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**Knowing Your Place: The emotional construct of place and importance of
home in Neil Bousfield's Norfolk coast prints and Paul Cezanne's Mont
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Abstract

Attachment to home can be a powerful human emotion and a source of creative inspiration. This paper will look at specific bodies of work by two artists to consider how theories of place and attachment to home are expressed through their practice.

Theorists postulate that we turn space into place by a process of becoming familiar with it and that the experience of place is intensely personal. The notion of landscape can be used to explore the wider context of the society within which an image is created and to think about how a person places themselves within their environment.

Neil Bousfield RE is an artist explicitly exploring place through his printmaking practice. Bousfield explores home building, identity, personal experience, archive materials, narrative and memory through the lens of a specifically defined place on the Norfolk coast between Walcott and Winterton-on-Sea where coastal erosion and sea level rise are major themes. Bousfield was interviewed for this paper.

Paul Cezanne (1839-1906) was hailed as the father of modern art; in later life he became obsessed with Mont Sainte-Victoire which overlooks his hometown of Aix-en-Provence. Through his connection with and study of nature he produced series of paintings unlike anything that had been done previously, his filled his canvases with his emotional response and Provençal identity.

The paper finds that both artists use practice-based research methods and that the context of the times they are living in is expressed within their images and adds to our understanding.

The paper concludes that a strong emotional connection to the place they call home is key for both artists.

5 Key Words

Place, home, landscape, attachment, experience

Note

I am using the Provençal spelling of Cezanne's name which has no accent on the 'e'; he never signed works with an accent. The accent appeared after he arrived in Paris where people mispronounced his name. Historically the family name does not have an accent since they are not used in Provence.

Accents have been retained where they appear in source material and references.

Introduction

A deep attachment to the place we call home has long inspired artists and writers. “I should paint my own places best” said Constable (Owens, 2022, p.189) and Wuthering Heights would be nothing without Charlotte Brontë’s deep love of the moors. While some artists explore light or colour, others explore their own deep personal attachment to place, possibly unconsciously. This paper will delve into the emotional connection we have with place, specifically a place we call home, in the context of making artwork about that place; as Cornish artist Peter Lanyon described it, making “a portrait of a place” (Stephens, 2000, p.38). Two artists will be studied: Neil Bousfield, a printmaker who used his artistic practice to become familiar with his new home and now explicitly makes work about place and Paul Cezanne who became obsessed with painting a mountain he grew up next to.

Neil Bousfield RE

Neil Bousfield states that he used his practice to “construct home and place from the space I found myself living in” (Bousfield, 2017) after he moved to the Norfolk coast in 2011. His practice-based research approach means that his prints become part of the research as he seeks new ways of looking at the world. He explicitly explores ideas centred around place construction, home building, memory, identity and the use of archival materials alongside personal experience.

Bousfield works in relief print and is a master of wood engraving, he holds an MA (distinction) in Multi-Disciplinary Printmaking, is an elected member of The Society of Wood Engravers and a Fellow of the Royal Society of Painter-Printmakers. I will be focussing on his Norfolk based prints made since 2012 looking at the development and importance of Bousfield’s attachment to his new home. Bousfield was interviewed for this paper.

Paul Cezanne (1839-1906)

Cezanne grew up in Aix-en-Provence and it was to here that he returned repeatedly, even during periods spent living in Paris, before finally resettling permanently by the late 1880’s.

The motif of Mont Sainte-Victoire fascinated him to the extent that he made nearly 80 paintings and drawings of it, the mountain overlooks Cezanne's home town. In later life it began to dominate his work and he painted it in all weathers from different viewpoints. He was primarily focussed on realising his way of seeing on canvas and sought to express his experience of nature.

Cezanne was hailed as 'the father of us all' by Matisse and Picasso and is frequently described as the founder of modern art. His work paved the way for the fauvists and cubists and has been credited with influencing much of art of the 20th Century. A lot of writing focuses on his technique and skills as a colourist, I want to explore his attachment to his homeland. I will be considering Cezanne's images of Mont Sainte-Victoire made from the 1880's onwards, looking at the deep attachment to his homeland and thorough knowledge of the locale to discover its importance in his work and argue that he was making images about place, not just landscape pictures of what he saw.

Turning Space into Place

Familiarity and Home

The notion of place has been much written about and seems to be where science, geography, philosophy and art meet. Place must be defined alongside space; Tuan (1979) led his fellow geographers to recognise the importance of personal experience when considering space and place; he states that when space feels familiar to us it has become place.

An object or place achieves concrete reality when our experience of it is total, that is through all the senses as well as with the active and reflective mind. Long residence enables us to know a place intimately, yet it's image may lack sharpness unless we can also see it from the outside and reflect upon our experience. (Tuan, 1979, p.18)

Tuan (1979) states that attachment to home can be intense, is global and can occur at different scales. Although we may move our home, we can transfer our attachment from one place to another. While Cezanne always returned to Aix-en-Provence, Bousfield had to make

a conscious effort to become acquainted with a space to transform it into a place when he moved to Norfolk in late 2011; he used his practice to build attachment to his new home.

Over a period of four years I walked, drew, read and made engravings about where I lived. I read research papers and texts which helped deepen my understanding of *place* and continue to inform and extend the way I make and think about my work and the way I address the notion of place and where I live. (Bousfield, 2017).

To begin with Bousfield didn't know the theory behind what he was doing, he was using his practice to explore a new place and making images about the themes that he found there, most notably the instability of the coastline. Ceramic pieces found washed up on the beach provided patterns which were incorporated into the images (see image below). He explains that to begin with he knew none of the theory about place, yet his images were completely rooted in place; they are more than just pictures of somewhere, they incorporate his experience, past narratives and artefacts found within that place.

I started those initial prints and things like [...] *Where there was tea, now there is sea*, that was one of the first prints I made about Norfolk. [...] that's really when I said, right I'm going to make work about where I live. And [...] I had none of this theory or ideas, I wasn't making work about place or anything like that. [...] All those ideas and things that I later read about were naturally in the work. Incidentally, those buildings, they're gone, they're long gone. That road's completely disappeared. I was really interested in those environmental narratives because they're so obvious when you're here. (Bousfield, 2023, 1:25 interview 2)



Bousfield (2012) *Where there was tea, now there is sea*

Conversely, Paul Cezanne grew up in Aix-en-Provence so we can assume that he was well versed in local history and traditions. The fact that he moved away to Paris and yet kept returning may have provided Cezanne with the distance and outside viewpoint that Tuan (1979) considers important. There are many accounts of his taking long walks with his childhood friend, the writer Zola, and climbing Mont Sainte-Victoire with another friend the scientist Marion, who later taught him about its geological importance (Lloyd, 2015). For Cezanne Mont Sainte-Victoire and the surrounding area had always been 'place' rather than 'space', but there was a point when he decided he needed to learn more about the underlying geology in order to paint it well; Cezanne told his friend Gasquet that

in order to paint a landscape well, I first need to discover its geological structure. ...I need to know some geology - how Sainte-Victoire's roots work, the colors of the geological soils - since such things move me, benefit me. (Conisbee et al, 2006, p.280)

Therefore, despite being immersed in Provence all his life Cezanne still felt he had more to learn in order to paint it well, he had a well-rounded knowledge of the area from a resident's perspective but more to learn from an artistic perspective. This suggests that our familiarity

with place can be multi-faceted and connection to the place called 'home' can lead to a deeper exploration when viewing it as the potential subject of artwork.

