

Alan Charlton  
Bethan Huws  
Richard Long

Hamish Fulton  
A MOUNTAIN IS NOT  
MADE OF STONE IT  
IS STONE

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**Alan Charlton, Bethan Huws, Richard Long and Hamish Fulton**

Alan Charlton, Bethan Huws, Richard Long and Hamish Fulton, all art historically significant British artists, all work within language systems of their own, producing unique conjunctions within their artistic practices, whilst, simultaneously, poking their finger at the principal of all culture and language. Language can be described as a powerful tool, working both as a collective memory bank and as a way to address or express a supposed reality. Yet, it is also a limiting tool, semantically charging words and objects that allow for the formation of structures which are mostly arbitrary when observed from a distance. The philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein notably states: "the limits of my language mean the limits of my world."

In this summer exhibition in Zuoz, the limits of language seem to be both solidified and expanded by the artists' works. The floating signifiers found on the gallery walls and floors demand a powerful presence, perhaps even taunting the viewer a little with their devout imagery. After all, there is a specific time and place to these works, completed or activated by the viewer and their personal encounter. Meaning may be offered up as complete, yet, only through language can it be sealed to a final state. Which language has the power to pull one in, or rather; what ideas one chooses to be part of, is for the individual viewer to decide.

**Bethan Huws**

Walking into the gallery, the viewer is first confronted with a film by Bethan Huws. In her work, Huws questions the artist's role and goes back in time to analyze specific, seminal moments in art history. The in between spaces she opens up often display a very intimate approach to her practice as an artist. Here, a recurring motive is the overlap of familiar places with vernacular language as well as the interference and merging of sound and words. In *Singing for the Sea*, Huws' unique approach to language and art is explored on a more serious note. The water, a seemingly singular plane, expands behind the uniform group of Bistrista Babis singing to the English seaside and demands a sense of longing or connection through its outward pull. Rather than the subtle irony found in many of Huws' works, the artist allows nostalgia to seep into an otherwise methodical approach to art. There is a fluidity to the sea, the song, the movement of the film. A poetic approach to meaning.

Nevertheless, Huws constructs a perfect image. The film can be seen as the artist's way of illustrating aloud – interior to her personalized network of ideas and emotions. The transferal of the Bulgarian multi-generation women's choir to the coastline of North East England demonstrates the artist's skill at producing poetic reflections through complex art-historical and linguistic explorations. Not unlike Marcel Duchamp's concept of the ready-made, Huws' work is a perfected assembly of elements in a precise context, demonstrating the

importance of the communication of meaning as a precise form. Of course, the viewer must be willing to insert themselves into Huws' iconographic lineage in order for the artwork to be intelligible in a contextual sense. The viewer must accept the artist's language as a form of truth. After all, meaning can be shifted or entirely emptied when outside of its usual context.

### **Richard Long**

In the works of artist Richard Long, other forms of reading life and meaning are made visible to the viewer in a more concrete manner. It is apparent that Long is content with a "vocabulary of universal and common means" as he has chosen the placement of stones, sticks, lines, circles, grass and water as his mode of expression. Long's pursuit of art within an artistic no-man's land, both literally and figuratively speaking, has made him one of the most well known artists of his generation, especially as a central figure of the Land Art movement.

In Gallery Tschudi's former hayloft, a large stone circle draws the viewer into reveries of prehistoric traditions, perhaps even of unearthly interventions, whilst in truth, these are stones carefully picked from the Rhône riverbed by the artist. When confronted with Long's work, a connection to nature is apparent: his elementary means of communication can be associated with the freedom of discovering and experiencing nature in a most genuine manner. There is a gentleness to the artist's manipulation of nature. Long does not look to set boundaries or leave his mark in a territorial sense, rather, there is an almost childlike joy and beauty to his works which inflects any notion of domination.

### **Alan Charlton**

Alan Charlton paints grey, monochrome canvases with an unwavering conviction. The artist found clarity in form early on in his career and has unapologetically followed this calling ever since. The basic elements always stay the same which allows Charlton to develop a personal vocabulary, playing with shape, dimensions and space within calculated measures of variation. Every painting expresses the artist's conviction anew. Interestingly, the grey surfaces do not suggest an imagined place or an emptiness to poetically dwell in; there is no mythologized history that can be discovered here; the artist is nowhere to be found.

Rather, the paintings size and shape on these particular walls make the viewer lucidly aware of a reality taking place in this moment, in this room. The viewer may even feel their feet more firmly on the gallery's floor. In the context of the exhibition these paintings seem to be powerful symbol bearers. Each one is a charged element that imposes itself on the viewer. The colour grey seems to cloak the shape of the world, revealing it to be synthetic and constructed, a product of culture. The works direct themselves at the viewer, demanding for a truth to be discovered, or rather; for the viewer to rediscover their surroundings. One might look at the paintings and try to decipher them as one would a foreign writing system. These attempts can only be sobering as the works do not allow themselves to be decoded as one would read an empty metaphor, they push and encourage the viewer to see more clearly.

## **Hamish Fulton**

### **A MOUNTAIN IS NOT MADE OF STONE IT IS STONE**

Hamish Fulton has described himself as a walking artist. The artist sees walking as an art form and a personal responsibility towards nature. All his art works start with his walking experience and his inherent refusal to see nature as a mere backdrop or stage to his art. In this sense, his walks come and go, like a cloud condensates and precipitates, inserting themselves into cycles that go beyond the usual limits of the imagination. To the artist, a completed walk is not a visible entity. Although highly conceptual in his process, Fulton rejects being categorized as a conceptual artist.

In this exhibition, new works by Fulton mark the gallery walls like small impressionist paintings. Each one is a landscape or depiction of a walk holding an individual story. Fulton documents his walks with both non-figurative and figurative illustrations as well as the fundamental walk texts which carefully word his measurements in steps, days, roads, dates, nights, or dots. There is a clearness and an aim to his travels as depicted in his texts, often a starting point and a destination, yet Fulton is persistent in telling the viewer that his work does not end with the words on the wall.

The work *Walking Seven Times Toward The Summer Solstice* is one example of Fulton's activating titles. There is a poetry to Fulton's way of wording these walks. The walk texts instantiate a future not unlike a speech act performs an action. This is visible in Fulton's work. The promises he makes to natural landscapes is essential to his art but it is also a demand to the viewer to take the human interference in nature more seriously. There is a sense of rebellion to his walking, criticism for sure. Through his art works, the artist seems to tell the viewer that nature exists but culture, with all its beauty and troubling faults, is a product of the human world.