

# **LANDSCAPE AND ARTIST FILM**

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## **ABSTRACT**

This thesis is an analytical commentary on a portfolio of digital video pieces which together constitute a body of practical research. The aim of that research was to use digital video to make a series of experimental films about the Scottish island of Rum in order to address the following question: How can such films address three things connected with landscape: the way in which landscape and subjectivity are intertwined, the way in which power operates through and on landscapes and the process of digital filmmaking itself? To this extent, the films aimed to illuminate and explore aspects of the work of Maurice Merleau-Ponty and Michel Foucault.

Through a process of experimentation with different camera types and filming techniques, and different editing and presentation styles, a series of video pieces was created before and following a visit to the Isle of Rum. The different methodologies evolved on the basis of this experimentation.

The thesis sets out the theoretical and artistic contexts in which the practical work took place with significant reference to artist filmmakers such as James Benning, Margaret Tait, Gideon Koppel, William Raban and Chris Welsby. It concludes that different styles of film are appropriate for capturing different truths about the landscape. Furthermore, it argues that digital filmmaking is itself capable of being a type of phenomenological investigation into our relationship with landscape.

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## **1. Introduction**

The aim of this research project was to use digital video to make a series of experimental films about the Scottish island of Rum. In doing so I wanted to address the following question: How can such films address three things connected with landscape: the way in which landscape and subjectivity are intertwined, the way in which power operates through and on landscapes and the process of digital filmmaking itself? I intended to experiment with different types of equipment, styles of filmmaking, editing and presentation.

This thesis is an analytical commentary on the video work constituting the practical research.<sup>1</sup> It sets out the personal and theoretical background to the practical work and the place of that work in the context of artist landscape film. It then describes the experimental film work taken in preparation for my trip to Rum. After a brief history of Rum it discusses the filming and the three substantive pieces of work which originated from this. The thesis also offers explanations of the aesthetic choices made and describes how the methodologies for filming, editing and presenting evolved. Finally, it includes reflection upon the extent to which the pieces achieve my goals and other issues arising in the course of the research.

It may be most helpful for the reader to begin the thesis and watch the video pieces as and when they are discussed here rather than reading the thesis first and then turning to the video.

## **2. The Personal Background**

I chose to work with digital video because I have been working artistically and commercially with it for several years. Amongst other things I hoped that this

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<sup>1</sup> This video work is provided on a separate, attached USB drive. The drive and a list of the pieces are in Appendix 1.



research would help me develop as a filmmaker and deepen my understanding of the process of filmmaking.

I was also keen to explore something else through filmmaking: In 1996 I completed a doctorate on the work of the French philosophers Maurice Merleau-Ponty and Michel Foucault (Macdonald, 1996). Long after I had left academia, their ideas still helped shape the way in which I view the world. Landscape film, I thought, might be another way of working through these ideas.

I have wanted to film on the Isle of Rum since I visited it several years ago to climb in Rum Cuillin, Scotland's most remote mountain range. Like the Skye Cuillin, visible across the sea, the mountains are the remains of an eroded volcanic caldera but, being much smaller than Skye, Rum is dominated by its mountains. Although they are not the highest of the Scottish mountains, they rise directly from the sea to almost 3000ft and tower, glowering blackly, above the Sound of Rum. The island is simultaneously beautiful and horrifying.

### **3. Landscape and Phenomenology**

The modern word "landscape" has several meanings, these being the result of its diverse history. Malcolm Andrews suggests that the word derives from the old German word "landschaft" or "lantschaft", meaning "a geographic area defined by political boundaries" (Andrews, 1999:28). "In the late fifteenth century, the land around a town was referred to as its landscape, a meaning that still survives in some places, as in the Swiss canton of Basel Landschaft" (Andrews, 1999:28-9). Thus, too, the modern English word "landscape" is used to refer to a place, to physical land.

John R. Stilgoe suggests that the word derives from the the old Frisian word "landschop", meaning "shoveled land, land thrown up against the sea" (Stilgoe, 2015:2). Likewise, our modern verb "to landscape" means to shape, to transform, the land. In contrast to the earlier meaning, of shaping the land to create a defence against the sea, the purpose of modern "landscaping" is primarily aesthetic.

The word “landscape” seems only to have begun to develop its aesthetic sense and become attached to art in or around the fifteenth century. Andrews refers to a contract for an alterpiece in Haarlem which “stipulated a ‘landscap’ as the necessary setting for the figural subjects” (Andrews, 1999:29). Initially in Western painting, the landscape in art usually formed the backdrop, or *parergon* for human action. Landscape itself was rarely (but could sometimes be) the subject, or *argument*, of a painting. Indeed, as Andrews shows through a study of different fifteenth and sixteenth century paintings of St Jerome in the wilderness, landscape features were frequently used allegorically, or symbolically, to reinforce the meaning of the human or spiritual drama depicted in the painting. Despite some notable exceptions, only gradually did the painted landscape free itself from the human subject and itself become the subject of art. It would, though, be a mistake to equate landscape painting, as a genre, with the simple representation of a real space. The famous landscapes of, for instance, Claude Lorraine, Pieter Bruegel the Elder and Caspar David Friedrich are not representations of real spaces but, for different reasons, variously *imagined* places.<sup>2</sup>

Now and again, all senses of the word collide. Robert Smithson’s film, *Spiral Jetty* (1970), for instance, is itself a work of landscape art in which is recorded the transformation of part of the shoreline of the Great Salt Lake in Utah into a massive natural sculpture, forever altering the landscape.

Whilst, then, the modern word “landscape” may refer to physical space, the aesthetically motivated transforming of that space, or the artistic representation of space, an important aspect of meaning has been retained from the diverse origins of the word. Landscape is always, in some sense, *human*. The physical landscape is never simply “space” as conceived of by science, the universe objectively described (although as we shall see, there are problems with the idea of such a description). Implicit in the sense of the word “landscape” is the notion of an agent or a perceiver, someone who *organises* space into a landscape, physically or perceptually. As Tacita Dean and Jeremy Millar put it,

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<sup>2</sup> e.g., Lorraine’s imagined *Landscape with the Marriage of Isaac and Rebekah* (1648), Bruegel’s *The Hunters in the Snow* (1565), with its impossible low countries mountain range and Friedrich’s *The Watzmann* (1824/5), with its distorted scale.

A landscape...is the land transformed, whether through the physical act of inhabitation or enclosure, clearance or cultivation, or the rather more conceptual transfiguration of human perception, regardless of whether this then becomes the basis for a map, a painting or a written account. (Dean & Millar, 2005:13)

Landscape is always for *somebody*. It is not surprising, then, that in recent years, a number of cultural geographers have turned to the phenomenological work of Merleau-Ponty to help understand our relationship to the landscape in the sense of our physical environment.<sup>3</sup>

Phenomenology, according to Merleau-Ponty, is that form of philosophy which takes lived experience as the starting point of an investigation into the nature of subjectivity and objectivity and the way in which we and the world exist.

It is the search for a philosophy which shall be a 'rigorous science', but it also offers an account of space, time and the world as we 'live' them. It tries to give a direct description of our experience as it is, without taking account of its psychological origin and the causal explanations which the scientist, the historian or the sociologist may be able to provide (Merleau-Ponty, 1945a:vii).

The aim of that investigation is general truths, or "finding definitions of essences" (Merleau-Ponty, 1945a:vii).

This phenomenology, which begins for Merleau-Ponty with a close study of the act of *perception*, seeks to question the division of the world into the binary oppositions of subjects and objects, minds and bodies, culture and nature. It reveals that the landscape itself is not something objective or external to the observer but is, rather, something which necessarily exists for an embodied, situated subject who is necessarily a participant in the landscape. Seer and seen are intertwined.

Thus, according to the cultural geographer John Wylie:

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<sup>3</sup> See, for instance, Wylie (2007) and Ingold (2000).

The visible landscape, for Merleau-Ponty, is neither the 'field of vision' of an observing subject, nor simply the sum total of external visible things. The visible landscape is instead an ongoing process of inter-twining *from which* my sense of myself as an observing subject emerges. It is the fact that I belong to the landscape of visible things that enables my seeing – it is my seeing which enables me to witness that belongingness. And so subjectivity, and the possibility of meaningful engagement with the visible world, occurs as the arising of a 'point of view' within the visible – it is thus *produced* ever and anon within embodied practices (Wylie, 2007:148).

It is important to recognise that Merleau-Ponty does not simply make a common sense claim that people are always situated, always to be found within some kind of landscape. He makes the much deeper ontological claim that the physical world and the perceiving subject necessarily exist for one another. In doing so, he argues against a common belief: that what makes the world "real" is that it is composed of objects which exist regardless of us, can be described independently of any particular point of view, and which possess determinate properties - size, weight, density and so on. Rather, what makes the world real and not merely apparent is that whilst it can only ever be described from a viewpoint, it simultaneously transcends all such particular viewpoints of it.<sup>4</sup>

"To 'live' a thing", Merleau-Ponty says, "is not to coincide with it, nor fully to embrace it in thought" (Merleau-Ponty, 1945a:325). No matter how many experiences one has of an object, one is aware that it is always possible to have more. In this sense, the world transcends us and it is this transcendence which makes it real rather than imaginary.

Whilst the reality of the world as something independent of potential observers of that world is obviously a common sense belief, it is also one which is used to ground the physical sciences. These purport to tell us what the world is *really* like,

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<sup>4</sup> But never viewpoints *per se*. That is, the world cannot be described from anything other than a viewpoint, as Thomas Nagel argues powerfully in *The View from Nowhere* (Nagel, 1986).

to give a description of the world in itself, distinct from any particular perspective of it. For Merleau-Ponty, however, science is an abstraction from our experience of the world, the world as we live it. To understand what it is about the world which makes it real for us, he turns back to that experience and, crucially, the experience of perception. A close study of this, he believes, reveals how the world and the perceiving subject are intimately intertwined. It reveals that perception is a creative *bodily* process through which the world, as something other, and our sense of ourselves as independent of it, come into being. How the world is constituted does not precede our involvement in it and phenomenology enables us to discover the way in which the operations of the human body enable both the world and consciousness of it to arise.

According to Merleau-Ponty (1945b:13), the painter Cézanne made explicit this coming into being of the world through perception in his later paintings.

Cézanne did not think he had to choose between feeling and thought, as if he were deciding between chaos and order. *He did not want to separate the stable things which we see and the shifting way in which they appear. He wanted to depict matter as it takes on form, the birth of order through spontaneous organisation.*

So for the phenomenologist, the landscape is not and cannot be something other. It is something which is shaped by its relationship to an embodied, situated subject and which, in turn, shapes that subject. If this understanding of our relationship to the world is accepted then it follows that artistic representations of landscape which fail to capture this intertwining also fail to make explicit a fundamental truth about the landscape.

