

HOLLY HENDRY – ARTWORK PROPOSAL

Research:

Astrida Neimanis says:

Our wet matters are in a constant process of intake, transformation and exchange – drinking, peeing, sweating, sponging, weeping. Discrete individualism is a rather dry, if convenient, myth.

In response to the site, and the conceptual provocation of Heraclites idea that “everything flows”, I have been thinking about geological, architectural, and anatomical cycles of matter – how the lifecycle of the material on the planet is one of continual movement and how this challenges the conception of a containment. I have been learning about the Chiers river (its contents, re-emergence, drainage, cycles, inhabitants and incorporation through the systems of the city) and thinking of these passages of water as a body or a form of gut or digestive system.

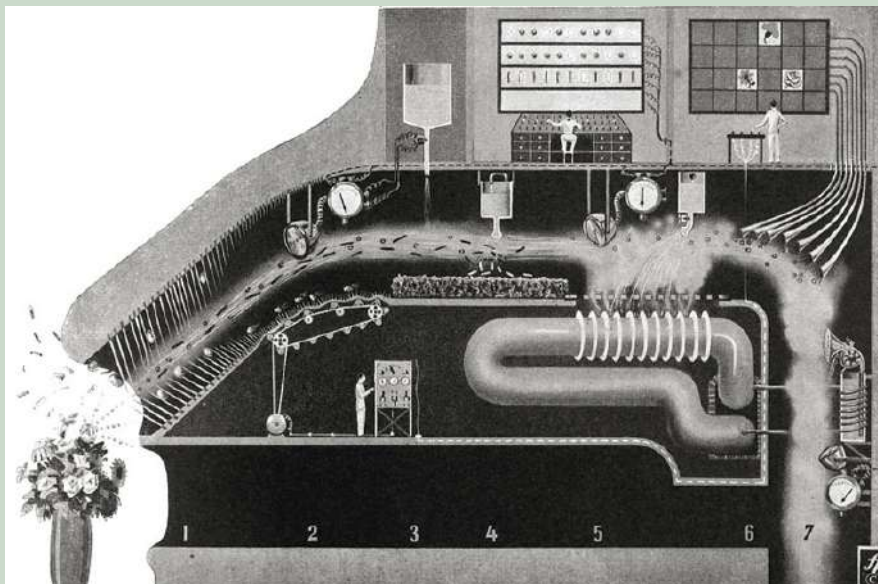
When formulating the first complete theory of blood circulation, physician William Harvey believed that studying the flow of rivers would help him understand the flow of blood in the body. From the left ventricle of the heart, Harvey wrote, blood is ‘diffused through the arteries’ just as ‘our Thames falls into the sea’. - De Motu Cordis 1628

This proposal has emerged from thinking about bodies of water. Anatomically, to be a body means to have edges, a skin that determines (at least physically) where one body ends and another begins. But consumption and digestion allows matter to travel through, bypassing our edges, to alter how we live and grow and appear. To describe “a body of water” implies it has an edge, a beginning and an end, a perimeter and definition. I have been considering the idea of embodiment in terms of water; the unstable edges and borders of something fluid.

Astrida Neimanis also states:

A watery body sloshes and leaks, excretes and perspires. Its depths gurgle, erupt. A body of water also extends, transcorporeally, into other assemblages: watershed, cistern, sea; and other bodies that were human, vegetable, animal, and hydrogeologica

Conceptions of bodies or anatomies are highly specific. But bodies are essentially unknowable as we cannot fully understand our mechanics and emotions. However, Western medicine, since the X ray, is driven towards the idea of transparency and the capacity of science to increasingly see—and thereby know, for seeing and knowing are synonymous –the systems and workings of all aspects of the body. Who can say if bodies are ruled by humours, the elements, the planets. I am interested in the idea of objects revealing or concealing how things work. I have been looking at the scientific illustrations of Fritz Kahn who saw the body as "the most competent machine in the world" and used visual metaphors to illustrate complex biological or technological principals that everyone could understand. For example he used his illustrations to compare the ear to a car or the eye to a projector. I am interested in this in a sculptural sense; in how opening up or revealing the inner workings also allows you into the work – addressing the psychological dimensions of inner/outer. I see these drawings in relation to the steel plant opposite the site in Differdange, connected to ideas of production, work, and industrialisation.



The Voynich Manuscript, held in Yale's special collections, is an illustrated codex that is hand-written in a possibly meaningless writing system, the vellum it is inscribed upon has been carbon dated to possibly the 15th Century. The manuscript starts with real and imagined plant imagery, associated with healing, which slowly leads to more irrigatory, vein-like depictions. Pipes lead in and away; women stand in the openings of ornate horns, seemingly suspended by jets of water and using their hands to support pipes or archways. Some scholars have speculated that it could be the first European manuscript on care for women, while others think it is a hoax. Since the text itself cannot be read, the illustrations are conventionally used to divide most of the manuscript into six different sections: herbal, astronomical, balneological, cosmological, pharmaceutical, recipes.



