

Out & About

Three days and nights in Papay

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Explosions of colour, the wet of walking to venues, the smell of the byre, the sounds of birds and "Nornoise," the fullness of home cooking, and the whirr of a 16mm film projector are fragments of my stay at this year's Papay Gyro Nights.

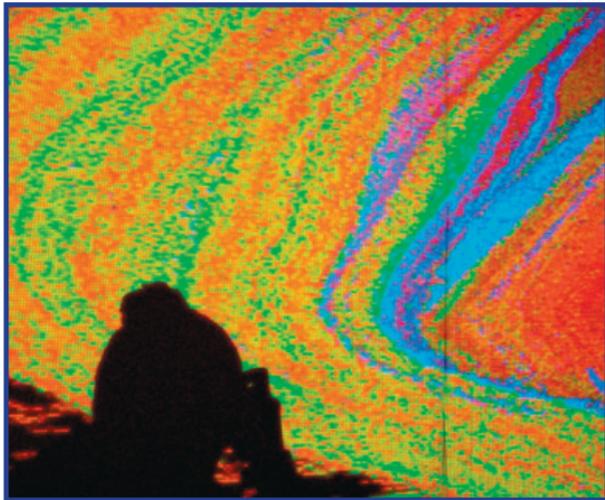
Last year, when a few folk returned to Stromness with their eyes aglaze about the wonder of the festival, I wished I had been brave enough to challenge the weather and attend. So this year, when the festival was mentioned to me, I booked my flight!

Truthfully, I knew little about what to expect. The name "Gyro," along with the exotic-looking logo for the event, piqued my interest. Visits to modern art museums had introduced me to video and film artists, but my curiosity was aroused by the prospect of seeing such an event on Papay in the winter.

Imagine surreal black and white images of translucent shadows projected on the back wall of the upper floor of a "grain loft," directly above a prize-winning bull's pen. Imagine these images ebbing and flowing to the accompaniment of a perfectly synchronized cello performance. Imagine seeing *Bow* from the Faroe Islands in that space, while sitting in an ad hoc swing, hung from the byre's rafters. It was rather extraordinary, for sure.

Contrast that video with the artistic duo, Genetic Moo, and their interactive *Nautilus*, which one passed by to get to the inner room of the Grain Loft.

These talented folks, Nicola Schauerman and Tim Pickup, became intrigued by the spirals within the nautilus. They designed a digital programme that, as people walked under the webcam, on screen the nautilus sucked the colours on the clothing into pixels. These pixels were then being



Work created by Genetic Moo.

constantly compressed into strata of colours, akin to the way the nautilus creates its spectacular shell. Each day, the colours squeezed tighter and began to look three-dimensional. It was a brilliant integration of science, technology and art, ideally suited for installation in a Children's Museum of Science. Throughout the week, they continued their exploration into spirals and video projections, with participatory workshops. They planned to display the workshop participants' creations onto their constructed large sculptural spiral.

Each day began with *Papey Listskjul Seminar* conversations at the studio of the organizers, Ivanov and Tsz Man Chan. With homemade soup or coffee in hand, and with resident artist Armando Seijo actively painting the faces, hats or stories of the folks around, words, ideas, and questions became the food to fill the curious soul.

At night in the Kelp Store (with renovations begun to convert it into Papay's heritage and art centre), the 16mm

projector whirred away with a retrospective of French cinematographer Patrick Bokanowski. The reels of film were personally carried by an attache from the French Ministry of Culture in Edinburgh to Papay, with the express permission of Bokanowski.

Bokanowski takes years to edit his pieces, and insists on his work being shown as it is made. He gave permission to festival organizers mainly because of the underlying vision of this festival — to hold an event on a "remote island in extreme weather" in unusual venues. And it was definitely unique to sit on propped up boards within a stonewalled damp shore building, with warm Japanese sake offered at the interval.

Other highlights were the scary tales told by master storytellers Tom Muir and Fran Flett Hollinrake in the candlelit St Boniface church, complete with a path through the graveyard.

I was sad to miss the concert on Saturday night from Bird Radio, and the accompanying

workshop, the fire lit procession and bonfire, the awarding of the Knap O' Howar art prize and so many other videos, films, and projections. Despite my interest in many areas, I eventually have to admit that I can't do everything and be everywhere!

