of influences: Alexander von Humboldt's view of the world as an interconnected entity; films by Flaherty, Herzog, Kossakovsky, Ponting and Tarkovsky inform the documentary methodologies; writings by Naess and Wells have informed the approach to landscape; Croce, Franklin and Kemp have informed the reading on intuition and the documentary impulse; and finally, the interdisciplinary collaborative projects in the Arctic by Martinsson and Holmlund, and the Cape Farewell Project have influenced the interdisciplinary approach.

The common ground in the films is the dialectic that shapes the distinctive documentary cinematic expression that alters between lyricism and realism, and the tension that is created in the works by this specific articulation. Based on this, the three films create a constellation that may facilitate a poetic space for contemplation through the cinematic form, topic, content and critical context.

There may be an intuitive way of using film and sound to evoke change within the material world; this is opening new possibilities for documentary film practice where complex philosophical, geopolitical and scientific aspects are brought to attention. In this way the

² This summary will use the terms environment, landscape and nature within the context of the natural environment as geographic and terrestrial locations; not in an ecological context. The text will introduce my research methods as a documentary filmmaker and draw upon a wide network of influences that are part of the contextual framework.

films are intended to contribute to an existing observational documentary filmmaking practice that is already embedded in history of film by offering new insights and paradigms for future practice.

List of contents

Copyright Statement	2
Acknowledgements	3
Author's Declaration	5
Abstract	6
List of Contents	9
List of Figures	12
Portfolio and Links to films	13
Note to the reader	16
Preface	17
1. Introduction	20
2. Context to Submitted Films	28
2.1 <i>In Transit</i> [2011]	28
2.2 <i>Prosperous Mountain</i> [2013]	30
2.3 <i>Pseudotachylyte</i> [2019]	31
3. Nature of Works	33
3.1 Processes: Observational Documentary Filmmaking	33
3.2 Intuition	38
3.3 Landscape	41
3.4 Image	49
3.5 Sound	58

3.6 Edit	64
4. Distribution of films: Context to audiences and venues	70
5. Original contribution to knowledge and contribution to the discipline	74
6. References	77
7. Appendix	86
7.1 <i>In Transit</i> [2011]	86
7.2 <i>Prosperous Mountain</i> [2013]	88
7.3 <i>Pseudotachylyte</i> [2019]	90
7.4 Brief timeline of Film Making Processes	92
7.5 Screening, Exhibitions and Publication History	100
7.6 Filmography	112
7.7 Portfolio	113
Scanned Book chapter	
Morstang, H <i>In Transit - revealing history through landscape in contemporary film</i> [2015]	
Published in 'Painful Heritage – Studies in the Cultural Landscapes of the Second World War' Anthology edited by Jasinski, M and Sem, L, Skrifter No 4 - 2015 [Transactions], The Royal Norwegian Society of Sciences and Letters.	

7.8 Portfolio 129

Scanned essay by Powel, B. *In Transit*

Limited edition DVD with accompanying essay.

7.9 Portfolio 134

Scanned images, essay and inset of artefact

[hand-made artist's film / booklet in fabric-bound case]

Prosperous Mountain film and photographs by Heidi Morstang.

Limited edition DVD [231 editions] with an accompanying essay by fellow and curator B Phipps, Churchill College, University of Cambridge. International distribution.

8. QAA Descriptors 149

List of Figures

Fig. 1	Still image from <i>In Transit</i> [2011]	timecode 01:40 - 02:18
Fig. 2	Still image from <i>Prosperous Mountain</i> [2013]	timecode 00:54 – 01:48
Fig. 3	Still image from <i>Pseudotachylyte</i> [2019]	timecode 26:43 – 26:49
Fig. 4	Still image from <i>In Transit</i> [2011]	timecode 04:57 – 06:09
Fig. 5	Still image from <i>Prosperous Mountain</i> [2013]	timecode 08:49
Fig. 6	Still image from <i>Prosperous Mountain</i> [2013]	timecode 03:36 – 04:13
Fig. 7	Still image from <i>Pseudotachylyte</i> [2019]	timecode 00:00 – 05:47
Fig. 8	Still image from <i>Pseudotachylyte</i> [2019]	timecode 00:00 – 05:47
Fig. 9	Still image from <i>Pseudotachylyte</i> [2019]	timecode 13:24 – 13:45
Fig. 10	Still image from <i>In Transit</i> [2011]	timecode 14:18 – 14:47
Fig. 11	Still image from <i>Prosperous Mountain</i> [2013]	timecode 05:14 – 08:23
Fig. 12	Still image from <i>Pseudotachylyte</i> [2019]	timecode 16:51 – 23:00
Fig. 13	Still image from <i>In Transit</i> [2011]	timecode 16:20
Fig. 14	Still image from <i>Prosperous Mountain</i> [2013]	timecode 13:57
Fig. 15	Still image from <i>Pseudotachylyte</i> [2019]	timecode 51:32
Fig. 16	Still image from <i>Prosperous Mountain</i> [2013]	timecode 04:28
Fig. 17	Still image from <i>In Transit</i> [2011]	timecode 16:53
Fig. 18	Still image from <i>Pseudotachylyte</i> [2019]	timecode 05:54

Portfolio

The portfolio consists of the following components:

- **Three films in digital format**

In Transit [2011], *Prosperous Mountain* [2013] and *Pseudotachylyte* [2019]

The films in the portfolio of published works are submitted as digital files. Links are listed below:

In Transit [2011]

<https://vimeo.com/151383007>

Password: intransit

Prosperous Mountain [2013]

<https://vimeo.com/149125735>

Password: prosperousmountain

Pseudotachylyte [2019]

<https://vimeo.com/350577859>

Password: mountains

Films are catalogued and archived in The National Library of Norway [Nasjonalbiblioteket]³

In Transit [2011] part of Norwegian Short Documentary Collection, part of The Norwegian Film Institute's FilmBib collection⁴

Presented on Artist's website⁵

- **Limited edition DVD + Essay + Photographs [*In Transit*]**

2012 *In Transit* limited edition DVD [120 editions] with an accompanying essay by Dr Brieg Powel and photographs by Heidi C Morstang. International distribution.

Catalogued and archived in The National Library of Norway [Nasjonalbiblioteket]

Scanned copy of essay in appendix 7.8. p. 126

- **Book chapter**

In Transit - revealing history through landscape in contemporary film Morstang, H [2015]

Published in 'Painful Heritage – Studies in the Cultural Landscapes of the Second World War' Anthology edited by Jasinski, M and Sem, L, Skrifter No 4 - 2015 [Transactions], The Royal Norwegian Society of Sciences and Letters.

Scanned copy of chapter in appendix 7.7. p. 110

³ www.nb.no

⁴ <https://www.filmbib.no>

⁵ www.hcmorstang.co.uk

- **Limited edition DVD + Essay + Photographs [*Prosperous Mountain*]**

2015 *Prosperous Mountain* film and photographs by Heidi Morstang.

Limited edition DVD [231 editions] with an accompanying essay by fellow and curator Phipps, B [Churchill College, University of Cambridge]. Artefact [hand-made artist's film / booklet in fabric-bound case]. International distribution.

Publication launch at Norwegian Ambassadors' Residence, London

Catalogued and archived in The National Library of Norway [Nasjonalbiblioteket]

Scanned copy of essay in appendix 7.9. p. 131

- **Screening history of films in appendix 7.5. p. 97**

Note to the reader

This summary accompanies a coherent body of work: an exemplary of three films created between 2011 – 2019 that concern human interventions in landscape. The films and the summary constitute the submission for PhD based on Prior Published Works.

This integrative summary offers a reflective overview of the research methodologies and draws on a variety of influences that continue to inform the artistic research practice.

The summary is written as a reflective outline of practice-based research. It must be made explicit that this is written as a filmmaker's perspective who observes scientific processes and does not refer to scientific research in this text.

Preface

Curiosity about how humans intervene in landscape and how ‘everything is interconnected’⁶ in our environment is the starting point for my research in observational documentary film. This sweeping statement is grounded in my inspiration by certain historical and contemporary artists, scientists and philosophers. It has led to several expeditions to the Arctic region where I have taken part in interdisciplinary research projects with the aim to create autonomous films that may contribute to an awareness of some environmental concerns of our time. When making films, I have sought an understanding of how humans intervene *with* and *in* landscape in order to advance knowledge about history, the present and future related to environmental and moral concerns. Intuitive interventions as a creative decision method as well as cinematic dialectic methodologies have been developed within observational documentary filmmaking practice in order to construct complex narratives that offer a poetic space for individual interpretations.

Since 1995 I have explored the significance of landscape through documentary photography practice and filmmaking. My background stems from formal studies in art history and documentary photography, and this continues to provide a stimulus for the cinematic expression and context to current work. Throughout my working practice, there is a specific focus on exploring the single frame as a method of creating unfolding narratives. Early works centre around cinematic interpretation of literature by the playwright Ibsen; these

⁶ Humboldt presented ideas that ‘all living matter as an organism of interconnected forces. He gave Western science a new lens through which to view the natural world’

Wulf, *A The Invention of Nature: The Adventures of Alexander Von Humboldt – the lost hero of science*, John Murray Publishers, London, 2016, p 127

films explore the depiction of landscape as a main character in the plays *A Doll's House* and *Brand*.⁷ The visual interpretation of these plays opened up for a sustained focus on shifting from a human-centred hierarchical view of landscape to portraying nature as a main protagonist where humans are visitors.⁸

In 2010, I took part in an expedition to the Russian Arctic to make the film *In Transit* [2011]. This expedition became a starting point for further observational documentary cinematic explorations of how various subject specialists approach landscape whilst undertaking research.

The various interventions may have similarities to filmmaking practice where intuition is a crucial part of creative and scientific methodologies; where a dialectic approach to investigation is performed by seeking miniscule details within a larger view, and metaphorically seeing microcosm within macrocosm. It must be made explicit that this is a filmmaker's observation and has no substance of research into scientific processes.

However, observing and filming interventions in landscape has strengthened my view that intuiting what may be significant is imperative as a creative decision method when seeking an understanding of our shared environment.

When filming *Pseudotachylyte* [2019] in 2017, I was intrigued by geoscientists' meticulous search for visual signs of ancient earthquakes on an Arctic mountain plateau. Why did they select a particular rock as a scientific sample and not another located slightly to the left or

⁷ *A Doll's House* [Dir. Morstang, 2005] and *Brand* [Dir. Morstang, 2008]

⁸ 'What is wilderness today in our largely humanized world? What it has always been: a space that sustains itself, was here before humanity, and where, in the words of the Wilderness Act of 1964, "the Earth and its community of life are untrammelled by man and where man himself is a visitor who does not remain"'. Wilson, EO *The Future of Life*, London, 2002, p 144

to the right? Furthermore, in preparation for electron microscopic work, why did they choose one specific fragment of the rock? Would our geological narrative be altered if another rock and a different 1 mm slice as microscopic sample was selected? This rumination is simply a speculation that artistic and scientific thinking processes may have similarities. Therefore, I have sought to articulate some of these aspects in this integrative summary with the anticipation that my insights may contribute to knowledge and further our understanding of our shared environment.

1. Introduction

When we encounter a film, we try to make sense of it; we interpret it; we attempt to grasp its significance⁹

This integrative summary for the *PhD on the Basis of Prior Published Works* presents an exemplary of three published films from an established artistic practice that concern human interventions in landscape: *In Transit* [2011], *Prosperous Mountain* [2013] and *Pseudotachylyte* [2019]. It highlights aspects of the systematic study in this body of works that may contribute to knowledge within the discipline of observational documentary film.¹⁰ It draws attention to observational documentary cinematic techniques to elicit new thinking, debate and action regarding environmental concerns of our time.

The text will use the terms environment, landscape and nature within the context of the natural environment as geographic and terrestrial locations; not in an ecological context. It will elucidate pivotal scenes from each film in order to highlight examples where artistic research methodologies are synthesised through the expression of film and interdisciplinary collaborations. The summary will emphasise some areas that may draw out ways we think about the following through observational documentary film: time; environment; scientific interventions in the Arctic landscape; painful histories; and construction of historical narratives. The methodologies are applied in the following components: image, sound and edit.

⁹ Carroll, N and Choi, J [eds.] *Philosophy of film and motion pictures*, Blackwell Publishing, Oxford, 2006, p 323

¹⁰ There is an anticipation of revealing some research processes and discoveries in this integrative summary that echoes Flaherty's approach. Frances Flaherty expressed his vision: 'he was searching for the spirit. The spirit of peoples. He made three films all on the same theme. The spirit in which people comes to terms with their environment. I had learnt to discover, he said, but I had not learnt to reveal'

'*Flaherty and Film*' - Robert Gardner interviewing Frances Flaherty, National Educational Television, 1957. Timecode 2:51

Since 2010, the research has focused on creating observational documentary cinematic narratives in collaboration with a range of subject disciplines whilst taking part in expeditions to remote locations in the Nordic and Russian Arctic, and most recently Sierra Nevada, California.¹¹ It has led to unfamiliar terrain; both conceptually and tangible. Curiosity about how humans intervene in landscape has led to collaborations with geoscientists, biologists, pure mathematicians, historians and forensic archaeologists. These collaborations have enabled cinematic explorations of human interventions in the Arctic landscape through making observational documentary films that have been screened to multifaceted audiences at several esteemed international film festivals and art exhibitions.¹²

The authored film works have been produced in close creative collaboration with cinematographers, sound designers and colourists.¹³ The methodologies consist of various creative stages of both independent and collaborative work. Pre-production and editing process is solitary work, whilst filming on location is in collaboration with cinematographer and scientific teams during expeditions to unfamiliar geographic territory. The final stage of post-production is in collaboration with sound designers and colourists. These filmmaking processes are technically rigorous and artistically emancipated: the methodologies draw out an awareness of the filmmaker's intuition and enables the decision to act upon it during

¹¹ Film on migration of butterflies, invitation by leading climate change scientist Professor Camille Parmesan through President Macron's *Make Our Planet Great Again Award*. Currently in production.

¹² The films have been screened at several international film festivals: Bergen International Film Festival, Norway; International Science Film Festival, St. Petersburg, Russia; Heidelberg Laureate Forum, Germany; Royal Norwegian Embassy, London; The Science Museum, London; Clermont-Ferrand International Short Film Festival, France; Impressions Gallery, UK. Full screening list in appendix.

¹³ Filmmaking is by its very nature a collaborative process, and this resonates with the scientific field work observed in the three films. Therefore, the collaborative aspect of creative filmmaking and scientific field work has been used as an example in order to seek how humans intuitively intervene in landscape.

filming and post-production by allowing for a poetic approach and expression, as mirrored in Tarkovsky's filmmaking methods:

When I speak of poetry I am not thinking about it as a genre. Poetry is an awareness of the world, a particular way of relating to reality...he [the artist] is capable of going beyond the limitations of coherent logic, and conveying the deep complexity and truth of the palpable connections and hidden phenomena of life¹⁴

Furthermore, the filmmaking methodologies are informed by a hermeneutic approach to interpretation, acknowledging an active participation¹⁵ in observational documentary filmmaking and by cultural interpretation.¹⁶ Dialectic approaches to image and sound¹⁷ were developed in order to construct complex narratives that offer a poetic space for individual interpretations. The films may offer audiences an alternative way of accessing specialist knowledge that may allow new perceptual and experiential knowledge to emerge.

The coherence of the films centres around:

1. intuitive interventions in constructing poetic¹⁸ spaces in observational documentary cinematic narratives within interdisciplinary expeditions to the Arctic landscape
2. a visual and aural dialectic that shapes the observational documentary cinematic

¹⁴ Tarkovsky, *A Sculpting in Time*, University of Texas, Austin, 1986, p. 21

¹⁵ Active participation by filmmaker, subject specialists and viewers

¹⁶ 'The work of art has its true being in the fact that it becomes an experience that changes the person who experiences it' Gadamer, HG *Truth and Method*, London, Bloomsbury Academics, 2013, p. 107

'How we understand ourselves and the world depend on the practical relation we have to things and on the interpretative lens we acquire through our cultural upbringing'
Zimmerman, J *Hermeneutics – A Very Short Introduction*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, p. 131

¹⁷ This will be elaborated upon in *Image*, p. 49, and *Sound*, p. 58

¹⁸ Tarkovsky, *A Sculpting in Time*, University of Texas, Austin, 1986, p. 21

expression that alters between lyricism and realism¹⁹ and the tension that is created by this specific articulation²⁰

3. the films may contribute to an insight of our environment by revealing equivalences between intuitive recording of unfolding narratives through observational documentary filmmaking, and the observation of recurrences of intuitive thinking across broad scientific practices.

It must be made explicit that the contextual framework that inform the artistic research outlined in this summary draws on a broad network of influences from a wide range of writers, filmmakers, painters, philosophers and photographers, rather than solely discipline specific research.²¹ It highlights a specific framework whilst acknowledging numerous other theoretical contexts within the scholarship of documentary film and photography such as anthropology, psychology, philosophy, environmental studies, gender studies and other perspectives that are not included in this reflection.²² The enduring interest in the environment is shared by the philosopher Arne Naess,²³ and is inspired by a network of

¹⁹ Notably, the oeuvre by Herzog and Tarkovsky have influenced the cinematic methodologies in constructing films that alters between lyricism and realism

²⁰ Humboldt's book *View of Nature* is an example of inclusion of this dialectic view: 'in Views of Nature Humboldt showed how nature could have an influence on people's imagination. Nature, he wrote, was in a mysterious communication with our 'inner feelings'

Wulf, A *The Invention of Nature: The Adventures of Alexander Von Humboldt – the lost hero of science*, John Murray Publishers, London, 2016. pp. 132-33

²¹ Kemp, M *Seen / Unseen – Art, Science, and Intuition from Leonardo to the Hubble Telescope*, Oxford University Press, 2006, pp. 330-331

²² In particular, the research draws on ecocriticism and deep ecology.

²³ Drenghson, A and Devall, B [eds.] *Arne Naess: Ecology of Wisdom* Penguin Classics, London, 2016

influences: Alexander von Humboldt's²⁴ view of the world as an interconnected entity; films by Flaherty, Herzog, Kossakovsky, Ponting and Tarkovsky inform the filmmaking methodologies²⁵; writings by Naess and Wells have informed the approach to landscape; Croce, Franklin and Kemp have informed the reading on intuition and the documentary impulse; and finally, the collaborative projects in the Arctic by Martinsson and Holmlund,²⁶ and the Cape Farewell Project²⁷ have influenced the interdisciplinary approach.

The published works are situated in and informed by a contemporary framework of other artists who employ similar poetic cinematic approaches to landscape. Of particular significance to the published works are the artists Tacita Dean, Ori Gersht, Werner Herzog, Andrei Kossakovsky, and Ben Rivers. These artists employ aesthetic refinement through cinematic methodologies that contribute to a novel visual expression emphasising contemporary concerns. In particular, the articulation of cinematic and audio expression that shift attention to an ambiguous mode of documentary

²⁴ 'Humboldt, however, warned that humankind needed to understand how the forces of nature worked, how those different threads were all connected. "Man can only act upon nature, and appropriate her forces to his use" Humboldt would later write, "by comprehending her laws"

Wulf, A *The Invention of Nature: The Adventures of Alexander Von Humboldt – the lost hero of science*, John Murray Publishers, London, 2016, p. 60

²⁵ In this context: these filmmakers create a poetic space in films where landscape is the protagonist

²⁶ In particular, interdisciplinary methods have been inspired by photographer Martinsson's and glaciologist Holmlund's longstanding *Arctic Views* project: 'Through photographs we get a clear picture of specific views in front of the camera inviting us to engage with time....the photographic research archives created through fieldwork are a good basis for a continued monitoring over time to follow the changes of a specific area. Such work and its results contribute to the interdisciplinary knowledge collected and processed in order to understand the overall picture of global warming and climate change and not least to communicate this understanding and its consequences'

Martinsson, T *Arctic Views – Passages in Time*, Art and Theory Publishing, University of Gothenburg, 2015, pp. 14-15

²⁷ 'Art and the sciences represent parallel, mutually-reinforcing acts of feeling our way through our environment, understanding and asserting our presence as a means of preserving it. Thus, the collaborative research and image-making represented by Cape Farewell should surely be the norm rather than the exception, standard practice rather than a romantic exception...artistic exploration is a human activity as old, widespread and diverse as technological innovation on the real stage of human activity'

Buckland, D; MacGilp, A and Parkinson, S [eds.] *Burning Ice- Art & Climate Change*, Cape Farewell, London, UK, 2006, p. 91

filmmaking that offers a poetic space for contemplation is influential in this context.

These contemporary artists have inspired the approach to filmmaking in various ways:

Dean's poetic cinematic observations of landscape through analogue film; Gersht's metaphorical approach to painful histories within European landscapes; Herzog's lifelong oeuvre for its approach questioning of content and the ability to convey the 'deeper strata of truth'²⁸ through the cinematic expression and collaboration with his subjects;

Kossakovsky's methodologies in observational documentary film and the removal of verbal narration; and Rivers' cinematic approach to conveying a deep connection to nature through human existence.

Technological and conceptual developments within documentary film practice have enabled contemporary filmmakers to work with both analogue and digital formats, and expand on a wide range of screening contexts, such as cinema screenings, art gallery and museum exhibitions, television, electronic distribution through internet, and within educational contexts. Due to the possibilities for screening observational documentary film in these varied contexts, the published works are therefore situated within a contemporary filmmaking practice that embraces possibilities of engaging with a wide range of audiences.

Dean and Gersht predominantly exhibit film works within gallery spaces; Herzog and Kossakovsky primarily screen films in international film festivals and art house cinemas, whilst Rivers' screens his works in both gallery and cinemas.

Therefore, the context for the published works draws on three areas of observational documentary filmmaking where the films have been screened: in contemporary

²⁸ 'Werner Herzog defended staging his so-called Minnesota Declaration: Truth and Fact in Documentary Cinema: "There are deeper strata of truth in cinema, and there is such a thing as poetic, ecstatic truth. It is mysterious and elusive, and can be reached only through fabrication and imagination and stylization" MacKenzie, S [ed.] *Film Manifestos and Global Cinema – A Critical Anthology*, University of California Press, 2014, p. 471

international film festivals, in art exhibitions and in academic contexts.²⁹

Based on this, the three films create a coherent constellation that may facilitate a space for contemplation and elicit new thinking through the cinematic form, topic, content and critical context. Identifying effective technical and rhetorical strategies for intuitive interventions when constructing documentary cinematic narratives, the films may bring insights and paradigms for future practice in documentary filmmaking.

Therefore, this summary will present the following selected aspects of creative processes and methodologies in observational documentary film drawing emphasis on their contribution to an original perspective within the discipline:

1. Observational Documentary Filmmaking: Highlighting certain points between idea – reality – autonomous film [e.g. conceptual phase – production phase – distribution]
2. Intuition: Intuitive interventions in observational documentary filmmaking processes
3. Landscape: Arctic as location and expeditions to unfamiliar territories
4. Topic and content of films: Highlighting examples in the films such as scientific interventions in the Arctic landscape; painful histories; construction of historical narratives; and deep time.

²⁹ Screening history in appendix 7.5 p. 97

5. Image: Unfolding narrative within the camera frame / viewfinder

6. Sound: Creating affective soundtrack with accentuation of silence and use of acoustics

7. Edit: Construction of autonomous narrative film through use of intuitive interventions as creative decision method

8. Distribution of films: Context to audiences and venue

2. Context to Submitted Films

The three films have been screened and exhibited in several contexts attracting a wide range of audiences: international film festivals, art exhibitions, academic conferences, and masterclasses that situate the research within a contemporary documentary film context and contribute to the discipline. The films, still images, limited edition DVDs with accompanying essays are catalogued and archived in The National Library of Norway [Nasjonalbiblioteket].

See screening history in appendix 7.5. p. 97.

2.1 *In Transit* [2011]

Filmed on location in Karelia, Russia, June 2010, and in Mga / St. Petersburg, Russia, October 2010.

Duration of film: 19 min 24 sec. HD format. Colour. Audio: Dolby Digital 5.1.

Year of production: 2011

Camera: Canon 5D MKII

Post-production software: Premiere Pro, ProTools editing system with Avid S6

Interdisciplinary collaboration: Kaprolat Committee, University of Bergen, Norway and Falstad Centre, Norway. Disciplines: History, Law, Forensic Archaeology.

