

Allison Gray:
Engraving

1 Introduction

The aim of this report is to provide an account of environmental art. The report is based around an environmental art project that was carried out at Ardmore Point, a peninsula located on the river Clyde. Firstly there will be a section that provides a description and context of site in which the environmental art was carried out. Secondly there will be a section that will offer a justification for and the purposes behind the art work. The following section will describe the methodology of the project; including planning and implementation. The concluding sections will concentrate on environmental art in general and will highlight how art in the environment can enhance experiences of the outdoors.

2 The site-context and description

This section of the report will provide a description and site-context of Ardmore Point. Physical and cultural mapping of the area will be included. Ardmore Point is a privately owned peninsula located on the river Clyde. (See figure 1 for a map showing the location of Ardmore Point and figure 2 for a photograph of the peninsula at high tide.)



Figure 1 – Map of Ardmore Point



Figure 2 – View of Ardmore Point

Until very recently the area was a nature reserve and was managed by the Scottish Wildlife Trust.

During the time that Ardmore Point was in the care of the Scottish Wildlife Trust it was in very good condition and had a well looked after nature trail. Unfortunately, due to recent events this arrangement is no longer in place. The peninsula is now in disarray and suffers greatly from litter and pollution. The litter is mainly produced from rubbish that has been disposed of in the Clyde further up the river towards Glasgow; this is obvious due to the fact that the large majority of litter is located on the east shore of the peninsula. This indicates that the litter has been washed down the Clyde and has been caught on the shore of Ardmore Point due to the fact that it protrudes out into the flow of the river. However there is also a strong indication that litter is being left by people who are visiting Ardmore Point as large amounts of rubbish can be found particularly in the areas where there are picnic benches.

Ardmore Point is located on the river Clyde. Searches revealed that the most prominent part of the Clyde's history was the ship building industry. Its rapid expansion began once the shallow, slow-flowing river had been dredged to allow large ships to sail all the way into the city centre of Glasgow. And, of course, the deeper, wider river allowed the creation of a huge ship-building industry along its banks. However the Clyde was not only used for shipbuilding, it rapidly came a way for Glaswegians to escape from the industrial city and allowed them to sail down the Clyde on cruising boats. One of the only boats that continues this tradition is the 'Waverley', a sea-going paddle steamer that offers day cruises of the Clyde, starting in Glasgow and sails down to the lower Clyde, visiting towns such as Helensburgh and Rothesay and the way. The Clyde has therefore had a huge number and variety of boats visiting it over the years, but unfortunately due to many different reasons the number of boats visiting the Clyde has dropped dramatically.

Justification for the art work

The art work carried out took the form of small engravings on to large pieces of drift wood. The engravings were of different types of boats that are (or have been) local to the river Clyde. In total, three engravings were produced. The first was of a schooner, the second was a puffer and the final one was a steamer. It was initially intended that there would be six engravings; however, due to time constraints on the day, this was not possible. The final three engravings were to include a yacht, a gaff rig and a sailing barge.

This concept was initially inspired by the idea of making an environmental work of art that was very discrete and would only be discovered by someone who was exploring the shore line. By producing a set of engravings that were randomly scattered throughout the shore line of the peninsula it was intended that it would encourage people to search for more of the engravings. This in turn would hopefully compel the people to explore the site in greater depth and possibly view the environment in a different way and hopefully enhance their experience of the outdoors.

The engravings were representations of the different boats that have been prominent through out the history of the Clyde. Using boats as the subject for the engravings was intended to entice the people who discover them to not only continue exploring the shore line, but to get them to look beyond the land and out towards the Clyde. It was also hoped that it would make the onlookers reflect upon the history of the Clyde and the fact that the river was once a busy waterway with hundreds of boats visiting it every year. Each engraving also included a small plaque with the type of boat written on it. This was to further emphasise that the engravings were part of a set and also to provide an informative/educational element to the artwork.

4 Methodology

This section of the report will provide a description of the methodology that was utilised throughout the environmental art project. It will include the planning and implementation of the project.

Before carrying out the project, a small investigation was made into the history of the river Clyde using the internet. The ships of the Clyde were selected as a topic for the engravings. A search was carried out to establish the most popular ships that have been local to the Clyde throughout its history. Following this an internet search was executed to find suitable images and representations of the selected boats. (See figure 3 for example of images collected to represent boats local to the Clyde)

