

Case Study Overview:
A Guide To Sketchbooks
Exhibits and Supporting Work
With Bibliography

MA Craft Resolution

Module AGP732

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Photo: Rebecca Smith 2023, Patinated Shredded Copper

Example Case Studies

Please read the poster first for an overview of the research.

The case studies show how the research design was developed. Research stages within are referenced to the key on page 3, materials and processes to page 4. Also to the sketch-book number where the original research can be found.

Case Study 1: Joram—A Capacious Bowl.

Case Study 2: Foundel O' The Gubber.

Case Studies 1&2 eventually come together in a final stage of development using shadows.

Each Case Study also generates aleatoric outcome that are treated separately as their meaning falls outside of the scope of the case study.



Photo: Rebecca Smith 2023 Aleatoric outcome example - dendrites

Final Process Design - Research Outcome - a method to use craft making to explore my place in the material and social environment.

- a) **Field research** using psychogeographic research methods
- b) **Subject research** on subjective associations recorded during (a)
- c) **Selecting a material and method and making a starting form** appropriate to (a & b)
- d) (Case study 1 uses foraged fibres. Case study 2, paper)
- e) **Responding & recording** psychogeographic association during (c).
- f) **Fictioning** by subjecting (c) to processes that mirror the forces of the strandline to the edge of destruction.
- g) **Responding** phenomenologically to (e)
- h) **Further subject research**, using (f) responses.
- i) **A second phase of making** contextualising (e) based on (f & g). Look out for fictioning byproduct and use as well as (c).
- j) **Speculating** on ideas for how (h) can be interacted with in the context of an exhibition; psychogeographically (use of space around the object), and phenomenologically (alternate meaning making)
- k) **Repeating** any of the steps above until the form meets the criteria for a final outcome: How or what it is made from is not obvious, its form has no obvious use. This lends freedom to the object for (i) (*Harman 2020*)
- l) **Reviewing** all steps including how the (j) relates to (a) and asking “What do I now know of this place, and what does this place now know of me?”

