

DONALD URQUHART

INTERVIEWED BY ANNE DOUGLAS

August 2012

Edited by Donald Urquhart, September 2012

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Anne Douglas: Could you think of a particular work that is, maybe, quite iconic of your approach?

Donald Urquhart: It's actually fairly problematic to answer a question like that because my particular practice is fairly diverse, depending on the context I'm working in. Underpinning it all is a strong sense of drawing so that the physical manifestation may well be something that could be referred to as a sculpture within the landscape or an architectural construct – but to my mind these things are always actually three-dimensional drawings.

I had a conversation with Atsuo Hukuda – a Japanese artist and curator – the other day who was querying an aspect of my practice and I was explaining to him that I had just redesigned the University Chapel here in Edinburgh¹ which would be opening next month. He was asking if that was art, or if it was design and, again, I didn't want to get bogged down in a semantic discussion, but I very much pointed out that my approach to that space was to see it as a three-dimensional painting and to treat it as I would a canvas, only there is an additional dimension to the space – so things like colour relationships and formal built structures within the space are very much conceived of as I would in a drawing or in a canvas.



Figure 1 University Chapel

It is very difficult to quantify that sense of turning my hand to a variety of contexts. I can be working almost simultaneously on a ten centimetre by ten centimetre drawing and also designing an architectural space and to me the approaches are identical to both although the result is sufficiently different that it could even attract different labels – ‘architecture’, ‘interior design’, art, etc.

I suppose at the core of all of my practice – to cut back to your original question and to excuse that qualification there – is, my work is deeply concerned with the landscape. For example, in the Chapel project (which will be called ‘*Sanctuary*’ because it is a multi-faith space) is very much about dealing with an architectural space with a strong sense of abstraction drawn from the landscape and relating the light in the space to that of the landscape – to the outdoors – and to bringing in landscape imagery.

There’s always this point of direct observation of a particular aspect of the landscape; there then usually is a form of documentation – so it is not my interpretation of the landscape, but rather, I see myself as documenting an aspect of the landscape. For example, in the Sanctuary space at the University, there is recorded footage of a waterfall directly in the space. That’s me going out and abstracting one aspect of a landscape and bringing it into another space – another context. That may well work across my practice, so whether it is documenting worm casts on a beach or very accurately recording ash on a glacier or whatever, and then that becomes part of the language of the drawing – but it is not just that documentation. It is about laying that documentation against a more formal aspect of the practice so that the work ultimately becomes about a dialogue of those two aspects.

Is that making any sense?

Anne Douglas: Yes.

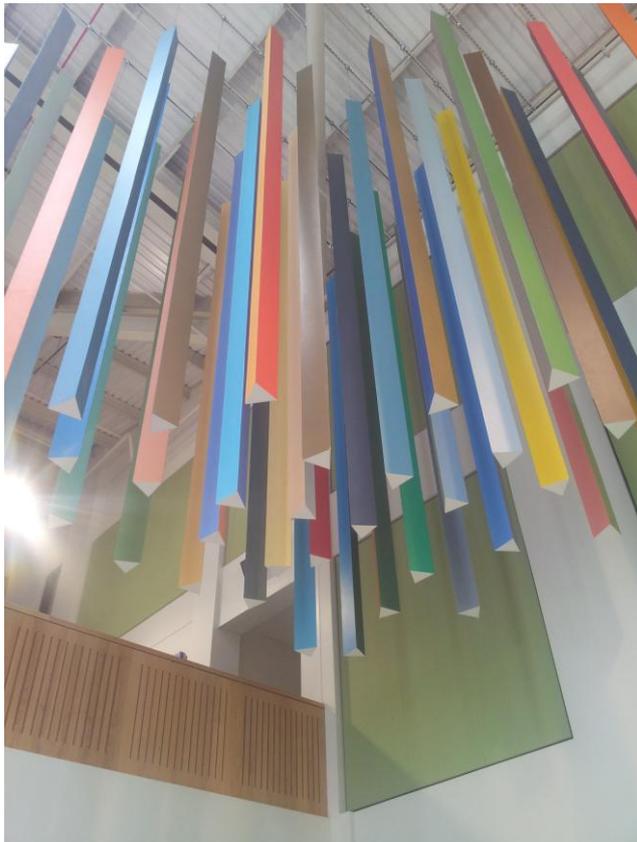


Figure 2 Colour Lines, Nicolson Institute, Stornoway

Donald Urquhart: If we talk about, for example, *The Sanctuary*, or a piece that I’ve just installed at the new Nicolson Institute in Stornowayⁱⁱ – there are aspects which

involve observation of the landscape and thinking about the psychology of the space that the work will then transform or, indeed, the psychology of the space itself, may be a major component of the work in the case of an architectural space – so there's that generalisation that runs across my practice.

The range in which I work ... I have works published in books about land art. I've been shortlisted for design awards. I have won design awards; I have won landscape architecture awards; I have won architecture awards and, ultimately, I would describe myself as a landscape painter. So the work is almost about simply observing and abstracting from the landscape. What changes is the context and therefore, the labelling.

Returning to your original question, if I had to select one work which has become quite iconic of my practice, it would be *An Enlightened Stand*. This is an outdoor work, very much in the language of drawing at Grizedale Sculpture Forest in Cumbria.ⁱⁱⁱ



Figure 3 *An Enlightened Stand*

Anne Douglas: I wanted to pick up a little bit on the importance of drawing in your interests and what you mean by drawing, or in what sense is it important to you because one could make a piece through colour; one could make an architectural intervention – but drawing is not necessarily a component of that but you specifically said drawing was very important to you.

Donald Urquhart: I use drawing as a way of trying to understand the world and a way of making sense of it. For me it is visual thinking; how the complexity of a landscape in front of me, as it enters my retina, how that could be made sense of and how that could be, therefore, reduced and what elements of that I want to concentrate on and think about.

There's that aspect of drawing as a form of visual thinking in response to an external motif, but then it is also just fundamental to it is the act of drawing. The beauty of drawing a pencil across a piece of paper and leaving a trace which then records 'I was here' for a particular length of time and a particular place. It is also to do with the physical sense of drawing; of creating lines and of basic mark-making as a way of marking a presence.

Sometimes in lectures I begin with cave paintings as illustrations and contrast those with graffiti artists and explain that the fundamental driving force to both activities are exactly the same. It's human beings essentially saying, 'I'm here, at this point in time, and I want to communicate that to somebody who may not be sharing that experience with me but may come across this at a later date.' Of course, there are greater complexities in both cave paintings' purposes as we understand them and, indeed, in graffiti art – but, essentially, I see those as being identical acts and it is very nice to take of an image of Lascaux and an image of a piece of graffiti art on the side of a building and basically to say, 'This is what, essentially, it is all about.'

