

# DESCRIPTIONS TRUE & PERFECT





Type of output:  
Artefacts

by  
Siân Bowen

Cover and left:  
*Descriptions True & Perfect* at the  
Main Gallery, Jilin University of Arts,  
Changchun, China, 2016.

*Photo credit: Siân Bowen*

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# SUMMARY

*Descriptions True and Perfect* comprised a solo exhibition of twenty back-lit drawings, ten artist's books and eight video projections.

Right:  
Arkangelsk Meteorological Research Vessel transporting  
Bowen's works to Nova Zembla, the Russian Arctic.

*Photo credit: Siân Bowen*

Below:  
Crates of Bowen's drawings after having been  
buried and frozen on Nova Zembla, 2015.

*Photo credit: Siân Bowen*



# RESEARCH CHALLENGE

The project investigated how the preservation, collection and transportation of ephemeral museum objects can stimulate innovative modes of drawing and video installation.

Bowen interrogated ways to transfer and recontextualise knowledge generated by her previous research project *Capturing the Ephemeral; Materiality and Transience through Drawing Practice*, AHRC Research Grant 2010-12. (<https://gtr.ukri.org/projects?ref=AH%2FH020721%2F1>) to establish a distinctive discourse that aims to bridge debates on contemporary drawing, materiality, video and the museum context.

Right:  
*Descriptions True & Perfect*  
at the Main Gallery, Jilin University of  
Arts, Changchun, China, 2016.  
Photo credit: Siân Bowen



# CONTEXT

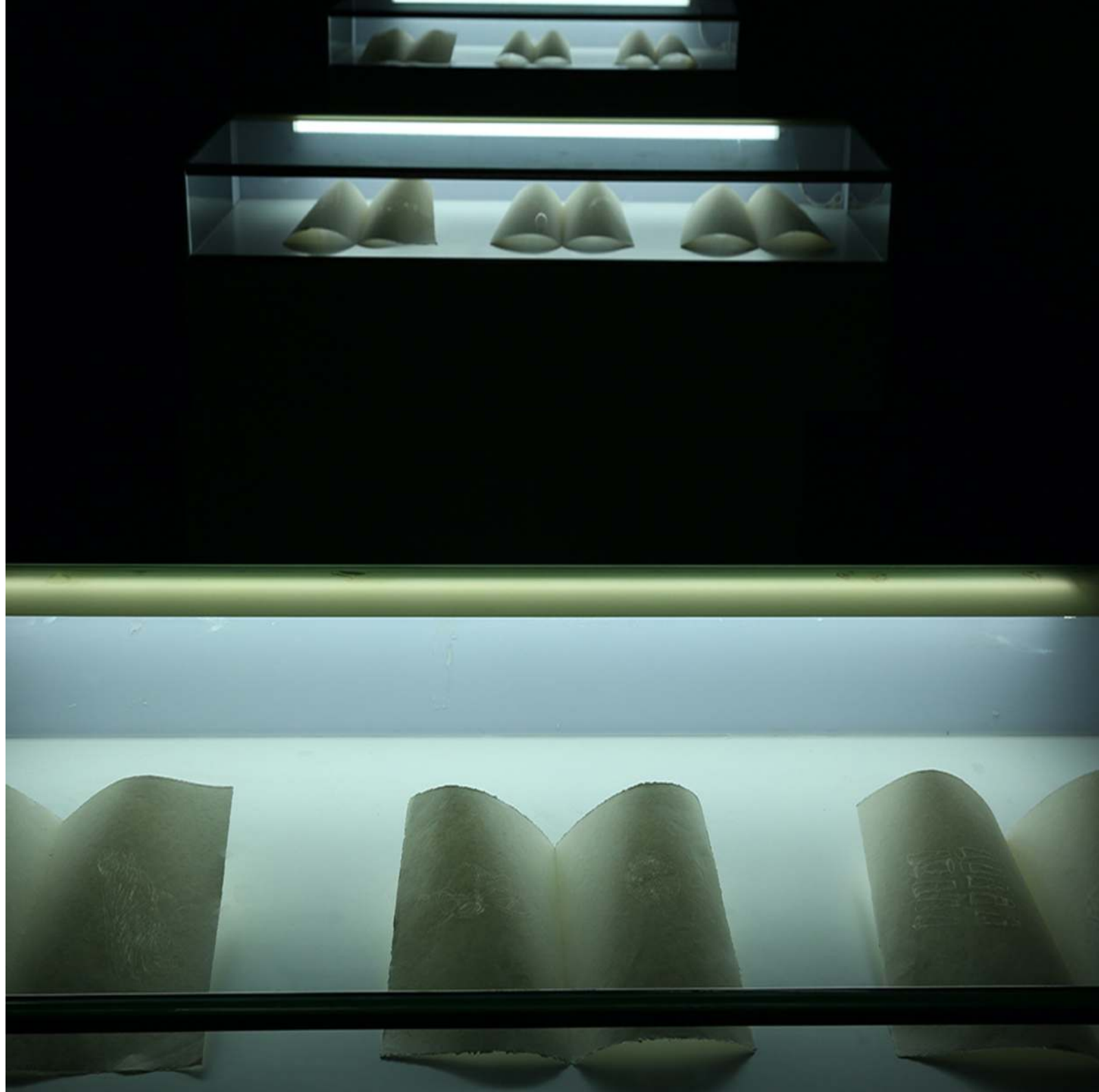
The project was framed by Willem Barentsz' expedition which left Amsterdam for China in 1596 carrying stacks of Renaissance prints but only reached the Russian Arctic – the prints remained frozen in the ice for three centuries and are now in the Rijksmuseum.

