

Fine Art research: Interactive Futures exhibition

University of Cumbria [Fine Art](#) lecturer Mark Wilson prepares to exhibit joint-collaboration work at Interactive Futures conference in Canada between 17-19 November 2011.

About

'between you and me' is a visual art project that on the face of it explores human relationships to the seal, an animal widely appropriated in Western culture for a variety of human representations and emotions. For the purpose of our enquiry, we have focused mainly on this animal within a specific geographical context, allowing us to draw attention to (some of) these perspectives in an attempt to distinguish and separate the animal from its representations.

It is this struggle or non-correspondence that lies at the heart of between you and me.

The relationships between its components and the challenges each component presents to the others constitute the substance of the work. Ultimately, whilst encompassing issues as broad as semiotics, compassion, empathy and subjection, it tests the fallibility of representations and our unreliable dependency upon them.

Presenters

This presentation focuses on the exhibition by Snæbjörnsdóttir/Wilson, entitled "between you and me". The project centres on the representations and intrinsic value of things and calls into question the myriad bases upon which we construct such representations. Snæbjörnsdóttir/Wilson have for some time in their work examined specific relationships between human and non-human animals – in "nanoq: flat out and bluesome" the polar bear, in "Big Mouth" the Tasmanian Tiger, in "(a)fly" urban pets etc. "between you and me" examines a contemporary set of relationships between humans and seals, with its particular focus on the coastal areas of Iceland where interaction of one sort or another has been customary for many centuries. In the Kalmar Art Museum, the installation was interspersed throughout the entire building – on the ground floor, the library, the upper stairwell and the main gallery on the top floor. In this upper space, the artists placed their key video work, "the naming of things", in direct dialogue with selected works from the collection at Kalmar including drawings, prints, paintings, photographs and textiles, all of which in one way or another represent animals.

Our colonisation of the building in this way, its implications for the audience, together with our staging of a public seminar event held during the exhibition are all discussed during this presentation. In addition, short video extracts will be screened.

Because most representations are constructed to perform some agenda of our own – in the case of animals, to entertain, to inform, to provide food, to remember, to stand for all others of the species, to symbolize human behavioural characteristics etc – in this process, the animal itself is occluded – eclipsed by its avatar or likeness, which is always a simplification and therefore must accordingly signify a loss.

Snæbjörnsdóttir/Wilson's work challenges the anthropocentric systems of convenience that sanction a daily acceptance of such loss and in an attempt to address such historical and contemporary imbalance, posits the alternative idea of "parities in meeting".