One of my aims, in this research, was to investigate the extent to which artist film can explore or articulate this intertwining.

#### **4. Landscape and Power**

Phenomenology investigates lived experience and, through close description of that experience, aims to help us understand better the way in which we exist within

the world. Phenomenology cannot, however, fully account for all of those processes which structure our experience and existence.

I can conduct a phenomenological investigation into the way in which I experience and exist within a particular landscape, for instance, the moorland landscape around my home. I can closely describe the way I see, touch, feel and think about the land and through that process come to a better understanding of the way in which I exist within it. What this investigation of experience will not do, however, is reveal the social, cultural and historical processes which have shaped the moorland itself, the way it is used and also the way in which it is understood.

Different historical forms of land ownership and use, different ways of exercising power over the land and those who use it, shape the landscape. As will become clear from the example of the Isle of Rum, these forms of power over land and people rely on, and help create, different ways of understanding the landscape; what it is, its limits, how it is constituted and who owns it. Moreover, historical and social networks of power affect not only our understanding of land but also our understanding of ourselves as users of land.

This means that understanding one's own experiences, and what makes experience possible, does not just require an investigation into that experience itself. It also requires that a study of those social, cultural and historical processes which have made that experience possible and which, furthermore, enable the development of ways of understanding that experience. This is what the philosopher Michel Foucault made clear throughout various historical, or genealogical, studies<sup>5</sup>.

Landscape geography has long attempted to make explicit the way in which landscapes and these various forms of power over land and people are intertwined, frequently from a Marxist perspective but also from a Foucauldian one.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Significantly, *Discipline and Punish* (Foucault, 1975) and *The History of Sexuality Volume 1* (Foucault, 1976).

<sup>6</sup> See Wylie (2007) for an excellent discussion of this. Matless (1998) presents a Foucauldian analysis of landscape and Englishness.

It follows, then, that artistic representations of landscape which ignore networks of power equally neglect an important truth about those landscapes. In fact, artistic representations of landscape have frequently, explicitly, dealt with networks of power. Arguably the first modern landscape paintings are Ambrogio Lorenzetti's fourteenth century frescoes in the Palazzo Pubblico in Siena, *The Allegory of Good and Bad Government*.<sup>7</sup> So, too, one of my aims in this research was to investigate the way in which artist film can explore or articulate the way in which networks of power operate on and through bodies and landscapes.

## 5. Defining Artist and Landscape Film

For the sake of convenience, I have so far used the word "film" to refer to analogue film and to digital video and I will continue to do so apart from where explicitly discussing the difference between the two media in Section 6. Similarly, I will continue to use the terms "artist film" and "experimental film" interchangeably.<sup>8</sup> I think this is reasonable given that artists are usually the ones who make experimental films.<sup>9</sup> And, lastly, whilst it is not at all true that all artist film is about landscape, it is relatively safe to assert that almost all films about landscapes are artist films. To justify this claim it is necessary to outline what I mean by *landscape films*.

Since "landscape" can mean both the physical environment and a particular representation of that environment, it would, strictly speaking, be possible to make a film about a landscape which does not actually represent that landscape *visually*. I am, though, interested in films which both address and depict landscapes. That is, I think landscape films are those films where the primary subject and visual content is a place or series of places. Landscape films are those which make the

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<sup>7</sup> For a summary of this subject, see Andrews (1999) Chapter 7.

<sup>8</sup> The current vogue is for "artist moving image" which is at least accurate but which doesn't really scan well in the following sentence: "I wanted to make a series of artist moving images".

<sup>9</sup> See, for instance, Curtis (2007)

landscape itself the *argument* rather than *parergon*.<sup>10</sup> Landscape films are, thus, themselves “landscapes” in the sense of being representations of *physical* landscapes.

With the possible exception of *Koyaanisqatsi* (1983), commercial cinema does not concern itself with films about landscape. Even arthouse cinema, as usually understood, sticks more closely to (narrative or non-narrative) investigations into psychology, personality or society than depictions of place - even if in doing so it seeks to question or subvert our ideas of narrative or personality. Landscape in commercial cinema (e.g., *The Revenant* (2015)) may have a role but it always remains a subservient one to what is, essentially, a story about a person or persons.

What sort of place, how large a place and how much of it does a film have to show in order for it to be a landscape film? A film which does not stray outdoors would not seem to qualify. Nor would a close up of a feature of the landscape, in itself, appear to be sufficient to constitute a landscape film.<sup>11</sup> On the other hand, a single film may contain different kinds of image - a close up of grass or a wide angle shot of a meadow, for instance. A film which consists of a series of close ups may, by accretion, build up into a study of a landscape. Indeed, this is how Lucy Reynolds describes the work of filmmaker Margaret Tait:

Rather than describe the landscape in the lateral arc of a panning camera, as a conventional cinematographer might, Tait’s vision is composed of many small parts. Her camera concentrates on details in the landscape: stones, grass, water, signs of human presence like a derelict boat or the distant chimney pot. Her scale is human.(Reynolds 2004:59-60)

People may appear in the film without it ceasing to be a landscape film if the main focus of the film is the landscape. Indeed, remembering Merleau-Ponty, if

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<sup>10</sup> See Andrews (1999) for a discussion of this in painting.

<sup>11</sup> Possibly because the word “landscape” carries echoes of Kenneth Baker’s simplistic definition of it as “a good view of a stretch of countryside” (Andrews, 1999:3)



landscapes are intertwined with the subjects who exist within them then it seems important that people feature in one way or another.

The artists working with landscapes would not necessarily see themselves as all working within the same genre. We can, though, identify artists or filmmakers whose films often take the landscape as their *Argument*. Some filmmakers concentrate exclusively on the landscape. People, when they appear, feature as aspects of that landscape rather than the subject of the film; see for instance, James Benning's *California Trilogy* (2012), Patrick Keiller's *Robinson* films<sup>12</sup>, Peter Bo Rappmund's *Psychohydrography* (2010), Emily Richardson's *Cobra Mist* (2008) and *Redshift* (2001), Chris Welsby's *Stream Line* (1976), *Seven Days* (1974) and others and William Raban's *Thames Film* (1986) and *River Yar* (1972) (made with Chris Welsby). Other filmmakers are more interested in the interrelationship of subjects with their landscape, although the latter remains more or less the focus; Margaret Tait's *Land Makar* (1981) or Jenny Holt's *Archipelago* (2016), for instance.

At the very boundaries of landscape film are films such as Gideon Koppel's *Sleep Furiously* (2008) and Ben Rivers' *Two Years at Sea* (2012). Here, either a community (for Koppel) or an individual (for Rivers) are the focus although, in both, the filmmakers remain sensitive to the way in which landscape is depicted and understood. Of *Sleep Furiously*, a study of a small, rural, Welsh community, Koppel (2008:5) states:

This relationship between people and the land reminded me of an expression that I had often heard in this part of Wales - that people don't 'own' the land, they 'belong' to it. For me, this suggested that in *Sleep Furiously* the environment should not emerge merely as a geographic location for peoples' lives, but should have the presence of a character in the film.

The distinction between artist film and documentary is fluid. Many of the films I refer to above are thought of as documentaries by their creators and audiences. This is unsurprising given the original definition of documentary by John Grierson

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<sup>12</sup> *London* (1994), *Robinson in Space* (1997) and *Robinson in Ruins* (2010).

as “the artistic representation of actuality”.<sup>13</sup> More recently, the idea of “Avant-Doc” has been developed to cover films at the intersection of artist film and documentary film.<sup>14</sup> Many of these, such as Larry Gottheim’s *Fog Line* (1970) and Peter Hutton’s *Landscape (for Manon)* (1987) are landscape films as I have defined them.

## 6. Landscape and Process

For a number of artist filmmakers, whilst landscape may have been the subject matter of their films in one sense, in another sense the films are more concerned with the *process* of filmmaking. Here I am thinking of those “structural” filmmakers who worked through or alongside the London Filmmakers Cooperative in the 1960s. The most important here are the works of William Raban and Chris Welsby, of whose films one critic wrote:

These films are landscape films; yet although their most obvious characteristic is their landscape subject matter...[a]t least as important as the choice of subject matter is the way that subject matter is presented; an exploration of the properties of cinematic representation is the crucial operative principle (Dusinberre, 1976:11).

William Raban’s work veers from relatively conventional landscape studies (as in *Thames Film* (1986)) to more experimental attempts to investigate the process of filmmaking itself. (*View* (1970), *2’45”* (1972), *Angles of Incidence* (1973), *Take Measure* (1973) and *Surface Tension* (1976).) *View* is a record of a landscape with river recorded over a single day and then speeded up. Raban is less interested in the landscape than in the way in which time is captured and recorded by the camera. As Peter Gidal says:

The film is also a pure documentary of the way the camera copes with time (and this mechanistic process is more important than the specific image content) (Gidal, 1971:126).

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<sup>13</sup> Quoted in Aufderheide (2007:3).

<sup>14</sup> In Macdonald (2015).

Chris Welsby, in his work, seeks to investigate the ways in which landscape & technology can interact to create films. (For instance, *Windvane* (1972), *Park Film* (1973) and *Seven Days* (1974).) Sometimes, the subject matter is simultaneously landscape, the process of filmmaking and the point at which these coincide. So, in *Windmill II* (1973), the camera points at reflective windmill blades driven by the wind. As the blades slow down, what is visible is alternately the landscape and the camera and filmmaker. As they speed up, these things blur and blend.

Welsby's approach is interesting because he sees filmmaking as a dialogue between himself, the camera and the landscape:

If you look at a Renaissance painting, it is very hierarchical: nature is positioned firmly in the background, a mere backdrop for the human narrative...[W]hat I've tried to do in my films is not exactly reverse this hierarchy, but try and position myself as a filmmaker with the technology *within* the landscape. It's the difference between collaboration and surveillance, really.

...I try to construct a film / video as a sort of model in which nature, technology, and a human being can work creatively together (in Herrera and Cook, 2003:98).

For Welsby, landscape filmmaking does not distance him from the landscape but very much embeds him within it and this experience of being embedded is something that I will return to.

The structural films of Raban and Welsby are a form of self-reflection upon the process and material of filmmaking inasmuch as Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology is a form of reflection upon the process and material of perception. Early on in my research, it struck me that structural landscape film might, then, act as a *metaphor* for a phenomenology of perception.

To clarify this point, and to try to sum up where I've arrived at: one aim of my research is to make landscape films which explore the necessary interconnectedness, the deep *intertwining*, of people and the landscape. Merleau-

Ponty's phenomenology sought to do the same, by examining the way in which subjects and the perceived world come into being for one another through the creative act of perception.

Structural landscape films are frequently about two things: the landscape and the process of filmmaking itself. Such films reveal, simultaneously, the landscape and the manner in which the moving image(s) of that landscape are created. As Peter Gidal says, "...viewing such a film is at once viewing a film and viewing the 'coming into presence' of the film" (Gidal, 1976:2). I wondered whether, in my films, the creative act of filming might stand in for the creative act of perception and, in this way, I might make explicit the intertwining of the perceiver and the perceived landscape.

