

EMI KODAMA & ELIAS HEUNINCK

Snowflake on the sand

INSTALLATION

WORKSPACEBRUSSELS

EN ∫ ongoing ∫ free

28/06 ∫ 18:00 › 22:00

29/06 ∫ 14:00 › 22:00

Through the lens of a microscope you look at a sand dollar. A sand dollar is a flattened, burrowing species belonging to the order of the sea urchins. This natural sea creature is held in a custom-built manipulator, which is programmed to move the object in such a way that as a viewer you feel like you are flying over its magnified surface. At first you have a general idea of how that sand dollar looks in its actual size, but no clue how things evolve on a more minuscule level.

Through headphones, a story is read. As you watch and listen, your perceptions change, slowly. And when you stare a little longer, the structured pattern becomes more tangible, more rugged and uneven. Gradually the surface adopts a sandy disguise. Some tiny holes echo footsteps in snow.

The interaction between the unfolding of the unusual landscape and the voice over makes you appreciate the object differently and identify certain aspects which weren't striking at first. It encourages you to look at an ordinary object and to picture it as something more than the material.

This work navigates effortlessly between a vast imagined landscape and a miniature world, situated between moving image and moving object. It shows that everything can become many things, as long as you allow your imagination to look beyond its current reality.

BIO

Elias Heuinck (BE, 1986) studied media art at the School of Arts in Ghent. He became interested in the use of the landscape image for various experiments with digital means. His works involve different media, but they always touch on the material of film and the notion of cinema. By changing the perspective in space, on paper, or in a digital data file, he gently disorients the audience.

Emi Kodama (CA, 1980), originally from Vancouver, has been based in Ghent since 2008 when she started the HISK. Through writing, performance, and installation, Emi layers elements of daily life with dreams and memories to create stories that people can explore and expand. She wants to give others the opportunity to spend time in their inner world — for them to be curious, ask questions, and realize the power of their own imagination.

Concept **Elias Heuinck & Emi Kodama**

Technical development **Elias Heuinck**

Story and voice **Emi Kodama**

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Your installation *Snowflake on the sand* is not your first collaboration. Artistically you are coming from different directions. What was your personal interest in this work?

Elias: I am interested in the process through which images are created – from the capturing of light all the way to the transfer, storage and playback of a digital image – and the question of what it means to create images. What I find fascinating in this installation is that everybody can imagine how things look through a microscope, but since the object moves so slowly, so controlled in front of the lens, it feels like a film. I want to create an area between cinema and object, a kind of pre-cinema experience that explores the visual quality of a mundane object.

Emi: With the microscope you can reach a place you can't physically go to, but you get very close to it through the combination of looking and listening. Your attention is zoomed into the object. Like outer space, which is very important for me in some other works, it's there but you can't physically access it. Most people can only go there through their imagination. For me there are two opposite directions: really big or really small, both equally inaccessible. This is something that fascinates me.

In your work you are connecting storytelling with a landscape that appears when you watch an object under a microscope. How did the object and the story come together?

Emi: For the installation we chose a sand dollar, a sea creature in the family of the sea urchin. Its white surface immediately reminded me of snow. We really liked the idea of the small object becoming a landscape from the beginning, but I wanted to move to different landscapes over the same object. This is the power of storytelling: you can jump to different locations and places seamlessly. I built other places into the story, like the salt flats and the beach, to create worlds which are in very different places physically but come together in the sand dollar. In this way, the sand dollar isn't just snow. It encompasses this vast distance so that the play of scale is much more dramatic.

Elias: The nice element about the project is that you have

two things at the same time: an object and an object as a landscape. The moment you look at the installation you experience it as an object and the moment you look through the lens of the microscope and listen to the story, you perceive an image that creates a real landscape in your imagination.

You are building connections between personal stories and collective memories of landscapes. How do you create the connection or transition between these two perspectives?

Emi: I make certain assumptions about people's experiences. I expect that people have walked around in fresh snow, been to the beach, that maybe they have an image of the salt flats in the back of their minds. As it starts with the image of the snow, it starts from the most familiar thing and expands from there. It starts somewhere familiar, which helps the audience to connect with the object and get into the story easily, and from there I take them on a journey.

Elias: In the story Emi describes situations you can easily imagine or that are familiar. These situations can be connected to your own memories, to very small details. Then she describes them in a way that the listener really connects to and imagines these things. After this imaginative world is established, Emi combines it with her own personal and sometimes very specific memories. In this way, it's both personal and out there. In the eyes of the audience these two worlds collide.

Interview with **Emi Kodama & Elias Heuninck** by **Andreas Fleck**