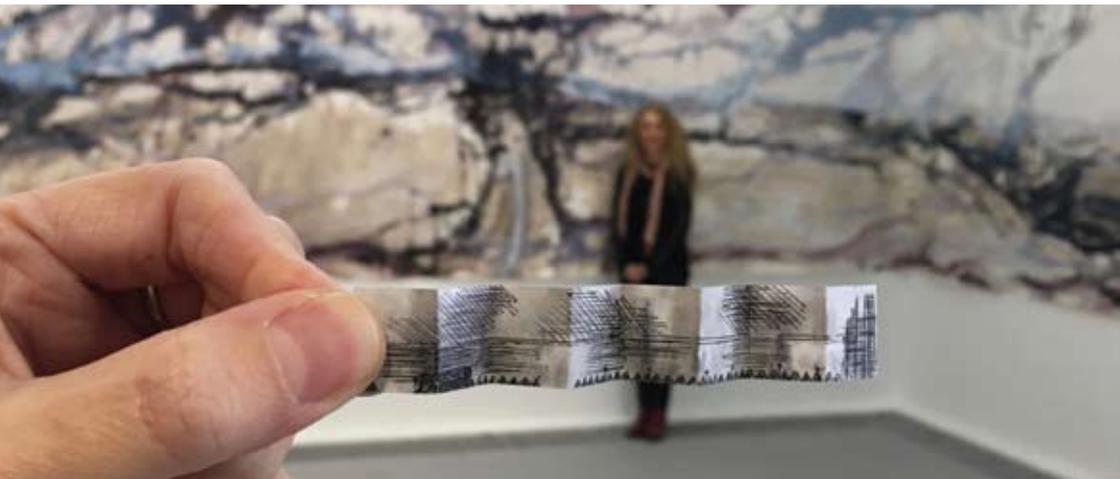
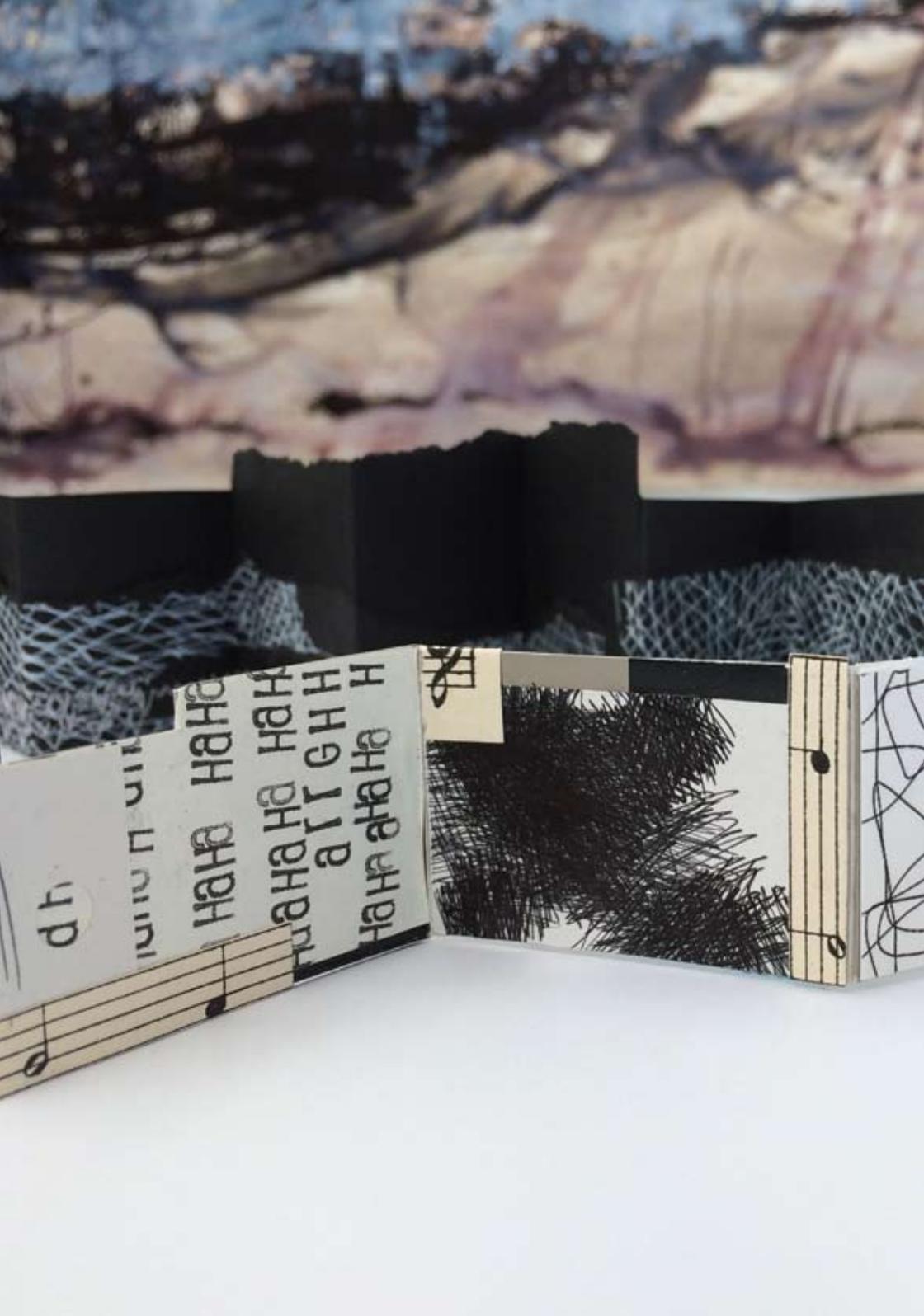


