

ITERATIONS

The cover art is a collage of design-related elements. A large red circle in the upper left contains a pencil sketch of a building with several dark, circular shapes above it. Handwritten notes in cursive are scattered around the sketch, including "Geometry", "Study Area?", "How building?", "... the 'Study Area'?", "To the right of the main entrance", "see to building is", "vertical element", and "A. B. C. D.". A large white circle overlaps the red one. A green circle in the lower left contains a pattern of small black 'T' characters. A large, irregular shape in the lower right is filled with a dense pattern of small black 'T' characters. A thin red line curves across the middle, and a thin green line curves in the lower right.

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Dr. George S. Jaramillo/School of Textiles and Design, Heriot-Watt University, United Kindom
Leah Fusco/Kingston University, United Kindom

Drawing Waters: Creative visual enquiries through riverscapes

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Drawing Waters is a series of participatory walks and visual fieldwork exercises developed and executed by the authors, to facilitate engagement with river landscapes. Through walking and drawing together, these events aim to develop discursive tools for the discovery and communication of cultural, political and socio-economic place narratives, identifying this as a key area for development in design research. Importance is placed on ‘thinking through making’ and examining the value of experiential approaches in place research.

Using two case studies, outcomes are documented through material captured via physical and digital data resulting in a visual and textual cross section of different river locations. A practical methodology is identified that can be applied to a wide range of research environments and key areas of impact are outlined, including heritage, pedagogy, public engagement, land use and policy making.

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This article discusses and reflects on an ongoing creative enquiry named Drawing Waters. It aims to explore discursive and collaborative methods used in participatory drawing and walking to uncover (and recover) place-narratives in river landscapes. The project began through the collaboration between the authors and their shared interest in drawing as knowledge maker. Over the course of a year that collaboration flourished into a series of place interventions at a variety of outings and conferences, two of which will be discussed here. Each intervention took a local river site as a place of interrogation, working with participants on learning about place through a psychogeographic walk using the river as the guide. The article will first explore walking and drawing as a research methodology and discuss how it is applied towards urban exploration and place-based narrative research. This is followed by describing the two drawing sites and the collective work of the participants, ending with a reflection of the methodological implications on future developments for collective walking-drawing.

Rivers and Place

Ever-newer waters flow on those who step into the same rivers.

–Arius Didymus apud Eusebius

Human bodies are one-third water and water covers over 70% of the Earth's surface. Water thus plays a crucial role in human survival and is needed for all organic life (Karr, 1998). Our entanglement with water is not only an inherent biological necessity but is also about how we live within that watery-space. It interacts with humans in all states from rain to lakes and glacial escarpments, as well as, flowing streams and rivers.

Rivers are a unique relationship between the land and water, as they are a natural collection of a watercourse that leads to a larger body of water like a lake, sea or ocean. As part of the hydrological cycle, rivers collect rainwater, surface runoff and at times upwelling of water (e.g.-springs) and through gravitational influences run down higher ground, and collect towards depressions (Karr, 1998). Their ecological significance is evident in transport devices of sediment and nutrients, as causeways for animals, as well as, biological boundaries, and as collectors of biodiversity.

Historically, rivers were used as places of gathering, as in the Mesopotamian cultures of the Euphrates and Tigris, the Nile for Ancient Egypt or the Yellow River of ancient China allowing human civilisations to flourish over time. Rivers 'are lifelines and

bridges of cultural influences' (Roth 1997, p. 26) where cities such as Rome and Paris formed along the banks of their respective rivers providing plentiful water supply for drinking and agriculture, and an excellent route for transporting people and goods (Mauch and Zeller, 2008). Rivers allow people to flow with the ebb and flow of the water cycle—the natural rhythms of rivers from spring tides and seasonal droughts conceal and reveal the land as its waters flooded its banks, nourishing landscapes with sediment and minerals. Thus, rivers extend relationships with humans beyond its confines, providing a connected route to other places through narratives, commerce, and ideas. We choose to explore this entanglement through two particular methods, those of walking and drawing.

