

In Search of
the Shortcuts
Dr Simon Woolham

In Search of
the Shortcuts:
Engaging with
Sites of History
and Narrative
Dr Simon Woolham

Project Description



This body of research contributes to current debates on the importance of drawing, its entanglements with sites of history and its role in the creation of narrative. The main finding of the research was that drawing practice can be a connective node between place, body, history and time. The inquiry utilised a drawing and walking methodology and its artefactual outputs were presented via a bespoke project online space and six curated exhibitions. The insights were further disseminated in the book chapter 'In Search Of The Shortcuts' in *Body, Space, Place in Collective and Collaborative Drawing: Drawing Conversations II* (eds Journeaux, J., Gorrill, H. and Reed, S.) published by Cambridge Scholars Publishing.

Project Duration:

Curated exhibitions, projects and public presentations dates 2014-2020.

Chapter published 2020.

Funder:

School Research Funding of £1098 for the Drawing Out The Canal project at Drawing Projects UK and £3,760 for the 2020 Drawing Conversations conference/exhibition.

Research Partners, consultants, collaborators:

- PAPER Gallery, Manchester
- Leicester Print Workshop
- Drawing Projects UK, Trowbridge
- Barnaby festival, Macclesfield
- New Mills Festival
- DAR: Digital Artist Residency

