

2A Earth Core: The Hominin Project – an art-science collaboration

Julian Ruddock, Aberystwyth University

This short film documents the making and exhibition of 2A *Earth Core: The Hominin Project*, an art and science collaboration between Julian Ruddock, a visual artist pursuing a practice-based PhD in Fine Art, and The Hominin Sites and Paleolakes Drilling Project (HSPDP) an international scientific research group, investigating the relationship between climate and human evolution. The research is focused in areas of the East African Rift, location of some of the earliest known fossils of anatomically modern humans, and from where our ancestors dispersed out of Africa.

The film draws on imagery of fieldwork conducted in the remote playa lake basin of Chew Bahir, southern Ethiopia, as well as interviews with HSPDP scientists and the visualization techniques used in contemporary science. It also shows the results of the collaboration, including two specific works. The first, entitled 2A, sequences hundreds of high-resolution photographs of the sediment cores from Chew Bahir into one twenty-four hour film that takes the viewer into the distant past, some 500,000 years ago. The second, 2B, is an installation of sediment from the bottom of drill hole 2B which was rehydrated, mixed and then dried during the exhibition in Aberystwyth University's Art Centre. The mud, initially laid down approximately 500,000 years ago, dried into an intricate set of fractal cracks that simulate the ancient playa surface, signifying both our past and our present.