This did not seem unreasonable given that thinking of the camera as an eye is neither particularly new nor uncommon. In 1923, Dziga Vertov, for instance, referred to the camera as his "cinematic eye" or "kino-eye" (Vertov, 1934:123).

Thus, I wanted my films to be about both landscape and, simultaneously, explore the process of the creation of images of that landscape.

## **7. The Use of Low Resolution Video**

I first attempted to draw a link between vision and the creation of the video image in *Viewpoint #1*.<sup>15</sup> I wanted to articulate the emergence of the landscape and the perceiver out of movement but I was not altogether pleased with the results, or sure how I might build on the idea.

I started experimenting with the video cameras on old mobile phones in October 2014. I attached an old mobile phone to a tripod and filmed a stretch of moorland. The results became *Viewpoint #2*. The heavily pixelated images *swarmed* on the screen, an effect which is not reproducible in still images. It felt as if the camera

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<sup>15</sup> All of the films made by me and referred to in this thesis can be found on the accompanying USB stick.

was struggling to cope with the landscape, a landscape which frequently became unrecognisable as a landscape.

It occurred to me that one way of making the process of moving image creation part of the content of a film itself might be to use these low-resolution video cameras. The pixelation seemed to render visible the constituent parts of the image and, therefore, the technological nature of the digital video process. The images reminded me of Cézanne's landscapes. Moreover, just as, for Merleau-Ponty, Cézanne sought to paint the coming into being of the landscape for vision, so my low-resolution camera captured the coming into being of a digital landscape on screen, "the stable things which we see and the shifting way in which they appear...matter as it takes on form, the birth of order through spontaneous organisation" (Merleau-Ponty, 1945b:13).

I hoped, then, that through using low-resolution video I might be able to represent, through the creative dialogue of the camera with the landscape, the way in which the bodily act of perception is similarly creative.

## **8. Defending Digital Video**

Digital and analogue filmmaking are different insofar as the materials are radically different. I use digital video, mainly for economic and technical reasons, and I wanted to explore the way in which working with the medium opens up new opportunities for examining the materiality and processes of filming. However, I was aware of arguments against the use of digital by both artist filmmakers and theorists and so I want to take a little time to scrutinise these.

Some artist filmmakers argue that film is the "proper" medium for recording landscapes. One of these, Gideon Koppel, is worth quoting at length, partly because what Koppel says affected the films I made. Talking of the production of *Sleep Furiously*, he says:

I needed a visual medium which was sensitive to subtle details of the land: the changes in light, textures, the presence of wind and rain, and cloud patterns. I realised that I needed to shoot on film rather than video. As the gap between

film and high definition video formats closes - at least in terms of specification - it is becoming increasingly difficult to justify film over video, particularly for a low budget project which was branded 'documentary'. I argued that if you imagine a video image of a magnificent landscape projected onto a big screen, as a signifier it says 'great landscape' loud and clear, but little else. The same landscape shot on film, may allow the audience to 'fall into' the image, to engage with it through their imagination, not simply their powers of recognition (Koppel, 2008:5).

I am genuinely not sure why Koppel believes this, or the extent to which he thinks it makes sense. The psychological claim is offered with no justification at all (and I do not think it has one) and the technological argument is no longer valid, even if it was at the time: Alejandro González Iñárritu's film *The Revenant* (2015), in which the landscape plays a significant role, was shot on digital cameras specifically because film would not have been able to cope with the low light conditions present on location.<sup>16</sup> By contrast, for much of Chris Welsby and William Raban's *River Yar* the screen is dark because the film stock could not cope with the low winter light.<sup>17</sup>

Koppel's comments can be understood better within the context of a general analogue/digital debate, a debate which straddles music, photography and cinema.<sup>18</sup> The debate also occurs within film theory and, specifically, it arises within the work of Vivian Sobchack, a theorist heavily influenced by phenomenology and, in particular, the work of Merleau-Ponty.

In *The Scene of the Screen: Envisioning Photographic, Cinematic, and Electronic "Presence"*, Sobchack (2004) privileges photographic and cinematic forms of representation over digital. Sobchack thinks that cinematic forms of representation are essentially good and enable not just a healthy relationship between the body and a screen but, also, between the body and the world *and* the body and itself.

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<sup>16</sup> See Lawrensen (2016).

<sup>17</sup> See Du Cane (1972).

<sup>18</sup> Within commercial cinema, for instance, Quentin Tarantino favours film (see James, 2015). Mike Figgis favours digital. (See his excellent *Digital Filmmaking* (Figgis, 2007).). Mike Leighs *Turner* was, ironically, shot on digital.

This kind of representation also grounds us morally. In contrast, digital forms of technology are essentially bad things which cause various existential problems, fracture our sense of self, disrupt our relationship with reality and upset our moral balance.

She begins by describing the way in which she believes digital technology works:

Digital electronic technology atomizes and abstractly schematizes the analogic quality of the photographic and cinematic into discrete pixels and bits of information that are then transmitted serially, each bit discontinuous, discontiguous, and absolute—each bit “being-in-itself” even as it is part of a system (Sobchack, 2004:153).

Sobchack then moves on to describe how this digital world is experienced through the use of such technology as “Television, videocassettes and digital discs, VCR and DVD recorder/players, electronic games, personal computers with Internet access, and pocket electronics of all kinds” (Sobchack, 2004:153):

...the electronic is phenomenologically experienced not as a discrete, intentional, body-centered mediation and projection in space but rather as a simultaneous, dispersed, and insubstantial transmission across a network or web that is constituted spatially more as a materially flimsy latticework of nodal points than as the stable ground of embodied experience (Sobchack, 2004:154).

Finally, she argues that life in the digital world (or the electronic - she conflates the two) is morally hazardous and involves a dangerous separation from reality which the photographic and cinematic avoid:

Digital and schematic, abstracted from materially *reproducing* the empirical objectivity of nature that informs the photographic and from *presenting a representation* of embodied subjectivity and the unconscious that informs the cinematic, the electronic constructs a metaworld where aesthetic value and ethical investment tend to be located in *representation-in-itself*...Living in such a formally schematized and intertextual metaworld unprecedented in its degree of

remove from the materiality of the real world has a significant tendency to liberate the engaged spectator/user from the pull of what might be termed moral and physical *gravity* (Sobchack, 2004:154).

There are some important points to note with regard to this set of claims.

One point is that much of what is said is wholly unsubstantiated, here or anywhere. There is no justification, for instance, for the claim that immersion in photographic or cinematic forms of representation is less distracting from reality than immersion in the digital or electronic, or that in moving to digital technology, what becomes ethically or aesthetically valuable is not the real world but the world of representations. These arguments can just as easily be directed at analogue photographs or cinema.

Besides, Sobchack never really clarifies what she means by the “cinematic” or the “electronic”. Elsewhere in her essays she equates the “cinematic” with narrative film projected within a cinema. This is problematic for two reasons. The first is that not all film is narrative, as has already been made clear. The second is that the cinematic is now, frequently, digital, which she does also accept elsewhere. Given its dependence on projection, cinema is also always, of course, *electronic*. Furthermore, whilst Sobchack lists a number of electronic technologies, these do not all work in the same way, they are not used in the same way and they are not all digital.

Sobchack also conflates the way in which digital technology deals with information (insofar as she understands that process) with the experiences of the users of that technology. The way in which something works is very different to the experiences one may have of it. Thus, the internet is not experienced by someone watching YouTube as a being a web or network. Understanding it as such means stepping back from the experience of using it. In order to justify her account of how electronic technology is experienced, Sobchack needs some kind of evidence. To be specific, she needs a proper phenomenological investigation into the way in which electronic technology is experienced. She does not, however, provide one. Instead, the heavily theoretical claims about the effect of electronic or digital technology are drawn from Situationist (and Situationist influenced) thought. I do



not think that they constitute an adequate, or even accurate, account of the experience of using electronic technology. In contrast, Sobchack does conduct a phenomenological investigation into the way in which *cinema* is experienced and I will come back to this.

Sobchack's understanding of the distinction between, on the one hand, the photographic and, on the other, the electronic, hinges upon a specifically realist understanding of the indexical nature of photographs partly derived from the work of André Bazin.<sup>19</sup> Hence, she says the photograph can "materially 'capture' and possess traces of the 'real world'", that it is "filled with a currency of the real" and that it has "authenticating power" (Sobchack, 2004:143). Electronic recording media, she thinks, do not have this indexical relationship with reality.

This is not an unusual set of beliefs, but as Tom Gunning has argued, this kind of thinking probably involves a misunderstanding of both technology and Bazin's writings. Gunning (2007) suggests that trying to identify the essence of cinema in a single process is probably mistaken and, furthermore, that it is possible to see cinematic *motion* as being more important to an indexical relationship between cinema and the world. Gunning (2007:34) points out "that as a technical innovation cinema was first understood as 'animated pictures'" and, in doing so, allows that digital video may have exactly the kind of direct, indexical nature as analogue film.

The belief that only analogue film can accurately or adequately capture reality and that digital video is in some way deficient is not merely wrong but harmful. It reflects a series of artistic and institutional prejudices and helps reify existing relationships of power. If greater artistic merit (and funding) is to be attributed to those films shot on analogue rather than digital, then this disadvantages all those incapable of financing analogue filmmaking. Analogue filmmaking is, significantly, the preserve of the rich or the well funded. Digital filmmaking, being cheap and ubiquitous, is something which makes possible creative, artistic activity by many more people.

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<sup>19</sup> See the articles collected in Bazin (1967).

One landscape filmmaker who has little ideological difficulty with digital video is James Benning, who moved from filming in 16mm to digital with *Small Roads* (2011). Equally, Benning's former student and landscape filmmaker, Peter Bo Rappmund has little difficulty using digital in his films, e.g., *Psychohydrography* (2010).

There seems no reason, then, why one form of image creation should be regarded as more or less appropriate for landscape filming.

## **9. Further Experiments**

Through a series of videos, I experimented with different camera types (high and low resolution) and different techniques: mounting the camera statically on a tripod, using pan and zoom and walking with the camera. I then experimented with edit - speeding up footage, zooming in further, juxtaposing and merging high resolution and low resolution video, using music or creating rhythmic audio tracks out of the recorded audio.

For *Viewpoint #3*, I filmed the same area of moorland as in *Viewpoint #2*, again with low resolution video, but I experimented with different forms of camera movement, video speed and zoom. I wanted to create a sense of dislocation and disorientation whilst the landscape emerged from confusion. Amongst other things, I wanted to create the effect of movement through a landscape.

