

Cian Quayle

Malcolm Lowry - Detours and Dislocations: Douglas and Dollarton

Proposals for Artworks

As a follow up to my participation in the Bluecoat exhibition *Under the Volcano – An Exhibition for Malcolm Lowry* (2009), in June this year I was able to fulfil a long held ambition to make a trip to Vancouver. The intention was to make photographs as well as film at sites and locations, which feature in Lowry's life and writing. I also hoped to respond to these and other spaces, as part of my ongoing practice, where ideas of place and home are reconfigured and reshaped by journeys and transition. The main aim was to make a companion moving image work to the 16mm film entitled *The Voyage that Never Ends*, which featured in the 2009 exhibition and the book publication *From the Mersey to the World* (eds. Helen Tookey and Bryan Biggs).

This film was shot on Super 8 cine film and it condenses the timeframe of the ferry journey between Liverpool and Douglas, in the Isle of Man, in a looped, 16 mm film projection of 14 mins duration. Lowry visited the Isle of Man as a child with his family, and later made reference to the island's history, myth, folklore, flora and fauna in his poems and stories. This is most evident in 'Elephant and Colosseum', which features in *Hear Us O Lord From Heaven Thy Dwelling Place* (1961), which is also the title of the Manx 'Fishermen's Hymn'.

Upon moving to Vancouver in 1940 Lowry and his wife Margerie moved into one of the infamous squatters shacks on the Dollarton shoreline. Here he was befriended by a retired Manx, boat-builder named Jimmy Craige, who lived, with his family, nearby in their own shack. The distanced connections between Douglas and Dollarton and Craige's relationship with Lowry and the impact on his writing continue to intrigue me. I am also fascinated by the squatters shacks and their non-site status, between somewhere and nowhere, as they exist at the edge of the city, in a landscape facing the sea.

Work in Progress

As part of the conference proceedings for *Under the Volcano, 70 Years On – An International Malcolm Lowry Conference* (2017) I am presenting two formative artworks, which will form part of what is an ongoing project, which to some extent follows in Lowry's footsteps. The Dollarton environs and shoreline were redeveloped as Cates Park, and the squatters shacks have long since vanished. I am exhibiting a 1/50th scale model of Lowry's

1940 shack, which was conceived and commissioned in collaboration with another Manxman Aley-David Kewley. This model will form the basis for a photographic work, which will ultimately be displayed in a lightbox. This and other works will potentially form part of an installation which will also feature a neon, text-based piece, which makes references to the Shellburn Oil Refinery, which faced the squatters shacks on the far side of the Burrard Inlet. I also visited the Maplewood Mudflats, with Sheryl and Kirk Salloum, where there had been another squatters community until the 1970s. I also cycled to Finn Slough to visit a similar community still in existence around the Fraser River. Later on, I returned to the mudflats and Cates Park to make a series of 35 mm slide photographs.

The film footage of the ferry journey from Horseshoe Bay in North Vancouver to Nanaimo and Gabriola is in part a homage to Lowry's novel *October Ferry to Gabriola*. Arriving on Gabriola Island where the Lowrys, attracted by the landscape and sea, had also considered moving to live. I met Charlotte and Tom Cameron and we were able to visit locations which were significant for Malcolm and Margerie and his writing. The film and photographs are still in a nascent form and will eventually emerge as part of my ongoing project *The Voyage That Never Ends*.



Cian Quayle: *Remade and Relocated - Malcolm Lowry's Shack at Dollarton, Vancouver (1940) 2017. 1/50th scale model - mixed media, 60 x 30 x 28 cm (Fabrication: Aley-David Kewley).*