

FOTMINNE: HOW MIGHT VISUAL ART REPRESENT LANDSCAPE'S IMPRINT UPON US

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Abstract:

The impact we make on landscape appears easy to measure: the marks we leave, the damage we do, the repair we attempt, or the care we take. Much harder to measure or record is the visceral effect that landscape has upon us. In this essay I attempt to chart ways in which the visual arts can register the deep yet unseen power of landscape to imprint itself. Using Kerstin Ekman's neologism *fotminne* or foot memory as a touchstone, the essay applies the work of anthropologist Tim Ingold and the acutely observational eye of writer Nan Shepherd to assess the effect of scale on the artist's ability to record landscape's power. It also examines questions of materiality, the role of the haptic, the power of interactive images, and the consequences of attempting to create the spectacular in order to register our engagement with landscape. Analysing work by, amongst others, Tracy Hill, Mary Maddingly, Finlay Taylor, Antony Gormley, Spencer Fung and Christiane Baumgartner, the essay identifies potential ways through the apparent conundrum that the imprint of landscape on the observer is hard to determine. The essay concludes by arguing that mutable works of art, experimental narrative, the deliberately decayed and decaying image, and the temporally experimental may offer ways forward.

Key words:

Fotminne, landscape, haptic, walking, impermanence

A path had once run here. The path began to run when the grass bent over. Summer after summer. Soles and hoofs and the weight they carried repeated the action. [...] A network of paths, walking veins, memory vessels – finer and finer out into the headlands of spruce forest towards the marshes and mountain heaths. [*Fotminne*] Remembering with your feet.

Kerstin Ekman, *Blackwater*

It is relatively straightforward to demonstrate the ways artists might register the imprint we make on landscape. We need only look at Andy Goldsworthy's *Woven Branch Circular Arch*, Richard Serra's *Te Tuhirangi Contour*, or Richard Long's *A Line in Ireland*.



Andy Goldsworthy, *Woven Branch Circular Arch*, Dumfriesshire, 1986



Richard Serra, *Te Tuhirangi Contour*, 2001. 56 Corten steel plates, 252m x 6m x 50mm



Richard Long, *A Line in Ireland*, 1974

However, I am investigating a reverse trajectory, examining the imprint the landscape makes on *us*, a more nebulous concept than a literal mark of foot upon sand or hand upon clay. The question cannot be approached literally, unless we prosaically record blisters on feet, scratches on hands or sunburn on faces. Land's mark or trace seems more likely to register in the psyche as a form of recollection or experience. The word *fotminne* or foot memory, a neologism devised by Swedish novelist Kerstin Ekman, is a helpful guide (Ekman, 1993, p. 413). Ekman steps away from the familiar idea that we leave prints on the land. In fact, the territory she describes in her novel *Blackwater*, in the wetlands or *myr* of the Swedish Vaajma region, does not record footprints. As Matthew Schneider-Mayerson explains, 'A myr was once an Ice Age lake whose surface is now spongy with dense mosses such as sphagnum and other low ground covers. [...] the ground here does not register human tracks' (Schneider-Mayerson, 2020, p.64). Ekman's *fotminne* travels in one direction only: land to foot. However, *fotminne* is not simply to know a piece of land so deeply that our feet recognise it as an old companion; Ekman's use of the word *minne* invokes the idea of recollection, immediately drawing in a temporal dimension. Memory can only come post the event, after the

encounter with the land, as Freud's idea of *Nachträglichkeit* or afterwards-ness records. Yet simply to represent past events or to evoke stories from the past does not seem conceptually powerful or visceral enough to express the thought that landscape franks us in some way. One alternative methodology might be to pursue artist Tracy Hill's interactive process. She uses intricate but fragile charcoal marks which fall from the paper and wall while we watch, as well as conductive ink. The ink, which responds to an electrical charge, emits sound when the observer touches it. Potentially, in inviting people to touch the work and for that touch to be transformed into a different synaesthetic experience, the encounter registers in just the way that I am looking for. When I spoke to Tracy Hill, she explained that in allowing observers to touch the work she embeds a different kind of experience:

With the drawings and the conductive ink prints there is a very strong participatory element. The work has to be allowed to grow and respond to the gallery or the situation, to allow audiences to bring their own interpretations. In the case of the conductive panels which demand a direct activation through touch, it meant each experience was different and not controllable. The material vulnerability of the wall drawings is a clear metaphor for the threatened, fragile environments the drawings strive to represent. The choice of material does bring unpredictability as responses to the wall textures and surfaces differ for each site (Hill, 2020).



