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*Geopoetics, Deep Mapping and Slow Residencies*


*Mary Modeen and Iain Biggs*

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# Creative Engagements with Ecologies of Place

## Geopoetics, Dēep Mapping and Slow Residencies

**Mary Modeen and Iain Biggs**

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In the Introduction, we signalled our concern to retrace the ensemble understanding we see as the 'fourth ecology'.

As individual authors, we have long experience both of making art in that variety of contexts rather misleadingly called the 'art world'.

Our aim as authors is to evoke a 'fourth ecology', a dynamic intermingling of relational knowledge and understanding, which, as a community of transverse action, we see as flowing from our concerns with, and practices of, geopoetics.

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the 'art public' - that constitute the assumed 'we' of her text. It is a simultaneously inclusive pronoun for her culturally similar sub-group and, as such, tacitly exclusive of most others.

A community of transverse action

The reader will have noticed that, in the previous section, I used the first person singular rather than our usual authorial 'I'.

This transverse community is distinct from the infernal disciplinary or interdisciplinary academic and professional networks it somewhat resembles.

Robert Fredman's project for geopoetics is deliberately ecalled, partisan and poetic. It promises that, as an activist, vision-framing way that limits its collective potential to geopoetics.

Robert Fredman

Much of Kenneth White's project for geopoetics is deliberately ecalled, partisan and poetic. It promises that, as an activist, vision-framing way that limits its collective potential to geopoetics.

This book starts, then, from a simple presupposition. The dominant social order (the master's house) has been built on geopoetic individualism.

On one hand, both art and education are manifestations of what is often thought of as 'culture'.

Consequently learning, whether, in an institution, by reading a book, or engaging with art, can be both a process by which knowledge of these traditions enables us to reflect on the dominant mind-set.

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we are aware of the practical efficacy of many indigenous traditions that have been able to share contemporary industrial societies in achieving a more harmonious balance with their environment.

The heart of this book

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Ecopoetical thinking allows us to see that 'nature-society relations' are not just one-way processes of knowledge.

This is significant because ecopoetics has indigenous people in North America, Australia and New Zealand has been important to us.

Working with paradox in practice: both arts and sciences

Following Alan Garner, we might say that this book is based on the paradox of present context.

referencing Fredman's understanding of Paul Cézanne's paintings of Mont Sainte-Victoire.

Our wariness regarding the instrumental tenor of 'probing', 'testing' and 'sizing up' returns us, in the context of the act of writing, to the question of the geopoetic act.

Figure 1. Iana Halperin, 'Boiling Milk', Safaraz 2000; photograph of the artist actually boiling milk in a thermal spring for the first time with present actions. Photo: Iana Halperin.

of care - the capacity to restrain oneself, to control one's desires in order to make space for another, while seeing entirely worthy, is tacitly framed by presuppositions that we see as problematic.

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instead to provide the reader with a sense of a variety of possible models of thinking in the West, along with activities such as cartography that flow from it.

Geopoetics, deep mapping/slow resistance: locating relations in place/time

The historical and geopoetical contexts that frame the currently dominant forms of thinking in the West, along with activities such as cartography that flow from it, cannot be wholly disaggregated.

Figure 2. Dr Amy Todman, 'Speaking in Lichen', photograph of performative actions, Scotland, 2015. As a performative artist, she speaks in lichen, and also as a loving action. Photo: Amy Todman.

film-maker, landscape architect, sculptor, performance-artist and writer, but also as a wide range of disciplines and practices within the humanities and the social, earth and environmental sciences.

