

## **‘Continuity’**

The industrial landscape inspires me. This body of five works is a response to the salt industry in Cheshire. Salvaged timber and mine-working ironmongery, salt crystals, brine and found sound combine to express the concept of continuity. The cyclic process of salt sees it change its form in a lifecycle of perpetual renewal. My influences include David Nash, Miroslaw Balka and Wolfgang Laib.

### **1. ‘A Space for Contemplation on the True Nature of Impermanence’**

Charred wood, timber, salt crystals, wood ash, oak tree, Tibetan singing bowl, sound

This is a dramatic circular construction of charred salvaged industrial timber. The timber has been fixed together to become a sculptural form, and the individual pieces used as drawing elements to become pointed spires, striking shapes and well defined negative spaces. The circle has an opening through which some items placed upon the floor are visible. The opening invites viewers to enter the space. On the floor is a rectangular box made from timber salvaged from a salt works. The surface of the timber is encrusted with growing salt crystals, filled with wood ash from the charred timbers and contains a small, living oak tree. Next to the box is a Tibetan singing bowl resting on a black mat. Sound from an industrial process is audible as a subtle but powerful presence that dies away and then arises again in a continuous cycle.



The title of this piece, ‘A Space for Contemplation on the True Nature of Impermanence’ makes reference to the Buddhist philosophy that all things are subject to perpetual change. In meditation, a person concentrates on the rise and fall of their breath as a contemplation on the knowledge that all that arises passes away only to arise again in cyclic renewal. The piece contains symbols of life and death, and acknowledges death as an important part of the cycle of life. The process of charring is destructive yet it protects the wood from further decay and preserves it, thereby suspending the lifecycle. Exposure to fire alters the state of the vegetable material to a mineral matter - carbon. Although carbon is formed from the process of destruction, it is the basic building block of the formation of new life. Salt crystals are in the process of growing on the wooden box and will eventually cover the box completely and grow across the floor and onto the carbon if left unchecked. Salt is vital to life and yet too much of it is destructive. The oak tree is growing from the ashes of burnt wood signifying new life, just as fresh growth springs up from burnt forestation. Found sound from the industrial process of salt production is mixed to form an audio experience that rises and falls, to die away and then arise again in a resurgent cycle. The Tibetan singing bowl is a symbol of contemplation. It is traditionally used by Buddhist monks at the start of meditation who strike it with the wooden baton to produce a beautiful ringing sound that fades very gradually to silence. It is used to help quieten the mind prior to meditation. The singing bowl is a philosophical symbol that invites the viewer to contemplate the cycle of destruction, death, rebirth and growth into new life.

## 2. '**H<sub>2</sub>O - NaCl**'

Timber, terracotta, salt crystals, test tubes, water, pond algae, brine, spectacles

A wall mounted, salt encrusted cabinet roughly constructed from textured and coarse grained timber, salvaged from the roof of a salt works, stands ajar to reveal shelves with three rusted hinged wooden books and a terracotta salt pot. The salt pot is encrusted with crystals that are spreading from the pot to grow organically across the shelf itself. Below the cabinet is a desk on which is placed another rusted hinged wooden book. Pages are lying open inviting the viewer to read the surface of the wood which is ingrained with the historic residue of the salt making process and growing salt crystals. A pair of reading spectacles lies on the page as a trace of a readers human presence. A test tube rack containing 4 test tubes lies in front of the cabinet, two containing water and two containing brine. Although the liquids look the same, the pure water contains growing algae, whilst the brine is too strong to sustain life and contains a desiccated seed head.



The title of the work '**H<sub>2</sub>O - NaCl**' is the scientific chemical formula for water and salt. The test tubes contain water and salt to symbolise the life giving, life supporting, life taking and life preserving qualities of salt. Although the cabinet is aged and rusted, the salt that has caused the decay is also responsible for the growth of the salt crystals that enrich our lives.

## 3. '**Continuity**'

Video (1min 38)

This short film shot in darkness 600ft below ground in a salt mine features found sound mixed from explosions and snatched images of mineworkers and machinery. Text is overlaid which makes reference to the lifecycle of salt and its importance in giving and supporting life, saving life, taking and preserving life. In spite of the power expended to extract salt from the earth, only a fraction of the resource is taken. Salt continues it's lifecycle in a much more powerful force than that of any human endeavor in it's extraction.

#### 4. 'Crystal Cut'

Salt crystals, glass, timber

Panel of two layers of glass mounted on wood. Between the layers is a crusting of salt crystals grown organically from liquid brine. The pattern of sweeping curves is taken from photographs of the marks made in salt rock caverns from rock cutting equipment. Although this equipment has tremendous power and works continually to extract the mineral from the earth, only a fraction is taken. The underground rock caverns have a tremendous energy of cyclic existence that transcends human intervention.

These crystals have grown from salt brine painted onto the glass from a tracing of a photograph of the marks in the rock. Left in hot sunshine, crystals have formed and continue to grow in response to moisture in the air. Trapped between glass, this 'decohydrante' lifecycle process is suspended.



#### 5. 'Formation'

Salt crystals, glass, timber

Set of three square panels of two glass layers mounted on wood cut from salvaged timber from salt works. Between the glass layers is a crusting of salt crystals grown organically from liquid brine. The progression of the three begins with fragmented organic forms through to fully joined forms. This progression is a reflection of the organic growth of the salt crystals that continue to grow if left undisturbed. Trapping them between the layers of glass suspends this lifecycle by reducing the 'decohydrante' lifecycle of the crystals that grow from brine in response to ambient moisture.