For *River #1*, I filmed a section of a stream in the Argyll Forest, in Scotland, at different levels of zoom and close up, using two different static cameras. All movement onscreen came from the subject - water. I then edited the different sections together into a sequence in which the screen moves from heavily pixelated close up, where the subject filmed is unrecognisable, to a point where the subject becomes visible as water. I wanted to find a tipping point - the point at which whatever part of the landscape filmed becomes recognisable and emerges from the pixellation.

For *Spring*, I filmed two different landscape scenes - a tarmac road and a copse - using an old mobile phone camera, and, in edit, gradually zoomed into the landscape to highlight the pixellation.

For *Streaming (After Welsby)*, I developed a rig that would enable me to capture the same view with three different cameras all running simultaneously, and used underwater cameras and hydrophones.

Here, I took a nine yard stretch of moorland brook as my subject. I experimented with different low and high resolution cameras but also with different camera angles and positions. In edit, I manipulated the images in order to try to merge low and high resolution images together seamlessly. I wanted clarity to arise out of heavily pixellated images.

In making these films, I wanted to use the low-resolution video to act as a metaphor for the creative act of perception. Just as the video landscape cannot exist without the creative work of the camera, the perceived world cannot exist without the creative bodily act of perception.

## **10. The Phenomenology of Filmmaking**

The filming of *Streaming*, in particular, reinforced two findings of Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology - the I, as filmmaker am embodied within the world and the nature of the world's "transcendence".

Filming *Streaming*, I had to stand in the river for long periods of time. Initially I was in waterproof boots, but I still got cold feet as I was filming for a couple of hours. I returned to record sound above and below the water. These times I was in running shoes which meant my feet got cold and wet immediately.

Wading in the stream I kept slipping on rocks. As I was using a waterproof camera and hydrophone, my hands were constantly in and out of the water. As I bent down to record sound, I got my clothes wet. Filming the brook and adjusting the equipment, I was focussed constantly on the water.

The experience of filming *Streaming* reminded me of other times I had spent wading in English streams; catching fish with my hands as a child in rural Shropshire whilst my parents sat in a warm pub, conducting geographical research with my brother on the North York Moors when I was a teenager, and also playing with my own children in streams around our home.

Frequently, I could not much see what I was filming because the sun was too bright. In any case, one camera had no viewfinder and on two others the viewfinders were not visible. This meant I was not always looking at the landscape through the technology. Being in the stream, filming, I was concentrating on and was directly connected to the landscape.

Technology, rather than being something which distanced me from the landscape, became something which facilitated a strong connection with it. This is something the filmmaker Margaret Tait also noticed:

I peer at things, I really peer at things through my camera viewfinder... I do sometimes actually use it to help me see the thing, you know. I frame it for myself through the viewfinder and see it differently. It's not just the framing. It's something else [that comes] of looking through a lens. You peer at it more closely, I think; follow it (Tait, 2004:96).

The landscape, rather than being something other, was something intimately connected to my body but also my past. Contrary to Sobchack's claims, my interaction with it, mediated by electronic technology, helped reinforce my sense of myself as a single, unified embodied being persisting throughout time and space.

Going further, I believe that the process of filmmaking can validate the results of other phenomenological work such as Merleau-Ponty's investigation of the world as "transcendent" in *The Phenomenology of Perception*.

As I suggested earlier, Merleau-Ponty shows that what makes us perceive the world as real is not that it is full of objects with determinate properties. In fact, we

have many experiences of objects as indeterminate, as vague, as distorted.<sup>20</sup> Perceiving an object as having “determinate” properties always requires us to adopt a particular point of view. Moreover, we implicitly recognise, of any object, that we can never exhaust it in perception. Nor can we ever fully describe an object: “To ‘live’ a thing”, he says, “is not to coincide with it, nor fully to embrace it in thought” (Merleau-Ponty, 1945a:325). No matter how many experiences one has of an object, one is aware that it is always possible to have more. In this sense, the world transcends us and it is this transcendence which makes it real rather than imaginary.

I experienced this transcendence clearly when I was filming *Streaming*. No matter how many different shots I filmed, I could always film more. The stream always transcended me. I could never exhaust its possibilities.

But I think there is even more than this to phenomenology and filmmaking. I believe that film, itself, can be a form of phenomenology, a way of investigating the landscape in order to ascertain its “essence”. In fact, I think digital filmmaking makes this easier. Thus, James Benning says the following, of his use of digital equipment:

I’m trying to make real sense of landscape by using real collages that are really highly manipulated but undetected...

For instance, if I’m filming in an area where generally there’s thunderstorms that come through every afternoon, but the day I happen to be there it’s sunny, that’s more false than collaging it to look like what it generally is, right? When I shot those cattle on the side of the road I was hoping for afternoon rainstorm... and it just didn’t happen.

The next day I was a hundred miles or so away and there’s the rainstorm. Different landscape completely, but I simply tilted the camera up to eliminate the

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<sup>20</sup> “For each object, as for each picture in an art gallery, there is an optimum distance from which it requires to be seen...at a shorter or greater distance we have merely a perception blurred through excess or deficiency.” (Merleau-Ponty, 1945a:302)

hills and shot the sky; then I'd just bring that in, crop it and you can fuzz the edge of the image so it just falls in and you don't even notice it's a different place. So in a way it's manipulation, but in *Small Roads* everything I manipulated made it more real to me: I'm trying to reinforce reality (quoted in James, 2015).

It is, then, possible to see film as a form of reflection *upon* rather than reflection *of* the landscape. Rather than recording the particulars of the world, it reveals its essence through an examination of those particulars.

### **11. A Deeper Materiality: *Wessenden Brook (24 Frames Hex)***

After my initial experiments, I wanted to see if I could explore a little differently the materiality of the medium I was using and if, in doing so, it might throw up other possibilities. It might also help me test the boundaries of what constitutes "landscape film".

Up to now, I had worked on the surface of the material I collected. That is, having shot video footage of whatever quality, I had simply transferred that footage into editing software and edited it there. I had accepted as video images the material I had collected. In this respect, editing digital video is significantly easier than, but still similar to, editing analogue film.<sup>21</sup> Clearly, though, the material I had collected was something quite different to analogue film - it was not a set of images, it was a set of computer files.

Different applications or software will read the computer file as a video file and play it as a piece of video, but I was interested in opening up the file to see what was there and reading it differently.

I took an excerpt of footage of the brook I filmed for *Streaming*. I split a one second (24 frames long) clip of this recording into two files, one video (visual) and one audio. The binary code making up these files is millions of digits long. To make

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<sup>21</sup> Hence, Final Cut Pro etc borrows from analogue editing the functions of splice, cut, mask, fade...

it (more) comprehensible to users, binary is frequently converted into hexadecimal code made up of sixteen characters: 0-9 and A-F.

Using a hexadecimal editor, I created text file transcripts of the code making up the video files and decided to use these as the basis for an installation film in which the code of the file became a brook again, albeit presented quite differently. The transcript of the video file become the visual stream whilst the transcript of the audio file would become the audio stream.

It would take a single person nearly twenty hours to read out the code making up the audio file from a one second video clip so I split it into twenty four sections, matching the twenty four frames.

I also wanted the finished film to have a further reference to the location where it was originally recorded. The brook flows into the Pennine village of Marsden where I live and so I sampled twenty four voices from Marsden, each reciting the sixteen characters of hexadecimal code. These twenty four voices were then fed into a digital sampler and each voice "read" simultaneously, at different speeds, a section of the transcript of the audio file. The audio track was mixed to try to emulate the ebb and flow of the brook itself.

The code making up the video file was converted into still frames of text. These were then edited together in a constantly streaming, repeating, twenty four minute pattern.

The code that is heard and seen in the end result is therefore exactly the same code constituting the one second clip recorded on 19th March 2015. To that extent, the film is, then, a record of the Wessenden Brook as it was on a sunny day in early spring, 2015. Moreover, the subjectivities of those people through whose life the brook flows have been folded back into the landscape. The film is at once a record of the process of filmmaking, the landscape and the subjectivities of those people inhabiting that landscape.

*Wessenden Brook* marked the end of my initial experiments. After this, I travelled to Rum.

## 12. Rum: A Very Brief History

The following should be just enough to give a sense of Rum's history and the changing way in which land ownership has affected the land and those who have inhabited it. <sup>22</sup>

Rum has been inhabited since around 7000BC. It has seen Stone Age, Bronze Age, Iron Age, Early Christian and, possibly, Norse settlements. It has always been sparsely populated but it reached a highpoint in 1795 when there were around 440 people living on the island. The islanders lived in crofts, relying on simple cultivation and livestock management. Land was allocated each year, each household had a share of communal grazing land and people helped one another with various tasks. Cattle, goats, seabirds and fish were eaten. Life on Rum was likely to have been unpleasant and hard. Moreover, the islanders were tenants. They did not own their land and, in the early 19th Century, the landlord, having been almost bankrupted, leased the island to a single tenant, Dr Lachlan MacLean, for sheep farming.

The traces of the crofts are immediately visible on the landscape of the island, especially at Harris, Kilmory and Guidill, where the remains of dwellings and byres sit within field systems scarred by lazy beds. These remains are almost all there is of the three settlements since MacLean evicted almost all of the islanders, paying for the passage of 300 people to Nova Scotia in 1826. The remaining 50 were shipped off in 1828, leaving one family to tend MacLean's sheep. That turned out to be insufficient to look after 8000 sheep and so MacLean had to ship in tenants being cleared from Skye.

MacLean began the development of Kinloch village, where the modern community is based. The power exercised over his tenants, repeated by other landowners across Scotland, transformed the landscape of the island. However, the sheep farm failed, MacLean himself was eventually bankrupted and the island was sold

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<sup>22</sup> The bulk of the account is taken from Magnussen (1997) with the exception of the account of the transfer of land to the Isle of Rum Community Trust which is taken from the Isle of Rum Community Trust (2015).



to the second Marquis of Salisbury who transformed the island into a sporting estate.

Rum had no red deer at the end of the 18th Century. Salisbury restocked the island with 600 of them, tried to stock the rivers with fish and attempted to manage the moorland to enable red grouse to thrive. The island then saw a succession of owners intent on managing it as a leisure resort for wealthy Englishmen. The most notable of these were John Bullough, a Lancashire mill owner, who bought the island in 1888, and his son George, who inherited it three years later in 1891.

Using Arran sandstone, George Bullough had a castle built at Kinloch at the end of the 19th Century. Designed as an exclusive shooting lodge, the castle, together with the rest of the island, was generally used by the Bulloughs and their guests at the end of the summer. The population of the island rose to over 100. All of these were employees of the estate or the families of these employees; kitchen staff, maids, mechanics, chauffeurs, ghillies, gamekeepers, gardeners, roadmen and laundry workers. Again, the landscape of the island was transformed by the castle, its elaborate gardens, hot houses and palm-houses and by the building of dwellings for the estate staff.

