



## **Drawing Out Hilbre: Tidal Event-Scores Between the Cartographic and the Choreographic**

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### **Abstract**

Drawing Out Hilbre is a practice-based enquiry on Hilbre Island where access is timed, ground is temporary, and orientation is continuously re-made through weather, tide, and group behaviour. Following Sarah Rubidge's (2012) proposition that movement generates dynamic systems that shape perception, I treat the crossing not as a route to be documented but as a space-producing force: the island seems to fill and empty, attention is pulled and re-pulled, and intensities accumulate where bodies cluster, disperse, hesitate, or reroute. Hilbre is a microcosm and complex nexus of relationships including eroding sandstone terrain, a Site of Special Scientific Interest. A site for a bird observatory and nature reserve complete with maritime Edgeland buildings empty and now occupied by BADA (British Art and Design Association) CASS, a Centre for arts, science and sustainability. I travel to a weather-beaten studio to study the movement ecologies of Hilbre. Yet while the buildings carry traces of past occupation and offer the seductive promise of a studio, it is Hilbre itself, with its shifting materials, tidal timings, and divergent lines of movement, that becomes the true studio, demanding sustained time, attention, and response.

The research proceeds through repeated site visits and iterative notation-making responsive to terrain, built form, weather, and co-present species. Instead of applying a pre-existing symbol system, I invent marks from observed and enacted dynamics: crossings, loops, pauses, detours, proximities, avoidances, and thresholds. These marks function as movement diagrams rather than conventional maps, registering not only where movement goes but how it composes attention in real time. It may include the specific movement of one species such as the Gull attacking the mussel or it maybe glare, seaweed drag, and wind dynamics. This creates a map that is distinct in time, space, and action: a glimpse of converging dynamics specific to this location.

Within my ongoing project blubilds, developed in dialogue with Leah's "diagrammatic stains," these diagrams operate as event-scores: temporal sequences translated into spatial configurations that retain abrasion, ambiguity, and excess as methodological value (Leah, 2022). The score is not the end-state. It is a launchpad: notation lifts off the page through close encounters with movement ecologies, becoming prompts for performance and action-based drawing, and extending into moving-image work through screendance's concern with inscription, choreography, and the legibility of the ephemeral (Rosenberg & Brannigan, 2013). Blubilds exist as serial drawings generated into action and back again through relay formations, they are never still but generative, processual and serial. In this context, processual means that drawing is understood as something that comes into being through an ongoing material process (Butler, 1999), rather than as the execution of a pre-existing idea. The work emerges through repeated contact between body, tool, surface, pressure, rhythm, attention, and matter. Joe Graham's Serial Drawing offers a theory of serial drawing as a plural yet unified art object, where meaning emerges through repetition, distribution, temporality and the relation between parts (Graham, 2021).

*Blubilds* are serial where the process unfolds through successive acts, marks, gestures, or iterations (Leah, 2022). Each drawing, line, or material encounter becomes part of a sequence, where small differences accumulate and reveal how distinctions are repeatedly made, undone, and remade.

Together, processual and serial suggest an approach to drawing where meaning is not fixed in advance, but produced through repeated bodily engagement with material forces. Each mark acts like a small agential cut: a temporary decision, separation, or registration within an entangled field of hand, tool, surface, and matter.

The work is situated within diagrammatic and performative approaches to inscription (Drucker, 2013), relational figuration and the diagram as a generative device (Zdebik, 2017), and recent diagram-led drawing discourse that frames abstraction as an analogical engine rather than a reduction (Drucker, 2013). Through this lens, “mapping beyond maps” emerges as a situated practice in which drawing acts simultaneously as research instrument and narrative device, inviting audiences to re-sense what persists together across tides, bodies, and species in a situated knowledge not limited to between humans and non-human species but material forces as well. Material forces can be understood both as the unruly, formless pressure of matter that resists fixed meaning, after Bois and Krauss (1997), and as Barad’s (2007) agential entanglement of bodies, tools, and surfaces, together framing drawing as a situated bodily negotiation with matter.

### Keywords

Tidal cartography; choreographic mapping; event-score; diagrammatic notation; more-than-human attention; performative inscription; walking-as-method; drawing and moving image.

