



*Installation for recorded sound and text*

This work presented a series of soundscape studies exploring themes around representation of natural environments, focussing on Harestanes Countryside Visitor Centre near Jedburgh.

My underlying intention was to explore the notion of the cultural representation of natural environments through the medium of sound, raising questions around the 'invisible join' between reality and how we represent this reality. The captured sounds also formed the basis of an archive, 'fixing' aspects of Harestanes' natural environment in time. It was intended that the project should also lead to sustainable outcomes in the form of public interest in the sonic environment and in notions of acoustic ecology. To this end an artist led soundwalk took place following the launch of the installation. Field recordings were carried out during 2008/2009, adding to preliminary studies taken in 2007. These focused on the sonic properties of natural phenomena: a spring dawn chorus, water in its various seasonal movements, the behaviour of wind through the various topographical features of the wider Harestanes area, the natural ambient sound of wooded areas, the sounds of small flights and large

flocks of Whooper Swans on Folly Loch in the winter of 2008/2009. Sounds taken from groups of schoolchildren playing and following guided sensory walks in and around the Visitor Centre afforded contrast to the sounds of the natural environment.

The listening space was fitted out with an interior decoration of fabrics, netting and scrim to 'soften' the acoustics of the room, to allude to the outdoors, to guide the visitor to the listening zone, and to allow for creative lighting options. A stereo pair of full range loudspeakers diffused the environmental sound and a selection of recorded readings.

A collection of field notes, sketches and quotations gathered during the research phase of the project was made available as reading material. The texts offered an edited selection of citations, reflections and sketches on themes and topics such as: nature writing, ancient, old and new thinking on representation, working theories on the discourse around the material processes of environmental art, social and cultural anthropology, the making of the work and its technical details, documentary art, archive, and the production of space. The most prominent texts quoted were those of American nature writers such as Susan Fenimore Cooper, Henry David Thoreau, Aldo Leopold and Barry Lopez. The recorded readings, based on the literature, were read by speakers associated with the project and with Harestanes Countryside Visitor Centre.

photograph by Alan Perris