It is that primacy of drawing as well – the simplicity of the drawing act I like. Some of the drawings may end up as three-dimensional manifestations and could be more accurately described as sculptures, *An Enlightened Stand*, for example.– I'm thinking particularly in this instance of a drawing I made in Sligo in Ireland, *Lines/Plane : Larus/Cygnus*^{iv}, which is made of stainless-steel rods and projects out of the river. It's was a huge engineering project which involved damming the river – so when I talk about the simplicity of drawing it is more the simplicity of the concept – it is not always the simplicity of the execution. The reductive act of translating a landscape to a drawing – to the drawn form – is where, I think, the simplicity lies.



Figure 4 *Lines/Plane : Larus/Cygnus*

Anne Douglas: So it is a kind of distillation ...

Donald Urquhart: Exactly. You're dealing with a multiple set of complexities which, in relation to each other then add further complexities to the point where it would be ridiculous to even try and describe the number of complexities and factors like temperature, sound, how you slept the night before, your emotional wellbeing, your bank balance, whether your car needs an MOT or not. These all inform – the latest book you read; the last piece of music you listened to. These externals all inform the senses as well as what you're actually looking at and then there is a historic, cultural aspect of what you're looking at; what light is doing to a landscape; the seasons; what else is going on – this incredible amount of complexity would be absolutely impossible to deal with.

Every drawing, every reference to a piece of landscape, is a distillation and is a reduction. I suppose what I'm doing in my decision-making, therefore, is selecting what it is I'm distilling from this mass of complexities. I say 'mass of complexities' – only a tiny percentage of which I even understand because the ones I'm conscious of (and the ridiculous example I just gave) ... The conscious and the unconscious stimuli in looking at something.

It is that sense of distillation and of trying to make a sense of the landscape that I'm looking at, or a sense of those complexities. It is as much about conveying to an audience a sense of what I'm looking at as well as a way of trying to simplify things down to understand them myself.

Because of the complexities involved, I can't think of a single example of landscape art that isn't a distillation in one way or another.

Anne Douglas: No. The very act of making a drawing or a painting of something, I guess, is already a distillation.

Anne Douglas: Can we move on to *Sounding Drawing*. Obviously you know a little bit of where we're coming from with the project and I just wondered if you could explore a little bit what your understanding of the project is and what kind of a challenge it offers you.

Donald Urquhart: My understanding of the project is that *The Sounding Drawing* project is part of a bigger project called *Time of the Clock* and *Time of Encounter* – so it is a component part of a bigger project. *The Sounding Drawing* is an exploration of the ideas of how sound might be conveyed in drawing and how drawing might inform sound – so, the relationship between these two quite different aspects of experience. My understanding is quite simply that.

Anne Douglas: Yes – that's our starting point, yes. Could you take us through how you're interpreting that in terms of your own work – what you would like to do with that opportunity?

Donald Urquhart: Linking the *Sounding Drawing* project to thinking about sounds – particular sounds – and then thinking back to it being a component part of a project which is essentially about different scales of time – talk about time and scales – different ways of measuring time. We have the ticking clock which, of course, is only

one aspect of time and my consciousness of it. I was thinking about how that could be applied to my own area which is looking at, and thinking about, landscape.

I was thinking about sound; and I was thinking about time; and I was thinking about landscape – and that offered up a lot of possibilities. I have used sound as a component in previous pieces of work – most notably in a previous Sanctuary which I designed which has the sound of running water very gently – almost on a subliminal level – playing in it, so the space is informed by the sound of water^v. I also used sound in another recent health-care environment project, but it is a sound I've used before – possibly to most spectacular effect in a shopping centre in Stirling as part of a show I did at The Changing Room Gallery a few years ago

They've got a loudspeaker Tannoy system within the shopping centre, in which the gallery is located and I managed to link into that. It was a way of trying to make people think about a drawing – so what I did was I recorded very large boulders being dropped into a very, very, deep, still pool of water – so you had these very sudden splashes which were not at all ... It is a very difficult to describe sound textually and I have done a piece of work about that as well – transcribing bird song^{vi}. Essentially, with these deep, booming splashes – the sound of a rock plunging into deep water and they were played intermittently, randomly, and completely without any warning and very loud in a shopping centre which was a slightly provocative act but also, what was very interesting for me was the waves – the waves on the water, the ripples, the circles – going out from the splash and being in evidence on the surface of the water for quite some time until they faded and equating those to sound waves. I was deliberately making these unexpected sounds and very much visualising the sound waves travelling out from the speakers so, for me and my thinking behind that piece, there is a very strong visual component although, of course, it was experienced by the audience as a fairly unexpected and completely out of context for a shopping centre some distance from a loch the sound, as I say, these intermittent sounds that were deliberately played at a point at which nobody could predict when the next one was coming along, so they were randomly played during the day – that way of thinking visually about sound and about time.

I suppose, for the *Sounding Drawing* project and to get more specific without tangentially going off and describing other previous pieces of work ...

I travel to Slovenia quite a lot for various reasons and one particular town in Slovenia – a mediaeval village on the coast called Piran – one of the things that I've become aware of over the years of travelling there and having an interest in ornithology is how the swifts – the migratory birds - are visible in the skies and provide a background sound for a period of the year. It makes you think of these movements across the landscape of these various phenomena and, to get slightly distracted as well, I remember, when I was in Japan, seeing on the weather (they have the same format as here of the television news and then the local news which I think is a fairly universal way of doing these things) – but on the weather map at certain times of the year in spring, they actually have the optimum line of cherry blossom as a visual line on the map of Japan because that travels north at a certain rate as the season warms. That line travels north.

I'm aware of this movement that's happening all the time with migratory birds and how we tend to observe it through being at a fairly fixed location and how, at certain

times of the year I've gone to Slovenia and been struck by the sudden noise of swifts in the sky there which is absent here, but here when I get back. More usually it's a phenomenon that just marks one of the clearest divisions in a year, which is the warm weather from the cold weather – winter and summer. The birds arriving in spring, and leaving in autumn – so, when the last swift leaves, you know it is about to get colder.

Just thinking about ways in which we observe and experience time which, of course, relates to the tilt of the earth and its relationship to the sun – so thinking about a being on a sphere that's floating in space and how one way of thinking about that is that is what warms or cools particular parts of the earth at different times and the way that species can move around the planet to maximise, at certain times of the year, for certain activities.

I suppose another aspect I like about that when I was thinking about migratory birds in the context of time and, indeed, of sound because the sound they make so you have no sound of a swift in the sky naturally occurring in October, November or January – no matter how much you'd like to hear it, you simply can't because the things that make the noise have gone to make the noise elsewhere and how that noise comes back.

I should say, in connection with Slovenia, the sky there is absolutely alive with swifts. In the evening they actually fly incredibly low and screech. It is an ever-present sound there in the summer months. We do experience it here in Scotland, but never to the same intensity as it is experienced in Slovenia – so there's just this background noise. It's just such an ever-present sound and I always enjoy my times in Slovenia so I suppose there's a pleasurable connection with hearing that sound, and I think most people tend to prefer the summer climate to the winter climate. The first cuckoo and swifts arriving, and swallows – one swallow doesn't make a summer. This is a way of measuring time in a way that hadn't been deduced from looking at a clock face.