Walking

Walking is an everyday activity; however, its embedded and personal nature allows researchers an area linking to the landscape research (Edensor 2000, Ingold 2008, Wylie 2005, Morris 2011). Walking is about observing and interacting with the landscape, where the embodied walker is trained, not on the destination, but on the path taken. Lorimer (2011) sees walking as a method of place making, where the act of walking enacts upon the landscape. We look at walking as a means of *'attuning'* to the landscape, a performative action that practices a type of landscape making. We connect this idea with the idea of psychogeography to generate a new type of walker in the landscape.

Wylie (2002, 2005) has used walking in exploring the coasts of Devon, Glastonbury Tor, and the south Welsh coast, employing observational skills to understand ideas of phenomenology, absence, love, and the body. Equally, Edensor (2000, p.104) walks the English countryside, in a *'way of being in the world combining elements of the sensual, the serendipitous, and the irruptive body'*. He explains how walking is an *'ongoing mapping of space through repetitive, collective choreographies of congestion, interactions, rests and relaxation'* (Edensor 2010, p.70). Thus, walking is a type of *'sensing with the feet'* (Macpherson 2009) where, when visual impairments demand a higher sensitivity to the texture of the ground, the anticipation of moving ahead rather than just moving your body becomes a means to an end;

it becomes attuned to the ground. This anticipation that the ground can be sensed is how we approach walking as a multi-sensory engagement with the ground and land. Psychogeography explores this type of walking, through the *dérive*

Psychogeography and the *dérive*

The *dérive* is an alternative to a standard walk where the body opens itself to wanderings and explorations through a landscape. Debord (1958) defines it *'as a mode of experimental behaviour linked to the conditions of urban society: a technique of rapid passage through varied ambiances'*. The psychogeographic walk attempts to destabilise the experiences of the city engaging the body in a dialogue with the spaces. These *'déambulations'*, probing into the margins of the land (Breton 1993 in Bassett 2004), provide an *'attunement'* (Stewart 2007, 2011) to the landscape. By framing landscape enquiries through this approach, we maintain a level of rigour and criticality while allowing an open and freeing element to the landscape. The simple and somewhat benign format of walking is charged with much more meaning than it seems, connecting it to the next sensory method—drawing.

Drawing

'To draw is to look...the act of drawing refuses the processes of disappearances and proposes the simultaneity of a multitude of moments' (Berger 2007, p.71)

As Berger mentions, drawing moves beyond simply recording or capturing, rather it flows from what is seen and what is being thought — it is knowledge creating and embodied. Drawing is an essential problem-solving skill particularly in understanding space and recovering tacit forms of embodied making (McGuirk 2011). Historically, drawing was thought to be only for the artist (Taussig, 2011) the likes of John Ruskin, yet, Ruskin taught to observe nature required a clear use of line, and not only appreciate the art of drawing but art history, geology, and other fields where observation was key, and seeing brought *'true'* understanding (Miller and Shepherd 2004, p.1). We move beyond recording towards what Azevedo and Ramos (2016, p. 146) state that *'the practice of drawing promotes the observation of non-verbal interactions, an immersive way of knowing the place, of creating integrative*

