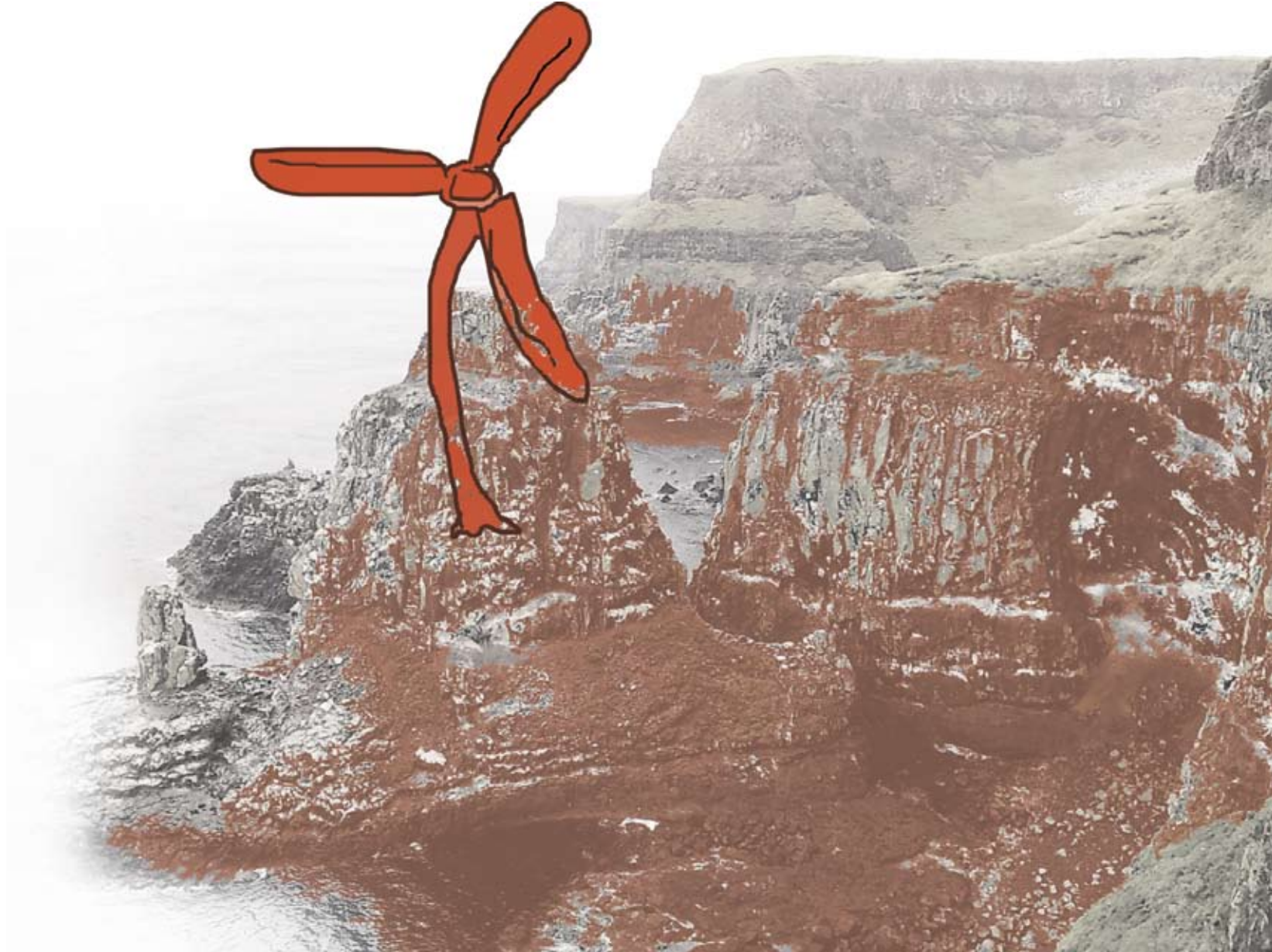


**COMMUNICATION IN THE THE AGE OF WIND:
EXPLORING THE POETICS OF NATURAL ENERGY**



*“Wabi-Sabi is the quintessential Japanese aesthetic.
It is a beauty of things imperfect, impermanent, and incomplete.
It is a beauty of things modest and humble.
It is a beauty of things unconventional.”*

