*"I'm truly sorry man's dominion
has broken natures social union"*
         Robert Burns, 'To a moose'

The Dynamic of the Edge: practice led research into the value of the arts in marginal spaces

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1.   Positioning

Through this paper we would like to articulate an approach to art and design practice that questions two fundamental assumptions

∞   It is *not* framed by the creative practice of an individual artist delivering an authored artwork to a public or audience.

∞   It involves, in a creative process, people who do not necessarily or readily define themselves as creative in relation to their everyday life.

So we will talk about the practice of individual artists in relation to how they operate as one of a group of people. Creative practice is developed as a vehicle for engaging a range of people (artists and non artists, researchers and non researchers, professionals and lay people) in the development of a set of experiences. These experiences are different ways of responding to change. They demonstrate the act of forming and reforming community in response to the push and pull of everyday life. The research and related projects form the conditions for a different set of exchanges between the players who together alter perceptions of what is possible.

In developing an effective relationship between the artistic process and culture, we aim to contribute to understanding sustainability. One of the key characteristics of sustainability is resilience *within* (different from a luddite resistance to) cultural change. Resilience in this sense means having the capacity to retain a degree of integrity, self organization and self awareness by engaging a process of finding value in the constant flux of everyday life.

Another key characteristic of sustainability that is relevant to the On the Edge research programme and to this project, INTHROW, is the development of a rich mixed ecology through multiple creative strategies. INTHROW is one of five projects within the programme. This rich mixed ecology relates specifically to a fundamental positioning within this work of not relying on artists to be the sole creator, and positively engaging a range of people in creative endeavour.

We will focus on process or tactics, as opposed to output or goals. We will attempt to draw out from the experiences that are constructed as a key part of the research, their significance to giving aesthetic form to everyday experience. Research and artistic practice come together to address a 'gap' in knowledge articulated by Michel De Certeau.

"'We know poorly of the types of operations at stake in ordinary practices, their registers and their combinations, because our instruments of analysis, modelling and formalisation were constructed for other objects and with other aims." (de Certeau et al 1998: 256)[1,]

Through the project, INTHROW, we will describe tools and methods and their use by different artists. We will describe how these tools and methods reveal aspects of the world in a particular way by engaging the senses. We will show how traditional knowledge is significant as a point of resistance by engaging multiple hands, eyes and minds in shared strategies.

The research provides grounded case study material of how art practice operates within culture, rather than operating in isolation – the isolation of academic practice as well as artistic practice. We are trying to take practice somewhere different from the modernist paradigm of the individual as creative genius set apart form everyday life. We are also trying to move beyond the fragmentation of meaning and relativity of values of postmodernism. We believe in the principal of a 'local aesthetic'[2], making art with people at the interstice of what is known and comfortable and what is unknown and challenging.

2.   Arts practice, formal research and the wider cultural context – How does the On the Edge research articulate this relationship?

On the Edge (OTE) is a three year research programme funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Board (AHRB) (2001-4). It is one of a small handful of large research grant projects in Britain that circumnavigates the tight relationship between individual practice and research by framing and investigating shared questions across a number of interested parties.

2.1   The research question

The OTE research tests the assumption that visual arts of quality can be developed in remote rural areas and that this development is different from more dominant models of practice that are urban based, such as gallery and public art practices. OTE sets out to understanding this difference as an expression of values (as opposed to skill or gap in opportunity or provision). OTE came out of a series of ad hoc projects in the visual arts with remote rural partners that sensitized us to the kinds of assumptions that the visual arts make[3]. Through our discomfort with these assumptions we framed the following deceptively simple questions in relation to current forms of art production
   ∞   What is made?
   ∞   Who makes?
   ∞   Who are the audience or beneficiaries?
   ∞   Who judges quality?

2.2   The research methodology

The research team, experienced artist researchers[4], invited each of the five partner organisations[5] into conversation over time about how they would like to use the opportunity that

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[1] De Certeau, M, Giard, L, Mayol, P (1998) *The Practice of Everyday Life: Volume 2: Living and Cooking* Edited by Luce Giard, trans. by T. J. Tomasik , University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis
(Originninally published as L'invention du quotidien, II, habiter, cuisiner, copyright 1994 Editions Gallimard. 'Introduction to Volume 1: History of a Research Project', by Luce Gaiard, was originally published as the Introduction to L'invention du quotidien, I, arts de faire, copyright 1990 by Editions Gallimard)
[2] Inglis, F., (2004) *Culture and Affection: The love of art and the meanong of home* Seminar paper at Gray's School fo Art 23.6.04
[3] These happened over a period of seven years 1994-2001
[4] Practice- led research is a space to be creative and reflective. The researcher both makes situations and makes sense of the experiences in rigorous ways by evolving practice and critical language together.
[5] Scottish Sculpture Workshop; Duff House, outstation of the National Galleries of Scotland in Banff; Museum of Scottish Lighthouses, Fraserburgh; Shetland College, on the Shetland Islands; and Deveron Arts in Huntly.

the research presented. We intuitively started to build the projects within key challenges, not as a problem solving exercise, but as an opportunity to open up new ways in which the visual arts could become operative. These ways work across social relationships operating as a bridge *between* academe and non academic worlds, *between* the project partners and the communities in which they are located, *between* the professional art sector and other cultural organizations, *between* global networks and local communities, *between* professional expertise and the knowledge of vernacular that comes from dwelling in a particular place, knowing through dwelling.

Within this space we both create and critically reflect on projects as a set of experiences that are designed to address the shared questions. Action and critical thinking form part of a single, focused process of development. In part the work of the shared space is generative and experiential – the development of five visual art projects sited in five different remote rural places in Northern Scotland. In part the work is reflective through a spine of workshops that keeps the research relevant to itself. The project benefits from the role of critical friend through the work of Francois Matarasso, cultural policy researcher, whose role is that of contributing to the critical thinking, and facilitating events such as the workshops and gatherings.
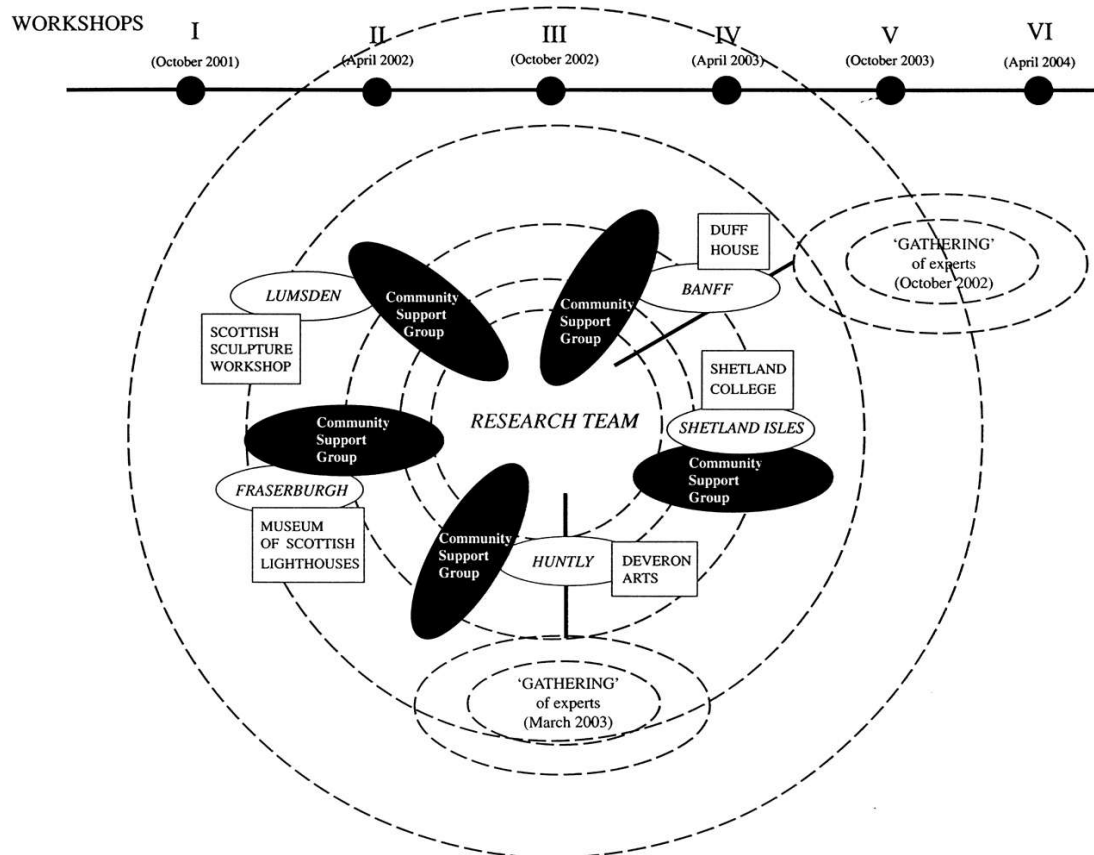