### Introduction: Drawing Out Hilbre as cartography, care, and disruption

Hilbre is a place that refuses the fantasy of stability. A small archipelago off the Wirral Peninsula, it is reachable only on foot and only at particular tide states; it appears, is traversed, and is then cut off again. That tidal gating does more than manage access. It produces a particular kind of attentiveness: timing becomes an ethics, the ground becomes provisional, and the simplest act of arrival is already a negotiation with water, weather, and risk. Within this precariousness sits an urgent material problem. Hilbre’s porous sandstone and exposed edges are increasingly subject to erosion and rockfall, and those working on and for the islands anticipate significant loss across coming generations. In response, Hilbre is being developed as a heritage and conservation site through the Hilbre Community Land Trust and its network, including Friends of Hilbre, the Hilbre Bird Observatory, and BADA, alongside plans to restore and repurpose island buildings into a Centre for Art, Science and Sustainability that can expand monitoring, education, and public connection. The arts, in particular, open a way of

asking what the research methods of this place might be: what is being conserved, by whom, and how, when conservation itself must respond to a landscape that is already moving, weathering, and partially disappearing? How might art and science work together, and unsettle one another, to develop forms of conservation that are publicly accessible, locally grounded, and responsive to the changing material life of the islands?

My response was to think how drawing might work with articulating the movement ecologies of Hilbre. This article emerges from **Drawing Out Hilbre: Research Project 01**, part of a long-term residency in partnership with the Hilbre Heritage Centre for Arts, Science and Sustainability and aligned with the broader Drawing Out Hilbre programme. The project asks a practical and methodological question: what can expanded drawing do for heritage and conservation when the site itself is a temporal event, made and unmade by tides, labour, migration, and weather? Rather than treating drawing as illustrative support for conservation narratives, I position drawing as a cartography of practice: a situated knowledge system

that registers relations, thresholds, and movement ecologies as they unfold. This means attending not only to what is “there” (species, structures, shorelines), but to how it becomes perceptible through walking, waiting, watching, avoiding, clustering, and responding.

My commitment to this work is explicitly feminist and posthumanist. Haraway’s insistence that objectivity is not a view from nowhere but a partial, located practice has particular force on a site like Hilbre, where the conditions of seeing are inseparable from the conditions of crossing. I do not arrive as a neutral observer extracting information from the archipelago. Once I am inside the environment, I am part of the ecology that is being traced: my timing, fatigue, pace, fear, and negotiations with other walkers and co-present species are entangled with what is drawn. Haraway’s emphasis that our bodies are both objects of knowledge and generators of knowledge (Haraway, 1991, 187) is not a theoretical decoration here; it describes the method. My embodied knowledge resides within a feminist body, and the marks I make are inseparable from that lived positioning.

Puig de la Bellacasa (2017) extends this situated framework by insisting that these practices are always also semiotic. Situated work is never only “being there”; it is the active making of meaning through signs, descriptions, concepts, and apparatus. This is no less apparent in the mark-making, recording habits, and field tools I bring to Hilbre. A notebook, a camera, a way of naming a movement as “avoidance” rather than “flight,” a decision to diagram a cluster rather than sketch a view: these are not neutral choices. They are part of an ecology of sense-making that joins epistemology and ontology, knowing and being, together. For Bellacasa, partial perspectives do not merely limit what we can know, they reconfigure what can matter and how it can matter, with transformative and disruptive consequences. The question becomes: what kinds of disruption can drawing offer to conservation’s inherited ways of seeing? For Haraway, the kinship and alliance that can be found in these webs or in my understanding configurations, is to dare to transgress from normative forms of representation and think of disruptive articulations. My specific approach is through movement

systems, where the body on the move is not a vehicle for arriving at the “real” site, but the very condition through which the site takes form. In Rubidge’s terms, movement establishes dynamic systems that shape perception: space seems to fill and empty, attention is pulled and re-pulled, and group trajectories generate a fluid collective behaviour. I fold this into an island method: crossings, pauses, detours, proximities, avoidances, thresholds. Here, the cartographic is inseparable from the choreographic. And following Ingold, this movement is not laid over terrain as if the ground were passive; it is made along with it. My notations are of and from my partial experience, but they are also entwined with the grain of rock, the drag of sand, the angle of wind, the pressure of time, and the co-presence of birds and other species. The work is not an encounter between “me” and “nature.” It is a set of entanglements.

Csordas defines somatic attention as “culturally elaborated ways of attending to and with one’s body in surroundings that include the embodied presence of others” (Csordas, 1993). an ecological stance from James J. Gibson, *The Ecological Approach to Visual Perception* “It is a keeping-in-touch with the world” (Gibson, 1979), both much older texts but call us to attention to realise somatic inference is being ignited in relation to new materialism and practice of attention. These entanglements are material and felt. Erin Manning brings us to this contemporary understanding with choreographic thinking in movement, ways to notice and become aware of experience, and perception in relation to moving through actions. Therefore, to move through place is to bring thinking in movement into a situated position, all it needs is a mark making tool at the end of a limb to index and materialise to register this attention.

