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Making Glass

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KAYLA PARKER: PUBLICATION

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Making *Glass* video essay: monologue script Kayla Parker

Scene 1.

EXT. SMALL BEACH, STONEHOUSE, PLYMOUTH - DAY

Just before high tide. Winter, the sun is setting.

A WOMAN in a coat is walking along the water's edge, her head is bent over, looking at the ground. From time to time she stoops to pick up a small piece of coloured glass.

WOMAN

This scrap of beach on the western edge of the Stonehouse Peninsula is two and a half miles across the city from where I live.

There are no signposts. It's a rubbishy nowhere place, unnamed on any maps.

I've come to walk the treasure line, a narrow strip of gritty sand between heaps of weed, just below the reach of the full moon tide. I'm collecting nubs of coloured glass, washed up remains of bottles and jars.

It's a cold, bruised non-place, caught between the Royal Naval Victualling Yard on one side and Devonport Docks on the other. An estuary of the River Tamar, which pours through the gap between Devon and southeast Cornwall, out into Plymouth Sound and beyond to the ocean. I'm close to where Turner painted picturesque views of the south coast and the naturalist Charles Darwin sailed off to the Galapagos.

When I visit this forgotten corner I am reminded of many histories.

The waves wash to and fro and release the scent of fermenting homebrew. I sweep the tainted beach for coloured glass. The winter sun falls to dusk.

Scene 2.

INT. STUDIO, LIPSON, PLYMOUTH - DAY/NIGHT

Winter, curtains are shut, no sense of time. Lit by lamps within the body of an animation rostrum stand, upon which is placed a large sheet of glass.

The WOMAN works carefully, balancing the pieces of glass gathered from the beach.

WOMAN

I prefer the softened feel of worn glass to sharp edges, newly broken. I'm also attracted to small shards of decorated pottery, but I want the translucent panes of the glass to 'look through'.

The digital stills camera fixed to my animation rostrum creates what I think of as my reference shot. Its view is fixed, overhead, monocular.

On a sheet of clear glass under the camera I arrange a still life from the glass fragments: daylight neon tubes shining up from below create an intimate landscape painted in light. The pieces of glass slither and clatter, they have to be carefully balanced.

I use a digital hand-held microscope to explore. Sold for use in science education, law enforcement, industry and aerospace, it is a mobile camera that allows me to inspect an area the size of a millimetre. I examine the glass, capturing each position frame-by-frame on my laptop as a digital photograph. A rhythmic circling of multiple viewpoints.

To end, I defocus and refocus the lens of the DSLR, recording its flexing sight as, finally, I touch the glass.

A small object held up close to the eye enfolds the field of vision, and creates an impression that one is a miniature within a macrocosm, as in the paintings of Georgia O'Keefe. Made small through my sense of magnified sight, I move within an interior landscape.

I write in the intervals between focused bursts of concentration. I report back from my experience. And, through this writing, creating the animation connects to childhood memories of swimming in the Mediterranean. Looking at the seabed through my mask, I dive below the surface and can hold my breath for longer than anyone else.

Through this process of animating my seeing I give new life to these objects with broken pasts. Extracted from their environment to become a seamless streaming future-present woven from the stopped moments of time and light.