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Curated by Rebecca Partridge and Nicholas Alfrey

SCALING THE SUBLIME: ART AT THE LIMITS OF LANDSCAPE

DJANOGLY GALLERY
NOTTINGHAM LAKESIDE ARTS



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The Grand Tour

Foreword

As Nicholas Alfrey has highlighted at the beginning of his essay, *Scaling the Sublime* originated in another earlier exhibition *Reason and Emotion: Landscape and the Contemporary Romantic*. Mounted at the Kunstverein Springhornhof, Germany, in 2013, the exhibition was curated by Rebecca Partridge with Randi Nygård and Bettina van Dziembowski. Since that time Nicholas and Rebecca have been discussing ways in which they might re-focus and develop its themes, refine the selection of artists and bring it to a British audience.

Subsequently, there have been a number of exhibitions in Britain and overseas exploring the theme of contemporary responses to landscape and the legacy of Romanticism, often as mediated through the more recent Land art. These include *Land's End* (Chicago, 2015); *Setting Out* (New York, 2015); *In Search of the Miraculous* (Newlyn Art Gallery, 2015) and *Terrain: Land into Art* (Hestercombe Gallery, Somerset, 2016). *Scaling the Sublime* does not attempt to re-trace the ground covered by these recent shows; instead it brings together the work of artists who are closely linked by their creative and in some cases personal affinities, but who have never been shown together as a group in this way before.

In terms of the Djanogly Gallery's own history, this exhibition also forms part of a strong lineage of landscape-themed surveys reaching back to its inception at the beginning of the 1990s and reflects to a large extent the strengths of teaching and research in the Art History department and the strong emphasis on Cultural Geography in the School of Geography at the University of Nottingham. *Toil and Plenty* (1993), *The Picturesque Landscape* (1994) and *The Perfection of England* (1995), were all seminal exhibitions exploring representations of the British landscape in visual culture in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. In more recent times *Michelle Stuart: Drawn from Nature*, curated by Dr. Anna Lovatt, was responsible for a revival of interest in the New York-based Land artist's work in both this country and the US.

I am indebted to both Rebecca and Nicholas for bringing the idea of *Scaling the Sublime* to the Djanogly Gallery and for their assiduous attention to detail during the preparations for the exhibition and this accompanying publication. We would all like to extend our thanks to the six artists who have allowed us to show their work and for their enthusiasm and support throughout the project.

The curators would also like to express our gratitude to the following for their support: Jennie Anderson (Argentea Gallery), Chris Bryant (Ingleby Gallery), Richard Clouston, Stephen Daniels, Richard Ingleby, Paddy Long, Siobhan Maguire, Matt Nightingale, The Nordic Artists' Centre, Joy Sleeman, Patricia Smyth. Mariele Neudecker's work is shown courtesy of the Thomas Rehbein Galerie (Düsseldorf) and Galerie Barbara Thumm (Berlin) and Project Pressure, London Lighthouse Foundation, Hamburg and the Zeppelin Museum, Friedrichschafen. Special thanks to Lauren Reid for allowing us to use her phrase 'Scaling the Sublime' for our title.

Last, but not least, I would like to thank my colleagues at Nottingham Lakeside Arts and the University of Nottingham students who have contributed to the Art Codes project in the exhibition, under the guidance of Matt Davies at the University's Digital Humanities Research Centre and Ben Bedwell at the Mixed Reality Lab.

Neil Walker

**Head of Visual Arts Programming, Lakeside Arts
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The Moon in the Wardrobe: Romanticism, Land Art and After

Nicholas Alfrey

Return to the Brocken

The idea for this exhibition goes back to an earlier one: *Reason and Emotion: Landscape and the Contemporary Romantic*, at the Kunstverein Springhornhof in 2013, curated by Rebecca Partridge with Randi Nygård and Bettina van Dziembowski, and including five of the artists exhibiting on the present occasion. The essay I contributed to the catalogue began with an allusion to an episode from Heinrich Heine's *The Harz Journey*, in which the author describes a night in the hostelry on the summit of the Brocken, the climax of the journey into the Harz Mountains.ⁱ Two young men, overwhelmed by the emotion induced by such a sublime situation, throw open what they take to be the shutters of a window and begin to declaim passionate eulogies to the night, the moon and the stars. But under the influence, too, of an evening's drinking, they have opened the doors of a large wardrobe instead, and their fine feelings are lost in its shallow recess.ⁱⁱ

Back in 2013, the allusion to Heine's Brocken episode was intended as a way of connecting the work of the artists showing at Springhornhof with a version of Romanticism that embraced irony, humour, doubt, and a sense of the absurd. This was a necessary antidote to a darker, more reductive account of Romantic art which had a high profile at the time, since it was the position taken by the curators of the major survey exhibition *Dark Romanticism*, organised by the Städel Museum, Frankfurt, as part of a larger project on the 'Romantic Impulse'.ⁱⁱⁱ The curators placed the Gothic imagination at the heart of their vision of the Romantic, characterized by dreams, fear, perversity, excess and extreme states of mind, and traced its legacy through Symbolism, Decadent Art and Surrealism.

Heine's *Harz Journey*, for all its eye for anti-climax, is nevertheless full of a sense of wonder, and to use it as a key to a contemporary artistic attitude is by no means to imply that the relationship with Romanticism now can only be understood in terms of disappointment, scepticism and satire. A recurring theme in Heine is the difficulty of articulating a response to what is inspiring in nature without lapsing into cliché. The promise of the spectacle of sunset and sunrise witnessed from the summit of the mountain draws travellers to make the ascent, but the fact that there is now a hotel up there complicates matters. Heine succumbs to his desire for breakfast and abandons the reverent dawn congregation assembled on the hotel's watchtower; he goes down to drink coffee and read the visitors' book instead, only to be dismayed at the platitudinous effusions he finds recorded in it. There is more at issue here, however, than just a satire on tourism. The Landscape Sublime might present the most compelling subjects to the imagination, but how to find a way of expressing it that has not been debased by common usage? How can we escape the limitations of our formal vocabulary when confronted with subjects of such tremendous scope? The questions remain as pertinent for those artists of our own time who are still 'in search of the miraculous'.^{iv}

After Land art

The artists in *Scaling the Sublime* are fascinated by the great themes of Romantic landscape - forests, deserts, the sea, icefields, clouds, the night, the moon and stars. Occasionally, there are explicit references to the imagery of Romantic art in their work, most obviously in the case of Mariele Neudecker: the model ship in *After Life* alludes to Caspar David Friedrich's *Sea of Ice*, with its vessel crushed in the arctic ice. Neudecker has also recreated other scenes by the same artist in the vitrine pieces for which she became well known earlier in her career. Mostly, however, any such references work at a more general level: the figure dwarfed by the immensity of the natural elements, for example, or facing away from us to contemplate a vast landscape, as in Richard T. Walker's video *an is that isn't always*. To a great extent, though, any dialogue between Romantic landscape and artists working today is mediated by the Land art of the late 1960s and 1970s.

It may seem surprising at first that so many artists in that period began to turn to landscape for ideas, and as a place in which to make art, given the conventional association of landscape with more traditional forms of art practice. But this can be understood as part of a wider phenomenon: a questioning of the art object, the relationship between the work of art and the spectator, and the conditions in which art was made, displayed and consumed. By working directly in the landscape, artists were able to find an alternative to the studio as the primary site of production. By making art from natural materials, or from anything that came to hand on site, they could distance themselves from the mediums, techniques and processes by which art-making had conventionally been defined. And by creating work that was ephemeral in nature, or did not even take tangible physical form, they were able to resist the commodity culture that had become so prevalent in the art world, and to suggest new ideas about value. In other words, Land art, the term by which a variety of new landscape practices eventually came to be known, needs to be understood in relation to Conceptual art, that wide-ranging tendency of the 1960s and 1970s that challenged traditional assumptions about the nature and priorities of art.

Land art cannot be accommodated within Conceptual art without some tension, however, and for an artist to work in and with landscape seems on the face of it to go against some of the key tenets of conceptualism. These tenets include the emphasis given to language and linguistics, and a corresponding denial of visual gratification and sensory pleasure; the claims to objectivity and critical rigour; the adherence to strict rules; the cultivation of emotional neutrality. Landscape on the other hand presents an unpredictable arena in which to work, where the conditions, light and elements are all in flux, and chance occurrences highly likely. A landscape site is unique by definition, and is hardly ever a neutral space: the decision to make work there not only opens it up to the play of contingency, but also to the associations of place, so that all the traces and echoes of previous human activity in that place inevitably become part of the meaning of a piece.

Just over ten years ago, *Romantic Conceptualism* at the Kuntsthalle in Nuremberg was a ground-breaking attempt to explore the convergence of tendencies hitherto regarded as incompatible, and to revise the widely held view that Conceptual art set itself against emotional expression and romantic subject matter in all its forms.^v Jorge Heiser, the curator, selected a wide range of artists and by no means privileged the theme of landscape, although key pieces by Bas Jan Ader and Susan Hiller underpinning the argument invoked the archetypal romantic imagery of sunset and stormy seas. Heiser's project constitutes a significant precedent for our exhibition. More recently, Andrew Wilson included a surprisingly high proportion of work related to Land art in his survey of *Conceptual art in Britain*, and the definition of the subject he offers is inclusive enough to reconcile any apparent incompatibilities between the two. In summarizing the strategies of Conceptual art, he notes that it was characterized by 'the pursuit of an art that was not defined by its own conditions - its self-referentiality - but which drew its material and its content from the world in which it existed and acted within'.^{vi}

The artists included in *Scaling the Sublime* are all indebted to Conceptual art in some way, yet their practice is not confined to the play of pure ideas. They make work that might carry out an initial proposition or follow a set of pre-determined instructions, but the realization of their projects is also likely to involve meticulous planning, extensive negotiation, the creation of networks, the enlisting of collaborators. It often requires the undertaking of demanding, sometimes even risky, journeys, and rising to considerable physical and logistical challenges. Above all, a work will often turn on an idea that involves a sudden imaginative leap, bringing out an essential affinity with Romanticism.

Many of these departures from the more rigorous forms of conceptualism are also to be found in the practice of Land artists; their work too was grounded in the direct experience of landscape, and they often chose to operate in the most demanding and remote terrain. It is fair to suggest that the preference for the outdoors implies some kind of emotional engagement with landscape and nature, although the work itself does not disclose this. The documentation of the pieces made by artists in these often spectacular locations was deliberately laconic and inexpressive, giving the spectator little or no access to the moment-by-moment pleasures or rigours of any given expedition, no matter on what epic scale it may have been conducted.

The legacy of Land art can be discerned throughout the work of the artists in this exhibition. It is there in the predilection for making journeys, sometimes to the very ends of the earth. There is a fascination with remote regions and locations, with deserts and icefields, mountains, glaciers and forests. There is a recurring preoccupation with scale and duration, time and repetition. There is the deployment of conceptual frameworks, with structures based on pre-determined intervals or constraints. Many of the processes and strategies used by artists associated with Land art are deployed here: walking, filming, transmission, documentation, the systematic tabulation of observations and information. Photography, film, sound recording, the most characteristic mediums for the documentation of Land art, are still in service. Finally, there is something of the laconic, deadpan quality typical of Land art, and there is a comparable resort to understatement, compression and obliquity.

The influence of Land art pervades this work on so many levels, and there are occasional direct references too. In Simon Faithfull's *Going Nowhere 1.5*, the figure of the artist filmed from the air as he walks in a gradually tightening spiral around the shoreline of his diminishing island is an unmistakable echo of that of Robert Smithson in sequences from his film *Spiral Jetty*, only with the clattering soundtrack of the helicopter engine in Smithson's work now replaced by the silence of the drone.^{vii} In Faithfull's *0.00° Navigation*, the artist is filmed as he follows the invisible line of the Greenwich Meridian in a piece that is both homage to and a parody of the large-scale straight-line walks of Richard Long.^{viii} Long's and Hamish Fulton's walking art is also reprised by Tim Knowles; his two *Nightwalks* are clearly related to their example, but they reach beyond it in that they are conducted in a location that had particular significance for the Romantic poets.

