
LEITRIM SCULPTURE CENTRE

LANDSCAPE, ECOLOGY & ENVIRONMENT RESEARCH RESIDENCIES I 2020/21 (LEER)

Felt Mapping

Research Portfolio Kiera O'Toole

Contexts & Themes
Specific Sites & Locations
Research Strategies & Methodologies

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LANDSCAPE, ECOLOGY & ENVIRONMENT
RESEARCH RESIDENCIES 2020/21 (LEER)

INTRODUCTION

The Landscape, Ecology & Environment Research Residencies is a new programming strand developed at Leitrim Sculpture Centre during 2020. Offering up to 5 residency placements over a one-year period the scheme provides artists working in contemporary visual arts with the space, time and support for the research and development of new engagements with landscape, ecology and/or environmental contexts and themes and to develop from this work, new directions, approaches and methodologies within their own practice.

Each working with ideas generated within the research strands: 'Contexts & Themes'; 'Sites & Locations' and 'Strategies & Methodologies' artists have assembled examples of their experimental work and ideas within the current exhibition. Alongside the presentation of art works in various mediums artists have also included short research portfolio's that afford a unique perspective on to the different research processes and orientations of their practice in relation to the wider contexts of landscape, ecology and environment.

Artists participating in 2020/21 are: Catriona Leahy; Kiera O'Toole; Marie Farrington; Pdraig Cunningham and Siobhan McGibbon, and the research residencies are set to continue in the coming years.

The Leitrim Sculpture Centre would like to thank all of the artists participating and the Arts Council who provided financial support for the project.

Seán O'Reilly
Curator (LEER)



The Landscape, Ecology & Environment Research Residencies are supported by the Arts Council

Glossary

| | |
|-------------------|--|
| Atmosphere | Spatially poured-out emotions which are experienced affectively and holistically by the subjective felt body. Atmospheres are produced and perceived (Böhme, Griffero, Schmitz). |
| Drawing | To be human is to make a mark. Drawing can record the 'emotional vibrations' of a site. |
| Emotions | Emotions are perceived as external, spatial and authoritative rather than a psychological understanding of an inner 'private psychic state' (Griffero). |
| Felt Body | Directly felt and is not assigned to the physical body without using the five senses or habitual body (Schmitz). |
| Felt Maps | Recordings of a site's 'emotional vibrations' as sensed through the pathically felt body. |
| Patheur | An individual that follows their intuitive impulses and are significantly affected by the emotions of atmosphere (Hasse). |
| Pathic | An affective involvement that the perceiver cannot critically mitigate the intrusiveness of (Griffero). |

'Felt Drawing'

1. Contexts & Themes

Introduction

Drawing

This project is underpinned by my current PhD practice-led research which examines if drawing has the capacity to record the 'emotional vibrations' of a site's atmosphere which can act as an active agent and co-creator of the drawings. Situated within contemporary drawing, the project is based on the widely held premise that drawing is an immediate form of communication and drawing's characteristics are the oldest and most fundamental form of artistic expression (Dexter 2013; Farthing 2005; Pergam 2015; Petherbridge 2011). The research project draws from practitioner-researcher Deborah Harty's premise that 'drawing *is* phenomenology' (Harty 2009). Based on Harty's research, the processes of drawing in-situ and site-responsive drawing act as devices for perceiving and recording the hidden felt aspects of a site. Through my tacit and material knowledge and my "pathic sense and emotive modality of knowing", the site-responsive drawing presents the moment of withdrawal and bears witness to the act of 'being there' or, I am, to quote Harty, "situated, a mark inhabiting space and time, an embodied blot." (Harty 2015, 51)

Theoretical framework

The project draws upon the philosophy of new phenomenologist Tonino Griffero's (1958-) concept of 'pathic aesthetics' project of which the principals are; presentness, first impression, atmospheres, affordances and quasi-things (Griffero 2020, 2018, 2017). For clarification, the concept of aesthetics refers to the original intention for aesthetics by Alexander Gottlieb Baumgarten's (1714-1762) which states that 'sensible aesthetics' is the foundation of experience. Importantly, the concept of 'pathic' does not refer to pathetic or pathological rather a letting go where one is 'subject to' a site's atmosphere. Pathic knowledge is perceiving intuitively in an involuntary and affective mode; the felt bodily presence of experience and the non-cognitive knowledge belonging to the corporeal, the situational and the actional modes of knowledge. As a result, this praxis as research takes the position that 'we' are open to what happens to us.

