



The Arctic Circle

Siobhan McDonald

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My name is Siobhan McDonald. I am a visual artist living and working in Dublin. My studio is based in The School of Science at University College Dublin where I was Artist in Residence 2013-2015. A fascination with time and the changeable nature of landmass has led to ongoing conversations with scientists and research institutions across the interweaving disciplines of botany, biology and geology.

I am developing a body of work following a recent research trip to the North Pole where I studied the disappearing landscape of the Arctic. Prompted by my experience of the Arctic shelf receding, this new work addresses issues of the instability of the earth's materiality. The work is grounded in an investigation of material processes, exploring the dynamic forces that transform matter and energy. This project combines art and science in a fascinating exploration of one of the Earth's last relatively untouched wilderness areas - the High Arctic to bring audiences on journeys to both real and artistically re-imagined Arctic spaces. CRYSTALLINE'S pivotal process is collaboration: with The European Space Agency; curator Helen Carey; palaeontologist Prof. Jenny McElwain, UCD; and with composer Irene Buckley.

CRYSTALLINE explores our desire to make corporeal contact with geological phenomena in Polar Regions. From January 2016, in my collaboration with Jenny McElwain, I will focus on the study of plants and atmospheres from the Arctic regions as far back as 400 million years ago, to explore the essential 'nature' that, invisible to the eye, acts as imaginary portholes into other times. This work will be informed by my arctic tracings of sounds and images recorded in the glaciers of this disappearing frozen landscape. In doing so, the urgencies around the tipping of natural balances in this fragile region will be revealed. The final work will emerge from my forthcoming residency at the ESA in spring 2016. Here I will conduct a series of workshops in ESA Madrid to work with experts using technology to help understand how the sun effects the melting of the polar ice caps. From this, a crucially innovative component of CRYSTALLINE – its final sound component, will be created for completion by June 2016 in a unique collaboration with Irene Buckley the original music score will be performed at ESA, Madrid and preserved in CD format to be included in the CRYSTALLINE publication.

In addition there will be a radio documentary based on my recordings of the High Arctic and interviews with artists and scientists, by award winning producer Claire Cunningham to be broadcast on RTE Lyric FM, funded under the Broadcasting Authority of Ireland. The final exhibition is confirmed for both ESA, Madrid and The Centre Culturel Irlandais, Paris.