# Drawing Insight



A collaborative project between the University of Chichester  
and Outside In at Pallant House Gallery



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Photograph left: Yvonne J Foster  
Front cover photograph: Jennifer Gilbert

## Introduction

Bringing creative communities together is an increasingly important and relevant part of contemporary arts practice, providing ways to share knowledge and explore the permeable interface between individuals and communities, skills and understanding.

The Insight project is an initiative developed by Shirley Chubb and Jennifer Gilbert during her time as manager with Outside In. The project recognises the value of collaborative practice and brings together artists linked to the University of Chichester (UoC) and Outside In at Pallant House Gallery.

The project sets up opportunities for artists from different backgrounds to learn from each other, have space for discussion and to develop their artistic practice, professional and social skills, confidence and wellbeing. It focuses on creating a truly collaborative approach to expressing ideas and skills.

The first pilot project in 2014 brought together UoC artist Gemma Green and Outside In artist Paul Bellingham with support from project facilitator Tanya Wood. This phase of development revealed the impact and value of providing artists with the space and support to investigate common visual territories and led to Paul Bellingham's current studies on the BA Honours Fine Art course at UoC. It also showed the importance of the facilitator role in supporting the partnership throughout.

Following a second successful project with Central St. Martins in London, this third partnership brings together artists Yvonne J Foster, from Outside In, with UoC alumni Deborah Petch and Rachel Redfern as project facilitator.

These partnerships have seen the production of some remarkable work that confirms the power of visual art as a communicative tool. Reaching out of their familiar ways of working, each artist has reconsidered and refocused their practice in response to their partner.

The processes of discussion, questioning and self-reflection have been key to each phase of development, allowing new works to emerge and

grow in response to the collaborative process. The facilitator role has been an essential element that enables the artist partnerships to focus and evolve in a supportive and safe environment.

Across each group the focus on learning from each other has been a key and intrinsic part of the process, with creative equality a priority that has underpinned the development of the initiative throughout.

Working with these artists has been an absolute pleasure, with each phase of development revealing their integrity and commitment to investigating and sharing the process of being a contemporary artist. Generously supported by an Arts Council England Grant, the Insight project provides a new template for collaboration, learning and parity between artists whose common interest is to investigate, explore and express their place in the world.

Shirley Chubb, Reader in Interdisciplinary Art, UoC  
Outside In: Marc Steene, Director; Jennifer Gilbert, Former Manager; Hannah Whitlock, Artist Coordinator and Harry Scott, Communications Officer.



Photograph: Liam Petch

## Deborah Petch



Photograph: Rosie Powell

It's a busy old life that is fulfilling and rewarding. I feel independent, enriched and happy. I've spent the last nine years of my life juggling a family single-handed, working and studying for a Degree and then a Masters in Fine Art. Through art I have found a new pathway that resonates within me, taking me forward by adding meaning and purpose to my existence beyond my responsibilities. Attaining a Masters Degree in Fine Art from UoC in September 2015 was an absolute high point in my life, my greatest achievement after my four children. Life is hectic but I always manage to fit in my art practice as it is what defines me. My art is an extension of who I am.

### *Collaboration and the artwork*

Authenticity within my art practice is paramount to me. Art is such a personal pursuit. How can two artists with divergent practices come together and still stay true to themselves? When making work it has

to feel right and true for both Yvonne and I, and this is where the challenges of the collaboration were discovered. Working together at the University on concertina books, we practiced our mark making that would inform our separate works. We responded to each other by embracing our differences in scale and technique, and this became the form of our collaboration. I responded by producing an 'Inkscape' outside on a cold but sunny winter's day on top of my regular haunt, the Iron Age hill fort at Cissbury Ring.

The 'Inkscape' is an enormous ink drawing created on a huge roll of paper. It is a gestural, expressive, intuitive and free piece of work, a celebration of life being lived, engaging with the past, thinking to the future but really embracing and being in the now. Working outside was exhilarating and a highlight of the project as I created an immediate response to being in the landscape at that particular moment in time. In contrast Yvonne enjoyed working small scale, in tiny boxes, indoors in the warmth and safety of her own space at home.



