

tanya axford
claire barber
elpida hadzi-vasileva
matt stokes
wolfgang weiledner
land + the samling



Viewing "Road to Nowhere" by Elpida Hadzi-Vasileva, July 2002

land + the samling an introduction

The road slides into the lake, disappearing into the water, and runs on, through the sunken houses, across the deepest point of the valley to where the railway line cuts through the drowned landscape to the dam wall. The submerged villages and farms have a currency still in lakeside speech. The bus driver points out Plashetts - an old name for a drowned place - as she drives us to Otterstone Viewpoint and the Headland - new names fashioned to give meaning to new places.

The landscape of Kielder now is forest and lake. Only 25 years ago it was forest and valley and 25 years before that it was valley and fells. It is a totally constructed landscape, a place of industry used as a retreat from the city. Kielder represents an 'otherness' for urban consumption - a rural idyll, a wilderness, a playground, a 'natural' environment.

Wolfgang Weileder's work 'Camera' takes hold of this through the use of a frame tent (the structure through which urban dwellers briefly become nomads) that is also a camera obscura projecting an idyllic 'framed' landscape into the safe, contained interior of the tent. But it's a mistake to see this as just a simple, ironic comment on the romantic construct of the 'landscape' or on the commodification of the 'countryside' as theme park. All Wolfgang's work presents opportunities to question what we see and how we make sense of it through playfully distorting and placing out of context common signifiers of meaning.

Like the other artists Wolfgang hasn't used his residency at Kielder so much to make work about the place but, rather, has allowed the place to push and stretch his work. That's not to say he ignores the place or fails to comment on it, explore its meanings, add to its associations. But viewing a work through the 'here and now' of its making and its siting isn't all of the story. The work is positioned within other dialogues: the before and after of its making; the larger body of the artist's work; other artworks; developing and changing investigations of ideas and reality - both the artist's and our own.

Wolfgang's next step with 'Camera' is to place the tent inside a gallery, construct a model landscape and project an image of that inside the tent. What then will be real and what a simulacrum? What will inside and outside signify? Will we, can we, know the difference between the image of the

simulated model landscape and the image of the constructed 'natural' landscape? Like the inhabitants of Plato's cave we are watching shadows dancing on the wall but, unlike them, we have no promise of 'truth' and 'reality' by turning our gaze in the right direction.

Is Elpida Hadzi-Vasileva's 'Road to Nowhere' a new life for the road running down into the waters of the lake, now floating green, reborn on the surface? Or is this colour field painting in its true environment abstracted from, but contiguous with, the landscape? Or is the landscape recolonising the valley stolen from it by the lake? Or is this some ghost road thrown up by drowned memories?

A work like 'Road to Nowhere' is invasive. It seeks to be part of a place, to belong and yet it encroaches on that place as an outsider. The work is made of large mats of cress which grows both fast and easily - and yet as she was constructing the work Elpida found herself reseeding and reseeding as the normally rampant plant kept dying. The problem was the slightly acidic lakewater which killed the plants - as if refusing any dialogue with the past or the memories hidden beneath the water's surface. Elpida told me a story about taking cress seed - which she couldn't get there - into Macedonia. It was impounded at customs for fear she was trying to sell it. So her project never happened and an apparently insignificant part of an artist's work - gathering her materials - became contentious and another metaphor for unrealised journeys.

It is the nature of these five projects that the journey is as significant as the arrival. This is so commonplace in contemporary art that it maybe seems trite to allude to - except that here real, physical journeys have been important mechanisms to produce and engage with the work.



The route of the old railway line emerges from the northern shore of Kielder Water and continues north across the border into Scotland. This was one of the paths that Claire Barber cycled, trailing behind her a large wooden roller wrapped with wool. As the roller dragged along the roads and forest paths the wool gradually matted into felt. This is the oldest way to make textiles - pounding dampened fibres until they mat together. It seems so stupidly simple it could never work but the felted wool is both strong and supple and wonderfully soft. Just north of the border is an old lime kiln which became the resting point for two hammocks felted from retracing the train journey that at one time took sheep to market.

A third hammock hung under a road bridge high across Lewisburn, one of the streams feeding the lake. These resting places are both poetic and useful - metaphorical and practical, places of reflection and comfort, of solace and refreshment.

