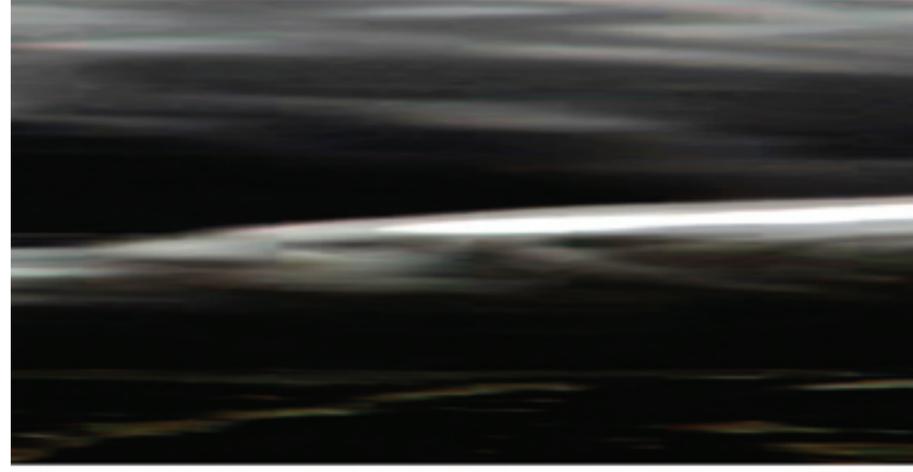


(cover)
Fingal's Cave - Film Still I
c-print on archival paper 42 x 30 cm
edition size: one

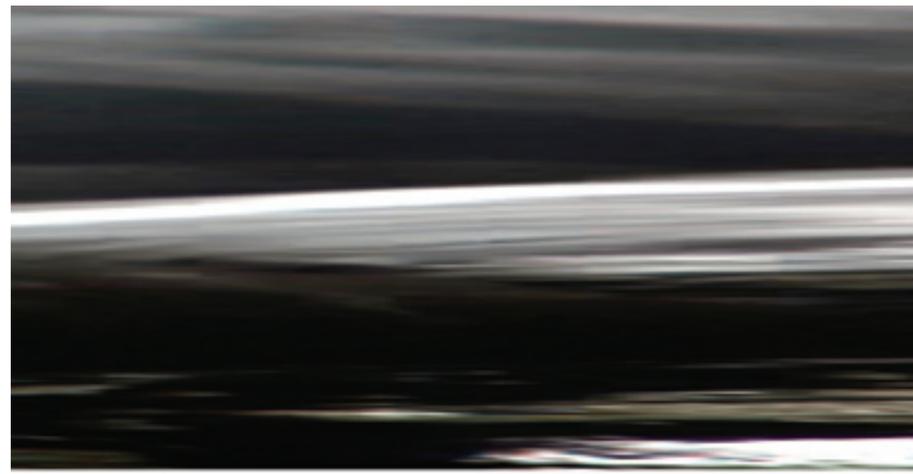
(this page)
Fingal's Cave - Film Still II
c-print on archival paper 42 x 30 cm
edition size: one



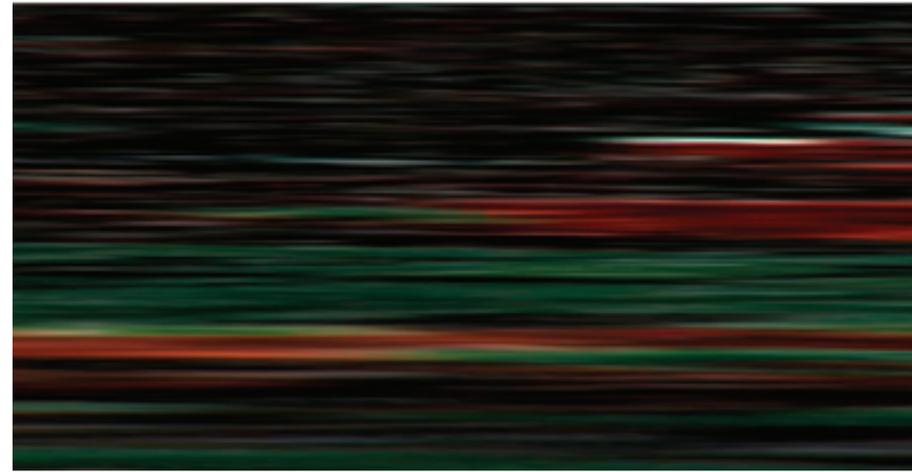
Fingal's Cave - Water Flow I
c-print on archival paper 40 x 80 cm
edition size: one



Fingal's Cave - Water Flow II
c-print on archival paper 40 x 80 cm
edition size: one