Photograph: Deborah Petch

Yvonne and I agreed to line our kitchen floors with paper as a record of our lives over the period of the project.

The paper that has lined my kitchen floor, capturing the marks and traces of everyday life in my home for over two months, was then taken outside to “The Trundle”, an Iron Age Hill Fort at Goodwood, and here I made a second kitchen shaped ‘Inkscape’. Taking what had been inside my home outside, I reworked the floor piece, layering it with a new landscape of charcoal and ink. With Rachel working alongside, it seemed the perfect climax to the project. This worn, torn, multi-layered and fragmented piece of work reflected life lived, enriched by time and embedded with memory and knowledge. Having the freedom to express ourselves through whatever form is appropriate unearths truths far beyond words. The realization that collaboration can mean separate works in response to each other was liberating and allowed us to work individually, taking this new work to exciting and contrasting scales.

#### *Drawing insight*

I began this project one year after completing my Masters degree. Having experienced collaboration during my studies I thought I had an idea of what to expect. How wrong was I. This collaboration has been a challenging, interesting, stimulating, eye-opening experience. At times I have felt frustrated, inadequate and quite ‘the outsider’, but at other times I have felt epic and liberated.



Photograph: Deborah Petch



Photograph: Deborah Petch



Photograph: Rosie Powell

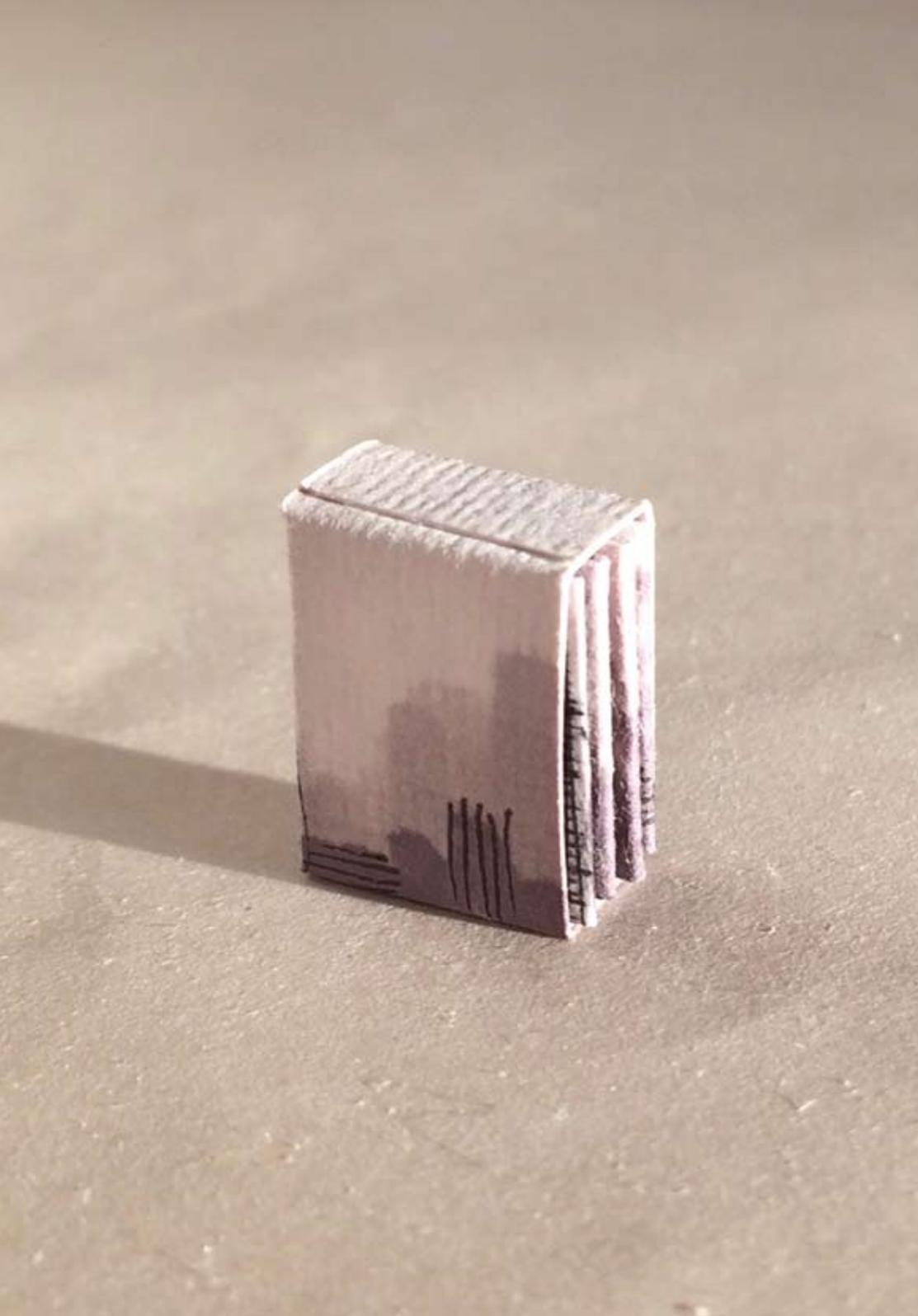
Perhaps this reflects life, anything worth living has tides, highs and lows, and phases. It also has an end, an aim and a goal to work towards. The roles have sometimes blurred, who was the facilitator, who was the artist, who was the outsider? As an intimate small group of three we have wrangled with big issues that have been revealed through trust and respect and we have all responded with some rich and loaded work. Learning of Yvonne and Rachel's past trauma has been emotional and I feel proud to have worked alongside two strong and gifted females. I believe the influence we have had on each other's practices will inform our work for a long time to come. We have all gained confidence in our abilities and I have felt valued as an artist.