Romanticism Continued?

Land art may be a significant point of departure for the artists in this show, but it should also be acknowledged that Land artists themselves, particularly those working in a British context, were mostly resistant to the idea that their work had anything to do with the Romantic tradition.^{ix} Some commentators at the time were reassured by what they saw as an affinity between the new landscape work and that of the late-eighteenth and early nineteenth-century Landscape Sublime, with its penchant for wild places, upland scenery, and the brooding spectacle of the elements. They also took the motifs of stone circles, standing stones, earthworks and ancient traces that often appeared in Land art in Britain as signs that the new art could still be understood in terms of the old, and that the tradition of antiquarianism and even of the Picturesque had been re-endorsed in modern form. But for the most part, the artists did not accept this version of their lineage. They preferred to emphasize the idea of radical discontinuity, and to identify themselves with the critical, experimental attitude of young artists in Europe and America.

There was another way in which critical commentary on British Land art could relate at least one aspect of it to a native landscape tradition. The striking black and white photographs documenting walks undertaken by Long and Fulton were sometimes assumed to be exercises in a mode of landscape photography associated with Neo-Romanticism. This was a movement that had emerged in Britain in the mid-1930s, but was most closely bound up with the Second World War and the search for imagery that could capture a sense of national identity, focused particularly on landscape. Bill Brandt is the exemplary figure in photography here. He continued to refine his work in the idiom of the Landscape Sublime throughout the remainder of his career, gradually distancing himself from anything that could be called topographical or picturesque. It is perhaps understandable that the photographs taken by Long and Fulton to document their walks, with their grainy textures and high tonal contrasts, should have been mistaken as exercises in a by now familiar poetics, as Ian Jeffrey did, for example, when he claimed that the two artists were really 'landscape photographers in the romantic style.'^x But to take their work in this spirit is to miss entirely both its conceptual framing, and the conjunction of text and image that is a crucial part of its meaning. It also misses a central concern of the artists - the idea of equivalences across different scales of distance, space and time.

The Neo-Romantics looked back for inspiration to the first British Romantic artists, to the landscape artists especially, to Turner, Constable, Cotman, Palmer and others. It has been remarked that both of these phases of artistic activity emerged in periods of war, and can therefore be associated with feelings of national isolation, and with an enhanced sense of place and heritage. Neo-Romantic artists were acutely aware of what was distinctive in the work of their predecessors, the qualities that marked it off from the European mainstream. Their own ambition, on the other hand, was to rework what they had derived from past example in the light of new ideas from the continent. This traffic, however, goes in one direction only. Neo-Romanticism has been the subject of intense interest for scholars and art lovers in this country, with David Mellor's exhibition *A Paradise Lost: The Neo-Romantic Imagination in Britain, 1935-1955* a notable landmark in the critical recovery of the movement, yet it has remained something solely for domestic consideration, and has scarcely been acknowledged outside Britain.^{xi} Certainly it has had no resonance for contemporary artists, and the reason for bringing it into the discussion in this context is to indicate the longer perspective in which Romantic art has acted on the later imagination.

In 1981 the Arts Council organized a touring exhibition titled *Romanticism Continued*, part of a series under the general heading 'Approaches to Modern Art'.^{xiii} It included work by Fulton, Thomas Joshua Cooper and Barry Flanagan, all artists who could be associated with Land art, and bundled them in with Neo-Romantics, including Paul Nash, John Piper and Brandt himself. The essay in the accompanying pamphlet strikes a rather apologetic tone, noting that 'none of the major innovations which constitute modern art has originated in Britain', and implying that the unique quality of British artists draws essentially on the past. The radical attitudes of the most recent artists are thus occluded in favour of a reassuring idea of the continuity of the native tradition, underscored in the pamphlet with lines from Wordsworth's *Prelude* and accompanied by an illustration of Constable's *Weymouth Bay*. It is hardly surprising that on other occasions, Fulton has been at pains to distance himself from any idea of continuity: 'contemporary ideas tend to get buried under established interpretations that relate purely to the way the world was, and is no longer'.^{xiii}

When it comes to the issue of Romanticism, the artists taking part in the present exhibition are at no risk of being caught in the same bind as were Fulton and other British Land artists. For them there is no question of the Romantic being limited to any idea of national tradition, nor are they in any way guarded about engaging in a dialogue with a historical movement.

The moon in the wardrobe

Much has been made of the antipathy of the Romantics towards Enlightenment philosophy and a belief in scientific progress: this is the line taken, unsurprisingly, by the curators of *Dark Romanticism*, with their emphasis on the irrational and fantastic. Other accounts, however, have maintained that 'Romantic Science' is not a contradiction in terms; at the beginning of the nineteenth century the boundaries between science and the arts were still porous, and a preoccupation with the relationship between self and nature was central to both. Scientific enquiry could be driven by a sense of wonder, while the writings of the Romantic poets were inflected by intense curiosity about the workings of the natural world.^{xiv}

The artists in this exhibition take it for granted that scientific research will inform their work. Many of their projects are collaborative and draw on expertise from other fields. Katie Paterson, for example, has worked with astronomers, astrophysicists, ecologists, an astronaut, moon bouncers, product developers and specialists in arboriculture, as well as with researchers affiliated to a wide range of academic institutions, commercial organizations and government agencies. Even where traditional means are used, as in the case of Rebecca Partridge's paintings, the work is open to innovative thinking in a range of disciplines, from the psychology of perception and political theory to neuroscience.

The depth of knowledge and complexity of information that lies behind some of the work here is matched by technical know-how in the realization, again drawing on the professional expertise of advisers, designers and manufacturers from diverse backgrounds. But behind it all there is a haunting sense of the limitations of our capacity, if not to accrue knowledge, then to articulate it, to make it meaningful in terms of our own experience.

There is invariably some kind of a tension here: on the one hand, the range of mind, the difficulty of the journey undertaken, the resolution of a succession of technical problems that go into a work, and on the other, the means of expression, the chosen form of the resulting piece. It is this tension, or deficit, that might bring us back to the starting point of this essay, and to Heine's account of that night on the Brocken.

During the incident of the two young men and the wardrobe, one of them mistakes a pair of yellow leather trousers hanging inside it for the moon, and begins his melancholy address to the child of the night, etc. This is absurd enough to be sure, but there is more here than a send-up of youthful delusion, or just a satire on the new cult of sublime tourism. The confounding of scale and space is indicative of a larger disorientation. A shallow recess has been taken for an unimaginable distance, a solid barrier for the celestial vault, a commonplace object for a heavenly body. Sublimity has been unwittingly exchanged for abject materiality, and although the poetic eulogy is perfectly sincere, its terms are inadequate to the imagined occasion. Something of a comparable play of equivalences is present in the work of Katie Paterson, although this time fully self-aware. Take her 2008 piece *Dying Star Doorbell*, for example, in which, in her description, 'the sound of a dying star - a tiny hum close to middle C - plays momentarily as a door opens.'^{xv} The connection between that insignificant sound and a cosmic event, between an ordinary action and the death of a star, defies comprehension, and both awe and absurdity are encompassed in the piece.

Like their Romantic predecessors, the artists brought together in this exhibition are pushing towards the wonderful, whether that is to be found in the 'ancient darkness' at the edge of the universe, in remote or overlooked terrestrial spaces, in the vertiginous complexity of big data, or within ourselves. There is risk involved, not so much in venturing to these limits, but in coming back and making something meaningful of the journey. There is always the possibility of 'wandering into the allure of the false gesture', to borrow one of Richard T. Walker's lines.^{xvi} In the work of the artists exhibited here, the Sublime is conveyed warily, through understatement, sometimes with the most mundane means - industrially produced materials, cameras, monitors, dials, relays of information. In other cases the pursuit of the ineffable is conducted through physical actions, variously tentative, uncertain, repetitive, rhythmical, which may be played out in huge landscapes, or alone in the studio.

ⁱ Nicholas Alfrey, 'Night on the Brocken', in *Reason and Emotion: Landscape and the Contemporary Romantic*, Neuenkirchen, 2013, pp. 12-17.

ⁱⁱ Heinrich Heine, 'The Harz Journey', in Heinrich Heine, *Selected Prose*, edited and translated by Ritchie Robertson, London, 1993, pp. 74-5.

ⁱⁱⁱ Felix Kramer, ed., *Dark Romanticism: From Goya to Max Ernst*, Berlin, 2013.

^{iv} The phrase is a reference to the title of the last project by the Dutch-born artist Bas Jan Ader, who disappeared at sea in 1975 while undertaking it. It was taken as the title of an exhibition curated by Blair Todd at the Newlyn Art Gallery in 2015 to mark the 40th anniversary of Bas Jan Ader's voyage, featuring contemporary artists who have made work dealing with journeys, the sea and the idea of the sublime.

^v *Romantic Conceptualism*, Bielefeld/Leipzig, 2007.

^{vi} Andrew Wilson, ed., *Conceptual Art in Britain, 1964-1979*, London, 2016, p. 53.

^{vii} Robert Smithson, *Spiral Jetty*, 1970, 32 minute colour film. Faithfull has now made three works with the title *Going Nowhere*: see Simon Faithfull, *Does the World Exist When I'm Not There? The 'Going Nowhere' Trilogy: 1995-2016*, Neuenkirchen, 2016.

^{viii} *0.00° Navigation*, DVD from super 8 and video, 2008, 55 minutes; the work was included in Stephen Bode, ed., *Simon Faithfull: Going Nowhere*, London, 2009, and discussed in an essay by Robert Macfarlane (unpaginated).

^{ix} For a fuller account of this context see Nicholas Alfrey, Joy Sleeman and Ben Tufnell, *Uncommon Ground: Land Art in Britain, 1966-1979*, London, 2013.

^x Ian Jeffrey reviewing exhibitions by Edwin Smith and Bill Brandt in *Studio International*, special number on 'Art Outdoors', Vol 193, no. 986, 1977, p. 139.

^{xi} David Mellor, ed., *A Paradise Lost: The Neo-Romantic Imagination in Britain, 1935-55*, London, 1987. See also Alexandra Harris, *Romantic Moderns: English Writers, Artists and the Imagination from Virginia Woolf to John Piper*, London, 2010.

^{xii} Arts Council, *Romanticism Continued*, exhibition devised by Brendan Prenderville and Ian Jeffrey, 1981.

^{xiii} Hamish Fulton interviewed by Ben Tufnell in Ben Tufnell and Andrew Wilson, *Hamish Fulton: Walking Journey*, London, 2002, p. 107.

^{xiv} See Richard Holmes, *The Age of Wonder: How the Romantic Generation Discovered the Beauty and Terror of Science*, London, 2008.

^{xv} *Katie Paterson*, Newcastle-upon-Tyne and Bielefeld/Berlin, 2016, p. 37.

^{xvi} 'Position 2', from the text on the reverse of a poster produced on the occasion of the exhibition Richard T. Walker, *in defiance of being here* at Carroll/Fletcher, London, 2013.

Critical Subjectivity and the Metamodern Sublime

Rebecca Partridge

I wonder if there is any reason beyond the ones I've been trying to deal with, and whether those reasons would shed light on these reasons. I wonder if that would be a worthwhile pursuit?

