

Lisa Wigham

Autobiographical Terrains

an exploration of theme and process

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Introduction

This contextual report charts my progress through a two year studio project based in an intaglio printmaking workshop. This has involved processes of image making that utilise traditional principals of etching whilst using non toxic processes. These processes have been developed through practice based research, to establish a visual language for the production of fine-art prints.

Initially my research took the form of photography and drawing, made as a passenger in transit on trains or during dusk hour drives. My fascination was with epic moments of light and dark in cloud forms on shifting horizons. These fleeting relationships and incomplete recordings of landscapes were then translated into etchings that intend to conjure the transience and emotion of journeys rather than a description of place. As travel over land and water continued, alongside development of etching techniques over this two year period, the emphasis shifted onto images operating though an economical use of line and incidental mark making manipulated through etching processes.

Landscape is now the subject of the exhibition that accompanies this document. This work explores sequence in a way that challenges the linear aspect of the journey, using an experience of landscape as a vehicle to explore autobiography. Through a discussion of themes and motivations and my relationship to the technical processes I use, I seek to understand my intentions in order to develop strategies for continued studio practice and exhibiting. An essential component to this study is that it prompts a critical discussion of the wider implications for the technology I use to create the work and its relationships to contemporary culture.

- Identification of themes consistent in my work
- Contextual reference points and relationship to other artists practice
- Impulses and contradictions of process: insights that have led me forward in my understanding of making
- Relationships between my printmaking and artists' book making practice; specifically the parallels between my tendencies while working with image or working with text
- Technologies and their inescapable bearing on the reading of the work
- Political intention of the medium- exercising freedom of choice for preservation of a craft
- Strategies for dissemination of both idea and object

Chapter One

Themes and Motivations

Sequence of Fragments

My work encompasses printmaking and artists' books where sequences of pages are used as a device for presenting short narratives as instances captured. This is intended to offer an impressionistic view by way of fragments, to echo the fragmentary experience of memory. When making artists' books this information is offered as captions of text, and when printmaking this is purely made up of images.

Through a process of examination during this study, I have realised my recurring fascination with the dramatic tension of fragility and weight. In image making this concern manifests itself in sequences of etchings where mark making holds tactile qualities of line, used to suggest imminence of experience.

Origins and a Stylistic Dichotomy

I was raised in Blackpool, and although based in London for most of my career, my perception of the enigma and history of my hometown has travelled with me and crept into my work. A town of illusions and surreal juxtapositions, dressed in the nonsensical through folly and fiction, it functions through a reliance on the transience of its seasonal audience to retain its showmanship.

I have participated in this illusion from behind the scenes, knowing secrets of the conjurer's tricks; this sentiment informs my work and my desire to bring contrast and contradiction, or opposites to the work I make. There is a hide and seek element to the way I reveal information. This has been described in the past as a stylistic dichotomy.

The Sketch Book, Note Book or Journal

Working in sketch books or journals is a consistent starting point regardless of the outcome of my work; it is in the intimate space of the page that a fathoming of experiences, observations and my relationships to my surroundings takes place. It has become apparent that through referencing the book form I am interested in offering the audience some evidence of my process in the outcome.

The sketch books from this period of study mostly hold drawings of landscapes made while in transit, some pan a 360 degree horizon or study tree forms made whilst walking in woods,

my interest is that in both their detail and sequence they reference inevitable changes enforced by nature, presented as metaphors for human emotions.

An Indicator of Possibilities

Only by emotionally connecting with a view or form, a perception occurs. My perceptions manifest themselves in images that seek to fathom rather than describes a place.

In realizing the paradox that artists face while seeking to represent movement in a still image, I began to pose the question what is lost and what is gained from transience and incomplete recordings of place?

'We make a mistake, says Seamus Heaney if driving down a road between wind and water, overwhelmed by what we see, we assume we will see "it" better if we stop the car. "It" is there in the passage'

Elaine Scarey (1999)



Robert Cahen 'Paysages-Passage ' 1997 13 screen monitor installation of landscape passing through the frame of a train window from Passage a retrospective of works at The Harris Museum Preston 2009

Dissolution of Image

My fascination for making landscapes that dissolve, appear and disappear at speed, that are tentative in form and mysterious in location have developed whilst investigating etching techniques. I was intrigued to look at the work of Thérèse Oulton based on the following statement.

‘As soon as we encounter Thérèse Oulton’s work, the dramatic instability of her vision becomes impossible to ignore. At one instant, a monument land – mass seems to spread across the canvas, impregnable and reassuring. Then, quite suddenly, it trembles on the verge of dissolution. The apparently solid elements within the painting break apart, making us aware of its fundamental vulnerability’

Richard Cork (2006)

In ‘The Promise of Dusk’ series 2009 I made a diptych of etchings that attempted to represent subtle movement of cloud forms and their dissolving vapours, as a metaphor for the passing of time.



This image was made by painting with water onto a sheet of copper coated in 'soft ground', this is a layer of extremely soft sticky substance made partly of grease that protects areas of copper and exposes others to the bite of the etching solution. As the 'soft ground' was wet when I painted into it I was able to part dissolve it and reticulation of the image occurred, this mimicked the movement and disintegration of cloud forms.

My attempts to capture images of ever morphing cloud forms through drawing, painting and photography has at times seemed futile, however the impossibility of the process also intrigued and preoccupied me for some years. Relinquishing some control by mark making using the unpredictability of water as a tool seemed fitting, acknowledging the integrity of the image I sought to represent. There is a desire in me to maintain some element of control by imposing a framework to support the composition of an image along-side fluidity. I am interested in finding creative solutions within self imposed limitations, in order to test boundaries.



