

RESEARCH PORTFOLIO

Walking and Place

Neil Bousfield

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Output Date: 2021-2022

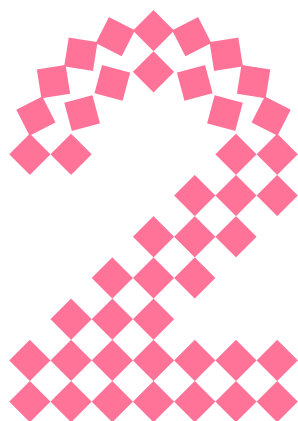
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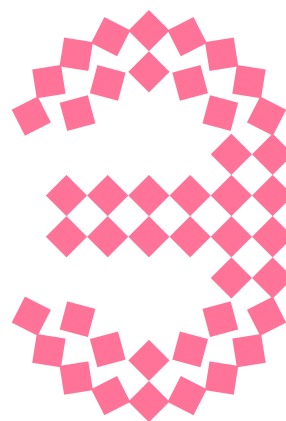
Contextual Information



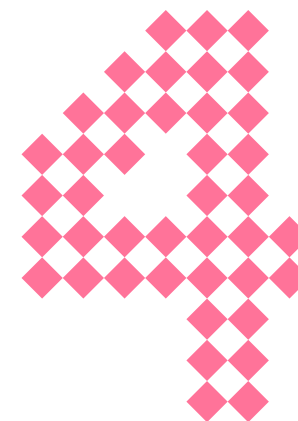
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Supporting Statement

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Walking and Place is a series of 11 multi-block relief engravings which reflect Bousfield's enduring engagement with landscape, place and value. The series is part of research which began in 2011 with *Where there was tea now there is sea*, an engraving for a Society of Wood Engravers project. This led to ongoing research of a study area between Walcott and Winterton on the North Norfolk coast where Bousfield lives, focusing on the effects of climate change on the coastal landscape, the eight-mile concrete sea defences and the surrounding land between the North Sea and the Norfolk Broads National Park. *Walking and Place* results from Bousfield's walks with his dog and interprets a dog's sense of place using the visual language of the grid. The series examines how regular walks strengthen attachments to the landscape for both dog and walker, including social interactions; understanding a place through walking it. The grid acts

as a metaphor for mapping and belonging, where dog walking symbolises the routines that transform space into home. Research involved mapping the area using LIDAR (Light Detection and Ranging) scans from the Environmental Agency, Google Earth, discussions with climate change scientists, coastal reports and sea level rise projections, highlighting the vulnerability of homes, villages, and land, as the sea wall becomes less effective. The artist documented the landscape and its details by sketching and drawing on each walk over time, so that mapping, sketching and constructing the coastline before and while it disappears is overlaid with the emotional and lived experience of the landscape. Together, the engravings reflect on place, memory, and the impermanence of landscape in the face of environmental change. Works from the series have been shown at a number of group exhibitions and on Bousfield's website from 2022.



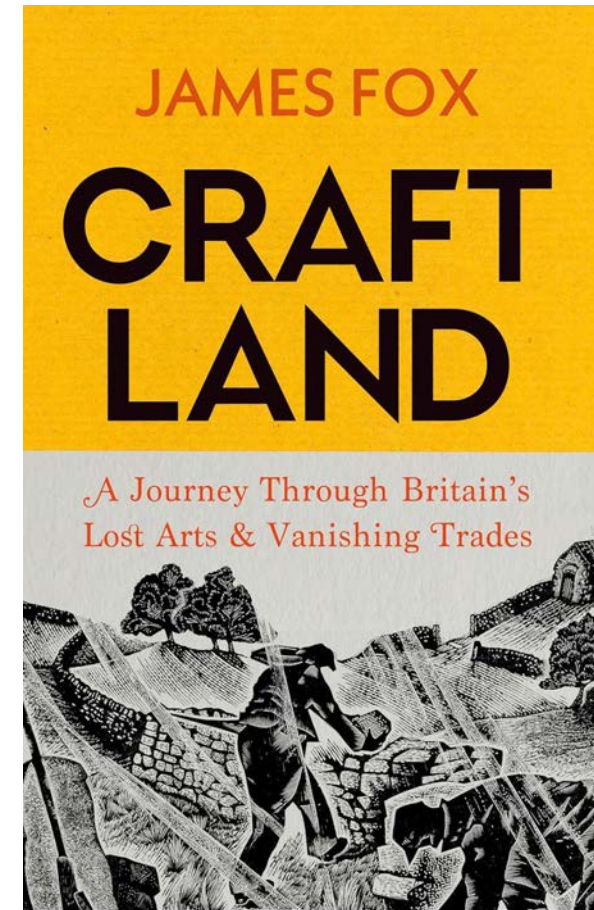
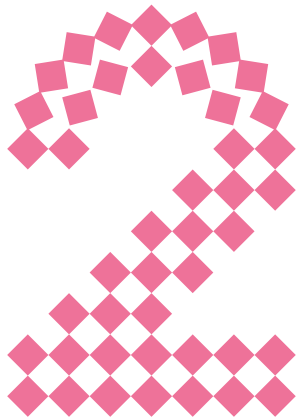
↑ 'Compass Run' (2022)