Those entanglements intensify when I return attention to forces: gravities, tides, confluences, winds, atmospheres. These are not background conditions. They press directly into my body and into the movement and notation I produce. Barad’s concept of intra-action is useful here because it refuses the idea that independent entities meet in an already-made world; rather, relations are generative, and the boundaries of bodies, tools, and environments

are made through their ongoing doings. For me, this also has roots in thinking around materialism and the formless, where forces are not only captured but disturb the very terms of capture, disrupting the desire for clean edges and stable representation (Krauss, 1997). Hilbre demands this kind of account because it continually exceeds the frame: the tide edits the page; wind rewrites the line; the island itself declines, not as an image of loss but as matter in motion.

This is why I understand “drawing out” as a cartographic and disruptive practice. Following Douglas Rosenberg’s sense of drawing as something that can be extended beyond the page, a means of making movement, relation, and embodied encounter visible, drawing here becomes less a representational act than a method of extraction, attention, and emergence. It does not simply picture Hilbre; it draws out the forces, timings, hesitations, densities, and crossings through which the place is continually made. This is important because conservation and heritage work, even when deeply committed, can still operate within visual regimes that keep nature at arm’s length: the picturesque, the rural-as-other, the landscape as view. As John Wylie (2007) argues in relation to landscape, such modes of depiction are never neutral; they organise distance, desire, possession, and spectatorship. The picturesque can make landscape available as an aesthetic object while quietly stabilising the very separations that Hilbre undoes: observer and observed, culture and nature, human and nonhuman, land and sea.

On Hilbre, that separation is both impossible and politically consequential. The island’s vulnerability, its restricted access, and its extraordinary density of human and more-than-human activity demand representational forms that do not smooth complexity into scenery. A new materialist approach, informed by Karen Barad, asks not what the island looks like from a distance, but how its material-discursive relations come to matter: how sandstone, tide, weather, bodies, birds, buildings, paths, histories, and conservation practices intra-act to produce the site as a shifting field of forces. Rather than observing strictly representational forms already overburdened by inherited aesthetics, drawing out attends to process and patterning: the pull of the tide, the erosion of edges, the timing

of access, the congregation and dispersal of visitors, the flight lines of birds, the worn tracks of repeated crossings. It maps the functions of place through movement, treating Hilbre not as a fixed landscape to be viewed, but as a dynamic material system to be followed, entered, and responsively traced.

My practice responds through invented notation and diagrammatic “event-scores,” developed through repeated site visits and iterative mark-making responsive to terrain, built form, weather, and co-present species. Instead of a pre-existing symbol system, I generate marks from observed and enacted dynamics, and within my ongoing project blubilds (in dialogue with Joanna Leah’s diagrammatic drawing research and her articulation of blubilds as embodied, diagrammatic stains), these scores translate temporal sequences into spatial configurations while holding ambiguity as productive.

Crucially, this is a feminist practice of care. Care, here, is not sentiment layered onto method; it is method. It is “drawing attention” as an ethical commitment to what is vulnerable, overlooked, inconvenient, or difficult to translate into conventional conservation evidence. In this sense, my cartographies of practice are not comprehensive in the conventional sense; they are accountable, embodied, and relational. They aim to contribute to Hilbre’s developing heritage and conservation archive by offering another kind of record: one that captures how Hilbre is continually made present through movement, labour, interspecies negotiation, and the forceful agencies of tide and weather.

### **Situated cartographies and matters of care in shifting grounds of Heritage and Conservation**

Hilbre’s current turn toward “heritage” is not a gentle cultural upgrade. It is a response to pressure, loss, and a growing recognition that what disappears here will not only be rock and building fabric, but patterns of attention, labour, and interspecies encounter that have quietly held the place together. The archipelago is already shaped by overlapping regimes: legal designations and scientific monitoring; informal and formal volunteer custodianship; municipal responsibility and its histories of “managed de-

cline"; and the daily choreography of walkers, birders, wardens, and species moving through a tidal commons. The Heritage Centre and the work of the Hilbre Community Land Trust attempt to draw these regimes into a different alignment, one in which conservation, education, and cultural practice operate as mutually reinforcing rather than competing languages. But this alignment is not guaranteed. Heritage can harden into nostalgia. Conservation can narrow into management. And "public connection" can slide into a picturesque consumption of elsewhere. If Hilbre is becoming heritage, it is not because it is safely held. It is because it is threatened. The stakes are material and immediate: erosion, rockfall, tidal inundation, and the slow undoing of built structures, that have been neglected for decades with the last warden as resident in 2010, and depleting habitats that have long supported navigation histories, volunteer labour, and the bird observatory's sustained attention. The emerging Heritage Centre and the wider work of the Hilbre Community Land Trust sit within this urgency, attempting to shift the island from a condition of managed decline towards an ethic of stewardship that can hold scientific monitoring, research and education, and public relationship together. Yet conservation is never only a technical problem. It is also a problem of how a place is made legible, who gets to speak for it, and what kinds of evidence count as protection. So far, Friends of Hilbre have spoken the clearest and most consistently championing Professor Cragg's Cheshire Islands work on molluscs etc. FoH conduct seal watch, invest in some of the land and vegetation management in conjunction with the warden. The Bird Observatory is notably shy and absent in core parts of the day as they ring bird species at 5am, stay over and take a watchful eye over nuanced changes. It is recently that the CLT (Community Land Trust) has come together to include BADA (British Art and Design Association). BADA's role is to develop a Centre for Art, Science and Sustainability that provides a point where art, scientific, and sustainable research can be housed, while also fostering interdisciplinary projects. The emphasis is on artist led activities as part of the public engagement and education aspects to create connections with habitats, ecologies and field work. Within this context I have been developing research that works with different modes of cartography and mapping in 'Drawing

