

Rosie McMillen

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University of Ulster - Fine Art Bachelor of Arts

www.rosiemcmillen.com

I was born in Belfast and live on the Ards Peninsula in Northern Ireland.

My interests lie in natural phenomena, social-cultural practices and the relationship between human beings, technology and ecosystems. For some time, I have been motivated to produce work which is also sustainable.

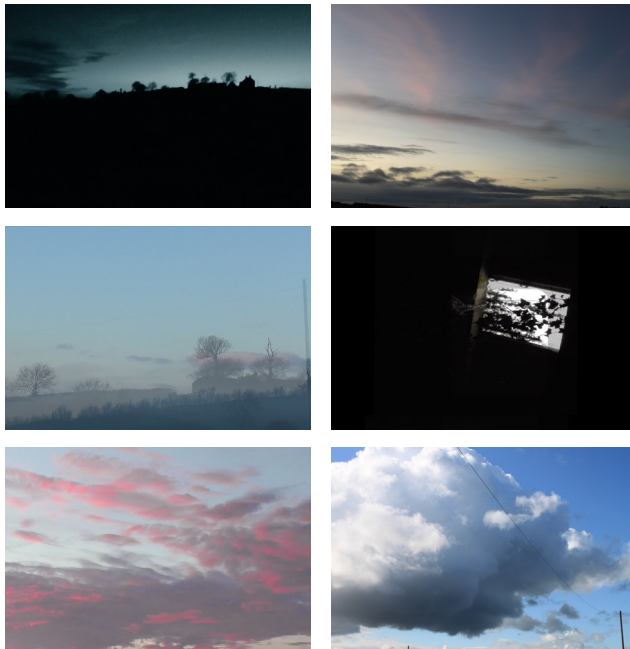
For that reason, I have shifted my practice from producing three dimensional objects to video installation using post production editing. I am a field worker, ethnographer and observer.

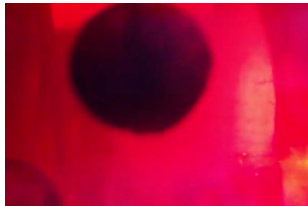
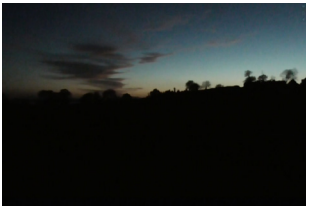
Climate change and global warming have created new extreme weather patterns – storms, blizzards, biting winds, catastrophic floods as a result of unsustainable patterns of consumption which we ignore at our peril.

As a counterpoint to this natural disintegration, global market forces and financial crisis have led to an imbalance in social structures.

I aim to test the hypothesis that artists have the ability to promote cultural change by re-engaging the viewer with nature. Arguably only when we greengage with our natural environment we will be able to alter our unsustainable patterns of material consumption.

Opposite and Below: Images from previous video works.





“I don’t mistrust reality, of which I know next to nothing. I mistrust the picture of reality conveyed to us by our senses, which is imperfect and circumscribed.”

— Gerhard Richter, in conversation with Rolf Schön (1972)

I take inspiration for my video installation works from nature and the environment. I am a field worker, ethnographer and observer. In the laneways and farm tracks of the Ards Peninsula I often-record footage of the changing seasons and time of day - fields of summer wheat disturbed by the wind, a sublime harvest moon or a winter sunrise.

The unedited raw footage I think of as my digital sketchbook and audio inventory of natural phenomena kept as an archive for future and as yet unperceived, unplanned work. This has been a fundamental directional shift from my previous work of creating two and three dimensional art objects. It is also in keeping with what I hope is a more progressive sustainable art practice with an emphasis on eco-ethics as well as eco-aesthetics.

In the postproduction process I manipulate the gathered visual images and audio by altering opacity, color sequence, timing, overlaying or reversing footage. It is an opportunity to experiment on a digital blank canvas in a flexible and intuitive way rather than adhere to a directed literal narrative. I would like to offer the viewer an opportunity to experience work, which tests their perceptive skills, and as a consequence perhaps reconsider their fundamental assumptions and preconceptions about the natural world they inhabit and how they interact with it.

