

Matters of Chalk

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KELLY + JONES
UN/WRITING
THE LANDSCAPE,
RE/FIGURING
THE BODY



MAPPING AN EMBODIED CONVERSATION THROUGH CHALK

‘Chalk played a very important role in my life as a child when I learned how to write and read. I learned how to write using chalk. When growing up, we used chalk to learn how to write on small blackboards. My mother who was a schoolteacher drew lines and shapes on the board and asked me to reproduce them, and that was how I learned to write before I was allowed to use pencil and paper. Also, in school all the lessons were written on the blackboard with chalk by the teachers. So, it was very easy for me to associate writing with chalk. To me, chalk represents writing or is a symbol for writing’ (Dafeamekapor, 2020).

Defeamekapor’s meditation on chalk was written in response to an artist talk delivered by Rhiannon Jones via zoom to graduate students at Ohio University on November 18, 2020 entitled, ‘Un/writing and re/figuring artistic practice.’ The subject of the lecture was the collaborative work that Jones had done with the artist Traci Kelly, as one half of the duo Kelly + Jones. Kelly + Jones first worked together in 2014, when they were invited by Michael Pinchbeck to participate in a two-week residency for The Drawing Board, curated as part of the program for Primary Artist Studios in Nottingham. The residency took place in an old school building, where they discovered a large chalkboard on the landing of a flight of stairs that became the background for their experiments with writing through the body. In 2015-16, they continued their collaboration at two former chalk pits in Cambridgeshire, England that had been reclaimed by nature. The series of collaborative performances titled after a range of grammatical signs, was a continuation of their work at the school house, albeit in a much larger environment.

In early 2020, Kelly + Jones exhibited the work that came out of the two residencies alongside new works from continued site reflections

at The Glass Tank in Oxford. The title of the exhibition, *CaCO3*, is the chemical compound of calcium carbonate, of which chalk is one form. In keeping with the tenor of their collaborative work, Kelly + Jones invited four women to participate in a micro-residency research project that Kelly had developed in 2012 called Seers-in-Residence. For three hours each, Janice Howard, Helen Walkington, Deborah Pill, and Kate Mahony engaged with the exhibition, moving work around, picking up chalk, and redistributing the images. Subsequently they came up with unique responses to the work including a Spotify playlist that was documented through video, photography and writing. This exchange is documented on Kelly’s website (Kelly, 2020) and published here in this unique newspaper, which includes contributions from the Seers-in-Residence as well as this essay, an exchange between Kelly + Jones, and a meditation on chalk by Joanne Lee.

The folding and unfolding of the publication allows new pathways and new relationships between the writers to emerge. Leafing through the newspaper allows the reader to encounter other articles of interest revealing alternative routes and the surrounding topography. In her lecture ‘Un/writing and re/figuring artistic practices,’ Jones talked about how Kelly + Jones were interested ‘in the notion of re/figuring positions for the process of writing through the body for bringing a subject into being, in order to explore its dialogic impulses in relation to the feminine.’ The format of the newspaper permits readers to continue the project of the Seers-in-Residence by engaging dialogically with the text as they fold, unfold, and turn the sheet.

At its best, the newspaper is an eccentric mapping, one that yields more questions than answers. For this essay, I have been charged with mapping the conversations

between Kelly + Jones, the Seers-in-Residence, Joanne Lee, and myself. I am also extending this mapping to include responses written after Jones’ lecture by three of the people in attendance at that lecture. What becomes apparent is that the chalk is irresistible to everyone involved in the project. Howard, whose essay engages with the meaning of the body, actually straps two pieces of chalk to her feet, mimicking *We Are The Apparatus*, a 2020 soundscape video from prior footage by Kelly + Jones created by tying blocks of chalk to the feet and clopping around. Walkington, a soil scientist and geographer, examined the composition of the clumps of chalk displayed throughout the exhibition, but also thinks back to her time as a teacher.

‘I got to write on the blackboard when I was a teacher, out in Zimbabwe. I taught Geography and English in a remote rural school. The kids had books, but no pens. The teachers had chalk and talk but Geography was learnt through the soles of the feet. The chalk in Black African schools was coloured, dusty, snappy, made from gypsum. Gypsum (Calcium Sulphate) is a salt, it’s been dehydrated and air dried to make a poor-quality chalk that made us cough, the price of power’ (Walkington, 2020).

Walkington’s experience as a teacher points to the metaphorical meaning of chalk as the beginning or carrier of language, which Walkington acknowledges is the price of power. But chalk can also mean a different kind of access to language, one that can be erased and redone, which leads back to the quote with which I began this essay. For Defeamekapor, whose childhood and young adulthood was spent in Ghana, chalk was the vehicle of language. More importantly, it was a language that was passed on to him via his mother, a school teacher who wrote on a chalkboard that Defeamekapor was permitted to copy before he was allowed to use pencil and paper. The use of chalk described by Defeamekapor is one that is corporeal and shared with his mother. For Defeamekapor, a designer more accustomed to computers these days, chalk is the medium through which the mother and child share a language that during his early years was still in flux. Given the interest that Kelly + Jones have expressed in the mark making potential of the feminine body, one cannot help but think of Hélène Cixous’ call for embodied writing in her 1975 essay ‘The Laugh of the Medusa,’ (Cixous, 1975) or Bracha Lichte Ettinger’s matrixial borderspace, a prelinguistic environment of communication between the mother and child which

Pollock in (Ettinger, 2005) suggests informs art making practices.

Equally important in the essays for this newspaper is the history and time of chalk as opposed to the history and time of the human. For Pill, chalk time was equated with human time, providing ‘the dust to which we all must become, leaving nothing but a trace’ (Pill, 2020). Mahony went even further, embracing the contemporaneity of corporeal freedom with her Spotify selection of songs about the body, many of which are songs for dancing and compliment the importance of sound for Kelly + Jones. For Lee, on the other hand, the chalk pointed to a deep time that is almost incomprehensible if viewed through a human-centric lens.

‘Some ninety million years ago what is now the chalk downland of Northern Europe – the particular place I lived, and those through which I regularly travelled – was in an entirely different physical state. Far from solid, this ooze at the bottom of a large sea was accumulating slowly from the deposition of creatures with calcite shells. Weighted and consolidated by overlaying sediment, these myriad brief lives have now become rock; hills have been raised from the remains of tiny creatures’ (Lee, 2020).

As Lee ponders what changes might still be occurring to the chalky cliffs where she once lived, she concludes that ‘matter is generative, stuff emerges, even if it is not the material expected or sought.’ Kelly + Jones echo this sentiment, writing of their work in the quarry that ‘This layering of time through the prehistoric marine life sedimented into chalk, the ancient human settlement, the 19th Century of discovery and knowledge exemplified by fossil collecting activities and the contemporary lived now is the precursor, the endnote and footnote that foreground the ambience of Kelly + Jones’ artistic work. They are part of a live process that carries heritage yet understand their practice in and of its own terms’ (Kelly + Jones, 2020).

With the work of Kelly + Jones, time, history, material, and metaphor are un/written and re/figured, transformed through the presence of their bodies, which speak to a different economy of representation. This work has profound importance for feminist art-making strategies. By way of conclusion, I return once more to a couple of the many responses to Jones’ talk. This one from Haley Kean, which stresses the importance of the material for feminism. ‘I was really intrigued by the use of chalk, and its connection to feminism. I think relating such a pure, raw material to a social topic is great. It feels grounding. As a woman, a lot of things I find that enhance my

relationship with feminism are things that ground me, make my existence feel natural and even ancient like these minerals’ (Kean, 2020). And this one, from Annie Eversz, which speaks to inherent feminist potential of the work in the quarry to reconfigure the temporal. ‘Remainders of what was once an active quarry now appears on the artist’s clothing in various forms, which offers the audience some historical context, but also embodies the theme of hauntology, which is referenced once again in a photograph of Jones pregnant lying on a rock at the bottom of the chalk pit ceaselessly binding past lives (the chalk itself), present lives (her own body at the bottom of pit) and future lives (her unborn daughter) into this transformative passing of time in one single image’ (Eversz, 2020).