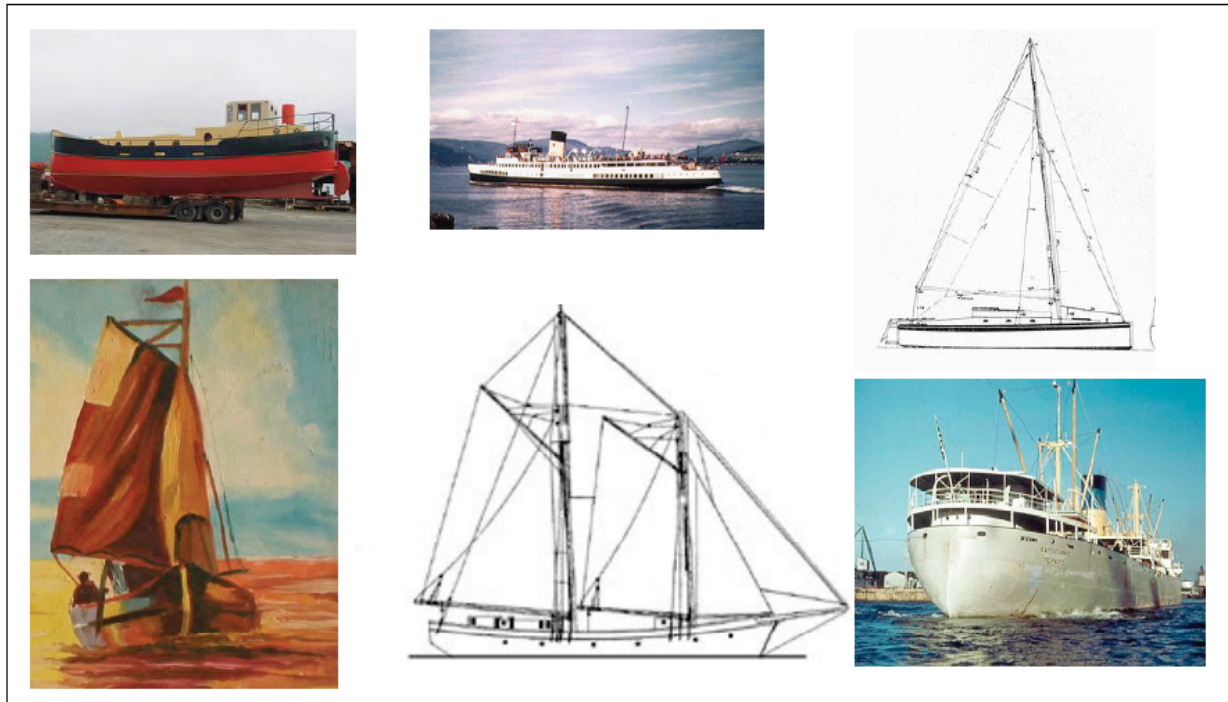


Figure 3 – Examples of images collected

Once on site, locations for the engravings were located. An attempt was made to insure that the pieces of drift wood that were used were a reasonable distance apart so that they were spread randomly about the shoreline of the peninsula. It was intended that when the engravings were being viewed the onlooker would be facing out towards the river. Tests were also carried out on several pieces of drift wood to ensure that they would be suitable for engraving.



Figure 4 – Engraving with a chisel



Figure 5 – Example of different qualities of wood

The engravings were created using a chisel, a Stanley knife and a screwdriver. Firstly the drawings were sketched onto the wood using a pencil. The drawings were then marked out using the Stanley knife; this tool provided a sharp and deep line that was easy to control. Once the outline of the boat was completed the chisel was used to make the lines deeper and more prominent where needed. The chisel was then used to gently scrape away the surface of the wood to reveal the different qualities and colour of the wood. By making deep incisions into the outlines of the drawing insured that, when using the chisel to scrape away layers of the wood, there was an element of control, as it meant that the chisel would stop moving when it hit the outline. The screwdriver was used to make holes when it was not possible to do so with the Stanley knife or the chisel (for example when trying to engrave the port holes on each of the boats).

The three different pieces of drift wood used all had differing qualities. This meant that the skills and methods of creating the engravings had to be changed and adapted to suit the wood. Before creating each engraving a small test was carried out, on a small and hidden area of the wood, to determine the different qualities of the wood and to decide on the best approach. The wood used to create the Puffer engraving is a great example of how the woods differed (See figure 5 for a photograph of the Puffer engraving). Whilst carrying out the test on this particular piece of wood it became apparent that there were different layers of colour that could be revealed by changing

the amount of surface wood that was scraped away. The top surface was a dark grey/brown colour; a small amount of light scraping with the chisel revealed a reddish/brown; and finally deep engravings produced a clean and bright off white colour. This unique quality in the wood was used to enhance the engraving of the Puffer and an attempt was made to try and produce a feeling of shade and colour.

The engravings took longer than anticipated to complete, therefore, as stated earlier, only three out of the six intended engravings were produced. See figure 6 for photographs of final engravings. Following figure 6 are two Haiku that were written on the day that the engravings were created.



Figure 6 – Final engravings (top left – *Puffer*, top right – *Schooner*, bottom – *Steamer*)

I hear nothing else
The scrapping and scoring

Water laps on the shore

Who will find one?

A small child playing on the beach

Will they search for more?