I may be the last person to discover what a freerunner is, but the Danish documentary, *My Playground*, by Kaspar Astrup Schroder, excited me no end. Within this film I found potential metaphors to understand the Papay Gyro Nights, with its experimental and sometimes bizarre films, videos, and music within unique structures.

Freerunners can't change the landform or the architecture, but they can transform it by moving around it differently. They concentrate on the unorganized part to create the Parkour. By paying better attention to the space, they figure out movements within that space. One freerunner explained: "I have a bad habit of exploring the possibilities in everything." Another in the Danish documentary said: "I don't know where to go; I just see when I want to go and what I want to do."

For a freerunner, it is this combination of playing around with movement and unmovable structure that inspires them. Well, it seems to me that Ivanov and Tsz Man Chan have been doing the same thing on Papay.

They visited Papay and saw its form and the structures there. Over the years, they have developed a way of moving and playing within the confines of Papay's past, from the oldest Neolithic farm settlement in Northern Europe to the warm community of Papay, to its centre of Beltane House, its shop, and Hostel.

Their energy of "playing" in the fixed environment is bringing life and spirit to a remote island in extreme weather, and, along the way, it is opening the eyes of residents and festival attendees to the new visionary artists in the north.

Promoting music for young people

Orkney Youth Music Forum is holding an open meeting on Sunday, February 19, to raise the profile of the organisation.

Everyone involved with or having an interest in musical activities for young people is invited to attend.

OYMF is one of a network of Youth Music Forums set up by Creative Scotland across local authority regions with the aims of promoting "joined up" thinking in terms of musical provision for children and young people, encouraging pooling of resources and identifying local gaps in provision.

The initiative also aims to share news of events and opportunities and provide a platform for young people to play an active part in the development of musical activities.

Glenys Hughes, chairwoman of Orkney Youth Music Forum, said: "A wealth of musical activities of all genres is available to young people in Orkney. I hope that OYMF can continue to support these activities by developing its role in providing a discussion forum where people can learn about opportunities, both local and national, and explore possibilities for collaboration."

"So this open meeting is intended as a step towards raising the profile of the forum. The committee hopes that a wide range of individuals, representatives of organisations and young people themselves will come along, give us their ideas on the most productive way forward for the forum, and, hopefully, join up as members."

Gemma McGregor, OYMF co-ordinator, describing some of the activities already undertaken by the forum, added: "Orkney Youth Music Forum has sought to raise awareness of musical opportunities for young people by providing an online directory listing music groups, bands, festivals and venues."

"We've also created an online events calendar, and hosted quarterly meetings showcasing young musicians. Other activities have included an Inter-Island Join Up project funded by Scotland's Islands."

"A report, *Music Provision for Young People in Orkney*, commissioned from the forum by Creative Scotland, is available to read on the forum's website, www.orkneycommunities.co.uk/YOUTHMUSICFORUM."

The open meeting takes place at 3pm on Sunday in King Street Halls. The event will include refreshments, and musical entertainment by Broken Strings and other young musicians who have recently taken part in Glasgow's Celtic Connections.

Snap an April fool!

April Fool's Day is the date and theme of this year's St Magnus International Festival's day of photography in 2012.

Following the success of last year's project, April 1 will be the day to take a snap or make a study on the theme, *These Foolish Things*.

Photographers can use any style, technique or subject — land, sea and skies, people, interiors, or events. The competition will follow the same format as last year, with a multi-location exhibition at festival time in June. Once again, W.H.B. Sutherland and *Living Orkney* will

be sponsoring prizes.

A year ago this week, February 14, 2011, was photography day in Orkney as part of the year-long celebration of Scotland's islands.

From 12.01am until midnight, adults and children captured images of island life on their conventional and digital cameras and mobiles — over 280 photographs were submitted for the St Magnus International Festival competition.

A panel of judges selected 75 to put on public display in exhibitions at the Pickaquooy Centre, St Magnus Centre, and cathedral throughout the festival period. The winning photographs were published in *Living Orkney*.

The exhibitions gave festival-goers a unique view of aspects of life in Orkney — the everyday and the exceptional, at morning, noon and night. Winners were chosen in three age-group categories, and large canvas wall prints of the winning photographs were provided by W.H.B. Sutherland.

Details of how to enter will be published in March, and novice and experienced amateurs of all ages are encouraged to take part.