It extended Bowen's interest in devising new ways of creating and exhibiting drawings to interrogate the museological dimensions of the state of flux. The project connects with current debates on how the texture of objects can communicate in various ways. The project is further contextualised within recent drawing research and practice that explores themes of ephemerality through different means. The research established a distinctive discourse that aims to bridge debates on contemporary drawing, materiality, video and the museum context.

Right:  
*Descriptions True & Perfect*  
at the Main Gallery, Jilin University  
of Arts, Changchun, China, 2016.  
*Photo credit: Siân Bowen*



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## METHODS

In 2015 Bowen had continued to the cartographers' failed destination: the bamboo groves of East Asia. Filmed solely in the reflection of a mirror, the resulting videoworks not only fragmented the artist's passage through sub-tropical landscapes but also sought to challenge experiential understandings of time and space.

Bowen had some drawings of her own devising which were frozen three years prior to her journey for *Descriptions True and Perfect*. They had been placed and then retrieved from the Arctic after three winters in collaboration with the Russian Meteorological Research Centre, Arkhangelsk, Russia. These drawings explored ideas connected to the transportation and storage of ephemeral objects. Once retrieved from the ice they were then completely reconfigured by Bowen through multiple foldings.

Right:  
Replica of a Claude Glass, developed  
with the Science Museum, London.