Fig 1 OTE Network

Each project is rigorously documented and evaluated through a series of 'Soundings' at strategic points in the project development involving participants as well as external advisors. The output is across a range of contemporary visual art practice, including conventional painting (where this has resulted from new forms of relationship such as new approaches to the role of patron), conversation, performance, broadcast, as well as formal academic papers at conferences.

The quality of the shared space counters the trend towards 'increased academization and professionalisation that characterize the aesthetic field today'[6]. These different individuals come together within a level playing field that is serious as opposed to professional, self critical before accountable.

It might be tempting to view the work of On the Edge as socially engaged. We have resisted being labelled in this way. We have suspended judgment about styles of working and related belief systems. We have resisted applying a formula to circumstances. We have not looked for deficiency as a focal point or defined the role of art as problem finding or problem solving. The challenges that we have engaged with have had aesthetic, cultural and social dimensions. We are primarily interested in the intrinsic value of making art, but define this as being different from the intrinsic value of the artist.

2.3   The research context

It is increasingly clear that rural Scotland is challenged by issues not dissimilar to post industrial urban contexts. In particular, the interdependency between work and culture and the impact of change in work on that relationship is as significant in rural areas, as in urban. For example within the INTHROW project a key participant, Pat Dunn, retired as the last full time tenant farmer within a village traditionally focused by agriculture. This provided a significant moment that indicated a shift from an economy and way of life based singularly on agriculture to one based on multiple sources – an issue that the project sought to focus.

It is worth noting that the authors, Douglas and Fremantle lived in the village of Lumsden. The project artist or architect, Gavin Renwick, in many respects brought in the perspective of 'the outsider' to complement those of the 'insider', acting as an architect to a set of strategies that were shared. The issues of the project brought together different perspectives: those of farmers with professional artists and administrators, historians and researchers. The strategies also brought together young people and retired people. The dynamic of interaction between inside and outside perspectives holds in tension the process of forming and reforming community on a daily basis.

OTE encounters the rural not through the notion of arcadia, but as having in common processes of change experienced by individuals in relation to different ways of living. The methodologies of the artwork in an urban context are not necessarily transferable to a rural context in which there is no conventional infrastructure to support them such as gallery, museum or public square. Within this research, rurality and the urban are not the issues per se. It is marginalisation, change and value that are key. In realizing the projects, the urban/rural polarity has become displaced by a different positioning that is neither urban nor rural but a new context for working in which the arts are integral to everyday experience, and not an extraneous component or commodity.

2.4   The geographical location of the project INTHROW

INTHROW is one of five projects within the On The Edge Research programme. INTHROW is centred around the village of Lumsden. Lumsden is located 55 kilometres due west of Aberdeen, between two sets of hills – the Ladder Hills, foothills of Cairngorms, and Coreen Hills. This is otherwise known as 'God's own country'.

Living in the NE of Scotland

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[6] The outline description for the Sensuous Knowledge Conference

The North East of Scotland has been inhabited for more than 3,000 years. Evidence of that inhabitation is visible everywhere.[7] This part of Scotland was relatively isolated until 19th century, although it has a University founded in 1496 and the Romans made incursions into the area. Historically Scotland was well connected with Europe and France in particular. The North East of Scotland also had, and continues to have, many connections with Scandinavia and the Baltic. For example, the harbour town of Portsoy on the north coast was for a period part of the Hanseatic League.

The locale is characterized by a distinct dialect and a strong traditional culture of music and song. The dialect, 'the Doric', is a type of Scots and is particularly strong in the rural parts such as Lumsden. INTHROW is in fact a Doric word meaning, according to the dictionary, "right through, in the heart of" for example, 'towards a fireside'. For a considerable period 'the Doric' was banned from schools, and it is only recently that the cultural significance of the vernacular language has been recognized.

The village of Lumsden is located in Strathbogie (literally valley of the river Bogie) in the centre of Aberdeenshire. It has a population of approximately 300, and is a construct of agricultural improvements in early 19th century. It is one of a significant number of planned villages in the North East of Scotland – villages laid out and constructed on 'greenfield' sites – from the late 18th and early 19th century. The village was laid out by the landowner of Clova Estate, a member of the Lumsden family, in 1820s. Prior to that scattered farm settlements characterised the area. The human impact of these changes are manifest within cultural forms such as Bothy Ballads. These are a unique form in the North East of Scotland, and one of the richest ballad traditions in the UK[8]. Bothy Ballads express in songs the loves, lives and hardships of people living and working on the land.

Fig.2 Linear Concentration

The process of creating 'planned villages' forms part of the narrative of agricultural improvement and the industrialization of cities. Very significant changes to patterns of inhabitation in Scotland were taking place at this time. These included the Highland Clearances. In fact there were significant lowland clearances as well. Lumsden is part of that history. Employment has traditionally been in farming, mostly working for tenant farmers or directly for estates. Bear in mind that rural Scotland is characterised by a few individuals owning huge tracts of land. The area surrounding Lumsden is divided into three estates that own everything you can see.

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[7] For example there are large numbers of stone monuments from different periods: bronze age stone circles of a specific type (recumbent) that only otherwise occur in the South West of Ireland; iron age Pictish 'symbol stones' carved with pagan and Christian images, in some cases on the same stone; and iron age hill forts with vitrified stone ramparts.
[8] See work of Francis Childe in recording ballads across UK

Fig. 3 Ancient Security

2.5 What kind of opportunity did the On the Edge research framework provide?

The development of OTE created a formal framework within which to explore the two core dimensions mentioned at the beginning. It provided a framework in which to evolve coherent and critical activities against clearly articulated questions. The framework was flexible and open, founded on enquiry rather than production, and this supported experimentation. OTE offered a research opportunity to the project partners. They reciprocated by offering up an issue, desire or challenge that we all believed would form an art project that addressed both their needs and the research aims.

3. The thinking and organisation of the Scottish Sculpture Workshop (SSW) – the research challenge

3.1 A modernist approach

In 1979 Frederick Bushe, a sculptor and educator, established the Scottish Sculpture Workshop (SSW) in Lumsden, in the former village bakery, as a centre for manufacturing object based sculpture. This was part of a significant movement to 'put means of art production in the hands of workers'.

