

In their own words:

Liza Dracup

This Q&A was produced alongside the exhibition Field Work: Ten Years of Photography by Liza Dracup, shown at Impressions Gallery from 7 July to 23 September 2017.

IG: Which artists/photographers do you particularly respect?

Hiroshi Sugimoto, Thomas Joshua Cooper, David Hockney, Tacita Dean, Anna Atkins, Ray Moore, Rothco, Cornelia Parker, Kate Mellor, Helen Sear, John Kippin, John Darwell, Paul Hill, Katie Paterson, Julia Margaret Cameron, Martin Parr, Ori Gersht, Mat Collishaw, Richard Misrach, Jem Southam, John Atkinson Grimshaw and The Pre-Raphaelites, Susan Derges and so many more.

IG: Why do you choose photography as your artistic medium?

The pathway to photography came through an interest in art and the visual world. I still have an interest in many aspects of the visual world, both within the photographic field and beyond it.

IG: What are the triggers for your projects?

Photography, the landscape and its natural histories are the triggers for me, as I am a naturally inquisitive person. I find photography an adaptable and valuable medium (analogue and digital), which has so much potential to engage and connect with a wide-range of local, national and international audiences. Photography's potential and latitude has an ability to communicate and be directed across a board range of concepts, ideas and subjects. It's a fascinating medium and it can make the familiar fascinating again.

IG: What are your main influences and how have they influenced your work?

The landscape and natural history in particular of the north of England. The field of landscape aesthetics, wider cultural debates about landscape and historical collections based research underpin and influence my ideas. These aspects influence and inform how my approach to my subject and the photographic methods I use.

IG: Some of our visitors will be interested in the technical aspects of your project. What equipment did you use? And did it affect the way that you worked and the project outcome?

I work experimentally with analogue and digital media (camera and non-camera capture). The methodologies and equipment I use has a direct effect on the work and my working methods. The printed output is also important, as my work is centred on the transformative qualities of photography and the photograph. I am interested in practice-led experiments with the camera and non-camera seeing and the aim is to visualise the hidden aspects of the landscape and its natural history through experimental photographic methodologies.

IG: Do you have any recommended reading to further contextualise your work?

These publications inform my photographic ideas from both a historical position and to ideas around the locale and ideas around the (lost) meaning of landscape.
Nature Exposed Photography as Eyewitness in Victorian Science Jennifer Tucker (2005)
The Natural history of Selborne. Rev. Gilbert White (1789)
The Unofficial Countryside. Richard Mabey (1973)
Wild Wood: A Journey Through the Trees Roger Deakin (2008)
Landmarks Robert Macfarlane (2015)

IG: What plans do you have for future projects?

I am working with NEPN (part of the Northern Centre of Photography at the University of Sunderland) who have commissioned a photographic research project on the Victorian Joseph Wilson Swan (1828-1914). The commission will investigate his inventions, associates and contributions to knowledge. Swan is most notable as the inventor of the incandescent light bulb. This research will highlight his other significant contributions to science and photography with his modifications to print processes notably the carbon print process (1864).

The research phase has started across various northern-based collections at the Newcastle Lit & Phil; the University of Newcastle Archive; the Great North Museum: Hancock Library and the Natural History Society of Northumbria Archive, Newcastle. The photographic response will culminate in an exhibition of my work in 2018.