*Photo credit: Siân Bowen*

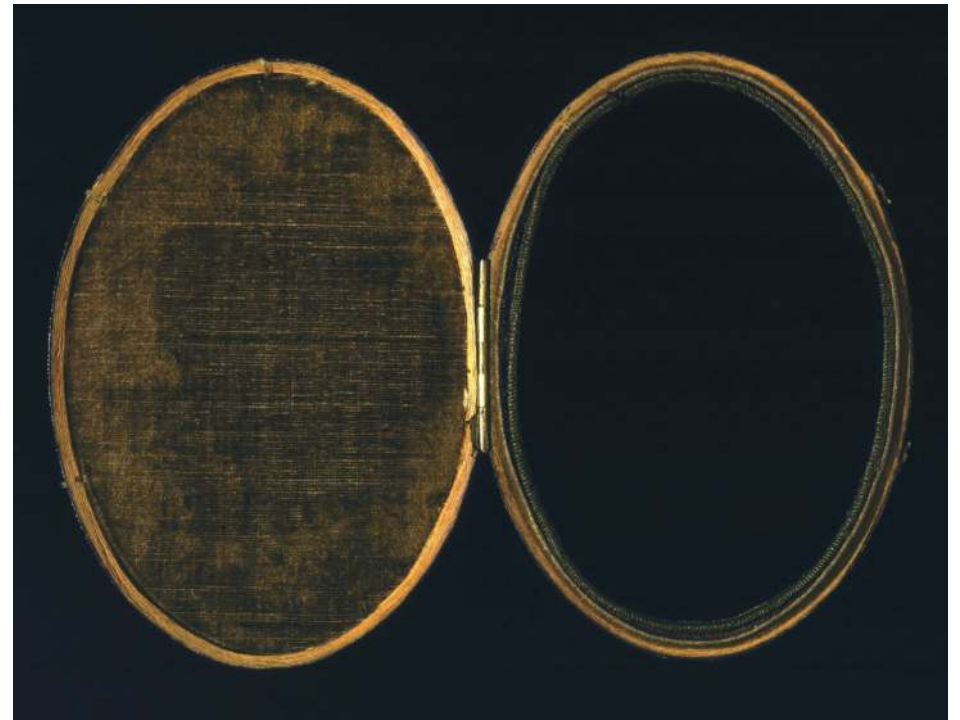




Bowen used a replica of a Claude Glass, developed previously with the Science Museum, London to aid the production of a number of new video works. The glass was based on an example dating from the eighteenth century held in the collections of the V&A. This slightly convex black mirror would have been used as a drawing aid outdoors; the reflections within it of scenery were considered to take on the tonal characteristics of Claude Lorrain's landscape paintings.

Right:  
Eighteenth century Claude Glass  
(convex black mirror) held in the  
collections of the V&A.

*Photo credit: V&A*



# DISSEMINATION

A large-scale immersive installation of twenty-five back-lit drawings, ten artist books and eight video projections, was staged at the Main Gallery, Jilin University of Arts, Changchun, China, 2016.

International Guest Lecture:  
Department of Arts, Jilin University of Arts, 2016.

Jerwood Drawing Prize:  
Panel Discussion and Presentation, AUB Bournemouth, 2017.

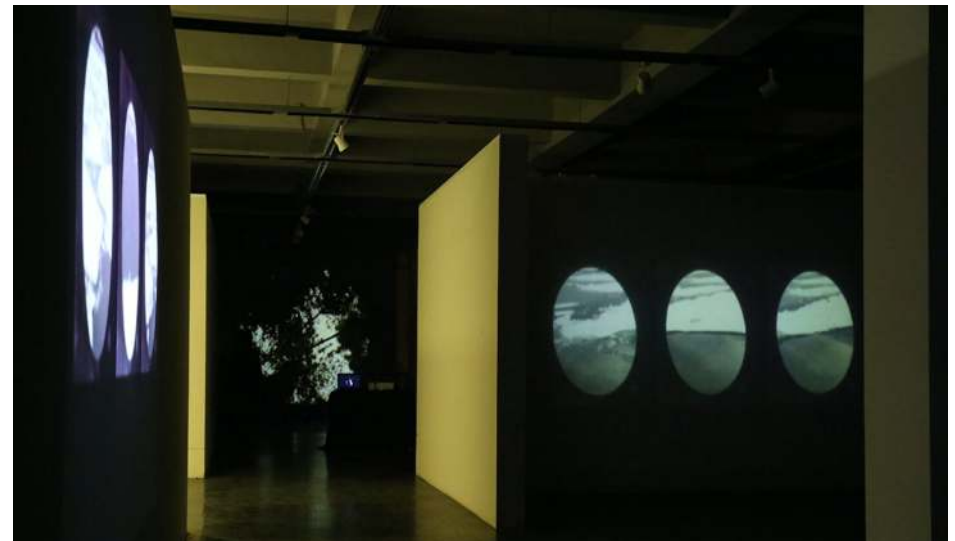
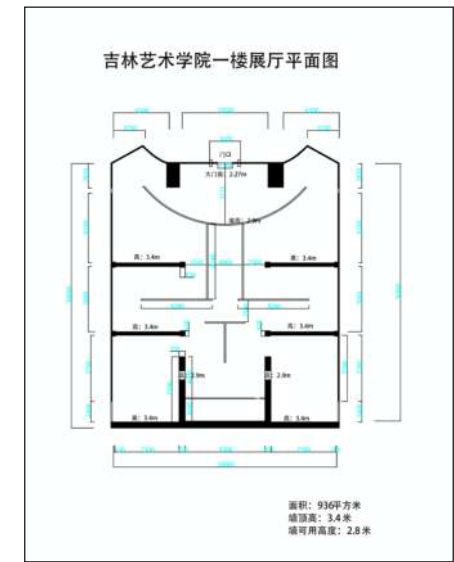
Selection of works included in 'Drawing Boundaries, Folding Islands'  
The British Pavilion, Venice Biennale for Architecture, 2018.

Selection of works included in 'I am the Space that I am'  
AUB Gallery, Bournemouth, 2018.

Right:  
Main Gallery layout,  
Jilin University of Arts,  
Changchun, China, 2016.

Below:  
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