

University for the Creative Arts  
Research Project Portfolios

# Seeing Through the Ground

By Andrea Gregson



# Project Details

Name of Researcher:	Andrea Gregson
Name of Output:	Seeing Through The Ground
Collaborators:	Art Historian Dr. Elizabeth Fisher wrote an essay for the zine publication at Grizedale Forest
UCARO link/s:	<a href="https://research.uca.ac.uk/5150/">https://research.uca.ac.uk/5150/</a>
Output Type:	M – Exhibition; solo exhibitions and site-specific installations of sculptural works
Year and mode of dissemination:	<p>‘Restless Terrain’: Sculpture from the Anthropocene, AVA Gallery, University of East London (17-24 March 2016)</p> <p>‘Checkpoint’ and ‘Korssting’ (2017) Public artworks sited in Glisholme Forest Featured in ArtPark, Denmark</p> <p>‘Seeing Through The Ground’ (2019) Grizedale Forest Gallery, Cumbria (5 July – 31 August 2019)</p>
External funding	<p>London Fieldworks - Outlandia residency (2015) = £250</p> <p>Henry Moore Foundation (2015-16) = £3000</p> <p>University of East London (2015-16) = In kind support including studio space, foundry &amp; workshop access, technical assistance, gallery space</p> <p>Gæsteatelier Hollufgård (2017) = £1775 plus in-kind support including accommodation, access to studio and workshops and technical assistance.</p> <p>Arts Council of England Project Grant (2019) = £12,000</p> <p>Forestry England (in kind support, 2019) = £3000</p>



*Wax cast from river, Glen Nevis, 2015*



*Wax cast of glacial boulder in stream,  
Glen Nevis, 2015*

# Synopsis

‘Seeing Through the Ground’ explores the connections and conflicting relationships between human activity, mass production and nature. It examines the agency of objects and the form of things in the structures shared amongst humans and non-humans alike. Developing new sculpture and drawing, the project developed across several linked projects that shared common research aims, questions and processes. It resulted in solo exhibitions/installations of public sculpture.

The research commenced with an art residency at Outlandia, Fort William, which tested and consolidated knowledge of casting in nature. The research was developed further during a Henry Moore Foundation Residency in the School of Fine Art at University of East London. There Gregson visited the Thames foreshore to locate fragments from industry and nature which she cast into works including ‘Restless Terrain’ (2016). A further residency at Gæsteatelier Hollufgård, Denmark (2017) resulted in two new works ‘Korssting’ and ‘Checkpoint’. In 2019, Gregson continued the research in

Grizedale Forest, locating former sites of industry and making work for her solo show ‘Seeing Through the Ground’ at Grizedale Forest Gallery; a second iteration of ‘Checkpoint’ was installed in the forest.

The research offers new ways of thinking about materials and their histories. Gregson draws on processes of casting and drawing to uncover new knowledge in the following areas: the nature and behaviour of materials; mass, volume and spatial perception; artists’ labour and non-verbal thought. This knowledge feeds an intricate, evolving understanding of her environment through sculptural process, transforming materials to mimic forces in nature.

Supporting contextual information outlines the project’s underpinning research context, aims and methods and includes images of the making and exhibition of the artefacts. It also includes a PDF of the ‘Seeing through the Ground’ booklet, and information on funding and follow-on activities.



# Context

Gregson's art practice has grown from a post-modernist position, questioning histories of site, the critical context of artistic practice, sculpture and monumentality, value and the production of materials. The research explores sculpture's potential to reveal materiality, site and artistic labour as a series of relationships, referencing post-structural theory (Deleuze and Guattari), object orientated ontology (Graham Harman) and the writings of Robert Smithson. Within her specialism, Gregson has developed experimental approaches to casting, exploring sculpture's potential to transform and collapse matter, whilst drawing attention to changing material states as a metaphor to explore the Anthropocene.

