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Nan Shepherd's *The Living Mountain* in Painting Practice: an Ecocritical Analysis

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Dedication

To all of my family and to the memory of Nan Shepherd (1893-1981)

'One is companioned, though not in time'

Acknowledgements

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Abstract

This study examines *Kissing the Cold Goodbye*, a study in fine art practice-as-research that uses painting as enquiry into a literary text, *The Living Mountain* (1977) by Nan Shepherd (1893-1981). The research examines how Shepherd's extended walks and climbs in the Scottish Cairngorms manifest in her text, an interweaving of personal memoir, natural science, sense-perception and eastern philosophy, written from an ecological, feminist perspective. I apply Shepherd's concept of walking as access to bodily thinking to my own walks and climbs between 2014 and 2023 in Iceland, Finland and Scotland. Taking an autoethnographic, first-person voice, ideas from *The Living Mountain* are explored as a relationality with the living world more embodied than the landscape as merely a view. One point of issue is painting's lack of extended presence within ecological discourses, exemplified in a claim by Weintraub (2012) that painted representations of landscape offer little consideration of underlying ecosystems. The research tests and challenges Weintraub's view in contexts of anthropogenic damage to northerly ecosystems: melting glaciers, loss of seabirds, ocean plastic and industrial forestry. Painting, it will be argued, has a capacity to generate new relationships of body and place in response to experiential specificities: I am taking painting to refer both to a process of do-ing and *a* painting, an object that enters the world as art. Painting-as-process is presented as bodily thinking, and its physical outcome a communication of what it means to think in paint and painting. I draw on fine art-specific methodologies and theories of visual art as ecocriticism to re-imagine *The Living Mountain* from an ecocritical perspective. In merging artistic practice with ecological critique*, Kissing the Cold Goodbye* contributes to new views of *The Living Mountain* across subject areas of ecological art, walking art, ecocriticism, ecofeminism, ecosexuality, painting as mourning, ecological grief and contemporary painting practices.

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2. *Water is speaking* (2021). A microphone is inserted under melting sea-ice, Baltic Sea, Finland [from video diary]. Available at: https://vimeo.com/526242975

3. *Patti Lean: Green Leaves, Black Water* (2021) a walking artist during Covid. Spring Fling Open Studios, 2021 [artist's film]. Available at: https://vimeo.com/935354803?share=copy

4. *Birth of Water* (2021). In a meditation on sound, language and understanding, Patti and Risto read words from Nan Shepherd's 'The Living Mountain', simultaneously in Finnish and English [artist's film]. Available at: https://vimeo.com/526201967

5. *Bringing the War Home* (2022). Winter forest, war in Ukraine [artist's film] Available at: https://vimeo.com/690533348

6. A film supplementary to the project, entitled *Patti Lean, Artist* by John Wallace (2024) is discussed in Appendix 7. Available at: https://vimeo.com/pileon/pattilean?share=copy

Accessing the Artwork

The Figures Section at the end of this text contains photographs relating to Nan Shepherd and images of all my artwork discussed in this study. Project work in film or video is available on Vimeo with links included above on page 14, and in footnotes to the text: a Vimeo account may be needed to log in. Alternatively, all project films, plus a film by John Wallace about my practice, are available in video file format on request from patti@pattilean.co.uk.

Links to artists's websites and artworks discussed in-text are given in footnotes for quick access.

Photographs in this text are by the author, unless otherwise credited.

Note on Referencing

1. This text uses a version of the Harvard referencing system set out in Pears, R. and Shields, G. (2022) *Cite Them Right!* 12th edn. London: Bloomsbury Publishing.

2. The edition of *The Living Mountain* referred to in this study is: Shepherd, N. (2014) *The Living Mountain.* 4th edn. Edinburgh: Canongate Books. In most instances, in-text references to *The Living Mountain* are given as (date: page) to avoid over-repetition of Shepherd's name.

3. Footnotes are used to provide occasional additional information, or to allow quick access to artworks or websites referred to in the text.

Introduction

0: 1 Description of *Kissing the Cold Goodbye*

Kissing the Cold Goodbye is a project in fine art practice-as-research that uses painting to enquire into a literary text, *The Living Mountain* by Nan Shepherd (1893- 1981). Insights and ideas from *The Living Mountain* are re-imagined in painting practice informed by contemporary theories congruous with Shepherd's text and by other artistic methods and media.

The Living Mountain, completed in 1945, recalls Shepherd's near-lifetime of roaming the Cairngorm mountains of Scotland in all elements and seasons: one photo shows Shepherd travelling light, evidently dressed for a summer walk in the mountains (figure 1). The lives of Shepherd and the mountain intertwine in an embodied, sense-based relationship that she later recalls as 'a traffic of love'; the word 'traffic' suggesting a reciprocal bond between woman and mountain (2014, p. xxxviii).[1] *The Living Mountain* is written from a feminist, ecological perspective in which, Shepherd writes, 'the body may be said to think' (2014, p. 105).

The project title *Kissing the Cold Goodbye* was first thought of when I took up ice-swimming in Finland during the Covid-19 pandemic; I came to think of the icy plunge as an embrace, reminiscent of the icy kiss in myths and fairy-tales of the north.[2] In his study of elemental poetics, *Water and Dreams,* Gaston Bachelard imagines cold water as an icy kiss; he writes:

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[1] The notion of 'a traffic of love' appears, probably for the first time in its present form, in Shepherd's 1977 preface to the first edition of *The Living Mountain*, hence the phrase was conceived of in hindsight since the main text of *The Living Mountain* was completed around 1945.

[2] Hans Christian Anderson's (1844) *The Snow Queen* and many derivatives from that tale use the metaphorical icy kiss to signify sleep, oblivion or death by cold. By contrast, Shepherd's recollections of climbers freezing to death on the mountain are related in a much grimmer, more factual voice, with the apparent aim of directly stating how dangerous the Cairngorms can be (Shepherd, 2014, pp. 4, 37, 67).

> ... [C]old water, when one triumphs over it courageously, gives a sensation of warm circulation. The result is an impression of special freshness, of tonic freshness: 'the sharp sweet minute's kiss/Given of the wave's lip for a breath's space curled'.
>
> (Bachelard, 2006, p. 167)[3]

One might imagine similar ideas underlying Shepherd's response to cold water, which she describes as: '... that strong white stuff, one of the four elemental mysteries' (2014, p. 23). 'Naked' and 'defenceless' after encountering the waters of Loch Etchachan (2014, p. 12) she adds: '... even fear became a rare exhilaration' which 'enlarged rather than constricted the spirit' (2014, p. 14).

In my title, the softer sound of the present continuous verb form, kiss-*ing* rather than *kiss*, conveys feelings more tender than the icy kiss of the Snow Queen, and correlates with the primary method of artistic expression in the research, paint-*ing*: hence, kissing and painting: the touch of the lips and the touch of the brush.

Kissing and painting eulogise a dual, ongoing loss: not only of cold places lost by climate heating, but also the displacement of an ideal, collective notion of northerliness which rests in the psychological rather than the place-specific (Wilson and Snæbjörnsdóttir, 2016; 2019). *The Cold* and *the North* tend to be indeterminate concepts, particularly since those who inhabit northerly places do not perceive them as remote, nor as the unchanging wildernesses imagined by other parts of the world (Decker, 2016, pp. 3-4). Kissing goodbye to something as abstract as *the Cold* enframes this study within both the geographical and the metaphysical.

[3] Bachelard is quoting lines from Algernon Charles Swinburne's (1882) epic poem *Tristram of Lyonesse,* part VIII canto 142. Available at: https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Tristram_of_Lyonesse_and_Other_Poems/Tristram_of_Lyonesse/The_Last_Pilgrimage (Accessed 28 December 2024). Bachelard characterises Swinburne's penchant for difficult sea-swimming as a personal struggle to overcome timidity, and in the same chapter cites how Nietzsche trained his will-to-power by long walks in the mountains (Bachelard, 2006, p.162).

As a walking artist I applied and tested Nan Shepherd's concept of bodily thinking to my own walks and climbs between 2014 and 2023 in Iceland, Finland and Scotland. The project takes an autoethnographic approach, with particular attention to autoethnography as: 'a political, socially-just and socially-conscious act' (Ellis, Adams and Bochner, 2011). While walking I witnessed multiple effects of the climate crisis, which impacted on my readings of *The Living Mountain* and became a central topic of the enquiry. I also noted that painting lacked a presence in ecological discourses and set out to investigate critiques in that subject area.

The project's critical framework is ecocriticism, taken here as an aim to use my art to create and speak about relationships between artistic/cultural discourses and the living world (Glotfelty and Fromm, 1996; Lousley, 2020; Garrard 2023). To paint ecological matters is to re-consider the Hubert Damisch's pivotal question of 1984: 'What does it mean for a painter to *think*?' (quoted in Yve-Alain Bois, 1990a, p. 245). The question prompted Bois to call for new relationships between painting and discourse in his 1990 essay *Painting as Model*, a response to claims of the 'death of painting'. My research extends questions of what it means for a painter to *think*, into what it *might* mean for a painter *to think ecologically*, a notion adopted from Timothy Morton's ecological thought (2007; 2010). Consequently the project's artwork forms an ecocritical exploration of *The Living Mountain*, and this present text too is written from an ecocritical perspective.

The methodological approach used in this study follows *Artistic Research Practice: Narrative, Power and the Public* (Hannula, Suaranta and Vadén, 2014) a fine art-specific methodology that places emphasis on contextual, reflective practice and articulation of the work in both academia and wider community outreach. Ravatz and Gregory's (2018) *Black Gold*, a mixed methods paper, also contributes to my approach.

In response to *The Living Mountain*, *Kissing the Cold Goodbye* operates across several subject areas and contributes to fields of study in painting praxis, walking art, ecological art, art about marine litter, feminist and ecofeminist art, and painting as a

form of mourning. In respect of ecocriticism, the project offers a new ecocritical reading of *The Living Mountain* effected in art practice.

The discussion is presented in three chapters, entitled 'Mountain', 'Sea' and 'Forest'. The Impact and Outreach section in Appendix 2 sets out public-facing and community aspects of the research. After the Conclusion, Appendices and References, a Figures section comprises images of all the visual works discussed in this study; that is, my artwork and photos or archive material relating to Nan Shepherd. Five films that form part of the research are listed with links to Vimeo on p. 14; for ease of reading the same links are presented in-text as footnotes. A separate film entitled *Patti Lean: Artist* by John Wallace (2023) is discussed in Appendix 8.

Chapter Summaries

Chapter 1, *MOUNTAIN*, discusses work generated from two artist residencies in 2014 and 2015 in north-west Iceland. The following ideas are explored: Shepherd's 'first idea ... that a mountain has an inside' (2014, pp. 16-17); 'feyness', defined here as mountain-induced euphoria (2014, p. 6); shifting one's perspective by shifting the body (2014, pp. 10-11) and 'the air is part of the mountain' (2014, p. 41).[4] With references to phenomenology and the elemental (Johnson and Smith, 1993; Irigaray, 1985; Lingis, 1998; Ingold, 2000, 2005, 2010; Bachelard, 2014, 2022; Merleau-Ponty, 2015) the artwork draws on phenomena such as: a snow-bridge, a Bergie selzer (a fizzing sound emanating from melting icebergs), the aurora borealis, noctilucence, and the melting ice sheet on Snaefellsjökull, a glacier in west Iceland.

In Chapter 2, SEA, I extend the work beyond mountain themes and orient the project towards the sea. This section focuses on three small islands currently suffering degradation to their marine life: the Icelandic island of Grímsay, the Hebridean Isle of Tiree, and Korpo Island in south-west Finland. In response to Shepherd's empathic interest in birds, the work explores art as grief and mourning, in context of mass deaths of fulmar (*Fulmaris glacialis*) chicks on Grímsay Island (Freud, 1919; Bois, 1990; Albrecht, 2005; van Dooren and Rose, 2017; Cunsolo and Ellis, 2018).

The chapter continues with a section entitled *Nature Morte* ('Dead Nature') a term conventionally applied to seventeenth century still-life painting. This section documents marine litter on one beach in Tiree, and the artwork takes the form of seabird-like assemblages and paintings influenced by found objects. I draw on theories of: glocalism (Heise, 2008; Walton, 2020); marine litter (Susik, 2020; Hochstrasser, 2015; Ritchie, 2024); the 'hyperobject' (Morton, 2013) and the 'hyperabject' (Franzen and Bjering, 2020).

[4] In defining 'fey' this study uses the fifth of five definitions in the OED: that is, 'possessing or displaying magical, fairylike, or unearthly qualities, and is also used ironically, in the sense of 'affected, whimsy' (OED, 2024). This is the meaning I remember from my childhood: the other four definitions focus on a state of closeness to death, which I have not heard in common usage.

Chapter 3, FOREST, explores walks in Scotland and Finland in context of restricted walking during the Covid-19 pandemic (2020-2022) and media images of refugees after Russia's invasion of Ukraine in 2022. This work draws parallels with the felling of ancient Scottish pine forests (Shepherd, 2014, p. 54). From a phenomenological, elemental perspective I test out Shepherd's idea that re-orienting the body in space can 'change the value of what I look upon' (2014, pp. 100-101; and investigate her fascination with the changing properties of water (2014, pp. 22-28) with reference to Bachelard (2006) and Irigaray and Marder (2016).

Next, the work explores how even depleted or damaged forest ecosystems provide habitats that support life (Wohlleben, 2016; Tsing, 2017; Rawlence, 2022; Gooley, 2023). 'Nature cures' of ice-swimming and forest bathing (Walton 2021; Jones, 2021) are tested with reference to Shepherd's descriptions of the living world's restorative powers: northerly light and scent pouring like liquid (2014, p. 18) in timely reminder to cherish the living world even if, as Anna Tsing (2015) puts it, life exists amid capitalist ruins.

0.3 Rationale for the Project

The research was first prompted by my personal history of walking in my home town of Paisley in the 1970s: for a young woman to wander alone was considered rather unusual in the culture I grew up in. I continued to walk, as a student, artist, teacher, wife, mother, carer; yet felt under-represented in a largely-masculinist orthodoxy of walking art that tended to privilege narratives of intellectual or physical prowess, or transcendence from everyday life. I admired the work of Richard Long and Hamish Fulton, but their innovatory models tended to hinge around the experience of the lone white man transcendent in nature.[5] *The Living Mountain* resonated more with my own experiences and motives for walking, leading to my aim to explore the text further in art practice.

In *Wanderers: a History of Women Walking*, Kerri Andrews examines how female walkers have gone largely undocumented in an overwhelmingly male canon of walking (Andrews, 2020, p. 35). Recent studies addressing the topic have revealed a hidden history of women walking for reasons of creative practice (Solnit, 2014; Elkin, 2017; Andrews, 2020; Abbs, 2021).[6] Walking is coming to be seen as an act more relational than solitary, concerned with what performance researchers Dee Heddon and Misha Myers call: 'the social relations and interactions activated by the very process of walking' (2019, p. 642) while also reaching out to encompass collaboration, community, minorities and divergent ways of walking. Networks such as the Walking

[5] Long and Fulton propose experience itself as art - an extension of ideas contained in John Dewey's (1934) *Art as Experience*. For Dewey, experience and perception are embedded within the artwork, while Long's and Fulton's walks are presented as artworks in and of themselves.
Examples of Long's work are available at: https://www.tate.org.uk/art/artists/richard-long-cbe-1525 (Accessed 29 December 2024).
Examples of Fulton's work are available at: https://www.tate.org.uk/art/artists/hamish-fulton-1133 (Accessed 29 December 2024).

[6] The predominantly-male canon of artistic, scholarly or avant-garde walking includes: Immanuel Kant, Friedrich Nietzsche, John James Audubon, William Wordsworth, Jean Jacques Rousseau, Henry David Thoreau, André Breton, Guy Debord, Jack Kerouac, Richard Long, Hamish Fulton, Robert Macfarlane. One study of creative walking, *A Philosophy of Walking* (2014) by Frédéric Gros, makes no mention of any female philosopher or walker.

Artists Network offer a platform on which all and any artistic walking practices can be shared and discussed.[7]

There is acknowledgement too that diverse creative practices of walking extend beyond the male/female binary. As Samantha Walton points out, inclusion or exclusion from foot-exploration of one's physical world cuts across all genders and abilities, race, class, sexual orientation and politics (2021, pp. 111-114). The writer-walker Tim Jeffreys puts the issue succinctly in his introduction to *Documents of Contemporary Art: Walking*; he writes:

> Ablism says: you cannot walk. Racism says: you cannot walk here. Patriarchy says: you must not walk like that. Capitalism says: no walking unless it generates profits for us.
>
> (Jeffreys, 2024, p. 10)

Walking then is not neutral but rather, contingent on who is walking, why and where. Furthermore, walking is gaining academic recognition as a method of knowledge-production and meaning-making; for instance, Heddon has called walking: 'a research methodology on the move' (2016) and: 'a mobile method of applied critical practice' (2023). Heddon and Myers founded *The Walking Library for Women Walking* (2019), an ongoing project in which women carry books about walking, while walking. In immersing the activity of walking in female theoretical contexts, the authors enframe walking as feminist pedagogy in the form of critical, self-reflective practices that open up new ways to 'explore, feel, attend, make, enact, connect, contest and demand' (Heddon and Myers, 2014).

Heddon's theories are influenced by Timothy Ingold's work on knowledge acquisition gained by walking, from perspectives of anthropology and phenomenology. Phenomenology, which this study understands as: 'the analysis of the structure of

[7] Walking Artists Network. Available at: https://www.walkingartistsnetwork.org/ (Accessed 29 December 2024)

conscious subjective experience' (OED 2024) enters and influences both theory and practice throughout, and is discussed more fully in Section 1:3. In his 2015 study *The Life of Lines,* Ingold writes:

> For the walker, movement is not ancillary to knowing – not merely a means of getting from point to point in order to collect the raw data of sensation for subsequent modelling in the mind. Rather, moving *is* knowing. *The walker knows as he goes along.*
>
> (Ingold, 2015, p. 47, original emphasis)

Walking as knowing is recognised by Shepherd too: her body thinks best when the mind stops and is 'not bedevilled with thought' (2014, p. 93). Her implicit challenge to René Descarte's 1641 concept of the mind/body divide (Descartes, 2017, pp. 83-85) anticipates phenomenological theory, particularly that of her contemporary Maurice Merleau-Ponty (1908-1961).

One question arising from this project's design is, why not undertake the walking research in the Cairngorms, particularly as these mountains have attracted a great deal of attention since Robert Macfarlane first championed *The Living Mountain* in 2011? I did have pre-existing connections with the Cairngorms from ski and hiking trips, and went there for a winter mountaineering course in preparation for the Icelandic residency of 2015 (figure 2). However, after consideration I decided to de-couple the project from the Cairngorms, partly because the first Icelandic residency was already planned, and partly because regular visits to the Cairngorms were difficult to organise around work and family.

Artistically speaking, working in places other than the Cairngorms opened up the research to less place-bound interpretations, and differentiated my work from other

artistic work about *The Living Mountain*.[8] In freeing the work from one specific location, Shepherd's ideas could be tested and examined wherever and whenever I happened to be walking.

In varying walking location I could avoid idealising the local, something Shepherd has a tendency to do, for example, in her descriptions of 'forceful and gnarled personalities, bred of the bone of the mountain' (2014, p. 85). To contemporary readers, Heideggerian concepts such as *Wohnen* ('dwelling') and *Dasein* ('being-in-the-world') (Heidegger, 2013, pp. 80-81) may be discerned in Shepherd's ideations, although her localism is more likely rooted in a devotion to rural life and language than in Heidegger's unpalatable politics (Morton, 2010; Clark, 2013). But even if understandable in context of Shepherd's era, the notion that only born-and-bred locals can form close relationships with the land seems exclusionary to those without a settled lineage, including myself.

Another key rationale of the research is an aim to bring Shepherd's insights to bear on discourses of the Anthropocene.[9] When Shepherd was writing in the 1940s, the Anthropocene had not yet impacted on public consciousness, yet *The Living Mountain* forewarns of significant ecological change. As far back as 1934, Shepherd notes the disappearance of what she calls 'eternal snow', the snow which remains year-round in the recesses of the mountain. She also mourns the felling of the ancient Rothiemurchus forest during the two world wars (2014, pp. 79-81) and later, in 1977, comments on tourism's negative impacts on the mountain: she writes: 'Bulldozers birse their way into the hill', and '... the very heather tatty from the scrape of boots

[8] For example, Robert Macfarlane's (2014) TV documentary *The Living Mountain: a Cairngorms Journey* re-traces Nan Shepherd's footsteps in the Cairngorms. Simone Kenyon's (2017-19) collaborative dance performance *Into the Mountain* and Elise Wortley's (2019) *Women with Altitude* project are also located in the Cairngorms. Kenyon's project is available at: https://www.ssw.org.uk/project/into-the-mountain-2018-19/ (Accessed 28 December 2024) and Whortley's project is available at: https://www.womanwithaltitude.com/ (Accessed 28 December 2024)

[9] This study uses 'Anthropocene' (Crutzen and Stoermer, 2000) to refer to the present era of human-made, irreversible change to the earth's life-systems, while also acknowledging the validity of other terminology such as 'Chthulucene' (Haraway, 2016), 'Capitalocene' (Moore, 2019), 'Eurocene' (Grove 2019) and 'Humilocene' (Abram, 2020).

(too many boots, too much commotion ...)' (2014, p. xxxv). In drawing attention to these early warning-signs of anthropogenic effects, *The Living Mountain* speaks to contemporary readers about what is lost and what is still to lose.

From a present-day perspective *The Living Mountain* can be viewed as an early example of ecological thinking. The term 'ecological thinking' is used here with reference to texts by the eco-philosopher Timothy Morton, whose *Ecology without Nature: Rethinking Environmental Aesthetics* (2007) deconstructs works of nature-writing to demonstrate how the concept 'nature' has been othered and aestheticised; an enduring consequence of Romanticism. For Morton, 'nature' does not refer to material reality or truth (2007, p. 19) but rather, signifies an obsolete world-view rooted in the binary opposition of nature versus civilisation (2007, p. 1).

Morton sets out a paradox in which commonly-held concepts of nature and environment actually alienate us from the living world. We understand environment as 'That Thing Over there' and 'something that surrounds us' while, at the same time, waste, rubbish, unsightliness and other undesirable consequences of the ecological crisis are excluded from the category of nature (2007, p.1).

Morton decries nature-writing, which he describes as: '[...] another way of saying artless art' (2007, p. 71), calling it ecomimesis, a form of purposeless description that, he writes: 'denotes a sense of a circumambient, or surrounding, world' (2007, p. 33). *Ecology without Nature's* arguments are supported by close readings of nature texts, in which a deconstructive approach reveals and challenges underlying assumptions about humanity's relationship with the living world. *Kissing the Cold Goodbye* takes the view that *The Living Mountain* goes beyond mimetic description, but Morton's theories have otherwise influenced this study and prompted me to avoid the terms 'nature' and 'environment' wherever possible.

Morton describes the ecological thought as: '... strangely or frighteningly easy - to join the dots and see that everything is interconnected' (2010, p.1) and: '... not simply a matter of *what* you're thinking about. It's also a matter of *how* you think' (2010, p.4). He contends that the ecological thought finds its most effective expression in art,

literature, music and philosophy and aligns ecological thought with the creative thought of artists: lateral, tangential, concerned with experience and emotions (2010, p. 4). In a later essay *All Art is Ecological* Morton argues that *all* art reveals explicit or implicit ecological thinking; he writes:

> [A]ll art is ecological, just as all art talks in various ways about race, class and gender, even when it's not doing so explicitly.
>
> (Morton, 2018, p. 18) [10]

In an exchange of emails between Morton and the musician Björk, a dream is recalled about emotions towards the living world; Morton writes:

> Earth needs this tenderness... I think there is some kind of fusion between tenderness and sadness, joy, yearning, longing, horror (tricky one), laughter, melancholy and weirdness.
>
> (Morton, in Björk, 2015, p. 8)

A focus on art's ability to reach into feeling, perception and emotion might support ecology's traditional role, according to Morton, in furnishing us with facts and statistics; this idea reveals an affinity with Shepherd's thinking about the Cairngorms when she observes:

> [The mountains'] physiognomy is in the geography books - so many square miles of area, so many lochs, so many summits of over 4000 feet - but this is a pallid simulacrum of their reality, which, like every reality that matters ultimately to human beings, is a reality of the mind.

[10] Morton's ecological thought draws on Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel's seminal work *Phenomenology of Spirit* (1807) which hypothesises a theory of mind based on 'pure consciousness' or *Geist* (German for 'mind' or 'spirit'). The creative mind according to Hegel is poised between 'restless movement to and fro' and 'motionless unity which is certain of its truth' (Hegel, 2018, p. 140), a concept that Morton calls Hegel's 'dialectic of the beautiful soul' and which he believes intrinsic to both art and the ecological thought (Morton, 2010, p. 117).

(Shepherd, 2014, p. 1)[11]

In respect of painting as ecological thinking, I perceived a gap in the field of ecologically-minded art whereby painting does not seem to hold a strong presence in ecological discourses - with notable exceptions, such as the work of Marie Thibeault or Janet Culbertson.[12] Perhaps the gap relates to a popular assumption that painting in response to the land is analogous to landscape painting, which tends to be associated with scenery and romantic painting. We may encounter a pervading, problematic narrative sometimes referred to as the 'window-on-the-world' view of painting; that is, a way of looking at and enframing the land as a static picture. Ingold writes:

> We treat the landscape as a view, and imagine that we see the world in pictures, optically projected into our minds as upon the white walls of the interior room. In this picture-landscape there is no weather: the wind does not blow, nor does rain ever fall. Clouds are forever arrested in their growth.
>
> (Ingold, 2015, p. 41)

In her seminal text of environmental art, *To life! Eco art in pursuit of a sustainable planet* (2012) the artist and critic Linda Weintraub claims that painting lacks a capacity to explore ecological concerns; she writes that:

---

[11] The theory that ultimate reality resides in mind-impressions rather than matter may implicitly reference David Hume's far-reaching empirical work *A Treatise of Human Nature* (1739-40) in which Hume writes:

> 'Tis evident, that all the sciences have a relation, greater or less, to human nature; and that however wide any of them may seem to run from it, they still return back by one passage or another (Hume, 1985, p. 42).

I have found no direct reference to Nan Shepherd having studied Hume, but his influence would have been widespread in early twentieth-century Scotland, and evidenced in the thinking of the Scottish Literary Renaissance to which Shepherd belonged. David Hume (1711-1776) was part of the eighteenth-century Scottish Enlightenment; a central tenet of his *Treatise* is that all knowledge, and hence meaning, emerge from sensory experience.

[12] Marie Thibeault: examples of work are available at: https://www.mariethibeault.com/press (Accessed 29 December 2024).
Janet Culbertson (1932-2023): examples of work are available at: https://www.janetculbertson.com/ (Accessed 29 December 2024).

> ... [P]ainted representations disregard the components of ecosystems that enable them to function: drainage patterns, ranges, biotic regions. They also ignore the interactions occurring within and among rivers, shorelines, mountain ranges and meadows.
>
> (Weintraub, 2012, p. 16)

Weintraub's statement could be attributed to effectiveness of other artistic methods such as photography, performance or installation in conveying powerful ecological messages. Or, perhaps there is a desire to sidestep western painting's canonical history of methods and discourses. One recent view of painting lending weight to Weintraub's argument is the artist Eduardo Kac's claim that painting is 'unidirectional': that is, a finished painting is fixed; it resists flow and evinces an immutable record of thinking, whose only potential for change lies in the interpretations of viewers and critics. In this age of interactivity, Kac continues, a painting may affect a viewer, but normally a viewer cannot affect a painting back (Kac, in Weintraub, 2012, p. 224).

Kac's argument does not distinguish between what John Dewey has called two energetic senses of the word 'painting': the work of art itself and the experience of making art; Dewey writes:

> [T]here is a difference between the art product (statue, painting or whatever) and the *work* of art. The first is physical and potential; the latter is active and experienced.
>
> (Dewey, 2005, p. 168)

A painting normally refers to an ongoing or finished object that enters the world as art: an artistic, cultural artefact aimed at communication with viewers. Then, as was noted in my introduction, there is the act of paint-*ing* (part of a present continuous verb form, or verbal noun, a gerund) that describes a continuity of process within the activity: the experience of making. For Dewey, the act of painting comprises an organisation of energies both in the making and in the viewer's perception; both are

imbued with an energetic temporal quality that extends into past and future (2005, pp. 181-185). It would seem that Weintraub and Kac do not account for time, space, energy and questions embedded within painting processes.

A significant artist whose work runs counter to Weintraub and Kac's rather proscriptive positions is On Kawara (1934-2014). In contrast to Weintraub's claim about painting's inability to represent underlying systems, it can be argued that Kawara's paintings tap into multiple unspoken feelings and ideas in which the work is suspended, matrix-like. In her essay 'On the Unsayable', Linda Boldt writes: '[Kawara] uses words in his painting to confront the negativity of what is left unsaid' (2016, p. 14) and indeed, the Guggenheim's 2015 retrospective of Kawara's work was entitled 'On Kawara - Silence'.

Kawara's diaristic approach included a rigorous lifelong commitment to painting: an aspect that differentiated him from his contemporaries in 1960s and '70s conceptual art (Kee, 2015; Weiss, 2015).[13] His painting *Code* (1965) depicts map co-ordinates *Lat. 31°25'N, Long. 8°41'E* meticulously painted as white letters and symbols onto a dark monochrome canvas.[14] Artwork about geography normally attributes significance to place, but Kawara's co-ordinates refer to an apparently random, unexplained location in the Algerian Sahara. Authorial control is relinquished to viewers' transitory, personal - or simply puzzled - responses to this fact.[15]

Between 1965 and 2014 Kawara made almost three thousand *Date* paintings, each of which depicts the calendar date when the painting was made, in the language of the

[13] Aside from painting, much of Kawara's conceptual work involved everyday means of communication: grids, lists, maps, telegrams, postcards. He often presented work as documentary collections in the form of books, folders, boxes or displays, his methodical and painstaking processes taking artistic self-documentation to new levels.

[14] *Code* is also known as *Lat. 31°25'N, Long. 8°41'E* and is available to view online at: https://vanabbemuseum.nl/en/collection/lat-31deg25n-long-8deg41e (Accessed 29 December 2024).

[15] Kawara's painting process is documented in a series of photographs by Henning Weidemann (1991). Weidemann was instructed to show the artist's work table with canvasses, materials and implements, laid out as if for a ceremony or ritual while Kawara himself was always out of the photos (Chiong, 1999). Available at: https://doi.org/10.2307/779080

country Kawara was in at the time.[16] Every painting is stored in a box lined with cuttings from local newspapers from the painting's date; the articles often report acts of cruelty and violence, in keeping with Kawara's preoccupation with death and disaster following the bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki when he was a child in Japan (Kee, 2015; Boldt, 2016).

Kawara's work speaks to viewers in oblique ways, refusing polemic or fixity of meaning, yet his life story and a deep well of unspoken feeling underlie the outwardly-emotionless artworks (Boldt, 2016). In contrast to Weintraub's argument about painting's inability to represent underlying systems, Kawara leads the viewer's imagination into to a multitude of possible meanings, a method that resurfaces in my use of the structural grid in paintings discussed in Chapters 1 and 2; in the film *Bringing the War Home* (2022) and the series of drawings *The Cutting* (figures 85-87), discussed in Chapter 3.[17]

In addressing ways of thinking in painting, *Kissing the Cold Goodbye* endeavours to show that painting contemplates connections with time and place that exceed representational landscape painting. Gaps appear between canons, methods and contexts, which, I suggest, offer up new territory for painting to explore. Weintraub's assertion dismisses painting's potential to articulate time and space in nonverbal, nonlinear ways, and to embed emotion/affect in hearts and minds. In testing and challenging Weintraub's claim, this project embraces painting as a form of ecological thinking.

The work in this study refuses categories of abstract or figurative: the aim rather is a multi-sense approach learned through the process of painting. Initial field-work is gradually distilled into paintings; information becomes invisible or emphasised along

[16] An introduction to Kawara's *Date* paintings is available to view at: Guggenheim (2015) *On Kawara: Date Paintings.* You-Tube. Available at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wXjiWD7j0fM Accessed 29 December 2024.

[17] Patti Lean (2022) *Bringing the War Home:* Winter Forest, War in Ukraine. Available at: https://vimeo.com/690533348 (Accessed 29 December 2024).

the way, and focus turns to the capacity of painting's languages to convey an implicit feeling or message rather than adopt a particular style.[18]

[18] In this I'm influenced by my fine art education at University of Cumbria, in which there was a no-house-style approach. Students were encouraged to work freely across styles and disciplines while also gaining understanding of context and history.

0.4 Methodology

In selecting a methodological approach for this study, several perspectives were considered, with focus on how methodology and artwork would connect together, and what mechanisms there would be for discussing and evaluating the work. First I established the project as autoethnographic; that is, taking a first-person perspective concerned with 'ethno' (culture) and 'graphy' (writing) hence 'self writing about culture' (Ellis, Adams and Bochner; 2011), then looked at methodologies as follows.

I considered narrative enquiry, a method that analyses how texts are structured (Braun and Clarke, 2013, pp. 197-198) with the aim of examining how *The Living Mountain's* formal structure and multiple perspectives might be articulated in my artwork. Narrative enquiry forms an important part of feminist research practices (Denzin and Lincoln, 2017; Hesse-Biber and Leavy, 2007; Butler, 1990). Related to that, Ursula Le Guin's (1989) *Carrier Bag Theory of Fiction* offered a model of female writing in which cultural material is gathered in a symbolic container for subsequent creative re-assembly: a useful approach to multi-perspectivity.

Next I considered multiple methods; that is, methodological assemblage rather than a single discrete methodology (St. Pierre, 2014). One multiple-methods paper, 'Black Gold: trustworthiness in artistic research' by Amanda Ravetz and Helena Gregory (2018) proposes an artistic iteration of the scientific gold standard of trustworthiness in research. Ravetz and Gregory place value on methods such as thinking-through-making, interpreting, abstract thought, disparate connections, deconstructions, juxtapositions and leaps of faith. Drawing from Haraway (2016) artistic research is metaphorised as a process of composting or 'black gold': a compound from which artistic 'nourishment' emerges out of decay, digestion and decomposition. *Black Gold's* compost metaphor corresponds well with projects that lie outwith conventionally-accepted research parameters or cross-fertilise with other disciplines.

Finally I opted for an approach set out in Hannula, Suaranta and Vadén (2014) *Artistic Research Methodology: Narrative, Power and the* Public, a methodology specifically

designed for artists and makers. In a previous paper one of the authors, Mika Hannula defines an artistic research project as:

> ... [A]n artist articulating something through works, and through reflectively writing his/her interpretation of the given research theme within and through his/her practice.
>
> (Hannula, 2009)[19]

On that basis the authors develop a full methodology with emphasis on socially- and ecologically-engaged praxis, in which key ideas are 'democracy of experience' and 'methodological abundance': all perspectives from all disciplines carry validity (Hannula, Suaranta and Vadén, 2014, p. 4). This approach resonates with the multi-perspectivity of *The Living Mountain* and echoes Shepherd's stated aim to 'know ... with the knowledge that is a process of living' (Shepherd, 2014, p. 1).

A key concept of *Artistic Research Methodology* is 'inside-in' research practice, described as: ‘practising the practice that the research is about’, ‘ a way of doing’ and ‘a way of thinking about that doing’ (2014, p. 23). A feedback loop of reciprocity is proposed (diagram 1) that 'contributes to wider development and dissemination of artistic narratives' and helps build bodies of knowledge of benefit to artistic and other communities (2014, p. 167).

The authors privilege context; that is, knowing where one's art sits in relation to the artistic and cultural canon. This applies to personal history too: the authors insist that: ‘Research is propelled by knowing your own history and being curious about and interested in it’ (2014, p. 11), a statement that appears positively to encourage the

[19] Hannula differentiates his definition from other models of artistic research which, he suggests, are those conventionally accepted by US and UK universities, and which tend to posit an artistic research project as either:
a) A piece of art history
b) A dissertation that is equal to an artwork, or
c) A dissertation that is an artwork
University of Cumbria's Fine Art PhD programme would appear more closely aligned to Hannula's model.

autoethnographic methods I am using.

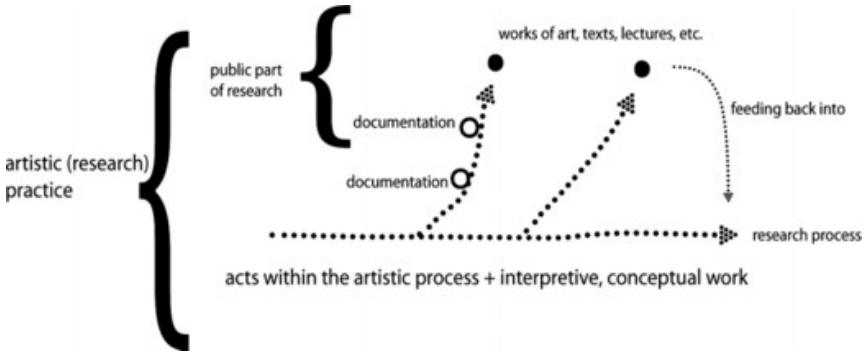

Diagram 1 . Model of 'inside-in' artistic research. Source: Hannula, Suaranta and Vadén (2014).

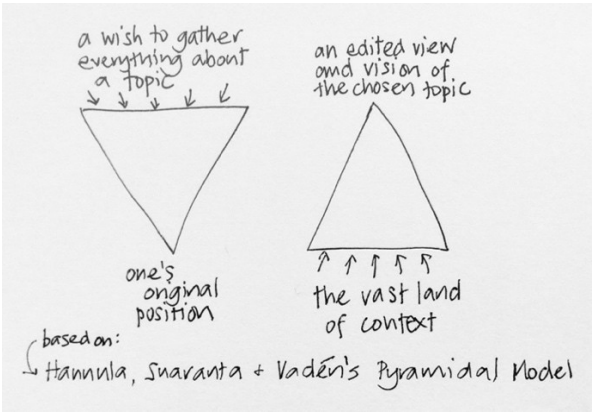

Diagram 2. Diagrammatic representation based on Hannula, Suaranta and Vadén's (2014) pyramidal model.

Artistic Research Methodology discourages researchers from attempting to learn everything about a research topic; rather, the authors propose that the gathering should be done *in advance* of the research project, which is imagined as a pyramidal model: an upside-down versus 'normal' ground-based pyramid (diagram 2). The aim is

stated as: '[A]n edited view and vision of the chosen subject and the topic that is no longer even 90 degrees, or 45, not even 25, but 3-4 degrees' (2014, pp. 8-9).

Artistic Research Methodology is cautious about adapting methodologies from other disciplines or blindly following normalised criteria of other versions of academic research (2014, p. 11). The authors state that 'every research project needs its own methodological approach' (2014, p. xiii) and propose three guiding principles for the contemporary artist-researcher, as follows:

1. develop and perfect her own artistic skills, vision and conceptual thinking
2. contribute to the development of the research culture in academia by means of an argument in the form of a thesis
3. communicate with practicing (*sic*) artists and the larger public in audience education

(Hannula, Suaranta and Vadén, 2014, p. vii)

Artistic Research Methodology defines a 'practice' as something that embodies choices and long-term committed activity; questioning, doubting and interpreting as befits the project. The authors endorse self-reflexivity and open-endedness within the practice itself, and state that there is no need to work to fixed outcomes. Art practice-as-research is described as 'acts within the artistic process + interpretive, conceptual work' and demands an ability, or at least an aim, to move readily between intuition and cognition (2014, p. 18). In respect of this methodological framework there is no shortage of possible approaches to the research.

0.5 Envisioning the Research

Following Hannula, Suaranta and Vadén's thought-loop described in the previous section, I envisioned the shape of the research in terms of the web of a money-spider (from the family *Linyphiidae)* (figure 3). I often see these spiders when I am out walking, particularly on days of frost or heavy dew. The webs' intricate woven structure bears similarity to a cat's cradle, a string figure game I learned as a child. According to Donna Haraway, this game is played worldwide and represents one of humanity's most ancient ways of making and thinking as it links hand and brain together (Haraway, 2016, p. 13). Haraway uses the string figure model for her theory of entanglements, the ongoing interactions between species that make our worlds. A spider web as research model corresponded with notions of inter-species entanglement in *The Living Mountain* that I sought to embed into my research.