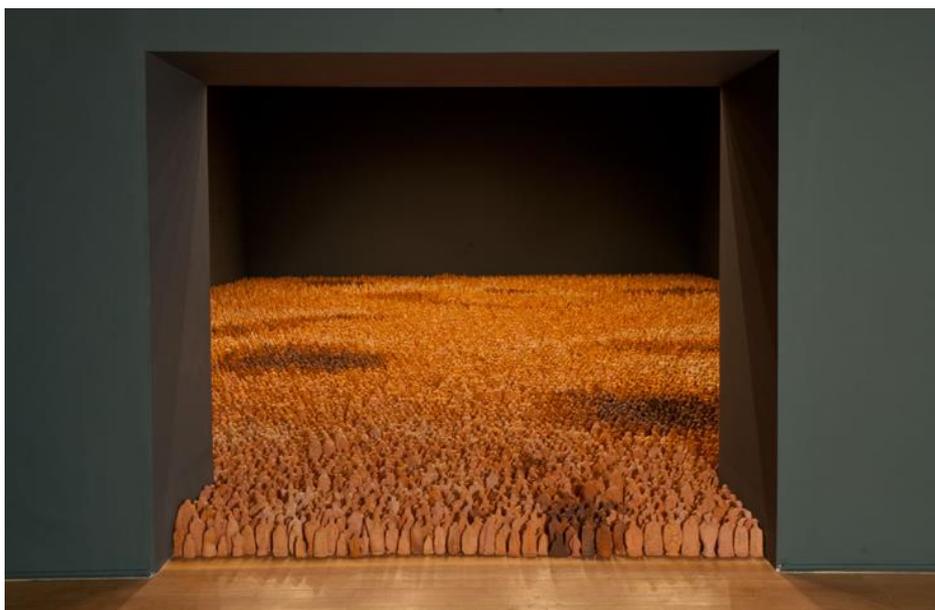
Tracy Hill, *Haecceity*, 2017 ©Tracy Hill

The demands made on the observer to do more than simply look, seem relevant to the artistic rendition of *fotminne*. In assessing the land's capacity to imprint itself on us, and art's ability to express that visceral idea, it is also worth examining the early-twentieth century theories of The Barefoot League. James Leith Macbeth Bain argued that walking across wild landscapes, provided one wore no shoes, would allow the body to absorb some of its power and vitality: 'if we walk on the young and living grass we shall receive its fresh and living – yet soothing – virtue. If we walk on the mountain turf [...] we shall receive the very strength of the mountain' (Bain in Minshull, 2000 p. 84).

Bain goes on to make haptic claims which are even more startling:

If we walk on the sands of the sea we shall taste the various qualities of the salts therein. If we walk on dry clay or mud we shall at once recognise that the nutrition thus imparted to our nerval body is finer or more comforting than that conveyed through rough sand or fine shingle. (Bain in Minshull, 2000 p. 84).

Walking in a hill-burn would, he claimed, impart the taste of trout. Tempting though his assertions are, replicating his experiments seems destined to disappoint (particularly when it comes to the trout.) Yet, his insistence that 'If you walk on the red-land you will absorb of the blood of Demeter' [the Goddess of Harvest], is not too far removed from Antony Gormley's reasons for using natural, unglazed red clay in his work 1991 work *Field*:



As Gormley explained, 'I want it to be earth [...] the redness of the clay being something to do with the iron in the earth, which is also the iron in our blood, which somehow makes a connection between flesh and planet. [...] *Field* suggests that the earth holds the memory of our ancestors and also the promise of the unborn. It has a life, a memory and a conscience' (Gormley, 2004 pp. 31-32). If the earth has a 'memory and a conscience' and is capable of absorbing into itself trace fossils or imprints of human activity, it does not seem to stretch the imagination too far to imagine that the traffic from foot to land might go in the opposite direction. This is not a literal transfer clearly, so how could it be framed? Gormley's assertion about 'memory and conscience' appears to be an evolution from his earlier idea that clay bears the mark of having been touched by the artist:

When I first began using clay I just wanted something that actually carried the sign of touching, of an event between a receptive material and the hand. [...] I get fantastic clay from a brickworks in Essex. [...] When the loam comes off the surface you come across this sedimentary layer composed of the oldest igneous rocks that have been broken down to this very, very fine particulate and have sat there, amalgamating over millions of years. I like that, it's as if you're touching the flesh of the earth, just like those paleolithic hand impressions (Gormley, 2004, p. 32).

