

## PRESS RELEASE

### *The Good Soil*

Michael John Whelan

November 08 – December 30, 2017

Deep inside a sandstone mountain on a remote Arctic Archipelago, seeds of the world are stored in the refrigerated vault of the Svalbard Global Seed Vault, only to be withdrawn in the event of war or natural disaster. Over three thousand kilometres away, hidden in the churchyard of a remote Welsh village, is a 5,500-year-old tree. As a sapling this *Taxus baccata* or Yew tree took root 1,000 years before the first Egyptian pyramids were built. Although poisonous to humans, over centuries material from the tree was removed to make talismans. In recent years, votive offerings of personal belongings have been hung from the tree.

These and other places, scientists and organisms are visited in Michael John Whelan's new film *The Good Soil*, where he continues his investigation of the phenomenology of nature and temporality. Utilising an essay film narrative, three different perspectives are woven together symbolising fixed past, fluctuating present and undefined future. By allowing them to be intrinsically linked, our mutable relationship with the natural world is explored. Slow paced cinematography in combination with an immersive soundscape and voiceover create an intimate and at times poetic journey.

Informed by long-term research, Whelan's latest works examine the historical resonance of diverse places and their potential to influence or be consumed by future realities. Recent projects include *Darkness had no need* (2017) where Whelan documents the darkest locations in the world through sound and durational analog photography, and the film *From the Mountain* (2014) that deals with the killing of the last wolf in Ireland in 1786.

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### *About the artist*

Michael John Whelan was born in Dublin, Ireland. His work has been exhibited and screened internationally in institutions, galleries and project spaces, including solo exhibitions (selection) at Rua Red, Dublin; Grey Noise, Dubai; Kunstverein Bochum and Boetzelaer|Nispen, Amsterdam. Group exhibitions and screenings (selection) include Kunsthall Stavanger; Kunst Haus Wien, Vienna; Lismore Castle Arts, Ireland; Dortmund Kunstverein; Kiasma, Helsinki; Centre for Contemporary Art Ujazdowski Castle, Warsaw; Museum Bochum; Noorderlicht Gallery, Groningen; Temple Bar Gallery & Studios, Dublin. He received a BA in Fine Art from IADT-DL, Dublin in 2002 and an MA in Fine Art from Chelsea College of Art and Design (University of the Arts London) in 2004. He has had two books published: 'The sun shone on the nothing new', published by Grey Noise/Lismore Castle Arts and 'Red Sky Morning', published by Argobooks, Berlin. He is represented by Grey Noise, Dubai and has work in a number of public and private collections.

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