Relationship to The Sublime

The theme of The Sublime has been embraced from a Romantic point of view in 'The Promise of Dusk' series. The Sublime and its manifestations in music and art in ecstasy culture embraced epic soundscapes and images within its sub-culture, this has since filtered its influence into popular culture as its legacy cohabits within it. The spirit of this sub-culture that dawned upon late 1980's Britain somehow permitted and made radical this embrace.

The Sublime has long been embraced as an escape from cultural monotony, as a transcendence of this, its function being to rejuvenate our sense of life. The sublime is presented as something extraordinary and in the case of my investigations, extraordinary light of dusk and nightfall when feelings are intensified.

In such an experience, the present moment of consciousness – our very sense of being alive is intensified into a felt quality, precisely because it is directly underscored by some actual or represented negation of life. Here, we do not simply have an experience which disrupts monotony. Rather we also have one wherein that upon which our aversion to monotony is ultimately founded (namely negation of life) is, itself encountered and reacted against to positive effect. In such an experience the horrifying event detaches from its immediate matrix of surrounding actualities and comes to symbolise the dialectic human finitude. We vaguely sense and celebrate the fact that moments of lived experience owe their intense and particular felt quality to the fact that they are constantly subtended by the threat and ultimate eventuality of death.

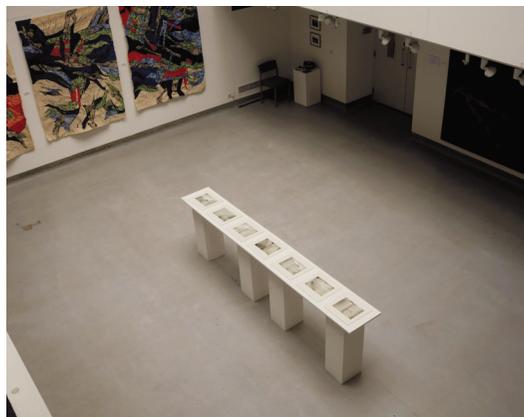
Paul Crowther (1993)

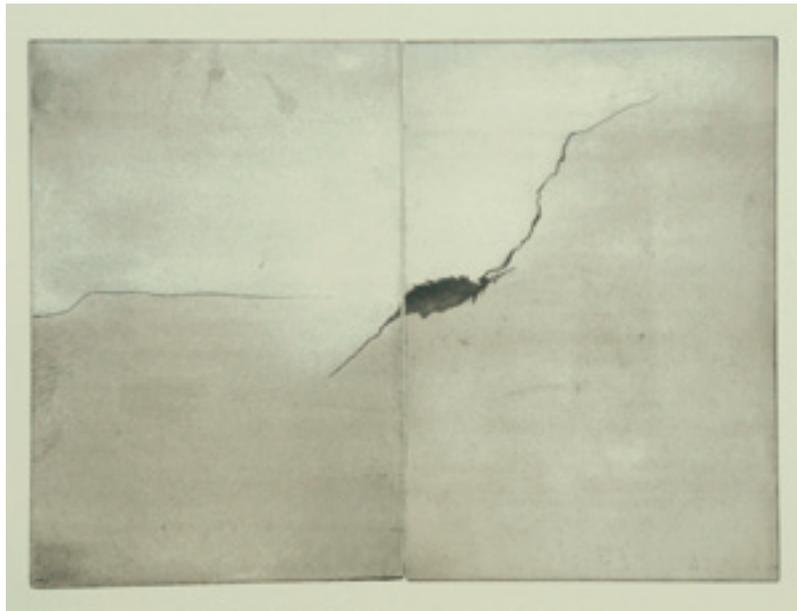
Tension of Contrasts

In the 'The Promise of Dusk' series there is a tension between change and not change, the sky is fluid, yet the horizon dense and static. Such opposites support my interest in working with contrast and opposition to bring friction and possible flux to an image. I have also drawn upon a poetic basis for my understanding of landscape, for example darkness as the unknown, sunlight as knowledge or enlightenment and a sense of foreboding in the density and immensity of darkness which follows dusk.

Reduction of Information

After working for several months in the intaglio printing workshop making 'The Promise of Dusk', I took to the road in order to revive my understanding of landscapes as visual and experiential forms. One of the outcomes from the drawings and paintings I made in sketchbooks became 'Notes From a Transpennine Journal' - a sequence of seven etchings. In translating the experience of travel into drawings and then etchings, I dispersed and dissolved information across loose pages to suggest momentary relationships with each view that passed through train windows. I began to exercise an economic use of line that was deliberately at odds with traditional landscape printmaking and the tendency to 'fill the page'. This was also a tactic to avoid clichés of rural landscape images. Alternatively a tentative sketch-like quality was used as an indicator of movement rather than a full description scene. I wanted this work to focus on the transience of a journey as a space for fleeting thoughts, nebulous topics such as motion, beauty and love, depicted through a sequence of images.





Drawing and the Page

The division line between two plates printed side by side in 'Notes From a Transpennine Journal' creates the look of a spine between book pages. The division also interrupts the image though its pronounced separation of two halves, while remaining bound together by drawn lines that connect. The use of open space within the printed page is intended to invite the reader to their own private contemplation. Space surrounds the details or notation of the drawing to contrast the marks that intensely occupy irregular intervals on each page.