The 3-D looping construction of the web embodies a possibility to extend in all directions, and corresponds with the mesh described by Morton on p. 28 and also with Ingold's concept of knowledge as a mesh of lines, in which 'personal' knowledge operates 'in-between' shifting lines or 'articulations' of pre-existing knowledge (Ingold, 2015, pp. 148-149). In order to live, Ingold asserts, human and nonhuman beings must put out lines to one another through the atmosphere: lines may comprise knots, loops, arteries, streams, sounds or voices.

Echoing how the web loops and turns in on its structural support, the model (figure 4) incorporates willow twigs and thread or string of different thicknesses (because some research ideas carry more weight than others). There are conceptual similarities too with Deleuze and Guattari's rhizomatic schema of knowledge systems (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987, ch. 1) except here the rhizomatic structure is replaced by knots and loops. In theory at least, both rhizomatic and recursive structures are infinitely extendable. In envisioning *Kiss the Cold Goodbye* according to what Ingold calls the 'choreography of the loop' (2015, p. 19) the recursive model offers ways of thinking about my thinking.

0.6 Ecocriticism

Here I will explain how ecocriticism is understood in respect of this study. In his definitive essay 'Some Principles of Ecocriticism' (1996) William Howarth explains ecocriticism's etymology: from Greek, *oikos* (house)and *kritos* (judge). An ecocritic is literally a 'house-judge' (Howarth, in Glotfelty and Fromm, 1996, p. 69). If we take *oikos* to mean the living world, our wider home, then an ecocritic is someone who analyses the relationship between cultural artefacts and our shared home, the living world.

Since the 1990s ecocriticism has developed from the study of relationships between literature and the living world, into an interdisciplinary field that may incorporate art, science, politics, philosophy, economics, and other subject areas in which the living world is foremost, particularly in contexts of the global ecological crisis.

For an account of contemporary ecocriticism, this study refers to Cheryl Lousley's survey entry 'Ecocriticism' in the *Oxford Research Encyclopaedia: Literature* (2024) in which the critical field is examined from a wide range of perspectives. Lousley sets out aims for ecocriticism to understand and mitigate anthropogenic destruction of living bodies and worlds; she writes:

> As a political mode of literary and cultural analysis, ecocriticism aims to understand and intervene in the destruction and diminishment of living worlds.
>
> (Lousley, 2020)

Lousley's explicit statement of aims overlays an ethical, activist imperative onto earlier definitions of ecocriticism.

Peter Barry and William Welstead's (2017) anthology *Extending Ecocriticism: crisis, collaboration and challenges in the environmental humanities* brings ecocriticism and art together in interdisciplinary collaborations. In their introductory essay entitled 'Ecocriticism extends its Boundaries' the authors suggest that to approach an artwork

ecocritically is: 'to join together methods and insights to inform the next steps at ... a crucial global point' (Barry and Welstead, 2017, p. 8). In the face of considerable ecological challenges, *Extending Ecocriticism* proposes that an ever-widening set of creative practices allows for new insights to enter different domains.

In respect of this project's contribution to ecocriticism, *Kissing the Cold Goodbye* aims at a new view of *The Living Mountain* articulated in art practice, in which both this written text and the artwork described therein, can be regarded as ecocriticism. Consequently *Kissing the Cold Goodbye* explores both artwork-about-writing and writing-about-artwork, and makes a contribution to the emerging field of visual art as ecocriticism.

0.7 A Brief Background to Nan Shepherd and *The Living Mountain*

I like the unpath best.

(Shepherd, 2014, p. 51)

Almost all her life Shepherd lived at 503 North Deeside Road, in the Aberdeen suburb of Cults (figure 5).[20] The River Dee flows close to Shepherd's garden, connecting her home to the river's source in the Cairngorm plateau: the line of the river forms 'an integral affinity between the two, a recognizable and tangible kinship' (Andrews, 2020, p. 188). Shepherd attended Aberdeen High School for Girls, now Harlaw Academy (figure 6). [21] She graduated from Aberdeen University in 1915, and worked as a lecturer in English at Aberdeen Teacher Training Centre until retirement in 1956. During the 1930s she wrote three novels: *The Quarry Wood*, *The Weatherhouse* and *A Pass in the Grampians* and a volume of poetry, *In the Cairngorms*. The novels centre on women's lives in rural Aberdeenshire communities; they were well-received and hailed as part of the Scottish Literary Renaissance, but subsequently fell into obscurity until the present revival of interest in Shepherd's work. Compared to the novels, *The Living Mountain* is short at 30,000 words, and composed of a more distilled writing closer to Shepherd's poetry in style.

A glimpse into Shepherd's home library (figure 7) shared by her literary trustee features writings by Irving, Shipton, Shackleton and Lawrence (Clouston, 2018, Appendix 3): these narratives of male exploration must have fed Shepherd's adventurous nature, since female role-models were few. Shepherd enjoyed summiting in her youth (2014, p. 9) and her later rejection of the summit and other masculinist narratives of mountaineering appear implicit, and engendered by her relationship with the mountain rather than an explicitly feminist agenda.

[20] I am indebted to Margaret Hadley and David Atkinson for organising a trip to Shepherd's house in Cults in September 2023.

[21] Also in September 2023, I took part in a guided tour of Harlaw Academy, by kind invitation of Margaret Hadley, a former pupil of the school. Despite the austere architecture of the building, Shepherd's biographer describes her education there as of a high standard, with kind and learned teachers (Peacock, 2017, pp. 62-72).

Shepherd was reticent about her inner life and emotions. The Cairngorms were her 'secret place of ease' (Peacock, 2017, p.15) from daily life and intense, exhausting bursts of writing (Andrews, 2020, pp. 190-191). An ill-fated love affair with an unnamed person informed a collection of sonnets entitled 'Fourteen Years' in Shepherd's poetry volume, *In the Cairngorms*.[22] These raw, bitter verses offer a rare glimpse into Shepherd's inner life and hint at sorrows subsumed into the 'radiant materialism' of *The Living Mountain* (Macfarlane, in Shepherd, 2014, p. xv).

Alice Tarbuck, writing from a feminist perspective in her blog *Dangerous Women*, contends that Shepherd's independence signals 'dangerous' female power; she writes:

> To have intimate knowledge of the Cairngorms, an area traditionally claimed by men, and to be able to walk in them alone, without permission or company, is to proclaim your independence, your specialist knowledge, and your place in the world.
>
> (Tarbuck, 2017)

'Dangerous' might seem far-fetched, but Shepherd was certainly regarded as quietly unconventional: a ‘doer’ rather than a ‘sayer' according to Walton (2017, p. 23). One friend and neighbour considered Shepherd as 'way ahead of her time in many respects'. He states:

> Oh aye, she was a feminist. Not in a militant way. It was all to do with the worth of woman…She thought they were seriously undervalued…She did what she did, going on her own to the hills, for example, partly to prove this was what women could do.
>
> (Cameron Donaldson, in Peacock, 2017, p. 23)

[22] Evidence points to the Scottish philosopher John Macmurray (1891-1976) author of *Reason and Emotion* (1962) as the recipient of Shepherd's feelings (Peacock, 2017, pp. 177-8). Alternatively, Robert Macfarlane suggests that Shepherd's secret love may have been the poet Charles Murray (1864-1941) (Shepherd, 2018, p. XVI).

An anonymous view expressed in the Scottish Ski Club Journal (1907) expostulates:

> Man is alone, gloriously alone against the inanimate universe … He alone is Man, for whose enjoyment and use Nature exists.
>
> (Walton, 2021, p. 57)

Clearly this perspective indicates the extent to which *The Living Mountain* was radical in countering a prevailing culture of male-humanist superiority. We might then envision Shepherd as an ecofeminist, for her implicit challenge to what Val Plumwood has called the 'master model'; that is, the dominant half of a dualism that posits women/nature in binary opposition to man/culture (Plumwood, 1997, ch.1; Garrard, 2023, pp. 25-26). Shepherd's liking for the unpath reads as a declaration of defiance against embedded notions of female passivity.

Shepherd is adept in rational thinking, an attribute conventionally ascribed to men (Plumwood, 1997, p. 24). She draws back from flights of imagination: after a dreamy 'uncoupling' of the mind in which she is 'sunk deep', she adds the qualifier: 'I do not ascribe sentience to the mountain' (2014, p. 91). She values strength of mind over flightiness, and declares:

> ... [N]ot getting lost is a matter of the mind - of keeping one's head, of having map and compass to hand and knowing how to use them, of staying steady, even when one of the party panics and wants to go in the wrong direction.
>
> (Shepherd, 2014, p. 44)

And yet, by contrast to her no-nonsense approach to climbing, Shepherd's joyous, sensual responses to the mountain might lead us to envision her as ecosexual,

although the concept of ecosexuality is a far cry from 1940s Aberdeenshire.[23] Yet, orgasmic overtones expressed in *The Living Mountain* would surely have raised eyebrows had the book been published in 1945; Shepherd writes:

> The whole skin has this delightful sensitivity, it feels the sun, it feels the wind running inside one's garment, it feels water closing on it as one slips under - the catch in the breath, like a wave held back, the glow that releases one's entire cosmos, running to the ends of the body as the spent wave runs out upon the sand.
>
> (Shepherd, 2014, p. 104)

While Shepherd's above-quoted experiences reveal both sensual and intellectual ownership of her relationship with the mountain, her passion towards the physical world may signal a longing for intimacy denied by historical events (Abbs, 2021, pp. 136-141). She was one of millions of cruelly-named 'surplus' women after the losses of the First World War, possibly with little expectation of romantic love (Abbs, 2021, pp. 136-141).

After Shepherd's father died in 1925 she became sole provider for the household: writing was fitted in around teaching and caring for her bed-bound mother, and later for the family housekeeper Mary Lawson. These obligations must have afflicted the creative life of a woman described by one friend as having a mind, 'a little detached from the average Aberdonian's…you were just aware that she lived almost on another plane' (Peacock, 2018, p. 20). Shepherd was afflicted with self-doubt and writer's block, confiding in her friend the novelist Neil Gunn: 'One reaches these dumb places in life. I suppose there's nothing for it but to go on living' (Peacock, 2017, p. 181). One

[23] Ecosexuality is a form of sexual identity that treats the earth as a lover, rather than a mother: the acclaimed ecosexual artists Annie Sprinkle and Beth Stevens declare in their manifesto: (see over/...) The Earth is our lover. We are madly, passionately and fiercely in love... We collaborate with nature. We treat all sentient and non-sentient beings with kindness, respect and affection. (Sprinkle and Stevens, 2020) Available at: https://sprinklestephens.ucsc.edu/manifestos/ (Accessed 29 December 2024).

might imagine repercussions of time, place and history played no small part in *The Living Mountain*.

In 1945 Shepherd sent Gunn a manuscript of *The Living* Mountain; he felt the book 'might interest hill and country lovers', and suggested one publisher, Batsford, before adding patronisingly: 'Make your letter interesting, you water sprite!' (Peacock, 2017, p. 217). Batsford sent a polite refusal, and Shepherd consigned the manuscript to a drawer for the next thirty years. Although continuing to write stories and articles, she never produced another book.

In 1977, Shepherd arranged for a small print-run of *The Living Mountain* by Aberdeen University Press, at her own expense. In 1996 a second edition was included with the three novels in *The Grampian Quartet* anthology. *The Living Mountain* was republished in 2008, followed by an edition in 2011 with a foreword by Robert Macfarlane, which celebrated its brilliance. A review in *The Guardian* named it 'the finest book ever written on nature and landscape in Britain' (Perrin, 2007) while another reviewer, also in *The Guardian*, wrote that he was 'giddy with something halfway between delight and vertigo' (Lezard, 2011). It would seem that Shepherd's time had come.

In 2014 a new edition of *The Living Mountain* was published, with an afterword by Jeanette Winterson. Winterson has never visited the Cairngorms and roams the text from the comfort of her bed - indication that *The Living Mountain's* scope far exceeds its physical geography. Winterson is 'remapped' by the book; her 'internal geography' shifts with reading and she feels more 'settled in herself' (Shepherd, 2014, p.112). A hardcover version of *The Living Mountain* was published in 2019; all editions except the first are by Canongate Books.

0.8 Review of Texts Influential to my Thinking

This review highlights recent critiques relevant to *The Living Mountain* that have informed this study.[24]

Gillian Carter's (2001) essay ''Domestic Geography' and the Politics of Scottish Landscape in *The Living Mountain*' discusses concepts of home and dwelling from an anthropological perspective. *The Living Mountain* is posited as: 'the textual representation of an engagement with the natural world from the perspective of a native dweller'. Carter's essay offers a lens for considering notions of home, yet I question her identification of 'native dweller' as does Walton (2020), because Shepherd lived in a suburban setting, fifty miles from the Cairngorms, and her social and professional position falls into several categories outwith 'native dweller', suggesting a more nuanced identity than Carter's text implies.

Two further concepts in Carter's paper inform this study. First is walking as embodied map-making: the landscape is mapped by the feet, for subsequent 'shaping into narrative form' (Carter, 2001): this idea fed directly into my series entitled *Carbon Footprint Drawings*, discussed later in this section. Next, Carter notes the open-ended, expansive nature of *The Living Mountain* as 'vast and dense, with multiple meanings that move out in all directions at once ... beyond discursive boundaries and generic conventions' (Carter, 2001). This emboldened my decision in Chapters 2 and 3 to take a conceptual leap beyond literal interpretations of 'mountain' and orient the work in different directions beyond illustration or transcription of *The Living Mountain*.

Kate Rigby's (2004) essay 'Ecstatic Dwelling: Perspectives on Place in European Romanticism' resonates with Shepherd's notion of *feyness*, discussed in Chapter 1.

[24] This is not to decry other critical writing on Shepherd's work, which provides valuable perspectives on topics beyond the immediate scope of this study, including modernity, rural life and Shepherd's use of the Doric vernacular of north-east Scotland. I am particularly indebted to Roderick Watson's (1996) introduction to *The Grampian Quartet* and Graham Stephen's (2020) article 'The Path to Quarry Wood: Nan Shepherd's Short Fiction in Alma Mater', in *Studies in Scottish Literature*, vol. 46. Both authors follow Shepherd's development as a writer, and consequently lend insights into how *The Living Mountain's* language was distilled and clarified by Shepherd's practice of writing poetry.

Rigby links a sense of the ecstatic to the eco-philosopher Gernot Böhme's (1993) theory of *ekstasis*, defined as ''self-unfolding' in time and space' (Rigby, 2004): a concept I apply to Shepherd's 'joyous release of body that is engendered by climbing' (2014, p. 6).

A second essay by Rigby, 'Spirits that Matter: Pathways towards a Rematerialization of Religion and Spirituality' (2014) is concerned with vital forces within matter and how these impact human thought and behaviours. Rigby writes from a new materialist perspective, and although her essay does not specifically name *The Living Mountain*, it provides useful insights into Shepherd's intertwining of matter and spirit. With emphasis on 'connectivity, nonlinear causality, trans-corporeality, material agency and an ethics of more-than-human 'mattering'' (Rigby, 2014, p. 284) the essay enriched my relationship to Iceland's ever-shifting terrain.

In *Ecology and Modern Scottish Literature* (2008) Louisa Gairn draws attention to two aspects of *The Living Mountain* that materialise in *Kissing the Cold Goodbye*. First is a multi-perspectival approach: a combination of art, science and spirituality in both Shepherd's writing and her persona, described by Gairn as: 'a fundamental respect for the natural environment ... informed not only by Romanticism and Eastern mysticism, but by scientific enquiry itself' (2008, p. 124). Gairn's writing on multi-perspectivity enters *Kissing the Cold Goodbye* in experimental alternative perspectives, such as a refusal of single-point perspective in Chapters 1 and 2; peripheral-vision meditation in Chapter 3; and use of several narrative voices and languages in *Birth of Water*, Chapter 3. Secondly, Gairn positions Shepherd's work within a Scottish ruralist tradition of writers and poets whose work aims to 'irradiate the common' (Shepherd, 1931) rather than deal with grandiose or universalising subjects.[25] Gairn's suggestion of an integrated, embodied relationship with the living world informs the discussion of the sublime in Chapter 1.

[25] Scottish ruralist writers include Duncan Ban MacIntyre, Neil Gunn, Hugh MacDiarmid, Kenneth White and Kathleen Jamie. Gunn and MacDiarmid were important influences on Nan Shepherd. The only woman on this list, Jamie, is of the current generation; it would seem that Shepherd had few, if any, female role models for her writing.

In respect of representation of female walking, three texts influence this study: Rebecca Solnit's *Wanderlust: a History of Walking* (2014) a cultural history of walking in which Solnit relates that women were considered 'worse' walkers than men for a variety of reasons including female anatomy (p. 46), respectability (p. 255) and fear of violence (p. 261). Next, Deirdre Heddon and Misha Myers's (2019) essay 'The Walking Library for Women Walking' documents a canonical library in recognition of female walking as a field of research. Thirdly, in *Wanderers: a History of Women Walking*, Kerri Andrews (2020) examines walking from female perspectives including Shepherd, connecting their individual histories to her own experiences.

In his introduction to *The Living Mountain* Robert Macfarlane tells how the book changed his approach to mountains in several ways. First is Shepherd's refusal of the summit in stark contrast to the main canon of mountain literature, which as Macfarlane points out, is 'written by men and ... focussed on the summit ...' (Shepherd, 2014, p. xiv). Next, Macfarlane describes Shepherd's habit of studying the mountain close-up; consequently she transcends the *catascopos*, the all-seeing eye that surveys the world from an elevated position; rather, the world presents itself as 'endlessly relational' (2014, pp. xv-xix). Third is Shepherd's sensual, embodied approach, evidenced by 'belief in bodily thinking' (2014, p. xixx) and an individual phenomenology of lived experience that anticipates Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology (2014, p. xxxi).

Another work by Macfarlane, *Mountains of the Mind* (2023) offers a cultural history of mountaineering written, Macfarlane admits, from perspectives of well-off, able-bodied white men. Macfarlane offers insight into narratives of conquest, hardship, fear, the exotic pull of mountains and their addictive, often fatal fascination. Macfarlane's literary style is notably elegant, an aspect critiqued by the poet Kathleen Jamie in her 2008 article entitled 'Lone Enraptured Male'; she writes:

> What's that coming over the hill? A white, middle-class Englishman!
> A Lone Enraptured Male! From Cambridge! Here to boldly go, 'discovering',

> then quelling our harsh and lovely and sometimes difficult land with his civilised lyrical words.
>
> (Jamie, 2008)

As Peter Reason points out in a 2015 article 'On Nature Writing', Jamie's comments highlight a polarised argument between those who regard nature writing as 'so tame' and overly concerned with human perspectives (Reason, 2015) and those who believe it a conduit for 'how cultural activity connects to political change' (Macfarlane, 2015).

Susan Ballard's 2017 essay 'New Ecological Sympathies: Contemporary Art and Species Extinction' enhances understanding of Shepherd's relationships with the nonhuman other. Sympathy, with its etymology of *sym* (with) and *pathos* (feeling), is defined as 'the state of being simultaneously affected with a feeling similar or corresponding to that of another' (Ballard, 2017). Ballard refers to writings by Bergson, Darwin, Ruskin and Butler to contextually analyse the notion of inter-species sympathies, a concept that accords with Shepherd's relationship with the mountain 'as a friend' (2014, p 15).

Alice Tarbuck's online blog 'Dangerous Women: Nan Shepherd' (2017) and her podcast 'Magic and Ecology Insurrection Interviews Podcast: Episode 7: Alice Tarbuck' (2021) analyse Shepherd's feminism and metaphysical leanings. Tarbuck, herself a witch, does not cast Shepherd as such, but believes her a 'dangerous woman' in respect of her unconventional, outsider position. Shepherd, with her Presbyterian background, is unimpressed by witchcraft, or as she calls it, *glamourie* (a Scots word for making charms, or bedazzling).

Tarbuck suggests that for a woman to understand the environment you walk in as a friend, is a radical position because it exemplifies female power and independence. In asserting that, 'We could all do well to learn from Shepherd's fierce joy in her surroundings, and her unconventional life' Tarbuck calls attention to women who challenge assumptions about gender and social expectation.

Samantha Walton's *The Living World*: *Nan Shepherd and Environmental Thought* (2020) is hailed on the cover synopsis as 'the first book to examine Shepherd's writing through an ecocritical lens'. Walton analyses *The Living Mountain* from several ecocritical viewpoints, including dwelling, geology, feminism, ecology, new materialism and selfhood. *The Living Mountain* is contextualised within historical developments such as Theosophy and the Scottish Literary Renaissance; however for reasons unknown, the Ecological Art section is abbreviated to one page.

In an online talk 'Nan Shepherd in Space: Writing the Earth and Cosmos in The Living Mountain', Walton (2021) challenges a description by Macfarlane of *The Living Mountain* as 'localist' and 'parochial' (2014, pp. viii, xiii). Walton applies the term 'glocalism' to *The Living Mountain*; glocalism is defined as: 'the extent to which what is called local is in large degree constructed on a trans-or super-local basis' (Heise, 2008, p. 51). Walton's links between global consumption, ecological degradation and artistic representation have influenced my arguments in Chapters 2 and 3.

A determining influence early in *Kissing the Cold Goodbye* was a 2015 Skype interview with Icelandic film director Benedikt Erlingsson (Excerpt, Appendix 4) about his 2013 film *Hross í Oss* (Of Horses and Men). The film examines Icelanders' long, intertwined relationship with the Icelandic horse, in which the breed has developed a smooth fast trot called a *tölt*, a gait particularly suited to Iceland's difficult terrain. Erlingsson envisages the horse/human relationship as one of mutual co-operation in a harsh climate; an interspecies bond in which Icelanders do not break their horses, but tame them. Erlingsson extends the breaking/taming metaphor to the whole of the living world; he states:

> [Y]ou could take this subject about taming and breaking into all our relationship to nature ... you lose the spirit or you get something against you. If you attempt...if nature is strong enough ...it will hit you back, or, you know, you break and you lose the spirit.
>
> (Erlingsson, 2015)

In relation to his next film *Kona fer í stríð* ('Woman at War'*)* (2018) Erlingsson's art is unequivocally driven by climate politics; he states:

> About the climate change ... of course this is the most important subject of all, and I think politics should not be about anything else, and about our reaction or preparation and our fight against climate change.
>
> (Erlingsson, 2015)

In depicting interdependency of species and determination to put his art in the service of climate politics, Erlingsson's work oriented my focus exclusively towards the climate crisis.

Erlingsson's perspectives on the *tölt* led me to explore mapping the land in *Four Carbon Footprints* (figure 8), monoprints made by walking on sheets of paper, with carbon paper attached to my boots. Later, the prints were projected, enlarged and re-drawn using carbon paper (figures 9 and 10), a slow process with results that resemble, but are not identical to, maps. One could imagine there are many types of human and nonhuman mapping with the feet no less valid than paper maps.

This review has focussed on texts that directly connect my practice and *The Living Mountain*. Other influential texts are interwoven into the following chapters, as are references to artworks that inform the research.

Chapter 1

MOUNTAIN

1:1 Introduction

This chapter explores work generated by two month-long artist's residencies in northern Iceland. The first, in August 2014, was at Listhús Artspace in the fishing harbour town of Ólafsfjörður in north-east Iceland (figure 11) and the second, in August 2015, was a self-directed residency in the Icelandic Westfjords. I sometimes travelled alone, and sometimes with artist colleagues Julie Livsey and Lesley Hicks. We each worked on our own projects, but collaborated in walks, conversations and mutual support in often harsh conditions. We travelled on foot, by bus, by ferry and by hitching lifts in remoter areas; we camped mostly in village sites, and occasionally wild camped, but this is generally discouraged due to its detrimental impact on the land. The work under discussion in this chapter relates to walks and climbs in the mountains around Ólafsfjörður; in the Snaefellsnes Peninsula, and the Westfjords.

1:2 The Mountain as a Friend: Painting as Coming to Know

Against a backdrop of mountaineering as conquest, one of the most radical aspects of *The Living Mountain* is the notion of coming to know the mountain as a friend; Shepherd writes:

> Yet often the mountain gives itself most completely when I have no destination, when I reach nowhere in particular, but have gone out merely to be with the mountain as one visits a friend with no intention but to be with him.
>
> (Shepherd, 2014, p. 15)

A state of amicable, interested friendship with a mountain has not been foremost in Romanticism's depictions of mountains. My own background in art history has offered tropes of sublime, fear-inducing mountains, exemplified in Caspar David Friedrich's *Wanderer above the Sea of Fog* (1817) a painting that depicts a lone male walker surveying a panorama of jagged peaks in luminous fog.[26] The painting's perspective lines converge on the figure: man is at the centre of his physical world. Another well-known painting is John Martin's *The Great Day of His Wrath* (*c.* 1850): a magnificent apocalypse in which Old Testament fury is embodied in nature; divine retribution is meted out, chiefly it would seem, to young, bare-breasted women. [27] However one interprets these paintings, friendliness does not come to mind.

Shepherd is ahead of her time in diverging from prevalent depictions of the sublime. Critiques of the sublime appeared only decades later in 1990s postmodern art: for instance, Mariele Neudecker's *Tank Works* (1997-2019) comprise miniature sculptural

[26] Caspar David Friedrich (1817) *Wanderer above the Sea of Fog.* Available at*:* https://www.hamburger-kunsthalle.de/en/nineteenth-century (Accessed 29 December 2024).

[27] John Martin (*c*. 1850) *The Great Day of His Wrath.* Available at https://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/martin-the-great-day-of-his-wrath-n05613 (Accessed 29 December 2024)

representations of mountains, forests and seas made of resin and salt, inside glass tanks.[28] Neudecker's work subscribes to a view expressed by Simon Morley in his 2010 essay *The Contemporary Sublime*, that contemporary artists tend to 'shy away' from describing their work in terms of the sublime and in general are 'wary of attributing to their practices lofty or grandiose intentions' (Morley, 2010, p. 19).

I found it difficult *not* to think of Ólafsfjörður as sublime, due to the massive mountains towering over the fjords. Much of the higher land was striated with year-round snow (figure 12) and I noticed how many locals wore traditional Icelandic-pattern sweaters, embodying the land by keeping warm in soft miniature versions of the rather forbidding mountains. Perhaps a wish to reduce the vast terrain to something I could conceptualise prompted my first drawings in Ólafsfjörður: tiny watercolour studies of mountains and sea-cliffs, including *Ólafsfjörður Sketchbook Studies #1 and #2* (figures 13 and 14) and *Four postcard studies: Hólar - Sauðárkrókur* (figure 15). I made these paintings in damp dreich weather; drizzle fell on my sketchbooks and mixed with the paint: just like home in Scotland. But the terrain differed from home: steeper angles, more diagonals, different relationships of bulk and mass, greener grass, more lucidity, much indigo, much black. In making the miniature paintings I began to know the place in its differences and similarities to what was already known; a befriending.

The philosopher Alphonso Lingis suggests that we each carry embodied within us, as an undercurrent to the physical world, a personal 'vital space' and 'individual geography' which we recognise when we go to new places (Lingis, 1998, p.165). Perhaps, as someone accustomed to rainy mountains, I already carried within me an atavistic familiarity with this place. But there was another form of embodiment at play: rigid with cold I had hardly moved a muscle while painting. To be hunched up and unmoving, I realised, is also a form of embodiment that affects the work. One could imagine this is why the sketches enframe a static field of vision; the painted image ends where my vision ends; mountain tops are chopped off like badly cropped

[28] Mariela Neudecker (1997-2009) *Tank Works.* Available at: http://www.marieleneudecker.co.uk/ tank-works .html (Accessed 29 December 2024).

photos. Painting outdoors in wind and rain produces in the work something of what Shepherd calls 'island weather' (2014, p. 2). When a person is close to a mountain and 'subject to its weathers', she writes, 'something of its own nature will permeate theirs' (2014, p. 89). The damp salt climate pervaded both me and the paintings.

On one walk, about a mile out of Ólafsfjörður, a bizarre example occurred of what Haraway (2016) names a 'contact zone' between species. I came across several mountain huts with open, wire-mesh sides. They contained thick slabs of meat which turned out to be from the Greenland shark (*Somniosus microcephalus*): air-drying is part of the process of making *hákerl* (fermented shark) an Icelandic delicacy with an overwhelming whiff of ammonia. While I was painting *in situ* (figure 16) arctic light on the shark's flayed skin rendered it, in Shepherd's words, 'luminous without being fierce' (2014, p. 2). I felt both repelled and fascinated, similar to looking at artistic interpretations of the nonhuman carcass, such as Rembrandt's (1655) *Slaughtered Ox* or Chaim Soutine's (1926) *Carcass of Beef*.[29] I thought too of Damien Hirst's tiger sharks in formaldhyde, and of eating or being eaten by the nonhuman other.[30] But Greenland sharks not known to eat humans: they are slow-moving scavengers which can live up to 300 years (Nielson *et al.,* 2016). To paint these bright curtains of centuries-old meat was to contemplate a once-living creature of the deep fjords displaced halfway up a mountain, a metaphor for other human and nonhuman entanglements and displacements.

[29] Examples of the carcass in painting include: Rembrandt (1655) *Slaughtered Ox*
Available at: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Rembrandt,_bue_squartato,_1655,_01.JPG (Accessed 29 December 2024).
Chaim Soutine (1926) *Carcass of Beef*
Available at: https://collections.artsmia.org/art/1325/carcass-of-beef-chaim-soutine (Accessed 29 December 2024).

[30] Hirst's first shark installation is *The Physical Impossibility of Death in the Mind of Someone Living* (1991). Image and essay by Luke White are available at: https://www.tate.org.uk/art/research-publications/the-sublime/luke-white-damien-hirsts-shark-nature-capitalism-and-the-sublime-r1136828 (Accessed 29 December 2024).

1:3 Drawing in the Field and Phenomenology

> Drawing is drawing out; it is extraction of what the subject matter has to say.
>
> (John Dewey, 2005, p. 96)

Environmental artist Kate Foster calls her practice of working outdoors in all weathers 'drawing in the field'.[31] She does so, she writes:

> ... to distinguish it from scientific field drawing. I like the dynamic of it. You are present in a situation, eyes moving between page and 'field', concentrating, and quietly documenting. It's not about an estrangement, it's about becoming aware of the entwined ways you are present in that place with non-humans also, and wondering at its specificity.
>
> (Foster, 2011)

Foster's concept of 'drawing in the field' is distinct from scientific fieldwork because it demands and aims at different expertise. The purpose is not to advance science or prove a hypothesis, but to make visible a specific feel and flavour of how place, human and nonhuman intertwine in dynamic relationship; as Macfarlane puts it: '… the world itself is … not the unchanging object presented by the natural sciences, but instead endlessly relational' (Shepherd, 2014, p. xxviii).

To walk, sit and pay the concentrated attention that drawing or painting in the field requires, involves engagement of mind and body by means of sense-perceptions. In outdoor drawing, terrain and weather touch the body and are explicated via the eye through the touch of pencil, brush or other drawing implement. For Shepherd, of all

[31] I have opted for 'drawing in the field' rather than *plein-air* for outdoor drawing and painting, since *plein-air* carries associations with nineteenth century nature painting of the Barbizon School. Female artists at this time tended to be restricted to social and domestic topics, and were mainly excluded from outdoor painting. I felt it appropriate to adopt new descriptions for what many artists are doing at this present time.

the senses 'eye and touch' hold the 'greatest potency' (2014, p. 98): an observation that shows affinity with David Hume's theory of extension; that is, how objects appear as situated and finite in time and space, and are apprehended by means of the visible and the tangible. Hume writes:

> The idea of space is convey'd to the mind by two senses, the sight and touch; nor does any thing ever appear extended, that is not either visible or tangible.
>
> (Hume, 1985, p. 87) [32]

Shepherd's ideas accord with Hume's, but her thinking also developed in remarkable parallel with that of her contemporary, the French philosopher Maurice Merleau-Ponty (1908-1961) whose work *The Phenomenology of Perception* was published in French in 1945, the same year Shepherd completed *The Living Mountain*. Shepherd does not seem to have been familiar with Merleau-Ponty's theories.[33] Macfarlane observes: ' ... [Shepherd's] philosophical conclusions concerning colour-perception, touch and embodied knowledge now read as arrestingly similar to those of Merleau-Ponty' (Shepherd, 2014, p. xxvii).

To understand phenomenology in *The Living Mountain* and its role in this project I am using definitions abbreviated from two sources; first, phenomenology is the study of:

> '[T]hings as they appear in our experience, or the ways we experience things, thus the meanings things have in our experience.
>
> (Stanford Encyclopaedia of Philosophy, 2024)

[32] In *A Treatise on Human Nature* (1739-40) Hume argues against thinking and reasoning in complete abstractions; his tenet is that all ideas derive from 'impressions' of the material world, 'impressions' being thought of as bodily sense-perceptions (1985, pp. 65-73). Hume's radicalism lay in a refusal of purely mental constructs such as miracles and the afterlife. See also footnote 11, p. 29.

[33] There is no record of Shepherd having read Merleau-Ponty's original text in French, and the first English translation of *The Phenomenology of Perception* did not appear until 1962.

Then, phenomenology comprises:

> '[A]ny of various philosophical methods or theories (often influenced by the work of Husserl and his followers) which emphasize the importance of analysing the structure of conscious subjective experience'
>
> (OED, 2024)

Holding these definitions in mind, we can examine specific examples in *The Living Mountain* of how the visible and the tangible meet in an embodied relationship that Merleau-Ponty calls: 'the inherence of the see-er in the seen' (Johnson, 1993, p. 124).

In her Chapter 6, 'Air and Light', Shepherd observes effects of moisture-laden air on one's perception, there being no shortage of moisture in the Cairngorms. She describes optical effects such as the hills 'clothed' in vivid blues when rain is in the air (2014, p. 41) and black cliffs below the plateau seeming to float in air, 'a snow skeleton attached to nothing' (2014, p. 42). Light refracted in damp air produces optical illusions including a sensation of seeing around the back of a stone steading; Shepherd writes:

> The rays of light, refracted through the moisture in the air, bend round the back of what I am seeing. I have looked at a croft half a mile away lying into the hill, with a steading and a cow, and felt as though I were walking round the stacks and slapping the cow's hindquarters.
>
> (Shepherd, 2014, pp. 42-43)

Compare this with Merleau-Ponty's statement: 'Our perceptual field is made up of 'things' and 'spaces between things'' (1962, p. 15) and his question: 'But can the object be thus detached from the actual conditions under which it is presented to us?' (1962, p. 204) and it would appear that Shepherd's observations form a grounded, empirical phenomenology. Given that she was working independently of Merleau-Ponty and the academy, Shepherd's conclusions about mind/body/world connection appear all the more radical in their impact on thinking about the body-self.

1:4 A Mountain has an Inside

From her earliest climb Shepherd learns about a mountain's interiority; she writes:

> My first climb was Ben MacDhui - rightly since he (*sic*) is the highest - and by the classic route of Coire Etchachan; and from that first day two ideas persist. The first is that a mountain has an inside.
>
> (Shepherd, 2014, p. 16)

The proposition of a mountain having an inside seems counter-intuitive for, as Macfarlane points out, '...we tend to think of mountains in terms of their exteriors – peaks, shoulders, cliffs' (Shepherd 2014, p. xviii). Ben MacDhui confounds Shepherd's expectations: round and hump-backed, this mountain does not have a spectacular peak, and the summit protrudes only slightly above the massif. Shepherd 'toils' - a word that hints at her Presbyterian background - only to find 'no spaciousness for reward, but an interior - that astounded me! And what an interior!' (2014, p. 16).

The notion of a mountain's interior invites further consideration of what constitutes a mountain, and how our sensing bodies are situated therein. The first time I visited a volcanic caldera, Hverfjall, near Lake Myvatn in north-east Iceland, the sight of a huge hollow basin at the top of a mountain seemed uncanny: a strange, fold-like absence of mountain. The drawing *Hverfjall tuff ring volcano with a crater, near Lake Myvatn, north-east Iceland* (figure 17) was made from the edge of the caldera, where the land seemed to slip down into fabric-like folds. I used liquid graphite to convey how fine black scree has trickled down into the hollow; forming lines like the veins of a leaf.

Ingold proposes that mountains are not the static, unchanging objects that we often assume: he writes: 'every mountain is a fold in the ground not a structure that is

placed upon it' (Ingold, 2015, pp. 32-35).[34] Two studies *Ólafsfjörður Mountain Study I* (figure 18) and *Ólafsfjörður Mountain Study II* (figure 19) examine how, perceived as slabs and folds of the land the mountains appear caught in a moment of immanence. Shepherd's reference to walking on a 'grumbling, grinding mass of plutonic rock' (2014, p. 105) reflects her perception of the mountain as a living actant rather than a static mass.

One chilly night in a tent on a mountain, I found myself testing out the idea of a mountain as a moving fold in the ground. I enacted what I thought it would feel like to *be* a mountain (figure 20), recorded in my journal as follows:

> *Awake and shivering in my 'four-seasons' sleeping bag, I'm wearing full thermals, fleece, down jacket, ski socks, woollen hat, scarf and mitts. I unfold a silver foil survival bag and squirm inside, pulling the top over my head to make a sealed package. Sleep at last. I wake up in a fuzzy dawn light; everything is damp. Condensation runs in rivulets down the inside of the tent, also in the folds of the silver bag. I mould my knees and elbows into shifting landscapes: corries, cliffs, gullies, crevasses, waterfalls, and for just a moment, glimpse what it is to be a mountain.*
>
> *(Journal, August 2015*)

Pretending to be a mountain while cold and half asleep, a lucid dream perhaps, exemplifies effects of a change in perception, a temporary un-selfing. Shepherd refers to a similar departure from normal consciousness when she slips in and out of sleep on the mountain; a momentary shift, which, she writes, 'serves this end of uncoupling the mind' (2014, p. 91). Enacting a mountain with my own body underscored to me that mountains too have a lifespan, only on a vastly different timescale from our own. Around this time I encountered the work of film-maker Temujin Doran, whose

[34] Ingold's observation echoes the opening sentence of John Dewey's (1934) *Art as Experience*; Dewey writes: 'Mountain Peaks do not float unsupported; they do not even just rest upon the earth. They *are* the earth in one of its manifest operations'. (Dewey, 2005, p.1). Dewey symbolically connects mountains with the embeddedness of artistic practice within experience of the living world.

documentary film *The Weight of Mountains* (2015), shot in Iceland, explores the temporality of mountains by envisioning the beginning (orogenesis), middle, and eventual end of mountains, over millions of years. Doran calls attention to ways in which mountains move, change, live and even die in ways that parallel other lives (Popova, 2014).[35] To gain from one chilly night in a tent even a glimpse of the mountain's existence in time and space, was to begin to understand the vital systems that move imperceptibly in and around us.

The following work discusses how I developed the idea of going *into,* rather than *up* a mountain. The work is based on a climb in the mountains of an area to the south-west of Ólafsfjörður, between a peak named *Kistufjall* (coffin mountain) and a glacier, *Brimnesdalsjökull* (surf valley glacier). An excerpt from my video diary, *Watery Final Cut: a mountain has an inside* (2017), shows the beginning of this climb (video still, figure 21): the bright sunshine belies the fact I would shortly climb into rain then driving snow and freezing fog.[36]

I reached an interior in the form of a snowy basin, with basalt cliffs overhanging on two sides and a black lava moraine tumbling into the hollow. By this time it was snowing heavily. I made some sketchbook drawings, entitled *'Surf and Coffin': three sketchbook pages* (figure 22). I could not see very well in the wind and snow, consequently the drawings articulate senses other than vision: hearing the cracking of not-too-distant rockfalls; and the taste and touch of wind, snow, ice, sleet and water: Shepherd writes that, 'One walks among elementals and elementals are not governable' (2014, p. 4). Using pencil, crayon and charcoal, and without conscious deliberation, the drawings quickly put down information that would enter subsequent work: the sweep, angularity and directionality of the terrain; how the mountain's systems operate in terms of peaks, cliffs, recesses, moraines, gravel and scree. In one drawing a reddish

[35] Temujin Doran (2015) *The Weight of Mountains*. Available at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FQy4_77Mp_w (Accessed 29 December 2024)

[36] *Watery Final Cut: a mountain has an inside* (2017). Available at: https://vimeo.com/233809070 (Accessed 29 December 2024).

scribble denotes ferrous dust on the snow, possibly from distant storms, while in another, smudged charcoal veins of black lava follow the curve of the basin, scattered like huge black crumbs on the snow. My overriding memory is of being inside a giant wave.

