

In November 2009 I was invited to contribute to Nancy Campbell's Arctic Arts Blog. The blog 'features artists who have responded to the Polar regions or associated themes - i.e. glaciers, ice and vulnerable environments.'

Below is a full transcription of our correspondence, it offers insights into my practice and information about The Glacier Project. Nancy's questions appear in blue, with my response in black italics

For the version edited by Nancy see:

<http://londonandnuuk.blogspot.com/2009/11/atelier-jackson-glacier-project.html>

email

Re: Feature in Arctic Arts Blog

Date: 5 November 2009 01:32:17 GMT+01:00

Upernavik survey.doc

LONDON/NUUK INTERNATIONAL CULTURAL PORTFOLIO

For inclusion on London/Nuuk listing please answer the following questions.

ABOUT YOUR WORK

.....
How would you describe yourself (e.g. poet/sculptor/designer...)?

Artist

.....
Briefly describe your training and how you reached your current practice?

*BA (Hons) Graphic Design, The University of Brighton
MA Communication Art and Design, Royal College of Art*

During MA study, an analysis of contemporary and historical glacier documentation was made, and areas not specifically addressed by other studies were identified. Opportunities for new modes of research and interpretation were found within the areas of colour, light, and form. To express these aspects, the project explores a physical and sensory experience of glaciers through sculptural book objects and prints.

.....
What are the central preoccupations of your work? Could you describe the ideas behind the pieces offered as examples here?

The Glacier Project is a personal response to the elemental characteristics of glaciers, snow and ice. The project presents an emotive, poetic and sculptural reading of the landscape.

Based on personal and observational experience the project proposes a visual study of glaciers as opposed to a scientific study – not as attempt to re-work or reject a scientific approach, but simply to offer an alternative interpretation of glaciers. Something to provide poetry – poetry that science sometimes filters out in the pursuit of objective discourse.

The Glacial Vocabulary piece was inspired by this, I wanted to offer a number of eminent glaciologists, explorers and geographers the opportunity to express their personal ideas about glaciers. Glaciologists and those working in the earth sciences were interested and intrigued by my project (I visited Professor Michael Hambrey and his students and enjoyed their company over a number of days in the glaciology department

at the University of Aberystwyth). The common and cohesive factor was that, simply, we all shared (earth scientist & landscape artist) a deep appreciation and fascination with the natural landscape. Early works in the project were an investigation into communicating particular inherent visual characteristics of glaciers (formation, colour and features). Currently, I am developing an in-depth colour study of Glacial Blue inspired by daily observations of the Argentière Glacier in the French Alps. A series of intricately layered screenprints that explore colour density and form – initially systematic in construction, the prints subsequently develop their own dynamic form.

Key ideas and concepts explored in the prints: > ink as strata – suspended colour within the layers of a print > three-dimensional colour – building depth, intensity and mass > using the screenprinting process to create sculptural forms on a surface

I aim to create purity to each piece of work, yet, they are also part of a collection of work that is variform – you cannot say everything about a complex thing in a single image.

How do the environment and landscape, urban or rural, inspire your work?

The work is inspired by my experience of the natural landscape – observing subtle colour shifts and noticing how light transforms and animates every surface of the natural environment. The extracting and the abstraction of something small (significant to me) of a detail I've experienced. Then, in the studio my working process is an exploration of how to visually communicate this observation. Colour, light and form (and the relationship between these three elements) provide the central preoccupations of my work.

Transient moments, colours and illuminations, held onto in the mind's eye – a human capacity to be somewhere, to experience something and communicate the essence of that sight. The work becomes a personal record – a document that captures something of the lived experience of being in and observing the natural landscape. I enjoy details, nuances, the impossibility of colour and the transient quality of these moments experienced in nature. Nature is forever transforming itself or being transformed through the light that falls upon it – never static, never fixed, never flat – totally alive and in permanent flux – pure inspiration.

The work is a response to nature not a replication of it. In highlighting a single aspect (colour) you remove distractions – getting away from the object you get closer to its essence.

I am developing a visual language to communicate aspects of nature that interest and fascinate me. Each new work in the series opens new possibilities and there is no definitive outcome or form (just as there is no single definitive colour in nature). The work investigates a range of ideas about colour and its relationship to form.

What are you working on currently?

Glacial Blue colour studies – building a collection / archive of printed colours
Colour research work – shifting and transient colours in nature / colour depth and mass

ABOUT YOUR INFLUENCES

.....
Name a book that has inspired your work.

Mountains of The Mind: A History of a Fascination
Robert Macfarlane, London: Granta Books, 2003.