Jennie Klein, Ph.D.
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Ohio University School
of Art + Design

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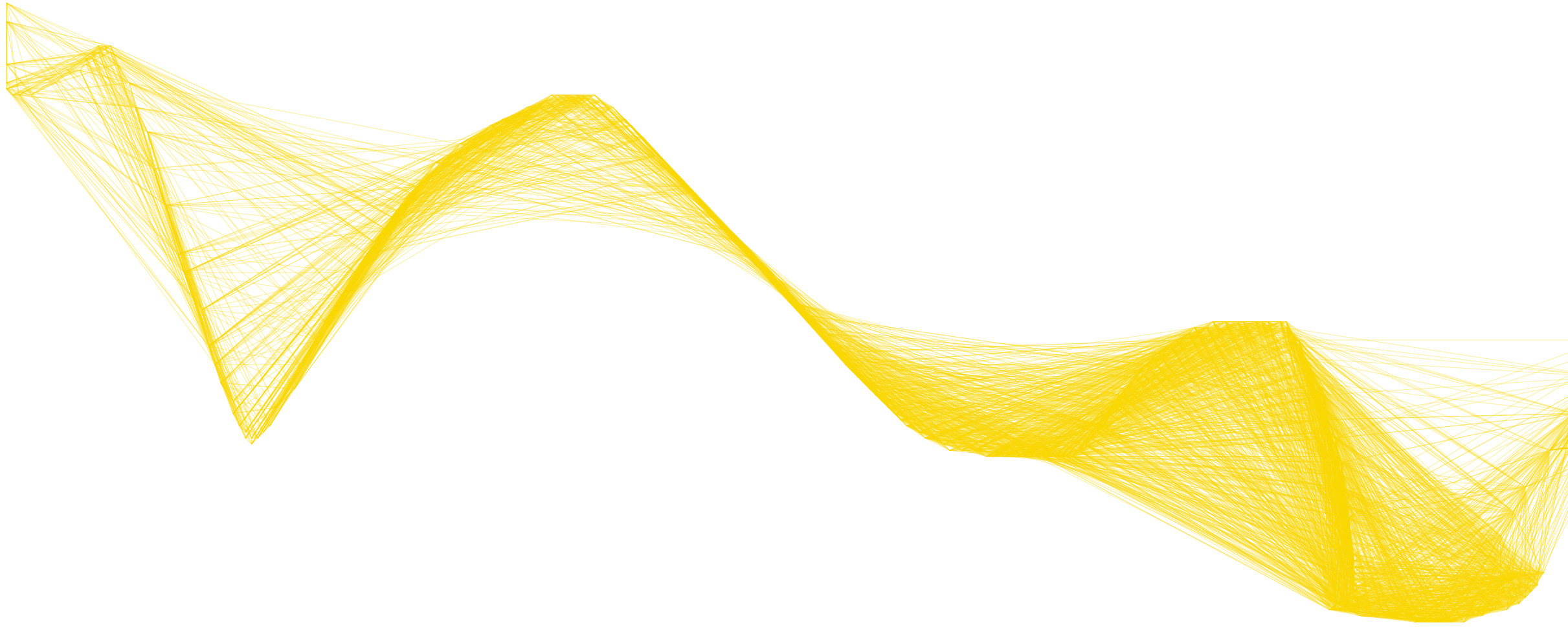
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SEERS-IN-RESIDENCE

AN INTERACTIVE RESEARCH MODEL FOR CREATIVE PRACTICES

Seers-in-Residence is a micro-residency developed by Traci Kelly in 2012 to be a tool for her own practice and also to be an open resource for creative practitioners across disciplines.

1. Invited researchers spending a continuous 3 hours interacting with the material of the initiating artist/s.
2. All material and architectural components can be altered but returned to original state at the end of the 3 hours, unless the invite specifically gives the freedom to destroy, replace and resituate.
3. The initiating artists SHOULD NOT be present to witness the residencies first hand, so that the Seer-in-Residence does not feel encumbered or presided over in their endeavours.
4. Within 2-3 weeks of undertaking the residency the researchers submit an approximately 1000 word text. This can be in a tone and subject of their own deciding e.g. creative, academic, anecdotal, scientific. It may be reflective or a work of art on its own terms, an investigation or all of these things etc.
5. Even though the Seers-in-Residence own copyright to all their own material there is a generosity that they provide their text and documentation for circulation to fellow participants and to the initiating artists. The materials can be published online and hardcopy

in talks, seminars, publications and exhibitions with the artists duly credited and CLEARLY not presented as the initiating artists own work.

6. Seers-in-Residence can be adapted to the teaching environment, enabling students to open up the dialogues present in their emergent practices and as a method of practical critique through in-action response and research-creation.

The model aims to be manageable, insightful, and unresting, extending the scope of an individual's practice through previously unconsidered lenses and formations.

The person or institution issuing the invitations commits to providing quality documentation so that the Seer has a resource to aid their reflection without being possibly distracted with producing their own. Publication is viewed as printed material, online material, a seminar, a public event, a further exhibiting context incorporating research contributions.

Kelly + Jones

*For We Are
Made of Lines*
Kelly + Jones, 2020



THE INBETWEEN OF WRITING: THE BETWEEN US OF COLLABORATION

HIT Space bar, HIT Space bar, HIT Space bar. Tap the MOUSE
i x ii am writing to you slowly. I'm wired. My intentions are hampered as the fingers of my non-dominant hand veer off course towards the precise dimensions built around the CAPITALISED let-ters of the keyboard. I see the dull glow of each key. It is pulsing at me. I haven't held a pen in years.
PAUSE

Diagram 1. Unresolved Pressure

i x ii doesn't care much for the proud assertions of the capitals and will keep words to the whispers of lowercase. i x ii reclaim the lower register as it tangles around my subjectivity as the grammati-cally unruly. The blackness always reacts to my touch. It has hidden depths.
RETURN

Diagram 2. Writing on the Horizon

i x ii wills not to be the right hand to the dominant. there is a smell of disinfectant washed over school stairs. A waft of autumn air rushes in as doors open and a rusted leaf strains, caught in a spider's web in the corner of the stairwell. The harsh, fast, slow or gentle touch of the pad. It's not a note pad as I know it. On the turn of the stone steps, fixed

to the wall, a silky surfaced writing board floats in time and space. I'm wired, wired to this machine. Our pressure points meet. Over and over and over and over and over again. I connect, we connect. My wires to yours. You can taste the dryness of chalk carried on the air of previous activations. an archaeology begins even as collaborators wait to meet for the first time to begin adding their own residual dust to the crevices of unwriting. You only see what is between me and you.
CLICK

Diagram 3. Dis /Connected / Mass

i x ii sways between destinations, brushing gestures and mo-tivations that predetermine language, before language distils, set-tles and marks a subject. Each black square offers a different kind of composition. A movement towards each other, a movement to-wards writing – the unwritten. I write silently, I write through my hands in the air, I repeat the pattern of what I have already con-ducted on the keys through the movement of my fingers. Where text marks a subject, scuff it at the edges, turn it in on itself, undo it so that it does not live peacefully. It is a silent and peaceful act. It flows.
DELETE

Diagram 4. Erasure

i x ii conjures with husks and fossils, past lives embedded in fingertips and lungs. Where do bodies begin and end? This discourse is made of metal and plastic, not of chalk and bones. Bodies of flesh and text grapple and fail to hold each other accountable. Create a space. A space, between the act of letter making and word forma-tion. .I. Space. .M. Space. .A. Space. .D. Space. .E. Space. .T. Space. .H. Space. .I. Space. .S. Space. For .U. spaced somewhere between, as performing political subjects. Writing and 'ghosting' the scene destabilises subjectivity and opens into new territories cast in the moment. I am a series of in-betweens. Each letter that I touch, each word that I create. I always have to pause. Create a space.
ESCAPE