I wonder if there is any point to ruminate... I wonder if there is any point in ruminating on things that are very much inaccessible, or whether the actual act is a reason in itself?... And all I can do is sit back and witness... the unfolding of something... meaningful maybe? I mean it can be meaningful if I am equipped... but I don't know what equipment is often required... I don't know what is expected....ⁱ

Lying on his back in the white sand of a vast, empty American landscape, one leg nonchalantly bent and a hand on his chest, Richard T. Walker speaks softly into a handheld microphone. The above is a transcript of an ambling dialogue with himself and the landscape: speculative, open, curious and surrendering to not knowing. There is comedy in this scene of Walker conversing, or attempting to, with the mute mountains and serenading a peak from the top of a Y-frame ladder with his guitar. Yet there he is, and so are we, facing a sublime landscape in all its wonder... *meaningful, maybe?*

There have been many exhibitions in recent years which evidence a renewed interest in landscape – a Romantic resurgence – and/or that psychologise our relationship to nature.ⁱⁱ *Scaling the Sublime* relates to all of these ideas. However, whereas current discourses around landscape typically make direct reference to political, economic and climatic changes, particularly in light of the Anthropoceneⁱⁱⁱ and the subsequent irrevocable change in our relationship to nature, these issues play a more indirect role for the artists in *Scaling the Sublime*. The works here forge a path towards an open and ambivalent landscape, perhaps a place 'outside' from which to look back; a platform from which to explore fundamental ontological questions and, simultaneously, the subject of great wonder. The exhibited artists share a fascination with the landscapes of their Northern European and American predecessors: deserts, mountains, deep oceans, the vastness of space. All are remote spaces at the edge of the known. Yet despite their best attempts to scale, map and serialise it, the enormity of the Sublime landscape remains beyond all possibility of calculation.

The return to these grand narratives marks a significant shift in contemporary artistic practices. Until recently, confessing such Romantic yearnings would be a matter of huge embarrassment, a guilty pleasure outside of postmodern critical discourse. As one of the artists in this exhibition revealed, 'I am, I guess, a wonder junkie.'^{iv} Ultimately, our need for wonder – to ask the big questions at the thresholds of our intellectual horizon – is part of the human condition and therefore we cannot dismiss subjective, affective experiences as being mutually exclusive to critical rigour. The artists in *Scaling the Sublime* tackle this problem head on, endeavouring to build new frameworks from which to question and explore regions at the limits of our psychological landscape.

The primary idea proposed by this essay is that of parallel and contradictory positions co-existing, with the sublime landscape acting as such a model. I am neither trying to trace a history nor to map interpretations of a contemporary sublime, but rather to sketch out some key ideas that connect the eighteenth-century Sublime to the present day. I am attempting to pull out the most abstract sense of sublimity in order to reveal why it is particularly useful as a framework when contemplating contemporary ideas.

In his essay ‘The Moon in the Wardrobe’, Nicholas Alfrey traces the historical contexts of landscape emerging from Romanticism and the importance of Land art to contemporary positions. Here I explore a parallel narrative, one that also begins with Romanticism, employed as a starting point for thinking about the relationship between landscape and abstraction. In the first part of the essay, I articulate the abstract nature of the sublime landscape. I address key precedents for *Scaling the Sublime*, introducing minimalist practices to the discourse on the abstract sublime and the idea of how understandings of abstraction oscillate between oppositional meanings. I then discuss Jorg Heiser’s *Romantic Conceptualism* exhibition as further evidence of how the seemingly contradictory states of ‘emotional Romanticism’ and ‘reasoned Conceptualism’ can, when understood in dialogue with one another, transcend the sum of their parts.^v In the second part, I consider what is so problematic about postmodern critique for many contemporary artists by introducing the idea of Metamodernism. Here, ‘Meta’ refers to ‘Metaxy’: a state of ontological in-betweenness, of oscillation between poles, or opposing states and ideas.^{vi} Although there have been many attempts to articulate the ‘post-postmodern’, Metamodernism particularly resonates in *Scaling the Sublime* – something on which I elaborate in the final part of this essay through a discussion of the specific works and concerns of artists in the exhibition.

Below, from left:

The Monk by the Sea 1808-10 by Caspar David Friedrich
Oil on canvas
110 x 171.5 cm
Nationalgalerie, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin
© bpk/Nationalgalerie, SMB/ Jörg P. Anders

Red on Maroon 1959 by Mark Rothko, oil paint, acrylic
paint and glue tempera on canvas,
2667 x 2388 x 35 mm
© 1998 Kate Rothko Prizel & Christopher Rothko ARS,
NY and DACS, London. Repro © Tate, London 2017

Just as Romanticism established landscape as a space within which to explore transcendental ideas, so in *Scaling the Sublime* the artists use landscape as a platform for exploring both the self and our larger relationship to the world. The distant limits of landscapes which evoke a sense of ‘beyond’ are reflective of the incalculable space of subjective experience and imagination – a space at the limits of intellectual landscape where reason and feeling co-exist. Historical Romanticism was wrought with complexities and contradictions, as is the contemporary terrain, although just as exploratory, expansive and exciting.



Historical Precedents

Sublimity is a slippery term – a far-reaching and abstract concept that follows no principle or law, nor reliable means or objects that cause it. The sublime experience is one in which what we perceive externally triggers an inner experience, and therefore offers a way to talk about awe, wonder and the unquantifiable. As we see in *Scaling the Sublime*, motifs of the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth century such as mountains, stormy seas and vast skies still abound; however, the concept is malleable, traversing cultural paradigms: there have been the ‘Modern Sublime’, the ‘Postmodern Sublime’, and the ‘Technological Sublime’. Crucially, the term originates in landscape – landscapes that are *remote*, thresholds at the limits between the visible and the unknown.

In his introduction to a recent compilation of writings on the subject, Simon Morley describes sublime experiences as:

[A] mute encounter with all that exceeds comprehension [...] what takes hold of us when reason falters and certainties begin to crumble. They are about being taken to the limits... The sublime experience is fundamentally transformative, about the relationship between disorder and order, and the disruption of the stable coordinates of time and space.^{vii}

The sublime sets up dualities. It is remote and embodied, both ‘other’ and triggered within the self. As an essentially abstract concept it provides an unrestrictive framework for describing, or attempting to describe, a felt, self-transcending experience. For Caspar David Friedrich, landscape was a way of understanding religious feeling, the horizon acting as a powerful symbol of the limits of what we know. Arguably, the story of twentieth-century abstraction finds roots in Friedrich’s Romantic impulse. In a commentary on Kant’s description of the Sublime being found in ‘formlessness’, Robert Rosenblum traced the Abstract Expressionist drive towards sublimity back to Northern European painting, describing how, in front of a painting by Mark Rothko, ‘we ourselves are the monk by the sea, standing silently and contemplatively before these huge and soundless pictures as if we were looking at a sunset or a moonlit night.’^{viii} Rosenblum not only described the boundless expanses which connect the Romantic landscape to American abstraction, the sense of ‘remote presence that we can only intuit and never fully grasp’;^{ix} he also articulated the paradoxical nature of the sublime experience – on the one hand found in the still void of a colour field, on the other in the ‘teeming, unleashed power of Turner’s landscapes.’^x

Identifying sublimity as a fundamentally abstract property, I return to the thread of my argument: that of the sublime as a critical model which holds oppositional meanings simultaneously and in flux. This ambiguity is a key property of abstraction and is arguably why it has historically been the vehicle for such divergent positions. For Abstract Expressionists, pure abstraction seemed the only way to communicate the transcendental. Their sublimity was infused with metaphysical endgames that, to later generations, became absurd; such assurances rely on a faith that can all too easily be turned on its head. The vast spaces of their canvases could equally hold nothing as everything. This paradox is perfectly articulated by looking at works by two artists, both exhibited under the umbrella of Minimalism, at its most visible during the 1960s. Countering the grand claims of his predecessors, the sculptor Robert Morris relocated abstraction, relating his works to the physical context within which they existed. He employed an ‘it is what it is’ approach: with no subjective input from the artist, merely a set of objective relations. Whilst sculptures such as his mirrored cubes (*Untitled*, 1965) could be read as an echo of the infinite and fragmentary nature of the sublime space, for Morris there are no metaphorical associations, simply a physical experience between the artwork and the viewer.^{xi} Consider this next to a work by Agnes Martin (*Morning*, 1965), which also employs the minimalist language of the grid. For Martin, however, this is pure feeling; it is all about

subjectivity. In her own words: 'I'm not a minimalist, I'm an Abstract Expressionist; I believe in having my emotions recorded in the painting.'^{xiii} What this serves to illustrate is how, when we strip concepts down to their most abstract, there is an oscillation between oppositional meanings.

In 2007, the writer and critic Jorg Heiser curated the exhibition *Romantic Conceptualism*, a seminal group show which brought together these seemingly unrelated threads of art history, articulating their co-existence as particular to a contemporary sensibility. Heiser's exhibition demonstrates that the cool criticality of conceptual strategies are not incompatible with the emotional subjects of Romanticism; rather, by treating the 'unsystematic systematically', there is 'a constant, electric charge'.^{xiii} At the core of the exhibition is the question asked by Heiser in his introductory essay (and a direct critique of positions such as that of Robert Morris):

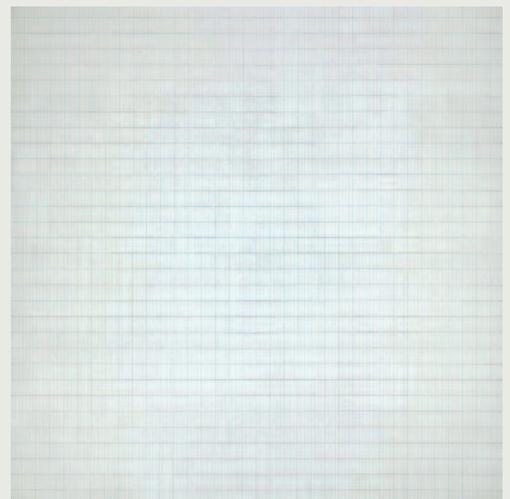
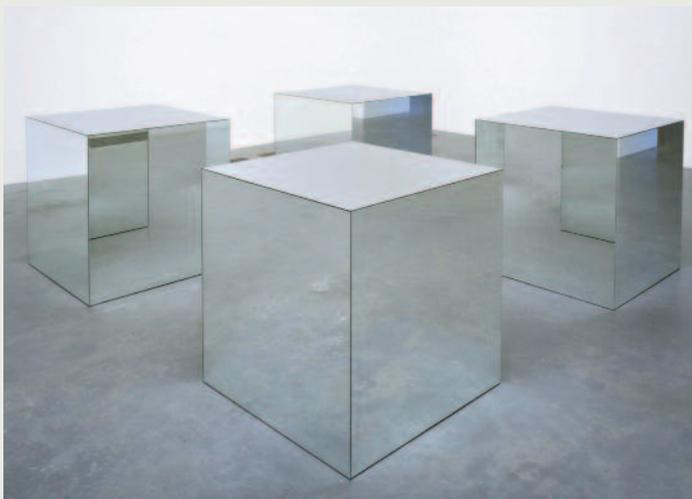
How can a critical theory of art which grants the artwork a life of its own where reception is concerned seriously imply that the artist's subjectivity – in whatever form – may thus not form the explicit material and motif for such a work?^{xiv}

A key artwork from the exhibition is Susan Hiller's *Dedicated to the Unknown Artists* (1972–6), a collection of 305 postcards depicting rough seas from the British coastline, displayed in a series of grids. The consequent tension between the Romantic scene of the turbulent, Turner-esque seascape, and the systematic, serial control within which the subject matter is arranged, is a poignant example of how Romantic Conceptualism is not about reconciling opposites; rather, it is about recognising the generative possibilities when languages cross over. In an interview between Hiller, Heiser and the critic Jan Verwoert, Hiller talks about what it means to move beyond the linguistic constraints of early conceptual practice: 'The idea of an artwork that was fully conscious was something that early language Conceptualists certainly talked about: that you wouldn't make any intuitive gesture'.^{xv} The restrictions of this conceptual position, and of therefore not being able to say anything that is beyond language, led Hiller to describe a move into what she calls 'fruitful incoherence'.^{xvi} Her practice continues to find strategies within which she can discuss that which is beyond the limits of our rational landscape, what Jan Verwoert describes as *vivid yet unverifiable* (such as art, love, religion, sensing other people's feelings, revelations of truths...). He says, 'Hiller works towards establishing this condition as a truth criterion in its own right'.^{xvii}

Below, from left:

Untitled 1965 (reconstructed 1971) by Robert Morris,
mirror glass and wood,
914 x 914 x 914 mm
© Robert Morris / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York
/ DACS, London 2017. Repro © Tate, London 2017

Morning 1965 by Agnes Martin, acrylic paint and graphite
on canvas,
1826 x 1819 mm
© Agnes Martin / DACS 2017. Repro © Tate, London 2017



This is the sensibility also running through the works of *Scaling the Sublime*: sincere attempts to move beyond the limits of a purely rational criticality and to reclaim emotional, embodied experience as a valid subject matter, whilst being fully aware of the pitfalls, and of the failures of previous generations.