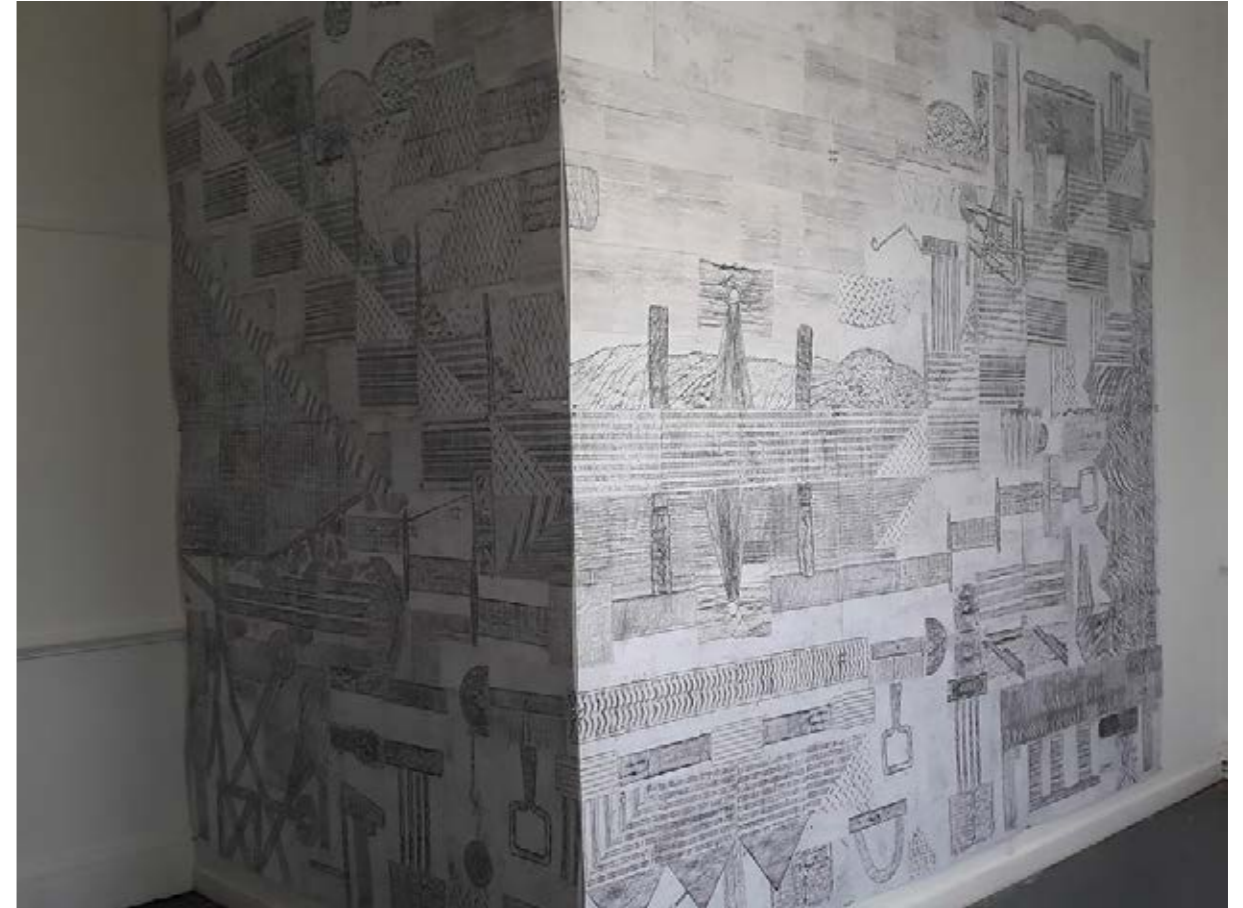
Research Aims & Objectives

Research Aims:

- To activate and engage with current discourse around sites of history and narrative, explored through an expanded drawing methodology to emphasise and define space as layers of memory.
- To align traditional and digital processes with the goal of encouraging narrative and histories associated with a multitude of spaces.

Research Objectives:

- To engage with personal and collective pasts, and community spaces and narratives through the deep-mapping of layers of social relations.
- To use the project's website to present live practice aligning the importance of both physical and virtual realms in presenting both the intimate and interactive as a continuous and experiential mapping of collaborative artistic practice.
- To utilise the website as a live creative presentation of projects (as opposed to a portfolio of individually archived works) focusing on the location and spatially specific, and as a platform to engage individuals and communities – a supportive and assistive resource to be shared, passed on and added to.



'Drawing out the canal' installation at Drawing Projects UK (2019)

Research Context

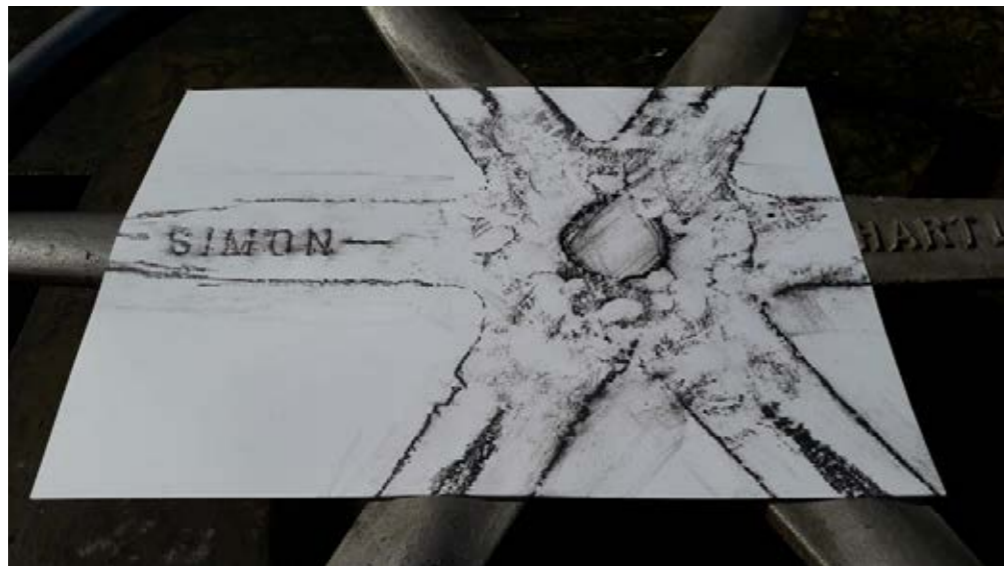
The research is located within the field of expanded drawing practices and examines the interrelationships of drawing and engagement with sites of history and narrative.

"Space is the product of interrelations; thus, we must recognise space as constituted through interactions, from the immensity of the global to the intimately tiny. Space is the sphere of the possibility of the existence of multiplicity; Space is always under construction; it is always in the process of being made. It is never finished; never closed."

