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# **Night Walking: darkness and sensory perception in a night-time landscape installation**

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## **Night walking: darkness and sensory perception in a night-time landscape installation**

### **Abstract**

Human sensory orders are recalibrated when faced with the reduced illumination levels of the night; it is harder to judge depth and distance, details are obscured, colours muted, and one is obliged to compensate for this loss of visual acuity by drawing on the other senses. Darkness also forces one to question how one's body is in relation to that which surrounds, challenging one's human sense of bodily presence and boundary. Focusing on *The Storr: Unfolding Landscape*, a temporary night-time installation by the environmental arts charity NVA (Nacionale Vite Activa) on the Isle of Skye in 2005, this paper draws together contemporary art theory on installation art and recent post-phenomenological work in geography to explore the ways in which individuals experience the nocturnal landscape. In so doing, the paper highlights the close connections between these two bodies of work and how they might be usefully employed to advance traditional geographical understandings of landscape in art. At the same time, however, it raises both an empirical concern and a methodological question. First, regarding the uncritical way in which visibility is incorporated into many post-phenomenological accounts of landscape. Second, regarding the validity of focussing on isolated narratives in instances such as this when so much of what the individuals experienced was caused by, or shared with, others.

**Keywords:** darkness, installation art, landscape, senses, Isle of Skye

## **Biographical note**

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## **Introduction**

At night new orders of connection assert themselves: sonic, olfactory, tactile. The sensorium is transformed. Associations swarm out of the darkness. You become even more aware of the landscape as a medley of effects, a mingling of geology, memory, movement, life. The landforms remain, but they exist as presences: inferred, less substantial, more powerful.<sup>1</sup>

In the above quote, mountaineer and outdoor enthusiast Robert MacFarlane describes his experience of walking alone, at night, in the Cumbrian mountains. Like a modern day Thoreau, who notably placed other senses as equal to, or more important, than sight,<sup>2</sup> he revels in a multi-sensory 'wildness'. For MacFarlane it is darkness that returns to wilderness a Lake District landscape 'loved into tameness by its millions of visitors'.<sup>3</sup> It transforms a familiar landscape of teashops and foot-worn paths into something strange and unfamiliar.<sup>4</sup> Highly visual animals, humans are greatly disadvantaged when the lights go out,<sup>5</sup> for the human eye has reduced visual acuity in conditions of lower illumination.<sup>6</sup> Nothing is solid in the dark: it is harder to judge depth and distance, details are obscured and colours muted. One is obliged to 'see' by drawing on other senses such as touch, smell

and hearing. In the dark how one senses what is surrounding is so fully restructured that it may no longer be appropriate to even label it a *landscape*, given that this term has embedded within it a notion of the scene and that which is visible.

Darkness also can call into question how the human body is in relation to that which surrounds. Anyone who has experienced the strange sensation of not being able to see one's hand before one's face on entering a pitch-black night will affirm that darkness challenges the human sense of bodily presence and boundary. Daylight vision allows humans to know bodily 'fullness', as Minkowski calls it, and to set that fullness into a relationship of 'distance' and 'extension' with a visualised context.<sup>7</sup> Whereas darkness, as art historian and critic Claire Bishop notes, engenders a sense of 'temporary dissolution';<sup>8</sup> it fosters, according to curator Mary Horlock, 'contradictory emotions: [a] feeling of liberation which can be uplifting, but also a sense of surrender which is unsettling'.<sup>9</sup> Throughout the history of Western thought, light has been an influential metaphor of existence, clarity and truth, a symbol of goodness, salvation, and the divine.<sup>10</sup> In contrast, the dark has been 'crammed full of all that is devilish, like some grim cupboard under the stair'.<sup>11</sup> A realm of fascination and fear which inhabits the edges of our existence, crowded by shadows, plagued by uncertainty, and shrouded in intrigue.<sup>12</sup>

As compelling as the construction of a light/dark (day/night) binary might be, however, it is problematic. As architectural historian Anthony Vidler reminds us, the mechanism of power ('the instrument of fear') exists not simply in 'the final triumph of light over dark' but in the instability between the two, 'their uncanny ability to slip from one to the other', to be present in each other.<sup>13</sup> There is no such thing as total darkness at night (or total lightness in the day). True darkness is a rare occurrence. In reality, one's

perception shuttles between extremes of light and dark. Darkness is situated, partial and relational. As the crepuscular night engulfs the landscape and oneself within it, one's capacity to see is determined by the flux and intensity of the light that one encounters.<sup>14</sup> Our vision is not completely obliterated, nor do we see different things; we see the same things differently. For example, one might be able to see for many miles across a moonlit valley but not be able to see the laces on one's boots, whilst the beam of a torch will illuminate a lonely hillside but leave unrevealed all that is outside its reach.

To date, apart from some emerging work on illuminated urban landscapes,<sup>15</sup> very little attention has been paid within geography to the interplay between light and dark, and the impact of this ambiguous relationship on people's experience and understanding of the world around them. In this paper, I aim to go some way towards addressing this gap. I do so by focusing on a night-time landscape installation created by Glasgow-based environmental arts charity NVA (Nacionale Vite Activa) on the Isle of Skye, Scotland, in August-September 2005 entitled *The Storr: Unfolding Landscape* (hereafter *The Storr*).<sup>16</sup>

Cultural geographers have long been interested in the work of landscape artists and visual artists for whom the concept of 'landscape' is a primary concern. From an initial focus on iconography and the genre of landscape painting,<sup>17</sup> in the last three decades this interest has branched out to include critiques of landscape, gender and visibility in landscape portraiture, photography and video-installation art,<sup>18</sup> the role of place, landscape and physical process in the making and photo-documentation of site-specific sculpture,<sup>19</sup> the representation of geographical knowledge in abstract art,<sup>20</sup> and notions of identity, belonging and resistance in Gaelic art.<sup>21</sup> These investigations have all served to advance geographical understandings of landscape representation, yet common to them all is an

almost explicit focus on visual imagery, the overall result of which has been a tendency to prioritise the visual as the key (if not the only) register by which art is experienced, and to focus on tangible art ‘products’ (e.g. paintings, photographs, film) rather than artworks which are more ephemeral, intangible or experiential in nature. Furthermore, there has been a tendency to present landscapes as pre-structured and ‘already resonating with ideological meaning’, whilst paradoxically ‘retaining subjects with the ability to flexibly inhabit and interpret these landscapes’.<sup>22</sup> Yet as this paper shows, landscape, meaning and subjectivity unfold relationally; to quote art critic Nicolas Bourriaud, art has always been to some extent relational, ‘a factor of sociability and a founding principle of dialogue’.<sup>23</sup>

Landscape ‘installations’ challenge one to think differently about landscape art. As Bishop notes, rather than ‘*representing* texture, space, light and so on, installation art *presents* these elements directly for us to experience’.<sup>24</sup> These artworks are often described as ‘theatrical’, ‘immersive’, or ‘experiential’, and ‘rather than imagining the viewer as a pair of disembodied eyes that survey the work from a distance, installation art presupposes an embodied viewer whose senses of touch, smell and sound (sic) are as heightened as their sense of vision’.<sup>25</sup>

Installation artworks, be they in gallery or natural settings, insist on the literal presence and active participation of the viewer.<sup>26</sup> Seen as integral to the completion of the artwork, spectator participation can take a variety of forms, from undertaking specific activities to walking through the work and simply confronting what is there.<sup>27</sup> Often, the viewer is invited to participate on so many different levels that some critics have suggested that terms such as ‘viewer’ and ‘spectator’ are inadequate, and that appellations such as ‘executant’, ‘actor’, ‘user’, ‘collaborator’, and even ‘creator’ may be more appropriate.<sup>28</sup> As

such, any attempt to interpret installation art necessitates an approach which not only takes senses other than vision into account but which also recognises that the visual is inextricable from these experiences;<sup>29</sup> or as Lorimer describes it, to acknowledge ‘the more-than-human, more-than-textual, multi-sensual dimensions’ of landscape experience.<sup>30</sup>

Artists and critics alike have argued that the need for physical engagement with installation art in order to experience it ‘*activates* the viewer, in contrast to art that simply requires optical contemplation (which is considered to be passive and detached)’.<sup>31</sup> For example, installation artist Ilya Kabakov describes the effect of ‘total installation’ in his work as one of ‘engulfment’: ‘we are not just surrounded by a physical scenario but are ‘submerged’ by the work; we dive into it, and are engrossed – as when reading a book, watching a film or dreaming’.<sup>32</sup> The emphasis lies not on the object, but on the dramatic confrontation of the perceptual situation(s) in which the participants find themselves.<sup>33</sup> As a result, the landscape in landscape-installation art is constantly unfolding – always ‘in process’, unstable, and lively.

It is here that one can make connections with recent post-phenomenological work on landscape within geography;<sup>34</sup> specifically, work which has sought to move away from the idea of landscape primarily as something seen (a mute, external field) or as a ‘way of seeing’ (a visual representation of cultural meaning), towards a more relational understanding of landscape with a stress on process, movement and becoming.<sup>35</sup>

I am thinking, in particular, here of John Wylie’s work on landscape, performance and subjectivity<sup>36</sup> and Mitch Rose’s work on the cultural landscape, representation and ‘dreams of presence’.<sup>37</sup> Wylie, for example, feels that landscape is better described ‘in terms

of the entwined materialities and sensibilities *with which* we act and sense’,<sup>38</sup> and that as we move in, feel for, and are affected by, the material world, different forms of subjectivity and senses of self emerge.<sup>39</sup> The practice of walking is central to Wylie’s understanding of landscape as paying attention to ‘specific walking corporealities and sensibilities: moments, movements, events’, he feels, allows us to reflect upon the ‘non-rational or more-than-rational’ aspects of life – for example, the ‘shifting mood, tenor, colour or intensity of places and situations’.<sup>40</sup> Or as Tim Edensor likewise observes, the walking body ‘demolishes any sense of a distanced, romantic conception of landscape, of any visual imperialism. The lively moving body beholds not some passive inert scene but a pulsing space’,<sup>41</sup> and as Rose argues that we should consider the landscape as ‘a thing in itself’ (as something that solicits and provokes, initiates and connects, and generates its own effects and affects), suggesting that our ‘inclination to mine the landscape for meaning has [...] kept us from being truly open to the possibilities of landscape and from creatively exploring not “what” but “how” the landscape *is*’.<sup>42</sup>

### *Capturing experience*

Such a project requires careful thought as to how one might capture individuals’ experiences of these mobile, multi-sensory, frequently intangible landscapes.<sup>43</sup> Non-representational theorists have argued that there are ‘things that we (humans) feel, sense and express that are unspeakable, unsayable and unwritable’ and in trying to say or write them we inevitably lose them.<sup>44</sup> Laurier and Philo suggest that such an ‘aporetic’ sense of language implies that any attempt to refer to the world is inherently futile; however, they also acknowledge that most advocates of non-representational theory would deny this implication for the simple reason that ‘many of their claims are advanced precisely in the

name of the singular “event” whose fragile specificity within the play of heterogeneous multiplicities [...] is repeatedly accented as the “place” for starting over in fresh versions of human-geographical inquiry’.<sup>45</sup>

