

Elisabeth's Part

Encountering Maeshowe

My pictures are attempts to express the inner meaning of Maeshowe through the medium of drawing and painting. It is my way of getting to grips with the monument with the help of artistic intuition to produce visual statements on what I have found. I usually begin with a precise observation and representation of the objective scene. After this, subjective criteria then also come into play for the rest of the process, which can be described as a narrowing-down and focusing of specific aspects crystallised out of the original situation. Driven by artistic intuition, this process then proceeds from one picture to the next, and the theme that was present right from the start develops and manifests itself more and more. The level of personal experience determines the selection and emphasis of characteristic details and frequently leads to distilled symbolism. Each of the series of pictures on show here is devoted to a single theme. Together, they make a comprehensive statement about Maeshowe.

Reduction and Expansion

After an initial phase with reduction followed by a state of inner relaxation I experienced a transition from a state of cowering down, as though I was hiding away in an inner cave to standing up straight in a state of joyful unfolding as a response to something heard within. Still in the darkness of the inner chamber, I gave expression to this experience in quick rough sketches. This resulted in a series of pictures that expressed the pulsating change between these two poles, between the seed-like compression of potential being and the other extreme – a sense of expansion going beyond the boundaries of the space.

The Crystal Core

The round mound enclosed by the circle of the trench, the earthen rampart and the gently rolling countryside contrasts starkly with and at the same time corresponds with the prismatic shape of the entrance passageway, the quadratic inner chamber and the equally rectangular niches in the walls. Inside and outside formed such an intrinsic whole in my mind, that I could not think of the one without the other. These three pictures reflect my endeavour to capture simultaneously the round curvature of the mound and the cool, angular beauty of the inner chamber, like a crystal embedded in the bedrock.

The Midwinter Light

What I wanted here was to create a visual expression of the light of the winter solstice as an event: To capture something of the way the light of the setting sun came to a halt at the boundary between the passage and the chamber. How it was trapped behind the orthostats constricting the passage. How it shot across the floor like an arrow and drew a thin golden line on the rear wall. And how it then grew to become a glowing rectangle illuminating the entire chamber.

While working on my drawings I experienced this event again and again, but I always had the feeling that I had not quite managed to really capture the experience visually. Unexpectedly, I think it is precisely this that enabled these pictures to show the essence of the event – the bare, unadorned simplicity of the dying light.

The Pulsating Light

The small, spherical red tangle in a picture that otherwise orients itself on tangible reality is like a harbinger of the pulsating light theme. With these images I attempt to capture the experience of a transcendental renewal of light in the centre of Maeshowe.

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Maeshowe Project December 2009
Elisabeth Holder

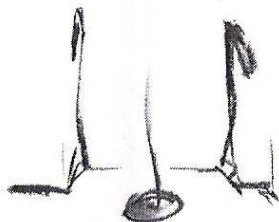
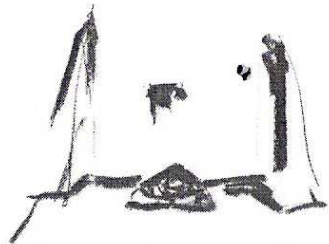
This theme involves literally spherical formations, energetic structures or fields, which interwove and encircled one another in a variety of colours – like a life circling around itself, pulsating and expanding or contracting, like the existence of potential being or potential growth.

The Space behind the Space

Sitting in the darkness in the central niche I observed the reflection of the dim light entering the chamber from outside. This was the starting-point for a series of pictures, drawn rapidly in quick succession, in which I repeatedly attempted to capture the same light phenomenon. Seen from within the niche, the light became more and more concentrated, embodying a theme that can be described as follows:

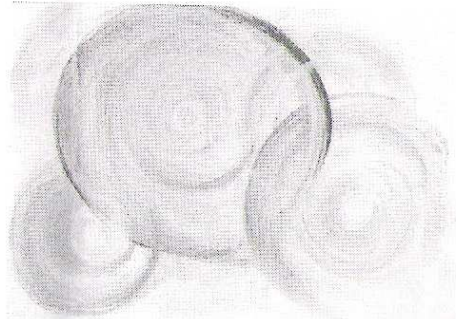
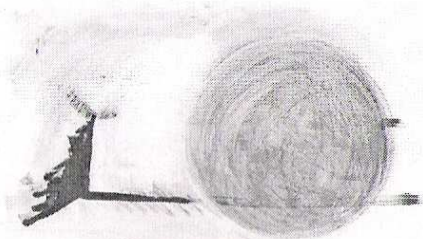
Embarking from the physical light and space as a starting point, an awareness of further spaces started to arise. In this process the “light spaces” before the inner eye appeared increasingly to overlay the outer spaces, until everything dissolved in pure light. In the darkness of the niche the dim daylight was thus transmuted into a brightness that transcended the physical space.

I Reduction and Expansion

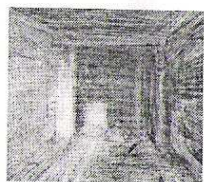
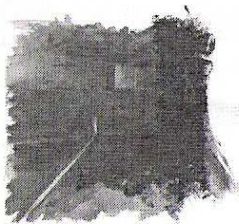


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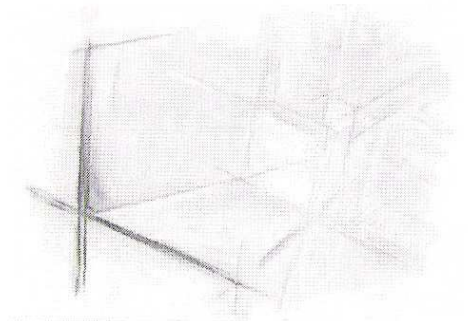
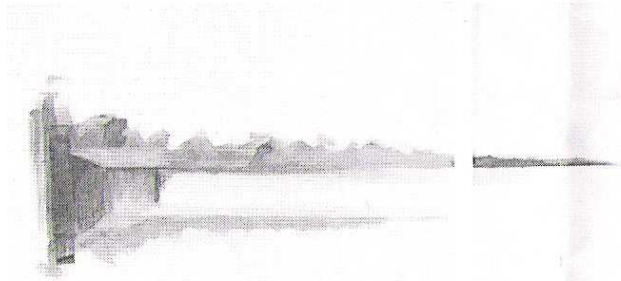
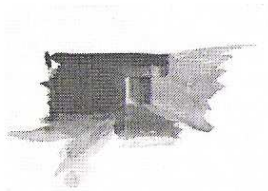
II The Pulsating Light



III The Midwinter Light



IV The Space behind the Space



V The Crystal Core

