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**Northumbria
University**
NEWCASTLE

LIMELIGHT





Type of output:
Collection
of Creative and
Critical work

by
Charles Danby

Cover:
Charles Danby & Rob Smith,
Limelight illumination at
Llangattock Kiln, Wales, 2016.
Photo credit: Courtesy of the artists

Left:
Charles Danby & Rob Smith,
video still of the *Limelight*
apparatus developed by Charles
Danby & Rob Smith in 2016 and
used throughout the research.
Photo credit: Courtesy of the artists

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SUMMARY

Limelight is a co-authored research project completed as part of a collaborative practice with the artist Rob Smith between 2016 and 2020. It is comprised of two exhibitions and two public performances.

Situated within the intellectual and interdisciplinary fields of New Materialism and Eco-Philosophy identified with figures such as Jane Bennett and Donna Haraway, the research works against longstanding human and non-human binaries, and establishes terms through which limestone, as a geological material with industrial application, is demonstrably not inert in nature, but by contrast possesses and presents agency.

The research is focussed on post-first-use industrial limestone sites in the Welsh Black Mountains and the English/Scottish Border settlement of Lowick. These sites are in, or close to, National Parks, indicating the value of lime in community networks, culture, heritage and tourism. The project thematically foregrounds the possibilities of 'Limelight' in relation to the use of quicklime in theatre lighting and landscape surveying; as an actant (Bennett, Latour) and an illuminating guide for human action, gesture and performance.

Methods include site-based fieldwork, the development and deployment of mechanical lime apparatus, and co-production with audiences. These methods underpin focus on the material states of limestone through its industrial processing - e.g. its decarbonising into quicklime, hydration into slaked lime and its carbonisation into limestone. These material sites map onto diverse applications through light, paint, render and soil neutraliser.

Dissemination through exhibitions (Black Mountains/ Cardiff and Newcastle) and performances (Edinburgh and Greenwich universities) engaged diverse specialist and non-specialist audiences across arts, performance, material architecture, heritage, ecology, geology and industrial history.

Right:
Charles Danby & Rob Smith,
fieldwork images of the testing
of the Limelight apparatus used
throughout the research, 2016.
Photo credit: Courtesy of the artists



TIMELINE

Limelight was developed and disseminated across four interrelated elements between 2016-20 - two exhibitions and two public performances

Danby and Smith have worked collaboratively since 2011 co-authoring and co-producing artworks including Oxted England (2012), The Quarry (2013), and Parallel Cipher (2015-16).

www.danbysmith.com

2016	2017	2018
<p>22ND OCT - 19TH NOV Exhibition: Cardiff Contemporary & Llangattock Lime Kiln.</p> <p>11TH NOV - 17TH DEC Exhibition: Polyspace, Newbridge Projects, Newcastle.</p>	<p>22ND - 24TH JUN Performance: Postcards From The Anthropocene: Unsettling The Geopolitics of Representation, Edinburgh University.</p>	<p>22ND - 24TH JUN Performance: Granular: The Material Properties of Noise, Greenwich University.</p>

RESEARCH CHALLENGE

How can the agency of geological material (lime) be activated within a creative research process?

The research was undertaken through material lime. Considered through time and across material states, the material properties and transformations of lime itself shaped the nature and performance of the research. The research inhabited Jane Bennett's political ecology of "Thing Power" (2009) and used it to explore representations, temporalities and affects of lime through materiality. It developed Tim Ingold's principle of 'thinking through making' (2013) by investigating the non-human subject position of lime to reveal a making through 'other-than-human' thinking and action.

How does geological material (lime) possess agency in transforming post-use industrial land sites?

The research involved field-work in post-use industrial sites to explore the architectures, communities and infrastructures made possible by lime. It worked with Donna Haraway's through-human kinship and speculative fabulation (2016) to bring visibility and presence for material lime within its industrial and geological land sites.

Right:
View of Llangattock limestone escarpment
and quarry face, with spoil heap, waggon
way and kiln, Black Mountains.

