

Between Nature and Space

I have pondered for a whilst now whether my artistic practice can be informed by investigating my own everchanging landscape. Focusing on the local area of Stranraer in Southwest Scotland, or my place, and its rich history of artists and makers, I considered what was, what is and what could be. Stranraer is a town that has a strong heritage and a focus on reuse and recycling as part of its growing identity and application for biosphere status. Historically, the town was known for lace, rope and shoe making, and the cultural industries have been ever-present, attracting artists and makers. Stranraer's local landscapes of sea and woodland and the shoreline where these spaces of nature meet offered me a landscape to explore past and place and reflect on the "value of cultural authenticity" (Hesmondhalgh, 2013, p. 2).

The town of Stranraer is located at the head of Loch Ryan. The shoreline around the loch offers an interesting juxtaposition of woodland and sea. Living and thriving together in the landscape, elements collide along the shoreline, aided by the harsh winds and daily tides of the Irish Sea. Focusing on an organic exchange of materials in space, I chose to source and gather my materials by exploring my local shoreline as a taskscape.

Tim Ingold reminds us that space and landscape are not the same, that landscape is somehow in between nature and space, a constant that is experienced or jour-

neyed via "bodily movement" (Ingold, 2002, p. 191). Considering the physical connections made by my own movement through the landscape, I was encouraged to gather objects that had also been moved in bodily ways by nature itself. In comparing walking and making handicraft, Antti Stöckell recognised both processes as being "characterised by repetition and continuation until a goal is reached" (Stöckell, 2018, p. 91). Conscious of the connections between handicraft, its intimate link to expression (Sennett, 2008, p. 149) and Stranraer's creative heritage, I decided to use traditional crafts and techniques. The organic movement of materials between the treescape and the seascape informed my making, helping me explore what lies between nature and space in my landscape.

My wander or gathering took me along the shoreline of the loch. I intended to capture natural relationships by using photography as a means of preserving the transitional landscape and the locations of objects as a reference for my making. However, with the change in tide and wind, I was forced to suddenly abandon the plan, which invertedly altered my process. I quickly moved through the space, gathering objects before the sea reclaimed them, returning home with soggy feet and a rich amount of materials that had been discarded by nature, time and tide. Unsure of how to recreate the

landscape from where I had gathered, I was reminded of “the authenticity implicit in having physically experienced a place” (Torell, 2009, p. 3). Using my ‘artistic memory’ as my resource, I reflected on the landscape as changing and transformative. Sevek’s (2023) observation of things “constantly reactivated and creatively transformed by artists” (p. 1) reminded me of Ingold’s



Figure 1. *Discarded by Time and Tide*.
Images: Diana Hamilton, 2023.

suggestion that a landscape is caught somewhere between nature and space as a memory is caught between reality and the episodic.

I created *Discarded by Time and Tide* over several days in an attempt to document the colours, textures and emotions experienced in the shoreline space. I used traditional crafts to incorporate and include the pieces



Figure 2. *Cherry Tree*, Images: Diana Hamilton, 2023.

found in my gathering, attempting to capture the landscape by exploring my memory of its nature and space to inform this piece organically.

Furthering this practice and gathering materials that had been moved through or discarded in the landscape, I created *Cherry Tree*. Using the branches broken and discarded from a storm, I combined these with dis-



Figure 3. Watersource.
Images: Diana Hamilton, 2023.

carded packing paper and materials left behind by the wind. Eager to incorporate the cultural significance of the area's history, I chose to use weaving and embroidery techniques to reflect the local lace-making heritage as a means of reconnecting and recolliding the materials in a way that reclaimed the memory in physical form. Choosing a circular loom to house the weave and echoing the tree of life, I included French knots and other embroidery stitches to resemble the colours of the blossom and the textures of the tree. Using repetition, incorporating knots symbolic of the local industry of seafaring, I offer the viewer a visual collision of the materials that have travelled through both the forest and the sea.

Choosing to repurpose and reinvigorate things abandoned by nature from the forest floor, I gathered this time with the reverse idea in mind. I chose to create a piece from a discarded root and attempted to reimagine the journey and importance of the root in the forest's life cycle. I looked to offer a differing juxtaposition, this time using an imagined memory instead of a residual one. I created a bed for the root that had been discarded by nature as part of the life cycle, this time using a round loom to interpret the cycle itself artistically in an attempt to preserve its memory using knowledge and imagination. I sourced and repurposed material and wool from the local reuse shop, bringing Stranraer's modern environmental identity into the piece. *Watersource* houses the root in a new bed of material, again exploring the idea of repetition, nature and gathering in an attempt to capture its temporality and place within the lifecycle of the local woodland.

Synergies of Place: Stranraer's Shoreline

In exploring my initial questioning of where culture and nature meet, I found that combining the experience of a place using movement and gathering as a means of

creating art can express the symbiotic relationships between spaces of nature and a place's history as a shared landscape of memory. Furthermore, combining these elements with repetition, expression and memory allowed me to understand how nature and culture can collide

between nature and space, encouraging exploration of the “synergies between art, cultural expression and the economy” (Burnett, 2017, p. 63) in these artworks.

References

Burnett, K. A. (2016). Place apart: Scotland's north as a cultural industry of margins. In T. Jokela & G. Coutts (Eds.), *Relate north: Culture, community and communication* (pp. 60–82). Lapland University Press. <https://lau-da.ulapland.fi/handle/10024/62840>

Dean, T., & Millar, J. (2005). *Place*. Thames & Hudson.

Hesmondhalgh, D. (2013). *The cultural industries* (3rd ed.). Sage Press.

Ingold, T. (2002) The temporality of the landscape. *World Archaeology*. Taylor and Francis Ltd.

Sennet, R. (2008). *The craftsman*. Yale University Press.

Sevek, S. (2023). *Memory in the artistic practise of Mariana Castillo Deball*. Blog published in BILDERFAHRZEUGE: Aby Warburg's Legacy and the Future of Iconology. [ONLINE] <https://bilderfahrzeuge.hypotheses.org>

Stöckell, A. I. (2018). Making wooden spoons around the campfire: Dialogue, handcraft-based art and sustainability. In T. Jokela, & C. Glen (Eds.), *Relate North: Art & design for education and sustainability* (pp. 80–97). Lapland University Press. <http://urn.fi/URN:ISBN:978-952-310-928-5>

Torell, L. (2017). *Place to place, 9 artists reflection about site-specificity and place-related processes*. (Environment, location, site, spot, space, room). https://www.academia.edu/34410559/Place_to_place_9_artists_reflection_about_site_specificity_and_place_related_processes_Environment_Location_Site_Spot_Space_Room

Trend, D. (1992). *Cultural pedagogy: Art, education, politics*. Bergin & Garvey.