



Eile {Border-Fictioning}

Paula McCloskey & Sam Vardy

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Figure 1.
Installation view 2, Eile {Border Fictioning} exhibition at Bloc Projects, Sheffield, June 2022.

ARCHITECTURE AND CULTURE

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Eile {Border-Fictioning} Paula McCloskey and Sam Vardy

Eile {Border Fictioning} is the name of an exhibition produced by the authors' art and spatial research practice, *a place of their own*, at Bloc Projects in Sheffield, UK, in 2022. The exhibition comprised an assemblage of artworks that we made over several years within the long-term research project "Eile"; bringing together material created since 2013 (including three films and performances) with new pieces made specifically for the exhibition (sculptures, sound work, digital prints and writings).

Through the exhibition, we were able to bring the mostly site-specific art works generated by the Eile project into the gallery space, to create a diegetic space with which to tell the story of Eile, both in terms of its origins and how the many practices of fictioning manifest across the space and time of the research.

The first room of the exhibition (Figure 2) contained documents from the Eile research, a self-published book documenting the evolution of the work (Eile {Border-Fictioning}), a text on the wall also giving a partial origin story, and a shelf containing writings which act as critical companions to the exhibition, from authors such as Harsha Walia, Octavia Butler, Samuel Delaney, Samuel Beckett, Alexis Pauline Gumbs, Sylvia Wynter, Simon O'Sullivan and David Burrows, Malcolm Ferdinand, and Lola Olufemi.

Visitors to the exhibition walk from this naturally lit opening space through a thick curtain into the immersive installation (Figures 1

and 3). The room is bathed in an amaranthine light and a sound work, incorporating field recordings of the border (wind turbines, rivers), sounds of Saturn's radio emissions, of oceanic decapods, and metallic drones, and a woman speaking a poem in English and Irish, reverberates across the space. To the left, three films are shown playing simultaneously on four screens: Eile/Bog (2022); Eile/Lobster (2019); The Territories of Eile (2017). A moving image of a pair of White Cryptic butterflies in a mating ritual is projected onto a suspended curtain of sheer fabric, and beyond this, a neon tree is placed in a corner, string tied across it forming a web, mimicking a performance from one of the films. A repeated digital image of the character Eile playing the game cat's cradle with a child Eile (seemingly suspended in space), climbs the back wall. The whole room is overlooked by a 2 $\frac{1}{4}$ m tall figure of Eile, wearing a black woolen Kinsale cloak lined with silver.

Through the exhibition, the project explores the notion of border fictions, enacting a form of border fictioning from a specific location (Ireland) to question the hegemony of nation-state borders and probing the disruptive potential of such fictionings.

Paula McCloskey is an artist researcher working at the intersections of art (performance, film, sound, publishing) and architecture, her research and practice develop collaborative critical fictions – to think with communities about possible alternate, social and ecological futures. Her current research involves developing a transdisciplinary praxis between architecture, art and science to interrogate two main concerns – critiques of border-imperialism, and critical fiction/ecologies, with Dr Sam Vardy in the art and spatial research practice, *a place of their own*. McCloskey also investigates the art, philosophy and social condition of maternity, including the intrauterine time and space, reproductive health and emerging technologies and reproductive futures. McCloskey is an Associate Professor of Art and Visual Culture at the University of Derby, UK.

Sam Vardy is a trained architect, a researcher and architectural educator, and produces interdisciplinary research at the intersection of architecture, urbanism, contemporary art practice, and social science. His current research involves developing a transdisciplinary praxis between architecture, art and science to interrogate two main concerns – critiques of border-Imperialism, and critical fiction/ecologies, with Dr Paula McCloskey in the art and spatial research practice, *a place of their own*. Vardy also investigates alternative notions of architectural design and practice, based on critical theories of participation, autonomy, feminist architectures, and self-organised spaces, to explore socio-spatial infrastructures of autonomy and inclusion, and diverse modes of collective design and spatial production. Vardy is Head of Architecture at Munster Technological University, and Associate Director of the Cork Center for Architectural Education.

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Figure 2.
Documents at Eile {Border Fictioning} exhibition at Bloc Projects, Sheffield, June 2022.



Figure 3.
Installation view 1, Eile {Border Fictioning} exhibition at Bloc Projects, Sheffield, June 2022.