

WHILE YOU WERE SLEEPING I  
WAS ALONE IN MY OWN  
ETERNITY



SHAUN STAMP

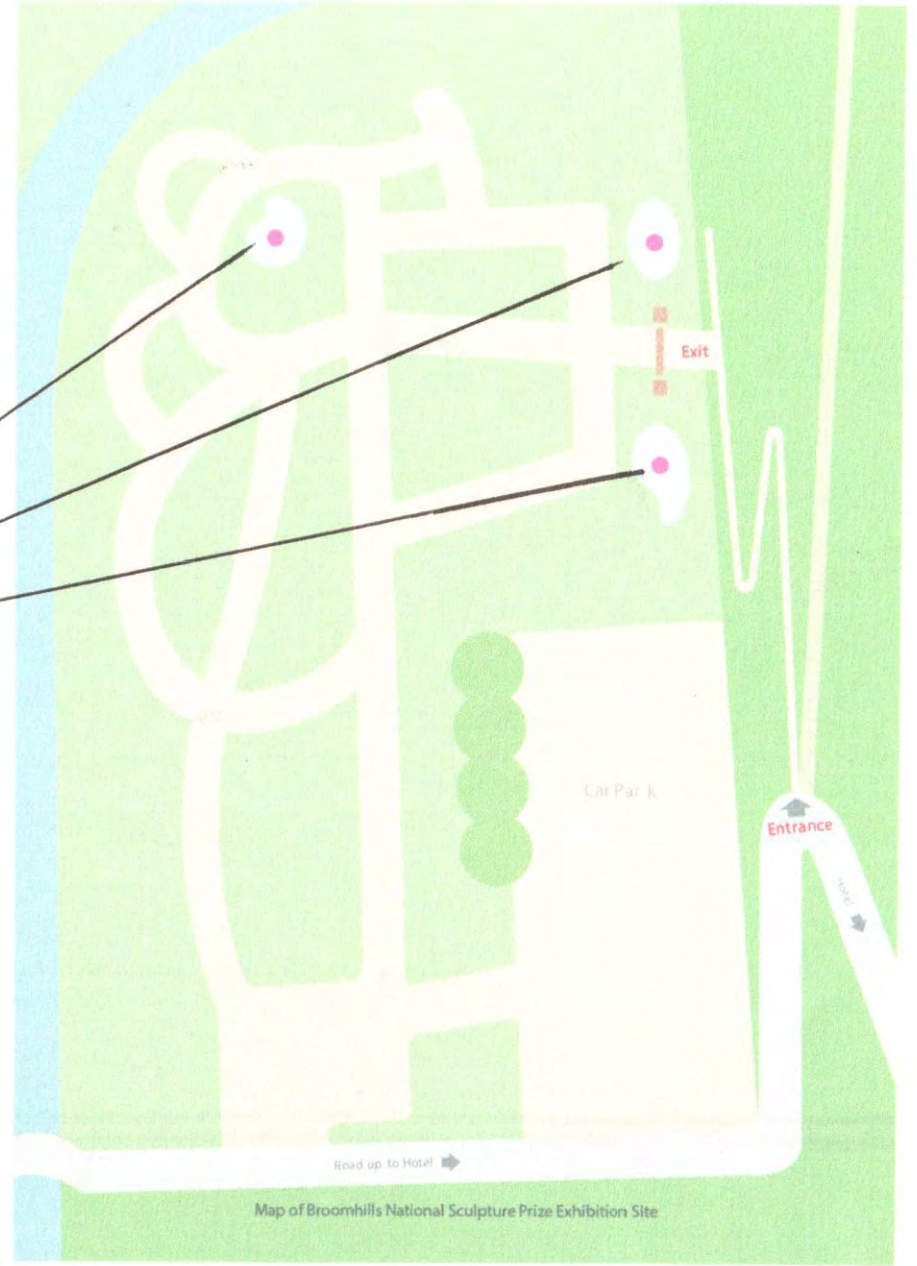


Site-Specific Sculpture for Broomhill NSP



fibreglass/resin sculpture will be placed within one of three water-surface areas of the park