After the first world war, the estate declined, as did the population. George Bullough's daughter Monica remained owner and discouraged visitors to the extent that Rum became known as "The Forbidden Isle". In 1957, the island was sold to the Nature Conservancy, the Scottish governmental conservation agency, which intended that the island would become a National Nature Reserve and an outdoor laboratory for conservation and research. In particular, the Nature Conservancy was interested in studying the red deer, of which there were around 1600. These deer had, under successive owners, diminished the island's diversity of flora and altered the landscape. (Trees will not grow if deer are not controlled or if the trees are not protected.)

Under the Nature Conservancy, the policy of discouraging visitors continued. The Conservancy's view was that Rum could only be properly studied and research properly undertaken if the public were kept at bay.

The Conservancy set about attempting to regenerate biodiversity on the island, a difficult task when deer numbers were not being controlled and deer research has, since 1957, been one of the key activities on the island. Kilmory, now, is the site of the deer research centre, not of settlement. For over 50 years, the prime aim of the management of the island was scientific research and experiment. Once again, as under the Bulloughs, the only residents were the estate staff; employees of the landowners.

By the turn of the century, the Nature Conservancy had (via several phases) become Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH). The conservation strategy for Rum had developed to the point where SNH wished to facilitate the development of a viable, sustainable community on the island. This was not possible whilst SNH owned all of the land and all of the properties; people lived on Rum only so long as they, or their spouse or parent, were employed by SNH. So began the process of transferring the area around Kinloch to community ownership. The Isle of Rum Community Trust was established and SNH transferred to the Trust the ownership of 10% of the surface area of the island in 2010. The Trust, using lottery money, established a community bunkhouse in 2014 and now seeks to develop the village and create business opportunities for the islanders, of which there are currently around 40. Three new crofts were created and a family from the south of England now occupies one of these. SNH continues to manage the rest of the island with a conservation strategy.

### **13. A Strategy For Filming**

I arranged to spend seven days on Rum in June 2015. It was not clear that the weather would be good enough for filming on all or any of those days. Because I wanted not just to study the landscape, but the operation of forms of power on the landscape, I planned to visit all those sites where the landscape would, in some way, reflect the operation of different forms or eras of historical power; the ruins of crofting settlements at Kilmory and Harris, the castle and Bullough memorial, the deer observatory and shearwater hut, the village, the modern bunkhouse and the new crofts.

I also wanted to visit the remote parts of the island; the mountain tops, the interior and the remote beaches.

I hoped to record the sound of Manx shearwaters coming into nest in the middle of the night. These seabirds only visit land at night. Silent at sea, they create a cacophony when they fly in to their nests after sunset. Throughout the summer they land in darkness to visit their nests high on the mountainsides and to incubate their eggs or feed their chicks. The sound of thousands of shearwaters coming in to nest is one of the most wonderful but also haunting things about Rum. It is rumoured that the Vikings believed the sounds to be the sound of mountain trolls. So, it is supposed, Trollaval - one of the mountains on which the birds nest - derives its name from the Old Norse for Troll Mountain.

I planned to film the landscape with different types of camera and to film with static and moving cameras. I also wanted to interview islanders. Initially I decided on this because I had assumed that the modern form of land ownership was more democratic. I thought I might use the voices of the islanders to shape those aspects of the film which concentrated on the village. They would have a voice in the film just as they have a voice in the shaping of the landscape. I also felt it would give depth to the finished product but also help me understand the island better. Moreover, if the landscape is indeed intertwined with those who inhabit it then to ignore them would seem to be a mistake.

I had, though, decided not to visually concentrate on people. If people ended up in shot, that was fine, but I did not want to make people the focus of the film. I felt that focussing on people would detract from the landscape. For that reason, I conducted only audio interviews.

In the end I interviewed nine out of around forty residents. I had compiled a list of questions, the main aim of which was to get people talking about their relationship with the landscape, both as individuals and as part of a community.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> Appendix 2

I interviewed crofters, people who worked for Scottish National Heritage and lived in Kinloch Castle, one of the villagers, the community bunkhouse manager and a deer stalker who was also the islander with the longest connection to the island.

Through the interviews, I found that land ownership and life on Rum is not as democratic as I had anticipated. Tensions exist between the community and SNH, between those who worked for SNH and other islanders, and between the directors of the Community Trust and other residents. Many people lacked a sense of control over the landscape and the village. Some of the people I spoke to (but who declined to be interviewed) lived chaotic lifestyles. It was obvious that several of the islanders had come to Rum to get away from other people and that they lacked the skills to work effectively with others to transform their environment. The fact that the Rum community is small, isolated and fragile means that the consequences of this are far greater than in a place where there are more, and more capable, people.

## **14. The First Project: *A Summer Voyage***

### **14.1. The First Principle**

I returned from Rum with several hours of video and interview footage. When I came to edit the material, I wanted to ensure that I made a film entirely out of the landscape I had filmed and so I decided that every sound and image used should be derived from the footage taken. I would not introduce music or sound from an external source. In *A Summer Voyage*, I managed this with the exception of the inter-titles.

This decision was not a constraint because the editing software enabled me to create quite sophisticated effects. Rather, it meant that the act of editing was an act of shaping and manipulating rather than one of bringing something other than my imagination to bear upon the material.

## 14.2. A Film In Five Parts

Through a process of experimentation, I ended up with five short sequences of video, each in a different style and each concentrating on a different aspect of the island.

### *Part I - MV Loch Nevis & a Tour of the Island*

In this sequence, the Calmac ferry arrives and departs. I wanted to highlight the fact that this *is* an island - but not a large or particularly busy one. I speeded the footage up partly to highlight the fact the technological nature of video which, unlike real time, can be manipulated.

The ferry announcement spills over into footage of the island in order to highlight the way in which island life hinges on the ferry. If the ferry does not come, the islanders may be without food or fuel.

I introduced a muffled hubbub made up of interviews with the islanders over shots of Kinloch village because you barely see anyone on Rum. Although there are forty people all living within a small part of the island, there was a sense that they were hidden.

This sequence ends with footsteps speeding up and a lightning tour of the island. Most people who visit Rum spend a few hours there, between ferries. At most they spend a couple of days and use those to walk around the island. Visitors have a sense of rushing to see and do everything.

The village shots, and the shots of the castle, show the way in which the landscape around Kinloch has been affected by the last 150 years of habitation, the deterioration of the castle, and the way in which the tree growth has been allowed to continue unchecked.

The sequence (almost) ends with shots of the Harris memorial. This is one of the most scenic and often photographed parts of the island and I wanted to include it. The wild camera pan therefore takes in both the existing memorial and an earlier memorial.

### *Part II: An Account*

This sequence is based around an edited section of an interview with someone who lived in the castle for two years until July 2015. In the background are distorted voices of other islanders.

The interviewee says that “the landscape doesn’t make sense”, it is “amorphous”, it has no “boundaries” and it has no “structure”. The video sequence aims to reflect this sense of boundlessness and amorphousness.

### *Part III: Flora*

I wanted to include a sequence about the island’s trees. What trees there are were planted in the last 200 years and unless they are protected, the deer - introduced by man - eat them. Trees directly reflect human interference in the landscape.

The soundtrack, in 4-4 time, was created by extracting the speeded up audio from the fragments and using it as the basis for the rhythmic music which the images dance to.

Two elements which appear elsewhere in the film (Parts II & V) are crucial to this sequence: movement and repetition.

Different styles of filming reflect different ways of being in a landscape. Static, lengthy shots taken with a high definition camera on a tripod reflect the experience of gazing at a landscape. In these, the existence of the camera is disguised.

Part III is therefore mostly made up of speeded up fragments of those moments when I tried to refocus or redirect the low resolution cameras. This jerky movement, along with its repetition and the poor quality of the image, helps emphasise the fact that this is a construct. They help emphasise the process of filmmaking (in a similar way to the jerky camera movements which the structural filmmaker Mike Dunford made the subject of his film *Deep Space* (1973)). They also reflect the way of moving around, the way vision and point of view move quickly across the landscape.

Through use of footage taken when the camera was being repositioned, I also wanted to try to highlight the way in which landscape filmmaking is a form of

interaction between the filmmaker and the landscape mediated via the camera. Making this film was an extremely physical enterprise. I was moving all day for several days. The filmmaker and the camera were not positioned outside the landscape - they were part of it and they moved within it.

#### *Part IV: The Croft*

I wanted to create a sequence that was made up almost completely of a single shot and the croft footage allowed me to do this.

I wanted to show the effect of people on the landscape and vice-versa, and the main piece of dialogue concerns the attempts to harness (power from) the land.

Whilst this appears to be a single shot, film time is not real time and, in fact, the shot is made of different layers of different, looped sequences.

Life on the croft is repetitive, almost Sisyphean. People walking through the scene emphasise the passage of time through movement but those movements are doomed to be repeated. The soundtrack mirrors this repetition and comes in three layers, like the video itself.

Before I visited, Channel 5 had been to Rum to make a documentary. Several weeks after I left, Ben Fogle came back with Channel 5 camera team to make a film about the family and the croft. The crofters have told these stories again and again and again.

The repetition in Part IV mirrors the way in which the crofters repeat their stories - for each other, for friends, for their blog and for the TV cameras.

#### *Part V: Mountains & Shearwaters.*

The high definition images here, bar two mountain shots, show movement. Water, deer and goats and, finally, the near midnight sunset. Time is shown to pass.

In this sequence, I wanted to move from the landscape as it is affected by human activity to a wild and inhuman landscape. So, the sequence moves from the hydroelectric station during daylight to the cacophony of the Shearwaters coming into nest at 1am in the most remote part of the island.

A low-resolution camera revolves again and again, visually touring the mountains of the island. Residents recite the names of the mountains over and over again, matching the revolutions of the camera.

The image zooms in and speeds up until it becomes overwhelming confusion and turmoil. Simultaneously, the human voices transform into the Shearwater cries. The movement of the camera matches the swooping, circling, diving action of the birds. As the landscape ceases to be human, so too does the soundtrack.

I wanted, with the final shots of the sunset, to emphasise again the interaction between the filmmaker and the landscape. Thus the footage used is footage taken whilst the camera was being moved and focused so that the sunset can be best captured. Film time is speeded up to emphasise the fact that filmmaking is a process.

#### *The framing device - Martin Martin*

I had created five sequences of video, all different but with overlapping properties and techniques. I wanted a way to link them all together.

Martin Martin's *A Description of the Western Isles of Scotland Circa 1695* (Martin, 1703) was a work of early science or "natural philosophy". Martin travelled around the islands of Scotland collecting data for his *Description* just over thirty years after the founding of the Royal Society, on whose behalf he travelled and for whom he brought back information about these wild, remote places.

