

An Archive of Her Self

A constellation of moments in the work of Hannah Edward.

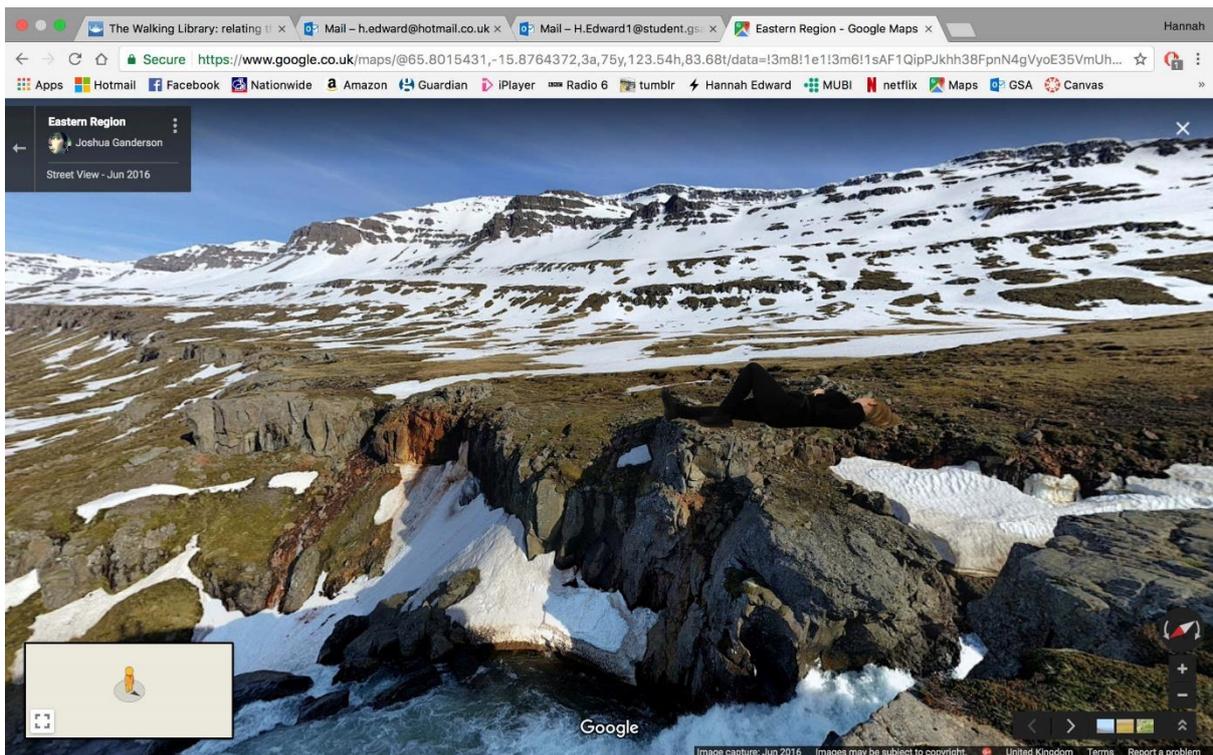
Hannah Edward is currently studying a Master of Letters in Fine Art Practice at the Glasgow School of Art. She had been unable to access her studio for a number of weeks until other studio facilities were secured. Now she and others have returned to making. It has not been the easiest time to make work. It is the summer of 2018 and the second burning of the Glasgow School of Art's Macintosh Building has been significantly worse than the first. Residents are still, upon writing, unable to access their homes. The students have been displaced to a much lesser degree. It has been destabilising and disruptive for the city of Glasgow on many levels. A course of study halted briefly, streets blocked off, homes made unreachable, an authoritarian blockage in place.

This time of unexpected stoppage and displacement is a particular juncture that will be remembered. In what way, remains to be seen. Edward makes work that investigates memory as a facility for meeting her past Selves; encountering herself at different points in her journey as a woman and maker. The disruption in making is unwelcome but perhaps one, for a practice concerned with flattening time and marking moments, to be included in the archive. Edward's most recent works are assemblages built on gestures of kindness and vulnerability. A reaching out to touch oneself in the past.

On writing this I struggled to think of adequate words to describe what Edward is doing. So many of the words I reach for have adversarial connotations, engagement, encounter, assembly (of troops!); describing meetings of competition or confrontation. Edward is in fact doing the very opposite. Her meeting with herself is one of quiet curiosity of her own vulnerability. A touch point with her Self at a purposefully chosen time that multiplies and unfolds into an archive of Self. A constellation of intimate moments. Not only is Hannah meeting Hannah, we as the spectator are meeting both. How we see each Hannah speaks of how Hannah has been viewing herself in the process of making and journeying through various landscapes, be they digital or physical. Similar to Chris Markers La Jetée Edward splices moving and still images in her work to indicate a return to a past that leaks into the present.