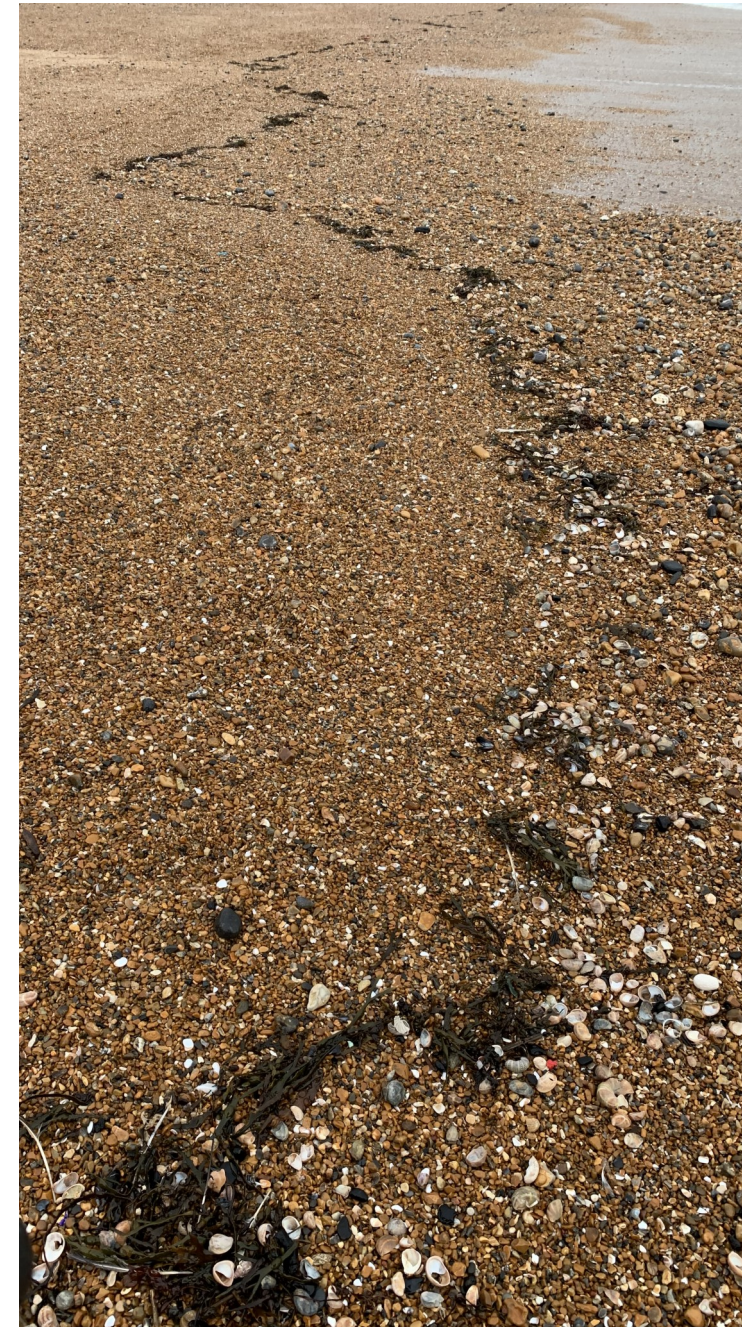


Photo: RS 2022 Nurdle and Shingle Beach, Brighton

Meaning mapped to materials and methods used based on the psychogeography of the strandline

Recycled copper - Sussex colours, maritime equipment.

Recycled Paper- soft bodied forms that erode quickly.

Foraged basketry material - sustainability, stories from home.

Manmade beach finds - globalism, stories from elsewhere.

Lettering - human presence, thoughts, memories.

Hammering, cutting, sandblasting - the battering of object against object.

Acid etching, patination - degrading of objects by UV light, immersion, salt and chemical exposure.

Electroforming - deposition, calcification.

Twisting, bending - the rolling action of the waves.

Juxtaposition - the indiscriminate mingling of materials.

Repetitive forms and action - the modularity that grows pattern and proportion in nature, diurnal rhythm.

Knotting, weaving - past ways of subsistence fishing cultures.

Burning - destruction and renewal.

Making marks - autobiography of objects.



Photo: Rebecca Smith 2022 Etched copper fragment

Example Case Studies – how the design was developed and tested, using the key on page 3.

Case Study 1: Joram – A Capacious Bowl

a) Noticing: During my years walk of the Sussex Shore I was attracted to the way that rope has wound itself in great knots over every structure. I treasured the occasional finds of fishing pots of repurposed rope and containers that show a certain craft skill in their making.

b) What do I know? They will last in the environment for ever, the brightly coloured nurdles that cover everything, that are now found in the placentas of human babies. These would be the shades of the multi-coloured stratum that represent our age. I feel alarmed.

Fishing technology was once diverse. Their structures depend on what is available locally to build from. Plastic waste is often the only resource available to subsistence fishing communities. Many artists collect it and work with it, engage politically to protest it or to demonstrate how to repurpose it.



Photo: Mary Mattingly, 2013 House and Universe, Art in The Anthropocene (Davis, 2015)

c) My response to a&b) through making:

(Sketchbook 1)

I don't remember the rope being along the shore in my childhood. This happened in my lifetime. What were the biodegradable materials that were used in the past?

It felt important to learn how to use local materials to make rope and pots to find out. I found a teacher in Ruby Taylor an Artist Archaeologist weaver who taught me the basics: Water Rush, Bramble, Grass.

Making on location: The experience of gathering, preparing and working the materials made me feel connected to generations of human experience and to place.

Sideways talking: is a useful research method. The slow speed of basket making and it being a communal experience allows for the sharing of wide ranging associations of who we are in the context of the skill, material and knowledge we are focussing on through making. A potential way to formalise and share my research.



Photo: Rebecca Smith 2023, Grass Structure

d) Working with the phenomenology of objects:

I select texts to read as I make that will inhabit my making. As the woven forms developed I linked them with Tim Ingold's work (2007) on the connectedness of everything through line. Weaving is a direct experience of that connection. I use Linear form, modularity and not erasing making marks during making to emphasise it.

e) **Workshop process:** (process key see p4). There is always a stage before (e) where I do not want to let go of object (c). I loved and felt pride in my woven forms; their smell and colour. I follow process to push them prematurely towards the dissolution of their current form. Back in the workshop they are first electroformed, then burnt away. The electroforming is a symbolic process for me to map to the way my muse, the strandline, lays down the sediment into strata. I refer to making or specifically being in a workshop, as psychogeographic. In its contemporary form psychogeography can be taken to mean the exploration of any space not just the urban. (Richardson 2015)



Photo: Rebecca Smith 2023 Burnt grass copper patination.

e) The Department of Electroforming

(Sketchbook 4) I want to create larger pieces so that audience interaction is on a body rather than a hand scale. I made the largest tank I could, 75 Litres, capable of producing work up to 600 x 300 x 300mm. This also involved building a shed.

