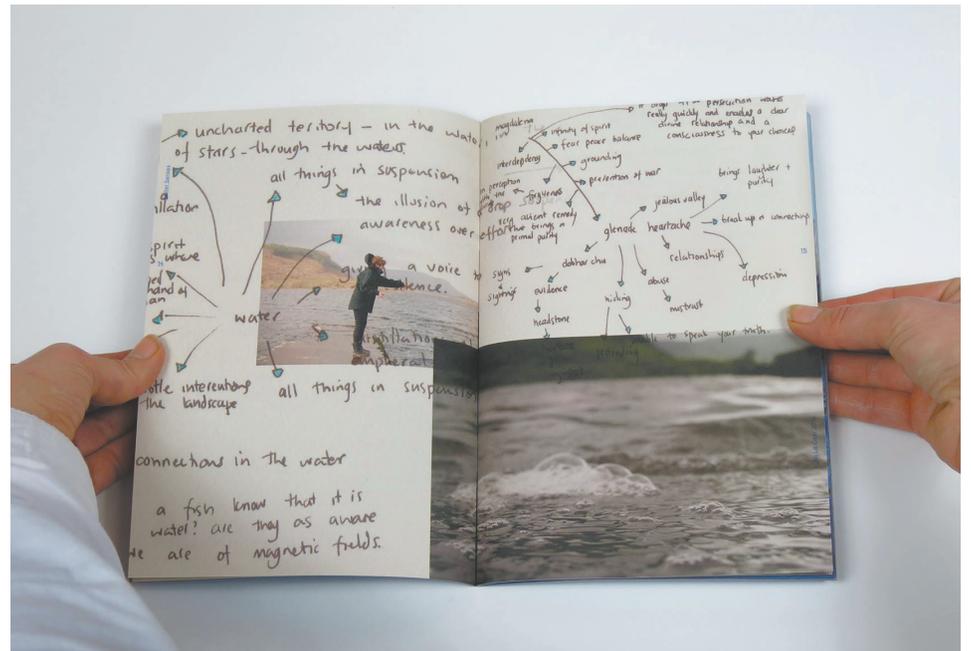


# Glenade Water Remedies

RUTH LE GEAR DISCUSSES HER PROJECT AND PUBLICATION 'WATER SENSES'



Ruth Le Gear, 'Water Senses' installation view, Leitrim Sculpture Centre



Ruth Le Gear, 'Water Senses' publication

A recent Arts and Disability Connect Scheme award afforded me the time and space to create a comprehensive body of work and a publication. 'Water Senses' emerged out of the research, collaboration and fieldwork I undertook to explore water and its memories. Even though I didn't realise it at the time, this work began in 2013 when I commenced a six-week residency at Leitrim Sculpture Centre (LSC). This followed a residency in 2012 onboard a tall ship in the Arctic waters of Svalbard, where I researched micro and macro forces in the retreating ice flows. After encountering Leitrim's Glenade Lough – one of Ireland's oldest glacial lakes – I decided to stay in the north west of the country.

Glenade Lough or Ghleann Éada – meaning 'lake of the glen of jealousy' – holds the story of the *dobhar-chú*, a creature of Irish folklore known as the 'water hound'. This tale of heartache and loss is carried through the valley and takes many different forms. The most common version tells of a young woman called Grace who was killed by the 'monster' in 1722, as she was washing clothes in the lake. When her husband found her lifeless body, he avenged her death by slaying the monster. The beast's companion awoke from the lake and chased the man and his brother many miles to Cashelgarron, below Benbulbin mountain in County Sligo. There he managed to slay the beast. The nearby ancient Conwal Cemetery contains Grace's gravestone, which displays a carving of the *dobhar-chú*. Ireland has many myths and legends, but very few are evidenced through carvings on a person's gravestone. A second tombstone connected to the tale was once situated at the south end of Glenade Lough, but has since been lost. This particular folk memory is so deeply embedded in the landscape, that when I swim in the lake, people tell me to get out in case the *dobhar-chú* gets me. Variations on this story include women being killed by serpent creatures or jealous wives killing their husbands with poisonous reptiles.

My intention with this new body of work was to convey a narrative from the water's perspective. I wanted to find ways to distill this ephemeral environment and decided to create remedies based on homeopathic principles with water taken from the lough. They channel the metaphysical forces that interact with it and the stories, memories, myths and folk tales that are layered upon it. My process involves serial dilutions with water and each individual water sample is analysed to see what is held within. These samples can be viewed as tiny, poetic time machines which form the basis of moving image and photographic works, as well as water remedies for the community.