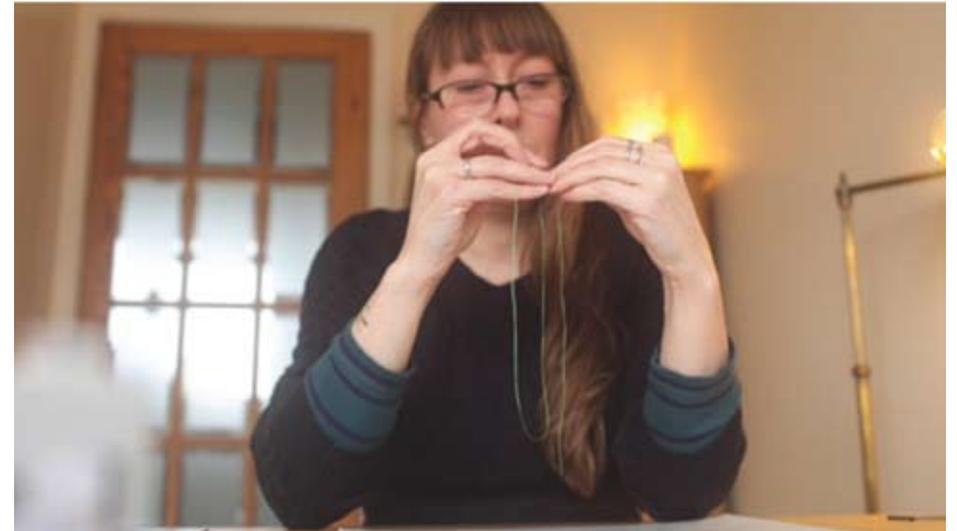
Photograph: Deborah Petch



Photograph right: Liam Petch



## Yvonne J Foster



Photograph: Rosie Powell

I'm the Outside In artist. I use art to cope with life.

A few years ago I had a severe breakdown. I was recently married and my husband left, triggering my depression to spiral out of control. I began spilling out my emotions through scribbled images, words and altered photographs; I was responding to what life had thrown at me by creating visceral artworks.

I didn't realise at the time that I was dealing with past trauma: my father attempted suicide the first time when I was 13. Dealing with the loss of a parent by suicide is strange: it never felt quite real. I often find myself revisiting a version of my teenage self; me before life changed.

Art is still my way of processing life, it is also my escape, relaxation and enjoyment. Sharing my art helps start conversations about emotional trauma, mental health, loss and suicide that had previously been hidden.

Photograph left: Yvonne J Foster

Saying that, I'm not so easily categorised. I left home after my father died and went to university to study Design & Silversmithing. I became an excellent student, winning awards and bursaries for my designs, but in the working world I soon became disenchanted and switched to a more rewarding career working with children.

Having now returned to art, due initially to my breakdown, I've had the freedom to decide my own style and direction. My work is hugely diverse: from miniature works of art and tiny boxes to stylistic graphic portraits.

#### *Collaboration and the artwork*

I hate talking about my current work because it opens it up to criticism, so I often keep work back, hold on to it until I'm not so emotionally invested or attached to it.



Photograph: Liam Petch

I make art initially to please myself, to express, to process, to challenge, to amuse and entertain. I find using white paper stifling, so I scribble, crosshatch and collage to cover as much white as possible. This helps me to unburden emotions and to focus before working in more detail.

I am extremely measured, particular and precise. I love working to a small scale. I find it pleasing. I work very quietly and methodically, focussing on minute details.

