

ENSHRINEMENT:

Spes Contra Spem

A Dialectic Between the Sacred and the Profane Essence of Material Separation

I change but I cannot die
Shelley, 'The Cloud' 76

AIMS

To unfold, merge and unfold again creation myths and evolutionary ideas into a layered, mythopoietic narrative, concerning human separation from nature in the recently defined Anthropocene:

- offering a sense of connectedness with existence lying beyond the reach of our own time;
- seen through a window onto another world reflecting the tensions existing in dynamic relationships.

OBJECTIVES

To entangle parallel narratives in words, objects and sound;

whilst researching and developing ways of encoding and implementing information embedded in those narratives,

employing a variety of digital and non-digital strategies to create different modes of engagement,

layering modalities in such a way as to catalyse open interpretations connected in fluid ways,

using sculpture centred on ceramic material, sound, words, and moving and still images in an installation,

incorporating the idea of evolutionary space formulated in the Research Statement.

CONTEXT

Contemporary and Modern

Artists dealing with the deep past, using a variety of modalities with atavistic perspectives, particularly sound, sculpture, virtual reality and words, including: Marguerite Hameau, Mohshin Allayai, Mimmo Paladino. and Andrew Lord.

Poetry: Ted Hughes and Rebecca Elson – cosmological and existential

Sound – Wolfgang Gil creating invisible form in which geometry is delineated with sound.

Science Fiction – Philip K. Dick – political, social and philosophical explorations in monopolistic societies; Walter M. Miller Jr. – *A Canticle for Liebowitz* – the cyclical nature of history and religion vs secularism. Ursula Le Guin – *The Left Hand of Darkness* – gender in another world.

Studio – shared with Janet Waring Rago in continual conversation and reciprocal interrogation; a chapel in rural Lincolnshire removed from the artificiality of the city amidst a man-made countryside – a paradox reflected in my work which questions the place and effect of humans with respect to Nature of which we are part.

MA Peer group

Theoretical

Evolutionary theories – Richard Dawkins, Stephen J Gould, Darwin, Pinker, E. O. Wilson and others.

Spes Contra Spem – the enigmatic Latin phrase from Romans 4.18, in the KJV, ‘who against hope believed in hope’ or more literally, ‘hope against hope’. This phrase has many meanings and has been paraphrased in a variety of ways, variations of which can be found in the Bible and other texts.

Evolutionary Space – A term coined in the Research Statement which describes art practice as a complex boundless system continually adapting to an ever-changing ecosystem in contact with other ecosystems.

Rasa – the Indian aesthetic system of emotions or feelings that cannot be described; somewhat similar to qualia but more complex.

Process Philosophy – everything is continually changing as a cornerstone of reality linking with the contentious but poetic notion of panpsychism.

John Dewey – *Art in Experience*. Art and its meaning, contextually residing in how it is perceived and experienced rather than in the artwork itself.

Martin Heidegger – *The Origin of the Work of Art* – describing the artist’s relationship with their work, the nature of that work, and its relationship with the world.

Kraft von Maltzhan – “Nature as Landscape”, a brief history of knowledge and our changing relationship with nature.

Roberto Mangabeira – “ human agency and the dynamics between the individual, state and nature.

Gareth Jones – *The Object of Sculpture*, traces the history of the reciprocal relationship between sound, music, sculpture, and architecture.

Wolfgang Gil – *sonic plasticity*. Using sound and its physical geometry in space

On Art – Richard L. Anderson ‘culturally significant meaning skilfully encoded in an affecting sensual medium’; David Bayles and Ted Orlando, art changes the artist and the world.

Symbiosis – Lyn Margulis, *The Symbiotic Planet*. We are all composite creatures sharing the same body.

Art Object as Agent – idea that corresponds an artwork to a living entity that engenders social interaction with by considering it as an agent rather than an object. – van Eck, Gell, etc.

Historical

Magic and myth – texts on religious and secular ritual, development and cosmology: Graves, *The White Goddess*; Fraser, *The Golden Bough*, Lucretius, *De Rerum Natura*; Aristotle, Plato and pre-Socratics, etc.

Religious and sacred iconography – from around the world and different periods: anthropological and archaeological.

Natural History and Art – Ernst Haeckel, Leopold and Rudolph Blaschka, Rodin.

Biology – Life processes and structure; connectedness and evolution; traversal and sentience.