Diagram 5. Undeclared

i x ii is a corporeal archive. Writing as a material artefact embodies a drive to become legacy, something referred to, built upon, recording transmittable knowledges. It is a structure filled with hid-den pressure points. We are resistant to ideas of capturing. It flows. It is free flowing, free forming, free flowing, free flowing, free flow-ing - though exchanging knowledge is important for development there's a thrust to discover how else it could be in production and circulation. It is not of man, or matter, or of shape, or a form that is familiar to my hand. Tap. Tap. Tap. Space. Space. Space. Give me a Space, create more spaces. If there must be straight lines they will be the edges of precipices ready to disarm gravity. Everything has changed.
OPTION

Diagram 6. Touch

i x ii flexes taut lines of sinew (fingers on left hand cannot span to the question mark, i x ii will never play piano). I can't change its sound. Sharps and flats. The weight of my

finger tips on the keys. The rhythm of semantics. A rhythmic journey. You may never play the piano, but these black and white keys play out a score for this discourse. stretching towards the unanswered to find a place of unanswering.
FUNCTION

Diagram 7. Finding The Edges

i x ii desires to trace through writing's topography (ditto) – You are reading this, yet, you do not see all of the kinds of hidden spaces that have taken place. Resonant sites – chalk pits and stairwells echo, they cannot contain the words that do not describe them. Give me a space key? utterances travel onwards softening information as they go. Some of what I press is already fading away under my touch. A. A. A is disappearing. The sound used and over used, over touched, receding, dis..Appearing from sight. clouding and erosions contaminate site, writing, clothing and flesh. Out of sight lays the labyrinth of mess, of mis-connections and unpressed communications. Erasing the previous into a drifted layer of silt.
LOCK

Diagram 8. Explode

i x ii am not your beast. What the fuck has a mouse got to do with it? The materiality of writing is cellular, molecular and neural, building structures and pathways in soft tissue. Fingers turn to white powder... proliferating into overspill, twitching the muscles, I'm wired. Playing the nerves it leaves the haunted body. We are the same.
SHIFT

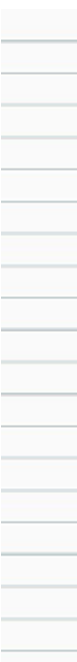
Diagram 9. Evolving Organism

A Discursive Conversation
Kelly + Jones, 2020

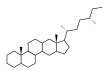
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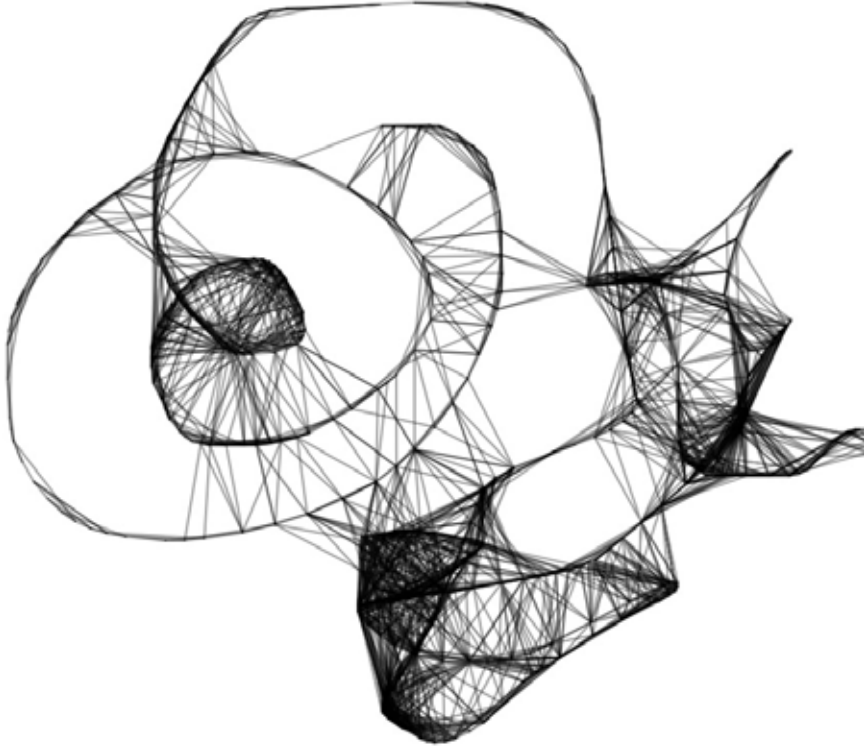
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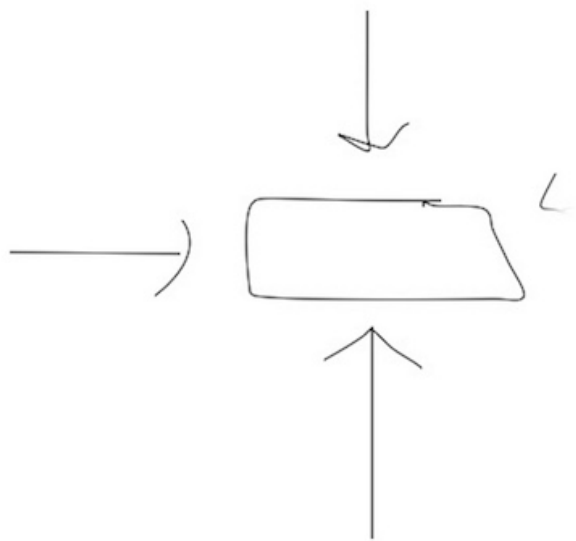
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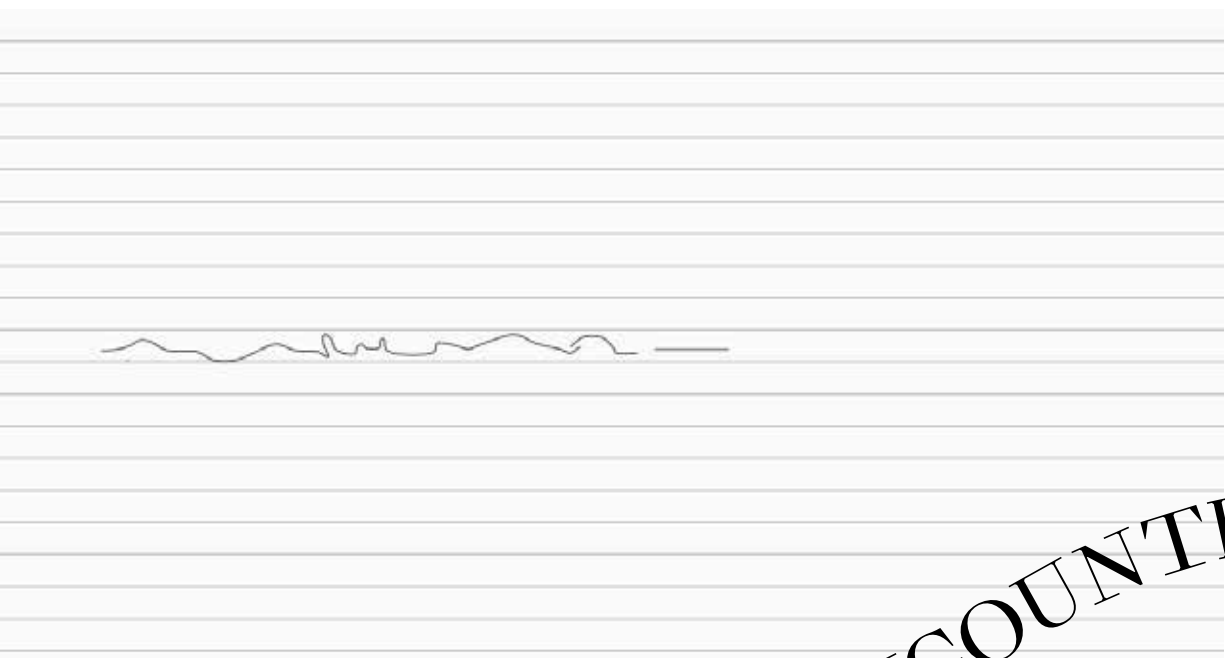
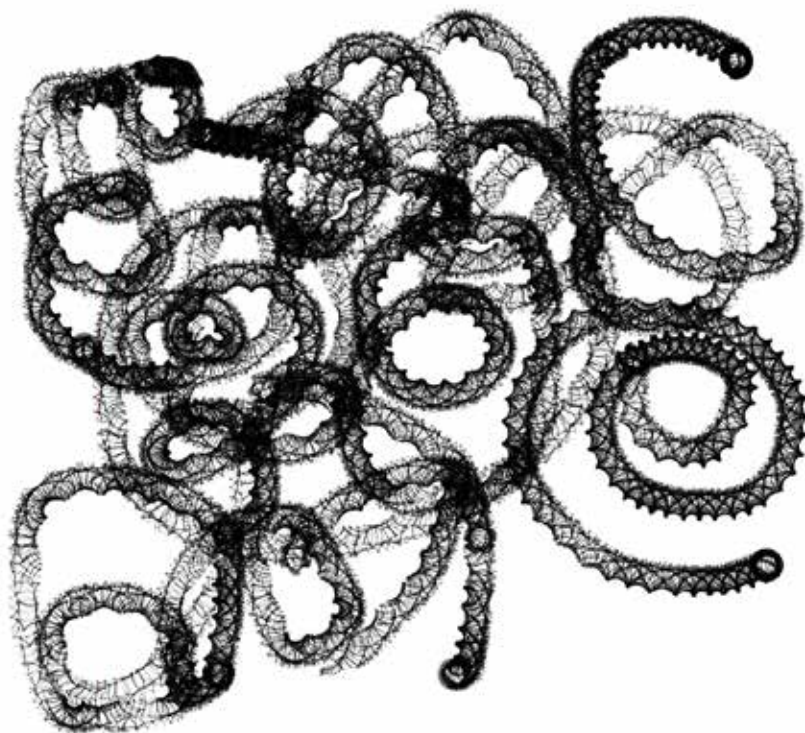
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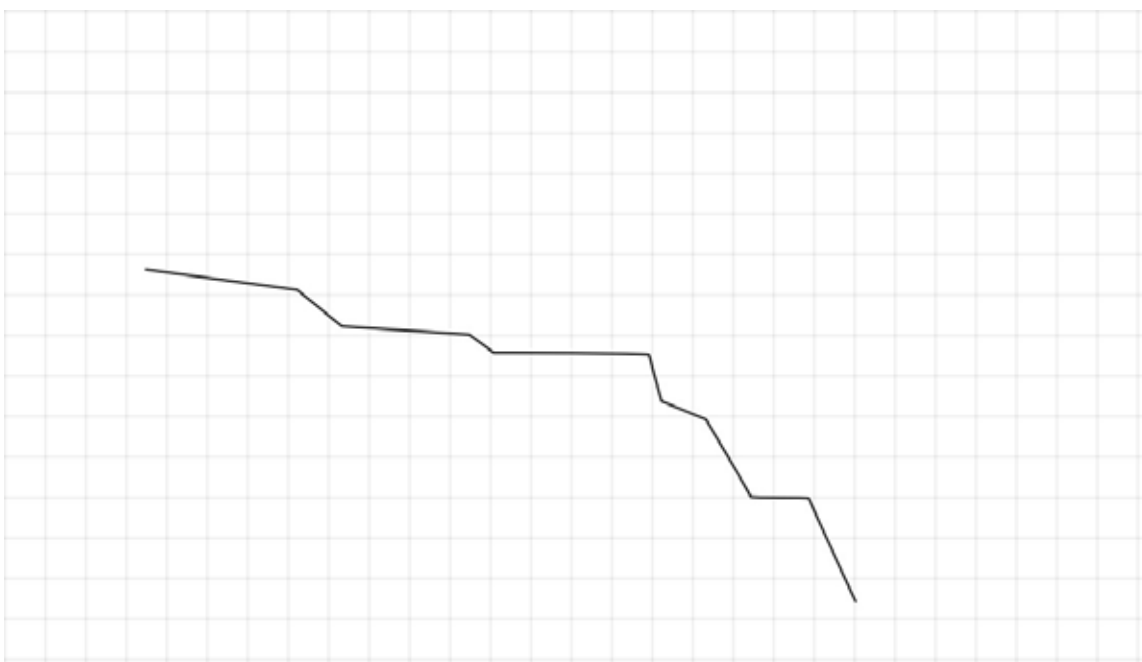


