

Helen Dowling  
whatever's there  
14 oktober - 11 november 2017



Red earth, a bright blue sky. The camera swerves jerkily in another direction, pivoting to show loose red soil, an endless straight road, a car parked with its door open. Suddenly, the image shifts. The sun-blasted landscape of reds switches to a forest tinged with green. A black sphere emerges in the centre of the image. Growing larger, the sphere expands into an active round black mass. As the footage changes,

the spot becomes nestled between the viewer and the landscape. The camera continues on its way while the spot vanishes and reappears in an interplay with the rhythm of the video.

For her film *I am not the sky*, 2017, Helen Dowling travelled to Australia. Conquered by the Europeans during the eighteenth century, it was labelled as a 'no man's land', *Terra Nullius*, despite the presence of an indigenous population. In her video Dowling wishes to undermine the notion of 'vacancy', uninhabited territory, and at the same time explore the role that the imagination plays in this. Filmed from various perspectives, the Australian landscape reflects the outside world. The movement of the rotating black sphere has a hypnotic effect, literally obstructing an open view of the landscape and thus evoking the awareness that we are partially blind to what we see, that on the one hand there is the sensation of discovery and, on the other, the realization that we are not on a journey if we are not able to break away from ourselves and the surroundings in which we exist. Dowling asks herself what is needed in order to experience a new environment. She observes on the basis of a physical perspective (by way of filming), but also from an imaginary perspective - via the idea that the imagination is in many ways not connected to reality, and even manipulates our view of reality.

The outside world has its counterpart in another video work titled *Holden*, 2017: here the camera takes our gaze across the details of a car's interior. The radio, sparkling drops of water on the windows, a gearbox. Everything is dark; only the details that come into the camera's focus are illuminated. What we see is the intimate atmosphere of an interior world, an environment designed for movement, while this also comprises a dramatic *mise-en-scène*, the arena from which communication with the exterior world takes place. As such the automobile becomes analogous to the human form. In the work of Helen Dowling, connotative and formal aspects enter into an interesting dialogue with each other. Her video works acquire their overtones via interventions during the post-production. The music that she uses for her videos has an atmospheric and murmuring quality, which sweeps the viewer away, as it were, from the narrative and into a certain abstraction. In the exhibition there is the added element of glass objects scattered about the space. These 'tools', armed with latent functionality, seem to be waiting for their definitive meaning: *whatever's there* is left to the imagination.

Helen Dowling (1982, Windsor, GB) creates video installations and sculptures in which she explores the language of editing, of emotion, mimesis, anthropomorphism and the empathic potential of the moving image. She studied at Goldsmiths and Slade School of Fine Art before participating in residencies at the Via Farini, IT, Fondazione Antonio Ratti, IT, and the two year residency program at the Rijksakademie van beeldende kunsten, NL, for which she received a Henry Moore Institute Research Fellowship and Fellowship Cees en Inge de Bruin-Heijn.

Recent presentations include 'Cities', Centre for Contemporary Arts in Glasgow, 2017 (Kari Robertson curated programme); 'Physical Fiction', Garage Rotterdam, NL, (curated by Yasmijn Jarram); 'Che il vero possa confutare il falso' Palazzo pubblico, Santa Maria della Scala, Accademia Fisiocritici, 2016 (Siena, IT curated by Luigi Fassi); 'Dark Palms', Studio Amaro, Naples, IT 2016 and 'Close-Up - A New Generation of Film and Video Artists in the Netherlands', EYE Filmmuseum, Amsterdam, NL, 2016.



'I am not the sky' and 'Holden' were made possible by support from the Dommering Foundation.