The *Description* falls between two stools. Whilst it attempts to be an application of scientific method it simultaneously recites the fantastic stories of the residents of the islands. This is in part due to Martin's status. He was not an outsider objectively examining the beliefs and habits of the islanders. He was one of them, was *of* them, and it would not have been possible for him to distance himself fully from the subjects of his descriptions. Thus, chapters on the "Courts of Judicatory - Church Discipline - Forms of Prayer" are mingled with chapters on "The Various Effects of Fishes on Several Constitutions in These Islands", "Yeast, How Preserved by Natives" and "An Account of the Second Sight".

I adopted Martin's *Description* as a framing device not simply because I, like Martin, travelled to the Western Isles for the purposes of research, but because of



the *status* of my own research project. Not only is my research non-scientific, it is non-written. It hangs in a space between art and academia just as Martin's project hung in the space between science and the life of the Western Isles - between observing a world and being of that world.

Martin's framework also allowed the combination of episodes or chapters of quite different styles. Martin mixed detailed first hand accounts of flora and fauna with observations on economy and the character of the islanders and unquestioned fantastic accounts of poisoning and spiritual phenomena.

To this extent, *A Summer Voyage* resembles Margaret Tait's *Colour Poems* (1974)- a series of "film poems" of different styles linked by a theme with inter-titles.

A final reason for adopting Martin's framework is the influence of science. The *Description* marks the point at which the Western Isles became the object of the scientific gaze, although one in which there was a radical interdependence of the object of science and the subjectivity of the scientist, an interdependence which, according to Merleau-Ponty, modern positivist science seeks to disavow. The making of the island into an object of science is something crucial to Rum's history.

With the use of inter-titles and the sea as a background, I also wanted to emphasise the fact that Rum *is* an island.

### **14.3. Reflection**

After I had finished *A Summer Voyage*, I reflected on whether I had achieved what I set out to do. To recap, I wanted to explore the way in which landscape and subjectivity are intertwined, the way in which power operates through and on landscapes, and the process of filmmaking itself.

Success, of course, depends upon what it is one is trying to achieve. In one sense I had achieved my aims insofar as I had made a film about the landscape of Rum in which I tried to explore these issues. This, though, cannot be sufficient. I wanted it to be possible for an audience to understand that these themes were being explored.

Taking the issue of power first; although power may operate in different ways, it operates significantly through the control of space and therefore leaves visible traces in the landscape, not just within or on the bodies it operates upon.

The landscape shown in the film is scarred by different forms of power. Abandoned settlements, lazy beds, scientific observatories, trees, deer, the castle, the Harris Memorial, the village, hydro-electric plant and crofts all reflect different periods of land ownership and use which themselves were, or are, founded on different ways of understanding the land and how it could or should be used. In the section devoted to the croft, the way in which the land is shaped by those who inhabit it becomes more explicit. On the whole, however, I felt that the exploration of how historical and social processes affect the land and our understanding of it (and ourselves) could be deeper and more explicit.

What of the intertwining of the landscape and subjectivity? The use of different filming and editing techniques, I felt, helped create the sense for the viewer of being within the landscape in different ways. This, though, is not all I wanted to achieve.

To go back to Merleau-Ponty, as Wylie (2007:148) said, the “visible landscape is... an ongoing process of inter-twining *from which* my sense of myself as an observing subject emerges”.

That this is so is, I think, most obvious from what Emily says in Part II. Her ability to make sense of the landscape and to make sense of herself are intimately connected, as is how she perceives the landscape and her own identity.

I did not just want to show this, though. I wanted to explore the way in which the visible landscape and the bodily subjectivity inhabiting it come into being for one another in the creative act of perception. To quote, again, from *Cezanne's Doubt*: I did not want “to separate the stable things which we see and the shifting way in which they appear”. I wanted to “depict matter as it takes on form, the birth of order through spontaneous organisation.” (Merleau-Ponty, 1945b:13)

I had hoped that the use of pixellated images and jerky, repetitive camera movements would draw attention to the process of filmmaking itself, making visible

to the viewer the way in which the camera creates images of the world. I then hoped that this would serve as a metaphor for the act of perception.

The possibility of this metaphor being understood is, of course, greater the more likely it is the viewer sees film or video as itself a form of perception, of a way of seeing the world. Vivian Sobchack offers a phenomenological account of the experience of viewing a film which, if it is to be accepted, would offer some support.

When we sit in a movie theater and perceive a film as sensible, as making sense, we (and the film before us) are immersed in a world and in an activity of visual being. The experience...is marked by the way in which significance and the act of signifying are *directly* felt, *sensuously* available to the viewer. The embodied activity of perception and expression—making sense and signifying it—are given to us as modalities of a single experience of being in the presence of and producing meaning and diacritical value. What we look at projected on the screen—whether Merleau-Ponty's 'the things, the waves, and the forests,' or only abstract lines and colors—addresses us as the expressed perception of an anonymous, yet present, 'other' (Sobchack, 1992:8).

and

...the *automatic movement* of the film through the camera and projector is overwritten and transformed by the *autonomous movement* of what is phenomenologically perceived as a visual intentionality that visibly chooses the subjects and objects of its attention, takes an attitude toward them, and accumulates them into a meaningful aesthetically and ethically articulated experience (Sobchack, 2004:147).

Sobchack seems to think that, when we watch a film, what we are aware of is not just the world of the film - what is happening onscreen - but that we also experience the world on screen as being the world as perceived by another perceiving subject. This subject is not the real director or camera operator of the film but a "novel and visible cinematic subject" (Sobchack, 2004:1488).

The problem with this phenomenological account of watching a film is that it does not seem accurate, at least not insofar as my own experience of watching films is concerned. An accurate phenomenology of the experience of watching a film will reveal, I think, that unless one is bored or distracted, one is fully immersed in the world of the film. I do not experience the world on the screen as being the world of some real or imaginary “other” viewer. Nor do I feel that I am looking through somebody else’s eyes. I feel in touch directly with the action on screen. The world is not apprehended as having been ordered by the perceptual activity of another viewer. The “cinematic subject” is not visible or felt in any other way. Nor is it a necessary condition of my being able to make sense of a film. It is, rather, a theoretical construct.

What this suggests is that the viewer of *A Summer Voyage* is unlikely to equate the film they are watching with the perceptual activity of an(other) subject. Thus, without a great deal of help they are unlikely to realise that the creative filmmaking processes made visible are meant to stand in for the creative processes of perception.

## **15. The Second Project: *Disruptions***

### **15.1. The Project**

As I note above, I did not feel I had fully explored the way in which landscapes are affected by power.

I wanted to try to explore how historical and social forms of power operate through landscapes in tandem with ways of understanding those landscapes and, consequently, ourselves.

The landscape of Rum has clearly been affected by the way in which the land has been owned and used. Over the past centuries, different ways of writing, speaking and thinking about the island have authorised and justified interventions into it and the lives of those connected to it.

I collected a series of different kinds of texts about Rum. I started with one of the earliest records of the island, Sir Donald Munro’s account from 1549 (Munro, 1549), and found many others: Thomas Pennant’s account in *A Tour in Scotland and Voyage to the Hebrides* (Pennant, 1772); *The New Statistical Account of*

*Scotland* (Author Unknown, 1834); an advertisement from *The Times* from 1886 advertising the island for sale<sup>24</sup>; *The Isle of Rum*, a poem by John Bullough, owner of Rum in the late 19th Century<sup>25</sup>; *Bare Feet and Tackety Boots*, the 1988 memoir by Archie Cameron, the son of one of the employees of the Bullough family (Cameron, 1988); The Nature Conservancy's *Final Report on Nature Reserves in Scotland* (Department of Health for Scotland, 1949); the website text of the Isle of Rum Red Deer Project; a 2008 letter from Michael Russell, MSP, reporting on a meeting of the Rum Task Group (Russell, 2008) and; the *Isle of Rum Croft Policy* from 2011 (Isle of Rum Community Trust, 2011).

These are texts which either justified disruption of the landscape - directly or indirectly - or reported on the effects of such disruptions. Munro's account of the island, for instance, brought back information which encouraged further exploration of the island, exploration which has historically led to interventions into it. *The New Statistical Account* reported on the effect of the clearances on the island, authorised by the system of property ownership, justified by written law. The advertisement in *The Times* led directly to the sale of the island to John Bullough. The Nature Conservancy's report justified purchase of the island from Monica Bullough but also, once purchased, it continued to justify a policy of isolation for the island and the use of the land as an outdoor scientific laboratory.

Archie Cameron's memoir, the only autobiographical text, is illuminating because of what it says about his self-understanding. Cameron was the son of one of the groundsmen working for the Bullough family, the owners of Rum. He says, in my excerpt;

I don't intend to get involved in discussion about the rights and wrongs of big estates. Really, that is quite pointless, since there are so few of them left. But this I know: the estate of Rhum<sup>26</sup> employed about a hundred people, and they were better off there than they would have been almost anywhere else. Of course it was a patriarchal and even tyrannical society in which we grew

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<sup>24</sup> Reprinted in Magnussen, 1997.

<sup>25</sup> Read by a resident of the island from a private copy of the poems. I have been unable to track these down.

<sup>26</sup> George Bullough changed the name of the island.

up, but I would rather have grown up there, with all the freedom and beauty of the island, than in some Gorbals slum (Cameron, 1988:144).

What I found interesting about this isn't the attempted justification of a system of land ownership, but what Cameron posits as the alternative to growing up on Rum; life in a Gorbals slum. His understanding of himself and the possibilities open to him are narrow. There is no room for him to imagine himself growing up as anything other than poor, let alone as the owner of the island, or the member of a community living according to quite different systems of land ownership.

None of the texts I chose are neutral. They have shaped the understanding of the landscape, justified the shaping of the landscape itself, or both. But, of course, the landscape also shapes the texts. Likewise, the interventions into the landscape consequent upon, justified or authorised by, the texts have shaped people's lives.

I wanted to show this somehow - show how text and landscape are interwoven and, in doing so, how systems of power (be they legal, scientific or political) enable disruptions to be effected in the landscape and, consequently, on people.

I started by juxtaposing modern images of the landscape with excerpts from the various texts relevant to those images and then creating videos out of both. Then, I opened up the video files with a hex editor and began to swap the code of each file around to disrupt the landscape and the text, introducing "glitching" into the video files. In this way I wanted to highlight the particular *digital* materiality of the filmmaking process.

I began to build up a series of these "disruptions" but it became obvious that there was little variation here and that a whole series of pieces based around the same technique might lack interest. I therefore sought different ways of making text and video disrupt one another using different editing techniques. Some of these highlighted the material nature of video (by, for instance, highlighting pixellation) but others did not.

In the end, I created ten “disruptions” which, together, tell the story of the island over nearly 500 years.<sup>27</sup>

I wanted to make it impossible to read or listen to the text without the effort being disrupted by the landscape, just as the landscape cannot be appreciated without being disrupted by the text. Nonetheless, with perseverance, I think that almost all the text can be read or heard and each landscape studied.

