

Folk horror

Wossit all about?
What can it bring to art
practice?
What's its value to
contemporary culture?



What's animism?

a myth for living by
willing suspension of disbelief
there + not there

- 'Animism is the **belief** in the presence of spirits in every aspect of the physical world, animate or inanimate, including weather phenomenon, such as wind, thunder and lightning' E. Firestone, 2017:1)

Beuys
Kandinsky
Pollock
ERNST

- Anthropomorphic - ascribing ^{human}
emotions to man + nature.
rather than acknowledging the
RADICAL OTHER of nature

What's folk horror?

Folk Horror recognised genre; Adam Scovell identifies three key films from 70s:

- *Blood on Satan's Claw*, *The Wicker Man*, *WitchFinder General*. But many in this vein
- League of Gentlemen (Horror fans); *Black Spot* (2017); *Midsomer* (2019); *A Field in England* (2013), *Enys Men* (2022) FH around before the triad, cross-genre presence across platforms.



Pessimistic outlook

humans = deluded, barbaric & bent on mastery

Visual articulation of the theme: No sightlines
visual blocking; no sightlines – lack of
human agency, curtailing gaze/mastery

Critical of androcentrism, Anthropocene, and
human dominance

Presence of Ritual, Sacrifice and the Ancient &
Myth/legend

Antipastoral/romanticised rendition on the
rural/nature

Animism & Pessimism

Through pessimistic frame human magic is
false (demonstrative of human attempts to
have even more agency over the natural
world).

In more recently in FH animistic forces
(nature) are in play as BIG OTHER speaking
to Anthropocene concerns (Black Spot).

FH therefore has both in play– those with
demonstrable animism and those who show
it as human folly.



Characteristics

**What does Visual
Pessimism look
like in folk
horror?**





Trees in landscape. Cold grey. Trees as dark barrier, cutting (out) the sky; tracing wyrd's tendrils



Muted palette, cold colours, the soil that swallows us all.
Branches – bony fingers breaking up the pastoral unity in *Blood
on Satan's Claw*.



Macbeth

All of these cases recall the army of trees in Macbeth, acting as a visual **challenge to the sovereignty of human agency** over nature

Trees. Boundaries, Visual, psychological Barriers



Arboreal myth-making - Black Spot
The Dark Forest – no sightlines.



'The black house' from *The Secret World* – betwixt town/country; inside/outside; night/day, entropy/haunted boundary space – places of imagination, ordinary and supernatural transgressions...



Mr and Mrs Andrews Thomas Gainsborough (1748)

“...landscape makes an ideological claim that human intention both frames and leaves its traces on the land, and ‘nature’ fills in all the spaces between. This specific conception of landscape flows from the conventions of Renaissance perspective in a landscape painting or photograph, the elements of the land converge towards the viewer’s position in a pleasing way, and in doing so implies the singularity of that static viewpoint as an ideal abstract position of power” Oscar Moralde ‘Haptic Landscapes’ <http://mediafieldsjournal.org/haptic-landscapes/>

FH as anti-pastoral, anti-vitruvian

Courbet's 'animism'

Blocked sightlines

No 'framing' – existential encounter rather
framed 'view'

Pastoral becomes 'wild' untamed, primal

Fantastic Landscape with Anthropomorphic Rocks 1864. 87 x
93cm





The Source of the Loue 1864. Oil on canvas, 99.7 x 142.2 cm

Source chthonic/origin place/resist gaze

Primordial
Secret
Black fathoms

Material of the earth – no smooth polished surfaces; far from metaphysical – a very earthly spirituality

Not about dominion or pastoral pretty scenes (contra patronage) – instead ‘sublime’ (Romantic?) in the sense of making the human world small and insignificant; equivalent of Lovecraft’s cosmic horror



The Unfathomable, chaotic...anti-human

The Wave c1871-73 Oil on canvas

Wyeth's folk horror: Stranger Things

folk horror lies mainly in the implied storytelling rather than in turbulence of material application