Artist Micheal Craig-Martin wrote that for a work of art to be genuinely experienced, it needs to be felt more than understood (Craig-Martin 1995). The philosophy of phenomenology and new phenomenology theoretically frames and informs this project to examine how drawing can record the 'emotional vibrations' of a site's atmosphere (Schmitz 2019). New phenomenology challenges traditional phenomenology's position of the body-subject by the recovery of the felt body (Griffero 2020, 2018; Schmitz 2019, 2011). To contextualise site-responsive drawing, I am exploring site-specificity within the atmospheric paradigm where emotions are external, spatial and authoritative rather than an inner 'private psychic state' (Griffero 2019, 419). Atmospheres as characterised as vague spaces with particular moods that can be produced and perceived by the drawer and viewer (Böhme 2017). By emotionally affecting us, atmospheres are felt as a specific perceptual tone that affectively involve one's pathically felt body (Böhme 2017, Griffero 2017, Schmitz 2019). I posit that a site's atmosphere can act as an active agent and co-creator of the drawings. Through the act of drawing, the project seeks to visually manifest the involuntary and affectively felt bodily experience as situated. By paying close attention, the 'emotions of atmospheres' can collectively touch us through our felt bodies to enact an intimacy; a 'holding space' for something intermediate where we can affirm our presence, which is always and already happening.

2. Specific Sites & Locations

Site

Critical readings of site-specificity in Western art history contextualises the research and focuses on the origination of site-specificity in European and American modernism. The term 'site-responsive' is utilised in this research as it speaks to how the felt-body of the drawer responds to the site as an inherent part of the art making process, rather than 'site specific' which can be site-orientated, site-related or site-referenced (Kwon 2004, 1).-This inquiry may take into account quasi-things, materiality of the site, topography, locality, historical and cultural associations that I, as the perceiver, bring to potential drawing sites (Kreider, O'Leary 2015). The project also considers the environmentally sensitive nature of the site.

A site is chosen only if it is located on or near a public space. Sites can include external and internal environments and the sites can vary from gallery spaces, non-gallery spaces, interior or exterior public spaces. Moreover, a site must awaken a first impression in the artist as a felt immediate interruption in their habitual flow (Griffero 2019) Although the sites are located in public places, the site-responsive drawings are not discussed within the realm of 'public art' which is often associated with monumental permanent works. In addition, the concepts of genius-loci or place which often tied to ideas of attachment, identity and sense of place (Seamon 2018, 2013, 2012) and hide the founding idea of atmospheres as 'qualitative-sentimental' (Griffero 2018,11). Whilst the site-responsive drawing incorporates a performative aspect, the focus is on the co-creation of the drawing by the felt body of the artist and the emotional atmospheric charge rather than a merely shared experience between the practitioner and audience. The viewer or passerby through an unexpected encounter with the site-responsive drawing may be stirred in their everyday experience of the site.

There is a slippage between the physical site (experience - drawings - atmosphere) and the 're-presentation' of the project within a gallery space. Given the hypothesis of the project is to investigate drawing's capacity to record the emotion of a site's atmosphere, the project outcomes in the gallery space are viewed as additional artworks that conceptually relate to the physical site drawings. The gallery which has its own particular atmospheric tone is a space where the viewer is expecting 'an experience' because art permeates an experience (Dewy 2005) and this experience differs significantly from the experience or encounter of artwork in everyday public spaces. Robert Smithson notes that his work exists in two realms - outdoor where it can only be experienced on site and indoor where objects taken from the site are displayed so both works complete one another (Smithson 1968). However, unlike Smithson, the external works of art and the internal gallery works of art are conceptually embedded with one and other yet they must be perceived within their own atmosphere. In this project, the in-situ drawings of the handball alley serve as a phenomenological recording device to become embodied drawings as 'felt maps' in the gallery space which are digitally collaged in tandem with a stop motion animation.