My journey with electroforming is physically demanding. The processing of the anodes is arduous, requiring 8KG of recycled copper piping per month. The tank is filtered every Sunday morning by hand. Like a potters kiln during firing or a glassblowers furnace my electroforming tank became part of the rhythm of my life. I connect this to my felt sense of the rhythmic theme of this part of my research.

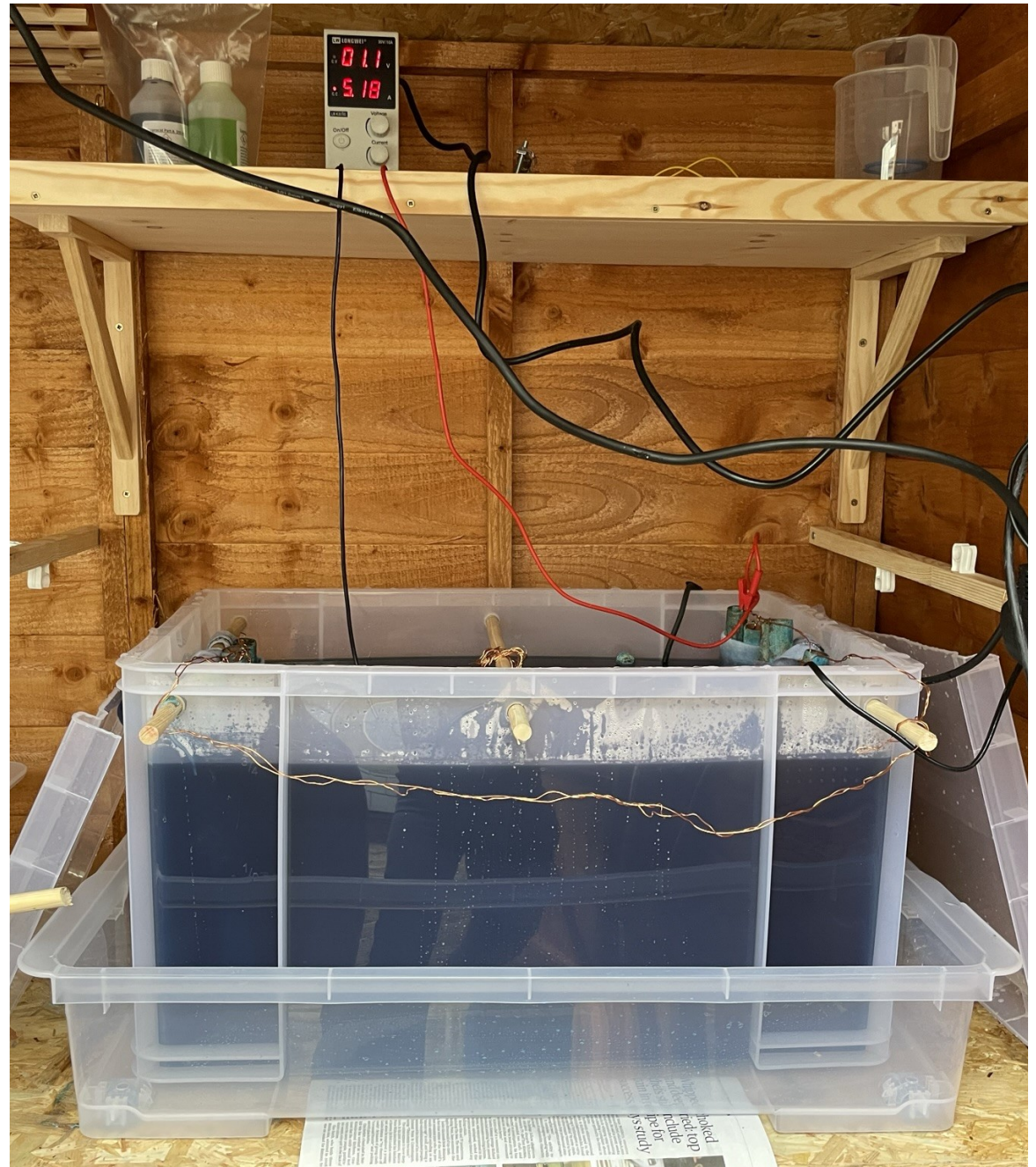


Photo: Rebecca Smith 2023 Electroforming set up 3

g) Asking what is missing from view:

