

'Footpath'

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Footpath contains impressions of ecological and social footprints. Disrupting anthropocentrism, observing subtleties and contemplating our place, my works start with the body and with walking. The act of walking is a passageway into thought and contemplation. Rather than walking toward apparent manifestations of human production, such as urban infrastructure and digital engineering, my decision is to walk away from such stimuli.

I am not under the illusion that I can “walk out” of the Anthropocene;¹ by entering a place that is less recognisably altered by humans, I begin to perceive the effect of human activity on less visible yet vital elements, such as air, water, vegetation and geology. Human inscriptions are brought into relief; for instance, the effects of a drought or a trodden down track. I respond with some sense of agency by finding a specific detail to keep communication alive, for example, a bone or stick that is transformed into an artwork back in the studio. By walking away from the “social centre,” I travel in and out of defined areas; crossing a concrete road in the middle of bushland or working from a canoe to observe the erosion on a riverbank.

Sensation and memory are explored more specifically through painting and drawing. Brushes are made from collected materials. The brush is significant because it allows a distance between myself and the canvas where subtle resonances of the world, memories of things seen and experiences of walking can be expressed. The hand fuses and concentrates all five senses. Imprecision of my brushes reveals the ambiguities in every human gesture. The paint transferred onto canvas is never the direct reproduction of my original mental image or memory.² Artist Lee Ufan describes this encounter between mind and material as having the “reciprocal relationship of actors in a play.”³ The artist no longer rules over objects but is one among them, embedded in the same set of forces.⁴ In his artworks and texts, Ufan pursues a more fluid relationship with the material world.⁵ Similarly, I search for a non-exploitative way to relate to the material world.

List of material used:

unglazed porcelain
concrete
24K gold
stones
ink
paper
felt

¹ The Anthropocene is a term coined in 2000 by atmospheric chemist Paul Crutzen and biologist Eugene F. Stoermer to describe the present time interval in which human activities have profoundly altered evolutionary, biophysical and climatic processes and created a “stratigraphic signature” with distressing and devastating consequences, Paul Crutzen and Eugene F. Stoermer “The Anthropocene”, *International Geosphere – Biosphere Programme, IGBP Newsletter 41*, (May 2000): 17 – 18.

² Deleuze makes a similar point in his description of Francis Bacon’s use of chance in his brush technique. Gilles Deleuze, *Francis Bacon: The logic of sensation*, trans. D.W. Smith (London: Continuum, 2003), 76 – 77.

³ Lee Ufan, *Shinpan deai o motomete: gendai bijutsu no shingen* (Tokyo: Bijutsu Shuppansha, 2000) which creates “responsive ‘fields’ rather than objects of cognition” Lee Ufan, *The Art of Encounter*, trans. S. N. Anderson (London: Lisson Gallery, 2004).

⁴ For more reading on the interconnected and reciprocal relationships of human and nonhuman agents (For example: networks of people and things, of people and animals but also of concepts and systems.) See Jane Bennet, *Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things*, (Durham, NC, 2010).

⁵ J. Kee, “Points, Lines, Encounters: The World According to Lee Ufan,” *Oxford Art Journal* 31, no. 3 (January 2008): 403–424.
<https://doi.org/10.1093/oxartj/kcn028>.

bronze (not patinated)
raw timber
copper
air⁶
cotton
pigment
water
earth
sound
raspberry pi

The worn, rough and light sensation of bone between my fingers is what struck me. Maybe it was a moment of realisation about the fragility of existence. In that moment I conceptualised a work involving hundreds of porcelain bones. Turning the fragile bone into a precious, brittle object is an act of reverence. They often snap in the kiln. These fractures are mended with Kintsugi, the Japanese art of mending broken ceramics with gold.⁷ The multiplicity of the bones reveals subtle variations. When repeated many times, the structure begins to burst through the casing of its familiar contextual form and a new-found unfamiliarity materialises. Concrete slabs for the bones to rest on feel familiar, like a footpath. If someone decided to step onto this "footpath," the bones would crumble into dust. Materials co-exist in a space between industrial, natural, borrowed and hand-made bridging the worlds between the "human-manipulated" and the "human-found," creating a field where both worlds meet.

The materials collected and observed are from areas of the landscape that have been degraded as a result of the failure, since colonization, to recognize Indigenous custodianship of the land. I pay my deep respects to the Biripi and Gadigal people, custodians of the lands upon which the walking and my studio respectively lie. In *Footpath*, I "walk-with" the land as a way of challenging ideas associated with "walking on" the land and in an effort to deconstruct human dominion. The viewer walks alongside the physical "Footpath" in the exhibition. It cannot be "walked on" as that would destroy it. This relationship of walking alongside and "with" parallels the one that is required for the remediation of both social and environmental systems.

It is a political statement to walk. To go slow is to cut against the hurried temporality of society.⁸ In *Footpath*, sudden shifts in perspective reflect the revelatory qualities of a long walk.⁹ When walking, the mind is in sync with the body and the body is mediated with the ground; the walker is connected to the extending landscape. My mind copies my walk, which copies the world. Grounded in this value, the practice of walking and engaging with materiality enables me to explore the unknown and go beyond the dualism of "nature" and "culture." I hope that my art creates an "encounter" with material objects in a way that breaks through the objectified (*a priori*) relationships of modern life.

⁶ The inclusion of natural phenomena as material was pioneered by Land artist and sculptor Hans Haacke Jeffrey Kastner (Editor), Survey by Brian Wallis. *Land and Environmental Art*, 138.

⁷ The process of Kintsugi has been the stimulus for a new framework for environmental and social remediation in the Anthropocene whereby damage is the central element for metamorphosis and change. Duncan P. McLaren, "In a broken world: Towards an ethics of repair in the Anthropocene," *The Anthropocene Review*, no. 5, (April 12, 2018): 136-154, <https://doi.org/10.1177/2053019618767211>; Katelin Marie Posthuma, "Kintsugi: A New Framework For Post-Industrial Transformation" (PhD diss. University of Maryland, 2016) <https://doi.org/10.13016/M2TC31>

⁸ French aesthetic philosopher and cultural theorist Paul Virilio wrote on the theory of "dromology". He posited that human history is a procession of contests concerned with speed. Power resides in the acquisition of speed. He defined this as "the science of speed". Paul Virilio, *Speed and Politics: an Essay on Dromology* (New York: Columbia University, 1986); Rebecca Solnit "suspect(s) that the mind, like the feet, works at about three miles an hour... modern life is moving faster than the speed of thought, or thoughtfulness". Solnit, *Wanderlust: a History of Walking*, 30.

⁹ For example, the sudden appearance of a vista at the top of a hill. In *Twilight of the Idols* he wrote "all truly great thoughts are conceived while walking". Friedrich Nietzsche, *Twilight of the Idols* (Mineola, NY: Dover Publications, Inc., 2019), 4.