This emphasis on the uniqueness of human experience has meant that, to date, much post-phenomenological theorising about landscape has tended towards personal experience translated into narrative-based experimental writings.<sup>46</sup> Whilst being applauded for its expressive prose, poeticism and fluency, this type of writing has also been criticised by some as being solipsistic, overly self-centred and introspective, and for its tendency to be ‘hermetically sealed’ thus precluding engagement.<sup>47</sup> Although my experience of *The Storr* would play a crucial role in documenting the installation, it is my contention that to preclude the thoughts, feelings, and experiences of the other participants would be to deny an important conceptual aspect of an installation for which an abiding theme was ‘one walk, many journeys’.<sup>48</sup>

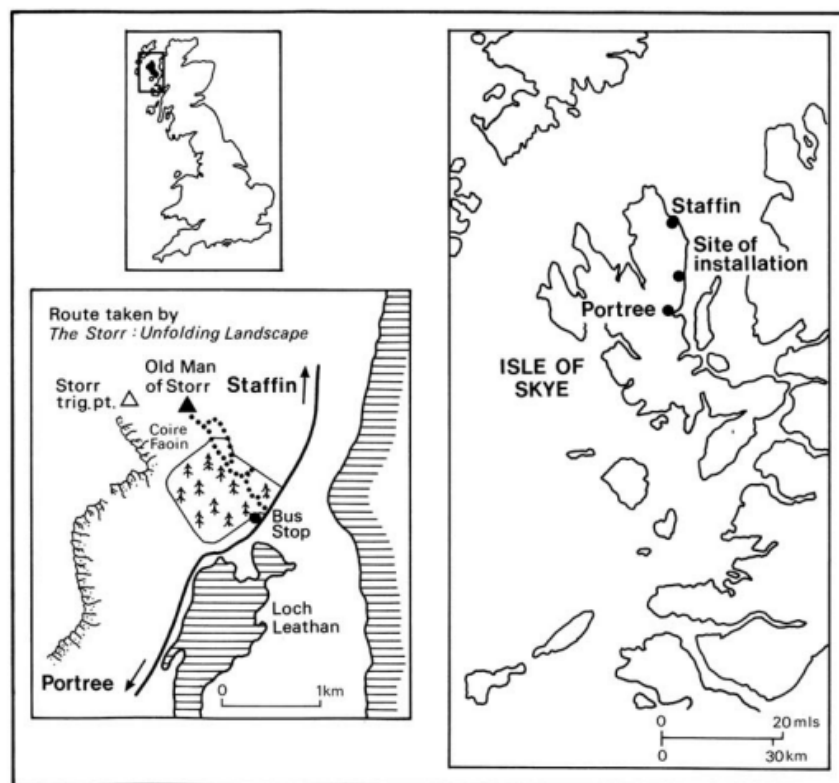
In discussing the methodological challenges faced by those wishing to write about the ‘phenomenological world of movement and sensoriality’ such artworks produce, Pink *et al* argue strongly in favour of photographic representation in combination with descriptive passages.<sup>49</sup> In the case of *The Storr*, the lack of ambient light prevented any such documentation beyond those images taken by the official professional photographer. Other potential methods (such as a ‘go-along’ approach<sup>50</sup> and the use of clip-on microphones and digital recorders to capture the immediate reactions of specific individuals as they encountered the different elements of the installation) were also rejected in light of NVA’s desire for people to remain silent as they moved through the installation.

These restrictions necessitated a return to a more conventional ethnographic approach which employed a range of qualitative methods, including: (i) semi-structured in-depth interviews with 22 members of the installation design and implementation team and 21 audience members;<sup>51</sup> (ii) participant observation at the two check-in centres where audience members were required to sign-in before being taken to the start of the installation, on the transfer buses on the way to, and from, the installation, on two walks through the installation as a member of the audience,<sup>52</sup> and during daytime walks across the site of the installation; and (iii) an on-line feedback form.<sup>53</sup> When employing such an approach, one must accept that ‘excuses made, stories told, tears shed or shared laughter may never succeed in fully capturing what an individual means, feels and thinks that they mean or feel’ and that to write about another person’s experience will always mean providing a partial account.<sup>54</sup> Rather than worrying about what might get lost in translation, however, Laurier and Philo encourage us to wonder at what more is to be discovered during commonplace episodes of language-in-use, direct observation of practical encounters and close consideration of empirical matters.<sup>55</sup>

### **Unfolding *The Storr***

For 42 nights, *The Storr* took its audience on an extraordinary nocturnal walk on the hillside beneath the Trotternish Ridge, a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) described by NVA as ‘one of Europe’s most dramatic and inspiring landscapes’ (Figure 1).<sup>56</sup> Prior to the walk the audience assembled at one of two ‘check-in’ centres (in Portree or Staffin) where they were given a safety briefing, a head torch, and a dog tag (for group identification) before being transported by bus to a lay-by on the A855 above Loch

Leathan. On disembarking, the audience found themselves in a floodlit area buzzing with activity; here, they were grouped together and offered a wooden staff for support whilst walking before being led off into the relative darkness. From this point on, NVA used light, sound, and performance to manipulate the audience's perception of the landscape as they moved through it. Their stated aims were to make people more aware of the changing nature of this apparently static rocky landscape, to encourage people to think about their place within the landscape, and to offer both islanders and non-islanders an alternative way of engaging with this unique landscape.



**Figure 1:** Map showing the location of the installation and the route taken by the participants.

Elements of *The Storr* can be traced back to previous NVA works, such as *The Secret Sign* (1998) in Stirlingshire and *The Path* (2000) in Perthshire.<sup>57</sup> Both of these events sought to produce dramatic sound and light interventions in natural landscape settings at night,

both involved the audience walking through the installation, and both were large scale (although, perhaps not quite so monumental as *The Storr* which covered a total of 30 square miles). The biggest difference was that from the outset, the artists did not want *The Storr* audience to be 'blasted away by bombastic music and kilowatts of light'.<sup>58</sup> This more circumspect approach was partly due to the environmental regulations which govern activity at SSSI locations and which forced NVA to make radical changes to their previous working practices;<sup>59</sup> and partly the result of a more self-consciously restrained and site-responsive approach, which sought to celebrate resonances already present in the landscape.<sup>60</sup>

These resonances included the natural processes which led to the formation, and continue to play a role in the evolution, of the Trotternish Ridge, as well as the sense that this was a contested landscape, marked by past and present human activity, and replete with social and cultural meaning. Creative Director Angus, in particular, relished the opportunity it created to find out more about, and develop a richer account of, 'the complexity that makes up the reality of what at worst someone sees as a wilderness, this [un-populated] empty space which you can kind of glide past', that 'romantic version of Scottish highland wilderness which is still bought into by various people primarily not from Scotland' which treats it as 'some sort of backdrop rather than it actually carrying this incredible complexity and confusion, [a] jumbled confusion of different messages and ideas and layers'.<sup>61</sup> For NVA, the landscape was not fixed in time nor devoid of human life, rather it was imagined, to quote Massey, as the (temporary) product of 'provisionally intertwined simultaneities of ongoing, unfinished, stories'.<sup>62</sup>

*The Storr* installation itself centred around four main sites of intervention: the wooded section on the ascent; the Coire Faoin and Pinnacles (including the 48-meter free-standing pinnacle ‘The Old Man of Storr’); the headlands looking towards the islands of Rona and Raasay; and the woods on descent. Each was designed to evoke a different sense of the self within the landscape at different stages in the journey – threatened, spiritually connected or ‘reverential’, fragile, and finally, as a small part of a wider universe. *The Storr* required participants to follow a set route and movement in and through the installation was directed by guides who accompanied the participants (due to health and safety regulations the participants walked in groups of 20-25 with two guides per group),<sup>63</sup> and by reflective path markers which caught the beams of the head torches worn by each individual and made alternative pathways invisible. The audience were told nothing about the installation prior to the start of the walk, except that they should bring water-proof clothing and wear adequate footwear for hill-walking.

No interpretation was offered to the participants as they made their way through *The Storr*; after the initial safety briefing the guides were instructed to remain silent for the duration of the walk. It was only on completion of the walk that participants were given a souvenir publication which included information on the design and construction of the installation, the poetry and songs used, and musings from individuals such as journalist Neal Ascherson, artist Peter McCaughey, mountaineer Doug Scott, and Robert McFarlane on some of the more conceptual aspects of the installation.<sup>64</sup> This lack of interpretation is not necessarily uncommon; much installation art is characterised by a desire on the part of the artist to shake the spectator out of a ‘passive, sponge-like state’ in favour of a more ‘self-determined, active experience’.<sup>65</sup> The audience ‘is encouraged to choose its own interpretation without relying on that of the artist, [the artist motivates] spectators to

experience works in an open-ended manner and become authors and generators of their own meanings'.<sup>66</sup>

It is worth noting, however, that in a review of Kabakov's installations critic Robert Storr commented that 'the experience they provide is much like wandering onstage and picking up loose pages from a script, overhearing bits of recorded dialogue and trying to figure out what the setting is [...] and what actions might still be taken'.<sup>67</sup> As I demonstrate, most participants agreed that *The Storr* had offered them a safe opportunity to experience the landscape in a completely different way to that in which they might normally experience it (be it simply getting them out of the car and on to the mountain or rendering a familiar place 'new'), however, there were a significant number who walked away from the installation feeling as though they had been constantly groping around for meaning.

The interpretation of visitor experiences of *The Storr* offered below is structured loosely around each of the four stages in the installation, thereby replicating something of the experience of walking through the installation as the artists intended, although the multivalent nature of the installation makes a strict sequential analysis both difficult and not entirely useful. Beginning with the woods, I explore the ways in which NVA played with traditional understandings of darkness in order to unsettle the participants, to make them feel vulnerable and to question their senses. Providing a comparison between the woods on ascent and descent I show how one's understanding of the darkness and sound, in particular, can effect one's sense of self in, and movement through, a particular environment. I then consider the upper mountain section and outline in detail the ways in which NVA attempted to facilitate the emergence of an embodied sense of self wherein participants would feel a connection with the landscape but also a detachment from it. I

show how the relative lack of light and sound interventions in this area encouraged the participants to think about their journey up the mountain, about those who might have walked the landscape before them, and to reflect upon their own role as active, if vulnerable, agents in the landscape. Following this I examine the Coire Faoin and pinnacles section highlighting the ways in which participants were emboldened to develop a new appreciation of the dark as a textured realm of reflection. Finally, I look at the section of the installation which invited participants to look, for the first time, up and out towards the headlands and islands of Rona and Raasay. This section marked a turning point in the installation wherein the darkness began to feel more protective than antagonistic and participants were encouraged to reflect upon their presence not just in this particular landscape but also in relation to the wider world.

