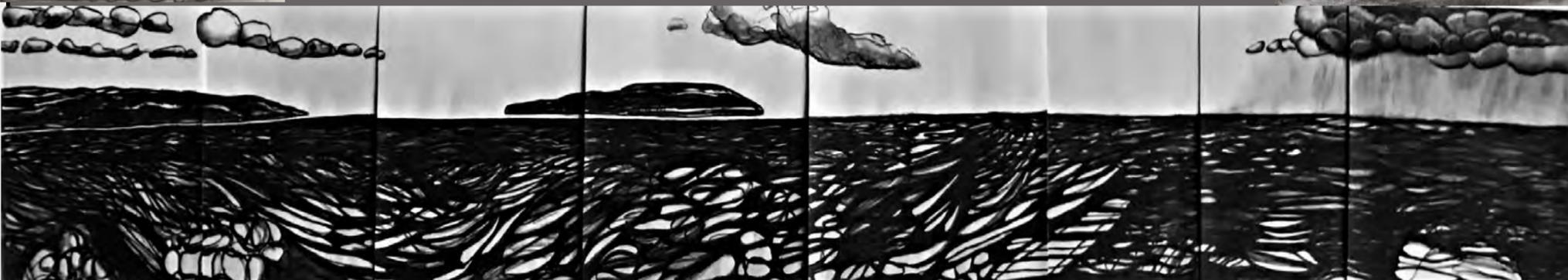


My work is concerned with place and notions of inhabitation and occupation. I propose that drawing is an important tool that allows us to understand place. That drawing as a process sits within our cognitive function and is a tool facilitating our ability to make sense of our environments. I suggest that the process of drawing can be considered within the concerns of cognitive niche construction theory, which Clark defines as “the process by which animals build physical structures that transform problem spaces in ways that aid (or sometimes impede) thinking and reasoning about some target domain or domains. These physical structures combine with appropriate culturally transmitted practices to enhance problem-solving, and (in the most dramatic cases) to make possible whole new forms of thought and reason (Clark, 2005, pp. 256–257). Clark (2006) makes the case that language plays an important role in embodied ecological action, so much so that he suggests language could be considered as a cognition enhancing structure and as such as a kind of cognitive niche. I would suggest the same considerations and importance to drawing as a cognitive enhancing structure, with the same ability to create a thought as an object and subsequently the ability to disseminate such thoughts within a stable structure. I would also suggest that drawing is not only for communicative purposes but for a range of cognitive functions. My early research has led me to test some areas within this discourse and I would like to present my durational drawing practice “Point of Reference” within the context of cognitive niche construction.



I drew repeatedly from the same spot on a beach in North Wales, UK. I made the drawings using charcoal, much of which I had produced from driftwood from the same beach. Over a year I produced many drawings of the same view out to sea. Subsequent to this in the studio I produced a large drawing 1 meter high and 10 metres in length. This piece of research began as a consideration upon movement with myself as the “Point of Reference” (Merleau-Ponty, 2012 p281) but developed into an exploration of extended cognition. This series of drawings far from being repetitive actions became multiple initiations, each drawing was not a repeat of the previous, but a new beginning, a new possibility. Each drawing being a graphic demonstration of my thoughts at that time, made on the beach and forming collectively aspects of a cognitive niche. This cognitive niche then allowed further development within my drawing practice, notably in the production of a large drawing which was technically difficult to create. Prepared with a roll of paper held on a wall, drawing half of the image, rolling and unrolling the paper to draw the second half, the first half being invisible during the completion of the drawing. Drawing at that scale required me to rely on my bodily movement with expansive markmaking and allowing the charcoal to freely flow over the paper, my movements were tuned to the movements of the sea, the time spent drawing the sea had created learnt rhythmic patterns which now created the drawing. This large drawing was made possible by the multiple cognitive supports of my many repeated drawings and the materials used and the time spent experiencing the beach. I suggest that this is demonstrating an example of drawing as an expression of cognition extended by the formation of a cognitive niche.

References

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