As a counterpoint to this approach I have edited extracts from seminal political speeches and combined them with natural visual imagery to explore the fine line between interpretation and misinterpretation in a geopolitical context. For example, creating a fictional climate change debate using extracts from Margaret Thatcher 1989's seminal speech to the United Nations juxtaposed with and a speech by the former president of Yugoslavia who was a climate change denier. The counterpoint of diametrically opposed ideology is a reflection of the smokescreen created by politicians and scientists, which bewilders the public.

I want to test the hypothesis that artists have the ability to promote fundamental cultural changes by encouraging engagement with the global warming and climate change debate, which we ignore at our peril. Arguably in modern Western society we have become disassociated from the natural world, and as a consequence have difficulty in communicating with the non-human environment. In this context I have been influenced by the works of the Icelandic/Danish artist Olafur Eliasson, in particular The Weather Project for the 2003/2004 Unilever Series in Tate Modern which has been described as "*holding up a mirror to show us who we are*".

My recent video works are the result of recording visual and sound as chance instinctive reactions to unplanned and random observations or events. This was evident on a recent trip to Iceland, when I shifted the focus of my practice to look at the relationship between hyper reality, natural phenomena and false interpretation in the context of mass culture and contemporary mythology I found it depressing that the Icelandic tourist industry appeared to be based on commercially marketing sublime naturally occurring events such as trips to see the Northern Lights, or the powerful eruption of geothermal springs. Ironically the tourists seemed more interested in taking selfies than experiencing the power of nature first hand.

I exploited these narratives in two video works, *Eyjafjallajökull* and *Rangt Goshver* which deliberately fail to deliver the instant gratification of a sublime experience hinted at. Stripping back the visual references even further in *Geyser* I have created an environment in miniature in the studio space as an act of willful deception and digital illusion.

Thingvellir, Iceland 2015





Thingvellir, Iceland 2015



Thingvellir, Iceland 2015





Andardráttur - Photograph series, 2016



Andardráttur (detail) - Photograph series, 2016









The light-boxes combine images of the contemporary and traditional sublime create a third space in reflections in the gallery floor. It is against this background that the force field of the contemporary sublime provides a moment of heightened experience underpinned by forces which are beyond our control – a moment of transcendence.

However, the discourse of the sublime has been tainted by association with inauthentic mass culture and become trivialized. As Baudrillard suggests in his seminal 1981 text *Simulacra and Simulation*:

“we no longer require a basis in reality, and the hierarchy between the real and the copy has been overturned.”

The companion work *Geyser* is a looped projection on the gallery floor of a geothermal spring installed in a dark space with a deliberate absence of sound, the viewer is asked to create their own narrative to explain the lack of physical properties.

Using the strategy of abjection in method of installation displaying the geothermal internal cavities in a way that has the effect of swallowing up the viewer - the round format of projection in my installation, places the subject under a microscope, more like a microscopic image and acts as a re-run of a past experience whilst becoming a brand new experience for the first time viewer.

For instance Mona Hatom's video installation *“Le Corps Etranger”*, 1994 creates an abject vantage that destabilizes boundaries and places the images from inside the body and features aspects of bio tourism - transforming the body into landscapes, to physical boundaries of territory and land, rendering the invisible visible.

There is a connection here where the electronic perception of nature is conveyed, where the micro becomes the macro and in this with our wonderment and admiration of the digital the viewer is beckoned toward this creation of a physical space one enters, in aim to create a tenor where the viewer feels like a force is pulling them in, to be engulfed in the interaction between the hyper reality and the mimic. There is also an interaction with the cylindrical space as the viewer becomes a foreign body entering the space further allowing another level of interpretation of the foreign as a foreigner in a hyper real re-adaptation of the original experience.

ICELAND - Photographic lightbox installation – Ulster University, Belfast. 2016



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Photo: Christin White



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EYJAFJALLAJOKULL & RANGT GOSHVER - Video, 2016

Video stills from Eyjafjallajökull, 2016

Duration: 5m 18s

EYJAFJALLAJOKULL



Video stills from Rangt Goshver, 2016

Duration: 3m 05s



Opposite:

Video still from Geyser, 2016