Kielder Forest is criss-crossed with well defined paths and roads, marked and signposted for cars and cyclists. Walk off them and you quickly become lost in the regular, regimented rows of conifers. The pine needle-covered forest floor deadens sound. The tree canopy cuts out light. A few steps from road and carpark take you into eerie stillness. Gradually you become aware of forest

noises - the chafing of insects? At first one, then others join in until you are surrounded by their shrill crescendo - and then abruptly returned to silence. Has your presence stimulated the chorus? Did you walk into it by chance? Will you hear it again, here or elsewhere in the forest? Is it a moment that belongs just to you and your journey or have others too heard this? Does this belong to the forest at all?

The mechanism of Tanya Axford's work - 200 small, cheap digital alarm clocks hidden under the forest floor - belies the poetic quality of the work steeped in the apparent but hidden life of the forest. Standing in the forest we lose our normal sense of time and become more aware - through sound, movement, shifts in light - of hidden presence. The working forest becomes wild wood and we become lost in its fairy tale vastness, playing with both its dangers and the prospect of taming them.

For Tanya Axford working at Kielder was very much a journey into the unknown: moving away from making work whose presence is felt through startling visual impact - such as a roomful of enormous chandeliers made from blue plastic clothespegs clipped one to the other - to the disembodiment of sound and the fortune, for us, of stumbling on the work by accident.

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- Claire Barber cycling along Kielder's roads
- part of the felt-making process
- Tanya Axford checking the clocks
- Alarm clocks
- Elpida Hadzi-Vasileva with her mats of cross



"The forest is a promise of eternal youth." When Arthur Taylor stepped off the train at Lewisfield Halt he saw neither forest nor lake - just an ex-army camp similar to the barracks he had recently left. The trees he came to plant - it was said - would never be felled in his lifetime. Like the other people Matt Stokes filmed Graham Cowan has seen the landscape, community and culture of the Kielder valley undergo enormous change. Plashetts, where Graham grew up, had no road - footpaths and the now submerged railway were the routes in and out.

Some of the edited footage of Matt's filming was shown during a ferry trip round Kielder Water. While ferry passengers watched the recollections interspersed with the skipper's tourist patter the small steam yacht Dunelm Mist took Matt and his interviewees on a separate journey over submerged farms, villages, roads and railway line.

What distinguishes Matt's work from documentary film or oral history is its form. This emerges from, and strives to preserve, the raw discovery of the original material. Part of that material has crystallised into a series of audio interviews with poachers played over film of birds of prey - most notably the eagle owl, once native to Kielder but hunted to extinction in Britain by gamekeepers. However Matt is still exploring his other footage. Kielder, because of the richness of material, has provided a big challenge. Maybe that's the nature of



the place - but more likely it is to do with an artist's being ready and eager for that moment.

From this viewpoint there is no doubt that all five artists were well selected for this residency. Rather than make work for the forest they brought a critical energy that pushes the conceptual and imaginative frameworks of their work and of our experience of a place and how we make sense of it.

There is also the question of what happens when you allow a group of artists to spend time together exploring their ideas and approaches to making work. Part of the Samling Foundation's ethos is inspirational learning - while undertaking their residency the artists were also working with sixth form students (see the matching catalogue about the students' involvement in the project). There is real need for students within formal education to have had direct dialogues with artists and Samling should continue to provide good models for that. But I hope it also uses 'Land and the Samling' to develop projects where artists can come together to learn from each other.

David Butler
August 2002

* Forestry Commission recruitment advertising from late1940s.

1. Elpidia Hadzi-Vasileva installs 'Road to Nowhere'
2. Matt Stokes and the steam boat Dunelm Mist
3. Wolfgang Welleder works on the design for 'Camera'
4. Matt Stokes edits his work
5. Wolfgang Welleder making 'Camera' at Kielder

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elpida hadzi-vasileva

"The 'Land and The Samling' project has provided me with an opportunity to develop my practice and to engage and work with the students. It also gave me the potential for new developments and a unique opportunity to develop new and exciting work.