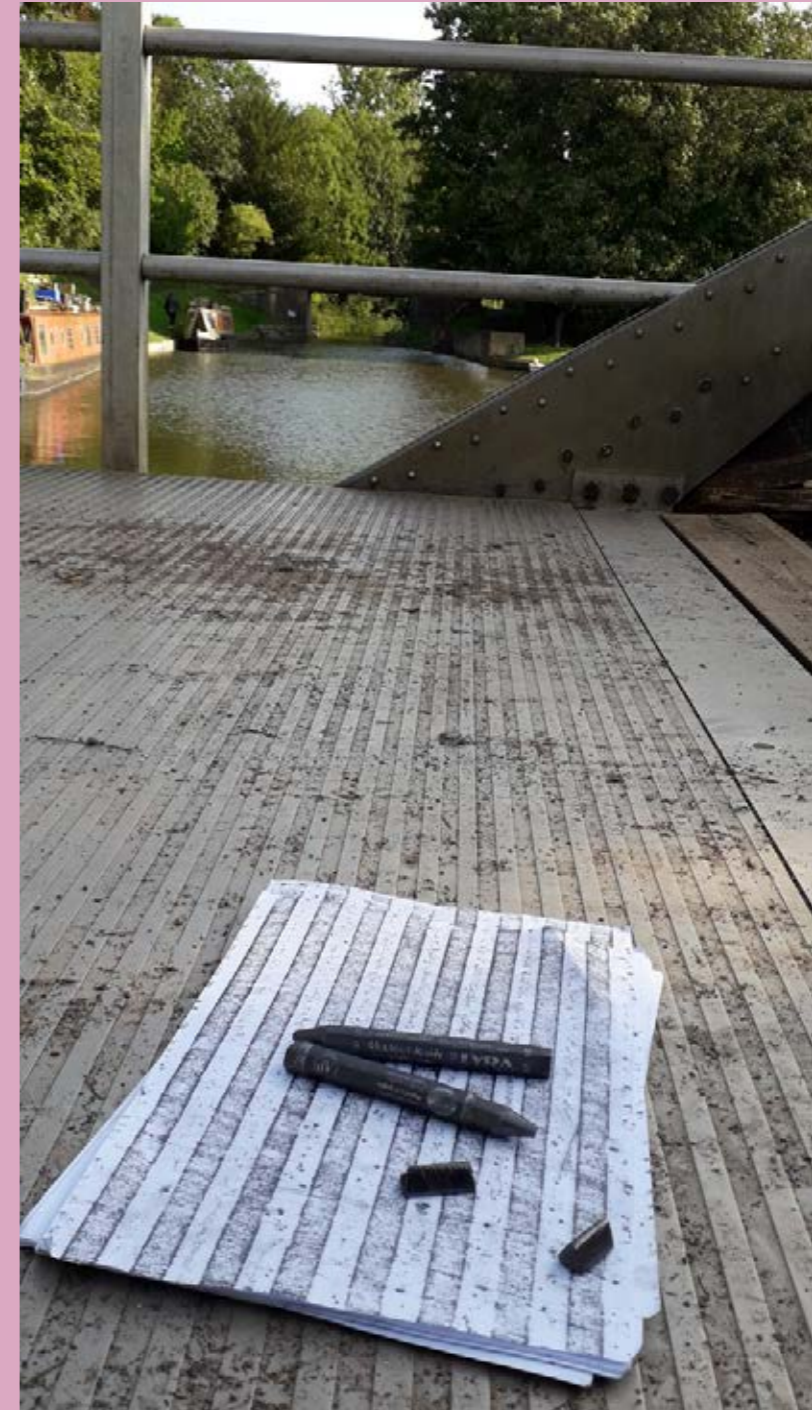
Doreen Massey (2005)

"Generative ideas emerge from joint thinking, from significant conversations, and from sustained, shared struggles to achieve new insights from partners in thought".

Vera John-Steiner (2006)



'Drawing out the canal' rubbings along the Kennet and Avon canal (2019)



'Drawing out the canal' rubbings along the Kennet and Avon canal (2019)

Research Methods & Process

In Search of Shortcuts is a practice-led project in which drawing is carried out through walking as a performative act. Exploring a specific geographical space (the suburban spaces of the artist's childhood in Wythenshawe, a large estate on the outer fringes of South Manchester, UK) through the collaborative act of walking, engaging with physical and virtual realms in a narrative re-enactment, 'walking' through layers of memory and thought, generating narrative lines. The 'shortcut' of the title situates the past in the present through a shared affective, peripatetic experience.

