



Drawing and Visualisation Research

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# DRAWING IN-SITU: SPACE, MORPHOLOGY AND STONES

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This article describes the author's current in-situ drawing practice and the importance he attaches to perspectival space and morphology in the context of landscape.

## SPACE/PERSPECTIVE



FIG. 1: *HARLECH GRITS: TOWARDS MOEL YSGYFARNOGOD*, PENCIL AND WATERCOLOUR ON PAPER, (545 X 902 MM).

Landscape is the outdoor environment as experienced, we are aware of ourselves *here* whenever we are aware of an array of objects *there*. Landscape is thus fundamentally perspectival, we do not simply *have* a perspective on the world, we *are* perspectives on the world, perspective is integral to a relational ontology. Landscape as an art is an outcome of the profoundest elemental conditions of human life. Painting and drawing affords a methodology for cultivating perceptual experience in a way that passes beyond mere knowledge of its objects to enable a deep-rooted reciprocity. These observations are made in direct opposition to what I have on previous occasions termed the ‘negative critique of landscape’, a long-standing multi-disciplinary denigration of landscape, perspective, and even space, as redundant cultural constructs of bourgeois and imperialist ideological hegemony.

Commencing to draw on blank white paper, out on a cold windswept mountain, is an experience that instills a sense of adventure. While the physical sheet of paper is a discreet bounded object, it serves as a material metaphor for an indeterminate primordial continuum. While a drawing proceeds, space is made apparent; its scale, depth and character emerge in often surprising ways. Drawing makes space visible within a complexity of relations and potentialities that cannot at first all be comprehended; a landscape forms over time, a complex synthesis of perceptual events, it is a process of constructive revelation. Every touch detail and relation is a materialized thought. The

perceiving subject itself is intimately spatial, oriented and thus situated. I consider that beyond the physical features of landscape, one of my fundamental concerns and motivations is with revealing, creating and manipulating space; its unity, character and perspectival integration being bound up with my situated existence.

The geometry of perspective constructs configurations of points, lines and planes that systematically relate a viewpoint to the vanishing points at infinity for all objects within the field of view. I consider that its mathematical/conceptual idealisation and abstraction is not alien to our sensory experience, but rather that it is consistent with our innate perceptual and cognitive capacities. These capacities constitute a primordial condition for the appearance of objects.



FIG. 2: *GREAT ASBY SCAR 1*, PENCIL AND WATERCOLOUR ON PAPER, (489 X 788 MM).

The limestone pavement of Great Asby scar has provided me with perspective recessions of clints, grikes and water runnels.

## MORPHOLOGY AND ROCKS

My recent work in drawing has engaged with a series of natural morphological themes of infinite complexity, structuring space in ways that challenge perception. Complexity is particularly intriguing when it sustains the tension between order and chaos, structure and texture. These themes include: scree slopes and boulder fields that exhibit the meeting of chaotic randomness with the interrupted rhythms and order of gravitational flows

punctuated by fallen rocks, and those distributed by vanished glaciers; the breaking down of sedimentary cliff structures; perspectival arrays of limestone pavements involving the repeated forms of clints, grikes and water eroded runnels. The drawings are made entirely in-situ, involving many repeated sessions in each place. They develop as a complex synthesis of extended observation in which structures are revealed over time in varied light conditions. The intensive development and refinement of form tends to increasingly transform the seemingly static topography of rocks into the fluid rhythmic flowing forms of process.



FIG. 3: *CLOGWYN DU'R ARDDU*, PENCIL AND WATERCOLOUR ON PAPER, (559 X 814 MM).

Clogwyn Du'r Arddu is a volcanic formation created over some 4 to 5 hundred million years ago. Its successive beds rise above screes and boulders that exhibit the meeting of chaotic randomness with the interrupted rhythms and order of gravitational flows punctuated by erratics distributed by a glacier that vanished some 10,000 years ago.





FIG. 4: GLACIATED ROCKS: PEN Y BENGLOG II, PENCIL AND WATERCOLOUR ON PAPER, (508 X 711 MM).

One winter I came across an outcrop of rounded glaciated rocks above Nant Ffrancon on Pen y Benglog (Summit of the Skull) that I recognised as those drawn by John Piper (1903 - 1992) in c. 1946-8: *Glaciated Rocks, Nant Ffrancon*. Eventually, with a bit of searching, I found the very same viewpoint from which I eventually proceeded to make the drawing *Glaciated Rocks: Pen y Benglog II*. The geological term for rocks of this type: *roches moutonnees*, reflects the similarity of these rounded forms to recumbent sheep. Piper's drawings, prints and paintings of Snowdonia constitute one of his most intensive themes. I made three further drawings of this group of rocks from different positions.



FIG. 5: GLACIATED ROCKS: PEN Y BENGLOG I, PENCIL AND WATERCOLOUR ON PAPER, (508 X 711 MM).



FIG. 6: GLACIATED ROCKS: PEN Y BENGLOG III, PENCIL AND WATERCOLOUR ON PAPER, (508 X 711 MM).