The deep, visceral sense of materiality seems vital, then, to *fotminne*, as does a temporal component. The paleolithic impressions Gormley refers to appear to be of the kind referenced by David Farrier in his newly-published text *Footprints: In Search of Future Fossils*. The text's aim is to alert the reader to the future marks that we, citizens of the Anthropocene, will leave as traces for those in a future age (if there is one) to decipher:

Ancient footprints, like burrows, tracks and tooth marks, are known as trace fossils. Unlike fossilized remains, they speak of life rather than death. Though bodiless, they bear witness to a departed body's weight, gait, and habits, telling stories about how ancient lives were lived. Trace fossils like the Happisburgh footprints are an accidental memory (Farrier, 2020 pp. 4-5).

The idea of 'accidental memory' is a beguiling one, vested in the idea of time, and it also grants the land and our place on it with a kind of mythic status in which we might conceivably be marked by

the encounter. Artist David Milne understood this mythic quality well. Retreating alone to a wild Thoreau-esque cabin in upstate New York, he used lake water to paint visceral, affecting semi-abstract images of the very same lake.



David Milne, *Bishops Pond (Reflections)* 1916. watercolour on paper. 44.2 x 54.2cm on paper, ©National Gallery of Canada



Spencer Fung, *Native Rock Pool and Horizon*, 2019. Jurassic clay and Chinese ink, 81cm x 61cm ©Spencer Fung

Such materiality motivates Spencer Fung too; his forthcoming show *Seed of Hope* will include nature paintings executed in his own hand-ground, liquid Cotswold clay. His mural of the world's largest

tree, General Sherman, was executed in site-specific soil mixed with Chinese ink. An alternative line of material enquiry is being pursued by Mary Mattingly who proposes a radical exchange with the land in which we do not so much use it to create art, but in which we create art by literally *wearing* landscape:

My work proposes a world returned to nomadic roots following a peripatetic population constantly on the move. It expects that in the near future, much more of the world's population will be forced to be nomadic. I focus on the creation of wearable environments, and autonomous living/traveling systems. (Mattingly,)



Mary Mattingly, *Inflatable Home*, 2008. chromogenic dye coupler print, 76cm x 99cm ©Mary Mattingly

The idea of wearing and travelling with one's art is a powerful one in a future, inhospitable landscape where home is no longer a location but simply the place where we happen to find ourselves. (It resonates even more acutely in our current lockdown climate where home is both a refuge and potentially a trap and where claustrophilia can morph all too easily into claustrophobia.)

Mattingly's powerful idea also, accidentally, invokes something else: the democratising power of the touring exhibition. The idea of taking our art for a walk obliquely references Paul Klee's famous aphorism. But, more than that, it seems a powerful concept in exploring whether *fotminne* can be visually recorded. If art representing the landscape can travel, does it not then follow that it might leave a *minne* or memory, as it travels? As Cornelia Parker said of her touring show *One Day This Glass Will Break* organised by Hayward Gallery Touring, 'the work travels for me when I cannot' (Parker, 2020). This seems to be a subtly different idea to the concept of the lavish, international blockbuster show whose complex financing demands that it be shipped from continent to continent. Parker appears to be suggesting that art can act as a kind of travelling emissary.

If art is to be an emissary in which it leaves its own powerful *fotminne*, should it not then evolve, change or even disintegrate over time? If it does not, might it not run the risk of being a cheap simulacrum of itself? It is possible to argue that the pre-Covid-19 era cannot exist in the public imagination as an ongoing state of being, since everything has changed and is not as it was. If, as Jean Baudrillard suggests, simulacra are replicas which no longer have an original, we might compound the temporal disjunct by producing art which is untethered from its inspirational source: a simulacrum of the simulacrum (Baudrillard, 1981). One possible route out of the conundrum might be to opt for scale, investing our energies in the evocation of the sublime defined by Edmund Burke as 'productive of the strongest emotion which the mind is capable of' (Burke, 1757). The vast scale of Christiane Baumgartner's prints, for example, in which she combines the digital with the intricate and exquisite hand-made woodcut, are intensely sublime.



