

LANDINGS: ART AFTER EXTRACTIVISM

AN EXHIBITION AT THE UCD HUMANITIES INSTITUTE

20 — 25 MAY 2024 | 12 — 7 PM | ROOM H.204



POST-EXTRACTIVIST
LEGACIES AND LANDSCAPES



UCD Humanities Institute
Institiúid don Léann Daonna UCD

Landings: Art after Extractivism

This exhibition marks the end of the Andrew W. Mellon funded research project on Post-Extractivist Legacies and Landscapes: Humanities, Artistic and Activist Responses. Administered by the Consortium of Humanities Centers and Institutes and led by the UCD Humanities Institute, our project produced many diverse outputs, spanning academic publications, blogs, an online syllabus, and artistic works.

The project developed through collaborative partnerships with the Centre of Excellence in Intercultural Studies (Tallinn University, Estonia), the Wits Institute for Social and Economic Research (University of Witwatersrand, South Africa), the School of Culture, History and Language (Australian National University) and the Humanities Research and Environmental Studies Centers (Rice University, U.S.A.). Locally we worked with colleagues from the UCD Earth Institute, ICRAIG; the Museum of Literature Ireland and with activists. Throughout the project we adopted a transnational lens to explore interactions between creative arts practices and local activism in the transition from mining to post-mining.

Post-Extractivist Legacies and Landscapes unfolded through three 'institutes': a pre-institute at the University of Tallinn in April 2023 was hugely enriched by site visits to the former shale mining area in Ida-Virumaa in Eastern Estonia. The main institute took place at UCD in July 2023 and was followed by site visits to the Abbeyleix Bog Project and the former mines at Glendalough. The post-institute was held in November at the Wits Institute for Social and Economic Research (WiSER) at the University of the Witwatersrand. Our South African visits included a Dlala Nje tour of the inner city and the Ferreira Mine Museum in Johannesburg, as well as a tour of the ERGO tailings projects on the East Rand and the Marievale Bird Sanctuary.

Landings: Art After Extractivism exhibits works by five artists/academics who responded to the discussions and site visits in different media.

Professor Anne Fuchs



Judy Carroll Deeley is a professional artist. Her practice encompasses painting, drawing, collage, mixed media, installation, assemblages, and collaborative projects. She graduated with a BA Honours in Fine Art (Painting) from The National College of Art & Design in 2008 and an MA Honours in Visual Art Practices from the Institute of Art, Design & Technology in 2011.

In 2021 and 2022 she was awarded an Agility Award by the Irish Arts Council to develop her new series of paintings *Capitalocene: From a Time of Ambition*. In 2022 she became the project artist of 'Post-extractivist Legacies and Landscapes: Humanities, Artistic and Activist Responses' in collaboration with the UCD Humanities Institute. In that role she produced over 20 oil paintings.

Other collaborations include *How It's Made: Meitheal* curated by Valeria Ceregini (Balbriggan Arts Festival 9-23rd September 2023), and Artnetdlr's current *Crosscurrents Collaborative Exhibition*. Her work has appeared in many prestigious group shows including *Straight Out of Ireland* in Philadelphia 2022 and *Bealtaine 2022* in The Irish Heritage Center in Maine, USA. She has had six solo shows.

Her work is in the art collections of UCD Archives, the Office of Public Works, The Central Bank, Villanova University, The Ballinglen Arts Foundation and in many private collections.

Judy Carroll Deeley Exhibition Statement

My current work is a series of paintings titled *Capitalocene: From a Time of Ambition*. This on-going work was initially inspired by visits to the worked-out landscape of Tynagh Mine, Co.Galway, in the 1980s. As main project artist on the UCD Humanities Institute-led CHCI research project 'Post-extractivist Legacies and Landscapes: Humanities, Artistic and Activist Responses' I had the opportunity to visit mine sites in Estonia, Ireland and South Africa.