Reservoir of Memory Through Mark-making

Richard Shiff speaks on the tactile mark making in Cy Twombly's work as holding a 'reservoir of memory', through the reappearance of pattern and line forms amongst the more ambiguous topography of his paintings. My efforts are concerned with seeking to draw lines that hold energy, that have conviction of the process- engraving marks into metal with variable force, they graze the surfaces.

'Half drawn, disappearing into a fog of time'

Tacita Dean (2008) on the notation of Cy Twombly

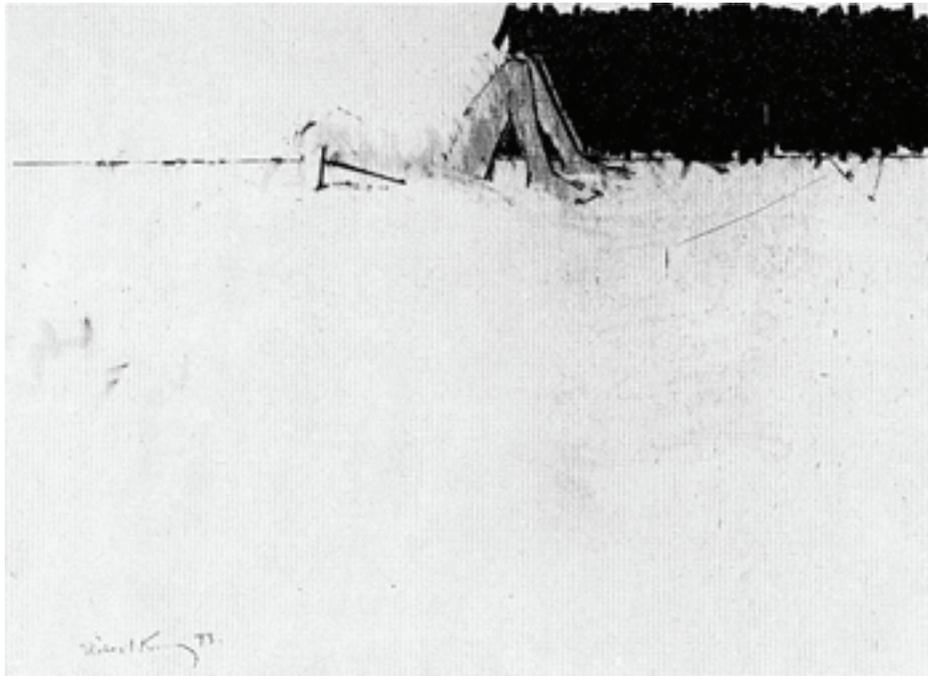
The title 'Notes from a Transpennine Journal' mimics a log book of purpose, as I wanted to reference its sketch book origins. By formalising the loose sheets of prints under sheets of glass I aimed to bring attention to their every detail, the human imprints in the be-speckled bitten metal, and the intentionally open spaces. I wanted to give the audience permission to fill that space with their own story prompted by association of part recognisable forms.

'spaces are not, they become'

Harry Charrington (1998) From Metaphor and Forgetting in the Modern City

Drawing and Absence of Information

As a method of research towards understanding the physicality of spaces I also spent time drawing while static in landscapes, feeling the elements and seeing the changing light. This initially took the form of measured drawings, using techniques from the school of William Coldstream, instilled in me during still life and life drawing studies in my formative art school education. This exercise is used before 'loosening up' and incorporating more expressive qualities into a drawing. This technique is about looking and analysis of forms, and what information is both absent and present in the drawing being of equal importance.



Michael Kenny 1973 'Nameless person' pencil/charcoal/ paper 56 x 76.3cm

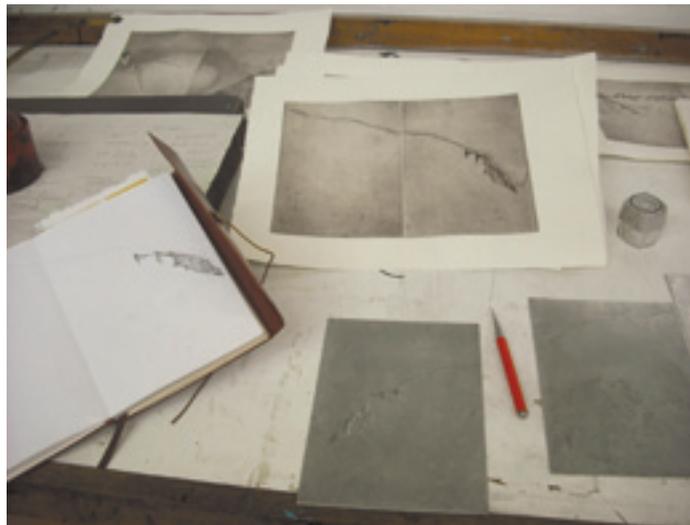


Lisa Wigham 'Life Study' 2008 pencil on paper

Drawing and Haptic Allure

As further journeys took place alongside development of printmaking processes, the resulting work that followed was a series of prints entitled 'Sixteen Pages on Elevation and Loss (Rif Mountains Series)'. This continued to employ the format of 'Notes From a Transpennine Journal' as it was also driven by a compulsion to capture the dramatic changes of levels of the horizon lines, and reference the book form by using two plates side by side to suggest a book spine. However I wanted to push the development of the drawing, make it open up forms, rather than close them.