Photo credit: Courtesy of the artists



How do the material sites of lime show landscape in a process of becoming offer new research possibilities for site-based arts practices?

The research was conducted with and through sites and communities created in relation to the transformational properties of material lime. It formed co-authorial networks of actants which extended John Latham's broad model of event structure by applying it to other-than-human (material) actants.



Top Right: Charles Danby & Rob Smith,
setting up the lime kiln burning event
held at Llangattock Lime Kiln,
Black Mountains, 2016.
Photo credit: Courtesy of the artists

Right:
Charles Danby & Rob Smith,
Lime kiln burning event held at
Llangattock Lime Kiln,
Black Mountains, 2016.
Photo credit: Courtesy of the artists

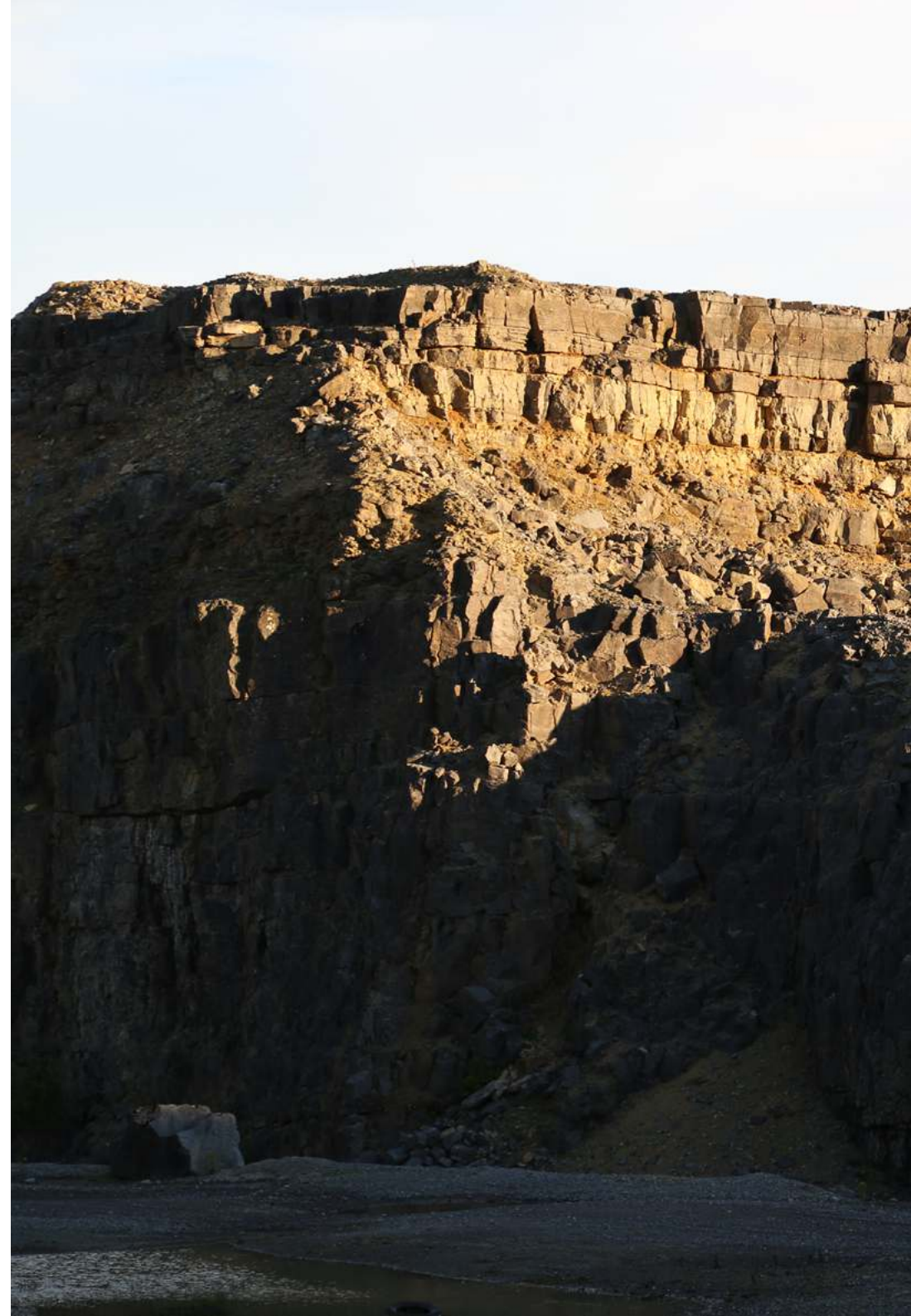


CONTEXT

The research is set within discourses relating to New Materialism, the Anthropocene, geo-materiality and fabulation. It is concerned with material agency and interlacing temporalities of the geological through human and other-than-human actants.

It centres on transitional and transforming industrial limestone land sites in the Welsh Black Mountains and in the English/Scottish Border settlement of Lowick. Each case-study site is in or close to a managed National Park. In both studies therefore material lime is investigated and addressed as a central actant within the National Park's managed framework of ecological and environmental conditions, and its transforming model of industrial landscape through community networks, culture and tourism.

Right: Site-visit at
Chwar Blaenonneu Quarry,
Black Mountains, 2016.
Photo credit: Courtesy of the artists



The research draws upon illumination, as both material phenomenon and metaphoric device. Limelight, as illuminating light, is a primal material condition of heated quicklime applied within land surveying in the early 19th Century. Its making visible of the land for navigational and topographical industrial mapping facilitated new image-making, readings and representational forms of the landscape. The research uses limelight as illumination, burning quicklime, to survey its own sites of extraction and industrial processing and ask what other visibilities and representations might be surfaced. 19th century theatre adopted the use of limelight as an illuminating light to spotlight action, gesture and performance on stage, making visible micro-moments, readings and representations within wider scales of storytelling. The evocation of theatre and spectacle as experience and encounter is a further contextual device for the research.