5 Environmental Arts Practice

The following section is concerned with the theoretical elements of art in the environment and will provide details of environmental arts practice and present an overview of the environmental artworks of Richard Long. It will also include how art in the environment can enhance ones experiences of the outdoors.

Environmental art is artwork created to exist outdoors and in a certain place. Typically, the artist takes the location into account while planning and creating the artwork. There is not one right answer or one right approach to environmental art and there are many different forms and motives. Many environmental artists tackle ecological and political issues for example pollution and land degradation. This type of art work is normally carried out in rural areas that are either polluted or contaminated in some way and is often produced in connection with local people. The local people are encouraged to participate and be involved in the running of the project. This approach would hopefully help to engage people in the act of thinking about ecological change and how they can take responsibility for the environment. Environmental art, particularly when it is carried out in rural settings, is often temporary. Artists may only intend the art work to be in location for a short time. Many artists that work in this way feel that making their art work temporary further enhances its value and intensity. In some instances of temporary art the artist's main intention is photographing the installation and the photograph then becomes the artwork.

5.1 Richard Long

Richard Long is well known for his environmental art and has always been fascinated with the

idea of making nature centre to his art work. “Over the years these sculptures have explored some of the variables of transience, permanence, visibility or recognition. A sculpture may be moved, dispersed, carried. Stones can be used as markers of time or distance, or exist as parts of a huge, yet anonymous, sculpture.” (Richard Long, 2000, Richard Long Official Website – Index) He began by simply working outdoors using natural materials such as grass and water. Over time this evolved into the idea of making sculptures through walking. This was inspired by the concept of, “the rich territory between two ideological positions, namely that of making ‘monuments’ or conversely, of ‘leaving only footprints’.” (Richard Long, 2000, Richard Long Official Website – Index) In 1967 Long produced his first work made by walking. It was a straight line in a grass field which represented his “own path, going ‘nowhere’.” (Richard Long, 2000, Richard Long Official Website – Index) Long often intentionally change the landscape in some way. This can be seen in his work, ‘*A Line Made by Walking*’ (1967) in which he treaded back and forth along the same line in a field. See figure 7 for a photograph of ‘*A Line Made by Walking*’. (Richard Long, 2000, Richard Long Official Website – Sculptures) This resulted in the grass being slightly worn away to create a thin path. The path temporarily altered the appearance of the land for a short time, leaving a visual record of his activity. The flattened line lasted until the grass grew again. The only record of the lines existence is in the form of a photograph and is therefore the only evidence of Longs movement through the field. Long also produces sculptures that are created from rocks or similar natural materials that are then photographed. Long not only records his art work through the medium of photography, he also uses maps or text works to record or describe his journeys. He uses whichever mode he feels is most appropriate for each particular work of art, frequently combining two or sometimes all three modes if recording.

5.2 Enhance experience of the outdoors

This section aims to describe how art in an environment can enhance ones experience of the outdoors. It will also highlight factors regarding the ecological and environmental impact to the area in which the artwork is being carried out. Environmental art can have a positive impact on an environment. Art in the environment, in its simplest and most obvious form, can add to the beauty of the site and therefore enhance the natural environment aesthetically. However some artists do not create work purely for aesthetic purposes; they may aim to use the work to highlight damage that is being done to the environment. This is in the hope that people who view the

artwork will look at the environment differently and will be inspired to take responsibility for its preservation. Environmental art is often used to interpret nature, creating artworks that can inform people about nature and its processes. “In a general sense, it [environmental art] is art that helps improve our relationship with the natural world.” (Lynne Hull, 2006, the Green Museum Website, What is Environmental Art?) It can also be used to highlight environmental and ecological problems that are prevalent in today’s environment. However, it must be noted that, even if the artwork is not harmful to the environment it can still have a negative impact. Introducing artwork into an area, regardless of its physical impact, will alter it. The value of the location is no longer intrinsic to itself – the artwork can change the environment and peoples perceptions of the area.

Environmental art can be a positive addition to an environment, however it would be foolish to assume that all environmental art is permissible as there are a number of factors that should be addressed when producing artwork of a certain type to ensure that the artist is treating the environment, in which the art is being carried out, with respect and consideration.

6 Conclusion

This report has provided an account of environmental art. The report concentrated on an environmental art project that was carried out at Ardmore Point. Firstly there was a section that provided a description and context of site in which the environmental art was carried out. There was then a section that offered a justification for and the purposes behind the art work. The following sections described the methodology of the project; including planning and implementation. The final sections of the report concentrated on environmental art in general and highlighted how art in the environment can enhance experiences of the outdoors.

7 References

Hull, L., (2006) Retrieved 12th May 2006 from the Green Museum website:

http://greenmuseum.org/what_is_ea.php

Long, R., (2002) Retrieved 26th April 2006 from the Richard Long website:

<http://www.richardlong.org/index.html>