I suppose the way that time gets marked out by flowers appearing is something I've used in my work before as well. I've made a fairly substantial drawing in the grounds of The Irish Museum of Modern Art with snowdrops, *Recurring Line : North/South*^{vii} – so again, to do with the tilting of the earth and miniscule rises in temperature after the equinox is what starts the snowdrop to flower and so using that as a material to make a drawing so that time actually became an embedded component in that piece of work, it is not visible in the summer, so you need to rely on memory or knowledge to refer to the piece, but if I tell you it is a one hundred metre line by one metre wide and it's planted with fifty thousand snowdrops, you can use your imagination to imagine what that drawing looks like. It is only actually physically visible for about six weeks in the year. There's the sense of actually incorporating time in that drawing and things that happen seasonally in the landscape.



Figure 5 Recurring Line : North/South

Thinking about sound and about time, it just seemed quite logical that these swifts, and my experience of them, would make quite a good subject matter for the piece of work that I'm proposing for the *Sounding Drawing* project. That, if you like, explains the subject matter of swifts. Actually, the project is taking place about four weeks too late to be ideal because it would have been nice synchronicity to have my piece referencing the coming and going of swifts at the time when they were more or less leaving that landscape.

The reason I chose the swifts was very much an initial response of thinking about the idea of a measurement of time that wasn't clock-dependent. I'm also attracted to the sense of time in these natural phenomena, in that they have been happening year after year for millennia.

So swifts are the subject matter. I don't know, Anne, do you want me to go on and just describe ...

Anne Douglas: Yes, that would be great.

Donald Urquhart: Because all I've dealt with is swifts as a subject matter.

Then I went and had a look at the space as well and to think about how one could make a drawing of swifts in a way which ...

One could simply present a drawing of swifts and a statement that swifts leave at a certain time of the year and come back at a certain time of the year and they'd been doing that for years and there would be a swift project with some reference to time – but I wanted to embed the idea of time in a performative aspect into the drawing. I

suppose this is a metaphor as well because, as I said previously, I think most people – certainly I – prefer when the swifts are arriving to when the swifts are leaving because when the swifts are leaving we are just about to go into the darkness and coldness of winter. Swifts arriving mean we are in summer – so, there is a degree of melancholy about swifts leaving and I wanted to deal with that sound disappearing from the sky and the actual swifts disappearing so they're no longer visually available to us and to bring in a performative aspect to the project.

I see all art as performative and containing time in all art references its own creation. If I'm looking at a Rembrandt ink drawing – there's time absolutely embedded in that work. There's the time that Rembrandt actually physically took to make that piece of work and when you're involved in making art yourself, you can then actually, from experience, reference time. I always think that when looking at a drawing – let's think of a Rembrandt ink drawing. If I'm standing in a gallery looking at a Rembrandt ink drawing, I actually think I'm sharing part of his life – I am sharing those two minutes or five minutes or those months (depending on which piece of work it is) that preoccupied that artist and physically took up his or her time to make the work.

Even a quick sketch or a drawing by Leonardo – I actually think, as I'm looking at it, "Wow, I'm actually sharing a couple of minutes with Leonardo da Vinci's life here" because embedded in that work is the time it took him to make the work. The work is an invitation to be in the moment of its creation.

I wanted to make that quite explicit in the work as well. What I'm saying is, there is always time embedded in every art work, but I actually wanted to make it more of a performative piece.

The idea is that I will work with musicians using a mixture of their interpretations – sound interpretations – and real recorded sound of screeching swifts which is not the world's most melodic sound. The idea is that there would be a cacophony in the gallery and my drawings will pre-exist, so I will make the drawings directly on the wall specifically for this project. They will be embedded onto the architecture, so they're not things that are brought in and taken away; they're there. They will be embedded in the architecture.

Then, as the sound is reduced throughout the performance – or through the performance – the gallery will, of course, go from being rather a noisy place to silence through a process and whilst that's happening, the drawings will be painted out. Essentially we will take a noisy space with some visual material and we'll reduce it to a silent space with no visual material and that, pretty much, is a metaphor for the swifts leaving the landscape.

Painting them out, the drawings will still remain slightly visible so there will be a trace for viewers to see afterwards and, I suppose, that then becomes almost a metaphor for memory – so, just as you can walk about on a winter's day and remember when the swifts were flying about and when the sky was blue and in anticipation of that coming round again, so the idea is that the lines won't completely disappear. There will be vague traces of them left.

That is an aspect of documentation from the landscape combined with a performative aspect to collaborate with the musicians to create this sound.

One of my favourite artworks of all time is Rauschenberg's *Erased de Kooning Drawing*. There's something deeply attractive about the idea of beginning with something and then reducing it down and taking away, rather than adding. That, I suppose, is an appeal to me in the work as well.

Then, there's a way in which the people who actually attend the performance are, I suppose, in a way rewarded because they will see the drawings before they're painted out, but then people visiting afterwards will not be able to witness the drawings that clearly or that well-defined so there's a sense of, if you come to the exhibition after the performance, that you were missing something; that something happened here, but you missed it, and that, again, is like the sky round about this time of the year when the swifts all disappear.

Anne Douglas: I suppose – except that you carry the knowledge of the swifts with you – so, will you inform the audience at all of what might have been?

Donald Urquhart: Yes. Current thinking is to document the performance through photography and then to make some visualisation available within the space. I'm envisaging the drawings as being almost obliterated, but not fully obliterated, but obliterated to the point where you would really need some direction to them being there before you would quite notice them because, by painting them out, they will virtually disappear.

Then, I suppose, it is the nature of all performative art that if you're not there you then rely on some form of documentation to convey that so we can look at a book and see a photograph of an Allan Kaprow performance piece which captures a one-hundred-and-twenty-fifth of a second from one viewpoint without any sound, without any smell – so it captures a tiny, tiny, tiny fragment of the complexity of that situation. I suppose that is what the documentation will aim to do – to alert people to convey what the performance was so we wouldn't, for example, project a film of the performance endlessly [as people would then just re-enact it], but there will be a form of text and probably a documentary photograph or a film or something to just ... I prefer just a couple of photographs or one photograph because it is not that complex. I like to work with simplicity.

It is a very simple piece and one paragraph and one photograph, I think, would convey what the piece was about and, yes, for the duration of the exhibition with the documentation of the event that happened so people can look at that.

I think to quite simply leave the gallery wall with these faint traces of graphite behind a layer of white paint – there's nothing really for an audience to be alerted to it and we'd perhaps be expecting too much of an audience to understand – or even to notice these things to understand – why they were there, particularly in the context of it being a group exhibition as well, so there would be other material around the space.

Anne Douglas: Yes, maybe. That's a risk worth taking, but I don't know – we could see how it works; make a judgement.