Identity and Emotion

To become truly familiar with a place merely living in it or seeing it every day is not enough; personal and collective memory of the area also play a role. Tuan (1979) notes that landmarks and visible signs may enhance people's sense of identity; Mont Sainte-Victoire was not of personal significance just for Cezanne but became a symbol for the cultural and political aspirations of the region of Provence (Lloyd, 2015). Therefore, by depicting the mountain Cezanne was making a statement about his own identity as a man of Provence.

The geographer Cresswell (2014) defines place in terms of attachments and connections between people and place. It is how we, as a social species, make the world meaningful. Both Bousfield and Cezanne's images are about a place they live with their family. Both artists will have memories and experiences outside of their artistic life, made with friends and family, which reinforce their sense of belonging. These memories, combined with the collective memory of the community deepen the understanding of human experience of place for the artists.

Cresswell (2014) states that we can turn a space into a place with personal possessions, so that we take ownership of it and become emotionally attached to it. He describes space as being empty, a "realm without meaning" (Cresswell, 2014, p.16). By contrast place must then be populated, artist-geographer Barnes (2019) concurs describing place as peopled and space as empty. She states that place refers to how people feel about a location and that different places play a role in constructing our identity. Like Cresswell, Barnes (2019) describes how we personalise space to turn it into place, and adds that feelings and emotions are deeply connected to our notion of place, this links to Bachelard's (2014) suggestion that memories are rooted in place not in time, and adds further weight to the idea that place is intensely personal for each of us. In his words to Gasquet (page 6) Cezanne links geological knowledge of the mountain with an emotional response when he speaks of being 'moved', again confirming the emotional connection he has with this place.

It could be argued that Cezanne and Bousfield both personalise place by making work about it, they take possession of it through the act of repeated plein air sketching and painting. Cezanne built shelters to store canvasses, and occasionally sleep in, near views he was working on, claiming a little piece of the land as his own and personalising it with possessions. Bousfield's practice involves not only walking and drawing but collecting; "I'm really interested in all those ideas to do with how artefacts carry meaning, and memory and how that impacts on place." (Bousfield, 2023, 6:43 interview 1). Bousfield embraces his own personal narrative; he grew up further north on the Yorkshire coast and remembers collecting coal on the beach as a child. Coal frequently washes up on Norfolk beaches, the remnants of countless wrecked cargo ships which journeyed from near his original home past his current home, enroute to London, and became victims of Norfolk's notorious shifting sandbanks. During our interview he shows me a huge lump of coal he has found and recounts a shipwreck story. This connection between his places is obviously important to him and forms part of his identity.

From the 1890's onward Cezanne became interested in the motif of a single pine tree; he felt an emotional connection linked to the innocence of childhood. In a letter to Zola in 1858 he recalls a particular pine tree under which they had taken shelter from the hot sun and expresses the wish that it may be spared the woodcutters axe (Lloyd, 2015). This is an example of Cezanne in later life painting that which feels familiar and for which he has held an emotional attachment for decades. Throughout Cezanne's correspondence his deep attachment to his homeland, particularly Mont Sainte-Victoire is explicitly stated:

Look at Sainte-Victoire there, how it soars, how imperiously it thirsts for the sun! And how melancholy it is in the evening when all its weight sinks back ... Paul Cezanne to Joachim Gasquet (Stäuble and Kiefer, 2015, p.209).

Cezanne saw art as a process of expression (Merleau-Ponty, 1964), his palette has been described as the 'palette of a peasant' (Raphael, 1968) since using local colours was of immense importance to Cezanne and part of his expression of his connection to the land and his own identity as a simple man of Provence. The Valley of the Arc is described by Conisbee et al (2006) as Cezanne's arcadia: the most finished in Cezanne's early series of Mont Sainte-Victoire paintings *Mont Sainte-Victoire and the Viaduct of the Arc Valley* (1882-5) features this

valley, the mountain and a single pine tree. It is well documented that Cezanne would introduce extra details and merge views together so it is possible that the precise position of the tree, with its lower branch echoing both the river and the mountain shapes, were his creation to bring together his personal narrative, experience and memories; the tree perhaps hinting at youthful afternoons with Zola but the eye being ever drawn towards the mountain in the background by the lines of river and rail. As Hockney (1999) put it, Cezanne gave us his account of seeing, not an exact representation of what he saw.



Cezanne (1882-5) *Mont Sainte-Victoire and the Viaduct of the Arc River Valley*

According to the art historian and philosopher Raphael (1968) three elements were equally important to Cezanne: nature, the artists mind and the artistic form. Cezanne saw painting as a means to interpret and represent nature, he wanted to paint 'the substance of things' and lay bare the anatomy of the earth (Healy, 2018). Cezanne believed that in order to understand nature it must be studied. His idea of nature, represented in paint, without

reference to what was fashionable or traditional in landscape painting shows his deep commitment to communicating his own personal view of his world and of his dogged determination to stay true to his own identity despite being ridiculed and ignored by the wider art world for most of his career.

Conisbee et al (2006) state that the late views of Mont Sainte-Victoire embody more than just nostalgia or memory, they concern Cezanne's own identity. More than being a man from Aix or a 'man of the mountain' they concern the fact he was thinking about his own mortality and the triumph of life over death (he was a devout catholic by this point in his life). Cezanne famously remarked to Gasquet "imagine Poussin completely repainted from nature" (Lloyd, 2015, p.211), the Mont Sainte-Victoire images are the culmination of that achievement, according to Russell (1990) it is in these images that his kinship with Poussin and his truth to himself are most evident. Murphy (1975) states that Cezanne's images capture the essence of Provence while omitting specific details, he thinks them more meaningful than the original scene. Cezanne was able to convey this 'essence' of his home country so well due to his long attachment and desire to convey not just what he saw, but what he felt about what he saw, he has laid his own emotion and identity on the canvases.

Landscape

Re-defining 'Landscape' in the context of 'Place'

The term landscape is used confusingly in contemporary language to identify a view or an area of land, traditionally it refers to a representation of an outdoor scene; it is picturesque because it looks like a picture (Hirsch, 1995). Anthropologist Hirsch (1995) explains that landscape entails a relationship between the 'foreground' and the 'background' of social life. This is linked to Barnes (2019) statement that humanistic geographers have emphasised the particularity of place experience, it is unique to each person. The term landscape can also be used to explore how people place themselves in their environment. According to Stuart and Strathern (2003) a sense of place and embeddedness within local, mythical and ritual landscapes is important. Landscape provides a wider context in which notions of place and community can be situated.

Andrews (2022) highlights the shift in Cezanne's approach described by Merleau-Ponty (1945) from an impressionistic style to something more solid which "seems subtly illuminated from within" (Andrews, 2022, p.23). As Cezanne worked on views of the mountain repeatedly, over decades, his style developed to the point where "Mont Sainte-Victoire, [...] is transformed into a series of horizontal bands of colour in which even the brushstrokes seem to deny perspectival recession" (Stevens, 2023, p.64). In *Montagne Sainte-Victoire seen from Les Lauves* (1902-6) what is immediately clear is that everything in the painting is given equal attention and importance and that the painter knows his subject intimately, it is not an image of what he sees but how he feels. Despite there never being a figure depicted in any Mont Sainte-Victoire painting they are landscape images full of human experience of place.



