
Victoria Clare Bernie

Slow Water

Curriculum subjects:

Art and Design
Higher Photography
English
Modern Studies

Curriculum for Excellence:

Expressive Arts - Art and Design
Social Studies - People, past events and societies

Victoria Clare Bernie's practice centres on the representation of landscape in Northern and Western Scotland. 'Slow Water' is a new project created during a Leverhulme Trust Artist-in-Residency post at the Scottish Association for Marine Science Research Laboratory (SAMS) based at Dunstaffnage near Oban in Scotland. The project takes the form of digital video, drawings and photographs. Video works are projected large scale depicting scientific fieldwork practices and hydro-electric infrastructures. Smaller video works are shown on wall mounted flat screens. Groups of photographs depict tiny water creatures and the minutiae of landscape across the seasons.

For ten months of the residency, Victoria worked in collaboration with marine and freshwater scientists and the Hydro to research and create a type of 'liquid atlas'. This atlas aims to map the present condition of water in Scotland, to study change in the landscape over time and to record the activities of industry and stewardship that maintain that landscape. Working with digital video, drawing and photography, Victoria's work seeks to identify and record an alternative image of Northern and Western Scotland as a worked and working landscape, in contrast to the more familiar image of the Highlands as an under-occupied, melancholic and apparently untouched terrain. The exhibition as a visual document is at once beautiful and unsettling in its ability to depict the details of insect life and death in a Highland loch, the particularities of water science and at the same time, the monumental charms of industrial infrastructure.

Biography

Bernie undertook an MA in Fine Art at Edinburgh University and Edinburgh College of Art, a Postgraduate Diploma at Edinburgh College of Art and a Master of Architecture History and Theory at McGill University, Montreal. Her work has been exhibited in gallery and non-gallery sites including Mount Stuart (Isle of Bute), Bonhoga (Shetland), Drum Castle (Aberdeenshire), Catterline Arts Festival (Aberdeenshire), 'Northern City: Between Light and Dark' at Lighthouse, Glasgow and 'Can art save us', Millenium Gallery Sheffield.

An earlier work was included in 'Invisible Fields', new moving image work by women artists in Scotland, shown at An Tuirrean in Skye and at Street Level Photoworks in 2005. Her work was included in the Film and Video Umbrella submission to the Zoo Art Fair.

Activity 1

Get creative mapping!

- Victoria Claire Bernie's work aims to create a 'liquid atlas' or in other words to chart the present condition of water in Scotland. Although this is an improbable task her work opens up interesting questions about how we might map our landscapes, environments and cities from the perspective of the social, natural and built world.
 - Think about how maps help us to understand communities, cities and environments:
 - Consider what you could map. Is it possible to map your bedroom, your eating habits, your bodily functions, your senses, your use of language, your journeys, your activities, your friends or even your future?
 - Once you have chosen something think about what symbols and labels you'll use to depict what you're mapping. Remember this isn't a road or atlas map so you can invent your own system and rules.
 - Draw out your map, including as much information as you think is necessary.
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Activity 2

Make a fictionalized landscape

Bernie's video work combines landscapes and sounds from various locations in Scotland and edits them together as though they depict one place. In this way you could say she creates an imaginary or fictionalized landscape.

Try making an imaginary landscape either by:

- Collecting photographs of a variety of landscapes / places and creating a collage by cutting and sticking different elements to make a vision of a new place.
- Or creating a 3-D model of a landscape and photographing it. You could even turn your photograph into a postcard and send it to your family and friends.

Activity 3

Discuss combining art and different subjects

Crucial to the development of Bernie's exhibition Slow Water was the artist's access to the scientific community. During a period of ten months Bernie worked with marine and freshwater scientists at the Scottish Association for Marine Science Research Laboratory (SAMS), based at Dunstaffnage near Oban. This period of time enabled her to develop a unique relationship with the landscape and create new work.

Artists now work in a wide variety of ways and it's becoming increasingly common for them to work with experts from other fields.

- Do you think Bernie's work looks like it relates to science and/or geography? Why?
 - Can you understand how an artist might combine science/ geography and art? Do you think you could be inspired by some aspect of science/ geography to create an artwork?
 - Are there any other subjects that you think could influence your art?
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