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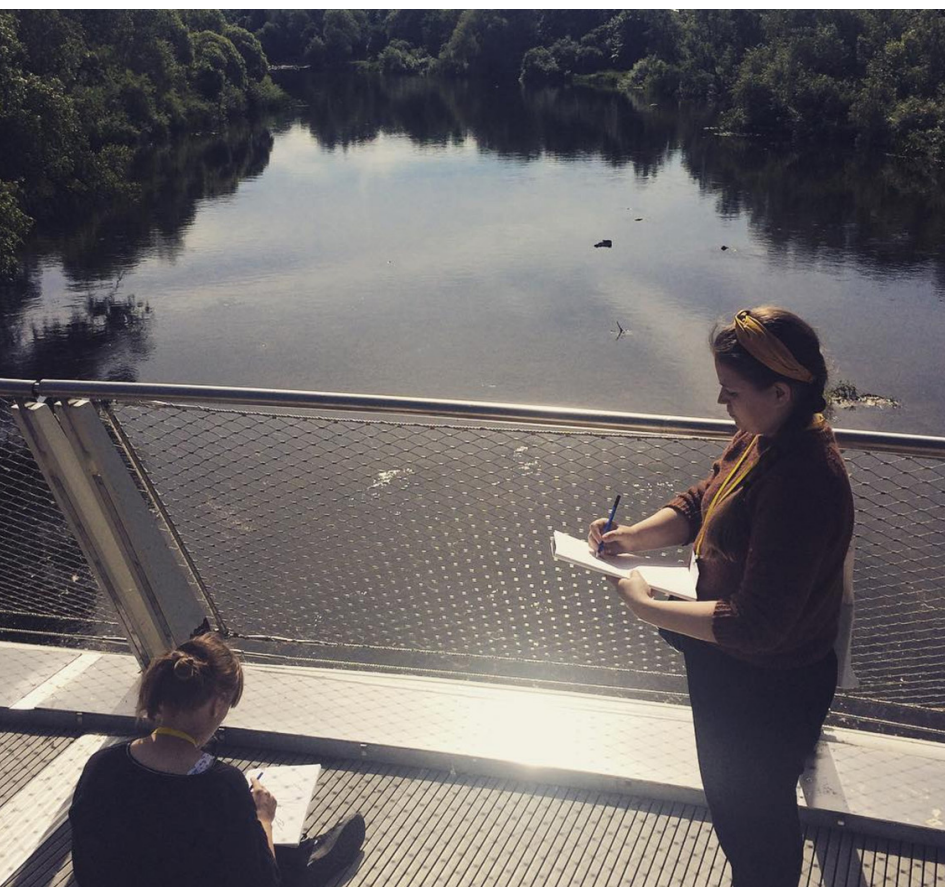


Figure 1: Drawing movement on the river Shannon over the Millenium footbridge

memories, and of contouring them in a non-abstract way, meaning that drawing forms unique relationships about place beyond simply seeing it.

Drawing is a creative enquiry that involves many techniques, guided by different strategic considerations, both in manner of execution and in purpose. The strategies provide the potential lines of investigation that shape creative enquiry and research, leading in different directions (Buchanan, 2007, p.59). Interpreting drawing as an ‘act’, we put forward Richard Serra’s (1967) Verb List, described by the artist as “*actions to relate to oneself, material, place, and process*” as a practical and discursive starting point to consider the function of drawing beyond its traditional status of artefact. It forms an exploration of the ‘*affective spatialities of landscape*’ (Wylie and Webster, 2018, p.1) Yet, it is important to keep in mind drawings limitations and its use in conjunction with other means of communication when it comes to research (Azevedo & Ramos 2016).

Case Studies

Case study 1: Limerick

The first workshop took place at the Design Research Society (DRS) Conference 2018,

Limerick, Ireland, walking a two-mile section of the river Shannon. We explored processes of expanded drawing practice in catalysing change to enable new understanding and knowledge in collective place-based creative enquiry. We had seventeen participants over the course of the day and began with group introductions. After a short slide presentation on the purpose of the walk, we ran quick drawing exercises to provide the participants with a chance to ‘warm up’. Since drawing is not only a cognitive act but a physical activity (Curtis 2009) these short engagements allowed the participants to get the hand and body accustomed to the day’s activities. The day consisted of a series of timed drawing tasks, varying from two to fifteen minutes in length, with different foci on sight, sound, space, and movement. From there, we left the building, and encountered the first body of water on the walk, a large shallow pond in the university grounds, where we tasked the participants to draw what they saw. These quick sketches opened up the eye and hand into longer sessions as the day progressed. Making our way towards the river, we stopped on the bridge to look at movement (Figure 1). Here we began to notice not only the movement of animals, water and other people, but started to see the movement in the architecture of the landscape—iron railings, concrete walls, tree lines - there was a strong visual motif of boundaries running through the course of the day. We became familiar with the infrastructure of the river and conversations meandered between the poetic and the engineered—from aqueducts to swans. Our walked began to transgress those boundaries (Sledmere 2016) common of psychogeographic work, and here applied as a way to give a sense of serendipity and surprise for the walk.

The mood was good and though some group members were apprehensive (as there is a level of trust given to us in running a day-long workshop), we managed to keep our participants moving and walking along the river. As facilitators, we kept this light and reflective, pausing twice in the morning. Drawing with time limits, according to one of the participants, was helpful as it kept them from thinking too much about content or placement. This allowed another way of seeing to emerge, using simple mark making on the page to capturing the atmospheric and essential qualities of a location.