FIG. 7: *GLACIATED ROCKS: PEN Y BENGLOG IV*, PENCIL AND WATERCOLOUR ON PAPER, (508 X 711 MM).

The activity of drawing involves walking as a fundamental component. On mountains it often takes a good two hours to reach a spot where I work on a drawing, repeatedly, some twenty to thirty times. By the time I return as it get dark, I have often spent four or so hours walking with all the necessary kit. Prior to starting a drawing, I spend many days walking to discover subjects. This is not merely a physical necessity, the experience of walking with aesthetic purposiveness intensifies environmental awareness. Our spatial sensibility is necessarily embodied, perspectival situatedness is not only optical, but involves all the senses. A landscape possesses a unity that is produced by the relationship of a human subject considered in terms of scale, activity, movement, perception and conception with the physical environment of a region. Walking affords a heightened understanding of topography and scale that informs drawing itself. Being free to walk is at one with being free to for the indeterminate attentiveness that constitutes aesthetic engagement.

Drawings form the basis for making paintings in the studio. The drawings are an immediate but extended response to the place, in the place, they thus differ from the subsequent paintings in this important respect. The paintings however give a further purpose to the drawings, a dialogue is created between the drawings and the paintings in which the paintings send me back to continue working on the drawings. In this way, the material process is bound up with the developing reciprocity of subject and nature.

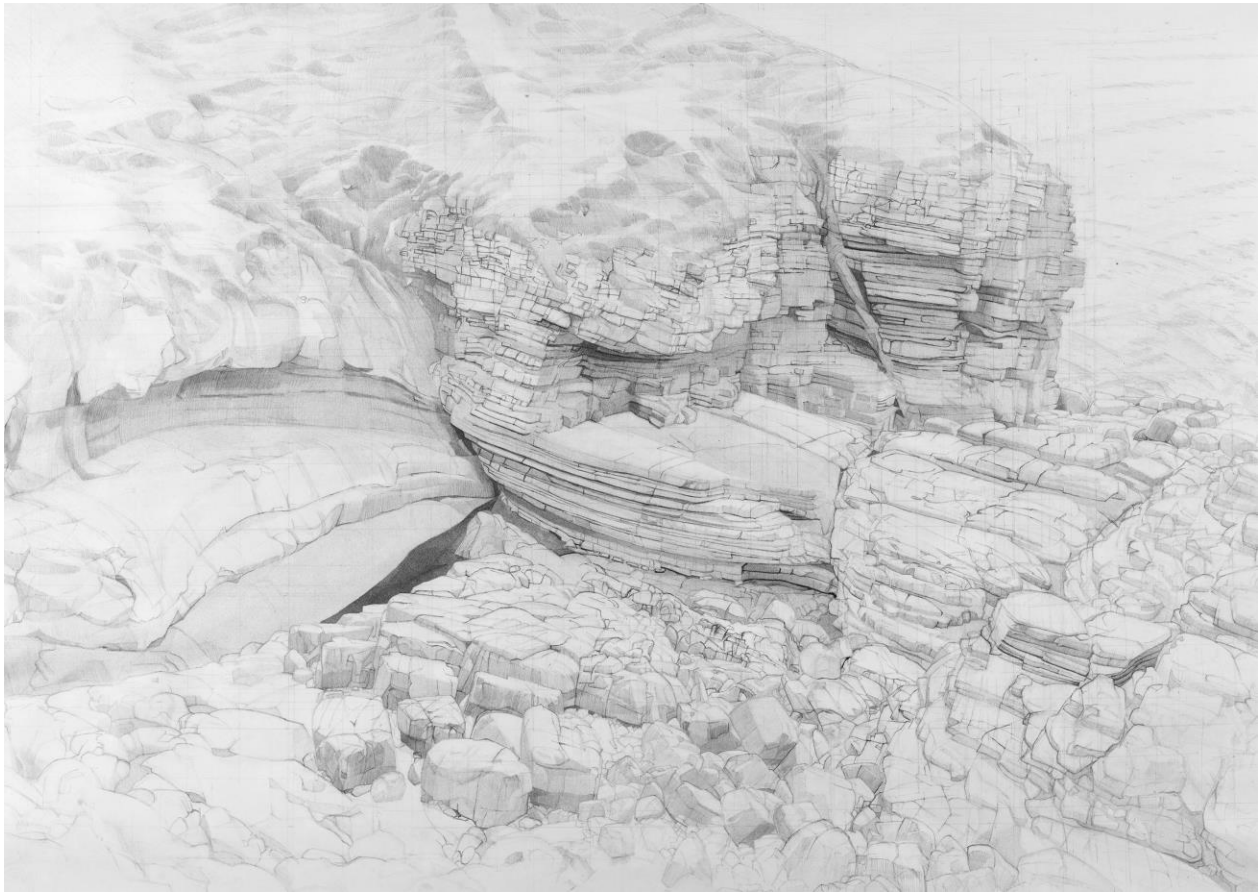


FIG. 8: LIMESTONE CLIFFS: CAIM, PENCIL AND WATERCOLOUR ON PAPER, (490 X 685 MM).

## SELECTED WRITINGS

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