### ***Walking through the night***

To be out at night in a forest, by a river, on a moor, in a field, or even in a city garden, is to know it differently.<sup>68</sup>

#### *The woods*

On ascent, the woods played with the idea of darkness as a metaphor for all that is sinister, shifting, and other-worldly to introduce the idea that ‘nature’, whilst at times intensely beautiful, is not benign.<sup>69</sup> Passing through a gate, participants began their journey into the woodland. As the gradient increased conversations died away; leaving only the dull thud of boots on bare earth, the tap of staffs on rocks, and the rustle of waterproof

clothing. Participants had to rely on the light from their head torches and the beams cast by those in front and behind to pick their way along the path. As they tried to accustom their eyes to this light source, however, they noticed that, instead of providing an expanded field of vision, the beam enclosed the individual within a circle of light which was very difficult to see beyond. As Jonathon commented,

anything which comes in the beam just lights up so you had this little ... because it was just beginning to be drizzly rain when we were going up [...] there were these little buzz of lights around you and then the midges would come past and so there was that funny little sort of enclosed world.<sup>70</sup>

This 'bubble' effect meant that landscape features (e.g. rocks), fauna (e.g. sheep) and even other people tended to appear in one's field of vision suddenly and with little warning, it was difficult to get one's bearings, and the darkness beyond the trees at the edge of the path became a mysterious void. The woods were experienced as an immense, seemingly endless *milieu* and yet, simultaneously, the light from the head torches emphasised a feeling of proximity to, or intimacy with, the surroundings and its contents. Some participants found this thrilling,

One of the nicest things in the dark, it is very difficult to judge the depth of the landscape around you [...] with the shadow and the lights, it all seemed to leer and ... it was like as if you were privileged and had been almost invited into it.<sup>71</sup>

At the same time, those of a more nervous disposition said they had felt vulnerable and exposed; they could not see into the shadows, but their awareness that anyone or anything

waiting to pounce from between the trees would have been able to see or touch them without warning was visceral.



**Figure 2:** The arch marking the entrance to the woodland © McAteer Photograph

Interestingly, none of the participants gave the impression that their walk through the woods had been a particularly contemplative experience, a fact which highlights quite neatly the contrast between experiencing the woods during the day and at night. For example, I agree with Wylie that when one walks through a wood, motion and ground seem to be peculiarly detached from each other;<sup>72</sup> however, this in-between state of moving without advancing forward, I would argue, can only really be experienced as a ‘ruminative’ process when there is enough ambient light to frame and facilitate one’s passage through the environment in a smooth, knowing and safe way. A state of being that Wylie describes as ‘a “daydreaming” state of preoccupation and self-reflection, a peculiarly intense space of

interiority itself experienced as boundless'.<sup>73</sup> It is difficult for one's thoughts to wander elsewhere when the ground beneath one's feet is obscured, intangible and seemingly impracticable. As the participants' responses demonstrate, their experience of being in the woods at night required them to be unremittingly 'attentive', in a heightened state of alertness, regardless of whether they were in motion or motionless.

Arriving at an arch sculpted from fragrant pine boughs, participants were asked to turn off their head torches and follow the green rope-lighting curving into the distance (Figure 2). To the right, a parallel 'path' (woven from pine branches) twisted away into the darkness. Ghostly white figures (projections) could be glimpsed walking through the shadows. A low disturbed breathing seemed to emanate from the ground blending with the wind swishing through the tree-tops and, periodically, a bestial sound (much like a wounded bull bellowing) resounded from beyond one's field of vision.<sup>74</sup> Trees, up-lit, cast fractured shadows on their neighbours and the entire woodland seemed to twitch and rattle animated by an unseen force. Processing deeper into the wood, participants gradually heard the sombre voice of Skye poet Sorley MacLean, reading in Gaelic from his epic poem *An Cuilithionn* (The Cuillin) his voice growing louder until it surrounded them reverberating through the trees and drowning out all other sounds. Until this point much of the participants' attention was directed at trying to distinguish between 'natural' sounds and sights and the interventions of NVA; here one emphatically grasped that one was 'inside' the artwork – surrounded.

The walk through the wood was designed to unsettle the participants and awaken their senses. Whilst we do see in the dark we do not necessarily see that which we wish to see or in the manner we wish to see.<sup>75</sup> This is because the human retina contains two types

of photoreceptors, rods and cones; at night, our vision relies on the rods which are more numerous and more sensitive to light, shape and movement than the cones.<sup>76</sup> These rods, however, are not sensitive to colour and lack the visual acuity or resolution provided by the cones; they also tend to predominate in the peripheral vision<sup>77</sup> which means that not only do we see the world in a 'ghostly monochrome',<sup>78</sup> we are also far more likely to catch a glimpse of something out of the corner of our eye in the dark than if we were to look directly at it.

Under the cover of darkness, NVA were able to stimulate the participants' imaginations to a degree that they would never have been able to achieve in daylight because, as the participants strained their eyes to see, each shadow and pin-prick of light was invested with a new and intense significance.<sup>79</sup> The boundaries between 'reality' and fabrication, familiar and unfamiliar became increasingly confused. As technician Graham explained, 'it's the whole experience [...] if you've got an imagination, you pick at it like you [do when you] stare into a fire and you see different images'.<sup>80</sup> However, as lighting designer David B gleefully acknowledged, one's imagination could be one's own worst enemy in that environment; the elements in the woodland might lead you to imagine that there is a pack of mad dogs, a bear, or a mad axe killer waiting to pounce but, in reality, 'there's a load of ditches, a load of bracken, a load of things that might poke you in the eye [or] things you could trip over, but actually, it's quite safe'.<sup>81</sup>

Throughout the installation NVA worked with the idea that perception was mutable and slippery; 'not the function of a detached gaze upon the world from a central consciousness, but integral to the whole body and nervous system, a function that [could] be wrong footed at a moments notice'.<sup>82</sup> Walking through the woods, deprived, to a large

extent, of their sense of vision, many of the participants noticed that their hearing became unusually alert;

I liked it because it's a completely different perception of the world, you hear a lot more in the dark, [...] you can't see more than six or seven metres in front of you because the trees are in the way and it's dark [...] it's like you are walking through the world on your own, it's strange but interesting.<sup>83</sup>

Ordinarily, one would assume to be able to know a lot about a sound (e.g. the physicality of the gesture used to create it, the properties of the phenomena involved) without necessarily seeing its source;<sup>84</sup> one might also expect to be able to decode the 'feeling' of a space (e.g. its size, where the nearest walls or boundaries are, even a good idea of its furnishing) simply by listening to the sounds present within it.<sup>85</sup> We assume that sound speaks to us directly, that our hearing does not lie.<sup>86</sup> However, as Emerson reminds us, 'sound on its own may be capable of ambiguous interpretation' and at night, as we become increasingly blind, 'the body is put in a greater state of alertness not quite knowing what the 'real answer' is'.<sup>87</sup>

One's hearing is influenced by the way one moves one's head and body and these movements are always, in part, guided by information gathered by what Ingold calls the 'operations of sight'; the more restricted this information is, the more likely we are to feel a loss of 'auditory control', and the more likely we are to feel threatened or overcome by sound(s).<sup>88</sup> The interweaving of recorded sounds with those already present in the woods (e.g. the wind in the trees, falling twigs, fauna in the undergrowth) made it difficult to locate their sources and to discern their reality.<sup>89</sup> This created a subtle undercurrent of tension in

the atmosphere which, coupled with the darkness, made the participants feel anxious, doubtful, and fearful. As one participant commented, ‘That very strange noise, almost animal like noise [...] building the tension, I don’t know, I suppose the combination of it being at night and a slightly disturbing sort of sound, it would have been frightening if I was on my own I think’.<sup>90</sup>

Another way in which NVA used sound to create a particular ambience and to effect the participants’ sense of the self<sup>91</sup> within the installation was through contextual layering. As Rubridge and MacDonald discovered in their installation *Sensuous Geographies*, contextual layers – the ‘sounds which fill the whole space and create a (changing) sense of the environment within which other independent sounds operate’ – can have a significant effect on participants’ movement within and through space.<sup>92</sup> Woods have their own mythology as mysterious and enchanted places,<sup>93</sup> and the contextual layers (e.g. the rattling branches, the breathing) used within the wood (on ascent) undoubtedly tapped into this. Participants tended to move relatively quickly through this area, keeping together as a group, and stopping only briefly to peer at the trees or the ghostly figures. As one participant commented;

We knew there would be lights and there’d be music and it was walk up a hill [...] so we got off the bus, [...] and off we set and not a word really was spoken. We knew to keep inside the markers, we knew to [...] switch our torches on and off when appropriate and then all of a sudden, lights started appearing and music started playing and it, well I found it really eerie, thought ‘Oh my God, we’re going to be massacred [in] some sort of pagan sacrifice and we’re paying for it’.<sup>94</sup>

Interestingly, it was the ‘mundane technology’<sup>95</sup> of the wooden staff offered at the start of the walk that gave this participant the most comfort during this time; ‘it [was] something solid and sounded solid. It sounded natural when it [hit] the stone and that made me feel a lot better because it was dark’.<sup>96</sup> As Tuan notes, ‘touch is the sense least susceptible to deception and hence the one in which we tend to put the most trust’.<sup>97</sup> Deprived of clear sight and unsure about her hearing, this participant found solace and security in the natural fibres and tactile solidity of her wooden support.

The participants walked the same path through the woods on ascent and descent; however, in comparison to the sublime aesthetic engendered on the ascent,<sup>98</sup> on the descent, the woods were no longer ‘uncanny’.<sup>99</sup> Once again, the participants had to negotiate the path using only the rope lights for guidance, but this time the collective impact of the installation was more ethereal than sinister, and the individual elements were more readily identifiable. MacLean was heard once more, but this time speaking in English and sounding more worldly-wise than foreboding. As the participants walked onwards, snowflakes (projections) began to fall through the trees and soft harp music filled the air.<sup>100</sup> As a result, movement through the woods (on descent) was much more relaxed, participants walked more slowly and many hung back from the group in order to savour the atmosphere. Commenting on the difference between these two experiences, one participant said;

they just got it so right, [...] they had harp music playing and I said I felt, you know, when you watch a film and you hear the music and then walking through the forest [...] I actually felt that you were part of some sort of film or movie but you had the

best of both worlds because you're experiencing it and you're hearing the music.