Donald Urquhart: I think one of the fantastic things about the Rauschenberg drawing is that he couldn't completely erase it – the traces and the marks and the indentations of pencils. Despite four days of rubbing away with rubbers, he couldn't absolutely erase the marks de Kooning had made and, I suppose, his form of how you convey a process or a performative aspect – because I see his erased drawing as a performative piece as much as an act of drawing through subtraction – is, in the Rauschenberg case, it's in the title of the work. If he doesn't call it *Erased de Kooning Drawing*, then you don't really have an in as to what the work is about. It is not documentation, but in this case the audience are helped to understand what the work is through the title of the work. I think, in this case I would simply like to allude through a photograph and a piece of text to allow the viewer to then imagine what the performance was like. As I say, in such a simple performance, it can be quite easily conveyed in a short text, I would have thought.

Anne Douglas: Another really simple observation is that, probably, the most people who will experience that work will come to the events. In the rural we can't necessarily assume a big audience that simply passes through the space. It could be a very small audience that will pass through the space so the event becomes the main point of contact with an audience, I think.

Can you perhaps just summarise a little bit ... You have explored what 'sounding' means in your work and what 'drawing' means and through this project you've brought the two together. I suppose the next question is really about the idea of experimentation.

We set this project up, in a way quite self-consciously to be a form of experimentation, taking ourselves to a different space that was unfamiliar. What would experimentation be to you? Is that a meaningful word in the context of your work?

Donald Urquhart: I'm glad you said that this project was set up to encourage experimentation because I think, although I've used sound before and collaborated in my practice before, this would be the first that I've collaborated with musicians towards making a piece. Of course, as I've said before, there's always the act of the artist embedded in the work – so, when you look at a drawing, you're aware that you're viewing a slice of that artist's life – but this will be my first performative piece of actual painting live, if you like, or painting out live, in front of an audience.

I'm usually quite private about that aspect of my practice. I cannot stand people calling in at my studio and seeing half-finished work, or work not presented as I would fully present it. When people say, "Can I come and see your paintings in the studio", I will say, "No, because you're not going to see them as they would be hung in a gallery working in the context of specific spaces."

Experimentation for me is usually something that is a set of controlled experiments where I know what I want to try and achieve and I'm experimenting with process to achieve that rather than experimenting to see what the outcome might be because I usually have a sense of what the output might be and I'm experimenting towards that – so I would tend to do most of my exploration, stroke, experimentation mentally, aided by sketching. That is something that then involves, for me, spending time out in the landscape, time spent principally thinking.

I would probably go to the landscape and sit and think through a series of ideas and visualise them and analyse them and think about them and then there might be one or two practical experiments to make – but pretty much all of the experimentation is done as a mental process rather than, I will go into the studio and play around with some materials and see what happens. I would never take that – I have never taken that approach – just see what happens.

Experimentation isn't something that I really consciously think about – that I would go and experiment and see what comes out of this. It is usually much more a measured approach to what I'm doing and a mental process that predates the making so that I very, very much know what I want to do. For example, I'm working mentally, at the moment, on a set of drawings. I'm always there, visualising what these drawings will look like and that is always done through thought. I haven't made a single mark on a single piece of paper. I will then go into the studio and make one or two little test drawings and studies – only for myself to just understand that the reality matches the images I have in my mind, and then I will go and make the drawings.

My experimentations are probably very, very unspectacular to watch because it usually involves me just sitting smoking cigarettes on a rock somewhere and that apparently fairly sedate scene is actually all the turmoil of experimentation going on in my mind. That's just the way I prefer to work.

This is probably quite an experimental piece, but we've still got to get together with musicians and work out how this is all going to happen, and I'm quite excited by that aspect of it and I'm also aware that I really want this to be a collaboration as well – so ...

What I'm describing just now may or may not be fairly close to what actually happens, but it may only be an approximation of what happens because if the musicians say, "We would rather do it this way", then I'm up for a dialogue and a conversation about that.

What I'm describing at the moment – and you must understand – is only how I see things from my perspective and I'm sure the musicians will have an idea of how it is from their point of view and when we actually physically get together and discuss things in the space, then I think there is a chance for things to happen there.

I also think the point of experimentation as well is I quite like to keep that from the audience. As I mentioned before, about not liking people coming into my studio and seeing things not finished or not as they would ideally be presented ... I think that is like having people round for dinner and trying something – a whole set of ingredients you've never used before and putting it down in front of them saying, "This is an experiment. I hope it is going to work." Unless you have a fridge-full of backup ... It's putting the audience in an awkward situation. I would rather rustle something up and think, well, those kind of ingredients do or don't work, and then share that experience with an audience.

There's that aspect to experimentation as well where I think there's a time and a place for that but yes, it's not when you fully present the work to an audience. I think there is a respect needed for the audience. I think an awful lot of artists' experimentations –

the clue is in the title, *Experiment* – they don't always work; they don't always get results. I just don't feel that my experimentation would be of any interest to anyone until I've resolved how that experiment is working and then I feel it can be brought to the dinner table, to carry on that clumsy metaphor.

Anne Douglas: I suppose there is a context for this which is that it came out of the Orpheus programme and three years of thinking about experimentation in the context of artistic research. We're getting towards the end of the three years now – so the projects, *Calendar Variations* and Kathleen's project, *A Day in my Life* and some of the work that she and Ann Eyserman are going to bring to the concert are ... Well, for Kathleen, I think, it's opened up a whole other way of being a musician which, before, was very enclosed in the notion of the performing hands of the concert pianist.

It's interesting ... I think there may well be something of a collision between your approach and the way that Ann and Kathleen are actually experimenting very vigorously around very open-ended processes which may well fail. So – no. It's going to be interesting.

Donald Urquhart: I think – sorry to refer back to experimentation as well and how that relates to my own practice – I think a great opportunity I have for experimentation and perhaps pushing at the edge of my practice is in the collaborative aspect of the work I do as well because I have collaborated with architects and with other artists and, again, without being sidetracked, collaboration is a huge term.

Years ago I was invited to give a talk about collaboration in my practice, and at the time I've only ever engaged properly in one true collaboration. I've worked with lots of other people, and I've worked with other architects, but collaboration is, for me, when you both bring ideas to the table and there's no hierarchy and there's a sense that new things will evolve so that a piece of work becomes greater than the sum of its parts and everybody involved is surprised where the practice has been taken and it has been taken to a place where they might not have been able to predict beforehand. That, to me, is true collaboration, and then there are variations on that theme which are working with other people to achieve a predicted output or an attempt to do something.

I have a reputation as being someone who works – because of the nature of the public projects and the architecture projects – collaboratively but, actually, most of that I wouldn't define as collaboration. I'm working with people to achieve something. I didn't collaborate with the filmmaker to make the film of the waterfall for *The Sanctuary* space. I employed a filmmaker to film a specific waterfall because I'm not a filmmaker. If that had been a collaboration with a filmmaker, we would have then had a discussion around the overall design of the space; how film might, or might not, fit into that; what that film could be; how that film could be – that would have been a collaboration. That would have been a design of a space collaboratively with a filmmaker.

Anne Douglas: Yes – you're authoring and conceptualising the whole process.