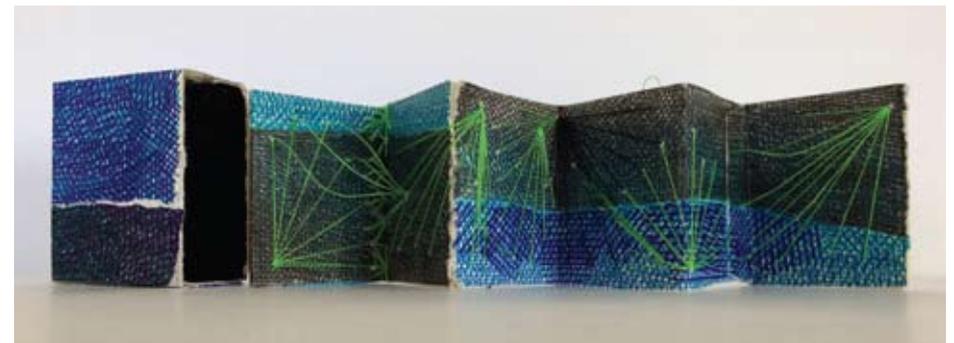
I purposely restrict in order to exercise an element of control. It focusses me and gives a welcome break from a self-critical and traumatised brain. It is a very solitary and personal process.

I love to work with boxes. I can hide the most precious or raw emotions inside.

#### *Drawing insight*

People are my biggest challenge; even the smallest of personal interactions can trigger a 'fight or flight' response. Controlling my artwork helps me cope with these feelings.

Changes to my normal routine unsettle my equilibrium. Joining the project meant being out of my comfort zone each week, in a place I didn't know, working with people I had never met.



Photograph: Yvonne J Foster

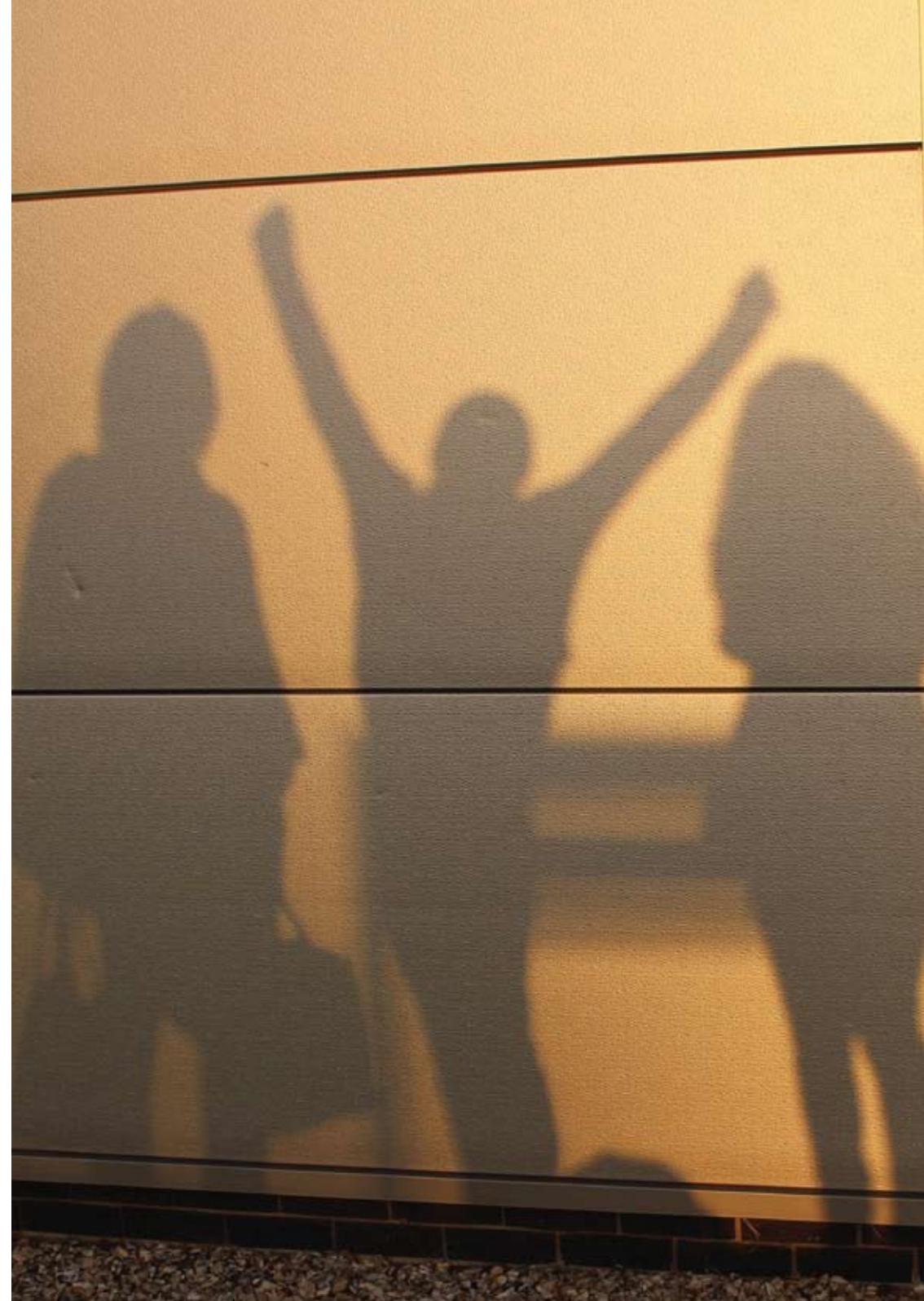
Returning to a university setting was challenging. I reacted negatively to creative suggestions that reminded me of work I did during my own university years. Without clear project parameters things were constantly changing which added to the feelings of instability. Throughout the project I keep a miniature journal. Simplifying everything that happened into just a few tiny words. This made things feel easier.