Leonard Koren, Wabi-Sabi

*“The Stone Age did not end for lack of stone, and the Oil Age
will end long before the world runs out of oil.”*

Sheik Ahmed Zaki Yamani

1. CONTEXT: REGENERATIVE ENERGY

Alternative energy and the Japanese ‘philosophy’ of wabi-sabi (often described as the Zen way of materials) are closely connected in their essence. Both deal with the effect of time, natural forces and natural change on materials and objects. While one is functional, the other is spiritual. One satisfies our physical demands, the other our philosophical needs. Although there is no direct equivalent of wabi-sabi in Western culture, aspects of it can be found in many traditional crafts and vernacular architecture.

Both climate change and the immediate threat of peak oil force us to search for viable fossil fuel exit strategies and the use of abundant, regenerative energy is one of the most obvious routes to follow. There is no shortage of this free energy: Britain and Ireland are surrounded by water and have an abundance of wind all year round while the sun provides 15,000 times more energy than the world's total consumption. The UK is required by Kyoto 2 legislation to increase its use of alternative energy to reduce its greenhouse emissions by 20% by 2020. The government has chosen to go the controversial route of nuclear energy, whilst investing to a much lesser extent in wind, water and sun power. Other European countries, however, continue to explore the use of alternative natural energy on a large scale as expansive windfarms are planned both offshore and on hillsides and acoustic motorway barriers have been topped with solar panels providing energy for local housing. Concentrated Solar Power (CSP) stations are already commercially operated in Spain and France. Closer to home, Strangford Lough now has one of the first innovative tidal power plants. Such high-tech approaches are now considered to be the state-of-the-art solutions to efficient use of alternative energy and requiring well-developed infrastructure, extensive planning and substantial funding. The outcomes are industrial scale projects, often controversial and not without their own environmental impact.

For several decades, individuals and organisations such as the Centre for Alternative Technology in Wales have experimented with low cost alternatives for domestic use. The

approach of accessible, inexpensive and intermediate technology is also of great significance for lesser-developed countries. Such low-tech or ‘barefoot’ solutions require basic skills and use natural, abundant and recycled materials to provide inexpensive low-gain energy suitable for dwellings.

Both high and low-tech approaches have so far largely ignored aesthetics and artistic contexts. Despite the fact that low-tech approaches often reflect the spirit of wabi-sabi, the visual appearance are generally considered secondary to function. This workshop aims to address this issue. Working within the low-tech approach, our aim is to design inexpensive yet poetic and beautiful systems for channelling regenerative energy. The open design brief encourages the development of functional and artistic mechanisms and systems which can be powered by the elements.

2. SCENARIO: MARCONI REVISITED...

Welcome to an island in the Age of Wind. Over the years isolated communities have managed to become fairly autonomous and self-sufficient in the production of both their energy and food supplies. Peak oil happened sometimes in the long distant past and the last remaining metal boxes on rubber wheels are used as green houses or as a source of ever decreasing raw materials. Sailing ships are the sole means of travel and are used to trade rare and exotic foods as well as goods made from recycled materials. North Easterlies have become the prevailing trade winds and the Gulf Stream has changed course significantly, no longer passing Ireland and Britain. Although the world-wide communication web is about to collapse and most copper cables used in telephony have corroded, the need for communication obviously remains. The location of Rathlin Island makes it an important relay point for messaging and communication between Ireland (Malin Head) and Scotland (the Mull of Kintyre). This is significant for the food trade, which relies on timely distribution and reliable forewarning of traders to prepare facilities.

3. THE BRIEF: WIND AS MESSENGER

Working in three small groups – as the traditional Irish work squad *meitheal* used to do – at different locations across the island. Your task is to research, design and make objects which, in some way, use wind to convey messages across the island to the other groups. However, it is most important that as well as being functional the devices you create are also poetic and beautiful in themselves, expressing the spirit of wabi-sabi. There will be a materials pool of old car parts, canvas, rope, found objects and wood to enable you to create tensile structures, spaces, vehicles, instruments, automata, kites or whatever you come up to relay a message with the help of wind between three high points on Rathlin Island and beyond. You are encouraged to use traditional sail-making techniques with

recycling ideas.