I am excited by this approach to non-sensical diagrams that prioritise emotion and healing – a visual depiction of liquid systems and plant-woman symbiosis. I have been drawing parallels between this research and some of the plants and waterways in Differdange.



The site's watery connections draw on some of my current research around anthropocentric warning signs such as Hungerstones - inscribed boulders that act as famine memorials, that were laid out in Europe in the 15th – 19th centuries which have been revealing themselves again recently, baring grim words of warning through their reappearance such as "if you see me, weep". For me, this idea of weeping and processes of intake, transformation and exchange relates to Ovid's story of Cyane, a freshwater nymph, consumed by grief, who dissolved within her own tears:

In endless tears she wasted away. Into the pool – her pool and she but now its deity – she spread and dissolved. You might have seen her limbs soften, her bones begin to bend, her nails losing their hardness. All the slenderest parts, her wave-blue hair, her fingers, legs and feet were liquid first; the change is slight and short from delicate limbs to chilly water. Next her shoulders, back and sides and breast dissolved in slender rivulets and disappeared, and last, in place of warm and living blood, water flows along her wasted veins and nothing now that you could grasp remains.

- Ovid Metamorphoses 5. 407 & 464

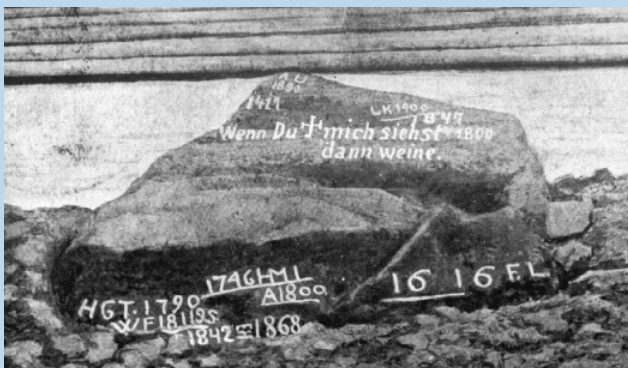
Sculpture realisation:

Working title: *Sump* or *You might have seen her limbs soften, her bones begin to bend*

Everything is in a constant, continuous transformation, voluntary and involuntary, predetermined and accidental. Through this work, I would hope to present a reconceptualization of an entanglement between bodies, waters and landscapes. I hope to formally and conceptually challenge the idea of bodily integrity and personhood. I want to explore the relationships between materials, bodies and the industrial and technological processes that are part of our embodied existence, by reconciling us with our disobedient bodies and chaotic expressions and desires.

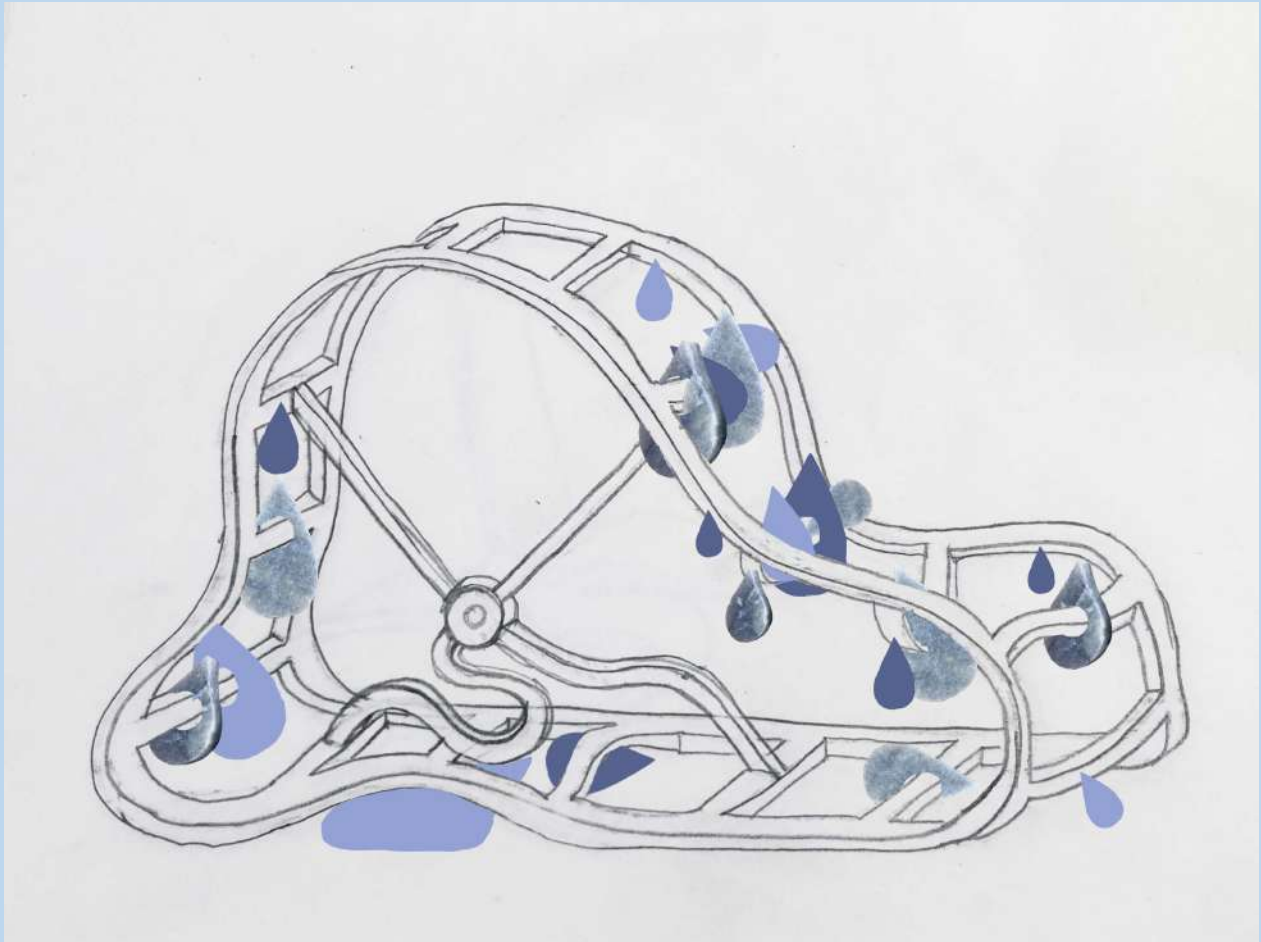
I have been thinking about these notions of loops, diagrams, tears and bodily/watery mingling in relation to my research, the location of the site and the river as an ever changing system. This has developed in parallel, whilst also considering the site's proximity to the continually functioning steel plant opposite, an industrial form of loop that has (at points) coalesced with the site.