That was actually, that's very unique.<sup>101</sup>

Although there was no spoken narrative in *The Storr*, this participant's sense of participating in a book or a film demonstrates the way in which the participants were caught up in an experience that was knowingly structured and sequenced by the artists. In this sense participants were both aware of the artificial constitution of their experience and willingly 'immersed within the space-between it create[d]'.<sup>102</sup> As Richard enthused, 'one of the most rewarding things [was] that you were actually appearing in it if you like, you weren't just a bystander'.<sup>103</sup>

Although NVA were purposeful in the way in which they structured their interventions, a comparison of the woods on the ascent and descent shows that their aim was not to encode the landscape with any one particular meaning, but rather to show that landscape is 'a surplus of meaningfulness gathering and circulating through a number of orbiting practices'.<sup>104</sup> Participants were encouraged to delve into, engage with and listen to the landscape; to seek out and feel for their own meanings or 'dreams of presence' which would, in turn, NVA hoped, enable them to (re)discover the landscape (and their place within it) and experience it anew.<sup>105</sup>

#### *The upper mountain section – ascent to the Old Man of Storr*

Approaching the edge of the wood, the participants gradually became aware of the Old Man high above them silhouetted against the grey sky or wreathed by mist. Summer days are long on Skye and it was only during bad weather and in the woodland sections that

the participants were shrouded in near complete darkness; generally, the installation was complimented by grey-skies or moonlight which allowed the participants to determine the black silhouette of the ridge. Up-lit, the bodach ('old man' in Scottish Gaelic) provided an iconic goal point and urged participants to continue their journey onwards and upwards. Although relatively untouched by NVA, this area was designed to play an important role in focusing the participants' attention on the journey that they were taking. For example, considerable physical effort was required to negotiate the narrow, rocky path to the summit, and this impacted upon the body of the participants (e.g. aching limbs, shortness of breath). Similarly NVA wanted participants to feel the watershed point (the top of the hill) that they were approaching in a peculiarly unmediated way, as a place where one was, as MacLean in the wood had suggested, 'left alone at height...the soul stripped bare on the hard stone surfaces [...] rising above human failure, the violent reality of life'.<sup>106</sup>

NVA consciously led participants to this experience of confronting the scale, remoteness and rawness of the crag. The section offered little in the way of artificial visual or aural stimulation and it was hoped that, instead of looking up and around them, each individual would become embroiled in his or her own drama.<sup>107</sup> In the dark, with little else to distract one's attention (apart from occasional bouts of heavy wind and rain), it was hoped that this experience of confronting 'raw' nature would be amplified and the participants would become more aware of an embodied sense of self in relation to the journey; that they would walk 'not in the sense of getting somewhere but in being a walker, by concentrating on the action and rhythm of the walk to the exclusion of all other thoughts'.<sup>108</sup> The more involved they became in the act of walking, the more likely it was that their awareness would be brought back to the present moment. Yet, no matter how absorbed or immersed the participants became, an element of disconnection between self

and landscape always remained.<sup>109</sup> Here, the participants were ‘in’ the landscape, but also ‘up against it’; ‘at one and the same time part of it, emergent from it and distinct from it’.<sup>110</sup> Once they got to the top, if the work was good enough, participants would then experience the ‘transcendent feeling’ that ‘comes from having made the effort, having done it successfully, having overcome [their] fear, overcome the negative feelings, having felt [they had] got somewhere’.<sup>111</sup>

Forced to walk in single-file in a narrow tunnel of light cast by the head torches and acutely aware of the movements of other members of their group (either stopping and starting in front of them, or pushing the pace from behind), some participants found this section of the installation intensely claustrophobic and frustrating. As Steven reflected;

It doesn't work when you are in a big line of people. If there is considerable space between yourself and the person behind you so that you can walk at your own pace, so you make those judgements about where you are going to walk and what aspects of the environment you are going to take in and respond to, then that aspect of walking is individually yours, but when you are walking at a restricted pace, and in a group, the physicality of walking isn't there. [...] I have had the experience of [walking] in the pitch black [before] and your sense of awareness is incredible, it becomes so acute, and you become so responsive to the slightest sort of noise, [...] and your eyes are wide open looking for just a glimmer of the subtlety of light so you can find your path. So the awareness that I had from that and then translating it into this [...] was completely devoid. Your senses that you would expect to use, or heighten in that environment, weren't. You were kind of shepherded through the path, you had lighting, you were with other people that sort of distracted the

sensory perception [...] simple aspects of actually just navigating yourself through that route you didn't have to do it, you didn't really have to consider where you were going.<sup>112</sup>

Others, perhaps over-stimulated by the woodland installation, said that they had found it 'boring' or had assumed it was simply a transitional stage in the installation, much like when a stage goes dark between set changes and the audience is left staring at the silent space in front of them wondering what is coming next.

This is not to say that there were no positive responses to this section. For example, one participant commented on the way in which the darkness punctuated only by the beam of the head torch had completely altered her perception of walking through this type of landscape in a group,

You didn't notice the fact that there was lots of people [...] you know, there's someone in front and [...] someone behind but didn't seem as if there were that many people, whereas in the daylight, if you were walking with twenty people, you'd think 'Oh God I've got to get away from these, there's just too many people here, there's no privacy' but because [it's dark] you don't see them.<sup>113</sup>

Another noted the way in which the darkness, coupled with the physical exertion of the walk, had forced him to focus on his own experience and, in turn, respect the privacy of others,

We were all in this almost self-imposed silence, you are just walking along and thinking ‘Oh, has anyone else seen that?’ and when the Old Man is sort of rearing up [...] and you just want to turn to someone but you feel like ‘No, I should be sort of sssh so everyone else can sort of’ ... it’s almost like meditation, almost, as you are climbing this mountain, because you are alone with your own thoughts [...] it’s a good way of describing the experience I had.<sup>114</sup>

Many of these participants likened the sense of being ‘alone’ whilst ‘in a group’ of people, all of whom were advancing along a pre-defined path towards a shared goal, to being on a pilgrimage (or, if the installation had really fired their imagination, paying ritualistic ‘homage’ to the bodach).

In creating *The Storr* NVA undoubtedly drew on ancient mythologies of walking to instil a particular affect;<sup>115</sup> for example, in 2002 (funded by a Creative Scotland award) Angus Farquhar walked several famous pilgrimage routes (to the source of the River Ganges at Gaumukh in India, to Camino de Santiago de Compostela in Spain, the stations of the cross at La Verna in Italy; and, to Mount Sinai in Egypt).<sup>116</sup> For Angus, this shift between the individual and the collective was interesting because

each has different associations. Pilgrimages are always done on your own and processions and marches are always done collectively so there are different associations and this is neither, it’s just associations that walking has, which are really useful because they create different emotions within you.<sup>117</sup>

As I have shown, walking *per se* did not always yield the desired experience of embodiment or facilitate participation,<sup>118</sup> but it was hoped that by instilling within participants a sense of isolation and ‘purpose’ they would, if only for a short time, become more aware of the importance of the journey itself rather than focussing solely on what they believed was their destination (the bodach).<sup>119</sup>

Earlier, I suggested that the weather sometimes impinged upon the participants’ experience of the installation. Installations are often dependent on the configurations of a particular space or situation and the physical characteristics of that space will have an enormous effect on the final product.<sup>120</sup> The topography and geology of the Trotternish Ridge played a powerful and active role in co-constructing *The Storr*, both in terms of its format and content, but also (e.g. via the prevailing weather conditions) determining the way in which the participants experienced the artwork on a nightly basis. As Edensor notes, ‘terrain and climate are apt to impose themselves upon the body, irrespective of discourses about the rural idyll and the Romantic countryside’.<sup>121</sup> This section comprised one of the most exposed parts of the installation and participants might get soaked or remain dry, feel warm or chilled to the core, be caressed by a light breeze or buffeted by strong winds; fickle and dynamic, it was possible to see, hear and feel the weather folding and unfolding across the landscape, an ever changing flow of ‘currents, qualities of light and shade, and colours’.<sup>122</sup>

It would be wrong to assume, however, that experiencing ‘bad’ weather was directly proportional to having a disappointing experience. For example, Jonathon expressed amazement at the way the darkness had altered his understanding of the mist;

Our cottage is just over the back here so we've actually been looking at the ridge for a week and a half now, and the last two days are the first time that it has actually been cloud free for the entire day long and so seeing this mist constantly evolving, and being close to it, is absolutely fantastic and I think the funny thing is, in daylight, you would simply be irritated, that it curtailed your vision of the landscape, or whatever it was that you had gone up there to see, but in the dark it became enclosing and enveloping and you could look at it as being part of the scene but it didn't detract from it in any way at all.<sup>123</sup>

Whilst David described how he had been mesmerized by the rain,

At one point there was a spotlight lying down on the ground [...]. It wasn't creating anything in particular and there was just this pool until it disappeared into the mist and you could just see this rain coming through it, because we had bursts of rain as we went up. It was like snow or something weird, just this strange glow, because it was not anywhere else, you couldn't really perceive it landing on you or anything like that, but there was this downpour going on in this tiny little pool of light.<sup>124</sup>

Both these quotes add weight to Ingold's claim that, whilst undoubtedly a multi-sensory experience, the weather enters into our visual awareness primarily as 'an experience of light itself'.<sup>125</sup> Guided, in part, by the interventions of NVA the participants looked with the light and according to it. Rather than detracting from their overall experience, participants often commented that the side effects of bad weather (torrential rain being the only exception) had added to the eeriness of the experience, increased the disturbing ambiguities

of the darkness, and made it more ‘magical’; ‘it was better than you could have staged sort of thing [...] Something you couldn’t orchestrate even ... and mystical’.<sup>126</sup>

### *The Coire Faoin and pinnacles*

The Coire Faoin and pinnacles marked the highest point in the journey. As participants filed over the lip of the corrie and down to a low row of seats (head torches off), the poem *Ausgesetzt auf den Bergen des Herzens* (Exposed on the Cliffs of the Heart) by German poet Rainer Maria Rilke echoed around its cavernous expanse. The narrator’s harsh diction was intended to reflect and accentuate ‘the vertical intensity of the surrounding cliffs [and represented] a stark intermingling of external and internal worlds through the overwhelming image of an emotional precipice’.<sup>127</sup> Once the audience were seated facing into the corrie, the narrator’s voice faded away to be replaced by an eerie spacious electronic music.<sup>128</sup> Lights began to articulate different rock formations (Figure 3) and then, in the distance, a solitary figure appeared, small and fragile, ‘crushed by the scale of the surroundings – resting, shivering, reaching, closing’,<sup>129</sup> whose purpose was to create a sense of distance, space, and isolation. As production designer Vicky explained; ‘because you are in a big group, the idea of having one person all on their own in such a big landscape [is that] you can identify with that person being on their own’.<sup>130</sup>



**Figure 3:** The Coire Faoin and Pinnacles © McAteer Photograph

This was one of only two points in the installation where the participants were returned to the traditional audience role of sedentary receiver of experience.<sup>131</sup> Participants were fascinated by the way in which the lights had focused their attention on specific features,

the funny thing about it was, like, when you climb up the hill in the daylight, you would look at what you wanted to look at but ... this, the lights were telling you what to look at, sort of focussing your senses. [In the corrie] they just picked out certain rock formations and then changed it, they didn't spotlight a whole area so you really felt [...] it added more depth to that area, that whole. I'm sure if we went up there today, we'd be a little disappointed at how small it would be but it just felt much deeper didn't it? [...] It really made you think.<sup>132</sup>

Just as they were settling down to watch the ‘show’, however, everything ceased abruptly; without warning the corrie was plunged into darkness. This sudden removal of all artificial stimuli left the participants straining to locate themselves in relation to the dark environment of the corrie;<sup>133</sup> whispered conversations died away and silence prevailed. As one participant recalled, it was like they were left trying ‘to hear the silence and see the darkness’.<sup>134</sup>

Here, silence was the moment between breathing in and breathing out, the motionless pause between fight and flight, the charged instant before the big bang; it offered respite but, being unexpected, it also made the heart pound and the skin prickle with anticipation. Yet, just as it is difficult to find absolute darkness, in reality there is no such thing as pure silence; there is always some sound, even if it is only the sound of one’s body.<sup>135</sup> Looking is not the only means by which we find out about and orientate ourselves in the world, knowing how a place sounds and resounds (particularly when visibility is restricted) also has an impact on the extent to which we feel ‘at home’ in a place.<sup>136</sup> In the corrie, once the initial moment of suspense had passed, NVA invited the participants to take a breath, to pause for a while, allow their thoughts to wander more freely,<sup>137</sup> and to experience the landscape in and of itself, free from intervention.

