



SELAH

Durham World Heritage Site
Saturday 22nd February 2020

- 12:30 Durham Museum and Heritage Centre (corner of North Bailey and Bow Lane, just opposite the east end of Durham Cathedral).
Open
- 13:00 'An Address to Holy Motherhood'
Reading and text by Gayle Meikle.
- 13:30 The Bishop's Dining Room, Durham Castle.
The Subtleties, Video and Audio Performance by Dawn Bothwell and Paul Stewart.
The World in which the Kestrel Moves,
drawings by Paul Stewart.
- 14:00 Turnstall Chapel, Durham Castle.
Organ performance by Sally Pilkington.

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SOARING

Part 3: 14:00 Turnstall Chapel, Durham Castle.
Soaring performance by Sally Pilkington.

In the Tunstall Chapel, Sally Pilkington will perform an improvised score on the organ. Here, the invitation to Pilkington developed from thinking of the organ as a wind-instrument, a set of airpipes, like human lungs on a much larger scale. It has been asserted that Hildegard von Bingen made a close association between music and the female body in her musical compositions.

Hildegard wrote music with a means of exploring and, quite literally, "giving voice" to the female body and all of its fleshly senses in a manner that would not have been possible through the written word alone. This devotional music sonorously elaborates upon female bodies (both human and divine) and female sexual desire, making sensual physicality integral to religious devotion. Discussing human birth in her book *Causae et Curae*, Hildegard wrote that women's bodies are "open like a wooden frame, strings have been fastened for strumming, or again they are like windows through which the wind blows, elements affect them more vehemently than men, and are more plentiful in them" (Hildegard, 1903, 105).

Her vocal scores used a technique which she called soaring, she likened this to the female contraction and the female orgasm, both actions linked to conception. This can be seen in her 'soaring' vocal scores, which are melismatic (in which a single syllable can move over an octave) they also repeat sections, like recall in memory.

THE WORLD IN WHICH THE KESTREL MOVES

The World in which the Kestrel Moves by Paul Stewart, takes a birds-eye vision of Durham Castle, motivated by Mary Midgley's writing in *Beast and Man: The Roots of Human Nature* (2003).

"The world in which the kestrel moves, the world that it sees, is, and always will be, entirely beyond us. That there are such worlds all around us is an essential feature of our world."

In particular, these drawings displayed on bamboo pedestals, echo the sandstone pillars of the Castle's Norman Chapel. The chapel's pillars depict carved, medieval animal figures like the mermaid and the pard, which lie between real and imaginary. These animals were not only decorative but were placeholders ordering where church and state figures should stand during services. These drawings invite the audience to try and rethink this hierarchy and instead to appreciate the building from the perspective of a kestrel, circling overhead.

Bad Spirits present *Selah* - Contemporary Art in Focus at Durham World Heritage Site.
Saturday 22nd February 2020, 12:30 to 14:30, Durham Museum and Heritage Centre and Durham Castle.

This performance was commissioned by Hazel Donkin as part of the Contemporary Art in Focus series supported by the Centre for Visual Arts and Culture (CVAC) and University College. Please arrive at Durham Museum and Heritage Centre at 12.30pm. Performance starts at 1pm and moves over to Durham Castle's Bishops' Dining Room, then Tunstall Chapel, ending at 2.30pm.

Selah is a sound performance framed within film projections and sculptural installations. The event will offer a promenade experience for the audience, starting in the Sculpture Garden of Durham Museum and Heritage Centre before moving to the Bishop's Dining Room and the Tunstall Chapel within Durham Castle.

Selah considers Durham Castle as a residence, an opportunity to rethink the home environment from a female perspective, and as a place of support, rest and care. 'Selah' is a musical instruction, thought to mean 'pause', creating a moment of silence for introspection. Bad Spirits will reframe Durham Castle and Cathedral site as a residence and from a feminist perspective, comparing the work of the philosopher Mary Midgley (whose archive is housed in Palace Green Library) to that of Hildegard von Bingen - a Benedictine abbess of the Rhineland. The performance aims to explore their outlooks and methods as potential, towards imagining an alternative future and present.

Bad Spirits is a curatorial project / a performance / an artistic collaboration between Dawn Bothwell & Paul Stewart. For *Selah* they invite curator Gayle Meikle and musician Sally Pilkington.

AN ADDRESS TO HOLY MOTHERHOOD

Part 1: 13.00 the Sculpture Garden of Durham Museum and Heritage Centre.

An Address to Holy Motherhood
Reading and text by Gayle Meikle.

Meikle wrote this text to perform at Bothwell and Stewart's home in Gateshead on Mother's Day, 2019. We invited her to read this again, in front of Fenwick Lawson's statue of Gaia. Gaia was significant for the philosopher Mary Midgely (whose archive is housed at the Palace Green Library, Durham University). The text offers an honest and contemporary view of motherhood - a counterpoint to the idealised figure of Gaia.

In Greek mythology, Gaia is the personification of the Earth and the Greek ancestral mother of all life, the Mother Earth goddess. 'The Gaia Theory' was formulated by the chemist James Lovelock and co-developed by the microbiologist Lynn Margulis in the 1970s. Named after the Greek goddess it proposes that living organisms interact with their inorganic surroundings on Earth to form a synergistic and self-regulating, complex system that helps to maintain and perpetuate the conditions for life on the planet.

Mary Midgely (1919-2018) wrote extensively about what philosophers can learn from nature, particularly from animals. Her archive is held at Durham University. She wrote in favour of a moral interpretation of the Gaia hypothesis. In 2001, Midgely founded, along with David Midgley and Tom Wakeford, the Gaia Network. Their regular meetings on the implications of Gaia led to the 2007 book, *Earthy Realism: The Meaning of Gaia* edited by Midgely, which sought to bring together the scientific and spiritual aspects of Gaia Theory.

THE SUBTLITIES

Part 2: 13:30 The Bishop's Dining Room, Durham Castle.
Audio by Dawn Bothwell, Video by Dawn Bothwell and Paul Stewart, Sculptures by Paul Stewart.

The Subtleties compares Mary Midgely and Hildegard von Bingen's writing, both writers used personification to stir reverence toward the natural environment. The work takes its structure Land, Sea and Sky from Bingen's book *Subtleties of the Diverse Qualities of Created Things*, 1158 (also named *Physica*), choosing excerpts from four of its nine books: Plants, Elements, Stones, and Birds. The word 'subtleties' refers to secret powers hidden in natural creatures for the use of human beings.

Bothwell takes samples from her own body: heartbeats both her own and an in utero accompaniment; breathing, stomach gurgles. *The Subtelties* sets tempos from three species: humans on the ground, whales in the sea and humming birds in the air, mimicking their heartbeats (70, 8, and 1200 bpm). It borrows field recordings sounding their breathing, digestion and other functions. Drum patterns and samples are made from these recordings plus other materials and elements: stone, steel, glass, iron, wind and water.

Hildegard's scores for female voice *O Virtus Sapientie* and *O Nobilissima Viriditas* are reworked. The definition of 'viriditas' or 'greenness' is 'the divine healing power of green' an expression aiming to overcome dualisms. *O Virtus Sapientie* is one of Hildegard's personified symbols of the fertile, creative goodness:

"Viriditas is a 'Sapientia' it creates the cosmos by existing within it, an ambience enfolding it and quickening it from within".

The bamboo sculptural screens onto which the videos are projected respond to the architecture of the castle. They propose impermanent, non-monumental structures which encourage their users not to feel dominated, but to organise non-intrusive, sustainable methods of communality.