Florence – formative period of ten years immersed in the Classical, Humanist, Renaissance, and Romantic culture, engendering a strong sense of the materiality of art both in making, content and experience.

Linnean Society – source of natural historical narratives in the oldest extant natural history society in the world.

Themes

Separation – (or awakening) of the human self from nature. Influential texts include those of Martin Buber, Robert Graves, Richard Dawkins, Kraft von Maltzhan, and Lewis-Hamilton amongst others. The emergence of life and traversals of complexity; the emergence of the “*œ*”, labels and language.

Metamorphosis – of matter and idea as continuity in a world of constant and cyclical change.

Language – as a vehicle for communication and miscommunication.

Struggle – Life, contingency and inevitability.

The Anthropocene – “ Whatever did the Gardener do to Eden?

Creation myths and religion – explicators of mysteries? Principle sources include amongst others: Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*; *The Bible*; texts on evolution including Darwin’s, *On the Evolution of Species*.

METHODOLOGY

My practice is driven by the feeling of flux being the natural state of things and that I am connected to the most distant time by an unbroken thread of contingent events: the indissoluble strength of the past and the vulnerability of a fragile future existence centred on the axis mundi of the self. I give this shape, synthesising rational and poetic thought at the point of giving material form. I aim to make this corporeal through ceramic material whose alchemical process of transformation links me with the past through its brittle archaeology and beyond that as a fossil of its living, malleable self. I create a space in which layered and intersecting meanings can come into existence, catalysed and unfolding into a multitude of inferences. Within this conceptual space shared between visual, tactile, verbal and acoustic modalities, resonances are delivered at differing rates encouraging the building of subjective correspondences. Modularity of thought and making come together using strategies of engagement that offer an adaptive flexibility for working in what I identified in the research statement as evolutionary space: a complex boundless system continually adapting to an ever-changing ecosystem in contact with other ecosystems.

Research

- Techniques and methods
- hermeneutics
- modern and contemporary scientific evolutionary theory
- philosophy and history of science
- world creation myths
- poetry
- historical and contemporary art practices
- archaeology and anthropology

Research Methods

- practice based
- text based
- conversations with peers, staff and audience
- collaborations
- analysis and reviews of works and exhibitions
- reflective critical writing

Mediums

- ceramics
- images

- sound
- painting and drawing
- virtual reality
- video

Techniques (principle)

- modelling
- carving
- digital
- voice
- video
- text
- projection (shadows)
- drawing
- virtual reality

Documentation

- blog journal containing
- sound recordings
- photographic

OUTCOMES

An installation with the following possible works:

- ceramic sculptures: suspended, wall or stand mounted, surface mounted
- vitrine
- responsive sound
- contextualising works and handling pieces
- verbal narratives heard through headphones
- image/animation printed and or on-screen

WORK PLAN

October 2018 – January 2019

Period of orientation

- identify and develop the area of study and work
- initial Project Proposal
- exploratory drawings and maquettes
- develop critical and reflective writing in blog journal

- build on video editing and digital sound software
- explore theoretical, contextual and poetry texts
- experiment, research, develop, filter and select

January – April 2019

Continue with the above:

- filter ideas, theory and techniques
- start developing an artist statement in the context of the proposal for the eventual final show
- build on Low Residency experience.

May – September

consolidate previous work

- test first prototypes
- develop work further
- research digital sound techniques for real-time interactions
- Research Statement
- develop Project Proposal
- curate work for Unit 1 Assessment.

October – November

Complete Unit 1

- shape ideas for the final show
- crystallise conceptual framework and methodology

November

start Unit 2 “ A period of intense developing and making in the context of previous research and experimentation to deliver project proposal. Throughout this period work on text and drawings for sound narratives.

December

- finish first sculptures and start other works
- plan engineering of displays
- work on the digital side and consolidate on Blender learning
- narratives ongoing
- experiment with sound

January 2020

- continue with suspended and vertical sculptures
- begin free-standing silent work.
- narratives ongoing

- experiment with sound
- fire pieces
- start fabricating

February

- continue work as above
- Low Residency period
- start curatorial content
- troubleshoot digital elements at residency

March

- start to complete works, fabrication, and curatorial elements
- record narratives
- prepare sounds and digital equipment and code

April

- complete work and curatorial elements
- plan logistics

May

By end of May all work should be completed and show planning well underway, also procure materials for packing and transport of work

June – July

Pack work and prepare for final show, review project proposal and prepare for unit 2 assessment. Delivery of work, installation, final show and de-install.

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