Cezanne (1902-6) *Montagne Sainte-Victoire seen from Les Lauves*

Practice-Based Research of Place in the Context of 'Now'

Cezanne demonstrates his understanding of differing perspectives and experiences of place when comparing his own experience of the mountain as a landscape, with the peasants of Provence for whom it was simply part of the environment; his experience is an “awareness of landscape as both the visible and conceptual shape of a place” (Borchardt et al, 2002, p.62). For Cezanne Mont Sainte-Victoire was about making sense of his surroundings in an actively responsive manner. It was the creative process itself rather than the completion of the work that was the “realisation of artistic personality.” (Borchardt et al, 2002, p.62). When his painting was going well the very process of painting itself was “a continual revelation of the inner meaning of the scene” (Murphy, 1975, p.76). Although the terminology may not have existed at the time, Cezanne was using a practice-based research method of working, where the process of making the image itself forms part of the research process. Bousfield also uses the process of making as an integral part of his research, describing the methods he used to explore his new home as a personal breakthrough in practice-based research (Bousfield, 2017). The artist’s experience of place will include haptic factors such as weather and sound as well as colour and shape. When painting Cezanne would not just be focused on what the mountain looked like from afar on that particular day; he must have recalled memories of details such as a particularly smooth or rough path taken to climb it, what the rocks and soils look like up close, which would lead to thoughts of the geology lectures from Marion. Then there would be all the previous attempts he’d made to draw and paint it, what worked, what didn’t and thinking about what the next brushstroke was going to add. Everything in his experience would influence each painting.

Both artists produce work that is full of the human experience of place, so they will naturally be influenced by the times in which they live. This context was raised by art historian Simon Scharma (1995) who explored ‘environmental landscapes’ which looked at how the human spirit is connected to dwelling places and asked what the images of place told us about the societies in which the artists were working. Similarly, Raphael (1968) stated that Cezanne’s refusal to limit himself to one viewing point forms part of his thoughts about society. His response to the failing society of the time was to stay in Provence and work, doggedly and

intensively, to make his work the foundation of everything; he put himself entirely into each brushstroke. Bousfield also considers his work in terms of a wider context:

You're very aware that you're in this place, at a particular time within a particular context, social, political, all those sorts of things, and so it has a particular meaning; and I think that's really important. So the work that we make, should be very much informed about the context now. (Bousfield, 2023, 27:09 interview 1).

Bousfield's work deals with subjects at the forefront of the global agenda; he tackles climate change and its effects on place directly. The global nature of this phenomenon is reflected in his most recent work.

Mapping Place

In the 1970's O'Keefe discovered what he termed 'place cells' located in the hippocampus within the brain which is also the area that deals with emotion and long-term memory, work since has proven that these cells build mental maps of locations (O'Keefe, 2023). We therefore have scientific proof that our brains turn space into place by mapping our world and this is linked with memory and emotion. Bousfield finds this exciting as he uses both contemporary and historical maps in his work, layering the past with the present, which poses questions for the future in his final image. According to Powell (2010) maps are far more than just a directional tool, the term 'lived landscapes' refers to the "ways in which people make sense of the built and historic layers in relation to the natural landscape and the lives that are made possible by the landscape" (Powell, 2010). Bousfield does exactly that in his work, describing the multiple strands of his research as a palimpsest which can be thought of as layers; both natural and human, past and present.

Trying to represent the idea that place is a multifaceted thing, is made from a deep knowledge and lots of different perspectives and experiences, and that's what I'm trying to capture. (Bousfield, 2023, 18:06 interview 1)

He has unearthed stories of shipwrecks and storm surges, watched houses crumble into the sea and used daily dog walking to connect the historical to the contemporary in how his community views itself and his experience of it:

you've got your experience, you've got what's happened here, so then the historical narrative, all the different stories; things like the ship wrecks, the things that you find

on the beach, and what they are and what they mean, how collections can communicate... (Bousfield, 2023, 15:52 interview 1).

Maps have led Bousfield to begin to connect his experience of place with other places around the world at risk from sea level rise, linking very different communities which have a shared experience of place in his work. His recent *Coastal Defence* series layers drawings of projected flood maps of New York with records of the 1953 flood at Sea Palling in Norfolk. Within the image are further drawings of the rocks and reefs built to protect the Norfolk coast. “The work looks at the idea of connectedness, place, and loss. It considers how the sea connects coastal places around the world” (Bousfield, 2023).



Bousfield (2023) *Coastal Defence: South Street*

The images in the series are complex and the detail fascinating. To someone familiar with the lines of enormous boulders positioned along the beach between Winterton and Walcott, the dark grey shapes feel immediately familiar. The paler colours are reminiscent of Norfolk beaches and on closer inspection familiar symbols from maps appear alongside windows, field textures and shapes that might be buildings. The sheer complexity of the image echoes the complexity of the issues being explored. This isn't just a landscape picture; it is a record of

the past and a suggestion of the future layered with images of the present set in the context of home, it links two very different communities who share a common experience of place. It is both intensely personal and globally relevant, an image that will keep on revealing itself to the viewer over time; just like a Cezanne.

Conclusion

Cezanne and Bousfield started making work about their place from opposite circumstances; Bousfield used his artistic practice to turn a new location into home while Cezanne immersed himself more and more deeply in a place he'd known intimately all his life.

Theories of place suggest multiple ways we turn space into place and it is evident that the experience of place is unique for each of us. Long residence in a place will offer familiarity but the exploration of place from an artistic perspective has led both these artists to a deeper knowledge and understanding of place. This has fostered a strong emotional connection to their home which in turn affects their personal narrative and identity. Both artists imbue the images they make with their emotional experience of place. The depth of knowledge about the place being depicted is evident from the complexity of the themes woven into the images.

Both artists work is rooted within the wider context of the times in which they experience place. Cezanne lived through a time of flux and immense social change, his dedication to his work, retreat to the country and identification of himself as a simple man of Provence could be interpreted as a way of seizing control in a changing world. Bousfield lives in a time when sea-level rise, climate change and environmental disasters are a constant global threat. The Norfolk coast has been disappearing under the sea for millennia but the acceleration of sea incursion is visible on a daily basis. That his work is starting to include not just his community but others facing similar challenges reflects today's global society.

It can be concluded that the emotional connection to the place they call home is key for both artists. Both know their place, intimately.

Word count: 4000

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Appendix

Neil Bousfield Interview Questions

The following questions were sent to Neil in advance of the interview:

1. What is your perspective on the emotional construct of place and the importance of place and home within an art practice?
2. How exactly did you use your artistic practice to discover this new environment you found yourself living in? (Geographically - recognising familiar places, finding your way around, visually - colours, plants etc, views that are unique to your area, historically - local history, oral histories and local stories not likely to be easily discovered)
3. How you feel about the environment you live in now - how well do you feel you know it; do you feel completely embedded in Norfolk and like you belong?
4. Is there one aspect of your local environment that you return to again and again in your work? What is it and what fascinates you about it?

In short, I'd like to understand exactly what you did to explore your new environment and the effect that had on your emotional connection to place over time. I'm also curious as to whether you feel as connected to the place you grew up in or whether the place of childhood/family ties is a different connection to the place we choose to call home as adults.

Neil Bousfield Interview Transcript

The interview was conducted in two parts due to the time limitations posed by Zoom therefore the interviews are specified as 1 or 2 in the text and the timings restart at 0:00.

Speaker N is Neil Bousfield

Speaker J is Jo Boddy

Direct quotes used in the text are highlighted in yellow (some were shortened with [...] where relevant)

Interview 1

0:00-1:41 [Introductions etc.]