Dedicated to the Unknown Artists 1972-1976
by Susan Hiller
305 postcards, charts and map mounted on
14 panels, accompanied by a book and a dossier
Each panel 66 x 104.8 cm
Collection: Tate, London
© Susan Hiller, 2018. Image courtesy the artist
and Lisson Gallery, London

Critical Subjectivity and the Metamodern Sublime

Susan Hiller's account of what it was like to be an artist in the early days of Conceptualism – the restrictions against making any unconscious move – would no doubt deeply resonate with many of the generation of contemporary artists who were educated under the firm grip of postmodernism. As an artist myself, I can recall the intellectually stifling discussions where the game plan revolved around deconstruction so minute that not even a waft of intuition could survive. Feeling, embodiment or intuition found no place in any serious critical conversation.

Although 'post-modernism' as a term is notoriously hard to pin down, the dominant motifs would include: irony, parody and subversion, and the conviction that all meaning is relational/contextual. This denies any one truth or history, and therefore does not recognize universalising or grand narratives. Nurture over nature, in the simplest sense, nihilism over God. Within the visual arts, Postmodernism was best expressed through appropriation and self-referencing irony; we only need to think of Sigmar Polke's 1969 painting as an apt example, consisting of a white canvas with the top right corner painted black, and titled *The Higher Powers Command: Paint the Upper Right Hand Corner Black!*^{xviii} The paintings that followed those of the Abstract Expressionists and Post Painterly Abstractionists not only mocked their heroic gestures, but also challenged their assertions to have made the 'final paintings' – the claim that, having revealed universal truth, nothing more could be said. The work of Polke and others were radical postmodern gestures that performed much needed punctures to such overblown claims. This is one example of why many contemporary theorists, who now question the ongoing validity of postmodernism as a framework for critique, do not altogether dismiss its insights. There have been numerous declarations of new paradigms: Altermodernism, Hypermodernism, Digimodernism and Performatism, to name a few. Post-postmodern thinking takes many different courses. As David Rudrum and Nicholas Stavris state in their recent anthology of writings by a range of contemporary theorists entitled *Supplanting the Postmodern*:

While some of these coinages are at pains to distance themselves as much as possible from the postmodernism that preceded them, others are more willing to accept that their formulations follow on from those of a now defunct postmodernism, taking them in new directions.^{xxix}

It has been my own feeling over the past decade that while there is no disputing the importance of postmodern questions, they do exclude fundamental areas of creative and intellectual enquiry, those regions of subjectivity, which as Hiller shows us, demand different strategies. There is also the point that many contemporary artists are simply tired of nihilism and irony claiming positions of intellectual superiority, instead recognising that it is perhaps more commendable to try and *construct* meaning, even if everything collapses in the attempt. The desire for depth, for authenticity, even beauty, is not mutually exclusive to critical thinking. Rather, we could say that ‘the baby was thrown out with the bath water’: that there are elements of the modernist project, with its idealism and sense of forward moving direction, that remain relevant and useful, albeit in the knowledge of the precariousness of such positions.

Although we might still be skeptical of any overarching claim, a proposition that strongly resonates with *Scaling the Sublime* is that of Metamodernism, proposed by the cultural theorists Timotheus Vermeulen and Robin van den Akker in 2010. They use the term ‘Meta’ to describe a pervading sense of oscillation between past, present and future; between believing in something whilst also recognising counter positions:

Metamodernism oscillates between the modern and the postmodern. It oscillates between modern enthusiasm and a postmodern irony, between hope and melancholy, between naiveté and knowingness, empathy and apathy, unity and plurality, totality and fragmentation, purity and ambiguity.^{xx}

Vermeulen and van den Akker recognise a pervading shift in contemporary culture from detached irony to a desire for sincerity, to wanting to believe in something, to ‘resignify the present’ through a return to metanarratives. This is manifested in artworks that aim to reconstruct as well as re-engage with *feeling*, describing Metamodernism as a ‘structure of feeling’. As Jorg Heiser pointed out about the Romantic Conceptual sensibility, it is not about synthesis or reconciling opposites, but about simultaneity.

Metamodernism is an unstable state in constant flux: ‘continuously overcoming and undermining hitherto fixed or consolidated positions’. In Vermeulen and van den Akker’s early essay ‘Notes on Metamodernism’, particular attention is paid to the resurgence of Romanticism, or ‘NeoRomanticism’, in contemporary art practice, acknowledging Heiser’s contribution. This return, they argue, is because Romanticism can equally be defined by its oscillation between poles:

Romanticism is about the attempt to turn the finite into the infinite, while recognising that it can never be realised... It is from this hesitation also that the Romantic inclination toward the tragic, the sublime, the uncanny stem; aesthetic categories lingering between projection and perception, form and the unformable, coherence and chaos, corruption and innocence.^{xxxi}

The uncertain, unstable state described should not be read as one of weakness, of being unsure or unable to commit to an idea. Accepting uncertainty and contradiction is instead an engaged and progressive position. The space that Metamodernism describes returns to the deflated remains of the abstract sublime, and while leaving the heroic genius on the floor, picks up their emotional responses and stands them face to face with critical detachment – thus instigating a conversation between the two about our contemporary landscape.

Scaling the Sublime

In a recent article the writer Seth Abrahamson summarised ‘The Ten Basic Principles of Metamodernism’^{xxii} as follows:

Negotiation between modernism and postmodernism.

Dialogue over dialectics.

Paradox transcendence.

Juxtaposition.

The collapse of distances.

Multiple subjectivities.

Collaboration.

Simultaneity and generative ambiguity.

A cautiously optimistic response to metanarratives.

Interdisciplinarity.

Reconstruction instead of deconstruction.

Engagement instead of exhibitionism.

Effect as well as affect.

Walllessness and borderlessness.

Flexible intertextuality.

Each of these points returns us to an expansive attitude, an outward-facing curiosity apparent in all the works brought together for *Scaling the Sublime*. In a general sense, what is particularly striking about contemporary practice is its multidisciplinary. This is highlighted here by the artists’ shared concerns for larger narratives of scale, time and perceptual relationships to landscape. Through this lens, medium specificity, or the idea that any means of production may be outmoded, seems in itself backward-looking; instead, works generated from digital technologies such as Martin John Callanan’s *A Planetary Order*, made up of data from weather-monitoring satellites, sit next to drawings or photographs, each acting as elements in a broader conversation of multiple simultaneous positions. This sense of expansion is also apparent through the dialogues between larger disciplines; Simon Faithfull, Katie Paterson and Mariele Neudecker have frequently made works in collaboration with scientists, enabling a depth of objective exploration at the very real limits of landscape. Each one of the works in this exhibition plays with scale both physically and imaginatively; relational distances expand and contract as we kneel down to observe minute cloud cover, watch the shipwreck from above, and are then immersed in the desert or submerged in the ocean.

These works are all made in full consciousness of the history from which they emerge, although the artists have found strategies, ways of crossing languages that generate both ambiguity and intellectual clarity. Paterson’s *Timepieces*, for example, calibrated to tell the time on other planets (in respective relation to themselves and to Earth) employs the stark language of the minimalist grid and the most objective scientific research to trigger vast incalculable spaces of the imagination. Much like Hiller’s *Dedicated to the Unknown Artists*, reason and seriality create a tension, opening up incomprehensible spaces that far transcend the means by which the work is made. The simplicity of this gesture allows the work to hover ambiguously; the reminder of our own relational scale opens the possibility for us to experience a sense of sublimity, somewhere between wonderment and feeling overwhelmed, bringing us to the threshold of our ability to imagine.

Conversely, Simon Faithfull's *Going Nowhere 1.5* leads literally into the sublime landscape as the protagonist walks the rapidly disappearing borderline of a sandy island into the North Sea. Faithfull, too, shifts distances, the camera shots alternating between near and far, detached from the landscape while documenting a total immersion. We could read this as a latter-day variation on Friedrich's painting of the monk contemplating the sea. Again, a simple gesture, that of tracing an outline of a landscape in the protagonist's steps, becomes a complex art historical parody; it is both sincere and absurd, detached (the ever-present drone reminds us of the critical observer) and fully embodied, as the artist literally submerges himself. The accompanying photograph is a record of his battle with – or submission to – the tide. There is a spirit to this performance: despite knowing he is 'going nowhere', he carries on seemingly undeterred. This is the way that a Metamodern optimism operates. It is a carrying on 'as if' there is a possibility for alternative futures, because this attitude – even if naïve – is preferable to nihilistic defeat.

Mariele Neudecker's *After Life* also makes direct reference to her Romantic predecessors, the ship in the ice an echo of Friedrich's *The Sea of Ice*.^{xxiii} The combination of video footage – three films that triangulate a constructed landscape with inverted reflections of an Arctic sea journey – creates a kind of perceptual dizzying and flux... a sense of here and there in the space. Neudecker frequently returns to the question of subjective and objective relations by trying to tease apart the threshold between 'landscape' and 'nature'. As Mark Cheetham observed in writing on her work, 'Neudecker's recent projects insist that our human perception of questioning and of emotional reaction are integral to what we call landscape and what we hope to discover in some fundamental form: nature.'^{xxiv}

This is critical subjectivity – a border zone, at the edge of landscape. It is a space built on objectivity; on looking, calculating and mapping, but which leads us to incalculable perceptual experiences, to emotional responses such as wonder or self-transcendence.

Richard T. Walker articulates this very well;

I am fascinated by the moments of resistance where articulated thoughts collide with ineffable feelings. My recent work has been about finding strategies that attempt to unite these opposing attributes of experience. Two places where this collision seems to happen is either alone in nature, particularly vast unpopulated expanses of what is considered wilderness, or with someone you love intimately, where you are confronted by feelings that appear to step outside the reality of a given moment. It seems to me that these two situations encourage a micro and macro delineation of self that in many ways relate to the sublime.^{xxv}

Below, from left:

Timepieces (Solar System) 2014 by Katie Paterson,
9 modified clocks, © Katie Paterson, 2018

Production Still from *Going Nowhere 1.5*, HD
Video, 2016 by Simon Faithfull © Simon Faithfull,
2018



Landscape, thresholds and self-transcendence... there is only so far that we can go before we must acknowledge the fundamentally theological nature of the sublime. Returning to Simon Morley, who describes the 'camouflaged ways of talking about experiences which were once addressed by religious discourses', the contemporary sublime is not one that looks upwards towards something higher but 'is mostly about immanent transcendence, about a transformative experience that is understood as occurring in the here and now'.^{xxvi}

Approaching the experience of sublimity as one that holds simultaneity brings us to an agnostic position, literally meaning 'not known'. Agnosticism in its various guises recognises that there is a threshold between what we know and what we are able to know: that there exists knowledge which is fundamentally unknowable, beyond our intellectual and perceptual capacity.

Occupying this threshold with full attention and awareness, utilising both curiosity and doubt, brings me to my concluding point. The flux and uncertainty expressed throughout the works in this exhibition are not evidence of an emergent sensibility that is passive or undecided through apathy. On the contrary, a truly agnostic enquiry is active and *engaged*. It is nuanced; simply by changing 'but' to 'and', we find ourselves in a very different, more open intellectual landscape. Arguably, a position that makes room for not knowing, and that has space for subjectivity, is the one that is truly critical.