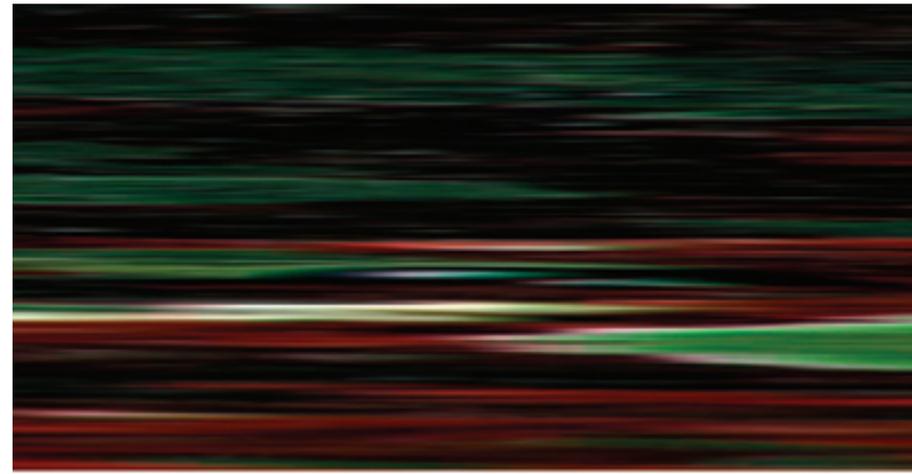
Fingal's Cave - Water Flow III
c-print on archival paper 40 x 80 cm
edition size: one



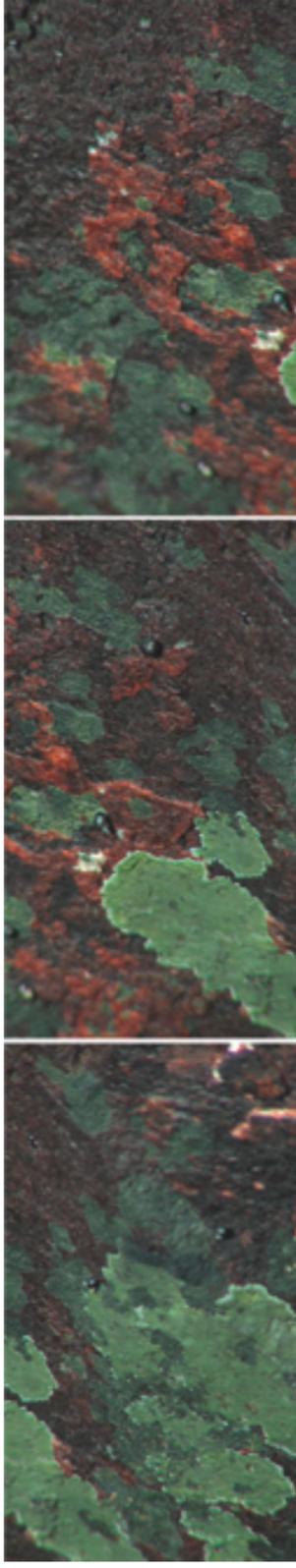
Fingal's Cave - Rock Surface I
c-print on archival paper 40 x 80 cm
edition size: one



Fingal's Cave - Rock Surface II
c-print on archival paper 40 x 80 cm
edition size: one



Fingal's Cave - Rock Surface III
c-print on archival paper 40 x 80 cm
edition size: one



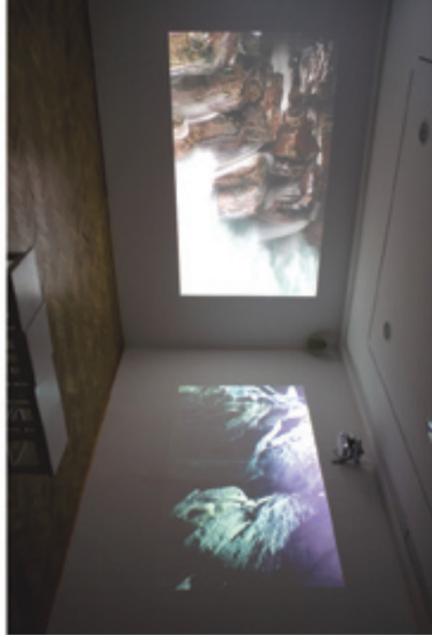
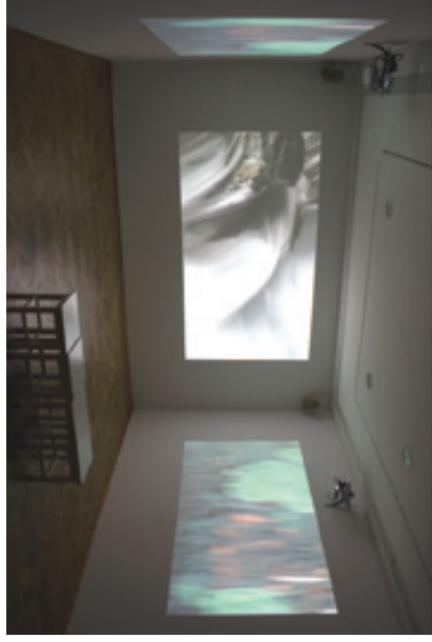
Fingal's Cave - Film Stills III
c-print on archival paper 59 x 42 cm
edition size: one

