

Ashley Rose FMP



Beyond the Noise:
Coul Links

Which Narrative?

- The Coul Links story I originally envisioned is unfinished and will not be concluded within the FMP timeframe
- So, if I continue to work with this place, a chapter of the overall story must be written
 - Trying to find the right narrative and POV to tell this portion of the story without compromising longer term project
 - Wish to continue to be perceived as a “relatively objective” observer
- Last WIP approached Coul Links as a place, not “the place”
- Prior WIPs were all about Coul Links “the place”
- Local interest would be more about the place and what is happening or not happening
- Personal interest tends more toward Coul Links as a place
- The following was written last week en route to Arles and it is a refinement on the approach in my FMP proposal

Statement of Intent (Last week)

Places, like people, often have 'personas', public and private, the perceived and the actual. Places, also like people, are constantly subject to forces around them: direct and indirect, natural and anthropogenic.

This project explores this place, Coul Links, exposing aspects of both the perceived and the actual and many forces acting upon it today. Among the forces that can be examined include weather, climate, political, social, economic, recreational, and attitudes/ actions/ inactions such as care, neglect, abuse, disregard, and commerce.

The words and images put forth by the respective sides are shaded to support their agendas. It is in a sense noise masking the underlying truth. Reality exists somewhere beyond, between, and beneath the noise. I want to filter the noise for the viewer by highlighting the dissonance between the public statements and the observations of the place itself, and to show that despite the noise, the place continues to live and breathe largely without.

Field of Dreams?

The title is in reference to the 1989 film treatment of the 1982 W.P. Kinsella book Shoeless Joe, in which the main character, an Iowa farmer hears a voice in his cornfield whispering, “if you build it, he will come.”

In the case of Coul Links, the developers are convinced that building another ‘world class’ (capable of being ranked in the top 50 or better in the world) golf course will cause the many national and international golfers who venture to the Highlands to play the nearby Royal Dornoch Golf Club (currently ranked 4th best in the world and 1st in the UK) will turn economically depressed East Sutherland into a destination and result in visitors staying for a night or several nights rather than returning to Inverness or further south and will spend the £600 per day that golf tourists bring to Scotland on average. They believe “If they build it, they will come”, along with significant economic benefit for Sutherland and the nearby communities.

A few local people and environmental groups oppose the development on the grounds that Coul Links is a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), a Special Protection Area (SPA), and RAMSAR treaty Wetland of International Importance as well as being within the Loch Fleet and Moray Firth National Nature Reserve. It is home to the Fonseca Seed Fly, a rare and little studied species known to exist in only a few places. Environmentalists claim Coul Links is a pristine example of untouched links land and one of the few if not the last significant site in the UK and that it would be destroyed by the introduction of a golf course onto its dunes.

Potential titles

- Some candidates have been
 - Harmony and Dissonance (described by Wendy as too poetic)
 - Beyond the Noise – (an approach to get to the reality)
 - Field of Dreams – (a nod to the 1989 film, but doesn't imply a neutral position, and there is a current photographic competition by the same name which could create confusion)
- Titles should carry weight and convey a bit of ambiguity of the thematic intent or POV
- Beyond the Noise works well with my artistic aesthetic and project intent. It allows me to convey a sense that place exists away from the politics of the situation and noise that generates.

Project Approach

- Develop narrative to reflect current chapter of an overall unfinished story
- Highlight the differences between the public statements and the objective photographic evidence
 - e.g. Archive web or press article stating site is “Pristine” contrasted with photos of tips and the detritus of the felled tree plantation
- Use archival print, web, and testimonial material as the counterpoint to my photographs
- Use sound in the background; people talking behind the photos of archival elements and nature’s sound recorded at the site behind those photos and video

Exhibition Concept

- Inspired by Nederlands Fotomuseum Ed van der Elksen exhibition
- Multi-screen video display with moving and still imagery accompanied by sound track
- Exhibit augmented with large and small format stills mounted in hall where people can spend more time with the images
- “Living room” setting