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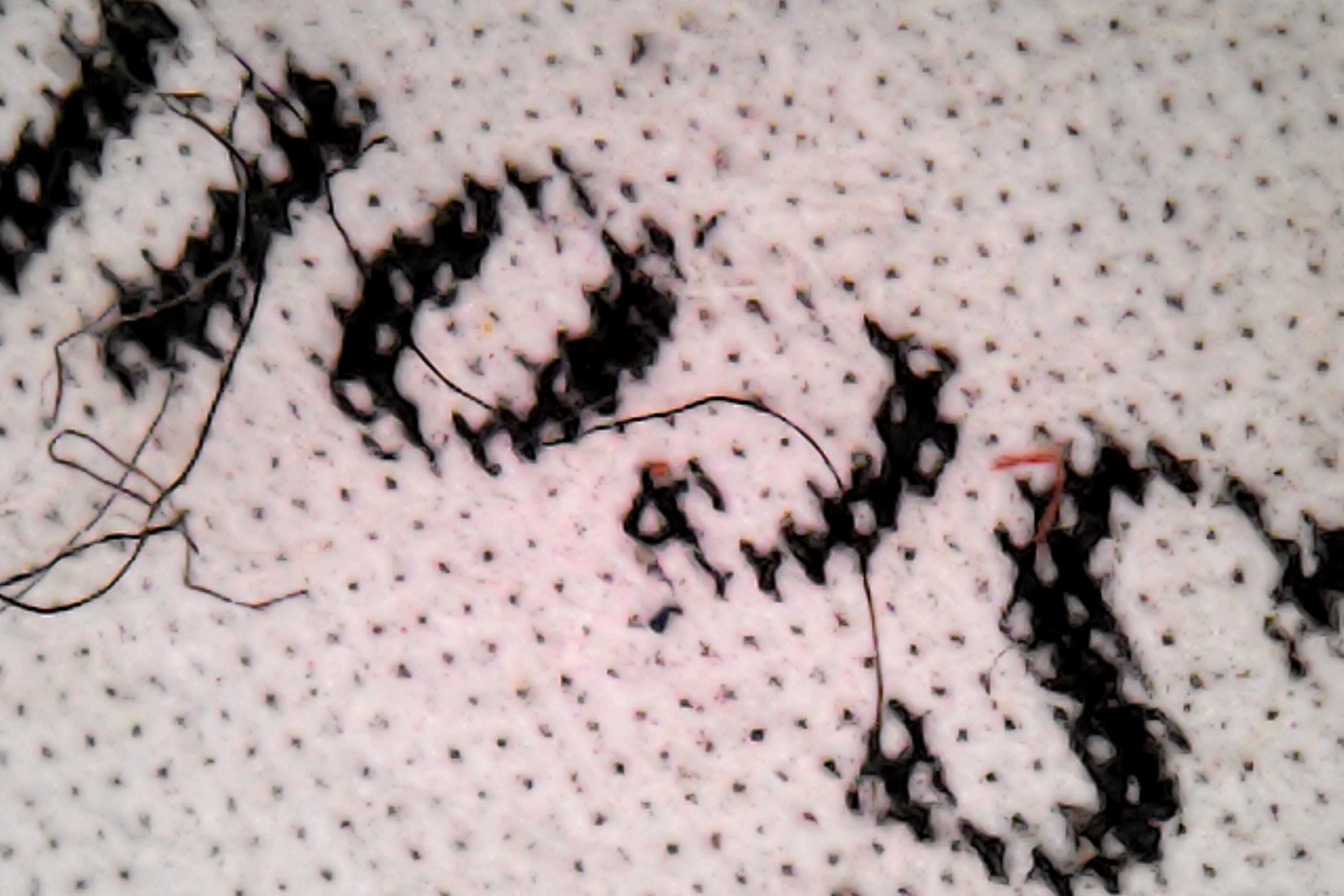