The vitality of the terrain called to mind an observation by Shepherd that the earth 'bristles' (2014, p.11); she observes:

> As I watch [the earth] arches its back, and each layer of landscape bristles - though bristles is a word of too much commotion for it.
>
> (Shepherd, 2014, p. 11)

'Bristle' is defined as: 'Of hair, quills, etc.: To be, become or stand, stiff and bristly; to bristle up: to rise like bristles' (OED, 2022). This curious-seeming descriptor for the land aligns with the twenty-first century philosophy of new materialism, which places the human self as inextricably enmeshed in the material world and always dependent on interactions with the nonhuman other. The new materialist philosopher Jane Bennett theorises 'a world of vibrant matter ... vital, energetic, lively, quivering, vibratory, evanescent, and effluescent', in which increased attention is given to the impact of nonhuman actants on human life including the physical and emotional state of individuals (Bennett, 2010, p. 112). Bennett writes:

> Humanity and nonhumanity have always performed an intricate dance with each other. There was never a time when human agency was anything other than an interfolding network of humanity and non-humanity; today this mingling has become harder to ignore.
>
> (Bennett, 2010, p. 31)

I had not understood 'bristle' in the sense of an embodied phenomenon: Shepherd uses the word in context of deliberately changing her perspective by bending down and peering through straddled legs at an upside-down world: a small shift in

perspective that completely changes her vision, and one that I learned to use as part of my artistic process.

The 'bristling' sense of ongoing life in Iceland may be attributed to the young age of its mountains, with the most recent geological developments lying within the last ten thousand years.[37] By contrast, Cairngorms granite is calculated to be much older, about 425 million years (Hall *et al*., 2013). *Geology of Iceland* explains:

> If we take the age of the earth as one year, then Iceland was only born less than two days ago ... The forces of nature that constantly mould and shape the face of the Earth operate faster in Iceland than in most other places. The rocks are shattered by the frequent change of frost to thaw, and the wind, seas and glaciers laboriously grind down the land.
>
> (Thordarson and Höskuldsson, 2014, p. 1)

In these conditions, drawing as investigative practice - conventionally regarded as an explication of the act of looking - was transfigured into a more phenomenological approach in which drawing becomes a multi-dimensional practice of 'sensing, feeling, thinking and doing' (Ashton, 2014). In shifting my own perspectives, in the tent, on the mountain, *in* the mountain, I was gaining an embodied understanding of relationality between walking, drawing and the self.

The vitality of the Icelandic terrain lends weight to Ingold's previously-mentioned criticism of landscape as a view without any weather; it challenged me to test new ways of representing weather in my paintings. *Kistufjall Study* #1 (figure 23) and *Kistufjall Study* #2 (figure 24) respond to the same place; one panoramic, the other more close-up, as if negotiating the terrain on foot. In making the paintings,

[37] Iceland was formed geologically in three phases: 16-3 million years ago; 3 million -100,000 years ago, and the current era which covers the last ten thousand years (Sigmarsson, University of Iceland, no date). Available at: https://english.hi.is/research/how-old-iceland (Accessed 29 December 2024)

watercolour paint was mixed with tactile materials: beeswax, glue, gum arabic and woodash, then successive layers were scraped off and reworked in broad sweeps using decorator's brushes and a metal spatula. Coarse woodash was mixed with beeswax and scraped across the painting's surface, creating fine scratches and incisions in the paper. Subsequent applications of paint ran into the hollows, forming delicate lines and textures.

I alternated between using transparent watercolour, sometimes further thinned with gum arabic, and gouache, an opaque watercolour with a higher ratio of pigment, often thickened with chalk. The two types of watercolour mixed together form a translucent, milky effect similar to that seen in ice, snow or mist. The results of layering, scraping and reworking hint at interplay of wind, temperature, weather and geology in a shifting terrain.

On the day described above, it occurred to me that my access to the mountains was faciliated by multiple purchases of suitable equipment and materials. The mountaineering course undertaken previously even taught participants how to pack a rucksack properly. This was my walking kit:

sketchpads and notepads
a box of watercolour half-pans
a large tube of white gouache
two tubes of watercolour
black Indian ink
bistre acrylic ink
small pencil case
brushes in a plastic tube
charcoal
erasers
re-useable plastic cup
penknife
i-pad
mobile phone
digital SLR camera
tripod
zoom mini sound recorder
solar charger
power charger
GPS navigation system (no signal)
compass and maps
leads, cables, batteries and adaptors
cases and/or dri-bags for the above
guidebook
first aid kit
silver foil emergency blanket

full waterproofs

extra fleece sweater

leather mitts

ski gloves

fingerless gloves

hat

scarf

sunglasses

sun-cream

high-energy snacks

water bottle

instant coffee

teabags

portable mini gas burner

All this to bring the artist closer to so-called nature. I wondered how confident I would be without a safety-barrier of kit between myself and the living world. Shepherd seems to have travelled much lighter, and is said to have always worn a skirt to climb (Peacock, 2017, p. 169; figure 1). In confidently roaming the Cairngorms one can imagine her as exceptional to her culture: for a woman to climb happily and freely in such difficult mountains must have required not only resources and practical knowledge, but also a great deal of determination.

1:5 Feyness: the Air is Part of the Mountain:

> The air is part of the mountain, which does not come to an end with its rock and its soil.
>
> (Shepherd 2014, p. 41)

On high climbs Shepherd experiences mountain-induced euphoria; she writes:

> I am a mountain lover because my body is at its best in the rarer air of the heights and communicates its elation to the mind.
>
> (Shepherd, 2014, p. 7)

Shepherd describes her elation as 'feyness', which she defines as being 'a little mad, in the eyes of folk who do not climb' (2014, p. 6).[38] Feyness is partly physiological; she writes that, '...the air grows rarer and more stimulating, the body feels lighter ...' (2014, p. 7) consequently one climbs with less effort. Shepherd sees this as an embodied effect; she writes: '... I begin to see that our devotions have more to do with our physiological peculiarities than we admit' (2014, p. 7). Encoded within Shepherd's bodily consciousness, and set loose by walking in the mountains, feyness produces reciprocal effects; she writes:

> 'Something moves between me and [the mountain]. Place and a mind may interpenetrate until the nature of both is altered'
>
> (Shepherd, 2014, p. 8).

A scientific explanation for feelings of elation in higher altitudes is the high count of negative ions in the mountain atmosphere: one wonders how many artworks this phenomenon has given rise to. For me, in Iceland, effects of exertion and mountain air

[38] The OED (2022) defines 'fey' as 'possessing or displaying magical, fairylike, or unearthly qualities'. The word was in currency in the 1960s; for example, my grandmother would use it to describe somebody who had an air of other-worldliness.

took hold on the *Kistufjall-Brimnesdalsjökull* climb described in the last section. On the descent I felt impelled to clamber underneath a snow-bridge, attracted by the water's sound and an unearthly light under the snow (video still, figure 25). Snow-bridges are formations of snow that build up to span steep gullies and were familiar to Shepherd; she writes:

> [...] the burns are turbulent. They can be crossed only on snow bridges, levels of snow down which runs a sagging uneven line that shows where the water is pouring underneath.
>
> (Shepherd, 2014, p. 99)

Alone on the mountain, I was aware that clambering under sagging snow was foolhardy, but entering into what Shepherd calls the 'inward fissures' of the mountain (2014, p. 22) felt so fascinating I continued regardless. I was drawn in and under the luminous surface of the snow, into an elemental gap in the earth's surface, that for Luce Irigaray represents the *'passage through the mirror'* of our symbolic separation from the subconscious; the mirror being penetrable only through small gaps for, as Irigaray puts it in elemental terms, 'frozen soil separates 'up' from 'down'' (1985, pp. 288-289). Above my head the sight of snow-cups, little waves that form in snow as a result of the sun's action, amounted to an uncanny shift in my own notions of up and down. Similarly, a plant transformed beneath a surface of silvery water reminds Shepherd of the Silver Bough, a mythic symbol of entry into the Otherworld of Irish folklore, signifying the power of the liminal to effect shifts in perception (Shepherd, 2014, p. 45).

My sense of entering a liminal space is recalled in two watercolour studies entitled *Ólafsfjörður: into the mountain* #1 and #2 (figures 26 and 27). In the first study the paper is soaked, stained and held under a running tap to push the pigment into the grain, letting each soaking dry out before repeating the process. The second study is on dry paper, the paint diluted with water and granulating fluid. A thick fine brush is loaded up and the paint carefully dropped, hardly touching the paper. The granular, diluted paint settles into its component colours (here, indigo and burnt umber) and

forms little pockets on the rough surface of the paper. In this kind of painting there is no need to draw outlines, the paint dries to a natural edge. Broad sweeps, grainy pigments, drips, splashes and watery light of the paintings form an echo of the land they respond to.

Each study depicts a portal with enclosing marks on either side, stopping places suggestive of transition from one reality into another. Inside the mountain, interior space is illuminated by ice and water: Shepherd refers to 'a faintly luminous grey-blue', the blueness of sunlight filtered through ice, recognised as an aesthetic effect produced by moisture in the air; she writes:

> The rays of light, refracted through the moisture in the air, bend round the back of what I am seeing ... These sultry blues have more emotional effect than a dry air can produce. One is not moved by china blue.
>
> (Shepherd, 2014, pp. 41-42)

Merleau-Ponty too notes effects of the elements on the body:

> Quality, light, color, depth ... are only there because they awaken an echo in our bodies and because the body welcomes them.
>
> (Johnson, 1993, p. 124)

In showing us feyness and hinting at folkloric, otherworldly subjects, Shepherd portrays a gentle, joyful interaction with the mountain that concurs with an ecocritical concept, *ekstasis*. *Ekstasis* or 'ecstatic dwelling' is defined as 'self-unfolding in time and space' brought about by contact with the living world (Böhme, 1992; Rigby, 2004). *Ekstasis* refers to the o*ikos* (Greek: 'house' or 'dwelling') that forms the linguistic root of 'ecology', from which we might infer that Shepherd felt joyfully at home in the mountain's ecosystems.[39]

[39] This version of feeling at home runs counter to Heidegger's 1927 theories of *Wohnen* (dwelling, dwelling-within) a much more potentially toxic discourse that, as Walton points outs, may involve 'the othering of those *not* invited to dwell' (Walton, 2020, p. 34).

The fact of a woman going *into* a mountain and feeling joyfully at home there, can be viewed as radical if we consider how awe, grandeur and the other lofty emotions that Romanticism inserted between the self and the living world, impact on notions of mountains. The feyness Shepherd describes is not to be confused with awe and terror as explicated in Edmund Burke's 1757 portrayal of the sublime (2015, pp. 33-4) nor the prescriptive, gendered sublime of Immanuel Kant, for whom the feminine is merely beautiful, while the masculine is presented as the true and morally-virtuous sublime; Kant writes:

> The fair sex has just as much understanding as the male, only it is a *beautiful understanding,* while ours should be a *deeper understanding* which is an expression that means the same thing as the sublime.
>
> (Kant, 2011, p. 36, original emphasis)

My own explorations of the vital life of Icelandic mountains continued back in Scotland. I returned to the studio with drawings, paintings, photos, films, journals, memories and feelings. By this stage in the project I was beginning to better understand how the methods I was using were entering the practice, and how drawing or painting in the field could be differentiated from my studio painting practice with its emphasis on composition.

Ólafsfjörður Snow-bridge I and Ólafsfjörður Snow-bridge II (figures 28 - 30) are studio paintings that recall the snow-bridge experience, conveying a close-up, shifting world of rock, soil, ice and snow. The paintings mix languages of mark and gesture to translate previously-used watercolour techniques into the more viscous and slippery medium of oil painting. Amy Sillman, a painter I draw influence from, has stated:

> If you're going to be a painter and you're not going to make something that feels informed by both mind and body, it might not be interesting because painting is such a visceral thing. (Sillman, 2006)[40]

[40] Amy Sillman. Available at: https://www.amysillman.com/ (Accessed 29 December 2024).

As I worked, the canvases were moved from floor to wall, turned at intervals to allow liquid paint to settle, or up-ended to encourage directional flow (figure 30). I used a diluant sold as non-toxic and biodegradable, and made thinning varnish using pine resin crystals, with the aim of keeping the studio free as possible of irritant or hazardous materials.

Sillman's work reminds that, in the act of painting, one is making a physical object: or as Susan Sontag has written, 'A work of art is a thing in the world, not just a text or commentary on the world' (Sontag, 2009, p. 21). By 'languages of painting' I am thinking of the interplay of thought, gesture, material and context rather than textual language. Mind and body make decisions about how to adapt the abstractions of language to the actual painting in front of you.

Ólafsfjörður Snow-bridge I and *II* take influence from the work of Joan Mitchell (1925-1992) whose paintings embody perceptions of the living world re-imagined as a painted surface. Mitchell stated that her work was based on the 'memory of a feeling ... but once I start painting, I'm painting a picture' (Bernstock, 1988, p. 33). The snow-bridge paintings make direct reference to Mitchell's tactile, clustered brush-strokes and the stains, drips, splatters and glazes with which she articulates her vision of the material world. Mitchell's paintings exemplify Shepherd's sense of bristling landscape and recall Bennett's theory of vibrant matter in respect of how the material, the paint, works a vibrant effect on the viewer.

Ólafsfjörður Snow-bridge I and *II* refer in particular to one of Mitchell's works, *Untitled* (1969) a painting which influenced me in several ways.[41] First is *Untitled's* arrangement of discrete spaces within the composition: as was Mitchell's practice, I established verticals and horizontals as a structural base for a dialogue of marks. Again similarly, I used a portrait rather than landscape format, in refusal of the traditional landscape-as-view format. The *Ólafsfjörður* snow-bridge paintings have taken

[41] Joan Mitchell (1969) *Untitled.* Available at: https://www.wikiart.org/en/joan-mitchell/untitled-1969 (Accessed 29 December 2024)

Mitchell's warm, south-of-France colour palette and done the colour-opposite, transitioning the work into colours of northerly snow, rock, light and space.

In a 2023 panel discussion about Mitchell's work, Sillman puts forward a view of painting as rooted in language. She argues that humans are 'the language animal' and notes how Mitchell has adapted the language of western painting, particularly that of Monet and van Gogh, and consequently taken 'art history further than it was going to go' into her own spaces, places and bodily movements (Sillman, in Zwirner, 2023). Sillman points out that Mitchell paints real things that correspond to real places, and expresses reservations, which I share, about how the term 'abstract' is conventionally applied to Mitchell's work. Sillman states:

> How could you get out of language, and how could you get out of space, and how could you get out of the feeling of there being something slightly extrinsic to your own skin limit and slightly intrinsic to that feeling?
>
> (Sillman, in Zwirner 2023)

In posing these questions Sillman proposes a painting practice embedded in materiality: your own skin is not abstract, she argues, nor is the day-to-day reality of working with paint and materials. Sillman's view resonates with my own practice: for instance, I spent a day testing out how to emulate a stain in Mitchell's *Untitled*. Aiming at a milky-translucent blue-green I wanted in the Ólafsfjörður paintings, I tested out the liquidity and viscosity of a damar varnish/turps solution mixed with ultramarine and viridian oil paint, tinted with white: an experiment not only about colour, but also about weight, tone, texture, speed of flow and how marks operate and interact on the canvas. The result is a delicate, hazy stain that refers back to the mountain yet also conveys meaning in the time and space of the painting.

Sillman likens this type of granular activity in the act of painting to the building blocks of language, similar to seeking the right word for a sentence or choosing one word over another word: usually there is one word-choice that feels, sounds and/or looks better in terms of a well-formed syntax (Sillman, in Zwirner, 2023). Sillman contends

that the language of painting extends to the implements one uses: brushes, cloths, spatulas, scrapers; each tool produces its own individual marks.

If gesture, position of body and speed or slowness of painting impact on painting's languages, for me this means an ongoing negotiation between considered composition and freely improvised mark-making. Even if mark-making appears random, it is informed by an underlying bodily agency that consciously or unconsciously reflects how we move in life: for instance, Mitchell was an expert figure skater which, one could imagine, affected how she would move around a painting.

Body and space are a topic in *Burstabrekkuvatn* ('Brush Slope Lake') (figure 31) a mixed media painting that interweaves studies of the body in space with Shepherd's idea that the air is part of the mountain. There was a group of dancers at the Ólafsfjörður residency, whom I would sometimes draw in rehearsal, using a water-soluble graphite crayon on wetted paper to follow their movements as they danced (figure 32). Afterwards, looking at *Moving dancers, Ólafsfjörður* I realised I had represented their bodies very similarly to the land I was studying.

Around this time I photographed a perception-altering phenomenon known as the Bergie seltzer, which occurs when small bubbles of trapped air and droplets of water are released by icebergs in the process of melting, causing air, water and rock to appear to fizz like effervescent salts (figure 33). Experiencing the oscillating world of a

Bergie seltzer dispels, even momentarily, the belief that the phenomenal world is fixed and stable.

The dancers' bodies and the Bergie selzer came together in *Burstabrekkuvatn*, a painting that examines the air as a visible, palpable and even tangible presence, and runs counter to our tendency in day-to-day life to forget about air. The eco-philosopher David Abram observes that air is even thought of as an absence; he writes:

I

> n the United States ... the air seemed thin and void of substance or influence. It was not, here, a sensuous medium - the felt matrix of our breath and the breath of other animals and plants and soils - but was merely an absence, and indeed, was constantly referred to in everyday discourse as mere empty space.
>
> (Abram, 1997, p. 26)

By contrast to the thin, void air described by Abram, the air of a Bergie selzer is a vital presence, difficult to ignore as one normally ignores the air in and around us. *Burstabrekkuvatn* conveys a landscape of uncertainty where air and light are tactile and present, while normally-palpable substances of water, rock and snow dematerialise into cloud. This is expressed by layers of translucent Japanese paper glued to the canvas, then partially torn off in order to build a haptic surface of partial representations, shadows and reflections. In conveying how the Bergie selzer phenomenon confounds the senses, the painting *Burstabrekkuvatn* questions habitual perceptions of air and atmosphere.

1:6 *Snaefellsjökull: what you have stolen can never be yours*

In this section I discuss *Snaefellsjökull: what you have stolen can never be yours* (2015) (figure 34) a painting that conveys my experience of climbing *Snaefellsjökull* ('Snow Mountain Glacier', *jökull* is Icelandic for 'glacier') in the Snæfellsnes Peninsula in western Iceland. In this painting, Shepherd's notion of a mountain's inside is extended to consider loss of glacier ice in a warming world, and the painting is considered in context of addressing ecological loss and mourning.

With remarkable prescience, as far back as 1934 Nan Shepherd observes progressive reduction in snow cover in the Cairngorms, a sight that disturbs her assumptions about time and permanence; she writes:

> There was snow worth seeing in those old summers. I used to believe it was eternal snow, and touched it with a feeling of awe. But by August 1934, there was no snow left at all in the Cairngorms except a small patch in the innermost recess of the Garbh Coire of Braereiach. Antiquity has gone from our snow.
>
> (Shepherd, 2014, p. 37)

At the present time, snow and ice cover on mountains is vanishing at accelerating rates and loss of glacier ice is a particular concern. This loss is deeply-felt in Iceland. In 2019 Icelanders came together to hold a funeral ceremony complete with a memorial plaque for Okjökull, the first Icelandic glacier lost to climate heating (The Guardian, 2019). Rituals and artefacts of mourning conventionally associated with loss of a human life apply here to the nonhuman: as Sigmund Freud observes in his seminal essay *Mourning and Melancholia* (1917), mourning may apply not only to a loved person, but also to a place, thing, idea or abstraction. To mourn a glacier reveals deeply-felt connections with the nonhuman world, and can be framed not so much as anthropomorphism, but rather in terms of Freud's *cathexis*, the allocation of mental and emotional energy towards what is lost (Freud, 2005, p. 203-204).

In recent years artists have turned energy and attention to loss of glacier ice. For instance, the art installation *Vatnajökull (the sound of)* (2007- 2008) by Katy Paterson raised public consciousness about the state of Iceland's glaciers.[42] Paterson placed an underwater microphone in the Jökulsárlón lagoon, a famous tourist spot where the glacier Vatnajökull enters the sea. The mic was connected to a phone line through which a listener from anywhere in the world could dial in and listen to the sound of the melting glacier: a meeting of the primordial and the digital.

Another notable artwork is Roni Horn's *Vatnasafn* (*Library of Water*) (2008-ongoing) a sculptural installation in the former town library of Stykkishólmur, west Iceland.[43] *Vatnasafn's* central focus is twenty-four glass columns; each contains translucent meltwater from one of Iceland's glaciers, including the now-vanished Okjökull. The installation effectively forms a fluid material archive in which visitors can walk about, their bodies washed by the light of the glacier water refracted through the tubes.

Snaefellsjökull, the mountain itself and the glacier, are estimated to be more than 700,000 years old; the mountain is volcanic, although *Geology of Iceland* assures that no eruptions have occurred in the past 1100 years since human settlement (Thordarson and Höskuldsson, 2014, p. 207). The place is associated with myth and folklore, and believed to possess magic powers. A giant part-troll/part-human Bárðr Snæfellsáss is said to have vanished into the ice and is still widely held to be the guardian spirit of the Snaefells Peninsula. Snæfellsjökull is also the setting for Jules Verne's *Journey to the Centre of the Earth* (1864) and for Icelandic Nobel Laureate Halldór Laxness's 1972 novel *Under the* Glacier, a bizarrely amusing work of magic realism about ill-fated attempts to impose Christianity on a reluctant pagan community.

[42] Katy Paterson (2007-2008) *Vatnajökull (the sound of)* Available at: https://katiepaterson.org/artwork/vatnajokull-the-sound-of/ (Accessed 29 December 2024).

[43] Roni Horn (2008-ongoing) *Vatnasafn* (*Library of Water*) Available at: https://www.artangel.org.uk/project/library-of-water/ (Accessed 29 December 2024)

I climbed Snaefellsjökull in late August 2014 in a group of seven climbers roped up to a mountain guide named Jón, on his last climb of the season. We negotiated a great many crevasses (figure 35) and Jón was uneasy at the formation of huge, new fissures in areas previously safe to climb: in thirty years of guiding he had not seen the glacier recede so far or fast. Some new snow falls every year, but not enough to sustain the glacier. My journal recalls what it felt like to be on Snaefellsjökull, as follows:

> *There's no blizzard, just low, milky cloud; impossible to distinguish up from down, ground from air. There are no shadows either, only white that's 'not so much a colour as the visible absence of colour', as Herman Melville puts it in respect of the white whale (1993, p. 240). I can hardly see my own feet as our crampons chomp the ice. The surface crust of the glacier is made of névé, old granular snow that has melted, re-frozen repeatedly and is compacting over time to form new glacier ice.*
>
> *It feels weird to be roped-up for eight hours to seven people you don't know. Jón instructs: if anyone needs to pee, don't un-rope, just ask the others to stop and turn away. Anything more, well, you just can't, because anything more would be preserved in the glacier. Nobody asks to stop all day.*
>
> *Jón carries a telescopic stick for measuring the depth of crevasses. Peering down into one, I see what Nancy Campbell means when she writes of 'a dented bruise of ice that gets deeper and bluer the further into it I look. Blue ice has no bubbles, making it the hardest of ices (Campbell, 2018, p. 204). We are looking down into the glacier's history, embedded in layers of stratified, solidified snow, ice and grit, one layer per season like growth rings on a tree. If a crevasse is deeper than the length of rope between each climber - meaning, the one who falls would pull the others down – then we divert our path.*
>
> (Journal, 2014)

Drawing in the field was impossible on Snæfellsjökull due to stinging sleet, snow and rain, and being roped-up to the others. The only option was to take random photos with my phone pointing blindly into the cloud (figure 36); I wrote:

> *Taking photos involves simultaneously dealing with the rope (always keep it in front..) while extracting my phone, effectively a detached, digital eye. The phone appears to need my body-warmth, otherwise the screen freezes between photo-grabs. I must deal with my gloves without dropping them; all without disturbing the rhythms of the walk.*
>
> (Journal, 2014)

Back in the studio, *Snaefellsjökull: what you have stolen can never be yours* (figure 34) was painted from photographs and memory; a mixed media painting 160 x 180 cm in size, made in response to the glacier climb experience. During the climb the i-phone had been a technological proxy for my vision: a factor subsequently important to the painting, because the composition developed as dozens of tiny images, as if the mountain terrain had been sliced up and rearranged. The painting's subtitle '*what you have stolen can never be yours'* is quoted from Laxness's *Under the Glacier* (2005, p. 131); here I use it to suggest that present anthropogenic climate breakdown amounts to stealing from the living world.

In October 2014 I had mentoring from the artist Bea Last, in which Bea highlighted a rhythmic feel to the glacier photos on my studio wall.[44] Her comments resonated with my memory of the climb as a steady trudge, and called to mind Shepherd's account of how walking rhythms transfer from the mountain to the body, and ultimately to consciousness; Shepherd writes:

> ... [M]ost of all after hours of steady walking, with the long rhythm of motion sustained until motion is felt, not merely known by the brain, as the

[44] Bea Last, artist and mentor. Available at: https://bealast.com/ (Accessed 29 December 2024).

> 'still centre' of being ... Flesh is not annihilated but fulfilled. One is not bodiless but essential body.
>
> (Shepherd, 2014, p. 106)

Last's and Shepherd's ideas about embodied rhythm intertwined with my own memories and feelings about Snaefellsjökull. Being new to glaciers, I had naively expected them to be pristine white, as they are from a distance. White, I learned, is a measure of a glacier's health, since white snow can reflect back ninety percent of solar radiation: the whiter the snowy surface, the more solar radiation, known as *albedo*, is reflected back upwards off the ice-sheet (Lutz et al., 2015; Shukman, 2017). Close up, Snaefellsjökull and other glaciers visited since, tend to be strewn with grit, rocks, crumbly black lava and black or red dust. Dark patches on the ice surface may be algae, in a phenomenon known as biological darkening. Dark algae will only reflect back about thirty-five percent, or even as little as one percent of solar radiation in the blackest spots, consequently the ice cover stays warmer instead of reflecting heat back into the atmosphere (Harding *et al.,* 2015; Lutz *et al*., 2015; Shukman, 2019).

In the project sketchbooks for *Snaefellsjökull*, I experimented with methods and materials that would convey the haptic surface of the glacier with its dust, chunks of lava, blocks of ice and glacial erratics (solitary boulders left behind by moving ice) (figure 37). Two further studies form part of the development work: *Photo-montage Study* (figure 38) differentiates elements of the mountain one from another to gain a feel and flavour of the terrain, while *Tests for 'Snaefellsjökull*: *what you have stolen can never be yours'* (figure 39) experiments with marks and media.

I remembered what it was like for the crampons to bite into the glacier's surface with each footstep, and began *Snaefellsjökull* by carefully drawing a 10 cm grid of fine lines using carbon paper and a sharp nib, so the lines were incised into the canvas rather than sitting on top (figure 40). The canvas is fairly large and, I felt, needed a structural armature or systematising device to contain the painting's motifs. I adapted Kawara's use of co-ordinates and the abstract grid, previously discussed on pp. 30-31, to articulate concepts of place and make reference to a general schematising function of

maps and graphs in representing the physical world; in drawing a grid I was mapping physical qualities of the real onto a painted surface.

In her 1979 essay entitled 'Grids' writer and critic Rosalind Krauss analyses multiple uses and purposes of the grid from an art historical perspective. One exemplar is the 'centrifugal' argument that takes account of the world outside the picture plane; Krauss writes:

> By virtue of the grid, the given work of art is presented as a mere fragment, a tiny piece arbitrarily cropped from an infinitely larger fabric. Thus the grid operates from the work of art outward, compelling our acknowledgement of a world beyond the frame. This is the centrifugal reading.
>
> (Krauss, 1979)

Krauss's centrifugal reading attunes with Bachelard's concept of 'intimate immensity' which concerns the vastness of being, both elemental and psychological (Bachelard, 2022, pp. 201-205). Bachelard is discussing the poetry of intimate immensity, while my task here was to use painting to communicate a sense of the intimate against a backdrop of elemental immensity. The centrifugal argument supports my rationale for the grid, namely, that the painting's terrain notionally continues outwards beyond the edges of the painting. The 'larger fabric' she mentions resonates with the vastness of the Icelandic topography and hints too at the generative nature of *The Living Mountain's* text.

I further divided the canvas by making horizonal rows of calligaphic pen-and-ink marks, which lent a sense of left-to-right movement and directionality to the emerging composition and hinted at human figures leaning into the wind. Next I scattered powder pigments over the surface in gestural movements using flour shakers containing crushed carbon, red oxide and umber pigments: the first two are certainly present in the Icelandic geology. The pigments were fixed with several coats of spray varnish until the painting could be vertical without shedding pigment dust.
The painting's composition takes the format of a visual field rather than a single-image

view of a mountain. I glued fragments of different papers onto the canvas: carbon paper, off-white Japanese paper, some monoprints made on another mountain. Then I began painting in a process of putting on paint and scraping off, back and forth until a more coherent composition began to emerge. I partially ripped off the collage, leaving torn edges and fragments suggesting effects of wind and rain on the glacier. The whole painting seemed too monochrome, black, white and grey, so with reference to the glacier blue of the watercolour studies in figures 26 and 27, I added stopping points in a light cerulean blue, to pull the composition together and articulate a sense of space (details, figure 41).

A sense of tension is held between the organising grid and tumbling motifs subsequently added to the painting, an expression of how one may try to understand the world by imposing order on flux and randomness. Shepherd reflects on how the eye orders form such that an aesthetic feeling is evoked; she writes:

> Perhaps the eye imposes its own rhythm on what is only a confusion ... [Y]et the forms must be there for the eye to see. And forms of a certain distinction: mere dollops won't do it.
>
> (Shepherd, 2014, p. 102)

Relationships of colour and form in *Snaefellsjökull* bear similarity to those in *Ólafsfjörður Snow-bridge I*, discussed in the last section, but here the motifs are sharper and more fragmented and disrupted. *Snaefellsjökull*'s colours refer directly to what was seen on the glacier: chromatic greys (that is, greys made from colour, in this instance, ultramarine blue and burnt umber oil paint, tinted with white), black, white, burnt umber, buff titanium and cerulean blue. The painting aims not so much at representation but rather at the story of an experience.

For Shepherd there exists a personal, physical reality in which touch and texture are paramount; she writes, 'The hands have an infinity of pleasure in them' (2014, p. 103) and continues:

> Sensation also. The feel of things, textures, surfaces, rough things ... smooth things ... nothing that I can touch or that touches me but has its own identity for the hand as much as the eye.
>
> (Shepherd, 2014, p. 103)

The embodied connection of climbing Snaefellsjökull and consequently re-imagining the glacier as a composition of idea, feeling and matter, brought home the inseparability of self, subject and material. To use the hand and eye to develop languages of painting - marks, shapes, colours, forms, implements and gesture - in the process of learning about the glacier was to cast light on the fact that, in spite of its size and apparent longevity, a glacier is a complex and fragile ecosystem that humanity would do well to stop destroying.

I did not set out to make the painting as a specific act of mourning, but the process prompted further consideration of how Freud's *Mourning and Melancholia* inflects this project. Freud describes *melancholia,* or melancholy, as a disordered adaptation of 'normal' mourning (Freud, 2005, pp. 203-204). Normal mourning works to understand what is lost by turning outwards towards the lost object, and is of finite duration, while *melancholia* turns in on the self, such that the ego becomes interwined with the lost object and continually reflects back in narcissistic ways (2005, pp. 209-210). If left untreated, Freud observes, melancholy establishes itself as pathological depression or even mania (2005, p.213).

Consequently one might hope that 'normal' mourning is being expressed in *Snaefellsjökull*, but the reality and indeterminate duration of ecological loss might induce feelings more like *melancholia*. For Shepherd, artistic creativity and loving attentiveness are key to staving off melancholy; she writes:

> [T]hat shadow which creeps in on us continuously ... can be held off by continuous creative act. So, simply to look on anything, such as a

> mountain, with the love that penetrates to its essence, is to widen the domain of being in the vastness of non-being.
>
> (Shepherd, 2014, p. 102)

In Bois' essay 'Painting: the Task of Mourning' the late twentieth-century death of painting is discussed in Freudian terms, with Bois declaring that: 'Mourning has been the activity of painting throughout this century' (1990, pp. 230, 243).[45] Questioning what is being mourned by the death of painting, Bois contends that the modernist trajectory must be interrupted by a change in relationship between painting and discourse, into one of 'nonpathological mourning' because 'the desire for painting remains ... not entirely programmed or subsumed by the market' (1990, pp. 243-244).

The theories of Freud and Bois offer a framework from which to clarify the position of this thesis: the research seems to sit between 'normal' mourning and melancholy. Neither seems entirely suited to ecological thinking, for we are not going to leave the climate crisis behind in any conceivable future, nor is it helpful to give in to despair. Bois' influential call for multiple diverse relations between art practice and discourse offers ways forward, and painting is still alive despite modernity. In Chapters 2 and 3 the artwork interweaves Shepherd's ideas with new directions offered by art and writing concerned with art as mourning, ecological grief and interspecies mourning.

[45] Bois locates the death of painting in a narrative of millenial/late capitalist apocalypse comprising the invention of photography; art in the age of mechanical reproduction (Benjamin, 1935) ; art markets as commodity fetishism (Marx, 1867-1894) and the seductive simulacrum of art as capital (Baudrillard, 1981).

1:7 The Geography of a Painting: Looking, Seeing and Perspective

The previous section examined how *Snaefellsjökull: what you have stolen can never be yours* developed from my perceptual experience of the glacier; this section considers *Snaefellsjökull* in terms of perspective as a visual and conceptual device, and the implications of using a grid based on multiple photographs to inform the composition.

In 1972 the artist and critic John Berger observed that Renaissance linear perspective, a type of drawing which forms the basis of modern European art's concept of spatial reality, is constructed to centre on the eye of a single-subject beholder. As Berger puts it, linear perspective 'makes the eye the centre of the visible world'; he writes:

> [Perspective] is like a beam from a lighthouse – only instead of light travelling outwards, appearances travel in. The conventions called those appearances reality ... Everything converges on to the eye as to the vanishing point of infinity.
>
> (Berger, 2008, p. 15)

In *Snaefellsjökull*, the work digresses from linear perspective because I wanted to conceive of the mountain in ways other than a perspectival view of a landscape. The etymology of 'landscape' lies in Middle Dutch: *landscap, landschap* and *landskip* (1590s) (Berger, 2016, p. vii) and implies a 'scaping' or 'scoping' of the land around the self, the human subject, at the centre of their world. The human subject in landscape painting may be the artist, the viewer or both; an example is Friedrich's *Wanderer above the Sea of Fog*, discussed on p. 44, in which the viewer and the figure in the painting are almost interchangeable in the role of *katascopos* ('all-seer'), a static looker from an unmoving position. By contrast, Shepherd has moments on the mountain when she loses a sense of centrality in the landscape; of one such moment she writes:

> Details are no longer part of a grouping in a picture of which I am the focal point, the focal point is everywhere. Nothing has reference to me, the looker.
>
> (Shepherd, 2014, p. 42)

Snaefellsjökull uses a nonlinear perspective, aerial perspective, which refers to an illusion of space created by rendering distant objects hazy or faint, sometimes with a blue tint. The effect is created in *Snaefellsjökull* by underlayers and glazes of thinned ink and paint. Aerial perspective is used in *Snaefellsjökull* to convey the way I experienced the glacier on the day of the climb. Due to mist and cloud the i-phone effectively formed a substitute for my eyes; my quick photo-grabs could only comprehend a limited field of vision. Yet I knew the rest of the glacier was out there in the clouds, invisible on the one hand, too big to take in on the other.

In *Hyperobjects: Philosophy and Ecology at the end of the World* (2013) Timothy Morton advances his theory of the hyperobject, in which a melting glacier would classify as a hyperobject, a thing so conceptually huge in time and space that we cannot grasp or know it wholly. The climate crisis is a hyperobject: 'Global warming is a big problem' writes Morton, 'because along with melting glaciers it has melted our ideas of world and worlding' (2013, p.103). For Morton, hyperobjects are changing our concept of the world; we are unable to comprehend fully their magnitude, or know how to articulate them from conventional humanistic perspectives.

Considerations of the human eye, time and perspective take us back into painting's histories. *Snæfellsjökull's* composition as a narrative of a walk in fragments of perception and memory, was influenced not so much by the cubist multiple viewpoint but rather by a Renaissance painting I encountered during the research, entitled *Saint John the Baptist retiring to the Desert* by Giovanni di Paulo (1454).[46] As the writer Olivia Laing (2022) points out, this painting shows the figure of Saint John - twice - a

[46] Giovanni di Paulo (1454) *Saint John the Baptist retiring to the Desert*. Predella panel, egg tempera on wood, 49 x 30.5 cm. https://www.nationalgallery.org.uk/paintings/giovanni-di-paolo-saint-john-the-baptist-retiring-to-the-desert (Last accessed 29 December 2024).

pink and golden boy, leaving a comfortable life inside the city gates to set off past neat fields and houses towards some wild-looking mountains; she observes: '[B]eyond this boy is a whole region of blue, visible but unpossessed,' signifying a future yet unknown.[47] I felt this narrative carried parallels both with Nan Shepherd setting out hopefully on her climbs, and with the Earth's possible futures in the Anthropocene.

This painting invents time and space, 'showing a person at two moments simultaneously' (Laing, 2022). The viewer would have been expected to understand it as a fiction, one that shows Di Paulo understood the device of perspective, as is clear in his rendition of the city gates and the pattern of the fields. The roses on either side of the predella are painted in a naturalistically, showing that Di Paulo also painted in this idiom. The stylised mountains therefore serve to convey a dreamlike effect or symbolic purpose rather than everyday reality: or perhaps di Paulo had never seen mountains.

Five hundred years later, Shepherd is walking in mountains, also in an uncertain world, and we see how the mountains also represented to her a dreamscape, or even a dream escape; she writes:

> I set out on my journey in pure love. It began in childhood when the stormy violet of a gully on the back of Sgoran Dubh, at which I used to gaze from a shoulder of the Monadhliaths, haunted my dreams.
>
> (Shepherd, 2014, pp. 106-107)

As Berger points out,' We never look at just one thing; we are always looking at the relation between things and ourselves' (Berger, 2008, p. 6).

[47] Things ended badly for Saint John, as hinted by the forbidding mountains in the painting.

1:8 Quiescence: the Peaceful Silence of Being[48]

This section discusses work prompted not so much by walking itself, but rather by what happens when you stop to rest after hours of walking, and how effects of rest enter the artwork. For Shepherd, rest after walking engenders a tranquil yet perceptive state of mind she calls 'quiescence'; she writes that:

> ... [T]he mind grows limpid; the body melts; perception alone remains. One neither thinks, nor desires, nor remembers, but dwells in pure intimacy with the tangible world.
>
> (Shepherd, 2014, p. 90)

Quiescence, according to Shepherd, does not simply descend unbidden: in hint of her Presbyterian background, Shepherd sees quiescence as a reward for rigorous training of mind and body. She writes that she is the 'instrument of her own discovering', and that:

> ... [T]he senses must be trained and disciplined, the eye to look, the ear to listen, the body must be trained to move with the right harmonies. I can teach my body many skills by which to learn the nature of the mountain. One of the most compelling is quiescence.
>
> (Shepherd, 2014, p. 90)

I cannot lay claim to the levels of self-discipline evinced by Shepherd, however in June 2015 I attended a Nan Shepherd training weekend at Kilmalieu, Ardgour, Argyll, a rugged, mountainous peninsula reached by ferry from the mainland. The aim of the weekend, organised by zoologist, climber and writer Jean Langhorne, was to test out Shepherd's methods for 'tuning in' to the land; one method was the cultivation of quiescence. Langhorne writes:

[48] This title is borrowed from Bachelard's *Poetics of Space* (2014, p. 213) in discussion of Baudelaire's depictions of vastness; according to Bachelard, a quality inextricably linked to silence.

> When your mind is calm, steady and open; the longer you allow yourself to sit and observe, the more dynamic the external world appears.
>
> (Langhorne, 2015)

We were five participants in the weekend: artists, writers and one psychoanalyst. On the first afternoon, Langhorne tasked us to go out for a walk alone, and to fall asleep outdoors, for, as she pointed out, falling asleep on a mountain calls for a certain amount of trust in the land.