I worked more happily at home responding to the differences in our artistic practice and processing the conversations and triggers. I created a visual narrative simplifying elements to make them more manageable.

The three of us, together, created a very specific dynamic, talking openly each week about the difficulties we were facing. Maybe this is why we came to the conclusion that we were just 'being human'; we couldn't have been anything else.



Photograph above: Yvonne J Foster, photograph right: Deborah Petch





Rachel Redfern



Photographs above and left: Rosie Powell

### *The facilitator role*

I have often felt that I have had a dual role on the project - as a facilitator but also as an artist. The two are intertwined; you can't have one without the other to get the best out of working with two other artists. Being paired with both Deborah and Yvonne for the Insight Partnership allowed the accidental to play its part - nobody would have known that Yvonne as the Outside In artist would have a story that would mirror my own. Whilst I had a job to fulfill as a facilitator I was looking at Yvonne and acutely aware at times that I had been and could be sat where she was, the Outsider looking in.

Creating art comes from the core of an individual's head, heart and soul. Collaborating means sharing those inner workings and I didn't quite understand how hard that could be until I worked on what has been a very intimate project. Larger projects would allow artists to hide something, keep something back for themselves. This was impossible for the three of us. The pressure of that was heightened by the fact that for Deborah art means freedom and the ability to

express herself and for Yvonne it is a controlled way of reaching out to the world to tell her story, but also a means of protection. Finding common ground was a delicate and sensitive process. At times it revealed the fragility in all three of us.

What resulted was a focus on differences in scale, speed of execution and materials. Each process reflects the inner workings of each artist. The art became the conversation and the results speak for themselves - remarkable pieces of work that reflect what it means to be an artist. As a facilitator it was important for me that we captured the essence and spirit of how we worked - it is key to how I myself live, work and paint - that drive to uncover the honest truth about what 'Drawing Insight' really means.



Photograph: Rosie Powell



Photograph: Rosie Powell

### *Drawing insight*

My practice is increasingly split between the making of art and the business of art. Combining recent creative experience and over twenty years working professionally in business development roles has helped me to pursue a growing passion to be part of coaching, facilitating and implementing projects that allow artists to flourish.

My practice as an artist shows that our lives are reflected in our work and it is sometimes hard to take somebody else's life into your work (or somebody else's work into your life). Art magnifies what we feel in every day life and allows conversations that would otherwise be difficult. Having those intimate conversations, working alongside professional artists to draw insight from the making of art has made me realise I am exactly where I was meant to be.

There is fragility in all of us, some hide it better than others and there is sometimes no clear answer to who is an Outsider. Deborah, Yvonne and I have been given the luxury of taking time out of the ordinary to pursue the extraordinary. In a time starved world this is a rarity and the outcome I hope reflects that.

For me personally this project has allowed real conversation to happen and art has helped me find my voice around the difficult issues of both mental health and suicide, a voice I hope I can use to good effect.



Photograph: Rachel Redfern



Image right: Rachel Redfern

## Filming the project

Rosie's sensitive approach to working with artists with a range of needs and her subtle approach to capturing information and sharing it with audiences, made her a natural choice for this project. We wanted the film to document the artist's ways of working, both separately and together, to show the differences in styles but also how they could merge through collaboration. Deborah can be seen at Cissbury Ring creating her largest piece to date, and her sense of freedom and joy is beautifully captured through movement and sound. On the other hand, Yvonne is seen at the desk in her flat with views of the sea, tenderly making marks on minute pieces of paper and scratching away with her pen. Rachel as the facilitator is there throughout gently using the making as an opportunity for enquiry, allowing all three to reflect on the role and importance of art in their lives.

Their differences are apparent; the film reflects the discussions that have taken place around what collaboration actually means capturing the intimacy of those visual and verbal conversations.

Filmmaker Rosie Powell commented:

*"Working on this project has been a very insightful and honest experience. I have collaborated with people I may potentially never have worked with creatively and had discussions about things I've never thought about before. It's been fascinating documenting how each individual works and how they use the materials they choose. It's wonderful to watch a piece of art work evolve and change; from being just an idea or feeling to being something physical, existing in a space.*

*I have enjoyed being let into each artist's workspace and therefore by default, into their personal space, something I feel that the film reflects. For me, it feels like this project started as a creative conversation, which has slowly become various difficult conversations about life, people and their differences. It has been an opportunity for me to focus not only on the artwork, but also the people behind it."*



Photograph : Deborah Petch

## Creative writing responses

On the 18th January UoC creative writing students and professionals were invited to meet the Insight artists and view the artworks created on display in artOne. The group were asked to reflect creatively on the experience in whatever form of words they felt was appropriate for them. The project team were interested in their initial, instinctive reactions expressed in prose or poetry, with the potential for their responses to be included in the project exhibition. The results were sensitive and thought provoking, as was the discussion that took place throughout the workshop. Here are some of those responses and the comments that accompanied them.