The artists here approach ideas with a reasoned, systematic, conceptual rigour, using calculation and science to conjure emotional and imaginative realms beyond the limits of that which can be empirically verified. With an exploratory spirit akin to their Romantic predecessors, they ask questions that embrace doubt and irony, idealism and wonder. At the same time, they self-consciously question the value of their actions, wondering what would and would not constitute a 'worthwhile pursuit'.

The distant horizon is suddenly broken by details of desert shrubs, the mountain's serenade fractured by a low drone. We see a sublime and ridiculous crescendo between the micro and the macro; a fragmented, disorienting perceptual push and pull. The artist climbs down the ladder, returns from the horizon, walks towards us with his back to the setting sun... before finally falling to the ground, out of breath, and picking up the abandoned voice recorder:

I just wanted to say... please... disregard anything I said.^{xxvii}

ⁱ ‘an is that isn’t always’, transcript, Richard T. Walker, 2015.

ⁱⁱ Exhibitions include: *Ideal Worlds: New Romanticism in Contemporary Art*, Schirn Kunsthalle, Frankfurt, Germany, 2005; *Romantic Conceptualism*, BAWAG Foundation Vienna, Austria and Kunsthalle Nürnberg, Germany, 2007; *The Art of The Sublime*, Tate Research Project, London, U.K., 2008; *In Search of The Miraculous*, Newlyn Art Gallery, U.K, 2015; *Lands End*, University of Chicago, U.S.A., 2015.

ⁱⁱⁱ The Anthropocene, a proposed term for the present geological epoch (from the time of the Industrial Revolution onwards), during which humanity has begun to have a significant impact on the environment (Collins English Dictionary).

^{iv} Conversation between exhibited artist and Rebecca Partridge, Berlin, 2017.

^v *Romantic Conceptualism*, BAWAG Foundation Vienna, Austria and Kunsthalle Nürnberg, Germany, 2007.

^{vi} Editorial, ‘What Meta does and does not mean’, Notes on Metamodernism, post 14 October 2010, <http://www.metamodernism.com/2010/10/14/what-meta-means-and-does-not-mean/>

^{vii} Simon Morley, ‘Introduction/The Contemporary Sublime’, *The Sublime: Documents of Contemporary Art*, 2010, p. 12.

^{viii} Robert Rosenblum, *The Abstract Sublime*, ARTnews, vol. 59, no. 10 (February 1961).

^{ix} Ibid.

^x Ibid.

^{xi} Robert Morris, ‘Notes On Sculpture’, 1966, <http://arts.berkeley.edu/wp-content/uploads/2016/01/robert-morris-notes.pdf>

^{xii} Quote from *Agnes Martin: With my Back to the World*, produced and directed by Mary Lance, New Deal Films, 2003 (25.00).

^{xiii} Jorg Heiser, ‘A Romantic Measure’, catalogue essay, *Romantic Conceptualism*, Bielefeld/Leipzig, 2007.

^{xiv} Ibid.

^{xv} Susan Hiller with Jorg Heiser and Jan Verwoert, ‘3152 words’, 15 March 2007, *The Provisional Texture of Reality: Selected Talks and Texts, 1977–2007*, Zurich, 2008, p. 130.

^{xvi} Ibid.

^{xvii} Conversation between Jan Verwoert and Rebecca Partridge, Berlin, 2013.

^{xviii} http://www.artnet.com/magazineus/features/saltz/sigmar-polke6-16-10_detail.asp?picnum=3

^{xix} Introduction, *Supplanting the Postmodern: An Anthology of Writings on the Arts and Culture of the 21st Century*, edited by David Rudrum and Nicholas Stavris, London, 2015, p. xiii.

^{xx} Timotheus Vermeulen and Robin van den Akker, ‘Notes on Metamodernism’, *Journal of Aesthetics and Culture*, 2:1-14, 2010.

^{xxi} Ibid.

^{xxii} Seth Abrahamson, ‘The Ten Basic Principles of Metamodernism’, *Huffington Post*, 27 April 2015.

^{xxiii} *The Sea of Ice*, Caspar David Friedrich, 1823–24, 96.7 cm x 126.9 cm, Kunsthalle Hamburg., Germany.

^{xxiv} Mark Cheetham, ‘Beyond Landscape’, *Hinterland* (published by Trondheim Kunstmuseum on the occasion of the exhibition *In The Collection – Mariele Neudecker – Hinterland*), 2013, p. 61.

^{xxv} Interview with Richard T. Walker, *Aesthetica* magazine, <http://www.aestheticamagazine.com/interview-with-richard-t-walker/>

^{xxvi} Morley, 2010, p. 18.

^{xxvii} ‘an is that isn’t always’, transcript, Richard T. Walker, 2015.

Other Key References:

Alison Gibbons, Timotheus Vermeulen and Robin van den Akker, *Metamodernism: Historicity, Affect and Depth after Postmodernism*, London, Rowman and Littlefield International, Radical Cultural Studies Series, November 2017.

ARTISTS

Martin John Callanan describes himself as an artist researching an individual's place within the systems that define how we live our lives. These systems are monitored and recorded through the ever-increasing capacities of information technology, so that the activities of an individual become part of a gigantic global archive, overwhelming in its scope, impossible to comprehend in the range and quantity of its detail.

The varied projects he has undertaken, some of finite duration, others on-going, have dealt with volumes of information on an often astonishing scale. They have been variously presented in the form of framed prints, printed lists or continuous LCD feeds, and issued as newspapers or stored in online archives. He has been fascinated by such things as global flight patterns, the tracking of personal movements or software commands, and has made work involving indexes, directories, algorithms, bureaucratic procedures, currency, and restricted - access spaces. His art probes the relationship between individual experience and the operations of the agencies and technologies that surround us.

A Planetary Order (Terrestrial Cloud Globe) may be something of an exceptional work for Callanan (he does not as a rule engage with issues of landscape), but it is a perfect embodiment of the ideas explored in this exhibition. It is a model of the cloud cover over the entire planet at a single moment in time: 2 February 2009 at 0600 UTC (Coordinated Universal Time) to be precise. The meteorological information is gathered from six cloud-monitoring satellites, and the data is presented in the form of a 3D digital laser-drawn sphere, at the time of its making the largest object ever to be produced by the Digital Manufacturing Centre at Bartlett Faculty of the Built Environment at University College London. (Callanan was then artist-in-residence at UCL's Environment Institute). It may have been an ambitiously large object as far as the digital technology was concerned, but its scale is touchingly diminutive when considering the prodigious quantity of data that has gone into its realization.

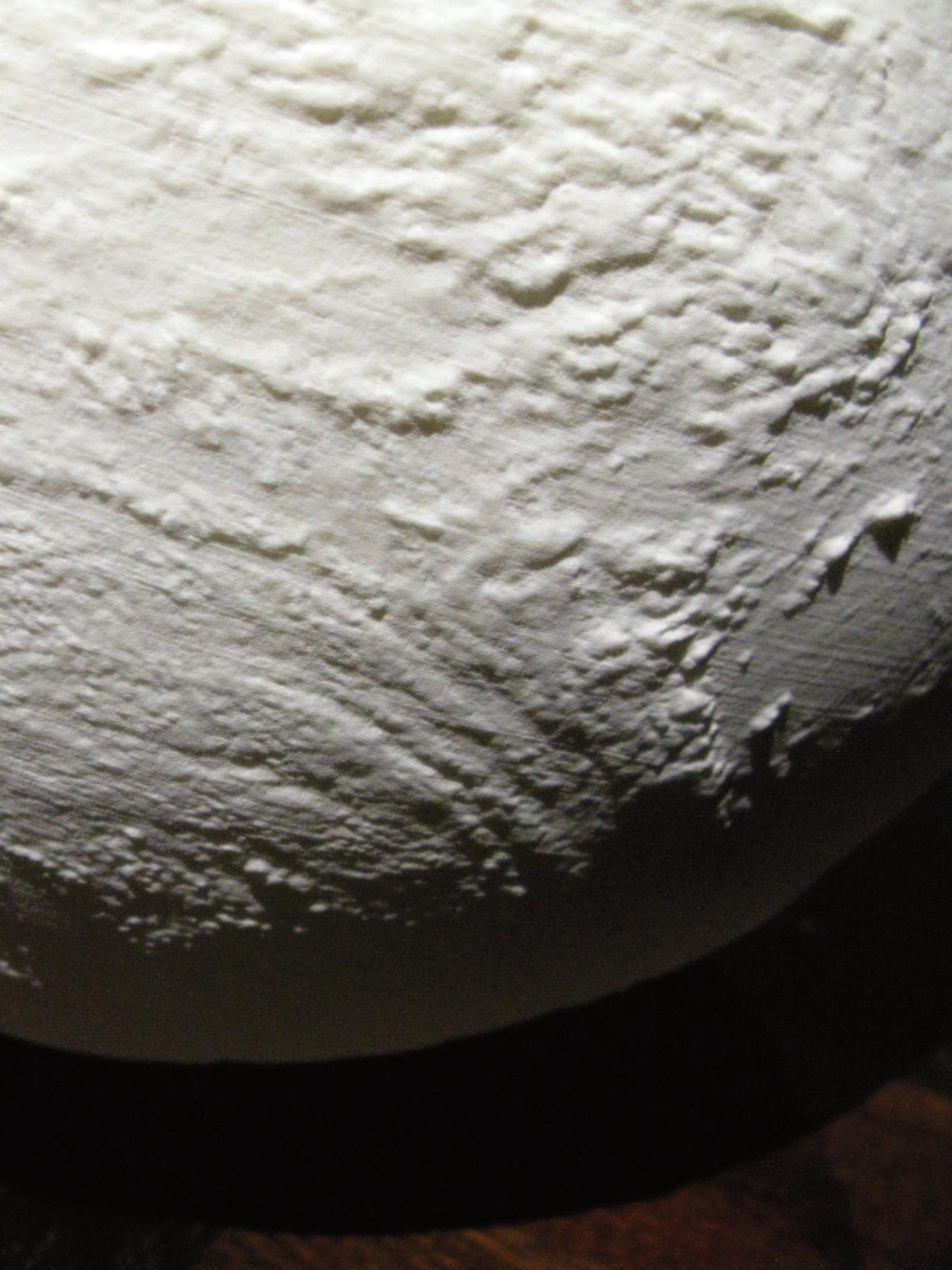
As Richard Hamblyn has observed, 'viewed from ground level, clouds are short-lived localised phenomena, undergoing rapid alterations as they pass overhead'. From this perspective, they have long fascinated artists, particularly British Romantic painters such as John Constable and Samuel Palmer, with their practice of 'skying'. It is also how they appear in Rebecca Partridge's *30 Day Cloud Studies* elsewhere in this exhibition. But when viewed from a satellite, clouds take on a very different appearance: in Hamblyn's words again, 'large-scale formations that range slowly across the earth's surface, connecting vast tracts of earth and sea through enormous geophysical processes ... a visible planetary order'.

Further Reading:

Richard Hamblyn and Martin John Callanan, *Data Soliloquies*, London, 2009.







The journeys Simon Faithfull has made and recorded for his art practice have taken him to the ends of the earth, to places out of reach for most of us, or to those we might never have thought of investigating. His work is motivated by the desire for experience and knowledge beyond the mundane realm we inhabit, and informed by a fascination for the pioneering figures of exploration and scientific discovery, as well as by fantastic fiction. There is sometimes a chilling edge of impending threat, but also invariably a sense of playfulness, even when the game appears somewhat dangerous. Anti-climax is never far away.

