Anne Bevan Undercovered
Graeme Todd Mount Hiddenabyss

Visions for the Future: Part II
19 February – 25 March 2000

Exhibition Guide

ANNE BEVAN (lower gallery)
Born in Orkney in 1965 Anne Bevan studied at Edinburgh University and Edinburgh College of Art where she specialised in sculpture. She has exhibited widely in Britain, and also abroad, most notably in Sweden (1994 and 1996), the USA (1999) and the Ukraine (1993).

Central to her work is an interest in hidden spaces and exploring underground or below surfaces. Change, movement and fluidity are often translated through processes of casting into plaster, cement or metal. For this exhibition she investigated the hidden water systems running under the city of Edinburgh, from their water sources to their outlets. Working with East of Scotland Water, she has visited reservoirs, filters, tunnels and pipelines. This research is documented in photographs, video, sound and sculpture, resulting in an installation which reinterprets this 'undercover world'.

Artist's Statement: I have always held a fascination for underground spaces, the hidden ground under our feet. I grew up in a landscape riddled with chambered tombs which, I suspect, caused this inclination to look down and to look under. The attraction? Uncovering and searching; climbing down, crawling into an enclosed dark space, not knowing what's there.

With this latest work I initially set out to get 'under the covers' in the street – to open up some of the cast iron lids, the man hole covers. This led me to approach the local water authority (East of Scotland Water) who have allowed me access to some of their pipes and tunnels and in particular to the water sources – the reservoirs – which eventually supply our taps for washing and drinking. I am curious about aspects of everyday life which we take for granted, essential things which are so much part of a daily routine that we hardly even notice them; unless they leak or drip or burst.

Over the last year I have been researching the history of the water which supplies the taps in my home. Unexpected stories, images and objects have found their way to the surface of my work, presenting new connections. My interest in collaborating with other artists has continued, with composer Pete Stollery, film maker Michael Wolchover and writer Janice Galloway, who have all visited the tunnels with me. The employees of the water authority have also played an important role in supporting the project, especially on these site visits.

On one of my visits to a reservoir, I was shown a musty old hollowed out tree trunk, stored away in a shed. It turned out to be an original 18th century elm pipe which was part of the first Edinburgh water system. I have borrowed this wooden pipe and it has now become the starting point for a new series of sculptures. The substitution of materials continues to interest me. From wood to lead to iron to concrete to plastic... the pipelines conveying freshwater have undergone an almost alchemical evolution of materials. In the Megget Valley it is known that prospecting for gold was taking place in the 6th century – in fact locals still go panning in the area. This valley was flooded in 1983 to form the largest reservoir to supply Edinburgh, 28 miles of tunnel, pipe and aqueduct take the water into the city. Change, distance, history, memories, everyday life... all seem to be wrapped up in different materials.

The exhibition also includes a new series of photographs and video works developed directly from these visits: walking in tunnels deep underneath a reservoir, walking along the base of a dam, through channels of flowing water. Installed with hand-made sculptural works, these will show a human presence in this dark subterranean space.

Exhibition sound produced in collaboration with Pete Stollery. Video and photography by Michael Wolchover. With thanks to Edinburgh College of Art, Jesmonite Technologies Limited, Ballantines Boness Iron Company Ltd, Mirage Digital Television, The Touch Agency, Solaglass, Wharfedale and East of Scotland Water.

GRAEME TODD (upper gallery)
Born in Glasgow in 1962, Graeme Todd graduated from Duncan of Jordanstone College of Art in 1985 and currently teaches at Edinburgh College of Art. He has exhibited widely both here and abroad, most notably in 1989 and 1995 at The Centre for Contemporary Art in Glasgow, in Gothenburg and New York in 1994, and in Canada, Ireland and London during 1997/8. He is currently preparing shows for Tokyo, Zurich and Rome.

The paintings in the series Mount Hiddenabyss were made during a six month residency in Basle, Swizerland, on the IAAB exchange programme with Edinburgh College of Art. The title comes from the Chinese compendium The Classic of Mountains and Seas (3rd Century BC to second century AD). This is a major source which brings together rare data and colourful fiction about the mythical figures, rituals, medicine, natural history and ethnic peoples of the ancient Chinese world. The passage in question reads:

"Three hundred and sixty leagues to the southwest is a mountain called Mount Hiddenabyss. Cinnabar trees are numerous on its summit. Their leaves are like paper mulberry; their fruit is as large as a gourd, and they have scarlet calyx with black veins. If you eat it, it will cure jaundice, and it is effective against fire. Turtles are plentiful on its south face, and jade is abundant on its north face. The River Reed rises here and flows west to empty in the sea. In this river there are many fine and coarse whetstones. There is an animal on this mountain. In appearance

it has a horse's body with bird wings; it has a human face and a serpent's tail. It enjoys giving humans a lift. Its name is the which-lake. There is a bird there which looks like an owl and has a human face, a monkey's body, and a dog's tail…"

Todd's landscapes employ a range of compositional formats, some of which are readily familiar to us, and some of which are more mysterious. The quotation above offers some clues as to the more esoteric sources he draws on for his painting: the flattened perspective characteristic of Chinese and Japanese painting; the lacquered mulberry, scarlet and cinnabar tones of his palette, and an understanding of landscape itself as the repository of legend, wonder and myth. This last idea of landscape is likewise common to a European tradition, and Todd's paintings are also informed by German painters such as Altdorfer (c. 1480–1538), Grunewald (c. 1470–1528), and Durer (1471–1528).

At the same time Todd's images originate in a modern concern with landscape and representation, drawing on picture postcards, chocolate box images, calendars and found photography as initial starting points from which to explore the question of space and perspective in painting. In this, their effect is paradoxical, simultaneously pulling in and repelling the viewer with the distorted syntax of their construction. Here the numerous layers of industrial varnish, added to the surface after each intervention, act as both a barrier and as a protector of this surface. The intricate strata which make up Todd's images thus offer a contradictory experience, where glimpses into traditional landscape-space are countered by an 'anti-space' composed also of slashes and dots. These constitute a further element of layering, leading the eye across the paintings to discover an abstract richness of detail in both surface and depth.

Visions for the Future is a project initiated by The Fruitmarket Gallery to commission substantial new bodies of work by young Scottish artists over the next three years. This exhibition is the result of the first commissions, and was selected by Norah Campbell (Director of An Tuireann, Isle of Skye), Trevor Cromie (Exhibitions Director, The Lighthouse, Glasgow), Euan McArthur (Head of Historical and Theoretical Studies, Duncan of Jordanstone College of Fine Art, Dundee) and Graeme Murray (Director of The Fruitmarket Gallery).
The exhibition is accompanied by two publications. The publications are produced as artist/writer collaborations with newly commissioned writing from Robert Alan Jamieson and Janice Galloway.

The exhibition is funded by The Esmée Fairbairn Charitable Trust, the Dunard Fund, The Hope Scott Trust, The Elephant Trust, The Binks Trust and The Nancie Massey Charitable Trust.

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The Fruitmarket Gallery

45 Market Street
Edinburgh, EH1 1DF, Scotland

P +44 (0)131 225 2383
F +44 (0)131 220 3130

info@fruitmarket.co.uk
www.fruitmarket.co.uk