Whilst weaving we discussed how it predates pottery and possibly stone tools. Pre carbon dating evidence of this has been ignored and was washed off the more tangible metal and stone finds as if it has no value. The objects that have been preserved are few and excite me as objects. They are mysteries, clues; Petrified balls of wool, a dark stain in the earth, a mush of fibres to be unpicked, carbon dated, reconstructed.

Why do these objects interest me?

Anil Seth (2020) describes how he thinks reality is created in consciousness by selecting the most likely option from hundreds of alternative hallucinations put together from sensory data in the brain. Damasio (2018) explains how these become “maps” once we have experienced a thing once to speed up recognition. If we don't want to see a premade map, we have to work in a different way. My selection of methods in psychogeography, phenomenology and fictioning establish this in my practice. Almost undefinable forms like these encourage fresh looking and is a motif in my work representing the selective way that knowledge and memory are formed. The electroformed grass bowl on the next page in the process of having its grass form removed and burnt out aims to create this sense.



Photo: Beth Suter Archeologist Blog, Illinois Museum, 2022, 5000 year old Imprint of a birch bark container (yet to be verified)

h) A technical breakthrough: Electroforming is normally used to replicate an exterior surface. I use it to reveal the unseen side of the weaving inside the bowl to create a new view. This is a psychogeographical outcome. I employ the device Rachel Whiteread used in “House” (1993) to evoke the absence of something that once existed.

To progress the forms to better show this unseen surface without the distraction of domestic inferences, I sought to put the inner surface of the weave onto the outside of a vessel. This presented a technical problem: It is not possible to electroform in a “Shadow area” (an area that is not directly opposite an anode). I developed a way of suspending the anode within rather than outside the woven form and used a directional fish tank water pump to make sure that the copper was being distributed evenly inside it.



Photo: Rebecca Smith 2023 Removing the grass master from an electroformed bowl to reveal a hidden view

h) Working with the phenomenology of my objects whilst making: The resulting blackened column evidences few clues about why it was made, how it was made or of what it is made. This ambiguity allows it to invite a wider variety of qualia as it is interacted with. That the material is on the edge of breakdown is my steer as maker towards sharing my felt experience of living in the Anthropocene.

The Sussex dialect and psychogeography:

In my research for evidence of weaving in Sussex I was exposed to the Sussex dialect through the diversity of names given to vessels, landscapes, materials and tools. Robert MacFarlane in *Landmarks* (2015) also found local dialects to be revealing of an older culture that lived more closely to the land. Selecting “Joram – A capacious bowl” as my title, refers to the richness and diversity of local material which exist if only we see it.



Photo: Rebecca Smith 2023 Burning the grass structure from the copper electroform of the final piece

h) Responding phenomenologically: Tubes and tunnels mark the transition from one place to another, geographically, psychologically, metaphysically. As I played with the meaning of the final outcome of Joram I was influenced by the many terms for geological features that refer to witches and witchcraft in the Sussex dialect.

Witches Cauldrons: is the name for the dissolution pipes of Hope Gap, also tube forms. They are known locally as “Witches Cauldrons”. Joram inspired a short story. It is written from a feminist perspective. Inspired by the naming of Sussex geological features and their relationship to myth. In particular the persecution of women as witches up until the 1930’s. It evoked my own response to ageing and the persona of the older woman. In further work I look for a way of incorporating the story into the pieces that inspired it.



Photo: Rebecca Smith 2023 Witches Cauldron, Hope Gap

h) Shadows. The shadows are the latest iteration of object in case study 2. They join Joram in case study 1 as a device to include (e & f).

As with all my work the making process marks are not removed so the colouring comes from the photo etching ground and stop out varnish. In further work the shadow forms can be used to make three dimensional form and to accommodate writing about the process. Shadows reference the nature of memory and knowing; how qualia is real but has no physical presence.