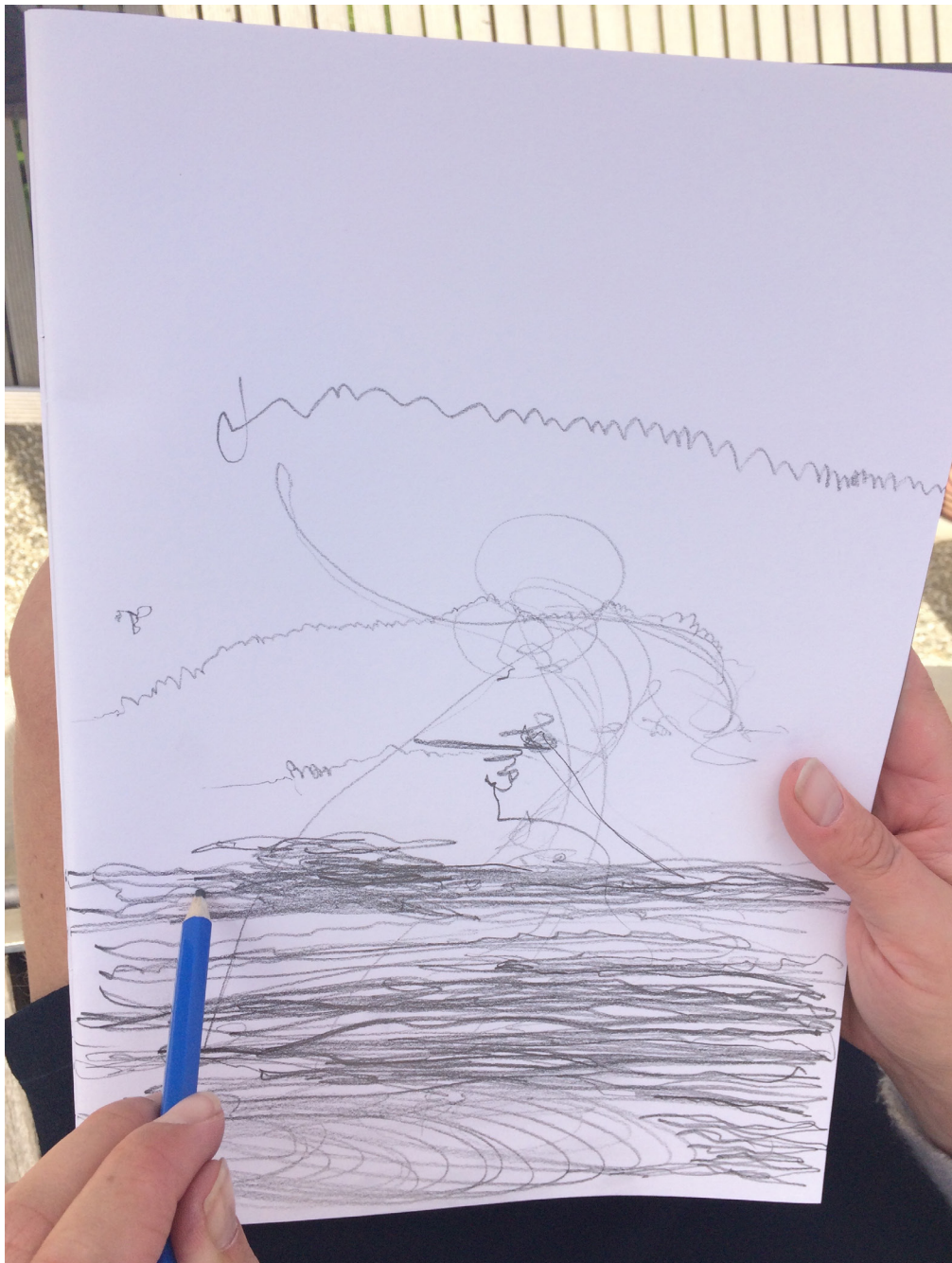


Figure 2: A participant's drawing of movement

Even at this early stage in the day, the challenge of making marks on location and in transient spaces, began to appear on the page (Figure 2). Participants moved away from representational drawings of events and objects and instead looked to capturing the more sensorial properties of their surroundings. For many, atmosphere became a focus through recording sounds, temperature, texture, for example. Others attempted to evoke movement in the landscape, charting material, and sometimes, immaterial qualities including water and air. It was interesting to see the inventive and diverse ways of handling these challenges in participants. What became clear in each