Faithfull has contrived a series of flimsy 'Escape Vehicles' designed to reach the very limit of the earth's atmosphere, and to transmit a filmed record of the journey towards inevitable disintegration as the conditions become unsustainable. In 2005 he was artist-in-residence with the British Antarctic Survey, sailing with the *Ernest Shackleton* from the Falklands to the Halley Research Station in the Weddell Sea, sending a digital image-diary back home and recording the voyage on video, in forty-four one minute fragments, through the porthole of his cabin. The following year, he travelled to the Arctic Circle in search of the Northern Lights, which, needless to say, did not appear.

The ambitious video piece *0.00 Navigation* (2008) is the record of a journey along the symbolic but invisible line of the Greenwich Meridian, that last vestige of British naval authority. The artist is seen swimming towards the shore, scaling the white cliffs, carrying on across the cluttered, domesticated landscapes of the south east, undeterred by every obstacle in his way, until eventually he disappears into the North Sea. In 2015, he continued this epic journey along the meridian line southwards, from the French coast all the way across Europe and Africa, ending at the Atlantic shore in Ghana. Recent works have involved sinking a ship off the Southern English coast and a blazing aircraft, deadpan versions of the catastrophe subjects of Romantic art.

Going Nowhere 1.5 is the third in a trilogy of video works, made between 1995 and 2016. In the first, a figure walks away from a fixed camera into a snowy landscape, as if re-enacting some dramatic scenario, though this time nothing much happens. In the second, a figure, the artist again but strangely out of his element, is walking along the bottom of the sea. In the third film, the artist is a diminutive figure, filmed from a drone, walking anti-clockwise round the perimeter of a sandbank entirely surrounded by the sea, as if by this action he might be able to define and secure the limits of his domain. But the tide is relentlessly encroaching.

Further Reading:

Stephen Bode, ed. *Going Nowhere: Simon Faithfull*, London, 2009

Joy Sleeman, 'The Possibility of an Island', in Simon Faithfull, *Does the World Exist When I'm Not There?* Neuenkirchen, 2016

Simon Faithfull
Stills from *Going Nowhere*, 1.5 HD film, 9 mins, 2016







The exploration of chance is at the centre of Tim Knowles' practice. He is interested in tracking movement, in paths and traces, and in the forces that act on figures or objects in motion. Sometimes he makes work directly in the landscape, by walking in remote or challenging areas - down the Tasman Glacier in New Zealand, for example, or traversing the Mungo National Park in New South Wales, or else, nearer home but hardly easier-going, the intractable conifer plantations of Kielder Forest in Northumberland. Such works might at first seem to extend a tradition established by Hamish Fulton and Richard Long. But Knowles's primary interest is in tracing and recording chance actions, allowing the character of a work to be shaped by the terrain, the play of light or the sequenced triggering of a camera shutter.

On other occasions, Knowles has devised ways in which the elements, particularly the wind, might determine the direction and ultimately the destination of a walk. To this end he has devised various portable contraptions designed to pick up the direction of the wind: helmets with wind vanes or sails attached, for example. These pieces of apparatus, with their swivelling parts, the necessary lightness and responsiveness of their components, require considerable skill in the engineering. His most recent, and most ambitious, enterprise is the construction of a sailing vessel which is steered by the wind: there will be no guiding hand on the tiller, and no pre-determined destination.

Knowles is represented here by two of his *Nightwalks*, highly-charged pieces conducted in a sublime - but invisible - landscape, though of course the night itself might be considered sublime. There is something of a literary tradition of nightwalking, as in Dickens' essay *Night Walks* and Virginia Woolf's *Street Haunting*, although it is more often associated with city life than with rural situations. Knowles made these works in the Valley of the Rocks near Lynton on the spectacular coast of North Devon, a location which as it happens also has potent literary associations: Shelley lived for a time hardly a mile away, and Coleridge and Wordsworth were inspired by the setting to begin a collaborative poem *The Wanderings of Cain*.

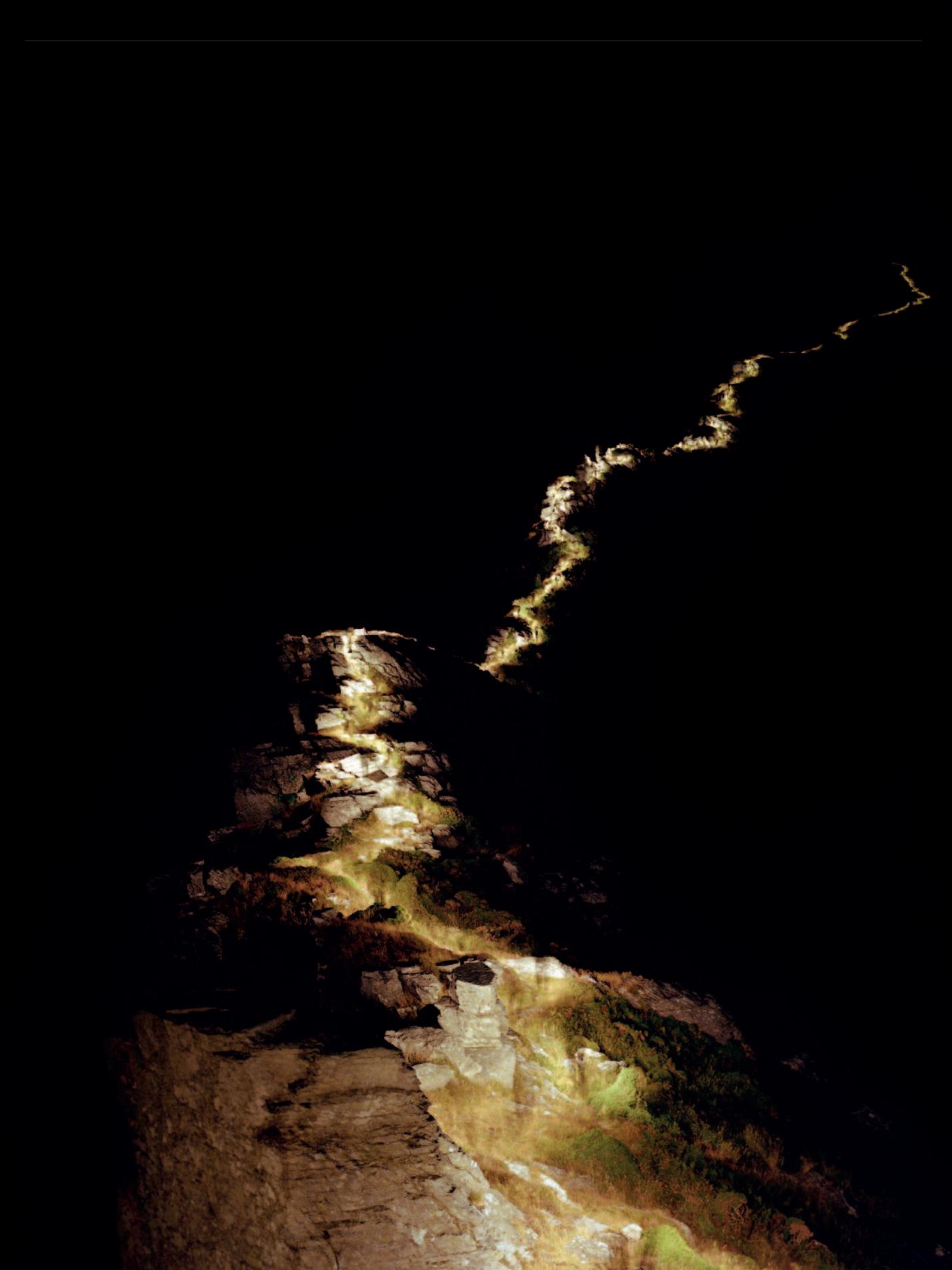
These pieces were created by means of a camera mounted on a tripod and a two-hour exposure; the artist walks away from the fixed camera position carrying three powerful torches fitted with diffusers and connected to a 12-volt battery carried in a backpack to ensure longevity of the beam. The effect is of a line drawn in light, its jagged, uncertain course a consequence of the unseen difficulty of the terrain. By day the Valley of the Rocks is much visited, and offers a classic experience of the tourist sublime. By night it enters a different, mysterious register: Knowles' photographs record a performance near a hazardous physical edge, an ephemeral track of light extending for miles into darkness.

Tim Knowles

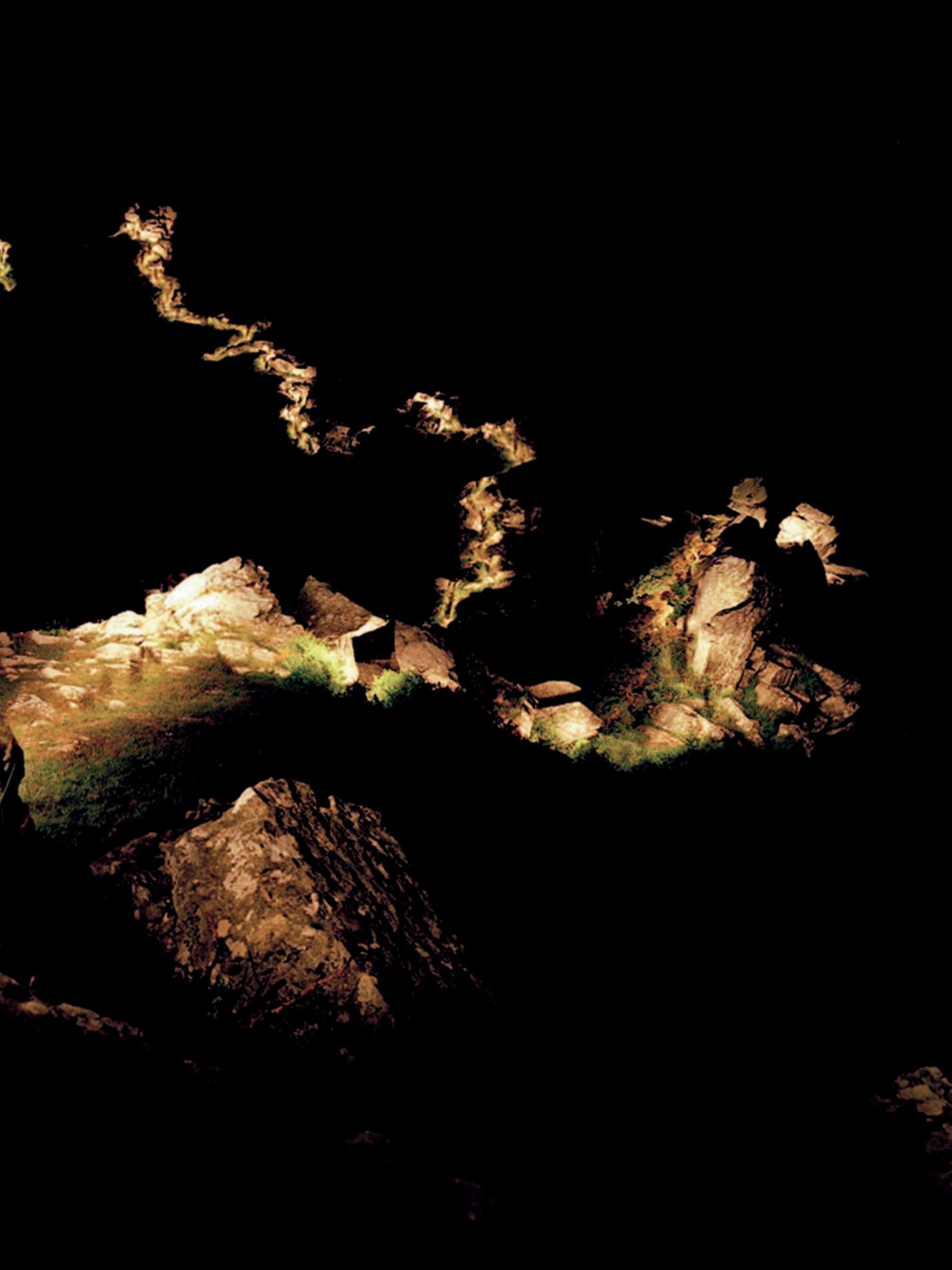
Nightwalk - Valley of Rocks #1 & #2, C-type prints mounted on aluminium, 2008

Further Reading

Tim Knowles, *The Dynamics of Drifting*, catalogue essay by Lizzie Lloyd, Hestercombe Gallery, 2017.