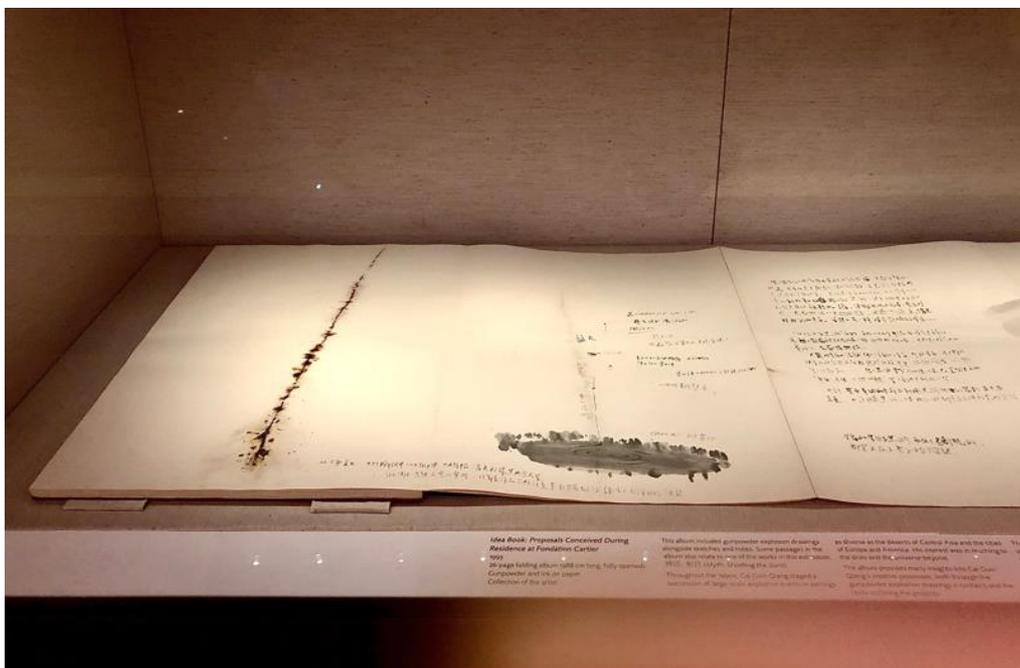
Christiane Baumgartner, Stairway to Heaven, ©Cristea Roberts Gallery

Her combination of the monumental with the meticulously miniscule has a powerful impact on the observer. Such sublimity is not an inevitability, however. Take the spectacular works of gunpowder artist Cai Guo-Qiang, whose ambition and scope cannot be denied. However, I found that repeated viewings of his vast works on show at the Ashmolean in Oxford, with all their colour, drama and showiness, left me weary and inert.



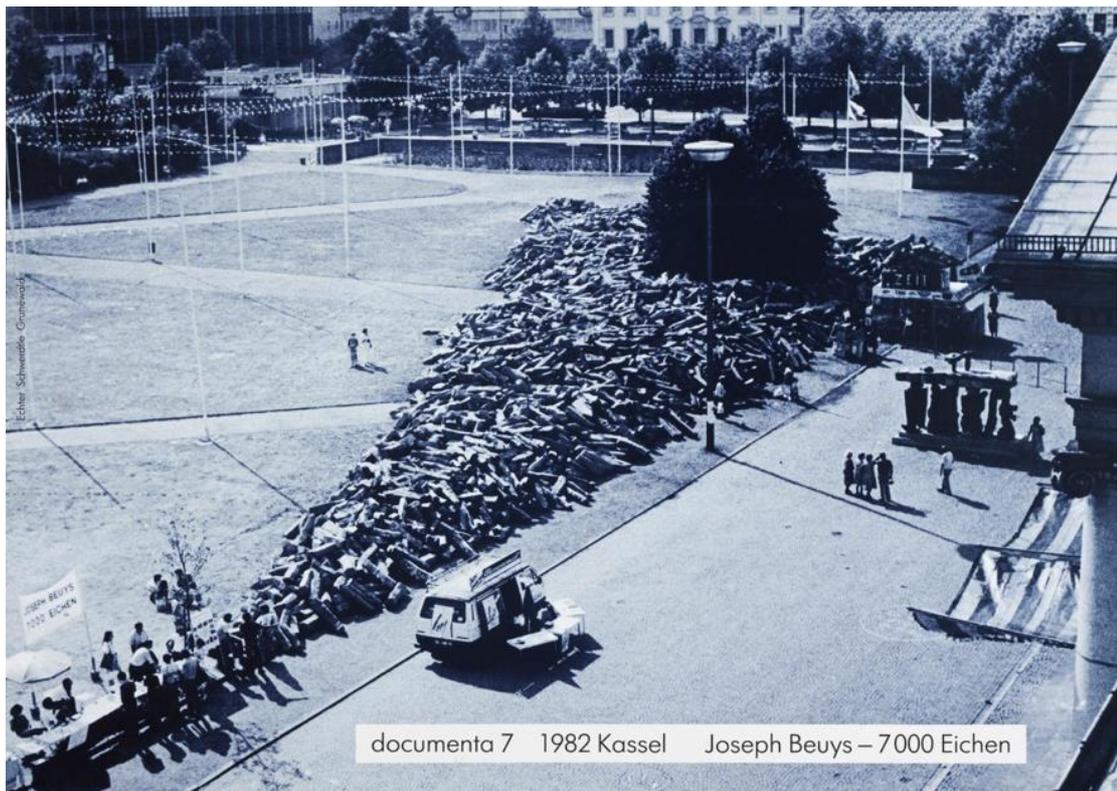
Cai Guo-Qiang, coloured gunpowder on canvas ©Ashmolean Museum