response, was the importance of decision making. Selecting materials, points of focus, and line quality enabled participants to make quick and confident choices. Many spoke of this decision-making process in the context of their respective practices and the importance of reflective and intuitive criticality in wider design research.

Through drawing together, yet in separate books, participants became highly sensitised to marks in and on the landscape on different sensory components (Figure 2). This multi-sensory approach allowed participants to develop connections to this unknown space. Introducing the concertina book, it



Figure 3: Drawing on the concertina book allowing for multiple participants to engage in mark-making



Figure 4: At an underpass with a section of graffiti nearing the centre of Limerick



Figure 5: At the end of our walk, with a pop-up reflection/ exhibition of the drawings

allowed for a collaborative drawing exercise echoing the form of the river itself as it filled with marks. Like the water, it transformed into a visual storyline and carrier of narrative (Figure 3). It was apparently the hottest day so far in the year, and the blue umbrellas that the DRS had included in their welcome tote bag came in handy to shelter us from the sun. In keeping with the theme, we walked along the river a line of blue circles hovering above our heads, pausing from time to time to observe different activities taking place by the water's edge.

Moving on, we realised that each of us had developed a strong sense of how the river functions through slow and deep observation. The length of time we had to study and observe the water and its environs allowed us an understanding of the site across geography, engineering, leisure, nature, architecture and sewage. Arriving at a large concrete bridge (Figure 4), we took advantage of the scarce shade and stayed for a while spreading out along the river edge. The bridge was covered in graffiti. Many of us redrew the marks sprayed onto its rough surface by people before us. We discussed how hidden spaces along a river's edge become a platform for people to voice words that perhaps otherwise go unheard, often revealing social, cultural and political narratives relating to a particular area.

We finished at The Lock, a public house in the centre of the city by the water's edge (Figure 5). It seemed like a fitting place to end our journey. After spreading out our sketchbooks and concertina across three large tables outside, we walked around this impromptu exhibition reflecting on the events of the day, of which we discuss at the end of the article.

Case study two: Cardiff

The second workshop took place at Royal Geographical Society (RGS) International Conference 2018, Cardiff, Wales, walking a section of the river Taff. Responding to the session theme of *'Desire Lines, Dawdles and Drifts: Walking Together As Research Tool'*, we used collective walking-drawing to focus on ideas of navigation, mapping, scale, distance and viewpoint in capturing environmental, cultural and dialectic conversations of the river and its environs. For this activity, we were given a shorter time frame of two hours and consequently decided to adopt a more structured approach, offering

specific points of focus on the walk. We had a larger group of twenty-five people and adopted collaborative drawing only in the session. Each group of seven was assigned a concertina sketchbook to fill together.

After leaving the university campus, we made our way to the river via Parc Bute Park (Figure 6) and started the first drawing exercise by exploring Viewpoint and considering the impact of distance and perspective on our understanding of place. Moving onto Pattern, we identified repeating motifs, both natural and human made, along the river edge. The third focus looked at Materiality, through close examination of the physical qualities of the water's surface (Figure 7). To finish, we looked at the infrastructure of the river through industry, engineering and architecture. By isolating elements of the river, each of these activities gave the groups focus and initiated specific conversations that emerged from focusing on one aspect of the landscape.

It was interesting to see that this shorter timeframe and sharper focus made people more physical and active in how they responded through drawing. Some lay on the ground to get rubbings or found natural materials and ground them into pigments (Figure 8). A few of the braver participants even waded in a shallow stretch of the river and worked into the concertina sketchbooks with their feet leaving silty traces on the paper (Figure 9). Discussing the transformative identity of the river, we noted how this movement generates complex stories as it both creates and destroys, reveals and conceals details in the landscape. We reflected on how the marks we had made together in the sketchbooks seemed to embody this process through materials, time, gesture and trace.