Describing his experience of an extended power-cut, philosopher David Abram notes that the break down of technologies re-awakened peoples’ senses,

we suddenly found ourselves inhabiting a sensuous world that had been waiting, for years, at the very fringe of our awareness, an intimate terrain infused by birdsong, salt spray, and the light of stars. As we [became] acquaint[ed] with our breathing

bodies, the perceived world [began] to shift and transform; certain phenomena that [had] habitually commanded our focus [began] to lose their distinctive fascination and to slip toward the background, while hitherto unnoticed or overlooked presences [began] to stand forth from the periphery and to engage our awareness.<sup>138</sup>

In situations such as this, when one is forced (or, as in *The Storr*, ‘encouraged’) to re-establish contact with the ‘native forms of the earth’, Abram suggests that one experiences a ‘recuperation of the incarnate, sensorial dimension of experience [that] brings with it a recuperation of the living landscape in which we are corporeally embedded’.<sup>139</sup> Indeed, as the participants sat in silence, the local soundscape was able to take centre stage for the first time:<sup>140</sup> one could perceive pebbles bouncing down the cliff-face, sheep bleating, the wind whistling through the pinnacles – sounds which, during the day, are overwhelmed by the shouts of tourists which are amplified by, and echo around, the circular hollow. One became more aware of the wind on one’s face, the musty smell of damp earth, the clammy smoothness of the vinyl seating pads – sensory phenomena one might not notice in daylight. Rather than trying to represent the landscape solely in terms of ‘what has gone before’ (as much traditional landscape art is wont to do), NVA tried to present, and encourage participants to engage with, the ‘what is’, the immediate present.<sup>141</sup>

Blumenberg notes that both ‘the one who comes out of the light into the darkness and the one who steps out of the dark into the light cannot see at first, because the [eye] cannot immediately make the transition’.<sup>142</sup> Although the transition from (partial) light to dark was a shock, I argue that the participants’ experience of the dark in the corrie (and from this point onwards) was vastly different to that experienced in the wood (on ascent). Considering the phenomenon of darkness and the effect it has on us in relation to space,

surrealist author Roger Caillois suggested that the dark, rather than being an absence of light, had something more positive about it.<sup>143</sup> This is interesting because it suggests that the dark is something that we might legitimately ‘see’, for example, one might say that we perceive darkness in the same way that we perceive shadows.<sup>144</sup> As Sorensen argues, shadows are, perhaps, ‘less puzzling because there is typically a combination of light and dark’ but not if we understand ‘complete darkness [as] merely shadow unbounded by light’.<sup>145</sup> For example,

if a cave explorer is in a completely dark cave dreaming that he is in a completely dark cave, then he does not see the darkness of the cave – or the darkness of anything else. To see the darkness of the cave, the explorer must wake up and look around. The newly awake explorer makes a fresh connection with the darkness of the cave even if there is no discontinuity in his black experience.<sup>146</sup>

In the corrie, participants were encouraged to see past the metaphorical darkness (as a cover for all that is wicked) and experience the real dark (as a natural phenomenon).<sup>147</sup> In the words of poet Kathleen Jamie, they were emboldened to ‘enter into the dark for the love of its textures and wild intimacy’.<sup>148</sup> Temporarily blinded and awed by the grandeur of their surroundings participants should, at this point, have felt very small and fragile, but also amazed and elated at the fact that they were sat, at the top of a mountain, in the dark.

Of course, as Pinder notes, the ‘melding’ between an artwork such as *The Storr* and the consciousness of each participant means that this type of work will always be a highly specific experience that differs according to the mood and circumstances of each participant on a particular day.<sup>149</sup> Some participants were extremely disappointed by the

corrie installation commenting that it lacked substance and could have been more entertaining;

visually it wasn't impacting enough to create [...] not a fireworks display, but you know[...] that sense of ... one thing that dawned on me was that there was no real sense that anything had happened, there was a real lack of scale.<sup>150</sup>

the lights at the top were just focussed on, just, certain areas and didn't move [...] I would have liked to have seen some, some light going across the rocks and, I mean, in one of the rock formations, it was like seeing a little old lady and man sat there, you know [...] your mind works overtime, [it] doesn't have to be full-on light, it can be sort of partial light or different colours and your mind plays tricks ... and you want your mind to play tricks and that's part of the fun of it I think. [They] could have just done a bit more on top [...] there should have been a bit of an element of surprise I think.<sup>151</sup>

For some, this disappointment stemmed from having had experience, or at least some knowledge, of previous NVA events which were judged to have been more spectacular; for others, it was because they had assumed the Coire Faoin and pinnacles to be the 'climax' of the walk.

Lone peaks or high points (such as the Old Man), as Solnit observes, tend to act as natural focal points in the landscape while 'mountains' *per se* often function as metaphorical and symbolic structures.<sup>152</sup> As a result, '[t]here is no more clear geographical equivalent to the idea of arrival and triumph than [climbing to] the topmost peak beyond which there is

no father to go'.<sup>153</sup> Similarly, there is a symbiosis between journey and arrival in Christian pilgrimage, as there is in mountaineering; 'to travel without arriving would be as incomplete as to arrive without having travelled'.<sup>154</sup> Unaware of the over-riding aims of the installation and deprived to a certain extent of the panoramic views that daylight would have afforded them once they reached the bodach, these participants were disappointed when they were not 'rewarded' for their efforts with a spectacular light and sound display.

There were participants, however, who appreciated the fact the NVA had not 'taken the easy option' and created a show spectacular;

it's very difficult because you tend to immediately assume that you go for something sort of really huge and spectacular but then it would become like Blackpool Illuminations and it doesn't want to be cheesy and tacky [...] in a way what we were experiencing didn't have the high points, but you could see the point of what was going on, with this changing illumination and the changing weather [...] it was an experience, but it didn't have that sort of climax which you would expect, some sort of major laser light show or something stupid, and that wasn't really the point and it shouldn't have been.<sup>155</sup>

There was a lot of work went into it but in sort of, if you like, overall it was still a very simple set. [Light] and sound and that's all you need really, and if [it was anything] else you would have concentrated on the gimmicks and the effects rather than what was there to start with.<sup>156</sup>

Talking about a friend who had been disappointed by her experience of the installation, one participant stated;

I feel sorry for the people who only went up with their head, not with their heart. Because they ... well, a lot of people go through life only looking at everything intellectually, without feeling the emotion of anything and, you know, those people who live totally in their head miss so much [they haven't] listened to, you know, the rest of it.<sup>157</sup>

This participant's comments suggest that it was those who looked too deeply for meaning in the installation or expected to be passive recipients of entertainment who missed out on the most rewarding aspects. Those who allowed themselves to be immersed, and did not look for meaning outside their own experience and how it made them feel, were the ones who got the most. As Anne enthused, 'the atmosphere really makes you, for a minute ... pulls you away from the stress of life if you like, and helps you to take in nature and the environment and take it within yourself'.<sup>158</sup>

*The headlands looking towards the islands of Rona and Raasay*

The descent marked not just a physical turning point but also a change in the overall atmosphere of the installation. For the first groups up *The Storr*, this was the point at which they became conscious of the fact that they were part of something much bigger; that they were observer and observed, not just the audience but performers and co-creators of the artwork.<sup>159</sup> Stopping, even briefly, participants would notice a line of lights snaking

up the hill on the opposite side of the bodach (Figure 4) and gradually they would realize that it was formed by the head torches of a later group on their ascent. Watching these lights process slowly up the hill propelled by unseen bearers, one had the curious sense of being simultaneously visible and invisible. Invisible because, having gone through the process of acclimatisation precipitated by the installation, the darkness now seemed to offer some form protection or camouflage rather than presenting itself as a threat. Visible because of the dawning realisation that ‘I am “one of them”, a visible thing’.<sup>160</sup> As one participant observed;

What was strange about watching the snake, the lights snaking their way up the mountain was you thought “God, there’s so many of them” [...] what was strange about that was, it’s not “What can I see, what does the landscape look like to me?”, it’s [...] “What do I look like to everyone else, what are they seeing?”<sup>161</sup>

Wylie describes this feeling of being ‘looked at’ in terms of paranoia and exposure, however, I would argue that for *The Storr* participants the lack of ambient light (and the deficiency of the lines of sight that might be directed at them) enabled them to experience this as a more expansive and subtle process rather than an abrupt assault on their consciousness.<sup>162</sup>

Initially, the descent path was steep; participants were urged to keep moving (by the guides and the momentum of the group) and, again, they were forced to negotiate the path using only their head torches. Consequently, until participants reached a respite area half way down the hill on a small promontory a short distance from the main path, they could only realistically snatch fleeting glimpses of the wider panorama in between long periods of

looking intently at where they were placing their feet. Standing on the promontory (head torches off) the participants' attention was captured by the silhouette of a woman singing Gaelic ballads on a knoll a short distance away.<sup>163</sup> The woman's voice (amplified by a megaphone, although this was not necessarily obvious to the participants) carried across the landscape moderated by the wind. Beyond her (on clear nights), spotlights on the headlands of Rona and Raasay (see the background in Figure 4) gave the impression of star constellations 'fallen to the ground'<sup>164</sup> and drew attention to a natural phenomenon that many people are denied access to by the bright artificial lights of the city.<sup>165</sup>



**Figure 4:** Snaking head torches with the star field behind © McAteer Photograph

NVA would admit that this element of the installation took some time to fine tune and, if they noticed it at all, participants (even Skye residents) frequently confused the lights with boats on the water or houses. The participant quoted below offered a more scathing

critique than others, but her comments highlight the bewilderment felt by some participants as a result of the lack of interpretation;

I couldn't tell it was a star field [...] it just looked like wavy lines [...] it's like the constellation of Orion, the constellation of the Pleiades [...] well I know what Orion looks like, I know the Pleiades is that one, the 'W'. Well, I couldn't see a W! You know, they'd have been better putting 'NVA, thank you for coming!' for what it was worth.<sup>166</sup>

Despite their confusion, however, several participants said that the 'star field' had presented an interesting optical illusion;

There is a sort of sensory deprivation, definitely with the dark, and [...] your senses do sort of sharpen up and you can see lights further away [...] you are aware of tiny pinpricks of light [...] it seems strange, you seem closer than you must be because it's bright, but you know it's so far away. [...] I thought I had worked out [how] the logistics were working [...] but then the whole of the forest below seemed to be littered with lights and I just could not for the life of me understand what the reality of those lights were. I didn't know if they were part of the [installation or] whether they were on the mainland, you know, that's thirty plus miles away [...] there was just this magical landscape with these little points of light.<sup>167</sup>

In traditional forms of landscape art, the use of perspective suggests not only extension and depth (e.g. a view that 'recedes from the perceiver'), but also a gazing subject who is somehow above and detached from the world that lays before them.<sup>168</sup> Requiring (perhaps

demanding) the active engagement of the participants *The Storr* encouraged people not just to look at the installation, but to look from it, look with it, be in it, be part of it, and to make connections between it and themselves and their surroundings in a number of different ways.<sup>169</sup> Participants were encouraged to listen to the performance and, whilst they were gazing at the panorama, to contemplate their experience of themselves, ‘their lives, their world, in relation to the intuitively vast dimensions of the night’s sky’ before returning to the main path to continue their descent.<sup>170</sup> On leaving the promontory, it was hoped that the participants would feel reconciled with, or more spiritually connected to, the landscape through which they had walked, and have a greater appreciation of their place within it.