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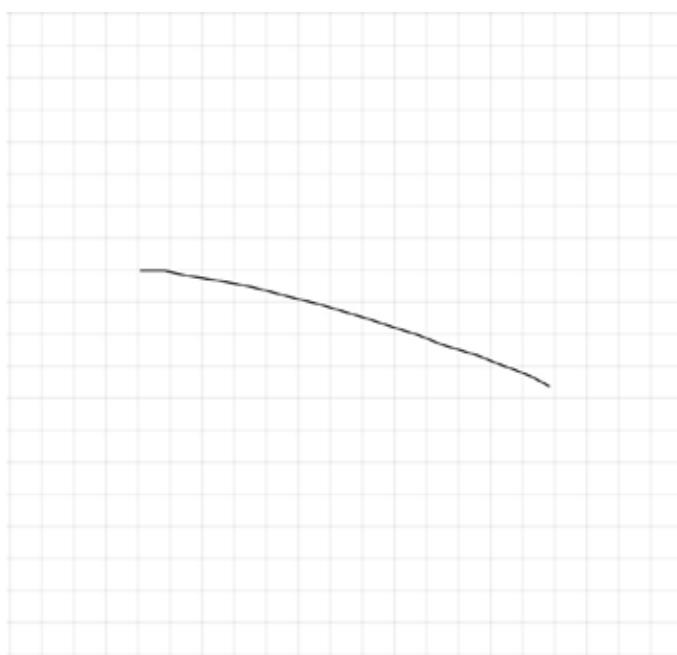


PER AND OBSCURE ENCOUNTERED OBJECTS.

7.



6.



5.



TOUCHING MOVEMENTS IN-BETWEEN: THINKING WITH MY FEET

Western culture privileges talk and text as legitimate forms of communication, yet there may be no words or language to name and communicate certain forms of experience, particularly physical sensation and its contribution to subjectivity (Howson, 2005, p.81). How do I communicate my recent experience as a ‘seer in residence’ through a body of text?

In referring to Elizabeth Grosz’s argument about Merleau-Ponty’s flawed emphasis upon visibility in *The Visible and the Invisible*, David Brubaker claims; ‘The gulf between subject and object or intellect and material object, is bridged more persuasively by examples of touch, and less well by references to the relation between seer and seen, or between the gaze of perception and the context of visibility. Touch is more effective as an example of the requisite medium or bridge, because the toucher is inevitably touched, whereas in traditional understandings of vision the seer sees at a distance and is unimplicated in what is seen’ (Brubaker, 2006, p.252).

How can I become a ‘seer’ in relation to your body of work then?

Laura U Marks suggests the image is ‘connective tissue’ and that by ‘staying close to the surface of an event [we might be able to] trace a connection between the events material history, the event itself, me and you’ (Marks, 2002, p.xi).

So I stay close to the connective tissue of your work and I read the other stuff.

In Traci Kelly and Rhiannon Jones’ work for the Glass Tank, different lenses invite us to the surface events of various interactions with floor, chalk, landscape and bodies. Some of those interactions manifest through engagement with the photographic, with the moving image, with found and constructed objects or through performative actions.

Apparently, limestone chalk is also used to mark boundary lines, despite its ability to stick loosely.

A haptic relation is created between the work and the beholder. According to Laura U Marks’ ideas in relation to the way we experience film, ‘our self-rushes up to the surface to interact with another surface. When this happens, there is a concomitant loss of depth - we become amoeba-like, lacking a centre, changing as the surface to which we cling changes. We cannot help but be changed in the process of interacting’ (Marks, 2000, p. xvi).