N 1:41

You've obviously done a fair amount of research already. Anyway, I was impressed you read Peter Lanyon's book so quick.

J 1:52

Yeah, I was glued to it!

N 1:54

Yeah, there was a lot of key phrases that came up where there was like, oh, wow, this is really interesting. Yeah. So really, I think to just to get my understanding, you're really trying to talk about how a deep sense of place impacts on creativity and art practice?

J 2:19

Yes. I think what I'm really interested in is, is almost the psychology behind so it's like the human attachment to that place is part of the facilitator for being able to produce, kind of, deep meaningful work.

N 2:40

Right, okay, anything. What I would strongly advise that you do is just write a very short paragraph for yourself to so you're really clear about what it is you're trying to prove. And have a focus for each of your chapters. Okay. break that down into smaller questions, too. So, because it's going to be really easy to go off on a massive tangent.

J 3:07

Yeah, I think I've gone round about three of those already. And I keep thinking of ...

N 3:11

And you'll read lots of other stuff, just bag all that research, keep it all because if you've got more papers or if this is what your work's about, even to be constantly turning up new stuff, and finding new ideas, which will hopefully impact on the way that you produce work and the way that you read other people's work. So that's all really good stuff, but just be really succinct about what your focus for is for each chapter. The only other thing that I thought that you should do is have some form of introduction, which you're gonna have to keep short which really outlines the key aspects of the theory and your understanding, so sets the context for your reader. So, you need to I think you need to talk about the difference between place and space give some form of definition, explain that. Touch on the key concepts of place dependency, place identity and place attachment, maybe how those are intertwined, but particularly, I think, from what you're talking about, we've got a similar sort of interest. I think, really, you're trying to make an argument for narrative memory, experience, lived experience. As if you were talking a bit about, I don't know Cezanne's work. Amazingly, that particular part of his practice, but if it's very much to do with, you know, this idea of being in nature and stuff, then perhaps you might touch on ideas to do with you know, the tactile and haptic sensory feedback so you know, all that stuff about wind on your face and the roughness of the tracks and the colours or the particular time of day, everything to do with all those sorts of aspects. You're trying to link them to very much about these understandings of you know,

how people attach themselves to something. So, the more they're walking in a particular area, the more they experience these elements, the greater the sense of connection they have hence they deepen their understanding. Hence, they make work at a much more deeper level, a deeper understanding a deeper connection to that particular landscape, which is what your main argument's about, which I think is all true. But it depends on your interests because I'm obviously very interested in things like not just the lived experience, but how things change in terms of narrative. So, when you go somewhere something's happened there suddenly it changes. Also, things like artefacts, things like trace, or pathways, so history, archaeology, collecting I love collecting stuff off the beach and artefacts and things. Things like....

N 6:37

Look at that for a piece of coal. That's picked up off the beach.

J 6:42

That's a huge one.

N 6:43

Massive, isn't it? I think that's come from a shipwreck. So, I'm really interested all those ideas to do with how artefacts carry meaning, and memory, and how that impacts on place. So, I don't know if you collect things on your walk.

J

Oh, yes, I do.

N

So yes, so you sort of thinking about you know, so it could be it doesn't necessarily have to be your lump of coal, but it could be an acorn or you're looking at the texture of it, and you love the idea of you know, trees or whatever it is. So, you try to link your key ideas to those to an explanation of you know, dependency, identity and attachment. And then everything that you reference in Cezanne's work, or any of your other references whether or not it's mine or anybody else's Peter Lanyon's means you can then reference back to the that mean that introductory chapter, so you've got the theory and the ideas and you can then reference that back as well as the quotes. So, if you see something that you think is interesting, you quote that and you can link it back to the theory. Does that make sense?

J

Yes. Yes.

N

The only other thing that I think you might find interesting; I don't know if you've come across it. Have you, do you about place cells?

J

No.

N

Okay. One of the things that underpins a lot of these theories and these ideas is the work of John O Keefe. His work of place cells.

N 8:29

And a place cell is a particular neuron in your brain basically, which is fired at a higher rate when you enter a particular territory. So, let's see within all animals, so this all relates to things like this idea, the key idea because if you do a lot of reading around place, you'll get you know the difference between space and place, or differentiated space we move through place. So essentially, as we move through space to places of interest, animals do the same thing, return to the nest, migration. We travel on a train through landscape spaces to places. So, it's all that side of things. So, the place cells, what's really interesting about them, is that they're located in the part of the brain called the hippocampus, which regulates emotion, and long-term memory. So provides actual scientific evidence for some of the ideas of place being an emotional construct, built from memory, narrative and experience. So that's where it comes from. And one of the interesting things about the place cells is that, you know, I live by the sea, if I go somewhere else, and it's by the sea, the cells are fired again. So, there's a clear link between you're making connections to different territories.

N 10:11

So that's all the theory side of it. I'd get all that in.

J 10:15

Fascinating

N 10:17

At the beginning. In terms of your point, see, yes, I have heard the term I don't know that particular writer, but I know lived experience and all that stuff about phenomenology. I don't read the masses about phenomenology like I said.... Some of this stuff gets a bit too philosophical. I think the what's worth thinking about is just how much of this academic and how much theory feeds your work and your ideas? Because it's different for everybody in their practice. Yeah. And I have cut off points like said I certain points I just sort of like, I lose the will to live an I want to make something instead of reading stuff. But right to describe our techniques and points. Right. Right. Yes. So point one. Yes, definitely. The word that I make, definitely refers to like I said the sort of experience of places walking that's why the dogs are in quite a lot because you know, this idea of routine. The same walk down the beach every day meeting people all those waves and hellos you make all these connections to other people. And the place itself you understand it becomes your home. And the reason I made a

lot of that work was because I moved to Norwich I moved to this area and wanted to connect myself to it and so I made work about it without knowing any of this theory stuff, and then my research on that, you know, my, the institution I work for kept saying, Oh, what's your research, what's your research and then one day I just Googled place, and I just put place research. And then boom, there was like tonnes of stuff on, do you use Google Scholar at all?

J
Yep.

N
Well, I've got virtually all of my references I just read research papers because they're quite short. You can start one read a couple of words and you know, if you're going to get anything out of it, if you're not gonna get anything out of it, chuck it and then start another one. There's lots of them if you for any further referencing, for your list, of stuff writers and thinkers about place if you just use Google Scholar and key in place dependency and put the word research after it, and then just go to Google Scholar and just get mind blown. Dependency, identity and place attachment, and you can link them to other things. So if you put in, say, place attachment, and walking, research, and then you'll hopefully find something to do with place attachment and how it's promoted by walking or whatever. So it's really good way of finding information.

J 14:03

Yeah, I was thinking about like the terms lived landscapes and then those ideas and making sense of the lived in historic layers because your work has so many layers in it. And I was I was just thinking, is that having come across the term does, does the theory kind of feed in and you think, oh, how can I get all that in my work or, or does that just happen almost accidentally, and then then you kind of find the theory and go, oh, I've kind of done that.

