



School: Bath School of Art

Researcher: John Wood

Project Title: Erdkunde

UOA: D32 Art and Design - History, Practice and Theory

300-Word Statement

This project was an opportunity for Harrison and Wood to develop a new video work in a response to the geology collection at Bristol Museum and Art Gallery, much of which is not on public display. Harrison and Wood's work is collaborative and all roles within it are equally shared.

The work draws upon the history of geological maps, walkers and individual geologists whose histories are tied up with the collection at the museum. Collecting, collating and classification of materials in relation to museums was of particular interest, inspired by the work of William Smith who produced the first geological map of the UK in 1815 and this project marked the 200-year anniversary of that map.

This project problematises the interpretation of a sets of materials, artifacts and texts, and through this process reveals that simultaneous interpretations and alternative narratives are possible calling into question the protocols and veracity of museum narratives and more broadly the concept of documentary narratives, which are rarely neutral.

This dissemination of information was directly addressed by the format utilized, specifically the narrative device of a lecture with no spoken words, based upon the idea of a field trip and the collection and subsequent display and interpretation of materials.

Here the show-and-tell lecture format is turned upside down to splinter the relationship between words and images, inducing thought through disjunction. Erdkunde's written captions function to disconnect rather than explain. The work has the feel of a children's picture book in which simple sentences accompany illustrations or actions.

The production of the work was supported by Arts Council England's Grants for the Arts programme, in partnership with 15 museums from across England the National Trust and the Contemporary Visual Arts Network and selected for New Expressions 3 at Bristol Museum and Art gallery.