I can’t help but touch the soft, friable, dry accumulated ooze, just as you, positioned, cast it down the steps towards the camera.

Subjects are constructed through discourse (language and other forms of representation) where bodies become subjected to subject positions (he, she, I, you, me). Subject positions are, according to Western ideas about subjectivity, fixed in time and space. Bodies then become subjects in this way, sexualised, gendered, racialised. They are different or the same as others.

Feminist phenomenology

establishes subjectivity as necessarily based upon lived or represented experience. As a methodology it constructs a critique of what is often referred to as a normalised body.

We are not often encouraged to touch. We are supposed to remain immobile on the other side of the bridge.

In challenging the fixity of a normalised body, postmodern theories suggest a subject who is fragmented or split. Such thinking accepts multidimensional aspects of subjectivity that are both the same and different, constituted as both agents and subjects (with power but also subjected to the law of language). This perspective views subjectivity as a process open to movement: fluid, mobile and transitory.

I move around the work trying to navigate boundaries encountered through time. Paper, floor, light, a desiccated lizard, porous rock. Images of landscape, of bodies, of black holes.

Intervention with the works in the gallery through this micro-residency, it could be argued, encourage a mutual subjectivity or ‘intersubjectivity’ that integrates both subject and object in the work which we affect and which affects us. Through the lens of haptic perception we can approach the work through the senses, as an embodied experience. Through engagement with the haptic qualities of the work, we can extend the boundaries that are already blurred - seeing/touching - viewing/feeling - and encounter the ways in which the work begins to challenge traditional ideas about subjectivity.

I am being filmed as I film as I touch the work as it touches me as I see(r) and am seen.¹ (Barker, 2009, pp.2-6).

I approached this micro-residency as a ‘seer’ through the things I think about when I make my own work. Ideas about phenomenology (feminine), subjectivity, the sensory and the haptic. Because I work with a moving image, I touch upon the ‘matter of surfaces’ (Manning, 2007, p.86) that are temporalized², that move and are moving. Consequently, I explore forms of connection through movement and materiality as a form of becoming, to enable me to engage with non-hierarchical aesthetic conditions of embodiment. Through

the process of making video works I engage with the concept of the in-between as a way of addressing the issue of binary opposition and because female bodies inherently occupy such in-between states; neither public nor private, neither cultural nor natural, neither self nor other. Through practice based research I relate the concept of this in-between to physical spaces, ideas about permeability, ideas about ‘the fear of the other within’ (Cristofovici, 1999, pp.286-287) the proximity and distance between the ‘viewer’ and the work and between subjects portrayed. I focus on themes of bodily disintegration and physical resistance and explore the ways in which subjectivity can be troubled and ideas about fixed perceptions of subjectivity can be challenged.

Like you, I think with my feet.

Horea Avram and Claudiu Turcus describe a ‘body in-between’ as, ‘a way to take the body ‘differently’, in the logic of the neither-nor, that is in an assumed relative (but not relativistic) mode that includes negotiations and reinterpretations... as a discursive field for thinking... about the tensions between public space and intimacy’ (Avram, Turcus, 2014, pp.5-9).

Just as you lead and are being led falling backwards through time, I move in-between, ‘touching not mastering’ (Marks, 2002, xii).

Janice Howard
Fine Artist
Seer-in-Residence for Kelly + Jones

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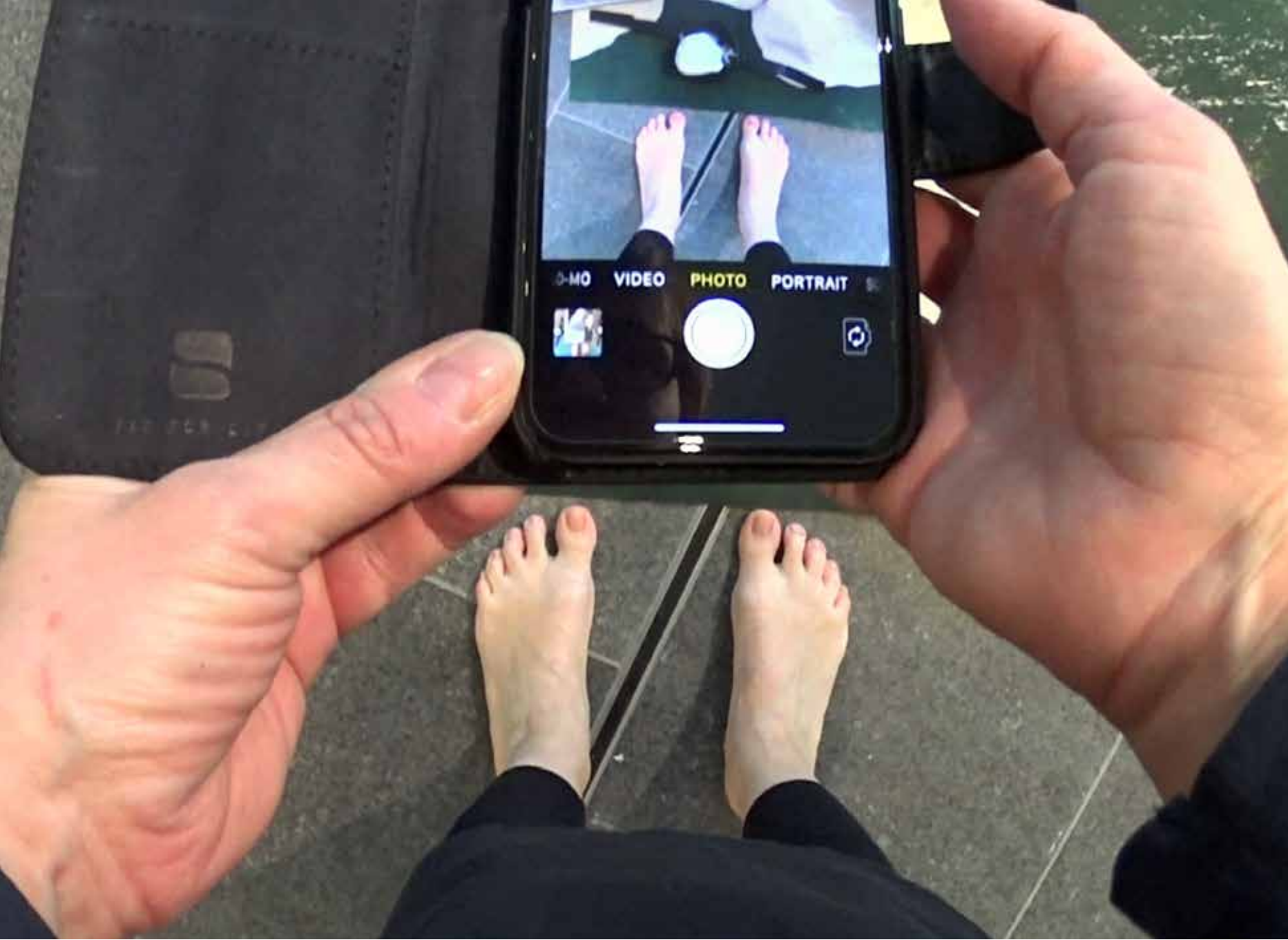
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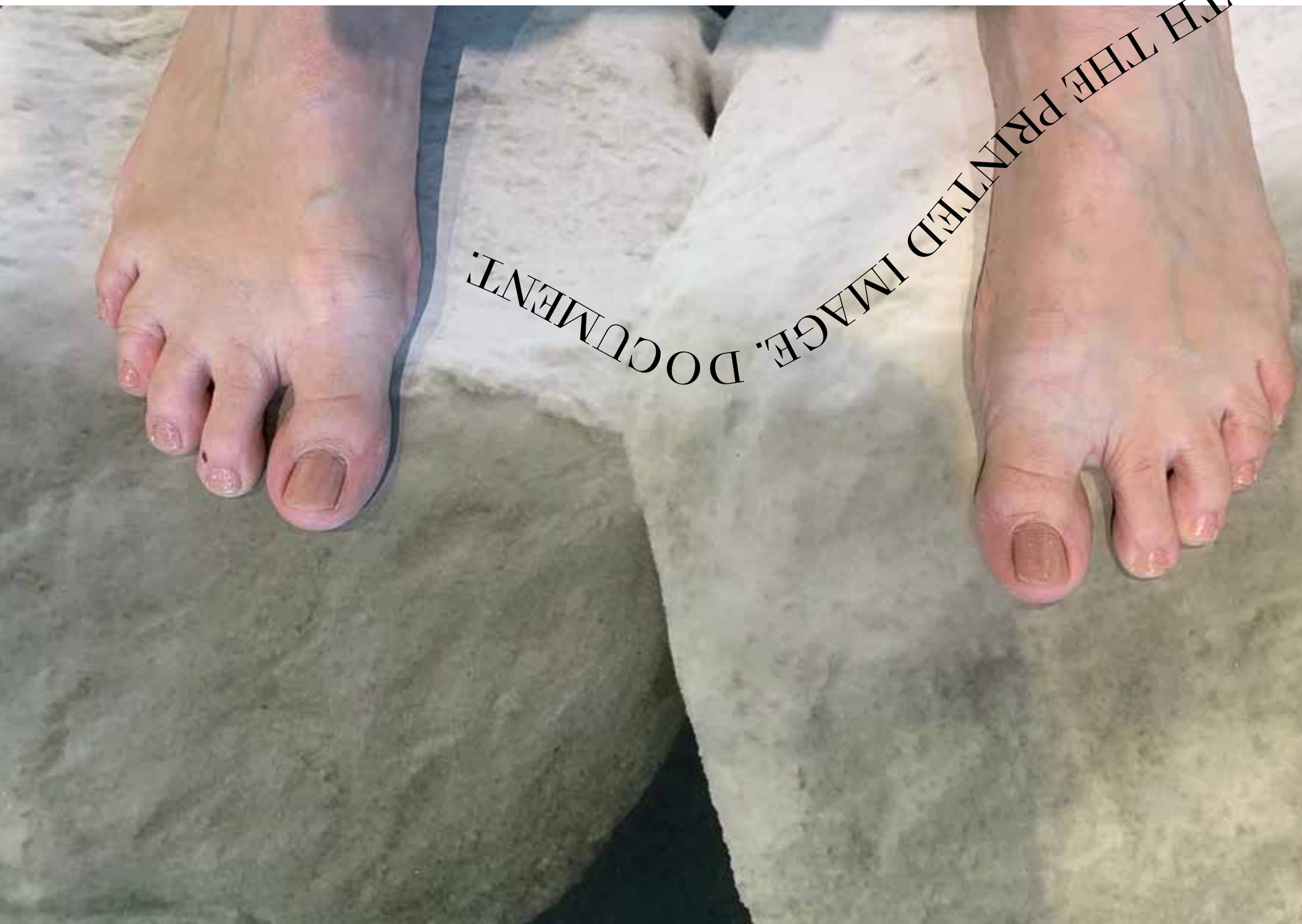
Footnotes