It was my aim to find ways to make spontaneous sensitive marks on metal, despite this sometimes being at odds with the tools. This intention was to capture visual notation of the process of looking, whereby the drawing becomes equivalence for looking, rather than an attempt to represent naturalism of the landscape.



The difficulty with making a printed image through intaglio incisions is that lines require reinforcement (drawing and redrawing lines over the top of one another) or cross hatching, in order to build tone, as this amalgamation of lines holds more ink in the metal and brings tonal qualities to an image. This laboured repetition can make it tricky to replicate the energy of an original drawing.

'An artist needs to act to respond to an idea, a discovery, a feeling, an excitement of recognition even if it's only a note, a gesture, just something that can catch a sense of an inner sensation that would otherwise fade and be lost'

David Nash (2009)

Horizon Lines

The drawings I make while 'en route' are always instinct led, usually prompted by a state of exhilaration, exact locations are unplanned; but consistently begin with drawing a sequence of changing horizon lines, to suggest moments of movement.

This use of horizon lines in my work is a reoccurring starting point when drawing landscape or depicting place; it is therefore where emphasis occurs. This feature of my work relates to its connotations as a means to measure capability for perception, ambition or intention.

Geographical Features and International Clues

Occasionally geographical clues hint at international location, uniform planting of pine trees peep over a mountain side, or the architecture of a signal box appears through hundred year old woods. However, ambiguity for location sometimes remains and sometimes disperses, as after an argument with myself over revelation of sites, an eclectic series of international locations are now suggested by titles. The emphasis however is more about my movement through fixed things, transience and the emotions of absence and presence and it is my intention that this is equally reflected in the titles of works. 'Sixteen pages on Elevation and Loss (Rif Mountains Series)', couples location with concerns of an autobiographical nature, reference to a state of being and the landscape as a metaphor for the self.

Seeing the paintings of Tilo Baumgärtel raised questions relating to this point for my practice on whether to site cultural location or keep anonymity and mystery? along with the question of what this might add or take away from the viewing experience? Baumgärtel uses an array of international clues to the location of paintings, Soviet architecture provides indicator of region (all be it vast) for the setting of scenes akin to that of fairy tales, I was enchanted by these hinterlands dappled by contrasts.

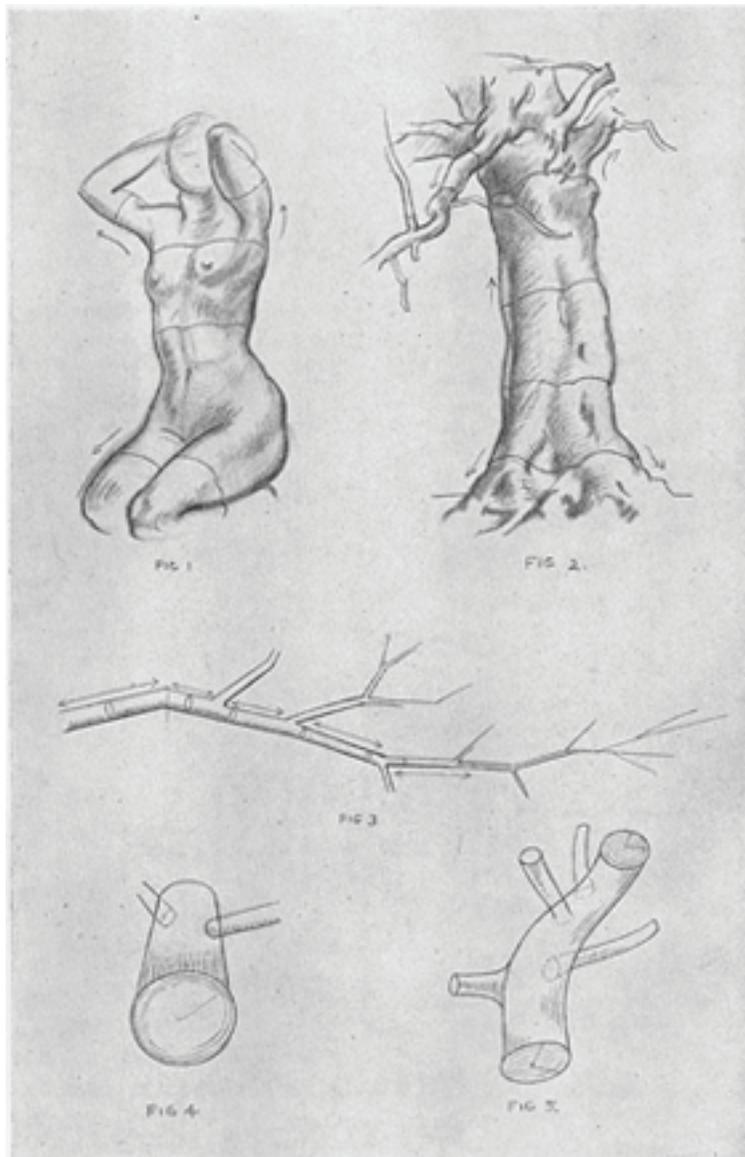


Tilo Baumgärtel 'Highland' 2009 Charcoal on paper, 155 x 250 cm copyright the artist, courtesy Wilkinson Gallery London

Allegory

Past and present work is informed by the draftsmanship and storytelling of Paula Rego, particularly in her aquatint etchings. I share an interest in the tonal exploration of light and dark in order to enhance the dramatic tension of allegory, presenting one thing under the guise of another. 'The Anthropomorphic Life of Trees' is a series of etchings presented as a sequence of vignettes translated from drawings of tree studies. My treatment of these forms was to read human emotion into their traits- tangled branches, strained, yearning, broken, interweaving and forming unexpected alliances, blossoming or bare, dignified and upstanding or gnarled.

