

2007

Johanna Billing

This is How we Walk on the Moon

Video installation

Aue Pavilion

Johanna Billing tends to stage people in her films, often collectively, engaged in activities that demand great concentration: recordings in sound studios, dance rehearsals, the tension before diving into the water.

The new video created in cooperation with Edinburgh's Collective Gallery centres on the ocean and the experience of sailing. Impressed by the contradiction of the city's proximity to the North Sea and the aloofness of the majority of the population to the ocean, Billing invited a group of local musicians on a sailing trip. The events unroll from the preparations on land through to the journey under the Firth of Forth Bridge to taking down the sails: the instructor's calm directions, the students' first awkward steps in unknown territory. And the commensurate soundtrack: "This is How we Walk on the Moon," a song from the 1980s by experimental New York-based musician Arthur Russell, in an interpretation rendered by Billing on string instruments.

Against the backdrop of the constantly changing weather — storms, rain, sun — progress slowly becomes visible. Steering: two hand cameras now have the optimal course in focus — and knowing that one is going the right way. Billing also uses handmade seats of light wood for the performance to tie the slightly pedagogic style of the video loop, linked with the persistently present physical performance — meant more as an observation of the learning process rather than as sailing instruction — to the space:

"Procedures of leaving", "Tiny Movements"— graphic chapter marks, with hand written title links set off the film's rhythm, highlight the poetic-documentary-fictional atmosphere of the adventure: as an irreverent emblem of a departure into the unknown.