Donald Urquhart: Exactly. One of my concerns is just how widely the word 'collaboration' is bandied around when actually a collaboration is where there is ideas brought to the table, but there's no hierarchy and there's equality across the creative

process. An Turas^{viii} was a true collaboration with some other artists and some architects. That was a true collaboration because we put some white sheets of paper on a wall and a bottle of whisky on the table and explored the site and explored the context, and basically we just all looked at each other and said, “What the hell are we going to do here?” and then set out bouncing ideas around that. It took quite a bit of time to develop that sense ...



Figure 6 An Turas

Anne Douglas: Which project was that?

Donald Urquhart: That was An Turas. Again, that was a true collaboration because the actual architectural form – everything, the linear nature of that – that all came about through equal discussion, so there’s no sense of the artists pinning brooches on an existing building or the architect bringing a conception of what that building might be to the table. At one stage we were talking about a circular structure and it ended up being a long line drawn in the landscape through discussion and back to some of those earlier points that I said about the simple act of drawing and mapping ‘Be here’.

Again, in the building, we didn’t subdivide or build artworks; we didn’t subdivide areas off – so you cannot look at it and say, “That area is obviously by such and such an artist.” It is completely equal authorship and everybody contributed some fairly dreadful ideas and some fairly good ideas, but what we ended up with was probably greater than the sum of the parts if we’d all made individual projects. This one was somehow a successful project and I think it was because it was a true collaboration and was bourn from experimentation in the conceptual phase.

When I'm involved in true collaborative projects or work ... When I say 'true collaboration', it is to distinguish them from employing somebody to help you achieve something you couldn't achieve on your own. Obviously, when the conceptual thinking is all done by one person then that isn't a collaboration – but when there is collaboration, then that also becomes an area of experimentation in my practice as well – so, when I sit down thinking about a space with another artist or with an architect and say, "What are we going to do here?", then that, to me, is always interesting because the other person brings questions and points to that discussion that might not have occurred to me – so suddenly you find yourself thinking, "I hadn't thought about that. That's quite interesting."

This idea of the swifts for the *Sounding Drawing* project came to me very quickly because I was thinking about swifts; thinking about different measurements of time; thinking about, where do we find sound and time combined. Swifts came to mind there.

There's a sense of just trusting that initial judgement, but what I'm excited about with this project is then sitting down with a musician, detailing this. At the minute, what I've brought is this ballpark idea. I would really like to see how that develops – so there's a degree of experimentation there.

Anne Douglas: It's interesting what you're saying because, actually, we've used, for example, score, or score-like verbal scores, in order to challenge or perhaps frame a problem that we've encountered in the work. *Calendar Variations* came out of being ... I was quite concerned about the balance within so-called socially engaged arts towards a way from responsibility – aesthetic responsibility and voice and authorship and the withdrawal by artists of those kinds of qualities, and so the sharing of the score was, in a way, trying to encourage a process by which individuals would respond from their own centre – re-find that centre.

I suppose, experimentation for me has been always about trying to confront certain problems or issues that have occurred in the process of making the work. It is not so much a kind of material experimentation or a very open question of, "What happens if I ...?" It's much more trying to frame and address a certain set of problems or issues.

Donald Urquhart: I suppose that was what I was trying to describe when I was talking about that apparently sedate scene when I'm experimenting which is me sitting on a rock beside a river or walking through a forest or whatever – that's really where experimentation is taking place because I'm actually bouncing ideas around and analysing and testing things. My experimentation is a mental exercise rather than a physical exercise and rather than anything that is particularly spectacular to be witnessed.

I'm reminded of an anecdote regarding Monet – who was sitting in the gardens and a friend passed – or an acquaintance or somebody he knew – passed, and he said, "Ah, M. Monet, you're relaxing", and he said, "No, I'm working." He was sitting in the park doing nothing and then the chap called on another day to the studio and he said, "Ah – now you're working" and he said, "No, now I'm relaxing." That sense of where the experimentation takes place – yes, obviously my practice develops as I engage with different sites, different contexts, different outputs – a drawing exhibition

is quite a different thing from a strategy for a hospital. There is experimentation in all of that, but it's a mental process for me rather than a physical act.

I think it will be as well. I mean, I would not take part in this project with the musicians if we just went live in front of an audience and experimented. The experimentation will be a mental process through dialogue and discussion and a result would be gleaned from that experimental dialogue, but that would be refined so the degree of presentation to the audience is a result rather than a process as such. We will do the experimentation and share the results of that experimentation with the audience rather than ask the audience to directly share the experimentation because that would involve an audience just standing around and watching me and a few musicians drinking coffee and bouncing ideas around.

Anne Douglas: Yes, I appreciate that. This is slightly off-script, but it might be useful to explore. What is your relationship with the idea of research?

Donald Urquhart: It is a pertinent question just now in teaching in an art college that has just merged with the university and finding a slight nudge alongside my sailing ship of what I thought was research and what university expectations of research are when they think about what artists do.

I see my life as an artist – I don't want to sound dreadfully romantic here, but I see my life as research. I've spent, since my early childhood, looking at, thinking about, speaking about, listening to, reading about, experiencing landscape and each drawing, each project, is a manifestation of what is an ongoing research project – so my research project, if you like, began the first time I picked a pencil up and will end when I fall over, dead, and everything is a research output along the way rather than compartmentalising this – you know, "I'm going to look at this area" and package this up as a kind of ref output and then I'm going to go and think about *this* as another piece of research. I just see all as an ongoing body of work and I've been struck a couple of times when giving talks about my practice where I've actually put a couple of images up together or maybe a drawing I've been working on in the studio and an architectural project and for the first time in front of an audience I could see a kind of connection there that wasn't apparent or didn't occur to me at the time. I was just working on these different strands of ideas or whatever.

That's really it. Because I'm also engaged very much in a lot of public art practice where there are specific results, outputs – so, a project is a research event is – they're building a new psychiatric hospital. There's a budget, a timeframe and numerous complex contexts. What are you going to do? So then that's research. There's a point in time in my ongoing research where I will take my current thinking and then apply it to the particular context – in that case, of course, different types of psychiatric illness; how people physically move through the space; the building itself – so there are a series of very defined research areas looked at for the specifics of that particular project, and what I bring to that is, if you like, the ongoing research is my concerns with what I'm looking at in the landscape and apply that to those particular contexts and because that project isn't ongoing – those projects tend not to be ongoing projects – they tend to have a start date, a completion date, and whatever I was doing in that hospital had to be done by the time it opened its doors to patients and staff, so you have a defined period of time to work towards that project.

That compartmentalisation of my ongoing research happens because of the nature of those projects demanding fixed outputs at particular points of time that has to happen so you channel all the research into those specific projects and then on it goes and with overlapping projects, sometimes it is quite difficult to kind of corral them all together. I'm getting side-tracked here. What is the main thrust of what I'm thinking about? I suppose, for me, what then happens is that's when drawing then becomes incredibly important again because I go back to the studio and make a series of drawings which are then ways of articulating, for me, what my current thoughts are and what it is in the landscape I'm particularly looking at that point in time. That then would inform these packages, if you like, which are these individual projects.