## **Conclusion**

In considering *The Storr* this paper highlights the close connections between contemporary art theory on installation art and recent post-phenomenological work in geography and demonstrates how they might be usefully employed to advance traditional geographical understandings of landscape in art. The former challenges us to foreground the body and reconceptualize our understanding of the viewer of art as an active and embodied generator of knowledge rather than a passive and detached recipient of meaning. Conceptualising the landscape as a dynamic, animated entity, an active agent which is always ‘in process’ (as opposed to one which is static, fixed and easily definable), post-phenomenological theory provides a useful starting point from which to investigate the complex, intangible and experiential environments characteristic of landscape-installation art. Moreover, it facilitates an understanding of bodies and landscapes as emergent through their mutual relationships rather than as autonomous or pre-defined forms; thus enabling

an in-depth exploration of the ‘participatory’ nature of these artworks and the extent to which their specific components and contexts might (individually and collectively) determine ‘what the body is’ and ‘what it is likely to do’ at various points.<sup>171</sup> Yet, the ‘doing’ of this research, and the nature of the installation investigated, raised both an empirical concern and a methodological question.

The empirical concern relates to vision and visibility. Despite an acknowledged interest in ‘lived spatialities’, corporeality, and sensory experience, there is an overriding emphasis on the visual in post-phenomenological accounts of landscape. This is not a criticism; on the contrary, theorists working in this area have done much to advance landscape theory beyond the ‘ways of seeing’ paradigm which has dominated UK-based cultural geographical thought since the late-1980s. Rather, it is an attempt to draw attention to the uncritical way in which visibility features in many of these accounts. Little, if any, attention is given to the fluctuating and unstable relationship between the assumed polarities of ‘light’ and ‘dark’ and the extent to which variations in relative ‘lightness’ or ‘darkness’ can impact upon an individual’s understanding of, and movement through, the landscape. For example, the self-absorbed, ruminative or ‘daydreaming’ state described by Wylie during his walk through the woods on his coast path odyssey could only ever be afforded by good lighting conditions (or at least, enough to determine where one was putting one’s feet).<sup>172</sup> As I demonstrate, one’s perception of that which surrounds shifts with the transition to darkness as different kinds of sensory corporeal connections are opened up, and these perceptions are (to varying degrees depending on previous personal experience) shaped by traditional Western understandings of the dark as a frightening, mysterious, void. It is only following a period of acclimatisation (or when one works through the ‘nightmare’) that one is able to see and appreciate ‘the dark’ as a textured realm

of sensory perception, as presence rather than absence. Likewise, being immersed in darkness engenders a different sense of self within the landscape (in relation to both the landscape and other people or beings within that landscape) to that which might be experienced during daylight hours. Distance and proximity become confused and one has the potential to be both visible and invisible.

The methodological question relates to the efficacy of relying on one individual's personal account. A study such as this undoubtedly benefits from the flexibility afforded by non-representational theory's commitment to methodological experimentalism and interest in the physical and sensory qualities of immediate experience.<sup>173</sup> Non-representational approaches have been successful in helping to legitimate the use of data registered by the researcher's own body in the analysis and dissemination of their research.<sup>174</sup> My embodied sensory experience of *The Storr* was both a necessary and meaningful part of the research process and has, without doubt, fed into my subsequent analysis of the installation and the way in which I have chosen to write about it. Yet, this was an event attended by many and was as much about collective social experience as it was about personal discovery. As the participant accounts show, individual experience was closely tied not only to the perceptual environment but also to the actions and expressions of others. As a result, one must question the validity of focusing solely on the 'singular event' or isolated narrative in instances such as this where multiple perspectives proliferated and so much of what one experienced was caused by, or shared with, others. This paper is not intended to be a definitive account of how one might approach such a project, nor does it claim to convey a more complete 'ethnographic "truth" of the event'.<sup>175</sup> Rather, my hope is that, by including other participants' experiences of, and responses to, *The Storr* within my analysis, I have gone some way towards opening up a debate on how one might do research involving

multiple subjects and include multiple/collective experiences in our writing whilst remaining sensitive to the post-phenomenological project.

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<sup>1</sup> R. MacFarlane, *The wild places* (London, Granta, 2007), p.193.

<sup>2</sup> Thoreau enthused, ‘the scent is a more primitive inquisition than the eye, more oracular and trustworthy ... The scent reveals, [...] what is concealed from the other senses’. Cited in R. Giblett, ‘Henry Thoreau: a Patron Saint of swamps’, excerpt from *Postmodern wetlands: culture, history, ecology* (Edinburgh, Edinburgh University Press, 1996), <http://www.thoreau.eserver.org/swamps.html>, 5 pages (p.2/5) (last accessed 31 March 2011).

<sup>3</sup> MacFarlane, *Wild*, p.192.

<sup>4</sup> R. MacFarlane, ‘The Via Negativa’, in A. Farquhar, ed., *The Storr: Unfolding Landscape: new perspectives on Scotland’s land and culture*, Second Edition (Edinburgh, Luath Press, 2005), pp.73-78.

<sup>5</sup> R. Sorensen, ‘We see in the dark’, *Noûs* 38(3) (2004), pp.456-480.

<sup>6</sup> American Optometric Association (n.d.a.), ‘The eye and night vision’, <http://www.aoa.org/x5352.xml> (last accessed 8 June 2010).

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<sup>7</sup> Minkowski (1993) cited in C. Bishop, *Installation art: a critical history* (London, Tate Publishing, 2005) p.82.

<sup>8</sup> Bishop, *Installation*.

<sup>9</sup> M. Horlock, 'Knut Asdam Exhibition', 11 July-1 October 2000, Tate Britain, <http://www.tate.org.uk/britain/exhibitions/artnow/asdam/default.shtm> (last accessed 24 September 2008); see also K. Pullinger, 'The city is mine', *The Guardian* 22 January (2008), p.4.

<sup>10</sup> C. Vasseleu, *Textures of light: vision and touch in Irigaray, Levinas and Merleau-Ponty* (London, Routledge, 1998); M. Bille and T.F. Sørensen, 'An anthropology of luminosity: the agency of light', *Journal of material culture* 12(3) (2007), pp.263-284; Sorensen, 'We'; W.I. Miller, 'Darwin's disgust', in D. Howes, ed., *Empire of the senses: the sensual culture reader* (Oxford, Berg, 2005), pp.335-354.

<sup>11</sup> K. Jamie, 'Darkness and light', *Findings* (London, Sort of Books, 2005), pp.1-28 (p.3).

<sup>12</sup> It is no coincidence, for example, that shadowy aesthetics are core structural devices in both horror films and Film Noir. S. Cairns, 'Shadows', in S. Harrison, S. Pile and N. Thrift, eds., *Patterned ground: entanglements of nature and culture* (London, Reaktion, 2004), pp.260-262; C. Nicholas, *Somewhere in the night: Film Noir and the American city* (Emeryville, Shoemaker and Hoard, 2006); J. Naremore, *More than night: Film Noir and its contexts* (Berkeley, University of California Press, 1998).

<sup>13</sup> Cited in L. Nead, 'The secrets of gas', in E. Edwards and K. Bhaumik, eds., *Visual sense: a cultural reader* (Oxford, Berg, 2008), pp.297-304.

<sup>14</sup> I draw here on the work of anthropologist Tim Ingold on the senses, visual perception and the weather. T. Ingold, 'Stop, look and listen! Vision, hearing and human movement', *The perception of the environment: essays in livelthood, dwelling and skill* (London, Routledge, 2000), pp.243-287; T. Ingold, 'Earth, sky, wind, and weather', *Journal of the royal anthropological institute* 13(1) (2007), pp.19-38.

Ingold highlights the partial nature of vision and the extent to which we have 'lost touch' with the *experience* of light, and I would add, darkness. Importantly, Ingold's work is premised on the understanding that vision is not a 'one-way process [...] but rather unfolds in circuits of action and perception, without beginning or end, that are set up through the placement of the perceiver from

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the onset as being *in* the world'. T. Ingold, 'The eye of the storm: visual perception and the weather', *Visual studies* 20(2) (2005), pp.97-104 (p.99, original emphasis).

<sup>15</sup> For example, S. Millington and T. Edensor, 'Contested landscapes of Christmas: illuminating urban and suburban space – class, identity and community', *Royal Geographical Society with the Institute of British Geographers Annual International Conference*, 29-31 August 2007, London; D. Delyser, 'Illuminating landscape and recovering representation: Alert Lite and the practices of neon', *Annual Conference of the Association of American Geographers*, 14-18 April 2010, Washington, DC.

<sup>16</sup> See <http://www.nva.org.uk> (last accessed 31 March 2011).

<sup>17</sup> D. Cosgrove, *Social formation and symbolic landscape* (London, Croom Helm, 1984); D. Cosgrove and S. Daniels, *The iconography of landscape* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1989); S. Daniels, 'Human geography and the art of David Cox', *Landscape research* 9(3) (1984), pp.14-19; S. Daniels, *Fields of vision: landscape imagery and national identity in England and the United States* (Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1993). For more recent work by Daniels see S.J. Daniels, 'Reforming landscape: Turner and Nottingham', in P. De Bolla, N. Leask and D. Simpson, eds., *Land, nation and culture 1740-1840: thinking the republic of taste* (Basingstoke, Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), pp. 12-36 and J. Bonehill and S. Daniels, 'Real views from nature in the country: Paul Sandby, estate portraiture and British landscape art', *British art journal* 10(1) (2010), pp.72-77.

<sup>18</sup> G. Rose, Geography as the science of observation: the landscape, the gaze and masculinity, in F. Driver and G. Rose, eds., *Nature and science: essays in the history of geographical knowledge*, Historical geography research series 28 (1992), pp.8-18; G. Rose, *Feminism and geography* (Cambridge, Polity, 1993); C. Nash, 'Reclaiming vision: looking at landscape and the body', *Gender, place and culture* 3(2) (1996), pp.149-169.

<sup>19</sup> D. Matless and G. Revill, 'A solo ecology: the erratic art of Andy Goldsworthy', *Ecumene* 2(4) (1995), pp. 423-48.

<sup>20</sup> D. Crouch and M. Toogood, 'Everyday abstraction: geographical knowledge in the art of Peter Lanyon', *Cultural geographies* 6(1) (1999), pp.72-89.