The dramatic landscape at Kielder, an artificial man-made forest and reservoir in a very remote area on the borders, has had a major impact on the making of

my work. The valley itself, which has been flooded to create the reservoir has left echoes of the former occupation. My work at Kielder was inspired by the old road that connected the villages at the time before the flooding and now leads and disappears into the water of a silent inlet. In response to this ghostly place I created a floating surface out of cress - simulating a continuation of the road into the lake. The cress carpet that takes the shape of the road will grow and eventually disappear into the lake."

Elpida Hadzi-Vasileva, July 2002



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1. Elpida Hadzi-Vasileva
2. 'Road to Nowhere' July 2002
3. Installing 'Road to Nowhere'
4. 'Road to Nowhere' July 2002



Elpida Hadzi-Vasileva, "Road to Nowhere", Kielder Water, July 2002

ELPIDA HADZI-VASILEVA
(nationality - British/Macedonian)

Education

- 1996-98 MA in Sculpture, Royal College of Art
1993-96 BA (hons) Fine Art in Sculpture (first class honours), Glasgow School of Art

Solo Exhibitions

- 2003 Museum of Contemporary Arts, Skopje, Macedonia (forthcoming)
2002 re:sort, Fabrica Gallery, Brighton
2001 epidermis, Kelvingrove Museum & Art Gallery, Glasgow
2001 Love Carpet, Queens Hull Arts Centre, Hexham, Northumberland
2001 epidermis, Berwick Gymnasium Gallery, Berwick upon Tweed, Northumberland
2000 WHO AM I, ArtSway, Hampshire

Group Exhibitions

- 2002 Talbot Rice Gallery, Edinburgh
2001 The Jerwood Gallery, London (shortlisted for 2001 Jerwood Sculpture Prize)
1998 Six Years, St Pancras Way, London
1998 Theatre of Memory & Indifferent Space, Royal College of Art, London
1997 Royal Botanical Gardens, Kew, London, Revival (permanent exhibit)
1997 World of our Imagination, Calgary University of Arts, Calgary, Canada
1996 Scottish Art, Domarco European Art Foundation, Edinburgh Awards
1994 134th Annual Exhibition, McLellans Galleries, Glasgow

Awards

- The Pollock-Krasner Grant, The Pollock-Krasner Foundation, USA Jan 2002
The Berwick Fellowship, The Scottish Arts Council Nov 2000
Year of the Artist, The Southern Arts Jun 2000
Assistance Grant, The Scottish Arts Council Jan 2000
Allen Lane Penguin Book Award, RCA (for best final written work) Nov 1996
Henry Moore Award, The Henry Moore Foundation Oct 1997
Jerwood Sculpture Prize (for best sculpture work) Jun 1997
The Calgary Travel Award, Royal College of Art Feb 1997
Carnegie Study Award, The Carnegie Trust Sep 1995
The Scottish Amicable Award, Royal Glasgow Institute Nov 1995
Carnegie Study Award, The Carnegie Trust Sep 1995

Commissions

- 2002 Road to Nowhere, Kielder Forest commissioned by Samling Foundation
2002 re:sort, Fabrica Gallery, Brighton
1999 Sweet Rod, Newton Park, Bury St Edmunds, commissioned by Bury St Edmunds Borough Council

Residencies

- 2003-04 Roswell Artist in Residence Programme, New Mexico, USA (forthcoming)
2001-02 Berwick Fellowship, Berwick upon Tweed, Northumberland
2000 YOTA Residency, Rhinefield Ornamental Drive, New Forest, Hampshire
1999 ArtSway, Hampshire
1995 Yorkshire Sculpture Park, West Yorkshire

MATT STOKES
(nationality - British)

Education

- 1993-97 BA(hons) Fine Art - Newcastle University.