In looking at the use of trees in allegorical painting I found their supporting roles in storytelling dependent on traits and posture, as well as their position in the composition of the frame. In 'The Anthropomorphic Life of Trees' I wanted the tree forms to be centre stage, mirroring human figures acting out small narratives, I have placed anthropomorphic treatment onto these tree forms and framed them with the furnishings that suggest antiquity and cherished memory.



Adrian Hill 1945 Diagrams Demonstrating Similarities Between The Human and Tree Forms

‘The student should remember that he is not so much concerned with the representation of timber, as that for a time he has been permitted to take part in the great moving forces of nature, and to share in the emotions conveyed to him’

George Clausen (1936)

Chapter Two

Etching and Artists' Book: My Relationship to Media and Process

In the last two years of this studio project I have sought to understand parallels between my process of book making and etching. Both forms intend to present short narratives, and utilise different technical process for their creation. However, I became interested to discover their similarities in terms of what I wanted to offer as an audience experience? I therefore decided to investigate what magnetises me to the technologies I use for the creation of these works, in order to gain insights into each process.

Etching and the Alchemy of Process

Part of my motivation and love for making etchings is seeing the metamorphosis of the images during the chemical processes, as marks indent themselves on the metal plates; I therefore seek to encapsulate the alchemy of this process of change in the outcome of the prints.





Zinc plates coated with 'soft ground' before lines are drawn or dry brushes used to draw the image



Revealing images from beneath the 'soft ground' after the metal is etched



'Inking up' the etched plate and wiping layers of ink away from the surface in preparation for printing





Intaglio printing presses and the printed image

Nurturing Successive Changes

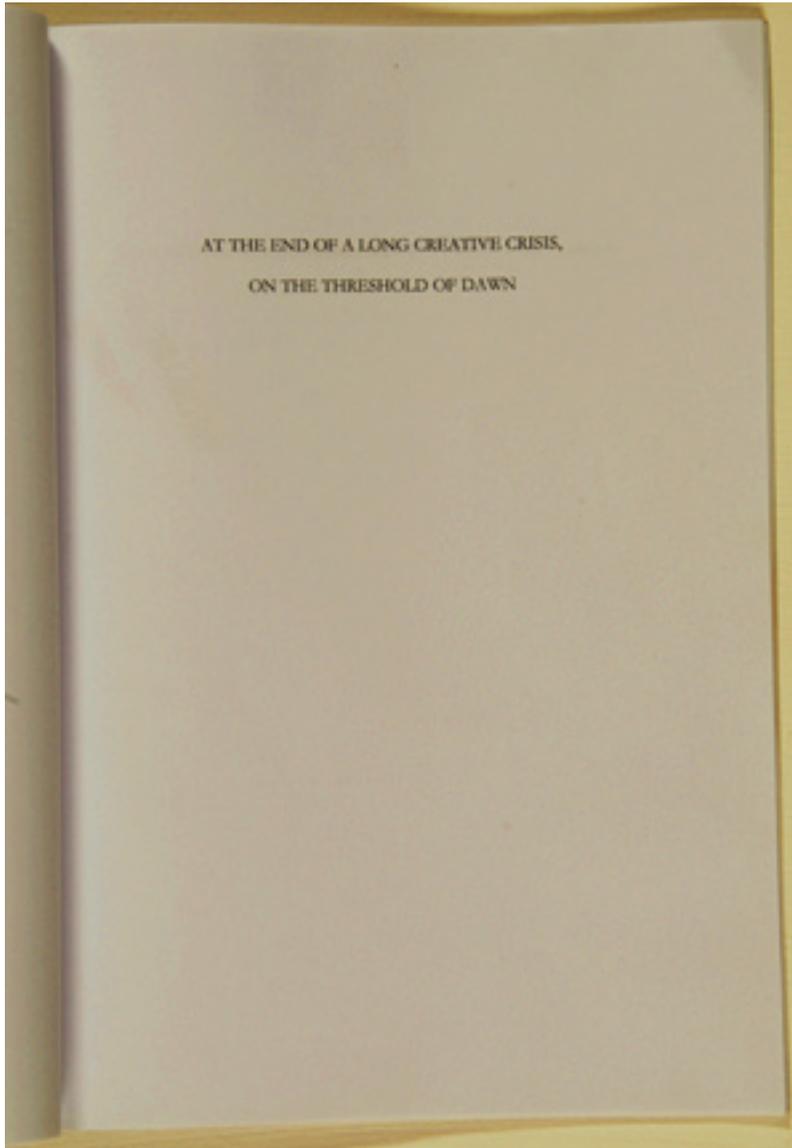
I have been intrigued by a series of etchings entitled 'He Disappeared into Complete Silence' by Louise Bourgeois, since seeing them in a glass vitrine in the British Museum some years ago. On reading about her relationship to the process of making this work, I realised a shared concern for the periods of contemplation during the successive changes of making an etching plate when 'proof' prints are taken after each alteration is made to a plate. At this point assessment occurs of both the image and theme, and what may need to be added or taken away, sometimes this consideration may need many hours or days of looking.

'The whole history of the creative process is there. In painting or in sculpture it would be gone'.