Anne Douglas: So the context keeps changing, but the threads of concerns and activity is an ongoing process?

Donald Urquhart: Absolutely – so, for example, two very recent projects – let's deal with two of them.

The psychiatric hospital in Dumfries which opened earlier this year: I collaborated with a poet and worked on another true collaboration and then worked with several other artists to make work appropriate to those spaces in that hospital, the main aim being to bring a sense or an essence of landscape into the interior space because of its therapeutic benefits and because how you can use colour, light, and aspects of landscape – including sound, in this case – to the psychology of the space in a particular context. That is the same approach I brought to *The Sanctuary* at Edinburgh University that we talked about earlier where there is a sense of using a spiritual aspect of the landscape – bringing that into the space – but in the context of students worshipping or using *The Sanctuary* space is different from the context of an elderly patient with Alzheimer's. So those two contexts mean that the works are actually quite different and absolutely applicable and having researched and thought through the particular content of those two – so there will be superficial similarity to some aspects of those two projects. They both fit within the overall theme of bringing the sense of landscape into architecture and that refined sense of essence of landscape, if you like. But for both of those the context – physical space and the context and the geographical location as well and the users - the audience – then it means that those are chapters in the same book, if you like. They're very related chapters, but they're separate entities within their own right and fit within the overall book, I guess, which is my ongoing study of landscape.

Anne Douglas: That's great. Just the last point, really – and you may feel you've covered it, but I'm not sure – is this point about, how did you arrive at the point that you are now, as an artist?

Donald Urquhart: I was brought up in rural Perthshire – a beautiful part of Scotland with amazing landscape in a rural situation with a father who was mad keen on fishing to the point that he didn't spend much time imparting any knowledge about fishing to his young son. He just took his young son with him and left him by the side of the river and said things like, "I'll be back in five hours. Don't fall in the river and don't make a noise." And then a grandfather who was a forester who would take me into the forest and say, "Well, we're felling trees, so stay here. We'll be back in four or five hours. Don't wander off; don't make any noise." So I had these two figures from early childhood that took me into the landscape and told me pretty much to sit still.

That, I think, is undoubtedly where an aspect of spending an inordinate amount of time just sitting on my own looking at landscape came from.

The next influence I can think about was a black and white – originally black and white; it then became a colour television series. It was called, ‘*The Undersea World of Jacques Cousteau*’. As a child I was fascinated by those programmes and the imagery – that whole hidden world of underwater.

I think from the age of about five to about seven I wanted to be, what we now know, to be scuba divers, but in those days were referred to as frogmen. I wanted to be a frogman.

Then there was a transitional period where I drew frogmen obsessively and then declared at the age of eight that I wanted to be an artist. I have no idea where that came from other than the fact that the world seemed to make sense to me when I was actually scribbling or drawing or making marks – so, at the age of eight, my parents thought that was a phase I was going through. They may well be right – perhaps it is a phase, but it is rather a long phase because I’m in my very early fifties and I’m still describing myself as an artist.

I then did the traditional things: I was good at art at school; I applied to Edinburgh College of Art; I studied drawing and painting; I left art college; I got a studio; I started making art and for the first few years didn’t really know what I was doing. In a way it was a very traditional skill-based education at that time. I knew how to stretch a canvas, but I had very little input into philosophical thinking and conceptual thinking about what it was I was making art about. That was an area that wasn’t looked at that deeply in art colleges in Scotland at that time.

[I then spent a period expanding.] It seems a strange thing to say, but coming out of Art College and immediately feeling that you’ve got to then go off and educate yourself about contemporary art practice – but I think that was perhaps indicative of what Scottish art colleges were like. That was the early ‘80s.

A key moment was, I had a residency in Amiens in France for three months. Amiens sits on the River Somme and is in the area with all the mass war-graves of the First World War and I was there in the autumn – so it was particularly melancholic experience. It was the melancholic season and it was a melancholic landscape because of its history.

There was a lot of mixed work. I really date my career from 1990 which was when I did this residency – eight years after I left Art College. That’s interesting about your earlier question about experimentation because I went to my studio and painted every day and made art every day for eight years and never showed the results. I didn’t have an exhibition. I turned down several exhibitions. I never exhibited a single piece of work from leaving Art College until 1990 – eight years – because I wasn’t making work I was happy with. I am, I suppose, an editor. I’m a very strict editor and if I was editing everything I did out, then there was nothing to show an audience – but that was it. It was an incredible period of time of learning and trying things out and it goes back to that point of not sharing my experimentation but rather learning from it and then keeping that side of things hidden.

I then had a fantastic conversation – and I’m eternally grateful to a chap called Luis Rosas – originally a Brazilian – who was the cultural officer for Amiens when I did this three-month exchange. He and I would meet and have a very strong coffee together. He put his head on the line quite a bit with the council for funding this residency and the idea of getting foreign artists of residence into this town to make work – so, I spoke to him about what his expectations of the residency were, and he spoke to me about what my expectations were, and I said to him, “You know, I’ve just been doing a lot of painting, a lot of experimentation, and a lot of trying things out, but I’ve not tested anything in a public domain and I think I’m at that stage now where I really need to think about where I’m taking all that process that I’ve been through and what I want to apply it to.” So we had this conversation which was essentially about me saying along the lines of that the best thing I would get out of this residency would be to leave here in three months’ time and know what it is that I want to make art with and why, but “I can understand on a very practical and pragmatic situation you might need to have some output to satisfy the town council or whatever the funders of this because the idea that you have had an artist wandering about and ending up thinking for three months isn’t of tangible benefit to anyone other than the artist. It may well be quite difficult politically to get councillors to then agree to fund another one of those.” So I said, if you need eight paintings by the end of this residency, I will deliver eight paintings, but that will not serve my practice because I will simply not be able to do what I want to do and I’ll be fulfilling the ... And he said, “Leave the problem with the politicians to me. Just do what you do.”

I was in an incredibly privileged position to be financially supported and accommodated to spend three months wandering around that particular melancholic landscape. That’s when I really started thinking, “What am I interested in; what am I concerned about; what am I reading about all the time; what do I do?” and because it was such a part of my upbringing, the answer was staring me right in the face – it was that solitary sitting, looking, thinking, commenting, distilling, and sharing my wonderment of the landscape in all its complexities and, of course, with the environmental situation we find ourselves in, that also had an added relevance.

I would be reading Greenpeace reports with quite an extensive knowledge of the Scottish landscape and then somehow, prior to 1990, would be going into my studio and making paintings that ignored my major interest and areas of research. There was a disconnection between what I was interested in and what I was actually making art about that is such a bloody obvious thing to say with hindsight but actually, it took those three months of being in the landscape. You know, you just stood by the river Somme for ten minutes and watch a leaf drift by – it is ok to make art about that because that’s such a beautiful thing to share with people.