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- <sup>21</sup> A.F.D. Mackenzie, “‘Against the tide’: placing visual art in the Highlands and Islands, Scotland”, *Social and Cultural Geography* 7(6) (2006), pp.965-985.
- <sup>22</sup> J.W. Wylie, ‘The subject of landscape: a brief reply to Mark Blacksell’, *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* 30 (2005), pp.521-522.
- <sup>23</sup> N. Bourriaud, ‘Relational form’, in *Relational aesthetics* (Paris, Les Presses du reel, 2002), pp.11-24.
- <sup>24</sup> Bishop, *Installation*, p.11 (original emphasis).
- <sup>25</sup> Bishop, *Installation*, p.6.
- <sup>26</sup> L. MacRitchie, ‘The sincerity of events’, in N. Childs and J. Walwin, eds., *A split second of paradise: live art, installation and performance* (London and New York, Rivers Oram Press, 1998), pp.21-30. The multivalent character of installation art means that its material definition remains elastic. R.J. Onorato, ‘Blurring the boundaries: installation art’, in R. Onorato and H.M. Davies, eds., *Blurring the boundaries: installation art 1969-1996* (New York, D.A.P./Distributed Art Publishers, 1997), pp.13-29; M. Rosenthal, *Understanding installation art: from Duchamp to Holzer*. (London, Prestel, 2003); J.H. Reiss, *From margin to centre: the spaces of installation art* (London, MIT, 1999); C. Bishop, *Installation*.
- <sup>27</sup> J.H. Reiss, *From*; N. De Oliveira, N. Oxley and M. Petry, *Installation art in the new millennium: the empire of the senses* (London, Thames and Hudson, 2003).
- <sup>28</sup> F. Popper, *Art, action and participation* (London, Studio Vista, 1975).
- <sup>29</sup> S. Pink, P. Hubbard, M. O’Neill and A. Radley, ‘Walking across disciplines: from ethnography to arts practise’, *Visual studies* 25(1) (2010), pp.1-7.
- <sup>30</sup> H. Lorimer, ‘Cultural geography: the busyness of being “more-than-representational”’, *Progress in human geography* 29(1) (2005), pp.83-94.
- <sup>31</sup> Bishop, *Installation*, p.11, (original emphasis).
- <sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, p.14. On Kabakov see <http://www.ilya-emilia-kabakov.com/> (last accessed 31 March 2011).
- <sup>33</sup> Popper, *Art*.
- <sup>34</sup> P. Merriman, G. Revill, T. Cresswell, H. Lorimer, D. Matless, G. Rose and J. Wylie, ‘Landscape, mobility, practice’, *Social and cultural geography* 9(2) (2008), pp.191-212.; Massey, ‘Landscape’; M. Rose and J. Wylie, ‘Animating landscape’, *Environment and planning D: society and space* 24 (2006), pp.475-

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479; D. Crouch, 'Flirting with space: thinking landscape relationally', *Cultural geographies* 17(1) (2010), pp.5-18; H. Macpherson, 'Non-representational approaches to body-landscape relations', *Geography compass* 4(1) (2010) pp.1-13.

<sup>35</sup> Rose and Wylie, 'Animating'; J. Wylie, 'Depths and folds: on landscape and the gazing subject', *Environment and planning D: society and space* 24(4) (2006), pp.519-535; J. Wylie, *Landscape* (London, Routledge, 2007).

<sup>36</sup> J. Wylie, 'Landscape, performance and dwelling: a Glastonbury case study', in P. Cloke, ed., *Country visions* (Pearson, London, 2003) pp.136-157; J. Wylie, 'A single day's walking: narrating self and landscape on the South West Coast Path', *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* 30 (2005), pp.234-247.

<sup>37</sup> M. Rose, 'Gathering "dreams of presence": a project for the cultural landscape', *Environment and planning D: society and space* 24 (2006), pp.537-554

<sup>38</sup> Wylie, 'Single', p.245.

<sup>39</sup> Rose, 'Gathering'.

<sup>40</sup> Wylie, 'Single', p.236.

<sup>41</sup> T. Edensor, 'Walking in rhythms: place, regulation, style and the flow of experience', *Visual studies* 25(1) (2010), pp.69-79 (p.75).

<sup>42</sup> Rose, 'Gathering', p.542.

<sup>43</sup> Lorimer, 'Busyness', p.89.

<sup>44</sup> E. Laurier and C. Philo, 'Possible geographies: a passing encounter in a café', *Area* 38(4) (2006), pp.353-363 (p.254).

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, p.354. Although the two share much common ground, it is worth acknowledging the difference in approach here between non-representational theorists and feminist geographers doing similar work on the emotions as outlined by S. Pile, 'Emotions and affect in recent human geography', *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* 35 (2010), pp.5-20.

<sup>46</sup> H. Lorimer, 'Cultural geography: worldly shapes, differently arranged', *Progress in human geography* 31(1) (2007), pp.89-100; J-D. Dewsbury, 'Performative, non-representational, and affect-based

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research: seven injunctions', in D. DeLysér, S. Atkin, M. Crang, S. Herbert and L. McDowell, eds., *Handbook of qualitative research in human geography* (London, Sage, 2009), pp.321-334.

<sup>47</sup> Merriman *et al*, 'Landscape'; M. Blacksell, 'A walk on the South West Coast Path: a view from the Other side', *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* 30 (2005), pp.518-520.

<sup>48</sup> This was a phrase was used during the planning and development stages and was one of several draft titles.

<sup>49</sup> Pink *et al*, 'Walking'.

<sup>50</sup> On the benefits of this method see M. Kusenbach, 'Street phenomenology: the go-along as ethnographic research tool', *Ethnography* 4(3) (2003), pp.455-485.

<sup>51</sup> Members of the NVA team were recruited via direct correspondence, flyers distributed during a guide briefing meeting, and on-site at the two check-in centres. Participants were recruited via local advertisement (e.g. posters in libraries, community centres, cafes) and on-site at the two check-in centres. All participant interviews were conducted within three days of visiting the installation. Only one interview was conducted with each person, with the exception of Creative Director Angus, who was interviewed twice. All the research participants were offered anonymity in the form of a pseudonym but all declined and gave permission to use their real names.

<sup>52</sup> Walk 1 occurred during the preview week when NVA offered local residents an opportunity to view the installation at a reduced price of £15 (full-price tickets were £25) while they made last minute alterations to individual elements. Walk 2 was undertaken two weeks later with my family. It is worth noting at this point that some people (and not just Skye residents) did object to being charged for walking on land to which the Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003 afforded them open access. Yet, only one or two took this beyond grumbling or non-participation and insisted on gaining access to the hillside whilst the installation was in progress.

<sup>53</sup> This form was advertised by bookmarks inserted into 5,000 copies of the souvenir publication handed to audience members at the end of the installation. Although the form only attracted 16 responses, the quality of the response was extremely high.

<sup>54</sup> Laurier and Philo, 'Possible', p.355.

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<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>56</sup> NVA, *The Storr: Unfolding Landscape* (NVA, 2005) <http://www.nva.org.uk/past-projects/the+storr+unfolding+landscape/> (last accessed 9 March 2009).

<sup>57</sup> For information see <http://www.nva.org.uk/past-projects/the+secret+sign/> and <http://www.nva.org.uk/past-projects/the+path/> (last accessed 9 March 2009).

<sup>58</sup> L. Gray, 'Moving mountains', *Art review* LVI (2005), pp.38-39 (p.39).

<sup>59</sup> NVA, 'Designing with nature', in A. Farquhar, ed., *The Storr: Unfolding Landscape: new perspectives on Scotland's land and culture*, Second Edition (Edinburgh, Luath Press, 2005), pp.47-66. For example, planning legislation classified the installation as a permanent build which meant that NVA had to submit a 300-page planning application plus full Environmental Impact Survey. T. Cornwell, 'Magic mountain', *The Scotsman*, 18 June (2005), pp.20-21.

<sup>60</sup> In its sensitivity to the environment, subjective and evocative response to the landscape, site-specificity, and attempt to address the connections between humans and nature, *The Storr* can be situated within a long tradition of artistic appreciation of the landscape. Connections can be made with the Romantic landscape tradition (cf. the deep appreciation of the natural environment visible in the work of Constable), the walking art of Richard Long (e.g. *A Line Made by Walking*, 1967) and Hamish Fulton (e.g. *The Pentland Road*, 1967), the sculptural installations of Anthony Gormley (e.g. *Another Place*, 1997), and the grand interventions of American Land Artists such as Robert Smithson (e.g. *Mirror Trail*, 1969) and Walter De Maria (e.g. *Lightening Field*, 1977). M. Gould, 'Walking art' (University of St Andrews, 2007) <http://standrewswalkingart.blogspot.com> (last accessed 31 March 2011).

<sup>61</sup> Interview with Angus (16/06/2005). For further discussion on conservation (including the role of SSSIs) and the cultural politics of Highland Scotland see F. MacDonald, 'Viewing Highland Scotland: ideology, representation and the 'natural heritage'', *Area* 30(3) (1998), pp.237-244.

<sup>62</sup> D. Massey, 'Landscape as provocation: reflections on moving mountains', *Journal of material culture* 11(1/2) (2006), pp.33-48 (p.46).

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<sup>63</sup> Edensor notes that advocates of lone walking have long vouched for ‘the delights of self-development, communing with “nature” rather than with people, the cultivation of self-reliance and contemplation, and the uninterrupted sensual experiences of nature’ that solo perambulation affords. T. Edensor, ‘Walking in the British countryside: reflexivity, embodied practices and ways to escape’, *Body and society* 6(3-4) (2000), pp.81-106 (p.89). Ideally, NVA would have sent people up the hill alone; however, the potential dangers of such an endeavour far out-weighed the benefits.

<sup>64</sup> See A. Farquhar, ed., *The Storr: Unfolding Landscape: new perspectives on Scotland’s land and culture*, First Edition (Edinburgh, Luath Press, 2005).

<sup>65</sup> Reiss, *From*.

<sup>66</sup> De Oliveira *et al*, *Installation*, p.17.

<sup>67</sup> Cited in *ibid*. pp.17-18.

<sup>68</sup> MacFarlane, *Wild*, p.202.

<sup>69</sup> Interview with Angus (16/06/2005). A full consideration of how nature was understood and represented within the installation is beyond the scope of this paper, however, as Massey notes early 21<sup>st</sup> century understandings of ‘nature’ as ‘endlessly mobile, restless, given to violence and unpredictability’ are now widespread and counter the idea that areas such as the Trotternish Ridge exist in some form of ‘natural state’. Massey, *Landscape*, p.38.

<sup>70</sup> Interview with Jonathon (n, 09/08/2005). In all participant interview quotes ‘r’ denotes a resident of Skye and ‘n’ a non-resident.

<sup>71</sup> Interview with Richard (n, 15/08/2005).

<sup>72</sup> Wylie, ‘Single’.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid*, p.238.

<sup>74</sup> In reality Bronze Age horns recorded in sea caves.

<sup>75</sup> Sorensen, ‘We’; Ingold, ‘Stop’.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid*; C.R. Nave, ‘HyperPhysics: rods and cones’ (2005) <http://hyperphysics.phy-astr.gsu.edu/hbase/vision/rodcone.html> (last accessed 4 March 2009). J.W. Kimball, ‘The human

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eye' (2008) <http://users.vcn.com/~kimball.ma.ultranet/BiologyPages/V/Vision.html> (last accessed 4 March 2009).

<sup>77</sup> Nave, 'HyperPhysics'.

<sup>78</sup> W. Self, 'The pleasures of night walking', *The Independent*, 25 May (2007), <http://www.independent.co.uk/opinion/columnists/will-self/will-self-the-pleasures-of-night-walking-450328.html> (last accessed 31 March 2011).