On my walk I made some before-and-after drawings in the field, later entitled *Quiescence Experiment: Before Outdoor Sleep* (figure 42) and *Quiescence Experiment: After Outdoor Sleep* (figure 43). I was tired after the drive from Glasgow and meeting new people; the 'before' drawings turned out busy and agitated. For the sleeping task I sought out a rock to sleep beside, an impulse seemingly shared with Shepherd who refers to a Shelter Stone in the Cairngorms as a haven of rest and safety in exposed terrain (2014, pp. 24, 43, 67, 100). I fell into the deepest of sleeps. Shepherd writes:

> Daytime sleep, too, is good. In the heat of the day, after an early start, to lie in full daylight on the summits and slip in and out of sleep is one of the sweetest luxuries in life. For falling asleep on the mountain has the delicious collorary of awaking.
>
> (Shepherd, 2014, p. 111)

I woke up illogically pleased to have succeeded in Langhorne's task. The two blue, dreamy 'after' sketches made on waking appear the diametric opposite of the earlier drawings. As Shepherd writes, '[O]ur devotions have more to do with our physiological peculiarites than we admit' (2014, p.7) and I keep the sketches as a reminder of the extent to which the embodied mind plays into artistic outcomes.

With attention to the notion of harnessing quiescence, over several months I made paintings from memory of quiescent moments. One painting is *Borealis* (figure 44) an oil painting that recalls the evening after climbing Snaefellsjökull when, tired and hill-

weary, we settled to camp in a half-flooded site at the foot of the glacier. I lay in my tent looking out at glimmers of noctilucence, a luminescence caused by ice crystals in high altitude clouds, found in twilight skies in northerly latitudes. From time to time the campsite lit up as the *borealis*, northern lights, cast an uncanny shimmer on grass, rocks, mountain and floodwater. Shepherd too observes how light on the mountain can dematerialise the land, confounding perceptions of solid, liquid and air; she writes:

> Up on the plateau, light lingers incredibly far into the night, long after it has left the rest of the earth.
>
> (Shepherd, 2014, p.91)

Borealis was painted from memory and photos, and aims to convey the night sky glow reflected on saturated earth, grass and red-purple volcanic soil. To articulate the translucent sky and land I used a technique called 'tonking' in which I poured liquid oil paint over the canvas, then removed the excess by laying paper over the wet surface and gently pulling the paper up, the process repeated several times.[49] The result is a veil-like layer which lightens and lends a liquid appearance to underlying areas of the painting.[50]

A horizontal format, broad bands of strong colour and distinct forms in *Borealis* are influenced too by the work of Icelandic painter Louisa Matthíasdóttir (1917-2000).[51] I saw examples of her work in Reykjavík and was fascinated by how she depicts the Icelandic landscape in swathes of colour. Her work is described by the poet and critic John Ashbery as 'clean, chilly and open' with 'cold nordic colours and an almost

[49] 'Tonking' is named after Henry Tonks (1862-1937), Slade Professor of Fine Art 1918-1930, who devised the technique.

[50] For Luce Irigaray shadows and reflections are a 'reflecting screen' that obscure the reality of the subconscious, shutting off 'true nature in order to direct men to the spectacle above' (1985, p. 289). From a painting perspective they represent a formal way of introducing symmetry to the painting's composition - the object and its shadow - but they also allow for distortion and the muddling of reality, so perhaps play not too dissimilar a role to that described by Irigaray.

[51] Louisa Matthíasdóttir (1917-2000). Examples of Matthíasdóttir's work are available at: http://louisamatthiasdottir.com/ (Accessed 29 December 2024).

summary way with volumes and perspectives' (Ashbery, in Perl, 1999, p. 9): an Iceland recognisable in W. H. Auden's (1936) poem *Journey to Iceland* which describes, '[T]he glitter/ of glaciers, the sterile immature mountain intense/in the abnormal northern day of this world' (Auden, 1988, p. 49).

Matthíasdóttir moved from Iceland to New York in 1942 to study with the abstract painter Hans Hofmann (1880-1986). She remained in America but continued to paint Iceland from memory and occasional visits, resulting in an original painting style that fuses her vision of an unchanging Iceland with avant-garde developments in New York. Her biographer describes Matthíasdóttir's Iceland as, '[A] hieratic, austere, magical place. The country becomes a series of impregnable images: sharp, clear, absolute' (Perl, 1999, p. 140).

Borealis is particularly influenced by ways in which Matthíasdóttir uses colour as inseparable from form. She learned from Hofmann's famous 'push-pull' method of painting, that is, creating an illusion of depth and movement in a painting by juxtaposing planes of colour, contrasting or close-toned. Matthíasdóttir is quoted as saying:

> The reason I paint is because I want to paint what I see. But to paint what I see, I must build from color.
>
> (Matthíasdóttir in Perl, 1999, p. 99)

Perhaps because Iceland is represented as a poetic image rather than day-to-day reality, Matthíasdóttir's Icelandic works embody a sense of dreamy quiescence: bands of colour form mountains, fields, lakes, animals, unfussy and non-hierarchical: each element depends on the others and is treated in the same way with broad slabs of colour. In relation to the land, colour is intensely lucid: emerald and viridian grass and moss, rocks and cliffs in venetian red and *caput mortuum* ('death's head', a purplish-red pigment) that correspond to deposits of ferrous oxide and haematite in the rock. Animals are constructed as part of the land, unsentimental and non-anthropomorphised; eating, sleeping or simply staring, as animals do. Matthíasdóttir's

dream-landscapes contain nothing jarring or disruptive to break the spell of quiescence she casts on the land.

Absolute silence is another thing. In August 2014 Julie and I were trying to hitch a lift outside the fishing town of *Siglufjörður*, on the north coast. There was no traffic whatsoever, for hours. We chatted now and then, but on pausing there would come a silence so absolute as to be a memorable, palpable presence. Nan Shepherd writes:

> For the ear, the most vital thing that can be listened to here is silence. To bend the ear to silence is to discover how seldom it is there.
>
> (Shepherd, 2014, p. 96)

The remarkable silence of that day is recalled in a painting entitled *Waiting at Siglufjörður* (figure 45), articulated in a mainly-horizontal composition. Fascinated by high mountains, I had been preoccupied with verticals, of going *up*, and had not considered going *along*, or a prevailing sense of horizontality in this part of Iceland: a seemingly-endless road, endless fjord, an occasional painted wooden house or distant ferry. Tangible effects of silence and the endlessness of the land confounded my normal sense of time, a sensation recalled by Shepherd when she writes:

> ...[N]ow and then comes an hour when the silence is all but absolute, and listening to it one all but slips out of time. Such a silence is not a mere negation of sound. It is like a new element ...
>
> (Shepherd, 2014, p. 96)

Waiting at Siglufjörður takes influence from Matthíasdóttir, only the horizonal is emphasised in straighter, more geometric swathes of colour than in Matthíasdóttir's work. I took elements from *Borealis*, such as 'tonking' areas of the painting; colour is based on the land and sea, and also on the colours of painted wooden houses we passed on the walk: a traditional red oxide or naples yellow seen in nordic countries, or simple black and cream. Pale areas of *Waiting at Siglufjörður* are painted using

lightened buff titanium oil paint, lending a pinkish glow I sometimes noticed on weathered houses and boats in northerly light.

Shepherd's insights into quiescence and silence led me to enact daytime sleep and listen to silence. In painting *Borealis* and *Waiting at Siglufjörður* I gained understanding of how quiescence and silence affect our bodies and inform interactions with the land. Matthíasdóttir's vision of the living world of Iceland was an influence: her original, in-between position spanning Nordic romanticism and New York abstraction opened up new possiblities for my work, leading me to further explore horizontality and colour-as-form.

1:9 Conclusion to Chapter 1

The artwork analysed in this chapter set out to make a relationship between *The Living Mountain* and my interpretations of aspects of the Icelandic terrain. Aims set out in the introductory section (pp. 19-23) have been addressed as follows.

First is an ecocritical analysis of *The Living Mountain* from the first-person perspective of a walking art practice. This aim was addressed by enacting ideas from *The Living Mountain* during my own walks; the resulting work examines what underlies the ideas and re-imagines them in my artwork. The ideas that entered the work of this chapter were: learning by foot; walking as a field research methodology; perception by all the senses; a mountain as a friend; a mountain having an inside; the air as part of the mountain; loss of glacier ice and painting as mourning; altered consciousnesses such as feyness and quiescence; multiperspectivity.

Next is an application of *The Living Mountain* to artistic and ecological discourses, with focus on human-caused environmental depredation in northerly places. This aim was addressed by contextualising and theorising my work in relation to relevant examples from art history and contemporary practice. I introduced theoretical writing by Ingold, Morton, Heddon, Freud, Bois, Haraway, Abram, Laing and others, partly to make connections backwards in time to *The Living Mountain* and partly to offer contemporary readings of my own work.

The third aim set out in the introduction addresses a gap whereby painting appears to lack presence in the field of ecologically-minded art practices and discourses. I tested and challenged Weintraub's (2012) proposition that painted representations of landscape lack capacity to speak about ecological matters, referencing Kawara to argue that, while works in other media convey powerful ecological messages, painting has an ability to exceed its history of the landscape as a view, by developing languages and practices of painting aimed at turning hearts and minds to ecological topics. The fourth aim, communication of the work both in academia and wider public platforms, is set out in the Impact and Outreach section, Appendix 2(ii).

Chapter 2

SEA

2:1 Introduction: Islands united by the Sea

Best to be like water.

(Lao Tzu, 6th century BCE) [52]

This chapter of *Kissing the Cold Goodbye* extends the research enquiry to sea, ocean, islands and sea-cliffs rather than mountains, in a move influenced by references to sea in *The Living Mountain* and by my own coastal walks. This chapter's artwork responds to the Icelandic island of Grímsey; the Isle of Tiree, Scotland, and Korpo Island, Finland. In response to the present era of climate catastrophe, the work confronts more disquieting perceptions of the sea than in Shepherd's time and responds to the more precarious state of life in our oceans.

Shepherd's fascination with water is manifest in *The Living Mountain*, expressed in the opposites of still water and turbulent seas. Still water appears as a symbol of unassertive strength, evidently an allusion to Shepherd's interest in eastern philosophy: her notebooks indicate she read Arthur Waley's influential 1934 translation of the *Tao Tê Ching* by Lao-Tzu (b. 571 BCE) while she was writing *The* Living Mountain pre-1945 (Peacock, 2017, p. 209). Shepherd's notion of disciplining 'the mind and body to quiescence' (2014 p. 96) discussed in Chapter 1, may stem from concepts of 'quietism' and 'a still pool' in Waley's annotations (1974, p. 57). In another example of the influence of Taoism, on observing the source of the River Dee high on the Cairngorm plateau Shepherd writes:

> Water... like all profound mysteries, it is so simple that it frightens me. It wells from the rock and flows away. For unnumbered years it has welled from the

[52] This epigraph is from a translation of the *Tao* by Stephen Addiss and Stanley Lombardo (1993). In the version of the *Tao* that Shepherd would have read, Arthur Waley's (1934) translation, the same line reads: 'The highest good is like that of water' (Waley, 1974, p. 151).

rock and flowed away. It does nothing, absolutely nothing, but be itself.

(Shepherd, 2014, p. 23)

We might connect Shepherd's above words to the feminine water-spirit, the *yin* of cold, quiet water in Taoism (Waley, 1987, pp. 56-57). We might also regard the passage as an implicit call for clarity in turbulent times.[53]

Further examples of the *yin* as cold, quiet water emerge in *The Living Mountain*. On one occasion Shepherd feels she is looking over distant sea when light and cloud combine to make the land 'a sea of mist' that 'washes' the distant hills, and a mountain peak 'lifts like a small island from the smother' (2014, p. 18). The epigraph to Shepherd's volume of poetry *In the Cairngorms*, reads: 'Islands are united by the bottom of the sea' (2014a, p. ix) in what may be an oblique reference to her friendship with the philosopher John Macmurray and his wife Betty, to whom the volume is dedicated.[54]

From the *yin* of quiet water, Shepherd switches to the *yang* of troubled seas: a contrasting device used here and elsewhere in the text to change instantly the mood and pace of the writing. Shepherd's turbulent seas convey western romanticism's trope of the angry sea, rather than the still waters that characterise eastern philosophy. There is a hint of the sublime in Shepherd's expression of awe and exhilaration in response to a turmoil of gales, 'the boom of angry seas' (2014, p. 97); she writes:

[53] In his chapter entitled 'Purity and Purification' in *Water and Dreams* Bachelard presents a more nuanced critique than I have attempted here. He denies the pure/impure binary of water and compares the 'simple but complete' pleasure of pure spring water with more complex roles that myriad types of less-pure water play in our collective psyche (Bachelard, 2006, pp. 138 - 143).

[54] As previously mentioned, *In the Cairngorms* contains 'Fourteen Years', the group of eleven sonnets thought to be addressed to John Macmurray. The above quotation may refer to the Macmurrays' physical distance from Shepherd in the years prior to publication of *In the Cairngorms* in 1934, as the couple had moved away from Aberdeen, first to South Africa then to London.

> Mankind is sated with noise; but up here, this naked, this elemental savagery, this infinitesmal cross-section of sound from the energies that have been at work for aeons in the universe, exhilarates rather than destroys.
>
> (Shepherd, 2014, p. 97)

The notion of elemental savagery is taken up too by Bachelard, for whom violent waters are associated with dynamic activism, aggression and anger, and also with vitality and invigoration important to the poetic imagination (2006, pp. 159-160). Here the troubled sea stands for tempestuous phenomena and weather conditions of the mountain climate, leading Shepherd to express wonder at deep time and temporality. Further examples arise when mountain burns in spate turn Shepherd's familiar paths into 'a moving sea' (2014, p. 27) and the worst storm for over fifty years is described as a 'boiling sea of cloud' in which the Cairngorm massif appears to rise and sink like 'a tossed wreck on a yellow sea' (2014, p. 36).

This purpose of this chapter of *Kissing the Cold Goodbye* is to apply Shepherd's ideas about the sea to contemporary ecological contexts of sea and ocean. I will discuss artworks that respond to the above-mentioned islands, in Iceland, Scotland and Finland. The islands are united not only at a level personal to me, because I have walked and made art in them, but also at a global level, in respect of the effects on them of warming oceans and currents which wash marine litter, often from distant sources, onto their shores.

Consequently, anthropocenic seas are troubled not only when storms blow, but also in respect of human-caused degradation to the marine environment. Ecological trouble manifests differently in each of the three islands discussed in this chapter; the problems I witnessed called for different artistic responses to each place. The first section of this chapter documents the making of a painting that mourns the deaths of seabirds in Iceland. Then, in Tiree, marine litter is considered in context of sea-trade and mass consumption, and in my last example I make paintings from sound-recordings of the sea, and in response to blue-green algae in the Baltic Sea, Finland.

2:2 Fulmars in Grímsay and *Úa's Journey*

In this section I discuss the development of *Úa's Journey* (figure 46) a painting that recalls the island of Grímsey, on the Arctic Circle about 25 miles north of the Icelandic mainland. Úa is the name of a mythic character from Halldór Laxness's magic realist novel *Under the Glacier* (1968) set in Snaefellsjökull: she is part-woman, part-shaman; a benevolent shape-shifter who wanders the Earth, spreading love and creativity where and when most needed. In respect of Úa's embodiment of female physicality and creative power, one could almost imagine her as a wilder, pagan version of Nan Shepherd.[55] At this point in the project I was immersing myself in *Under the Glacier* and Laxness's other novels, with the aim of better understanding Icelandic land and culture. Laxness (1902-1998) was a near-contemporary to Nan Shepherd, and his novels contain themes in common with Shepherd's, such as human and nonhuman co-existence, and modernity's effects on traditional rural communities. His work has provided an important contextual backdrop to the Icelandic work in *Kissing the Cold Goodbye*.

In late August 2014 I spent three days in Grímsey and walked the same six- mile circuit around the island each day. I was echoing Shepherd's taste for repeated circumnavigation, when she describes going around the Cairngorm plateau 'like a dog in circles to see if it is a good place' (2014, p. 22). I spent hours on the island's precipitous sea-cliffs (figure 47) watching a constant traffic of seabirds, mainly fulmars (*Fulmaris glacialis*) coming to land at their nests in which chicks screeched for their next meal (figure 48). Similarly to Shepherd I lack 'the assiduity and patience' (2014, p. 62) for dedicated bird-watching, but was happy to be mesmerised by the fulmars' aerial displays.

Shepherd too is fascinated by watching aerial antics of birds. On recalling the flight of swifts over the mountain, her perceptions correspond not only to the visible and

[55] Similarities to Úa may also be discerned in Haraway's (2016) speculative character Camille, a hybrid, ungendered being whose task is to participate in a new epoch of healing in post-Anthropocene communities. .

audible: her inter-species empathy is such that she vicariously feels the birds' movements echo through her own body. She writes:

> It seems odd that merely to watch the motion of flight should give the body not only vicarious exhilaration but release. So urgent is the rhythm that it invades the blood. This power of flight to take us into itself through the eyes as though we had actually shared in the motion, I have never felt so strongly as when watching swifts on the mountain top.
>
> (Shepherd, 2014, p. 61)

Shepherd's words highlight how an embodied sense of another's physical world takes her out of her own life-world, even for a moment. The mountain affords her a possiblility of co-presence with other species that constitutes an implicit refusal of human exceptionalism. A possibility to merge with the whole of the living world is fully realised in the closing chapter of *The Living Mountain* when she writes: 'I am a manifestation of [the mountain's] total life, as is the starry saxifrage or the white-winged ptarmigan' (2014, p. 106). Shepherd's endeavours bring her to an ontological co-existence with the totality of the mountain's ecosystems.

For me on Grímsey, my joy at watching the fulmars evaporated when I discovered that some small whitish objects scattered over the cliff-top, were in fact the corpses of fledgling fulmars (figure 49). I learned they die of hunger because parent birds must fly increasingly far to catch fulmars' main diet of sandeels, in decline due to warming oceans (Katz, 2014). On Grímsey and throughout the circumpolar north, huge losses in seabird numbers indicate a drastic chain of causality: rising sea temperatures affect plankton, causing a massive decrease in sandeels, with disastrous effects on bird populations. Seabird researcher Freydís Vigfúsdóttir is quoted in respect of her work in north-west Iceland; she states:

> There are just dead chicks everywhere. Not only do you have to provide your field assistants with food and shelter, but also some psychological help after many, many days of collecting dead chicks.
>
> (Katz, 2014)

The sights witnessed in Grímsey stayed in my mind, and in the studio I began to process my feelings and memories about the fulmar losses. I had seen no other humans on the cliffs those three days in Grímsey, so perhaps it was incumbent on me to do the work of witnessing and remembering the dead chicks. In *Flight Ways: Life and Loss at the Edge of Extinction* (2014) the field philosopher and writer Thom van Dooren studies the behaviour and habits of birds under threat of extinction. Van Dooren draws attention to the importance of mourning in telling stories about the nonhuman dead, dying and extinct, in order to draw them back into relationship with the living; he writes:

> Mourning offers us a way into an alternative space, one of acknowledgement of and respect for the dead. In this context mourning undoes any pretense (*sic*) toward exceptionalism, instead drawing us into an awareness of the multispecies continuities and connectivities that make life possible for everyone.
>
> (van Dooren, 2014, p. 126)

As I worked on Úa's Journey over several weeks in the studio, the painting's aim clarified into that of holding a space for the grim plight I'd witnessed. In *Mourning: the Task of Painting* Bois develops Freud's idea of mourning as an extended process involving some work on the part of the mourner. Mourning, according to Bois, is a task, a work, a process. Nan Shepherd, a modernist, was mourning war's carnage and effects of industrialisation; four decades later Bois, a postmodernist, was addressing the death of modernist ontologies and ideologies in the name of progress.

The notion of a painting as a holding space prompts questions about painting's role in conveying a narrative; how to embody feelings and memories in the painted surface. In this regard Amy Sillman's work is an influence, because she approaches painting as a conversation between herself and the canvas. She describes her part-formal, part-imaginative paintings as 'a combination of memory and story-telling, anecdote and self-feeling', and is quoted in interview as saying:

> I don’t think oil painting would be all that interesting if you weren’t going to essentially use its materiality as one of your tools ... I hold on to the idea of making something the same unscripted way that I have a conversation ... combined with having some experience working with oil paint and knowing how to take it apart formally.
>
> (Sillman, 2006)

Sillman's words resonate with how *Úa's Journey* developed out of an ongoing conversation between myself and development material brought back from Iceland. I had no preconceived notions as to what the painting was going to do or be as I started work on it as a companion piece for *Snaefellsjökull*. I carefully drew a grid with carbon paper, a process of kneeling on the floor and stretching across to draw. Then I scattered and varnished powder pigments onto the canvas and attached monoprints from *Four Carbon Footprints* discussed on p. 42, that reminded me of speckled fulmar plumage. I started painting using large brushes and big marks: the brush stroke, the drawn line, the grid, the splash. During breaks in painting I would look at work by contemporary female artists: Amy Sillman, Julie Mehretu, Jadé Fadojutimi: artists whose work re-imagines the 'old' masculinist tropes of abstraction in contexts and cultures of the present time.[56] As I worked over several weeks the topic seemed to find itself: bird-like shapes and forms were emphasised while other marks became less important.

Comparison between *Úa's Journey* as work-in-progress and the finished painting (figure 50) shows how a great many erasures and reworkings are made in order to arrive at a final composition. To paraphrase the painter Roy Oxlade, motifs may arrive by accident but they stay by design (Reichert, Oxlade and Richardson, 2004).[57] Visual

[56] Work by these artists can be viewed, respectively, at:
https://www.amysillman.com/
https://www.tate.org.uk/art/artists/julie-mehretu-17390
https://jadefadojutimi.com/ (Accessed 29 December 2024).

[57] Roy Oxlade (1929-2014). Examples of Oxlade's work can be seen at
https://www.frieze.com/article/roy-oxlades-Works-80s-90s-review-2018
(Accessed 29 December 2024).

information is lost and found along the way, in a conversation of marks and negotiations about what is needed in order for the painting to make internal sense and to speak to the viewer.

The surface of *Úa's Journey* is multi-layered and tactile, built up in layers of powder pigment, paper and carbon paper collage, ink, varnish and oil paint, with a colour palette more strongly monochrome than *Snaefellsjökull*. Gulls and fulmars are referenced by swooping marks and collaged monoprints hint at the speckled markings of the young fulmars (figure 51). Yellowish Japanese paper glued onto the canvas takes on membrane-like qualities in a visual analogy for the decomposition of the fulmar corpses, a process of salt, wind and sun that amounted to preservation by curing (figure 52). While painting I was thinking about the classical art of augury, in which bird entrails are used to interpret omens. To my mind the starved corpses of the fulmar chicks represented present-day augurs of ecological decline.

Three green marks form points of a triangle within the composition, visible under layered paint and collage (shown in pink, figure 53): these provide subtle but important stopping-points for the eye and add to the effect of the grid in supporting and containing the organisation of the painting. I had in mind an uncomfortable, arsenic green (figure 54) similar to how Shepherd describes pools of mountain water; she writes:

> The greenness of the water varies according to the light, now aquamarine, now verdigris, but it is always pure green, metallic rather than vegetable.
>
> (Shepherd, 2014, p. 25)

Black gestural brushmarks at the foot of *Úa's Journey* lend heaviness to the painting's composition. Although the painter Robert Motherwell (1915-1991) belongs to what Sillman calls the 'grand old men' of Abstract Expressionism (Zwirner, 2023) I kept

thinking of his series of Elegies to the Spanish Republic.[58] Motherwell described the *Elegies* (over 100 paintings, between 1948 and 1967) as his 'private insistence that a terrible death happened that should not be forgot' (Moma, 2004): original sentiments about death and loss that still carry weight in respect of the multi-species deaths of the present time.

Úa's Journey began as a bird-watching walk, then developed as a witnessing and a mourning. During the sustained attention involved in the process of making, and feelings of anger and powerlessness in respect of the fulmar deaths, I felt some catharsis in speaking about the loss through my art. It was not until some time later, in the wake of the Covid-19 pandemic, that mental health began to be discussed more freely, and connections made between the climate crisis and emotional disorders: as Walton puts it, '[C]limate change can disrupt a coherent sense of self' (2021, p. 271).

In 2003 the environmental philosopher Glenn Albrecht coined the term 'solastalgia', 'preliminarily and broadly defined as the distress caused by the transformation and degradation of one's home environment' (Galway et al., 2019). A similar but more general term, 'ecological grief' has been identified by climate and health researchers Ashlee Cunsolo and Neville R. Ellis who define this often-unacknowledged grief as:

> [T]he grief felt in relation to experienced or anticipated ecological losses, including the loss of species, ecosystems and meaning ... often left unconsidered, or entirely absent, in climate change narratives, policy and research.
>
> (Cunsolo and Evans, 2018)

Feeling an inability to prevent ecological harm and loss of species, we experience an 'anticipatory grief for ecological changes' that have not yet happened, and anxiety about 'future losses and mourning for an anticipated future that will likely cease to be' (Cunsolo and Evans, 2018). Or, as Nan Shepherd writes in the wake of forest habitat

[58] Some of the *Elegies* series by Motherwell are available to view at: https://www.moma.org/collection/works/79007 (Accessed 29 December 2024).

destruction, 'I tremble especially for the crested tit, whose rarity is a proud distinction of these woods' (2014, p. 56).

One might question however if the above-mentioned emotional responses can be classed as disorders rather than understandable reactions to a disordered world (Comtesse *et al*., 2020). In a potentially worrying move, the American Psychological Association (APA) has added solastalgia to its medical lexicon, as well as eco-anxiety, defined as ‘a chronic fear of environmental doom’ (Dodds, 2021). Then there is a condition of pre-traumatic stress response, a before-the-fact version of classic PTSD, in which so-called climate Cassandras are ‘gripped by thoughts of future harm' (Kaplan, 2020). As the psychologist Margaret Wadesley points out, such institutional recognition of feelings around climate comes with the danger that climate anxiety may profitably be medicalised, and corporate attempts made to mitigate the climate crisis with pills (Wadesley, 2024).

2:3 *Nature Morte*: the Hyperobject and the Hyperabject

Repeat the circle, feeling firm on the ground as
the wave washes through you, absorbing the power
of the sea
Pull the seas towards you as you inhale.
Push the seas away from you as you exhale.

(Tania Kovats, 2007, p. 168)

This section analyses work made in response to marine litter and discarded objects on beaches in the Isle of Tiree, Scotland. Marine litter is defined as 'any persistent, manufactured or processed solid material discarded, disposed of or abandoned in the marine and coastal environment' (United Nations Environment Programme, 2024). Current data suggests that between 1 and 1.7 million tonnes of plastic enters the world's seas annually (Ritchie, 2023). In this section, perspectives from environmental art, art history and academic writing come together in the artwork. *Nature Morte*, the title of the ongoing body of work, is conventionally applied to the still life genre in western art; I adopt it here as a lens to consider effects of seaborne detritus on the fragile ecosystems of Tiree.

Tiree is the outermost of the Inner Hebrides of Scotland, a flat scrap of land measuring ten miles by five, from where if you travelled due west you would first reach Newfoundland. Even in calm weather there is a swell, 'clean and effortless as breathing' as Shepherd puts it (2014, p. 61): a movement articulated elsewhere in artworks such as Piet Mondrian's (1915) *Composition 10 in Black and White*, and Tania Kovats's *Blue Sea* (2013) both of which speak about the mesmeric pull of the ocean's surface.[59] A contemporary riposte to Mondrian's work is Pam Longobardi's (2012) *Ghosts of Consumption/Archaeology of Culture (for Piet M.)* a re-imagining of

[59] Piet Mondrian (1915) *Composition 10 in Black and White.* Available at: https://artsandculture.google.com/asset/composition-10-in-black-and-white-piet-mondriaan/NgEozt-0sWt3eQ?hl=en (Accessed 29 December 2024).
Tania Kovats *Blue Sea* (2013), in Kovats, T. (2014) *Drawing Water: Drawing as a Mechanism for Exploration.* Edinburgh: The Fruitmarket Gallery, pp. 166-167.

Composition 10 in Black and White using plastic detritus recovered from three of the plastic-infested gyres in the Pacific Ocean.[60] In Longobardi's version, the shifting shadows of a moving sea suggested in Mondrian's work are replaced by the cast shadows of dark plastic objects.

Sometimes in Tiree the ocean surface and the sky are indistinguishable from each other. This is the only place I know where the sea is so clear as to be invisible, and in which seaweeds - kelp, wrack, sea lettuce, gutweed - appear suspended in mid-air as they pull with the tide: the only way to tell water from air is to plunge your hand right in. Shepherd is fascinated by crystal clear water; she writes of the Pools of Dee in the Cairngorms:

> They are elemental transparency. Like roundness, or silence, their quality is natural, but is found so seldom in its absolute state that when we do so find it we are astonished ... Water so clear cannot be imagined, but must be seen.
>
> (Shepherd, 2014, p. 3)

However Tiree's seemingly-pristine water belies the fact that plastic and other waste from fishing boats, cargo ships or simply carried by tides, is washed up in huge quantities onto Tiree's coral-sand beaches; further testimony, as the art historian Abigail Susik puts it, that: '... the world's seas have become lucid indicators of the omnipresence of global capitalism and the resulting life of discard' (Susik, 2012). In recent years a great deal of artistic attention has turned to marine ecosystems, as we come to terms with a dismantling of deeply-seated cultural ideas and expectations of the sea as a projection of western culture's romantic desire for the wild.

My concern with the topic of marine litter in Tiree dates back to 2008, with a painting entitled *The Maze, Tiree* (figure 55). 'The Maze' is the name of one of Tiree's most

[60] Pam Longobardi (2012) 'Ghosts of Consumption/Archaeology of Culture (for Piet M.) Available at: https://crystalbridges.emuseum.com/objects/4937/ghosts-of-consumption-for-piet-m (Accessed 29 December 2024).

exposed beaches; it faces out into the open Atlantic and is known for giant waves and pounding surf. Walking here one evening, my family and I came across the disconcerting sight of a burnt-out car-wreck sitting on the sand between high and low tides, as if washed up only moments before. The car contained little apart from charred plastic boxes full of dead fish, while engine oil and battery fluid oozed out over the sand and a stench of burnt plastic and rotten fish filled the air. We could only speculate as to this scenario's back-story: a possible act of revenge or a deal gone wrong, evidently to the detriment of the nonhuman life involved. This ugly, seeping wreck disturbed my illusions of the sublime beauty of the place.

At that time I was reading *Damaged Romanticism: A Mirror of Modern Emotion*, by Terrie Sultan *et al.* (2008) in which David Pagel highlights how nineteenth century romanticism instrumentalised nature as human aesthetic pleasure; he writes:

> [N]ature was imagination's springboard, providing poets and painters with a blank slate on which to inscribe their fantasies of sublime beauty, unsullied splendor, and infinite cyclical grandeur - not to mention adventure, redemption and self transformation.
>
> (Pagel, in Sultan *et al*. 2008, p. 64)

Pagel is discussing the photographic artist Edward Burtynsky's series of large-scale documentary photographs entitled *Shipbreaking, Chittagong, Bangladesh* (2000-2001), a project that portrays an area of the port city of Chittagong where discarded cargo ships are sent to be dismantled, one of the few places in the world that will accept them.[61] Burtynsky's photos reveal a wasteland in which exploitation of human labour and pollution of ecological systems are laid bare on a grand scale. The broken hulks are depicted against milky pink or blue light and evince an other-worldly aesthetic that sits uncomfortably between beauty and toxicity. Human shipyard workers resemble tiny ants around these giant monuments to mass consumption. Burtynsky's large-scale photos are suited to the size and scale of his subject; the power of the images, their

[61] Edward Burtynsky (2000-2001) *Shipbreaking* series. Available at: https://www.edwardburtynsky.com/projects/photographs/shipbreaking (Accessed 29 December 2024).

relationship to photographic truth and their reproduceability together convey a widespread ecological message. In hint of Burtynsky's beaches and skies, *The Maze, Tiree* contains multiple washes and glazes in warm slightly off-key colours that suggest the putrescent feel of the polluted scene. As a painting, *The Maze's* surface is more tactile and hand-made than a photo, and while the painting operates on a much smaller scale than Burtynsky's work, it shares a sense of the aesthetic tainted with disquiet and disgust.

Another painting *Beach at Baugh, Tiree, after Winter Storms* (2012) (figure 56) picks up on a similar theme of detritus in sublimity. Referring back to Shepherd's observation about a tossed wreck on a yellow sea, mentioned on p. 90, and hinting at Hokusai's famous work *The Great Wave* (1830-32), this painting depicts a close-up storm wave about to break on a pebble beach.[62] The wave is imagined as not only brown with kelp, as often seen in stormy seas, but also contains an artificial-looking primrose-yellow area, based on a colour I've seen in plastic fish boxes that have been out at sea for a while and gained a matt, patinated surface.

In January 1919 I began a self-generated project with the instruction, to myself, to pick up thirteen items of beach rubbish each day for five days, on Baugh Beach in Tiree. The beach contained tangles of washed-up objects: an array of mundane, banal items, most likely thrown from ships or spilled out of containers: fish boxes, car tyres, ropes, nets, rubber gloves, trainers, insoles, deodorant cans, plastic toys, sardine tins - a toxic version of Haraway's (2016) concept of entanglements (figure 57).

Thirteen was chosen as around the maximum number of objects I could collect in the weather conditions that week. I selected different colours daily, according to mood and preference, and picked up the first thirteen items of that colour that came to hand. The objects were documented (see Appendix 6) and have since been kept in my studio and used as a starting point for drawings and paintings.

[62] Katsushika Hokusai (c. 1830-32) *Under the Wave off Kanagawa* (also known as *The Great Wave*). Available at: https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/45434 (Accessed 24 December 2024).

The word 'fragment' predominates in the documentation, an indication that the objects' remains are likely still somewhere out at sea, breaking up into even smaller pieces and ultimately microplastics. In an article entitled 'Plastic pollution in Atlantic at least 10 times worse than thought' *The Guardian's* environment editor Fiona Harvey writes:

> New measurements of the top 200m of the Atlantic found between 12 and 21 million tonnes of microscopic particles of three of the most common types of plastic, in about 5% of the ocean. That would indicate a concentration in the Atlantic of about 200 million tonnes of these common plastics.
>
> (Harvey, 2020)

Self-evidently my efforts at picking up marine litter would make little impact; even contemplating the above figures invokes helpless paralysis in me. But as I worked with the items in the studio over several months, the close physical contact involved in handling them made them more real and forced me to confront their materiality: as Shepherd writes, albeit in a different context: 'A lot of strength comes to us though the hands' (2014, p. 103). Sea-borne trash tends to confound expectations in regard to the sense of touch: the rubber gloves I collected felt brittle and fragile, not at all rubbery; the plastic bottle fragments sharp and dangerous, not soft.

Writing on the cusp of the age of widespread plastic, Shepherd is still rooted in natural materials and elements. She differentiates material objects one from another by her close attention to similarities and differences in feel and tactility, and gains sensual pleaure from the touch of the living world; she writes:

> The feel of things, textures, surfaces, rough things like cones and bark, smooth things like stalks and feathers and pebbles rounded by water, the teasing of gossamers, the delicate trickle of a crawling caterpillar, the scratchiness of lichen, the warmth of the sun, the sting of hail, the blunt blow of tumbling water, the

> flow of wind - nothing that I can touch or that touches me but has its own identity for the hand as much as for the eye.
>
> (Shepherd, 2014, p. 103)

At first I was repelled by the plastic objects I collected, but in learning about them with my hands, my attention altered the significance of the weathered fragments, prompting consideration of how cultural artefacts link to wider ecologies. I photographed and painted the objects: *Day 1: Green Trash, 19 January 2019* (figure 58) relates to *Nature Morte: Green Trash Study* (figure 59) and *Day 5: Red Trash, 23 January 2019* (figure 60) relates to *Nature Morte: Red Trash Study* (figure 61). *Nature Morte (Tiree Beach Trash)* (figure 62) was a temporary assemblage made for an open studio event.

The cutural artefacts of seventeenth century Dutch still-life painting were inextricably linked to the sea as a site of commercial exchange, as Barbara Hochstrasser (2007) demonstrates in her study entitled *Still Life and Trade in the Dutch Golden Age*. Shipping, trading and the pursuit of colonial mercantile interests were celebrated in the art and patronage of that era: Hochstrasser relates how exotic luxuries painted by Dutch artists - lemons, olives and oysters, served on silver, pewter and crystal; silks and tapestries; sugar and spices - were products of a brutal colonialist sea-trade supported by slavery. Slaves were displayed like exotic possessions among the luxury consumer goods, exemplified in works such as *Still Life with Moor and Porcelain Vessels* (1665-75) by Juriaen van Streek: an egregious moment for art history.[63] One could imagine a line drawn through history linking a common desire for commodities to pollution of the seas, in the name of profit.

[63] Juriaen van Streek (c. 1660-1670) *Still Life with Moor and Porcelain Vessels*. Available at: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Juriaen_van_Streeck_-_Stillleben_mit_Mohr_und_Porzellangef%C3%A4%C3%9Fen_-_6599_-_Bavarian_State_Painting_Collections.jpg (Accessed 29 December 2024).

An important exhibition *Gyre: the Plastic Ocean* (2013-2015) refers to the ocean gyres, five marine vortices in which circulate millions of tonnes of plastic waste, including the massive North Pacific Garbage Patch between California and Hawaii. The exhibition, originally created in Anchorage, Alaska, brought together 26 artists on a large-scale project about plastic debris. Some of the work takes an archaeological perspective such as Mark Dion's (2014) *Cabinet of Marine Debris* and Steve McPherson's (2009-2010) *28 Objects That Measured The World*.[64] Pam Longobardi makes both sculptural assemblages and abstract paintings, and regards painting as an antidote to her work with plastics. She writes: 'Through the act of painting, I find hope and comfort by engaging with the imaginary' and her paintings resemble to her 'a paradise of living energy' (Longobardi, 2024).[65]

Fragments, multiples and quantities are expressed in the photographic art of Mandy Barker, another of the artists in *Gyre.*[66] Her paintings and photos use grids to organise the subject material. The grid flattens out pictorial hierarchies, and the physical act of handling and arranging these normally-overlooked objects, then drawing, painting or photographing them, changes their status from rubbish to artefacts that reflect back to us a culture that deposits its rubbish into the oceans.

To turn the mind to the reality of marine litter means comprehending that its remains will leech into the world's oceans for centuries to come, long after the human use-lives of the detritus. The time during which the objects are desired is a fraction of what we might call their zombie lives: as Morton puts it, '[a] Styrofoam cup will outlive me by over four hundred years' (2013, p. 60).

[64] Dion, M. (2014) *Cabinet of Marine Debris* Available at: https://www.tanyabonakdargallery.com/artists/34-mark-dion/works/9650-mark-dion-cabinet-of-marine-debris-2014/ (Accessed 29 December 2024)
McPherson, S. (2009-2010) *28 Objects That Measured The World* https://www.stevemcpherson.co.uk/artwork/28-objects/ (Accessed 29 December 2024)
[65] Examples of Longobardi's work can be seen at: https://oceanic.global/pam-longobardi/ (Accessed 29 December 2024)
[66] Mandy Barker. Available at: https://www.mandy-barker.com/ (Accessed 29 December 2024)

Continuing on from the previous work about Icelandic fulmars, I made seabirds, or rather, bird-like assemblages from marine litter: styrofoam, plastic, wood, metal, bone. I was influenced by Chris Jordan's photographic print series *Midway: Message from the Gyre* (2009, ongoing) based in the Midway Atoll in the Pacific Ocean. Jordan's large-scale photos depict carcasses of albatross chicks which have died from ingesting plastic fed to them by parent birds who mistake it for food.[67] Jordan writes:

> Like the albatross, we first-world humans find ourselves lacking the ability to discern anymore what is nourishing from what is toxic to our lives and our spirits. Choked to death on our waste, the mythical albatross calls upon us to recognize that our greatest challenge lies not out there, but *in here*.
>
> (Jordan, 2011)

Rather than beach debris being *inside* a bird, as in Jordan's photographs, I made bird-like assemblages of plastic in which the exterior of the bird figure is made of plastic. *Seabird #1: Sanderling* (figure 63) is based on the sanderlings (*Calidris alba*) that over-winter in Tiree from their breeding grounds in the Arctic and can be seen from July to March, in large groups feeding below the tideline. One study of juvenile sanderlings notes an overall drop in sanderling numbers between 2009 and 2011 in Tiree although no cause was determined (Lemke, Bowler and Reneerkens, 2012). *Tiree Beach Trash Study #1: Mountain* (figure 64) is a painting developed from shapes, forms and colours in *Sanderling* and conveys a sense of the detritus choking the beach.