Because that was such a large part of my upbringing as well, it was just so obvious. So, as an artist I then began to direct myself towards looking at, and thinking about, landscape and work which had concerns about the ecology within the work, but never an overt part of the work. I never wanted to make art that would work better as a slogan on a Greenpeace T-shirt.

This then goes to a lot of what I’m doing just now, which is bringing a sense of landscape into ...

We, as a species, are becoming more and more disconnected with the landscape. We get in air-conditioned cars and I control the temperature in my car; I control what it sounds like by the use of a CD player or whatever; I can park in a shopping mall and go into a shop and buy things and I have no idea who produced them or where they came from or whatever. We have this ongoing and increasing disconnection with the landscape and sometimes it is quite frightening when you speak to children now about just how ...

I remember reading about somebody who did a project – there was a book published about the whole life cycle and history of the cod. I can't remember the author's name. I read it again recently. The disappearance of cod. [*Cod: A Biography of the Fish That Changed the World*] It looked at all sorts of cultural aspects of cod and how cod coming and going and being over-fished changed civilizations. On the back of this book a school teacher did a project about cod and she started the project by getting the children to draw a cod. I can't remember the percentage – I think it was roundabout seventy per cent of the children – drew it in a kind of a box. That was the process that the cod went through for them. It was something that came out of a freezer cabinet. The idea that they had gills and fins... It's a fairly ridiculous example, but that disengagement with the landscape – so one of the things I'm interested in doing is by making landscape the core theme of my activity as an artist is in an attempt to re-engage people with thinking about the natural world.

For example, in the *Sounding Drawing*, something as simple as swifts leaving and swifts coming back is something I think noteworthy and is worth consideration. By using landscape as the core subject in an area of investigation in my own research project which my artistic career, then in a tiny way – and I'd never overstate what I think this might achieve, but there is a sense – usually when exhibiting and working in an urban context – then there is a sense that I'm just constantly reminding people about the landscape.

If you go to the Irish Museum of Modern Art and there's a sign, and it makes you think about snowdrops no matter what time of the year you're there; and now, with a lot of healthcare environment projects, then I also think about the real therapeutic benefit of the landscape, or spiritually in terms of the Sanctuary spaces I've designed and just how much landscape, and access to it, increases our sense of wellbeing – so the more we go back to landscape and away from this built environment, the better we feel. This is well documented through countless research projects, Ulrich probably being the most famous one because it demonstrated that the view of a green space makes us feel better and less time to heal than a view of a brick wall – so there's a sense of bringing the sensibility of landscape and a reduction of landscape into architectural space and then, hopefully, allow the integration of art into architecture and that that sense of landscape so that my input to healthcare and the physically built environment actually becomes a component of the healthcare package.

Anne Douglas: Yes. It also brings one back to that notion of drawing as being present. There's something about, I think, the way that you handle landscape, that brings one right into it. I was thinking about those paintings in the Perth Museum. Are they an Icelandic landscape? The perspective is almost as if you're in the landscape walking through it. It's not picturesque in that traditional sense of the word. I feel that you bring one inside it, and position the body inside the landscape.

Donald Urquhart: Fundamentally, what it's about, it's about us in the landscape – so there's always that sense it's not detached, picturesque. I find those hills an attractive viewpoint, but it's saying, "Here we are in the presence of these hills", so there's usually – and that, again, there's usually a formal aspect in the work as well which is self-consciously about being in the landscape rather than being a representation of landscape because then, the best thing I could do would just be to make me and my car available to drive people into the landscape and say, "Look at that. Isn't that nice?" That's why it does go back to that fundamental [*thing*] about the cave painting or the graffiti artist – it is about saying, "Here we are in this presence; in this landscape." It is as much about the relationship of being within the landscape – us, to the landscape. That is why there are quite often vertical aspects in the work – a mark, vertically, representing the figure and then the horizontal, of course, representing the ground – so that relationship between the horizontal and vertical in the formality of the work is very, very important.

There is never a sense of I go out and just document aspects of landscape and bring them in uncritically about just saying how beautiful the landscape is because I think we can very much take that as a given. Particularly, because of my upbringing, where I'm from – the particular area I'm interested in is the Highlands of Scotland. They're famed worldwide for being beautiful. The last thing the Highlands need is another artist telling the world that the Highlands are beautiful. That's been going on for a long time now.

There's something about the fundamentals of being a person at a time in that landscape is what the work is actually about; and the consciousness of being there and looking – the act of looking is a component of the work as well. Mischievously, I do love to tell people I'm a Scottish landscape painter because I know the imagery that they get is not at all ...

So, it's a bit like the piece I made for Stornoway recently, based on the rereading of Hugh MacDiarmid poem from 1943 called *Scotland Small?* which talks about an observer saying of the Scottish landscape – or one bit of the Scottish landscape – 'nothing here but heather' and when he then looks at the macro level of that landscape and everything that's in there – at the plants, the butterflies – when you actually look closely at an apparently fairly monocultural, featurless landscape, that through the act of observation and careful observation, this entire universe opens out. It's always been a fantastic poem, so the piece I did in Stornoway ... It seemed a particular appropriate poem to match to Lewis because, of all the Hebridean Islands, Lewis is the one that gets the bad press. People will go to Lewis and then will drive down to Harris for the scenery, but Lewis itself is overlooked and is quite often just described as, 'it's just a peat bog' – so, when I was commissioned to make a piece of work for the school, I chose to engage with the pupils and to get them to think about the landscape and this came across as being ... They were thinking that Lewis is just a big area of peat, but when you actually start looking closely at it ...

In essence I got them all to choose a colour, or a favourite colour, or to think about things in the landscape where there was colour – from saying, "Well, there's nothing much out there" but then, when you actually look at the colour of an owl's eye or a waxwing or a berry or a couple of veins in a jelly fish washed up on the beaches – that's a lot of colour and the kids started to really engage with that and then chose their favourite things and then go away and discussed their favourite things in the

landscape with their families and with their friends and come back with one thing from the landscape. We worked with the Scottish National Heritage. Both were archived – and how to spot a colour out in Photoshop so you can identify ... You know, take one pixel from an image from the landscape.

I then made a piece of work which has forty triangular sections hanging suspended from the ceiling so therefore, forty times three gives you a hundred-and-twenty colours. Each of these flat colours was then selected by a child from the landscape so this incredibly bright, colourful piece of work is all available out there in the landscape to go and see – so the children are now actually thinking differently about the landscape that they have been born and brought up in by just being asked to look at the landscape in a slightly different way and that looking at the landscape in a slightly different way is what is deeply appealing to me. That's why that MacDiarmid poem is one of my favourite pieces of work because it just encourages a less lazy way of looking at a landscape and how that can be rewarded.

Whilst I was painting those flat colours on those five-and-a-half metre long triangles, I was actually struck with it. This was straight landscape painting. You know, I was being a landscape painter. I'd derived something from the landscape and I was applying paint with a brush.

It is as much about ways of seeing in the landscape and ways of being conscious that we are seeing than it is just simply about recording elements of it.