Solo Exhibitions

- 2000 'Roll-in' Along', a public video projection, Richmond Street, Manchester

Selected Group Exhibitions

- 2002 Living Proof, Bewick Court tower block, Newcastle upon Tyne
Memento, Underground Metro stations, Newcastle upon Tyne
Mostyn 12 Open, Ortel Mostyn Gallery, Llandudno, Wales
Visions in the Nursery, Nursery Gallery, Bow Arts Trust, London
Video ROM 2, Gian Carla Zanetti Gallery, Milan & Gallery of Modern Art, Bergamo, Italy
BigM, an inflatable video dome, various venues throughout Europe

- 2001 Retail Therapy, vacant shop unit, Bridges Shopping Centre, Sunderland
VideoROM, a mobile video projection unit, Valencia Biennial, Spain
Allotment Day, Adhoc Gallery, Wallsend, North Tyneside
2000 Small Battles, Mackey Mayor Building, Manchester
ROOT, Hull Time Based Arts, Hull
VANE, disused shop, Highbridge, Newcastle upon Tyne
NOW, disused shop, Queens Street, Nottingham
1999 VANE Export, Tonsta Konsthall, Stockholm, Sweden
Field Day, Hallington, Northumberland
Toogoo 'n Groove, Pine Factory Centre, Gateshead
Inside Out, Adhoc Gallery, Wallsend, North Tyneside
1998 Art Tour, North Farm Studios, Hallington, Northumberland
Hug, Drawn & Flaunted, Live Theatre, Newcastle upon Tyne
1997 11+11, Globe Gallery, North Shields, North Tyneside
1996 'User Friendly', Monument Mall, Newcastle upon Tyne
1995 Reflections of Technology, Paddington Station, London
1994 Exchange show, Bratislava School of Art, Slovakia

Commissions + Residencies

- 2002 Grizedale Arts, research and development residency
2001 'Stretch', a video installation commissioned by the City of Sunderland
Short term residency at allotments on North Tyneside
2000 'Roll-in' Along', a video installation commissioned by Work and Leisure International

WOLFGANG WEILERER

(nationality - German)

Education/Research/Teaching

- 1989-95 Academy of Fine Arts, Munich
1991-92 University of Newcastle, England
1995-96 MFA Photography and Related Media Programme, School of Visual Arts, New York

- 2000 Six-month research visit to New York and Seattle, USA
2000-02 Norma Lipman Senior Research Fellow at the University of Newcastle
2001- Lecturer at the Fine Art Department, University of Newcastle

Solo Exhibitions (since 1994)

- 2002 muraki, a collaborative sound installation with Matthew Sansom, t-u-b-e Galerie für radiophone Kunst, München and Globe Gallery, North Shields
2000 jam, Ausstellungsforum FOE 156, Munich
1998 Presentation of the Studio Prize-holder of the Erich Hauser Foundation, Saline 36, Rottevitl
1996 Sie zeigen, da... a theater sculpture with Daniel Tharau, Arena, Berlin
CHECKMATE, a theater sculpture with Daniel Tharau, SVA Amphitheater, New York
1994 Kunstorium, Städtische Galerie im Lenbachhaus, Munich

Group Exhibitions (since 1994)

- 2002 Land and the Smitling, Kielder Water, Northumberland
2001 CERAMICS, E.P.O. European Patent Office and Rathausgalerie, Munich
Studio Prize-holders 1997-2001 of the Erich Hauser Foundation, Saline 36, Rottevitl
2000 Was geschieht bestimmt der Ort, L.A.C. Lieu d'art Contemporain, Sigean, France
Bavarian State Prize Exhibition, Galerie der Künstler, München
1999 x-mas, Kent Gallery, New York
1997 10th Exhibition of the Jürgen Ponto Foundation, Kunstverein, Frankfurt
1996 SPECIFICS, SVA Gallery, New York
Junge Kunst 1996, Saar Ferngas Förderpreis, Wilhelm-Hack-Museum, Ludwigshafen
Out of Egypt, Ägyptische Staatssammlung, Munich
1995 Debitantenpreis 1995, Academy of Fine Arts, Munich
Ortung, GSF-Forschungszentrum für Umwelt und Gesundheit, Munich
1994 Kunststudenten stellen aus, Kunsthalle der Bundesrepublik Deutschland, Bonn
anvisiert, Deutsches Museum, Munich/Oberschleissheim
- Awards + Prizes (since 1995)**
2000 Bavarian Ministry of Science and Culture USA Research Grant
1999 Bavarian State Prize
1998 Studio Prize of the Erich Hauser Foundation
1995 German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD) Scholarship
Debitantenpreis, Award of Academy of Fine Arts, Munich

