

Artist Statement: Time Tries All Things

I was immediately drawn to this commission when I first heard about it. Physics offers us extraordinary concepts and shapes in regard to time. There are specific qualities to the medium of film that can address ideas about time, or our perception of time. The Russian film director Tarkovsky called making films 'sculpting in time'. The representation of time is of great interest to me across disciplines.

I met many people in researching this project but Fay Dowker was actually the first physicist I met and listening to her extremely thoughtful and rigorous conceptualisation of ideas about time in physics struck a profound chord with me, in particular with regard to thinking about the divisions between art and science and in our use of language. Later I met David Berman in Queen Mary University and it was actually when in conversation with him, listening to him - he is a phenomenal communicator of the complex ideas in physics - that the first germs of the final project began to crystallise and I realised that the work was going to be led by the voice, by language. It was a film that the soundtrack almost existed first.

I started to research some of the history of QMU and found that in 1882 a man called Walter Besant, wrote a novel called *All Sorts of Conditions of Men – An Impossible Story* which told of how a couple went to the East End to build a "Palace of Delight, with concert halls, reading rooms, art galleries and schools." He was trying to raise the public awareness of the hardship among the poor in the East End and his novel was very popular and one of the outcomes was aiding the success of raising the finance in 1886 for a People's Palace, a place for culture and learning in the East End of London. This palace of delight eventually grew into what is now Queen Mary University. The film is shot almost entirely in the original Peoples Palace, a real place that was formed out of a novel.

And one day I went to look more closely at the Clocktower outside the Peoples Palace, it had been built in 1890 by Herbert Stern, a philanthropist in memory of his father. And on the side of it was a stone plaque, a strange out-of-place and out-of-time object, a carving of a bird flying over a bay with the words 'Time Trieth Troth' carved into it. And I could find nothing about it, its maker is unknown. But I took a photograph of it, a snapshot. In looking at this photograph back in my studio I decided I wanted to remake the stone plaque, to consider the time before the plaque existed as well as the time afterwards. I approached the stone carver Seamus Dunbar, who granted my request so beautifully and skilfully.

The relationship between reconstruction and photography interests me, where both attempt to fix a moment. Photography for all its disposability now and current focus on dispersal, can still mark a certain moment in time. Within the film, I wanted to stretch the photographic snapshot I had taken of the stone plaque into a different kind of elasticity of the present understood through film and combining the modes of time and their differing implications for the future suggested by both Fay and David.

Amongst all the moments that one has, there are moments that are significant. This work is a collation of different moments, of different half hours aligned and intertwined with each other, in order to make another half hour. Someone has a conversation with you about the nature of time and a year later you are still thinking about what they said and the moment they said it.

Grace Weir - The Institute of Physics, London, 18th Jan 2019.