Her practice is part of a growing group of artists whose work engages with nature, climate change and materiality, in particular, waste matter and geology in relation to industrial capitalism. Artists such as Gustav Metzger, Guiseppe Penone, Heather & Ivan Morrison, Alice Channer, Marie Lund, Annie Cattrell and Katie Patterson have informed her practice. Gregson has engaged with public art and the historical context of placing sculpture in the landscape. Her research

critically examines site as a context of human history and our relationship between industry and nature. In 'Checkpoint' (2017- 2020) and 'Korssting' (2017), visitors were invited to question their relation to nature from the position of the sculpture, to view the landscape through portals whilst seeing interior drawings that map objects present in the forest and the nearby motorway.

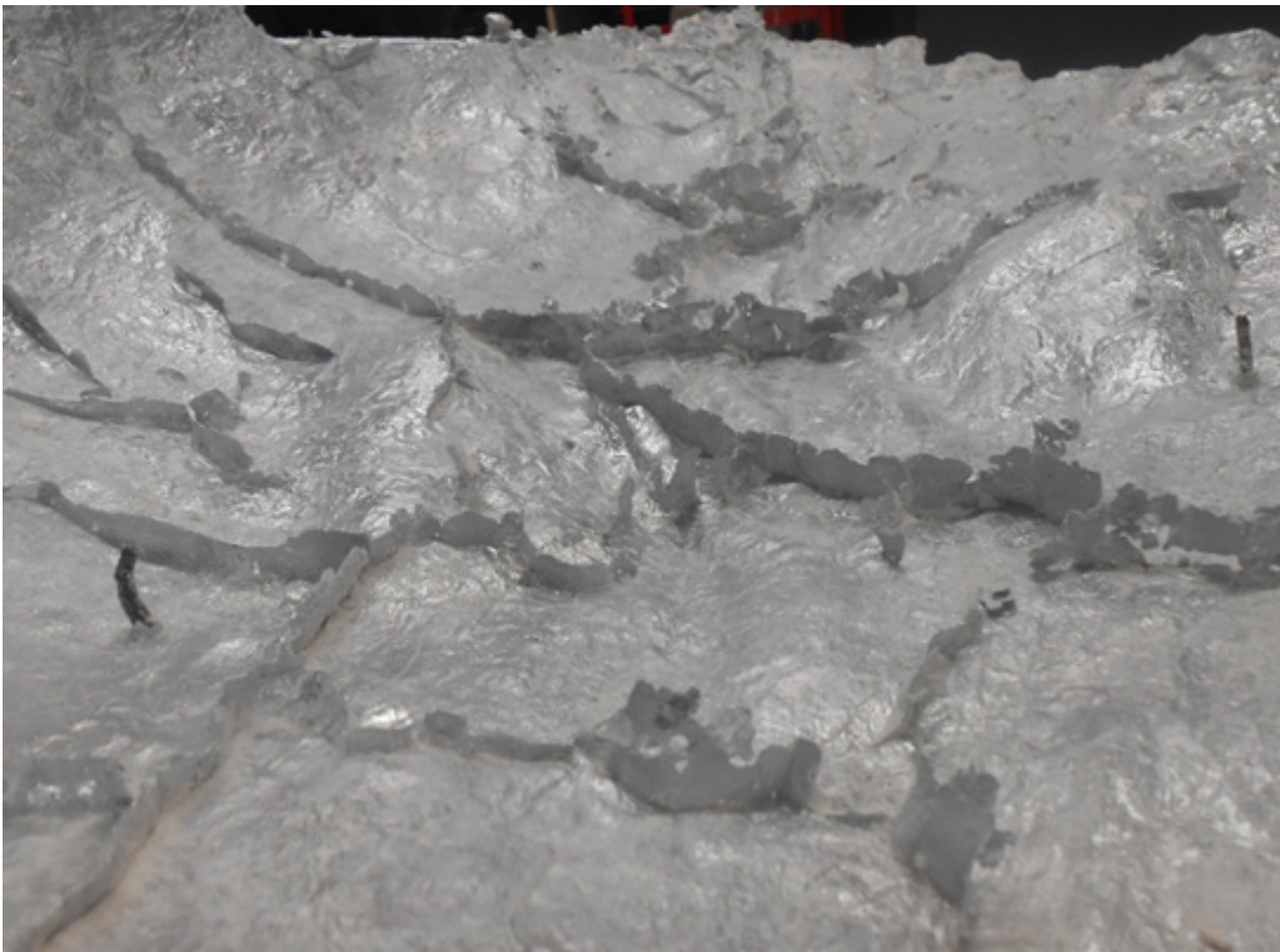
This subject matter builds upon Gregson's collaboration with Gustav Metzger in creating the 'Facing Extinction' conference and exhibitions (2014) which investigated how the art and design world, scientists and academics engage with current debates around extinction and climate change. In 2015, Gregson collaborated with London Fieldworks to co-curate Metzger's 'Remember Nature' project with Hans Ulrich Obrist, Serpentine Gallery, Central Saint Martins and Agnès B.