Implied natural forces linked to death











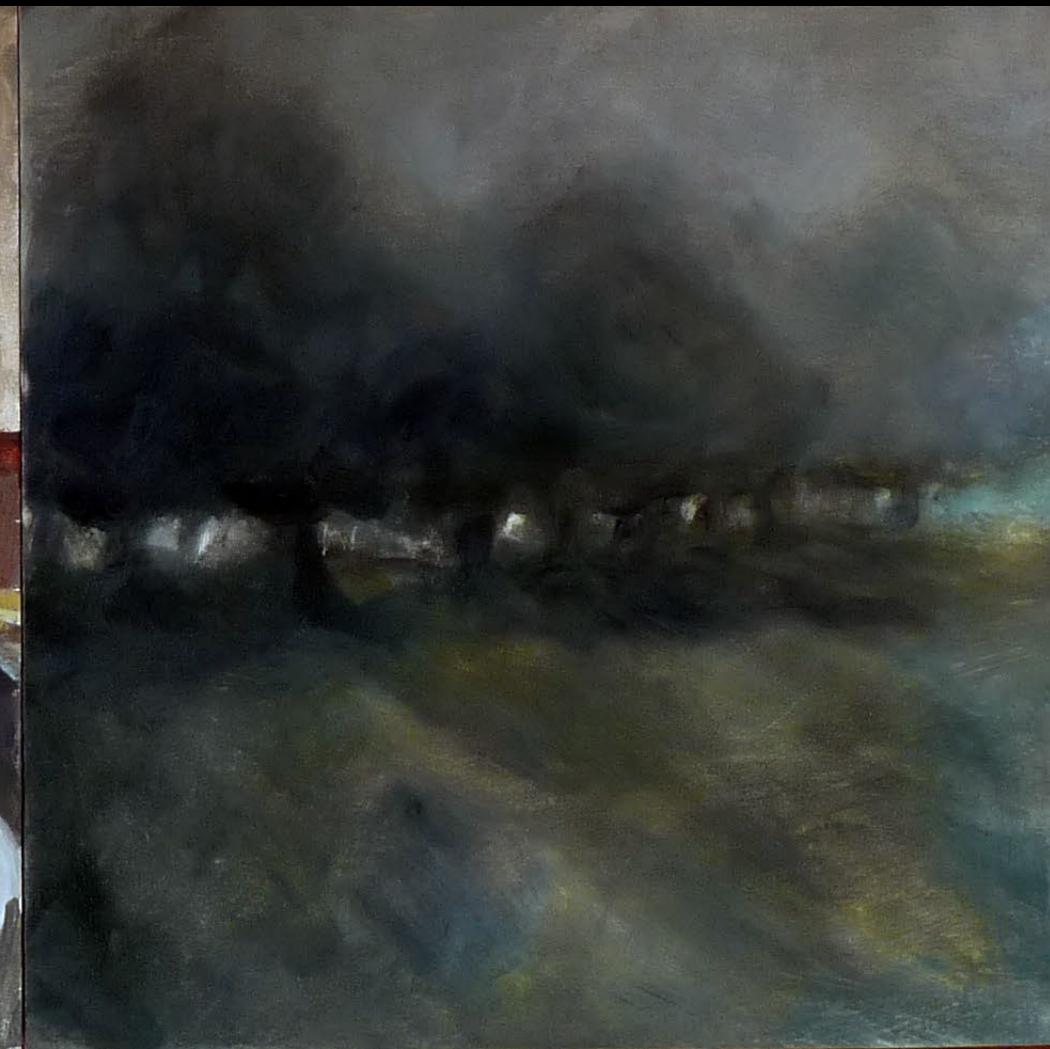
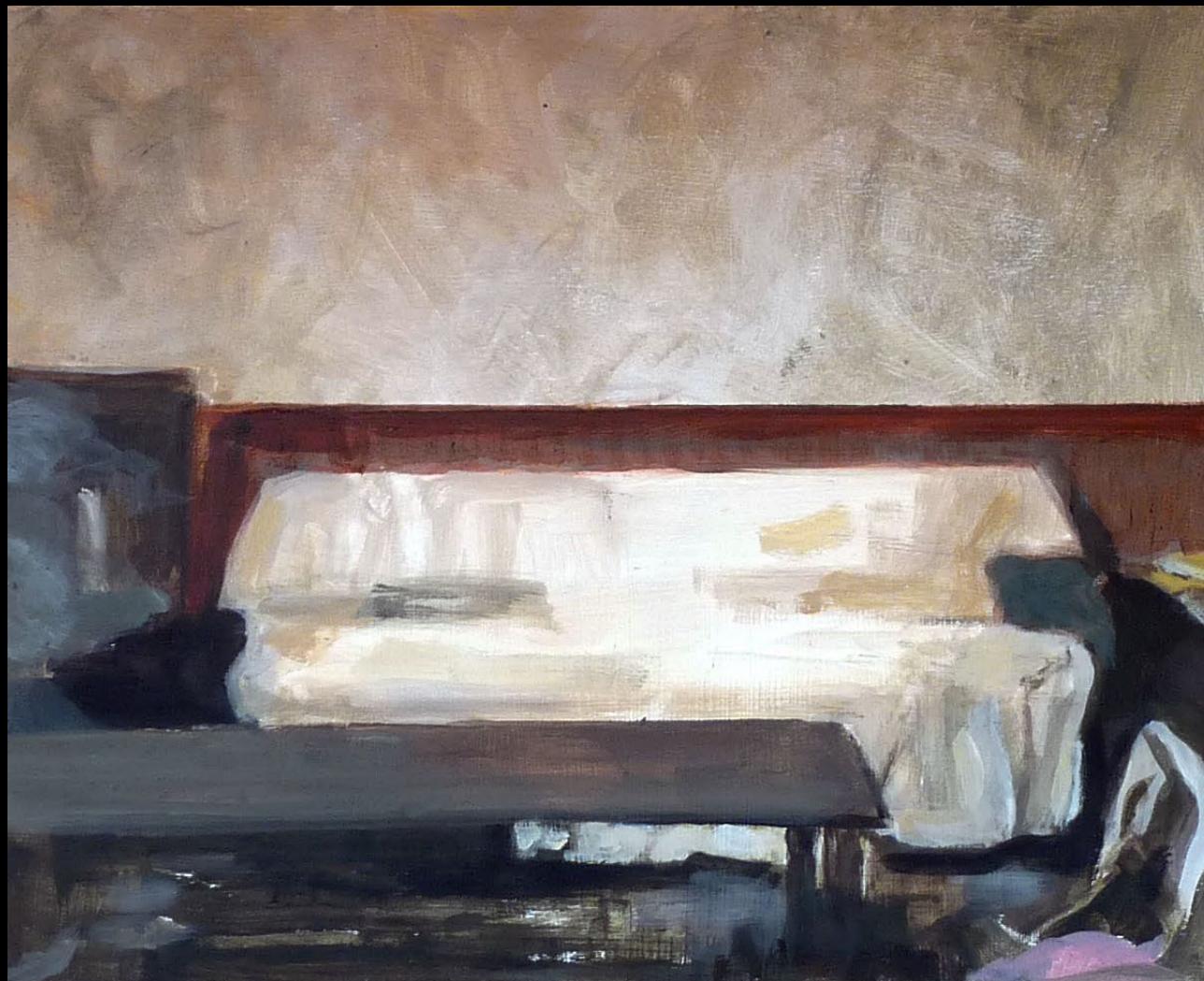