N 14:32

Yes, it happened like that to start with because I just made the work. Because I didn't know you know, the theory. And I struggled with this idea of research because this was my first full time, at that point I was full time, academic with a research element to my contract. And before that, I just made work and then all of a sudden you're supposed to read some research was done by people little white coats on I was like, what's this? I don't do that. So, I really struggled with the idea and thought very much about you know, because you can contextualise your work, the works about all sorts of things. My work goes from linked to craft and making, is always drawn. So, I was like, am I interested in drawing? Yes, but it's not my main focus. And then eventually, I understood that I was really interested in particularly place, but how place is made from narrative and expedience and that's where my main interest lies. And from that, then obviously, you start to think about different ways of looking at the same place. So, you know, **you've got your experience, you've got what's happened here, so then**

the historical narrative, all the different stories; things like the ship wrecks, the things that you find on the beach, and what they are and what they mean, how collections can communicate, so you can reference to museums, and that's what I was trying to do in the Dalziel paper make a case for how artefacts also inform a sense of place. And so things like historic maps and lands, aerial photography really interests me so that's why I got interested in Peter Lanyon's work from his glider ideas, because we've got Google Earth so when I just you know whenever you go in somewhere if I could look on satellite maps, he was actually just to get my bearings and work out. And then you start to if you looking at this particular, any rural sort of area, you start to see the tracks and so you get all this idea of trace and archaeology. But all of that comes together in the term palimpsest, have you come across that term?

J 17:13

Yes, through you, you introduced me to that!

N 17:18

So that's very much to do with layering. We layer, I've already touched on that. I understand it very much to do with layers. Most people do. But I think if you're really into the theory of it, this is quite subtle. I think it's more to do with how multiple readings, how different things come together to create new readings of things. So, it creates new work it's not just about the layering, it's actually about how you something to do with that. And anyways, yeah, so I'm fascinated by bringing all those elements together. And I suppose just really to come in at point one a bit more yet. It's really about the different. Trying to represent the idea that place is a multifaceted thing is made from a deep knowledge and lots of different perspectives and experiences, and that's what I'm trying to capture and that's why I put lots of different things in there. I also like this different, the actual aesthetic of trying to blend different perspectives. So, an aerial perspective with an actual drawn perspective.

J 18:37

It's very clever.

N 18:39

That's those sorts of ideas, and also referencing things like maps and sort of the shapes in the early works are to do with things that I've found, like objects, they little bits of ceramic, with patterns on. So, I'm interested in pattern from an aesthetic point of view, but also in its relationship to place as well. So, pattern in place is really important. So that's where you know if you'll see things like work say...

N 19:21

Ooh Gilbert's tears, for example, that was a commission for a piece of work I was invited to make for a particular exhibition with Pallant House. And there was a deliberate effort there

to put a landscape together, which wasn't necessarily representational of an actual location but it was a more representation of my experience of that place. And because I used to walk there used to walk my dogs around that particular area around Selbourne then lay down historic maps. And then the bird who's actually I think, it's a red capped woodpecker or something which used to be around that area. So, it makes all those references and obviously the bit about tears is to do with the loss of biodiversity. So those are the sorts of different narratives all of those different ideas come together to create that one piece of work.

N 20:28

So that happens a lot. Point two theoretical ideas. Yeah, we talked really about palimpsest, that was really the only other theory, I think. What have we got next? Lanyon's....

J

Portrait of a place, I thought that was a lovely idea.

N 20:54

Yes, portrait of a place I mean what that's mostly interested me about that book. And that's why because I was reading it when you contacted me, oh, yeah, that's, you know, I'm really connect to this. This is what I'm trying to do. Because one of the things that I think all these ideas allow you to do is get a deeper sense of a particular location or place and its importance is value, and how you might try and represent that. It's really, is this the challenge in the making, and so you're not really trying to make work, which is a visual representation is much more about making work about that place and what that means and what it looks like it's just part of it. So, I think this idea of making work about like a portrait of a place rather than what it looks like, is is really interesting.

J 22:17

Really interesting, because Cezanne's as well, he would, in his mountain he did loads of these paintings with this particular mountain, mainly towards the end of his life, although it had cropped up throughout his career. That he used to actually steal different views and put trees in different places, because he was all, in like ,he was trying to be really embedded in nature. And you know, he got to the point where he would only paint plein air to do it, and actually be looking at the mountain and he kept revisiting it because he said, although kind of like, the views stayed the same, but nature changed all the time. So he had to keep re-examining it, because although the mountain was always there, it was always ever changing. Although at kind of first glance, you know, someone unfamiliar would think it always looked the same. So that's why that kind of struck a chord between Lanyon as well and you and I was just thinking there's, there's so much there with these people that seem to have this deep connection to this place that it seems you can almost although the, the, the aesthetic and the look of the work, but you know, there's very little in common between you and Cezanne, when you look at the work, but actually when you delve into some of the ideas behind it, there's seems to

actually be an awful lot in common, although, I think, you know, 100 odd years ago, these theories didn't exist and Cezanne wasn't thinking about it or researching it in the same way but actually, he's kind of expressing the same ideas in his writing which I thought was quite interesting, really.

N 23:43

I think that's a really nice point that might sort of, you know, because it's something that people naturally do as a place isn't that you know, it's hardwired into how we've existed in involved in, can see, you know, I think I've said things like returning to a nest. These are the ideas which why I think the notion of home is really important because that's got such a deep emotive connection to a particular location. You know, your home is everything your territory, you know, if people get really riled up about our street, our house and I think when you that's it, they operate on different spheres of scale. So, you know, home becomes your immediate territory. This is my street, my park, this is where I live. This is so because of that and so I think there was a really interesting that connection is really interesting thing, the different perspectives. The thing about the time is really interesting as well. As you've got factsheet on geological time as well. So, you've got different ways of thinking about time, so nature, seasons, but also, you know, around here, it's all about coastal erosion as the change. And that's, those are some of the narratives which are coming out which I think I was interested in. So, when I first arrived here, it was like, oh, this is it has a strange temporal nature to it. So they feel very, you know, it's changing. It's, it's, you could see the landscape falling into the sea, but also, you're very aware that we have all those ideas to do with Doggerland are the last villages everything that's under the North Sea and it's very apparent. So those some of those narratives are really important. So, they're not really, it's not theoretical, but it is informed through other contexts. Particularly history, I think.

N 26:04

The next part, portrait places that comes back later wrong. But yes, self, self-doubt. I don't think anybody makes anything and puts it in the world without having some sort of worry or concern because the receipt I suppose. Yes, I think all I know I've got this little bit here which I talked about where I thought about this idea of making the portrait of place. One of the things that I'm trying to do is trying to think about what it means to live here now. And I think some of these idea's particularly this idea of time, like in Cezanne's you know, the views, but also this geological time. **You're very aware that you're in this place, at a particular time within a particular context, social, political, all those sorts of things, and so it has a particular meaning; and I think that's really important. So the work that we make, should be very much informed about the context now.** It's never just about making a nice picture. With, even if it is a nice picture. Everybody thinks that's what they're looking at, but really, you're making something that is very rooted in now. So I think that's really important and I think that differentiates people who make work about place from people who make work of our, I think there's a difference when you go somewhere that's dramatic. And then this I don't know

masses about this I maybe really biased about this all those notions of landscape and the sublime and all that sort of stuff. But I see myself very different from that. That's not why I'm not going somewhere to make and I'm not painting mountains, because they're dramatic and the nature is amazing. And look at the light and isn't it fantastic? There's an element of that. You know, it's like the sea and the sun coming up and all that sort of romantic stuff. But I think you know, I think it's very much connects to your idea that there's a deeper understanding and a deeper set of values to represent and to communicate in the work other than, isn't it amazing? Isn't nature all sublime and wonderful? So I think place, making work about place is different from landscape. And that's I think that's a really important thing to sort of start to understand is that when you really immerse yourself in your particular territory, that you're not making work, you're not making landscape work, in my opinion, you're making work about that place, that's informed through all of these ideas that we've discussed. It's not just about being there and seeing it and going, wow, look at that.