Initial site visits and potential drawing sites, November/ December 2021



Above: Left to right; First Protestant, Site in between buildings, Manorhamilton Castle, Derelict building, Courthouse
 Left: Sketch of 'site in-between buildings, Handball Alley.



Initial potential sites

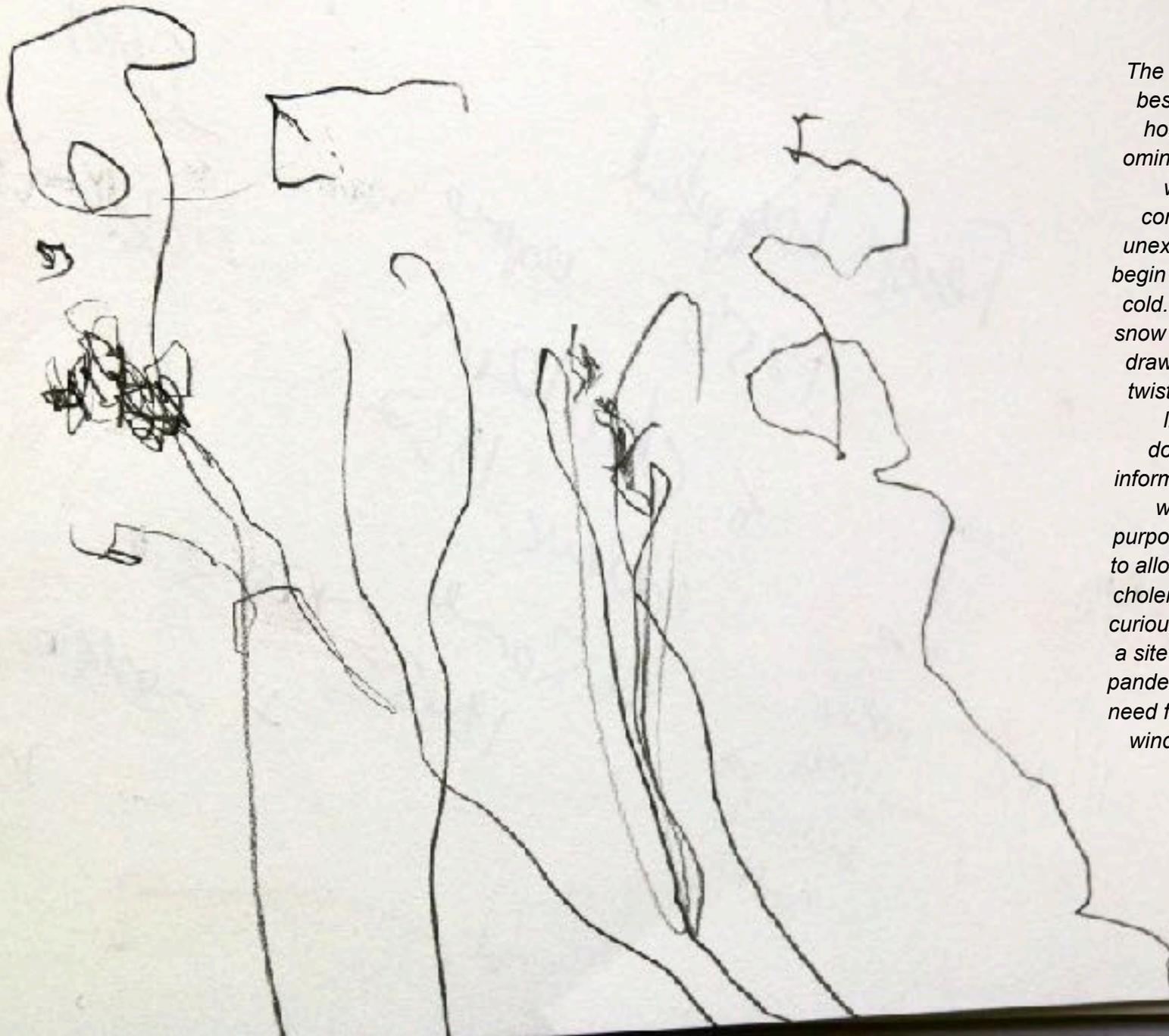
Note: Although I visited many sites in Manorhamilton, these are the key sites that were potential drawing sites.