It may seem counter-intuitive that the scale and ambition of a work, or the grandeur of its setting, can undermine its power. But infinitely more striking to me was Cai's folding album of ink drawings and hand-written notes, based on Ming dynasty scrolls from the fourteenth century. Essentially, it's a linear narrative in which the textual is both decorative and meaningful. Its concertina-folded form seems to replicate the idea of a circular meander or dance, or of the Situationists' *dérive* in which the artist and viewer return back to the point at which they started. Could this idea of a circular narrative or walk be a way of recording landscape's imprint?



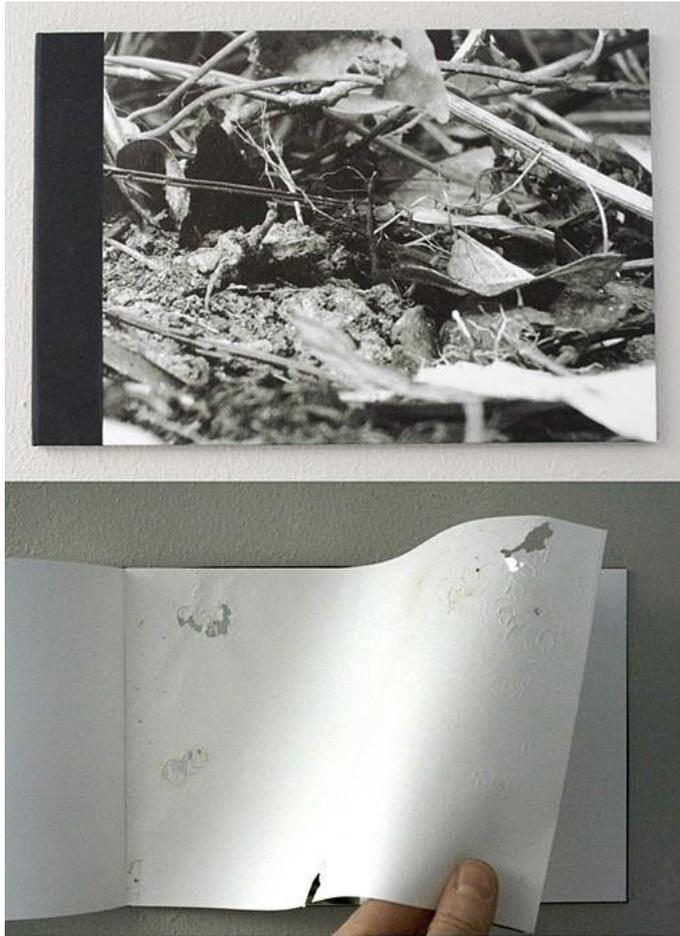
Cai Guo-Qiang, *Idea Book: Proposals Conceived During Residence at Fondation Cartier*, 1993. Gunpowder and ink on paper. 988cm. Collection of the artist.

The idea of the circular alerts us once again to the temporal. If it is circular, where did it begin and where will it end? The playfulness of Joseph Beuys' *7000 Oak Trees* (1982) in the city of Kassel performed a kind of circular narrative in which a vast pile of 7000 basalt stones heaped up in front of the Museum Fridericianum was diminished by one each time an oak tree was planted. The eventual exchange of stone for tree took five years.



Joseph Beuys, *7000 Oak Trees*, 1982, ©DACs, 2020

An even longer projected timescale is embedded in the *Future Library* artwork. Trees newly planted in Norway are growing now to form the pages for an anthology to be published in 100 years. The texts, submitted at a rate of one each year, will be read for the first time in 2114. The proleptic approach taken in both works of art factors-in the temporal aspect that is at the heart of *footminne* or foot memory. Both works also have a powerful narrative drive which might be another way to record landscape's imprint upon us. Narrative potential is, of course, part of the appeal of the artist's book but, as printmaker and book artist Finlay Taylor notes, it is the haptic quality which prevails: 'You can hold them, it's intimate, that's very important. You can touch that artwork, you are invited to. Maybe two or three folks can look but not more really. [...] Narrative is there though I don't tell stories, so in its broad sense' (Taylor, 2020).