In April 2023, we visited the oil-shale mining district of Ida-Virumaa in Estonia. This blanched countryside is smothered by mounds of ash. There are bleached hills, blanched roads and empty abandoned towns, the legacy of oil-shale mining in the area. This territory is no longer suitable for agriculture. Layers of trees and soil metres deep were removed to make way for the mines. Any remaining trees cling to an uncertain earth. It has an eerie artificial beauty that I tried to express in my Ida-Virumaa paintings.

In July 2023, our team visited the Miners' Village at Glendalough, with industrial historians acting as our guides. Industrial heritage is an integral part of the history of place in Ireland, but it has been overlooked. As Irish children immersed in stories and myths about Saint Kevin, it became difficult for us to identify this landscape as other than spiritual. My response was to represent mining structures on the picture postcard views of Glendalough, so endeared to generations of Irish at home and abroad, to remind people of its mining heritage. On a recent hike to the mine site in Glendasan Valley I experienced something of an epiphany. Right next to the mining detritus was a rag tree and a holy well. Visions of miners' families of old tying rags to the tree and dipping fingers in the well in supplication to Saint Kevin for the safe return of their loved ones deep in the mines below flashed before my eyes – the sacred and the secular in perfect harmony. In my forthcoming solo show in Mermaid Arts Centre Bray in 2025, I want to respond to these juxtapositions of the spiritual and the earthly, the pastoral and the industrial, in large-scale oil paintings.

In November 2023 we visited the Gauteng Province in South Africa. Here I responded to the legacy of gold mining. The area around Johannesburg

is pitted by underground mines, some of which are flooded and leak toxic minerals into waterways and rivers. The toxic tailings ponds are being piped to an area away from Johannesburg. Toxic leakage persists and affects local communities. Poison dust blows over the land. In visiting the Gauteng mine, I had a sense of how to catch the heat and dust and alluring but poisonous atmosphere through the use of rich bright colours. Following all three research trips, I returned to my studio and prepared compositions for paintings from photographs but mostly from my mind's eye. These compositions convey a sense of the lived experience and the conjured 'emotion'. I then worked in oils on canvas. Each painting attempts to find a balance between the eerie beauty of the mine lands and the damage they do to the environment.

Judy Carroll Deeley



'Cry' Oil-shale Mining, Ida-Virumaa, oil on canvas 120 x 150 cm, 2024, €2100



Gold Mine at Dusk, Gauteng South Africa oil on canvas 30 x 40 cm, 2024, €650 (framed)



Acid Mine Drainage Gauteng South Africa; oil on canvas 30 x 40 cm, 2024, €650 (framed)



Tailings Pond Bridge 2 Gauteng South Africa, oil on canvas 30 x 30 cm, 2024, €650 (framed)



Miners' Helmets Oil-shale Mine Ida-Virumaa, oil on canvas 40 x 30 cm, 2024, €650 (framed)



Miners' Lamps Oil-shale Mine Ida-Virumaa, oil on canvas 40 x 30 cm, 2024, €650 (framed)



Pylon Gauteng Province South Africa, 40 x 30 cm, 2024;
€650 (framed)



Empty Oil-shale town oil on canvas 50 x 60 cm; 2023 NFS



Underground, Glendalough Mine, oil on canvas, 80 x 60 cm, 2023, NFS



Tailings Pond Ida-Virumaa, oil on canvas 60 x 80 cm, 2023, NFS



Gold Mine East Rand Gauteng South Africa, oil on canvas, cm 60 x 80
cm, 2024, NFS



Tailings Pond Bridge 1 Gauteng South Africa 60 x 80 cm, 2024, €900



Dr Katherine Fama lectures on modern American fiction at UCD. Her research and teaching focus on representations of singleness, domestic architecture, and emotional responses to occupancy, aging and ability.

Through her role as Project Art Partner on the Post-Extractivist Legacies and Landscape project, she was fortunate to experience the intersection of the conference and site visits, photography, and reflective writing about domestic and communal spaces shaped by mining histories in Estonia and Ireland. Katherine worked with pen and ink, watercolor, and monoprinting to create postcards depicting site visits to Estonia, Glendalough, and South Africa. She has found translating creative research into the classroom particularly rewarding, with model building in "Architecture and Narrative" and a practice-based MA seminar "Crafting in the Novel" planned with Sarah Comyn.