Louise Bourgeois (1994)

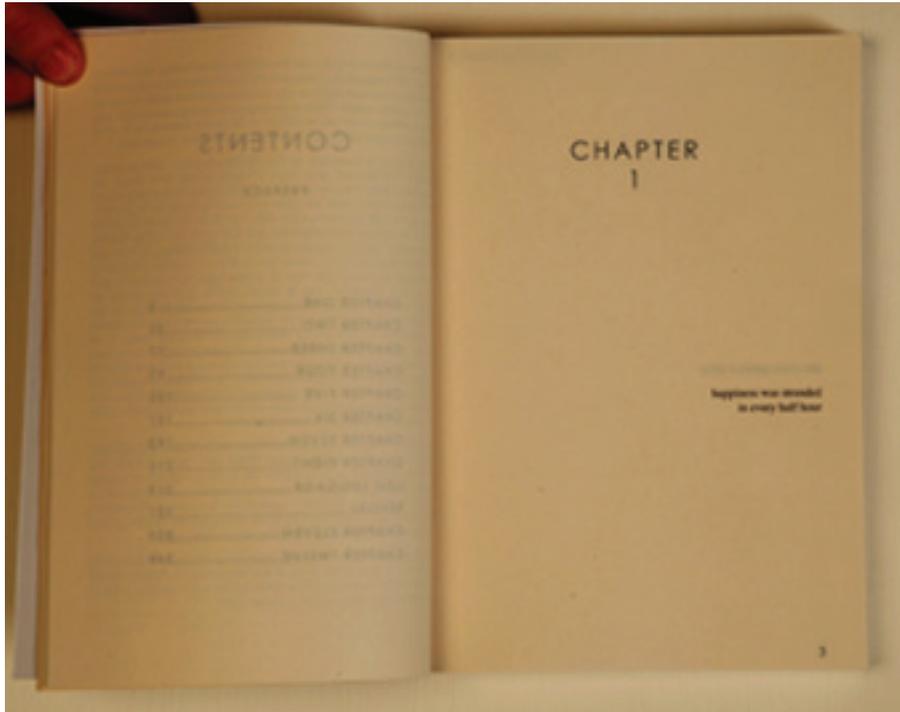
There is permanence to etched lines, it is difficult and near impossible to edit or erase them from an etching plate without complete obliteration of the image. If I over-work a print, there is no turning back, apart from starting again. I have, on occasion had to do this; I now acknowledge that making time for thought between phases as a reality for my process.

Periods of consideration between stages of printing are also a welcome contrast to the physical action engraving intense burrs into metal. I have chosen at times to leave space in the images for contemplation, to act as pauses for breath or punctuation. This echoes the concept for use of empty space between text on a largely empty page.



Ambiguity and the Printed Page

In the book 'Lost Luggage Revival' a long story told in small pieces is staggered across 365 pages. This book functions through its purposeful juxtaposition of scenes and places and jumps from location to location. The story is made from extracts from written notes in sketch books and edited to a reduced form.



Lisa Wigham 'Lost Luggage Revival' - a novel 2006 digitally printed paper back book, limitless edition 15x20 cm

Autobiographical Terrains

In working on 'Sixteen pages on Elevation and Loss', the images question my perception of mountains, hills and solid dramatic formations as 'enduring'. Depicted in their physicality by space, silence, noise and intensity of nothingness conveyed through weight of line and simplification of forms.

I have edited versions of the original sketches made in situ, as I transcribed them into metal, being ever mindful of how this mark-making will look once the plate is etched. In each phase of drawing I have edited obstructions to the compositional structure of landscapes, stripping down overriding information such as removal of foreground structures.

I make original drawings in situ when I am alive to myself and my surroundings; not only to depict a landscape but to interweave emotion from a time of solitary observation and reflection. Parallels in my process of making artists' books come by way of the deliberate elimination of words in the editing process, bringing charged purpose to each mark, word and empty space on a page. Along with the visual concern for composition, autobiographical dealings are always negated as a protective instinct by the editing process- from the rawness of original drawing or written word to printed product.



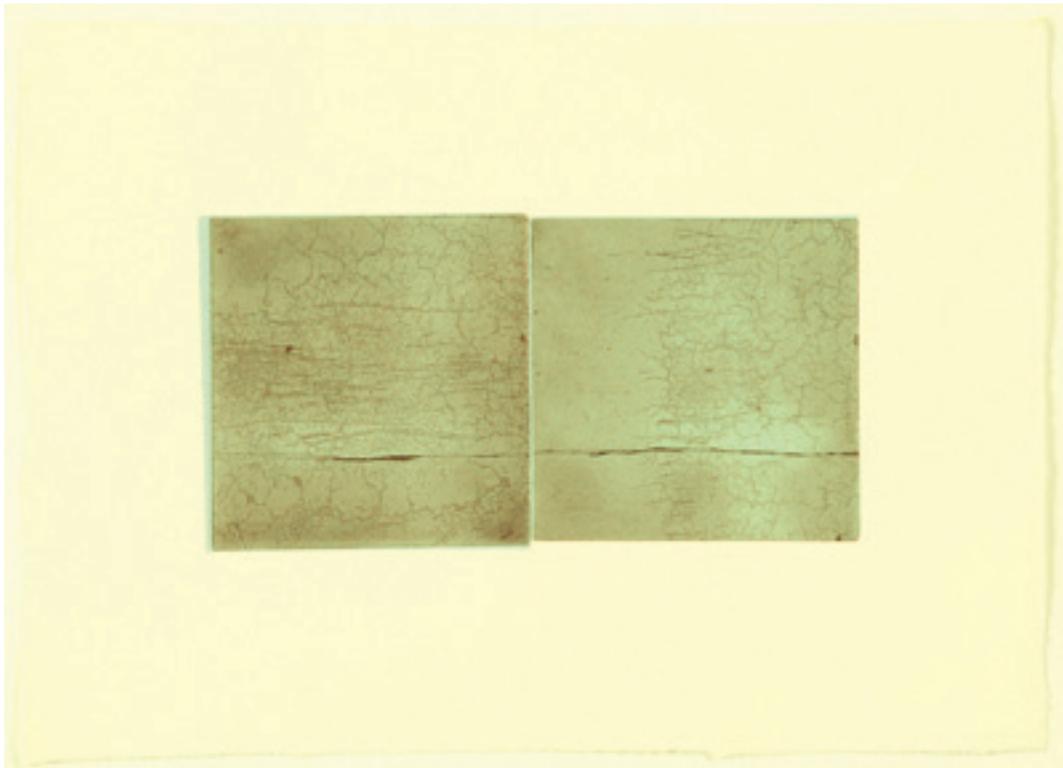
Lisa Wigham from the sequence 'Sixteen Pages on Elevation and Loss (Rif Mountains Series)' 2010 etching 29 x 27 cm