The film *In Transit* [2011] investigates an area of Karelia on the Russian/Finnish border close to the Arctic Circle, where, in 1944, an incident occurred that left a scar on the landscape and the psyche on both sides of the invisible line. Approximately 120 Norwegian soldiers serving voluntarily in a German SS unit were killed fighting Soviet forces in Karelia. The fallen

Norwegian men, were left unburied and without identification until 2005, when locals found human remains in the forest under a thin layer of soil. In Norway, these men were, and are still regarded as political traitors. The film is a cinematic investigation of revealing history through the landscape where the battle took place. The potential repatriation of the remains of Norwegian political traitors is the central focus. Although the film deals with contemporary issues of difficulties regarding repatriation, reconciliation and closure, it also broaches questions of national identity and shame. It deals with current politics reconciling the many painful aspects of history, such as the potential homecoming of remains of political traitors. It deals with memory and perhaps more importantly, the forgotten and 'buried' chapters in history. It is an aspect of painful heritage.

Art has - could have, must have - a unique role in illuminating the dark in such places.

Through film and its documentary form, the specifics of place and landscape and compelling aspects of the story and its significance are hauntingly presented as fact. The film draws upon references from the films *Nanook of the North* by Flaherty³⁰ and *The Forest* by Ori Gersht;³¹ paintings by Kallen-Gallela and Shiskin; and the collected oral stories *Kalevala* by Lønrot.

³⁰ Flaherty, R *Nanook of the North* [1922]

³¹ Gersht, O *The Forest* [2005] and *The Clearing* [2005]

Gersht embarked on a journey to Kosov, Ukraine, encountering landscapes where massacres took place during WWII. The cinematic interpretation of landscape in the work *The Forest* has been particularly inspiring when developing *In Transit* due to its evocative and metaphorical visual and aural interpretation of painful histories.

2.2 *Prosperous Mountain* [2013]

Filmed on location in Longyearbyen and at the Svalbard Global Seed Vault in the Arctic Archipelago of Svalbard, Norway in February 2013.

Duration of film: 14 min 28 sec. HD format. Colour. Audio: Dolby Digital 5.1.

Year of Production: 2013

Camera: Canon 5D MKII

Post-production software: Premiere Pro, ProTools editing system with Avid S6

Interdisciplinary collaboration: Svalbard Global Seed Vault and NordGen.

Disciplines: Biology, botany.

Prosperous Mountain [2013] was filmed at Svalbard Global Seed Vault in the High Arctic, which archives duplicates of food crop seeds for future generations. The film has screened at film festivals and exhibitions since its premiere in 2014. It employs framing techniques from documentary film and photography, requiring the viewer to interpret the portent of unfolding events without a verbal narrative.

The film presents the ecologically fragile landscape of the High Arctic where the vault is located and observes human interventions of mining, transport and global seed storage. From a detached distance, and without dialogue, the camera portrays the complexities of human interests that converge at this apparent beacon of sustainable futures that portentously foreshadows plant species extinctions. The originality of the film is its portrayal of these complexities through the cinematic observations pointing at the fragile global ecological system that led to the existence of the vault.

Its depiction of epic-scale landscape draws on films by Kossakovsky and Tarkovsky, while echoing the contemplative approach of Ponting's *The Great White Silence* [1924]. The film has a relation to a long history of filmic depiction of the cultural significance of the polar landscape, however employs certain nostalgic techniques to elicit new thinking, debate and action in the face of climate emergency.³²

2.3 *Pseudotachylyte* [2019]

Filmed on location at the Nusfjord Plateau, Lofoten Islands, Norway, July 2017, and in the Plymouth Electron Microscopy Centre, University of Plymouth, UK, November 2017.

Duration: 54 min 28 sec. UHD Format. Black & White. Audio: Dolby Digital 5.1.

Year of Production: 2019

Camera: Arri Amira 3.2k with Leica Summicron-C

Post-production software: Premiere Pro, ProTools editing system with Avid S6

Interdisciplinary collaboration: Geoscience [scientists from Universities of Plymouth, Liverpool, Cardiff, UK; and University of Padua, Italy]

Filmed in the Arctic landscape of the Lofoten Islands in Norway, the black and white documentary film portrays a team of international geoscientists investigating rock formations for evidence of earthquakes originating deep below the Earth's surface.

³² David Buckland expressed a similar thought from his expedition to the Arctic in 2004: 'what the artist does is to somehow find the human scale of the storytelling. In this case, the human scale of climate change. My ambition was to find a way of including the additional narrative of climate change within my artwork from the Arctic' Buckland, MacGilp, Parkinson, *Burning Ice – Art & Climate Change*, London, Cape Farewell, 2006, p. 95

On location and electron microscope footage portrays the nuanced and collaborative observational practices of the scientists during fieldwork.

Pseudotachylyte [2019] foregrounds aspects of methods of scientific knowledge production and research that are not generally accessible outside of the scientific communities they concern. A key part of its originality lies in its focus on what is overlooked in the interplay between field work and laboratory practices. In part, the film draws attention to the aesthetics of these methods: its visual richness and humanism. The portrait of a method is timely given the increasing prevalence of digital and remote science methodologies and at the same time bridges the artistic landscape genre with the scientific practice of fieldwork. The film unravels how scientific thought-processes are communicated and contributes to knowledge of how scientists make decisions and consequently how these decisions define geological narratives. It is influenced by the unfolding narrative in the opening scene of Tarkovsky's *The Sacrifice* [1986],³³ Herzog's emphasis on landscape as location in *Encounters at the End of the World* [2007] and *Fata Morgana* [1971], and it draws on Naess' theory of duplication.

³³ Opening scene in Tarkovsky's *The Sacrifice* [1986]. Timecode 5:52 – 15:19. Scene presents unfolding narrative of landscape, characters and content through one cinematic framing technique and duration.

3. Nature of works

3.1 Processes: Observational Documentary Filmmaking

There are deeper strata of truth in cinema, and there is such a thing as poetic, ecstatic truth. It is mysterious and elusive, and can be reached only through fabrication and imagination and stylization³⁴

With background as a documentary photographer,³⁵ the observational documentary approaches stem from certain documentary photographic theories. In particular, the notion of the documentary impulse³⁶ provides context for what is referred to as intuitive interventions. Franklin outlines this:

The documentary impulse embraces a dualistic approach to the treatment of actuality. Creativity, or the extent to which creativity is applied, is a selective process. At the same time, and in the background, lies the onus of fidelity, or recording things as they are... There is a marked difference between contemplating things as they are and things as we perceive them³⁷

It proceeds from John Grierson's idea of documentary as 'the creative treatment of actuality' as it seems to 'fit the internal dialectics of factual filmmaking'³⁸ In the films discussed in this thesis, intuitive interventions as a creative decision method is an active

³⁴ Werner Herzog in the Minnesota Declaration. MacKenzie, S [ed.] *Film Manifestos and Global Cinema – A Critical Anthology*, University of California Press, 2014, p. 471

³⁵ The persistent motivation as a documentary photographer and filmmaker is mirrored in the following writing by Franklin: 'Why photograph? Because sometimes – just sometimes – photographs can lure our senses into greater awareness. Much depends on the viewer; but to some, photographs can demand enough of emotions to be a catalyst to thinking' Franklin, S *The Documentary Impulse*, Phaidon, London, 2016. p. 201

³⁶ Franklin, S *The Documentary Impulse*, Phaidon, London, 2016

³⁷ Ibid. p. 198

³⁸ Ibid. p. 181

part of the filming processes. It takes place whilst filming on location, in the editing process and in the sound design in post-production.

Kemp writes:

there is a type of thought, most readily recognizable at the very outset when ideas begin to stir but actually operative throughout, which is neither visual nor verbal – nor abstract or symbolic. Such a type of thinking embodies aspects of the visual and non-visual in pre-verbalization and pre-visualisation shuffle of such speed as to be effectively instantaneous.³⁹

This kind of thinking allows a pre-conceptualisation of the film, here referred to as the *idea* itself. Each film is planned with three main components, loosely inspired by Haiku poetry.⁴⁰

These are then explored through the camera whilst filming on location when unexpected events and unfolding narratives take place, referred to as reality itself.⁴¹ The intuitive intervention is an immediate response to what is observed on location,⁴² and the decision to act through recording the unfolding narrative, as a ‘documentary impulse’⁴³ The idea [pre-production], reality itself [filming on location] and film as independent artwork [completed film in post-production] are three separate phases that are ultimately synthesised into a poetic cinematic form.

³⁹ Kemp, M *Visualizations – The Nature Book of Art and Science*, Oxford University Press, 2000, p.178

⁴⁰ Basho, M *The Narrow Road to the Deep North and Other Travel Sketches*, Penguin Books, London, 1996

⁴¹ Examples: Truck scene in *Prosperous Mountain* [2013] timecode 05:14 – 08:23; Rock scene in *Pseudotachylyte* [2019] 16:51-23:00; Excavation scene in *In Transit* [2011] 04:57-06:09

⁴² ‘Understanding is the interpretative act of integrating particular things such as words, signs, and events into a meaningful whole. We understand objects, texts, or fact when it makes sense within our own life context and thus speaks to us meaningfully. When we understand objects, texts, or situations in this way, they become part of our own inner mental world so that we can express them again in our own terms’
Zimmerman, J *Hermeneutics – A Very Short Introduction*, Oxford University Press, 2015, p. 7

⁴³ Franklin, S *The Documentary Impulse*, Phaidon, London, 2016

Through specific intuitive interventions in filmmaking methodologies facilitate a space for non-intentional and intentional narratives to unfold when unexpected events take place.⁴⁴ However, sensory experiences of weather changes, topography, temperature, wind, conversations and other elements whilst filming on location are not possible to fully convey through film.⁴⁵ These experiences of place are critical; it recognises the distinction between reality of place, and film as autonomous two-dimensional audio-visual medium.⁴⁶

Filming each scene once is part of the cinematic methodology, echoing documentary filmmaker Kossakovsky:

Try to not force people to repeat an action or words. Life is unrepeatable and unpredictable. Wait, look, feel and be ready to film using your own way of filming. Remember that the very best films are unrepeatable. Remember that the very best films were based on unrepeatable shots. Remember that the very best shots capture unrepeatable moments of life with an unrepeatable way of filming.⁴⁷

Employing this methodology, each scene is discussed with the collaborators prior to filming: a conversation with the subject specialists of what the expedition will entail, and a conversation with the cinematographer how to visually portray their exploration. During filming, the intention is to observe unfolding events where the unexpected may take place.

⁴⁴ Fig. 11 Still image from *Prosperous Mountain* [2013] timecode 05:14 – 08:23. When filming the Svalbard Global Seed Vault from a distant angle close to the Adventfjord, a coal truck emerged. This event was not expected however it was a visually striking event. The cinematographer and filmmaker intuitively shifted filming viewpoint in order to film the unfolding event of coal dumping. The scene is one of the most pivotal in the film as it highlights current environmental concerns regarding climate change.

⁴⁵ For example, the films cannot fully express how cold the High Arctic felt when filming *Prosperous Mountain* [2013] [- 32 Celsius plus wind chill factor resulting in – 52 Celsius]. Fear of wildlife such as polar bears is not portrayed in the films, nor are mundane conversations concerning logistics of car problems, equipment challenges, finding the right directions and waiting for access.

⁴⁶ The choreographer Siobhan Davies employed a similar artistic methodology in the production of the film work *Endangered Species* Buckland, D; MacGilp; A and Parkinson, S [eds.] *Burning Ice- Art & Climate Change*, Cape Farewell, London, UK, 2006, pp. 90 - 93

⁴⁷ Greene, R *Your world inside out: Vivan las Antipodas! and Kossakovsky's Ten Rules* www.bfi.org.uk [accessed 8th April 2020]

No scenes are repeated; no scenes are staged nor directed with clear verbal direction. This technique facilitates a creative decision method⁴⁸ where intuitive interventions take place with the intention to emphasise why landscape matters; thereby decisive moments⁴⁹ define the documentary narrative. This observational approach facilitates consistency of cinematography through the search for a visual expression of the location itself.⁵⁰

After filming on location, the recorded material is not viewed until a certain amount of time has passed, usually two – three months. This methodology allows perceived experiences of filming on location to elapse in order to work with the cinematic footage as independent visual material.⁵¹ It allows a latent image to emerge;⁵² consequently, an autonomous film with distinctive qualities is created in the editing process. This final form is then commencing its independent existence in the mind of the viewer, acknowledging Gadamer's hermeneutic interpretation when he writes about transformation into structure in the work:

Thus, the concept of transformation characterizes the independent and superior mode of being of what we called structure. From this viewpoint 'reality' is defined as what is untransformed, and art as the raising up of this reality into its truth⁵³

⁴⁸ 'You need your brain both before and after filming, but don't use your brain during filming. Just film using your instinct and intuition' [Kossakovsky's Fifth Rule]

⁴⁹ The photographer and Magnum co-founder Henri Cartier-Bresson used the concept of the decisive moment in his working practice: 'Your eye must see a composition or an expression that life itself offers you, and you must know with intuition when to click the camera. The phrase was taken from a quote by the 17th century Cardinal de Retz, who stated, "There is nothing in this world that does not have a decisive moment"'
Cartier-Bresson, H [eds. Cheroux, C and Jones, J] *Interviews and Conversations 1951-1998*, Aperture, New York, 2017, p. 56

⁵⁰ Kossakovsky explores this technique explicitly in *Vivan Las Antipodas* [2011] and *Aquarela* [2019]

⁵¹ Acknowledging extensive research into cognitive and perceptible processes, this is not part of the artistic research methodology. This method is a personal approach to filmmaking.

⁵² Fontcuberta, J *Pandora's Camera*, from the essay *The Invisible Image [and not non-existent on that account]*, Mack Books, London, 2015, p. 34

⁵³ Gadamer, H G *Truth and Method* Bloomsbury Academic, London, 2013 [first edition 1975], p. 117

This methodology is shared amongst fellow documentary filmmakers where landscape is a central character.⁵⁴ These films employ similar techniques by focusing on human intervention, intentional use of sound, and methods of unreliable narration and staging of events in order to convey ‘deeper strata of truth’.⁵⁵ These techniques do not only apply to filmmaking methodologies in landscape, however they may be applied in other observational documentary where intuitive interventions occur.

⁵⁴ *Nanook of the North* [Flaherty, 1922], *Fata Morgana* [Herzog, 1971], and *Vivan Las Antipodas* [Kossakovsky, 2011]

⁵⁵ ‘Werner Herzog defended staging his so-called Minnesota Declaration: Truth and Fact in Documentary Cinema: “There are deeper strata of truth in cinema, and there is such a thing as poetic, ecstatic truth. It is mysterious and elusive, and can be reached only through fabrication and imagination and stylization” MacKenzie, S [ed.] *Film Manifestos and Global Cinema – A Critical Anthology*, University of California Press, 2014, p. 471

3.2 Intuition

Intuition is a state of mind, not a way of thinking...the conception of images is governed by the dynamic of revelation.⁵⁶

The term intuition in this context refers to intuition as creative decision method in observational documentary film practice, and refers to Croce, Naess and Tarkovsky's interpretations highlighted in this summary. Methods of intuitive interventions during filming involve patient observation of the location: topography, light and weather conditions, and observing the scientists' intuitive processes. One may claim that intuitive interventions inform the construction of complex narratives. Franklin argues that 'the documentary impulse embraces a dual approach to the treatment of actuality in which creativity, or the extent to which creativity is applied, is a selective process';⁵⁷ in this context referred to as intuitive intervention. Filmmakers and scientists may perceive locations differently based upon artistic and scientific methodologies; how do we arrive at a shared understanding?

Kemp elaborated on this in his writings on art, science and intuition:

I have a powerful sense that effective art and science both begin at the points where knowledge breaks down. Visual intuitions are one of the most potent tools we possess for feeling our way into the unknown.⁵⁸

⁵⁶ Tarkovsky, *A Sculpting in Time: reflection on the cinema*, London, Bodley Head, 1986, p. 40

⁵⁷ Franklin, *S The Documentary Impulse*, Phaidon, London, 2016, p. 29

⁵⁸ Kemp, *M Seen / Unseen – Art, Science, and Intuition from Leonardo to the Hubble Telescope* Oxford University Press, 2006, p. 330

For instance, in *Pseudotachylyte* [2019], the filming methodologies are deliberate intuitive cinematic explorations of how geoscientists intervene in the Arctic landscape. They internalise the science that gives them a perceptual freedom in the field to use intuition as an instrument, as seen in their tactile exploration of the mountain plateau. This visual observation may be disputed by scientists; however, it provides the core tension of the film. The methodologies draw on Naess' theory of duplication⁵⁹ by explaining that:

This way of avoiding contradictions between two or more observers results in the famous *duplication*: there is a tree outside in the exterior world and a tree inside the mind of the observer...the tree in the mind no longer has the character of an image or a copy, because the external tree of physics has no similarity to the internal one. Furthermore, the internal is *in* the mind in a *non-spatial sense*. It is not *in* the brain, because then it would have been seen long ago by scientists... The tree in the mind is private in principle, belonging to a specific person or animal; it is *subjective*. The tree outside is *objective*, supposedly completely independent of any perceivers and a thing in itself⁶⁰

Naess explains, there is a 'world of concrete contents'⁶¹ that is further interpreted in the mind of the individual. For example, in *Pseudotachylyte*, the geoscientists and filmmaker equally intervene with physical landscape: the concrete contents, e.g. the rocks, in an intuitive manner based upon factual information; yet the decisive interventions are intuitive and selective.

Intuition has been examined in elaborate theories within philosophy and psychology, and throughout Eastern and Western history of religion. One example is Croce's theory on intuitive knowledge that emphasises that intuition and rational thinking are not separate but part of what he identifies as 'expression'.⁶²

⁵⁹ Drengson, A and Devall, B [eds.] *Arne Naess: Ecology of Wisdom* Penguin Classics, London, 2016, pp. 74-75

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² Cothey, A L *The Nature of Art*, Routledge, London, 1990, p. 83

He explained:

Knowledge has two forms; it is either intuitive knowledge or logical knowledge; knowledge obtained through imagination or knowledge obtained through the intellect; knowledge of the individual knowledge of the universal; of universal things or of the relations between them⁶³

We have the ability to acquire knowledge without conscious reasoning, and employ intuition and observation of the world as expression. Intuition is employed as a strategy in order to draw attention to aspects we cannot fully comprehend through words or documented facts.⁶⁴ In filmmaking, intuitive interventions can take place by trusting a method of creation that allows the unexpected to occur. On a rudimentary level, the underlying notion is that intuitive knowledge drives artistic and scientific practice; sometimes referred to as a 'gut feeling' or 'hunch' that further steers the development of ideas as a creative decision method.⁶⁵ Conversations with mathematicians⁶⁶ have expounded the intention to seek a way to connect macrocosm with microcosm on a conceptual and cinematic level, as mirrored in Tarkovsky's reflections.⁶⁷

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ 'The knowledge the work communicates is intuitive knowledge of the work itself. But since intuition and expression are identical, the artists' intuition of the work he produces is the very same process as the one by which he produces on expression of this intuition'
Ibid. p. 84

⁶⁵ In elucidating conversations during filming with the mathematician Professor Sir Roger Penrose he refers to the term insight or understanding, instead of intuition. Penrose explains the process of mathematical intuitive thinking as 'wouldn't it be nice if...'
Thinking Space [Dir: Morstang, 2015] timecode 47:27 – 48:10

⁶⁶ 'Intuition is seeing the truth but not yet understanding the reason why, and then your job as a mathematician is to find out the reason why, which means putting all the axioms together and deducing the thing you know in your heart is true because you spotted it'
Professor Kevin Buzzard explaining mathematical intuition in *Thinking Space* [Dir: Morstang, 2015] timecode 21:25 – 23:02

⁶⁷ Tarkovsky, *A Sculpting in Time: reflection on the cinema*, London, Bodley Head, 1986, p. 40

3.3 Landscape

It was curious because when I arrived there everything was exactly as I had imagined it. It was as if the landscapes had no choice: they had to fit to my imagination and submit themselves to my ideas of what they should look like. I like to direct landscapes just as I like to direct actors and animals. Often, I try to introduce into a landscape a certain atmosphere, using sound and vision to give it a definitive character⁶⁸

In the films, landscape is the protagonist: the ancient scars of earthquakes traced in the seemingly unchanging rocks in *Pseudotachylyte* [2019], the winter of the Arctic landscape in *Prosperous Mountain* [2013], and the veiling of the forests in *In Transit* [2011].

The opportunity to take part in expeditions to remote and unfamiliar Arctic territories⁶⁹ has allowed the development of a systematic observational methodology to filmmaking by adapting to terrain and gain insight into how scientific teams intervene in specific landscapes.⁷⁰ The cinematic approach to landscape encompass a physical space that is earthbound, consisting of a presence of distinctive light and weather changes, as

Martinsson explains:

Clouds and mist often sweep through the Arctic landscape. The weather and light change rapidly and constantly reshape the views⁷¹

Emphasising changing weather and light conditions is pivotal to the unfolding narratives where the protagonist is the Arctic location. The particular luminous qualities of the Arctic

⁶⁸ Werner Herzog in Cronin, P [ed.] *Herzog on Herzog* Faber and Faber, London, 2002, p. 81

⁶⁹ The Cape Farewell Project [Buckland] and Martinsson's long-standing work in Svalbard shares the observation that 'the sites on our route along the northern shores of the Polar Sea all have a story to tell, be it natural or cultural' Martinsson, T *Expedition Svalbard – Lost Views on the Shorelines of the Economy* Steidl, 2015 p. 13

⁷⁰ Methodologies echo Buckland's *Cape Farewell* Project, and Martinsson and Holmlund's longstanding Svalbard work. Buckland, D; MacGilp, A and Parkinson, S [eds.] *Burning Ice- Art & Climate Change*, Cape Farewell, London, UK, 2006 Martinsson, T *Arctic Views – Passages in Time*, Valand Academy, University of Gothenburg and Art and Theory Publishing, 2015

⁷¹ Hedberg, H; Knape, G; Martinsson, T; [eds.] *Expedition Svalbard – Lost Views on the shorelines of economy* Steidl Publishers, Gottingen, Germany, 2015, p. 28

light is part of the cinematic methodologies as ‘absolutes of light and darkness define the Arctic circle’⁷² The cinematic interventions are created by the physical and visible materiality in landscape. Working closely with a cinematographer, the intention is to construct a cinematic landscape within each frame, scene and ultimately the entire film; in this way, landscape is presented as a constructed idea. The systematic methodologies employed in these films are not specific to the Arctic: they can be translated and embedded to any location and interdisciplinary collaboration in local and global contexts, in order to seek an understanding of our environment through film.

The films draw upon historical and contemporary documentary films where expeditions to specific locations are featured and explored as concrete places and metaphors.⁷³

This conceptual approach echoes the following description of Herzog’s oeuvre:

Herzog’s documentaries mythologize the landscape as depicting an internal space, which is also an indexical image of the external world. Even in documentary, they suggest, we cannot identify clear and fixed boundaries between exterior and interior spaces of representation. Underlying this cinematic terrain is documentary’s unstable and constantly shifting relationship to knowledge.⁷⁴

The first static scene appearing in *In Transit* [2011]⁷⁵ is a wide shot of the lake by the Hasselmann Hill in Karelia, Russia, where the battle on the 25th and 26th June 1944 took place. The scene features a view of a tranquil lake with surrounding boreal dense forest; one solitary young birch is centred in the frame. The intention to film this scene on the anniversary of the attack 25th June 2010, was to draw attention to identical Arctic distinctive

⁷² Davidson, P *The Idea of North*, Reaktion Books Ltd. London, 2005, p. 121

⁷³ ‘*Encounters at the end of the world*’ [Herzog, 2007]; ‘*Nanook of the North*’ [Flaherty, 1922]; ‘*Vivan las Antipodas*’ [Kossakovsky, 2011] and ‘*Aquarela*’ [Kossakovsky, 2018]; and ‘*The Great White Silence*’ [Ponting, 1924].