In simple terms: you will work together in small teams to design and create a poetic device to communicate the arrival of a certain food to the next group, using wind as your power source.

Location 1. The West Light or Bull Lighthouse is the most westerly point of the Island. Set high on the cliffs, it is in direct sightline of Malin Head and Inistrahull Island off Malin. It is the first point of sight for Atlantic and coastal traders. There is workspace available in the lighthouse, but material supply is tricky (only light materials...).

Location 2. Kinramer is a high area overlooking Rathlin Sound and is in the middle of the two other sites. This station will need to be able to receive and convey a message. Workspace is in the yurt and small barn.

Location 3. Ballynagaard is in direct sightline to the Mull of Kintyre in Scotland, about 15nm away. Good outside workspace is available and Jonny will have a range of recycled car parts available. Also welding facilities.

4. PROGRAMME: BOOT CAMP..

Monday:

Arrival with 13.00 ferry.

13.30 Introduction to Camping Barn accommodation and facilities, then lunch.

14.30 Briefing and communal brain storming session at Camping Barn or Yurt

15.30 Division in groups, off to sites

16.00 Research and development. Refining ideas

18.00 Finishing work and return to Camping Barn

19.00 Dinner

20.00 Tutors introduce their own work, then discussions

Tuesday:

From 7.30 Breakfast

8.30 Going to sites with materials. Play with materials, finalise designs

13.00 Lunch break on site

13.30 Start making

18.00 Finishing work

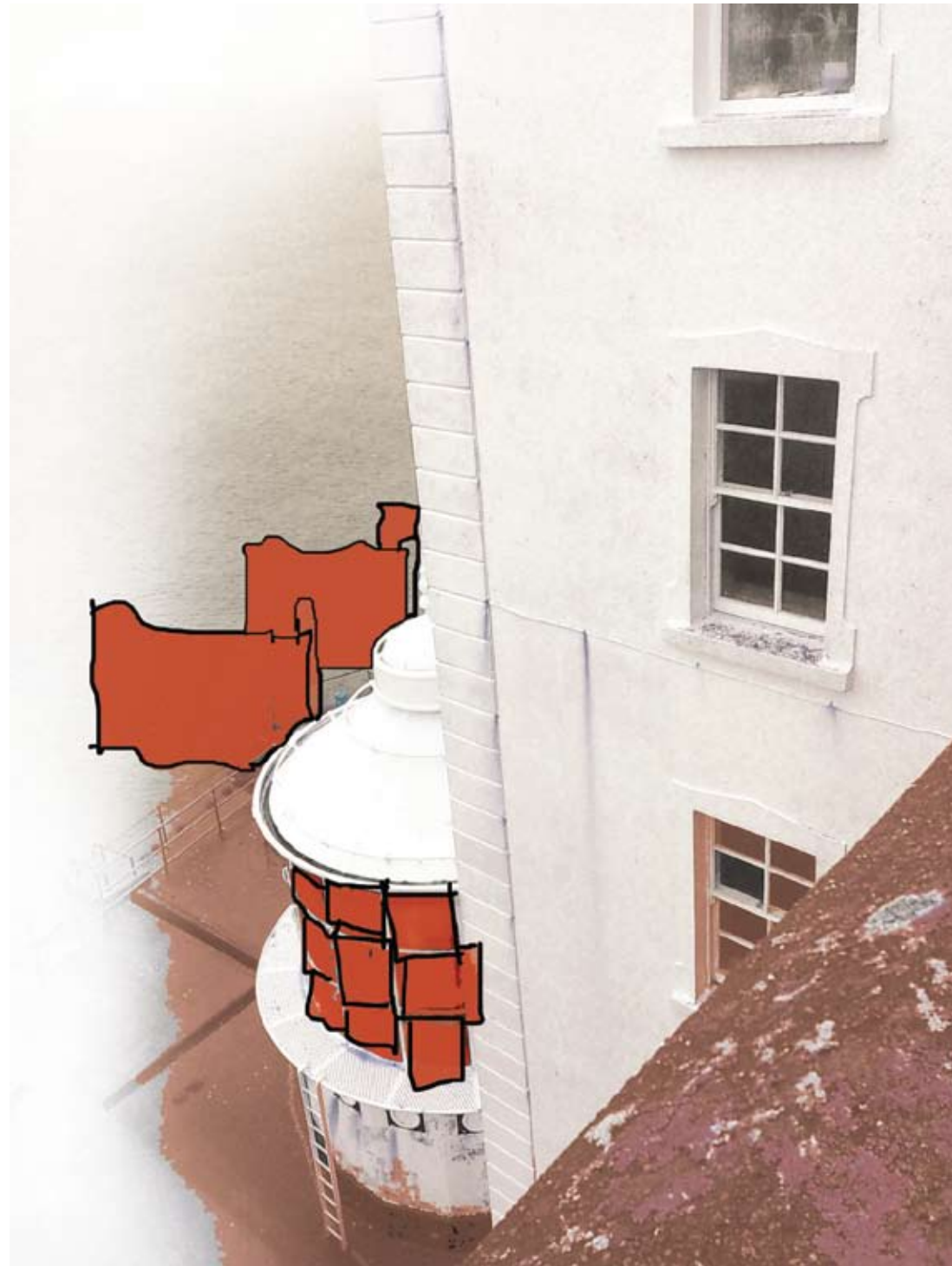
19.00 Dinner

20.00 Film: 'Eleventh Hour'

Wednesday:

From 7.30 Breakfast

8.30 Going to sites, starting work: making the piece



13.00 Lunch break on site
13.30 Continue making
18.00 Finishing work
19.00 Dinner in Manor House

Thursday:

From 7.30 Breakfast
8.30 Going to sites, starting work: continue making the piece
13.00 Lunch break on site
13.30 Continue making
16.00 Finishing off all work!
17.00 Going to sites, clear-up sites
18.00 The Grande Finale: Testing communication
19.00 Dinner
20.00 Guest Speaker: Martin McCarthy, Sustainable Energy Ireland

Friday:

From 7.30 Breakfast
8.30 Bus to ferry
9.00 ferry to Ballycastle
9.30 Bus to Belfast
12.00 Arrive in Belfast

5. TUTORS

Holger Christian Lönze, West Cork

