

ISSUE TWENTY : WINTER 2022
OPEN RIVERS :
RETHINKING WATER, PLACE & COMMUNITY

RIVERS AND MEANING



<http://openrivers.umn.edu>

An interdisciplinary online journal rethinking water, place & community
from multiple perspectives within and beyond the academy.

ISSN 2471-190X

The cover image is of low clouds in Glen Forsa on the Isle of Mull, Scotland, UK. Image by Jill Diamond on Unsplash.

Except where otherwise noted, this work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International License](#). This means each author holds the copyright to her or his work, and grants all users the rights to: share (copy and/or redistribute the material in any medium or format) or adapt (remix, transform, and/or build upon the material) the article, as long as the original author and source is cited, and the use is for noncommercial purposes.

Open Rivers: Rethinking Water, Place & Community is produced by the [University of Minnesota Libraries Publishing Services](#) and the [University of Minnesota Institute for Advanced Study](#).

Editorial Staff

Editor
Laurie Moberg, Institute for Advanced Study,
University of Minnesota

Administrative Editor
Phyllis Mauch Messenger

Editorial Assistant
Natalie Warren
PhD Candidate, Communication Studies,
University of Minnesota; Institute for Advanced
Study, University of Minnesota

Media and Production Manager
Joanne Richardson, Institute for Advanced Study,
University of Minnesota

Contact Us

Open Rivers
Institute for Advanced Study
University of Minnesota
Northrop
84 Church Street SE
Minneapolis, MN 55455

Telephone: (612) 626-5054
Fax: (612) 625-8583
E-mail: openrvrs@umn.edu
Web Site: <http://openrivers.umn.edu>

ISSN 2471-190X

Editorial Board

Jay Bell
Soil, Water, and Climate, University of Minnesota

Tom Fisher
Minnesota Design Center, University of
Minnesota

Mark Gorman
Policy Analyst, Washington, D.C.

Jennifer Gunn
History of Medicine, University of Minnesota

Katherine Hayes
Anthropology, University of Minnesota

Nenette Luarca-Shoaf
Lucas Museum of Narrative Art

David Naguib Pellow
Environmental Studies, University of California,
Santa Barbara

CONTENTS

Introductions

Introduction to Issue Twenty
By Laurie Moberg, Editor 4

Guest Editor’s Introduction to Issue Twenty: Rivers and Meaning
By Mary Modeen 6

Features

RIVER FUGUES
By Margaret Cogswell 15

(Re)connecting Community to the Awataha Stream
By Laura Donkers and Charmaine Bailie 47

TWEED
By Tania Kovats and Mary Modeen 60

Professor Jiao Xingtao and *The Yangdeng Art Cooperative Project*
By Jiao Xingtao and Mary Modeen 100

In Review

Light and Language at Lismore Castle Arts
By Ciara Healy Musson 113

Geographies

In the Crook of My Elbow
By Katie Hart Potapoff 120

Perspectives

River / Museum
By Miriam Mallalieu 128

Primary Sources

Photo Essay of Ilhabela Rivers
By Francisco Pereira Da Silva, Laelcio Pereira Da Silva, and Helena Beutel 136

Reflecting On Brackish Waters
By Louise Ritchie 164

Between Two Rivers: Two Ballads from a Scots Traveller Family
By Arthur Watson 173

Teaching and Practice

The River and The Bridge
By Robert Snikkar 179

IN REVIEW

LIGHT AND LANGUAGE AT LISMORE CASTLE ARTS

By Ciara Healy Musson

The Victorian artist Samuel Palmer (1805–1881) believed that certain points in the day—usually twilight—were the times when visionary and spiritual aspects of light in a landscape could be felt most intensely. Allegorical in many ways, his work was often regarded as a lament for things still present, but so clearly on the edge of disappearance that they might almost

as well be gone. Through paint, printmaking, and drawing, Palmer channeled the filigree light and energy of these liminal moments in time on to canvas and paper.

Almost one hundred years later, in the Great Basin Desert of northwestern Utah, Nancy Holt's (1938–2014) *Sun Tunnels* (1973–76) continued



*Lismore Castle from the Blackwater.
Image courtesy of Paul McAree, Curator Lismore Castle Arts.*



Nancy Holt 'Electrical System' (1982) installation at Lismore Castle Arts.
Image courtesy of Paul McAree, Curator Lismore Castle Arts.

that meticulous attentiveness to the passing of time, to the encroaching night. Composed of four concrete cylinders arranged in an open cross format and aligned to frame the sun on the horizon during the summer and winter solstices, Holt's work has always been part metaphysical, part practical. Like Europe's Neolithic ancestors, it has a deep respect for—and knowledge of—the universe and the lessons found within it. Their lives' works and hers were predicated on an active interest in connecting all that is poetic and esoteric in the land with the mathematics of construction and engineering.

Light and Language at Lismore Castle Arts in Ireland presents a selection of Holt's work from 1966 to 1982, all of which relate to her *Sun Tunnels* earthworks. The five contemporary artists joining her in this exhibition share her infallible curiosity and desire to connect materials to time, light, space, movement, water, flow, and energy.