I am here; I belong here

These touch points are set up by the artist herself. She chooses the landscapes within which she travels and inhabits. She chooses her position, her view point and her method. She journeys on foot through physical landscapes and inserts herself into digital scenes where she may never have been. Her use of digital platforms has been a theme throughout her work for the last four years. Her mode of display utilises the tabular browser window, the interactive Google Earth interface and the square format of Instagram so often accessed on handheld devices. Flattening space and time in an attempt to neutralise contexts. Often the titles of the works will recall the date and time she made the work. A record of the insertion of the memory into her archive. An insertion and reassertion that she is in and of the world; No matter the time, the space, the place, the instances of making. It seems that nothing of consequence happens, that there is no narrative, no story, other than the addition of that moment of being into her own visual library.



Sleeping Body on Tour (2017)

In her work Edward interchanges between stillness and movement. The stillness of her body in *Body on Tour (2017)* and *Sleeping Body on Tour (2017)* compared to the movement we can see in *Body Pretending to be Paintings (2017)*. Edward expresses her displeasure of being a fixture of inertness. She becomes an active participant in her work where she can walk away from the static postures these women have been immobilised in. Choosing her backdrop of paintings, such as the Mona Lisa, Olympia and The Birth of Venus, Edwards uses her movements and her gestures to communicate her disdain at the attempted fixing of female stature within these works.

In confirming the strength of her ability to take up space Edward does not lay claim to the landscapes she chooses. She takes no territorial ownership, but embraces it as being a part of her Self. In *Body Exploring Google Earth (2017)* she appears to be questioning the landscape she inhabits with her gestures and the position of her body. She appears to be more knowing in *Body Taking Up Space (2017)*, no longer questioning the space she has placed herself within but playing with it. Embodying the space and herself in a playful way, recognising that none of us are separate from the spaces we inhabit no matter how we try to distance ourselves from them. Our lived experience shapes us in more ways than one. The mutability of our bodies as open-ended, permeable systems rather than closed boundary-ed vessels.



navigations (2018)

There is a distinct development of Edward's relationship with both her Self and her body. The movements of her body have become dancelike in *navigations* (2018). It appears that Edward is moving for her own pleasure and hers alone. The joy of moving, the articulation of the bend, the sweeping of the arms. It repeats and repeats looping on small handheld devices. She performs a moving meditation in a landscape that could be many places. It is Lanzarote but could be Scotland on a good day. She embodies the rhythm of the land.

Viewing Edwards work has always been an intimate experience for me. Her moving images are often displayed on a variety of devices that one holds in the palm of one's hand. Encountering her work on Instagram on your mobile phone, cradling Hannah in hand held warmth and care. Edward speaks of handling herself with kindness. Reencountering her past self at different points in time in various conditions be they in the studio, outside or in the digital realm. In some cases, she was physically there, in others she was but a digital cut out placed into a photograph.

Gentle insistence

The archive Edward is creating is one of captured moments of her adult history. It recalls the digital archives that many of us have built as projections of ourselves. Edward is performing to a degree but



Self-Care (2018)

her work is a distinctly different performance to, for example, Amalia Ulman. Ulman performs personalities on Instagram, often to draw attention to the narcissistic element of self-branding that is growing on this and other platforms. Those archives often do not contain the vulnerability of the work that Edward presents. She admits to thinking about the idea that we are always performing as we are searching for our most authentic selves. Even in private when we are alone we are performing to ourselves. Watching Hannah embrace herself in the very recent *Self Care* is a touching intimate scene. A maternal loving gesture she extends to her past self; embracing Hannah at that moment as she was.

Edward's archive is a process of the lived experience, whether that be in the physical or digital realms. Inserting herself into snapshots of places and time, and again reinserting herself to review those moments, speaks so strongly of memory. The work of memory and the bleeding between what we remember, how we internally process our external experience while continually experiencing new things. A representation of memory and re-encountering the temporality of ourselves. Edward is meeting herself at points on the journey and wishing to comfort, rather than confront, herself as she was. To review a life and to cultivate a kindness, an understanding of how she was at that time, and how this contributes to who she is now. How often our past seeps into our present and reveals itself in another form. How we must learn to forgive ourselves and treat ourselves with compassion first, before we can extend this sympathy to others.

Edward's work is available on www.hannahedward.co.uk. You can follow her on Instagram @hannah_edward. Edward will be exhibiting at The Glasgow School of Art Graduate Degree Show opening 31 August 2018 at Kelvin Hall, Glasgow.