We observed that participants did not work sequentially in the concertina sketchbooks. Some started in the middle, began at the end, and finished at the beginning. There was no focus on mapping the chronology of the day within the form of the book. This was an instinctive choice by many it seemed, largely shaped by the short timeframe and need to make decisions quickly. This is quite opposite to the first workshop, where the sketchbooks echoed the long, hazy ramble of the day.

The overriding reflection of the workshop was the importance of the physical artefact

made together as a testament to shared experience and knowledge (Figure 10). Participants enjoyed the challenge and constraints of filling a whole sketchbook and it forced each group to make important decisions about what and how their observations made it on to the page.

We hoped that this project would give people a hands-on activity through which to research place-based narrative in a meaningful and respectful way that gives priority to the experience of learning. By using walking and drawing, we placed everyone on a level playing field. This activity was not about previous knowledge or skill but being present and noticing, observing, documenting, reflecting on the things that happened throughout the day. The workshops were designed to allow for multiple drawing abilities and did not expect participants to have refined skills. In both walks we wanted to invite all members of the design community and disciplines beyond to take part in these events, as we believe that working collaboratively provides a way of engaging those who may have trepidation in drawing. As one of our participants wrote on Instagram regarding the DRS workshop:

'Conferences can be intimidating and formal and intimidatingly formal. Thanks #drawingwaterdrs for allowing me to kickoff #drs2018 by forgoing workshops for a day of wandering and drawing along a river bank, meditating on form and place and space and what it means to engage with a landscape, squishing flowers onto sketchbook pages, picnicking with people from all over the world surrounded by trees and swans and wild things.' (Lutterman 2018)

The physicality of movement through walking and drawing generated an atmosphere of journey and discovery and, using Richard Serra as a starting point for thinking more actively about the process of drawing helped to support a creative and playful approach in the workshops. By giving each group a definitive task to fill the book, a sense of purposefulness underscored the workshops and the gratification of producing a practical and tangible outcome in the form of a collective sketchbook was felt to be important. The document became material evidence of observing, negotiating, recording and interpreting a communal experience and we spent important time at the end of



Figure 6: At the Parc Bute Park bridge, Cardiff, Wales



Figure 7: Participants of workshop attending to the concertina book and the water beyond

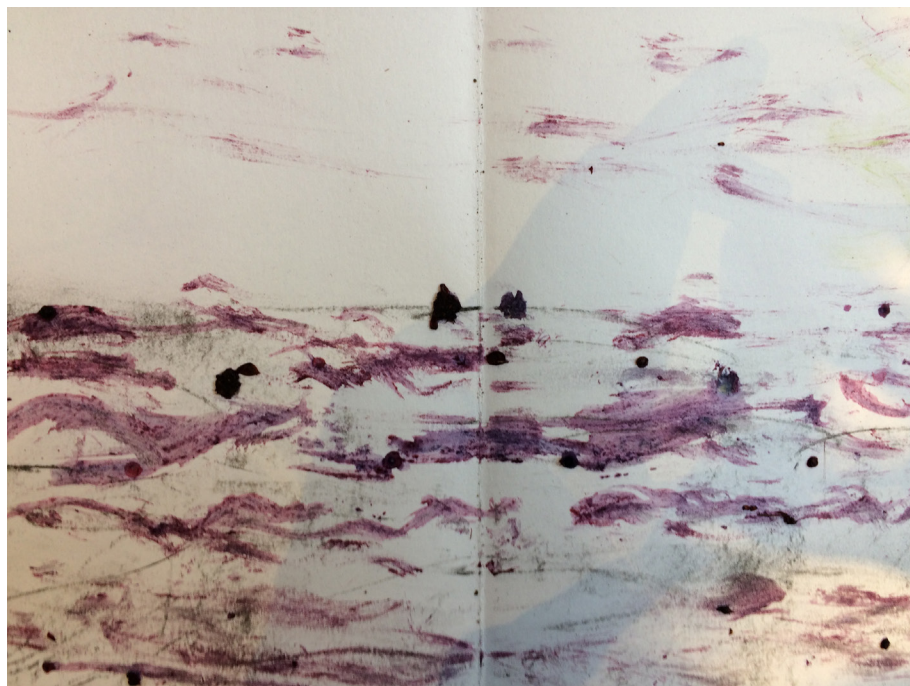


Figure 8: Markings with found pigments from berries and other natural materials

each workshop discussing the experience. The books acted as a prompt for this and made it accessible for everyone to contribute by talking about their individual role in the group, and how that contributed to the whole.