Erosion and Protection

There is an aggressive nature to etching, in that it involves engraving and eroding metal by immersing in corrosive chemicals. Simultaneously the metal is partly protected by selectively coated areas using a 'ground' - to prevent or minimise its exposure to the bite of chemicals. This action of both erosion and protection is ultimately in the interest of creating something of beauty.

I have developed methods that create marks through application of heat and cold, inducing crackles in the protective 'ground' this has occurred in 'Endless Sea'. While making these etching plates a negotiation of opposites occurred to me: affirmative and negative, absence and presence, as I made images that echo the metamorphosis of geological forms. I am interested in the metaphors of this process being engrained in the outcome of each image.



Lisa Wigham 'Endless Sea' 2010 etching with chine-collé 10 x 17 cm

Whistler and Mark Making

Seeing a retrospective of etchings by James Abbot McNeill Whistler an influence took place on much of my transition from first to second year of this studio project. In seeing his work, that which held my gaze were his 'proof' prints where empty spaces acted like ghostly interruptions to formality, briefly occupied by soft fine lines and quick spontaneous strokes of the etching needle. These prints held the look of accidental scratches, yet deliberately positioned to support the composition of the image.

Seeing these works helped me to realise my own great pleasure in the early stages of an etching, when subtle amounts of information occupy the plate. This shifted emphasis on the viewing experience I intended for the viewer. By showing the evidence of the craft in the outcome I revealed the framework or unfinished looking states of conception. I began to realise that exposing this searching quality is an important element to my practice.



James Abbot McNeill Whistler 'Jo's Bent Head' 1861 drypoint

From Etching to Artists' Book

The use of open space in the etchings is also a deliberate departure from the tradition of 'filling the plate' with information. The artist CRW Nevinson reacted against this overload of information in landscape etching by creating the work 'That Curs`ed Wood', his motivation being 'the stripping away of sentimental illusions'.



CRW Nevinson 'That Curs'ed Wood' 1918, Drypoint print on late 18th century paper

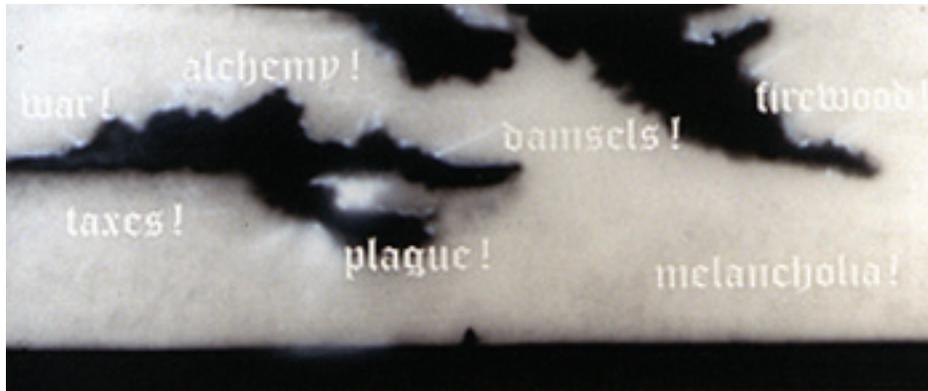
Sequence and Display

Like pages from a book, I make etchings to be viewed as sequences, and their display is supported by structures that encourage the audience to walk from one image to the next. However I have observed that audiences will roam around spaces and no guarantee of a chronological reading, as I found with the problems of displaying artists' books in exhibition spaces, I propose that these sequences of images be offered as a synthesis of viewpoints.

I have referenced the book form by opting to display etchings on flat surfaces, aimed to set up a one to one correspondence with the viewer, as they read the work from above, like a book or map as an evocative artefact. I am selectively attempting to engage the viewer by removing distance that exists during the gaze of wall based work and offer an active role in the viewing experience. When work occupies frames, and placed on the wall I am intending to contrast this experience.

Horizon of Text and Image

I have come to the realisation through this study that horizon lines are consistent in both image and text based work. They are a device used to describe a view or relationship to an environment. In this respect the paintings of Ed Ruscha have accompanied me as an influence.