Dr Sarah Comyn is leading an IRC-funded project, Imperial Minerals, which investigates the impact of mineral mining on the nineteenth-century literary cultures of Australia, New Zealand and South Africa. At UCD she lectures on nineteenth-century literature, settler colonial literature, and the economic humanities.

In the past she has used art as a hobby to escape from her scholarly work and research, but recently she has begun to use watercolour and embroidery to explore her research through different mediums. The work in this exhibition comes from a collaboration with Katherine Fama, in which they explored the artistic postcard as a mode of reflecting on both the embodied and memoried experience of post/extractivist sites. They are currently expanding this work into a print project that explores recycling and using found objects from neglected urban sites in Dublin.

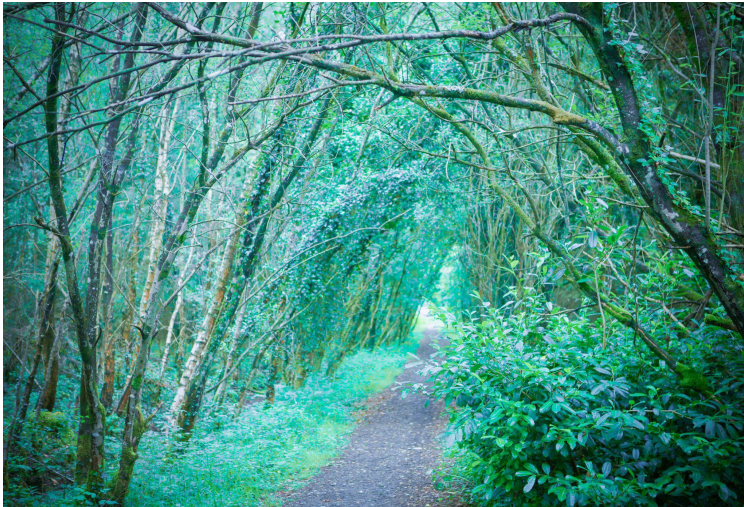
Sarah Comyn and Katherine Fama Exhibition Statement: Postcard Exchange Project

Our Postcard Exchange Project had several goals: firstly, it aimed to develop a shared creative-critical practice. Secondly, it extended the temporality and media forms common to the research programme. A third aim was to engender productive, continued, responsive exchanges between scholars through evolving work with research, photography, painting, drawing, and reflective writing.

Conferences usually take place over a few days at most. Academics travel vast distances to present papers clustered around a related set of academic research questions. Moments for response and connection pass quickly. The compacted time of a site visit or dinner provides a limited moment for connection and exchange before researchers return home to busy teaching and publication schedules. The time for digestion, reflection, and response to these complex sites is highly constrained. Building on the extended form of the institute team and event series in Estonia, Ireland, and South Africa, our project sought to develop year-long responses to site visits, constellating institute sites and experiences. Instead of leaving the research papers, site visits, and presentations in their three-day event timeline, we worked to stretch, repeat, and develop institute insights over a longer time period, through multimedia work.

We chose the postcard because of its small size, its mobility, and its function as a space for response and communication. Many researchers are not prepared to create a full-scale artwork, but they can work through photography and smaller scale works on paper. Project leaders joined colleagues and institute attendees in taking photographs of our site visits, creating multimedia postcards from site visits and images, and finally using those postcards to record reflections about the values, costs, and risks of the research site visit. Over the course of a year, researchers worked in new, visual forms; responded to the visual representations of colleagues, interrogated their own experience of the site visit, and extended and renovated more familiar processes of intellectual exchange.