MAP OF BROOMHILL NSP 2014





## Reflections on *While You Slept I Was Alone in My Own Eternity*

Nathan A Thompson - *Writer, Poet and Journalist for CNN, Irish Times, Vice, Al Jazeera, The Telegraph, Khmer Times - He is also lead tech writer at Bybit, NFT and cryptocurrency spot and derivatives exchange*

I was struck by the separation of *While You Slept I Was Alone in My Own Eternity*. The theme is clear from the title that evokes the separation that exists in the most intimate spaces. The artist casted as a black and almost voided figure, alone, floating in the verdant pool shows us the profound disconnect between humans and the world around them. While nature luxuriates in effortless equilibrium, humans are set adrift and lost in "separateness". It is poignant as the sculpture made of much harder stuff than the surrounding nature, it is a solid product that, in keeping the form intact, also serves to freeze and trap. It opens up a dialogue with that eternal quest of the human heart, how can we end painful separation?

The quest for answers is naturally heroic. The journey here is represented by the body laying, near-submerged in water which is the ageless symbol of the unconscious. The strong undercurrents of the subconscious are mirrored in the vulnerable pose of the body and the gestures of its open and weaponless hands. It is a similar posture to Han Solo in Star Wars when he was frozen in Carbonite and delivered as a decoration for Jabba the Hut's cave. Solo's freezing is a pivotal moment for the character when he changes from being a mercenary to a hero, willing to sacrifice himself for something greater. The open posture is also reminiscent of Christ's crucifixion - another heroic act of self-sacrifice. With these references the artist examines his own calling: to feel everything, to sacrifice himself to the dark waters of the unconscious in the hope of bringing back boons.

But the sacrifice is not yet complete. Indeed the artists' sculpture is trapped between states. It is neither submerged or ascended and finds itself in a state that is unstable and unusual echoing Derrida's deconstruction of semantic dualism. Shaun Stamp's sculpture provides the perfect medium to explore concepts of deconstruction because it exists beyond the language Derrida sought to critique. The position between binary opposites also allows the artist to remain silent about the question posed by the title. He leaves his form, as Nietzsche said, "Stretched between the animal and the Overman - a rope over an abyss".

