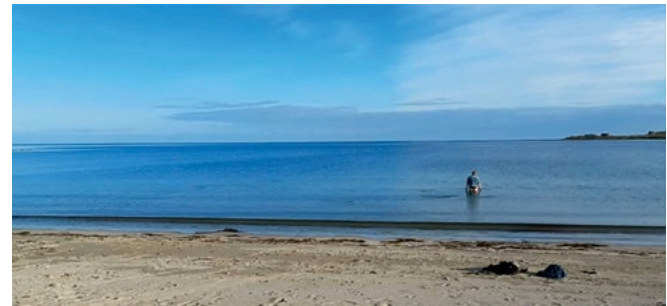


Heini Kankaro and Kerriane Flett

Virtual walks: Ongoing shared remote connection



*Figure 1. Heini walking in the landscape, Rovaniemi.
Image: Mira Kemppainen, 2023.*

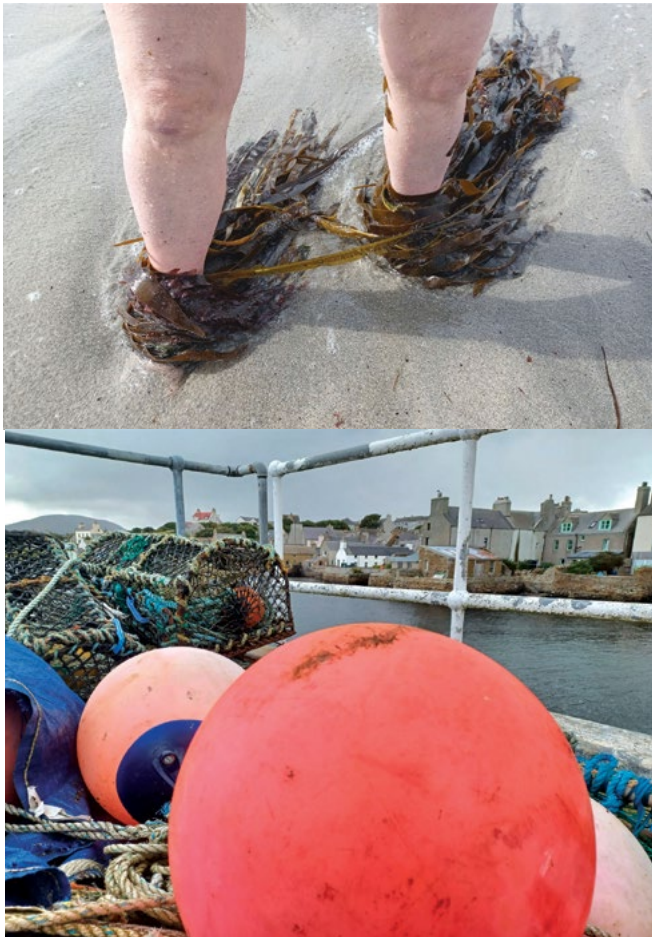


*Figure 2. Kerriane walking in the landscape, Orkney.
Image: Cordelia Underhill, 2023.*

Connections is about exploring landscapes and nature both familiar and not so; the pair enters into a dialogue about what it means to be a dweller within a landscape/ nature whilst exploring both the known and unknown. Experimental and surreal experiences of landscapes influence the visuals. Connections, both physical and virtual, have influenced the creation of this work.

MADders: a name chosen by the artists representative of their collaborative art practice. The multiple meanings of this word reflect the multiple and nebulous ways in which they relate to landscapes. Loaded with symbolism relating to the natural world, colour and the absurd, MADders describes the duo perfectly.

Kerrianne is from Orkney, an archipelago off the northernmost tip of mainland Scotland. During the LiLa project, she was part of team Shetland as she is currently studying for her MA in Art and Social Practice with UHI Shetland. Interestingly, this programme is fully online, and team Shetland was comprised of many students who do not physically study in Shetland, instead meeting online within a virtual study environment—something which would prove useful as this project progressed.



Orkney and Shetland make up what is known as the Northern Isles and are renowned for their lack of trees! This element made this year's theme of forest particularly interesting and challenging for Kerrianne. During the programme and before fieldwork week, Kerrianne spent time finding her forest, no easy task in a landscape devoid of trees. Settling on the shoreline as her taskscape (Ingold, 1993), studying kelp forests proved to be an area of interest early in the research phase. In her work, Kerrianne is interested in exploring opposing and contradictory phenomena and through her practice strives to embrace this dissonance. Something she carried with her to Umeå and the forests she found there. During her time in Sweden, Kerrianne explored what it means to be a visitor in an unfamiliar landscape. Wearing the colour pink, reminiscent of fishing buoys from her home taskscape (Ingold, 1993), Kerrianne set out to explore the unfamiliar (to her) forest in Umeå, in both a sensory and performative way. Taking inspiration from the situationist's idea of the *dérive* reinterpreting this idea from an urban to a contemporary rural context, she embarked on unplanned journeys through this new landscape, allowing herself to interact performatively with any areas of interest found along the way. This theory also applies to Heini, whom she encountered in this new landscape.

Figure 3. Finding my forest (kelp feet). Figure 4. Colour inspiration, fishing buoys, Stromness Orkney. Images: Kerrianne Flett, 2023.