1. Barker suggests that ‘touch need not be linked explicitly to a single organ such as the skin but is enacted and felt throughout the body.’ In relation to the camera and considering the ambivalent position of the viewer, she asks the questions who’s moving?/ who’s being moved? (Barker, 2009 pp.2-6).

2. Judith Butler discusses matter ‘not as a site or surface’, but ‘as a process of materialization that stabilises over time to produce the effect of boundary, fixity and surface we call matter’. Matter as a process must therefore materialize as an inherently shifting and temporal situation. (Butler, 2011, p.xviii).



FOOTING. STAND ON TOP OF THE NEWSPAPER AND ALIGN YOUR FEET WITH THE PRINTED IMAGE. DOCUMENT



SUBJECT AND OBJECT: WELCOME TO THE BORDERLAND

The eye can't see a landscape in its entirety, it alights on features and the brain does the work of sense making, locating salient stopping points and stitching them together. Humans give names to these points to share stories and journeys, so despite the exhibition being text free I have colonised it with the names in bold of particular exhibits I used to navigate the space. And similarly I've chosen to ignore some features too.

I entered the exhibition landscape with my rucksack containing the usual field gear (field notebook and pencil, Munsell soil colour chart, laminated index of grain size and roundness for describing sediments, camera,

power as keepers of knowledge, which can slip into a pedagogy of oppression (Freire, 1972). Chuck out the chalk to open up spaces to an emancipatory pedagogy, where we are no longer differentiated into teachers and students, but co-learners, co-discoverers (Boyer, 1998). But then the film looped to **blind leading the blind** wandering across a borderland space of novelty and ambiguity (Hill et al, 2016). 'Who is leading who' in the co-discoverer relationship? If there's no power, is authentic discovery learning for both actors possible? Exploring courageous (Gibbs, 2017) and compassionate (Vandeyar, 2013)

the steps to temporarily zing it alive again against **blackboard**.

My father used to draw amazing maps in chalk on the blackboard at the School where he taught kids about t'Chalkshire Wolds and Vale of Pickering. I loved making maps and writing on the blackboard as a kid, then on the whiteboard as a trainee teacher, following in his pedagogic footsteps and adopting his mantra as my own that 'Geography is learnt through the soles of the shoes.' I got to write on the blackboard when I was a teacher, out in Zimbabwe. I taught Geography and English in a remote rural school. The kids had books, but no pens. The teachers had chalk and talk but Geography was learnt through the soles of the feet. The chalk in Black African schools was coloured, dusty, snappy, made from gypsum. Gypsum (Calcium Sulphate) is a salt, it's been dehydrated and air dried to make a poor-quality chalk that made us cough, the price of power.

To Zimbabwe I took my 'dustless chalk' with me. It had been quarried, crushed, washed, ground, sifted, hydrated and baked to make smooth white calcium carbonate, representing the deaths of millions of plankton. Someone said they were disappointed that the exhibition was apolitical?!

Ballerina blocks. The chalk may have coloured my vision but I imagined a white powdered Geisha face, delicate white

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measuring tape, plus a flask and waterproof trousers just in case the experience became inclement!). I have spent a career zipping together my interests in pedagogy (the science and art of teaching and learning) with being a geographer (specifically in pedology, studying soils 'in the field,' both a science, and an art). I was immediately absorbed with exploring the lie of the land. Unnatural, but influenced by nature. Drawn to the pieces of chalk colonising **Paper Tube** I tested the specimens for colour, they looked all white, but one sounded different on the floor, giving the characteristic 'ring' of a flint, which when dusted off had a Hue, Value and Chroma of "Gley 2, 4 / 5" or Dark Bluish Grey according to the Munsell soil colour chart. These scales attempt to be objective about colour, but the light kept changing and I asked several visitors to help me decide, and they all gave slightly different answers.

I appreciated the lack of title or explanatory text. To me, ridding the school of chalk in **Chalk flung from an apron** was akin to ridding teachers of their

pedagogy through working in partnership. The risk is we lose a sense of direction? Fall and drag each other down? It takes too long (Mountz et al, 2015). Tentative steps, and trust seem necessary, and dialogue, and going in with our eyes wide open to possibilities.