Seabird #2: Gull (figure 65) places an unidentified piece of seabird skull, probably from a herring gull (*Larus argentatus*) or common gull (*Larus canus*), inside the neck of a plastic canister to make a representation of a gull-like creature. An article in the journal *Seabird* paints an overall mixed picture of Tiree's seabird populations, for instance, a general decline is recorded in numbers of most species, but there is a rise in common gull numbers (Bowler, 2014, p.79) *Tiree Beach Trash Study #2* (figure 66) responds to the *Gull* assemblage, again picking up on the 3-d shapes of the assemblage

[67] Chris Jordan. Available at: https://www.chrisjordan.com/ (Accessed 29 December 2024)

to make a painted composition.

A third plastic bird figure *Seabird #3: Penguin* (figure 67) is an abject small figure that was prompted by the affecting documentary *Emperor* (2018) in which David Attenborough follows endangered penguin chicks in Antarctica. The body is made of a yellow plastic container for a Spanish brand of drinking chocolate powder called Cola Cao; I was unable to identify the other fragments used in *Penguin*, apart from a cartridge shell. *Tiree Beach Trash Study #3* (figure 69) is a painting that responds to *Penguin* and to a little plastic doll inscribed with the word 'Love', found on the beach (figure 68). These part abject/part-comic figures bring to mind Freud's 1919 theory of *The Uncanny*: they bear half-forgotten resemblances to real birds, when in fact they comprise objects distant from us in time, space and intended contexts: strangely familiar and abjectly strange. If the ocean popularly represents our unconscious, this is an awakening of the worst kind.

In his theory of hyperobjects introduced Morton describes, 'things ...massively distributed in time and space relative to humans'; he writes:

> A hyperobject could be the very long-lasting product of direct human manufacture, such as Styrofoam or plastic bags, or the sum of all the whirring machinery of capitalism.
>
> (Morton, 2013, p. 1)

For Morton, climate warming is a hyperobject, as is a glacier, as are quantum objects. We cannot see hyperobjects in their entirety yet they possess agency: they touch us and act upon us in individual fragmented ways: the sun burning our skin, for instance, or the sight of a melting glacier.

However recent thinking posits the concept of the hyperabject as too abstract, too distanced and carrying too many associations with sublimity. Totalising descriptions of hyperobjects as either massive or tiny beyond comprehension, are liable to invoke feelings of awe and wonder inappropriate to effects of the climate crisis. According to researchers on ecology and capitalism Mikkel Krause Frantzen and Jens Bjering (2020)

the concept of the hyperobject ennobles ecological disaster in misleading ways.
In their 2020 essay 'Ecology, Capitalism and Waste: from Hyperobject to Hyperabject' Franzen and Bjering propose to replace 'hyperobject' with 'hyperabject' in discussion of marine litter. Hyperabject is a co-mingling of 'hyperobject' and the 'abject', as described by Julia Kristeva in her (1980) theory of abjection. Abjection is the state of throwing off or rejecting what is other to oneself, including objects of which we have partaken, but are no longer useful or desirable (McAfee, 2004). To think (or re-think) the sea as a giant garbage tip disrupts a commonly-held notion within our symbolic realm whereby the ocean signifies vastness, mystery, sublimity, a source of life and nourishment. By contrast, the hyperabject represents massive, inert deadness, a 'planetary infrastructure of waste' (Frantzen and Bjering, 2020) defined by lack of any cultural, ecological or economic value. *Fragments from the Sea, Tiree* (figure 70) are nameless, randomly-formed fragments that typify lack-of-value waste, and yet ... their colour and distressed texture impelled me to pick them out as aesthetic objects; they informed the painting *Seafarer* (figure 71), described next.

Franzen and Bjering's and Kristeva's abjection theories are articulated in *Seafarer*, an oil painting on linen, in which pastel-coloured, fragmented forms appear to float on invisible currents in a sort of aimless dance, in hint of Shepherd's words when she writes:

> ... [L]ike a painting without perspective, in which objects are depicted all on one plane and of the same size, they fill the canvas and there is neither foreground nor background.
>
> (Shepherd, 2014, p. 98)

In making *Seafarer*, the above observation by Shepherd coalesced with memories of the hyperabject, bringing to mind a drifting, morphing flow of translucent scraps, rather like memories themselves. I also noted that Shepherd's above words constitute one of only two direct references to painting in *The Living Mountain*, and is the only

one that hints, albeit obliquely, at any knowledge of modern painting on Shepherd's part.[68]

It was Shepherd's reference to objects all depicted on one plane that prompted me first to draw around real objects from my collection of sea-plastic, on separate sheets of paper. I filled in the shapes with a thick gesso primer and mono-printed them onto the canvas using a 10 cm grid to organise the composition (figure 72).[69] Within the grid I subtly altered the forms as I worked, carefully enlarging some, reducing others, and shaping them into directional flows in hint of oceanic gyres and currents. One challenge at this stage was to avoid resemblance to recognisable objects. I was aiming to flatten out any hierarchy of objects: a shape that resembled a real thing would attract the viewer's eye, whereas I wanted to depict a mass of unidentifiable objects. My approach in this respect was informed by Kristeva; she writes:

> When I am beset by abjection, the twisted braid of affects and thoughts I call by such a name does not have, properly speaking, a definable object. The abject is not an ob-ject facing me, which I name or imagine.
>
> (Kristeva, 1982, p. 10)

I interpret Kristeva's words as signifying a difficulty in comprehending something when we do not have identifiable objects to define or fixate upon. When so much art tends to privilege the object, as Bois (1990a, p. 247) points out, then if there is no discernable object, only a mass of non-objects, our intentions are lacking in focus. So it is with ocean plastic: what kind of pictorial languages might speak about matter such

[68] The other direct reference to painting in *The Living Mountain* occurs in chapter 5, 'Frost and Snow' when Shepherd is studying patterns on the underside of ice. She describes the reverse patterns as: 'the subtle shift of emphasis and superimposed design that occurs between a painting and the landscape it represents' (2014, p. 61).

[69] I began the painting with same 10 cm squares used in *Snaefellsjökull* (chapter 1) and *Úa's Journey* (chapter 2) but this grid proved more complex to organise when it developed as multi-directional and organic: fine adjustments of colour, form and weight were needed to achieve the uniformity I was seeking. This was a departure from the repetitive model of On Kawara, who adhered to his grids with precision, one possible exception being the *Date* paintings which must have involved judgements of eye and hand to accomodate the lettering of each date.

as plastic waste? Surely plastic waste is the opposite of Bennett's idea of vibrant matter?

With these questions in mind I opted to convey a sense of decomposition by deconstructing the shapes and forms of the painting, while retaining connections with the material world of things and places: living matter juxtaposed with dead matter. In an aim to tie the painting to land and sea I conveyed effects of weather and sun-bleaching by using thin layers of colour partially rubbed off. The colours are based on what I've seen on the Tiree coastline: rocks, sand, pebbles, lichens, sea-pinks, beachgrasses, fragments of plastic, glass, other human-made materials.

2:4 Finland Ice-melt: Water is Speaking and Algal Blooms

Two paintings, entitled *Ice-melt, Korpo, Finland #1* and *Ice-melt, Korpo, Finland #2* recall the start of Spring 2021 in Korpo Island, Finland, when sea and forest began to stir after seven months of northern winter (figures 73 and 74). I would walk to an outcrop of twisted silvery pine trees known as archipelago pines, which look as if they grow out of bare rock. This type of tree is known as *Krummholz* (German for 'crooked wood') and refers to exposed, wind-blown trees at the forest edge in subarctic regions (Rawlence, 2022, p. 40). At the interface of tree, rock and ice, new patterns would appear each morning in forms Shepherd describes as: '... [C]rystal clear but most probably translucent; crimpled, cracked or bubbled; green throughout or at the edges' (2014, p. 31). Shepherd is fascinated by transmutations of ice and water; she observes:

> The water ... freezes in crinkled green cascades of ice, then a dam forms further up of half frozen slush, green, though colourless if lifted out, solid at its margins, foliated, with the edges all separate, like untrimmed hand-made paper, and each edge a vivid green.
>
> (Shepherd, 2014, p. 31)

Once I heard the sea-ice singing; an unworldly strain interspersed with deep gurgles and cracks; I learned later this is a phenomenon of air movement under melting or forming ice. I tried to record the singing on my phone, but the wind was too strong. Hoping to be prepared next time I went home and improvised a waterproof mic (figure 75) but I never heard the sounds again.[70] I did use my home-made mic though, to record other sounds of the sea, the forces of the ice pushing against the rocks while

[70] Multiple recordings of sea singing are posted online: one that resembles what I heard is Jonna Jinton (2019) *Singing Ice: Two Hours Raw Ice Sounds.* Available at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Qd-CwJa1SHE (Accessed 24 December 2024).

cracking and receding, in echo of Shepherd's description of, 'an interplay between two movements in simultaneous action, the freezing of frost and the running of water' (2014, p. 31).[71]

The two ice-melt paintings were made by playing back my recordings to trigger memories of the time and place. Notions of green-ness came to the fore as I recalled how winter-white ice-crystals gave way to rich green sea-water. The Baltic Sea is brackish rather than salty, and the coastal water green due to reed-beds breaking down on the sea-bed, rendering the water nitrogen-rich and oxygen-poor. In summer large parts of the Baltic Sea turn vivid green with blue-green algae (*Cyanobacteria*): a toxic ecological scourge, yet frighteningly beautiful.

Helped by rising sea temperatures, blue-green algae photosynthesises on the sea's surface and deposits layers of green sludge on the shoreline; you can almost taste the colour, which varies between mouthwash, chartreuse and pistachio. This worrying phenomenon is the subject of recent work by Renja Leino, an artist whose video and photographic installations chart relationships between Finnish islanders and the sea. *The New Seapainting* (2018) is a photo that resembles a painting in thick green oils, a twist on the northern ideal of romantic seascape painting.[72]

Ice-melt, Korpo, Finland #1 and #2 bring the above ideas, sounds and memories together by imagining where the forest meets the sea at the moment of melt. Conventionally, spring would bring fresh new growth and eager anticipation of summer in the north, but here the lurid, toxic greens hint at the coming threat of a too-green sea.

[71] *Water is speaking* (2021). Available on Vimeo at: https://vimeo.com/526242975 or as *Film #2* in the USB accompanying this study.
[72] Renja Leino (2018) *The New Seapainting* [Photograph] Installation view available at: https://renjaleino.com/darling-sea (Accessed 29 December 2024).

2:5 Conclusion to Chapter 2

This chapter has marked an experimental orientation of the project from mountains to sea, with the aim of applying and testing Shepherd's ideas to my walks in and around coastlines.

The first section of the chapter has taken the idea of Shepherd's sympathetic embodiment of birds, to speak about my own interactions with birds in the form of dying fulmar chicks on the Icelandic island of Grímsay. The painting *Úa's Journey* (figure 46) is analysed in terms of mourning and ecological grief, contextualised first by van Dooren's (2014) concept of interspecies mourning, then in context of solastalgia (Albrect, 2003) and ecological grief (Cunsolo and Evans, 1028).

Next, this chapter has looked at anthropogenic harm to our seas, through the lens of Shepherd's interests in Taoism and Romanticism. A body of work entitled *Nature Morte* (Dead Nature) considers sea-borne rubbish on the Scottish Isle of Tiree, in contexts of mercantile capitalism dating back to seventeenth century Dutch still-life painting (Hochstrasser, 2007); the beach rubbish problem on Tiree as a microcosm of 'glocalism' (Heise, 2008; Walton, 2020) and the contemporary concept of the Hyperabject (Frantzen and Bjering, 2020) articulated in the painting *Seafarer* (figure 71).

Finally this chapter discusses two paintings entitled *Ice-melt, Korpo, Finland #1* and *Ice-melt, Korpo, Finland #2* (figures 73 and 74) prompted by sound recordings of ice melting in the Baltic Sea and the ongoing problem of blue-green algae in that sea due to rising temperatures, for reasons of nutrient pollution and climate warming.

Chapter 3

FOREST

3:1 Introduction

This chapter explores forests and trees in context of Shepherd's words about loss of the original pine forests of Scotland. For Shepherd, war and ecological destruction go hand in hand; she writes of:

> ... [T]he Rothiemurchus forest where the fir trees were felled in the 1914 War ... Not much is left now of this great pine forest.
>
> (Shepherd, 2014, p. 79)

The work presented in this chapter covers the period of the Covid-19 pandemic (2020-2022) and the outbreak of war in Ukraine, in context of walks in Scotland and Finland during lockdown restrictions. The first section discusses work originating in the Glenkens area of Dumfries and Galloway, my home area, during the first Covid-19 lockdown. Next, the work is located in the forests of Korpo Island, Finland where I spent seven months during the next lockdown period. Then, work from both Scotland and Finland intertwines in drawings and films that examine human and nonhuman sound and language. Finally, paintings of trees and forests look at the concept of industrial forests and forests that have been left alone to regenerate naturally, in context of *shinrin-yoku* (Japanese for 'forest-bathing') and the notion of the nature cure.

3:2 Tracks to the Forest, Flowers and Bees.

Our village in Dumfries and Galloway boundaries onto Galloway Forest Park, almost three hundred square miles of forest and loch connected by wetland flows. On first impression the area seems wild and remote, but is in fact extensively grazed, drained, harvested and managed for farming, forestry, angling, deer-stalking, hiking, camping and cycling. Historical and present-day impacts of human activity are deeply inscribed into the shape and nature of the land.

The forest mainly consists of blanket-planted Sitka spruce (*Pichea sitchensis*) in the tight rows favoured by commercial forestry. The area is interspersed too with privately-owned moor and woodland used for pheasant or deer shooting, therefore heavily managed and offering few protections from extraction and profit-driven land practices; a Scotland-wide issue, as Jamie notes:

> There's nothing wild in this country: every square inch of it is 'owned', much has seen centuries of bitter dispute; the whole landscape is man-made, deforested, drained, burned for grouse moor, long cleared of its peasants or abandoned by them.
>
> (Jamie, 2008)

One hillside between our village and the forest has been largely left alone in recent years, being too close to the village for shooting and too rough for grazing. The terrain typifies what Anna Tsing calls 'disturbance-based ecologies', that is, semi-cultivated habitats in which human and nonhuman adapt to living side-by-side (Tsing, 2017, p. 5). Nonhuman life has proliferated: ancient oaks spread like giant broccolis, with birch, beech, willow, blackthorn, crab apple and alder established above or below the floodlines according to their natures. You can follow where a fox has walked during the night and even spot from fresh scat what the creature has eaten; as Shepherd puts it: 'One is companioned, though not in time' (2014, p. 30).

Most days during lockdown I walked the paths here, companioned variously by frogs, toads, skylarks, red kites, snipe, butterflies, adders, slow worms, midges, ticks, and many more species. The earth is receptive and springs back from a footstep: repetition is needed to make a path. I would stop to draw networks of interweaving tracks that led into the forest, my eye and hand following the lines of human and nonhuman walkers. Charcoal drawings entitled *Mossdale Flow Studies* (2020) (figure 76) convey a sense of the land inscribed, impressed upon and overwritten by repeated imprints of feet, paws and hooves. The drawings are built up in layers of additions and erasures, suggesting the ground is not static or homogeneous; rather, as Ingold points out: 'It is infinitely variegated, composite, and undergoes continuous generation' (2010, p. 134).

Peat-brown pools, soil, mud and the tangled roots of heather and willow lie beneath the reeds, bracken and cotton-grass. Scent and touch are paramount: gentle rooting in sphagnum moss under oaks and birches might reveal tiny scented chanterelle mushrooms. Shepherd writes:

> I am like a dog - smells excite me. They are there, to be smelled ...The earthy smell of moss, and the soil itself, is best savoured by grubbing.
>
> (Shepherd, 2014, p. 98)

She describes how her father taught her to collect stagmoss by carefully feeling each root with her fingers; she recalls:

> Though I did not know it then, I was learning my way in, through my own fingers, to the secret of growth.
>
> (Shepherd, 2014, p. 58)

Mossdale Flow Study (figure 77) is a painting that echoes this terrain's damp, bright earth by making a composition of colours and forms seen and absorbed from the place: yellow-gold chanterelles, purple-brown peat soil, pools and lochans, the wateriness of the sky. The canvas is under-painted in a crimson colour ubiquitous in the land after you have first noticed it, in heather, saxifrage, blaeberries, junipers,

sloes, brambles or birches in early spring. Similarly, Shepherd describes glowing purple in the upper branches of 'naked' white birch trees; she writes:

> Birch trees are least beautiful when fully clothed ... they are loveliest of all when naked ... without transfiguration they are seen to be purple - when the sap is rising a purple so glowing that I have caught sight of a birchwood on a hillside and for one incredulous moment thought the heather was in bloom.
>
> (Shepherd, 2014, p. 53)

Mossdale Flow Study and the criss-crossing path of my daily walks, appear in the film by John Wallace that accompanies this study (Appendix 8) [73]

Shepherd is fascinated by alpine flora of the Cairngorms, and marvels at the 'tenacity of life' in these hardy plants that outlived the glacial period (2014, p. 49); she writes: 'I can imagine the antiquity of rock, but the antiquity of a living flower - that is harder' (2014, p. 59). Chapter Seven of *The Living Mountain*, entitled 'Life: the Plants' contains multiple names of plants and flowers recited like an incantation; for example:

> ...[B]irdsfoot trefoil, tormentil, blaeberry, the tiny genista, alpine lady's mantle; saxifrage, the 'rock-breaker', and silene, the moss-campion ...the most startling of all ... Its root too is strong and deep.
>
> (Shepherd, 2014, p. 49)

Shepherd portrays the mountain's plant-life in sensuous terms: 'thrusting', 'vigorous', 'ardent', 'moist', 'flamboyant' (2014, pp. 49-51). 'Adoration ... at its finest', she writes, 'demands clarity of the intellect as well as the surge of emotion' (2014, p. 51). One could imagine Shepherd as sublimating her own yearnings into the mountain's outpouring of life.

[73] John Wallace (2024) *Patti Lean, Artist.* Available on Vimeo at: https://vimeo.com/pileon/pattilean?share=copy as Film #6 on the USB pen that accompanies this study.

A flourishing of wildflowers in my local area felt reassuring during the Covid pandemic. I began a log of flowers and plants seen beside the above-mentioned paths, with the aim of comparing what I saw with Shepherd's lists. My list included:

birdsfoot trefoil	devil's bit	ragged robin
bog asphodel	hemlock	red campion
chamomile	ladies' bedstraw	spotted orchid
coltsfoot	ladies' mantle	tormentil
cow parsnip	meadowsweet	vetch
cuckoo flower	ox-eye daisy	wood sorrel
harebell	plantago	yarrow

I painted tangles of wildflowers (figure 78) noticing how the place buzzed and hummed with bees and other pollinating insects as I worked. Their presence underscored the 'intricate interplay' of species expressed by Shepherd when she states succinctly: '[N]o milk-vetch, no Burnet moth' (2014, p. 59). In riposte to this statement, we re-wilded our garden in Finland; I painted the results in watercolour and worked with a local printer to make an edition of a hundred booklets in Finnish, English and Latin entitled *No flowers, no Bees* (figure 79).

In 2020 the wildflower project contributed to local objections to a proposal to plant Sitka spruce in the area that prompted *Mossdale Flow Studies* (encircled in orange on the map in figure 80). Since too much of south-west Scotland is already blanketed in monoculture Sitka plantations, and since Sitkas acidify the soil and release more carbon than they can sequester before harvesting (Matthews *et al*., 2020, abstract) there was considerable local objection. The wildflower log with its indications of a thriving wildlife habitat formed part of local representations against the scheme.

The plan was modified, then finally abandoned. I was pleased my research played a role, albeit small and localised, in contesting outmoded, harmful forestry practices. Walking in this area every day underscored how bonds formed at an embodied level can lead to a will to save and protect places to which we are emotionally attached, as

the evolutionary biologist Steven Jay Gould (1941-2002) writes:

> [W]e cannot win this battle to save species and environments without forging an emotional bond between ourselves and nature as well - for we will not fight to save what we do not love (but only appreciate in some abstract sense).
>
> (Gould, 2014, p.39)

3:3 The Bell and the Blackbird; Green Leaves, Black Water

In Chapter 1 of *The Living Mountain* Shepherd refers to an Irish tale about a monk who listens to the song of a blackbird (*Turdus merula*) (2014, p. 3).[74] In the tale, *The Bell and the Blackbird,* a monk on his way to prayer is transfixed by the joyful bird-song; he loses all sense of time and forgets the call to prayer.[75] Shepherd mentions the story again in 1981, in a letter to the artist Barbara Balmer in which she marvels at how perception of time passing depends on the senses (Peacock, 2017, p. 258). For Shepherd, one can imagine time in the mountain to be quite different from time spent on dutiful work in Aberdeen.

I would often hear a blackbird's song on my walks, prompting thoughts of the tale of the monk and how Nan Shepherd's trips to the Cairngorms were boundaried by her near-lifetime of caring responsibilities. I visualised the rich notes of the blackbird's song as entangled, curling shapes; an idea explored further in a video *Green Leaves, Black Water* (2020) (video still, figure 81), a film made for an online version of Spring Fling Open studios which aimed to showcase what Spring Fling artists were doing during lockdown.[76]

In the film I am drawing reflections of willow branches in the waters of Mossdale Loch, near my village. Using Indian ink applied with an extended brush, I carefully re-trace the twisting lines of the branches onto sheets of paper placed on the ground. Shepherd writes of tree-roots, '[E]xposed where the soil has been washed away above

[74] The call of the blackbird (*Turdus merula*) is available to listen at: https://www.rspb.org.uk/birds-and-wildlife/blackbird (Accessed 24 December 2024)

[75] The tale appears in several versions: Shepherd seems to refer to a version in which the monk falls into a trance and wakes up to find the Reformation has occurred (Peacock, 2017, p. 258), Versions of the tale in contemporary poetry include: Seamus Heaney (1996) *St. Kevin and the Blackbird* and David Whyte (2006) *The Bell and the Blackbird*.

[76] *Green leaves Black Water* (2021). Available as film #3 on the USB pen that accompanies this study, or on Vimeo at https://vimeo.com/935354803?share=copy (Accessed 29 December 2024).

the path, twisted and intertwined like a cage of snakes' (2014, p. 55): an image that merged with that of the blackbird's song to influence the drawings.

Blackbird I and II (figures 82 and 83) are montages of the drawings made at the loch; each montage is made up of six drawings. I could imagine that the drawings depicted views of the loch from the perspective of a bird flying from tree to tree. There is little prospect of telling precisely what the perspective of a blackbird would be, however Haraway's concept of interspecies 'response-ability' (2016, p. 10) offers a lens through which to consider new narratives of ongoing responsiveness between species. Haraway proposes that 'It matters what stories make worlds, what worlds make stories' (2016, p.11). Rather than thinking in terms of anthropomorphism versus human exceptionalism, our relationship with nonhuman others can be reframed in our narratives and stories.

Gaps and overlaps between human and elemental worlds are considered in a film entitled *Birth of Water* (2021) (video still, figure 84).[77] The film explores sound, language and understanding, drawing both from the previous work described in this section and from notions of interspecies speaking and hearing as described by Shepherd; she writes:

> As I stand there in the silence, I become aware that the silence is not complete. Water is speaking. I go towards it ...
>
> (Shepherd, 2014, p. 52)

Birth of Water contains four voices that convey four perspectives: the nonhuman (reeds and water); text from *The Living Mountain*; and two voices, a male and a female, reading Shepherd's words simultaneously in Finnish and English. Each voice renders the other less intelligible, although the occasional word is deliberately left 'uncovered', offering fragments of verbal meaning to the listener. Linguistic stops and starts sit at variance with the liquid fluidity of air, water, reeds and reflections; as

[77] *Birth of Water* (2021) Available at: https://vimeo.com/526201967 (Accessed 29 December 2024)

Bachelard puts it in his observations entitled 'Water's Voice' , '[T]he river is speech with no punctuation' (2006, p. 189). Bachelard quotes the reed's motto, 'I bend and do not break' but regards this as, 'a *passive* motto, that advises waiting and bending with power', a characteristic he associates with femininity, at odds with dynamic, rigid power of the masculine (2006, p. 162).

Mossdale Loch, where *Birth of Water* was made, is a part-natural, part human-made flow system at the edge of the Galloway Forest. The loch floods with increasing frequency, transforming the normally-peaceful lapping water into a headlong rush, something for which Shepherd feels an atavistic combination of fear and attraction; she writes:

> For the most appalling quality of water is its strength. I love its flash and gleam, its music, its pliancy and grace, its slap against my body; but I fear its strength. I fear it as my ancestors must have feared the natural forces that they worshipped..... It slips out of holes in the earth like the ancient snake.
>
> (Shepherd, 2014, p. 56)

The 'ancient snake' likely refers to the biblical serpent of the creation story, a reference that *Birth of Water* alludes to in shots of snake-like reeds.

Birth of Water is also influenced by Matthew Dalziel and Louise Scullion's film *Water Falls Down* (2001) filmed between Norway and Scotland, in which the spoken voice interweaves with sounds of water. [78] *Birth of Water's* use of the spoken-word also draws from *Colour Poems* (1974) by Shepherd's younger contemporary, the Orkney-based film-maker Margaret Tait (1918-1999), whose work will be discussed in the next section.

[78] Dalziel and Scullion (2001) *Water Falls Down* [video installation]. Opening clip available at: https://dalzielscullion.com/works-entry/water-falls-down/ (Accessed 24 December 2024).

3:4 The Cutting: War and Pestilence

Earlier, my house was a coal-store for the old railway line linking south-west Scotland with ships for Belfast and Dublin. The line closed in 1965 and is now repurposed into a rough walking and cycling path. A section I walk regularly cuts through deep granite and sandstone rock, and even on the hottest day has its own cool, damp microclimate. Water runs down the rock, and tree roots and massive ferns tower over your head as you walk; the air tastes fresh and oxygenated.

The Cutting charcoal drawings (figures 85-87) are based on this stretch of path, and result from an experiment in peripheral-vision walking meditation, a yoga technique designed to regulate the breath, quiet the mind and focus attention to the periphery of vision, while softening the gaze and relaxing the eyes. This was my variation on Nan Shepherd's delight at making changes to her vision simply by half-closing her eyes or adjusting her body position. She asks, 'How can I number the worlds to which the eye gives me entry?' (2014, p. 101) and finds it 'invigorating' to disrupt her 'habitual vision of things ... depending on how the eye is placed and used' (2014, p. 101). Shepherd writes:

> It will take a long time to get to the end of a world that behaves like this if I do no more than turn round on my side or my back.
>
> (Shepherd, 2014, p. 101)

A walking meditation makes it difficult for the vision to zoom in and register specific objects such as trees, rocks, mosses or lichens: reorienting the body changes the subject-object relationship inherent in the landscape-as-a-view discussed on page 25. The aim was to take in a sense of the forest's entanglements as they entered my perception, but not being experienced or patient at meditation, I did not find this easy and only achieved the desired shift in perception very fleetingly.

I made the series of drawings by holding onto the memory of those few moments when the meditation felt easy and right. I already knew the saplings were mainly

alders and willows, and the willow charcoal sticks I used echoed those trees' slippery forms and shadowed bark. I worked charcoal powder into the paper with a cotton cloth wound into a soft pad, then superimposed networks of delicate interlacing twigs and shoots, rotating the charcoal gently as I drew. I sliced the slender tips of charcoal to a sharp edge before every new line, and was careful to keep white areas masked off and charcoal-free as possible to let light into the drawings.

On 24 February 2022 Russia invaded Ukraine. *Forest* (figures 88 and 89) is a hybrid drawing/painting with dark red-painted sides to the canvas, that conveys a prevalent mood of agitation and anxiety at this time. I had been trying to work on walking meditation drawings, but my mind would wander, disembodied, to the latest dreadful TV images. Dazed refugees from Ukraine arrived in our village, while my Finnish husband pored anxiously over his newsfeed: Finland suddenly felt more vulnerable.

The Living Mountain refers to war only obliquely in the demise of ancient pine forests (2014, p. 54) and 'in the wrecked aeroplanes that lie scattered over the mountains' (2014, p. 77). Other works by Shepherd are more outspoken: for instance, her 1930 novel *The Weatherhouse* centres on a character Garry Forbes, a military engineer traumatised by his experiences in the trenches. A 1942 short story *Descent from the* Cross is a bitter indictment of WW2's psychological effects from the perspective of a female protagonist. The living world would seem to offer Shepherd an escape from feeling 'bedevilled with thought' (2014, p. 93), an idea that lends weight to her friend and literary executor Erlend Clouston's stated belief that *The Living Mountain* was written in response to the carnage of war (Appendix 3, p. 167); Clouston believes that:

> *The Living Mountain* was written as an explicit rejection of the scientific rationalism which exterminated 16 million people in [the] First World War.
>
> (Clouston, 2019)

Felled and broken trees are the subject of *Salt Marsh Forest, Korpo, Finland* (figures 90 and 91) a charcoal drawing depicting a scraggy, winter-worn forest-edge: an alder wood originally planted in the straight rows typical of Finnish and Scottish forestry, but

now interspersed with birch and willow, and left to its own devices as the vegetation spreads into the marsh. The Baltic Sea is slowly encroaching this area; alders were likely planted to mitigate flooding as they soak up water and extract nitrogen from from the air, which is then fed to other trees and plants via the roots (Wohlleben, 2016, pp. 143-144). The sea was frozen when I drew the trees: a world Shepherd describes on a similar winter day as 'completely white' and 'completely black' with the trees having a 'dead black look' (2014, p. 29), articulated in the drawing as pointed shards of dark and light. Powdered charcoal was worked into the paper, each successive layer sealed to achieve the sooty black of winter trees.

The above-described drawings formed part of a film entitled *Bringing the War Home: Winter Forest, War in Ukraine* (2022) (figure 92).[79] The title references Martha Rosler's anti-war series of the same name.[80] The film opens with peaceful reflections then moves to the drawing *Salt Marsh Forest, Korpo* accompanied by a persistent percussive sound, made by recording thundery raindrops falling into a metal wheelbarrow. This scene draws on other artworks that use atonal sound to speak of war and disaster, such as Margaret Tait's *Colour Poems* (1974, 1: 56) and Rebecca Horn's *Concert for Anarchy* (1990).[81] Then, images of bombardment appropriated from internet news sources flash up, incurring unlikely connections in sound and vision: a bandage on a woman's face echoes masking tape on drawings in the previous frames; a recording of myself drawing with charcoal on paper sounds like heavy breathing, sighing, or in this context, dying; charcoal breaks and splinters, like a shell going off. In a bunker a violinist takes up her bow; a child wails, music plays. A journalist blogs, there are not enough buses and people are having to walk for their

[79] *Bringing the War* Home [Artist's film] available at: https://vimeo.com/690533348 (Accessed 24 December 2024)

[80] Martha Rosler *Bringing the War Home.* [Artist's film] Available at: https://www.martharosler.net/house-beautiful-bringing-the-war-home-new-series-carousel (Accessed 24 December 2024)

[81] Margaret Tait (1974) *Colour Poems*. [Artist's film] Available at: https://movingimage.nls.uk/film/3697 (Accessed 24 December 2024)
Rebecca Horn (1990) Concert for Anarchy. [Sculptural installation] Available at: https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=291463924996731 (Accessed 24 December 2024)

lives. The film ends with a young girl staring from the window of an evacuee bus. The film's mood conveys an emotional heaviness; the use of trees as metaphors calls to mind Paul Nash's broken-tree paintings such as *We are Making a New World* (1918) or the ecofeminist artist Janet Culbertson's *Black* series of drawings (2022).[82]

The Orkney born film-maker Margaret Tait (1918-1999) was a younger contemporary of Nan Shepherd. There appears no evidence they knew one another yet there is a similarity in their approaches: for instance Tait's work has been called 'a loving attentiveness to all the living world' ('Colour Poems', National Library of Scotland (NLS) Moving Image Archive, 2024). Film researcher Susannah Ramsey describes Tait as a 'filmpoet'; Ramsey writes:

> [Tait's] approach to filmmaking was remarkably similar to the ethos of the avant-garde, generally self-funded, non-conformist, uncompromising, non-commercial, with distribution and exhibition being select.
>
> (Ramsey, in Bonta, 2017)

Tait's *Colour Poems* influences my film *Bringing the War Home* in several ways: flickering water disrupts 'normal' vision; drawings are scratched; spoken word is overlaid with found sound and footage of the living world, and local narratives interwoven with iconography of war and capitalism. *Colour Poems* appears ahead of its time in linking ecological devastation with modern capitalism in scenes of the Scottish oil industry and stone-quarrying on a massive scale. Tait describes her process as follows:

> A poem started in words and completed in images. A poem started in words goes on in the picture; part of quite another (finished) poem is read

[82] Paul Nash (1918) *We are Making a New World* [painting] Available at: https://artsandculture.google.com/asset/we-are-making-a-new-world/DwHVm44w3XbHOA?hl=en-GB Accessed 24 December 2024)
Janet Culbertson (1932-2023) Examples of work available at: https://www.janetculbertson.com/ Accessed 24 December 2024) 'Black' drawings were on Artsy https://www.artsy.net/artist/janet-culbertson but are no longer available to view.

> ... Out of my own memory and thought, I find the external scenes to make a picture from.
>
> (Tait, in 'Colour Poems' *NLS Moving Image Archive,* 2024)

Making the above-described films was an experimental departure from painting and I was interested to note how the drawings were incorporated into the films and the films influenced subsequent drawings.

3:5 Solastalgia: Cure and Refuge in the Vegetal World [83]

Old forest greybeard
sprig-hatted, lichen-coated
dress the forest in linens
clothe the backwoods in broadcloth
the aspens all in cloth coats;
Old forest greybeard
sprig-hatted, lichen-coated
dress the forest in linens
clothe the backwoods in broadcloth
the aspens all in cloth coats;
in silver deck out the firs
set up the spruces in gold the
old firs in copper belts the
birches in golden flowers
the stumps in golden trinkets!
Dress them as of old in your better days
as the moon the spruce boughs shone
and as the sun the pine tops
the forest smelt of honey
and of mead the blue backwoods
the glade edges of wort, swamp
edges of melted butter.

(Lönnrot, 1989, p. 159)

That Finns are forest people is evident from Finland's national epic poem *The Kalevala*: lyrics, ballads, stories and songs from the oral poetry of Karelia, collected by a Finnish scholar, Elias Lönnrot (1802-1884) and formed into a continuous written narrative first published in 1835. The above epigraph from *The Kalevala*, canto 14, conjures up

[83] 'The vegetal world' refers to Irigaray and Marder (2016) *Through Vegetal Being*, an analysis of human restoration brought about by living among plants.

images of archaic forest unchanged over aeons, deified and personified, in which trees wear clothes, and provide food, shelter and spiritual nourishment. By contrast, present-day Finnish forests are mostly industrial plantations often subject to controversy over land rights and logging, as in the video documentary *Last Yoik in Saami Forests?* (2007) in which a reindeer herder observes, 'You don't go to a young forest to feel revitalised, you long for an old one' (ArcticPeoples (*sic*), 2013).

Korpo island in Finland is covered in forest, some of which has been left alone long enough to become what forest researcher Ben Rawlence (2022) calls 'old growth', that is, pine and birch forest over 160 years old and allowed to form carbon-absorbing lichens and mosses. Rawlence asks:

> Is this also why an old forest feels good to the human soul? When we walk among a rich inter-generational community of trees accompanied by a profusion of other species, there is abundance and richness, but there is also satisfaction at the sight of nature having achieved a natural balance.
>
> (Rawlence, 2022, p. 61)

We spent winter and spring of 2021 isolating in Korpo. The only time I saw anybody apart from my husband was at the women's ice-swimming group mentioned in my introduction. *Blue Forest, Korpo, Finland* (figure 93) merges the ice-swimming circle with the alder plantation of the charcoal drawings discussed in the last section, and is influenced by a blue light that permeates the forest in midwinter: a long blue dawn till about 11 am, then, at around 2pm, a deep indigo darkness starts to fall. I loved the light, or lack of it, and the unreal feeling of being cocooned in blue: as Rebecca Solnit puts it, 'The world is blue at its edges and in its depths' (2017, p. 29).

Another writer, Maggie Nelson, is in love with blue. In a personal cultural anthology of the colour, entitled *Bluets*.

She writes:

> And so I fell in love with a color - in this case the color blue - as if falling under a spell, a spell I fought to stay under, and get out from under, in turns.
>
> (Nelson, 2009, p. 1)

Nan Shepherd too is fascinated by an 'emotional effect' caused by some shades of blue, that can 'trouble the mind like music' (2014, pp. 41-42). She writes:

> [A]s soon as we see them clothed in air the hills become blue. Every shade of blue, from opalescent milky-white to indigo, is there. They are most opulently blue when rain is in the air. Then the gullies are violet. Gentian and delphinium hues, with fire in them, lurk in the folds.
>
> (Shepherd, 2014, p. 41)

Blue Forest is painted in thin layers of acrylic, each layer matt-varnished to convey a glow of crispy ice and brittle, skinny trees like winter ghosts.

Blue Forest's composition is reimagined in another painting, *Forest Study, Korpo, Finland #1* (figure 94) this time introducing more colours, influenced by an enchanted description of the Cairngorm forests in which Shepherd writes:

> From the gold of the birches and bracken on the low slopes, the colour spurts upwards through all the creeping and inconspicuous growths that live among the heather roots - mosses that are lush green or oak-brown, or scarlet, and the berried plants, blaeberry, cranberry, crowberry and the rest .
>
> (Shepherd, 2014, p. 54)

I painted some of the scrappy trees around the forest's edge. *Broken Forest* (figure 95) conveys a sense of the buttery light, grey lichens and stumps described in the *Kalevala*

quotation above. I imagine the Korpo forest to be old growth because the trees are huge and untended; shady canopies punctuated by pools of light. Dead trees are left to fall and decompose, providing nourishment in the soil for saplings to emerge.

A year later, in 2022, infected with Covid-19 I would go into the forest to draw, and to escape July temperatures in the high thirties: a diametric opposite of the previous freezing blue winter. *Korpo Forest: four drawings in the field* (figure 96) were made on these trips, using a single implement, pen or pencil. I timed the drawings to about forty minutes each because that was how long it took for mosquitos, ticks, mooseflies, blackflies and the occasional adder to find me; in this way I made one drawing a day. The northerly light resembled liquid; in one enchanted description of the Cairngorm forests Shepherd writes:

> As I watch the light comes pouring round the edges of the shapes that stand against the sky, sharpening them till the more slender have a sort of glowing insubstantaility, as though they were themselves nothing but light.
>
> (Shepherd, 2014, p. 91)

Shepherd writes too of the forest's life-giving properties:

> [T]he fragrance is the sap, is the very life itself. When the aromatic savour of the pine goes searching into the deepest recesses of my lungs I know it is life that is entering. I draw life in through the delicate hairs of my nostrils.
>
> (Shepherd, 2014, p. 52)

Shepherd's words read like before-the-fact *shinrin yoku* (forest-bathing) a Japanese therapeutic practice gaining popularity in the west, in which daily exposure to negative ions in forest air reduces stress and lowers blood pressure (Walton 2021; Jones, 2021). *Forest study Korpo*, Finland #3 (figure 97) combines with the forest drawings to inform two larger paintings of the morning forest. *A Swim in the Forest #2* (figure 98) and *A Swim in the Forest #3* (figure 99) are developed using broad brush-strokes and cool colours; they consider the notion of elements merging together in the northerly light

such that one is uncertain what is matter and what is light. Shepherd's naked white birches (2014, p. 53) appear in *A Swim in the Forest #3.* I wrote in my journal:

> *Finnish forest light - molten, intense, low-angled, quivering - wraps itself around objects turning them to them knobbly black silhouettes, like Giacometti sculptures.*[84] *I think it's the same phenomenon you get at sea in the north, when whole islands hover above the horizon, suspended mirage-like and you squint at everything.*
>
> (Journal, August 2022)

This section has explored different moods and affects of forest ecosystems. Even if forests can no longer be described as wildernesses (Marris, 2011) and even if they are industrial forests, disturbed forests or exemplify outmoded forestry practices, the support and sustenance to life they provide informs our collective cultures and narratives as well as the health of the planet.