Finlay Taylor, *Decomposition*, book, ink jet, snail eaten page and mirror paper, 2009. ©Finlay Taylor

Environmentalist Tim Robinson thought of landscape in haptic terms too, further reinforcing the meaning of the word *geography* or the writing of lands, by exchanging it for the more visual *geophony* to define what he called the ‘showing forth of the earth’ (Robinson, 2012 np). As Fintan O’Toole said in his recent obituary of Robinson, he ‘delighted in the way every place became richer and more complex the more you looked at it and the more you listened to its people. (O’Toole, 2020). ‘Every tale entails the tale of its own making, generalities breed exceptions as soon as they are stated, and all the footnotes call for footnoting to the end of the world.’ (Robinson in O’Toole, 2020). Footnoting and the idea of noting one’s feet are brilliantly conflated here. In the close-looking, the noting, yet more embedded or imprinted feet might still be found. Footnoting ties narrative, word-art, a temporal measurement, anthropology, and memory together. Ultimately, it is

perhaps not in the vast but in the microscopic or minutely observed that the imprint or the trace of landscape on us might be found. As Robert Macfarlane said of explorer and writer Nan Shepherd, she had 'an Andy Goldsworthy-ish eye for the inadvertent acts of land-art performed by the mountain'. He cites some of her Goldsworthy-esque, minute observations: 'Beech bud-sheaths, blown in tide-mark lines along the edge of the roads, give a glow of brightness to the dusty rods of May' (Macfarlane, p. xvii). Shepherd, he says, does not trade in showy ascents of mountain peaks but seeks the profundity of interiors and recesses. (Macfarlane, p. xviii). It is evocative of anthropologist Tim Ingold's taxonomy of the trace, thread and surface in the land, in which he imagines making marks in the landscape, but ones which are as impermanent as Tracy Hill recommends. He cites Richard Long's *A Line Made by Walking* in which, he says, nothing was added or taken away and then turns to the idea of cracks in the landscape, those 'in breaking ice, sun-baked mud, stressed rock, dead wood and the bark of ancient trees' (Ingold, p. 43). In a passage which reminds me of Nan Shepherd poking her finger into mouse holes and the snowpack, he cites Kandinsky's 1926 work 'Point and line to plane': 'The example Kandinsky uses is of how the moving, linear edge of the spade cuts the surface of the soil, as in archaeological section, creating a new, vertical surface in the process. Then there are of course the furrowed lines of the farmer's field, cut in the earth with a ploughshare which not only creates a new surface but turns it face upwards' (Ingold, p. 45). It seems a powerful way of summoning the dramatic shifts in scale which the artist may apply to landscape, in the process making us see new interfaces, new planes, new surfaces, by the sheer intensity of our gaze. Here, perhaps, lies the true engagement with *fothminne*: leaning in, looking harder, recording narrative, experimenting and disrupting cycles of time, being acutely aware of materials and materiality, and using the visceral gaze to make physical that which is metaphysical. My conclusions, as they apply to my practice, are that interactivity, the impermanent, the deliberately decayed and the circular, the temporally-stretching narrative, and dislocations in scale will offer the ways forward.

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Hill, T., interviewed by Charlie Lee-Potter, 27 April 2020.

Taylor, F., interviewed by Charlie Lee-Potter, 11 May 2020.

APPENDICES

Interview with Tracy Hill, 27 April 2020

CL-P: You define Haecceity as 'an interweaving of the mapped and measured world with the very

personal world of our sensuous experiences.’ To what extent do you think that the confined, circumscribed ways in which we’re all now forced to live could produce a new kind of creative response to minutiae, to the fragmentary, the fleeting. Could it result in a more intense, new form of individuation?

TH: This is a really interesting question; there are both practical and technical adjustments that have had to be made by everyone. Personally, on a practical level, I am simultaneously separated from my place of work, colleagues and studio at present. I have found that the physical shift to working from my home has created a new headspace or perspective. I have had to prioritize the work I can do given the space at home and also re-evaluate what is possible in terms of equipment in order to keep making some work. I have realized that my writing and drawing are becoming more closely linked during this time. I am able to read, walk and draw in the same day allowing an extended but natural reflection process to take place. The restrictions of travel had created a need to re-evaluate the places of engagement and I think shifted the timescale of those engagements rather than re-writing my role. I am revisiting spaces around my home with a new recognition I think. I am more attentive to the extra time, which the lock down has afforded us and I think I am measuring this through my walking. The physical world we can explore is smaller at this time but if we consider the world through multi-sensory engagements and a pause to consider place then I think the wayfinders world has the potential to explore unseen territories as never before.