⁷⁴ Ames, E *Herzog, Landscape and Documentary*, Cinema Journal, 48, Number 2, University of Texas Press, 2009, p. 65

⁷⁵ Fig. 1 Still image from *In Transit* [2011] timecode 01:40 - 02:18

midsummer light⁷⁶ of 1944; the dates for filming provided the critical characteristic of 24-hour daylight with midnight sun.⁷⁷ The light was filmed specifically to indicate a historical event; nature itself was filmed to allude to the intensity of a historical event and the contemporary intervention of exhumation. This method allows a dialectic construction of the film; it moves between past and present interventions within the cinematic construction. Furthermore, part of the emblematic cinematic interpretation of the location are mid-summer flowers, bird songs, swans, the Arctic midsummer light and a constant presence of mosquitoes. Deliberately, the location of the Arctic forest is portrayed as the main character in the film, drawing on the rich artistic heritage of the Karelian landscape.⁷⁸ The opening scene⁷⁹ in *Prosperous Mountain* [2013] is a cinematic panning sequence of a dark blue mountain range where a pyramid shaped mountain emerges in the frame illuminated by a full moon. The intensity of the Arctic blue light is a dominant feature; its

⁷⁶ Filming existing light on location is part of the systematic enquiry in how to portray landscape as main character. The impetus lies in the term photography [interpreted from Greek: drawing with light], and in cinematography [the art or science of film (motion-picture) photography]

⁷⁷ During the attack in 1944, it was midnight sun in the Arctic. 24-hour daylight may have been used strategically in the attack in order to maximise visibility. Witness accounts include descriptions of time confusion; whether the attack happened in the late afternoon [4 pm] or early morning [4 am]. Interview with a survivor of the battle, Mr. Windingstad, in his home in Oslo, April 2010; Senje S *Glemt Soldat* Pax Forlag, Oslo, 2008, p. 26

⁷⁸ Of the portrayals of Karelia in the arts, most prominent is the Finnish epic poem *Kalevala*, the oral folklore and mythology collected by Elias Lønrot in the 19th century. In one particular cycle, in response to *In Transit* [2011], Lemminkäinen's journey to Tuonela, the island of the dead, is described. His mother travels to Tuonela to bring back her dead son where 'she rakes for her son along Tuonela's river she dredges against the stream' [Lønrot, 1989, p. 175]. Akseli Gallen-Kallela portrayed this in his painting *Lemminkäinen's Mother* where a mother sits on the shore of a black lake, grieving over the body of her dead son. In the lake swims a swan. [Gallen-Kallela, *A Lemminkäinen's Mother*, Oil on canvas, 1897, Ateneum Art Museum, Helsinki, Finland]

The composer Jean Sibelius also worked with *Kalevala* in the tone poem *Lemminkäinen [Four legends]*, Op. 22, 1895, where the second part refers to *The Swan of Tuonela*. These artists have influenced the film by its symbolic interpretation of landscape. The idea of the mother travelling to the distant shores of Tuonela to bring back her dead son bears resonance to two aspects of the film: the individual families of the fallen who want to bring their dead home, and the symbol of the motherland and its work for repatriation. The Karelian forest where the fallen SS volunteers are laying has resemblance to Tuonela, the island of the dead; it is a land faraway and difficult to reach. Some relatives of individual fallen soldiers are travelling to this contemporary Tuonela, a symbolic and physical land of the dead in order to arrange repatriation.

⁷⁹ Fig. 2 Still image from *Prosperous Mountain* [2013] timecode 00:54 – 01:48

visual reference is Sohlberg's painting *Winternight in the Mountains*⁸⁰ The unique quality of light and constant weather changes allude to a terrain at the forefront of current environmental change.⁸¹ The pyramid shaped mountain lends its contextual reference to early seed collectors in ancient Egypt.⁸² Filming wide vistas is part of the systematic cinematic method in order to portray the location and landscape, Svalbard, as the main character where humans are portrayed as visitors.⁸³

The unfolding narrative in *Pseudotachylyte* [2019] emphasises weather and light conditions. There is only one scene where no humans appear; the intent of a visual pause.⁸⁴ The mountain plateau is featured with rapidly changing light. The landscape changes its visual presence by nature's interventions of cloud movements; consequently, the geometrical patterns on the plateau is illuminated. Furthermore, the intention for this cinematic

⁸⁰ In the limited edition publication of the film *Prosperous Mountain* [2015], Phipps quoted the painter in the accompanying essay: 'Before me in the distance rose a range of mountains, beautiful and majestic in the moonlight, like petrified giants. The scene was the most magnificent and filled with fantastic stillness that I had ever experienced. Over the white contours of the Nordic winter stretched the sky's endless vault, filled with a myriad of glimmering stars. Harald Sohlberg on his painting Winter night in Rondane [1913-4]'

Waallan-Hansen writes 'Sohlberg's Winternight in the Mountains is not a depiction of winter itself, but is more a visualization of state of mind or an emotion that can surface when encountering nature. Winter Night in the Mountains conveys a sense of the grandeur of nature'
Huusko, T; Waallann Hansen, V; Luhtala, A; Yvenes, M [eds.] *The Magic North – Finnish and Norwegian Art around 1900*, Finnish National Gallery/ Atheneum Art Museum Helsinki and National Museum for Art, Architecture and Design, Oslo, 2015, p. 167

⁸¹ 'In the High Arctic it is possible to witness just how fast the ice is melting and the balance of our planet is changing'
Buckland, MacGilp, Parkinson *Burning Ice - Art & Climate Change*, London, Cape Farewell, 2006, p. 137

⁸² The first known plant collector recorded in history is the Pharaoh Queen Hatshepsut of Upper and Lower Egypt who ruled 1500 BC. Images from her expedition to the land of Punt, possibly today's Somalia, are recorded in the reliefs in her temple Djoser-Djeseru at Deir el Bahari, Luxor, Egypt. These images were the starting point for making the film, and inspired the scene of the Arctic procession of seed delivery, *Prosperous Mountain* [2013] timecode 09:48.

⁸³ 'What is wilderness today in our largely humanized world? What it has always been: a space that sustains itself, was here before humanity, and where, in the words of the Wilderness Act of 1964, 'the Earth and its community of life are untrammelled by man and where man himself is a visitor who does not remain'
Wilson, E O, *The Future of Life*, London, 2002, p. 144

⁸⁴ Fig. 3 *Pseudotachylyte* [2019] timecode 26:43 – 26:49

interpretation as a visual pause, draws attention to the mountain plateau as a character revealing its geological narrative through light, and highlights its enduring presence without human intervention.⁸⁵

In this context, the terms landscape; natural environment; land; and terrain echoes Wells' writings in regards to the observational documentary cinematic approach to the subject and content in the films. She writes:

Suffice it to note that our relation to the environment in which we find ourselves, and of which we form a part, is multiply constituted: the real, perceptions of the real, the imaginary, the symbolic, memory and experience, form a complex tapestry at the heart of our response to our environment, and, by extension, to landscape imagery⁸⁶

Furthermore, the view of a shared natural environment stems from the interpretation of Naess' writings that the essence is defined as a 'world of concrete contents'⁸⁷ He writes about perspectivism:

the world is the total set of perspectives. But usually we find the subject – object distinction implied in perspective. The world is *seen by* subjects in different perspectives. The tree *looks* different according to the perspective of the observer. By walking around, we see the tree from different angles. Thus, 'perspectivism' may mislead'⁸⁸

⁸⁵ The writer John McPhee explored the US landscape by physical experience and observation in company with geologists; his writings share similar interventions *with* and *in* landscape as experienced whilst filming *Pseudotschlyte*. McPhee elaborates on what landscape constitutes of in terms of topography, geology and human interventions. He offers an insight into deep time based upon factual geological information and intuitive interventions in landscape through his written observations. Similar to McPhee's writing methods, hiking with the geoscientists was central to the filming methodology: the geologists' rhythmic exploration of the landscape through scientific interventions defined the structure of the film.

⁸⁶ Wells, L *Land Matters – Landscape Photography, Culture and Identity* I.B. Taurus, London, 2011, p. 2

⁸⁷ 'I propose to identify the world with the set of contexts, not with structures. This means that the two contents referred to above are two parts of the world. The world has structures, but does not reveal them. We make conceptual constructs to cope with them, but they are all human-made'
Drengson, A and Devall, B [eds.] *Arne Naess: Ecology of Wisdom* Penguin Classics, London, 2016, p. 78

'If we permit ourselves to use to terms realness and reality, I shall maintain that there is no reality 'behind' the contents. The abstract structures may be called real, but any definite structure in the form of a theoretical construct is an ens rationis and is not behind or underneath the contents'
Ibid. p. 79

⁸⁸ Drengson, A and Devall, B [eds.] *Arne Naess: Ecology of Wisdom* Penguin Classics, London, 2016, p. 80

Employing these viewpoints within film methodologies alerts to alteration in hierarchies in landscape; it becomes the protagonist in the film works similar to Herzog's approach to directing location as an inner state of mind:

It is not just a location, it is a state of mind. It has almost human qualities. It is a vital part of the characters' inner landscapes. The question I asked myself when first confronted by the jungle was "how can I use this terrain to portray landscapes of the mind?" I have never been to Peru before filming but had imagined the landscapes and the atmosphere with real precision.⁸⁹

This portrayal reverses hierarchical approaches to landscape that naturalise exploitation, and this approach to landscape as protagonist stems from concepts in deep ecology where there is an eco-centric approach to our environment.⁹⁰ In the films, nature itself is portrayed as a protagonist that will endure beyond momentary human intervention⁹¹ as an attempt to draw attention to our impact on our environment.⁹² They intentionally shift the hierarchical structure of our relationship to landscape: from human-centred to nature-centred.⁹³

Employing cinematic techniques to portray landscape as protagonist and humans as secondary characters may shift the focus in order to emphasise why landscape, time, history, geopolitics and our environment matter.⁹⁴

⁸⁹ Cronin, P [ed.] *Herzog on Herzog* Faber and Faber, London, 2002, p. 81

⁹⁰ Garrard, G *Ecocriticism*, Routledge, Abingdon, 2012, p. 24

⁹¹ Wilson, E O, *The Future of Life*, London, 2002, p. 144

⁹² Martinsson writes 'in my work as a researcher I always think of whom I am doing this for. The answer is simple for me. It's for my daughter and her generation and their future children and grandchildren. This is a call from the field for the beauty and appreciation of wild places and the preservation of the world'
Martinsson, T *Arctic Views – Passages in Time*, Valand Academy, University of Gothenburg & Art and Theory Publishing, 2015, p. 16

The painter Peder Balke described the Arctic landscape as 'for in these northern districts the beauty of nature takes the leading role while human beings, the children of nature, play only a secondary role.'
Lange, M I, *Peder Balke – Paintings*, National Gallery Company London, 2014, distributed by Yale University Press. Pp. 20-21

⁹³ This can be also be referred to as shifting from an anthropocentric to an eco-centric view.
Garrard, G *Ecocriticism* Routledge, Abingdon, 2012

⁹⁴ 'Art and the sciences represent parallel, mutually-reinforcing acts of feeling our way through the environment, understanding and asserting our presence as a means of preserving it'
Buckland, MacGilp, Parkinson *Burning Ice – Art & Climate Change*, London, Cape Farewell, 2006, p. 91

Figures



Fig. 1 Still image from *In Transit* [2011] timecode 01:40 - 02:18



Fig. 2 Still image from *Prosperous Mountain* [2013] timecode 00:54 – 01:48



Fig. 3 Still image from *Pseudotachylyte* [2019] timecode 26:43 – 26:49

3.4 Image

Before I travel somewhere I haven't been before, I create an image in my mind how it is going to look. Even on those occasions I haven't got any visual material to draw upon, those landscapes emerge in my mind: concrete and realistically formed as if they were existing. It is not that I create them, they just exist there until reality, which encompass another depth, and force them to the side⁹⁵

The following systematic cinematic methodologies are employed in all three films:

1. An expedition takes place: arrival to location – intuitive interventions whilst filming – departure from location
2. Unfolding narrative: employing the camera as an instrument in order to unravel visual observations of interventions in landscape
3. Finding the frame: dialectic use of images through predominantly wide shots and close ups
4. Camera movement: locked and free-moving sequences
5. Durational exposure: a range of shot length, predominantly long takes

The cinematic expression developed during the production of *In Transit* [2011] portrays dualities in a specific landscape that is visualised as beautiful and idyllic with its wide sweeping vistas, as well as brutal close-up images of human intervention in nature. This dichotomy creates tension within the film and therefore highlights both moral and ethical questions with the subject matter. Powel writes:

And it is this landscape which permeates *In Transit*. The forest panoramas teem with vivaciousness whilst the close imagery reinvigorates the remains of the past as they

⁹⁵ The process of making documentary films resonates with the experience of a writer. When the author Knausgaard travelled to Northern Norway to write a commissioned essay, he described the journey as outlined above. Knausgaard, K O from the essay 'Sandhornet' in 'Sjelens Amerika', p. 71. Forlaget Oktober, Oslo, 2019. Translated by Morstang, HC.

emerge from the root-infested undergrowth. So alive is the forest that even the living take time to emerge from its frames. By engaging with the landscape and its cultural representations, *In Transit* challenges collective and individual memories of a defining period in Europe's most troubled century, and in one of its remotest corners... But *In Transit* also reminds us that in that serene landscape lie the metaphorical and literal skeletons that help define the present.⁹⁶

The tension of the cinematic language lends itself to ambiguity where 'the art cinema seeks to solve the problem in a sophisticated way: by the device of ambiguity'⁹⁷ The spoken dialogue in the film offers limited information; the images and sound continuously offer an ambiguous view of the unfolding events in landscape. This ambiguity offers room for interpretation, to ask questions and debate whether one should intervene in landscape and memory through exhumation of fallen soldiers.⁹⁸

The scene of the first exhumation⁹⁹ starts with a wide static frame of dense forest and a figure looking at the site. It shifts to close-ups of vigorous unearthing with the use of metal spades and tools. The viewpoint changes to an angle above; soil and hands covered with gloves unearthing roots, rocks and sandy soil. The scene is illuminated by sun. All of a sudden, the sun is covered by clouds and the light changes as the first human remain is revealed: a human bone unearthed under a thin layer of soil. In this instance, the cinematic image is created by the forensic archaeologists' and searchers' intuitive intervention of

⁹⁶ Powel, B *In Transit*, limited edition publication, 2011, p. 10

⁹⁷ Braudy, L and Cohen, M [eds.] *Film Theory and Criticism – Introductory Readings* Oxford University Press, Oxford. 1999. Citation by Bordwell, p. 721

⁹⁸ *In Transit* frames the remains of such dead as they emerge from Karelian soil; forgotten by none who knew them, but absent from their collective national narrative. With the violent revelation of their bodies and its framing in Heidi Morstang's imagery come the discomforts and complexities of national identity. These dead of war have neither gravestones or cenotaphs to record their names, only a canopy of birch leaves and a humming requiem of forest life' Powel, B *In Transit*, limited edition publication, 2011, p. 5

⁹⁹ Fig. 4 Still from *In Transit* [2011] timecode 04:57 – 06:09

seeking a certain location,¹⁰⁰ and the filmmakers' intuitive intervention of filming the unearthing in synchronicity of sudden light change.¹⁰¹ The unfolding narrative is revealed through content, cinematic approach and observational methods; consequently, the narrative is materialised into a cinematic image.¹⁰²

Prosperous Mountain [2013] features static wide scenes of sweeping wide vistas where humans and their belongings are portrayed as miniscule in landscape.¹⁰³ The scenes reveal a vast landscape dominated by extreme, rapid weather changes and blue polar light. Scenic sequences are emphasised by harsh and uncomfortable aural depictions of the Arctic landscape and as reflected upon in the essay in the limited edition DVD of the film:

The scenes that constitute the film unfold as tension rather than narrative, it moves amongst moments rather than in confrontation with them, offering a searching ruminative absorption.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰⁰ The searchers and forensic archaeologists from the Kaprolat Committee, University of Bergen, located sites where remains of fallen soldiers may be located. The searches were based upon witness accounts and maps drawn from these accounts. The role of the landscape was significant in the 1944 battle. The battalion based in the Karelian forest heard the sound of axes and trees falling for several weeks before the attack. They knew Soviet troops were approaching as they were cutting trees with axes to build roads to manoeuvre their military transport into the area, as described in an interview by survivor Wolfgang Windingstad, 8th April 2010; and Senje, S *Glemt soldat* Pax Forlag, Oslo, 2008, p. 14

¹⁰¹ 'Morstang is consequently able to depict the dead where they fell, using the same radiant June sunlight in which they died, far away from the frames of ceremonies. The personal essence of death pervades *In Transit*, with the fallen still amongst to the paraphernalia of their lives: the boots, bottles, buttons, and bullets crucial to their final days' Powel, B *In Transit*, limited edition publication, 2011, p. 8

¹⁰² The filmmaker Herzog describes a similar approach to filmmaking as 'my films come to me very much alive, like dreams without logical patterns or academic explanations. I will have a basic idea for a film and then over a period of time, when maybe I am driving or walking, it becomes clearer and clearer to me. I see the film before me, as if I were in a cinema' Cronin, P [ed.] *Herzog on Herzog* Faber and Faber, London, 2002, p. 65

¹⁰³ Fig. 5 Still from *Prosperous Mountain* [2013]

¹⁰⁴ Phipps, B, limited edition publication of the film *Prosperous Mountain*, 2015, p. 3

The protagonist is the Arctic location itself and the Svalbard Global Seed Vault. Employing visual rhetorical methodologies portray humanity in a brief timespan versus the longevity of a fragile landscape, as echoed in the Cape Farewell project.¹⁰⁵

The systematic use of static scenes throughout the film allow unfolding narratives to emerge within the viewfinder. For example, the scene of a military ship¹⁰⁶ quietly gliding across the horizon alludes to military and geopolitical interests in the Arctic Archipelago. The naval vessel emerges from the right side of the frame and appears to be pulled into the frame by moving sea mist. The observational documentary methodologies allow these events to emerge and unfold through a patient observation of place itself that reveals itself through predominantly long takes. In this way, movements of mist, clouds, wind directions and light conditions are part of creating a cinematic expression in the viewfinder with the intent to provide a poetic space for the viewer to intuit the narrative.¹⁰⁷

Connecting macrocosm and microcosm, time and space are central subjects in *Pseudotachylyte* [2019]. The film methodologies explore time and locations; long sequences

¹⁰⁵ Buckland, D; MacGilp; A and Parkinson, S [eds.] *Burning Ice- Art & Climate Change*, Cape Farewell, London, UK, 2006

¹⁰⁶ Fig. 6 *Prosperous Mountain* [2013] timecode 03:36 – 04:13

¹⁰⁷ This echoes Tarkovsky's intention; that 'the image is indivisible and elusive, dependent upon our consciousness and on the real world which it seeks to embody...it is a kind of equation, signifying the correlation between truth and the human consciousness, bound as the latter is by Euclidean space. We cannot comprehend the totality of the universe, but the poetic image is able to express that totality'

Tarkovsky, A *Sculpting in Time: reflection on the cinema*, London, Bodley Head, 1986, p. 106

feature prominently in the structure of the film with the intention to reveal the expedition.

This resonates with film methodologies by Herzog,¹⁰⁸ Flaherty¹⁰⁹ and Tarkovsky.¹¹⁰

Pseudotachylyte [2019] is constructed as a quest through a ‘cinematic continuum’,¹¹¹ as explored by Herzog in *Fata Morgana* [1971]:

Fata Morgana represents not an African travelogue, but an exploration into the paradoxical nature of the cinematic image, which confronts the spectator with a space of referentiality that is also fleeting and inaccessible. To this effect, Herzog uses visual analogy and extremely long takes. In one passage, for example, the camera performs a 180-degree pan, as if it were slowly moving along a cinematic continuum, from the seemingly solid ground of a rock formation to the shimmering mirage of a desert lake...The paradox is clear: by “holding” on the physical world that appears before it, the camera renders a shifting landscape picture that appears to lose its referentiality in the course of its depiction¹¹²

Throughout the film *Pseudotachylyte* [2019], the camera follows the movement of the geoscientists at the mountain plateau, creating an illusion of space through constant movements in long duration shots.¹¹³ Wide rotating scenes follow the geoscientists’ movements in the landscape as 360-degree visual explorations that shift into close-ups of their tactile exploration of the very specific and detailed features of the terrestrial surface, such as grain of rocks. This is featured in the opening scene of the film¹¹⁴ where close-up

¹⁰⁸ Ames, E Herzog, *Landscape and Cinema* Cinema Journal 48, No 2, Winter 2009, p. 59
Herzog, W. *Fata Morgana*, 1971

¹⁰⁹ ‘*Flaherty and Film*’ - Robert Gardner interviewing Frances Flaherty, National Educational Television, 1957
Timecode 1:51 ‘His approach was exploratory. I am explorer first, he said, and a filmmaker a long way after. He brought the filmmaking an explorers’ mind and a process of discovery. All art, he said, is a kind of exploring. To discover and reveal is the way every artist sets out his business. Now, science is exploration. Its aim is discovery but it is exploratory. In the Flaherty films, art and science comes together. The process is the same, the search is the same; the search for truth’

¹¹⁰ Tarkovsky, A. Opening scene from *The Sacrifice*, 1986. Timecode: 5:51 – 15:19

¹¹¹ Ames, E Herzog, *Landscape and Cinema* Cinema Journal 48, No 2, Winter 2009, p. 59

¹¹² Ames, E Herzog, *Landscape and Cinema* Cinema Journal 48, No 2, Winter 2009, p. 59

¹¹⁴ Fig. 7 Still image from *Pseudotachylyte* [2019] timecode 00:00 – 05:47

scenes of laboratory processes in the Electron Microscope feature microscopic patterns of rock samples collected at the mountain plateau and geometric patterns emerge as concurrent screen-images.¹¹⁵ Similar geometric patterns are visible in satellite images and maps of the plateau.¹¹⁶ These patterns are scars of earthquakes, pseudotachylytes; they feature throughout the film in scenes from the mountain plateau: the natural laboratory itself.

The geologists identify pseudotachylytes and analyse patterns of samples, whilst the filmmaker discovers visual landscapes reminiscent of Balke paintings from the region.¹¹⁷ Subsequently, these scientific and artistic aspects synthesise into a visual discovery¹¹⁸ how this landscape was formed by geological events.¹¹⁹ The intention to employ cinematic strategies in order to draw attention to macrocosm and microcosm; the epic and the miniscule world as visual, physical and tactile exploration of landscape is inspired by Kemp's writings on art, science and intuition by '*embodying the potential opposites*'¹²⁰

Given this total interdependence, the levels we characterize as 'parts' or 'fundamental; units', and those we describe as 'wholes' or 'complexes', are matters of philosophical conviction, practical choice, or personal preference, not scientific

¹¹⁵ Fig. 8 Still image from *Pseudotachylyte* [2019] timecode 00:00 – 05:47

¹¹⁶ Fig. 9 Still image from *Pseudotachylyte* [2019] timecode 13:24 – 13:45

¹¹⁷ When the painter Peder Balke travelled to northern Norway in the 1880s he described this landscape as '...nor is any pen capable of describing the grandiose and enchanting impression made on the eye and the mind by the wealth of natural beauty and the incomparable situations, an impression that not only overwhelmed me then and there, in the intoxication of the moment, but also had a decisive influence on the whole of my life'

Lange, M I *Peder Balke Paintings*, National Gallery Company London, 2014, distributed by Yale University Press, p. 20

¹¹⁸ 'His [Balke] pictures would not be seen as topographically correct or naturalistic representations of natural conditions....to achieve these effects, Balke developed a singular visual language, simplifying the motifs – at times almost to the point of total abstraction – in order to redouble the experience of nature's majesty. This is most obvious in the some of his late monochrome paintings of the Northern Light from the 1870's. The light phenomenon hovers over the ocean with the help of simple vertical and horizontal strokes of paint on a black ground'

Lange, M I *Peder Balke Paintings*, National Gallery Company London, 2014, distributed by Yale University Press, p. 53

¹¹⁹ 'The earthquakes in the Nufjord plateau took place almost two billion years ago'. Recorded conversation with Dr. Luca Menegon on location at Nufjord Plateau, Norway, July 2017.

¹²⁰ Kemp, M *Seen / Unseen – Art, Science, and Intuition from Leonardo to the Hubble Telescope*, Oxford University Press, 2006, p. 325

demonstration. It is sometimes the case that the less dogmatic, non-programmatic and 'fuzzier' procedures of artists are better at embodying the potential opposites than the analytical presentations of modern science¹²¹

Figures



Fig. 4 Still from *In Transit* [2011] timecode 04:57 – 06:09



Fig. 5 Still from *Prosperous Mountain* [2013]

¹²¹ Ibid.