Like the alchemist Paracelsus (1493–1591), who once marveled that starlight could be glimpsed in the twinkling eyes of those we love, all artists in this exhibition see the echoes of one thing mirrored in another. Katie Paterson's delicate haiku-like poems in their restrained forms, titled *Ideas* (2015–), for example, surround Holt's large, electrified light bulb installation *Electrical System* (1982). Cut from silver, the poems shimmer elusive and lyrical on the walls, each small constellation of words illuminated by the yellow glow of lightbulbs on Holt's large work, transporting the reader to a new way of thinking with each reading.

Not all the work in this exhibition is ethereal and transcendental, as Holt's and Paterson's are, however. Produced using a Beckman & Whitley high-speed rotating mirror framing camera operated by engineer and scientist Tim Samaras (1957–2013), Matthew Day Jackson's *Commissioned Family Photo* (2013) is

a series of 82 photographs of the artist with his family. The “nuclear family” portrait was taken using technology developed in the 1950s for military weapons testing. It was used to analyze the efficacy of explosions and shockwaves from nuclear detonations. The camera can capture over a million frames per second. The resulting image is created by 97,500 exposures. The artist and his family are the only human beings ever to have been photographed by this camera. The resulting images are blurry and unsettling, reminiscent of Victorian spirit photographs, but within the frame there is something more sinister: layers of burnt umber and orange hues obfuscate the small child in the woman's arms in a way that feels almost radioactive.

Curated by Lisa Le Feuvre, the exhibition invites us to be enthralled by the awe and magnitude of the galaxies and stars, of the earth and the planets, of time and energy. Yet this vast expanse also induces a kind of horror. With a shock, we see ourselves: tiny on this planet. Our fragility and frailties come to the fore in the face of such immensity. We are not alone and yet we are so, so alone in this unfolding dark universe.

Spilling out of the gallery space and into the gardens is work by Charlotte Moth, whose *Blue reflecting the greens* (2021)—a glass circular blue mirror secured to the castle walls—reflects an otherworldly version of the garden back on itself.

On the lawn is A. K. Burns' sculpture *The Dispossessed* (2021) made from mangled chain link fences once used to separate or control a crowd. The fences, now deformed and displaced from their original function, take on a figurative quality of dancers.

The poetry of the everyday, of structures, limitations, and ways of defining space continues with Dennis McNulty's *Boundary Conditions* (2021), which maps a network of streets around his home in Dublin.



*Charlotte Moth 'Blue reflecting the greens' (2021) at Lismore Castle Arts.
Image courtesy of Paul McAree, Curator Lismore Castle Arts.*



*A. K. Burns 'The Dispossessed' (2021) at Lismore Castle Arts.
Image courtesy of Paul McAree, Curator Lismore Castle Arts.*

The textures of light and time, of energy, flow, and movement are made all the more relevant when one considers the location in which this work is situated. Lismore Castle dominates a bank of the River Blackwater in Co. Waterford, Ireland, and since 1753, it has belonged to the Duke of Devonshire’s family. River Blackwater is one of the largest rivers in Ireland, draining five ranges of mountains—the Boggeragh, Nagle, Ballyhoura, Galtee, and Knockmeldowns—as well as thousands of acres of land in Co. Cork. It enters the Celtic Sea in the small seaside town of Youghal and is designated a Special Area of Conservation (SAC) because of the protected habitats and species it nurtures. Tidal mudflats and sandflats, old oak woodlands, freshwater pearl mussel, white clawed crayfish, lamprey,

Atlantic salmon, European Kingfisher, and otter are all sustained because of this river. In Herman Hesse’s (2008, 83–84) iconic book *Siddhartha*, the river is described as everywhere at the same time:

at the source and at the mouth, at the water-fall, at the ferry, at the current, in the ocean and in the mountains, everywhere, and that the present only exists for it, not the shadow of the past nor the shadow of the future... Nothing was, nothing will be, everything has reality and presence.

These sentiments are echoed most profoundly in *Light and Language*, in Holt’s intimate connection to nature and the stars. Like Siddhartha,



Lismore Castle from the Blackwater.
Image courtesy of Paul McAree, Curator Lismore Castle Arts.

her quest as an artist was to listen to the voice of nature, to give back what was already within. The five artists in this exhibition continue her legacy, but with an ever increasing and sometimes elegiac urgency. Our planet—and our relationship with it—is changing rapidly. Evening soon will come.

References:

Bennett, J. 2001. *The Enchantment of Modern Life: Attachments, Crossings and Ethics*. New York: Princeton University Press.

Hesse, H. 2008. *Siddhartha*. London: Penguin.

Recommended Citation

Healy Musson, Ciara. 2021. “*Light and Language* at Lismore Castle Arts.” *Open Rivers: Rethinking Water, Place & Community*, no. 20. <https://editions.lib.umn.edu/openrivers/article/light-and-language-lismore-castle/>.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.24926/2471190X.8806>

About the Author

Dr. Ciara Healy Musson is a writer, book artist, curator, and lecturer in Art, Culture & Heritage at IT Carlow, Ireland. She is the 2021 recipient of a Scottish/Irish Bilateral Network Award from the Royal Irish Academy, an IMPACT Research Award from University of Reading (2016), a Large Grant Award from Arts Council Wales for a curatorial research project titled *Thin Place* (2015) and she was one of the 2011 recipients of the Wales Arts International Critical Writing Award. Her research interests involve developing strategies in writing, curating, and education for philosophy, poetry, literature, science, agriculture, and the visual arts to converge. This is to explore new ways of “making room” for other ontologies especially in a time of climate change.