Limelight is an artwork and event structure performed through actions, broadcast, audiences and objects...

Below: Site-visit at Ty-Mawr Lime, Black Mountains, 2016.



Below: Site visit and sound recording at Canal Bridge 119, Monmouth and Brecon Canal, 2016.



Below: Site-visit at a lime kiln site off the B4560, Black Mountains, 2016.



Below: Site-visit at Chwar Blaenonneu Quarry, Black Mountains, 2016.

Photo credit: All images courtesy of the artists



METHODS

Limelight consisted of site-based fieldwork through a funded residency with PEAK, Wales (2016) and in Lowick (from 2017). Danby & Smith used methodologies of inhabiting and navigating to investigate and document post-use industrial lime infrastructures (quarries, kilns, canals, waggon ways) in the Brecon Beacons National Park, through panoramic video, photography, sound recordings, notetaking and drawing.

Partnership networks were established with Ty-Mawr Lime, Canals & River Trust, BBC and National Park representatives, and community partnership networks with residents, non-specialists, volunteers and artists, using skills and knowledge exchange through presentations, workshops, demonstrations, meetings and site-visits.

Danby & Smith used the studio to build a small-scale lime kiln for the production of quicklime, and examined and tested the chemical properties and material states of lime, through slaked lime, quicklime, limelight, lime screeds, lime mortars, and lime wash.



Charles Danby & Rob Smith, BBC live broadcast setup, Llangattock Lime Kiln, 2016.

Photo credit: Courtesy of the artists

Material lime apparatus were developed and built as transmission devices for light, breath, video playback and sound (limelight apparatus, quicklime microphone apparatus, exothermic lime video- player apparatus, limestone hum server apparatus), testing these at industrial lime extraction and distribution sites.

Performances were developed as total immersive experiences with no separation between performers, audience and space. The performers used projectors and mirrors to distribute, hold, reflect, invert and rescale images through audience architecture.

Methodologies of co-production were developed through which audiences produced parts of the research's imagery, representations, documentation and future scripts.