Fig. 6 Still image from *Prosperous Mountain* [2013] timecode 03:36 – 04:13



Fig. 7 Still image from *Pseudotachylyte* [2019] timecode 00:00 – 05:47

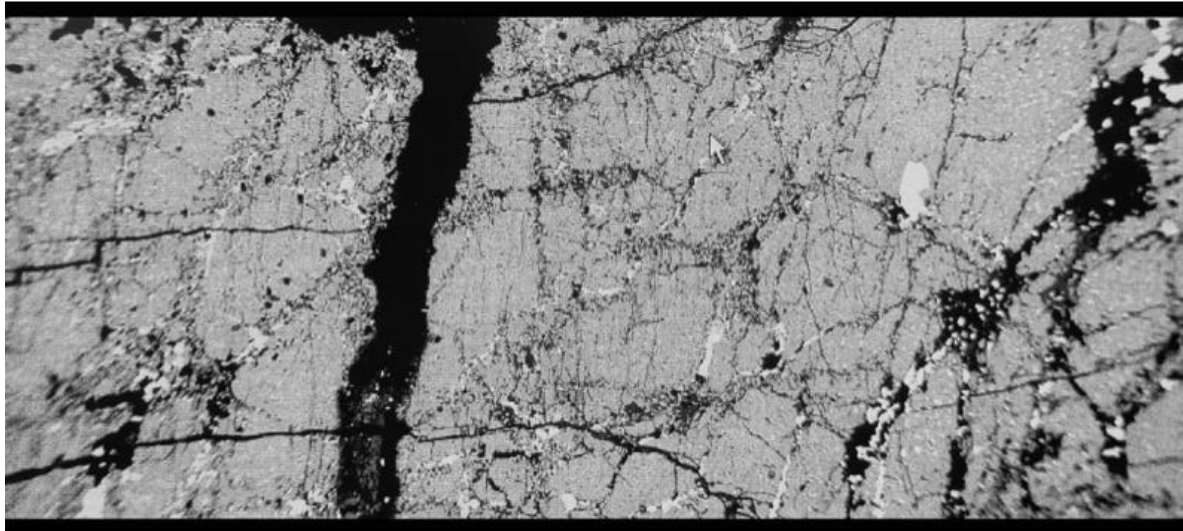


Fig. 8 Still image from *Pseudotachylite* [2019] timecode 00:00 – 05:47



Fig. 9 Still image from *Pseudotachylite* [2019] timecode 13:24 – 13:45

3.5 Sound

Whilst walking in unfamiliar terrains, I seek views through my eyes and through the viewfinder; the part of the camera that is a reminder of what the quest is all about: finding the view. Sometimes, I do not find any views by looking, nor do I find any images that convey the pre-existing image in my mind. Whilst feeling overwhelmed by the visual richness of the location, I close my eyes and listen to the pitches of the wind, rustling of leaves, birds, rain falling, sudden blizzards; sounds that are near me and sounds in the distance. I create an image in my mind, and when I open my eyes, I have found that exact image that will emerge in the viewfinder¹²²

The following systematic sound methodologies are employed in all three films:

1. Use of silence as intuitive intervention in the dialectic exploration of silence and noise; furthermore, the dialectic exploration of inner and outer 'worlds'
2. Recording of natural sounds of Arctic landscape in order to create sound design that emphasises an accentuation of aural elements, and likewise removal of certain sounds in order to create dialectic expression
3. Including specialist terminology used by scientists
4. Removing selected dialogue in order to extract concise fragments.
5. No use of music in films
6. Construction of a dialectic soundtrack in post-production including use of silence and natural sounds

¹²² In conversation with myself, 11th February 2020

In Transit [2011] has a scene starting with a close-up image of white dust swirling in the air.¹²³ Sound of a metallic saw is accentuated whilst the close-up image gradually exposes the content: a saw is cutting through a brown bone that resembles a tree branch.

The audio gradually reveals the narrative of the unfolding scene before the viewer sees the incident itself: a human bone is cut in order to provide a DNA sample for identification.

Prosperous Mountain [2013] features a blue truck reversing onto a coal tip in a white mountainous terrain.¹²⁴ The sound is accentuated through an uncomfortable crescendo, until it is silenced when the coal is dumped onto the tip. The coal disperses into the air as a black cloud. As a method of audio intervention, silence is used to accentuate the lament of mountain: coal dispersing as an environmentally challenging act.¹²⁵

Pseudotachylyte [2019] features a long sequence by a rock.¹²⁶ The soundtrack is constructed with the intention to create a dialectic tension between the outer, exterior world and the inner world of thought-processes¹²⁷ with initial dialogue by geoscientists before the audio

¹²³ Fig. 10 Still image from *In Transit* [2011] timecode 14:18 – 14:47

¹²⁴ Fig. 11 Still image from *Prosperous Mountain* [2013] timecode 05:14 – 08:23

¹²⁵ E O Wilson argues that ‘what humanity is inflicting on itself and Earth is, to use a modern metaphor, the result of a mistake in capital investment. Having appropriated the planet’s natural resources, we chose to annuitize them with a short-term maturity reached by progressively increasing pay outs. At the time, it seemed a wise decision...But there is a problem: the key elements of natural capital, Earth’s arable land, ground water, forests, marine fisheries, and petroleum, are ultimately finite, and not subject to proportionate capital growth.... The long-term prospects are not promising. Awakened at last to this approaching difficulty, we have begun a frantic search for substitutes’
Wilson, E O *The Future of Life*, London, 2002, p. 149

¹²⁶ Fig. 12 Still image from *Pseudotachylyte* [2019] timecode 16:51 – 23:00. The sound is almost silenced at timecode 18:38 with only tactile sounds accentuated. The sound reappears in timecode 23:00 when the geoscientists have completed their exploration of the rock.

¹²⁷ Herzog employs similar technique in *The Dark Glow of the Mountains* [1984]
‘What we wanted to find out was what goes on inside mountain climbers who undertake such extreme endeavours? What is the fascination that drives them up to the peaks like addicts? Aren’t these mountains and peaks like something deep within us all?...The lens and camera movement flatten out the pro-filmic scene, transforming the physical environment into a graphic pattern, re-signifying the depicted mountains and ravines as the “highs” and “lows” of an inner world, which the camera seems to register like the moving stylus of an automatic instrument. This method of surveying and displaying

only features the tactile exploration of the rock: hands touching the rock and footsteps in the terrain. Silencing all dialogue in the mid-section of the scene draws attention to the inner space of the geoscientists and focus the cinematic narrative on the presence of the landscape as protagonist: the rock itself. This methodology is used in order to create a dialectic cinematic expression that evokes a multi-layered articulation of the narrative, a technique also explored by Herzog who writes:

There does sometimes seem to be a contradiction between what you see and what you hear, but for me this actually creates a kind of tension that makes many things transparent that otherwise would not be so¹²⁸

Herzog's approach becomes significant in the post-production phase as intuition is a defining element when constructing the soundtrack. In this stage of filmmaking, the filmmaker and sound designer discuss each scene in the 'rough cut edit' by listening and watching the unfolding narrative with the existing soundtrack. This is followed by a second viewing of the edit when the sound is muted in order to allow for a visual interpretation of the film. A crucial part of the process is making decisions on composing the layered sound track by recalling the event of filming on location, and these are discussed between filmmaker and sound designer.¹²⁹ Emphasising certain sounds from the original sound recordings accentuate and create an autonomous aural narrative. Employing this

physical terrain— the film's key visual strategy—is also the way in which Herzog charts an inner movement traversing desire, fear, passion, dependence, and fascination, across some of their various phases. The strategy relies for its effect on the spectator's powers of visualization and projection, so that the cinematic landscape also becomes a site for eliciting emotions from the audience'

Ames, E *Herzog, Landscape and Cinema* Cinema Journal 48, No 2, Winter 2009, p. 50

¹²⁸ Cronin, P [ed.] *Herzog on Herzog* Faber and Faber, London, 2002, p. 256

¹²⁹ As stated regarding 3.1 Processes: Observational Documentary Filmmaking [p. 30], the methodology allowing perceived experiences of filming on location to elapse in order to work with the cinematic footage as independent visual material, is a different approach to recalling aural soundscapes. As filmmaking methodology, it acknowledges a distinction between filmmaking as material and the cinematic image creating imaginary spaces.

methodology also separates sounds into individual audio layers. The film soundtrack is then reconstituted in layers emphasising specific sounds. Each scene is assembled with composites of distinctive sounds; variations of pitches and sound levels are developed into a composite final soundtrack. The intention is to introduce the viewer to complex moral and ethical dimensions of the film by devising sound methodologies that gradually reveal the content through both contradiction and reinforcement of the image track.¹³⁰ In the aforementioned examples of scenes, affective soundtracks were created with accentuation of silence and use of acoustics drawing emphasis on tension in the dialectics of image and sound.

Methodologies such as using spoken narratives by esteemed science communicators in mainstream documentaries¹³¹ are not employed in the published films. On the contrary, parts of verbal dialogue are removed in order to create an audio and visual narrative in order to elicit subjective interpretations; only natural sounds feature.¹³² As a consequence, the sound design is composed with loose references to and inspiration by the Japanese poetry form of Haiku poetry¹³³ where there is a clear minimalistic structure and an acute observation, often with the juxtaposition of images and / or ideas, as the filmmaker

¹³⁰ Ibid.

¹³¹ Examples: Various world leading BBC productions such as Attenborough series: *Blue Planet I and II* [2001 and 2017], *Planet Earth I and II* [2001 and 2016], *Seven Worlds, One Planet* [2019], BBC Productions

¹³² 'He [Bergman] singles out one sound and excludes all the incidental circumstances of the sound world that would exist in real life. ...Above all, I feel that the sounds of the world are so beautiful in themselves that if only we could learn to listen to them properly, cinema would have no need of music at all'
Tarkovsky, *A Sculpting in Time*, University of Texas, Austin, 1986, p. 162

¹³³ Basho, M *The Narrow Road to the Deep North and Other Travel Sketches*, Penguin Books, London, 1996

Tarkovsky employed as a model for his filmic language¹³⁴ in order to elicit contemplative responses to the films.¹³⁵

Figures



Fig. 10 Still image from *In Transit* [2011] timecode 14:18 – 14:47

¹³⁴ 'The image as a precise observation of life takes us straight back to Japanese poetry...Haiku cultivates its images in such a way that they mean nothing beyond themselves, and at the same time express so much that it is not possible to catch their final meaning. The more closely the image corresponds to its function, the more impossible it is to constrict it within a clear intellectual formula. The reader of Haiku has to be absorbed into it as into nature, to plunge in, lose himself in its depth, as in the cosmos where there is no bottom and no top...The Japanese poets know how to express their visions of reality in three lines of observation. ...And the more precise the observation, the nearer it comes to being unique, and so to being an image'

Tarkovsky, *A Sculpting in Time: reflection on the cinema*, London, Bodley Head, 1986, pp. 106-107

¹³⁵ Tarkovsky worked towards 'an integral part of his imaginative blending of poetry and reality, of inner and outer truths; sounds from nature that elicited an echo within himself' Ibid. p. 14



Fig. 11 Still image from *Prosperous Mountain* [2013] timecode 05:14 – 08:23



Fig. 12 Still image from *Pseudotachylyte* [2019] timecode 16:51 – 23:00

3.6 Edit

The artist comes, chooses his material, discarding all that is unnecessary, leaving only that which is essential, necessary, obligatory, - and unexpectedly there arises a work of cinematic art¹³⁶

The following systematic editing methodologies are employed in all three films:

1. Narrative structure of expeditions: arrival to Arctic location – scientific intervention in landscape – departure: landscape left as enduring character
2. Construction of individual scenes: Content
3. Construction of rhythm in each sequence
4. Grade by colourist in final post-production phase: tonality, contrast, colour corrections to achieve specific cinematic expression

There is an identical underlying narrative structure in the three films: there is an expedition to a location where scientific interventions take place. People arrive, scientific interventions take place in the Arctic location, people depart. Each film ends with the protagonist, landscape itself, being devoid of people, consequently epitomising the permanence of the natural environment itself.¹³⁷ Intuitive interventions are predominant in the creative process throughout the editing phase.¹³⁸

¹³⁶ Tarkovsky in Bird, R *Andrei Tarkovsky – Elements of Time* Reaktion Books, London, 2008, p. 201

¹³⁷ Fig. 13 – 15: *In Transit* [2011] timecode 16:20, *Prosperous Mountain* [2013] timecode 13:57, *Pseudotachylyte* [2019] timecode 51:32

¹³⁸ The footage is the raw material for the construction of each film. All footage is watched and then selected based upon content. The footage consists of approximately 20 hours filmed material for each film. The narrative is constructed in the editing process by including sequences that observe the location itself with its visceral qualities of light and weather conditions; rhythm of people's interventions through body language; pace of walking and of scientific interventions.

The edit is constructed on the basis of content and dialectics of rhythm: human endeavour portrayed as frenetic and active versus the presence of the location itself: nature as subtle and enduring. The editing process has the capacity to draw attention to and elicit significant aspects in the films as Tarkovsky expresses:

Assembly, editing, disturbs the passage of time, interrupts it and simultaneously gives it something new. The distortion of time can be a means of giving it rhythmical expression. Sculpting in time! ¹³⁹

For instance, *In Transit* [2011] is constructed with a dialectic use of close-up images of human intervention in landscape where these scenes are filmed and edited with a frenetic pace; on the contrary, wide landscape scenes are static and the editing rhythm is prolonged and calm in order to elongate landscape as a perpetual protagonist. The intuitive intervention in editing is based upon key moments of content: interventions in editing is used as a means to highlight significant moments in the narrative, such as pauses loosely inspired by Haiku. The intention is to draw attention to significant observations that constitutes the narrative.¹⁴⁰

One example of such pause is featured in the static sequence of young birches.¹⁴¹ After scenes of hectic accumulation of human remains deposited in white plastic bags for transportation to DNA labs, the scene of the young birches appear as a pause. The

¹³⁹ Tarkovsky, *A Sculpting in Time: reflection on the cinema*, London, Bodley Head, 1986, p. 121

¹⁴⁰ 'Eisenstein saw in these three line verses the model for how the combination of three separate elements creates something different in kind from any of them. ...What attracts me in haiku is its observation of life – pure, subtle, one with its subject. This is pure observation. Its aptness and precision will make anyone, however crude his receptivity, feel the power or poetry and recognize – forgive the banality – the living image which the author has caught' Ibid. p. 66

¹⁴¹ Fig. 13 Still image from *In Transit* [2011] timecode 16:19 – 16:27

intervention of a static, calm editing rhythm is highlighting the content of the film; the filmmaker located the site where the witness had described as the last place he saw his 17-year-old friend being shot and died.¹⁴² The site of the birches therefore becomes a visual resting ground and memorial place in the cinematic image, as Bazin would refer to as embalming time.¹⁴³

Prosperous Mountain [2013] is constructed with static elongated sequences; only wide framing is used apart from three panning sequences.¹⁴⁴ This systematic methodology is used in order to construct a cinematic intervention that facilitates for a contemplative space for the viewer. The edit consists of constructed unfolding narratives as a tension,¹⁴⁵ such as cinematic duration of events: military ship, truck dispersing coal, dog sledges and blizzards. The editing techniques resemble mountain scenes from Herzog's *Fata Morgana* [1971] and *The Dark Glow of the Mountains* [1985], where prolonged scenes of mountain ranges allow a meditative exploration of inner landscapes through the construction of editing.¹⁴⁶

¹⁴² I filmed an interview with a survivor of the battle, Wolfgang Windingstad, in his home in Oslo, April 2010. He gave a detailed description of the site where his friend had been shot and killed; the site of the young birches by the lakeside. A letter dated 8th November 1953 was sent to survivor Wolfgang Windingstad. A sister of a fallen soldier wrote 'we would like to gain certainty about our brother's destiny. I would therefore ask you if you have seen my brother dead or alive after the battle on the 25th and 26th of June, or if you have heard anything about his destiny from other friends. If you know anything about him, please let us know the full truth, no matter how gruesome it might be. For the uncertainty is worse than anything else. Even the smallest piece of information will be received with the deepest gratitude'

¹⁴³ Gray, H, [ed.] *What is cinema? By Andre Bazin Vol. 1*, in the essay *The Ontology of the Photographic Image* University of California Press Ltd. London, 1967, p.14

¹⁴⁴ *Prosperous Mountain* [2013] has three scenes with panning shots: Mountain range and moon [timecode 00:50 – 01:45]; truck arriving to the Seed Vault [time code 05:14 – 08:23]; and delivery of boxes with seeds inside the vault [timecode 08:59 – 09:48]. The majority of scenes are static.

¹⁴⁵ 'The film, *Prosperous Mountain*, brings the viewer into close proximity with the movement between light and heaviness in this Nordic landscape. It is an outlook that is simultaneously closed and limitless, and manifested as mood. The scenes that constitute the film unfold as tension rather than narrative, it moves amongst moments rather than in confrontation with them, offering a searching ruminative absorption. Yawning and inscrutable, the panorama is tight but nonetheless boundless. It moves silently across vistas that appear bereft of life, except for the solitary lights in a house and snow mobiles which observe the presence of man's impact on the region'
Phipps, B, limited edition publication of the film *Prosperous Mountain*, 2015, p. 3

¹⁴⁶ 'Combining a passion for landscape views with an insistently inward movement, his documentaries render a cinematic

A dialectic expression is also a dominant feature in *Pseudotachylyte* [2019]; the mountain plateau is portrayed as a space alluding to insight into deep time whilst intense human endeavours are portrayed as brief excursions. Editing techniques centre on the intensity and fast hiking tempo of the geoscientists in contrast to the prolonged and slow measuring processes of the mountain plateau, drawing emphasis on a certain predictable rhythm to the film. Echoing Croce, it can be explained as working well when

the knowledge the work communicates is intuitive knowledge of the work itself. But since intuition and expression are identical, the artists' intuition of the work he produces is the very same process as the one by which he produces an expression of this intuition¹⁴⁷

The final phase of editing is colour grading with colourist in post-production. The filmmaker and colourist watch the entire film in order to seek the visual expression of the film: colour tonality, saturation, contrast levels and detailed masking in specific scenes are drawn out. The process is methodological: each scene is graded in order to achieve visual consistency revealing the cinematic materiality.¹⁴⁸

terrain that is largely detached from the referential world and oriented toward the inner world, instead. Herzog's ephemeral vistas open up a paradoxical space of imagined interiority, which is also a representation of the physical world that we inhabit. The practice of aestheticizing the psychological interior by means of landscape has an extensive history in German art, literature, and cinema, but it is unusual in the context of documentary film. Herzog is clearly aware of this history, and stakes a certain claim to it: "For me, a true landscape is not just a representation of a desert or a forest. It shows an inner state of mind, literally inner landscapes, and it is the human soul that is visible through the landscapes presented in my films, be it the jungle in *Aguirre*, the desert in *Fata Morgana*, or the burning oil fields of Kuwait in *Lessons of Darkness*'

Ames, E Herzog, *Landscape and Cinema* Cinema Journal 48, No 2, Winter 2009, pp. 50-51

¹⁴⁷ Cothey, A L *The Nature of Art*, Routledge, London, 1990, p. 84

¹⁴⁸ Fig. 16 In *Prosperous Mountain* [2013] there is a scene of a building on a mountain in dark twilight [timecode 04:28] Three windows are illuminated. The light in the windows were spotted by the colourist in post-production and was barely visible in the footage or could not be recalled as visible when filming on location. By drawing out the existing light in the cinematic materiality, this scene elucidates human presence in a bleak and hostile environment.

Figures



Fig. 13 Still image from *In Transit* [2011] timecode 16:20



Fig. 14 Still image from *Prosperous Mountain* [2013] timecode 13:21



Fig. 15 Still image from *Pseudotachylyte* [2019] timecode 51:32



Fig. 16 Still image from *Prosperous Mountain* [2013] timecode 04:28

4. Distribution of films: Context to audiences and venues

*The work of art has its true being in the fact that it becomes an experience that changes the person who experiences it*¹⁴⁹

These films are intended to be watched for their entire duration. They have been screened in contemporary documentary film festivals where the subject of the films have been in focus.¹⁵⁰ Several screenings¹⁵¹ have included panel debates and Q & A sessions with filmmaker, organisers, film critics, journalists, and subject specialists with participating audiences. Questions raised during these events have furthered the filmmaker's development of new films or have pointed out poignant observations.¹⁵² Disseminating the films in a variety of contexts has allowed for interdisciplinary debates to take place and thereby broaden perspectives.¹⁵³ The intention is to use film to facilitate a space for contemplation and thereby draw out an alternative perspective on the thematic of the film with the anticipation it advances knowledge through the specifics of observational documentary film.

¹⁴⁹ Gadamer, H G *Truth and Method*, London, Bloomsbury Academics, 2013, p. 107

¹⁵⁰ Screening history in appendix 7.5 p. 97

¹⁵¹ Rigorous production standards allow international screenings that attract multidisciplinary audiences within art, film, ecology, history and science. This allows a multifaceted hermeneutical interpretation of the works, and therefore opens up a space for advancing knowledge.

¹⁵² For example, in a Q & A session after the Norwegian premiere screening of *Prosperous Mountain* [2013] at the 37th Norwegian International Short Film Festival, Grimstad, a journalist pointed out that the scene of the truck dispersing coal is an image of climate change: the blackness of the coal accelerates melting of snow. This revelation of an obvious scientific fact confirmed the intuitive response to filming the scene on location. It was not planned, yet the scene is the most poignant of the film in terms of content.

¹⁵³ Kemp's eight main themes of 'how we relate to the world around us', for example 'the key role of representational 'modes', not least the styles and vehicles through which communication becomes effective'
Kemp, M *Visualizations – The Nature Book of Art and Science*, Oxford University Press, 2000, p. 178

The films are promoted through a brief statement and still image when submitted to film festivals. One chosen still image summarises the film itself: *In Transit* [2011],¹⁵⁴ *Prosperous Mountain* [2013],¹⁵⁵ and *Pseudotachylyte* [2019]¹⁵⁶ The selection of these still images act as snapshots¹⁵⁷ of each film; a consolidation of content and cinematic form in one single image. Promotion of the films by one single image highlights the intention to unfold a narrative in a single image which brings the films in correlation to photography as still image.¹⁵⁸

¹⁵⁴ Fig. 17 Still image from *In Transit* [2011] timecode 16:53

In Transit [2011] is promoted through a still image of the wooden coffins in political indecisive storage and refers to the title of the film.

¹⁵⁵ Fig. 11 Still image from *Prosperous Mountain* [2013] timecode 07:07

Prosperous Mountain [2013] is promoted through the still image of the coal dispersing truck with reference to the film title of prosperity of the mountain: coal is extracted from mountain, and seeds are deposited in the mountain vault; both facets of prosperity despite representing opposite political value systems.

¹⁵⁶ Fig. 18 Still image from *Pseudotachylyte* [2019] timecode 05:54

Pseudotachylyte [2019] is promoted by the still image of geoscientists walking on the plateau as portraying the quest itself in this particular location.

¹⁵⁷ This echoes Kossakovsky's 7th Rule of Cinema: 'Shots are the basis of cinema. Remember that cinema was invented as one single shot – documentary, by the way – without any story. Or story was just inside that shot. Shots must first and foremost provide the viewers with new impressions that they never had before' Greene, R *Your world inside out: Vivan las Antipodas! and Kossakovksy's Ten Rules* www.bfi.org.uk [accessed 8th April 2020]

¹⁵⁸ Gray, H [ed.] *The Ontology of the Photographic Image in What is Cinema? By Andre Bazin Vol. 1*, University of California Press, 1967, pp. 9 - 16

Figures



Fig. 17 Still image from *In Transit* [2011] timecode 16:53



Fig. 11 Still image from *Prosperous Mountain* [2013] timecode 05:14 – 08:23



Fig. 18 Still image from *Pseudotachylyte* [2019] timecode 05:54

5. Original contribution to knowledge and contribution to the discipline

*I have a powerful sense that effective art and science both begin at the points where knowledge breaks down*¹⁵⁹

The original contribution to knowledge stems from the long-term research focus: revealing equivalences between intuitive recording of unfolding narratives through observational documentary filmmaking, and the observation of recurrences of intuitive thinking across broad scientific practices.

The modest and speculative claim is that intuitive interventions as a creative decision method in observational documentary filmmaking methods joins a historical quest¹⁶⁰ by several disciplines within art, science and humanities that seek insight of the interconnectedness of our environment and human endeavour.¹⁶¹ Therefore, *In Transit* [2011], *Prosperous Mountain* [2013], and *Pseudotachylyte* [2019] intend to contribute to an existing observational documentary filmmaking discipline¹⁶² by offering new insights and paradigms for future practice by opening up a poetic space for contemplation. This echoes Herzog's view:

The film [*Fata Morgana*] is not there to tell you what to think. I did not structure it to push any ideas in your face. Maybe more than any other films I have made it is one that needs to be completed by the audience, which means all feelings, thoughts and interpretations are welcome. Today, thirty years later, the film is very much alive to

¹⁵⁹ Kemp, M *Seen / Unseen – Art, Science, and Intuition from Leonardo to the Hubble Telescope*, Oxford University Press, 2006, p. 330

¹⁶⁰ Some examples of this historical quest have influenced and inspired the research processes in the longstanding film practice and in the three film works submitted for this PhD on the Basis of Prior Published Works: the works by Alexander Von Humboldt, Arne Naess, Werner Herzog, and Andrei Tarkovsky.

