

# Misson Carr

Unit 3 Interdisciplinary practice

1000 word illustrated report

Steven Ingman



Misson Carr onsite documentation

As an artist and painter I am interested in the landscape and the relationship between nature and humanity, natural and manmade and the concepts of what constitutes to something being considered a wilderness. I wanted to use this opportunity to work with the Nottinghamshire Wildlife Trust in further developing my understanding of the landscape. I focused my interests on an area of land known as the Humberhead Levels and more specifically a small nature reserve managed by the Nottinghamshire Wildlife Trust known as Misson Carr. Robert Atkinson, the reserves Management Team Leader agreed to meet with me onsite. He showed me around the site and explained his role and the work undertaken. I wanted to gain a greater understanding of the history, wildlife and work that goes into preserving the land while considering

our relationship to nature and the concept of wilderness in the British landscape. In developing this knowledge I hope to advance new ideas and concepts when it comes to producing a body of work. For an intended project I would develop an exhibition of paintings that will demonstrate an understanding and critical engagement with this landscape, to find its identity and its sense of place. I hope to connect humanity with the environment and consider the effects of our society on nature whilst debating the concepts of wilderness.



Misson Carr onsite documentation

In painting Misson Carr I would want to capture a sense of remoteness; the location, the restricted access and the 'by appointment only' signs mean the location is hardly visited. As you go deeper into the site there is an element of wilderness, with the constricting branches of dense woodland blocking your path. This had been left as dense woodland as part of the conservation. I would emanate this sense of remoteness and a feeling of wilderness by producing paintings on a grand scale portraying seemingly impassable structures of trees. These almost claustrophobic

scenes would aim to invoke a feeling of no escape and contain the viewers gaze within the confinements of the canvas. Through the conversation with Robert we discussed the fact most of the British landscape is, as he put it “tightly managed” and the actuality there is no longer many places that can be defined as true wilderness in the British Landscape. The paradoxical concept of a ‘managed wilderness’ makes me reflect on how I perceive and ask future questions in my portrayal of the landscape when considering the notion of wilderness. Considering this, edgelands, ruins and sites of abandonment allow nature the opportunity to take control and exploit the freedom to thrive. These sites could be considered the few sites of true wilderness. I would take wilderness and place it within the ordered gallery framework.



Misson Carr onsite documentation

In engaging with Misson Carr I will be asking questions and combining my artistic perception. The finished paintings themselves would become a platform for dialogue and give a voice to something that is sometimes overlooked. The exchange of ideas,

on site research, ways of looking at nature, and the conservation work undertaken by the Nottinghamshire Wildlife Trust will be presented in an art context. The paintings are tangible, physical embodiments of combined ideas, thoughts, processes that enable greater public engagement, allowing the work and philosophy to be accessible to wider audiences. The work can develop our understanding, create debate and educate. This has been demonstrated by a project run by Ordinary Culture, an artist led group facilitating interdisciplinary curatorial projects, who collaborated with the Nottinghamshire Wildlife Trust and Duke's Wood Oil Museum. The project focuses on the history and socio-political significance of Duke's Wood and the industrial heritage of the area. It is suggested that through the diverse practices of the artists working at this site "the wood has been reawakened and a new form of prospecting commenced, where the elision of ecology and industrial history sets the scene for new meanings to be made" ([ordinaryculture.org.uk](http://ordinaryculture.org.uk)). It is proposed that this work stimulates and redevelops our perception of a place.



Before being managed by the Nottinghamshire Wildlife Trust and becoming a nature reserve, Misson Carr was owned by the Ministry of Defence (MoD).



Misson Carr onsite documentation

Past sites used by the MoD are often left to nature's devices and sometimes abandoned for prolonged periods of time. Much of today's modern military is shrouded in secrecy and so when considering painting this landscape I have to think about the mystery of the site. This layering of the historical use, therefore resulting in the involvement of a variety of disciplines, is evident in the work *Record of Fear* (2005) by artist Louise K Wilson. Wilson, commissioned by Contemporary Art in Historic Places, in partnership with the National Trust, English Heritage and Commissions East delivered a collective of performances and artworks (Flintham 2012). The National Trust Property Manager at Orford Ness remarked "Orford's secret past will have been brought to life through a contemporary art exhibition on site" (as cited Fitzpatrick 2005).



A Record of Fear (2005) Louise K Wilson

Interdisciplinary art practice offers a new way of delivering combined research ideas in an art context that is accessible to a wider audience. In the case of Louise K Wilson, the aspirations of the National Trust were that "We hope that it will enhance our visitors' enjoyment of the site and give a more personal and interesting insight into its unique role in British military history." (as cited Fitzpatrick 2005). The aims of interdisciplinary practice are to look at ideas from a new perspective and also the development of new and innovative ideas related to a discipline. Marc Quinn in collaboration with the Wellcome Trust portrayed Sir John Sulston, one of the genetic scientists who decoded the human genome, in an abstract portrait constructed from the man's own DNA. Quinn considers it the most realistic portrait in the National Gallery and new way of looking at portraiture and the relationship between Science and Art (Jeffries 2011).



Sir John Edward Sulston  
by Marc Quinn  
sample of sitter's DNA in agar jelly mounted  
in stainless steel, 2001  
5 in. x 3 3/8 in. (127 mm x 85 mm)

This project has made me consider and develop ideas in showcasing the British landscape within a gallery context. The paintings would elude to the idea of wilderness still existing in the British Landscape by bringing a heightened response of nature, informed by my research with the Nottinghamshire Wildlife Trust. It has enabled me to consider how Painting sits within contemporary art as an interdisciplinary field and use this knowledge to reflect on the relationship between nature and human society whilst debating the concepts of wilderness in the British landscape.

## References

Fitzpatrick, P. (2005) Artist's Record Of Fear Haunts The Remote Orford Ness [Online] Available from: <http://www.culture24.org.uk/art/art30548> [Accessed: 5<sup>th</sup> May 2016].

Flintham, M (2012) 'The Military-Pastoral Complex: Contemporary Representations of Militarism in the Landscape', *Tate Papers*, no.17.  
<http://www.tate.org.uk/research/publications/tate-papers/17/military-pastoral-complex-contemporary-representations-of-militarism-in-the-landscape>, accessed 6 May 2016.

Jeffries, S. (2011) When two tribes meet: collaborations between artists and scientists. *The Guardian* [Online] Available from:  
<http://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2011/aug/21/collaborations-between-artists-and-scientists> [Accessed: 1<sup>st</sup> May 2016].

[www.lkwilson.org](http://www.lkwilson.org) [Online] Available from:  
<http://www.lkwilson.org/index.php?m=welcome&sub=news> [Accessed: 28<sup>th</sup> April 2016].

[www.ordinaryculture.org.uk](http://www.ordinaryculture.org.uk) [Online] Available from:  
<http://www.ordinaryculture.org.uk/dukes-wood-blog/2015/3/20/spaces-of-reconciliation> [Accessed: 29<sup>th</sup> April 2016].