Right: Charles Danby & Rob Smith, installation view of *Limelight* (detail of the limestone hum server apparatus), Polyspace, Newbridge Projects, 2016. The exhibition extracted and reformulated the broadcast data stream of the limelight illumination from Cardiff Contemporary & Llangattock Lime Kiln, extending it from its transmitted 31 minutes to a new timeframe of 37 days, the length of the exhibition.

Photo credit: Courtesy of the artists



An iterative methodology was developed, through revisiting, that enabled the research to be both live and simultaneously folded through its existing disseminated forms, its documents, sites, subjects, audiences, images and narratives.

A methodology of timecoding the transmissions was developed that established a connective live time framework for the research through its points of dissemination.

Speculative fiction was used as a methodology for script writing, to reveal the constituents (agents) of lime both through the case study sites of the research and through its points of dissemination.



Above: Charles Danby & Rob Smith, *Limelight*. Photographs taken by Benek Cincik and Tiago Torres-Campos during the performance *Limelight: Other Actions of Observation and Navigation*, at Edinburgh University, as part of the Conference, *Postcards From The Anthropocene: Unsettling The Geopolitics of Representation*, 2017.

Photo credit: Courtesy of the artists

DISSEMINATION

- Public Audiences
- Arts Audiences
- Academic Audiences
- Open Source Partner Reports
- Open Source Peer-Review Publishing

The dissemination of the research was through open-source partner reports (Canals & Rivers Trust, Nesta), partner, public and arts audiences at the exhibitions and performances, arts and non-arts specialist academics and public audiences at the conferences.



Charles Danby & Rob Smith, *Limelight*, stills from live event in Cardiff, Cardiff Contemporary & Llangattock Lime Kiln, 2016. *Limelight* was one of ten commissioned works for Cardiff Contemporary, a biennial of contemporary art. It was funded by PEAK and Cardiff Contemporary, and developed and delivered in partnership with the BBC and Arts Alive Wales through a Digital Innovation Fund For Arts In Wales and NESTA grant. Performers: Ed Lawrenson and Georgia Bates. *Photo credit: Courtesy of the artists*





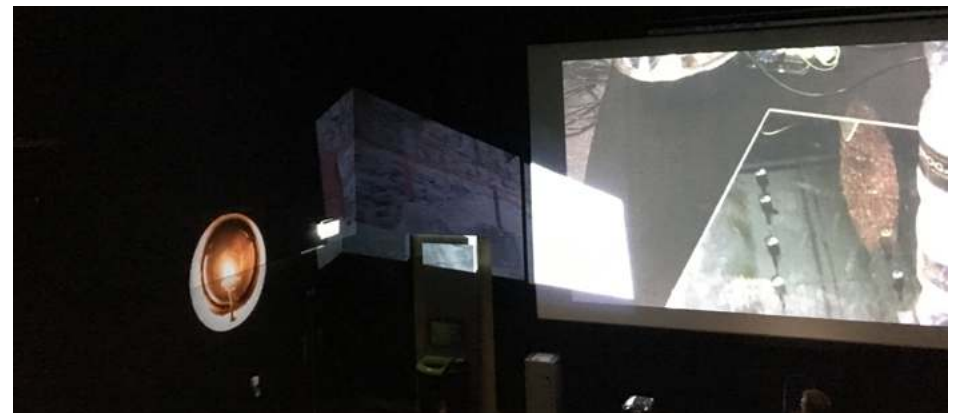
Above: Charles Danby & Rob Smith, testing a *Limelight* illumination, Llangattock Kiln, 2016.

Photo credit: Courtesy of the artists



Top: Charles Danby & Rob Smith, view of *Limelight* (Other Actions of Observation and Navigation), Edinburgh University, 2017.

Photo credit: Courtesy of the artists



Bottom: Charles Danby & Rob Smith, view of *Limelight* (Further Actions of Observation and Navigation), Greenwich University, 2018. The performances took the form of a conference paper, constructed and delivered through material lime.

Photo credit: Courtesy of the artists



Above: Charles Danby & Rob Smith, installation view of *Limelight* (detail), Polyspace, Newbridge Projects, 2016. Courtesy of the artists. This work was commissioned by NewBridge Projects through the Arts Council England and formed part of the group exhibition Polyspace.