## REFERENCES

Harman, G., 2018. *Object-oriented ontology: A new theory of everything*. Penguin UK.



'Checkpoint', wood, drawings on fabric,  
Glisholme Forest, Fyn, Denmark, 2017  
Art Residency at Gaestatelier Hollufgaard,  
2017



*'Itinerant Moraine', aluminium (200 × 124 × 60cm), UEL, 2016*

*Henry Moore Foundation Residency,  
University of East London, 2015-16*





*'Itinerant Moraine', aluminium/grog (200 × 124  
x 60cm), UEL, 2016*

# Research Questions and Aims

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## Research questions:

What new insights can sculptural casting drawing practices bring to geological and post-industrial sites and their histories?

What are the differences and similarities between material forms through deep time and human activity, sculptural process, and mass production?

What are the connections and differences between artists' labour, nature's labour and industrial labour?

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## Research aims:

To develop sculptural and drawing practice within the context of materiality, nature, archaeology, site and geology.

To research landscape as a relic of past production formed by non-human and human actions.

To research lost histories, re-enact past labour, collaborate with materials and industrial processes in sites of interest; those on the border between the natural and the artificial.





*'Checkpoint', wood, drawings on fabric,  
Glisholme Forest, Fyn, Denmark, 2017  
Art Residency at Gaestatelier Hollufgaard,  
2017*





*Andrea Gregson and Mark Sowden during bronze pour at University of East London foundry, 2016*



*Andrea Gregson making rock frottage experiments at Half Moon Bay, Heysham, Lancs, 2016*





*'Torsion', bronze, wood, (45 × 157 × 42cm),  
UEL, 2016*

# Research Methods and Process

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The research process is based on placing in equivalence studies of geological processes of deep time with the rapid material transformation of sculpture, observing how materials and objects fracture and erode in both.

The methods adapted reflect a deepening interest in the interweaving of human activity and non-human forces exploring the (inherently sculptural) processes that have defined human relationships to nature. For example, 'Itinerant Moraine' is an aluminium cast of a glacial boulder, found by a waterfall, during her residency at Outlandia (2015). Gregson first cast the boulder in wax, carried it down the mountain and reproduced it in aluminium. An aluminium factory is sited below Glen Nevis, powered by water, which runs down the steep slopes of this collapsed caldera. Gregson proposes her labour of casting from wax to aluminium is a metaphor of human industry and manufacturing, echoing our dependency on mass production of nature.

Within the historical context of sculpture and object making, many of the materials that Gregson repurposes are waste matter, from plastic plaster sacks to webbed fruit nets. During the Henry Moore Foundation Artist Residency (2015-16), Gregson visited the Thames foreshore where she found

multiple layers of history, geology and industrial waste matter brought up by tides such as flint nodules and coke from the former Beckton Gasworks. Consequently, a piece of eroded geotextile was later reconfigured into bronze; 'Restless Terrain' (2016) a major work, was completed during her research sabbatical. The work now occupies an ambiguous state, between micro- and macro-scales, human and geological temporalities.