| | |
|--|--|
| First Protestant Church | Near main street. First Protestant Church in Ireland. Derelict building. Notice slabs in the interior ad exterior of the ruins. An overall pathic sense of heaviness. |
| Site in-between buildings | Interesting 'nook' off the main street. There was no particular atmospheric tone that resonated in my pathically felt body. |
| Manorhamilton Castle | The historical and cultural significance of the site does not allow for site-responsive drawing. |
| Workhouse - Fever Hospital 1840 - 1845 | Near hospital and sits on hilltop site. Immediate emotional atmospheric tone of illness and weakness. |
| Courthouse 1815 - 1820 | Near main Street of Manorhamilton. The architectural features of the three fanlights with cut sandstone windows initially drew my interest. However, the building is explicitly attractive and there was no particular atmospheric tone that resonated in my pathically felt body. |
| Handball Alley | Located near GGA field. There is a pathic felt bodily feeling of illness which is recorded in several in-situ drawings. |

Workhouse, Manorhamilton Dec 2020



The building is a derelict a fever hospital built in 1850 in response to the cholera outbreak epidemic 1832 and also in response to the famine 1745-49. It became a workhouse afterwards in 1842 which included many inmates.



The derelict building beside the current hospital appears ominous. I notice the windows are considerably and unexpectedly large. I begin to draw. It is very cold. It has started to snow and as a result, I draw quickly making twisted and delicate lines that fall downwards. I'm informed that the large windows were purposefully built wide to allow fresh air due to cholera epidemic. How curious it is to visit such a site during the Covid pandemic where we still need fresh air and open windows to survive.

Felt Drawing

Handball Alley



Left to right: Interior of handball alley, in-situ drawing of emotion of the atmospheric, in-situ drawing of bird sounds.

No-one is around. I hear birds. I enter into the alley. It is formidable. The size and form of the structure bears down on me. I'm vaguely aware of handball alleys place in Irish history in relation to its function for sport and for political purposes. Dorothy Cross' project Chaism comes to mind (Cross 2005).

Standing in the corner of the huge concrete structure, I am hidden from view. I am conscious of the doorway as someone could visit at any moment.

I begin to draw.

I make quick gestural line drawings. I do not look at the drawing. I hear some bird sounds. I do not know what type of birds, there is more than one type of sound. I choose one sound and I draw it. I stop when I feel I have recorded the sound in drawing. I review my drawings and analyse the marks.

Oldest protestant Church in Ireland



I notice the interior slabs on the ground and they remind me of the horizontal gravestones in the Protestant Church which are often found on the inside of ruined churches.

Left to right: Oldest Protestant Church, interior ground of handball alley

I'm standing in the middle of the handball alley. My hand drifts across the page as it twists and turns, I stop. I realise the drawing reminds of the in-situ drawing at the fever hospital. Both drawings have similar twisted lines that manifest the affective sphere which is felt as an illness.

Note: This is possible because the felt body 'exceeds the skin contour' and can perceive the affective sphere as belonging to me without relying the material body schema (Griffero 2010, Schmitz, 2016)

I recall the feeling of illness and the gravestones and the holes in the walls, I look at the drawing, then the slabs on the ground and up at the walls that surround me.

I am inside a tomb.