¹⁶¹ 'Most of us eventually realise that some of our basic ways of knowing rest on intuitions such as everything hangs together and 'live and let' live'. All philosophies of life consist of basic value norms and basic hypotheses about the nature of the world. When these philosophies take careful account of ecological responsibilities, they become ecosophies, a word he [A Naess] coined for ecological wisdom'
Drengson, A and Devall, B [eds.] *Arne Naess: Ecology of Wisdom* Penguin Classics, London, 2016, p. 17

¹⁶² Examples by Flaherty, Herzog, Kossakovsky, Ponting,

audiences. It is like nothing they have ever seen before, and I think everyone comes away with their own understanding of the film¹⁶³

The films facilitate hermeneutic interpretations and new knowledge to emerge across subject specific disciplines. Furthermore, they offer an alternative way of accessing specialist knowledge that may allow new perceptual and experiential knowledge to emerge. The originality of the films derives from the methodology of employing intuitive interventions as a creative decision method when constructing poetic spaces in these cinematic narratives within interdisciplinary expeditions.¹⁶⁴ The three films employ a consistent dialectic expression that alters between lyricism and realism within image, sound and edit, and a tension is created by this specific articulation of juxtapositions.¹⁶⁵ Inquisitiveness may lead to discoveries of both terrestrial matters in a physical and tactile manner, in addition to perceptible and conceptual discoveries of the imaginary.¹⁶⁶

¹⁶³ Cronin, P [ed.] *Herzog on Herzog* Faber and Faber, London, 2002, p. 46

¹⁶⁴ See Kemp, M *Seen / Unseen – Art, Science, and Intuition from Leonardo to the Hubble Telescope*, Oxford University Press, 2006. pp. 330-331

'I have a powerful sense that effective art and science both begin at the points where knowledge breaks down. Visual intuitions are one of the most potent tools we possess for feeling our way into the unknown. My final plea is for professional in each 'field' to exercise generosity and tolerance within the scope of an agenda which decrees open communication with each other, not just in specially staged conferences but also in broader public forums. I believe that we surrender our human 'wholes' to our specialist 'parts' at our peril'

¹⁶⁵ Franklin writes that 'photography has no special status in the generalized search for truth. It stands alongside painting, sculpture, film, fiction or any diarized account. But what photography can contribute in a way other artistic and literary works cannot is its serendipitous take on life, its surrealistic freshness of vision – effortlessly revealing surprising juxtapositions and, as the writer Max Kosloff has suggested, scenes 'that could not have been imagined' Franklin, S *The Documentary Impulse*, Phaidon, London, 2016, p. 7

¹⁶⁶ The figure in Flammarion's woodcut peeks behind a layer of the tangible earth and discovers non-terrestrial materials where there is a sense of wonder of the infinite and unknown. The cinema screen and the projected image works as another layer of discovery. The photographer Hiroshi Sugimoto portrays cinema screens as a conceptual space of time. His illuminated blank screens are long exposures of entire films. The cinema screen is another layer in our world of representation and imagination that we can peek behind in our minds.

Flammarion, C *L'atmosphère: météorologie populaire* Paris: Hachette, 1888, p.163

Brougher, K; Elliott, D *Hiroshi Sugimoto* Ostfeldern-Ruit, Hatje Cantz Publishers, 2005, pp. 79 - 107

The contribution to knowledge and to the discipline of observational documentary filmmaking is therefore intended as a dynamic and flexible instrument that consolidates a vision to influence perceptual and affective change in the viewer in relation to environmental concerns of our time.¹⁶⁷

¹⁶⁷ Buckland, MacGilp, Parkinson *Burning Ice - Art & Climate Change*, London, Cape Farewell, 2006, p. 91
'Art and the sciences represent parallel, mutually reinforcing acts of feeling our way through the environment, understanding and asserting our presence as a means of preserving it'

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[accessed 25th February 2020]

7. Appendix

PhD on the Basis of Prior Published Works

The submission is based on the following works:

7.1

In Transit

2011

Running time 19 min 24 sec

HD Colour

Aspect ratio 1:2:35

Audio Dolby Digital 2.0

Dialogue: Russian, English, Norwegian

Filmed on location in Karelia, Russia, June 2010; and Mga near St. Petersburg, Russia,

October 2010

Credits

Director / Editor / Script / Producer	Heidi C Morstang
Cinematography	Jaime Feliu-Torres
Sound design & mix	Paul Donovan
Colourist	Christian Short
Post production manager	Miles Hall

Post production	Films at 59
Production management, Russia	Andrei Lysenko
Interpreter	Lisa Maximova
Searchers	Sergei Ishankin
	Andrei Lysenko
	Volodja Solowyow
	Victor Sumnitelnow
Forensic Archaeologist	Stian Hamre
Assistance in Research Process	Kaprolat Committee, University of Bergen
	Wolfgang Windingstad
	Lisa Lemke
	Volksbund Deutsche Kriegsgraberfursorge
	Brieg Powel, University of Plymouth
	Leiv Sem, Falstad Centre, Norway
Sub-titles	Lisa Maximova, Anna Staevska

7.2

Prosperous Mountain

2013

Running time 15 min 45 sec

HD Colour

Aspect ratio 16 x 9

Audio Dolby Digital 5.1

Filmed on location at the Svalbard Global Seed Vault, Longyearbyen, Norway, February 2013.

Credits

Director / Editor / Script / Producer	Heidi C Morstang
Cinematography	Patrik Säfström (fnf)
Sound design & mix	Paul Donovan
Foley artist	Ben Jones
Colourist	Christian Short
Post production manager	Miles Hall
Post production	Films at 59

The following individuals were interviewed on location and provided insight into the film:

Roland Von Bothmer

Botanist and Scientist Emeritus, NordGen (The Nordic Genetic Resource Centre)

Provided generous advice during filming and facilitated access to the Svalbard Global Seed Vault

Cary Fowler

Founder of the Svalbard Global Seed Vault and former Executive Director of the Global Crop

Diversity Trust

Provided generous support for the film and insight into background and context to the

Svalbard Global Seed Vault

Wilhelmina Pelegrina

Regional Campaign Coordinator, Food and Ecological Agriculture, Greenpeace Southeast

Asia

Bert Visser

Director, Centre for Genetic Resources, Wageningen University and Research Centre, The

Netherlands

Åsmund Åsdahl

Coordinator of Operation and Management at the Svalbard Global Seed Vault and NordGen

[The Nordic Genetic Resource Centre]

7.3

Pseudotachylyte

2019

Running time 54 min 28 sec

UHD Black & White

Aspect ratio 1:2:35

Audio Dolby Digital 5.1

Filmed on location at the Nusfjord Plateau, Lofoten Islands, Norway, July 2017 and in the Plymouth Electron Microscopy Centre, University of Plymouth, UK, November 2017.

Featuring

Lucy Campbell

Post-Doctoral Research Fellow in Structural Geology and Rock Deformation

University of Plymouth

Åke Fagereng

Reader in Structural Geology, Cardiff University

Elisabetti Mariani

Reader in Earth Materials, University of Liverpool

Luca Menegon

Associate Professor of Structural Geology and Tectonics, University of Plymouth

Giorgio Pennacchioni Professor of Structural Geology, University of Padova, Italy

Credits

Directed, edited and produced	Heidi C Morstang
Cinematography	Patrik Säfström [fnf]
Sound design	Paul Donovan
Track lay	Jon Cawte
Foley	Jon Cawte and Tom Chilcott
Colourist and online	Christian Short
Post-production manager	Miles Hall
Consultant	Iain Stewart

Supported by

Arts Research, University of Plymouth

Natural Environment Research Council

Creative Associates 2019, Sustainable Earth Institute, University of Plymouth

7.4

Brief timeline of Film Making Processes: *In Transit* [2011], *Prosperous Mountain* [2013], *Pseudotachylyte* [2019]

In Transit [2011]

Filmed on location in Karelia, Russia, June 2010, and in Mga / St. Petersburg, Russia, October 2010.

Duration of film: 19 min 24 sec. HD format. Colour. Audio: Dolby Digital 5.1.

Year of production: 2011

Interdisciplinary collaboration: Kaprolat Committee, University of Bergen, Norway and Falstad Centre, Norway. Disciplines: History, Law, Forensic Archaeology.

Pre-production

June 2009

Read small news item in the Norwegian newspaper *Aftenposten* about Kaprolat

Committee's expedition to Karelia, Russia in their search for fallen soldiers from WWII.

Contacted Kaprolat Committee at University of Bergen for further information and asked for permission to take part in new expedition to make a film. Permission granted.

February 2010

Meeting researchers in Kaprolat Committee at the University of Bergen for background information and planning of expedition logistics.

April 2010

Reading autobiography of survivor and witness Mr W Windingstad, Oslo, Norway. Contacted Mr Windingstad and filmed interview in his home in Oslo. He provided information about location, topography and Arctic mid-summer light that provided vital information for planning the cinematic interpretation.

May 2010

Planning of camera and sound equipment for traveling to remote Arctic location without access to electricity. Planning filming and production logistics involving basic camping and complex travel itineraries.

Production

June 2010

Filmed during five days and on the exact dates of 25th / 26th June 2010, when the WWII attack had occurred in 1944.

Handheld filming and audio recordings during travel to location in Karelia: from Finnish border to location Hasselmann Hill in Russian Karelia.

Cinematographer, filmmaker and interpreter hiking with searchers in challenging topographic terrain due to steep hills, dense forests and fast speed of hiking. Filming led by searchers navigation and intervention in terrain. Filming facilitated by interpreter.

September 2010

Filmed at Mga near St Petersburg, Russia where wooden coffins with human remains were stored awaiting burial and repatriation. Access granted by *Volksbund Deutsche*

Kriegsgräberfürsorge [The German War Graves Commission]. Filming facilitated by interpreter.

Post-production

October 2010 - October 2011

Edited various rough-cut sequences of film

October 2011

Sound design & mix, and colour grade in post-production facilities at Films at 59 in Bristol

Distribution

Distributed the film to film festivals, museums /art galleries, academic conferences and film screenings, national film collection, made hand-made DVD with accompanying essay.

See screening history in appendix 7.5

Prosperous Mountain [2013]

Filmed on location in Longyearbyen and at the Svalbard Global Seed Vault in the Arctic Archipelago of Svalbard, Norway in February 2013.

Duration of film: 14 min 28 sec. HD format. Colour. Audio: Dolby Digital 5.1. Year of Production: 2013

Interdisciplinary collaboration: Svalbard Global Seed Vault and NordGen.

Disciplines: Biology, botany.

Pre-production

June 2012

Read about existence of the Svalbard Global Seed Vault in Norwegian news channel *NRK*

June 2012

Contacted Norwegian Government for access to film at annual seed delivery at the Svalbard Global Seed Vault. Researched history of seed collectors and light conditions in Svalbard.

Pre-visualised scenes of seed delivery to the vault.

Watched films and art works portraying polar landscape: *Cape Farewell Project* [Buckland, 2001 - ongoing]; *Nanook of the North* [Flaherty, 1922]; *Encounters at the End of the World* [Herzog, 2007]; *The Great White Silence* [Dir. Ponting, 1924]; *Winter night in the Mountains* [Oil painting, Sohlberg, 1914]

January 2013

Access to Svalbard Global Seed Vault granted three weeks before seed delivery. Planned travel and equipment logistics with cinematographer.

February 2013

Pre-production meetings in Oslo before travel to Svalbard. Planning access to locations, visual viewpoints, polar bear safety, precautions for filming in extreme cold temperatures and planning interviews with scientists.

Production

February 2013

Filmed several exterior scenes of Arctic winter landscape on location in and around Longyearbyen.

Filmed annual seed delivery to the Svalbard Global Seed Vault.

Filmmaker recorded sound on location.

Filmed interviews with scientists on location for contextual information to international seed deliveries: Roland Von Bothmer, Botanist and Scientist Emeritus, NordGen [Sweden]; Wilhelmina Pelegrina, the Rice Research Institute [Philippines]; Bert Visser, Director at the Centre for Genetic Resources, Wageningen University and Research Centre [The Netherlands]; and Cary Fowler, Founder of the Svalbard Global Seed Vault and former Executive Director of the Global Crop Diversity Trust

Applied and gained access to film from control tower at Longyearbyen Airport for arrival of plane with seeds.

All scenes were filmed with camera on tripod due to strong wind and extreme cold temperatures [-32 Celsius + wind chill factor = - 52 Celsius]

Post-production

March – May 2013

Edited various rough-cut sequences. Final edit consists of static scenes only apart from two cinematic panning sequences. No use of close-up scenes.

June 2013

Sound design & mix, and colour grade at post-production facilities at Films at 59, Bristol.

Distribution

Distributed the film to film festivals, museums / art galleries, academic conferences and film screenings, national film collection, made hand-made DVD with accompanying essay.

See screening history in appendix 7.5

Pseudotachylyte [2019]

Filmed on location at the Nusfjord Plateau, Lofoten Islands, Norway, July 2017, and in the Plymouth Electron Microscopy Centre, University of Plymouth, UK, November 2017.

Duration: 54 min 28 sec. UHD Format. Black & White. Audio: Dolby Digital 5.1. Year of Production: 2019

Interdisciplinary collaboration: Geo-science [scientists from Universities of Plymouth, Liverpool, Cardiff, UK; and University of Padua, Italy]

Pre-production

January 2017

Invited to make film on identifying ancient deep earthquakes [invitation by prof. I Steward, University of Plymouth. PI Dr L Menegon, NERC funded research project]

February – July 2017

Pre-production meetings with geo scientists at University of Plymouth. Pre-visualising scenes of expedition. E-mail correspondence with cinematographer planning film and equipment.

Planned travel and equipment logistics for filming during week-long mountain hike.

Read *Annals of the Former World* [McPhee, J, 1998] in preparation for expedition. *Into Eternity* [Madsen, M, DVD, 2010]; paintings by Balke, *Fata Morgana* [Herzog, DVD, 1971]

Production

July 2017

Handheld filming by cinematographer and audio recordings by filmmaker during five-day mountain hike at Nusfjord plateau, Lofoten Islands, Norway. Filmed interviews with geo scientists on location. Explored long handheld cinematic sequences in 360 degrees featuring wide scenes to close-ups of geo scientists' tactile exploration of rocks. Filming led by geo scientists' hikes and terrestrial exploration.

November 2017

Filmed preparation and analysis rock samples in Electron Microscopy Centre, University of Plymouth.

Post-production

August 2017-August 2018

Edited several rough-cut versions before final edit.

April 2019

Sound design & mix, and grade by colourist at post-production facilities at Films at 59, Bristol.

Distribution

July 2019 – April 2020

Sent film to several international film festivals. See screening history in appendix 7.5

7.5 Screening, Exhibitions and Publication History

The films have been screened at international film festivals, art exhibitions, public and academic presentations. The inclusion of the films into competitive film festival programmes are based upon selection and is a juried process. The screenings are live events with audiences present in the cinema.

In Transit [2011]

Collections

Morstang, HC [2011] *In Transit* [film] catalogued and archived in the national film collection

[National Library of Norway](#)

Morstang, HC [2011] *In Transit* [film] purchased by Norwegian Short Documentary Collection, The Norwegian Film Institute's FilmBib Collection

Cinema screenings

2013

Morstang, HC [2011] *In Transit* [film]

Focus Film Festivals Programme at the 20th Ozu Film Festival, Italy

2012

Morstang, HC [2011] *In Transit* [film]

International Docurama Programme, 31st Uppsala International Short Film Festival, Sweden

2012

Morstang, HC [2011] *In Transit* [film]

Best Short Films from Around the World Programme, Helsinki Short Film Festival, Finland

2012

Morstang, HC [2011] *In Transit* [film]

International competition, Concorso Film Festival, Italy

2012

Morstang, HC [2011] *In Transit* [film]

International competition, Sapporo International Film Festival, Japan

2012

Morstang, HC [2011] *In Transit* [film]

Official competition, *In The Palace* International Short Film Festival, Bulgaria

2012

Morstang, HC [2011] *In Transit* [film]

Official competition, Kortfilmfestivalen, Grimstad, Norway

2012

Morstang, HC [2011] *In Transit* [film]

Invited for Featured screening. Oslo Screen Festival, Cinemateket, Oslo, Norway.

Presented by NABROAD

2012

Morstang, HC [2011] *In Transit* [film]

Lab Programme, Tabakalera San Sebastian, Spain

2012

Morstang, HC [2011] *In Transit* [film]

Official Lab competition, 34th International Clermont Ferrand Short Film Festival, France

2011

Morstang, HC [2011] *In Transit* [film]

Aesthetica International Film Festival, York, UK

2011

Morstang, HC [2011] *In Transit* [film]

Ostrava International Cinematographer's Festival, Czech Republic

2011

Morstang, HC [2011] *In Transit* [film]

Avanca International Film Festival, Portugal

Exhibitions

2014

Morstang, HC [2011] *In Transit* [film]

Film screenings and photographic exhibition, Churchill College, Cambridge, UK

Publications

Spring 2016

Chapter '*In Transit - revealing history through landscape in contemporary film*'

Pp.119 -134 Painful Heritage – The Royal Norwegian Society of Sciences and Letters/

Skrifter nr.4 – 2015. Edited by Marek Jasinsky and Leiv Sem ISBN 978-82-93175-31-5

February 2012

In Transit

Limited edition DVD [120 editions] with an accompanying text by Dr Brieg Powel and photographs by Heidi C Morstang. International distribution.

Winter 2012

'*In Transit - revealing history through landscape in contemporary film*'

Conference Paper. Published in 3rd Avanca / Cinema: Conferência

Internacional Cinema - Arte, Tecnologia, Comunicação, Portugal, ISBN 978-989-

96858-1-9

Invited as speaker

2012

Artist talk and film screening

Govett Brewster Contemporary Art Gallery, New Plymouth, New Zealand

2012

Keynote speaker at Making Visible International symposium.

Massey University, New Zealand

2010

Keynote speaker at Painful Heritage International Symposium, Falstad Centre, Norway

Prosperous Mountain [2013]

Collections

2020

Prosperous Mountain [2013, film] catalogued and archived in the national film collection

[National Library of Norway](#)

Cinema screenings

2014

Morstang, HC [2013] *Prosperous Mountain* [film]

Premiere screening. Cinéma des cinéastes, 31st International Environmental Film Festival,

Paris. Official Competition [4 – 11 February]

Morstang, HC [2013] *Prosperous Mountain* [film]

20th International Short Film Week, Regensburg, Germany, International Competition

Morstang, HC [2013] *Prosperous Mountain* [film]

Festival International Documentaire Eau et Climat, Belgium.

Official Short Documentary Film Competition. Winner of 2nd Prize.

Morstang, HC [2013] *Prosperous Mountain* [film]

37th Norwegian Short Film Festival, Grimstad, Norway. Official Competition [12 – 17 June]

Morstang, HC [2013] *Prosperous Mountain* [film]

Official Short Film Competition at Pelicam International Film Festival, Romania

Morstang, HC [2013] *Prosperous Mountain* [film]

4th Ecofalante Environmental Film Festival, Sao Paulo, Brazil

Panel debate: '*Original seeds x transgenic seeds*'

Film Screenings and Panel Debates

2015

Morstang, HC [2013] *Prosperous Mountain* [film]

Film screening, publication launch, panel debate. Royal Norwegian Embassy, London

[24 November]. Hosted by the Norwegian Ambassador Mona Juul.

Panel Debate between Heidi Morstang [filmmaker], Ingrid Dokka [The Norwegian Film Institute], Åsmund Åsdal [The Svalbard Global Seed Vault], Camille Parmesan [Plymouth University], and Barry Phipps [Cambridge University]. Topics concerned the future of the Svalbard Global Seed Vault, the vulnerability of the arctic and the role art can play in the debate.

Morstang, HC [2013] *Prosperous Mountain* [film]

Invited to screening at Cinemateket, Oslo, Norway.

Presented by the Norwegian Film Institute

2016

Morstang, HC [2013] *Prosperous Mountain* [film]

Foot Anstey Law Firm, Plymouth Office.

Film screening and presentation during Environmental Awareness Week.

Exhibitions

2020

Morstang, HC [2013] *Prosperous Mountain* [film] + *Ringhorndalen* [photographic series]

[Seedscaapes - Future-proofing Nature.](#)

Impressions Gallery, Bradford [2 September - 12 December 2020] Touring Group Art

Exhibition + [Virtual Exhibition](#) [online]

2021

Morstang, HC [2013] *Prosperous Mountain* [film] + *Ringhorndalen* [photographic series]

[Seedscapes - Future-proofing Nature.](#)

Royal Albert Memorial Museum & Art Gallery, Exeter [18 May – 5 September 2021]

Morstang, HC [2013] *Prosperous Mountain* [film] + *Ringhorndalen* [photographic series]

[Seedscapes - Future-proofing Nature.](#)

The Dick Institute, Kilmarnock [September - December 2021 – dates tbc]

2014

Morstang, HC [2013] *Prosperous Mountain* [film]

[Bomuldsfabrikken Kunsthald](#), Arendal, Norway. Group Art exhibition [14 June – 24 August]

Morstang, HC [2013] *Prosperous Mountain* [film] + *The Road North* [Photographic series]

[Light Touch](#), Maryland Art Place. USA. Group Art Exhibition [10 February – 22 June]

https://issuu.com/marylandartplace/docs/light_touch_catalog

Publications

2015

Prosperous Mountain film and photographs by Heidi Morstang.

Limited edition DVD [231 editions] with an accompanying essay by fellow and curator Barry Phipps [Churchill College, University of Cambridge].

Artefact [hand-made artist's film / booklet in fabric-bound case]. International distribution.

2018

Pascale Weber [ed.] 'Prosperous Mountain [La montagne prospère] – réflexion d'un cinéaste sur l'importance du facteur temps et du paysage de l'Arctique'.

In *Le Mythe de l'Abondance*.

Published in French with the support of the Contemporary France Research Chair/ French General Consulat Montreal/ CERIUM-Université de Montréal

2013

'Prosperous Mountain' Conference Paper. Published in 5th Avanca/ Cinema:

Conferência Internacional Cinema – Arte, Tecnologia, Comunicação, Portugal

ISBN 978-989-96858-3-3

Prizes

2014

Morstang, HC [2013] *Prosperous Mountain* [film]

2nd Prize. Festival international du Documentaire Eau et Climat, Belgium

Invited as speaker

2020

Morstang, HC [2013] *Prosperous Mountain* [film] + *Ringhorndalen* [photographic series]

[Seedscapes Symposium](#) [21 November]

2016

Morstang, HC [2013] *Prosperous Mountain* [film screening + lecture]

Keynote speaker at film industry seminar *Camera as my research instrument*

Nordkapp International Film Festival, Norway

2015

Morstang, HC [2013] *Prosperous Mountain* [film screening + lecture]

Environmental Photography and Humanities: Contributions to Research and Awareness,

Valand Academy, University of Gothenburg, Sweden. International symposium

[23 – 24 April]

2013

Morstang, HC [2013] *Prosperous Mountain* [film screening + presentation]

Everywhere and Nowhere – New Photographic Encounters with Space, Place and

Dislocation, Photography Research Group, University of Plymouth

Reviews

Constantini, G L [2020] *Seedscaapes: Future-Proofing Nature* [Leonardo Reviews](#)

Pseudotachylyte [2019]

Collections

2020

Morstang, HC [2019] *Pseudotachylyte* [film] catalogued and archived in the national film collection [National Library of Norway](#)

Cinema Screenings

2019

Morstang, HC [2019] *Pseudotachylyte* [film]

Premiere Screening.

[Bergen International Film Festival](#), 25 September – 3 October

Pseudotachylyte in Official Competition: *Norwegian Documentaries*

Pseudotachylyte in *Golden Owl Competition* [awarded to the best science documentary by the University of Bergen]

Bergen International Film Festival 2019 announced:

With PSEUDOTACHYLYTE, director Heidi Morstang [THINKING SPACE, BIFF 2016] returns with a beautiful and deeply fascinating documentary that shows how outstanding research creates the foundation for existential truths about time, humanity and the globe we live on. With striking black-and-white images of wild and beautiful Northern Norway scenery and a curious look at the people who are eagerly exploring it, this is an educational and thought-provoking meditation on research and the past's ability to give us captivating insights into our own time.
www.biff.no

2020

Jackson Wild Media Awards Catalogue

[Jackson Wild Media Awards 2020 – catalogue p. 73](#)

Awards

2019

Film awarded [Creative Associates 2019, Sustainable Earth Institute, University of Plymouth:](#)

Creative Associates - Exploring novel and innovative ways of communicating research. Communicating research to those outside the subject area is important, but can be challenging - it is much more than disseminating results. It is about translating these results into the right language, format and context for the best accessibility and impact. The Sustainable Earth Institute's Creative Associates projects aim to explore novel and innovative ways of communicating research and develop a portfolio of case studies of the different creative approaches possible.