CL-P: You cite the conversation between Humphrey Ocean and Mark Alexander, noting that the ‘marks laid down are the beginning of a conversation; to put down the first mark creates a dialogue from within until something new emerges. [...] Playing with the idea that maybe I am uncovering something that has always been there but has only just materialised into physical space.’ Do you start to draw with a sense that you are, as it were, re-finding the thing that was there all along? Or is it more a question of finding new potential in something?

TH: Specifically thinking about drawing, I do consider the act of mark making as a conversation, it is a conversation primarily with myself, to help me understand something. Through the drawing I always hope to create a visual space, which has enough room for audiences to bring their own questions, interpretations, memories and values. So in this respect it always about finding new potential, but that potential is different for everyone depending on how much they offer and invest in the work. The Humphrey Ocean and Mark Alexander quote was connected to my Haecceity project and the act of drawing during my residency. Julie Mehretu (amongst others) talks about the third space when making. This is a space, which unfolds during the act of making, from this emerges a new understanding or view. I begin a drawing as I begin a walk, it is a discovery, a journey; the journey is participatory between myself, the location of the drawing and the world around me. By this I mean I am trying to decipher the world through a personal lens as a way to understand myself within it. During Haecceity I think I also described it as an archaeological dig, at the beginning it was impossibly hard, like digging blind. Each day’s drawing uncovered a new memory or a new conversation, they had always been there but drawing gave them a language. The drawing revealed and enabled a visual articulation allowing links and connections to be seen in new ways. Each layer of drawing/conversation created a context to inform or encourage the next day’s drawing/conversation.

CL-P: What is your own personal definition of the word ‘mapping’? It’s a term which seems to spring from the idea that there is a definitive version of something that just needs to be decoded or recorded. But your work seems to interpret mapping in much more elusive, unpredictable and rewarding ways.

TH: I suppose I would describe my personal definition of mapping is a recording of locations with the

intention to understand and navigate, enabling location within an unknown space. Certainly I think within western culture there is the idea that maps provide a truth, the 'definitive map' is seen a reliable marker for recorded pathways and rights of way used in legal disputes and for planning. However, all written maps contain biases (this has been widely written about) with many places now left off modern maps as emphasis is given to reaching urban centres in the most direct and time efficient way. Robert MacFarlane speaks about how contemporary maps triage aspects of landscape, selecting and ranking them in order of importance, these subtle interventions create forceful biases in the way a landscape is perceived and treated. I think my work speaks about a much more sensory form of mapping, more of an 'unmapping'. More widely my work asks us to consider whether we should unconditionally accept and trust digital information presented to us. Based on the decisions and biases inherent in digital navigation aids, maps are programmed by others to guide us and as such influence how we travel and where we travel. For many it also informs and controls our experiences of the physical world, the idea of being lost is one, which is experienced when we lose signal on our devices forcing us to suddenly reengage with the location we have been travelling through in a virtual space.

In my last two projects I have become increasingly interested in visualising the very essence of place, the elusive properties which connect us to spaces when we inhabit them through walking and spend time enough to form memories. Friedhard Kierkeben called it a 'discernment of individuality' in an essay he wrote about my work. <https://www.nontoxicprint.com/tracyhill.htm>

By exploring the capabilities of our developing digital technologies my observations as both artist and walker offer a re-imagined vision, one that resonates with non-verbal human experiences, subtle, rhythmic and immersive. Providing an immediate link between the senses, thinking and showing, where our physical and digital worlds overlap.

By distilling the huge amounts of data collected by the digital scanners I can bring a kind of decoding through corporeal experience or a form of digital translation.

A more sensory visualisation of my experience is created based on aesthetic decisions as an artist and my understanding as a walker. In scientific and mapping terms this renders the scanner data useless but the resulting images I feel, offer value beyond the captured physical information and mapping of the location.

CL-P: How much do you allow chance to guide your practice, whether it be via materials behaving in unexpected ways or because the landscapes in which you work can't be controlled. Do you welcome such unpredictability?

TH: I am not sure I would call any part of my practice chance - I allow room in my investigations to develop through interactions and partnerships. These both bring unpredictability and richness to the research, which then feeds into the work I think. Every project develops over a long period; relationships and conversations are key to informing that work. With the drawings and the conductive ink prints there is a very strong participatory element. The work has to be allowed to grow and respond to the gallery or the situation, to allow audiences to bring their own interpretations. In the case of the conductive panels demands a direct activation through touch meant each experience was different and not controllable. The material vulnerability of the wall drawings is a clear metaphor for the threatened, fragile environments the drawings strive to represent. The choice of material does bring unpredictability as responses to the wall textures and surfaces differ for each site. This is an integral part of the work and essential for its success so is very much embraced and welcomed.