20 years later at the end of the 90's this had become an established sculpture organisation built around an urban industrial model, dislocated into rural North East Scotland. The organisation was faced with the need to change. The surrounding context was itself going through significant change. The characteristics of the current phase of rural change are well known: the impact of agricultural subsidy, genetic modification of crops, the organic or slow food movement, suburbanization, and depopulation. SSW had an economic relationship with the village, but no significant engagement in the community, nor did the community feel any ownership of the organisation. Many artists came to Lumsden, some explored, some made friendships. The relationship with the community was unclear. Aspects of the organisation were valued, but other aspects were completely opaque.

3.2 Raising the case for change

As Director (1996-2003), Chris Fremantle was faced with the need to make the organisation relevant, both to a new generation of artists, and to its circumstances and context. It was significant that other parties were also interested in the dialogue about the role of sculpture in the landscape, the role of the arts in rural areas, and the role of culture in regeneration[9]. The location of the organisation was identified as one of its strengths. This identification came through discussion and project activity with artists and researchers. Artists commented that the location was unusual in providing such easy access to a landscape of considerable diversity[10]. Increasingly this moved to the forefront, becoming a more significant attraction than the 'site for manufacturing objects'.

The discourse of 'site specificity' in the visual arts was very significant in this process. It was and is critical to the understanding of contemporary practice, but it also provided a pivotal concept for organisational reflection. Site specificity is an idea that enables artists to engage directly with circumstances.[11] It can be a form of political statement, and it can be formulaic. But when the organisation begins to think about its relationship to a location in terms of site specificity, then this brings to bear a range of complex issues and certainly engages the organisation in thinking about sustainability as more than financial security.

SSW became increasingly focused on the development of the artist, rather than merely supporting the production of work. Fremantle began to diversify the programme seeking to position the organisation not as a 'sculpture workshop' but as a 'cultural organisation' with a 'specialisation in sculpture'. The organisation moved to focus on the role as an international residency centre – a location for engaging with culture.

3.3 Developing a new concept of an arts organisation: Imagine Lumsden

In parallel with this developmental trajectory a long term dialogue developed with Gray's School of Art in Aberdeen. As an academic organisation, the Art School through its research was seeking to redefine its academic role by developing relationships with non academic partners within the region, developing new thinking about the role of the artist within culture and the significance of this role to the education of the artist. Fremantle became involved in some of the ad hoc projects previously noted. This resulted in the identification of shared questions and approaches. In particular Fremantle was struck by the device of an 'imaginative agenda' that framed and stimulated the development of a programme of activity.[12] How would you apply an 'imaginative agenda' to thinking about the future development of a sculpture organisation? How might it enable the organisation take on a new role and contribute to the sustainability of a rural community?

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[9] Thinkglobal, Cumbria College of Art and Design, 2000, published 2001 ISBN 1 85850 182 2
[10] unpublished interview with John Hunter 1998
[11] Kwon, M (2002) One Place after Another MIT This book "seeks to reframe site specificity as cultural mediation of broader social, economic and political processes that organise urban life and urban space" p3 Kwon views the arts an ideological system that is framed and sustained by a network of interrelated spaces and economies, studio, museum, art market, art criticism. The developments in SSW pick up on the notion of site specificity as a node of multiple transactions across different individuals and qualities of experiences – aesthetic, ethical, social, political and economic.
[12] Fremantle was involved in one of the ad hoc projects, 'Room with a View' (1998), that took place between Gray's School of Art and Duff House, an outstation of the National Galleries of Scotland. The premise of this project was, 'If the Duff family, the original owners of the 18th century house, lived now, what kind of artwork would they commission or collect today?'

Fig 4. Imagine Lumsden

The construction of such a question significantly assisted with framing site specificity as more than a visual arts strategy. It placed the interests of the organisation (sculpture) within a broader canvas (culture) that enabled the organisation to relate its core purpose to its context. This has previously been problematic because there is a very limited visual art, let alone sculptural tradition, within the North East of Scotland. The organisation had seemed isolated and irrelevant.

Prior to INTHROW, there was a long period of conceptual development, in dialogue with researchers at Gray's School of Art. It had a number of dimensions:
- ∞ The development of the idea of a cultural organisation with a specialization in sculpture - actively engaged in redefining sculpture as a process;
- ∞ The exploration of the idea of the artist working within the landscape, on the land, or in relation to ideas of inhabitation;
- ∞ An environmental concern in relation to the rapid change and growth of suburban settlements around Aberdeen;
- ∞ Imagining what the relationship could be with the community;

These processes were also tested through a number of SSW projects. One of the key projects took place in 1998 and was entitled 'Owergaeing'[13]. During this project Gavin Renwick worked with a team of young artists and architects developed initial and tentative approaches to a visual investigation into the cultural and environmental characteristics of the inhabitation of the area of the village of Lumsden. This project made a significant contribution to Fremantle's thinking and also brought him into a working relationship with Renwick who later became 'the artist' in INTHROW.

3.4   Renwick as artist and researcher

Renwick's practice involves aspects of art, design and architecture. His undergraduate degree is in architecture and his PhD is in fine art very much within the context of practice-led research. The PhD was focused on the cultural dimension of inhabitation of land in the context of the First Nation land claims in the Canadian North West[14]. He is currently recipient of an AHRB Fellowship to pursue post doctoral research.

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[13] 'Owergaeing', the artists, SSW, 1999, ISBN 0 952 8901 2 9
[14] Renwick, G. 20002 Spatial Determinism in the Canadian North: A rhetorical Overview and Practice based Response University of Dundee

Renwick is in a technical sense the artist in the project. For many bureaucratic purposes, such as grant writing, he is described as 'the artist' or 'the lead artist'. In reality, creativity developed in the dialogue between the inhabitants of the village, researchers and arts administrators, and artists. Renwick's role was at the heart of the dialogue. His primary activity was listening. The nature of his role provided him with enough time to listen. Both by his presence and by his actions he shaped the dialogue, created focal points and drew people into the process. Renwick worked with a wide range of people to establish threads of activity and tools. But other people also played important roles, as we will see, in supporting and challenging this process, and it is in no sense a monologue.

4.   Raising the project brief

One of the key focal points of Fremantle's programme at SSW was land, and this was carried into On The Edge. Marginal rural land that is no longer used for agriculture tends to become a prime site for housing in rural Aberdeenshire leading to developments that are an urbanisation of rural space. The core group within the project development started to question the assumptions underpinning 'development' in these terms and to play with the notion of the symbolic value of re-appropriating land from the private into the public domain. How might this happen? What would it mean as an expression of different values? Who would be involved in the revaluing? This questioning had come about through long relationship and deep understanding of place by the authors and by drawing others, such as Renwick, into the discussion.

4.1   What do you do with a field? An imaginative agenda

As the OTE framework developed, so Fremantle developed the imaginative agenda. A provisional title of the project was 'What do you do with a field?' and a brief was prepared.   The brief focused the project on the issue of marginal rural land[15].

On looking back at the brief the emphasis was not purely visual – "In describing our approach as visual it is not our intention to suggest that we are simply seeking an aesthetic response to the problem. Rather, whilst the aesthetic has a role to play, we are seeking to develop a visual method for imaginative thinking about potential uses of marginal rural land which addresses a number of key issues" (INTHROW brief 2002) Reflecting later at one of the OTE Soundings Renwick commented "the briefs were an opening gambit". The brief, as in all On The Edge projects, was developed in discussion with the artist.