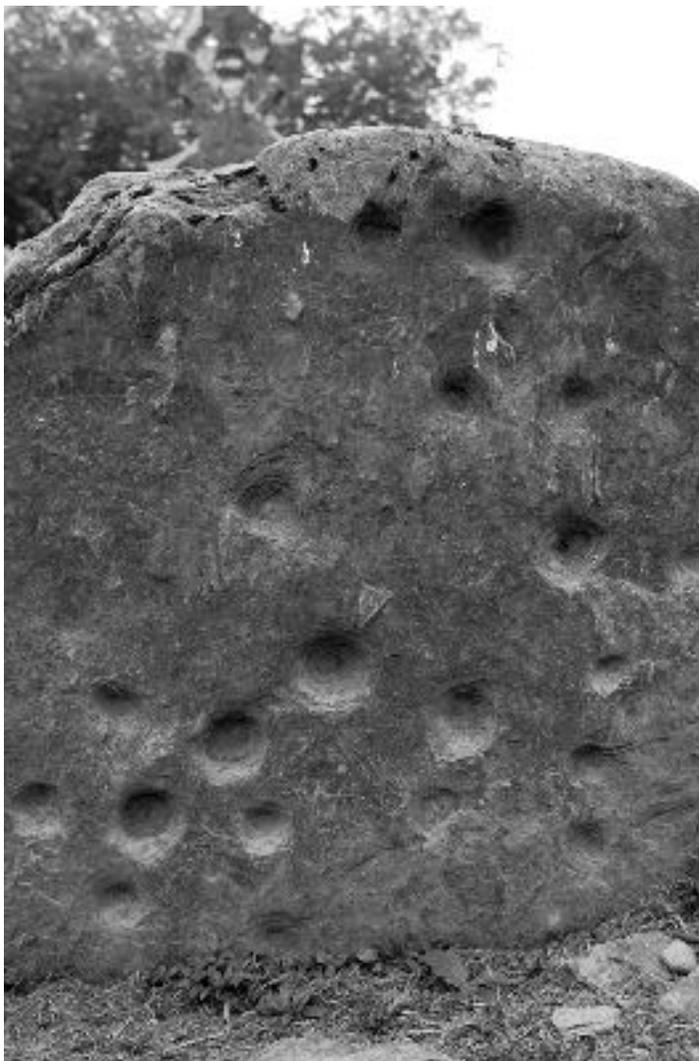
My experiences, memories and cultural knowledge combine to inform my articulation of the atmospheric tone and what it feels like for me in that moment is a feeling of illness. Even the sound of the black crows added to the emotional tone of the site.

Now, I can leave the site.



Holes

There are lots of small holes in the side of walls of the handball alley which appear to have been created by the weather. They remind me of a previous project that explored the megalithic headstones in a Preban Cemetery, Wicklow. I quickly sketch three of the holes in the wall unsure of their meaning in the project.



Right to left: Megalithic stone (detail, top; sketch of holes, holes in wall of handball alley.

Handball Alley ; Selected site for site-responsive drawing



| | |
|-------------------------|---|
| Site | Handball Alley, Manorhamilton, Leitrim, Ireland |
| Duration | 10 days site visits 2/3 days site- responsive drawing |
| Dates | May 2021 |
| Atmospheric tone | Illness, uneasiness, |
| Drawing Media | Charcoal _a material that is the remains of something else. |