During this research, Gregson has discovered the transformative effect installation and sculpture can have on the viewer, as a psychological trigger of remembered objects or imaginary places. The metal cast works from 2011-2016 explore the unseen inside space of sculpture, contesting predictable associations of monumentality, vanity and power, and instead underlining impermanence, memory and the speculative creative process. These bronze and aluminium sculptures, originally cast from waste matter, are literally inside out, giving the object an interior and exterior life and expanding upon the potential for objects to have an 'aura'. The apertures facilitate this relationship and offer generous perspectives into the hollows of the bronze. For Gregson, the interaction between the work and the public is very important, the ability to transfer ideas through objects to other people.





*Andrea Gregson patinating 'Restless Terrain', bronze sculpture made at University of East London, during her research sabbatical in 2016.*

# Research Contribution

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## Research insights and contribution:

Gregson uses drawing as an opportunity to navigate ideas and thoughts in flux. Drawing, alongside improvisation and experimentation with materials and objects, works as a catalyst for ideas to evolve. Using frottage to emboss structures and surfaces brings a tangible presence to materiality, creating a haptic understanding of space and time. Gregson sees drawing as a means to excavate ideas in motion, to lead into sculptural practice, be it in wood construction, assemblage, or casting, creating works that pursue common research approaches but that all provide new insights relating to their specific geographical sites.

For instance, during her residency in Grizedale Forest (2019), Gregson researched material evidence of the landscape's industrial past. She located former iron smelting sites by the mass of slag fragments buried among the moss at Hob Gill and Stony Hazel Finery Forge, an eighteenth century industrial ruin. At Hob Gill, a direct wax cast was taken from the bedrock in a nearby stream and later cast in iron. This work, 'Carbon Delta' examines the co-dependency of water in past and present industry, making connections to the glacial past that shaped the landscape and the rivers that later powered mills and forges.

One work 'Touch-stone' was made with the public in an intensive collective drawing that took shape over 7 hours at Stott Park Bobbin Mill. Immersed in conversations with the public whilst drawing, Gregson brought new meaning to the act of drawing, a communal process of recording the topography of a slate wall on a coppice barn. Over 200 people used graphite (a local material) to trace the slate formations of the wall, built by Victorian masons, as an act of remembered labour. Graphite was mined extensively during the eighteenth century in Borrowdale for the iron industry and gunpowder production. All Gregson's artworks reach out to engage new audiences with sculpture, materiality, geology, industry and landscape, exploring how materials are transformed through sculptural process as a metaphor of mass production.

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*'Flagrant Matter', bronze/plastic (56 x 56 x 60cm), UEL, 2016*



*'Flagrant Matter', bronze/plastic (56 x 56 x 60cm), UEL, 2016*





*'Restless Terrain', bronze/steel (206 × 57.6 x 50 cm), UEL, 2016*



*'Spectre', installation composed of porcelain objects, UEL, 2016*

*'Spectre' (detail), porcelain, UEL, 2016*



# Research Dissemination and Recognition

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Dissemination:

‘Restless Terrain’: Sculpture from the Anthropocene (2015-2016)

Art residency, Outlandia, Fort William (April, 2015)

Henry Moore Foundation Artist Residency, University of East London (1 September 2015 – 28 February 2016)

AVA Gallery, University of East London (17-24 March 2016)

‘Checkpoint’ and ‘Korssting’ (2017)

5 week residency, Gæsteatelier Hollufgård, Denmark

Public artworks sited in the nearby Glisholme Forest

Featured in ArtPark, Denmark (2017)

A second version of ‘Checkpoint’ was installed in Grizedale Forest:

<https://research.uca.ac.uk/4510/82/videoplayback.mp4>

‘Seeing Through The Ground’ (2019)

Grizedale Forest Gallery, Cumbria (5 July – 31 August 2019)

Participatory drawing event at Stott Park Bobbin Mill.

Art historian and curator Dr. Lizzie Fisher authored an essay and 300 zines were produced including the essay.