4.2   The artist's response to the brief – a proposition in three key stages

Renwick responded to the brief in the form of a visual document, 'INTHROW (What to do with a field)' incorporating evidence, strategic thinking and tactics.[16] This document was prepared following a period of work on the project and was not an immediate response to a brief in any conventional way. Rather this document sought to consolidate initial findings into a proposed

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[15] "This project is intended to explore one particular issue: the value and potential of marginal rural land for public use. … We intend to place priority on new and imaginative thinking about the value and potential public and community uses of this land. We believe that this issue is of general importance to rural communities, and relates to issues raised by the Scottish Executive in *Designing Places: A Policy Statement for Scotland*, 2001.
The key issues are
  ∞   the need for approaches which enhance the visual character of the landscape and the settlement;
  ∞   the need for public space which is valuable to a range of ages and interests within a community;
  ∞   the need to generate effective models of public ownership which prioritise local democracy and empowerment;
the need to create a sustainable future for the land and communities." (INTHROW Brief, May 2002)
 (INTHROW Brief, May 2002)
[16] Inthrow (What to do with a field?) February 2003, Summary of Intentions revised July 2003.

programme. It is not an artist's proposal for making a work, or even for developing a process. It shares more in common with a manifesto than an artist's proposal. As a manifesto it is intended to motivate people to common concerted action for change. It is also a long term programme to achieve change in the realm of artists' practice within society. It is visual itself, and it demonstrates visual thinking, but a number of the tactics described are not primarily visual.

In the document Renwick lays out a context for the work linking it to the literary traditions of the twentieth century[17] that placed regionalism and the creative use of vernacular at the heart of creative practice. The introduction goes on to establish the link between land and culture.

From these 'first principles' a programme is set out including the following categories: *Completed* (8 items), *Short Term* (8 items), *Medium Term* (3 items), and *Long Term* (3 items)

Folk, Work, Place – a research tool

Renwick's methodology draws on the work of Patrick Geddes (1854 - 1932). Geddes, Professor of Botany at Edinburgh University, was particularly concerned with the natural environment and town planning. He evolved a framework based on the concepts of 'work', 'place' and 'folk' corresponding to the historical, geographical and spiritual aspects of the city and thereby enabled planning to be approached in a complex way, as a spiritual and a cultural phenomenon.

Renwick has been working for more than 6 years with the Dogrib, a first nation tribe in the Canadian North West on their land claim to the Canadian Government. This has involved developing a means of evidencing the cultural relationship between nomadic people and the landscape they inhabit. This process has also specifically involved Renwick in the relationship between the cultural and the environmental. The nature of home as a process rather than a place, and the articulation of the concept of home as a landscape rather than a building have been central to Renwick's work.

> "On Dogrib land culture is part of daily life, indeed life is interwoven into the fabric of the whole day. While on the land 'work' is neither compressed into prescribed hours or spatially isolated." (Renwick, 2004)
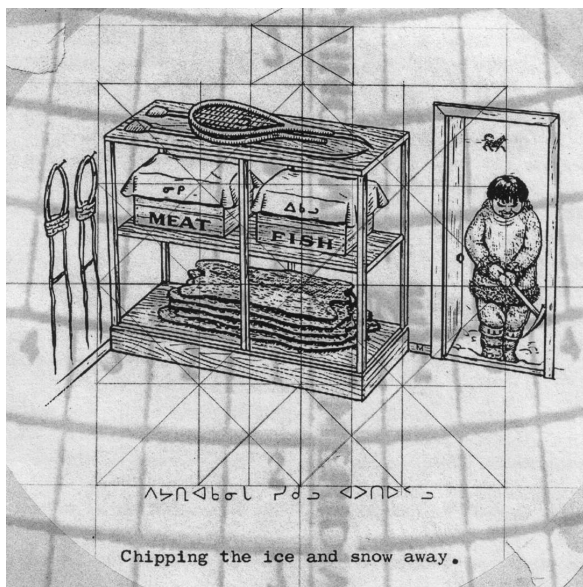

Fig 5. 'Home'
(from 'HOME: the outpost of progress, Royal Albert Memorial Museum & Spacex Gallery, Exeter, Devon, 2001)

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[17] With particular reference to the Scottish writers Lewis Grassic Gibbon and Hugh MacDiarmid. MacDiarmid developed a language for writing that has been described as synthetic Scots. It is developed from spoken language.

INTHROW (hearth or home as key metaphor)

INTHROW (Doric for 'towards a fireside',**)** also became a key metaphor within Renwick's proposition for Lumsden. The concept of hearth is significant within the traditional cultures of the world, and is also significant in the culture of the North East of Scotland,

> "In the bush the hearth is the fulcrum around which traditional extended family groupings arrange both their domestic structures and social activity. People come and go between different hearths all the time. The camp is therefore a multi-centred communal place where interior and exterior spaces are not necessarily perceived as separate…"[18]

Renwick returns time and again in his work to the concept of hearth. He proposes its exploration in a number of ways. Within INTHROW it is a key generative metaphor and also a proposed point of action.[19] It establishes a form of 'aesthetic production' drawing different individuals into conversations and activities (such as revisiting peat cutting or walking within the surrounds of Lumsden) that are linked by their relationship to values of dwelling.

In conversation with Pat Dunn
> Gavin Renwick (GR): See, when you thought of home, what did you think of? Did you think of the house, or did you think of farm, the land?
> Pat Dunn: Ah well, partly both, you thought of the house too, but the fairm was your living you see.
> GR: In Canada, the Dogrib very much think of their land as their home – homeland – as opposed to the house.
> PD: Well, I suppose the land would have been first, ken.
> GR: That's what always came first?
> PD: Well that was your living. You had to have the land in good nick to get the good crops.

Renwick identified the importance of developing work in Scotland as a mirror to the work in the Canadian North West. He commented on the relevance of post-colonial thinking to Scotland's new nationhood under devolution in parallel to the Dogrib land claim. The 'right to roam' legislation in Scotland parallels the change in the understanding of land ownership required for the Dogrib land claim. Community buy-outs of estates, particularly taking place in the west of Scotland, parallels the Dogrib negotiation with the Canadian Government for the return of their traditional lands. The traditional knowledge, intangible heritage, and culturally oriented processes developed by Renwick are critically relevant in both contexts.

Renwick's role in the project is in part framed by coming into the community (of researchers as well as of inhabitants) and partly framed by relating the circumstances in the North East of Scotland to those in the Canadian North West.

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[18] Renwick, G., 2001*Home: The Outpost of Progress, Spacex Gallery and Visual Research Centre*, University of Dundee.
[19] Returning to the document 'INTHROW (What do you do with a field') the 'short term' items include, 'Design of two intial 'hearths', one replacing the village bus stop and intended primarily for the youth, one sited at a deserted clachan/fermtoun within walking distance of Lumsden. ('The distance between two points is measured in memories'.)' In 'medium term' the next stages are iterated, 'Construction of hearths with the aid of youth club members', and 'Inauguration of hearths with an oral tradition programme including: Wullie Petrie and his local 'student'; Arthur Watson, artist;Frieda Morrison, traditional singer; Norman Shaw, artist and DJ; with the Lumsden Youth Club. Again there is a mixing of communities between artists and locals.

