

At Fruitmarket this winter – Project Paradise

This winter until 21 January, the Fruitmarket Warehouse hosts Sarah Wood's film Project Paradise.

This is inspired by the Black and White Oil Conference organised by Richard Demarco, CBE, in Edinburgh in 1974 at which Joseph Beuys and Buckminster Fuller both spoke.

The conference took place in the context of the imminent exploitation of oil and natural gas in the North Sea. It posed a number of questions and made observations frighteningly relevant now as we try to find ways to combat climate change, mitigate its ravages and keep fossil fuels underground.

In a letter preparing for the event, Demarco asked Beuys: "Can the experience of art help? Can the artist play a role? Can the artist make sacred the land and the waters around the Scottish coasts so that they will not be exploited? Have we a visionary artist who can do for Scotland what Constable did for England and make sacred what is called landscape country, and no doubt safe, for the moment anyway, from the hands of developers?"

Some 50 years on, Wood's film examines the idea of Paradise as a way of talking about how we relate to nature now as often something simply to commodify. She argues that our current

panic about resources is about the end of an era rather than the end of the planet. Instead, the film invites viewers to open up thought and imagine how we might want to live in the future. Projected as a portal into the floor of the warehouse, Project Paradise invites midwinter audiences to gather round the light of the image and come together as participants in the reimagining of a new way of living in the world.

Fiona Bradley, Director of Fruitmarket said: One of the defining convictions of Fruitmarket – founded in 1974, the same year as the Black and White Oil Conference – is that the experience of art can help, if only by clearing a space in which to think together. As Fruitmarket goes into our 50th year, *let's imagine a more positive way of living in the world and strive for a new kind of collective energy.*“

Sarah Wood is an artist-filmmaker, writer and curator. She works primarily with the still and moving image to explore the role the documentary archival plays in the narration of history. Since she began working in artists' film in 2000 her ambition has been to generate a cinema of ideas – experimenting with film form to offer renewing space for viewers to consider some of the key social and political issues of our time.

She gained early success with found footage films made for both single screen and site-specific installation before turning her attention to the meaning of archiving and the politics of memory. Notable works include *For Cultural Purposes Only* (Animate!/ Channel 4), *Murmuration x 10* (Brighton Festival), *Three Minute Warning* (FACT/Channel 4), *I Am A Spy* and *Memory of the Future* (Whitstable Biennale). All won film festival awards and were acquired by cultural institutions across the world.

Her other central concern is migration – both the movement of displaced people round the world and the migration of ideas via the situation that art creates. With political borders

closing she asks whether art can model alternative forms of hospitality across three commissions: *Boat People* (Whitstable Biennale), *Azure* (ArtExchange), *Here is Elsewhere* (Kettle's Yard). Inclusivity is key for Wood's practice – collaborating with artists, writers and thinkers in a creative attempt to open the space of art to dialogue and to encourage viewer participation.

Her focus on the historical image has led to opportunities to respond to several filmmaker archives (Stanley Kubrick (artist-in-residence), Margaret Tait (LUX Scotland), Thorold Dickinson and Derek Jarman (John Hansard)) which in turn has galvanized her to reconsider cinematic form for the post-COVID landscape. What role can cinema play in shaping our shared future? Wood responds to this question in the collaborative project *Projectionism* for the Independent Cinema Office – a multi-voiced open letter to cinema made during COVID lockdown in partnership with the EAFA.

Sarah Wood Project Paradise

Fruitmarket Warehouse

09.12.23–21.01.23. 11am–6pm daily.

www.fruitmarket.co.uk