At the heart of this project is the assertion that drawing as an embodied act is both individual and collective process and the research enabled bringing together a network of artists who emphasise and consider the exploration and excavation of space through various approaches to drawing, connecting and curating sites' narrative and histories through capturing textures, vistas, traces, movement of history and narrative.

A curatorial strategy was developed to bring these artists together by curating exhibitions in a variety of settings, combinations and contexts. For each individual artist, drawing is processed through encountering, researching, and engaging with architecture and objects in the physical and virtual realms. Their works address the textural, sensory, and durational nature of psychological space, as well as the historical recording of plotted space. The curatorial strategy was informed by the social geographer, Doreen Massey's seminal work in changing our perceptions of space and the importance of space as 'the dimension of things being, existing at the same time: of simultaneity.' (Massey 2005).

Walking both physically and mentally was at the core of the exhibitions. The curation of 'This land is our land' at PAPER in 2019 involved a number of contemporary artists, with a diversity of practices, re-exploring the meaning of place and myth in the act of pilgrimage whilst mirroring the socio-politic absurdity of today. A number of the artists re-traced the history of the Kinder Scout in the context of an anti-Brexit walk on 29 March 2019, the date the UK was scheduled to leave the EU.

During the process of engaging with Drawing Out The Canal, both time and space interact, are integral, and unfold simultaneously. They are led by space and time (narrative) and access and interpret space. Through the process of engaging with the artworks, a 'multiplicity' of shared personal stories is experienced through engagement with layers of narrative and drawn-out narrative spaces. The strategy of the artworks goes some way to making visible the untapped narratives of spaces and their potential. It achieves this by opening up a stream of consciousness, engaging the public directly with both artwork and the realms of spaces that are experienced; 'walked through'. In the book chapter Woolham, S (2019) 'In Search Of The Shortcuts,' in (2020) *Body, Space, Place in Collective and Collaborative Drawing: Drawing Conversations II* (eds: Journeaux, J., Gorrill, H. and Reed, S.) the author shares the insights generated through walking as a performative act in this project, and further knowledges gained through exhibitionary practices and processes.



Walking Routes: Mapping, excavating and performing histories, Barnaby Commission (2018)

Research Outcomes & Dissemination

2020 Woolham, S (2019) In Search Of The Shortcuts, in Body, Space, Place in Collective and Collaborative Drawing: Drawing Conversations II (eds: Journeaux, J., Gorrill, H. and Reed, S.). Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2020. ISBN: 978-1-5275-4196-2

Woolham, S (2020) Beyond Other Horizons, Exhibition and British Council symposium, Iasi Palace of Culture, Iasi, Romania. Curated by Peter Harrap; Anna McNay; Florin Ungureanu, funded by the Romanian Cultural Institute
[exhibition and conference]
<https://www.a-n.co.uk/events/beyond-other-horizons/>
<https://www.centredelagravure.be/fr/news-articles/20065-beyond-other-horizons-du-3-au-31-mars>

2019 Woolham, S (2019) This Land is Our Land PAPER, Manchester [curated exhibition]
<https://www.manifestartsfestival.com/paper-1>
<https://www.thefourdrinier.com/this-land-is-our-land-interview-with-the-curators>
<https://www.creativetourist.com/event/this-land-is-our-land/>
<https://paper-gallery.co.uk/this-land-is-our-land>

Woolham, S (2019) (Un)Staged PAPER & Leicester Print Workshop [curated exhibition]
<https://paper-gallery.co.uk/unstaged>
http://www.leicesterprintworkshop.com/exhibitions-and-projects/exhibitions/un_staged/

Woolham, S (2019) Drawing Out The Canal Exhibition and residency, Drawing Projects UK, Trowbridge [curated exhibition]
<https://www.axisweb.org/p/simonwoolham/workset/244044-drawing-out-the-canal/>
<http://drawingprojects.uk/index.php/exhibitions/upcoming-exhibitions/209-simon-woolham-drawing-out-the-canal-10-to-26-october-2019>