Valuing traditional knowledge in revealing change – tools and methods

Renwick's creative practice places traditional knowledge at the heart of the sustainability of a rural community within its environment. The focus of his work has been to reveal and value traditional knowledge and to use it as a tool with polemic as well as aesthetic dimensions[20]. To this end he identified a number of methods including

> A. *the development of a living archive for the village*

> B   *listening and foregrounding key vernacular terms in the Doric language that articulated relationships between dwellers and their land*

> C   *the development of a visual tool – the 'Summary of Human Settlement: Cultural Continuity in Strathbogie' that connected current patterns of inhabitation with six visible phases of inhabitation of the same landscape in the past (from the Megalithic to the present)*

> D   *enabling other artists, researchers and dwellers to engage with the different artistic tactics and take these further by involving their own skills, minds and imaginations in the discussion of land[21].*

> A. *the development of a living archive for the village*

A living archive of traditional knowledge would take in the work already done including interviews, surveys and the artwork made by the project participants in response to circumstances. The point is not to initiate a local history society or museum for the area[22], but rather to develop a stimulus for creativity. The archive is intended to be a living resource supporting research, but also supporting creative practice within the context of SSW. The value of the archive would be in the creative interaction between artist and knowledge. On one level the archive would seek to give the community clear ownership over its own knowledge and the ability to negotiate a relationship with creative practitioners[23]. On the other hand the archive would seek to avoid the repetition of new visitors to SSW asking the same questions.

The potential for this process of valuing what is there emerges within an informal conversation between Pat Dunn, Wullie Cowe, a fellow farmer, and the authors, on the occasion of Dunn selling up his cattle as part of the retirement process.

> Pat Dunn: It'd be right fine if there had been a video long ago just to see what was going on
> Wullie Cowe: …..or photographs
> PD: ..a video 100 years after this. I'd be exciting for young eens coming up

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[20] The recognition of these qualities has been enabled by the work of Heather Delday whose Ph.D research, forms part of, and contributes to the OTE initiative. She develops an analytical tool offered by Michel de Certeau, which draws together the aesthetic, the polemical and the ethical dimensions of practice. Delday, H., Dec 2004 *Close as a contruct to critically investigate the relationship between the artist and the everyday* unpublished thesis The Robert Gordon University
[21] The idea of 'revealing change' is not Renwick's description of his practice. Rather it is the critical reflection of curator Tom Trevor of Spacex Gallery, Exeter, England. Tom Trevor and Ian Hunter, Director of Littoral and polemicist for rural cultural development were invited to engage with the project in a Sounding. Both Hunter and Trevor had previously worked with Renwick and were invited to participate in the Sounding to explore the dynamics of the project. Ian Hunter described rural change as being 'like a knife that is so sharp that you don't feel when it cuts you.'.
[22] Such a thing already exists in the form of the Alford Heritage Centre.

[23] The development of the structured relationship between traditional knowledge archive and contemporary practitioners – the conception of the creative practitioner as a type of worker with knowledge, was also developed by Fremantle in a paper presented to the Res Artis Conference, Helsinki, in 2002 entitled 'Epistemology of a residency centre'.

Chris Fremantle: No, it'd be like looking at black and white photographs and they'd be saying its *so* boring…(Laughter)
PD: That's right enough.
WC: (But) There's always some folk takes an interest awae back
PD: There's something good , you ken….Oh Lord, aye

B   Listening and the Vernacular

Underpinning the concept of the archive, one key area of work developed by Renwick is around language and in particular to the Doric. Generally in Scotland there is a traditional salutation 'may your lum always reek' which roughly translates as 'may you always have a warm fire'. Edinburgh is known as 'Auld Reekie' because of the smoke. Renwick identified that within the community of older people frequent reference was made to 'there's nae reekin' lums', a crucial indicator of change for Renwick. It is also linked to the key generative metaphor of the 'hearth'. The expression is used in day to day conversation by older members of the population

Pat Dunn, Wullie Cowe again in conversation with authors over the valley, now empty of individual inhabitants.
> Pat Dunn: " There was folk in Old Toon…There was a gerdner (gardner) at Clova. He stayed in the old house at the steading. There was Bogmoor and all…My granfether long ago had Bogmoor. He didna stay there. He had the grazing.
> Wullie Cowe: I mine (remember) old Jimmie Davis at Cairn Gar. He said he mine 17 reekin lums across the brae face…*17 reeking lums* (said with emphasis and surprise).

The expression refers to the change in patterns of inhabitation. In living memory houses, now derelict, scattered all over the valley floor and sides, were inhabited. On a still day smoke would be seen rising (reekin) from chimneys (lums). The spread of inhabitation over the land was a function of the land use pattern. This distributed population was involved in employment on the land, in farming and estate work. Now it is consolidated into the village. Of course a significant proportion of the houses in the village also have central heating, so the village does not smell of wood or peat smoke as constantly, and the lums do not literally reek.

Renwick's artistic process has been characterised by listening, holding conversations, attending meetings of local cultural groups such as the Doric language group, investigating other areas of formal research associated with archaeology and cultural studies. Tom Trevor at an evaluation Sounding identified this process as "embodied through relationships – that's where real meaning lies". Serendipity has played an important role in enabling the artist to operate within the context.

Ian Hunter highlighted another dimension, contextualising this area of work in relation to the global issues in rurality including the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP), the World Trade Organisation (WTO) and the General Agreement on Trade and Tarriffs (GATT). The tactics of engaging with traditional knowledge and listening to individuals also belong to the movement resisting globalisation, and the constant reshaping of local and world maps through the movement of capital. Within INTHROW the development of a point of resilience focused on the individual and the local. It is in a relationship with other work on traditional knowledge, such as that with the Dogrib, and is about community resilience, rather than specifically about resistance.
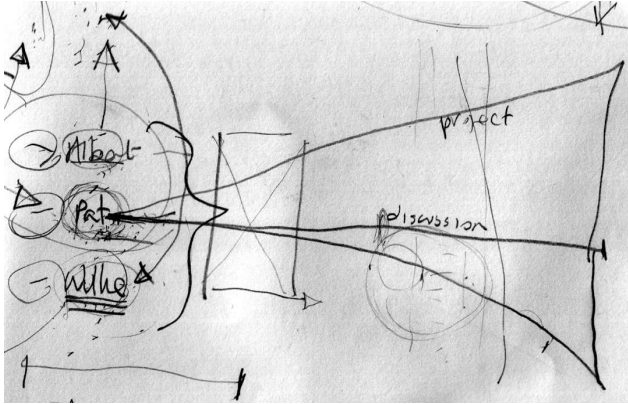
Fig 6. Listening (from interview by Delday with Renwick, Dundee Contemporary Arts Centre, March 2004)

'Revealing change' as an art practice strategy can only be achieved through a process of listening, particularly with those who have experienced the change. The tactical objective is to acknowledge the change and to seek to highlight issues of value.

Another phrase that Renwick has highlighted in 'there's nae whisperin' in the braes' which roughly (and inelegantly) translates to 'there is no voices in the hills'. Historically the hills would have been alive with the sound of activity. The urban romantic ideal of the silence of the countryside is a myth. Renwick developed out of this small recurrent cultural reference an area of work.

C   'The Summary of Human Settlement: Cultural Continuity in Strathbogie' – a visual tool

Renwick worked with Simon Ings and Kevin Gauld within the larger Owergaeing project (1998) to develop *The summary of human settlement: cultural continuity in Strathbogie*. Renwick returned to the Summary when he started work on INTHROW. He tested the Summary and developed it further working with other practitioners including visual artists, architects, designers and photographers. The Summary is offered as a tool with which to engage the issues specific to the area. In particular the Summary focuses on inhabitation. The Summary reveals the changing patterns of inhabitation, and enables further and more detailed exploration of the community and its surroundings.