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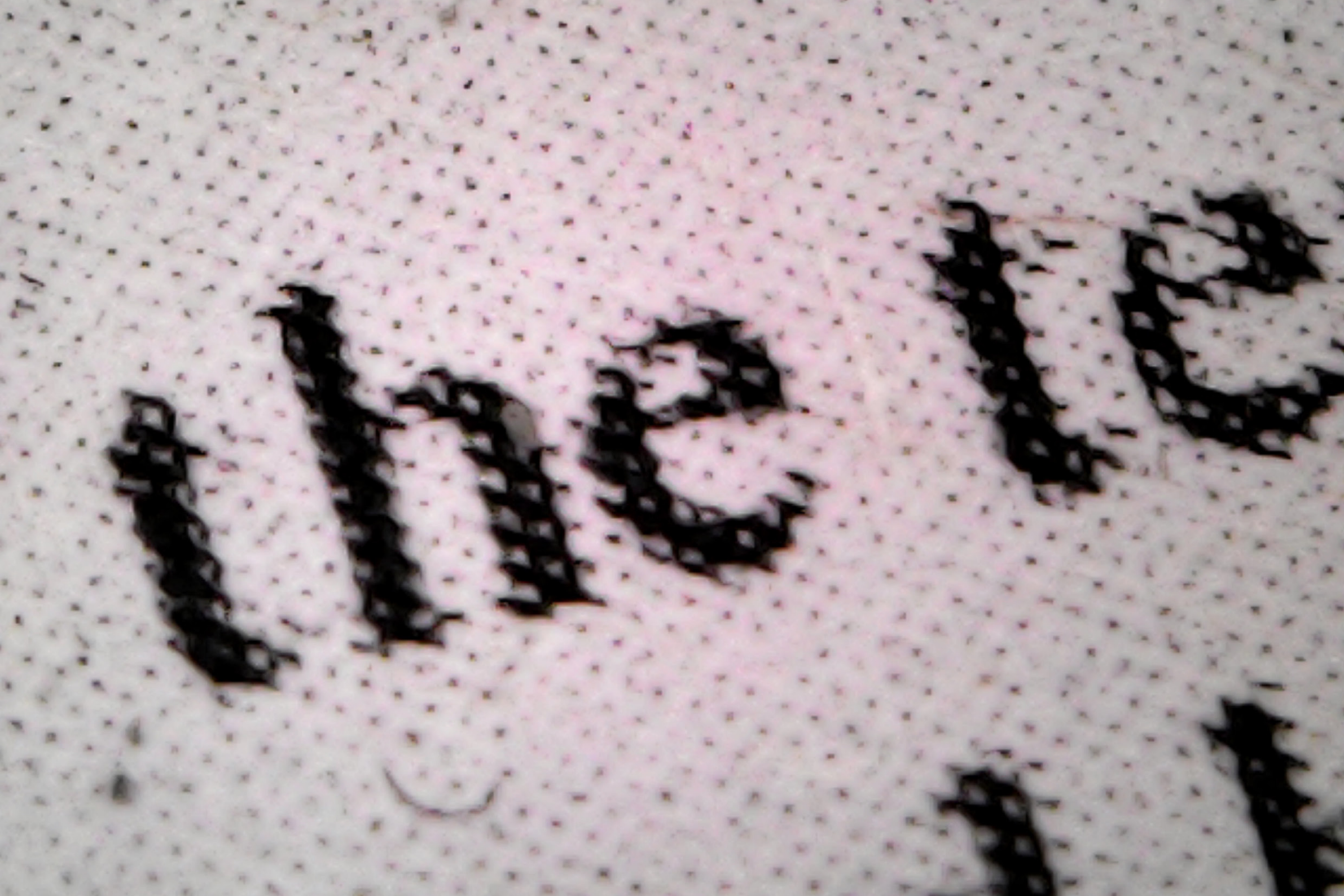




