Research Process

Bousfield's research drew from a wide range of sources used over a number of years concerning the effects of climate change on the North Norfolk coast, including ongoing discussions with Dr Sophie Day, a Senior Research Associate at the Tyndall Centre for Climate Change Research, UEA. His research for this series was guided by two areas of enquiry: (i) *Can the daily dog walk create a sense of identity, attachment, and familiarity with territory, facilitate connections to community and enhance belonging?* (ii) *How can walking be understood and established as a methodology for further research within the defined area of study?*

A number of sources informed an understanding of walking as a research method and of placemaking, including Hannah MacPherson's 'Walking Methods in landscape research' (2016), Yi-Fu Tuan, *Space and Place: The Perspective of Experience* (2001) and WG Sebald's *Rings of Saturn* (1995). The research was also influenced by the work of the neuroscientist John O'Keefe, who identified the existence of place cells and place fields which can be seen to be activated in particular locations

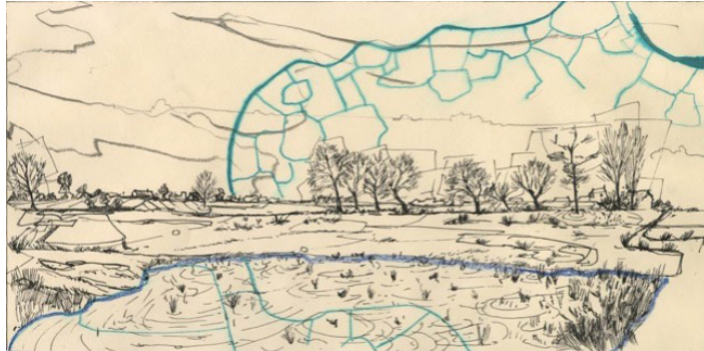


↑ 'Craft Land'. Cover image by Neil Bousfield



A convenient, accessible, local coastal walk was identified close to Bousfield's home and within the coastal study area. The walk was repeated daily at a set time to build routine, allowing the researcher to observe, experience and understand variations across seasons, tides, weather, light and changes in the height and shape of the beach. The routine enabled interactions with other dog walkers, leading to social connections. He mapped the area using historic Ordnance Survey maps, drainage maps, aerial photography, Google Earth, and the Environmental Agency's LIDAR data. Bousfield then drew abstract responses to the maps and routes he had walked using grid structures, aiming for a visual perspective which represented the landscape from above and through a historical lens. These drawings were overlaid by the daily sketches made on location as well as drawings of figures walking dogs. Designs were developed to reflect the project concepts rather than as literal representations.





For each work in the series the key drawing was scanned and digitally layered in Photoshop then transferred to a high-performance thermoplastic, for hand engraving by Bousfield. The engraved blocks were printed by Bousfield, with each print using four blocks, one block per colour, referencing a traditional Japanese woodcut approach, and layered using transparent ink to allow multiple colours.