J 29:38

That's almost just the sensory experience part of it isn't it?

N 29:42

Yes, it's part of it and so is picking up that acorn going [rubs hands] but that fits in with that and that fits in with that and this fits in with your reading theory or, or, or I don't know some ancient battle took place there as well. You can't see it, but you know it's there. And so the place has changed. This there's a project I do with students about place and one of the things that they'll look at is I'll take my watch or something and you'll see it's just an ordinary watch. But then I say you know; this is this is watch from the Titanic or something so it's the same watch but all of a sudden its value changes. So you're understanding the way you know your territory is built as well from those ideas that have to do with history and narrative and story as well as experience as well as collecting things is really complex.

J 30:55

Sensory, yes, sensory experiences was next. So we've kind of covered that so I said do you revisit the same places to rediscover them or find something new?

N 31:06

Yes, yeah. All the time. One of the things just in that doubt bit. I think I'm always concerned about how you make work that represents such a complex reading of a place how you make all those intangible things like history and memory, how you capture that conditional text. So there's always doubt on whether or not you're doing that right. And also, that can manifest itself in in a more structural and formal ways in terms of, you know, abstraction, composition, colour, all those things like that. And its relationship with representation. So that's one of the sort of formal things and so on. Always thinking about how abstract can I make something if it's completely more of an emotional and theoretical response to somewhere, does it have

any meaning when it's read by someone else? So these the things are like, ah, you know, like, I'll show somebody something they go oh, that's great. That looks, looks great. I can see it's a place. And I'm looking at it thinking well it's a bit boring. It's just a picture without this thing, and they go: dunno know where it is. That doesn't matter to me because I know where is but that matters to you. So that is, and that's where doubt comes from, when they're sort of starting to relay ideas to the audience. And that's another element of practice, which is really tricky. And all I've got against that is how can the reader make sense of work about a place which they cannot read? Right, so that's one of the things in my head.

J 33:12

We've got four minutes left I just noticed four minutes, four minutes.

N 33:26

I've got an area of study. So, to find an area and return to it all the time. And it's very much about this coastal strip, and it's in its wider context and meaning.

J 33:43

'Cos you kind of start at Winterton and go up to...

N 33:48

Walcott to Winterton because of the wall. Basically, the seawall was built along there and the work I make is to do with what's going to happen when that's gone. How, because the meaning of this landscape, it's not just that it's my home. It has its own value, and it's right, but also it can be read on a global platform within a context, sea level rise. So, it's really interesting to make connections to this place than others.

J 34:18

I saw the New York turnpike work with the Norfolk and New York... where you connected that because of the local and global...

N 34:23

Yep, layering all those different places together. So I'm really interested in the idea of people losing their homes to do with sea level rise. So that's, that's the main narrative, I think, which I pull from this, this particular place. In terms of how I select work, is very much it can be from drawing, it's always from drawing I draw out in the landscape. And then I bring that work back. Sometimes I'll use that particular drawing, and sometimes I'll rework it. It is quite designed so I'll bring in other elements like the aerial landscapes I'll gather lots of different research. So I've drawn a coastal map of the of the area, I've drawn what's happened in terms of flood maps when that area is gone. I'm now going to be drawing different locations I'd like to link to different cities. And then I'm also be drawing actual images of from my walks,

whether or not they're abstract scribbles or actual visual recognised places and then somehow, I'll fudge that lot together to make something [laughs]

J 35:48

The most professional fudging I think I've ever seen!

N 5:58

In terms of looking back at work. I mean, the main thing that I would say is that practice is cyclical in its nature. So new ideas are always reworked based on personal findings, and experimentation. So, when you look back at work, I always feel it's like more like a chain of practice, rather than individual finished work. So old work, the ideas and approaches can be combined with new ideas, new findings, and also stuff that you've read. So, it's ongoing and cyclical. If that makes sense.

J 36:36

[meeting about to cut out - arranges to set up a second meeting]

MEETING 2

J 0:00

[greeting]

J 0:30

So yes, we we're talking about selecting the subject of a print and previous work and revisiting, you were saying about work being cyclical and the old work informing the new work and revisiting...

N 0:51

Yeah, very much. I think that's, that's sort of how I always think about developing new approaches. And I think what I'm finding at the moment because I've made a lot of work about this coast already, but now I'm approaching it in a much more rigorous, a more formal way. Because when I started those initial prints and things like 'where they there was sea', no, 'where there was tea now there is sea' that was one of the first prints I made about Norfolk. Prior to that, I was making lots of different sort of work. And then that's really when I said, right I'm going to make work about where I live. And I didn't understand, I'd had none of this theory or ideas, I wasn't making work about place or anything like that. So, it was back informed. So effectively, it was, all those ideas and things that I later read about were naturally in the work. Incidentally, those buildings, they're gone, they're long gone. That road's completely disappeared. I was really interested in those environmental narratives because they're so obvious when you're here. But I sort of took step back from that and then tried to unpick everything that I was doing. Definitely through that place, the place theory and the understanding of those ideas, and then so, so now I'm in the process of reconstructing

it all back together again. Because, I made work about The Broads and one of the things; that was a research project with the University; one of the key things I wanted to understand was if making work about that particular area, I mean it's really close. It's about 10 miles away. And interestingly, it's linked: I found a series of reports which linked the two locations together. Berney Arms and which is right in the middle of the Norfolk Broads. And this coast, I think it was Natural England, part of what they've done is they've split up the country into areas and it doesn't follow river boundaries or regional boundaries or any sort of administrative boundaries for, they've linked it through areas of habitat or how it's linked and somehow they've linked this part of the coast with that part of the Broads. And so I got really into that and really interested in the connections and what I was really trying to do is to think if I'm really immersed myself in this particular Broads landscape, would it feel like home? Would it feel the same as if I was making work along the wall? And it doesn't, feels different. There's more attachment to my immediate location than there was to there even though they're very linked. And one of the things that I found really interesting is the whole of the Norfolk Broads and everything is, is completely artificially managed in terms of the water levels, obviously, it's all dykes and pumps and drainage systems. I mean, I was really ignorant when I moved here, I was like 'oh, windmill' and I thought they all ground flour or something like that, but they're all wind pumps. Everything's, the whole landscape is completely artificial. You could be walking in, in in the countryside, and then you walk by a river, which is this high next to you, and then 10 feet below, there's another one. There's another one and it's like: how does this work? But there's a drain that's just outside the house, there's like a drainage ditch is about 50 metres just over there. And it starts about again 50 metres from behind the seawall. So but the interesting thing is that any water that lands here, doesn't go to the sea it goes down, the whole landscape here is drained through all these dykes all the way right through into the broads system, through all the rivers through all the broads and then pumped over the river wall near Great Yarmouth and that, which is nearly 12/15 miles away before it makes the sea.

J

It's nuts, isn't it?

N 6:34

It's completely nuts!

N 6:39

So all that, all those ideas informed that body of work, and now I'm making more work to do with this particular coast. So I'm returning back to, you know, the drawings of the walls, the sea views, the rocks and reefs and all that sort of stuff. So it is very much linked, and it goes round. And I'm just looking at some of the drawings I'm making now and I'm thinking that's what I'm doing now, that's what I did before how is it quite similar. How am I approaching this? What am I learning? So yes, so it does come around.