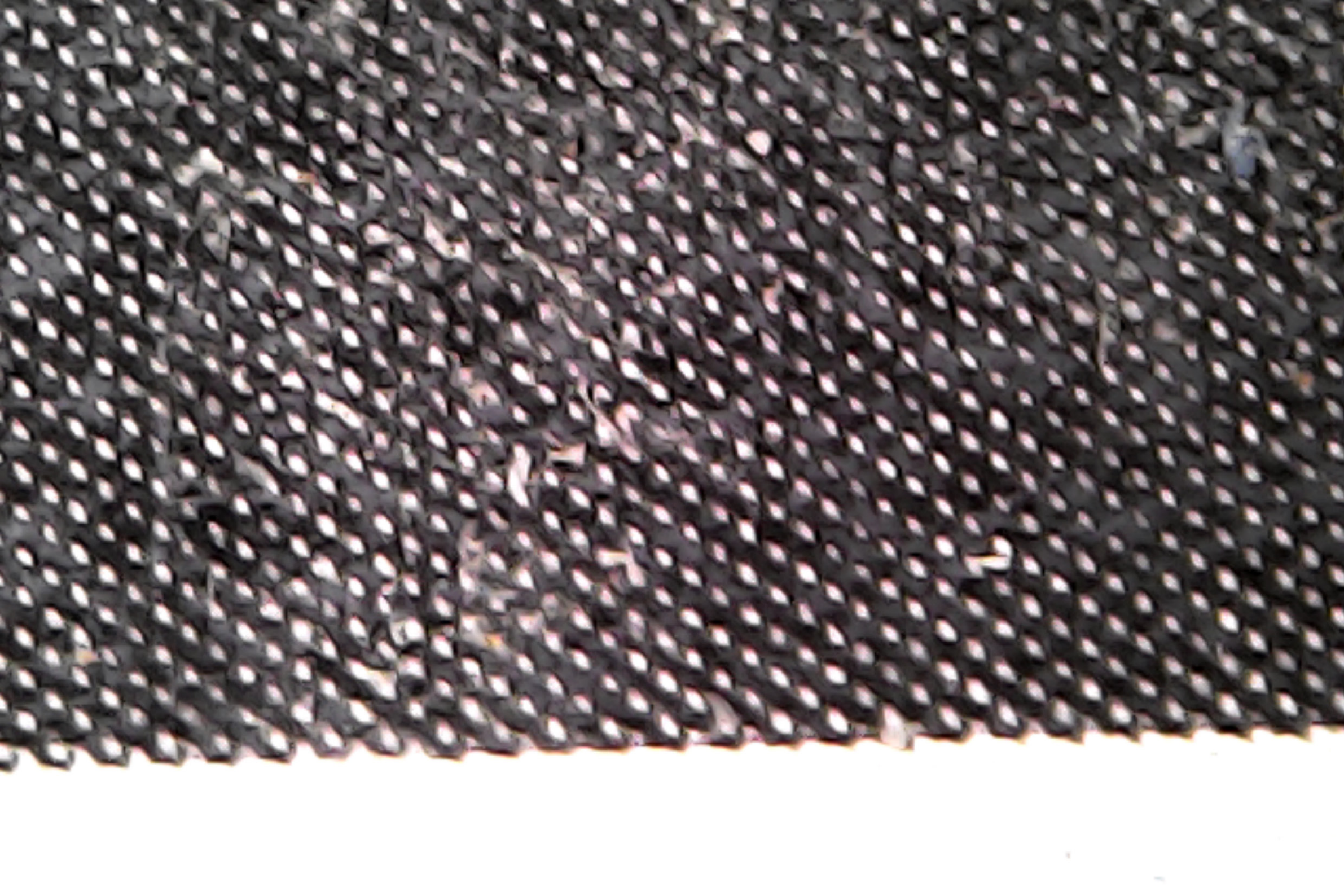
























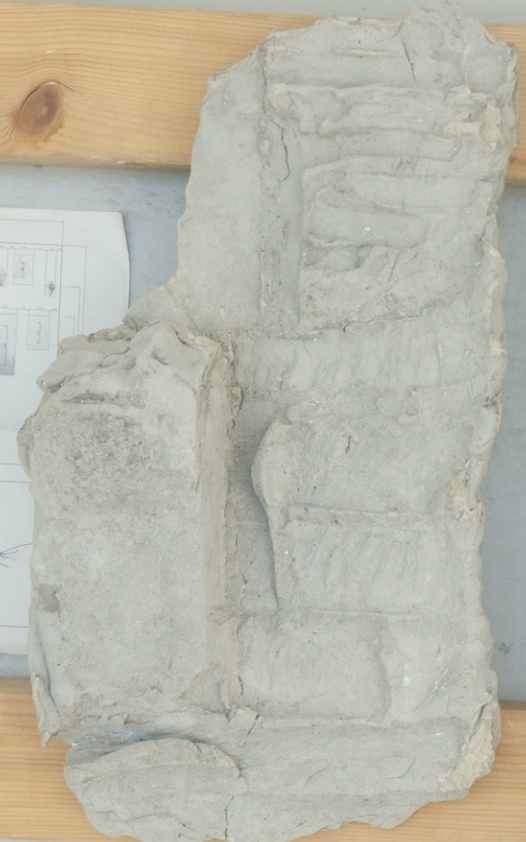
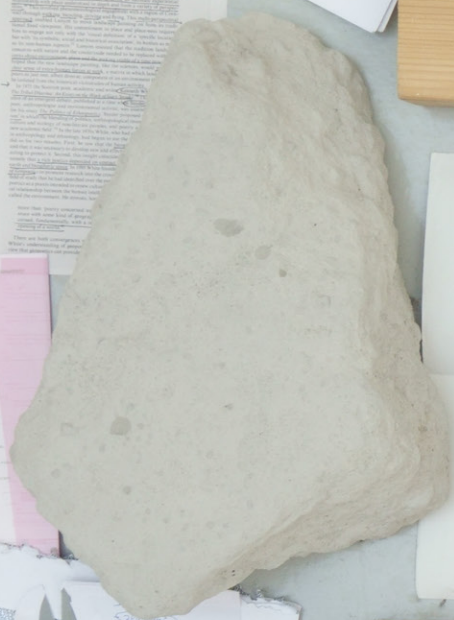