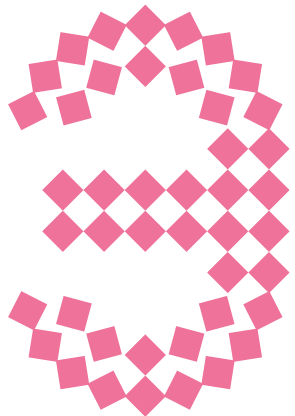
Research Insights

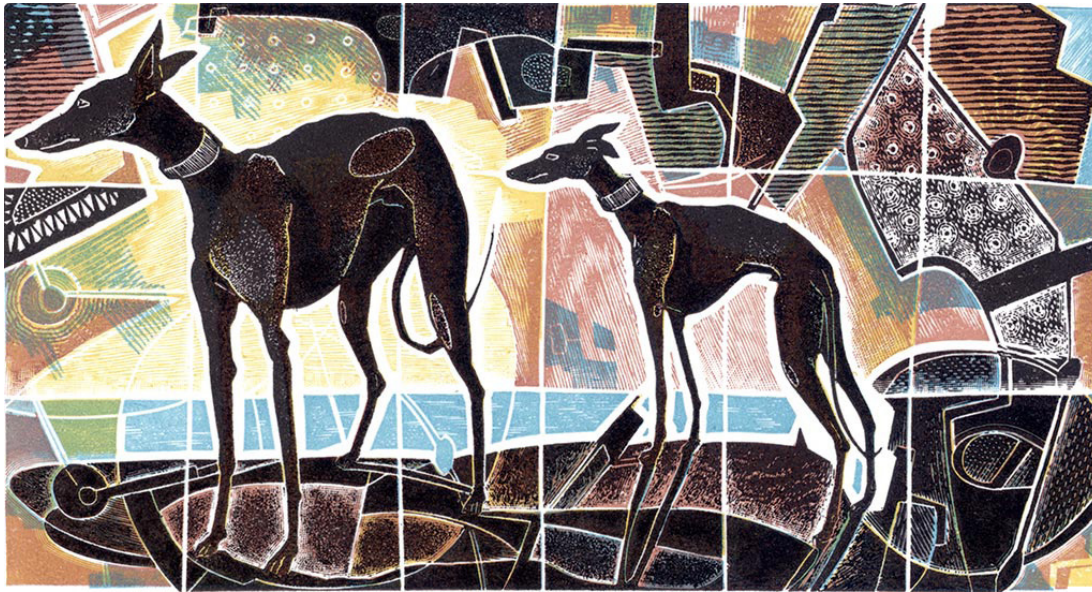
11 multi-block, coloured engravings were relief printed onto Zerkall paper using an 1858 Albion press made by Wood and Sharwood of 89 West Smithfield, London. Each print measures 8 x 15 cm, except *Dorothy Walking* (5.5 x 12 cm).

The series of works uses the process and tradition of wood engraving to layer contemporary landscape illustration with multiple perspectives, awareness of seasonal and environmental change, social interaction and narratives of place.

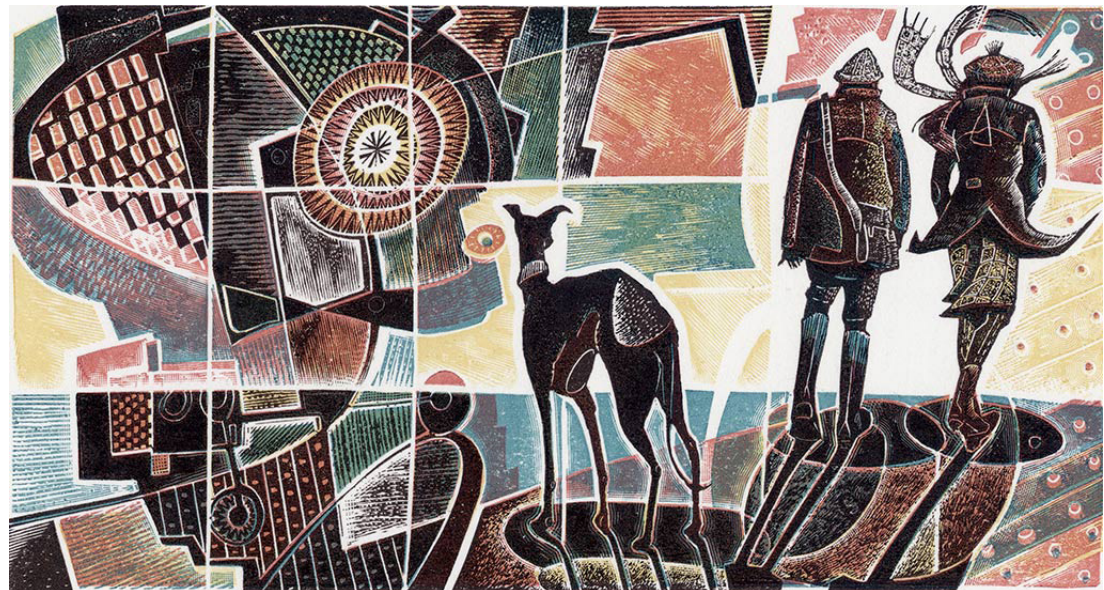


↑ 'Dorothy Walking' (July 2021)