[84] This refers to the post Second World War work of the painter and sculptor Alberto Giacometti (1901-1966) which was characterised by bronze sculptures of elongated human figures. Examples are available at: https://www.tate.org.uk/whats-on/tate-modern/giacometti (Accessed 24 December 2024)

3:6 Conclusion to Chapter 3

Most of the work discussed in Chapter 3 was made at the time of the Covid-19 pandemic (2020-2022) during which we alternated between Scotland and Finland: an unintended consequence of Covid restrictions and Brexit visas. The research project was obliged to adapt to not having a studio and to seven months of Finnish winter; however the project was designed to be flexible, and new experiences were integrated into the work.

In August 2020 I applied for online tuition with filmmaker Colin Tennant, former official photographer with the British Antarctic Survey.[85] Film-making and drawing came to the fore in the research and each practice informed the other. As with many artists at this time, much of my work moved to online platforms.

Painting wildflowers as described in Section 3:2 had not been in my plan, but rather, evolved over months in response to walks. I had little experience of flower-painting, so rather than attempt botanical studies, I painted plants and flowers in the field, in their tangled habitats, using a loose, quick method. The *No Flowers, No Bees* booklets have been widely disseminated, with about 100 copies going out in Finland and Scotland.

The dark days of the invasion of Ukraine are manifest in the work in sections 3:3 and 3:4. when the tangled trees and sharp forms reflect a mind/body separation that was not present in Chapters 1 and 2, but which gave me better understanding of Shepherd's walking as an antidote to the multiple restrictions in her life. The final section 3:5 has turned artistic attention to shade-providing, oxygen-making, life-enhancing properties of forests and trees as catalyst for renewal in both art and life.

[85] Colin Tennant and Saskia Coulson. Available at: https://wearectproductions.com/ (Accessed 24 April 2024)

4. Reflective Conclusion and Evaluation of the Research

This section is prefaced with a short summary of the project, then I examine how the methodology and the project have fitted each other, followed by reflective discussion and evaluation of ways in which the research has addressed the aims set out for the project.

The table below (diagram 3) shows an overview of *Kissing the Cold Goodbye*; a full timeline is detailed in Appendix 1 of this study, and the Impact and Outreach sections in Appendix 2 discuss ways in which the work has been displayed and communicated in academic and public contexts.

	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	TOTAL
AR - Artist's residency	1	1	1								3
EX - Exhibition solo or 2-artist			1	1	5	3	1	1	1	2	15
EX - Exhibition group							1	1	5	1	8
CPI - Conference presentation, international			1			1					2
CP - Conference presentation			3	1		2		1	1		8
CO - Community Outreach		1	3	3	2		1	3	2	2	17
PD - Professional Development (self-initiated)		4	1	1		1	6		1		14
PU - Publication		1		1							2
RD - researcher Development UoC		1		8							9

Diagram 3. Summary Table of Events

4:1 Short Summary of *Kissing the Cold Goodbye*

Kissing the Cold Goodbye uses art practice as research to explore Nan Shepherd's *The Living Mountain* from an ecocritical perspective. Shepherd's radical approaches to walking as bodily thinking were applied to my own walks and climbs in Iceland, Finland and Scotland. I separated the project from Shepherd's locale, the Cairngorms, in order to differentiate my work from other work about *The Living Mountain*, and focus the research on Shepherd's ideas rather than place-bound interpretations. Consequently the project aims at a re-imagining for the Anthropocene rather than an illustration of *The Living Mountain*. I questioned tropes of the landscape as a view, and Weintraub's (2012) argument that painting lacks capacity to speak about ecological concerns. Guided by Hannula, Suaranta and Vadén's (2014) fine art-specific methodology, I developed an ecologically-minded painting practice across methods and subject areas, aimed at making a contribution to critical discourses of *The Living Mountain*.

Chapter 1 'Mountain' explored the following ideas from *The Living Mountain*: treating a mountain as a friend; 'a mountain has an inside' (Shepherd, 2014, p. 16); 'feyness': being rendered 'a little mad' by effects of mountain air (2014, p. 6); loss of glacier ice, and 'quiescence', training the body to mountain sleep (2014, p. 96). Shepherd's feminism was examined in context of her challenge to prevailing mountaineering narratives of her era and indeed the present time.

Chapter 2 'Sea' extended the enquiry to aspects of the living world other than mountains, while still rooting the work in original ideas from *The Living Mountain.* This chapter explored losses of fulmar chicks on the Icelandic island of Grímsay; marine litter in Tiree, and blue-green algae in the Baltic Sea. Taking the assertion by Bois (1990a) that: '[M]ourning has been the activity of painting throughout this century, the work was theorised in contexts of interspecies mourning (van Dooren, 2014; Dion, 2016); ecological grief (Albrect, 2003; Cunsolo and Evans, 2018) 'glocalism' (Walton, 2021) and the hyperabject (Frantzen and Bjering, 2020).

Chapter 3 'Forest' centred on restricted walking during the Covid pandemic (2020-

2022) and effects of the invasion of Ukraine in 2022. Shepherd drew links between imperialism, war and destruction of forest habitat, prompting me to consider distant news reports of the Ukraine war. Focus turned to drawing, painting, sound recording and film to explore how even depleted or damaged ecosystems may provide habitats that support and encourage life (Tsing, 2017). The last section conveyed Shepherd's aesthetic descriptions of renewal, in which northerly light and scent pour like liquid (2014, p. 18). The research turned to present-day nature cures exemplified by outdoor meditation, ice-swimming and forest-bathing (Walton 2021; Jones, 2021). In the last year of the project I collaborated with film-maker John Wallace on a short film about my practice.[86]

[86] John Wallace (2024) *Patti Lean, Artist.* Available on Vimeo at: https://vimeo.com/pileon/pattilean?share=copy (Accessed 24 December 2024)

4:2 How Methodology and Project form a Match

The main methodology used in this project was Hannula, Suaranta and Vadén's (2014) fine art specific methodology entitled *Artistic Research Practice: Narrative, Power and the Public.* Early in the project I made a physical, string-figure model of the methodology which helped me conceptualise the recursive nature of the practice-as-research model proposed by the methodology.

A first tenet of the methodology was that the artist-researcher should develop and perfect her own artistic skills, vision and conceptual thinking: a focus that oriented the project towards interpreting rather than illustrating Shepherd's text. *Artistic Research Practice* encourages 'inside-in' research practice: that is, practising the practice the research is about. I reached into my personal art history of relating my work to the land, and differentiated my work from canonical works past and present. Influence was drawn from contemporary artworks and practices engaged with ecological topics. My own work was analysed in terms of drawing in the field, studio work, female gestural painting and a haptic approach to composition.

A second tenet of *Artistic Research Practice* is to contribute to the development of research culture in academia by means of an argument in the form of a thesis. Throughout the project I attended conferences, and presented at two international conferences. I wrote a chapter entitled 'ArtLines' in an anthology, *Extending Ecocriticism: crisis, collaboration and challenges in the environmental humanities*. (Barry and Welstead, 2017). Arguments and perspectives were tested out as critical lenses for the work, including overlapping fields in feminist studies, eco-philosophy, new materialism and art history.

A third tenet of the methodology is communication with practising artists and the larger public in audience education. I exhibited widely throughout the project, including three solo exhibitions and a multi-venue touring exhibition. Most exhibitions were supported by talks, workshops or public lectures, articulated with a strong ecological message. I participated in ARG, an artistic research and writing group based

at University of Cumbria. In the community, I am board member of community arts centre The CatStrand and was honorary president of Dumfries and Galloway Fine Arts Society. I volunteer with the arts organisation Upland to set up and facilitate peer-to-peer support throughout Dumfries and Galloway.

4:3 Evaluation of the Research Outcomes in relation to the Aims

Four overlapping aims of this project were set out in the introductory section on pages 19-26 of this study, and can be summarised as follows:
Aim #1: an ecocritical analysis of *The Living Mountain* from the first-person perspective of a walking art practice.
Aim #2: application of *The Living Mountain* to artistic and ecological discourses of the present time, with focus on human-caused depredation in northerly places.
Aim #3 addressed a gap whereby painting does not have a huge presence in the field of ecologically-minded art practices
Aim #4: communication of the work both in academia and wider public platforms.

What I found was, the aims could not be addressed separately like joining dots, or as Jeffreys puts it, 'as if they were separate poles awaiting acts of connection' (2024, p. 11). Consequently I will discuss how aims were met as the project developed, rather than aim by aim. One of the authors of the methodology I used, Mika Hannula, likens artistic research to 'Crossing a River by Feeling Each Stone'; he writes:

> The essential character of valid qualitative research is a certain slowness, and in Artistic Research, this means understanding how much time it takes and is needed to get two different views on relating to reality to collide, contrast and co-operate.
>
> (Hannula, 2009)

Hannula's metaphor of feeling stones reflected my own endeavours to balance creative practice with academic research within a research project. In respect of the the money-spider model discussed in my introductory section, the recursive, looping nature of the artistic research at times felt difficult to adapt to the more linear narrative of a thesis.

The first chapter was concerned with walking as a method of critical practice: learning, knowing and embodying a relationship with the land. Walking and drawing served as

forms of artistic note-taking. Walking gained me access to places I would not otherwise have reached, and where I could establish a practice of drawing in the field as a way of coming-to-know. In walking I could enact experiences similar to those of Shepherd: aim #1. The work was theorised from a feminist perspective with the *caveat* that recent walking practices exceed the male/female binary to encompass all and any artistic walking practices: Aim #2.

A detailed analysis of one painting prompted by climbing a glacier, brought together Aims #2 and #3: I challenged my own art-historical background of landscape as a view, centred on narratives of romanticism and the sublime. In harnessing the camera as a proxy for eyesight in poor weather conditions, studio paintings experimented with perspective and the grid and conveyed sense-perception rather than naturalistic representation: Aim #1.

In Chapter 2 the work was concerned with the sea, with a focus on seabirds and marine litter: Aim #2. In analysing the work in Chapter 2 the project entered subject areas new to me: art as a form of ecological mourning, and ecological grief as a mental health condition: Aim #2.

Chapter 3 was based on walks during the Covid-19 pandemic in Scotland and Finland. With little access to studio materials, I used film to explore restricted walking: Aim #1. Shepherd connected war in Europe with destruction of forests in the Cairngorms: my work focused on long periods spent walking and drawing in the forest (Aim #3) and on present-day nature-cures (Walton, 2021): Aim #2. Studies of trees over weeks of daily observation articulated how even depleted forests can support life and retain a capacity for renewal (Tsing, 2017): Aim #3.

Face-to-face exhibitions, talks and lectures were not possible during Covid: everything went online, bringing benefits of Zoom conferences and seminars, and virtual exhibitions: the new platforms attracted new audiences to the work and opened up new discussions about dissemination of art: Aim #4. I made several films during

lockdown, one was included in a women's film festival: Aim #4. In 2014 film-maker John Wallace made a short film about my practice: aim #4.

One aim from the start of the project was to challenge Weintraub's (2012) provocation about painting being unable to speak about ecological matters, which challenged me to examine what differentiated my practice from ecological practices in other media: aim #3. Not wishing to repeat a reductionist, Greenbergian argument or set painting in opposition to other media, I concluded that painting's long history should be acknowledged but not reified, and argued for painting as ecological thinking: Aim #2.[87]

An overarching rationale behind *Kissing the Cold Goodbye* is to put one's art and scholarship in the service of positive ecological change: frustratingly slow work, as Rebecca Solnit observes:

> You write your books. You scatter your seeds. Rats might eat them, or they might rot [...] some seeds lie dormant for decades because they only germinate after fire.
>
> (Solnit, 2016, p. 66)

The research, thinking and making that go into a work of art may not be obvious when the art goes out into the world: it falls to the artist-researcher to publicly articulate and reflect on the work, and to create discussion by public engagement, and by inviting emergent space in which to explore a topic and glimpse possible alternative scenarios, as Nan Shepherd so manifestly achieves in *The Living Mountain*.

[87] 'Greenbergian' refers to Clement Greenberg (1909-1994) the American modernist critic and advocate of abstract art, whose 1940 essay 'Towards a newer Laocoon' challenges notions of perspectival space in painting, and proposes flatness of the picture plane as the one defining limitation that characterises the medium of painting (Greenberg, in Harrison and Wood, 2003, pp.566-567)

4:4 Topics for Further Research

Shepherd writes:

> Knowing another is endless. And I have discovered that man's experience of them enlarges rock, flower and bird. The thing to be known grows with the knowing.
>
> (Shepherd, 2014, p. 108)

Her words echo my experience of *The Living Mountain* and confirm that my readings of *The Living Mountain* are some of many possible interpretations: there is no shortage of potential for further research on *The Living Mountain*. Other topics arising from this study include:

- Exploration of Clouston's theory that *The Living Mountain* was written as an explicit rejection of the scientific rationalism of the First World War (Appendix 3)
- Artistic interpretation of artists and writers other than Shepherd; I am thinking of the Austrian writer Christiane Ritter, who lived in a hut in Svalbard over winter 1933.
- Further research on how trees form communites (Wohlleben, 2016; Simard, 2021). Ideally the research would be in collaboration with forest scientists or specific forest research projects.

4:5 The Contribution of the Study

> It matters what stories we tell to tell other stories with; it matters what concepts we think to think other concepts with.
>
> (Donna J. Haraway, 2016, p. 118)

Kissing the Cold Goodbye contributes to a growing body of artistic and literary work based on *The Living Mountain*, but differs from other work about *The Living Mountain* by focussing elsewhere than the Cairngorms. Rather than follow in Shepherd's footsteps or illustrate Shepherd's text, this project extracts and re-imagines Shepherd's ideas, consequently proposing Shepherd's relationship of love and friendship with the living world as an adaptable model for contemporary application.

Kissing the Cold Goodbye makes a contribution to discourses in fine art by weaving ecological concepts and debates into painting practice. The project departs from conventions of the landscape as a view, and orients perception towards a more embodied engagement with the living world.

Kissing the Cold Goodbye contributes to Barry and Welstead's (2017) concept of extending ecocriticism to encompass visual and other emergent forms of art. Ecocriticism normally appears in text form, but *Kissing the Cold Goodbye* makes an experimental departure from this role by presenting the artwork as ecocriticism of *The Living Mountain*: the project explores artwork-about-writing and writing-about-artwork.

Walking art is a subject area in which *Kissing the Cold Goodbye* contributes to new knowledge, particularly in areas concerned with walking as a relational practice (Jeffreys, 2024) and walking as feminist critical practice (Heddon and Myers, 2014). The project contributes to a broad canon of walking in female theoretical contexts, in which Nan Shepherd plays a significant part.

Finally, *Kissing the Cold Goodbye* contributes new directions in several specific areas of enquiry: art as a form of mourning (Bois, 1990; Freud, 2005; van Dooren, 2014; Dion, 2016); solastalgia and ecological grief (Albrecht, 2005; Cunsolo and Ellis, 2018; Galway *et al*., 2019) and study of effects of artistic engagement with the living world (Walton, 2021).

Appendices

The Appendices are arranged in order of mention in the text; their role is to make available relevant supplementary material too lengthy to be included in-text. Some differ stylistically from the main text, and to append them separately avoids interrupting the main narrative.

Appendices 1 and 2 are lists of events, providing respectively, a timeline of the project and a survey of Impact and Outreach at each stage of the research. The timeline shows how the project was structured and developed, and is coded into seven types of research event (e.g. exhibition, conference, publication etc.) while the Impact and Outreach section describes academic and public-facing events that correspond to each thesis chapter. Appendices 3 and 4 comprise primary research in the form of email correspondence with Shepherd's literary trustee Erlend Clouston (Appendix 3) and a transcript of an interview with film-maker Benedikt Erlingsson (Appendix 4). Appendix 5 contains a poem, *The Maze* by Lesley Jackson, written in response to my painting of the same name. Appendix 6 contains full documentation of the mini-project *Nature Morte* discussed in Chapter 2, while Appendix 7 summarises the role and purpose of films #1-5 made as part of this research. Finally, Appendix 8 describes *Patti Lean Artist,* a film by John Wallace (2024).

Appendix 1

Whole-project Timeline of *Kissing the Cold Goodbye*

Key to Abbreviations

AR - Artist's residency

EX - Exhibition

CP - Conference presentation

CO - Community Outreach (community, teaching, talks, lectures, interviews)

PD - Professional Development (self-initiated)

PU - Publication

RD - Researcher Development (University of Cumbria)

2014

AR/EX August 2014: Listhús í Fjallabyggð, Ólafsfjörður, Iceland: artist's residency and exhibition. University of Cumbria award to prepare PhD proposal.

2015

PD 7-8 February 2015: Glenmore Lodge Outdoor Centre, Aviemore: Winter Mountaineering Skills I.

EX June 2015: CAL-DEW-GATE: an exhibition of work by past and present University of Cumbria fine art staff to mark the closure of the Cumbria Institute of the Arts building at Caldewgate, Carlisle.

PD 12-15 June 2015: Kilmalieu, Ardgour, Argyll: Nan Shepherd weekend workshop organised by University of Glasgow M.Sc. candidate Jean Langhorne.

AR August 2015: walking residency in Icelandic Westfjords with artists Dr Julie Livsey and Lesley Hicks.

RD 3 September 2015: The Beehive, Ambleside, Cumbria: Writers' Rsetreat with Professor Pete Boyd.

PD 4 September 2015: Skype interview with Icelandic film director Benedikt Erlingsson (*Of Horses and Men* [*Hross í oss]* 2013; *Woman at War* [Kona fer í stríð], 2018)

CO September 2015 - 2018: member of board of directors of the Dumfries and Galloway regional arts organisation Upland. http://www.weareupland.com/

PD 9 November 2015: mentoring session with artist Bea Last https://babyforest.co/bealast

2016

EX *Living Landscape* (2016-17) ACE/Lottery-funded touring exhibition of work by six artists: 30 January-24 April 2016, Dean Clough Galleries Halifax; 2-31 May 2016, Hull School of Art and Design; 7 May-19 June 2016, Studio Eleven Gallery, Hull.

PU January 2016: Moore, R. *Living Landscape* (2016) Exhibition catalogue.

PD 27 February- 1 March 2016: attended painting masterclass with John Skinner and Emily Ball at Seawhite Studios http://www.emilyballatseawhite.co.uk/.

CO 24 March 2016: Dumfries and Galloway Arts Symposium, Gatehouse of Fleet: invited speaker.

CP 14 July 2016: University of Cumbria Doctoral Colloquium, Lancaster. Presented 'Augury, noctilucence and de-severance: uncanniness in northerly landscapes'.

CP 15 July 2016. NAFAE Conference, University of Cumbria, Lancaster. Presented 'Augury, noctilucence and de-severance: uncanniness in northerly landscapes'.

CP 11 August 2016. Walking Women Conference , Edinburgh Festival Forest Fringe, Drill Hall, Leith, Edinburgh. Presented PhD work to date. *http://www.walkingartistsnetwork.org/walking-women-at-forest-fringe/*

CO 6 September 2016. Yellow Door Gallery, Queen Street Dumfries. *Letters from Iceland* exhibition, Artists' talk. https://www.facebook.com/theyellowdoordumfries/

CP (international) 22 September 2016: presented conference paper: 'Uncanny Landscapes' at *Wild or Domesticated: Uncanny in Historical and contemporary perspectives to Mind* conference, House of Science and letters, Helsinki, Finland, 20-22 September 2016. Available at: https://wildordomesticated.wordpress.com/. Accessed 27 March 2024.

AR 8 September - 3 October 2016 : artist's residency at AARK Finland, Korpoo Island, Finland. Available at: https://aark.fi/ (Accessed 3 October 2023)

CO October 2016 - present: Upland Art Design and Craft Development, Dumfries: facilitate a monthly peer critique group.

http://www.weareupland.com/projects/professional-development

2017

EX 14 January-4 March 2017 *Living Landscape* (2016-17) [Exhibition]. Lottery/ ACE-funded touring exhibition: Gracefield Arts Centre, Dumfries,; Ropewalk Gallery Barton Upon Humber,11 March-23 April 2017; The Discovery Centre, Cleethorpes, 12 June-23 July 2017. http://www.contemporarylandscapepainting.co.uk/2016/03/16/living-landscape/

CO 4 February 2017 Gracefield Arts Centre, Dumfries. Artist's talk to accompany exhibition *Living Landscape.*

CO 11-12 February 2017: Gracefield Arts Centre, Dumfries. Taught 2-Day masterclass in contemporary approaches to landscape painting, to accompany *Living Landscape*.

PD 10 March 2017: *Words by the Water* festival, Theatre by the Lake, Keswick. Attended Erlend Clouston*,* 'The Nature Writing of Nan Shepherd'. https://issuu.com/wayswithwords/docs/wbtw-prog-2017-v2

CO 12 March 2017: The Stove Network, Midsteeple, Dumfries. Artist's Talk to Blueprint 100 young artists' group. http://www.thestove.org/blueprint100/?doing_wp_cron=1499337226.9557580947875976562500

RD 5 July 2017: University of Cumbria, Lancaster. 'Critical Thinking'. Researcher Development Summer School 2017, with Visiting Professor Hilary Constable.

RD 11 July 2017: Dr Lindy Hatfield, 'Feminist Research'. Researcher Summer School 2017.

RD 11 July 2017: Dr Kaz Stuart, 'Collaboration and Team Working'. Researcher Summer School 2017

RD 11 July 2017: Dr Kevin Wilson-Smith, 'Qualitative Methodologies: Interpretive phenomenological analysis'. Researcher Summer School 2017.

RD 12 July 2017: Dr David Murphy, 'Keeping it going: Maintaining your perseverance and enthusiasm'. Researcher Summer School 2017.

RD 12 July 2017: 'Quality Writing for Qualitative Projects'. Researcher Summer School 2017, with Dr Sally Elton-Chalcroft.

CP 13 July 2017: University of Cumbria Doctoral Colloquium, Lancaster. Presented 'Environmental abstraction: a new materialist approach to abstract painting'

RD 14 July 2017: 'Writing at PhD level: critical engagement and development of theory'. Researcher Summer School 2017, with Dr Jamie Mc Phie.

RD 14 July 2017: 'Critical Reflective Practice and Reflexiveness', Researcher Summer School 2017, with Professor Robert Williams.

PD 1 September 2017: mentoring session with Dr Jamie McPhie, University of Cumbria.

PU 30 October 2017: Publication: Lean, P. 'ArtLines: three walking artists in Iceland' in Barry, P. and Welstead, W. (2017) *Extending Ecocriticism: crisis, collaboration and challenges in the environmental humanities*. Manchester, Manchester University Press.

2018

EX 9-30 April 2018: Vallum Gallery, Institute of the Arts, University of Cumbria Brampton Road, Carlisle, CA3 9BJ. *Wanderers and other nomads: ecologies of place brought to mind.* Curated an exhibition of work on an ecological/ecocritical theme by undergraduate and postgraduate students and staff on the Fine Art course at UoC.

CO Interviewed on Border TV about the above exhibition.

EX 17 April- 7 May 2018: Ottersburn Gallery, Dumfries. *Place,* group exhibition for Spring Fling Taster.

EX 26-28 May 2018. Upland, Spring Fling Open Studios, Dumfries and Galloway.

EX 30 June- 30 August 2018: Ottersburn Gallery, Dumfries. DAGFAS (Dumfries and Galloway Fine Arts Society) *Summer Show*.

EX 13 October – 9 December 2018: Mitchell Gallery, Kirkcudbright Galleries, St. Mary Street, Kirkcudbright, DG6 4AA. *Energise:* an exhibition 'highlighting the topical issues of climate change, renewable energies and conservation through innovative creative practice'. https://www.kirkcudbrightgalleries.org.uk/event/energise-an-exhibition-by-upland/

CO 6 November 2018: Tullie House, Carlisle. Delivered Lunchtime Lecture '*Thirled* to the mountain: Nan Shepherd, Eco-criticism and Nomadology in Painting Practice'.

2019

EX 10 January- 28 February 2019: Edinburgh Drawing School Gallery, 13 Great King St., Edinburgh. 'Featured artist' in New Year Exhibition.

PD 11-14 March 2019: Emily Ball Studios, Seawhite Studio, Star Road, Partridge Green, West Sussex RH13 8YR. Attended 4-day course taught by Simon Carter. Link to Carter's work available at: https://www.simoncarterpaintings.co.uk/ (Last accessed 3 October 2023).

CP 6 April 2019: Plenary Speaker at Conference: EISCP (The Edinburgh International centre for Spirituality and Peace) *Nan Shepherd: The Spiritual, Ecopoetic and Geopoetic Vision in her Life and Writings.* Presented 'Nan Shepherd, Ecocriticism and Nomadology in Painting Practice'. Full programme available at: http://eicsp.org/events/event-details/651-day-conference-nan-shepherd-the-spiritual-ecopoetic-and-geopoetic-vision-in-her-life-and-writings-6-april-2019/ (Accessed 3 October 2023).

EX 27-27 May 2019: Upland, Spring Fling Open Studios, Dumfries and Galloway. Link expired but up-dated link to the event available at: http://www.spring-fling.co.uk/ (Accessed 3 October -melt

melt-

CP (international) June 26-30, 2019. University of Davis, California. ASLE (Association for the Study of Literature and Environment) Thirteenth Biennial Conference: 2019 Conference *Paradise on Fire.* Presented '

jökull: What You Have Stolen Can Never Be Yours' in Workshop 6-p *Artistic Witnessing: Earth's Edenic Fall.* Page 26 of programme: full programme available at: https://www.asle.org/wp-content/uploads/ASLE2019FinalProgram.pdf (Accessed 3 October 2023).

EX (solo) CO 5-26 October 2019: Ottersburn Gallery, Dumfries. *Boreal: paintings from the North*: exhibition, artist's talk and workshop.

2020

EX (solo) CO 7 January – 7 February 2020: The CatStrand, High Street, New Galloway, DG7 3RN. Solo Exhibition: *Sundogs and Parahelia: new paintings by Patti Lean* 25 January 2023: Artist's talk and group discussion.

CO 10 March 2020: The CatStrand, High Street, New Galloway, DG7 3RN: Kids' Club Gelée-printing workshop. Collecting, identifying and making prints of flowers and leaves from the local area.

PD 15 April 2020: ARG (Artists' Research group) Writing Group, online seminar. Presented paper *True Grids: can the Grid shake off Modernism's Baggage?*

EX 23-25 May 2020: Mill on the Fleet, High Street, Gatehouse of Fleet, DG7 2HS Spring Fling Open Studios: gallery exhibition and online events during Covid pandemic. Link expired, link to the venue available at: http://www.millonthefleet.co.uk/ (last accessed 3 october 2023).

PD 27 May 2020 ARG (Artists' Research group) Writing Group, online seminar. Presented discussion on article 'Amy Sillman with Phong Bui', 2006, *Brooklyn Rail*.

PD 30 June – 3 July 2020: Emily Ball, online course: *Long Summer Days and Open Spaces*. Available at: https://www.emilyballatseawhite.co.uk/ (prof. development)

PD 1-13 August 2020: Made a short film for Spring Fling about my practice under lockdown, *Green Leaves, Black Water.* Available at: https://vimeo.com/455275477)

13 August 2020: One-to-one tutorial with filmmaker Colin Tennant. https://wearectproductions.com/)

PD 24-27 August 2020: Emily Ball at Seawhite Studio, Simon Carter online course, *The Working Landscape.* Available at: https://www.emilyballatseawhite.co.uk/

Simon's website is https://www.simoncarterpaintings.co.uk/ (prof,development)

PD September 2020: Upland mentoring scheme: received award for mentoring by Dr. Patricia Cain. http://www.patriciacain.com/

2021

EX 28 May – 1 June 2021: Spring Fling Open Studios: online and pop-up exhibitions during Covid pandemic.

CO July 2021- ongoing: Upland CIC, Gracefield Arts Centre, 28 Edinburgh Rd, Dumfries DG1 1JQ https://www.weareupland.com/about/ Peer faciliation: received funding to create a peer support resource padlet available at: https://tinyurl.com/u8chvdup

EX/CO 10 July - 30 November 2021: Kirkcudbright Galleries, 3B St Mary St, Kirkcudbright DG6 4AA: WASPS 'Ten Years On' group exhibitions, gallery and online virtual-tour exhibition; artist's talk at virtual opening https://www.kirkcudbrightgalleries.org.uk/.

CO October 2021 - current: honorary presidentship of DAGFAS (Dumfries and Galloway Fine Arts Society): during centenary year; planning centenary exhibitions and events.

CO 15 and 29 October 2021: Gracefield Studios, Dumfries. Artist's Talk and workshop 'Integrating Collage into your Work'.

2022

EX 24 -27 March 2022: WASPS The Briggait, 141 Bridgegate, Glasgow, G1 5HZ. waspsstudios.org.uk Invited participation at Borders Art Fair, Kelso https://www.bordersartfair.com/

EX 7-14 May 2022: Vallum Gallery, University of Cumbria Institute of the Arts in conjunction with Tullie House https://www.tulliehouse.co.uk/about-us/news/nature-and-geology-top-priority GeoWeek Exhibition

CP 12-13 May 2022: Presented at NAFAE and GeoWeek Symposium https://www.nafae.org.uk/news/geoweek-2022-symposium

EX 2 June-2 July 2022 Tidespace Gallery, Kirkcudbright, Patti Lean and Denise Zygadlo, *Making Her Mark : Body/Paint/Land/Scapes.* https://tidespace.uk

EX 14-24 July 2022: The Biscuit Factory, Newcastle https://www.thebiscuitfactory.com/ . Group exhibition.

EX 1-31 July 2022: Korpo Gård, Korpo, Finland: 4-artist summer exhibition.

CP 7 July 2022: University of Cumbria, Lancaster: presented remotely at Graduate Conference.

PD 22 August 2022: attended University of Turku Arts and Sciences Symposium Aboagora 22 'Wind '. https://www.utu.fi/en/news/events/aboagora-2022-wind

EX September 2022: Tidespace Gallery, Kirkcudbright: work to accompany writer's talk, Sarah Thomas on *The Raven's Nest*

CO 6 December 2022: The Amersham Arms, 388 New Cross Road, London SE14 6TY. *Green Leaves Black Water* (film) was shown at a 'Reweirding' event: https://reweirding.co.uk/2022/09/23/women-and-walking-wanderers-and-psychogeographical-pilgrimage/

2023

CO 26 January, 23 February, 30 March and 27 April 2023 'Art Thursdays' - a series of lectures on twentieth century art to a Kirkcudbright art group:

1. 'Minimalism and Conceptual Art: a short guide as to why we sometimes scratch our

heads on seeing contemporary art'.

2. 'Postmodernism and Arts of Identity: how changes in society changed art during the second half of the twentieth century (and vice-versa)'.

3. 'Women's Work and the Impact of Feminism: strategies and methods to be seen and heard'.

4. 'Arts of Nature: Landscape/s, Ecologies, Environments: changing approaches to the Earth's natural systems through landscape, environmental and eco-art'.

CO 26 May 2023: interview with P. Howie on local radio, to speak about Spring Fling Open Studios and Kirkcudbright's role as artists' town.

EX 27-29 May 2023 Spring Fling Open Studios Available at: https://www.spring-fling.co.uk/virtual-studios/?f=virtual_studios_search&ptb-search=1&ptb_title=Patti+Leino.

EX 16-30 July 2023: Dundas Street Gallery, Edinburgh. 'Our Bright Earth', a four-artist exhibition.

EX (solo) 6 October- 13 November 2023: Perth Creative Exchange, Stormont Street, Perth PH1 5NW: *Kiss the Cold Goodbye: Ten Years Walking in Iceland, Finland and Scotland.*

Appendix 2

Kiss the Cold Goodbye: Impact and Outreach

This section includes selected exhibitions, presentations and significant outcomes; for a full timeline of the research project please see the previous section, Appendix 1.

(i) Impact and Outreach of Chapter 1

Hólar-Sauðárkrókur Studies (figure 15) were part of a group exhibition in Listhús í Fjallabyggð, Ólafsfjörður, Iceland (August 2014). *Snaefellsjökull: what you have stolen can never be yours* (figure 34) was exhibited in CAL-DEW-GATE, an exhibition of work by past and present University of Cumbria staff, Carlisle (June 2015) (figure 100).

The paintings *Snaefellsjökull: what you have stolen can never be yours*, *Ólafsfjörður Snow-bridge I* (figure 28) *Ólafsfjörður Snow-bridge II* (figure 29) and *Borealis* (Figure 44) were part of *Living Landscape,* an ACE/Lottery-funded touring exhibition of work by six artists (2016-17) curated by the artist Rob Moore.[88] Exhibition venues were: The Discovery Centre, Cleethorpes (12 June-23 July 2017); Ropewalk Gallery, Barton upon Humber (11 March-23 April 2017); Gracefield Arts Centre Dumfries (14 January-4 March 2017); Studio Eleven Gallery, Hull (7 May-19 June 2016); Hull School of Art and Design (2-31 May 2016); Dean Clough Galleries, Halifax (30 January-24 April 2016). The exhibition was augmented by a publication *Living Landscape*, artists' talks and I held a 2-day painting masterclass at Gracefield Arts Centre, Dumfries (February 2017).

Approximate recorded visitor numbers for *Living Landscape* were: Discovery Centre 7000; Ropewalk Gallery 2000; Gracefield Arts Centre 3694 (clocked in); Studio Eleven and Hull School of Art and Design 1500, and Dean Clough Galleries 3000: a total of 17,194 visitors.

[88] Examples of Moore's work are available at: https://watermarkgallery.co.uk/artists/rob-moore/ (Accessed 7 April 2024).

My Icelandic sketchbooks were exhibited at New Bridge Project, Newcastle, in a 3-person exhibition (February 2016). *Ólafsfjörður Snow-bridge I and Ólafsfjörður Snow-bridge II* appeared in an exhibition entitled *Letters from Iceland* at Yellow Door Gallery, Dumfries, (September 2016). I was featured artist at Edinburgh Drawing School Gallery, Edinburgh (January, 2019), where *Snaefellsjökull: what you have stolen can never be yours* was shown along with smaller Icelandic works.

I attended a number of conferences and symposia which included: invited speaker at Dumfries and Galloway Arts Symposium, Gatehouse of Fleet (2016); a paper, 'Augury, noctilucence and de-severance: uncanniness in northerly landscapes' presented at NAFAE (National Association for Fine Art Education) Conference, Lancaster (2016) and at University of Cumbria Doctoral Colloquium, Lancaster (2016); and 'Environmental Abstraction: a new materialist approach to abstract painting' at the same event (2017).

My research was presented at the Walking Women Conference, Edinburgh Festival Forest Fringe, Edinburgh (2016); and a paper entitled 'Uncanny Landscapes' at the conference *Wild or Domesticated: Uncanny in Historical and contemporary perspectives to Mind*, Helsinki, Finland (2016). I went on residency to AARK.fi (August 2016) which led to contact with Finnish artists and the methodological approach by Hannula, Suaranta and Vadén used in this study.

A chapter on my Icelandic work 'ArtLines: three walking artists in Iceland' was included in Peter Barry and William Welstead's (2017) *Extending Ecocriticism: crisis, collaboration and challenges in the environmental humanities*, published by Manchester University Press. The British Society for Literature and Science reviewed the chapter as follows:

> Patti Lean records her experiences of a month-long walk across Iceland in the company of fellow artists Julie Livsey and Lesley Hicks, mapping 'artlines' that link their work to that of other artists, such as the Icelandic painter Louisa Matthíasdóttir and filmmaker Benedikt Erlingsson. Sharing their experiences – and their artistic responses to them - Lean opens up

> 'traditional' aesthetic categories like 'sublime' and 'landscape' to wide-ranging discussion, whilst also relating their journey to 'the recent proliferation […] of walking practices as strategies of artistic production. In the face of irreversible and catastrophic environmental change, artists can put out lines, literally and figuratively, to other disciplines'.
>
> (Adrian Tait, 2020)

In respect of item 3 in the Methodology section (p. 29) that supports a principle to 'communicate with practicing (*sic*) artists and the larger public in audience education' (Hannula, Suaranta and Vadén, 2014, p. vii) I have participated in Spring Fling Open Studios most years since 2003 and served on the board of directors of Upland Community Interest Company, Dumfries and Galloway, from 2015-2018 .[89]

In respect of community outreach, I gave talks to groups in the community, including Blueprint 100 young artists' group, Dumfries, and sixth form school students at Dalbeattie High School (both 2017). Since 2018 I have been volunteering with Upland to facilitate peer-to-peer networks thoughout the region, where rural isolation and distance from artistic centres are a problem. I received funding to create a peer support resource padlet for peer crit groups setting up in the region.[90]

[89] Available at: https://www.spring-fling.co.uk/ and https://www.weareupland.com/
[90] Available at: https://tinyurl.com/u8chvdup.

(iii) Impact and Outreach of Chapter 2

In 2015 the painting, *The Maze, Tiree* (figure 55) and an essay, 'A Voice in Proust' written for an exhibition *Memory's Images* at Gracefield Arts Centre, Dumfries (2009) formed part of a collaboration with the poet Lesley Jackson. Jackson's poem *The Maze, Tiree* (Appendix 4) was presented at the StAnza International Poetry Festival 2017, Saint Andrews, Scotland and is included in the ongoing project *Poetry Map of Scotland*. [91]

In April 2018 I curated an exhibition entitled *Wanderers and Other Nomads: Ecologies of Place Brought to Mind*, at The Vallum Gallery, University of Cumbria (figures 101 - 103). A starting point for proposals was a question posed by the feminist philosopher Rosi Braidotti:

> How can we engage in alternative policies which entails the creation of sustainable alternatives geared to the construction of social horizons of hope ...?
>
> (Braidotti, 2013)

Proposals were invited from foundation, undergraduate and postgraduate students and faculty staff at the University of Cumbria Institute of the Arts: there would be no hierarchy in selection of work. The work selected engaged with queer theory, feminist speculative fiction, anthropology, materiality, techno-science, ecological art and spiritual contemplation of the everyday; the exhibition was featured in local press and television.

Two paintings *Ice-melt, Korpo, Finland #1* (figure 73) and *Ice-melt, Korpo, Finland #2* (figure 74) were part of a selected exhibition, *Energise*, at Mitchell Gallery, Kirkcudbright Galleries, Kirkcudbright (October-December 2018); the exhibition was

[91] StAnza International Poetry Festival 2017Available at: https://stanzapoetry.org/projects/poetry-map/ (Accessed 3 April 2024).

described as: ‘highlighting the topical issues of climate change, renewable energies and conservation through innovative creative practice’ (Kirkcudbright Galleries, 2018).

In April 2019 I was plenary speaker at a conference entitled *Nan Shepherd: The Spiritual, Ecopoetic and Geopoetic Vision in her Life and Writings* organised by The Edinburgh International Centre for Spirituality and Peace, at Augustine United Church, Edinburgh, with a presentation entitled ‘Nan Shepherd, Ecocriticism and Nomadology in Painting Practice' (Lean, 2019a).

Boreal: paintings from the North was a solo exhibition, with artist’s talk and workshop at Ottersburn Gallery, Dumfries (October 2019). Another solo exhibition *Sundogs and Parahelia* took place at The CatStrand, New Galloway with artist’s talk and group discussion about climate change (January-February 2020), followed by a Kids’ Club gelée-print workshop at The CatStrand in which youngsters aged between five and twelve collected, identified and made gelée prints of flowers, leaves and feathers collected from the local area (March 2020).

During the Covid-19 pandemic I took part remotely in Spring Fling Open Studios (23-25 May 2020) including a socially-distanced exhibition (Gatehouse of Fleet, May 2020) and online events.

I presented my Icelandic work at *Paradise on Fire* (2019) the ASLE (Association for the Study of Literature and Environment) Conference at University of Davis, California, and met the artists Beth Stephens and Annie Sprinkle, who explained ecosexual practice, in context of their documentary *Goodbye Gauley Mountain* (2013).

Two essays, respectively entitled 'True Grids: can the Grid shake off Modernism's Baggage?' (April, 2020) and 'Discussion of an interview: ‘Amy Sillman with Phong Bui’ (May, 2020) were presented in online seminars with ARG (Artists' Research Group), a University of Cumbria interdisciplinary research group.