Invited as Speaker

2020

Morstang, HC [2019] *Pseudotachylyte* [film] Film screening and presentation.

[Njord Research Centre, University of Oslo](#) 5 June

7.6 Filmography

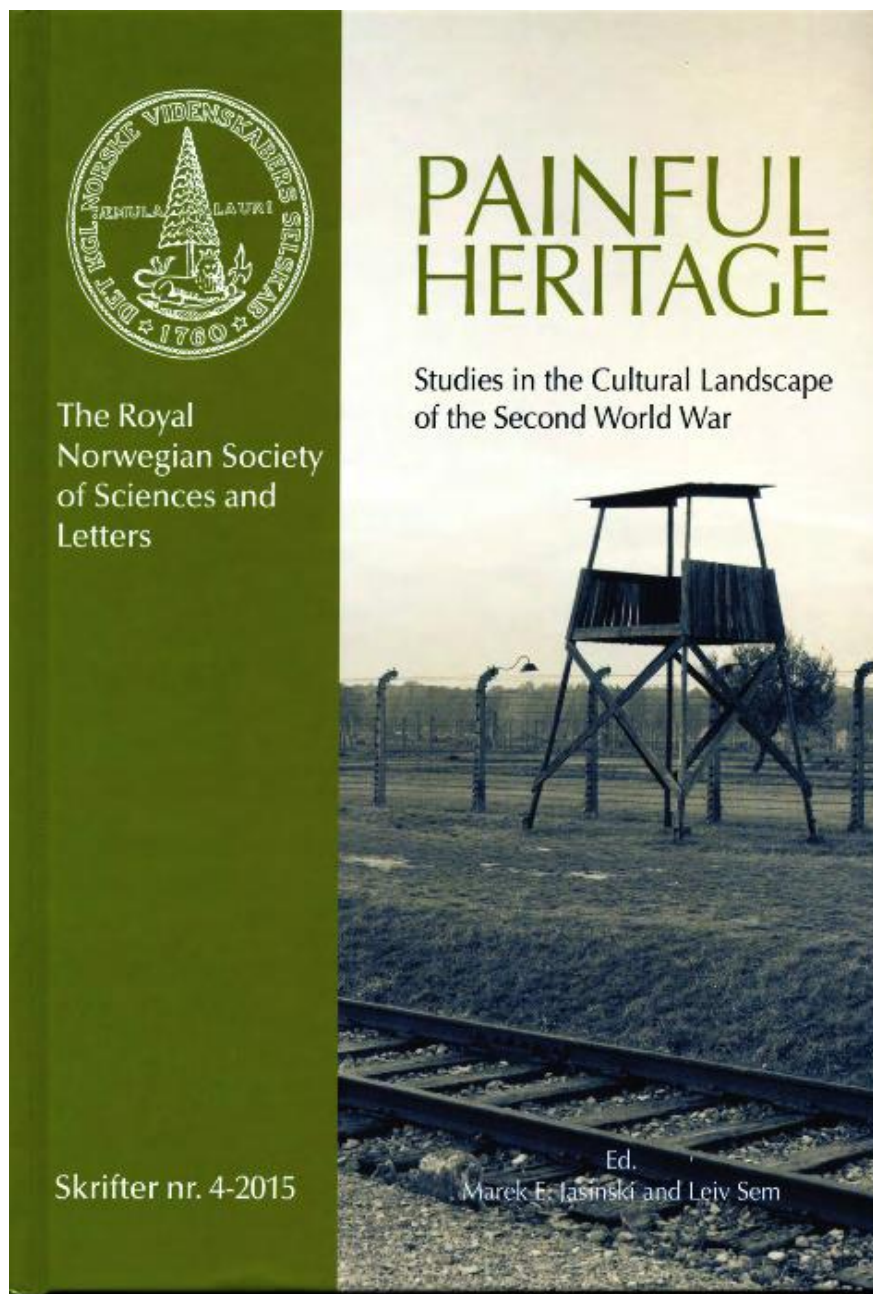
2019	<i>Pseudotachylyte</i>	UHD, 54 min 28 sec
2015	<i>Thinking Space</i>	HD, 60 min
2013	<i>Prosperous Mountain</i>	HD, 15min 49 sec
2011	<i>In Transit</i>	HD, 19 mins 24 sec
2008	<i>Brand</i>	S16 mm film, 13 mins
2007	<i>Certain Degrees Below</i>	S16 mm film, 5 mins
2005	<i>Notes from Ithaca I, II and III</i>	DV, 5 mins x 3
2005	<i>A Doll's House</i>	DV, 4 mins 40 sec
2004	The Waves	HD, 4 mins 13 sec
2001	Divers	DV, 5 mins
2001	In Between	DV, 5 mins

7.7 Portfolio

Book chapter

Morstang, H *In Transit - revealing history through landscape in contemporary film* [2015]

Published in 'Painful Heritage – Studies in the Cultural Landscapes of the Second World War' Anthology edited by Jasinski, M and Sem, L, Skrifter No 4 - 2015 [Transactions], The Royal Norwegian Society of Sciences and Letters.



Contents

Foreword	5
<i>Marek E. Jasinski and Leiv Sem</i>	
The Archaeology of Modern Conflict: Ethics, Theories and Methodologies	7
<i>Harold Mytton</i>	
Memories of War and Wars on Memories: Painful Heritage of WWII in Norway – Archaeological Surveys 2007–2012	17
<i>Marek E. Jasinski</i>	
Organisation Todt and Forced Labour in Norway during the Nazi Occupation: Preliminary Remarks from an ongoing Research Project.	45
<i>Hans Otto Frøland and Gunnar Hatlehol</i>	
Archaeological research in former Concentration camps Heritage – Remembering – Commemoration – Learning	63
<i>Claudia Theune</i>	
The hidden heritage of forced and slave labour: Examining the commitment to remembering in the British Channel Islands	79
<i>Gilly Carr</i>	
Repatriation Itineraries of Soviet Prisoners of War from Norway	97
<i>Marina M. Panikar</i>	
War graves and collective memory	101
<i>Marianne Neerland Soleim</i>	
The Eastern Front revisited: The SS-volunteers in Norwegian WW2 discourse	109
<i>Leiv Sem</i>	
In Transit: Revealing history through landscape in contemporary film	119
<i>Heidi Morstang</i>	



Transactions of The Royal Norwegian Society of Sciences and Letters
(Trans. R. Norw. Soc. Sci. Lett. 2015(4), 119–132)

In Transit: Revealing history through landscape in contemporary film

Heidi Morstang

School of Art and Media,
Plymouth University, UK

Abstract

The film *In Transit* investigates an area of Karelia on the Russian/Finnish border close to the Arctic Circle, where, in 1944, an incident occurred that left a scar on the landscape and the psyche on both sides of the invisible line. Approximately 120 Norwegian soldiers serving voluntarily in a German SS unit were killed fighting Soviet forces in Karelia.

The fallen Norwegian men, were left unburied and without identification until 2005, when locals found human remains in the forest under a thin layer of soil. In Norway, these men were, and are still regarded as political traitors.

The film is an artistic and cinematic investigation, revealing history through the landscape where the battle took place. The potential repatriation of the remains of Norwegian political traitors is the central focus.

The text discusses several issues that are portrayed in the film and its cinematic language. Although the film deals with contemporary issues of difficulties regarding repatriation, reconciliation and closure, it also deals with national identity and shame. It deals with current politics reconciling the many painful aspects of history, such as the potential homecoming of remains of political traitors. It deals with memory and perhaps more importantly, the forgotten and 'buried' chapters in history. It is an aspect of painful heritage.

Art has – could have, must have – a unique role in illuminating the dark in such places. Through film, the specifics of place and landscape are haunting and compelling aspects of the story and its significance.

Introduction

There are landscapes that are epic: vast, wild and beautiful. The forest of Karelia in the border-zone of Russia and Finland, close to the Arctic Circle, is one example of such a landscape. Although the beauty of this remote zone is present, another aspect regarding painful heritage is also evident.



Figure 1 Film still from *In Transit*: View from Hasselmann hill, looking towards Kaprolat Hill. June 2010.

In this text, I wish to unravel some aspects of the beauty and brutality that is manifested in the landscape through the making of the film *In Transit*. The work uses cinematic language to explore history through landscape. It conveys the aftermath of a WWII battle and the current repatriation of Norwegian political traitors. In the text one question is unfolding: Should one leave the dead where they fell in a battle and provide a memorial on site, or should one undertake exhumation in order to identify and repatriate remains of individuals?

The work engages with the themes of repatriation and closure, and is using the particular medium of film to explore and present them in a way unique to visual arts. It is expected that this will stimulate debate that does justice to the subject matter, and its significance to the multi-faceted uniqueness of the human experience.

Although the film deals with contemporary issues of difficulties regarding repatriation, reconciliation and closure, it also deals with national identity and shame. It deals with lack of dignity. It deals with current politics reconciling the many painful aspects of history, such as the potential homecoming of remains of political traitors. It deals with memory and perhaps more importantly, the forgotten and 'buried' chapters in history.

This text is written from a filmmaker's perspective and focuses on some concerns while making the film. Historians, eyewitness and locals involved directly with the case discussed in this text, have generously shared their knowledge in the research process.

Historical background

On 25th and 26th of June 1944, Soviet troops attacked, in what was then Soviet Karelia, a single front-line SS-battalion, the *Skijeger*-battalion, consisting of approximately 180 Norwegian volunteers (*formally 'traitors' under then applicable Norwegian law*) (Kaprolat committee, 2008:1). The battalion was defending German positions in a desolate lake area against Soviet forces attacking the Kaprolat and Hasselman fortifications on the Eastern front.

The entire battalion was either imprisoned in Soviet Prisoner of War camps, or shot dead and left, unidentified, and neither retrieved or formally buried, for over 60 years. Approximately forty SS-volunteers managed to escape to safety and returned to Norway (Kaprolat committee, 2008:1). In Norway, these men were, and are still regarded as political traitors.

In 2005 locals unearthed human remains under a thin layer of soil. However, others had been looting the area prior to this, searching for war memorabilia such as helmets, belts, identification medallions, rings, watches and other objects the dead soldiers were wearing, making current searches and identification work challenging. As the soldiers were left dead in the open terrain, wild animals such as bears have also scavenged the forest and dislocated body parts¹. Due to the looting and foraging by animals, searches have proved to be challenging, as often there is no metal that give signals to detectors.

Since 2005, locals, historians and forensic archaeologists continued to locate more remains, aiming to identify and arrange proper burials for the dead. The work has been ongoing, to retrieve and store them in Mga near St. Petersburg for DNA identification prior to burial. Some, but not all of the remains of the soldiers, were removed to storage between 2008 and 2010, pending identification as part of a project of closure led by the University of Bergen. The Kaprolat Committee, an interdisciplinary research project led by The University of Bergen, is undertaking this task. The Committee's prime purpose is to bring an end to a prolonged, shameful episode in the history of three nations² where basic human and ethical respect and conduct was suspended.

The Kaprolat Committee is actively engaged in four areas: scientific identification; forensic archaeology; historical accuracy, and legalities, including enforcement of the Geneva Convention of responsibilities for soldiers killed in action. The many facets of the battle raise many complex and difficult issues such as age, rage, outrage, loss, culture, identity, atrocity, enmity and pride that are, neither unique nor confined to history. The chemistry of the issues is such that 'closure' is probably unfathomable, distinctive to the different nations involved, and unique to individuals.

By January 2011, seventy individuals had been excavated. Of these, thirteen individuals have been identified and five individuals have been buried in Norway. Sixty-five individuals are still stored in small wooden coffins in a warehouse in the village Mga, currently in transit. Approximately fifty soldiers remain in Karelia, their only grave a thin layer of arctic forest soil. Searches are still being undertaken.

1 The author interviewed a survivor of the attack, Wolfgang Windingstad on 8th April 2010, when he explained that 'many things have happened in the area since then, and animals have eaten many bodies. An arm of one officer was found by the lake, far from where he fell. I know that, because I saw it. The arm is identified because of his wedding ring was found on the hand. It is wolf, bear and glutton in the area. I have never seen any, because they are shy of people.'

2 Norway, Germany, Russia

Revealing history

In June 2010, a small expedition to the Kaprolat and Hasselmann hills in Karelia was undertaken. The purpose of the expedition was to locate and exhume remains of fallen soldiers in the landscape. This was the third expedition to the area; the previous had taken place in 2008 and 2009 by the Kaprolat committee. *In Transit* was filmed during the 2010 expedition.

Five Russian searchers and a forensic archaeologist from the Kaprolat Committee worked intensely over five days. During this time they located the remains of twelve individuals through searches with metal detectors in the vast and dense forest. Human remains were located under 3 cm - 20 cm of soil; only leaves and soil from every season since 1944 was covering the dead. The soldiers were found in the positions in which they had been killed in action.

The searchers based their navigation to the sites upon witness accounts of the battle, instructed by The Kaprolat Committee. The remains were then exhumed and the forensic archaeologist would take DNA samples on site and mark each finding with a matching GPS location. The DNA sample would be transported to a lab in Sarajevo for identification, with the aim to match the sample to DNA samples provided by living relatives. If remains were identified, the families concerned could then arrange a proper burial of their relative if wanted. Not all families have wanted to provide DNA samples, resulting in a number of individuals not being able to be identified.

The Kaprolat Committee have been able to undertake part of the work, as the Norwegian government have given financial support to the searches, exhuming and identification process, but have not given financial support for repatriation of the individuals. Families who wish can arrange transport to Norway for burial, however, the unidentified fallen are still in storage under care by the organisation Volksbund Deutsche Kriegsgräberfürsorge (The German War Graves Commission), in the village Mga near St. Petersburg.

As a filmmaker, I wanted to film the landscape and the topography of the area during the 2010 expedition, as well as the human intervention of locating the fallen soldiers. Observing how the history of this site was revealed in nature was the initial starting point.



Figure 2. Film still from *In Transit*: Karelia. June 2010.



Figure 3. Film still from *In Transit: Searching*, June 2010.

The unique quality of the Arctic midsummer light at the anniversary dates of the battle informed the film. The main interest whilst making the film has been a focus upon the *contemporary landscape*, by looking at the landscape as a resilient character. By not using archival material such as existing photographs, maps, historical accounts by survivors or interviews by academics involved in the project³, the film focuses on three parts:

- 1: The journey into the forests where the battle took place
- 2: the searches, exhumation process and forensic archaeology on site
- 3: transport and site of storage of the found remains.

As this text is accompanied by only selected still images from the film, I would like to describe the work briefly: the film has limited dialogue and is fragmented. It has a visual language that varies from wide epic landscapes that one might describe as beautiful, to close-up images of searchers hands revealing human remains of several individuals. The contrast is evident between the *image* of the landscape and its topography to the intense rawness of the excavations; humans intervention in the landscape. The intensity of what appear to be fast revelations of what is hidden beneath the soil is disturbing. Perhaps the contrast between the beautiful and the brutal within this landscape provides us with an insight into what once took place, and this history that is now being revealed. This duality of the visual language contributes to a disturbance of 'judgment'. As the landscape appears tranquil and perhaps can be regarded as beautiful, the interventions of the searchers interrupt the idyllic summer landscape.

In Anne Wilkes Tucker's essay *A problem of beauty* in the photographer Richard Misrach's book *Desert Cantos* she discusses beauty, writing 'that the concept of beauty in art is cyclically under threat. These include, at present, a public and professional suspicion of beauty as a corrupting influence, or maybe just irrelevant, in the deeply cynical time that discounts all attempts at authenticity' (Misrach, 1987:15). Tucker continues to write that Misrach's photographs from the series *The Pit*, 'while politicised by their accompanying text, are formally both disturbing and seductive. They range from close-ups to panoramic sweeps of animals scattered in mass or in isolated groups beneath the distant horizon.

3 Assistance in research process was provided by The Kaprolat committee, University of Bergen

However, the series is distinguished by Misrach's proximity of the photographs subjects and an absence of sweeping vistas' (Misrach, 1987:15). Working with the visually beautiful in a present landscape poses perhaps a challenge in the viewer when confronted with the disturbance of nature: should this beauty be left without any intervention?

The forest in Karelia is today used for recreation such as fishing and hunting for mainly Russian locals and visitors, and has a poor infrastructure such as transport and electricity. The site for the battle around the Kaprolat and Hasselmann hills is still inaccessible and regarded as wilderness, where the closest settlement is 50 km away. The intervention of the excavations has a purpose of identifying the dead and offer formal burials. As this location is non-populated and remote, the site could also have the possibility of functioning as a memorial site for the fallen. However, the implications of poor infrastructure and accessibility make it challenging for relatives to visit. The exhumation in this case, is not solely an intervention in landscape, but is also a stirring of war narrative and national memory, that might work towards a closure of the past.

The role of the landscape was significant in the 1944 battle. The battalion based in the Karelian forest heard the sound of axes and trees falling for several weeks before the attack. They knew Soviet troops were approaching as they were cutting trees with axes to build roads to manoeuvre their military transport into the area⁴. Not only were the sounds of approaching troops significant but also at mid-summer the twenty-four hours of daylight provided good visibility for an attack.

In the area of the Hasselmann and Kaprolat hills the topography features vast forests, gentle hills, lakes and marshland. In an interview with a survivor of the battle, I asked how the landscape looked in 1944 and how it was in 2007 when he revisited the hills. He said *'it was open, the trees were cut and it was an open field. Now it has overgrown, there are bushes, birches and dense vegetation. And some pine trees. I recognised the area, even though it has overgrown'*⁵. In June 2010, we encountered a dense, new forest with birches and pine-trees. No paths were visible in the density of the forest. There were mid-summer flowers, bird songs, swans, the Arctic mid-summer light and an endless presence of mosquitoes. The presence of the forest itself was the focus when developing the film: the forest as the main character in the film. The main question that unfolded was how does the landscape look today and are any signs of the war battle still present?

In the pre-production phase of the film, I searched for previous artists' representations of the Karelian landscape, as these responses to this place might provide an understanding of both the physical and psychological landscape.

Of the portrayals of Karelia in the arts, most prominent is the Finnish epic poem *Kalevala*, the oral folklore and mythology collected by Elias Lønrot in the 19th century. In particular one cycle, in response to *In Transit*, *Lemnikainen's journey to Tuonela* is described. Tuonela is described as the island of the dead, and Lemnikainen's mother travels to Tuonela to bring back her dead son where *'she rakes for her son along Tuonela's river she dredges against the stream'* (Lønrot, 1989:175). Not only is this journey to the island of the dead described in Kalevala as the Finnish painter Akseli Gallen-Kallela has portrayed this in his painting *Lemminkäinen's Mother* where a mother sits on the shore of a black lake, grieving over the body of her dead son.

4 Interview with survivor Wolfgang Windingstad, 8th April 2010 and Senje, Sigurd Glemt soldat Pax Forlag, Oslo, 2008 (second edition), p. 14

5 The author interviewed a survivor of the attack, Wolfgang Windingstad on 8th April 2010. He had re-visited the area in 2007.



Figure 4. Film still from *In Transit*: Kaprolat Hill, Karelian forest. June 2010.

In the lake swims a swan⁶. The Finnish composer Jean Sibelius also worked with *Kalevala* in the tone poem *Lemminkäinen (Four legends)*, *Op. 22, 1895*, where the second part refers to *The Swan of Tuonela*⁷. These artists have influenced the film by its symbolic treatment of the landscape. The idea of the mother travelling to the distant shores of Tuonela to bring back her dead son bears resonance to two aspects of the film: the individual families of the fallen who want to bring their dead home, and the symbol of the motherland and its work for repatriation. The Karelian forest where the fallen SS volunteers are laying has resemblance to *Tuonela*, the island of the dead; it is a land faraway and difficult to reach. In response to these artists' work, some relatives of individual fallen soldiers are travelling to this contemporary *Tuonela*, a symbolic and physical land of the dead in order to arrange repatriation.

However, one visual influence became a main inspiration for the cinematic language. In Russian landscape painting, how the vastness of landscape is portrayed is particularly evident in Ivan Shiskin's 19th century monumental oil paintings where visual realism and grandeur in portraying nature is used. In particular his forest paintings depict the landscape with attention to details. Although his work is painted between four to six decades before WWII, his visual language portraying the impenetrable, dark forest with details of light provided a rich visual resource in developing the contemporary forest vistas in the film. In his work, we do not only stand back to view, but the paintings give an illusion of the viewer standing inside the forest itself (Jackson and Wageman, 2003:13).

In the painting *The Thicket* from 1881⁸, he 'frequently presents his viewer with a seemingly random, severely cropped but casual composition of the forest underbelly, its dead and fallen branches, the areas seldom penetrated by light. The moss covered rocky interior appears almost unearthly, untouched and unspoiled by man, and the strong vertical plane is heightened by cramming the picture plane, resulting in an un-idealised and claustrophobic scene' (Jackson and Wageman, 2003:64-65). Not only are Shiskin's paintings portraying forest landscapes that seem overwhelming to enter, however, they do focus on

6 Akseli Gallen-Kallela, *Lemminkäinen's Mother*, Oil on canvas, 1897, Ateneum Art Museum, Helsinki, Finland.

7 Sibelius, Jean, *Op. 22 Lemminkäinen (Four legends)*, 1895.

8 Ivan Shiskin, *The Thicket*, 1881, Oil on canvas. The Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow, Russia.

the quality of light within the forests, creating his landscape paintings immersive. His portrayal of the Russian landscape became a rich source for developing the cinematic language where the immersion and vastness of the forest was sought as a visual idea. The artists mentioned here made landscape work in the latter part of the 19th century, focusing on aspects of national identity and symbolism (Jackson and Wageman, 2003:75). Another aspect of forests as symbolic landscapes contains horrifying dark dimensions in European history such as forests as sites of sacrifices and executions (Schama, 1995: 81 – 10). Forest sites of atrocities committed during The Second World War are well documented and commented upon by various historians, and the battle in the Kaprolat / Hasselmann area in Karelia is a relatively small example seen in the wider context of the war. In various parts of Russia hundreds of thousands of soldiers are still buried, unidentified in fields, villages and forests (Boyes, 7th June, 2008). One prominent example is the surroundings of St. Petersburg where epic numbers of individuals killed during the Siege of Leningrad are still searched for by search teams (Boyes, 7th June, 2008). Volksbund Deutsche Kriegsgräberfürsorge based in Kassel (The German War Graves Commission), organise systematic searches using Wehrmacht documents and eyewitnesses' testimonies to locate thousands of German military personnel who died in the area. (Traynor, 23 Sept 2000).

As a filmmaker I also wanted to portray the human intervention as a tactile process, where the unearthing is a major part of the process. By choosing to film the exhumation process itself with close up images, it refers to and *confronts* the viewer with the actions of history, and what took place. The narrative of history is unfolded through physical layers in time: layers of nature's cycles and seasons. The information provided is through visual images and then by the limited dialogue of the forensic archaeologist, estimating the age and cause of death on site. The narrative here unfolds visually through the time cycle of nature and traces of human remains left in situ.



Figure 5. Film still from *In Transit*: Details of exhumation. June 2010.



Figure 6. Film still from *In Transit*: Details of exhumation. June 2010.

The images could have been shown with a more distant approach, allowing a less confrontational viewpoint. However, by confronting what is revealed by hands searching through soil, sand, roots and leaves, the very painful image of what once happened is yet again evident. Not through written data and not through eyewitness accounts, but through visual images. However, the complex duality of the visual response refers to Susan Sontag's writings on photography, that '*often something looks, or is felt to look 'better' in a photograph. Indeed, it is one of the functions of photography to improve the normal appearance of things. ...beautifying is one classic operation of the camera, and it tends to bleach out a moral response to what is shown. Uglifying, showing something at its worst, is a more modern function: didactic, it invites an active response. For photographs to accuse, and possibly to alter conduct, they must*

shock' (Sontag, 2003:72). Watching the duality of imagery in the film does provoke the question whether one should reveal the physicality of the battle or not. What is regarded as beautiful in this landscape also presents us with the shocking *aftermath* of the battle: the repatriation of the fallen. Not only are we confronted by the physicality of the place where young people died in the savage of war, but also we watch human remains being revealed through ferocious searches. Looking at the physicality of the scene is thought provoking, but perhaps more so the discovery of the SS uniform and what they represented. The challenge of the fallen in Karelia is the complexity of nationality and political viewpoint. Roger Boyes concludes in his article on the search for SS soldiers in Russia that *'archaeology is about the search for lost civilisations. The search for German remains is something else: an attempt to recover the memory of how savage war can be and then put the memory to rest'* (Boyes, 7th June, 2008).