‘Seeing Through The Ground’ will be further disseminated in a solo exhibition at Danielle Arnaud Gallery, London in 2021, where existing and new work will be presented.

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# Research Dissemination and Recognition

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## Influence of research:

Invited speaker at Gustav Metzger Symposium 'Ethics into Aesthetics', West Den Haag, Netherlands (26 January 2018)  
[http://www.westdenhaag.nl/exhibitions/17\\_11\\_Gustav\\_Metzger/more3](http://www.westdenhaag.nl/exhibitions/17_11_Gustav_Metzger/more3)

Invited speaker at UCA Canterbury as part of Start 19 (12 March 2019)  
<https://sculpture-network.org/en/view/event/1062>

Review in The Westmoreland Gazette, Cumbria (28 July 2019)  
<https://www.thewestmorlandgazette.co.uk/leisure/17799968.new-exhibition-delves-grizedales-industrial-past/>

Invited to an interview by Asian Curator (14 July 2020)  
<https://asiancurator.com/andrea-gregson/>

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## Follow-on-activities:

Gregson collaborated with Gustav Metzger to curate 'Facing Extinction Conference', UCA Farnham (6 - 7 June 2014)  
<https://gustavmetzgerucafarnham.wordpress.com/facing-extinction-the-exhibition-gustav-metzger/>

Gregson collaborated with Gustav Metzger to curate 'Facing Extinction Exhibition' at James Hockey Gallery & Herbert Read Gallery, UCA Farnham & Canterbury (2014)

'Facing Extinction exhibition' was livestreamed as part of Gustav Metzger's digital commission during the Serpentine Marathon, 'Extinction: Visions Of The Future', Serpentine Gallery, London (October 2014)  
<https://www.serpentinegalleries.org/whats-on/gustav-metzger-mass-media-todayandyesterdaycouk-0/>

Invited to exhibit bronze and aluminium sculptures in group show, 'Down to Zero', curated by Michael Roberts at Patrick Heide Gallery, London (11 Sept – 11 October 2014)  
<https://www.patrickheide.com/exhibitions/down-zero>

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# Research Dissemination and Recognition

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## Follow-on-activities:

Gregson was a co-curator of Gustav Metzger's 'Remember Nature' project with London Fieldworks, Hans Ulrich Obrist, Serpentine Gallery, Agnes B, & CSM (4 November 2015)  
<https://www.serpentinegalleries.org/whats-on/remember-nature/>

Gregson was invited to participate in group show, 'Gestures of Resistance', curated by Jean Wainwright, Romantso, Athens, Greece (April 17)  
<http://gesturesofresistance.com/info/andrea-gregson.html>

Gregson was commissioned to design a series of bronzes for the walkways on Tower Bridge, London with London Sculpture Workshop (2017)

Gregson was invited to participate in group show 'The Collection' at Squires and Partners Architects curated by London Bronze Casting (April 2019)  
<https://www.londonbronzecasting.com/the-collection>