This phase of the process plays with Harmans (2018) example of the different types of object, the horse, the imagined horse and the unicorn (with only one of these possessing matter and the imagined horse and the unicorn being very different objects) The shadow forms move through being the shadow of an object, to a shadow made of matter, lent to another object, to being an object in their own right.

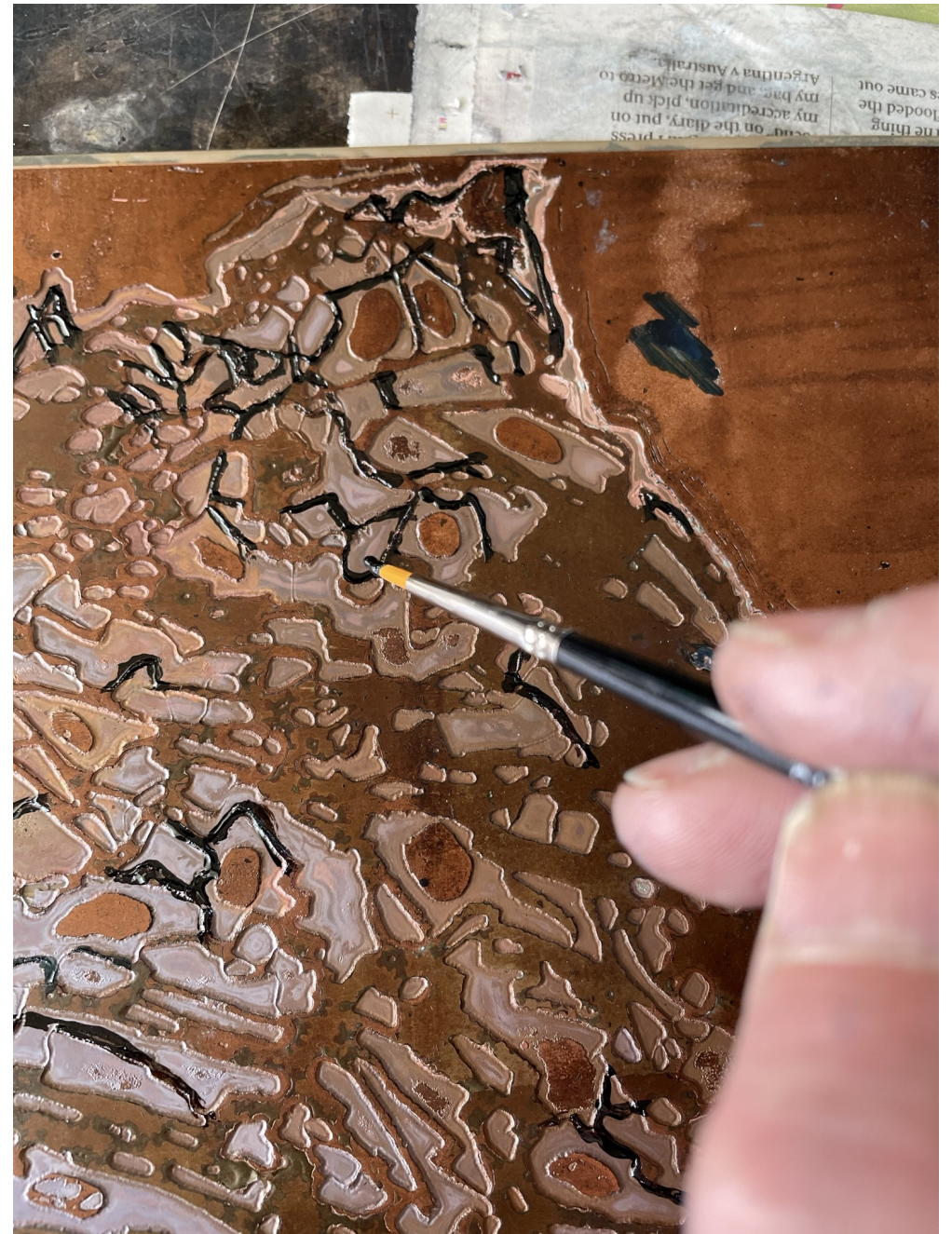


Photo: Rebecca Smith 2023 , Stopping Out a Shadow Form.