2018 Woolham, S (2018) WALKING ROUTES: MAPPING AND PERFORMING HISTORIES Barnaby festival, Macclesfield [curated exhibition]
<https://corridor8.co.uk/article/macclesfield-barnaby-festival-2018/>
<https://www.axisweb.org/p/simonwoolham/workset/237874-walking-routes-mapping-excavating-and-performing-histories/>

2017 Woolham, S (2017) PAST/PRESENT/FUTURE NEW MILLS, New Mills Festival [curated exhibition]
<http://visitnewmills.co.uk/event/simon-woolham-and-ruby-tingle/>
<https://www.axisweb.org/p/simonwoolham/workset/231761-past-present-future-new-mills/>
Woolham, S (2017) Drawing Conversations 2: Body, Space, Place, Coventry University [conference paper]
<https://www.cambridgescholars.com/download/sample/64203>
<https://networks.h-net.org/node/73374/announcements/777346/drawing-conversations-2-body-space-place>
Woolham, S (2017) for space, PAPER [curated show/exhibition]
<https://paper-gallery.co.uk/for-space>
<http://expandeddrawingpractices.blogspot.com/2019/06/simon-woolham-unearthing-layers.html>

2016

Woolham, S (2016) In Search of the Shortcuts (with PAPER) Art On Paper, BOZAR, Brussels [exhibition]
<https://paper-gallery.co.uk/art-on-paper-simon-woolham>
Woolham, S (2016) TAKING BACK SPACE: The Macc Walks [exhibition]
<https://www.axisweb.org/p/simonwoolham/article/1971-the-macc-walks-taking-back-space/>
Woolham, S (2016) Space/Place DAR: Digital Artist Residency [residency]
<https://www.a-n.co.uk/events/simon-woolham-artist-in-residence/>
<https://digitalartistresidency.org/artists/simon-woolham/>
Woolham, S (2016) Living Maps: How deep is your map? University College London [conference paper]
https://www.jiscmail.ac.uk/cgi-bin/webadmin?A3=ind1610&L=WAN&E=quoted-printable&P=410858&B=-_000HE1PR0901MB1196C498DB4F5D82E2777CD1BFAD0HE1PR0901MB1196_&T=text%2Fhtml;%20charset=iso-8859-1&XSS=3&header=1

2014

Woolham, S (2014) Unstable Ground, PAPER [curated exhibition]
<https://paper-gallery.co.uk/paper-15-unstable-ground>
<https://www.theskinny.co.uk/art/news/paper-15-unstable-ground-paper-gallery-manchester>
<https://www.we-heart.com/2014/09/10/unstable-ground-paper-gallery-manchester/>
Woolham, S (2014) Mapping Culture, Coimbra, Portugal [conference paper]
https://www.ces.uc.pt/eventos/mappingculture/documentos/Final_programme_text_FINAL_22_05_2014.pdf



'Drawing out the canal' performance at Drawing Projects UK (2019)



PAPER #15
UNSTABLE GROUND
ANNABEL DOVER - LAURA OLDFIELD FORD - REECE JONES - DAVID MILES
GEORGE SHAW - STEPHEN WALTER - LISA WILKENS - SIMON WOOLHAM
 2nd August 2014 – 13th September 2014
 Private View: Thursday 31st July 6-9pm

Open Saturdays
 11am - 5pm
 14 - 20 Mirabel Street
 Manchester
 M3 1PJ
 www.paper-gallery.co.uk

PAPER ARTS COUNCIL ENGLAND

'UNSTABLE GROUND' PAPER exhibition poster, 2014

PAPER #37
FOR SPACE

20TH MAY – 24TH JUNE 2017
 PRIVATE VIEW: THURSDAY 18TH MAY 6-9PM

ANNA BARRIBALL - TOM BASKEYFIELD - JACK BROWN
 LAYLA CURTIS - GERRY DAVIES - HONDARTZA FRAGA
 JENNY STEELE - JAMES STEVENTON - SIMON WOOLHAM

