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LOCALITY as subject and setting; our past and our future

LOCALITY as subject and setting; both our past and our future

In 2016 I created LOCALITY - a three school international residency programme running from 2016-2019. This project explored the artistic methods employed to examine the qualities of LOCALITY from temporary residences in several different regions within three countries: the Finistere, France; the north -eastern coast of Scotland and Anvers, Belgium.

On the morning of the 27th of April 2016, in the meeting room of the Haliotika Centre, le Guilvinec, the largest remaining artisanal fishing port in France, 19 bachelor and post graduate Art students from Belgium, France and Scotland listened to the Breton wife of a retired fisherman recounting the experience of receiving monthly radio telegrams from sea, informing her of her husband's wellbeing whenever the fishing trawler reached radio signal waters. Her story was translated between students, from French to English to Flemish.

Her husband and son sat next to her, talking in turn of life at sea, present and past. The testimonies we heard that evening informed and transformed our understanding of the port and the people of le Guilvinec, and of the Atlantic ocean as an economy, a battle ground, a cemetery, and they fuelled our desire to wake up at 3am the next morning and observe the line of fishing trawlers leaving the port of Guilvinec in silent succession.

The project 'Locality' sought to both explore and reflect the daily 'instantiations' (Giddens 2013) of the 'lifeworld' (Habermas 1970; Carr 1977, 202 - 212 ) of the people of le Guilvinec, situated in its particular historical and spatial context and further, to place this unique experience in the wider context of our globalized world.

The UNESCO and CRS Report 2005 privileged the experience of rural and indigenous peoples, to increase awareness that these unique 'ways of knowing' developed by societies with long histories of interaction with their natural environment, are important facets of the world's cultural diversity and to acknowledge that they provide a foundation for locally-appropriate sustainable development

I believe exploring Locality against the backdrop of an increasingly impersonalized globalised economy can re-externalise our sense of place, and support our tentative reawakening sense of the importance of inheritance, of ancestry, of 'being placed'. This is the duality of 'knowledge which is both ancestral and innovative' (Schegel UNESCO)

How do we participate in Locality – dweller, owner, stranger, wayfarer?

"Having spent a few days within the area of Findhorn during the LOCALITY residency, I found a disused and broken stairway on the beach almost completely buried in a sand dune.

My project consists in bringing this small landmark back to life, first by unearthing the old, creating an archaeological procedure, and then by building a new one based on its revealed placement, embedded within the dune." Owen Cole, a student from Quimper, France participating in LOCALITY 2017.

Adjusting to the macro context of the globalised world has been fed to us as the only way forward, but perhaps our futures can only truly be created through an understanding of our past; and experiencing place as affective and dynamic in its multi- dimensionality, calling on our heritage, our ancestors shared knowledge, in particular that micro level of the localized experience of our lives as individual human beings.