Case study 2 - Sketch book 2

a-b) Noticing: I moved along the shingle, sat or floated in the surf at the strandline for an hour a day for a year in different spots along the Sussex Shore. I stayed present to the sensations and took a photograph looking out to sea before I left. I was left with the feeling of a constant rhythm that varied its intensity as it responded to phenomena. Sketchbook 2 illustrates the progression from experience into 2D and then into 3D as I worked to capture its qualia as a base form in my process.

c-d) Capturing rhythm

I reduced the movement of the sea and weather in my photography back to line using photoshop to capture the kind of gestures that might represent it. I recreated this as a deformable surface made of the calmest rhythm, laser cut in card. As few supporting tabs as possible were added to hold the structure together. The deformable surface can be manipulated into different surface textures and into three dimensional forms. Being made of paper the forms reference the idea of what is “missing from view” outlined in case study 1.



Photo: Rebecca Smith 2023, Paper Rhythmic Form

e) Submitting the paper forms to the forces of the strandline

This was done symbolically in the workshop by electroforming, as previously discussed, a process that maps to deposition. Sealed and coated in copper paint the paper forms are submerged and become a cathode in a sea of copper sulphate and sulphuric acid. Copper from the recycled copper piping at the anode slowly coats them. The smaller test pieces exit the “sea” strong, light and shiny.

The large paper forms do not resemble the smaller test pieces, they are thick and brittle with a crystalline appearance to the copper formation. After much troubleshooting my theory on why this happened is a lack of amperage, I had a maximum of 10 amps available and need to invest in a larger power source that gives 30 amps cc.

f) Technicalities apart, my process dictates that fragments are not discarded but are moved on through the process. Failures are perceived by me in the context of my mapped desire to create an object of perfection, interesting to note in the context of my research.



Photo: Rebecca Smith 2023, Paper Form pre electroforming

g) The rhythm in the round – Sketch book 3

The second iteration of the deformable surface was in the round. My journeys are not linear, they are circular, they begin and end at home. The first pieces in paper reference this and as they were manipulated, they mapped to the undulations of my walks over the chalky cliffs of Sussex. I did not achieve any results from electroforming them (with more power I can in future) so moved to working directly in reclaimed copper sheet. As I can no longer hold a saw I tried nitric acid and ferric chloride as ways of cutting the deformable surface structure.

h) Cutting with acid: references the way barnacles and limpets cut into the chalk to make a bespoke cut out for them to occupy and the less benign chemical erosions taking place on the shore. The Nitric, when it didn't get too hot and lift the ground gave me an accurate thin cut. Ferric chloride, a more effective cutter of copper gave a more aleatoric result.



Photo: Rebecca Smith 2023, Round rhythm pre forming.

h) Psychogeographic Byproduct: My making process is lengthy and varied to allow for psychogeography and phenomenology to take place and be noticed

“Black Friday” references the Situationist practice of *Détournement*. It is made from an incidental meeting of my Guardian newsprint table covering and the imprint from cleaning the ground from my form. It reflects on the nature of the consumption of objects in the context of buying verses making.



Photo: Rebecca Smith 2023, Black Friday Print.

h) The problem with bowl forms: The first “bowl” forms are best gazed into rather than at, “Geological” has lost its rhythm; “Sun on Sea” is rhythmically coherent. Both are unsatisfactory as they have a form that is easily categorised. They might work better if encased in a box so they can only be seen from the inside like a Victorian peep box?

Outcome 3: Foundel O’ The Gubber

meets this criteria for a finished form by being hard to categorise by type, material or method to give it maximum independence as an object (Harman 2018). It also appears to be on the edge of coming apart. This moment in time when the materiality of a thing is about to change is a tension all my final pieces share. Craft objects most often give a sense of security and identity. By disrupting this I point to how objects move through time with us. (Ribas 2020) The strandline is merciless in pointing this out. The learning here is that when something is moveable it is changeable.