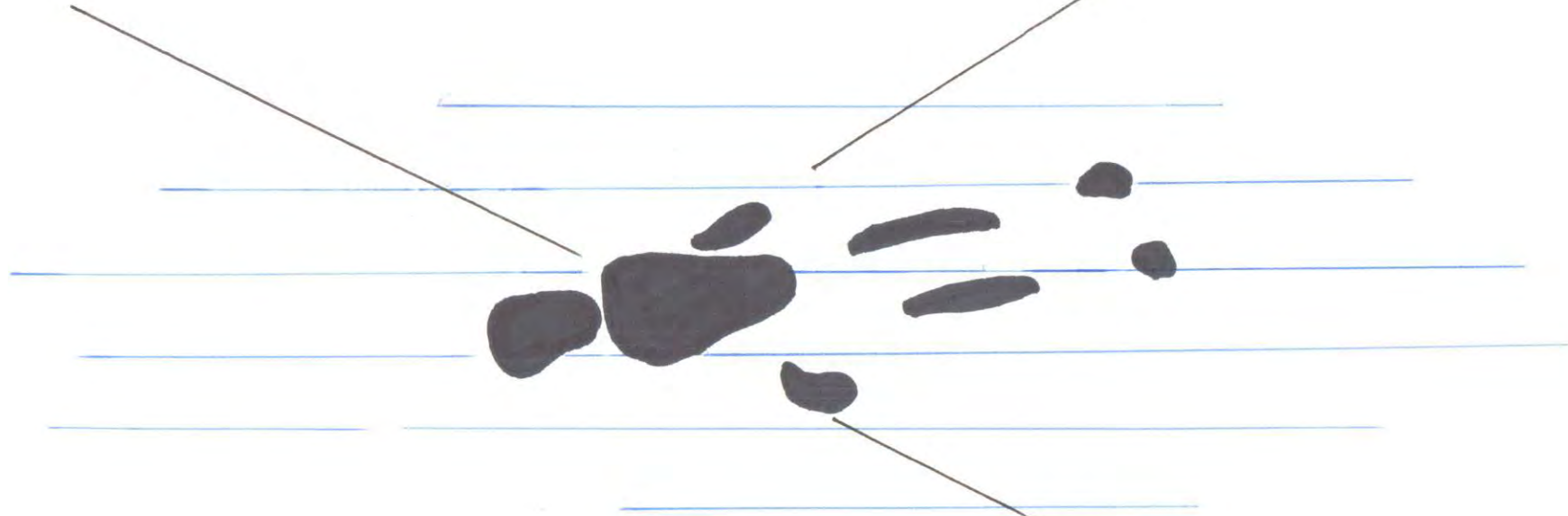




Self portrait - Casting process

Motionless State of Suspense

Figurative Sculpture Bits  
within/between water



Only some parts  
of the body  
can be seen

While you Slept I was alone in my own Eternity 2014





Self portrait:  
While you were sleeping,  
I was alone in my own eternity

BroomHill Sculpture Prize  
Patinated Bronze, glass eyes



Glass eyes created by Jost Haas London  
( Francis Bacons eye maker )

While you were sleeping I was alone in my own eternity  
self portrait cast  
Broomhill sculpturePrize - Park, Devon, UK  
2014

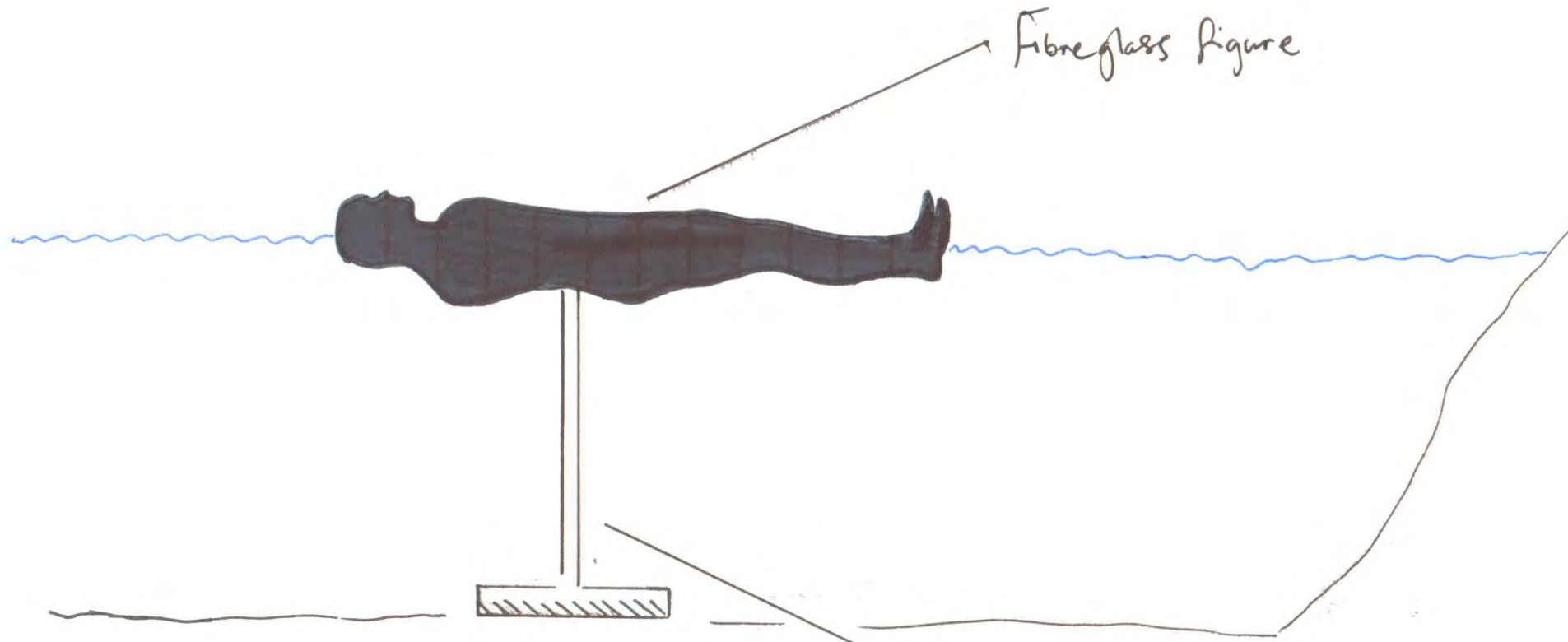




*Using an exploration of Confessionalism, Philosophy and Psychology, I planned to open a dialogue between Pre-Raphaelite artist John Everett Millais' painterly scene Ophelia (1851-52) and myself as to question masculinity, femininity and the third gender, to overcome generalisation, binary, fluidity, identity, sexuality, love, loss and heartbreak.*

