

Concerning Roundabouts

Production notes

Starting the hand work after working with keyboard, mouse, screen, you instantly have a heightened awareness of your body and of your mood. The space you take up, the way your body feels, tensions, aches. Your eyesight, which is sorely lacking.

Time-based and performative – you are doing this *now*, in this particular moment in time and this moment is affected by everything, is *about* everything. Working on the computer is much more cerebral – everything feels provisional, everything can be redone.

David Pye – workmanship of risk and certainty – jigs. What constitutes a jig? The road is a guide, but the scalpel doesn't know that – it is just a different colour on the paper, so maybe it can't be considered a jig. As with the lino V tool. I push it along the edge of the road, but if it touches it makes the road buckle and lift off the surface; it can wander in and under the road, or out into the surrounding space.

There is a minor risk to the body too – scalpels and chisels sticking into soft skin. Stiff neck.

The quality of lino comes to the fore – the relationship between the lino and the cutting tool – everything changes with speed, cutting angle, speed. Do you drive from the wrist, from the elbow, or from the shoulder? Do you turn the tool or the lino?

The edge becomes more real. What happens when the tool gets to the edge of each sheet of lino? You try to continue the movement as if the edge were not there, but each time the tool gathers a bit of pace and, lemming-like, jumps over the cliff without pausing for thought, leaving a trace of its edge-madness. The anxiety engendered by coming to an end.

This has been a very difficult process – it is easy to say that you will use techniques you are unskilled in, not so easy to deal with the doing. I have never done woodblock cutting (though I've been carving spoons) and I've only ever done one linocut, on my foundation course over 30 years ago.

It's winter and the days are short and light levels very low; my eyesight is terrible and I am constantly frustrated that I can't see what I'm doing. I feel the pressure of the deadline. My mood is also low, or, at least, very up and down. At times, I get into a rhythm and the tool moves smoothly – it feels right. The hand finds the right cutting angle, keeps the correct downward pressure, the right speed forward – in control, but not tentative. Then I lose concentration and dig too deep, or veer off into the next door cut. As ever, I hate making ugly marks, ugly movements.

I'm reminded of some ceramic processes where you are working blind – decorating processes where you won't know what you've really done until it comes out of the kiln. Without experience, I'm not sure how the marks I'm making will be translated by the ink and the paper. I am made aware of my body, my mood, my energy. I think I can tidy up on the computer, which takes some pressure off. Then I think I shouldn't do this. What is the point of unskilled making if you hide the mistakes? The marks are a very direct trace of the intimate engagement I talk about – between tool, material, maker and environment. I start to wonder if the semi-competent making will be read this way. Does everyone have a different idea of what is well-made; what the intention is? Which takes us back to the need for text and what, exactly, is discovered. Can the work itself stand as the research output?

Using making – intimate engagement – as a means to investigate some of the big questions – thought, embodiment, situatedness, individual and group –
Not to to advance other fields, but to use an interdisciplinary approach to advance my own field.

Using making as a way of thinking – thoughts come that don't otherwise.
Setting up making projects to fail – to generate the tension that comes when you have to make using tools and techniques that you are not pratised in. Being out of your comfort zone. So, back to thinking about craft as a tool for thinking embodiment and speculating on the reality of other objects.