In what way can we describe the *Summary* as a tool? In general terms it is a tool for learning about and exploring the landscape. This highlights a number of characteristics. The title sets out a scale of space and time, and indicates that the exercise is a 'summary' and therefore not comprehensive. The title also indicates that the objective is cultural, not merely architectural or anthropological, although both these disciplines are key to framing the exercise.
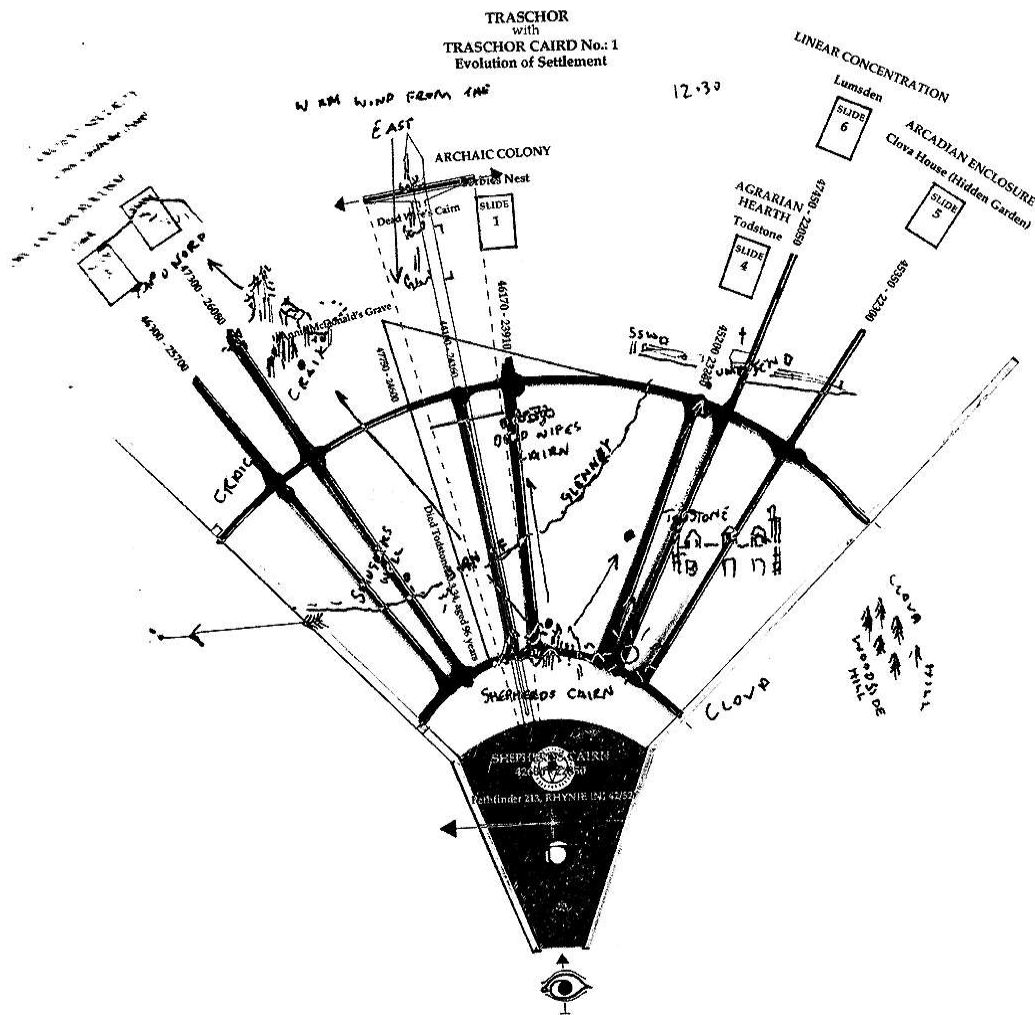
Fig. 7 The Summary of Human Settlement: Cultural Continuity in Strathbogie

Seeing and Hearing….

As with any tool it lends itself to many uses – as viewfinder and itinerary, but the tool is a thing in itself – it has an aesthetic dimension. Let us first present the structure as poetry:

> Ancient security
> Archaic colony
> Organic microcosm
> Agrarian Hearth
> Arcadian Enclosure
> Linear Concentration

Renwick says: "For me in some ways it is an 'onomatopoeic' evolution…. This may be where the poetic is perceived to lie - as opposed to it being a separate considered act."[24] In creating a visual structure, a poetic language evolves.   In making a tool with which to learn about something, the use of 'sounds-like it is' words achieve more than description.

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[24] Quoted from an email exchange between Fremantle and Renwick. Onomatopoeia is literally the formation of a word from sound that resembles that associated with the thing named. The phrases used in the Summary are not literally onomatopoetic but do convey a sense which is cumulative and associated with land.

Gavin's work is nearer to the ground than maps can ever be, but this structure of words has some of the formal characteristics of a grid. The intention is to create a means of navigating the time and space of an area. Instead of reducing it to two dimensions, expand it to a multitude.
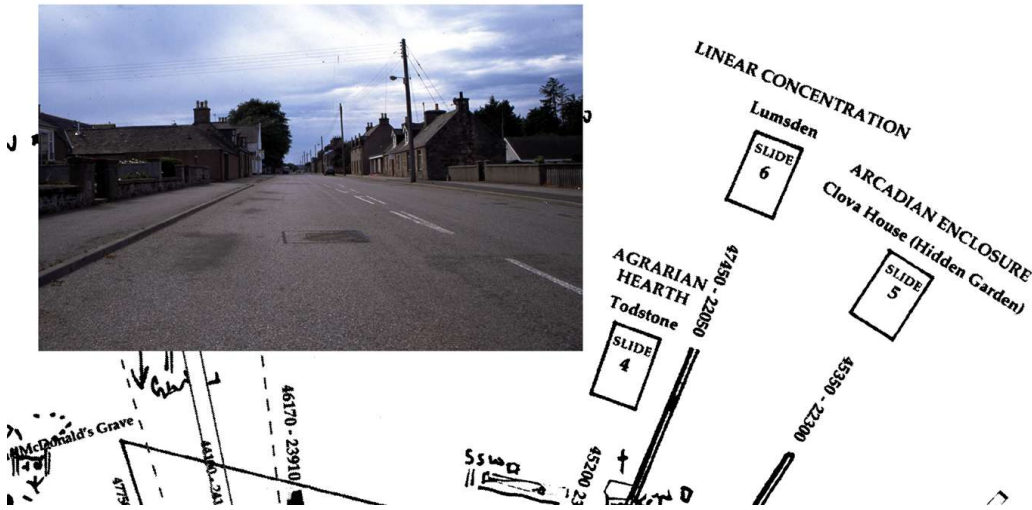

Fig. 8 Summary Linear Concentration

.... Patterns of Settlement

The landscape of Strathbogie has offered the evidence of the complexity of defining settlement in Scotland. In Scotland the structure, culture and ecology of 'settlement' has changed specifically, even in rifts, throughout history. But this history is also overlaid over itself, in so many places clearly evident: a palimpsest, overwritten time and again by later settlement and inhabitation. The *Summary* avoids the romantic invention of the rural-highland redemptive narrative that has dominated Scotland's self-image since the 19th century. Instead it focuses on a relationship between people, sites, histories and terminology and through this seeks to reveal change and cultural impact.
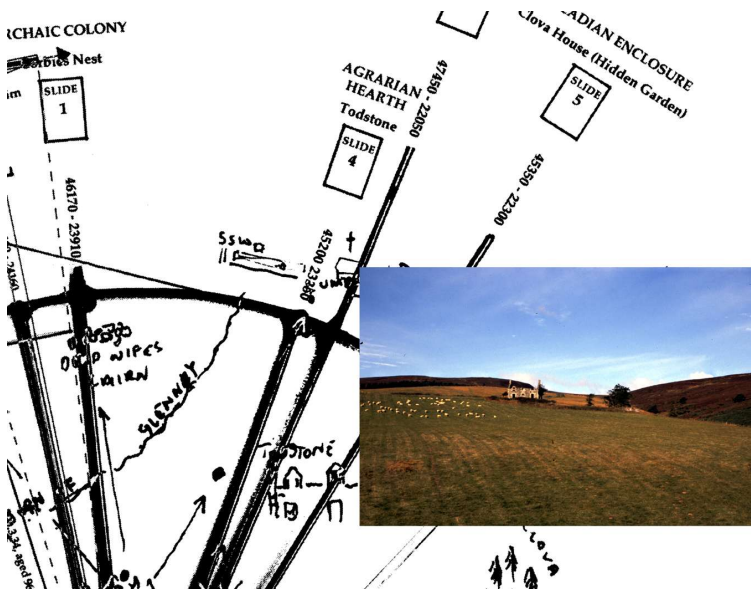