Steps, stones and trajectory tights (with flat fish) provided the opportunity to attempt an environmental reconstruction. As the video played, the trajectoried and fractured chalk blocks were left on steps for long enough to field sketch the resting positions of 4 steps. Recreating this by moving the steps side by side and utilising the floor, provided space for correct alignments to be recreated. A passing maintenance technician, his eyes drawn to the screws that weren't fully countersunk, admitted "*it's provoked a conversation and if that's what art's supposed to do then it's done its job!*". We see what we choose to. Another visitor said "We're taught to wait to hear an expert interpretation of the text, so are reluctant to form our own opinion." I moved the fish off

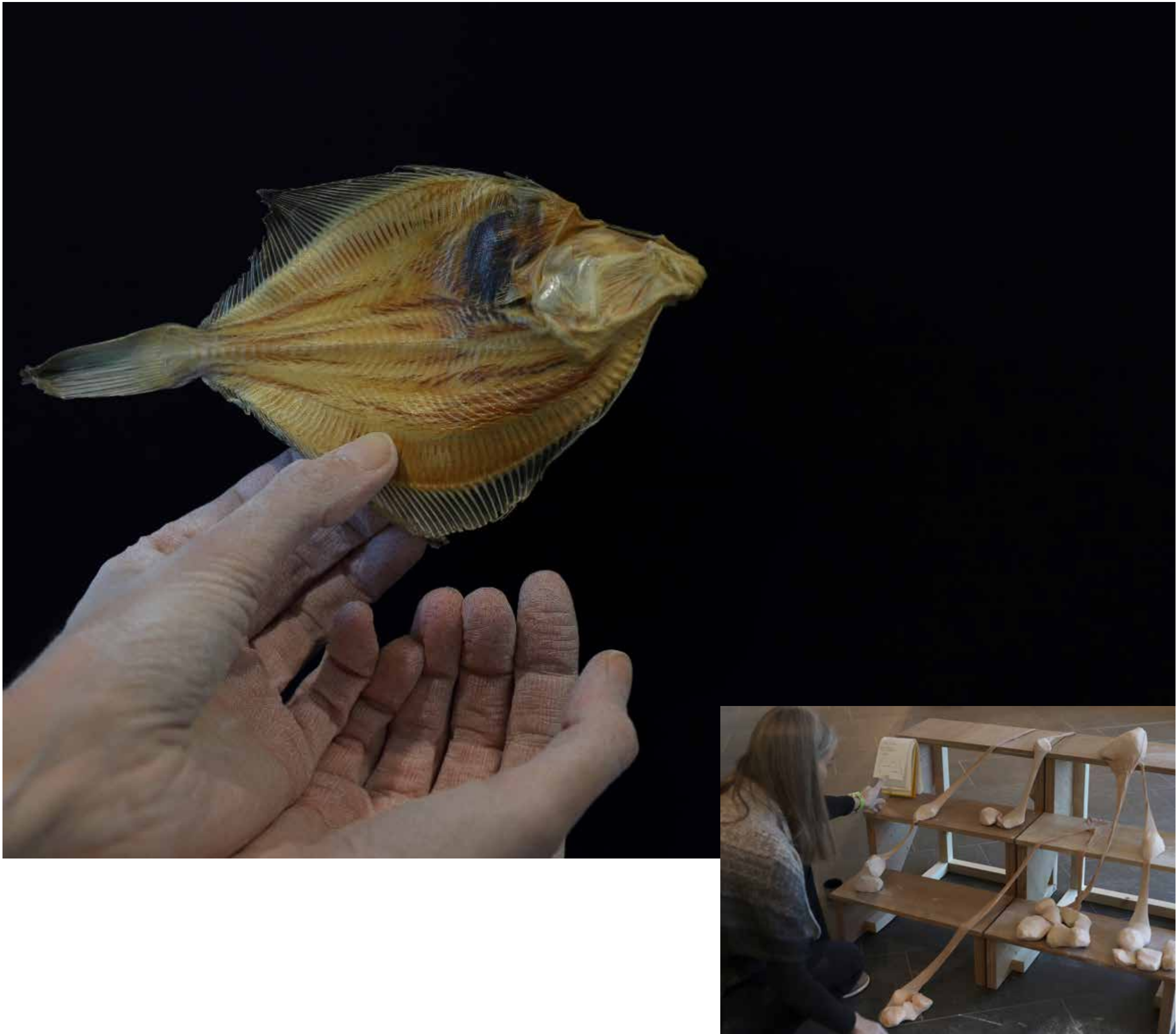
socks practising her walking and dancing on single block wooden shoes or 'Ippon geta' in Japan. Gallery visitors associated the film of the chalk dance with 'pain' and 'annoyance'. Pain empathising with one person's own pain in walking, repeated operations on her soles (scar tissue soul).

At the end of my micro-residency, I wondered, had I been just a seer, or a subject, objectified? Writing myself into the exhibition briefly by being in the tank, all traces to be erased. The landscape is a palimpsest, continually recording and erasing the impacts of nature and humans, and traces are always left behind, at some scale. Can you find me?

Helen Walkington
Professor of Higher Education
Soil Scientist and Geographer
Seer-in-Residence for Kelly + Jones



JOURNEY. GIVE YOUR NEWS



SPAPER AS A DEPARTING GIFT TO SOMEONE YOU DON'T WANT TO LEAVE.



BIT.LY/THEBODYPLAYLIST

Un/writing the landscape, re/figuring the body



SHEDS
SHELTER. UNFOLD THE NEWSPAPER AND FIND DIFFERENT WAYS TO 'PROTECT' THE BODY.



‘A SCULPTURE OF
STEPS CAUGHT MY
IMAGINATION.’

‘... ADORNED WITH
CHALK CONFINED
WITHIN HOSIERY...’

‘... SCULPTURAL
IMAGES REVEAL
MORE THAN THEY
HIDE.’

‘THE CHALK
PROVIDING THE
DUST TO WHICH
WE ALL MUST
BECOME, LEAVING
NOTHING BUT A
TRACE.’





UNFOLD THE NEWSPAPER AND PLACE IT UNDER YOUR CHIN. WHAT DO YOU FEEL IS BELOW?



MATTER/S OF CHALK

Living for a time on England's chalk edge, my vantage point from the top of a tower block afforded a view east towards a sharp section of white cliff, which rose to an arc and dropped sheer to the sea below. On some days, the mist would roll in and cling to the land, everything becoming cloud-wrapped as the sky muddled itself with the earth and the cliffs were temporarily erased.

What we are able to know will shift depending upon where and how we look and the circumstances that surround our investigation. The matters at which we gaze may themselves change form or state. Sometimes we find clarity and sharpness, and sometimes obfuscation and uncertainty. Even these latter states can be valuable as we stay with an idea, suspend decision making and linger with the possibility that things may yet be revealed in different ways. Moment by moment matters change, as we ourselves do. There are always multiple states of knowing place, material and ourselves.

On this shoulder of the South Downs, I grew fruit and vegetables from the thin earth cultivated above chalk. A dry and hungry soil that quickly took into itself whatever compost and manure I could give, it birthed a relentless crop of flints alongside the beans, brassicas, pumpkins and plums. Rising inexorably to the surface, their pale knobles were always reminiscent of bones, and they bruised the skin as I knelt to weed.

We encounter the earth's substance in diverse ways. It may offer soft or gritty dust to our fingertips or tongue. Coughing, we may register its tiniest particles in the throat or lungs. It may come through ingestion, as foods deriving minerals from the soil convey this to our own cells. It may reveal the planet's immediate structure underfoot through our walking and running, or when we lie flat and heavy upon its surface, gazing down or skywards. It may come through handling hefty rock whose weight strains muscle and sinew, and through the particular chiming, clinking resonance of one piece of matter striking another. Our knowledge of the chalk lands may be subtle or intense, come at overwhelming scale or emerge much more intimately.

Travelling north weekly, the train journey took me through the capital and brought me into Bedfordshire fields where scattered flints indicated the chalk had reached the surface once more. I pictured the geological maps I had seen showing its extent of its outcropping: up towards the Yorkshire and Lincolnshire Wolds, down to the Champagne regions of France.

We ought to look for what underlies and is hidden alongside what is very visible. There will be signs, certainly, and maybe wonders, though most of the time semiotic phenomena are more subtle. There will be patterns, chaos or complexity, but all will have something to tell us if we take the time to interpret

and reflect. What might we learn by being in a place or experience for long hours, days and years, or by passing through at speed, when the changes of perspective register or intensity can reveal something that has been overlooked by those too familiar with their locale? Attention can be intense and concentrated, but it might also come about through drift and an openness of waiting. A quick glance and a slow stare can both be productive; the latter is not better or more serious than the former.