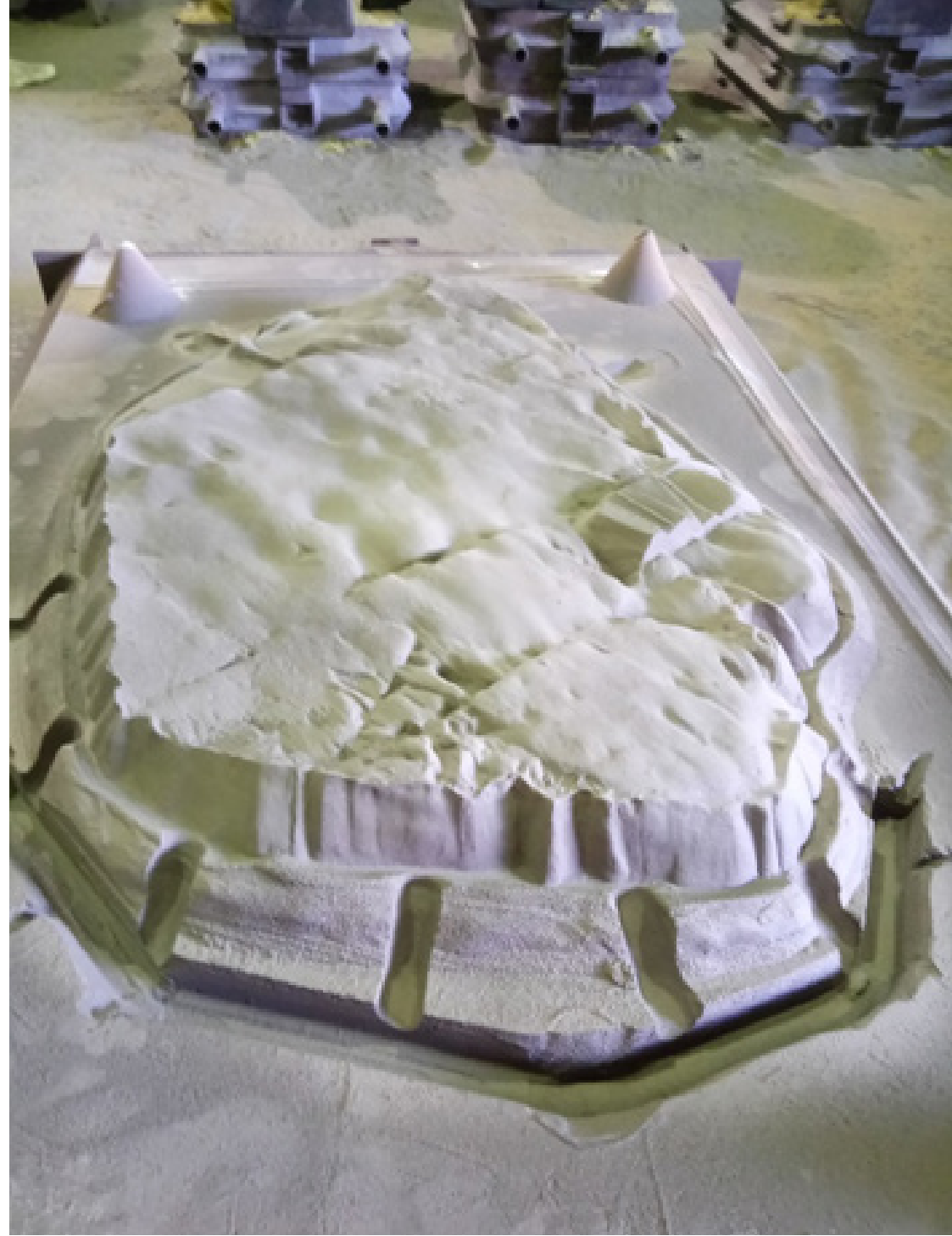
Invited to group show 'Greenness is A Kind of Grief', The Regency Town House, Brighton (May 2021)

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*Wax cast of rocks at Hobb Gill*

*Seeing Through The Ground Solo Show  
Griedale Forest 2019*



*Sand cast of Hobb Gill rock at Maybrey  
Reliance, Kent*



*Detail of cast iron 'Carbon Delta', 2019*

*'Carbon Delta', ductile iron, cable reel, mirror, 2019*





*'Feeling for a Wall', frottage on wall of 18th century industrial ruin, Stoney Hazel Finery Forge, 2019*

*'Feeling for a Wall' in progress at Stoney Hazel Finery Forge, 2019*





*'Touch-stone', frottage of slate wall at Stott Park Bobbin Mill, made with 200 participants over 7 hours*





Solo show 'Seeing Through The Ground'  
Grizedale Forest Project Space Room 2 -  
Tallystick' (ceiling), 'Flagrant Matter' (floor),  
'Lathe-Bed' (wall), 2019



*Solo show 'Seeing Through The Ground'  
Grizedale Forest Project Space, Room 1 -  
'Carbon Delta' (floor),  
'Saw shed' (right wall), 'Spectre' (left wall),  
2019*



