

under the same sky

15-26 June 2022 / 11 am-5 pm
St. Luke's Crypt, Cork

a new audio-visual installation by **Kristina Inčiūraitė**
curator **Chris Clarke**
musical director **Eva McMullan-Glossop**
musical performers **The UCC Choir**
commissioned by **The Glucksman**
in partnership with **Cork Midsummer Festival**

Chris Clarke: Under the Same Sky was filmed in the Burren, County Clare. What was it about this area that interested you, and what did this particular landscape bring to your film?

Kristina Inčiūraitė: One horrifying expression remains with me: *It is a country where there is not enough water to drown a man, wood enough to hang one, nor earth enough to bury him.* No surprise that this sentence said about 400 years ago belongs to Oliver Cromwell, but it accurately reveals the characteristic of the Burren National Park – not an accommodating place for humans. Due to specific geological features, the bleak and treeless land looks more like the surface of the moon; the impressive limestone pavements were formed around 340 million years ago. The limestone erodes horizontally and vertically, with rainwater forming a distinctive pattern with cracks, and underneath the limestone pavements, huge caves flood when it rains. This unique multi-layered landscape is a hidden realm of wild nature. There are various species of flora with simultaneous occurrence of Mediterranean, Alpine and Arctic species, as well as a rich faunal community. My approach to this place is rather philosophical. I have chosen this location because of its contradiction and ambivalence – something that looks poor and deserted but, on closer inspection, surprisingly rich and diverse.

The Burren's landscape is very ascetic and reminiscent of no man's land; the poor visual aspect escalates the focus more on the acoustics. Therefore, I asked the following questions to my musical collaborators, the UCC Choir, who created the base of the film's soundtrack: Can biodiversity be sustained in our individual and collective memory? Can we re-construct various sounds of Irish wild nature based on observations and imagination? Can we be less anthropocentric and imagine communities that are not shaped by human superiority? The priority is given to sound/voice rather than visuality which is a characteristic of all my films. The acoustic or verbal space becomes the conceptual pivot in my films to reflect socio-cultural

and environmental issues and focus on our memory. So, the ascetic landscape of the Burren reveals the beauty of the soundscape by disclosing the hidden treasures of our (sub)-consciousness, which somehow relates to the hidden plants inside the Burren's limestone cracks.

CC: There are sequences where the camera delves underground, plunges into darkness before returning to the surface, close-up details, and other parts incorporating digital manipulation or animation. How did you choose to structure or arrange these sections? Is there a sense of narrative here, or do you employ a sort of formal variation, or do you strive to achieve a more atmospheric tone?

KI: The film's structure evolved naturally and followed the route of my filming trip. It was important for me to show two sides of the Burren's 'moon' – the visible and concealed – to dive from the ground to underground and back to the sun, where more surreal images emerge. Also, colours have a meaning here. I tried to achieve an atmospheric tone where black-and-white episodes related to the past and pinkish images associated with the apocalyptic future meet at one point as the Burren is full of contradictions. I suggest that the present time is missing in the film. The here-and-now seems to dissolve in the unidentified black void that appears in the gaps of limestone pavements in the second part of the film. In other words, the current time is vague in my film; it is uncertainty submerged in blackness.

CC: The soundtrack was developed over several workshops and rehearsals with Eva McMullan-Glossop and the University College Cork Choir and comprises a range of animal noises, including whistles and growls. How did this experience unfold and what guidelines do you generally offer in your musical collaborations?

KI: I initiate many collaborations with various choir singers in different countries and present the outcome in musical performances, sound projects or soundtracks. Additionally, I provide the context, concept, and mood of the project, but the singers decide what to perform. The nature of such collaboration is completely experimental, as the given guidelines are improvisational.

Eva and the UCC Choir were invited to create a soundtrack for my film – each singer tried to express various wild nature sounds. Ireland is very domesticated, and fewer plots of untouched land are available. Thus, the recollection of wild nature sounds is challenging. Imagine standing on the plain rocky ground in the Burren in the distant future where there is no more life while you try to

remember/imagine the surrounding noise and specific ambience that should embrace you in this vast area.