Fig 9 Summary Agrarian Hearth

…. Revealing Change

There is a visual education. By focusing the eye of the user on certain features, the intention is to reveal a process of change over the period of human settlement. The visual revelation of the process of change is intended to raise and inform the interrogation of the current context of change. The visual education through the investigation of six sites should prompt other observations. What under normal circumstances might be taken as natural is observed to be man-made, etc. The human uses of the materiality of the landscape become evident. The user of the tool will realise that the six sites are only six of a multiplicity of sites that could be used, but they are carefully selected for their visual characteristics.
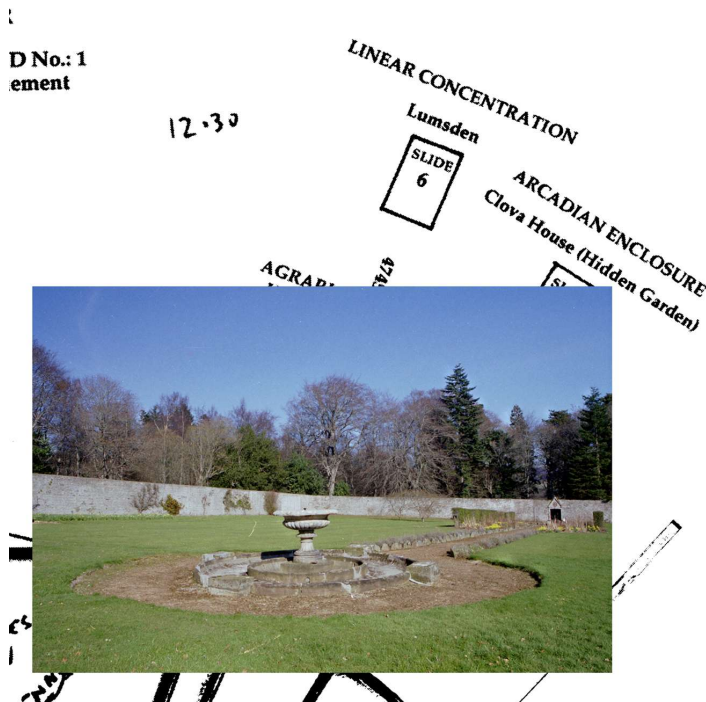

Fig 10 Summary Arcadian Enclosure

This is naturally an itinerary, an invitation to travel over the landscape. Some of the sites are frequently visited by many people, others are unacknowledged. The Tap O' Noth[25] is visited by large numbers of people regularly because it provides an outlook. The souterrain[26] is mostly visited by artists sent from SSW. The abandoned farms are ignored, except in the memories of the older inhabitants. A journey around the sites would take a day in a car, although the sites are all within a radius of 6 miles of the village of Lumsden. On foot it would take longer.   Again scale is established by exploring the itinerary. As an itinerary the tool leads the user to a series of points and in the process enables the discovery of the shape of the landscape, examples of human settlement, and the cultural continuity of Strathbogie. The itinerary assumes use by a stranger coming to explore. For the dweller these sites are simply part of a landscape which is used on a regular basis for recreational walking. The highlighting of the sites was developed in part by villagers, artists, researchers and administrators walking, experiencing the spaces spatially as well as intellectually.

The Summary forms an important element within the whole INTHROW project by underpinning the investigation of land use and settlement.

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[25] Tap O' Noth is the second highest megalithic hillfort in Scotland, three miles from the village of Lumsden and a significant landmark visible from the village.
[26] artificially constructed underground structures generally thought to be early Christian within one mile of the village..
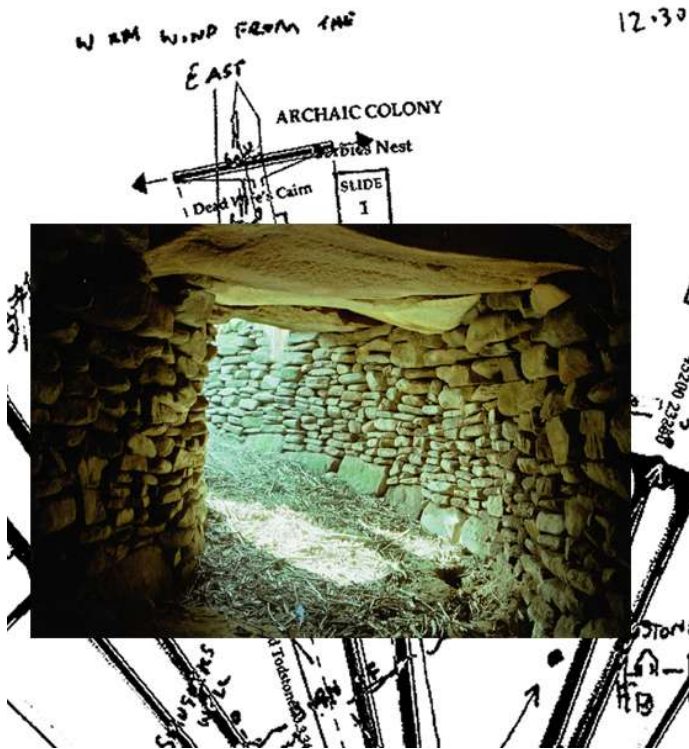
Fig 11 Summary Archaic Colony

D   Enabling others: multiple minds, hands and eyes

The methods and tools identified by Renwick were appropriated by the different individuals and groups that had become involved in the project at every stage. Those involved in INTHROW to date include a wide range of members of the community young and old, students in architecture at the University of Strathclyde, recent graduates from that programme, curators, artists, DJs, archaeologists, local historians, researchers, technicians, farmers, retired people of Lumsden as well as young people in Lumsden.

In particular two other artists were drawn into the strategy, Norman Shaw, artist and DJ; and Sergio Rodrigues, photographer and Pepinieres[27] resident at SSW.

A DJ Workshop in the hills – a sonorous landscape

Norman Shaw is also involved in practice led research and has completed a PhD entitled 'The Sonorous Aesthetic of the Highland Landscape[28]. His practice focuses on working with found and pre-existing sound. The process of involving Shaw arose from discussions between Douglas, Fremantle and Renwick around engaging young people in the project more directly. Douglas identified the need to engage the young people and to demonstrate to them that their surroundings could be reinterpreted and used within contemporary urban forms such as popular music.[29] Shaw not only engaged young people, he succeeded in engaging the seriously disaffected.

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[27]The Pepinieres Programme is an annual EU funded exchange programme for young artists. Sergio Rolando Ferriera Rodruigues was at SSW for six months from March 2003.