*Where have I gone* (poem submitted by Fran Benson)

Where have I gone?  
Hidden in the shadows  
Lost in my soul.  
I have crept to the edges of your life  
Out of reach, an infinite second away  
Breathing memories across your path  
Entwined with past and present  
Pushing you forwards to a future  
I will never know.

*"Taking that emotion then to Rachel's painting, I saw it as a metaphor: the textures and colours were the here and now of life stretching forwards to the future and where it didn't meet the edges was the hinterland, where death and the unknown and unseen resides - and is where "crept to the edges" came from - and yet it is still very much part of the picture"* Fran Benson



Photograph: Deborah Petch



Photograph: Rachel Redfern

*Traceries* (poem submitted by Denise Woodhouse)

1.

We can only bring, in the way of maps,  
these unenclosed, uncertain fields  
into which we've stitched our dead peacocks,

tails laid out, feathers cross-hatched  
in emerald, indigo and midnight blue. Abstracts,  
dark-hued bodies of work, scripted, marked

with the stark tramlines, the railway tracks,  
that zigzag, in their untoward ways,  
toward your undisclosed horizons.

2.

Standing back, you see these wayward, sky-born trees.  
The way their branching black arteries  
have etched their electricities in our heads.

You see stained white meadows  
feathered with radiant traceries,  
cobwebs of skeletal leaves, capillaries

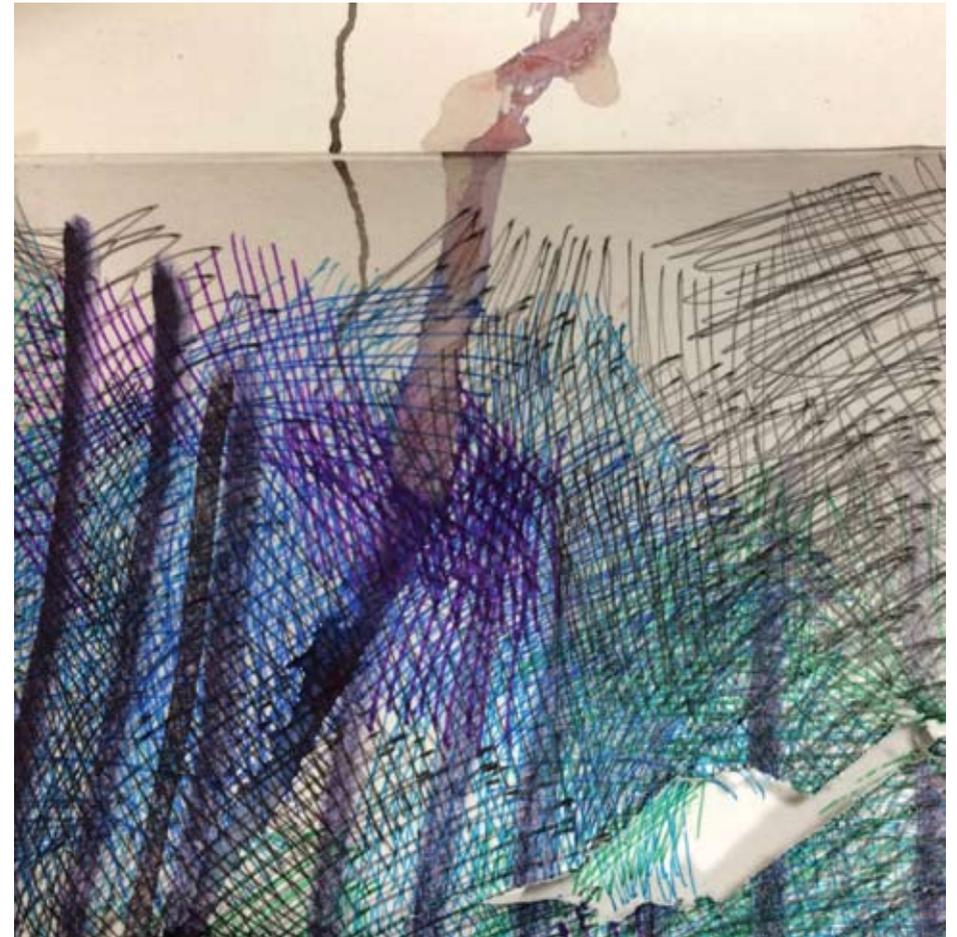
soaked in midnight hues,  
swollen with violets, purples, viridians,  
a snowfield rivered with inky deltas.

3.