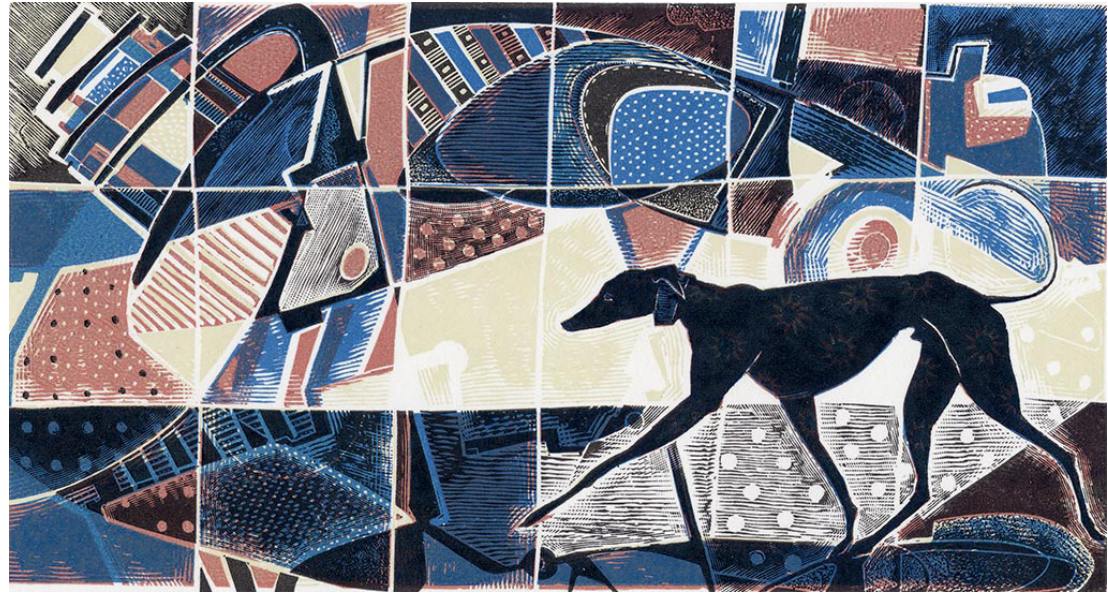




↑ 'Coast Sunrise' (September 2022)



↑ 'Into the Sun' (September 2022)



↑ 'Scout' (September 2022)



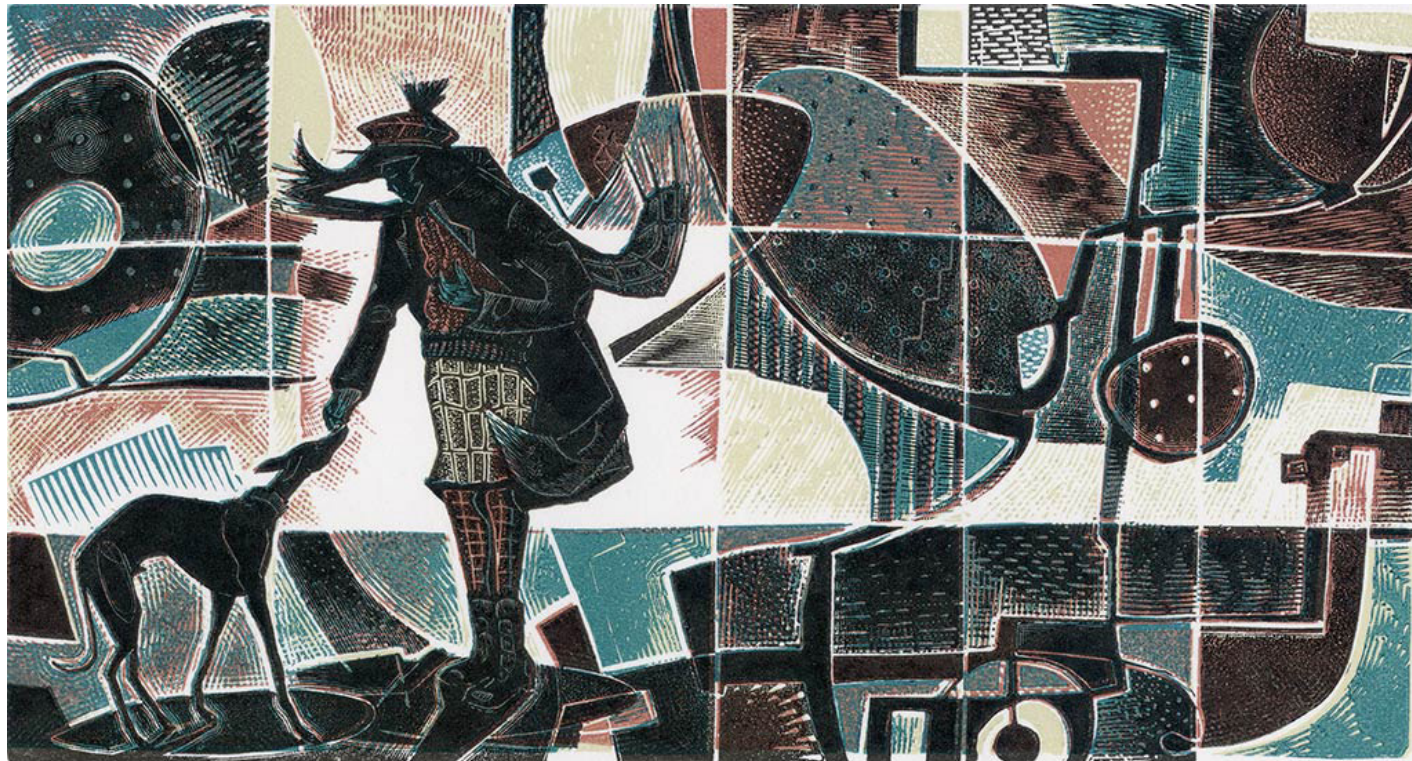
↑ 'The Calling' (September 2022)