So, regardless of what people think about the piece of work in Stornoway, what is really important for me about that is that there are about hundred and thirty kids who are looking at their own landscape slightly differently than they did before and have all read a MacDiarmid poem. If there is an achievement in that piece of work, it's not the thing hanging in the school – that's simply a record of that – but it's actually about encouraging people to look at the landscape in a slightly more prolonged way than we're encouraged by modern society.

So the actual act of just ... To me they say, "What are you doing?", I say, "I'm going into the landscape", they say, "But what are you going to do?" "I haven't thought that through. I'm just going to go there and sit and be in it."

There's a fantastic line – I can't properly remember it verbatim – in Neil Gunn's *The Atom of Delight* where someone actually sees himself. He comes upon himself being in the landscape by the act of sitting in the landscape. It's as much about consciousness of the self as it is about that external thing which is the landscape.

Anne Douglas: We've had quite an interesting seminar this week with Tim Ingold and Peter Davidson on walking with Robert [McFarlane] and [Raja] ... The Lebanese activist who walks. The idea of being present in, rather than ... It's slightly different from the idea of observing the picturesque. There's something about the picturesque that positions you outside, out of the picture frame, whereas ...

They very much talked about walking as being present in the landscape and particularly Raja because ...

Donald Urquhart: It's a direct experience.

Anne Douglas: The Palestinian – he’s extremely frustrated by the encroachment of the Israeli population into his homeland and so every time he walks into his landscape, it’s quite a problematised experience and a political act because he is trying to regain that freedom that he had as a child to walk in that landscape and not feel danger, whereas now he feels danger. So, no – it’s interesting.

Donald Urquhart: I think the occupation of the landscape – you know, the illegal occupation supported by our own government and the United States – sadly – by limiting access – that’s what these checkpoints are about – they’re not because they need to know people’s identity every five minutes; they’re simply acts of provocation to say, “I am denying you access to your landscape therefore I am in control” and “I will stop you going here” or “I have the power to stop you going here” – so, the internal checkpoints that people have to go through, and even that physical barrier has been built, security screen that’s been built round the west line absolutely to cut people off ... Yes, that ability to engage with landscape ...

I had an experience like that. I just came back from Zagreb – from the Croatia side – the war was going on there in ’91 – just at the start of it all and I then went to ... I was making a series of works which were paintwork on top of black and white photographs of the reflections of trees in pools of water, so I was having to regularly go back to the forests when there was no wind (which was not every day of the week as in Scotland), so the water wasn’t rippled when there was water (because it had to be after rain), and when there was sufficient sunlight as well to photograph these reflections because I was attracted to making a series of work that was about transience. A reflection in a puddle is dependent upon a puddle, and the puddle isn’t a permanent fixture in the landscape, so these images of trees would appear and they were doomed from the moment they appeared. The water would start to drain and evaporate. I happened into a forest where I was met by a gamekeeper who escorted me off the premises at the end of a shotgun and I was really angry because I’d come back from Zagreb which was at war and there was plenty weaponry in evidence over there, but I wasn’t aware of anyone directly pointing a gun at me all the time I was in a country which was in a state of war, and here I was in a forest that I felt I had more spiritual ownership of than this gamekeeper who’d filled in a job application and then got access to this – and that frustration – and I said to him, “I am only photographing trees with puddles” but I happen to know about snares and things going on in the forest that gamekeepers do that they shouldn’t do. It was probably the camera that was making him nervous. I actually said to him, “I’m only photographing the puddles.” He just would not let me in.

It was anger with nowhere to direct the anger. There was no point even writing to the estate or anything like this. It was good to see the ‘Right to Roam’ legislation coming in since then – but the idea that I could be cut off from part of my landscape is absolutely ...

I’m not in any way equating it to the situation in Palestine, but I had a tiny taste of it to understand something of the frustration that it caused me – so, if you multiply that up a million-fold by the situation in Palestine, it is absolutely horrendous and we’re all complicit in that. We can tut, tut and condemn Israel, but actually, we’re complicit in that.

It's fantastic that a simple act can become a provocative and highly political act – simply walking across a piece of landscape – a fundamental aspect of human life.

Anne Douglas: His recent book talks about the landscape disappearing – his landscape disappearing. He made a film which he projected which is a sort of theatricalised conversation between himself and encountering an Israeli man at the same spot in the spring that they both love and both feel ownership of and the conversation between them and the Israeli man is a young man and he is very bemused, I think, by the sense of frustration in Raja about his presence because the Israeli man is kind of innocent, but it's his presence, with a gun and it's the gun that does it. It's the gun that actually turns that relationship into something that's very, very challenging. It's very beautiful, actually – very simple, but you just feel that really deep, deep frustration.

ⁱ *University Sanctuary*, 2012

A project to re-design the Chapel of the University of Edinburgh Commissioned by the University of Edinburgh

ⁱⁱ *Colour Lines*, 2012

A sculptural installation for the new Nicolson Institute School in Stornoway. Isle of Lewis.

Commissioned by FMP Group

ⁱⁱⁱ *An Enlightened Stand*, 2000

A permanent land-art work installed in Grizedale Sculpture Forest Commissioned by Grizedale Sculpture Forest

^{iv} *Lines/Plane : Larus/Cygnus*, 2003

A permanent sculptural work sited in the River Garavogue, in the town centre of Sligo, Ireland

Commissioned by Sligo County Council

^v *Sanctuary*, 2003

Design, development and implementation of a major architectural space to serve as a Sanctuary for the New Royal Infirmary of Edinburgh. Commissioned by the Lothian University NHS Trust and managed by Ginkgo Projects Limited

2005 Scottish Design Award (Best Building for Public Use)

^{vi} *Ornithology*, 1998

A series of ten canvases depicting texts from The Observer Book of Birds, exhibited in the *Grey Weighted Notes*, solo exhibition; An Lanntair Gallery, Stornoway; Talbot Rice Gallery, Edinburgh; and Aberdeen Art Gallery, Aberdeen

^{vii} *Recurring Line : North/South*, 2007

A permanent artwork work using snowdrop plants to create a drawn line (1m x 100m) installed within the grounds of the Irish Museum of Modern Art in Dublin.

Commissioned by IMMA, Dublin, Ireland.

^{viii} *An Turas*, 2003

A large-scale permanent, constructed work installed at Gott Bay, Isle of Tiree developed in collaboration with the artists Jake Harvey, Glen Onwin, Sandra Kennedy and the architecture practice of Sutherland Hussey.

Commissioned by Tiree Art Enterprises.

- 2003 Royal Scottish Academy, Architecture Gold Medal
- 2003 RIBA, National Award
- 2003 RIAS, Best Building in Scotland Award
- 2003 RIBA, Stirling Prize (finalist)
- 2003 RIBA, Stephen Lawrence Award (finalist)
- 2003 Scottish Enterprise, Dynamic Scotland Award
- 2005 Mies van der Rohe Award for Architecture (finalist)