Dr Sarah Comyn and Dr Katherine Fama



'Paths Untaken', Abbeyleix Bog, K. Fama



'Home@, Viivikonna, Estonia, K. Fama



'Rust Abstracted', Eesti Laevandus Museum, Estonia, K. Fama

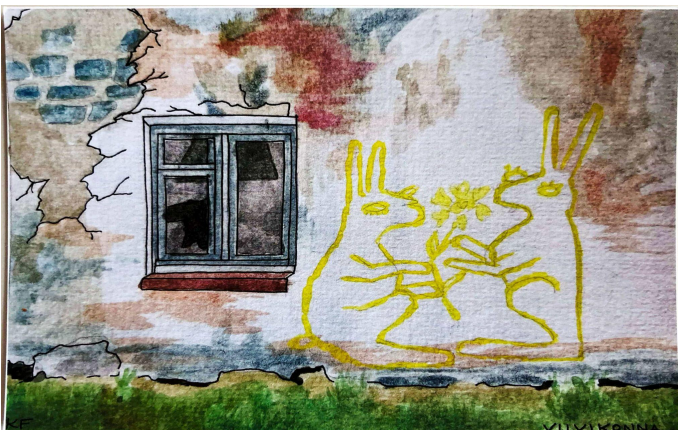


'Wild Strawberries', Ida Varun, Estonia, K. Fama

Postcard Exchange Project



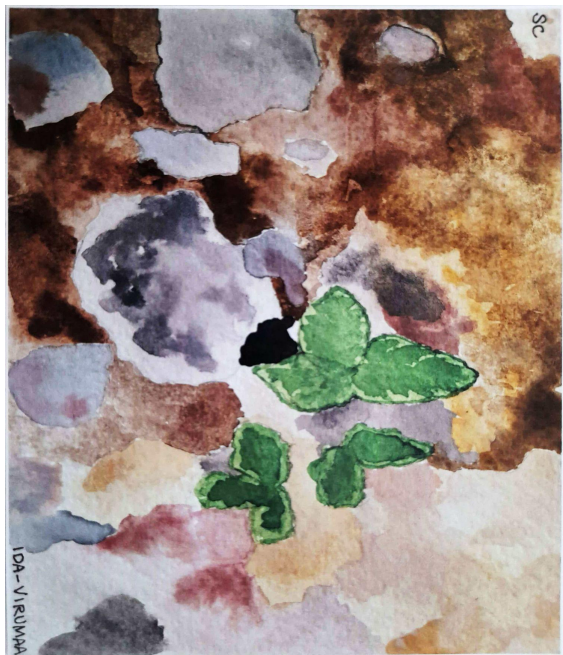
'Fallen Arches: Research and Disability', Glendalough, Ireland, K. Fama



Details, Housing in Viivikonna, Estonia



Eesti Kaevandusmuuseum, Estonia



Wild Strawberries in the Oil shale quarry, Kohtla-Nõmme, Estonia



Dr Helen Doherty was a Senior Lecturer in the Department of Film and Media at the Institute of Art Design & Technology for two decades, where she taught film and interactive media on various undergraduate programmes, while also directing the MA in Broadcast Production. Her research includes the history of film education, the future of the film school and the politics of major art shows

such as *Documenta*. Helen was a member of the jury for the Prix Europa Documentary Awards for television and radio in 2018/19 and chair of the jury for the Prix Europa Television Documentary award in 2020. As a committee member of the Republic of Ireland branch of the Royal Television Society, she actively promotes the cultural value of broadcast television.

In recent years her focus has shifted on to her art practice: she graduated with a Higher Diploma in Art & Design from the National College of Art and Design in 2023. She is currently completing a Studio + year on the BA Fine Art with NCAD. Her artwork includes drawing, video, photography and sculpture and the work tends to be socially engaged. Her works have been recently exhibited at the NCAD CEAD exhibition in 2023, the Ambiguity Collective in 2023, and I LÁR BÁIRE/COMMON GROUND exhibition at A4 Sounds in 2024. In 2024 she was the recipient of an NCAD art studio micro-residency with the Royal Hibernian Academy.

A comprehensive book on the Irish boglands is John Feehan's and Grace O'Donovan's *The bogs of Ireland: an introduction to the natural, cultural and industrial heritage of Irish peatlands* (Environmental Institute, UCD 1996, 2008). It is also available to download in .pdf format from the UCD Research Repository.