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in 2002, Pearson and Shanks took this impulse into new directions. Pearson continued to develop site-work "horizontally across the terrain and simultaneously" to become "a topographical phenomenon of local history", while Michael Shanks engaged with archaeology.<sup>38</sup> Their introduction of the term deep has been adopted by a variety of individuals working in the arts, digital arts, architectural education (notably the collective 'landscape biography' of Arklow), and to describe their own landscape or place-oriented work

on of performance/archaeology appears to have Pearson's involvement with the Cardiff Laboratory of 'anthropology' of Eugenio Barba's *Odin Teatret*, 1980. In 1981 Pearson, a former archaeology student, with Lis Hughes Jones, and became its first artistic director, internationally acknowledged as a pioneering group dealing with place, identity and the role of art in strategies of cultural resistance and community building. McLucas joined the company in 1988, shifting its site-specific direction.

Reading of *PrairyEarth* in the early 1990s led to an awareness of both their training as archaeologists and of the way in which they articulated by Welsh terms such as *yr aelwyd* (the square mile), *yo fro* (neighbourhood, home district, habitat).<sup>39</sup> Subsequently *Brith Gof* produced powerful performances on a range of scales that engaged with the folds and creases, the vernacular detail, which practice that, in retrospect, can be seen to both particularise and discipline based expositions of philosophical and geographical perspectives.<sup>40</sup>

Chris Professor of Performance Studies at Aberystwyth to design one of Britain's first undergraduate degrees in the late 1990s and, as a performance maker, he has remained a highly influential figure in both the fields of theatre and performance. An in-depth recent performance work is documented in *Performance, Memory and Landscape* (2006), a work that contact with both the literary psychogeography of Guy de Maupassant and W. G. Sebald, and with the combination of mappings of an individual like Luci Gorell Barnes' *The Stinging Nettle Atlas*, a project concerned, like the *Angels of Childhood*.

the Omar and Althea Hoskins Professor of Classical Studies at the University of Exeter, is perhaps best known for work

with Christopher Tilley on post-processual or interpretive archaeology. Given its eclecticism at both the theoretical and technical levels, along with Shanks' support for the continuing relevance of Cliff McLucas' work, his approach remains closely linked to that of deep mapping. However, it is predicated on, and intended to privilege, the discipline of archaeology conceptualised 'as a mode of cultural production' or 'cultural poetics'.<sup>41</sup> What we find problematic about this disciplinary appropriation appears in his claim that 'we are all archaeologists now', alongside his view of the Arts and Humanities as a 'fascinating research laboratory'. These claims reflect a tacit intellectual neo-colonialism typical of the combative *realpolitik* and disciplinary empire-building endemic to the academy. (Similar attempts at appropriation can be found in, for example, the writing of certain cultural geographers). Something which, in turn, imposes arbitrary limits on open deep-mapping/slow residency as a knowledgeable, passionate, multi-perspectival and open engagement with the world as polyverse.

*Cliff McLucas: deep mapping the island of Terschelling*

While Cliff McLucas' deep mapping work in California is known from online archives, his final deep mapping project is largely forgotten. (What information we have comes from a performed lecture and from Joop Mulder, McLucas' collaborator and the director of the *Oerol* festival).<sup>42</sup> However, it suggests that his work was developing rapidly and in new directions. Between 1999 and 2002 McLucas initiated a major new project. Its first iteration, *Earste Dagen (The First Days)*, was presented at the *Oerol* annual festival on the island of Skylge/Terschelling, located off the Netherlands mainland in the Wadden Sea. *Earste Dagen* was intended as a pilot project, undertaken with the view of developing methods for deep-mapping places and peoples by combining cartographic, aerial survey, and other neutral technological processes with recordings reflecting the political and social concerns (in particular with regard to language) relating to the island's history and inhabitants. From what we know of what McLucas presented in 2000, it appears that he was preoccupied with the fragility of the island (geologically little more than a large, artificially stabilised, sandbank) than even slight changes in sea level would submerge.