RICHARD ASHROWAN

On my first visit to Fingal's Cave, a dramatic sea cave almost an hour's journey by sea from the Island of Mull, I was perceptually overwhelmed. My first impressions were overpowering, creatively debilitating even. One writer described the cave as a 'cathedral of the sea' and I can think of no more accurate description for a place that so defies intellectualisation. The Atlantic swell of the sea moves rhythmically in and out of the cave as if in a long slow breathing motion, matched by an incredible and equally rhythmic roar which echoes through the cave like thunder. The towering sculpted columnar walls and roof were long held to be man-made, or created by giants, or held as proof of a divine creator. One myth suggested that the cave was the abode of a nine-headed sea monster, another that the Devil himself were buried beneath the island. The last inhabitants of Staffa, around 1790, left the island after the pot on their stove shook so violently during a storm one night, that they believed "nothing but the devil could have shook it that way." It can be a wild, moody and inhospitable place.

I visited the cave, with my camera and sound recording equipment, seven times in all, on visits lasting anything between one hour and 24 hours. Each and every time its mood was different. At times, when the sea is calm and the sun low, the light begins to hit the inner columns and reflections from the water surface light up the roof surfaces, revealing an incredible and unnatural looking array of reds, pinks and greens upon the surfaces of the grey volcanic columns.

Fingal's Cave
Installation at the Foksal Gallery, Warsaw
High definition video on three synchronised projectors
with surround sound, 10 minutes duration, looped



Fingal's Cave

The irregular shapes of the remarkable many sided columns, formed by the slow cooling of a lava flow 90 million years ago, were dramatically accentuated. At these times, the cave consumed my attention in a play of light, colour, form and contrast, taking on an almost ethereal aspect, very much like being in an empty cathedral. At other times, when even landing on the island was challenging due to the forceful swell, the cave took on a truly frightening countenance. I perched precariously upon the columns with my camera as the sea roared in and out past my feet, boiling, angry and relentless. I could do nothing but attempt to record simply what I saw and heard, without thought. The words of John Ruskin to 'go to nature in all singleness of heart, rejecting nothing and selecting nothing," were often present in my mind.

Ultimately, Fingal's Cave is not a conventionally beautiful or comfortable place to be. It contains a powerful and dramatic sense of desolation that leads most visitors to spend no more than a few minutes within it. After the initial sense of awe, one can sense a growing unease in people as the atmosphere of the cave begins to penetrate. At this point, many people turn away, back toward the bright light outside. In its way, Fingal's Cave demands that we accept into ourselves a kind of desolate inner pathos, a demand I was more than happy to surrender to.

www.ashrowan.com
studio@ashrowan.com
01750 62204 (UK)
00 44 1750 62204 (int'l)

Biography
Richard Ashrowan (b.1966) is a self taught moving image artist who lives and works in the Scottish Borders. He works primarily with photography and high definition film and video, creating immersive video installations, still photographic works on paper and written texts. His works have been exhibited at the Foksal Gallery and Fabrycka Szuki in Poland, the Brukenthal Museum in Romania, the Scottish National Portrait Gallery in Edinburgh, the Ruskin Gallery in Cambridge and the Threshold Artspace in Perth. In addition he has works in public, private and corporate collections. An artist's monograph 'Lament' is published by Nowhere Arts.

The natural world has for me always been a place of hidden meanings, associations and memories, a place experienced as inseparable from my own consciousness and sense of selfhood. The exploration of this relationship, the space between my own inner humanity and the perceived natural world, is at the heart of my work. I am drawn to seek out those landscapes in which I can find and experience a strong emotional resonance, a deep sense of connection, an answering. This process is one of refinement, of honing down the overwhelming complexity of a given landscape place to find within it those images and movements in time that seem to hold the essence of a feeling, a vital intensity. Many of the images I capture could be described as microcosms of place, emotion, time and memory.

Artist's Statement

This work was first shown at the Foksal Gallery, Warsaw, Poland, as

a three screen immersive environment, using three high definition video projectors and a surround sound system. The exhibition was curated by Jaromir Jedlenski. A DVD of the video material is available on request from the artist's studio, in addition to a sequence of original one-off C-prints derived from the work.

Fingal's Cave



RICHARD ASHROWAN
Fingal's Cave