In the film there is one scene where a soldier is exhumed. The scene starts with a wide shot of a dense forest, where five people are gathered, focusing on something on the ground. The scene unfolds with close up images of ferociously searching hands through soil and roots.

Then fragments of a SS uniform are revealed, a green button and then a skull.

The position of the skull and the rest of the skeleton, still in uniform, reveals how the man fell. This scene portrays the intensity of the search and disturbance of nature; it pinpoints perhaps the challenges and difficulties of the exhumation. Revealing these human remains shows an aspect of history that perhaps some wanted to be erased from the collective national war narrative in Norway.

Eirik Veum writes *'There are still aspects regarding the Second World War that are still taboos and difficult for Norwegians to talk about. ...in particular with regards to Norwegians who fought in the war with German SS-uniforms, the so called 'frontkjemperne'* (Veum, 2009:9). Further to this point, Susan Sontag writes *'what is called collective memory is not a remembering but a stipulating: that this is important, and this is the story about how it happened, with the pictures that lock the story in our minds'* (Sontag, 2003:76). The visual imagery of this scene is revealing as the soldiers' political identity is emerging as the uniform is appearing. When the poignant coloured green button is discovered, we realise that this significant object belonged to one individual. Watching this scene one is reminded of the political representation of the fallen through the SS uniform and the sheer horrors of what they represented. However one is also confronted with each individual's brief existence, and the appalling manner in which the fallen has been left in the forest for over six decades.



Figure 7 Film still from *In Transit: Kaprolat Hill, Karelian forest*. June 2010.



Figure 8. Film still from *In Transit*: Details of exhumation. June 2010.



Figure 9. Film still from *In Transit*: Details of exhumation. June 2010.



Figure 10. Film still from *In Transit*: Details of exhumation. June 2010.

By revealing the forgotten, and by unfolding history, it brings up the question of time. As these men who were found in the forest have never been retrieved nor formally buried, there are still family members who have been searching for their relatives since 1944. Some relatives wish for their relatives to be buried in Norway, as a final resting ground. Other relatives do not wish to come forward with information, or claim their relatives back, due to the perception of shame that still is present in Norway. The notion of a traitor (*landssviker* in Norwegian) runs deep in the population, perhaps the deepest in the generation who did experience the war. The author Eirik Veum argues in his book *De som falt* from 2009 that *'perhaps this book is being published too early, and that it preferably should be published after everyone who has a relationship to the war and their relatives have died? That would have been most comfortable for all parts. We could have kept the illusion we wish to behold with regards to our recent history, and some families would have avoided being presented with a truth that they neither want nor have a need to know. Whether we like it or not, the SS-volunteers keep throwing long dark shadows onto those Norwegian families, and is therefore a painful aspect in the Norwegian society'* (Veum, 2009:10). Veum continues that *'if we should learn from history, we need to know all aspects of it, not only selected parts that is easy to understand and accept'* (Veum, 2009:10). In the book *The Politics of war memory and commemoration* it is argued that *'particular individual experiences may be (or seem) singular, and - especially - if not consonant with official narratives - be withheld from articulation and become isolated'* (Ashplant, Dawson, Roper, 2000:19). With relevance to the fallen

in the Karelian forest, this might be one reason why they have never been formally retrieved and repatriated: the SS volunteers are not consonant with the official war narrative due to an involuntary commemoration (Ashplant, Dawson, Roper, 2000:18).

The political and historical context of the subject is heavily laden with pain and refers to a harrowing epoch in world history. The non-conventional narrative in the film does not draw attention to any individuals, neither the fallen, searchers nor relatives. In the film, there is no main character we can identify with, but rather a description of events unfolding. The site in Karelia is only one example of other similar sites throughout Europe and Russia where hidden painful history is still buried. One such example is the Falstad Forest in Norway where some Soviet Prisoners of War are still laying unidentified in the forest where they were killed (<http://falstadsenteret.no>). Another example is the border zone of Finnish and Russian Karelia, there several individuals still lay buried in fields, in particular Finnish soldiers killed in the summer of 1944 as Finnish troops had to retreat rapidly to new defensive positions (Ashplant, Dawson, Roper, 2000:152). Numerous sites in Spain contain unknown graves from the Spanish Civil War. An on-going public debate is taking place as to whether one should exhume these sites or not (<http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/europe/8098443.stm>). Some relatives urge for individuals to be exhumed and formally buried, whilst others urge for the past to be left alone and 'forgotten' (Ibid).

These examples are historical sites, but one should also remember that similar battles and atrocities continue to take place in various conflict areas today. Recovering and exhuming fallen individuals offer the dead formal burials and relatives certainty of their death.

The film offers a stark glimpse into what has been left behind and what happens when history is being revealed. It offers a discourse into the ethical issues if such sites should be left as memorial sites or if individuals should be exhumed, identified and be formally buried in another site. Exhuming and identifying the individuals might have an enormous impact on relatives, by gaining certainty of the destiny of the fallen, and providing a final resting ground 'at home'. In the case of the forests around the Kaprolat and Hasselmann hills, due to the inaccessibility to the site such as its desolate and remote location, one argument for exhuming the fallen is that relatives wish to have accessibility to a memorial site that is logistically possible to visit.

As the fallen soldiers are still regarded as political traitors in Norway, there is also a social stigma and shame associated with the SS volunteers (Veum, 2009:9). However, there are still family members of the fallen who are searching for their family members and would prefer to formally bury their relatives (Veum, 2009:386).

In a letter dated 8th November 1953 sent to survivor Wolfgang Windingstad, a sister of a fallen soldier wrote *'we would like to gain certainty about our brother's destiny. I would therefore ask you if you have seen my brother dead or alive after the battle on the 25th and 26th of June, or if you have heard anything about his destiny from other friends. If you know anything about him, please let us know the full truth, no matter how gruesome it might be. For the uncertainty is worse than anything else. Even the smallest piece of information will be received with the deepest gratitude'*.⁹ This uncertainty of not knowing whether a relative is alive or not, shows individuals need for confirmation.

9 Author's interview with survivor Wolfgang Windingstad, 8th April 2010.



Figure 11 Film still from *In Transit*: Wooden coffins stored at Mga. October 2010.

One of the last scenes in the film shows several small wooden coffins stacked on top of each other. The coffins are marked with numbers referring to the GPS location where they were found. They contain remains of individuals who have been exhumed and are waiting to be identified or formally buried. A political decision has not yet been made where the final resting place might be; perhaps this is highlighting the difficulties of reconciliation and closure.

What does a film contribute with in the existing histories of historical war and contemporary conflicts? In this case, the film offers a visual glimpse into a brutal past. However, it does challenge the viewer with a present revelation of an un-victorious aspect of history, and is a reminder of the need of closure for unidentified fallen, regardless of national or political belonging. Noel Carroll writes '*when we encounter a film, we try to make sense of it; we interpret it; we attempt to grasp its significance*'. (Carroll, 2006:323). 'The language of film offers the viewer a confrontation with one's own moral and ethical understanding, and can therefore further develop moral concepts in everyday affairs' (Ibid).



Figure 12. Film still from *In Transit*: Karelian forest and documentation process. June 2010.

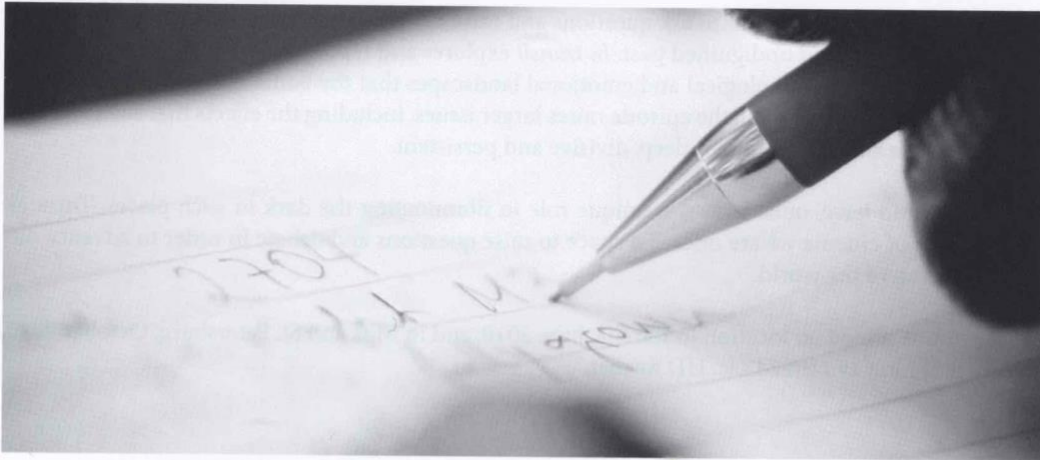


Figure 13. Film still from *In Transit*: Karelian forest and documentation process. June 2010.

As a filmmaker, the visual language that was developed during the production of *In Transit*, portrays dualities in a certain landscape that is visualised as beautiful and idyllic with its wide sweeping vistas, as well as brutal close-up images of human intervention in nature. This duality creates tension within the film, and therefore highlights both moral and ethical questions with the subject matter. The tension of the cinematic language lends itself to ambiguity where *'the art cinema seeks to solve the problem in a sophisticated way: by the device of ambiguity'* (Bordwell cited in Braudy and Cohen, 1999:721). As the spoken dialogue in the film offers limited information, the images and sound continuously offer an ambiguous view of the unfolding events in landscape. This ambiguity offers room for asking questions and debate whether one should intervene in landscape and memory through exhumation of fallen soldiers.

Conclusion

One can discuss whether it is ethically right to exhume individuals after (in this context) Second World War battles, or whether one should let the dead rest where they are and rather provide a memorial. This might be a question only relatives of the concerned should agree to. In the case of the dead in the Karelian forest, relatives are supporting the Kaprolat Committee to undertake searches, exhumation and DNA-identification (Kaprolat committee, 2008:1).

After visiting the site in Karelia I am left unbiased whether one should exhume remains for repatriation or whether one should identify the individual graves and provide a memorial on site. From a personal perspective, I found the forest itself as a symbol of how time passes, and where nature, left on its own, provides a peaceful environment. It was difficult to imagine a brutal battle having taken place in such a tranquil location. The forest in Karelia is one example that might provide a peaceful resting ground for the fallen, however there are numerous locations throughout Europe that are not in such beautiful places and would not serve as an appropriate final resting ground. Relatives' desire to bring the dead back 'home' is another personal aspect that only individuals can answer. What appears to be a lengthy process of deciding upon where to provide a final resting place for the fallen soldiers is yet to be agreed. When this is resolved, memory can perhaps be put at rest.

Through film, the specifics of place and landscape are haunting and compelling aspects of the story and its significance. The film *In Transit* is a cinematic response to the events of human intervention in a historical landscape where conflicts of the past have taken place. The film builds upon ambiguity

through visual duality in order to ask questions and raise debate whether one should reveal the past, in this case a brutal and undignified past. *In transit* explores and represents through film and photography, the physical, psychological and emotional landscapes that the battle and its legacy occupies. Specific and shocking in itself, the episode raises larger issues, including the effects that such an event has on families and communities: deep, divisive and persistent.

Art has – could have, must have – a unique role in illuminating the dark in such places. Through the language of cinema we are offered a space to raise questions and debate in order to advance our understanding of the world.

In Transit was filmed on location in Karelia, June 2010, and in Mga and St. Petersburg, October 2010. Duration of film: 19 min 24 sec. HD format.

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Images

All images are still photographs from the film *In Transit*, © Heidi C Morstang.

7.8 Scanned essay by Powel, B. Limited Edition DVD with accompanying essay.



IN TRANSIT

ESSAY BY
BRIEG POWEL

PHOTOGRAPHS BY
HEIDI C. MORSTANG

Narratives are instrumental in shaping who we and those around us are. Some such narratives are entirely individual: the tales we tell ourselves about the world and our place in it. Others are intended to bind and unite, fostering a sense of belonging to a community, a society, or a nation, establishing a distinctive shared history of the group. Narratives are central to identity on both individual and collective levels. We 'narrate' who and what we are, and to whom and what we belong. By extension, we also implicitly and explicitly narrate who and what we are not, and to whom or what we do not belong.

Narratives are social constructs, products of our habits and interactions as social creatures, whether we choose to live alongside or apart from others. Narratives order our social world, placing us here, you there, and them further away. Unity and enmity are simultaneously produced and reproduced through the power of narrative. Some narratives reinforce each other, confirming the familiar, reassuring us that we are who we think we are. Others conflict or contradict, undermine and question, perhaps even upset. Sometimes both the reassuring and the upsetting conflate, sitting alongside each other in uncomfortable symbiosis. In such cases it is tempting to glorify comforting

dates by the pageantry of pristine regimental flags and red plastic poppies, stone and marble are deliberately chosen as the material of monuments for their durability and longevity. The nation's collective memory, it seems, reserves a special place for those who die in its name.

And yet collective memories rarely fully reflect those of individual who belong to the collectives. There may indeed be experiences shared by many, but the many are not the all. And, as Paul Ricoeur argues, in trying to remember some *thing*, one often remembers oneself: in remembering the war one is led to remember my war or our war. These different individual and collective memories do not necessarily correspond. Where are the tales of the unmentioned told? And their names carved? And what if the ceremonial unity of the nation in the present belies the divisions of the past? Horace penned his words when his *patria*, Rome, was undergoing political turmoil and civil war, when the victors claimed the farms, lands, and often lives of the losers. In conflict both sides frequently claim to serve their countries, but in civil conflict it is the nation itself which is the subject of the conflict. The national collective divides, leaving individuals to navigate their own paths between conflicting visions of the group.

narratives to the extent that the awkward is forgotten; the good is always better to remember than the bad. But to forget completely requires one not to be reminded of that which is to be forgotten, and it is impossible to predict when a souvenir might appear. One might also ask whether it is desirable to forget completely, because without a sense of the bad it is difficult appreciate the good. Societies therefore often commemorate the good in the context of the bad, deploying material reminders in prominent public spaces to aid in doing so.

Some of the most visible material examples of commemoration occur in relation to war. In public squares across Europe, for example, the monuments to those killed in war physically embody attempts to narrate good (honour, glory, *trionphe*, sacrifice, valour) out of bad (industrialised mass-slaughter and the associated anonymity of wartime death, decimation or incineration by modern weaponry). *Dulce et decorum est pro patria mori* wrote Horace. Death might be bad in itself, but death in the name of one's nation is sweet and noble, we are told. The finality and very individual experience of dying is reframed as a communally honourable achievement in the name of the national collective. Reinforced on pre-assigned



And some wars may not be 'civil' by official distinction, but were much so in the ideologies of the participants. As the film *In Transit* reveals, the unity of the victor sometimes requires that the dead of the vanquished remain where they fell and well away from the permanence of marble.

In Transit frames the remains of such dead as they emerge from Karelian soil; forgotten by none who knew them, but absent from their collective national narrative. With the violent revelation of their bodies and its framing in Heidi Morstang's imagery come the discomforts and complexities of national identity. These dead of war have neither gravestones or cenotaphs to record their names, only a canopy of birch leaves and a humming requiem of forest life. But they are Norwegian. Whilst the distinctive SS runic insignia visible on the decaying uniforms conjures association with the most objectionable horrors of the Nazi German regime, the word 'Norwegen' on the identity tags dislocates such initial assumptions. For Norwegians in the present this one word changes the dead from being those of an 'other' to 'ours'. These are the dead of the *Skijeger Batalion*, part of the *Norge* (Norway) SS volunteer regiment, killed fighting Soviet forces on 25/26 June 1944. They were not the black-clad

'death's head' (*Totenkopfverbände*) SS units of the concentration camps but elite ski-borne infantry supporting the Finns in their 'Continuation War' to reclaim Karelia from the Soviet Union. The ferocity of the Finns and their allies' fighting ultimately failed to prevent the re-taking of Karelia by the Soviets, but it did much to ensure that Finland was unique amongst the USSR's pre-war neighbours in maintaining its sovereignty after 1945. That the *Skijeger* fought to protect a liberal democracy (Finland) from an authoritarian dictatorship might normally be cause for commemoration. That they did so in the uniforms of another dictatorship which also occupied Norway at the time ensures that it is not.

The result is that the dead of the *Skijeger Batalion* have remained in Karelia for over six decades, conveniently out of sight for the narrators of Norway's war. Narratives are best remembered when they are simple, and the narratives of the Second World War are typically of good's triumph against unfathomable evil, freedom's victory over totalitarian tyranny. The heroes of Telemark, for example, are far better known than the young boys of *Norge*; the former fought the Nazis, the latter the Soviets. And it is in the context of this point that the



political power which shapes narratives is revealed. The neglect of the *Skijeger* dead permits narrative focus on the resistance to the Nazis and participation with the victors. Many from *Norge* actually fought both Nazi and Soviet. But ignoring the dead also avoids the ironic consistency of the Soviet army being the enemy to both the *Skijeger* and to post-war Norway; the Iron Curtain becoming a useful shroud to cover the dead and prevent inconvenience in the strategic stalemate of the Cold War.

The narration of history is often political, structured to frame an audience's beliefs for a specific purpose, such as a belief in the fatherland. Post-liberation, for example, it is far more useful to speak of the national resistance to the occupier than to discuss those who risked life and limb to cooperate. But time and events change perceptions. It was to Norwegian nationalist sentiment that the poster art of Harald Damsleth appealed to encourage volunteers for *Norge*. Damsleth narrated through image and slogan, driving a consistent tale of pan-Scandinavian solidarity to stop aggressive Soviet Bolshevism. They are notably free from references to cooperation with German or Nazi, bar from the SS runes on the helmets of the posters' characters. His images aim to exercise power through their narrative: the image-



maker framing both the subject of the image and, potentially, its interpretation by an audience. But the subjective nature of personal interpretation limits the power of the image-maker over the audience, and sometimes an image is not sufficient to make a narrative convincing. But if reinforced through the banal symbols and rituals of daily life a narrative becomes very powerful indeed. Damsleth's work ran alongside military parades in town centres, broadcasts on national media, and a general stream of messages urging collaboration. These all combine in an effort to make the narrative common knowledge, familiar to all even at the subconscious level. And this is the method of collective memory narration, consistent reinforcement through the procedural, iconic, and congregational.

In Transit begins to pick apart the mass-memory of the war memorials. This is a reconnection with the individuality of memory, the unearthing of sons to those long dead, and brothers, fathers, uncles, and grandfathers to some who still live. Their names may not be on the monuments but they remain in the minds of many. *In Transit* reminds us of those lives, a renaissance to those pushed aside by history. The dead are reframed, highlighting the enduring power of image itself

In contrast to the sanitised immediacy of these recent representations, *In Transit* enjoys the freedom from embedding that comes with the passing of time. The lack of state sponsorship might ensure that the dead do not come home, but the informality of the excavations allows the representation of those whose lives are not meant for commemoration. Morstang is consequently able to depict the dead where they fell, using the same radiant June sunlight in which they died, far away from the frames of ceremonies. The personal essence of death pervades *In Transit*, with the fallen still amongst the paraphernalia of their lives: the boots, bottles, buttons, and bullets crucial to their final days.

And those days spent in the wooded hills and clear waters of Karelia would have evoked the landscapes of their Norwegian homes, both literally and culturally. The nineteenth century Norwegian romantic nationalist artists and literary figures placed the Scandinavian wilderness at the centre of their visual narratives, becoming the frames in which Norwegian society was built. So often in this work the natural wilderness is associated with the home, a paradoxical coming together of the vast and remote with the intimate and comforting. Chiming eerily with the panoramic frames of *In Transit*, for example, is Kitty

to shock, intrigue, and remind free from the trappings of collective narration.

This also distinguishes *In Transit* from the public imagery of recent conflict. So much of this imagery is censored and sanitised, a result of the re-appreciation of the power of the image to shape public opinion in the aftermath of Vietnam. Since the Falklands/Malvinas war in 1982 the 'embedded' photographer and filmmaker has come to monopolise the imagery of the wars of Europeans and North Americans, the state having acquired a monopoly over conflict's representation. Thus Western audiences of war have come to perceive a familiar narrative in imagery from pearly-toothed recruitment poster pin-up, to glamorous Galahads in dusty armour helping destitute natives, to triumphant returning heroes parading in town centres. The dead also play their part in the pageantry, packaged in gleaming hearses that stream their national colours through the crowds of warriors past and the present public, their names slipping seamlessly onto the memorials of old. Damsleth and his fellow collaborators' ideology may have been rejected, but their methods of narration continue unmolested.

Kjelland's 1886 painting *Sommernatt*, depicting a boat on a lake in wooded hills awash with summer evening light. Meanwhile Isak, the hero of Knut Hamsun's novel *Markens Grøde* (Growth of the Soil), turns the wilderness of the Norwegian Highlands into his homestead, just as the *Skijeger* men turned the earth and trees of Karelia into their bunkers, shelters, and homes. But the Karelian landscape also had particular relevance to the *Skijeger*'s Finnish allies. Their national cultural narrative was especially influenced in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries by works set in or inspired by the Karelian or Finnish landscape, including the ancient poetic epic of the Kalevala and Jean Sibelius' musical works *Finlandia*, *Kullervo*, and the *Lemminkäinen* and *Karelia Suites*. This body of Finnish work developed in parallel to Norwegian romantic nationalism, becoming central vehicles for the expression – and shaping – of both nations' identities. And as both nations achieved independence in the early twentieth century, these cultural narratives of landscape became symbolic foundation stones upon which the new states were to be built. It is unsurprising, therefore, that Stalin's invasion and occupation of Karelia in 1939/40 acquired such a symbolic significance for Norwegian and Finn alike.

And it is this landscape which permeates *In Transit*. The forest panoramas teem with vivaciousness whilst the close imagery reinvigorates the remains of the past as they emerge from the root-infested undergrowth. So alive is the forest that even the living take time to emerge from its frames. By engaging with the landscape and its cultural representations, *In Transit* challenges collective and individual memories of a defining period in Europe's most troubled century, and in one of its remotest corners. The romantic nationalist influences remind one of the central role that landscape has played in the development of national identities, especially in Norway and Finland. But *In Transit* also reminds us that in that serene landscape lie the metaphorical and literal skeletons that help define the present. It was a sense of national duty and collective solidarity which led many of the *Skijeger* men to fight in Karelia. But it is also a concern over the nation's identity which prevents Norway from bringing them back, however many decades may have passed. As a result the *Skijeger*'s dead remain mostly unclaimed and unidentified, repackaged as GPS coordinates on wooden boxes or still part of the Karelian landscape around Lake Kapanez and the hills of Kaprolat and Hasselman, where they fell. *In Transit* thus becomes a reminder of the forgotten *Skijeger*, the men who have no headstones.



The photographs of the found objects were taken in the Hasselmann and Kaprolat Hills, Karelia, June 2010.

7.9 Portfolio

Artefact [hand-made artist's film / booklet in fabric-bound case]

Prosperous Mountain film and photographs by Heidi Morstang.

Limited edition DVD [231 editions] with an accompanying essay by fellow and curator B Phipps, Churchill College, University of Cambridge. International distribution.

Publication launch at Norwegian Ambassadors' Residence, London, November 2015







PROSPEROUS MOUNTAIN

AN ESSAY BY
BARRY PHIPPS

Before me in the distance rose a range of mountains, beautiful and majestic in the moonlight, like petrified giants. The scene was the most magnificent and filled with fantastic stillness that I had ever experienced. Over the white contours of the Nordic winter stretched the sky's endless vault, filled with a myriad of glimmering stars.

- Harald Sohlberg on his painting *Winter night in Rondane* (1913-4)

There is a tension of above and beneath.

It is forbidden to be buried on Svalbard. Yet, it is a place that has become inextricably linked to what lies beneath its surface. This remote archipelago of islands located between the north coast of Norway and the North Pole, measures approximately sixty-two thousand square kilometres and is covered in permafrost. It is formed of serrated mountain peaks and colossal migrating glaciers.

Here, the summits and the sea are conjoint. Suddenly the sky can be near, not as redemptive quietude but as savagery, amplified by the spiked contours and bleaching snow, where the eyes find no rest. In the winter it is a midnight world, where the nights can be as black and deep as the coal seams hidden in its icebound layers, whilst in summer the shifting light shines for 24- hours a day from April through August. Instability persists in the ever-changing weather: haze and rain, hail and snow, clouds unceasingly in motion, closing and opening while light penetrates then disappears. It is a place of moods, shifting nuances and of never-resting forces across one of the most sparsely populated areas on earth.