Mariele Neudecker established her reputation with a series of works that made direct reference to the canon of Romantic landscape. These involved creating three-dimensional models of subjects from painting, particularly those by Caspar David Friedrich, and displaying them in glass tanks. The tanks are filled with water and a mix of chemicals to stand in for the air, which appears to have varying degrees of density, from fog, mist and rain to clear sky. The effect is magical: we find ourselves peering into a miniature world of forests and mountain summits, sometimes only dimly illuminated through refracted light. But it is also somewhat disconcerting. We can see more than we could in the painting - we can walk round the other side of a peak - but also less: what in the picture implied tremendous spaciousness is now obviously physically contained, and what was clear before is now partially obscure and distorted. We are more aware of the materials used to construct the landscape, the mechanisms involved in looking at it.

Neudecker's larger project might be described as an investigation of the ways in which our ideas of nature, and our relationship to it, have been mediated through representations, through 'landscape'. In her work she lays out some of the processes, perceptions, apparatus, and conventions by means of which landscape is constructed, and nature seen at several times removed. To this end she has developed a diverse practice, using (and this is not an exhaustive list) sculpture, photography, video, prints, maps, graphite rubbings, models, sound recording and installation.

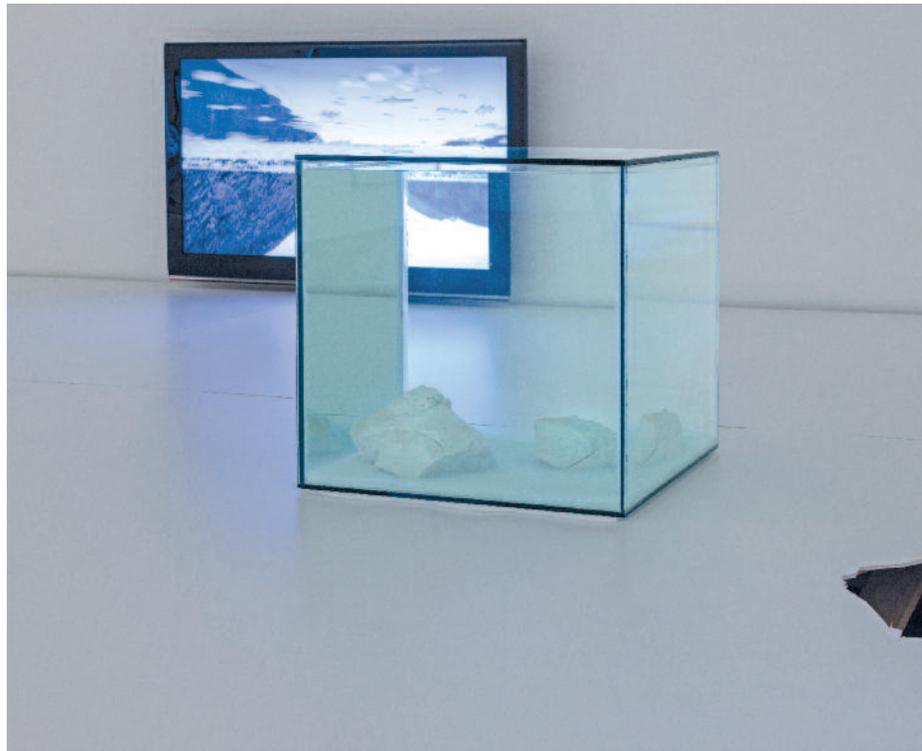
For *Scaling the Sublime* Neudecker is showing *After Life*, a large-scale installation which has only been previously exhibited once before, at the Zeppelin Museum in Friedrichshafen. It is the outcome of a trip to Southwest Greenland in September 2015 in partnership with Project Pressure, an organisation dedicated to documenting the world's vanishing glaciers. The artist had first travelled to Greenland in 2012, in search of a 'nature' beyond landscape: 'Maybe this time I was seeking the *subjective experience* that was so fundamental to the Romantic Sublime of the 19th Century'. She was fully aware, though, that the Arctic was not an untouched space, and that it was the domain of the indigenous Inuit people, to say nothing of the presence of teams of international scientists and camera crews. She saw that the great risk for an artist was to come back with only 'calendar pictures'.

After Life combines references to the familiar, haunting imagery of earlier polar expeditions with others to technology and optics. The vitrine and the model ship trapped in the 'ice' continue the artist's interrogation of the Romantic Sublime and its legacy, while the videos, red-blue colour separations and 3D images suggest ways in which, in her words, technology both 'enables and hinders our perception'.

Further Reading:

Mariele Neudecker: Hinterland, Trondheim Kunstmuseum, 2013





Mariele Neudecker
After Life mixed media installation (Zeppelin Museum, Friedrichshafen, Germany) 2015





Rebecca Partridge's *30 Day Sky Studies* utilizes the most traditional media within the constellation of works in *Scaling the Sublime*. As co-curator of the exhibition her broader concerns naturally resonate throughout the exhibition. More specifically, her own practice reflects on the Romantic landscape, our perceptual relationship to it, and what it means to make a painting of a landscape within the multidisciplinary and expansive field of contemporary art practices.

Partridge's paintings are typically produced in sequences, systematising vast, open and/or structurally complex landscapes from deserts to forest canopies, resulting in a tension that both brings the works to life and asks for our quiet attention. Her landscape subjects are sometimes remote - wildernesses that express a sense of longing for elsewhere - and sometimes close at hand, such as her views of trees we could walk past on the street. She uses these anonymous, un-locatable spaces to explore very basic ontological ideas, observing and inhabiting them, both literally - through her many journeys with her camera - and in the studio. Previous and ongoing works have ranged in timescales, documenting shifts in light over a 24-hour sequence, for example, or else revisiting the same site in three-year cycles to record the same tree, from the same position, in a relationship that could be potentially decades long. Because of their serial nature, we become attuned to the slightest variations and differences, mirrored by the medium of paint, which, with its impressionability, is in itself a record of time and attention invested in the process.

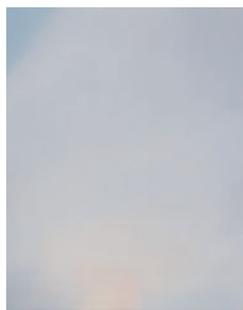
30 Day Sky Studies takes the period of one month during a stay on the west coast of Norway. Within this framework she recorded the sky randomly and intuitively. There are parallels here to Mariele Neudecker's approach to landscape, and Partridge too attempts to occupy a perceptual hinterland: she explores a space between nature and our perception of it, between objective observation and our subjective response, and between what we perceive and what exists beyond us.

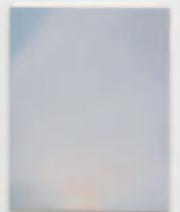
Partridge's early works explored her own synaesthesia, a subject on which she has written in the context of recent neuroaesthetic research. Notions of sensory malleability, a perceptual network of abstractions that cross over, led her to make works spanning film, sound and ceramics. She continues to return to painting, however, allowing this synaesthetic framework to become increasingly indirect. As she says: 'there are different ways that I can talk about the work - I can talk about synaesthesia, I can talk about landscape... but I'd say that the overarching theme of the work is expressing certain values through actions in the studio.' (in conversation with Gabriella Sedita, 'Conversations on Creativity, 2017'). By approaching the work in this way, thinking of it in terms of conveying an attitude, both looking at and recording the landscape become consequent acts. They are an expression of presence, attention and curiosity, embodied through her physical engagement in making the paintings, and the investment made by the spectator in looking at them.

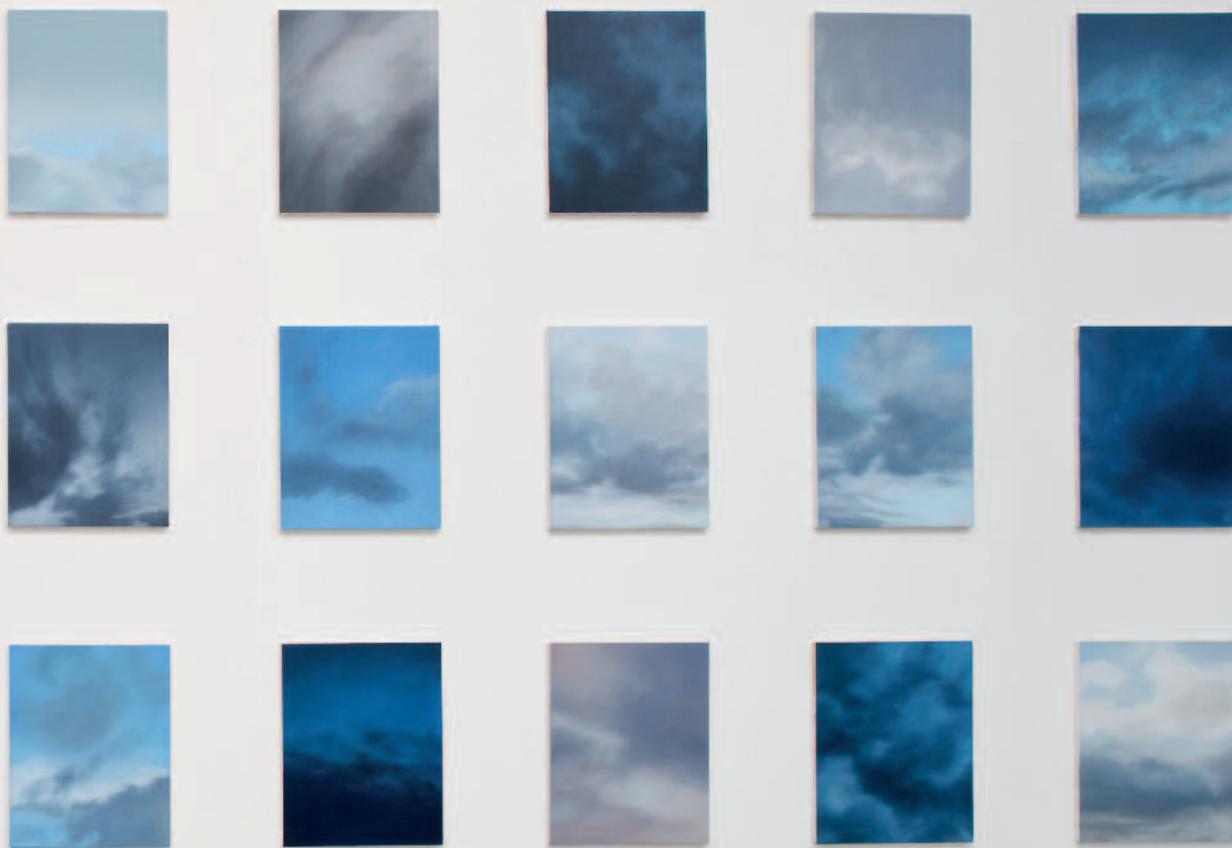
Rebecca Partridge
30 Day Sky Studies, oil on birch ply, 2017-18

Further Reading:

'Resonances and Reverberations: Conversation between Rebecca Partridge and Jan Verwoert', *Notations*, Berlin, 2014.







Right at the outset of her career Katie Paterson established a name for herself with two works, one dealing with ice, the other with the moon. *Vatnajokull (the sound of)* consisted of a direct phone line to a microphone in an Icelandic glacier, so that a listener could hear the sound of ice melting. In *Earth-Moon-Earth (Moonlight Sonata reflected from the Surface of the Moon)* the first movement of Beethoven's romantically-named sonata was translated into morse code, transmitted to the moon, received back on earth, and the remaining notes played on an automated piano.