CL-P: So much about the art world is predicated on the idea of preservation and conservation – in other words, making a work of art immutable. But you seem to embrace the idea of impermanence. I'm thinking here of your painstaking charcoal drawings which by their very nature are so fragile and transient. Does transience have a unique power over the viewer?

TH: I try to ensure the drawings are seen as very obviously temporary and their pending disappearance often creates an anxiety for some visitors who needed to believe that what was before them could be controlled and preserved. Conversations during installing of *Haecceity* resulted in members of the public assuming it was the gallery who had determined that the panels would be destroyed at the end of the exhibition. Offering opinions that it was a waste of time me drawing if the work could not be shown again. Their lack of control or ability to control the destination or fate of the work caused an inability to engage fully with the work or me and some individuals then became reluctant to invest time in something they perceived to be impermanent and therefore of little value or use to them. For others, the transient drawings were embraced, conversations were animated and dynamic and the work was carried away as a memory or an encounter and enjoyed for the experience of the temporary performance. Some visitors made multiple visits as the work developed and their stories became part of the work.

Interview with Finlay Taylor, 11 May, 2020

CL-P: Do you ever recoil from what you're representing? I'm thinking of the snails munching away at paper for example, or butterflies resting on tongues. On your website you talk about viewers' simultaneous fascination and repulsion. What's the purpose of that dual effect?

FT: Ahh, good question. Personally no, I am intrigued and fascinated by those things, events and happenings that I either set up to happen or observe and capture in some way. But I understand others have different reactions and I like that response. I want a gut reaction, a reflex if possible in the viewer, some sensation beyond the retinal.

CL-P: Is there something unique or particular to printmaking which makes it particularly powerful when documenting landscape? I'm thinking here about the Swedish word *fotminne* or 'foot memory' - the idea that the foot not only leaves an imprint on the land but that the land leaves a metaphorical yet visceral imprint on the person who's walked there.

FT: Thanks for the reference Charlie, I didn't know it. For me it's the power or importance if you like of printed matter, of printing and forcing out an image or text or both. Print is complex so the ideas are shifted through the media and making. Printed stuff in the context of contemporary practice can be ephemeral or more substantive like an etching or book but it usually takes a place of importance, of asking to be noticed. I always think about it as a way of drawing, if in a computer or on wood or plate, I am trying to work something out, come to consider it further, that's the idea or image. Your reference is there the 'foot memory' in some way, I think a bit of 'I was here and left this'. There is some ego in that of course but I like what I feel is often humble about print, if not humble then graspable, mostly in the scale that I use anyway.

CL-P: In representing catastrophe such as climate change or the current pandemic, do you think artists have any particular responsibilities? After 9/11, for example, some artists chose to disrupt things further whilst others took the safer route of offering consolation. Does an engagement with catastrophe matter, and is consolation ever permissible?

FT: These it seems to me are jobs for us all and artists are no different, so across the spectrum we engage. If someone is making formal work, I wouldn't expect them to divert at every shift in event or politics. It seems in our job contexts does so much, so the things we make now reference our time even if they don't address it directly. I say all this and think practice can shift to a moment but it's not for everyone and we don't all have those skills. Right now we're all responsible, 'plant a seed', shit we gotta do something.

CL-P: Has Covid-19 changed the ways in which you view landscape/territory/domain/nature? How might you represent it in your work?

FT: Ummm, yes, too soon to pinpoint, I would like to say the hierarchies of importance will shift for me and society at large. I am pleased to see 'nature' shift in some cases quickly. Weeds infesting the roadsides of London, pollution dropping in the city. Surely we don't want to rush back to that. I can taste the difference in the air. This moment has animated me to work with some short texts I have been gathering on my phone for about 5 yrs, so making some grungy home made relief prints and drawing a bit. They now sound different at this time.

CL-P: What qualities do you find in the artist's book which makes you keep returning to it? Is it to do with narrative, or something else altogether?

FT: Well, they fit so much of what I like. Scale that I mentioned before, you can hold them, its intimate, that's very important. You can touch that artwork, you are invited to. Maybe two or three folks can look but not more really. Sequence, order, the quality of familiarity and potential for surprize with each turn of a page. Narrative is there though I don't tell stories, so in its broad sense. It's the structure, form, potentials, I still think in 'book' about works and planning works, so the sketch-book as a place to hold and rediscover ideas for example. I am making some books at very particular scales that relate to some rope works I have completed. So 'The Great Grandmother- a rope as long as a wolf'. I have also used them to work in collaboration , using the book as an exhibition space with page specific works that do not exist elsewhere. They can be everyday objects and special at the same time. A book is a place I have always been happy to spend time in.