Rob Murphy is a visual artist living and working in Dublin, Ireland. He is a graduate of the MA – Art in the Contemporary World [2012] at the National College of Art and Design, Dublin, and previously the BA in Visual Arts Practice [2011] at the Institute of Art, Design and Technology, Dun Laoghaire, Dublin. He has been working collaboratively on various projects with the artist Lily Cahill since 2012. Recent solo exhibitions include Prodigy at Broadstone Studios, Dublin, 2014, The Crusades at The Drawing Project, Dublin, 2013, Scum at The Joinery, Dublin, 2013.

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Rob Murphy Excerpt from ‘The Last Ten Minutes of The Dead Poet’s Society’ (2012)

We were in transition year of secondary school. All of us were about fifteen or sixteen. They brought us out to this Catholic retreat compound near the airport that was run by Jesuits. They had a day of activities set out for us to do. In the morning we played five-a-side amongst ourselves and ran around and stuff. In the afternoon they gave us a really shit lunch. After that they lead us into a hall gymnasium where they played the last ten minutes of The Dead Poet’s Society for us twice. After that they split us all into two groups. A woman lead my group into a room with lots of sunlight. There were lots of different coloured yoga mats on the floor. We were told to lie down on them. We were told to close our eyes and place our hands loosely across our stomachs. The woman told us to relax and to ‘breathe deeply, so [...] become aware of the rhythm of our breathing and breathe smoothly to relax’. To ‘feel the warmth of the room and the weight of our bodies on the floor’. To ‘try to ease any tension we may have held from the day’. To ‘try to ease any thoughts that might be filling our minds’ and keep our eyes closed.

She asked us to imagine ourselves ‘lying down on lush grassy hills’. She said: ‘Your eyes are closed and you are fully aware, but as easy...you feel the grass beneath you and the gentle summer breeze that is whipping up from the river flowing at the foot of the hill. You stand up opening your eyes and see that all around you are lush meadows, butting hills. As you look down, you see that you are not wearing your regular clothes, but garments made of finely woven cloth that flow and keep you cool in the warm sunshine’.

At this point she had just hired up the whole sounds that were playing on the cd player in the background and continued talking at us.

‘As you look around at all the grace surrounding you, you see a man walking over the hill towards you. He looks friendly and is wearing similar clothing to you. He has a friendly smile which puts you at ease. As he approaches you he nods a greeting and you reply. Both of you remain silent to enjoy the simple pleasure of being in each other’s company on such a beautiful day. The man then breaks this silence with a gesture towards his hand: “I would like to give you something” he says...”It’s a rock”’. He holds out his hand and you see a rock of a shape, size, colour and quality that is specific just to you, and special to every one of you.

“You are amazed at the different qualities of the rock as you take it from his hand. You study the rock for a time... you feel its warmth from the man’s hand. When you look up, you see that the man has left”.

It was at that moment she switched the track to a Brian Kennedy song and continued: “And it slowly dawned on you that man... was Jesus Christ”.