Out Hilbre', a long-term project that deliberately takes drawing fieldwork into territories that map and represent Hilbre differently from the traditional modes that currently surround it. My current preoccupation is with the tidal convergences and the bird populations and how they prey, sit and wade around Hilbre rather than that more ubiquitous term 'inhabit'.

This is where a feminist, situated framework matters. Haraway's insistence that our bodies are not merely lenses but also objects of knowledge and generators of knowledge (Haraway, 1991, pp.187) refuses the fantasy of a neutral conservation gaze or broad brushstrokes of inhabiting. On Hilbre, I am not outside the ecology looking in. Once I am inside that environment, my movement, timing, and capacities become part of what is being recorded. The work is therefore accountable to its partiality: to the tide state I walked in on, to the route I chose, to the fatigue that altered my attention, to the weather that made some signs flare and others disappear. Situated knowledge is not a limitation to be corrected; it is a condition to be declared and worked with because as I discovered it reveals the inside lives and moments of place with specificity, incongruity, absurdity, surprise, power dynamics, stories and intimacy.

The stakes, then, are not only ecological, but representational and political. How Hilbre is pictured, narrated, and archived will shape what kinds of protection are imaginable and what kinds of futures become acceptable. This matters because the dominant visual grammar for threatened landscapes often defaults to the scenic and the salvageable: cliff-edge romance, lonely buildings, heroic weather, a nature that is "over there." Even well-meaning conservation storytelling can reproduce this separation, keeping nature as a distinct object of care rather than a field we are already entangled within. On an island that you reach by walking across water saturated sand, such separation becomes not only inaccurate but ethically thin. You cannot visit Hilbre without entering its conditions. You cannot watch birds without becoming part of the disturbance field. You cannot cross without being shaped by tide time, wind force, in a multispecies choreography.

This is why I frame the work through feminist situated knowledge and matters of care. Haraway's account of partial, located objectivity makes the terms clear: knowledge is produced from a body, and that body is itself an object of knowledge. The conservation archive is therefore never simply "about" Hilbre. It is also about the kinds of observers, instruments, routines, and interpretive habits through which Hilbre becomes knowable. Puig de la Bellacasa (2017) intensifies this by insisting that situated practice is always semiotic as well as material. Conservation does not only happen through measurements and management plans, but through signs and descriptions, through what gets named and what remains unmarked, what is permitted, who and what is a priority through the apparatuses that tune attention toward some relations and away from others. On Hilbre, the semiotics are everywhere: in bird lists and logbooks, warning signage and tide tables, heritage narratives and funding language, the tacit scripts of where to step and where not to, what counts as "disturbance," what counts as "care." My own tools and methods join this semiotic field. The notebook, the camera, the invented mark, the decision to diagram a threshold rather than sketch a view are not neutral. They intervene in what can be noticed and what can be communicated.

What is at stake in my project is whether drawing can operate as a constructive disruption inside these existing semiotic and material systems. Bellacasa suggests that when partial perspective joins knowledge and ontology together, it can be transformative and disruptive. I take this seriously as a conservation question. What happens if we treat protection not as the safeguarding of a scenic object, but as the maintenance of relationships and conditions of encounter? What if the archive includes not only species presence and building histories, but the movement systems through which the place is repeatedly made present: crossings and returns, clusterings and dispersals, avoidances and proximities, labour routines, tidal timings, the atmospheric forces that press into bodies and reorganise attention? This is not an argument against

scientific approaches. It is an argument that conservation needs additional forms of evidence, forms capable of holding relational complexity without immediately flattening it into either data or picturesque loss. For Bellacasa, notes that Haraway's writings raise the question of separatist ideas that cause conflicts, if we are to rethink. Drawing in nature then is to rethink how approaches do not reinforce breaks and splits between here and elsewhere (Bellacasa, 2017, pp. 73 and Leah - Geldard, 2017), but how they reveal the choreography of relationships.