Dissemination

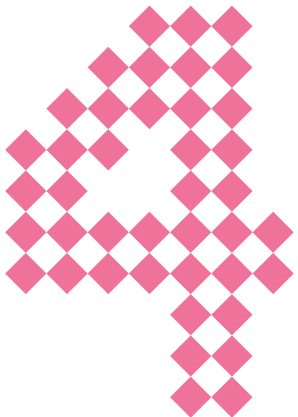
Dorothy Walking (2021) was first exhibited at the Society of Wood Engravers 84th Annual Exhibition, Bankside Gallery, London, 1-20 February 2022.

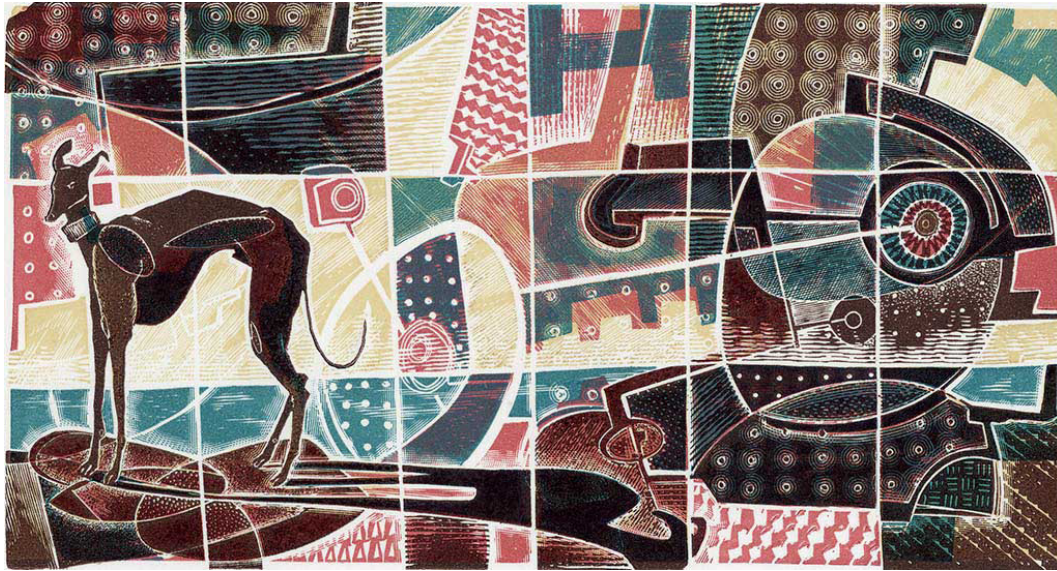
Coast Sunrise, *The Path* and *The Return* (2022) were first exhibited at the Society of Wood Engravers 86th Annual Exhibition, Bankside Gallery, London, 6-25 February 2024.

Further exhibitions of works from the series will be forthcoming in the period 2025-2028.



↑ 'The Return' (September 2022)





↑ 'Alignment' (November 2022)



↑ 'Shoreline' (November 2022)



↑ 'The Path' (November 2022)



↑ 'Sighting Time' (November 2022)