*The idea is a reflective story on what I want from the work personally and what I would like to artistically by Illuminating the Self, adrift, between life and death; I am thinking about the playful roles between ourselves and others, and those relationships we create within, in order to fill the void. - Shaun Stamp*

While you slept I was alone in my own Eternity



Fibreglass figure

Under water  
Steel and Concrete base



Carbonfibre Material - pattern





SHAUN STAMP

## *WHILE YOU WERE SLEEPING, I WAS ALONE IN MY OWN ETERNITY*

Self portrait  
Bronze, Glass Eyes  
60 x 120 x 180 cm  
2013-14

When the idea for *While you were sleeping I was alone in my own eternity* (2013-2014) happened, I was reading Jacques Derridas' essay on 'The binary opposition in Structuralism', in such as polar opposites between presence and absence, life and death, femininity and masculinity. Within that period I was also thinking about gender-binary assimilation, Symbolism, Confessionalism... and Ophelia. The Pre Raphaelite 1852 painting by John Millais; Shakespeare's story of Hamlet.

When I was young my mother had a poster of Ophelia, sometimes I would stand in front for a few seconds when passing along the corridor, just gazing at her presence and the beauty of nature surrounding her suspended in water. While I stood taking in her beauty and thinking she was alive, perhaps just resting in the water I also found it odd she was fully clothed. For a long time it never occurred to me she was in-fact dead, or releasing her last breath, while staring up into the clouds above to the unknowing, maybe with hope of another place free of pain and suffering or maybe to close the acute modes of feeling, and emotion, for good. It was only in secondary school while studying Shakespeare that I realised it was a tragedy, she was dead in the painting, and that the story of Hamlet and her was a tragic love affair; one that saw Ophelias heart break, sent her insane, or maybe not insane but clearly certain and ready to leave her physical space, from material world we are born into. This image resonated with me for a long time, and I returned to that image again as I felt a connection and understanding taht I needed to create a painting you could walk around, from any angle...One that a viewer could approach but felt unsure what they were witnessing as they gazed at the pond and uncovered it on their journey towards it. The objective of the self portrait was to be set in a way like Millais painting.



The language we make between these experiences of emotion, feelings and connections are formed of post-human conditions. John Millais painting of Ophelia (1851-52) was always something I related to, the image of story and tragedy was powerful and poetic; love, despair, disconnection, disassociation from the Other and the Self. By using myself for the portrait I cast myself in the same position as Lizzie Siddal in order to flip the notion of the gender-role. I wanted to show that men should not be afraid to be open, fragile and vulnerable and that we shouldn't hide this within society, especially with the toxic masculinity culture we are surrounded by. This was my way of making an open letter, as you say... to express emotion and feeling, that on societies surface, appears mutually exclusive for one gender. Such taboos I am interested in. Like when a someone asks 'what football team I support' depending on my mood, I usually reply with, "I don't like football, but from time-to-time I'll watch the men run round in their shorts"; Watching the persons expression with glee, is a reminder that I don't want to fit in just to be accepted....It's finding little breaks in the way cultural expectations adhere to fit-in and releasing I am old enough to not care about it and feel good to break away from that 'norm' and pop-culture.

To add...The colour black also mediates to Carol Mavors essays on the colour and with John Harveys book The story of Black; both seemed to be relevant for what I was trying to associate and express at the time. with the weight of black it helps reflect the feeling and plays with the illusion of weightless and weighted form as it sits solidly, but appears suspended in the water. Perhaps it is looking at the split second of life and the point where one might feel free and weightless at the moment of death... or in the womb before birth.

The fine-tuned balance between life and death is something that made me want to dig deeper within this work. And in this work I wanted to emulate the image of Ophelia in Millais painting as a man because woman are always seen as the weaker and feeble creatures in these stories, and men are seen as the strong nonchalant. I think we've come full circle again in civilisation. I think woman are again (however slowly) being seen as equals and perhaps better leaders and thinkers for the world ahead.

Stamp

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