I manipulated the colour of the images to disrupt the landscape further. My initial aim was to try to replicate the feel and style of landscape postcards - these are messages home from my trip. Grey skies were transformed to blue. The grass became vivid, the rocks are starker.

Throughout each piece, the images and the text change. These are time-based. Just as the land changes through time, so do the pieces.

I wanted to present video in a different context, where the expectations are different to single channel cinema and where the material is encountered in a different way. This series of pieces I therefore created for, and exhibited in, a gallery on continuous loop on DVD monitors spaced out in a large “U” shape.<sup>28</sup> I disrupted the series itself by interspersing other video landscape pieces. One of these was *Wessenden Brook*, a six screen installation in which each screen showed a looping section of a moorland stream from above, flowing from right to left.<sup>29</sup> Put together, the sections *almost* created the impression of a river flowing across the screens. Only *almost* because those sections were disrupted. They did not quite fit, and on each screen there was a slight pause as the video looped.

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<sup>27</sup> All ten *Disruptions* are provided on the USB stick accompanying this thesis. The pieces range from around a minute to four and a half minutes and are designed to play on permanent loop.

<sup>28</sup> Photographs and video of the exhibition are included on the USB stick accompanying this thesis. Appendix 3 includes some of these photographs together with the gallery text.

<sup>29</sup> Again, see the USB stick for a short video of this exhibit, *Wessenden Brook*.

## **15.2. Reflection**

I began the project with the aim of exploring power and also, again, the process and materiality of digital video. The second aspect became less important as I tried to make the exhibits more interesting for the viewer.

I wanted to show how the text and landscape interact and disrupt one another. I felt it was less clear in the pieces based around glitching that this is what is happening. It seemed more obvious in those pieces where the text and video share the screen. To this extent, as in *A Summer Voyage*, I feel that the attempt to use the process of filmmaking to try to make a point about landscape is problematic.

Although the focus was on power, the exhibition of these video pieces in a gallery context enabled me to mirror the experience of filmmaking in a way that single channel, "cinematic" presentations fail to capture. Like the filmmaker, the visitor to the gallery found themselves within a landscape. Rum's past and present and the different parts of the island were laid out together. The exhibits became objects to explore, in any order. They were all visible at once. Control passed from me to the visitors: people could decide how long to spend at each exhibit, and each exhibit transcended them, not only in terms of the meaning or interpretation that it had, but in that through looping, it existed before the visitor arrived and continued to exist once they had gone.

By placing a river flowing through the gallery, I tried to emphasise this sense of the exhibition itself being a landscape. As visitors moved around the exhibits, the sound of the river grew or faded. Quite unlike a cinematic environment, where background noise is eliminated, this sound mingled with footsteps, chatter and the sound of doors opening and closing. Whereas the cinema requires the body to remain static and focused on a single image, the gallery environment demanded a much more mobile form of engagement - both from the body and the (embodied) mind.

## **16. The Third Project: *Under the Mountain***

The *Disruptions* project focused solely, in the end, on power and how this affects landscape and the lives of those who are intertwined with it.



The view taken in the *Disruptions* was objective, historical, textual; *genealogical*. The point of view was not that of the subject experiencing the landscape. Even where a subjective point of view was represented (as in Archie Cameron's autobiography), it was presented textually, as an object for the viewer's gaze.

I wanted to come back to the way in which subjectivity and landscape are intertwined and, instead of taking a genealogical view of Rum, take up the standpoint of those currently immersed in the landscape. In other words, I wanted to be more *phenomenological*, to listen to the voices of people who live in the landscape talking about how that landscape has affected them and attend to that experience. I wanted, following Merleau-Ponty, to adopt the standpoint of lived experience not, like Foucault, to take the standpoint of discourse.

In a phenomenological essay entitled *Nature's Moods* the philosopher Jane Howarth asks why we ascribe emotional terms to nature. "How can the sky be angry, the season melancholy, the brook joyful?" she asks (Howarth, 1995:108). Appealing to Merleau-Ponty she argues that we apply mood terms to nature because of deep similarities between ourselves and the natural world. Patterns in nature match patterns in our moods.

The angry sea rages, thunders, is turbulent, frenzied, destructive, forceful, dashes against the cliffs. Angry people behave in clearly similar ways.  
(Howarth, 1995:108)

When we speak of the sky as being angry, therefore, we testify to a deep and meaningful connection between our own nature and that of the world.

Some of the people I interviewed on Rum spoke in these terms and so I returned to the interviews I had recorded, selecting those sections where the islanders spoke about the effect of the landscape, the physical land, upon themselves and others and I pieced these together, trying to find links between them.

Once I had done that, I turned to the video footage. The editing process was quite different to that for *A Summer Voyage*. There, I mostly began with video material and attended to sound and dialogue afterwards. Now the process was more akin to that which I adopted in the *Disruptions* where I started from text and then sought single images to accompany it.

I did not want to use low resolution footage or try to incorporate an exploration of the process or material of filmmaking. I thought again about what Gideon Koppel had said, about wanting the viewer to engage with images in their imagination. I chose long sequences of video, as long as possible, to try to force the viewer to engage with what was on screen. In some cases, I chose images to exactly match what was being spoken about. In other cases, I chose material which alluded to it. Sometimes there are the thinnest of connections between the image and the spoken word, and sometimes there seems to be no reference at all.

It was important to create a single channel cinematic piece here because, if I was to force viewers to engage with images, I needed to take back the control I had given to viewers with the *Disruptions*.

In this final film, the relationship between the people and their landscape changes. The points of connection drift in and out. Landscape becomes other, subjectivity separates, but they then rejoin one another, they reconnect. People are immersed in their landscape yet also separate from it.

## **17. Conclusions**

With the final film, I deliberately sought to concentrate on one aspect of my research; the intertwining of subjectivity and landscape as identified by Merleau-Ponty.

I had previously attempted to investigate this or, perhaps better, represent this using visual techniques. I had initially hoped that I could illuminate the way in which landscape and subjectivity arise together out of the creative act of perception by utilising low-resolution video which would highlight the analogous creative process of digital video.

I came to feel that I was not managing to make this work. I could see there was no reason why the viewer would make the leap from one to the other (from technology to perception) just as there is no reason why anyone looking at Cézanne's paintings would necessarily draw the same conclusions as Merleau-Ponty. I think that the attempt to use the process of filmmaking as a metaphor for perceptual processes was probably too oblique.

In contrast, in making their films about the process of filmmaking, the structural filmmakers who influenced me were doing just that - making films about process and using that to investigate aspects of filmmaking.

I think that I more closely captured the kind of intertwining of landscape and subjectivity identified by Merleau-Ponty by returning to the audio interviews, the lived experiences of the islanders. This intertwining is not captured at the level of perception, as Merleau-Ponty thought Cézanne attempted, but at a linguistic, reflective level.

An ironic (or perhaps obvious) consequence of my methodology is that the interviewees are disembodied. At the time of filming I felt that this would allow me to focus on the landscape itself but how much harder it now seems to have made the attempt to illuminate the connections between people and place. Better, perhaps, to have tried to depict people acting within a landscape that reflects them and vice-versa, as does Margaret Tait in *Land Makar* (1981), her intimate portrait of Orkney crofter Mary Graham Sinclair.

Another result of my research was the realisation that time, rather than image quality, is the most important aspect in trying to engage the viewer as Gideon Koppel does in *Sleep Furiously*. Remember that he wanted “the audience to ‘fall into’ the image, to engage with it through their imagination” (Koppel, 2008:5). With *Under the Mountain* I thought that it would be necessary to use high definition video to do this, but what became apparent was that it is not the resolution of the images which is important in creating this effect, but their duration. Looking at back at Koppel’s film, with its long takes of the Welsh countryside, this now seems obvious. The imagination needs time to work. Rapidly cutting from one scene to another renders the viewer passive.

Like James Benning’s landscape films, most notably his *California Trilogy*, *Under the Mountain* therefore perhaps most comfortably belongs within that genre of films often referred to as “Slow Cinema”.

The formal characteristics shared by [such films] are immediately identifiable, if not quite fully inclusive: the employment of (often extremely) long takes, de-centred and understated modes of storytelling, and a pronounced emphasis on quietude and the everyday...

...during long takes we are invited to let our eyes wander within the parameters of the frame, observing details that would remain veiled or merely implied by a swifter form of narration (Flanagan, 2008:11).

I suggested earlier in this thesis that the activity of filmmaking verifies for the filmmaker some of the conclusions of phenomenology and, further, that film may itself represent a kind of phenomenological reflection upon the landscape, revealing certain truths or essences. As Merleau-Ponty knew, phenomenological reflection upon the world is not passive:

When I begin to reflect my reflection bears upon an unreflective experience; moreover my reflection cannot be unaware of itself as an event, and so it appears to itself in the light of a truly creative act (Merleau-Ponty, 1945a:x).

Filmmaking is itself a form of creative reflection. In selectively filming and editing the footage taken from the landscape of Rum, I was aiming to uncover and highlight some essential truths about that landscape. As for Benning, again, the process of editing digital video, hopefully, has enabled the general to be derived from the particular.

One other result was the realisation that different styles of edit and presentation are suitable for different kinds of truth. Thus, in *Under the Mountain*, reliance upon the subjective viewpoint enabled me to draw out truths about the relationship of people to their lived landscape different to those highlighted by the *Disruptions* project which adopted a textual, historical perspective. On the other hand, the *Disruptions* exhibition enabled me to create a *place*, a *landscape* for bodies to explore, with objects to investigate, just like the place the exhibits depicted. Again, video presented in this manner requires the active engagement of the mind, just as *Under the Mountain* does, but in quite a different, and a very *embodied*, manner.

Finally, despite my reservations about the metaphorical use of low-resolution video, the practical and creative investigation of the process and materiality of digital video clearly resulted in quite different films to those which could have been

made using analogue film. The methodology developed in the creation of *Wessenden Brook (24 Frames Hex)* is wholly reliant upon digital technology and the images in *Viewpoint #1* and *River*, in particular, but also in parts of *A Summer Voyage*, are essentially digital.

I believe that aesthetically interesting work can be created by exploiting the low-resolution properties of early digital video technology. It can be used to capture landscapes in a way quite unlike analogue film; digital and analogue technologies are very different. There is a tendency amongst digital filmmakers to attempt to replicate the analogue, and to thereby elevate it above the digital.<sup>30</sup> It seems to me that there is, instead, more interesting work to be done in exploring those differences and highlighting the beauty of the digital.

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<sup>30</sup> A quick Google search will reveal dozens of effects such as fake “grain”, “light leaks” and “flares” created for Final Cut Pro which give video an “authentic film” look. So, too, there are dozens of online tutorials about how to use lights, lenses and filters to make your digital video more “cinematic”.