Figure 5. Kerrienne: *Exploring the forest Umeå, absent body.*
Image: Kerrienne Flett, 2023.

Heini is from Finland and she is a master's student of art education at the University of Lapland. She is interested in exploring landscapes with her senses and feelings. The landscape changes year after year, but the feelings are the same—everything comes together into a meaningful whole. Her favourite taskscape (Ingold, 1993) is about feeling in the place, seeking things she did not notice before, and listening to the sounds around her. On her walks, Heini focused on the various reflections and shapes she found in nature. Image 7: Exploring the forest Umeå, absent body. Picture by Kerrienne



Figure 6. Heini: *Exploring nature, present body.*
Image: Ezgi Tanriverdi, 2023.

Flett, 2023

When LiLa's fieldwork week started in Sweden, Heini explored nature with her senses. She lay on the ground in different places so she could feel the connection with nature—the warmth of the rock, basking in the warmth of the sun, the gentle breeze of the wind, the smell of the sea and the tickling grass underfoot. Sometimes, she draws her senses on paper with her eyes closed so that she can focus more closely on the experience without privileging the ocular. The most important thing was to just be and let things happen.



Figure 7. Heini draws her senses on paper. Image: Mari Parpala, 2023. Figure 8. Tactile exploration of nature. Image: Heini Kan-karo, 2023.

During the fieldwork week, the pair decided to work collaboratively on a final artistic production after both had explored the landscape individually. This meant a return to their familiar landscapes of Orkney and Finland, whilst maintaining an online working relationship

to find a way to collaborate in a meaningful way long distance. It was this ongoing shared remote connection that became a vital part of the working process and of equal importance to the final artistic output—the film.

Virtual communication became a tool to enhance their artistic process and they decided to jointly embrace *dérive* inspired walks within their own landscapes, a technique Kerriane had used during the week in Umeå. This ‘dwelling perspective’ (Ingold, 1993) made us think about our active, perceptual engagement in the landscapes we live in. The shared experience and joint enterprise shaped the direction of the work that followed. Communication and documentation became increasingly important as the work evolved, communicating visually online as a means to quickly share ideas and areas of interest.

As with all collaborative practices, there were challenges. After returning to their home landscapes, certain factors made a combined way of working problematic. The two-hour time difference between Finland and the UK is the most troublesome for coordinating their walking practices. However, as the project went on, this was overcome by the increased use of online platforms to share ongoing work and ideas between pairs. This intimate correspondence and sharing of work and ideas strengthened the duo’s connection. There is a shared humour and a creeping sense of the absurd brought on by the colour pink and informed by global environmental crises. This collaboration relates to ongoing shared and remote ‘connections’ and how artistic processes might continue, even when distanced by 4,172 kilometres.

About the Final Work, Connections: Virtual Walks; Ongoing Shared Remote Connection

The final work, ‘Connections - Virtual walks; ongoing shared remote connection’ is a virtual and visual conver-

sation between two different artists and their landscapes. Landscapes are not just space or nature. They tell of their cultural image and surroundings. The landscape is the place where dwelling can happen and when it happens, people can scan the world and reveal information (Ingold, 1993). What MADders share in their performative practice is a vision of the landscape that considers both the absence and presence of the body. When exploring a landscape, information is received from our surroundings through our bodies. The body can be present when dwelling and receiving information from the landscape. The body is never just an object that receives information without being present; it can also be absent and tends to disappear (Leder, 1990). Through this work, we consider whether the performative body can ever truly be absent.

In the exhibition, both artists' videos are displayed side by side, viewed as one work comprised of components made by each half of the duo MADders, highlighting the dialogue between the artists, their landscapes and the shared connection formed during LiLa 2023.

This collaboration between Finnish and Orcadian peers has been dictated by the restraints of social media and internet connections. This collaboration was only briefly experienced in real life. Thus, this exchange was distracted by the constraints of virtual communication. Given the breadth of the definition of this term, we have exercised the best we can to cross this divide. Separation in this collaboration includes physical, language and cultural separation. We have relied on a variety of ether-connected communication avenues, trying our best to retain haptic and peripherally visceral connections. In light of the specification for this project's absence and presence of trees and bodies, we discovered a shared love of pink, an intermediary colour between the reddish brown and light hues of a landscape with a big sky.

In the final work, you see two landscapes 'talking to-

gether' the way people interact with each other. Knowing when to be quiet is a challenge when it comes to recording virtual walks. Sometimes, the feeling of excitement is so intense that pausing when communicating proves difficult and interruptions happen. This is also true of our landscapes when they are in conversation. They also experience a language barrier; sometimes, both are silent, and sometimes both speak at the same time. Communication at times proves difficult. To convey this visually, we have added pauses in the conversation, represented by pink block colour, which allows time for contemplation during the at times hectic conversation.

During our landscape's conversation, pauses, silence and time for consideration are as important as pace, movement and noise, creating a rhythmical experience akin to an in-person conversation. In addition to being important to the flow of the final work, the pink moments of contemplation also provide enduring symbolism, linking both to MADders' names and also to issues surrounding feminism. The pink colour speaks of femininity, but it can also be a badge of sisterhood and works as a political gesture. (Elliot, 2007). The use of pink became an important element in our individual videos and then in the combined final production, visually symbolising MADders' connections' across many levels.

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