Should you stay, see us release our dead peacocks,  
to fly as phoenixes, paper-winged  
and feathered with the tender strengths

of acrylic, ink and thread. From these proximities  
see how the tensile web holds at last,  
how the laced net catches and, for a moment, suspends

the spun glass of your breathing,  
unhitching the iron weight from above our heads,  
revealing these, the friable charts that we are offering.



Photograph : Yvonne J Foster

*Bare The Raw* (poem submitted by Johanne Ball)

Bare the Raw  
Slip in my shadow  
Walk at my pace  
Fall through the gaps  
Feel the fragile.

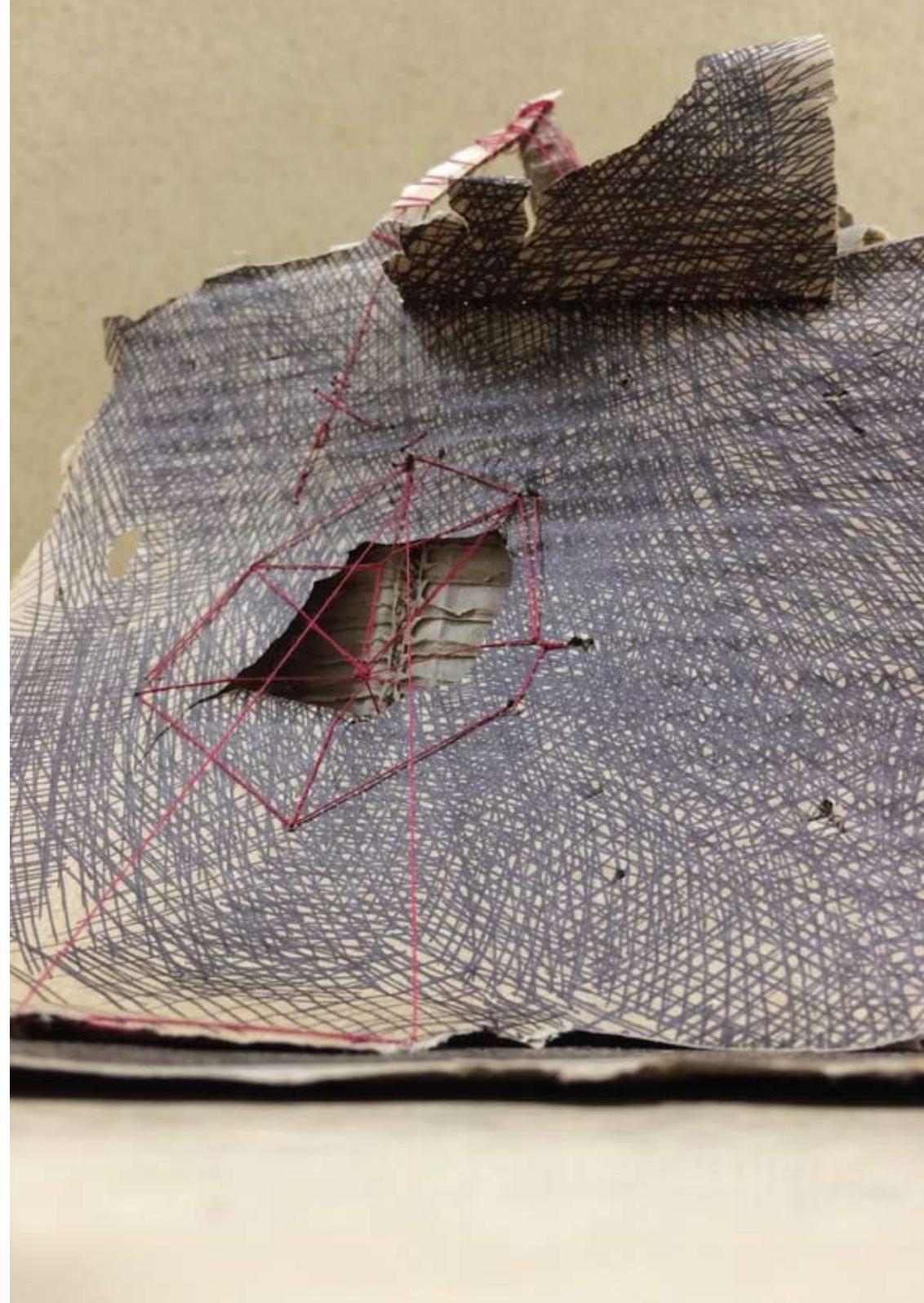
Tune your ear to the storm.  
Over the edge  
All is still  
In the Landing

Flesh has its tinge  
I want to trace.  
Brush your chalks  
Make your mark

In me.  
Expose the interior  
The details in the creases  
Know the slippage

Awaken humanity

*"A huge thank you to you all for sharing your art and aspects of your hearts - this was one of the best afternoons I've spent at the Uni. You are a brave and beautiful bunch!" Johanne Ball*



Photograph: Yvonne J Foster

## Drawing Insight

Exhibited at Pallant House Gallery, 1-26 March 2017

Partners:



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