OPEN EVERY SATURDAY
 11AM - 5PM
 14 - 20 MIRABEL ST
 MANCHESTER
 M3 1PJ
 WWW.PAPER-GALLERY.CO.UK

PAPER ARTS COUNCIL ENGLAND **FOURTH DAY** SMITH

'FOR SPACE' PAPER exhibition poster, 2017

PAPER #53:
(UN)STAGED
 CURATED BY SIMON WOOLHAM & YASMIN CAWEN
 WITH LEICESTER PRINT WORKSHOP

SUNIKO EADON - ENMA GARDNER - ILONA KISS
 RUI MATSUNAGA - GEORGE SHAW - RUBY TINGLE
 SIMON WOOLHAM - HANNAH WOOLL

OPEN EVERY SATURDAY
 11 AM - 5 PM
 UNIT 12, 14-20 MIRABEL STREET
 MANCHESTER (OP. M3 1PJ)
 WWW.PAPER-GALLERY.CO.UK

18 MAY - 22 JUNE 2019
 PRIVATE VIEW: THURSDAY 15 MAY 2019, 6-9PM

ARTS COUNCIL ENGLAND **SMITH** **FOURTH DAY** LEICESTER PRINT WORKSHOP

'This land is our land' PAPER exhibition poster, 2019

PAPER #54:
THIS LAND IS OUR LAND
 CURATED BY SIMON WOOLHAM & STEPHEN WALTER

LAYLA CURTIS & JOHN ANGUS - OLIVER EAST
 DAVID KEFFORD - SARAH EVANS - SABINE KUSSMAUL
 CALUM F KERR - JOE HANCOCK - DALE HOLMES
 REECE JONES - JANE LAWSON - GRAHAM LISTER
 KATY SUGGITT - JILL TOWNSLEY - STEPHEN WALTER
 LISA WILKENS - SIMON WOOLHAM

OPEN EVERY SATURDAY
 11 AM - 5 PM
 UNIT 12, 14-20 MIRABEL STREET
 MANCHESTER, M3 1PJ
 WWW.PAPER-GALLERY.CO.UK

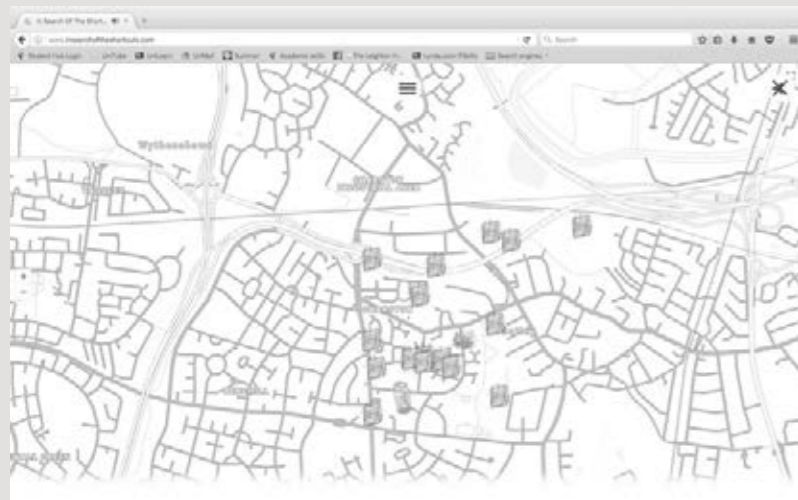
29 JUNE - 3 AUGUST 2019
 PRIVATE VIEW: THURSDAY 27 JUNE 2019, 6-9PM

ARTS COUNCIL ENGLAND **SMITH** **FOURTH DAY** **PAPER**

'(Un)Staged' PAPER exhibition poster, 2019



In Search Of The Shortcuts -
website title page, Simon Woolham
and John Clarke, 2018



In Search Of The Shortcuts -
Wytham Walks, Simon Woolham, 2018



In Search Of The Shortcuts -
Bolsover Walks, Ryan,
Simon Woolham, 2018



'Tom' DAR (Digital Artist Residency)
virtual walk (2016)



Simon maps canal for exhibition' Macclefield Express, June 2018 for Walking Routes: Mapping, excavating and performing histories, Barnaby Commission (2018)



'Taking Back Space: The Macc Walks'
Film installation for Barnaby Festival (2016)

References

Massey, D. (2005) *For Space*. London: Sage
John-Steiner, V. (2006) *Creative Collaboration*. Oxford University Press

Output Type:

Chapter in edited book, original artistic works, creative body of enquiry, textual, visual, or aural content encountered as part of the user experience on websites, solo exhibition, curation of exhibition, contribution to collaborative group exhibitions