Ed Ruscha '17th Century' 1988, Acrylic on Canvas 56 x 134 in

The Sea

I continue to relate to subject from a Romantic point of view, particularly in my treatment of landscape or seascape as a mirror for thought and desire; and a setting for narratives. The sea conjures feelings of awe, solitude and transience- with a greater intensity at night. It is both blissful and brutal, and 'From Sea to Shore' is intended to question our human endeavour to stay afloat within mysterious waters.



Lisa Wigham 'From Sea to Shore' 2009 aquatint etching, 27 x 68 cm

Tacita Deans treatment of this subject has undoubtedly resonated with me, 'Disappearance at Sea (Cinemascope)' 1996, is informed by the story of yachtsman Donald Crowhurst who went missing in 1969 while sailing around the world. It features a seemingly limitless panorama on film shot from inside a lighthouse; at intervals a flash bulb endlessly searches the horizon. The passing of time has been treated at a meditative pace, in a dramatic space referencing The Sublime; there is also added resonance of the technology of the 16mm film turning in its loop. In revisiting this work I realise my shared fascination for stories of the lost and found.

These stories are explored and reflected upon during the making process, whether it be writing or etching, there is a meditative relationship between thinking and making. The results are autobiographies that record existence part understood through selected memories, before they are lost. They attempt to fathom human relationships and the creative process itself.

Conclusion

Printmaking with Intention

In my career to date I have embraced traditional methods of typesetting, etching and bookbinding. As a graduate in 1997 my sensibilities for such process were at odds with the emerging digital age. My contemporaries began making work and making a living using digital technologies, and I now realise my growing political intention for the use of etching as a need to exercise freedom of choice of technology. There is also the belief that by utilising these art forms for the expression of contemporary ideas their craft might be valued and preserved.

The medium of printmaking and particularly etching is relative to the intension I have for exhibiting my work. I make editions of etchings rather than unique prints, as I seek to disseminate them in different contexts and environments. This reproducibility is an inherent component to the meaning and declaration of the work.

I am interested in the juxtaposition of traditional printmaking with rapidly advancing digital technology. This has led me to utilise the two art forms as and when appropriate to the concept and value I wish to place on of the work.

Artists' Prints as Artists' Multiples

The democratic intention of Fluxus artists and DADA's attitude that word and image could be valued as equals are elements that initially drew me into the idea of making artists multiples. This was believed to be an activity that could critique the traditions of gallery spaces, by making portable works of art that function independently. My strategy for dissemination of both idea and object is to facilitate the exhibition and sale of limitless edition multiples in parallel to limited edition fine art prints through my publishing operation the Two am Press, using web technology to share, sell and distribute the work.

The contradictions and impulses of these early influences are akin to my experiences of life. The extraordinary and the absurd have long been inspiration for making. The power of deception in the theatrical elements of my home town and the play of revelation of information are undoubtedly now understood to be elements within my methods for communication of ideas through works of art.

Medium as Message

Artists working with cutting edge digital print technologies such as Mark Titchner and Will Tuck exploit links and connotations of the relationship of the medium to its use in commercial printing. In addition Tichner uses language and visual tactics from advertising and corporate culture. By using these elements for making limited edition artists' prints Tichner seeks to radicalise the perception of what an artists' print can be. The artist Will Tuck (2010) describes his use of digital printing to produce fine-art prints as something that 'ultimately toys with the idea of being a modern master in a world given over to cheap thrills and fast consumption.'

In making the book 'Lost Luggage Revival' I related my ideas to the form of a digitally produced work of art. I played with the consideration of the implications of the media, re-appropriating its meaning and possibilities with reference to its traditions. I have come to realise through this exploration that this is a concern in my practice, despite the different choices of printmaking technologies.

Reduction of Information to an Essence

The word displayed in dense quantities is said to be 'time robbing' by Hugo Ball (1927) in his discussion of Dada. Through this contextual report I have drawn a conclusion that this sentiment contributes to my intention for reducing information to an essence, whether through economy of words or mark making.

The social reality for the speed at which exchanges of information travel via information technology in contemporary culture rarely allows word or image to settle or be still. This can manipulate premature processing of information and potentially modified experiences of word and image.

It is in me to make work that rejoices the beauty I see in the sky, the sea and land, but it is also in me to issue the audience with the responsibility to question the experience through the materials and technology used for its construction, signifying their relationship to wider cultural activity.

THE END

Glossary of Terms

Intaglio printing: marks are created by making incisions into metal in the case of this study zinc or copper was used.

Fine-art prints: a print that is an original work of art individually made by hand, an edition of fine art prints are closely identical to one another, each print is signed by the artist and numbered.

Etching: is a process of printmaking developed in the 16th century. Traditionally regarded as the noblest technique in the graphic arts, the process of etching is also known as 'biting'. A drawing is made on metal and bitten by a mordent or acid that is a corrosive agent inscribing a metal plate with an image.

Etching solution or Mordent: The term mordent comes from the Latin word, "mordere", it is therefore a solution used to bite marks into metal.

Non toxic printmaking: in the case of this study saline sulphate has been used as a non toxic alternative to nitric acid to etch metal.

Ground/Soft ground: a thin layer of wax used to coat an etching plate, forming a resist to the mordant or acid. Drawings are made through the ground to expose areas or lines to be bitten during the etching stage of image making. After the etch the ground is cleaned away and ink is rubbed into the lines etched by the mordant. The print is made onto a dampened sheet of paper using an etching press.

Proof prints: these are prints taken from an etched plate, to act as early drafts, to be built on gradually by marks added to an etching plate in stages.

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