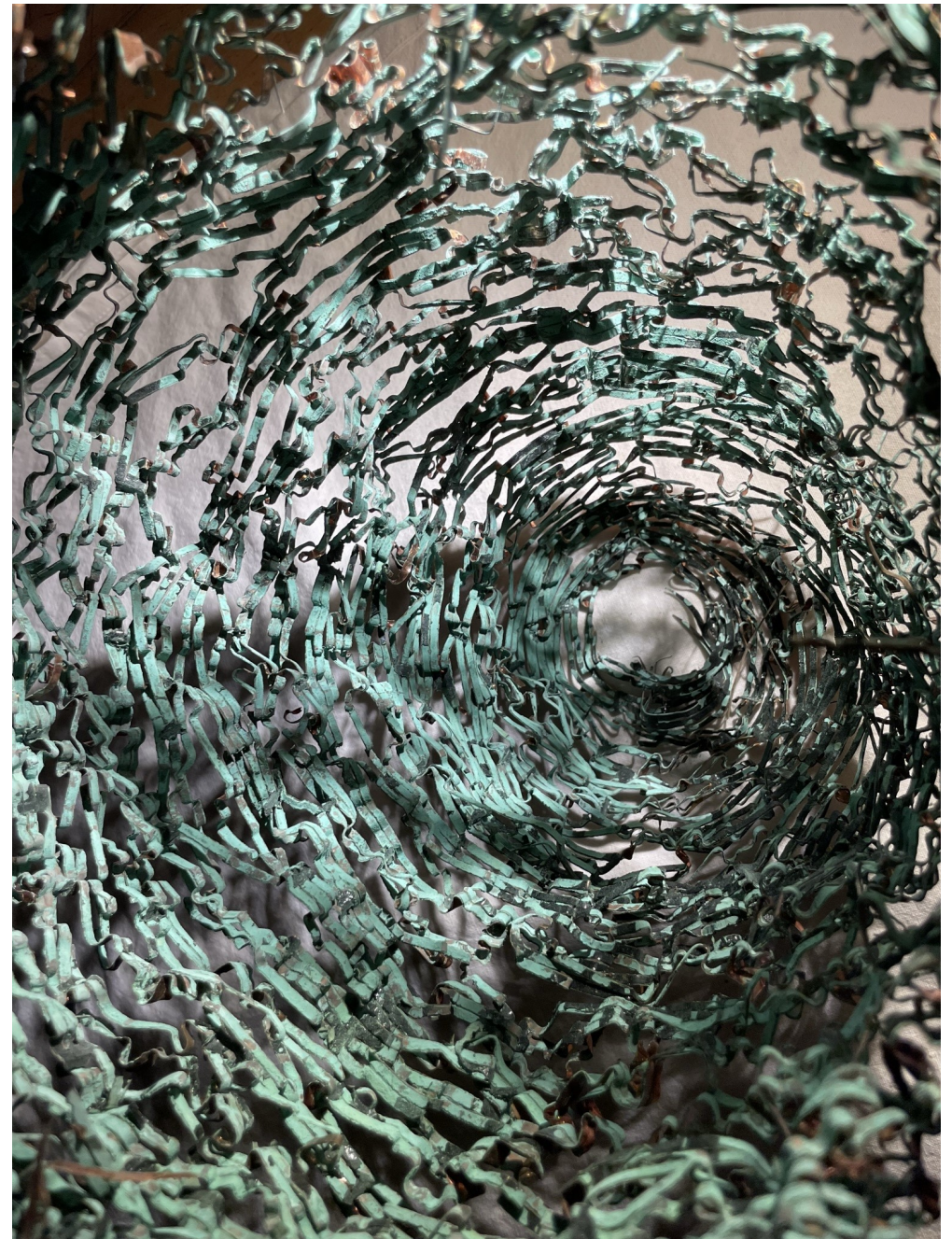


Photo: Rebecca Smith 2023 Foundel O’ The Gubber - literally “Inspiration found emerging from the black Sussex mud”

j) A continuing relationship with completed

forms: My research method is to continue to work with my objects even when they seem to be complete I keep them near me and monitor their phenomenology. Foundel O' The Gubber produced shadows in the moonlight that are a further iteration of the rhythm in this case study. (See p12 for my thinking on the shadow forms)

Photoetching: The shadows are photographed then manipulated in Photoshop for photoetching. Like electro-forming, basketry, working in paper this is a new technique for me. In this instance there are some university experts to call on in the printmaking department, though its unusual for the to have someone who wants to bite right through the plate.