Within this context, Drawing Out Hilbre: Research Project 01 positions expanded drawing as both research instrument and heritage method. The aim is to develop "drawing ecologies" as cartographies of practice: diagrammatic notations and event-scores that arise from being inside the archipelago and moving with its constraints. These scores are disruptive precisely because they refuse the stable view.<sup>1</sup> They record Hilbre as an event and an entanglement, not a scene. They foreground the ways forces (tide, wind, gravity, glare), species (migration, feeding patterns, flight vectors), and human labour (maintenance, observation, guiding, hosting) co-compose the site's legibility. In doing so, they offer conservation partners a different kind of archive, one that can support heritage preservation while also troubling the representational habits that keep "nature" othered and at a distance.

In this way these scores challenge policy-shape. If conservation remains tied to top-down management regimes and inherited landscape imaginaries, ambition shrinks to what can be administered. By contrast, if we allow practices of attention to expand what counts as conservation knowledge, then protection can begin to include the lived systems that make Hilbre matter: its timings, its vulnerabilities, its collective behaviours, and the more-than-human agencies that continually redraw its boundaries. This is where drawing becomes more than documentation. It becomes a way of staying with the trouble of Hilbre's precariousness while reworking the terms through which care, evidence, and inheritance are understood. In this

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1 - See Joanna Leah *Blubilds: Diagrammatic Stains* in *Drawing: Research, Theory, Practice paper*, 2022 on how the diagram acts as a stain of disruption in site based drawing.

way it challenges what matters, why it matters and what conservation leaves out in its current modes of documentation. The apparatus is different; pencil, a stopwatch, a phone camera, a notebook, a way of naming a bird's movement as "loop" or "avoidance" the modes of working are different and what emerges are not innocent. They challenge what becomes sensible and sayable and what is made visible. In Bellacasa's terms, the situated body with partial perspective folds epistemology and ontology together: ways of knowing become ways of being-with, and this conjunction has transformative, disruptive potential (Bellacasa, 2017: 71). Care is not merely a feeling that softens method; it is a practice that reworks what matters, how it matters, and to whom.

The question, then, is what disruption might be possible through drawing notations and movement-based scores. Conservation, even when progressive, can still carry inherited optics: the picturesque; the rural as backdrop; "nature" as a separate entity to be visited, managed, or protected from a distance. These frames quietly other the environment, turning it into a scene, an object, a resource, or a loss narrative. Hilbre is especially vulnerable to this because its islandness invites romance and removal at once, an elsewhere that can be admired without being implicated. Against this, *Drawing Out Hilbre* treats drawing as an intervention into representation itself. Notation that arises from crossings, clusterings, thresholds, avoidances, and timed returns insists that the island is not an image but a system of relations. Movement does not simply happen on Hilbre; it composes Hilbre as lived space, and it reveals protection as an ongoing negotiation among humans, birds, weather, materials, and infrastructures of care.

In this sense, "Drawing Out" is not simply a method for recording Hilbre. It is a way of troubling the terms by which Hilbre is protected. By shifting attention from scenic depiction to event-scores and diagrammatic relations, the work asks: what would conservation look like if the archive held not only species lists and shoreline measurements, but also the choreography of encounter, the labour of volunteer maintenance, the timing pressure of tides, and the semiotic apparatuses through which we decide what

counts as evidence? If representation is part of how places are valued and governed, then a feminist cartography of practice can act as a small but insistent disturbance, making visible the entanglements that picturesque framings smooth over. This disturbance is not refusal. It is care enacted as method: a commitment to staying with the trouble of Hilbre's disappearance while expanding what we recognise as conservation knowledge.

### **Mapping in embodied movement systems**

If the previous section set out a politics of care after Haraway and Puig de la Bellacasa, this one turns to the forms of thinking that can hold that ethic: not maps as static overviews, but movement systems, diagrams and stains that are made from within the tide, the wind and the walk. Rather than treating the island as a static object to be mapped from above, I draw on Sarah Rubidge's account of movement systems, Karen Barad's intra-action, and Bois & Krauss's writing on the formless and horizontality to reframe Hilbre as a shifting choreography of bodies, tides and weather. This shift from cartographic to choreographic logics opens onto a diagrammatic practice in which lines, stains and smears are not mistakes but thinking devices: Johanna Drucker and Jakub Zdebik anchor the diagram as performative relation-machine, while blubilds (Leah, 2022) legitimise the messy mark as recording the traces, patterns, forces and excess cuffuffle of Hilbre. Building on this, the section situates my repeated tide-walks in theories of place and insideness (Relph, Ingold, Shoard, Brinklow), understanding Hilbre as a maritime edgeland and climatic barometer that must be known from within its own materials and rhythms. It closes by framing *Drawing Out* as a methodological hinge: following Douglas Rosenberg and Erin Brannigan, screendance and drawing are treated as allied practices of inscription, so that notation can be performed and film can be read. Together, these strands provide the theoretical scaffolding for the project's diagrammatic, movement-based approach to mapping the island.