The proposed work takes the form of the water wheel as a starting point– a mechanism that, for me, connects movement, cycles, water, bodies and industrial processes. The water wheel takes advantage of the flowing waters from a river to generate power through movement. In this sense, a water wheel is a form of analogue machine, converting the energy of flowing or falling water into useful forms of power. It was a driving force behind the earliest stages of industrialisation in Europe. Water wheels were also used as a way to bring things up from mines, relating to what is under the surface. The wheel shape also relates to the Rota Fortunae (wheel of fortune) which in medieval and ancient philosophy is a symbol of the unpredictable nature of fate. More generally, the circular shape speaks of continuation, repetition, progress.

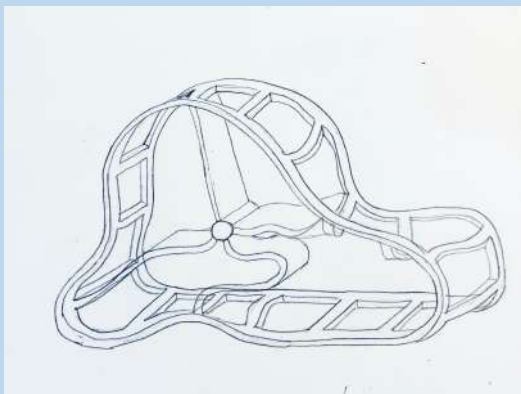
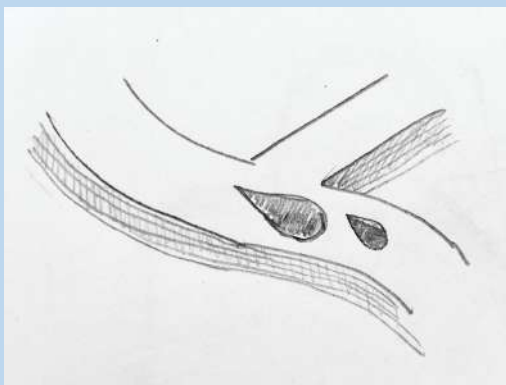


10,197. - I.O.M. LAXEY WHEEL

The work will take its form from the structure of a water wheel, but one that has gone limp and succumbed to the weight of what it is meant to be carrying. The main structure will be made from steel, laminated in layers of plywood and coated with aluminium – traditional materials of wood and metal that are used to make waterwheels. The aluminium outer coating will also be inlaid with small details of teardrop shapes, where a contrasting metal will be inset. There will be larger tear shapes attached to the work which are either cast in coloured concrete or waterjet cut stone or marble. The casts will contain small details of river rocks and sea glass (also known as “mermaid’s tears”). This mix of materials - natural stones and hand-cast methods – combined with industrial production techniques such as steel bending and water-jet cutting reflects the duality of the history of the site.



The repeated motif of the tear-drop shapes could relate to notions of tears, rain, water droplets, and the river, but for me this also relates to stories such as Ovid’s Cyane and the Hungerstone’s tears in light of global warming. Combined with the limp and organic form of the work, I hope the overall work would enable conversations around vulnerability, activity and passivity in connection to the surroundings.



I envision that the work will be sited near the stream/ river, with a close proximity to it. This placement can be decided through discussion with the curators, as the work will be supported by its own weight.