[28] University of Dundee 2003

[29] Douglas commented that rural life is not perceived to be sexy in the eyes of young people. "They congregate at the bus stop (in many rural Scottish villages, and in Lumsden) and this is a symbol of 'getting out'. They take a great interest in fast cars. Skateboarding enables young people to appropriate urban public space and architecture through an activity

Music is an important dimension of the culture of young people. Shaw developed an indicative activity running a workshop with a small group of young people resulting in two tracks being produced. The young people were provided with digital recording equipment and sent out into the village and surrounding landscape to record sound. The sounds Shaw asked them to collect included natural sound (bees buzzing), man made sound (vehicles passing through the village), and speech (both their own conversations at the bus stop and the other members of the community). Speech demonstrated various forms of vernacular including the Doric and the slang and swearing of the young people.

> 'The basic idea was to re-appropriate the sounds of the traditional Doric culture of Lumsden and its environs within a contemporary framework, and to get younger people from the area to instigate this re-appropriation. Our main aims were to gather a team of local young people who would record the Doric language and other sounds from the environment, and to collage these sounds digitally and produce some tracks'. (Shaw 2004)

Renwick then identified Whitehillocks as the location for a performance. The site is part of the 'Summary of Human Settlement: Cultural Continuity in Strathbogie'. It was interpreted through photography by Rodrigues and it was used for a performance by Shaw. The performance was attended by young people and other artists.

> 'The next day we set off up the glen to Whitehillock, where I was to do a *nimrod33* set in a ruined cottage next to a standing stone. We hauled the gear into the nettle-strewn space where I performed a mix of old and new – including our new tracks – right in the very hearth of the cottage. An unforgettable gig for me – I had to hide under a hillock of coats when it rained, then re-hatch from it when it stopped'. (Shaw with Fremantle 2004)

Fig 12 DJ artist Shaw with young people from Lumsden

Photography as the eye of the project

Sergio Rodrigues came to Lumsden through the Pepinieres programme. He is a young Portuguese photographer. Rodrigues' involvement in the project was developed by Fremantle. Renwick engaged Rodrigues in the framework and highlighted key areas of investigation. Rodrigues developed his own relations with the community and his own activity with the school as

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that is skilful, convivial, self confirming, design led, branded, and fast. So mountain biking has begun to enable young people take over and animate the spaces around villages." The activity involves developing routes through the landscape that are challenging and fast. Obstacles and structures are built that enable the development of skills. Mountain bikers now take on a bit of the urban flaneur. "The skill is aestheticised within an event structure. Success is defined by elegance."

well as supporting Renwick's programme of revealing change. Rodrigues developed a piece of work with the young people in school taking their portraits. He also produced work focused around a number of Renwick's conceptual focal points including the 'Summary of Human Settlement: Cultural Continuity in Strathbogie' and during the oup'[30] associated with the end of Pat Dunn's tenancy at Auchenleith.

Fig 13 The Roup, May 2003

Renwick's programme, epitomised by the Summary, had created a conceptual framework for other practitioners and individuals to engage with issues of value and a process of revealing change.

Fig 14 Shaw performing at Whitehillock

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[30] *roup* in the Concise Scots Dictionary means 'plunder, deprive of everything' and indicates the final selling up of a farm. It is effectively a form of redistribution of equipment by auction.

5.Summary and Conclusion

The research has constructed a shared framework – shared across individual artist researchers, across sectors of arts administration, arts practice, policy making and dwelling. This has meant that we have together raised and tested questions through research and practice in the real world.

This experience has given rise to a definition of sustainability that we have tested out in five different situations specific to a particular way of life in Northern Scotland. Within this definition, we understand sustainability to be a form of resilience to change – responding to change from a sense of self and through a set of experiences that are primarily concerned with learning. The process is by no means consensual.

INTHROW was one of the five situations for understanding whether this definition of sustainability had any credibility. The project has been a series of transactions – of giving and responding between different individuals, a rich ecology of exchange. The village of Lumsden presented us with its experience of change. Fremantle imaginatively linked this with a parallel need for change within the organization for which he was responsible. That organization is geographically situated in the village but had been connected tenuously i.e only in economic terms. Fremantle gave these two interconnected experiences of change over to the research programme. On the Edge responded by developing with him and other partner organizations a project proposal to test out new ideas and approaches. Renwick as architect of INTHROW responded to the resulting brief by presenting us as participants in the project with a series of methods. These included *the Summary* and the chance to engage poetically with vernacular language among others. Other artists, Rodrguez and Shaw, as well as dwellers of Lumsden such as Pat Dunn, Wullie Cowe, Wullie Petrie and a group of young people interacted where and when these methods resonated with their lives. They were effectively responding to a dialogue initiated by the artist. In this sense the project INTHROW is not goal orientated but the beginning of a process of experiencing in new and imaginative ways, a way of life that is geographically and socially marginal. This 'seeing' generates new meaning for those who choose to participate.

Through revealing change the project has explored value. By revisiting peat cutting, an activity which no longer takes place in large parts of Scotland where it had been practiced for centuries, there is an opportunity to think about value. The value may lie in the symbolic significance of hearth, or in the involvement of the whole family in range of domestic activity, or in the knowledge of and management of the land.

Chris Fremantle:	It sounds like we are being sentimental about this. Its important, people come from all over the world (to SSW in Lumsden), its important that they understand where they are….
Pat Dunn:	No, aye. If they dinnae know about things, there's nothing to be said.

We have become sensitized to what is happening in ways that confer value on everyday experiences – the natural sounds of Lumsden, processes of retirement and what these mean within wider reference points of landownership, self organization and the inevitability of change. This process is neither about nostalgia, nor is it about deficiency. The focus on traditional knowledge is not based on any assumption that life was better in the past. The older members of the community have a strong cultural identity and social life. They are clear about their values and inheritance. They also live in the present and enjoy what it has to offer.

Fig 15 Pat Dunn discussing peat cutting

For example they live in houses with central heating and no longer cut the peat.

The artistic interventions are not perceived to be one off isolated projects by the participants of Lumsden. These interventions have become a kind of conduit for something else to happen. The participants have been involved in developing a new understanding and expectation of what art is. The young people of Lumsden would engage again with Shaw's workshop, given a chance. It was 'cool' and valorized their experience of youth in rural places (informal conversation with Douglas 16.11.02). Shaw as an individual, like Renwick, was given an opportunity to work in a way that was a new challenge to his practice and creatively developed him as an artist (interviews with Delday Renwick 8.3.04 and Shaw 7.7.04, Dundee Contemporary Arts). For Rodrigues, the residency in Lumsden through the mentoring of Fremantle, marked a change in direction in which he plans to link anthropology with photography within future work. For Pat Dunn, Wullie Cowe, Wullie Petrie and Alfred, the living archive is an ongoing focus of interest as denoted by the many inquiries about Renwick's return and the desire to pick up where they left off, over the statuory 'wee dram'. Without question, expectations have been raised, requiring decisions about what will continue and what will not. These present a set of choices for SSW under a new directorship related to how it perceives its relationship with the village.

The On the Edge team has acted as a presence throughout the process, participating in generating the projects, in critical thinking, in the development of critical language, in nudging the process in new directions that previously were not envisioned. They have painstakingly worked with, crafted even, a way of learning with others about the value of the artistic process.

In seeking to draw conclusions it is clear that the role of knowledge within practice led research, and more generally within culture is not as product. A key criterion within the discourse around academic research is the 'original contribution to knowledge'. This suggests that knowledge is not a static repository but rather a dynamic, political tool for revealing, understanding and shaping change. The academic understanding of knowledge needs to be rethought.