*Working on frottage of log pile at Stott Park  
Bobbin Mill, 2019*



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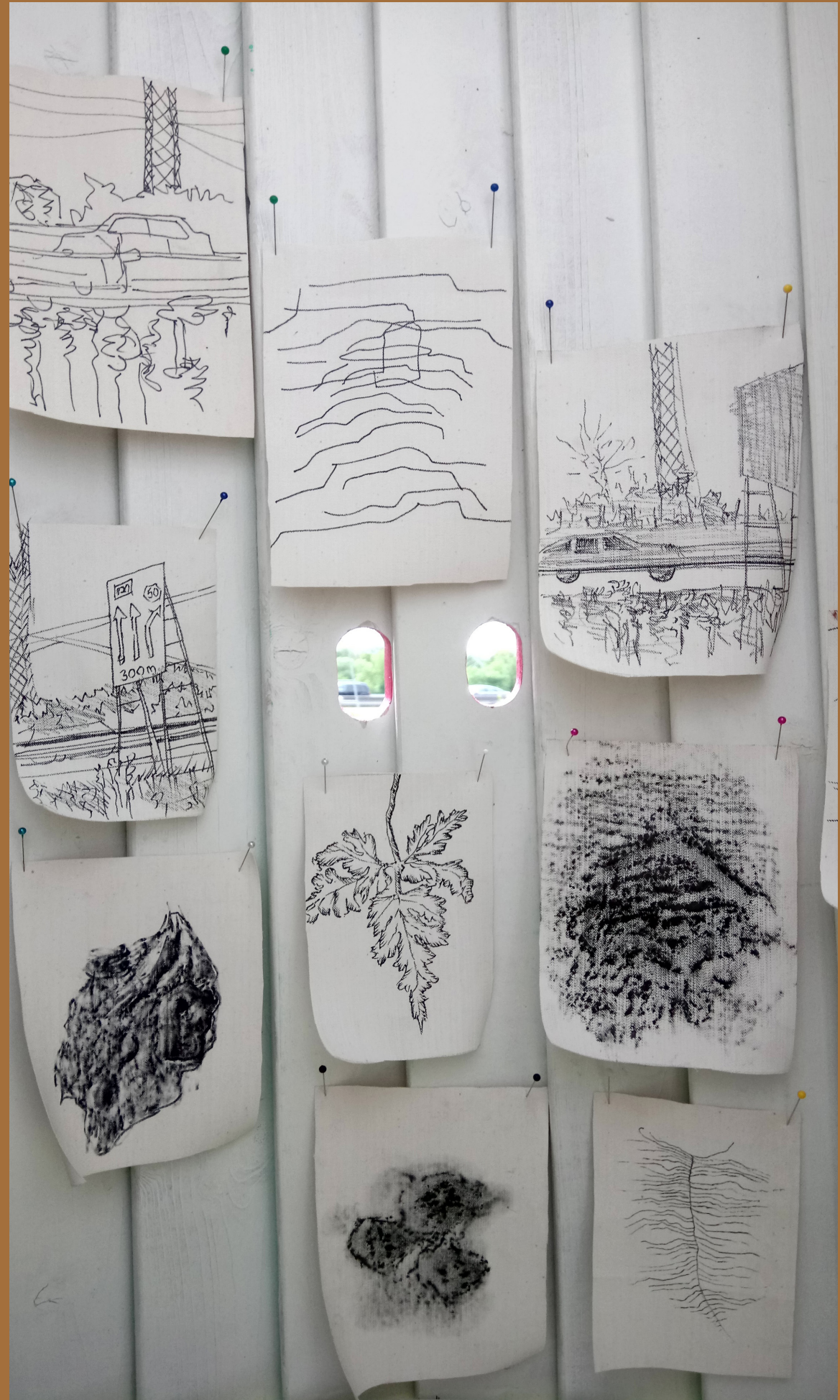
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Graphic Design:

Studio Mothership





wood, fabric, graphite  
Checkpoint and Korssting  
2017