Working with photographer Fred Ross, who used a helicopter to take the necessary photographs, the installation presented the island as wholly isolated; with McLucas combining 'an aerial video survey of the island, a wild track sound recording from five different locations on the island, an interview with the oldest man on the island [and a Frisian speaker], and a series of digital stills'.<sup>43</sup> These were installed in a Second World War bunker, a former canteen of the German Wehrmacht, which further emphasised his concern with fragility. It seems that the central focus of the work was a projection onto the reinforced concrete floor, involving a large map of Terschelling. While this does not imply any radical departure from *There are*

fracture

ten things that I can say about these deep maps, sumptuousness appears to have given way to a materially appropriate response to the fragility of both the land and its original language of Frisian or Frisians.<sup>44</sup>

McLucas' preoccupation with language in his deep mapping derives from his learning, and concern for the future of, the Welsh language. Asked about the Terschelling project's focus on language, he said:

In fifty or a hundred years' time... maybe the language will have changed, for sure it would have changed I think, and that's why it's exciting for us to make a portrait of this point in time.<sup>45</sup>

Anwen Jones and Rowan O'Neill rightly reference McLucas' concern with the British perspective on Welsh culture as 'underground' or 'private' and his stress on deep-mapping's potential to address the place that such a "culture inhabits – both geographical and emotional (dare I say 'spiritual')".<sup>46</sup> This concern is present in the Californian work in his insistence on including the languages of Native Americans spoken along the length of the San Andreas Fault. It also resonates with the work of many contemporary practitioners who embrace this importance of language; for example in Tim Robinson's work on the west of Ireland, artist Arthur Watson's work in the inclusion of Scots place names, and Dakota artist Mona Smith's *B'dote* memory mapping, all concerned to address the fragility of the intimate relationship between language, local naming and a sense of place. That McLucas recognised the importance of such concerns and had begun to link these to environmental issues remains significant for current approaches to deep mapping/slow residency.

*The disciplinary environment/the authority of open practice*

Silvia Loeffler, whose *Glas Journal* was referred to earlier, has an ensemble practice of the kind referred to in the Introduction. However, this term needs to be thought through in relation to how such practices are authorised. She refers to her chronotopic approach to her residency as a form of deep-mapping, but also as a 'hybrid ethnographic project' concerned with 'the cultural mapping of spaces we intimately inhabit', using the terms of 'liquid' and 'tender' mappings that refer to Giuliana Bruno's discussion of Madeleine de Scudéry's *Carte du pays de Tendre*.<sup>47</sup> This compound naming seems entirely appropriate for a collaborative, many-faceted project that explores the layered emotional geographies of Dún Laoghaire Harbour, Dublin, by focussing on "performatively mapping the intimate rituals and everyday performances of those individuals who live and work in the harbour" (Figure 3.3).<sup>48</sup> She adds that by developing the project with the participation of local inhabitants, she has been able to explore the maritime environment as a liminal (or, arguably, 'undisciplined') space, one in which the character of buildings, the area's economic implications, daily spatial

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That critical analysis is not the place to end this book, however. In the two decades of the 21st century to date we see that there is an even more stringent insistence on place, or in the parlance of the academy, 'a spatial turn'. And one thing we share as a *leitmotif*

which are self-styled commitments undertaken by individuals to the timeframes of commitment to

rhythms and a project is, then, individuals who live that will condepts based in with a host of that what is par and complexity the interaction constant flux o might be seen times and place At a time wh social sciences by establishing with art that 'm ity to engage se rary art as a mo to deep mapping of deep mapping articulate such ance' reside? As initiators of dee 'speaks for itself demarc research textual expositi as authoritative Such 'justified' reference in the of what the aut Deep Mappings ilities is an exer a disciplinary fr pological and e cism, work by se history, film, po dark sea', local This breadth of marked contras largely cite mat plinary field In making th that reference plinary authori Stengers, Felix