### **Cartographic vs choreographic logics**

Conventional cartography offers Hilbre as a neat contour: a bounded land-mass in blue water, crossed by safe routes and warning symbols. It is a view from above, aligned with

what Karen Barad would call a classical, representational logic: the world is over there, and we take measurements of it. By contrast, Sarah Rubidge's writing on choreographic systems offers a way to think from within the moving field. For Rubidge, choreography generates "dynamic systems" in which pathways, pauses and proximities are constantly re-negotiated; she describes group movement as forming a "molar entity" that seems to thicken and thin space as it passes through. In this sense, space does not sit there waiting to be mapped: it appears to fill and empty as bodies traverse it and leave kinaesthetic traces.

Hilbre's tidal regime already choreographs such a system. Access is rhythmically opened and withdrawn; the sand is alternately path, mirror and hazard. Rather than a neutral background on which walkers move, the island behaves as a score that times decisions, routes and hesitations. Reading Rubidge alongside Barad's notion of intra-action emphasises that it is not simply that people move in a pre-existing environment, but that walkers, water, wind, birds, dogs, tripods and sketchbooks co-constitute the event. The "map" here is not a stable representation but the emergent figure of these entanglements and therefore the emergent 'Figure' is one that is situated, located and embodied.

### Diagrammatics and performative inscription

Johanna Drucker's work on diagrammatic thinking is useful at this point. For Drucker, diagrams are not neutral containers for information but performative inscriptions: they do conceptual work. A diagram does not simply record relations that are already there; it proposes them, tests them, and sometimes produces them into being. This pushes my tide-walk sketches away from illustration and towards thinking devices that organise attention. Jakub Zdebik develops a related account of diagrams as "relation-machines" that configure forces, not just depict them. In his reading, the diagram is already a choreography of vectors, intensities and tendencies. When I draw a tide-track, a cluster of wind arrows or the way a group disperses around a rockpool, I am not merely noting positions; I am schematising possible movements. The diagram, in Zdebik's sense, is generative: it can be re-performed, bent, extended. It becomes a kind of rehearsal score for future walks and for the camera's path, drafting how

bodies might move in response to this particular combination of mud, swell, ledge and sky.

### blubilds and the diagrammatic stain

It is here that my work on *blubilds* and the diagrammatic stain becomes vital in its expansion into situated drawing. In Leah (2022) I legitimise the smear, drip and blur as epistemic marks drawing from (Bois & Krauss, 1997) and formless mark-making. Applied to this situation it is evidence of too much water, too little control, or a body that cannot keep the page still. Rather than treating these as mistakes to be cleaned up in a final map, she reads them as the places where uncertainty and excess insist on remaining visible. They are, in Haraway's (2016) sense, "troubles" to be stayed with, not corrected. This is far closer to the experiential aspects of being in situ and the slips between body, site and apparatus.

Bringing Leah into dialogue with Bois and Krauss's *Formless: A User's Guide* gives the stain further bite. Bois and Krauss argue for the informe as a set of operations-horizontal, base, entropic-that resist vertical, elevated, idealising modes of looking. To draw on Hilbre is almost by definition to draw horizontally: the eye tracks along the tide line, the horizon, the low cloud shelf. The page lies flat on wet stone; ink feathers and runs. These drawings are not aerial diagrams but from-the-ground smears that register the body's own instability. In this sense, the stain is a local instance of horizontality: an insistence that knowledge here is tidal, prone to slippage, and made at sea-level.

Barad's intra-action helps me understand these marks as recordings of entanglement. The blurred ink line is not simply my failure to control the tool; it is the joint action of pen, wind-gust, damp paper, my braced hand, and the pressure of time before the channel refills. The diagram is therefore less a top-down "map of Hilbre" and more a condensed event in which island, weather and body have briefly co-authored a trace.

### Place, insideness and maritime edgelands

If the mark is made from within the system, how do I account for that sense of insideness? Edward Relph's (1976) notion of behavioural and empathetic insideness offers

language for the long-duration, repeat visits that underpin this project. Relph distinguishes between merely being located somewhere and dwelling in it through habituated movement, memory, and affective investment. This is brought alive in Tim Ingold's discussions of knowing from the inside in *Making* (2013) that acknowledges the necessity of observation, experience and improvisation and how knowledge is grown and embodied through this entanglement with being not just inside place but inside the spaces created by various social mobilities. If we also add in the non-human and more than human entanglements and encounters, this insideness is whipped into a full and thick experience. Over seasons, my body learns the feel of particular gullies underfoot, the way wind funnels between slabs, the smell when the tide turns. The drawings and films should be understood as arising from this empathetic insideness rather than from a tourist's momentary encounter.