(iii) Impact and Outreach of Chapter 3

In May 2022, paintings *Korpo Ice-melt #1* (figure 7) and *Korpo Ice-melt* #2 (figure 75) and drawings *The Cutting, Mossdale #1* (figure 91) and *The Cutting, Mossdale #2* (figure) were exhibited at *GeoWeek*, an exhibition in The Vallum Gallery, University of Cumbria as part of GeoWeek, an event at Tullie House, Carlisle (installation view, figure 104). The work was presented at NAFAE (National Association for Fine Art Education) and GeoWeek Symposia, both at University of Cumbria, May 2022.[92]

Snaefellsjökull: What You Have Stolen Can Never Be Yours (figure 34) and *Úa's Journey* (figure 47) and development work took part in a 2-artist exhibition entitled *Making Her Mark: Body/Paint/Land/*Scapes: *Patti Lean and Denise Zygadlo*, Tidespace Gallery, Kirkcudbright July 2022 (exhibition flier, figure 105).[93] Mention was received in a well-regarded Arts blog *Caught by the River*.[94] In September 2022 selected work was shown at Tidespace to accompany a writer's talk by Sarah Thomas, about her Icelandic memoir *The Raven's Nest.*[95]

Drawings from *The Cutting* series (figures 85-87) *Bristling Forest* (figures 88, 89) were selected for a group exhibition at The Biscuit Factory, Newcastle, July 2022. Work from the *Ei Kukkia Ei Mehiläisiä/No Flowers No Bees* series (figures 78,79) was included in a 4-artist pop-up exhibition at Korpo Gård, Korpo, Finland, July 2022 (exhibition poster, figure 106).

I presented remotely at the University of Cumbria Graduate Conference, Lancaster, July 2022. In August 2022 I participated in person at a multi-disciplinary Arts and

[92] *GeoWeek,*Tullie House, May 2022. GeoWeek Symposium 12-13 May 2022. Available at: https://www.nafae.org.uk/news/geoweek-2022-symposium (Accessed 24 April 2024).

[93] Tidespace, Kirkcudbright. Available at: https://tidespace.uk/ (Accessed 29 December 2024).

[94] *Caught by the River*. Available at: https://www.caughtbytheriver.net/ (Accessed 9 December 2024).

[95] Sarah Thomas, 2023, *The Raven's Nest*. Details available at: https://sarahthomas.net/the-ravens-nest/ (Accessed 29 December 2024).

Sciences Symposium entitled *Aboagora 22 'Wind'*, University of Turku, Finland.[96] In December 2022 the film *Green Leaves Black Water* was shown at 'Reweirding', a *Women and Walking* event, London.[97] In the community, I delivered 'Art and Tart', a series of four lectures on aspects of twentieth century art, January- April 2023, Kirkcudbright.[98] In May 2023 I took part in Spring Fling Open Studios weekend, with over 1000 visitors to the studio and an interview on local radio.[99]

In July 2023 I was part of 'Our Bright Earth', a four-artist exhibition in Dundas Street Gallery, Edinburgh (figures 107, 108). The exhibition was covered in two magazine articles: 'A Quartet of Artists from the South West Look at 'Our Bright Earth'' (*ArtWork* #226 May/June 2023) (figure 109) and 'The World Times Four at Dundas Street Gallery Edinburgh' *ArtMag* (1 July 2023).[100] One reviewer wrote that the exhibition was, '[E]ngaging with our present environmental crisis' and 'trying to create a platform to encourage conversation and dialogue about this predicament' (Gladstone, in ArtWork 2023).

A solo exhibition took place at Perth Creative Exchange, Perth *Kiss the Cold Goodbye: Ten Years Walking in Iceland, Finland and Scotland.* (exhibition poster figure 110; installation views figures 111-112) with artist's talk and discussion, November 2023.

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[96] Advertised on: https://www.utu.fi/en/news/events/aboagora-2022-wind. No longer available.

[97] Women and Walking: *Reweirding*. Available at: https://reweirding.co.uk/2022/09/23/women-and-walking-wanderers-and-psychogeographical-pilgrimage/ **(**Accessed 24 April 2024).

[98] 'Art and Tart' Lectures were entitled:
1. 'Minimalism and Conceptual Art: a short guide as to why we sometimes scratch our heads on seeing contemporary art'.
2. 'Postmodernism and Arts of Identity: how changes in society changed art during the second half of the twentieth century (and vice-versa)'.
3. 'Women's Work and the Impact of Feminism: strategies and methods to get seen and heard'.
4. 'Arts of Nature: Landscape/s, Ecologies, Environments: changing approaches to the Earth's natural systems through landscape, environmental and eco-art'.

[99] Spring Fling Virtual Studios. Available at: https://www.spring-fling.co.uk/virtual-studios/ (Accessed 24 April 2024) (Accessed 8 April 2024).

[100] Available at: https://www.artwork.co.uk/adimages/AW226.pdf (Accessed 8 April 2024) and: https://artmag.co.uk/the-world-times-four-at-dundas-street-gallery-edinburgh/ (Accessed 8 April 2024)

Appendix 3

Erlend Clouston's Notes from a Talk

The following notes for a talk delivered by Nan Shepherd's friend and literary executor, Erlend Clouston (Edinburgh, April, 2019) were sent to me by email (11 October 2020); Capitalisations and emphases from the original script are retained.

Title of talk: 'Nan Shepherd and the SAS: Nan's covert links with the secret army that keeps this country safe'.

CLIP: FLIGHT OVER EVEREST (Barnaby Blacker) 1.31-2.37
Good afternoon, everyone. Confirmatory referendum….
My name is Erlend Clouston. I was Nan's literary confidante for 35 years.

PIC. NAN AND I (OLD)
Here we are discussing evolution on a Shetland beach.
So, 'Nan and the SAS'. It is an interesting concept, is it not? Stick with me.
I hope you enjoyed that film clip.
It surely offends, we'd all agree, against everything that Nan Shepherd stands for.
A mountain is there to be conquered!
And conquered, of course, by males….and males using machines.
Spirituality doesn't feature - unless you include the native Jethro Tull with his penny whistle.

Well, **maybe….** our pre-conceptions are wrong. Maybe there is **another** dimension to Nan….. that has been……overlooked.
But before we start, I have a cerebral challenge for you. Answering it will require concentration…... self-control ….and honesty. It is what is called……..a RAT test. Do not be offended. That is RAT ….. as in Remote Associates Test.

PIC WW2 SNIPERS (GOOGLE)

Above all, do NOT shout out the answer. Our squad of highly-trained snipers have been cleared to do what is necessary.

I have to say at this point that members of the Natural Change organisation and their families are barred from entering the competition.

If it is subsequently established that anyone has cheated, their homes will be levelled and their identities erased from all official records.

What the rest of you have to do is a) work out the answer - discreetly - and b) remember

how long it took you to come up with that answer. Either write the answer on a piece of paper and swallow it,..... or remember it.

The winner will receive this bar of self-destructing chocolate.

Right. I am now going to give you three words:

All you have to do is find a **fourth** word that can be attached…. equally comfortably…. to all three ..... to create three **different** words

Ready? Have you set your stop-watches? The three words are: TUG, GRAVY AND SHOW.

PIC: TUG GRAVY SHOW

We want a single…. **other word** ... that fits with all three.

There is a point to all this. It will become apparent in due course.

Now there are two components to this presentation

Both reveal aspects of Nan which have, for different reasons, escaped public attention.

Hopefully they will provide a clearer understanding of her character…. and her legacy

Right, to start with…

PIC OF NAN ON HILLSIDE

There is a tendency - perfectly understandable - to view Nan exclusively through an exotic, spiritualised, quasi-feminist lens.

WE can be lured into viewing her as a hyper-active…..,hyper-thinking…. hyper-sensitive…. blue-stockinged guru.

As such... she can be conveniently framed **in opposition...** to the crude strivings of men.

In shorthand terms, Nan goes **into** the mountain; men are feebly obsessed with struggling to go UP the mountain.

But Nan **also** had a **distinct….. deep-seated…. adventurous** streak.

She had an admiration…. and apparently not a grudging admiration…. for the heroic efforts of conventional, usually-bearded, male explorers.

In fact, one might be tempted to say she had a **crush** on them - or quite as much of a crush as everyone else had….. in those days when celebrities were thin on the ground, so to speak.

OK Exhibit One

PIC: EVEREST

Where is this? Right: the highest mountain in the world, Everest is seen as the quintessential male virility test.

Sherpa Tenzing and Edmund Hillary finally made it to the top in 1953. It was another 22 years before the first woman - Japan's Junkai Tabei - conquered it.

It still remains, broadly, a male preserve: barely a tenth of the 4,000 climbers to reach the summit have been female.

Doers this deter Nan? Not at all.

PIC MEN AGAINST EVEREST

Here is the book that Nan gives me as Christmas present in 1954, when I am eight-years-old.

Note the title: MEN Against Everest.

Interestingly, in fact **very interestingly,** given the era, the flap on the cover of Mr Marshall's excellent book suggests that it is aimed, enterprisingly, at a non-binary market.

LOOK UP BOOK

I quote:

“Mr Howard Marshall has a stirring tale to tell; he has told it simply and boldly in a way which will appeal particularly to boys **and girls**, for whom the story of Everest must always be a great inspiration.”
Nan’s crush on Everest had... **preceded** this generous gift.

PIC FIRST OVER EVEREST + SIGNATURE
HOLD UP BOOK
In 1948, a couple of years AFTER she has written The Living Mountain….Nan buys First Over Everest, an account of the pioneering…. high-testosterone…..1933... flight over the mountain
As you can see, at some point Nan thought enough about this book to pass it on to me.
And it is real empire building - or re-building - stuff .
Britain had lost the south Pole to Norway.
We’d lost the North Pole to America and, worse, possibly to a **Black** American, Matthew Henson .
Conquering, in a manner of speaking the THIRD pole - Mount Everest - would show that British aviation was a match for anything the pushy French, or Germans, or Italians, or Americans could do.
It is an extraordinary book - and I mean that,literally. Built into the rear cover is a pair of cardboard 3D spectacles.

TAKE OUT SPECTACLES
The idea clearly is that these will enable the home-bound reader to better appreciate…. the book’s 26 black and white photographs.
I must say I enjoy the thought of the author of The Living Mountain…. settling eagerly into her Aberdeenshire armchair... a glass of ginger beer in one hand…. 3D spectacles in the other…..patriotically studying the erratic progress of two **extremely noisy** biplanes over the pristine Himalayas

PIC: CLYDESDALE AND BLACKER
And here are the heroes: Lord CLYDESDALE, alias Douglas Douglas-Hamilton, Duke of Hamilton, AND chief observer Lieutenant-Colonel Stewart BLACKER who wrote the

book. Both, of course, men.

PIC: BLACKER

Here is the Chief Observer Blacker being fitted into his gear by Air Commodore Fellowes for a test flight. Nan will have been impressed by the all-weather garments.

PIC: COCKPIT

Here is Lord Clydesdale's Cockpit. Was Nan thrilled by the revelation - contained in the caption - that the supercharger boost gauge is top right?

PIC: PLANES AND ELEPHANTS

Predictably we have a show of imperial one-upmanship . What did Nan make of that? And what did she make of the revelation that…. in India…. an ill woman QUOTES "may not see a doctor, whatever her suffering. All she can do is thrust a tiny model through her bed curtains and explain by its aid where the pain is."

And PIC: CHIEF OF NEPAL (SENT)

Never mind: at least the men were doing all right. Here we have His Highness the Maharaja Sir Joodha Shum Shere Jung Bahadur Rana, GCIE, Prime minister and Supreme Commander-in-chief of Nepal. Not a man one was likely to come across in a Braemar bothy.

Finally, national honour is satisfied. Nan….. with her 3D specs...could vicariously savour a peak she would never climb, or even go into.

I'll let **you** savour the movie version for a few Brexity moments.

CLIP: WINGS OVER EVEREST 27.08 - 27.52

The planes - Westlands - we are told, "were an epitome of the British aeroplane-maker's craft and his scientific skill."

CLIP: FLIGHT OVER EVEREST 18.53-19.00

Hallelujah!

Sadly ,scientific skill has been helpless against the the remorseless appetite of 20th century capitalism.

After multiple mergers and takeovers, Westlands has fallen into the clutches of a

company called Leonardo - run, ironically, by the dastardly Italians.
I can't say I am overwhelmed by the effectiveness of the 3D specs, but the fault could lie with the photographs.
I might suggest to Canongate that they at least consider incorporating consider the technology into their next edition of The Living Mountain.

PIC 'THE MOUNTAIN WAY'
In 1939, no doubt seeking a diversion from the looming calamity of war, Nan buys The Mountain Way' . This is an anthology of climbing writing, compiled by RLG Irving.
Only five of the 234 essays are by women.

PIC MARMOT
One of them, by Margaret Symonds, describes how she caught a 12lb marmot in the Alps in 1890. This involved a petticoat and several hatpins.

But greater challenges faced the world. If we had more time I could discuss my belief that The Living Mountain is written as an explicit rejection of the scientific rationalism which exterminated 16 million people in First World War

PIC: YOUNG FASCISTS
In 1939 it would have seemed very clear to Nan that Europe was on the verge of repeating the same mistake .
Mr Irving's introduction would not have cheered her up.
He pitches climbing as, QUOTES, "another form of the desire for dominance, the motive power behind the gospel of force which is replacing Christianity among the young people of Europe." End quotes. Mr Irving is talking, of course, about Fascism

PIC Inside of 'SOUTH' by Shackleton
A few years earlier Nan has acquired 'South', Ernest Shackleton's hair-raising and very-manly account of his escape from Antarctica. Of course, Nan would have been only too aware that several members of Shackleton's expedition survived Antarctica only to die in the trenches of the Western Front.

PIC THE VOYAGE OF THE CHELYUSKIN

And then a real oddity - and possibly my favourite: The Voyage of the Chelyuskin.

Again, made over to me.

Has anybody heard of the Chelyuskin?

How quickly we forget.

This book, written by "members of the expedition " - again, all male - tells the story of the pioneering, almost successful, 1933 attempt by a Russian Soviet-era steamship to battle a passage through the Arctic from Murmansk in the west to Vladivostock in the east.

PIC CHELYUSKIN IN ICE

In its own way, the crew';s adventures were as remarkable as Shackleton's.

Near the end of the voyage the Chelyuskin is trapped in the ice, is crushed, and sinks.

All but one of the 100-strong crew escape. They alert Moscow to their predicament by radio. Using a few shovels and two crowbars they construct a runway….then re-construct it and re-construct it and re-construct it.. 13 times, as their icefloe buckles or breaks up.

After two months, ski-planes finally land.

The crew are eventually deposited in a Siberian village….from where 53 of them have to walk 300 miles to safety.

The point of this is that it takes someone with a really special interest in extreme adventure to seek out and buy this book.

We are not talking about a bone fide…. quasi-patriotic... rapturously-publicised **BRITISH** achievement .

We are not talking about spirituality.

We are not talking, really, about literature.

We are talking about the TRANSLATED accounts of around 50 different contributors, none of whom are professional writers.

We are not talking about a new generation of Tolstoys.

What grips are the men's gripping... individual... accounts of their predicament...coupled with the high farce of attempts to impose **Communist party**

orthodoxy on a group of shivering …….shipwrecked sailors - many of whom are **not** party members.

PIC A. BOBROV

I quote from page 176: "A.N. Bobrov, an old Bolshevik, brought forward a striking plan of mass work. The plan included **lectures** on economic geography……a course in dialectical materialism ……and a study of the resolutions of the XVII Party conference. **Most** comrades took up a **very critical attitude….** to the plan of lectures.
Comrades tried to prove to Bobrov that it was **not worthwhile….** trying to **transform**…. and **educate** people out there **on the ice**. Anyway, it was not going to be of much practical use…"
In the end, however, perhaps predictably ,the old Bolshevik gets his way. **No one** wants to spend more time than is
necessary **in Siberia**.
So what does all this have to do with the SAS?
Well … **bear with** me. I am just laying the groundwork.

PIC OF SAS IN DESERT

Here we have a picture of an SAS group from the Second World War.They are about to go on patrol in the Sahara Desert. You will notice their head-dress.
Keff-ee-yeh
As well as being eminently practical for work in dusty heat, the **keff-ee-yeh** is a nod to the man whose guerrilla tactics in the first world war subsequently inspired the SAS's modus operandi

PIC/LAWRENCE OF ARABIA

Given Nan's now-established appetite for civilian heroics, you will not be surprised to learn that she was an **admirer** of TE Lawrence.
In fact "**admirer"** maybe…. **under-cooks** it.
If it wasn't quite **hero-worship**, she certainly viewed him as a **heroic character.**
WE mustn't forget that **between** the wars,…… the world was **very short** of heroes.
A man like Lawrence had an **irresistible** aura. He was writer-soldier to start with.

And a **successful** writer-soldier.

His autobiography, The Seven Pillars of Wisdom, was hailed as one of the great books of the language….. by Winston Churchill/.

Equally potently, from **Nan's** point of view, Lawrence was tinged with the **mystique**…. of the East.

To Nan, who had bought the Rubiyaat of Omar Khayam and The Sayings of Muhammad when only a teenager, this must have made him particularly fascinating.

Lastly, Lawrence was a throw-back to an age of **pre-industrial** warfare. With his horses and daggers and disguises and bands of followers, Lawrence restored some of the glamour to combat.

How do we know Nan held Lawrence in high regard?

There are small but significant clues.

First she bought both volumes of The Seven Pillars of Wisdom, Laurence's autobiography - again in 1939.

Secondly, there are the... what we might loosely term...**marginalia**…. she has added to both books.

PIC: DRAWING GLUED INTO BACK OF VOLUME 1

There is a handsome drawing of Lawrence, cut from a newspaper, which she has glued onto the end-paper of Volume 1.

She has also tucked in to Volume 2 a hostile review, by Harold Nicholson, of a notorious **biography** in which Richard Aldington sought to **undermine** the Lawrence legend. Nicholson dismisses the Aldington book as "dreary and sour." He continues:" I am obliged to the author for forcing me to think more highly of TE Lawrence than ever before. " Nan presumably agrees.

PIC PHOTOGRAPH OF HAND-WRITTEN INTRODUCTION

Thirdly, Nan has added to the front of this book, **by hand,** the 600 words of the introduction to the original edition, an introduction that was subsequently **suppressed** at the urging of George Bernard Shaw.

Indirectly, this painstakingingly restored passage gives a rare insight into Nan's political sympathies.

Clearly she shares Lawrence's disdain for the **conservative forces** which stole his victory from a younger generation

I'll read a few sentences:

"We lived many lives in those whirling campaigns ; yet when we achieved, and the new world dawned, the **old men** came out again and **took** from us our victory…. and **re-made it….** in the likeness of the former world they knew.

"Youth could win, but had not learned to **keep,** and was pitiably weak against age."

"When we won, it was charged against me…. British petrol royalties in Mesopotamia were become dubious, and French Colonial Policy ruined.

" I went up the Tigris with one hundred Devon Territorials, young, clean delightful fellows, full of the power of happiness and of making women and children glad…. and we were casting them by thousands into the fire... to the worst of deaths…..not to win the war, but in order that the corn and rice and oil of Mesopotamia…. might be ours.

"All the subject provinces of the Empire were….**to me**….not worth **one dead English boy."**

PIC: CRYPTIC ADDRESS

we find on the end paper of Volume 2, the cryptic note: " Clouds Hill, Moreton, Dorset (Wool Station)."

This, of course, was the address of Lawrence's **tiny country cottage.**

In the 1934 Aberdeen University Gala Rag magazine, Nan writes about visiting... curiously, **Dorset.**

The next year. 1935, T.E. Lawrence has his fatal motorcycle accident.

Is there, perhaps, a story here?

Alas, probably not.

You will notice that after Lawrence's address….. Nan also writes **"National Trust Property"** . The National Trust only took over the cottage in 1959, so Nan only formally noted the address **24 years** after Lawrence died.

Of course, that doesn't mean to say she DIDN'T visit him in 1934…..

PIC FLECKER (OLD)

There is one final element to my thesis. I think it completes a circle in a very neat way.
In Nan's notebook we find a poem by James Elroy Flecker.
It is taken from his verse drama, The Golden Road to Samarkand.
It elevates **travel** to the level of a **quasi-mystical mission**….. framing the journey as a **hypnotic mingling** of duty and desire.
It should be read to the rustling of palm trees - or possibly pine trees..

*We are the **Pilgrims**, master; we shall go*
***Always a little further;** it may be*
*Beyond that **last blue mountain...** barred with snow...*
*Across that **angry** or that glimmering.. sea*

The verse is in Nan's notebook, so it clearly spoke to her.
Other people were on the same emotional wavelength
It can be found, most prominently, in **Herefordshire.**
On the clocktower of the barracks of Special Air Service:

PIC SAS BERET (GOOGLE)
Now we can move on to the second element of the postulated Nan/SAS nexus
In this instance, you will be glad to learn, I have gone for a loose interpretation of the letters SAS.
What do we opt for?
Sleet and Snow?
Sober and Serene?
All applicable, in their own way, to Nan.
But let's settle for the more prosaic **Scottish Action on Sustainability.**
OK, some facts.
Scotland, as we know to our cost, is not a world leader in very much.
But there is **one field** in which we **do** excel.
And we **excel** to the extent that **UNESCO** has presented Scotland with an **award** in **recognition** of that excellence.
So well done **us**…. and well done…. **Nan**

And very well done an organisation called **Natural Change.**

Can I ask how many people here have **heard of** Natural Change? And, by the way, I am not talking about an **organic cosmetics** company.

Hmm, roughly X per cent are familiar with NC.

Very interesting.

Well…. **I had never heard** of Natural Change….. until a few months ago.

Whether this reflects on my **ignorance** or their **modesty**, I am unsure.

What Natural Change have managed to do is **work a revolution in our schools**.

Not only in the schools, but in the **various administrations** - government... local authority... teachers... unions - that sustain these schools.

In brief terms - and I apologise to those who know this already - Natural change is an off-shoot of the environmental charity, WWF.

Natural Change was set up,.... around a decade ago to act…. as green storm-troopers.

Its remit was to **ACCELERATE**, by fair means or foul, the infiltration of the doctrine of sustainability into the Scottish education system.

No prisoners were to be taken.

Scotland's **climate-change targets** were at stake.

Historians have established that **extreme** arm-twisting, brow-beating and water-boarding ensued.

In a daring move, 12 policy makers from the higher echelons of the education sector were **held captive** for 16 days in a secret... Natural Change ….hideout.

Once freed, they were followed for **eight months** to ensure that they kept to the terms of their release.

PIC ARNE NAESS...JOHN MUIR...NAN (GOOGLE...GOOGLE …OLD)

In the **background** to this insurgency lurked a... **shadowy troika….** of hard-line - eco-strategists: Arne Naess, the Norwegian founder of Deep Ecology .....John Muir, the Scottish lobbyist for wild places…. and ..... Nan Shepherd, who might be called **the poet** of the resistance.

Before we shade in Nan's **particular contribution** to the conspiracy…. let us see what it has **achieved.**

Thirty-one demands were finally put to the authorities. **All 31 were accepted.**

A smuggled document…. which has recently come into my hands…. explains that these featured several over-arching principles:

All Scottish pupils now have the **right….** to learn about sustainability.

All trainee teachers will have to demonstrate an ability to advocate sustainability in order to qualify

Everyone else involved peripherally in school affairs…., from maintenance staff to politicians….., are to put sustainability….. at the centre of their thinking.

Now, by sustainability we are not talking about building desks from re-cycled wood or banning plastic cups.

We are talking about the social, as well as physical mathematics that that stems from the simple fact that Scotland currently **consumes Scotland** at a rate that is **three times more** than Scotland can sustain, long-term.

This has **huge** implications for the future. We are talking about re-balancing…. human ecology. At the heart of this….. is r**espect for the planet** - which is where Nan comes in.

Natural Change use The Living Mountain as a **go-to source of inspiration** - an inspiration both to enthuse themselves…. and to encourage **others** to adjust their relationship to the world around them.

Nan's writing has a clarity, a simplicity, a beauty and an integrity that is rarely found in eco-primers.

It is seductive to readers in a way that **perhaps** Elements of Applied Semantics by Arne Naess is not.

More subtly, it also provides **a template** for the attitude that Natural Change... and the Scottish Government…. want to encourage in Scottish schools and, ultimately, Scottish society.

Fear of strangeness does **not feature** in The Living Mountain. Nan relishes, records, sympathises and inter-acts with….. all the world she meets. It is a **benchmark** for good behaviour.

Can I ask if Morag Watson is here?

Morag was one of the architects of the Natural change project. Thanks to the advanced tracking device known as Skype, I **contacted** Morag in her Perthshire lair.

I asked Morag for the **core importance** of Nan's gospel to what might be termed the

refining of Scotland's psyche..

The conversation was, of course, encrypted,.....but I can leak a **few** details.

MOrag acknowledges that QUOTES "there **can** be a **macho element** to the outdoor world: acquiring this, bagging that.

What makes Nan **attractive** .....is that she is the antithesis of that. She is never feeding her **ego,** but feeding her **soul.**

For her, the purpose of being in the outdoors is…. **to be in the outdoors** - not up, over or straight through it."

Which is where we came in, about half an hour ago.

Morag tells me that Natural Change still runs its thinking-persons' boot camps.

The location is secret. All she would reveal is that you turn left at Tain and drive for an hour.

The principal ingredients are a **little bit** of walking and **quite a lot of** ....observing and sharing. There are, I am assured, no lectures on dialectical materialism.

And, best of all, it is **scientifically-proven** to be **good** for you.

A cognitive neuroscientist…. called David Strayer, from the University of Utah…. has demonstrated that….. after three days of immersion in Nature…. the brain is effectively rejuvenated.

Which brings us back, once more, to our **opening riddle.**

Hand up all those who did **not** find a word which twinned naturally with Tug, Gravy and Show.

Hands up all those who solved it in l**ess than a minute**

Thirty seconds?

Ten seconds?

WEll done. And the answer is, of course….Boat

PIC: TUGBOAT ETC.

Your name is? No you work for Natural Change?

Here's your prize.

For the rest of you, do not despair. Our neuro-scientist friend has demonstrated that if you give the frontal cortex a three-day break from the persistent demands

of telephone calls, emails, deadlines, working out the tv controls, the psyche's psyche changes.

I quote Mr Strayer

"When the attention network is freed up, **other parts of the brain** appear to **take over**….like those associated with sensory perception, empathy, and **productive day-dreaming."**

Before-and-after tests have demonstrated that humans duly perform **47 per cent** better in challenges that measures creative thinking and problem-solving - challenges like the Remote Associates Test you have just completed.

So...all roads lead to Tain

CLIP: FLIGHT OVER EVEREST 18.16 - 20:

By way, of course, of...The Living Mountain.

PIC SVEIN

Before we finish, I must just say Thank you to my son Svein. As you can see, he too had a rapport with Nan….and he completed a nice kind of circle by stitching together the technical side of this presentation

PIC: THE END

And thanks, of course, to yourselves, for sitting through this so patiently.

Appendix 4

Benedikt Erlingsson interviewed by Patti Lean

Skype, 4 September 2015.

Transcript excerpt.

BE Thank you for your questions. If you take the first one there, about the difference between breaking a horse and taming it - well, it's very close to all horse people. It's the brutality - to have a slave or to have a companion; that's the difference. And the Icelandic horse has never been broken like this; it's not in the tradition so we have been ? in our horse culture that has been more dominant to work with the horse. Maybe had something to do with the temperament of the horse. I once heard a circus-taming horseman saying that the Icelandic horse was a very clever horse, but he always checked you out. He was a lot like a shepherd dog; you will teach him something and then he knows. He is, like, he learns fast but then he has to test your boundaries, all the time. Maybe because he doesn't trust men , or he has bad experience.

PL So he has to negotiate?

BE Yeah, sure. The power of it has always been to negotiate with the horse, because for us the horse is the will, the fire; to feel the independence and the power of this animal that is taking you; and get it with you.. it's not...you know, it's the drive. We call it a willing horse. Everybody's talking about 'willing horse' ; 'he is willing,' somebody says. Maybe if this is an old farmer then he means 'really willing' but he would just say, 'he's willing'. It's the art of understatement.

PL So, independent people and independent horses?

BE Yes, they are willing...they want to go. I once had experience about this, about the 'willing'. I never understand it. The was Apache Indian (*sic*) from America that came to Iceland; a friend brought him to me. He wanted me to introduce him to Icelandic horses and I had great respect for him. I was, like, this is a horse person from America, this Apache Indian, so I was really showing him my horses and it was really funny, I was letting them holding (*sic*) for me a very tender horse; it was very, you know, hard to get, and I was lucky I got him there out of a group, and I asked him, could you please

hold him? And then I came and I got other horses and I had problems, and then I came back and he had let him go, and he was just, he had bound up about him, and I said , 'Where's the horse?'. 'He didn't want to be with me.' So I was, like, oh my god, and then I start to look for him, so I was, like, wow, this is really...this is a guy, you know, he knows something. And then I put him on an old mare that I had, my favourite mare, was willing, very, you know, did everything for you, but she was like a jaguar, you know. He did not want to have a saddle, even, and I said, 'No, you have to have a saddle. I think we could negotiate, we could put, like, a very thin mattress that I had, you know, to sit on and then he got into that, and we went on, and she wanted to go, and he was all the time, 'She's a crazy horse, crazy horse; she wants to run, run,' and we were, like, 'Of course she wants to run, ' and he stopped very soon and he went down and he was in shock. He said, 'We would shoot a horse like that.' And I was, 'What? What is this? And I started to ask him and then I found out something about 'warm bloods' and 'cold bloods', so he was probably brought up on a ranch where there were cold-blood horses - take (s*ic*) all the time to get them moving. For me their spirit is broken. So this was an Indian - maybe he was not really, you know, he was like he was some horse-whisperer that has been on a ranch and was from Apache, you know, tribe.

PL So was he the basis for the character in your film?

BE No, no. I just told his story out of the concepts. So it's a very interesting subject; you could take this subject about taming and breaking into all our relationship to nature.

PL Is it like a sort of metaphor?

BE I think it's a good metaphor. You can take it, taming nature or breaking nature, you know.

PL Yeah, and we've done a lot of breaking...

BE And it usually comes in our head; you lose the spirit or you get something against you. If you attempt...if nature is strong enough ...it will hit you back, or you know, you break and you lose the spirit.

PL So what is it about Iceland, then, that nature is so much, I don't know, 'in your face' all the time? Nature and Iceland.

BE Well, I don't know...I don't think Icelanders are more nature people than other

people, but I think, it is a magic maybe. It's a new island, there is something in the landscape that is very new. We are very few, so there's a lot of space. It's easy to... you know, you can drive 30 minutes from Reykjavík - 20 minutes - and you're, like, on the moon. There's nothing in a volcano, you are in the highlands. I am location scouting now for my next film, and it's incredible how beautiful the highlands here are, just close to Reykjavík. You can very very fast come to an area no tourists. There are a million tourists in Iceland now, but you don't see them. You do in some places.

PL Contrast the Westfjords with Scaftafell. Beautiful walks and hikes - then I suppose you worry that you're part of the destructive force, going into these pristine environments.

BE Yes, but there is a lot of space, and it's about the seclusion. So I think this is also the - you touch on the concept about space that for me, it seems to be a very beautiful paradox, if people have a space around them, there is a distance around people, they tend to be very interested in each other. But when you press people together, a lot of people, like in a big city, they are not interested, you know, they close up.

PL In the Westfjords the binoculars - in parts of rural Scotland things are very similar; interest in the day-to-day things that people are doing.

BE Exactly, but then I think there's some primitive forces there, so maybe they are visible and you can say that when people have the space, and the space is clean around them, you can more see their primitive natures. I don't think people are more content, but their nature is more visible.

PL (There's a) debate about pristine meaning 'super-clean' but the root is 'primitive'...what did I ask?

BE How important do you think the landscape is in informing human-horse relationships?

PL Oh yes...what made you think of looking from the horse's perspective?

BE Yeah, but I've always been interested in that perspective of course, as a boy and as a horseman. There is a lot to say about both - but the landscape, you know, the Icelandic horse is so much 'the ship of the desert', and all this ancient road system, you know, because you were talking about hiking in Iceland. There is this hidden road system from the Iron Age, from the Vikings, from the first settlers. very soon they

made this road, they found out, and we are still travelling on these roads - and that's part of our hobby: when you're a horseman you travel on horses in the summers and you are looking at finding the old roads. And these are roads that you can read about in the Iceland sagas. So when you're riding, you know you're exactly on the same track as this person and this person. And this is really beautiful. When you start to analyse these roads, they were so well put in the landscape; so economical in, you know, relations to energy and everything. So you really start to admire how (...) is the way - okay, it's not there because, okay, you really understand how well thought the plan is.

PL There's a great expression, 'desire lines', the lines we make to get from A to B in the most desirable way. So, for example, people going to a supermarket will walk across the grass and make a path across the grass. You see that, these muddy paths, you know, and the people carry their bags of shopping across these lines. And it's interesting now, that in some planning projects, e.g. in American university campuses, they wait until the students made these lines themselves first, before they put in paths.

BE Beautiful.

PL Beautiful, isn't it, these desire lines. And we can also equate that to our psychology - we 'engrave' lines in our minds in the way we think about things, and perhaps in the way we think about the environment. So I think your lines are a lovely idea and it's lovely to know they've been there for so long. I didn't know about them, it's amazing.

Appendix 5

Poetry Map of Scotland, poem no. 170: Tiree

The Maze, Tiree.

It was the whiteness of the shell
the sweep of wet beach, the spread
of dark rocks holding it down.
It was the lean of the grass
the wrinkled sea, all the talk
about a change in the weather.
It was the forgotten plastic bag
the burnt-out car, the stains
of oil and rust that lingered.
It was wild primroses on Kennavar
in morning sun, the way we live,
what we have done.

(Lesley Jackson, 2017)

Appendix 6

Documentation of Marine litter found at Baugh Beach, Isle of Tiree

19- 23 January 2019.

Day 1. Saturday 19 January 2019. Green and yellow

Tub, 'Cola Cao', plastic, yellow no lid. Dimensions: 10 cm diameter x 22 cm height. Condition: more or less intact, printed text on side faded.

Container, plastic, white, empty. Use indeterminate: of the type used for cooking oil, brake fluid, screen wash etc. Shape crumpled, amorphous. Dimensions approx. 20 x 30 x 10 cm.

Fragment, (looks like broken-off corner of a fish box), plastic, yellow-green

Fragment, plastic, red-orange, looks like battery cover from a gadget or toy. Dimensions approx. 5 x 5 cm

Fragment, plastic, brittle, cracked, yellow faded to pearlescent white. Shape amorphous; looks like remains of 'Jif' lemon juice bottle. Condition: cracked, crumpled, decayed. Dimensions approx. 5 x 3 cm.

Bottle top, plastic, crimson. Approx. 5cm diameter. Condition: edges broken.

Fragment, plastic, unknown origin. Dimensions approx. 4cm x 5 cm.

Tape-like fragment, plastic, green, looks like cable tie or strap. Dimensions: 0.8 cm wide x 20 cm long.

Fragment, plastic, off-white, unknown origin, roughly fin-shaped. Dimensions: approx. 5 x 15 x 1 cm.

Aerosol can, metal and plastic, 'cocoa brown' tanning mousse. Pink and white exterior labelling. Condition fair. Dimensions: approx. 20 cm long x 5 cm diameter.

Baler twine, plastic, knotted, orange; tied with black tape at one end, frayed at the other. Dimensions approx. 35 x 15 cm.

Tub, plastic, white, no label, looks like yogurt tub or similar. Contains section of pink Styrofoam. Dimensions varied, approx. 12 x 7 x 3 cm. Condition: decomposed.

Bottle with lid, plastic, 0.3l, red lid, contains yellow liquid.

Day 2. Sunday 20 January 2019. Blue.

Sheeting, polythene, blue. Tied in knots, frayed. Dimensions variable. Condition: poor

Bottle lid, plastic, blue. Looks like top of 5 litre water container. Approx 20 x 9 x 8 cm. Condition: good.

Cylinder, plastic, blue. Looks like battery or cartridge case. Approx. dimensions: 6 cm long x 1.5cm diameter. Condition: squashed at one end.

Fragment, triangular (sail-shaped), plastic, turquoise. Origin indeterminate. Dimensions: approx. 6 x 8 x 10 cm.

Glove, rubber, purplish-blue. Looks 'large' size. Dimensions approx. 20 x 10 x 2 cm. Condition: dessicated, hardened.

Fragment, cylindrical, plastic, dark blue. Similar to item 3. Dimensions not recorded.

Beer can, 'Belhaven', metal. Dimensions: approx. Condition: squashed in centre.

Sole of child's flip-flop, rubber, with remains of strap, plastic, turquoise. Dimensions approx. 15 x 6 x 2 cm. Condition: decayed.

Fragment of rope, plastic, green, flat with canvas stitched on. Dimensions: approx. 12 cm long. Condition: fair.

Fragment of rope, plastic, cerulean-type blue. Approx 20 cm long x 1 cm diameter. Condition: frayed.

Fragment of rope, plastic, turquoise. Dimensions irregular: approx. 40 cm long, < 1 cm diameter. Condition: frayed at both ends.

0.3 litre bottle, plastic, clear/translucent, no lid. Dimensions: approx. 20 x 8 cm base diameter. Condition: vertically squashed, contains holes.

Bottle, plastic, clear/translucent, lid blue plastic. Contains sand. Dimensions: approx. 10 x 10 x 10 cm. Condition: horizontally-squashed, poor.

Day 3. Monday 21 January 2019. Black and Brown

Piece of plastic sheeting, black, with loosely frayed ends containing soil. Approx. 52 x 30 cm.

Fragment of plywood, approx. 20 x 20 cm.

Fragment of plastic, brown (pot?). Approx. 10 x 10 cm.

Sole of shoe (trainer?), plastic, black with fragments of turquoise. 10 x 29 cm.

Strip of rubber, black, unevenly cut. 36 x 3 cm.

Cartridge, plastic, black with white insert at one end. 7 cm x 2 cm diameter.

Fragment of rubber, segment-shaped, brownish pink, spongey, cork-like. 6 x 2 cm.

Fragment consisting of 3 pieces of burnt timber, with 4 rusty nails protruding from one end. Approx. 15 x 11 x 11 cm.

Fragment, plastic, black, curled at one end. 6 x 5 x 0.5 cm.

Fragment, triangular, plastic, black, slightly curved, about 3cm thick. Approx. 15 x 9-11 cm.

Strip of rubber, broken, black, held together by woven fabric webbing. Approx. 107 x 1cm x 0.4 cm thick.

Strip of rubber, black, reinforced with woven webbing. 209 x 2.7 cm x 0.9 cm thick.

<u>Day 4. Tuesday 22 January 2019. Whitish-blue and silver. Too windy to work in situ</u>

Fragment, plastic, whitish-yellow, bottle neck, Approx. 12 x 9 cm.

Fragment, plastic, white, circular spiral. Approx. 3 cm diameter.

Aerosol tin, metal, flattened at top end, with green plastic nozzle, sand-encrusted. Approx. 15 x 8 cm4.5 cm diameter at foot.

Length of rope, polypropelene, white, frayed. Approx 4 cm long.

Can top, aluminium, ragged edges with oval hole 3cm long. Approx. 8 cm diameter.

Fragment, plastic, white, circular with eight 'segments' inside. Approx. 2cm diameter.

Fragment, plastic, white, octopus-like but with 5 legs. 5 cm long, top approx. 2cm diameter.

Fragment, plastic, roughly triangular, one serrated edge, rust particles on one side. Approx 8 x 8 x 12 cm.

Seabird skull, upper jaw, seagull, dark tip to beak. 13 cm long.

Handle, plastic, clear, probably from carrier bag. 20cm x 6 cm.

Fragment, plastic, grey, one serrated edge, 12 x 6 cm.

Fishing line, tangled into rough ball-shape, clear.

Lower part of a feather, white with yellowish quill. Approx. 14 x 4 cm.

<u>Day 5. Wednesday 23 January, 2019. Red.</u>

Pot, plastic, yogurt-type, containing a piece of lilac-coloured expanded foam. Approx. 19 x 11 cm.

Bottle, plastic, flattened, clear with red plastic lid. 29.5 x 13 cm.

Cartridge, plastic, red, flat at one end. 7 cm long x 2.3 cm diameter.

Lid, plastic, dark pink. Lid attached to a broken top. Lid has 3 triangular openings, broken. Dimensions not recorded.