Photo: Rebecca Smith 2023 , Shadow Form.

i) **Dérive and taking the objects into 4D** (Sketch book 5) No work examining psychogeography and phenomenology is complete without the invitation for an audience to interact. Inspired by the Situationists, Surrealists and Fluxus I have speculated about ideas of how to use the space around an object somatically, Harman's (2018) 4D to encourage atypical movements within a gallery space. As a psychogeographic device I've considered meaning making games. For example; card pack prototypes can be put to use in a number of different ways to examine the outcomes: As coded clues to their making that require decoding or as prompts to make up your own story. These are something for further research.

Final thoughts: The objects exist now to be interacted with in this way. Realistically for exhibition their entropy needs to be stabilised. There is also more thinking to be done about having them create debate as effectively as my research model did for me as I made them. The model guided my process in thinking about how a craft practise can create a space in which a kind of self-consciousness about place and function within the modern world can be achieved.

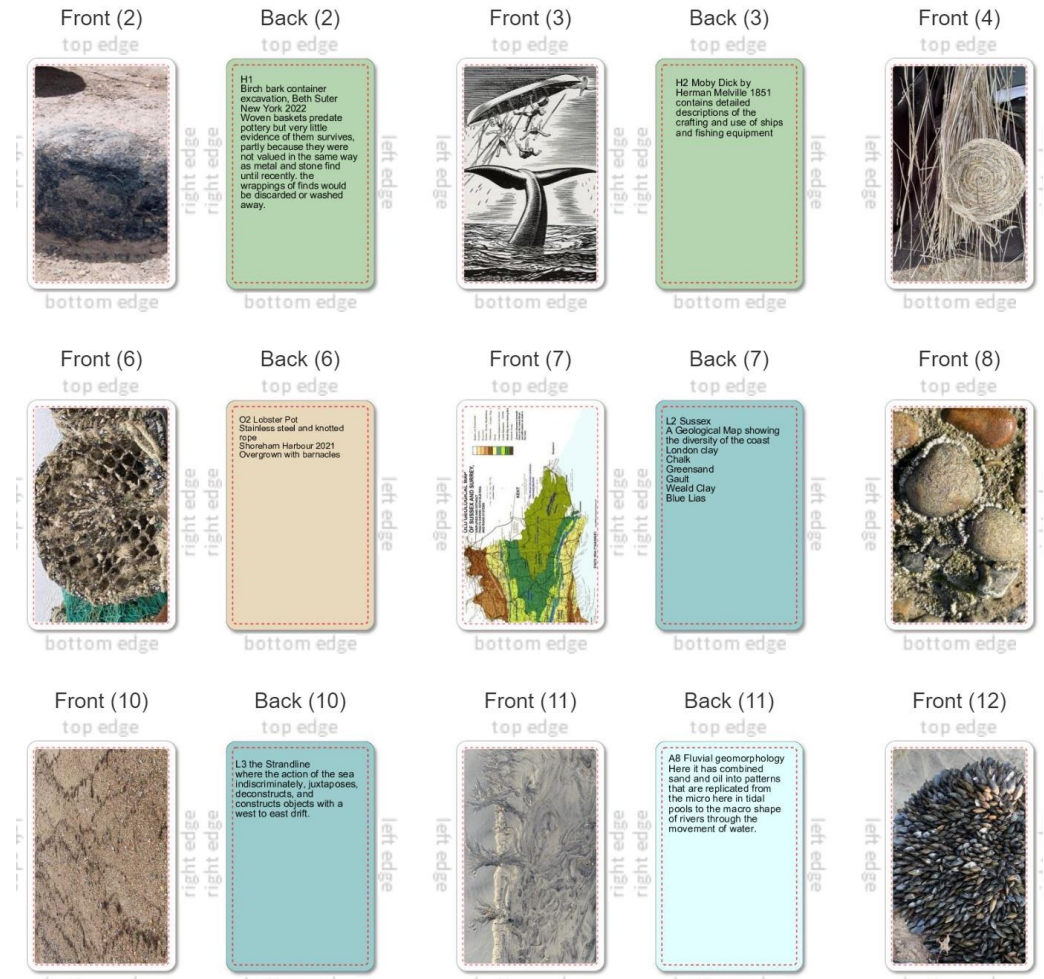


Photo: Rebecca Smith 2023 , card pack ideas

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