Tim Ingold's call to "know from within" and to follow materials complements this. For Ingold, lines of walking, drawing and weather are not separate categories but interconnected threads in a meshwork. On Hilbre, following the material means letting the tide timetable, the slipperiness of weed or the brittleness of frost dictate what can be done, which route is viable, whether a tripod can be set up at all. The work becomes a matter of moving with these materials rather than imposing a preconceived shot list or map.

At a larger scale, Marion Shoard's (2001) writing on edgelands and Godfrey Baldacchino and Laurie Brinklow's work on islandness help situate Hilbre as a maritime edge-condition: neither fully sea nor fully land, neither spectacular wilderness nor fully domesticated infrastructure. For Hilbre its smallness connotes vulnerability and helplessness associated with islandness (Foley et al, 2022). Yet its resilience despite its sandstone bedrock has kept it consistent as both place and space as cultural and climatic barometers, registering shifts in tourism, conservation policy, erosion, and weather patterns ahead of more stable inland sites. Hilbre's status as a tidal island amplifies this: it is periodically cut off, periodically flooded with visitors. Staying with this troubled, in-between

character resonates with Donna Haraway's injunction to "stay with the trouble" as a research ethic rather than a slogan. Instead of seeking to resolve Hilbre into a stable, picturesque object, the project attends to its ongoing frictions: between access and danger, visitor and warden, sanctuary and spectacle.

### Drawing Out via screendance

Finally, this theoretical frame folds back into practice through the notion of Drawing Out. Douglas Rosenberg characterises screendance as a form of expanded drawing, an inscription of bodies in time that can be read as well as watched. Erin Brannigan similarly proposes choreography as a set of organising principles that can migrate across stage, page and screen. Taken together, these positions allow me to treat notation, camera work and editing as linked episodes of mark-making rather than separate disciplines.

As these episodes accumulate, their serialisation produces a sense of moving through choreographic patternings of ecology: each drawing, shot and edit is one moment in an ongoing processional score. Joanna Leah Geldard's work on Processional Edgelands (Arts in Society) is helpful here, foregrounding a generative approach to cartographic drawing in which repeated passes across a site gradually build a living map of relations and through repetition draw out the movement patterns as temporal tracings or more accurately a cartography. I make a distinction here since Mapping and Tracing (Deleuze & Guattari and Ingold)

My own series of tide-walk drawings and video fragments similarly proposes Hilbre as something that only becomes legible through this iterative, processional practice.

Drawing Out, then, names both a method and a lineage. On the one hand, it refers to drawing-with Hilbre: mapping movement systems, diagrammatic stains and formless horizons in graphite and ink. On the other, it gestures towards the pulling out of those marks into screendance: diagrams become scores for camera pathways, and the resulting films in turn generate new possibilities for drawing. In this feedback loop, notation is something that

can be performed and film is something that can be read. Together they form a diagrammatic practice capable of holding the island's choreographic logics, its edgeland insideness, and its messy, horizontal entanglements of sea, weather and human bodies.

### **Drawing in Situ with event-scores**

This methodology grows out of new materialist thinking, where the island, weather, tides, mud and birds are not backdrop but co-actors. Jane Bennett's account of "vibrant matter" invites attention to the "thing-power" of nonhuman forces rather than treating matter as inert stuff (Bennett, 2010, Coole and Frost 2010) likewise frame New Materialisms as an attempt to rethink politics and perception animated by forces and processes beyond the human. My methods respond to this: drawing, walking and filming are ways to move with, and be moved by, Hilbre's own material agencies.

Fieldwork has taken place between 2024-2025 through repeated visits to the Hilbre archipelago, timed tightly against the tide tables. Each trip begins at sea level, leaving from the West Kirby slipway along the official route and, on some visits, from Red Rocks along the less-used, technically prohibited path. The two approaches choreograph very different bodies: the sanctioned line across more solid sands versus the risky navigation between mud-slicked rocks and the smaller islets.

Practically, I carry a small sketchbook, soft pencils, a waterproof pen, phone camera, spare socks, and a printed tide chart. Decisions about where to stand, walk or wait are made minute-by-minute in relation to what the ground is doing: where the sand holds firm, where green weed films the rock, where the mud has been "slicked up" by recent storms. These surfaces change visit to visit, meaning that "the route" is never simply repeated but actively re-found. This fits Tim Ingold's insistence that knowledge emerges by 'following flows of materials' (2013) rather than imposing a pre-given plan.

