

*This is not a song, it's a spell
and it's haunted me for years.**

*Essay for Gwenneth Boelens
written by Eloise Sweetman*

*on the occasion of This Dusk Song
at Treignac Projet,
17 October - 4 January 2021*

Vermillion red, gold, deep purple
Cobalt blue, silver-white, concrete grey
Pale yellow, white, blue, marigold yellow.

Sit silently. Take a moment to let everything pour over you. Can you hear the river rushing, and the wind blowing in the trees? Maybe there is rain today and you can hear bodies moving somewhere nearby. A kettle whistles. Now, can you hear the strum of tight strings of a weaving loom? The sound moves through space perhaps carried through the threads that stretch across, and through, the architecture of the room. The flow of the artwork made of electro-conductive and reflective fibres, of copper, of basalt, of steel. At times the tautness slackens, and the threads hang loosely on each other. Then they fan out catching the light at different times of the day. Vibrations course through the installation. Everything is moving even when we pause to contemplate where we are. Open to the elements on a day in a season that always feels at dusk.

* Comment by Daniel Taylor regarding Song of the Siren covered by This Mortal Coil, written by Tim Buckley. Retrieved on 21 august 2020 from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HFWKJ2FUuAQ>

This Dusk Song is sunset and mist.

The exhibition is cycling through time, across two buildings with two histories. In this current sequence, we are making up the history of the third. In a past life, the buildings were a hospice and an orphanage, later a textile factory and now an alcove for the arts. On the facade of the building stands St. Anne, the patron saint of mothers, unmarried women, housewives, women in labour, who wish to conceive, grandmothers, educators, lace makers, seamstresses, and miners of precious metals.

Using different metals in her installation *This Dusk Song (subtle body)*, Gwenneth Boelens attunes to Treignac Projet's multiple exhibition sites by threading copper, steel, reflective, conductive, and aramide fibers over rollers and spindles reclaimed from textile machinery from the factory's heyday. Gwenneth uses the machine parts as the supporting structure of the installation while at the same time weaving the two locations together. Although they are brought together, the totality of the work can not be comprehended at one time. Only through thinking back at the exhibition can you complete the work. *This Dusk Song (subtle body)* is contemplative. Inviting the audience to pause and join in its deliberation.

This Dusk Song is river rushing and hiss.

Scattered throughout Treignac Projet are *Shields, Shells, Shh*, made on-site using one cut from recycled sheets of steel from the factory as well as newspaper and offset printing plates. Appearing as satellites fallen to the ground, the work transforms into a shield and a shell. Left to the elements, the light-sensitive pieces will slowly become markers of time as they are bleached by the autumn sun. And in many ways, Gwenneth's works mark time and process on their surface. Shadows, tan lines. Subtle bodies floating on the surface. Like foam collecting on the top of a river.

In her two-channel video work *The very thing we don't know is always trying to expand* (2016), draws upon interviews with Erik Verlinde, theoretical physicist, who has spent his entire working life developing a theory of matter. Together he and Gwenneth document for the first time his theory for the world to see. In the small monitor, he writes out his formula as the camera pans across the length of the wall. We hear him in the larger screen answering Gwenneth's questions on gravity, the 95 per cent of undefined 'matter' in the universe, and how these topics resist visibility. At the end of the video, he describes what is known, and assumed, like the crests of a wave at dusk.

This Dusk Song is auditory and lived.

This Dusk Song is a phrasing written by Val Plumwood in the chapter *Place-based spirituality as oppositional practice* from her book "Environmental Culture: the ecological crisis of reason" (1990). It is in that paragraph that Plumwood talks about the importance of staying in one place. To call a place home, to belong somewhere. Thus through that belonging, you can get to know a place in ways that a short visit can not adequately allow. Val recalls the various bird song that she hears from her window telling her the times of day and changes in season. Time is marked by diapason and light. Now in times of Covid-19, it feels ever more profound to be in one place. By staying in one place you can move and be moved through the world in different ways, carried on an autumn breeze, harried by a hornet. Plumwood writes "The communicativity and intentionality of more-than-human others is often the key to the power of place." And yet, she discounts the human world of "silent objects" that impoverish the experience of life. But we know that artworks are not silent. They are in their own right centres of communicativity and intentionality creating power **with** a place in the middle of the countryside.

Silver, reddish copper, pearlescent yellow,
muted toad green.

Blue, silver, reddish-orange, green.

White, grey, orange, green, black, greyish blue

Yellow, grey, rusty white, green.