Working with the community on this project has been transformative for me and has given me a newfound confidence within my practice. I've also developed a number of successful collaborations and gained access to specialist ecological knowledge. For example, during the field investigations, I joined Cillian Roden, an experienced naturalist and ecologist, who was carrying out a targeted aquatic survey of Glenade Lough. Accompanied by Jim Ryan, Cillian was searching for



Ruth Le Gear, 'Water Senses' installation view, Leitrim Sculpture Centre

the *Najas Flexilis*, a native aquatic plant that is entwined with Glenade Lough's mythology, but has not been seen there since 1970. A recording of the men's conversations during this expedition formed the basis of a soundtrack which accompanies my new video work. I also had the pleasure of working with digital archaeologist Gary Dempsey. Sometimes the lines between archaeology and folklore become blurred, as archaeologists excavate layers of rich topography, ancient legends, place-name lore, hagiography and local traditions pertaining to specific regions. It could be argued that where the folklorist digs where the archaeologist does not.

By opting for a publication as one of my main outcomes, I wanted to extend the work beyond the gallery context. I was thrilled to work with Padraig Cunningham from Pure Designs on the design and layout of the publication. Cunningham created a vehicle for my ideas and the different elements we had discussed during our initial meeting. I had a fairly clear idea of what I wanted and just needed to identify an appropriate form and tone. We looked into different materials that might suit the ethos of the project. He really helped to assert the idea of something precious that would reflect the level of the care and research I had invested in the project. I wanted various aspects of the project to be contained within a presentation box. A unique water remedy sits snugly underneath a booklet and several postcards – a formation that emulates the imprinted, layered stories I have encountered on my journeys through this valley and its water. With this publication, I want to take the reader on a journey to become part of the water, to listen to the whispers of stories yet untold from this place.

I have worked diligently to assemble a range of poetic, critical and theoretical understandings as well as inventive artistic approaches linked to my broader water investigations. My exhibition 'Water

Senses' ran in LSC from 10 to 25 March. On entering the main gallery space, the viewer encountered a blue line of books across the back wall, at water level. A tall table in the centre of the space displayed the various components of the publication including the seven remedies and their corresponding images. Two screens disseminated my video works, while a clear glass orb containing water was suspended within the space using copper wire. On the wall opposite the film works, a large print comprised 70 images documenting my interactions with the waters over the years. As part of my exhibition, I held water remedy sessions in the gallery. I was reminded of my time as a student at GMT when I was so ill that I needed a bed in my studio in order to work. I transported the very same bed to the gallery setting in order to treat people with water remedies.

## GLENADE WATER & MOSS REMEDY

This remedy is especially helpful for those who work with energy. It helps to clear old unwanted patterns quickly and to integrate new patterns that are emerging. The remedy allows your own innate healing powers to do their work with ease and it holds space for you. When we hide things from others (tears, pain, grief etc.), they can become hidden to ourselves. This remedy helps people listen to their intuition and stops them becoming stuck in repeated thinking. The moss brings a new clarity and deep clear mental energy that is calm yet energising. It works deeply on the sinuses and spine and helps to clear viruses. It is a powerful awakener and brings one on an inner journey to be in the now.

## GLENADE EQUINOXES REMEDY

Equinoxes occur twice a year, when the sun crosses the celestial equator in its seasonal migration. The Vernal Equinox happens in late March and the Autumnal Equinox is in late September. In addition to the (approximately) equal hours of daylight and darkness, the equinoxes are times when the sun's apparent motion undergoes the most rapid change. It is the time of balance between day and night, before night takes over and brings the winter, a time of darkness and death, and the rebirth of spring into the light. This remedy helps with the inner-transformation and shift of darkness into light. It can help to lift the grief for lost places of the past, a place to which you cannot return; a place that perhaps never was.

**Ruth Le Gear is an artist who currently lives in County Leitrim and has a studio in The Model, Sligo. 'Water Senses' is supported by the Arts Council's Arts and Disability Connect Scheme managed by Arts and Disability Ireland. It is kindly supported by Leitrim Sculpture Centre and The Model, Sligo. 'Water Senses' can be purchased from [ruthlegear.com](http://ruthlegear.com) and The Model, Sligo.**