Helen Doherty Exhibition Statement: 'Bog Lands'

In this work I explore the Irish boglands from several vantage points: ecology, industry, energy and culture.

Turf is formed from layers of growth and decay of organic matter over thousands of years in water-logged land which is compacted over time. An area of original bogland can hold ten times more carbon than the same area of a rainforest. This dynamic layering over slow time creates a natural material that is vital to our ecological wellbeing.

In this artwork, a hanging paper scroll with a bank of sod draws attention to the vitality of the boglands and its construction over time.

The industrial history of turf cutting is referenced in a quotation from James Joyce's *Ulysses*, which captures how canal barges are dropping down the canal locks from the Irish midlands to deliver turf to Dublin. This short passage of text hangs on a rickety frame and is printed on the kind of bag fabric that can be found withering across the boglands today. It connotes a disappearing industry that continues to affect the landscape.

It is becoming widely recognised that we cannot renew the Irish boglands when we extract material from them. Consequently, we are turning to more sustainable power sources such as solar energy. A suspended lantern harnesses solar power that lights miniature glass pieces inspired by the flora of the bog lands. A flame can be a warning of hazards and a lantern may be lit in memory of loss or to guide to welcome travellers.

Now that the energy transition to non-carbon sources of energy is underway, there are restrictions on turf cutting. When cutting turf passes into memory, turf can be inscribed into our cultural heritage. Turf sods wrapped as individual items become a memorial to the ecology, industry and stored energy of Irish boglands from the past to the present day.

