

# Vessel

7 x 7

Sarah Rhys

20.11

06.12

The coracle is a traditional timber woven boat still used for fishing on three rivers in west Wales. The word “Wales” derives from the Anglo- Saxon word “wealas”, meaning foreigners or strangers. Sarah is interested in the medieval poetic descriptions of welsh coracles — Nofiwyr o groen anifail / A swimmer in animal skin — alongside the descriptions in diaries of travelling English Victorians visiting ‘wild Wales’, who found the coracle folk very strange, roaming the land with boats on their backs. Charting a course through the Towy estuary in Llansteffan, the River Hafren / Severn through England, down to River Lea in Dalston, Sarah’s handmade coracle journeys through myth and history, human and amphibian.

The coracle is ancient and has mythic status. It is both highly specific to Wales, Ireland and Scotland; and also aligns with cultures further afield, such as in the universal story of a chosen child being placed in such a vessel and set out to sea.

Coracles are built from local ash, hazel and/or willow, with a waterproofed calico skin. Originally, the boat was covered in animal skin - usually from a black cow or a horse. A black coracle would be near invisible at night and not throw a reflection onto the water.

There were once 22 different coracle designs in the UK, each corresponding to a specific river.

Last century, most people living along the River Hafren/Severn had one of these small boats, using them for transportation across the river (avoiding the tolls) and for catching salmon and eels. The coracle is now only licensed for fishing on three rivers, all of which are in west Wales.

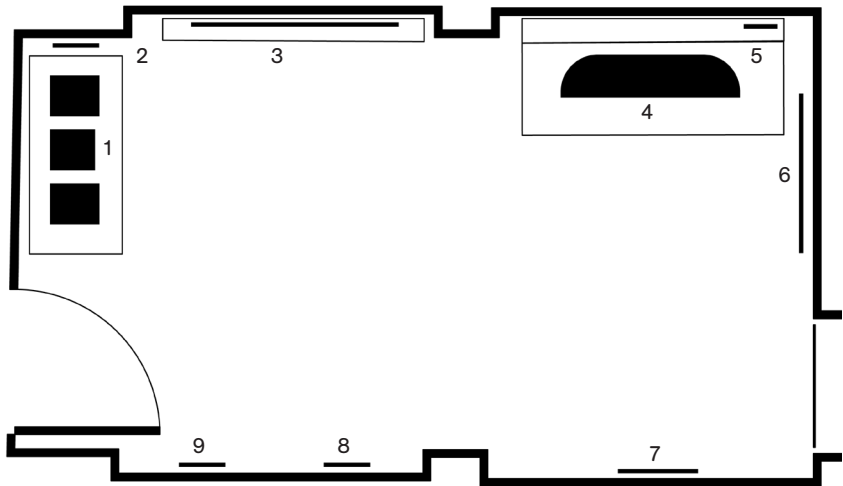
Clyfwchwr is the welsh word uttered when it is time to begin fishing - when seven stars are visible (twilight) on a clear night. Other phrases from Medieval welsh are still heard amongst the coracle community, even between those who are not Welsh speakers, such as astell orlais (the wood at right angles to the seat, forming a box for the catch).

**microscope**

2-4 Tottenham Road, N1 4BZ

hello@micro-scope.uk

instagram @micro\_\_scope



- 1 Vessel 7 x 7 (i, ii and iii)  
2025, 30 x 30 cm  
Woven printed card, tracing paper  
(framed)
- 2 Archival image: Fisherman having a  
cigarette sheltering in coracle  
Date unknown, 12.3 x 18 cm

- 3 Poetic fragments: Descriptions of  
coracles from Medieval welsh -  
Cywydd 1: Ifan Fychan ab Ifan ab  
Adda (approx 1572-1603)  
Cywydd 2: Maredudd ap Rhys  
(1430-50), 60 x 100 cm  
Graphite Pencil on wall

- 4 Handmade coracle and paddle  
2024, 106 x 100 cm  
Ash laths, willow, pine wood, calico,  
thread, copper roves, black oil-  
based paint

- 5 Coracle during construction  
2024, 20 x 16 cm  
Digital print

- 6 Coracle woman  
2025, 84 x 100 cm  
Photographic print

- 7 Clyfwchwr (Twilight) video stills  
2024, 2.5 x 21 cm  
Archival digital prints (3 pieces)

- 8 Archival image: Fishermen carrying  
their coracles, river Teifi  
Date unknown, 18.4 x 18.1 cm

- 9 White Coracle III  
2024, 16.7 x 25.5 cm  
Digital print

**Sarah Rhys** is an interdisciplinary artist who lives and works in a rural estuary village in Carmarthen Bay, west Wales. Rhys' work explores watery landscapes, ecologies of place and the more-than-human world. Since 2024 her main focus has been on the Towy coracle and it's surrounding ecologies, including apprenticing herself to a local coracle fisherman.

Sarah has an MFA from Bath Spa University, and a BA QTS in Design Technology from UWE, Bristol. She is a member of PLaCE international, Space Place Practice, and is a Spike Island Associate.

sarah@rhysstudio.org  
instagram @sarah.rhys  
Prices on request

**Microscope** is a tiny testing ground for art and ecology. Hosted by Periscope, curated by Kirsty Badenoch and Daniel Rea.