<sup>79</sup> E. Johnson, 'A phenomenological investigation of fear of the dark', *Journal of phenomenological psychology* 19 (1988), pp.179-194.

<sup>80</sup> Interview with Graham (29/08/2005).

<sup>81</sup> Interview with David B (05/08/2005).

<sup>82</sup> Bishop, *Installation*, p.48; see also R. Bandt, 'Sound installation: blurring the boundaries of the eye, the ear, space and time', *Contemporary music review* 25(4) (2006), pp.353-365.

<sup>83</sup> Interview with David, (n, 09/08/2005).

<sup>84</sup> S. Rubridge and A. MacDonald, 'Sensuous Geographies: a multi-user interactive/responsive installation', *Digital creativity* 15(4) (2004), pp.245-252.

<sup>85</sup> S. Emmerson, 'Aural landscape: musical space', *Organised sound* 3(2) (1999), pp.135-140.

<sup>86</sup> Ingold, 'Stop'.

<sup>87</sup> Emmerson, 'Aural', p.137.

<sup>88</sup> Ingold, 'Stop'.

<sup>89</sup> D. Pinder, 'Ghostly footsteps: voices, memories and walks in the city', *Cultural geographies* 8(1) (2001), pp.1-19.

<sup>90</sup> Interview with Calum (n, 05/08/2005).

<sup>91</sup> T. Butler, 'A walk of art: the potential of the sound walk as practice in cultural geography', *Social and cultural geography* 7(6) (2006), pp. 889-908.

<sup>92</sup> Rubridge and MacDonald, 'Sensuous', p.249.

<sup>93</sup> S. Maitland, *A book of silence: a journey in search of the pleasures and powers of silence* (London, Granta, 2009); P. Macnaghten and J. Urry, 'Bodies in the woods', *Body and society* 6(3-4) (2000), pp.166-182.

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- <sup>94</sup> Interview with Rowena (n, 15/08/2005).
- <sup>95</sup> M. Michael, 'These boots are made for walking ...: mundane technology, the body and human-environment relations', *Body and society* 6(3-4) (2000), pp.107-126.
- <sup>96</sup> Interview with Rowena (n, 15/08/2005).
- <sup>97</sup> Y-F. Tuan, 'The pleasures of touch', in C. Classen, ed., *The book of touch* (Oxford, Berg, 2005), pp.74-79 (p.78).
- <sup>98</sup> I use this term in the Burkian sense that even though participants noted feelings of isolation, fearfulness, uncertainty, (and as outlined in the next section) privation, vastness, and difficulty, they all walked through the installation safe in the knowledge that any danger they faced was (to a large extent) figurative and they were unlikely to be harmed. For further discussion see F. MacDonald, 'St Kilda and the sublime', *Cultural geographies* 8(2), pp.151-174.
- <sup>99</sup> Maitland, *Silence*.
- <sup>100</sup> Music arranged by Scottish composer/producer Paul Mounsey.
- <sup>101</sup> Interview with Rowena (n, 15/08/2005).
- <sup>102</sup> D. Pinder, 'Ghostly', pp.2-3. For examples of Cardiff's sound walks see <http://www.cardiffmiller.com/artworks/walks/index.html> (last accessed 31 March 2011).
- <sup>103</sup> Interview with Richard (n, 15/08/05).
- <sup>104</sup> Rose, 'Gathering', p.550.
- <sup>105</sup> *Ibid.*, p.599.
- <sup>106</sup> A. Farquhar, 'Structure', in A. Farquhar, ed., *The Storr: Unfolding Landscape: new perspectives on Scotland's land and culture*, Second Edition (Edinburgh, Luath Press, 2005), pp.117-133 (p.118).
- <sup>107</sup> Gray, 'Moving'.
- <sup>108</sup> S. Slavin, 'Walking as a spiritual practice: the pilgrimage to Santiago de Compostela', *Body and society* 9(3) (2003), pp.1-18 (p.8).
- <sup>109</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>110</sup> Wylie, 'Single', p.240.
- <sup>111</sup> Interview with Angus (16/06/2005).

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<sup>112</sup> Interview with Steven (r, 03/08/05).

<sup>113</sup> Interview with Lynn (r, 08/08/2005).

<sup>114</sup> Interview with David (n, 09/08/2005).

<sup>115</sup> A. Phillips, 'Walking and looking', *Cultural geographies* 12 (2005), pp.507-513. Solnit observes, for example, that the pilgrim 'toiling along a road to some distant place is one of the most compelling and universal images of what it means to be human, depicting the individual as small and solitary in a large world, reliant on the strength of body and will'. Solnit, *Wanderlust*, p.50.

<sup>116</sup> Recalling the latter, Farquhar states '[e]very night [...] thousands of people with hand held torches walk towards dawn, an uncoiling line of flickering energy, snaking upwards with single intent. An ascent allows each person to move through the same physical territory, yet experience it from radically different perspectives'. A. Farquhar, 'Foreground', in A. Farquhar, ed., *The Storr: Unfolding Landscape: new perspectives on Scotland's land and culture*, Second Edition (Edinburgh, Luath Press, 2005), pp.9-12 (p.11).

<sup>117</sup> Interview with Angus (16/06/2005).

<sup>118</sup> J. Lee and T. Ingold, 'Fieldwork on foot: perceiving, routing, socializing', in M. Coleman, ed., *Locating the field: space, place and context in anthropology* (Oxford, Berg, 2006), pp.67-85.

<sup>119</sup> Solnit, *Wanderlust*.

<sup>120</sup> Reiss, *From*.

<sup>121</sup> Edensor, 'Walking', p.101.

<sup>122</sup> Ingold, 'Eye'.

<sup>123</sup> Interview with Jonathon (n, 09/08/2005).

<sup>124</sup> Interview with David (n, 09/08/2005).

<sup>125</sup> Ingold, 'Eye'.

<sup>126</sup> Interview with Bruce (n, 15/08/2005).

<sup>127</sup> Farquhar, 'Structure', p.119.

<sup>128</sup> A site-specific composition by Norwegian composer Geir Jensson.

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<sup>129</sup> Farquhar, 'Structure', p.119. This figure was Alex Rigg a dancer and performance artist trained in the Butoh technique.

<sup>130</sup> Interview with Vicky (07/08/2005).

<sup>131</sup> M. Jacobson, 'Janet Cardiff and George Bures Miller', in C.A. Jones, ed., *Sensorium: embodied experience, technology, and contemporary art* (Cambridge, Mass., MIT, 2006), pp.57-61.

<sup>132</sup> Interview with Rowena (n, 15/08/2005).

<sup>133</sup> Bishop, *Installation*.

<sup>134</sup> Interview with William (n, 05/08/2005).

<sup>135</sup> Maitland, *Silence*.

<sup>136</sup> Ingold, 'Stop'.

<sup>137</sup> B. Ehn and O. Löfgren, 'Daydreaming between dusk and dawn', *Etnofoor* 20(2) (2009), pp.9-22.

<sup>138</sup> D. Abram, 'Philosophy on the way to ecology', *The spell of the sensuous: perception and language in a more-than-human world* (New York, Vintage Books, 1997), pp.31-72 (p.63).

<sup>139</sup> *Ibid.*, p.65.

<sup>140</sup> Butler, 'Walk'.

<sup>141</sup> P. Merriman and C. Webster, 'Travel projects: landscape, art, movement', *Cultural geographies* 16(4) (2009), pp.525-535 (p.531).

<sup>142</sup> H. Blumenberg, 'Light as a metaphor for truth: at the preliminary stage of philosophical concept formation', in D. Levin, ed., *Modernity and the hegemony of vision* (London, University of California Press, 1993), pp.30-62 (p.45). There is debate surrounding the length of time night-sight or 'dark adaptation' takes to develop; estimates vary from 10-30 minutes. Sorensen, 'We'; Self, 'Pleasures'. Sorensen also adds that that there may be impurities in the initial black experience – when the lights go out, one may experience after-images and other residues of recent viewing. An example is provided by Paton Walsh who describes the effect of turning one's head-torch off in a cave: 'First you see random flashes of white light as your retina tries to adapt, then colours join the fireworks. The last and most enjoyable stage is hallucination. Wave your hand in front of your face and, although there's no light to enable your eye to detect an image, your brain pretends to see your

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swaying hand. It's the visual equivalent of feeling your ears ringing'. N. Paton Walsh, 'Heart of darkness', *The Observer*, 7 February (1999), p.8.

<sup>143</sup> R. Caillois, 'Mimicry and legendary psychasthenia (translated by John Shepley)', *October* 31(Winter) (1984 [1937]), pp.16-32; N. Chapman, 'Features in a landscape' (2000) <http://www.grizedale.org/lying/neil.html> (last accessed 24 September 2008).

<sup>144</sup> Sorensen, 'We'.

<sup>145</sup> *Ibid.*, p.457.

<sup>146</sup> *Ibid.*, p.459.

<sup>147</sup> Jamie, 'Darkness'.

<sup>148</sup> *Ibid.*, p.3.

<sup>149</sup> Pinder, 'Ghostly'.

<sup>150</sup> Interview with Steven (r, 03/08/2005).

<sup>151</sup> Interview with Lynn (r, 08/08/2005).

<sup>152</sup> Solnit, *Wanderlust*.

<sup>153</sup> *Ibid.*, p.136.

<sup>154</sup> *Ibid.*, p.50.

<sup>155</sup> Interview with Jonathon (n, 09/08/2005).

<sup>156</sup> Interview with Richard (n, 15/08/2005).

<sup>157</sup> Interview with Catriona (r, 03/08/2005).

<sup>158</sup> Interview with Anne (r, 03/08/2005).

<sup>159</sup> For the last groups this happened on the final stage of the ascent. Staggered check-in times between 11pm and 12am meant that groups going off at different times tended not to meet.

<sup>160</sup> Wylie, 'Landscape', p.153.

<sup>161</sup> Interview with David (n, 09/08/2005).

<sup>162</sup> Wylie, 'Landscape'.

<sup>163</sup> Various female singers occupied this role, however, the one who performed most frequently and who liaised with NVA during the developmental stages was Ann Martin.

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<sup>164</sup> Farquhar, 'Structure'.

<sup>165</sup> D.M. Levin, 'Shadows: reflections on the Enlightenment and modernity', *The philosopher's gaze: modernity in the shadows of enlightenment* (Pittsburgh, Duquesne University Press, 1999), pp.408-418.

Solnit, however, would argue that constellations are not natural phenomena but cultural impositions, and that 'the lines drawn between the stars are like paths worn by the imagination of those who have gone before'. Solnit, *Wanderlust*, p.291. Toward the end of the installation run nature occasionally provided its own display in the form of the Northern Lights.

<sup>166</sup> Interview with Sylvia (r, 08/08/2005).

<sup>167</sup> Interview with Jonathon (n, 09/08/2005).

<sup>168</sup> Wylie, 'Depths', p.522.

<sup>169</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>170</sup> Levin, 'Shadows', p.410.

<sup>171</sup> Macpherson, 'Non-representational', p.5.

<sup>172</sup> Wylie, 'Single'.

<sup>173</sup> Dewsbury, 'Performative'.

<sup>174</sup> Dewsbury, 'Performative'.

<sup>175</sup> Pile, 'Emotions', p.11.