Implied
natural
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Link to my practice

- Investigating ways of expressing visually figurative and landscape – without dominance – put humans into and in their place.
- Critical commentary on Anthropocene through the frame of FH and animism
- Existential inquiry – who or what are humans and why are they so jumped up? Why have we lost our connection to the wild.
- New tools new modes of expression – frame of FH to explore that through AR.
- **Research-practice question: What does a pessimistic use of digital augmentation look like?**















FH, AR and animism

<https://bridge.artivive.com/>

Dolls house hauntings (FH AR)











Strangers
of
Existence



Aim to create a visual 'poem' rather than linear narrative

Focused on 'energies' and word-image puns

Combo of 3D particle based animations & 'real' footage

- <https://tanyakartblog.com/2022/10/04/3s1-ar-haptic-work/>
- <https://bridge.artivive.com/>

Discussion pointers

- Why does folk horror speak to culture now?
- Is pessimistic animism an escape or symptom of an age of incoherence & materials? Does it have value?
- Is there a way to connect painting and digital augmentation that isn't gimmicky?
- What could a pessimistic use of digital augmentation look like?
- Why do artists need to be in the digital game?



In the contemporary milieu, the idea of being negative is either regarded as a destructive mentality or else defeatist fatalism. But, at least in passing shades, negative emotions can hold great power. There resides in negativity the seed of critical thought and a beneficial duty to engage with one's internal feelings. The work of negation, indeed the very act, is a process which remains productive in a sense – a deconstruction rather than a wholly violent act of destruction.... The negative capability of the art of negativity reveals a mutual demand for plasticity, open-mindedness, and freedom from totalizing rules and answers.

‘The Art of Negativity: On Rejecting Positive Thinking’
Enis Yucekoralp.

https://przekroj.pl/en/society/the-art-of-negativity-enis-yucekoralp?utm_source=facebook&utm_medium=post&fbclid=IwAR1400IkK0KI_wEiKrD_Mc0HyF6423XGRTieQRftu9trEjaSHvW7uolYs5U