Handball alley- site-responsive drawing
Charcoal
May 2021



Handball alley- site-responsive drawing
Charcoal
May 2021





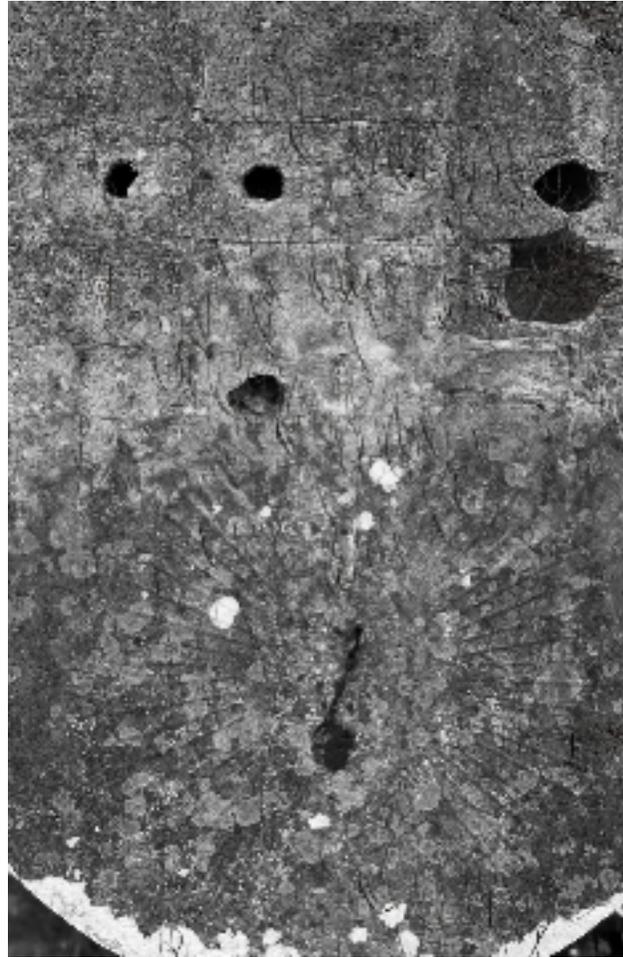
Drone footage by Colm Farrell Films

I stopped drawing after two days. I needed space and time to reflect on the drawings . I was unsatisfied with the process of the drawing .

Given this is a research project and my concern is exploring drawing's capacity to record the emotional vibrations of a site, I decided to abandon the drawing and focus on the practice of drawing in-situ and how I might re-present this work in a gallery setting.



Digital Collages



Felt Map of Manorhamilton, digital collage of megalithic gravestones, site-responsive wall drawing on handball alley and gestural drawing Manorhamilton, Leitrim on Hahnemuhle Photo Rag 300gsm,

3. Research Strategies, Methodologies & Artistic Approaches

The key objective of the research project is to critically engage with the ideas and processes of site-responsive and in-situ drawing practices.

The aim of project is to develop a practice-led methodology for site-responsive drawing that validates the drawer's pathic experience of the site meaning the atmospheric and felt bodily aspects of experience. Griffero asserts that a transformation of life into a work of art is possible only if the involvement is succeeded by a semi-reflective distance. In this project, both the drawing in-situ and site-specific drawing process are semi-reflective. The research will analyse the ways in which drawing may validate the emotional vibrations of the site's atmosphere as felt by the researcher's body. At this stage in the research, the methodology is in four strands. Each strand informs the next to develop into an evolving investigation through practice.

Methods

1. Developing new drawing media for site-specific drawing practice
2. Drawing in-situ practice
3. Site-responsive drawing practice
4. Field research
5. Studio research with time and space to develop drawing media

- A series of 'felt maps' meaning a collection of the in-situ drawings
- A site-responsive drawing
- A stop motion animation of a 'felt map'
- A series of digital collages
- Presentations and artist talks

Strand One; Locate Site and Record ‘Emotion of Atmosphere’ through Drawing In-Situ

Though a series of line drawings using pencil on paper, the practice of drawing in-situ provides an immediate and direct drawing approach. This method records the pathically felt body as it resounds to the site’s atmospheric tone through expressive gestural and linear inflexions. In other words, the line manifests my felt experience given that drawing can “record the trace of the drawer” (Harty, 2015). By making use of line only, it may be possible to analyse the differences and similarities of the characteristics of line. The resulting drawing may be utilised as a motif for the site-responsive drawing.

Strand Two: Reflection and Research

- Reflection of the emotional tone of the site and the resulting in-situ drawings. The drawings will generate embodied ‘felt maps’.
- Analyse the site’s physical aspects such as potential drawing surface, shelter from weather, public access
- Investigate the site for potential plant/earth pigments for drawing media and confirm drawing media
- Gain permission to draw on the site from relevant local authorities, private landowner landlord etc.
- Inquire into the site’s historical, cultural, social aspects if relevant
- Analyse potential environmental and logistical issues

Strand Three: Studio

- Material Research for site-responsive drawing
- Prepare drawing media and equipment for drawing

Strand Four: Site-Responsive Drawing

- Reflection of the emotional tone of the site and the resulting in-situ drawings and analyse if the emotional tone has changed substantially or remained similar in character.
- Prepare equipment and drawing media
- Draw
- Document and reflect

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