J 7:18

Do you ever, like, from a body of work, say like that, is there like one little bit sometimes you look back and you think, oh, there was something there that I didn't unpick enough in that one and almost... I was interested with the dog walking one, when you did the series about a dog's sense of memory. Yeah, a few so and it was like the routine of the dog walk. And I was like dogs have featured so often in your previous work that it felt almost like that little bit was kind of like, well, I'm gonna take the previous work and look at it from the slightly different perspective and then make it so it kind of felt like there was a little bit of previous work that got pulled out into that because obviously it's about more than just the dog walking. But the idea and the notion of the starting point being the dog's perspective, because I walk my dog in the forest every day. So I just thought, and my work at the moment is very much about the forest so I was thinking that's really interesting. Yeah. The different points of view and how the dog sees it. So it made me start doing yep, rather than kind of being more landscaping views. I did some little things about you know, the grasses and I was thinking well, the dogs lower down and it's constantly got her face in so I was thinking again, it was that kind of different perspective. So yeah,

N 8:39

I'm pleased that you said that actually because that's exactly what I was trying to do. Because I think what, as you as you make things and particularly exhibit and sell and present your work to other people, I was quite conscious of people who say oh you're that dog person' or the whippet person or whatever. And it's like, no, there's, there's a lot more to it than that. And so I think I made those, that series, where there was a technical experiment in there because there are multiple block and most of my work before that, the way I approach colour was reduction. So they are multiple blocks, I was working through that and interested in so there's always, not always, but quite often is a technical exploration that runs along, which is a little bit more haphazard, maybe, it's not really as well thought out as the ideas that inform the work and the work was very much informed by that need to, sort of, try to communicate to people that there was more about it than just walking dogs. It was more than dogs really are a somatic idea. They're a metaphor for this idea of routine and lived experience. That's what they're about. It's what they represent, they're not really just drawings of dogs walking down the beach.

J 10:39

They're kind of, they represent home and routine and...

N 10.51

They represent that narrative which is a fundamental of place making so it was important to me that I showed that the other thing that they reference a lot is, it was interesting that you picked up on that Dalziel paper because part of when I was doing that, I was asked to look at some engravings as part of the, I think it was with Ipswich? I can't remember now. One of the

universities, Bethan she's really nice. She was doing the, she did all the work on the Dalziel collection. And so she wanted a contemporary engravers perspective of the collection. And she was interested in my ideas to do with colour but when I looked at the archive, one of the key things that I extracted from it, was interesting about it, were all the images of the shipwrecks and particularly I was interested in the old engraving blocks. How they used to do them they're all basically, because end grain blocks are really small, really, really small, and massive engraving blocks which were done for newspapers and things in the trade industry; they were they were all bolted together on the backs of the blocks that we're all sort of recessed in the bolts, and what they used to do was bolt them all together, put the image on the blocks, take them all apart, pass them around the workshop, and all the engravers would engrave their part. And some people specialised in skies and things like that. And then they'd bring them all back together, bolt them all together. And then the master engraver would join it all. And that's how it was done. So what happens is sometimes the blocks shrink. And so some of the images have this grid patterning and at the time I was doing lots of stuff to do with mapping, I'd look at maps a lot. So I'm really interested in grids, and the way the structure is, the world is mapped and broken up into these little squares. When I was talking to Norman Ackroyd, who talked a lot about different formats, and he was talking about a double square and double square, that landscape view fits nicely, obviously into that mapping grid. So I was exploring the idea to do with grids, which is again recurrent and it's coming up and in all my sketchbooks, I've drawn out grids first, and then drawn within them. And that's how, that's what sometimes they're referenced in the image, and then sometimes they're not. But yeah, so that's I was exploring. I came across a woman's work, Dorothy, Dorothy Annan, and I don't know if you're ever around the Barbican? If you get to go around the Barbican and look for her work, they're big ceramic murals and they're made in tiles. And what was really interesting was like, oh wow, these are like a grid structure, and then they're lovely, really nice to see. So those ideas really informed ours. And then obviously the relationship between land and sea is key in in my work as well. So all those ideas are really revisited and come round and round and round as a rehash. Yeah, I think and now I'm thinking a lot about those, the ideas in the New York series about that connectedness and the different cities. And, strangely, I think a lot of like things that inform my work as well are some of the projects are set for the students as well. Because I do research for those and there are quite the two projects and run a one with the Sainsbury Centre.

J 15:32

Because you've done some prints from there recently as well, I saw?

N 15:35

Yeah, yeah, so I've done that for about five or six years. And this is the first time I've just started making work, and made a whole series of work which is, isn't really about this place. And I'm thinking is it about place, but then it's taken me, I've been going there 10 years with the students and it's taken me 10 years to feel that connected enough to actually make

something so that's interesting. So I'm still sort of digesting that. And again, it was a little bit of an experiment about, because they're really quite abstract. I didn't want to draw the objects. I didn't want to draw the actual place itself, like a visual representation. So I drew lots of images to do with the sort of the shapes around the objects and particularly light. The light in there is really interesting because the collection was a private collection, it was their own collection in their house, in their home. So it's very much to do with evoking a sense of home in that collection, which I found really interesting, and that's why it's got, when you go in there, it's got carpet down, which is really unusual for a museum. The lighting is particularly yellow, because it's more, it protects the objects and artefacts, but also it's to do with trying to create a warmer sense and a more homely feel to it. And then how all the objects are organised you can walk around them so you get that idea of multiple perspectives and different views and so on the shadows cast, really interesting. So yeah, I made that body of work, that was the last set of engravings I did. Prior to that, I'm just about to start exhibiting the ones that were, with the rocks. So I'm also thinking about that and how that is impacting on the drawings and things I'm making now because I'm very much in the process of gathering, lots of research to do with the wall and also thinking very much about how it connects to other places. Because I've got a list of 28 cities from 13 different countries and they're ranked in terms of impact on population, loss of real estate, as to their impact on sea level rise. So sea level rise is the main narrative really, which is a sort of addressed in the work and then places like you know, Kolkata, Mumbai, Dhaka, Shanghai, unpronounceable names, about six cities in China. Vietnam is badly hit. But so are places like USA, Miami, Miami is ranked number one in terms of the city that's going to lose most value basically goes into the sea by 2170 it will be probably be gone. So will Kolkata so that's ranked at number four money wise, for the population, number one, something like 16 million people lose their homes in Kolkata.

J 19:28

Gosh! It does put the Norfolk coast into perspective, doesn't it?

N 19:33

Yes! It's making us, and that's the, that's the thing that's interesting me at the moment that sort of, how can this small little place like Walcott that no one's really heard of, how does that relate to Mumbai? It relates because people's homes....

J 19:55

It's the same experience, isn't it?

N 20:00

Yeah, exactly. That loss of place. So those are all the ideas that I think that inform things that again, it just goes round and round and they're reworked.

J 20:11

Do you think because you've made so much work and looked so deeply at your particular home, do you think that's possibly why you now feel comfortable enough to, kind of, confident enough to start relating it to other places? Because obviously there's going to be that shared human experience, like whether it's Mumbai or whether it's Norfolk, of home loss and habitat loss and the loss; but I would imagine that maybe in the first year when you'd arrived, like, you wouldn't have felt confident enough...

