



Artists' Moving
Image Network



Supported using public funding by
**ARTS COUNCIL
ENGLAND**

Julia Parks Interview Transcript

Voice: Julia Parks, FLAMIN Fellowship artist 2020-2021

00:07

My artistic practice explores the relationship between people, place and industry in West Cumbria. So to put that in context, it's the area between the Irish Sea and the Lake District National Park. And it's the kind of coastline that runs down the west side of the county of Cumbria. My recent work has very much explored the way in which heavy industry has shaped the landscape and where I live. So an example would be in the town of Workington, which had a large steel industry and was also connected with the iron industries locally and coal. It has these massive slag banks which have been left over from the industry that took place there. And I think this is an example of the kind of places I'm interested in, because there's nothing to say, "Oh, these were built by people" - it's not until you talk to people that you find out "Oh, wow, they're slag banks" and they are the leftovers of the industry that's now gone.

01:15

The most recent work and probably the one that I feel has been the most important piece of work that I've made to date is a film called *Workington Red*. I made that film in an old iron ore mine that had turned into an art centre, and the film was shown in that place. I'm really interested in being able to show work in those contexts, because the place speaks directly to the work in some ways.

01:40

I would call myself an interdisciplinary artist, because I do work across mediums. So photography, sculpture, film - I would say film has become much more of a central medium that I've been using in the last couple of years. But it's been there for a long time. I work primarily with 16 millimetre film, and also interweave that with archive footage. And I guess, the reason I use that medium is that I'm often looking at things that have happened in the past and using archives. I kind of feel that the 16mm compliments that history in some ways, because you're using a medium that kind of comes from a different time.

02:30

I guess I'm really interested in artists like Margaret Tait. Just because I think there's a social documentary theme within that work - she's actually documenting things, life as it is there, but she's also making artwork and the films are beautiful. I do often shoot things that happen in Cumbria, like there's a trawler race and Uppies and Downies - I have no idea whether I'll ever use them in a film, but it feels important bear witness to that and to document it in some way.

03:04

I felt that it was the right time for me to apply to the fellowship when I did, because I'd made about three significant works that I felt had really pushed my practice on and I was starting think about the next work that I really wanted to make. I felt that actually, it would be really interesting to get input from a broader and wider network of people and also get a bit more development support, rather than necessarily constantly thinking about the same same way I always make work, but actually pushing myself to work in a different way or in a slightly new way. And so that's really why I applied.

03:50

So the project I applied with was specifically exploring the way in which seaweed had been used historically, now and also into the future. Seaweed is a subject that I've been looking at in Cumbria, I'd made a short film developing, and using seaweed as material actually to develop a black and white image using seaweed. I became really interested in the idea of using seaweed within the context of the Irish Sea and then thinking about the nuclear power station, Sellafield, that's in the Irish Sea and the remnants of that, that would have been in my image. So that kind of really led me on to this exploration of thinking about seaweed and it took me to all these various kind of areas like folklore and the history of seaweed within the UK and Ireland. The area I'm really interested in is that relationship between using a material, and then when that use starts to put that material under threat.

05:00

So the Fellowship has made an absolutely huge difference I think to my practice. First of all, just the opportunity and the confidence that it's given me to be part of such a programme. It's been really exciting to meet all of the different artists as part of the project to really learn from them. Also to see the diversity of work - I've like picked little bits for each artist that I found useful. And, also, learning from the other Fellows, I've been really interested in the ways in which they plan their work, and seeing how they kind of lay out all the different ways they think about making a film, in quite a detailed way, and actually seeing how people's work has developed has been really, really interesting.

05:50

The other thing that's been really important about the FLAMIN fellowship is that I've found all of these new avenues for potentially exploring funding or opportunities or showing work that I just didn't know about. Obviously, I've done a lot of arts related funding, but I've never done the more film side of funding. And that was a really interesting opportunity. I think in future, it means that I'm starting to look a bit more at the film opportunities that are in the UK, but also Europe as well.