.....
Which other contemporary writers/artists should readers of the site check out (if possible link to a web resource or mention galleries/publications)?

I have been reading about these two artists recently...
herman de vries (featured in the book Song of The Earth, Thames & Hudson)
Roni Horn (saw exhibition at Tate Modern this year and reading the catalogue now)

Also a fantastic glaciology site:
www.glaciers-online.net

.....
If you had the time, what else would you do?

There is always time

.....
What is your favourite quotation?

This one seems relevant right now...
“No changing of place at a hundred miles an hour will make us one wit stronger, happier, or wiser. There was always more in the world than men could see, walked they ever so slowly; they will see it no better for going fast. The really precious things are thought and sight, not pace. It does a bullet no good to go fast; and a man, if he be truly a man, no harm to go slow; for his glory is not at all in going, but in being.”
John Ruskin
(The Art of Travel, Alain de Botton, London, Penguin Books Ltd. 2002, p222)

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images supplied:

- Jackson_01 *me [2009]*
- Jackson_02 *Volume Study 3: Crevasse [2007]*
- Jackson_03 *(Studio) Colour Research: Glacial Ice [2008 – 2009]*



Jackson_01



Jackson_02



Jackson_03

Please attach:

- (a) Two high-resolution jpeg images of your work (if visual) or two samples of written work. If you are concerned about copyright, we suggest you put a small watermark on images.
- (b) A high-resolution jpeg image of yourself.

Thank you for becoming a part of the international London/Nuuk portfolio of creative practitioners. If you know of others who might like to feature, please let them know about the project, or ask them to contact nancy@nancycampbell.co.uk for details. You will be informed when your feature is live online, and I hope that it will create additional interest in your work.

email

On 14 Dec 2009, at 21:20, Nancy Campbell wrote:

Hi Liz

I'm just preparing the post on your work (after some delay I'm afraid). Thank you for your fantastic and detailed analysis of the project, which I found very interesting, particularly the idea of using ink as a dense mass rather than a surface.

I wanted to ask you, additionally, if you had developed an interest in glaciers (or even the landscape/environment) before studying for your MA, or whether this was a sudden coup de foudre. I wondered whether it was personal experience that had caused you to respond to these ideas, or whether it was a more intellectual engagement...

Looking forward to hearing from you,

Nancy

email

On 15 Dec 2009, at 19:04, Liz Jackson wrote:

Hi Nancy

Interesting question... just looked up 'coup de foudre' in the dictionary and I would say it was a combination of mind and soul...

I spent the first year of MA study researching natural phenomena and their visual and scientific descriptions (I did a project on the aurora borealis and another on the colour of the sky). I really engaged with the scientific mode of explaining, and the diagrammatic language of description. I enjoy finding a concise definition of something (not something I'm good at myself with words... but something I can attain through my visual work). Inspired by a simple definition or an elementary fact, the work can then explore a range of possibilities. Whilst considering the focus of the second year of my MA I was seeking an area of earth science that...

> still retained an element of wonder (there is still a sense of the unknown within glacial dynamics and behaviour)

> was small enough to be part of (it's a specialist area of study in the UK and I got to talk to the author of the pre-eminent book on the subject)

> open enough to confer with (Glaciology seemed like an approachable area science, glaciologists work in the field, make observations, take measurements – simple tasks I could easily relate to, I liked the idea that a glaciologist was simply defined as 'someone who studies glaciers' – exactly what I wanted to do.

Initially the project was conceived as an investigation into how to re-present glaciology... perhaps a re-design of a textbook or re-working of scientific descriptions. After visiting glaciologists at Aberystwyth University I realised I wasn't really interested in re-designing and type-setting a text book... all that information already existed in a perfectly serviceable form. So, instead I went back to the inspirational source, Glaciers themselves, to start over and see what my interpretation would look like.

Since then, the motivation is finely balanced between the outside and inside – nature first, studio second. living by the glacier provides a constant reminder of its beauty, scale and light – I thought perhaps it would become familiar by its habitual presence, but, for me it's complexity grows, I am constantly re-amazed, re-energized and re-awed by its blue mass resting above the valley.

Hope that answers your question... I did imagine that the project would be confined to a period of MA study but the seeds within those early books still have energy, I feel the work now has a different kind of integrity.

living in the Alps has afforded the opportunity to develop a deep appreciation for the Argentiere glacier and the mountain landscape that provides it's context. I think you can respond to something in a different way when living beside it, i don't feel under pressure to define my experience of it, my observations, thoughts and impressions can accumulate over time – my visual language is developing alongside my experience of nature here.

Best

Liz

A short answer would also include.. It's so, so beautiful here – when so much nature is being poured in, something poetic will pour out.