Photo credit: Courtesy of the artists



Above: Charles Danby & Rob Smith, Poster for the exhibition *Limelight* at Cardiff Contemporary, 2016.

Right: Charles Danby & Rob Smith, installation view of *Limelight* (detail of poster), Polyspace, Newbridge Projects, 2016. Courtesy of the artists. The poster is folded forwards and backwards through exhibitions from 2013 and 2016. It acts as a mirror and a portal.

Photo credit: Both courtesy of the artists





Above: Charles Danby & Rob Smith, view of *Limelight* (Other Actions of Observation and Navigation) at Edinburgh University as part of the Conference, Postcards From The Anthropocene: Unsettling The Geopolitics of Representation, 2017.

Photo credit: Courtesy of the artists

“The most intense feeling was of lime being ‘transmitted’ into other media and hitting the walls, ceiling, and people’s bodies in the dark. There was something quite remarkable about the materiality of lime dissolving in the air until it hit other types of matter and reorganised again. It is was almost as if lime mixed with electricity and light to formulate itself into another kind of images.”

“My overall experience of the paper was immersive. To be more precise, the superposition/juxtaposition/overlay of different media (two projectors, one computer, the microphone, the main screen in the auditorium and the additional projection created on another surface on the stage) and the materials themselves (quicklime, bottle of water, etc.) multiplied the experience, enhanced the multi-sensory experience to an extent that it pushed the limits of spatiality. The spatiality aspect was epitomized when... the projection fell onto some people in the auditorium, so the subject-viewer became a part of the performance not only as a passive subject but also as a corporeal becoming.”

Audience writing as recollections of *Limelight* at Postcards From The Anthropocene: Unsettling The Geopolitics of Representation, 2017.

Partner Impact Reports:

- https://media.nesta.org.uk/documents/difaw_arts_alive_e.pdf
(Digital Innovation Fund Arts In Wales / NESTA, 2017)
- <http://cardiff.moderngov.co.uk/mgConvert2PDF.aspx?ID=15051>
(Cardiff Council / Cardiff Contemporary, 2016)

Exhibition, Performance & Publication Links:

- <https://peakartuk.wordpress.com/2016/10/11/limelight-2/>
- <http://artsalivewales.org.uk/wp/12064/peak-copa-at-cardiff-contemporary/>
- <http://artsalivewales.org.uk/wp/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/Limelight-Calcholau-postcard.pdf>
- <https://canalrivertrust.org.uk/refresh/media/thumbnaill/32350-arts-on-the-waterways-newsletter-autumn-2016-1.pdf>
- <http://www.wai.org.uk/news/7121>
- <https://thenewbridgeproject.com/events/polyspace/>
- https://westminsterresearch.westminster.ac.uk/download/2e9792ceae434d5a8447ceef1fa362fa093f2cac5f6d4cd067399d9c9fc974413/2881536/Postcards_Booklet_20170820.pdf
- <http://www.postcardsfromtheanthropocene.com/22-june-2017>
- <http://www.dpr-barcelona.com/index.php?/ongoing/anthropocene/>
- <http://www.greenwichunigalleries.co.uk/granular-colloquium/>
- https://gala.gre.ac.uk/id/eprint/20043/13/20043%20WATERWORTH_Granular_The_Material_Properties_of_Noise_2018.pdf

Reviews:

- <https://corridor8.co.uk/article/review-polyspace-the-newbridge-project-newcastle/>
- <http://www.thecourieronline.co.uk/poly-spacing-out-into-new-territory/>

Wider Public Impact:

- <https://kslh.wordpress.com/2017/07/28/barns-ness/>

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NESTA

Cardiff Contemporary

Arts Council England

Lowick Heritage Group

Edinburgh University

Greenwich University

Northumbria University

Newbridge Projects

Ty-Mawr Lime

Charles Danby & Rob Smith, A *Limelight* illumination
at Llangattock limestone escarpment and quarry face,
Black Mountains, 2016.

Photo credit: Courtesy of the artists