N 20:47

We didn't really understand that, and I think I read somewhere, I can't remember what paper or anything he was in, but I like the idea of that, people leave a territory they come back and what they bring back enriches it. Although I don't travel hardly anywhere, but it's a sort of, it is sort of a conceptual leaving, and then bringing something back to unfold, your sense of understanding and the value of where you are. And I think it's probably again it's one of those, I don't know, maybe it's a human part of the human condition to wander out and come back. But yes, I mean, and also I do have some sense of connection to where I'm originally from as well because originally I was from the northeast, so Redcar, which is just up the coast; you'll just have the cluster on the right side so, when I'm walking up the beach I'm gonna see on the right side, the same way, I know which I can visualise the coast and I can see the steel works, although they've torn them down now, see the steel works at the end of the beach. And so there's those all those sights and I'm really interested in the history of it. And that's why I was interested in the shipwrecks and the coal because this story of, you know, finding all this coal on the beach because we used to collect coal on the beach, sea coal, and all those lumps of coal have probably come down from the pits in the northeast, because there was a series of those as a big ship wreck. What they used to do is run the convoys down the coast, and they'd have them all together, and there's Happisburgh sandbank where there's literally hundreds of shipwrecks, it's an notorious stretch of area, which is literally there's 1000s of ships out there. And in one day alone, this convoy, they sail down through heavy fog, the lead ship of the convoy saw the breakers at the last minute turned off, it missed them, but the seven ships behind all sailed on and are wrecked in one day, obviously, a lot of people lost their lives but all of their ships for cargo ships and they all carried coal to and then for this particular storm, we came out onto the beach and we used to collect coal, you find lots of pieces like one day we just found, looks everywhere all over the beach collecting bags and bags. So as all those ideas and those connections, so there's like a strong connection, I feel a strong connection between here and there. My original birth place which is again, another element of place which hasn't come into my work a lot. I think we all find it, we all have where we were originally from, so this is home but it's only one of them.

J 24:41

Because, yeah home can move with you and you take bits of your previous home with you and then yeah, I guess it's like you're saying when you turn to the sea and those neurons fire,

those place cells. So surely that must do that in your previous homes or in your previous places.

N 25:01

Yeah, you bring your emotional baggage to somewhere and project it and maybe that's when you arrive somewhere and you think this, you have some sort of feeling like, you're happy in a place. Because when we were looking around to buy our house, we couldn't you know, could have lived in Norwich but we kept travelling to the sea. So I just knew, that we live by the sea.

J 25:31

Interesting. Yeah, you come from the sea and you could have lived you know, you could live pretty much anywhere in Norfolk and be within half an hour 40 minutes of Norwich. But yeah, you head straight out to the sea.

So final question on this. What feels more important to you the process or the end result? It's almost like a trick question that one!

N 26:04

What did I write? I think I put both, I think for different reasons. I mean, I think there's always the interest of making the work and the ideas, I suppose it, when you think process/result, when I think of it in lots of different ways. I suppose there's different elements. So you've got the ideas, the ideas are really important so all the theories, the reading that, I mean I'm thinking now about some of the things in mentioned Peter Lanyon's book, particularly the idea of recording work as you move. I found that, because I've done a whole series of abstract drawings of the walk from Liverpool Street up to the Royal Academy. And I just walked along drawing lines and squiggles and made these compositions and they've been stuck on my wall for about the last 12 months that I keep looking at them. And I know I'm going to do something with that. I've got all these drawings and I'm still processing them. And so I suppose all of that side. I think that's why I made the work: to explore, and to learn and to just have something to do. So, I think that's the most important so yeah, the process, the process of making and being creative. Yeah, actually, interestingly thinking, that's the most important part. Then you get the end result and then, for me, it's always a disappointment. Because you start unpicking it, thinking all that, all for this, is that right? And then I go away. Come back to it, look at it. And then usually then I'll think oh, actually, it's not bad. And then I'll reread it. So there needs to be a distance between the actual pulling the print, making the work going. And then I suppose I've got result as basically dissemination in terms of exhibiting and selling. Oh, that's another, another nightmare. I think I found that really difficult. Yeah, I think that's quite, because when I made all the, I never really made prints, my original my very first degree was in animation. I never studied printmaking. And then I started making prints because I was making lots of work - woodturning and furniture carving, things like that. And then my partner Claire's, I had to give up that workshop because, I decided well I need to make a living what

should I do? And I had a friend who was on the digital animation course and she had a successful career in the film industry, she said get into computers; you'll have lots of work. I did an MSc in graphical computing technology. And so I gave up my workshop and I needed something to, so that's when I took the lino cutting and I thought this is great. It's called making, it's got tools, it's got workshops, it's got practice, it's got real physical connection to materials, but it's also got ideas and it's got, you know, narratives and story and communication. So I just loved it. And, and that's, you know, that's when I started making all this stuff. But yeah, and then so I made work for a very long time since '93, I think recently in the last, moving to Norfolk was, I actually started to exhibit and sell and selling has been a bit...

J 30:22

Is that because you don't like letting go of things or you just don't like the commercial side.

N 30:27

I don't like the commercial side, not comfortable with it. Because of quite quickly you think I was thinking I mean, I think I made, was a victim of making the same work. And when you look around and lots of you know, I'm always envious but other people who were successful, but what's successful? Selling lots of work and everyone knowing your name, but then you think there's a pressure there for your work to be recognizable and fit into a box. And I think quite a lot of people make the same work. 10/15 years down the line their work's now not changed, it's the same. And a number of people go oh I liked what you did before. It's like [groans] so yeah, so there's that's quite tricky, but I think the motivation really comes from just being creative and doing stuff and exploring ideas. And that's, I think that's for me when I'm happiest I think that any maker would be. We all want success.

J 31:37

Saves you having to get a real job!

N 31:40

Then I don't have to go through this. I've got a nice balance.

N 31:44

And I've got a great balance and I'm really happy now, I've only got three days a week. I've got much more time for my own work, and the two seem to connect much better. I teach projects which come from my ideas, and I find that really satisfying so I think that's really nice. But yeah, I've never really thought about why I do it.

J 2:12

Just a compulsion to do it. It's interesting that you went from the furniture with the wood to lino, but then went back to the wood and did the wood engraving again. You've obviously, there's something about wood for you.

N 32:25

Yeah, well, don't use end grain blocks. I use plastic, a polymer, an engineering plastic. Because it's basically I made my own blocks. So...

J 32:40

So that's how you can do them a bit bigger? Because I was amazed when I saw a couple of your prints of how big they are.

N 32:46

Yeah, so that's why they're big for wood engraving because blocks, someone gave me a box 1,000 pounds worth of blocks, but they're little ones they're like 50mm by 70mm and 20 pounds. And I don't think you can get good size ones. Although I'm complaining because there we're all these price increases; the polymer sheet is like a, it's an engineering plastic I use, it, for one meter by two meters used to cost me 60 pounds. And now when I went to go back to look to see how much it is it's like 160 pounds! And then that's glued down onto plywood. And at the moment, I'm experimenting with wood cut and, so all the engraving is usually done on that, and then the wood cut is done in things like ply wood. And then I've done some pine blocks. But I usually use those as multiple blocks, and that's how I used to work when I was doing linocuts. Yeah, I used lino, and then plywood for multiple blocks. And so I've sort of touched back on that again, I found myself doing that.

J 34:16 [points out time]

N 36:29

I hope the report everything works out well. I hope you enjoy making that deeper connection to the area that you're exploring.

J 36:40

Oh yeah, no, it's, it's definitely started. I can see it starting to change my work and make so much more meaning already.

N 36:47

Yeah, I think I think it's really interesting.

Thank you very much. Very well. Take care Bye