Holger trained as a furniture maker before studying architecture and later lithography and sculpture. He completed a DPhil applying Gestalt psychology to the perception of time in art. While researching design-for-sustainability for The Eden Project in Cornwall he became interested in the ecological aspects of many Irish craft traditions and curachs in particular. Holger's sculpture work centres on the interaction of people with their cultural and natural environments, with the sea being a recurring theme. He works as a professional sculptor and traditional boat builder. www.holgerlonze.com

Johnny Fyffe, Belfast

Goldsmith and co-owner of Jennymount Street Architectural Salvage Yard, he studied jewellery and goldsmithing at University of Ulster. He has worked on numerous building and salvage projects and brings to the symposium a wealth of knowledge of experimental working methods and practical research.

Pete Hill, Cornwall

Sculptor and artist working for the Eden Project and designer/maker for Wildworks theatre company, Cornwall. Pete is also an experienced sailor and Yachtmaster trainer. He will bring to the project his knowledge and skill in rigging and making objects from found and discarded material.

6. INITIAL RESEARCH AND LITERATURE

Fuad-Luke, A.; *The Eco-design Handbook*, Thames & Hudson, London, 2nd ed., 2005
Lengen, J. von; *The Barefoot Architect*, Shelter Publication, California, 2008
Juniper, A.; *Wabi Sabi: The Japanese Art of Impermanence*;
Koren, L.; *Wabi-Sabi for Artists, Designers, Poets & Philosophers*; 1994
Tatsusaburo, H.; *Japanese Art and the Tea Ceremony*; 1974
E. Estyn Evans; *Irish Heritage*; 1958
Schumacher; *Small is Beautiful*;
Papanek, V.; *Design for the Real World*
Google: design (r)evolution/poetics of materials; The Eden Project; The Yarner Trust; Centre for Alternative Technology; CELT, East Clare

YOU WILL NEED TO BRING: Good working/walking boots, gardening gloves, waterproof gear (jacket and trousers!) and warm work clothes as well as changes of non-work clothes, toiletries and any special food you will require. Although tools will be provided, a small kit of personal hand tools, penknife, woodworking tools and sewing stuff etc. would be helpful. If you would like to camp, bring tent, sleeping bag and pillow and towel. Sketch books, camera and other equipment for recording the process.