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## **Moving Image**

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*Land Makar* (1981) Directed by M. Tait. [Online] UK: Available through Lux. [Accessed 13th September 2016]

*Landscape (for Manon)* (1987) Directed by P. Hutton. [Online] United States: Available through YouTube. [Accessed 13th September 2016]

*London* (1994) Directed by P. Keiller. [DVD] London: British Film Institute

*Park Film* (1973) Directed by C. Welsby. Chris Welsby (2005) [DVD] London: British Film Institute

*Psychohydrography* (2010) Directed by P. B. Rappmund. [Film] United States: No longer available through MUBI. [Accessed 13th January 2016]

*Redshift* (2001) Directed by E. Richardson. Emily Richardson, 6 Films (2008) [DVD] London: Lux

*River Yar* (1972) Directed by C. Welsby and W. Raban. Chris Welsby (2005) [DVD] London: British Film Institute

*Robinson in Ruins* (2010) Directed by P. Keiller. [DVD] London: British Film Institute

*Robinson in Space* (1997) Directed by P. Keiller. [DVD] London: British Film Institute

*Small Roads* (2011) Directed by J. Benning [Online] United States: Available through Youtube. [Accessed on 13th September 2016]

*Seven Days* (1974) Directed by C. Welsby. Chris Welsby (2005) [DVD] London: British Film Institute

*Sleep Furiously* (2008) Directed by G. Koppel [DVD] UK: New Wave Films

*Spiral Jetty* (1970) Directed by Robert Smithson. [Film] United States

*Stream Line* (1976) Directed by C. Welsby. Chris Welsby (2005) [DVD] London: British Film Institute

*Surface Tension* (1976) Directed by W. Raban. [Film] London: Lux

*Take Measure* (1973) Directed by W. Raban. [Film performance]

*Thames Film* (1986) Directed by W. Raban. William Raban (2004) [DVD] London: British Film Institute

*The Revenant* (2015) Directed by A. G. Iñárritu [Film] United States: 20th Century Fox

*Two Years at Sea* (2012) Directed by B. Rivers. [DVD] UK: Soda Pictures

*View* (1970) Directed by W. Raban. [Film] London: Lux

*Windmill II* (1973) Directed by C. Welsby. Chris Welsby (2005) [DVD] London: British Film Institute

*Windvane* (1972) Directed by C. Welsby. Chris Welsby (2005) [DVD] London: British Film Institute

### ***Paintings***

Lorraine, C. (1648) *Landscape with the Marriage of Isaac and Rebekah*. Oil on canvas, 149.2 x 196.9 cm, The National Gallery, London.

Bruegels, P. (1565) *The Hunters in the Snow*. Oil on Panel, 117 x 162 cm, Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna.

Friedrich, C.D. (1824/5) *The Watzmann*. Oil on canvas, 135 x 170 cm, Nationalgalerie, Berlin.

**Appendix 1: List of Video Pieces and other material provided on USB stick (below).**

**1. Original Video**

1. Viewpoint #1
2. Viewpoint #2
3. Viewpoint #3
4. River #1
5. Spring
6. Streaming (After Welsby)
7. Wessenden Brook (24 Frames Hex)
8. A Summer Voyage
9. Under the Mountain
10. Disruption One
11. Disruption Two
12. Disruption Three
13. Disruption Four
14. Disruption Five
15. Disruption Six
16. Disruption Seven
17. Disruption Eight

18. Disruption Nine

19. Disruption Ten

## **2. The *Disruptions* exhibition records**

### **(a) Photographs**

20. Intro Video

21. Exhibition Overview 1

22. Exhibition Overview 2

23. Disruption One

24. Disruption Two

25. Ferry

26. Disruption Three

27. Tree

28. Disruption Four

29. Disruption Five

30. Streaming (After Welsby)

31. Wessenden Brook 1

32. Wessenden Brook 2

33. Wessenden Brook (24 Frames Hex)

34. Disruption Six

35. Disruption Seven

36. Amorphous

37. Disruption Eight

38. Croft

39. Disruption Nine

40. Disruption Ten

### **(b) Video**

41. Disruptions Exhibition Overview 1

42. Disruptions Exhibition Overview 2

43. Wessenden Brook

## Appendix 2: Rum interview questionnaire

# Landscape, Power & The Moving Image

## Interview Questions

**Researcher:** Dr Alistair I Macdonald

**Course:** Masters Degree by Research (Art & Design)

**Department & University:** Manchester Institute for Research and Innovation in Art & Design (MIRIAD), Manchester Metropolitan University, Righton Building, Cavendish Street, Manchester, M15 6BG

These questions are prompts to facilitate a conversation about life on Rum. You may not be asked all of them and the conversation may progress in such a way that you are asked different questions.

1. Tell me how you came to live on Rum
2. How long have you lived here?
3. If you moved here from somewhere else, where did you live beforehand?
4. Tell me about where you used to live.
5. Why did you come to Rum?
6. How is living on Rum different from where you used to live?
7. What do you enjoy about being on Rum?
8. What don't you enjoy?
9. Does the community meet formally or informally to discuss issues affecting the lives of the islanders and the management of the land?
10. How are decisions made in these meetings?
11. How much power over your own life and the landscape do you feel you have?
12. How has Rum changed since you have been here?
13. Tell me what you know of the island's history.
14. Describe the island's landscape.
15. How does the landscape of Rum affect you?
16. How do you think the landscape is changing?
17. How do you think Rum will change in the future?
18. Do you feel connected or cut off here. And to or from what?

## **Appendix 3: *Disruptions* exhibition text and some photographs.**

### **(a) Exhibition Text**

#### **DISRUPTIONS & OTHER LANDSCAPES**

A solo exhibition by **Alistair Macdonald**  
**Grosvenor Gallery**, Grosvenor Building, Cavendish Street, Manchester, M15 6BR

**19 - 21 April 2016** (10.30 - 3.30)

Landscape is never other. Frequently, it is the place where power is exercised over physical space and the bodies which inhabit it. Our different ways of understanding the landscape authorise, justify, explain and describe different interventions into space and bodies, interventions which disrupt both.

Taking the Scottish island of Rum as his subject, artist filmmaker Alistair Macdonald has drawn upon the different forms of discourse which relate to the island; memoir, travelogue, letters, advertisements, poems, scientific reports and legal documents. Disrupting footage of the island with fragments of text and vice-versa, he has created for the Grosvenor Gallery a series of video pieces presenting the history of the island as a series of disruptions and the landscape as the place where power, discourse and bodies intertwine.

But landscape is also for play and, for those who prefer their scenery untheorised, the exhibition also features dancing trees, a boat trip, and a river streaming through the gallery.

Alistair is an award winning filmmaker. His short films have been shown across the UK and Europe. Currently based in the Manchester Institute for Research and Innovation in Art and Design (MIRIAD), this is his first solo exhibition.

[www.alistairimacdonald.com](http://www.alistairimacdonald.com)

**(b) Photographs**

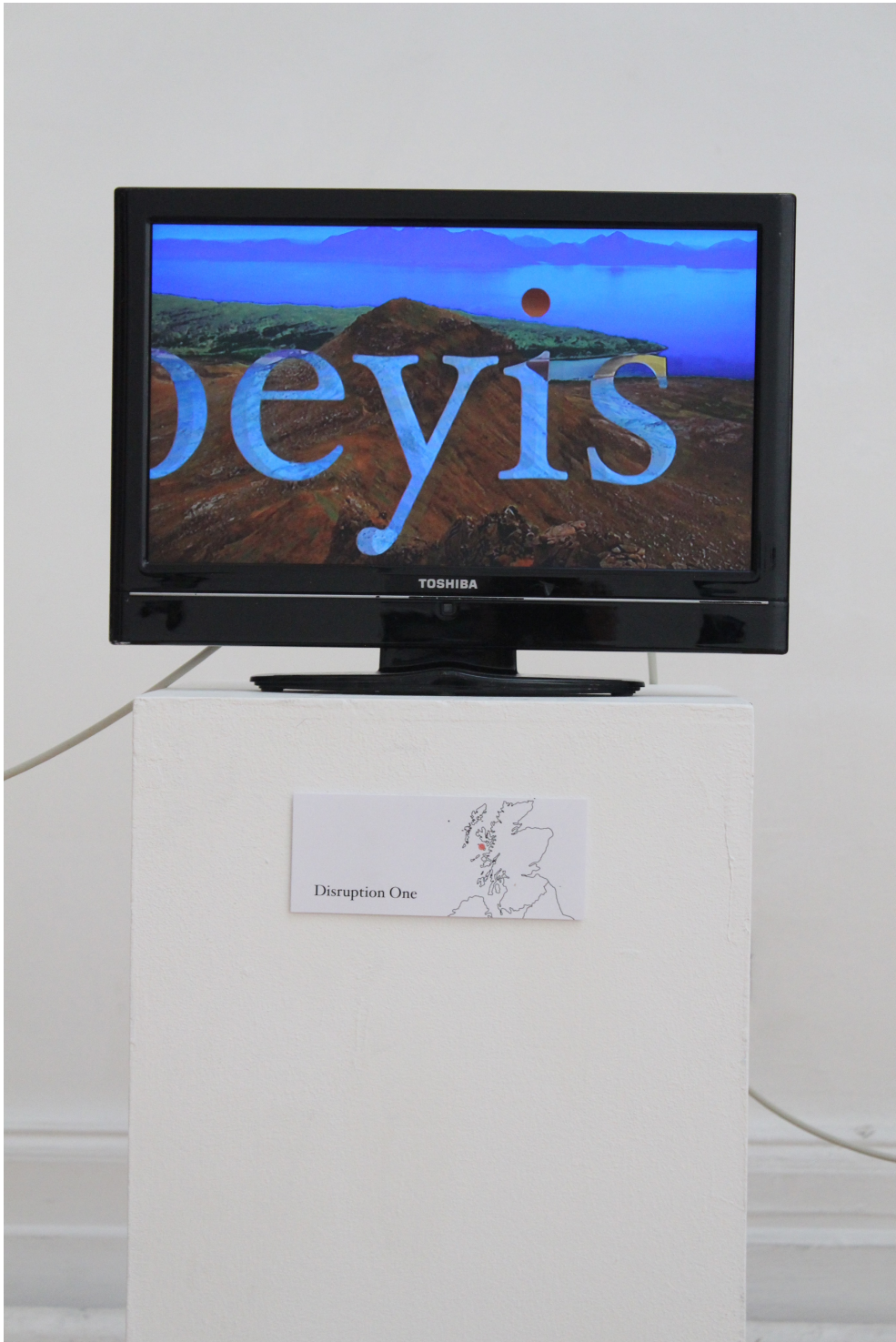


*Exhibition Overview 1*



*Exhibition Overview 2*





*Disruption One*





*Disruption Three*



*Wessenden Brook*



*Wessenden Brook*