Dr Helen Doherty



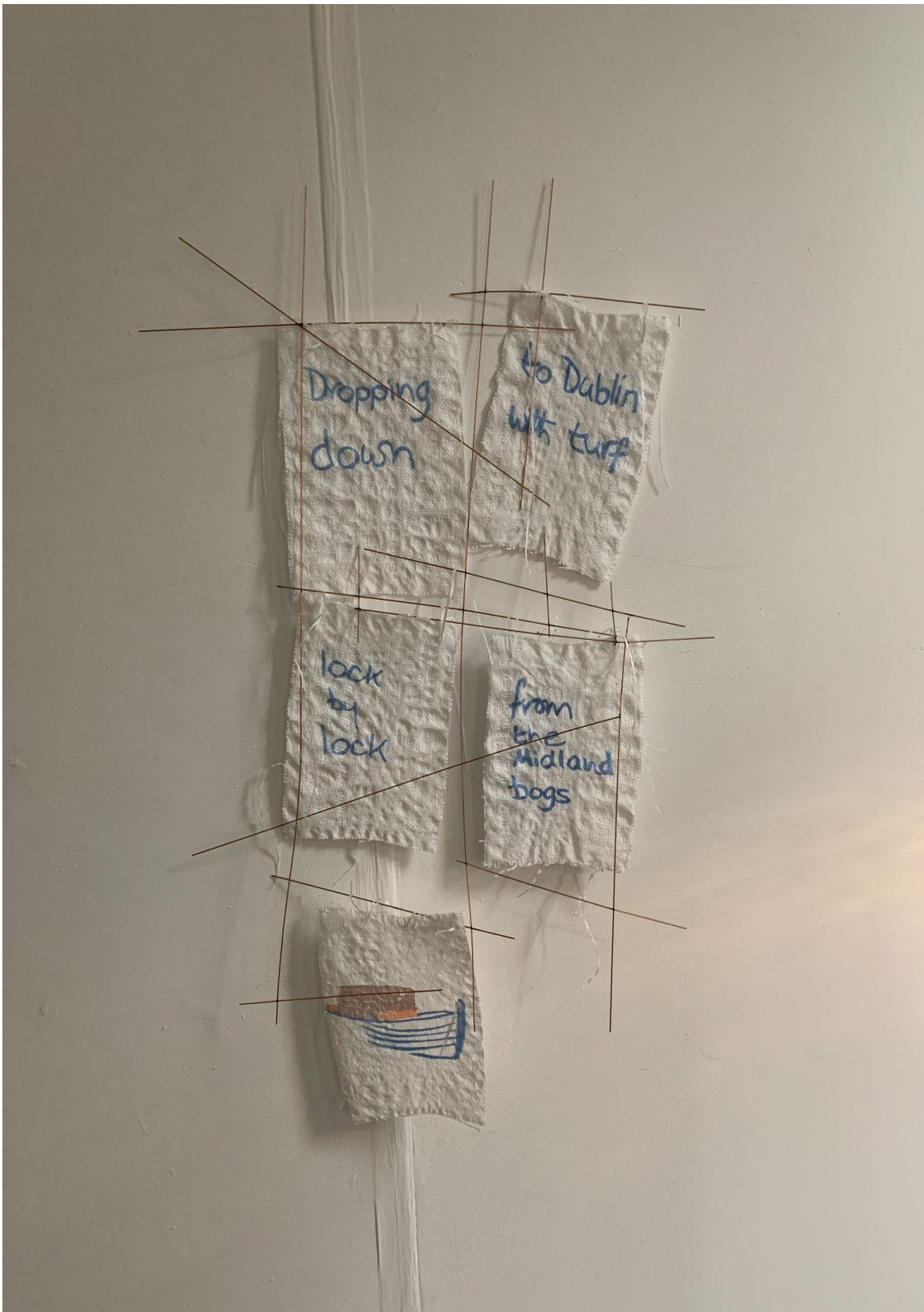
Bog Lands, NCAD Annex 2023



Bog Lands: New Energy



Bog Lands: Not for Sale



Bog Lands: 'Dropping lock by lock (James Joyce, *Ulysses*)



Dr Linda Mbeki is a chemist, historian and archaeologist. Her work looks at the intersection of bioarcheology and archival research to shed light on the marginalized people from the South Africa's colonial period. Her work focuses on the migration and diet of enslaved persons at the colonial Cape and workers' migration to the gold and diamond mines during South Africa's mineral revolution. She

applies isotope geochemistry to skeletal material and interrogates written records to elucidate individual histories. By studying labour migration and diet over 170 years (1750-1920) of South Africa's history, she aims to assess whether and to what extent the migrant labour system is part of a continuum that began with the shipment of enslaved people to the Cape. She writes transnational history that spans the early modern and modern periods.

She was the 2022 UCD Discovery Visiting Global Fellow and in 2023 she was a partner in the UCD Humanities Institute project on Post-Extractivist Legacies and Landscapes. Her visit to UCD yielded significant findings. Firstly, using the strontium isotope system, she determined that a population from a 19th-century South African diamond mine was predominantly locally born. Archival documents spoke volumes about the human toll of gold mining. Preventable deaths from respiratory diseases caused by poor sanitation and overcrowding were common. Malawian workers, in particular, were prone to infectious diseases, and their death rates across all mines were multiples that of the general population.

Linda Mbeki Exhibition Statement: Ntate

This short film is about one of many return journeys made by a family man from his home in the rural areas of Southern Africa to a gold or diamond mine. Although my research focuses on the lived experience of 19th-century miners, I chose to pay homage to the living. I had a moving conversation with a former mine worker who had spent his entire career (21-49 years of age) working in South Africa's gold mines (1968-1996). Ntate is a soft-spoken 76-year-old grandfather of five. He is tall with a deep voice, which softens when he laughs, something he offers easily.

We are grateful to Ntate for sharing his bittersweet journey with us. He is an extraordinary man, and it could not have been easy telling his story of hardship. Like many men and women of his generation, he did not have the luxury of being present while his children were growing, learning, and hurting. He makes up for lost time by doting on his grandchildren who call him names as his chuckles."

Drawings and animation by Ali Aschman.

Storyboard and additional animation by Alex Widdoson.

Sounds from bbc.co.uk, freesound.org and personal recordings.

This project was made possible by UKRI Higher Education Innovation Funding.

Dr Linda Mbeki