The longer walk gave the first workshop a much more embedded and involved nature to it, whilst the second walk with its limited time focused the work into discrete points along the walk. Additionally, the extended timeframe of the first walk allowed participants to work individually, as well as collaboratively. This led to a slow and meandering experience with sustained and deep conversations that allowed people to discover alignments in their respective research. The deliberate structure and fast pace of the second workshop didn't allow for as much time to reflect throughout the exercise but did develop group trust very quickly and functioned as more of a more of a short, sharp intervention to the conference proceedings.



Figure 9: Markings made of mud-laden footprints from the river

Another outcome of both workshops was the teaching techniques that participants could take away to test in their respective programmes. One participant reflected on the importance of engaging in the landscape and the use of it for his students back in their classes. Another studio lead noted walking-drawing as a way to get students involved more deeply in the space and location they are working in, remarking on how drawing can better integrate into arts education (Ridley Rogers 2010, Chorpensing 2014).

Alongside the production of a physical artefact, participants were encouraged to contribute visual content to a Twitter and Instagram feed throughout the day (Figure 11). This became an important parallel activity and operated in a similar way to the concertina sketchbooks; both became streams of information echoing the form of the river. Through retweets and subsequent additions, the twitter feed functioned as an alternative publication, one that continues to evolve and grow new tributaries. The feed also became a way of including participants that were unable to attend the workshops themselves and to participate in conversations offsite.

Conclusion

Three key areas of interest have emerged through the project so far. The first is the



value of visualisation through drawing as a discursive tool. Participants became heightened to their surroundings through observation, which in turn attuned other senses of touch, smell, sound and even taste. Visualisation acted as a process of discovery and a prompt for memory, reflection and communication. Strang (2008) describes this sensorial experience working with water landscapes as a '*phenomenological and processual view, encompassing shifting "fluidscapes" of identities and experiences.*'

The second is collaboration and the complexity of the individual and collective voice. By focusing on a practical task, bringing different perspectives together in the group around land use and place narrative was made possible in a positive and productive way. Working together on a practical task, participants quickly developed a sense of community and trust. Many of the choices people made in filling a sketchbook were immediate and spontaneous. What people chose to focus on revealed varying cultural narratives and often connected to an individual sense of place experienced by participants.

Lastly, the workshops primed participants for the rest of their stay. Through establishing a relationship with the area and each other, participants enriched their interpretation of the key themes of the conference in a geographic context. As stated earlier, the DRS participants felt relaxed and 'attuned' to their conference place.

Next steps

We have refined our model for subsequent workshops by adjusting aspects of duration,

group size, materials and points of focus, with the aim of running future events for a half-day with 10-15 participants. We will focus on collaborative drawing, using the concertina sketchbook as a fixed format to generate comparisons across different groups and integrate structured exercises focused on particular elements of the landscape such as viewpoint, materiality and structure.

Alongside the physical production of a drawn artefact, we produced an online documentation of each workshop via Twitter and Instagram. This was intended to operate as a live update, with reflections, thoughts, scans and photographs of the event, made visible to all conference participants and members of the public. Through this, our Twitter page echoed the form of the river itself; a stream or flow of information that became fluid and grew tributaries as it reached new audiences. Both outputs consider the act of publishing as a form of site-specific activity, developed in real time and designed to capture knowledge and understanding as it unfolds.

In future workshops, we will move towards testing the impact of these methods on how a place is understood, interpreted, protected and used via policy, community initiatives and land use. Our next event will form part of '*Up on the Downs*', a landscape research project devised by Jack Newman at Kent University. Engaging with academics and professionals working in humanities, mental health and heritage, the project connects place-based research with public engagement and local council bodies.

Figure 10: Final reflection session looking at the three concertina books that were created in the two hours



Figure 11: A screenshot from the project's Twitter page