After intensive workshops and rehearsals, Eva and the choir achieved a very subtle and rich sound composition. The musical performers prepared a library of individual sounds, not directly focusing on the film plot and arranged some group performances dedicated to some episodes of the film, where the mood changes slightly. Everyone was free to decide what and how to perform. I'm excited that each choir participant was a thinker, active performer, and composer rather than a passive voice performing musical scores. I always strive to achieve the non-hierarchical, 'horizontal' arrangement of musical collaborations.

CC: The soundtrack really accentuates the strange, unworldly nature of the Burren. Can you elaborate on how you arranged the musical score with the filmed footage, and what effect the sound has on how viewers perceive or interpret the work?

KI: The group performances were created for particular parts of the film, while some 'loose' individual sounds were selected and synchronised with the rest of the images by myself. Together with the UCC Choir, I tried to create a subtle and somewhat lightly sophisticated 'dialogue' between the sound and the image. All this is based on experimentation without any written musical score. I would encourage the spectators to think about which sounds they could add to this soundscape. A broad interpretation of work is always welcome.

CC: Under the Same Sky incorporates sculptural elements such as the embroidered pillows and a polished platform. What roles do these objects and features play in one's encounter with work? How do they relate to the film and its soundtrack?

KI: Yes, this is not just an experimental film (duration: 13 min.) but an audio-visual installation incorporating other elements. This is a site-specific project adjusted for the former St. Luke's Church. The shape of the project brings a distant reference to the altar if not for praying, then for meditation with gods and sounds derived from nature. Through the thin black platform and cushions with embroidered contours of the bats, I try to extend that specific sense of uncertainty of the here-and-now. The shiny black surface doubles the film image and accentuates a more surreal, unworldly atmosphere. Meanwhile, the bats from the darkest corners of the film's cave mysteriously pop up on cushions. At first glance, they look like flying mammals, but actually, they are depicted as swimming bats. It is atypical for them to be in the water; however, they swim when

they really need to, i.e., when they accidentally fall in. It's a stressful situation for them. I present the bat as still not drowning but in a state of frustration. Again, there is an uncanny uncertainty.

CC: The work addresses ideas of biodiversity and the impact of human activity on the natural environment. Do you see it as possessing an implicit ecological message or political agenda?

KI: No doubt, the ecological message is always a political agenda. Extended domesticated areas can be perceived as a certain type of violence towards wildlife. To do justice to wild animals and other beings inhabiting the country (and the planet in general), we need to reduce a dominant anthropocentric-capitalist order and allow more space for alternative modes of (non)economic relations and regulations. Namely, the protection of animals in native habitats, ecological zones (like national parks), and animal sanctuaries. The ethically and politically correct human-animal relations should be seen in the context of broader political agendas. It should go hand in hand with other movements of social change by trying to support racial justice, indigenous, LGBTQ+, disabled, feminists, anti-globalisation movements and other minorities.

It was interesting for me to work on a micro-level, focusing on one ambivalent landscape of the Burren, and revealing the poetical tones of our fragile world. Together with my musical collaborators, I tried to 'employ' individual and collective memory and remind us that living beings are closely tied together, and these ties should not be lost.

Kristina Inčiūraitė (b. 1974) is a Lithuanian contemporary artist, whose practice often involves installation, experimental film, and musical performance. She has produced numerous projects in collaboration with international singers, collectively addressing the constant change of our urban and natural world, and the ways in which these developments alter and affect our own identities. Her work has been previously exhibited at art institutions, including National Gallery of Art, Contemporary Art Centre in Vilnius, MAXXI National Museum of 21st Century Arts in Rome, National Art Museum of China in Beijing, National Art Museum of Ukraine in Kyiv, Oi Futuro Cultural Center in Rio de Janeiro, Kalmar Museum of Art in Kalmar, KUMU Art Museum in Tallinn, and ar/ge kunst Gallery Museum in Bolzano, etc. www.inciuraite.lt