The film, Prosperous Mountain, brings the viewer into close proximity with the movement between light and heaviness in this Nordic landscape. It is an outlook that is simultaneously closed and limitless, and manifested as mood. The scenes that constitute the film unfold as tension rather than narrative, it moves amongst moments rather than in confrontation with them, offering a searching ruminative absorption. Yawning and inscrutable, the panorama is tight but nonetheless boundless. It moves silently across vistas that appear bereft of life, except for the solitary lights in a house and snow mobiles which observe the presence of man's impact on the region.

The deep history of man's sway over the archipelago reportedly began when the Vikings sailed to Svalbard, the place with the cold coasts, in 1194. However, it is a Dutchman Willem Barents who is reputed to have 'discovered' the largest of the islands Spitsbergen in 1596. Barents was in search of the infamous Northeast Passage, but was stopped at an early stage by thick ice and perished on Novaya Zemlya. However, other vessels from the expedition made it back with tales of easily harvested whales and walruses. This was to be the beginning of centuries of brutal animal slaughter, until the time came at the end of the 19th Century when there they were plundered almost to extinction.

(Store Norske) which continues production.

The remoteness of the islands meant that before the opening of an airport in 1975, the only means of transport was by sea. Consequently when the harbours iced up, the local community was completely isolated during the long winters. In the 1950s, prominent in this community were around 1000 people employed in the Norwegian mines. Further to this, another 1000 miners worked in the Russian coal mines, owned by Trust Artikugol, which operates in Barentsburg - which has subsequently fallen to around 400 miners working there today.

Since the 1990s, there have been major changes in the working life on the archipelago. From 1993 the economy has been concentrated on two main industries, tourism and research. Amongst the 2500 people settled on Svalbard today most carry a Norwegian passport. There are Norwegian flags for sale in the tourist shops, along with cuddly polar bears, key-rings and Arctic-styled bottle openers. In 1995 tourists spent 32,625 nights in Longyearbyen, by 2006 that number had reached 83,049, and the figure continues to increase. Despite the prominence of Norwegian settlers on Svalbard, there are reminders

After the whales and walruses were decimated, renewed interest in the territory came with the discovery of coal and other minerals in its unique, stratified mountains. 350 million years ago, before these mountains were shaped by the deep freeze of the Ice Age, Svalbard lay splashed by the waves beneath the penetrating rays of the equator sun. At this time the Arctic region was covered by a dense forest of ferns. The plants died, falling on top of one another, and over time produced thick layers of peat. The peat layers were in turn covered by sand, river gravel, and clay, and compressed over centuries to form rich black strata of coal that are mined to this day.

The first coal shipment was sold by the polar seafarer Søren Zachariassen in Tromsø, Norway in 1899, and marked the start of a race to unearth the biggest and richest findings. The Norwegians were first in 1903, followed close behind by Englishmen, Dutchmen, Germans, Swedes, Americans and Russians. By 1909, while most of the inhabitants of the island were Norwegian, the main employer on the island was the Boston-based Arctic Coal Company - co-founded by the American John Munroe Longyear, who gave his name to the main town on Svalbard, Longyearbyen. The American company was purchased ten years later by Store Norske Spitsbergen Kulkompani

that the archipelago is more and less than that. There are Russians (100) and Ukrainians (300) who live there, some in Longyearbyen, though most at Barentsburg. The young women at the supermarket check-out speak Thai. Moreover, further north from Longyearbyen at Ny Alesund, a Zeppelin atmospheric station is perched on a mountain top, wherein a German scientist monitors sensing equipment supplied by Switzerland, Sweden and South Korea. There are scientists from Asia and North America measuring changes in global atmosphere, which would be masked by local variation if it were taken further south. The relatively pristine air of the region is helping scientists to understand the pollution of the mega-cities of New York, Mumbai and Beijing. The internationalisation of the archipelago, with scientific stations from ten countries - Britain, France, Germany, Italy, The Netherlands, Norway, South Korea, Japan, China and India - affords the unquantifiable benefit of meeting in one place. It is the reflection of a growing understanding of the global importance of Arctic science. But it is also a reflection of the desire of many countries to maintain a national presence in the Arctic region.

The Arctic region is nature's front line. It has long been regarded as nature's storehouse - from commercial whaling to mines of coal

and minerals - and as technology advances the search is on for biological substances and processes which may be of industrial, pharmaceutical and medical use. The hunt for active biological substances and processes in the region is known as bioprospecting, inviting comparison with the search for gold, coal and oil. The United Nations has already identified forty-three commercial enterprises with bioprospecting operations in the Arctic.

The volume of waste, as an effect of the increased activity on the archipelago, has risen substantially. According to Statistics Norway 4000 tonnes were produced in 2010, of which 85 per cent was from commercial activity. Previously much of it was disposed in landfills, but it is now shipped to the mainland.

The situation brings to mind what the German philosopher Martin Heidegger would call 'the age of technology', in which the natural world is regarded as a store of energy, resources and raw materials for human purposes - the wind as currents of nitrogen to be yielded, the sea as source of hydroelectric power, forests as standing reserves of paper. Heidegger's term for the destructive grasp of nature as standing reserve is 'enframing'.

In the depth of this situation, wherein the Arctic 'storehouse' of biodiversity is being raided in order to provide short cuts for industrial, pharmaceutical and medical science, another storehouse with the potential to help global agriculture to adapt to a different, climate-changed world is being accrued.

...where danger is, there / grows the saving power also
- Friedrich Hölderlin

In contrast to the possibilities of bioprospecting, the Arctic also affords unique conditions for preservation. Since 2008, seeds from all over the world have been shipped to Svalbard, and placed in an vast underground cavern of a former coalmine more than 100 metres inside a mountain, maintained at between -18° and -20° Celcius, behind a set of steel doors and two airlocks. The Svalbard Global Seed Vault was constructed to contain samples of up to 4 million crop varieties, the idea being to provide a backup system for the world's genebanks, in order that global agricultural diversity can be maintained.

Often referred to as the "Doomsday" Seed Vault, it is an expansive stronghold that can hold up to 4.5 million seed varieties. The vault has

been designed to last a thousand years, and to withstand a wide range of global disasters, including climate change, nuclear war, and even an asteroid strike. It was established as the world's insurance policy against botanical disasters, so that food production can be restarted anywhere on the planet following a regional or global catastrophe. It was founded by Cary Fowler in association with the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR), and its construction was funded entirely by the government of Norway; operational costs are also financed by Norway and the Global Crop Diversity Trust. Primary funding for the Trust comes from organisations, such as the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, and from a number of governments worldwide.

In the first year of its opening around 400,000 seeds were deposited from countries around the globe. Samples came in from Ireland, the U.S.A, Canada, Switzerland, Colombia, Mexico and Syria. Several times a year, cargo planes land on the tiny airstrip on Spitsbergen Island carrying new contributions in acronym-labeled crates: rice from the Philippines, potatoes from Peru, and a cornucopia collection from the USA. They are then carried through the snow and along the roads to the entrance to the vault, where they are swept into the cavernous

depths and into cold storage.

The film is witness to the procession of the seeds into the Seed Vault which takes place only three or four times a year. In so doing it recalls a recurrent theme in human history, the collection of products of indigenous plant species through the cultivation of crops.

According to popular history, it was the Egyptian pharaoh Queen Hatshepsut who first began the organised movement of seeds and plants around the world, during the fifteenth century BCE. Aromatic plants played a prominent role in ancient Egyptian medicine, religion and magic, and the most sought-after aromatic was only to be found in the land of Punt. Hatshepsut is well known for her ambitious building projects in Egypt, particularly the erection of her funerary temple at Deir el-Bahri, in the Valley of the Kings. The walls of the temple are adorned with reliefs and hieroglyphic records of the events and highlights of a trading expedition to the land of Punt, believed to be in modern-day Somalia, around 1480 BCE. These relief panels record a key event in Egyptian history, showing Egyptian boats sailing from the Red Sea Coast and being welcomed by the king of Punt and his wife. The Egyptians are pictured offering metal axes and other

goods and leave with myrrh trees, ebony, ivory, cinnamon wood and panther skins. Also discovered at Djoser-Djeseru were the intact roots of frankincense trees, which once decorated the front façade of the temple. These trees were also collected by Hatshepsut in her travels; according to the histories, she brought back five shiploads of bounty, including flora and fauna. The final relief shows the trees being planted at the temple.

The temple, the tomb, the vault, the valley ultimately show that our being in space, as Heidegger might say, is determined by a tension of above and below. In valleys, we are below; this is a place where we create the order supporting our existence. Here, place is understood, even in threatening weather. But on Svalbard, this order is, from nature's side, as the film so beautifully poeticises, only a rift in the unknown. Mountains loom large above, the enormous stone uniting the land. And, when we ascend, we are calmed by a freedom that is different from the valley's safety, because on top we are exposed. Here, "up in the weather", forces are unleashed as in a storm, and we understand that nature is a fragile condition.

- Barry Phipps, *Cambridge*, 2014

Biography

Barry Phipps is a Fellow, Undergraduate Tutor and Curator of Works of Art at Churchill College. He has a wide ranging academic background, which is rooted in Fine Art, as both an undergraduate and lecturer, and includes research in Continental Philosophy (Warwick), History of Art (Oxford) and the History and Philosophy of Architecture (Cambridge).

He was appointed as the first Interdisciplinary Fellow at Kettle's Yard, the contemporary art gallery of the University of Cambridge. Most recently, he has worked with the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation, Lisbon, Royal Norwegian Embassy in London, the Embassy of Denmark in the UK, and is currently working with artists in Finland, Canada and Japan.



**RESEARCH
WITH
PLYMOUTH
UNIVERSITY**

Land
Water
/
and the visual arts


NORWEGIAN EMBASSY



PROSPEROUS MOUNTAIN

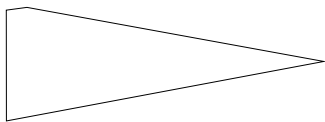
A FILM BY
HEIDI C. MORSTANG

Prosperous Mountain

Through an unfolding narrative, the film explores the specific global landscape of the Arctic that plays part in a fragile ecological system. Through the portrayal of the Arctic winter landscape that appears inhospitable, we are presented by human intervention through endeavours of mining, transport and global seed storage.

As global plant diversity is rapidly declining and several plant species are facing extinction, numerous countries are collecting and storing seeds for securing the world's future supply of food crop seeds. In addition to over 1400 seed banks located in countries that could experience nature disasters, wars and civil strife, *The Svalbard Global Seed Vault* has been constructed in order to store duplicates of food crop seeds samples to secure global plant diversity and food security for the foreseeable future.

By February 2013, 774,604 food crop seed samples from 231 countries around the world were stored there. The full capacity of the vault is 3 million seed samples. It now stores one third of the world's food crop seeds.

















Prosperous Mountain

Running time 15 min 45 sec
HD Colour | Aspect ratio 16 x 9 | Audio Dolby Digital 5.1

Director / Editor / Script / Producer – Heidi C. Morstang
Cinematography – Patrik Säfström
Sound design & mix – Paul Donovan
Foley artist – Ben Jones
Colourist – Christian Short
Post production manager – Miles Hall
Post production – Films at 59
Text consultant – Anthony Caleshu
Photographs – Heidi C Morstang
Graphic design – Farion

Supported by:
MADr, The Media, Art and Design Research Centre, Plymouth University,
The Royal Norwegian Embassy, London

Prosperous Mountain was filmed at The Svalbard Global Seed Vault in
the Arctic archipelago of Svalbard, Norway, February 2013.

Heidi C. Morstang works with moving image, photography and experimental documentary. Her practice is rooted in the physical; she is interested in the social, mythological and archaeological histories embedded in landscapes. She uses images to explore and offer insight into complex and often subtle tensions and conflicts that characterize places, however beautiful our environment might appear.

She works internationally through collaborations with historians and scientists. Her photographic works have been exhibited widely including: the Derzhavin Museum, St. Petersburg, Russia; The Lowry, Manchester; Galeria Ana VilaSeco, Spain; Plymouth Art Centre, UK; Govett-Brewster Art Gallery, New Zealand; and Pump House Gallery, London. Her films have been screened at international film festivals including: the 34th Clermont-Ferrand International Short Film Festival, France; 31st International Environmental Film Festival, Paris; 31st Uppsala International Short Film Festival, Sweden; 'Best Short Films from Around the World', Helsinki Short Film Festival, Finland; Sapporo International Film Festival, Japan and the 35th and 37th Norwegian Short Film Festival, Grimstad.

This film forms the first part of a trilogy concerning seed banks, pollination, climate change and bio security.

www.hcmorstang.co.uk



1. QAA Descriptors

PhD on the basis of Prior Published Works

Heidi Cathrine Morstang

Submission for PhD on the basis of Prior Published Works:

I hereby declare that my work qualifies for FHEQ Level 8 Doctoral degree as it meets all the descriptors outlined in the QAA document: UK Quality Code for Higher Education.¹ I will outline these below and refer to the submission consisting of the coherent body of work [three films] and an Integrative Summary.

4.18 Descriptor for a higher education qualification at level 8 on the FHEQ and SCQF level 12 on the FQHEIS: doctoral degree

The descriptor provided for this level of the frameworks is for any doctoral degree which should meet the descriptor in full. This qualification descriptor should also be used as a reference point for other level 8/level 12 qualifications.

Doctoral degrees are awarded to students who have demonstrated:

- *the creation and interpretation of new knowledge, through original research or other advanced scholarship, of a quality to satisfy peer review, extend the forefront of the discipline, and merit publication*

¹ <https://www.qaa.ac.uk/docs/qaa/quality-code/qualifications-frameworks.pdf>

QAA descriptor, p 30

Three published films are presented for submission for PhD on the basis of Prior Published Works: *In Transit* [2011], *Prosperous Mountain* [2013] and *Pseudotachylyte* [2019]. The submitted works and integrative summary bring an account of practice and insights to the possibilities of creating a poetic space in documentary filmmaking by identifying effective technical and rhetorical strategies for opening a space for intuitive interventions when constructing documentary cinematic narratives. It contributes to an enriched understanding of our environment and the place of humans in the world that benefits from creative practice. The screening, exhibition and publication history outlines the quality to satisfy peer review, extend the forefront of the discipline, and merit publication.

- *a systematic acquisition and understanding of a substantial body of knowledge which is at the forefront of an academic discipline or area of professional practice*

This is outlined throughout the Integrative Summary; outlining nature and significance of works.

- *the general ability to conceptualise, design and implement a project for the generation of new knowledge, applications or understanding at the forefront of the discipline, and to adjust the project design in the light of unforeseen problems*

This is outlined in the Integrative Summary; outlining nature, significance of works and methodologies.

The importance of these films derives from the methodology of intuitive interventions that rework the genre of observational documentary film and

contributes to interdisciplinary knowledge by eliciting contemplative responses in the viewer in order to understand multifaceted aspects of landscape within history, present and future; furthermore, to evoke change with the material world through a sensory expression that goes beyond the visual.

The films are intended to contribute to an existing observational documentary filmmaking practice that is already embedded in history of film by offering new insights and paradigms for future practice.

- *a detailed understanding of applicable techniques for research and advanced academic enquiry.*

This is outlined in the Integrative Summary; outlining nature, significance of works, and methodologies.

Typically, holders of the qualification will be able to:

- *make informed judgements on complex issues in specialist fields, often in the absence of complete data, and be able to communicate their ideas and conclusions clearly and effectively to specialist and non-specialist audiences*

The publication history of the films outlines the ability to communicate ideas and conclusions clearly and effectively to specialist and non-specialist audiences. This is evidenced by the inclusion in highly reputable international film festivals and exhibitions, where specialist and non-specialist audiences attend. The published

films all make informed judgments on complex issues in specialist fields: the integrative summary makes this explicit.

The research has been developed within the research group *Arts Research: Land/Water and the Visual Arts*, where an international academic context has provided international peer review.

- *continue to undertake pure and/or applied research and development at an advanced level, contributing substantially to the development of new techniques, ideas or approaches.*

My practice-led research in contemporary observational documentary filmmaking and photography brings together an understanding of documentary practice and contributes to a new genre of documentary internationally as evidenced through the esteemed locations in which it has been screened. The research focuses on how contemporary documentary filmmaking and photography bring knowledge alongside other disciplines. It is developed in collaboration and conversation with international world-leading researchers within diverse academic research areas: forensic archaeology, political and cultural history, biology, climate change science, geo-science and pure mathematics. The research is autonomous and self-standing. By leading ambitious collaborations, it has continuously developed, attracting global audiences and leading to progressive recognition in international communities.

The research has led to invitations to undertake further current research projects [e.g. Swedish Research Council funded interdisciplinary research project about

Arctic glaciers in Svalbard with Dr. T Martinsson, Gothenburg University; film about visual thinking in mathematics, in collaboration with Prof. Sir Roger Penrose and Prof. Paul Tod, Oxford University; and, a research project on migration of butterflies, invitation by leading climate change scientist Prof. Camille Parmesan through President Macron's *Make Our Planet Great Again Award*.] These projects are currently in development and production.

Critical peer review of the research across the visual arts, film arts, sciences and humanities is evidenced through inclusion and dissemination in internationally excellent, and academically rigorous symposia, conferences, film festivals, contemporary art exhibitions, and numerous publications. The research was included in the Research Assessment Exercise 2008, the Research Excellence Framework 2014 and the Research Excellence Framework 2021.

And holders will have:

- *the qualities and transferable skills necessary for employment requiring the exercise of personal responsibility and largely autonomous initiative in complex and unpredictable situations, in professional or equivalent environments.*

The artistic research practice is embedded in continuous scholarship through leading *Arts Research: Land/Water and the Visual Arts Research Group*. Since 2009, I have organised international artist-in-residencies, annual conferences and symposium. These have attracted national and international audiences, and have resulted in the

development of an international research network: *International Environmental Arts Research Practice Network* between the following Universities:

- Massey University, New Zealand
- University of Plymouth, UK
- HDK/Valand, Gothenburg University, Sweden

I organised and led the following research events:

2019 Environmental Artistic Research Practice International Conference

Artistic research practice has a unique capacity to offer crucial insights informing our understanding of environmental issues in the era of the Anthropocene. The reflexivity inherent in arts research along with an emphasis on expressive communication as outcome offers significant scope for bringing crucial yet complex relationships between vulnerable species, human action and climate change to wider appreciation amongst general audiences and key stakeholders.

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

- Keynote speaker: Professor Camille Parmesan, Climate Change Biologist and President Macron's 'Make Our Planet Great Again' Laureate

- Keynote speaker: Anne Noble, Distinguished Professor of Fine Arts (Photography) at Massey University, Wellington, and a New Zealand Arts Laureate
- Keynote speaker: Professor Tyrone Martinsson, Valand Academy, Gothenburg University, Sweden
- Keynote speaker and Book Signing: Yan Wang Preston 'Mother River' and 'Forest'

This conference was the first of a series of research events planned by the international research network linking University of Plymouth, Massey University, New Zealand and HDK/Valand Academy, Gothenburg University, Sweden

5th / 6th July 2018

Out of Place

25th Arts Research: Land/Water and the Visual Arts Summer Symposium

Speakers: Carole Baker, Christopher Cook, Hannah Drayson, Stuart Moore, Liz Nicol, Kayla Parker, Simon Standing, Yiannis Toumazis, Liz Wells

22nd /23rd June 2017

Territories

Land/Water and the Visual Arts Summer Symposium.

Speakers: Barbara Bosworth, Domenika Williamson, John Martin, Susan Trangmar, Emeric Hluisset, Fedra Dekeyser, Claudia Pils, Carole Baker, Tom Cox

18th January 2017

Safe-keeping bees: An inter-disciplinary exploration of the future for bees in Britain

Land/Water and the Visual Arts Symposium

Speakers: Nick Bentham-Green, Mark Edwards, William Kirk, Andrea Liggins, Amy Shelton

16th / 17th June 2016

Journeys and Transmissions

Land/Water and the Visual Arts Summer Symposium

Speakers: Nicola Brandt, Susan Collins, Katie Davies, Nicos Philippou, Moyra Stewart,

Marcus Vergette, Richard Yarwood, Paul Whitty, Phil Smith

25th / 26th June 2015

Wilderness / Wildness

Land/Water and the Visual Arts Summer Symposium

Speakers: Liz Wells, Eva Cooney, Daro Montag, Jay Griffiths, Stephen Huggett, Temujin

Doran, Angus Carlisle

15th November - 15th December, 2015

Land/Water International Artist-in-Residence programme

Artist: Caroline McQuarrie, Massey University, Wellington, New Zealand

2012-14

Land/Water International Artist-in-Residence programme in collaboration with the Marine

Institute, Plymouth University

Artists: Pascale Weber [Sorbonne University, France] and Jean Delseux [University of Clermont-Ferrand, France]. Residency developed into Erasmus exchange programme between Plymouth University and Sorbonne University, Paris.

Final film works screened in the Ocean City Festival in September 2014. Supported from the Marine Institute, Erasmus European Programme and Faculty of Arts, Plymouth University

10th / 11th July 2013

Nocturnal

Land/Water and the Visual Arts Summer Symposium

Speakers: Nick Alfrey, Angela Kingston, Susan Derges, Jem Southam, William Arnold, Milo Newman, Liz Nicol, Louisa Fairclough, Tabatha Andrews, Fergus Heron, Chrystel Lebas

2012

Water: Image

Land/Water and the Visual Arts International Conference

Keynote speaker: Per Bak-Jensen

2012

In Transit

Research event aimed at research staff and postgraduate students from the Faculty of Art and the Business School.

Invited Dr. Brieg Powel, lecturer in International Relations, and Dr. Leiv Sem, Falstad Centre, Norway. Discussed how contemporary film and photography can engage with historical, ethical, political and international aspects within painful heritage.

The event comprised of a film screening, exhibition and presentations from the fields of art, international relations and history.

23rd / 24th June 2011

No Man's Land

Land/Water and the Visual Arts Summer Symposium

Speakers: Alev Adil, Anthony Haughey, Anne Noble, Emma Stibbon, Liz Wells,

Anthony Caleshu

1st / 2nd July 2010

Land and the Metaphysical

Land/Water and the Visual Arts Summer Symposium

Speakers: David Williams, Jo Love & Mike Evans, David Rayson, Jane Grant,

Peter Cusack

2009

Land and Expedition

Land/Water and the Visual Arts Summer Symposium

Speakers: Anne Burke, Melanie Challenger, Neville Gabie, Vicky Long,

Jorma Puranen, Stephen Vaughan

4.18.1 *Doctoral degrees are awarded for the creation and interpretation, construction and/or exposition of knowledge which extends the forefront of a discipline, usually through original research.*

The submission for the degree presents three widely exhibited films that contribute to original knowledge within the field of observational documentary filmmaking practice as a dynamic instrument that corrals the vision to influence perceptual and affective change in relation to moral and ecological issues. The processes are technically rigorous and artistically emancipated.

4.18.2 *Holders of doctoral degrees are able to conceptualise, design and implement projects for the generation of significant new knowledge and/or understanding. Holders of doctoral degrees have the qualities needed for employment that require both the ability to make informed judgements on complex issues in specialist fields and an innovative approach to tackling and solving problems.*

As outline above in 4.18 and 4.18.1.

I have conceptualised, designed and implemented the film projects that have contributed to new knowledge and understanding through its international distribution.

Additionally, through continuous and coherent research, the *International Environmental Arts Research Practice Network* connecting Massey University, New Zealand; HDK/Valand, Gothenburg University, Sweden; and University of Plymouth, UK has been developed. This

has resulted in ongoing research within an international academic context where academics and post-graduate students attend research events and develop research.

4.18.3 *Doctoral programmes that may have a substantial taught element in addition to the research component (for example, professional doctorates), lead usually to awards which include the name of the discipline in their title (for example, EdD for Doctor of Education or DClInPsy for Doctor of Clinical Psychology). Professional doctorates aim to develop an individual's professional practice and to support them in producing a contribution to (professional) knowledge.*

N/A

4.18.4 *The titles PhD and DPhil are commonly used for doctoral degrees awarded on the basis of original research.*

The research is original. See submission of coherent body of work [three films] and Integrative Summary.

4.18.5 *Achievement of outcomes consistent with the qualification descriptor for the doctoral degree normally requires study equivalent to three full-time calendar years.*

The research submitted for this degree has been undertaken since 2011.

4.18.6 *Higher doctorates may be awarded in recognition of a substantial body of original research undertaken over the course of many years. Typically a portfolio of work that has been previously published in a peer-refereed context is submitted for assessment.*

Most degree awarding bodies restrict candidacy to graduates or their own academic staff of several years' standing.

I have been employed by the University of Plymouth since 2006. The research submitted for this degree has been undertaken since 2011.