Fragment, plastic, red with loop. Probably Fragment, plastic, grey, one serrated edge, 12 x 6 cm.

Fishing line, tangled into rough ball-shape, clear.

Lower part of a feather, white with yellowish quill. Approx. 14 x 4 cm.

Pot, plastic, yogurt-type, containing a piece of lilac-coloured expanded foam. Approx. 19 x 11 cm.

Bottle, plastic, flattened, clear with red plastic lid. 29.5 x 13 cm.

Cartridge, plastic, red, flat at one end. 7cm long x 2.3 cm diameter.

Lid, plastic, dark pink. Lid attached to a broken top. Lid has 3 triangular openings, broken. Dimensions not recorded.

Fragment, plastic, red with loop. Probably top of type of net used as bird feeder or for fruit/veg. Approx. 4 x 2.6 cm

Fragment, plastic, curved, red, roughly triangular. 3 x 3.5 cm.

Fragment, plastic, red. Part of lid with text 'Max' on top. Approx. 5 x 3 cm.

Fragment, plastic , red, flat, roughly square. Approx. 2 x 2 cm.

Fragment, plastic, orange. Rounded corners, one broken, also mouldings. Contains holes. Small fragment of blue plastic attached. 6.5 x 6.5cm.

Handle, plastic, grey with traces of red paint; appears chewed at tip. Approx. 11.5 x 7.5 cm.

Aerosol can; pink, white and black. Text: 'CB cocoa-brown original medium shade'. Dimensions 16.3 cm long x 5 cm diameter.

Swathe of rope/baler twine, polypropylene, orange, frayed into horse-tail shape. Approx. 40 cm long.

Fragment, plastic, red, triangular, reinforced; probably part of a box.

Approx. 65 x 22

Appendix 7

Films #1-5: their Role and Purpose in the Research [101]

The role and purpose of films within the project evolved in the course of the research; they vary from documentation/diary to short films presented as artworks.

The first two films, #1 *Watery Final Cut* and #2 *Water is Speaking* are intended as journal documentation of 'elementals' referred to by Shepherd (2014, p. 4): rock, water, snow, ice. They contain opening shots of enclosed interior space underneath ice or snow, then the camera slowly tilts up and pans across a vista of mountains or sea. I examine what Shepherd calls 'interplay' of elements and self (2014, pp. 31, 59) by zooming from the macro to the micro, as does Shepherd in her text. *Green Leaves, Black Water* (film #3) was part of an online exhibition aimed at explaining my walking/drawing practice to a public audience. It comprises a series of tracking shots of me walking on rather rough ground which my daughter Carmen filmed using a gimbal. Then I make drawings by Loch Mossdale, using an extended brush to follow moving reflections of willow branches on the loch.

Birth of Water (film #4) and *Bringing the War Home* (film #5) use cross-cutting to express simultaneous sets of actions. The former conflates ideas of the mythic 'ancient snake' (Shepherd, 2014, p. 27) with associations of femininity and the generative potential of flowing waters (Bachelard, 2006). *Bringing the War Home* is an

[101] The films are:
1. *Watery Final Cut* (2014; 2017) 'A mountain has an inside' [from video diary]. Available at: https://vimeo.com/233809070
2. *Water is speaking* (2021). A microphone is inserted under melting sea-ice, Baltic Sea, Finland [from video diary]. Available at: https://vimeo.com/526242975
3. *Patti Lean: Green Leaves, Black Water* (2021) a walking artist during Covid. Spring Fling Open Studios, 2021 [artist's film]. Available at: https://vimeo.com/935354803?share=copy
4. *Birth of Water* (2021). In a meditation on sound, language and understanding, Patti and Risto read words from Nan Shepherd's 'The Living Mountain', simultaneously in Finnish and English [artist's film]. Available at: https://vimeo.com/526201967
5. *Bringing the War Home* (2022). Winter forest, war in Ukraine [artist's film] Available at: https://vimeo.com/690533348 (All films accessed 29 December 2024)

experimental collage of drawings, sound and found footage, influenced by the work of Margaret Tait.

Overall, the films play two main roles in *Kiss the Cold Goodbye*: first is the sketchbook role of documenting my walks, in which film material acts as a memory trigger for specific places. Visual appearance is important, but sound recordings also recall a sense of place; I find listening to a place helps with drawing and painting a sense of the whole place. The second role of films is as artworks in themselves. Processes of editing and collaging footage, sometimes separating sound from visual footage, lend new meaning and a few surprises to the work, as does having the freedom to appropriate pre-existing footage from various sources. One must be mindful of copyright and permissions, but there is no shortage of open-access material. Painting is normally messier than filming, and the materiality of paint calls for different approaches than filming, however the two methods integrated with one another have enriched the project.

Appendix 8

Patti Lean Artist, a film by John Wallace (2024)[102]

This film is shot in Dumfries and Galloway, with visual reference to research in Tiree, Iceland, and Finland. We filmed over two seasons, walking and talking both in the Galloway Forest Park and in my Kirkcudbright studio. With a background in literature and classics, and a newly-found interest in *The Living Mountain*, Wallace's questions opened up lively discussion, footage from which was subsequently integrated into the film along with footage of drawing in the field from my video diary. I was particularly grateful to have access to music, 'The Plateau' by Jenny Sturgeon (2021) from her album *The Living Mountain*. [103]

Patti Lean Artist opens with a walk in Galloway moors and forest on a sunny, freezing day in winter 2023. At minus 10 degrees, we were able to film ice formations on the reeds and grasses as well as freezing lochs , Loch Mossdale and Loch Stroan, calling to mind Shepherd's descriptions of ice and snow in Chapter 5 of *The Living Mountain*. Overlooking Loch Stroan, Wallace asked me to read out the following passage about effects of the elements:

> I had no idea how many fantastic shapes the freezing of running water took. In each whorl and spike one catches the moment of equilibrium between two elemental forces.
>
> (Shepherd, 2014, p. 20)

Speaking Shepherd's words out into freezing air lent new significance to my relationship with both *The Living Mountain* and spoken word in general. I tend to be

[102] John Wallace (2024) Patti Lean Artist [film] Available at: https://vimeo.com/923330798/e166c7a11b (Accessed 29 December 2024)

[103] Jenny Sturgeon (2021) *The Living Mountain* [music album] Available at: https://www.jennysturgeonmusic.com/thelivingmountain (Accessed 29 December 2024)

happier in front of a painting than a camera, but on this day a combination of weather and light, Wallace's encouragement and some fortuitous planning led to a unique experience.

In my studio - this time in summer, bringing a sense of seasonality to the film - Wallace focussed on materials and process; he took multiple close-ups of development work for the marine litter project in Chapter 2, and documented how that project was conceived and followed through. The film is carefully edited to integrate contextual references to Shepherd and other writers - for instance LeGuin's carrier bag theory is mentioned in relation to my collection of sea litter objects retrieved from Tiree.

Wallace's understanding of multiperspectivity in *The Living Mountain* prompted him to design the film as a collage of images, sounds and texts with new and surprising juxtapositions. I learned interview, film and editing processes new to me, as well as having my work reflected back in the medium of film; Participating in this film made a positive contribution to the project.

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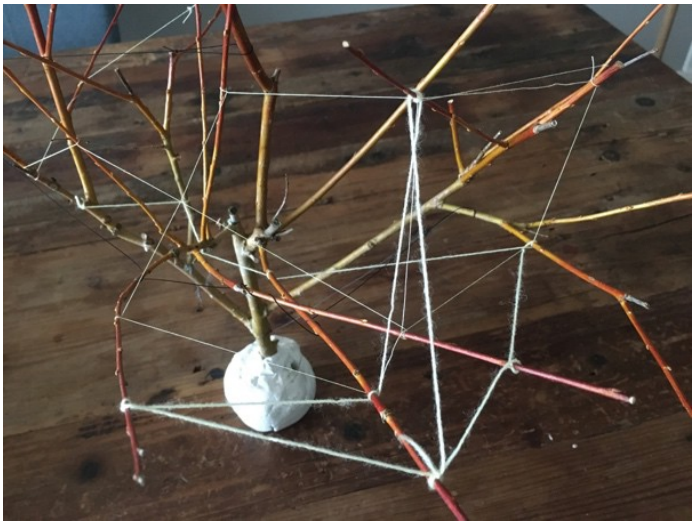

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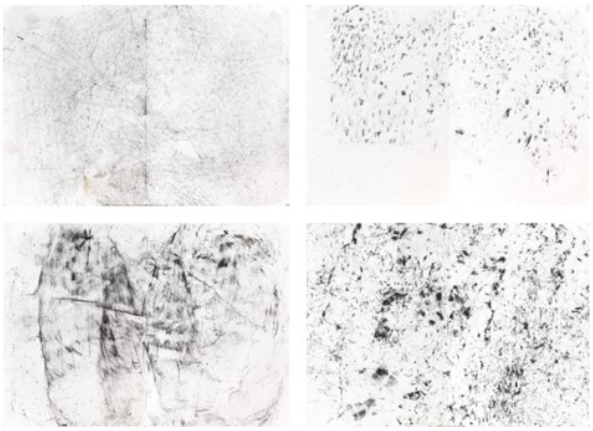

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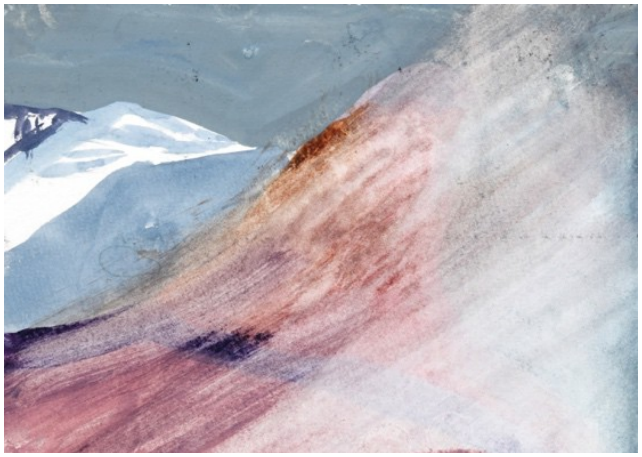

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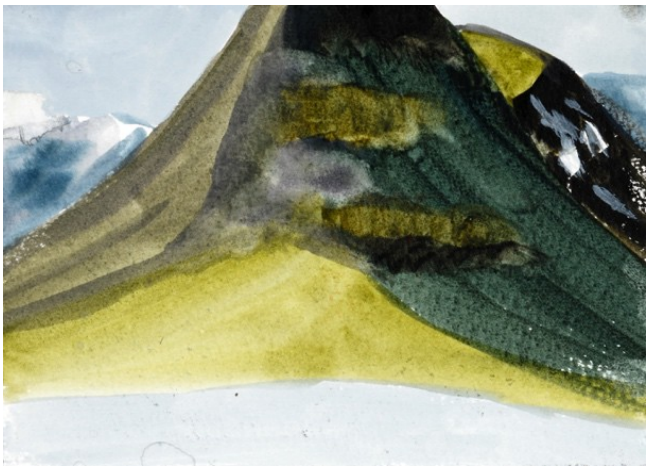

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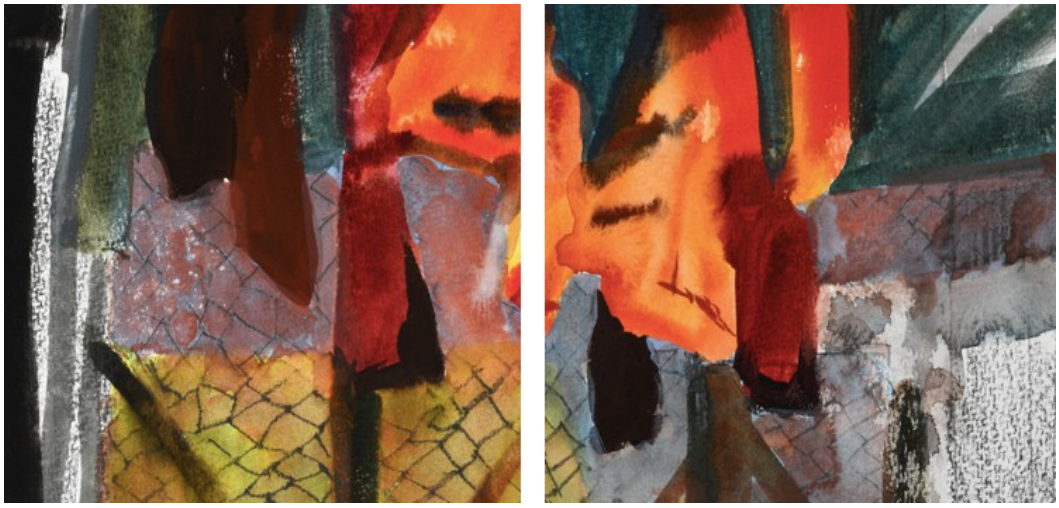

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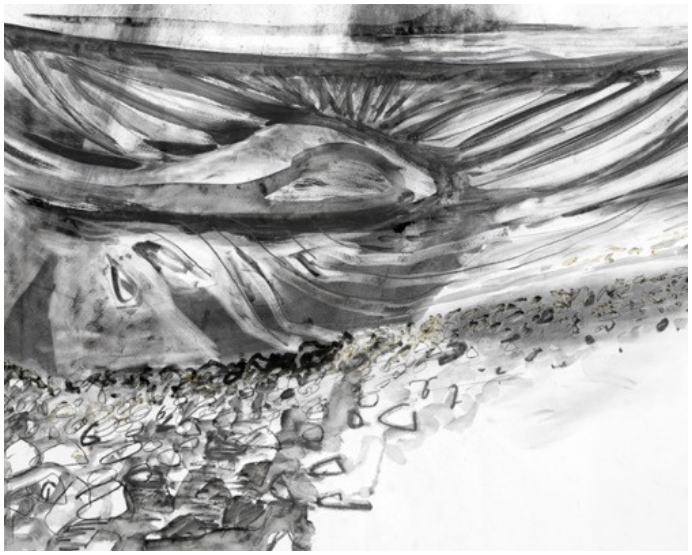

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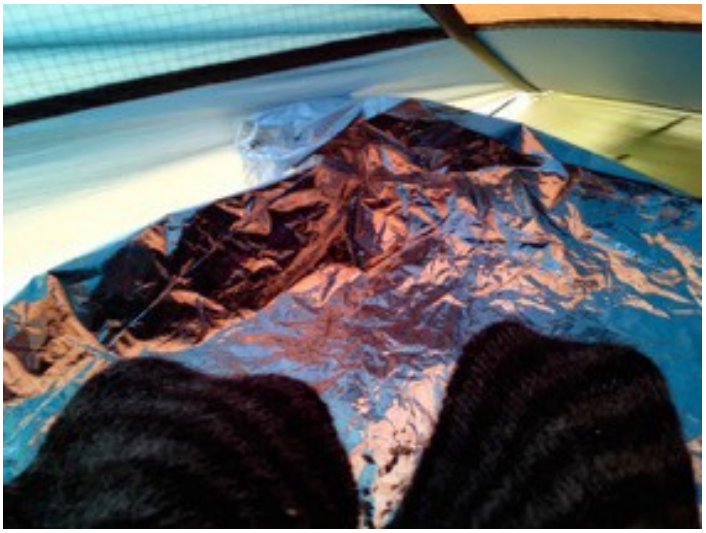

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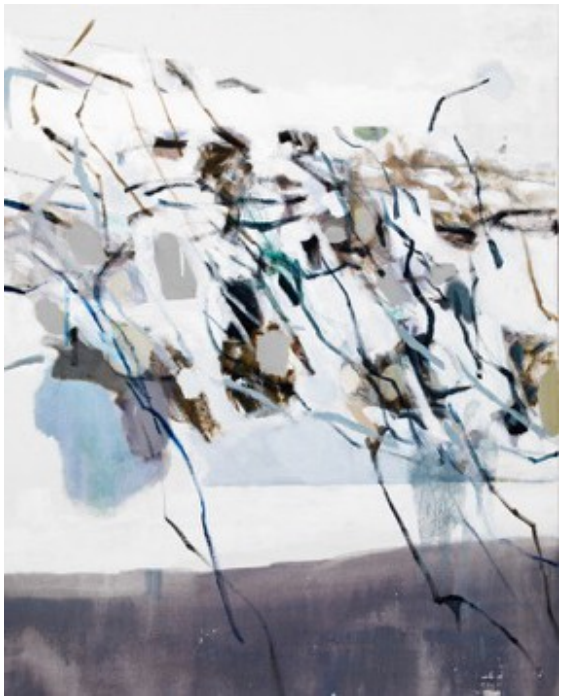

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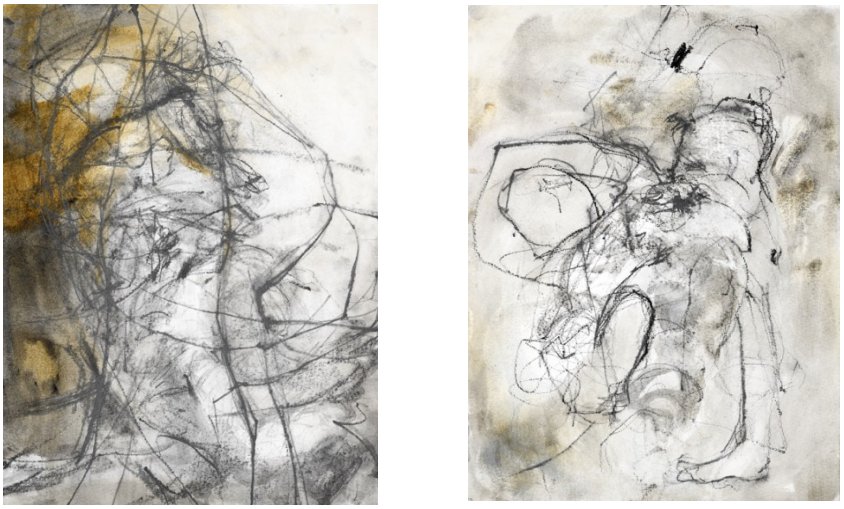

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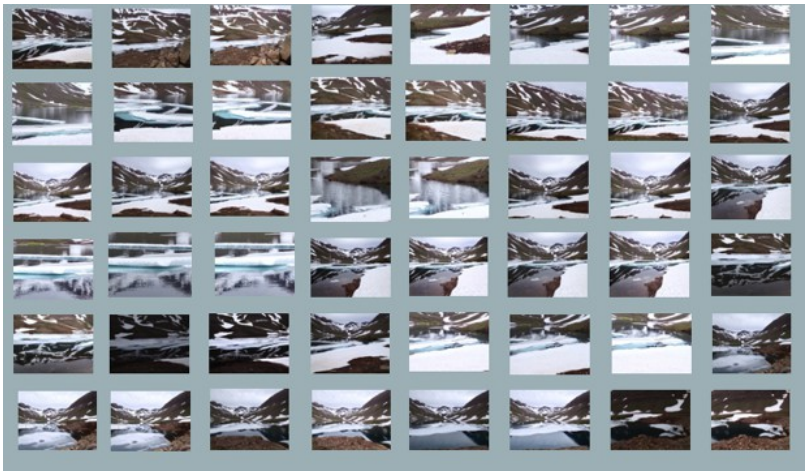

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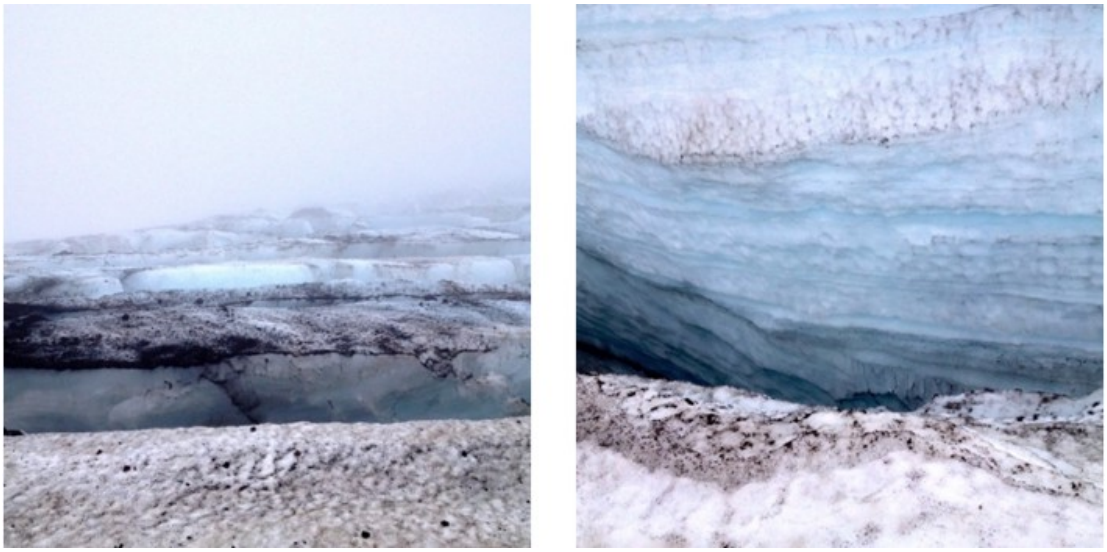

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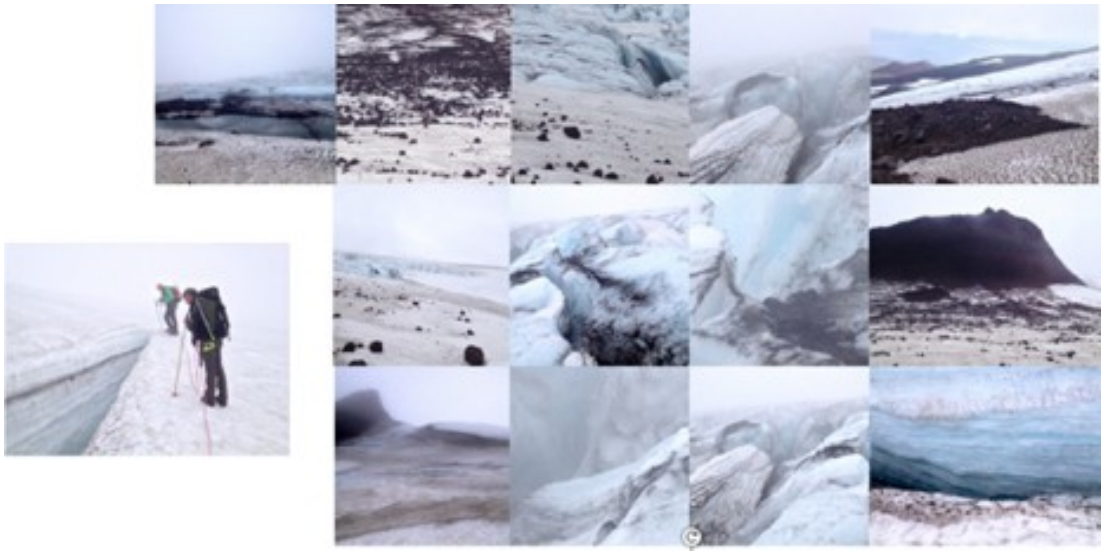

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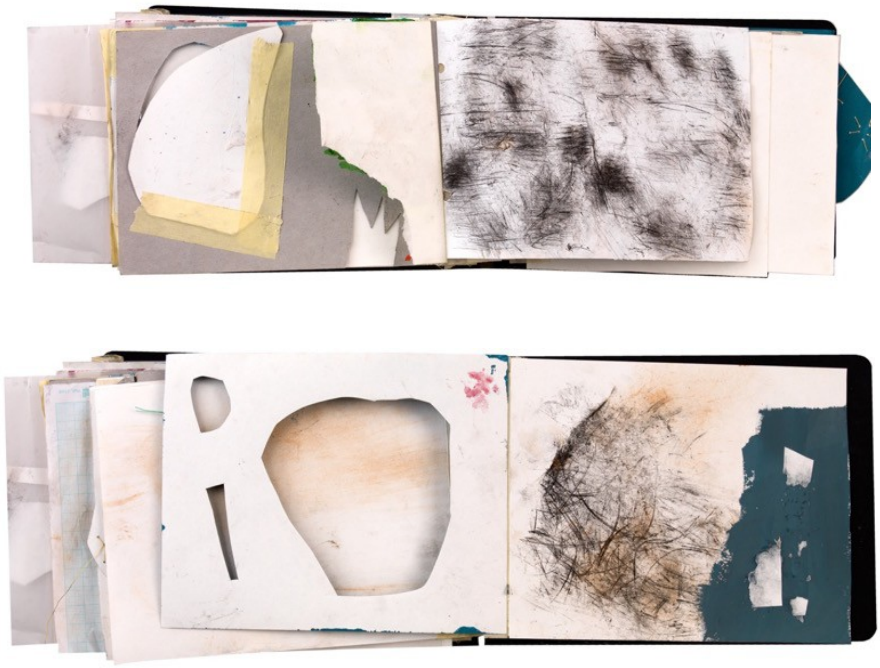

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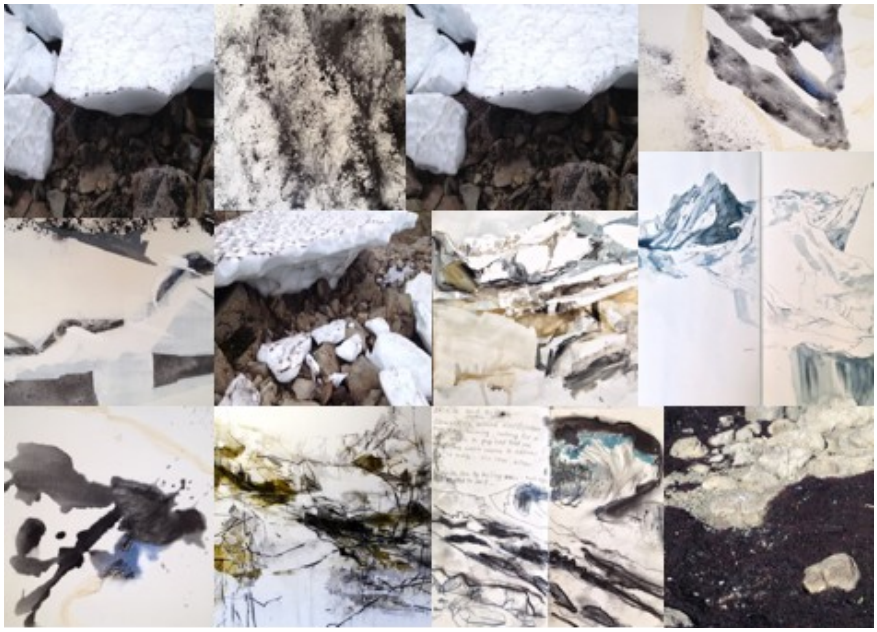

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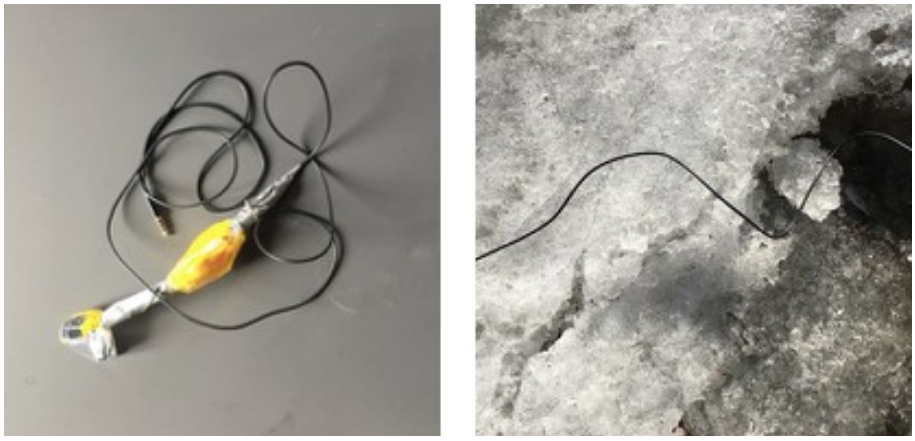

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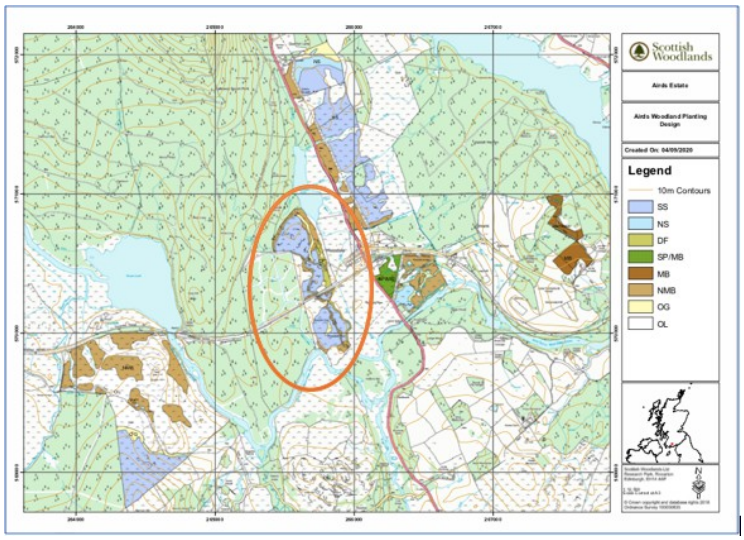

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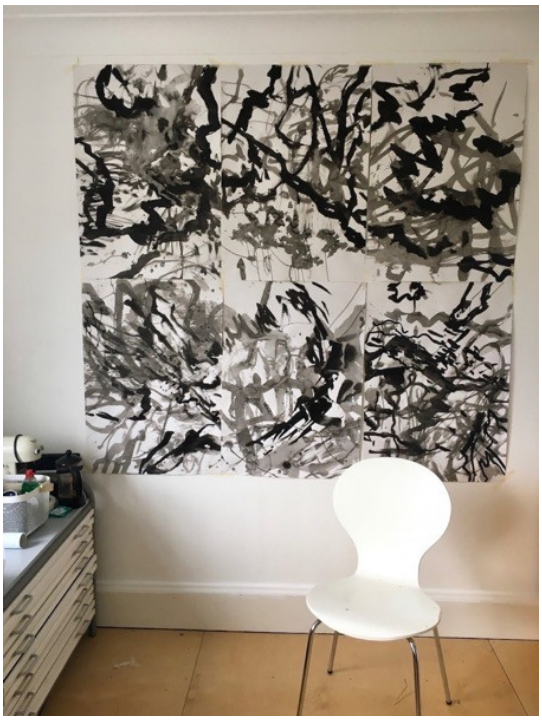

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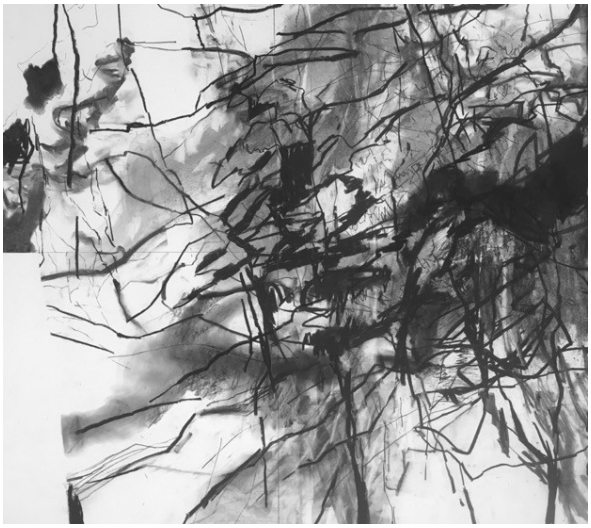

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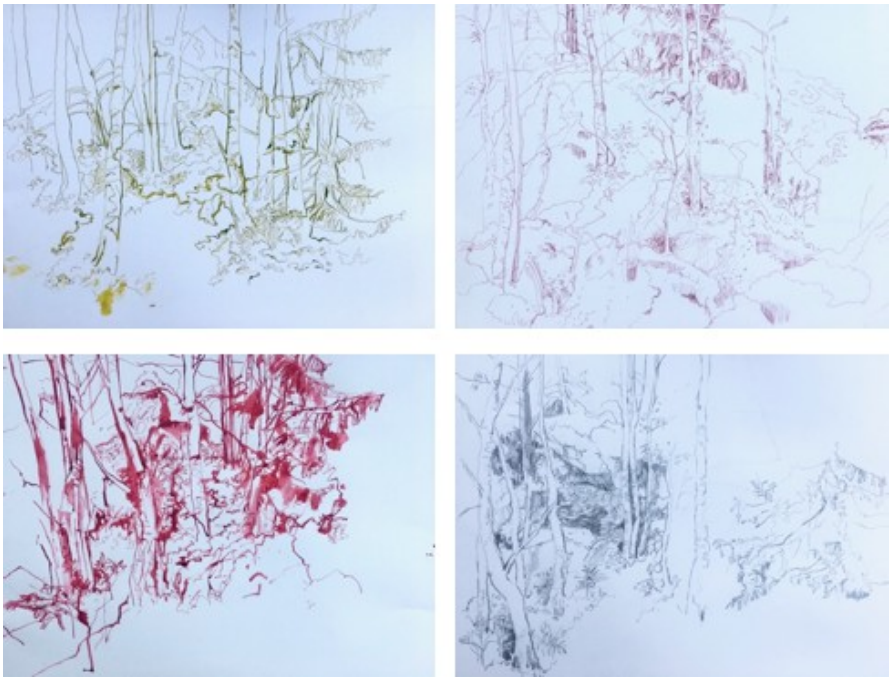

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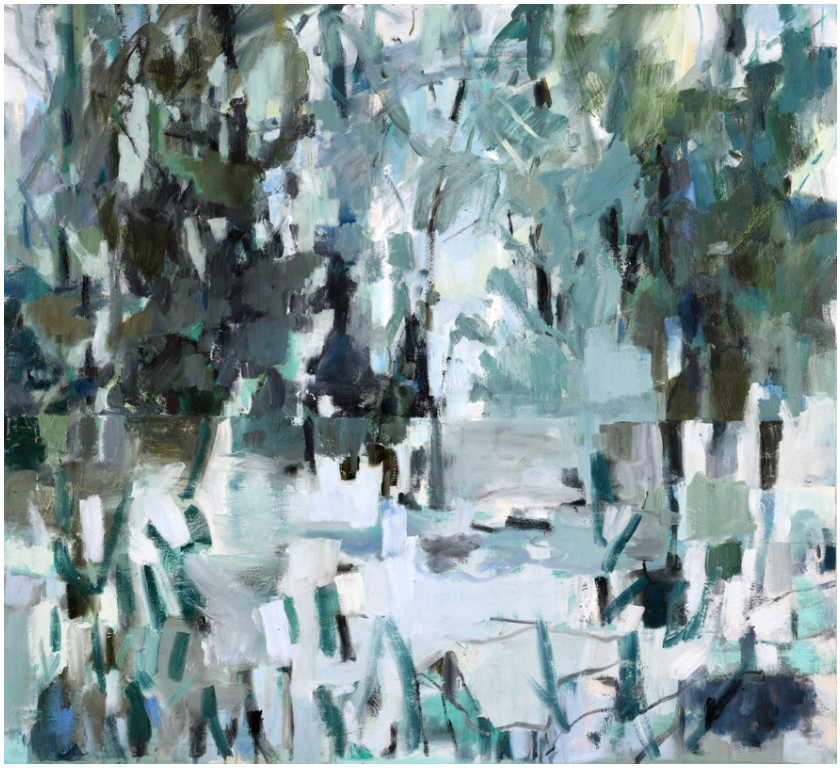

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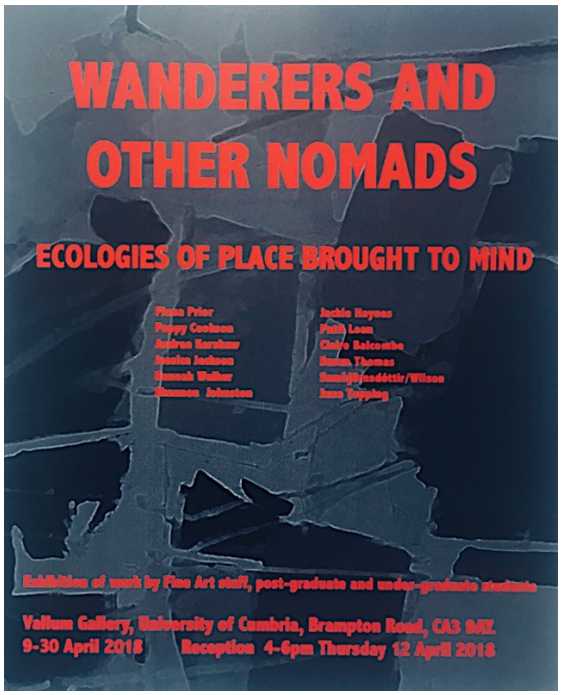

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Figure 108. Installation view, *Our Bright Earth*, Exhibition held at Dundas Street Gallery, Edinburgh, July 2023.

A Quartet of Artists from the South West look at 'Our Bright Earth' National Museum

WHETHER they write, sketch, take photographs, paint, sculpt or work in clay there's a passion today for the artist to "give expression to the environment and its concerns."

So says Patti Leino, one of four artists from a group set up by 'Upland', which runs Dumfries & Galloway's Spring Fling event (May 27-29), where each year some 90 professional artists and craftspeople open their studios to visitors.

Whereas in the past, painters like Turner, Constable, Monet and O'Keefe interpreted their environment with a pencil or brush, today it's hard for any artist to just sit down, reach for his sketchpad and draw.

That would be tantamount to fiddling while Rome burns. It's axiomatic that, when it comes to Nature and the environment today, we're all in the last chance saloon and these four artists have a particular sensitivity towards that fact.

Patti Leino's mentor is the Aberdeenshire poet, Nan Shepherd (1893-1981) who published in the 1940s The Living Mountain.A memoir of field notes concerning landscape and weather in the Cairngorms, it was written in the tradition of Thoreau and John Muir and influenced a tranche of contemporary nature writers like Robert MacFarlane and Richard Mabey.

All four of these artists live in Dumfries & Galloway. They will invite visitors into their studios during this year's Spring Fling and stage a show together, 'Our Bright Earth' at Edinburgh's Dundas Street Gallery (July 16-30). They have exhibited widely in Scotland and NE England.

Heather Armstrong studied art, design and photography after retiring as a NHS doctor. When she began working with clay, she was enthralled by the freedom it offered and liked working with her hands. "It suited her need to be in control."

However, the unpredictability of the firing process was unnerving, if not exciting as she had to give up being in control! She owes much to the Galloway landscape, its mountains, sea, rocks and rivers. Her ceramics are hand-built, smoke-fired, unglazed and decorative, rather than functional.

Left: **Patti, Leino, 'Seafarer'**
***Above*: Heather Armstrong, 'Bay'**

Bella Green is from Glasgow but has lived in Dumfriesshire since 1997. Trained at Norwich School of Art, she was tutor for 20 years in colour and drawing at the Royal College of Art. She gives tuition in courses, classes, workshops and online. Her landscapes are achieved through an immediate, gestural approach, while her still lifes tend to be ordered and structured.

Raised in Jersey, Caroline Hone studied art in England, spent much of her life in Cornwall and moved five years ago to Twynholm, in Galloway. As a walker and sketcher, she works from memory, beginning with random strokes and continuing until she connects with a recognisable location, season or weather pattern. Working in versatile acrylic, she concentrates on the paint itself, her paintings referring to the environment and her concern for it.

Patti Leino divides her time between WASPS studios in Kirkcudbright and Korpo in Finland. A graduate of Edinburgh University and Cumbria, she taught fine art at Cumbria University from 2001 to 2018.

Leino describes herself as a walking artist who, like Nan Shepherd, likes northerly, fragile-but-resilient places. She speaks out about the climate crisis by using layers, fragments and gestural brushwork.

Her methods and materials are varied. She collects material on her walks, photographs objects and creates sound recordings of terns flying above

Figure 109. Editorial, 'Our Bright Earth' in *ArtWork* 226, May - June 2023, p. 8.

Figure 110. Exhibition poster: *Kiss the Cold Goodbye: Ten Years Walking in Iceland, Finland and Scotland.* Exhibition held at Perth Creative Exchange, Perth, October-November 2023.

Figure 111. Installation view: *Kiss the Cold Goodbye*, Perth Creative Exchange, October 2023.

Figure 112. Installation view: *Sanderling,* Perth Creative Exchange, October 2023.