On other journeys, I encountered ancient or more recent hill figures, horses and humans mainly, and reckoned how the chalk craved mark-making, motivating people to draw at scale across these upland landscapes. It reminded me how, more intimately, chalk had tried to explain ideas in the classroom, provided opportunities for imaginative visualization and mapped out games on schoolyard tarmac.

Marks differ in their making. They might be carved deliberately into the soil or cumulatively walked along the ground. A line drawn by hand across a wall, a floor or the surface of paper varies in weight, texture and scale. The marks we make vary in meaning too, according to their intent, location, material and making. Original intention may not be known or remembered by anyone who encounters those marks made centuries before or in cultures not their own. Marks can be made during play or in order to assert dominance. They can communicate and describe and they allow or define exploration and explanation. Even erasure is a form of expression. As I write and think about the marks made in, on and by chalk, I reflect on writing's own complicated line and consider the translation of experience into the knowledges shared through text.

Some ninety million years ago what is now the chalk downland of Northern Europe – the particular place I lived, and those through which I regularly travelled – was in an entirely different physical state. Far from solid, this ooze at the bottom of a large sea was accumulating slowly from the deposition of creatures with calcite shells. Weighted and consolidated by overlaying sediment, these myriad brief lives have now become rock; hills have been raised from the remains of tiny creatures.

I consider the slow time of

geology and the transmutation of matter and ponder how we might understand the infinite changeability of what seems permanent. I imagine the slowness of sedimentation and the turning to rock of multiple living beings and I try to fathom the process of something alive becoming stone and then the epochs through which rock endures. Of course, the stone is itself ultimately impermanent. I picture its subsequent erosion by wind and rain, and its slow but relentless splitting by water and ice. I consider how new soil is made as particles adhere with dirt and vegetal matter, and fungal hyphae and the sticky secretions of worms bind the whole to fertile humus. I think of the colonization of these surfaces by new species. I wonder what the roots of seedlings might 'feel' as they advance cell by cell, navigating the thin cracks in rocks. Matter is generative: stuff emerges, even if it is not the material expected or sought.

Where, in many disciplines, hypotheses are proposed and specific questions set to frame an investigation, artistic research has frequently sought other ways to go about its work. Artist researchers often refuse the acts of definition that set limits too soon on the form and direction of exploration. They think and feel a way forward, employing methods that allow a mélange of pressing up against, standing on and standing back from; a process of licking, looking and listening; a possibility of being in one place and then another; a quarrying the library of philosophy and a querying the feelings of place. They go along less trod paths, or at least prefer to wear different shoes so that familiar ground underfoot is experienced afresh. They deliberately overturn the always-too-much-known of previous practice and value the uncertainty of the next step.

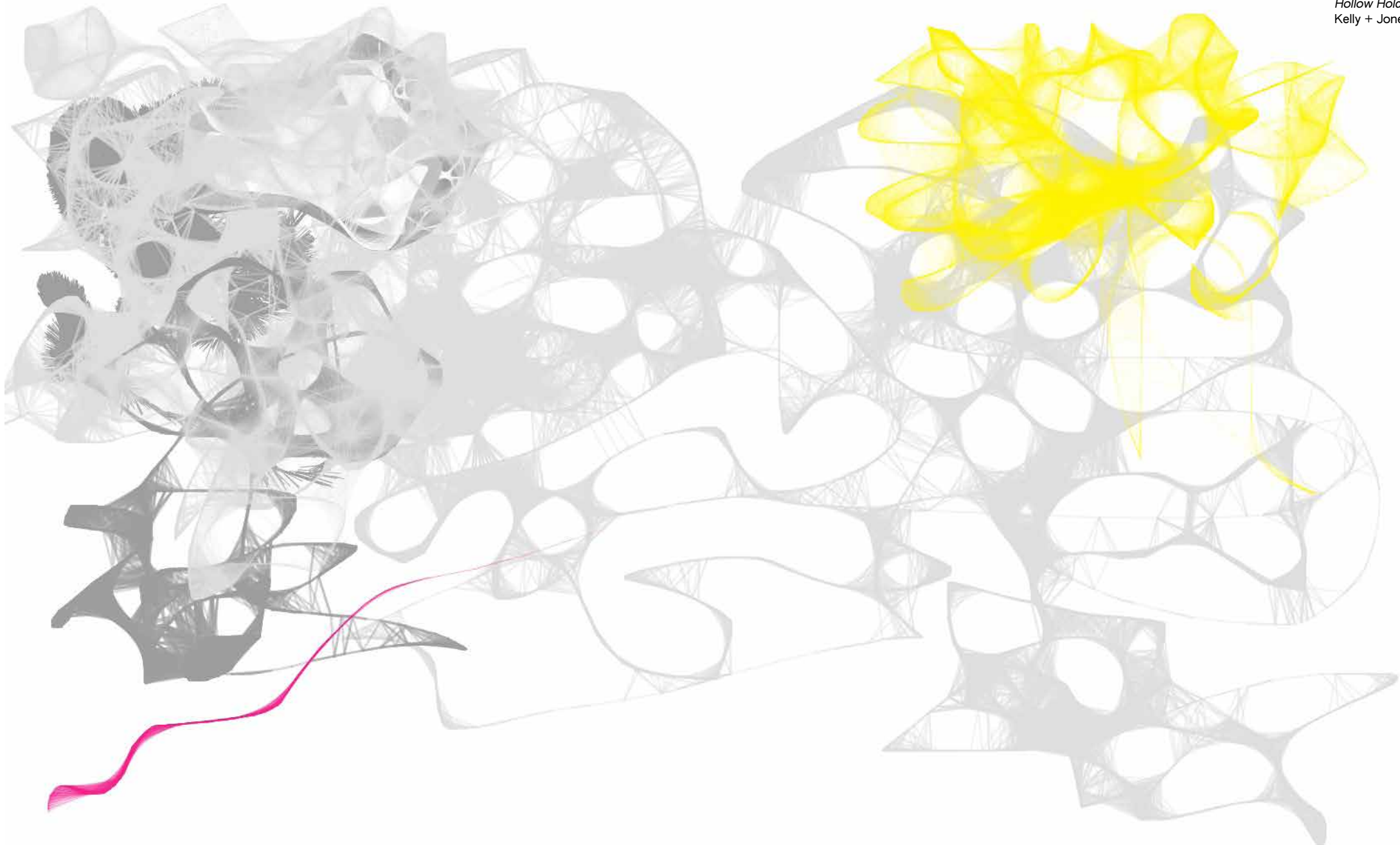
Artistic research of the sort practiced by Rhiannon Jones and Traci Kelly recognizes and sustains the multivalent potential of site and material, refusing to fix a narrow trajectory of investigation or interpretation. They use body, material, place and duration to assemble, gather, combine and juxtapose different registers, creating resonant epistemological constellations. In the entanglements of the physical, emotional, cultural, ecological, historical and geological,

there are new knowledges, but the point seems not to know things definitively, to set them down once and for all, but rather to set in motion the particular vibrations of how such stuff can and does matter.

I think of the intertwining of forms, functions and narratives in Donna Haraway's articulation: 'It matters what matters we use to think other matters with; it matters what stories we tell to tell other stories with; it matters what knots knot knots, what thoughts think thoughts, what descriptions describe descriptions, what ties tie ties. It matters what stories make worlds, what worlds make stories' (Haraway, 2016). It matters that a rigorous openness to staying with the material, stories, and meanings of chalk can be sustained, so that its matter continues to matter in multiple ways.

Joanne Lee
Fine Artist

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Hollow Holding
Kelly + Jones, 2020



Kelly + Jones solo exhibition
The Glass Tank, Oxford, UK, 2020
Photo: Kelly + Jones, 2020

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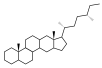
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Performative Scores
Kelly + Jones, 2020

Drawings
Kelly + Jones, 2020

THE BODY
RE/FIGURING
THE LANDSCAPE,
UN/WRITING
KELLY + JONES