In the ten years since then, she has continued to develop both terrestrial and cosmic themes in her work. On the one hand she has made pieces involving desert sands, tree samples, fossils and living timber. On the other, she has made a lightbulb to simulate moonlight, a mirror ball with 10,000 images documenting every solar eclipse known to humankind (*Totality*, 2016), and *Second Moon* (2013-14), in which a fragment of lunar rock was sent to orbit the earth by airfreight courier. But her interest in the extra-terrestrial has taken her far beyond the moon and moonlight. She has mapped all the dead stars, transmitted the 'ancient darkness' from the edge of the known universe on television, and created an archive of darkness, an open-ended slide collection of images from unimaginable distances of time and space.

The piece by which Paterson is represented in the exhibition, *Timepieces (Solar System)* addresses the idea of the moon and the planets of our solar system, but it also deals with the relationship between our reality and worlds beyond ours. As with much of her work, there is a poignant contrast between the means and materials at our disposal and the vast spaces that surround us, spaces revealed as all the more immense by advances in scientific research. Our capacity to measure may be more formidable than ever, but what kind of imaginative response might be possible when faced with such huge scales of data and knowledge?

In this piece, the other eight planets in our solar system and the Moon are imagined in relation to our time-based regime. In a work of typically understated presence, nine clocks have been calibrated to tell the time in relation to the other planets and to Earth. Time itself is a sublime concept, (and the mind boggles at the idea that the equivalent of our day and night on Mercury lasts for 4,223 hours), but these nine clocks also reveal the limits of our understanding. The series of dials, with all that they imply about our regulated condition, assert a futile claim on those other worlds - indifferent, unknowable or empty, and still in most senses well beyond our reach.

Further Reading:

Katie Paterson, with texts by Nicolas Bourriaud, Mary Jane Jacob, Lisa le Feuve and Lars Bang Larsen, Newcastle-upon-Tyne and Bielefeld/ Berlin, 2016.









Moon

Richard T Walker left his native Britain for California over a decade ago. Since then the wild and remote landscapes of the American West have been the subject of his ongoing questioning - a pondering yet persistent reflection that antagonises, doubts and desires the sublime landscape always just beyond reach. Walker seemingly attempts to woo the distant mountain peaks with song; he observes, records, and repeatedly speaks to it as if the intimacy of his relationship with nature were akin to that between lovers. His works convey moments of great wonder, but disturbed by the overwhelming beauty before him, there is also a melancholic apathy, and frequent absurdity. As with other artists in *Scaling the Sublime* - Simon Faithfull, Tim Knowles, Mariele Neudecker and Rebecca Partridge - journeying out into the landscape is crucial; his first person experience being that which the larger practice reflects back on. Also reflective of a particularly contemporary sensibility is how the work is both fragmentary and self-mirroring: sculpture, found objects, film, sound, photography, drawing and installation make up constellations within which the artist may perform again, mirroring himself in the film. These live performances bring the archetypal Romantic figure into the gallery, singing to the screen at yet another step removed.

In the immersive, cinematic video work *an is that isn't always* Walker converses with the desert, alone with a voice recorder. Beyond the initial narrative, underlying abstractions play out. Spatial shifts between near and far and the placement of drawn peaks in front of themselves create a perceptual back and forth, a push and pull between distance and intimacy. The installation *between us, as it is, here, almost forever, always* brings elements from the video works physically into the gallery, assembled with a sense of effortless minimalism. An inverted light box containing a close and mirrored image of a rock echoes the inverted reflections within the film element of Mariele Neudecker's *After Life*. Similarly, the active resonances of the sound converse with the static nature of a found rock - which, resting on a keyboard, plays a note harmonizing with the audio quietly playing through a walkie-talkie.

Walker references multiple historical and material languages, from classic motifs of Romanticism to Land art, film and pop musical references with a comic twist reminiscent of works by Conceptual artists such as Bas Jan Ader. This multilingual, synaesthetic space says something about the inability of language to articulate our experience of the sublime landscape, ultimately beyond our limits. In his own words, 'There is a beautiful paradox in such distance for at the very centre of what it is, there is something that in its very nature is "over-there", other, away and unattainable. It is to attain the unattainable, and I think there is something profound in that.'

Further Reading:

Jeffrey Kastner, 'Call of the Wild: Four Natural Duets for Richard T. Walker' in *defiance of being here*, Carroll Fletcher, 2013.



Richard T Walker
between us, as it is, here, almost forever, always mixed media installation, 2015



Richard T Walker
Still from *an is that isn't always* single channel HD video, 9mins 16 secs, 2015
(and overleaf)





Artists' Biographies

Martin John Callanan

b. 1982, UK; lives and works in Scotland.

Martin John Callanan's artwork has been exhibited and published internationally. He has recently been awarded the prestigious triennial Philip Leverhulme Prize in Visual Art 2014-17 for outstanding research, and in September 2015 he was awarded Alumnus of the Year for Excellence in the Arts by Birmingham City University. His was the first artist-in-residence at the Bank of England from 2015-16. Recent solo exhibitions include: Noshospace, London; Horrach Moya, Palma de Mallorca; Baltic 39, Newcastle-upon-Tyne; Or Gallery, Berlin. His work has been shown at White Cube, London; Galerie Christian Ehrentraut, Berlin; V2, Rotterdam; Arts Santa Mònica, Barcelona; James Cohan Gallery, New York; Es Baluard Modern and Contemporary Art Museum, Mallorca; Whitechapel Gallery, London; ZKM Karlsruhe, Germany; Ars Electronic Centre, Austria; ISEA, Brighton; FutureEverything, Manchester; LIFT2014, Battersea Arts Centre; Kunstverein Springhornhof, Neuenkirchen, Germany; Riga Centre for New Media Culture, Latvia; Whitstable Biennale, Imperial War Museum North; his work has been published by Book Works.

Simon Faithfull

b. 1966, UK; lives and works in London and Berlin.

Simon Faithfull studied at Central St Martins, London and then Reading University. He is a Reader in Fine Art at the Slade School of Fine Art, UCL, London. His wide-ranging practice is well known internationally and his works are represented in many public collections including the Pompidou Centre in France and the Government Art Collection, UK. Recent exhibitions include solo shows at Galerie Polaris, Paris; Musée Des Beaux Arts, Calais; Fabrica, Brighton; Sprinhornhof Kunstverein, Germany. His practice, combining video, digital-drawing, writing and performing, has been described as an attempt to understand and explore the planet as a sculptural object - to test its limits and report back from its extremities. Recent projects include a journey across Africa tracing the Greenwich Meridian and the deliberate sinking of a ship to create an artificial reef.

Tim Knowles

b. 1969 UK; lives and works in Bristol.

Tim Knowles has exhibited widely both in the UK and internationally, and he has been commissioned to present temporary works and events in major cities around the world. Recent exhibitions and projects include the solo exhibition *The Dynamics of Drifting* at Hestercombe House, Somerset; *And what, for example, am I now seeing?* Galleria Continua, Les Moulins, Paris; *Precarious Nature*, COCA, Christchurch, New Zealand; *Dispersal Zone*, a large-scale temporary public work commissioned for Nuit Blanche, Toronto; *Force-Fire*, a project commissioned by Timespan for the 2015 Helmsdale Highland Games, Scotland. His works are included in the National Collecting Scheme for Scotland, the Progressive Collection (USA), the Fidelity Investment Collection (USA and UK), UTS Art Collection and NAS Collection (Australia), Art Stations Foundation (Poland), and in various private collections internationally.

Mariele Neudecker

b. 1965 Germany; lives and works in Bristol.

Mariele Neudecker uses a broad range of media including sculpture, film and sound. Her practice investigates the formation and historical dissemination of cultural constructs around natural and technological worlds, and notions of a Contemporary Sublime. Neudecker often uses technology's virtual capabilities in order to reproduce a heightened experience of landscape, thus addressing the subjective and mediated condition of any first-hand encounter. Solo exhibitions include Ikon Gallery, Birmingham; Tate St Ives; Tate Britain; Kunstmuseum Trondheim, Norway; Zeppelin Museum, Friedrichshafen, Germany; she has shown widely in international group exhibitions. Neudecker is Professor at Bath Spa University, Fellow for CERN's Visiting Artists Program, and is on the European Commission's Science Hub's advisory panel for their Joint Research Centre for Art and Science.

She is represented by Galerie Barbara Thumm, Berlin, Thomas Rehbein Galerie, Cologne and Galeria Pedro Cera in Lisbon.

Rebecca Partridge

b. 1976, UK; lives and works in Berlin and London.

Rebecca Partridge gained an MA in Fine Art from the Royal Academy Schools, London in 2007, since which time she has been exhibiting internationally. Recent solo exhibitions include *In The Meantime* at Kunsthalle CCA Andratx, Mallorca, and *Notations* at Kunstverein Springhornhof, Neuenkirchen, Germany, as well as numerous international group exhibitions including *Verstand und Gefühl: Landschaft und der Zeitgenössische Romantic* which she co-curated at Kunstverein Springhornhof in 2013. Grants awarded include Terra Foundation for American Art Summer Fellowship (France) and residencies from Kunsthalle CCA Andratx and The Josef and Anni Albers Foundation (U.S.A). In 2017 she was awarded a residency from the Nordic Artists' Centre where she made the works for this exhibition. She writes for several contemporary art journals including *Berlin Art Link*, *Hyperallergic* and *Sculptorvox* and is currently a Lecturer on both the BA and MA Fine Art at West Dean College, UK.

Katie Paterson

b. 1981, UK; lives and works in Scotland.

Katie Paterson graduated from the Slade School of Fine Art, London in 2007. Paterson's work is known internationally; recent solo exhibitions include *Salt*, Utah Museum of Modern Art, USA; *From Earth into a Black Hole*, James Cohan Gallery, New York; *Totality*, Somerset House, London; *Syzygy*, The Lowry, Salford; *Le Champ de Ciel*, *Field of the Sky*, FRAC Franche Comté, Besançon, France; *Ideas*, Ingleby Gallery, Edinburgh; *Eveningness*, Kunstverein Springhornhof, Germany; *In Another Time*, Mead Gallery, University of Warwick; *Katie Paterson*, Kettle's Yard, Cambridge; *Inside This Desert*, BAWAG Contemporary, Vienna; *100 Billion Suns* at Haunch of Venison, London. Her works have been exhibited in major exhibitions such as the *Light Show* at the Hayward Gallery, London; *Dissident Futures*, Yerba Buena Centre for the Arts, San Francisco; *Light and Landscape* at Storm King Art Centre, Hudson Valley, USA; *Marking Time* at MCA, Sydney; *Continuum* at James Cohan Gallery, New York and *Altermodern* at Tate Britain. She is represented in collections including the Guggenheim, New York, Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art, Edinburgh, and the Arts Council Collection.

Richard T. Walker

b. 1977, UK; lives and works in San Francisco.

Richard T Walker received his MA in Fine Art from Goldsmiths College, 2005. He has exhibited and performed world-wide, including solo and group exhibitions at San Francisco Museum of Modern Art; Yerba Buena Center for the Arts, San Francisco; The Contemporary Austin, Austin, Texas; Times Museum, Guangzhou, China; Museum of Modern Art, Rio de Janeiro; Hiroshima City Museum of Contemporary Art, Japan; Witte De With Center for Contemporary Art, Rotterdam, Netherlands. His work is held in collections including San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, Kadist Foundation, San Francisco / Paris, and the Kunstsammlung Nordrhein-Westfalen, Dusseldorf. Walker has been an Irvine Fellow at the Montalvo Art Center and a resident at the Headlands Center for the Arts, San Francisco, and Skowhegan School of Painting and Sculpture, Maine, USA. He received an Artadia Award in 2009.

SCALING THE SUBLIME: ART AT THE LIMITS OF LANDSCAPE

23 March – 17 June 2018

Curated by Nicholas Alfrey and Rebecca Partridge with Neil Walker

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