Falling and slipping have become part of the method rather than accidents to be erased. Emma Cocker and Claire Thornton's *Italic I* project treats the repeated fall as a

conscious training, attending to the different phases of surrender and recovery. Joanna Leah's (2022) *blubilds* similarly read the twist, stumble and off-balance line as an "embodied diagram" of edgeland terrain. On Hilbre, the moment when my boot slides on weed or sinks to the ankle in mud is registered in the page as a swerve, blot or broken line. Rather than correcting these, I keep them as indices of entanglement between body and ground.

"Data" in this context does not mean long, stable sketching sessions from a safe viewpoint. It consists of fragments of drawing on the move: quick marks made while walking, scrambling, bracing against horizontal rain. It also includes spoken notes recorded into my phone, conversations with wardens and birders, and sensory memories such as the peculiar experience of having the front of my body soaked by wind-driven rain while my back remains dry, or of noticing the sudden absence of birds as they seek shelter ahead of a squall. In Ingold's terms, these are all traces of an ongoing correspondence with the elements.

Islandness matters methodologically. Brinklow describes islandness as a heightened, often emotional sense of boundedness and exposure shaped by surrounding sea and weather. Working tidally on Hilbre means that every drawing session is bracketed by risk (of being cut off, of fog, of rough water) and by enforced waiting. This temporal and spatial boundedness shapes what can be drawn at all.

Finally, the protocol is intentionally open-ended. Following Umberto Eco's notion of the open work, the visits are not aimed at a single definitive map but at an "ever deepening search" that remains structurally unfinished. Each outing adds another possible reading of the island rather than closing it down.

### **From system to speculative notation as drawing articulation**

Out of these walks, a vocabulary of invented marks has emerged. Instead of starting from an abstract symbol system, I have let categories arise from what walking actually demands:

- crossings and recrossings of channels
- loops around pools or bird roosts
- pauses for weather or to give space to seals
- detours around unstable rock shelves
- proximities to other walkers, dogs, tripods, fences
- avoidances and thresholds (waterline, red-flag zones, steep drops).

Some marks are site-specific and timebound: a jagged kink records a slip; a spiralling blot stands for a blocked line of passage; a soft oscillating line traces the edge where wet sand turns to water. Others are adapted shorthand borrowed from existing notation systems for their gestural efficiency, then re-purposed. In all cases the aim is articulation and translation, not abstraction for its own sake: the marks must be quick enough to draw mid-stride, yet precise enough that I can later re-enter the walk through them.

This approach echoes Bennett's call to attend to the "vitality" of matter. The marks are not neutral labels attached to a passive landscape; they are traces of encounters with lively water, mud, stone and wind. Coole and Frost's emphasis on material agency underlines why a pre-fabricated symbol key would be inadequate here: the island keeps changing the terms of engagement, so notation has to stay provisional, responsive.

Louis Netter describes reportage drawing as a "revelatory act" that maps lived experience, foregrounding the artist's subjective engagement rather than pretending to neutral objectivity. My practice takes up this stance but shifts the focus from human events (protest, migration, street life) to the quieter dramas of tide, weather and nonhuman traffic. The drawings are a record of being there with: with volunteers checking paths, with birders scanning flocks, with the birds themselves as they lift and resettlement.

Sarah Casey and Gerry Davies' *Drawing Investigations* offers a parallel from another angle. They frame drawing as an investigative tool that can reveal phenomena "subtle, challenging or seemingly inaccessible to visual scrutiny," particularly in environmental contexts. Chapter 4's focus on difficult environments legitimises my use of quick,

partial drawings as a way of sensing shifts in mud consistency, wind direction or bird behaviour that might elude static photography. Victoria Hunter's work on site-based body practice further supports this, showing how movement scores and tasks can explore the 'synergies between material bodies and material sites' (Casey & Gerry, 2024, pp.95 - 96). My event-scores sit at this junction: they are both field notes and invitations to move, for me and potentially for future performers or viewers.

### **Drawing Ecologies of situatedness**

An ecological drawing practice cannot be neutral extraction. Bennett's political ecology of things asks us to recognise nonhuman agencies without romanticising them. Drawing "with" Hilbre means paying attention to wardens' guidance, staying outside roped-off nesting areas, keeping distance from seals, and avoiding disturbance to roosting birds even when that would make a better shot. The presence of volunteers and birders functions as an ethical check: I am a guest in an existing community of care.

Netter reminds us that reportage drawing is always a "human document of witness," complicated by the artist's subjectivities. I acknowledge this by keeping myself visible in the work: slips, hesitations and blind spots are left in the drawings rather than edited out. Casey and Davies emphasise collaboration and dialogue in investigative drawing conversations on the sand about erosion, bird counts or visitor pressure are folded back into the marks and scores.

Finally, this methodology sits within broader art-ecology practices that attempt to register environmental change without instrumentalising it as scenery. Coole and Frost argue that new materialist politics requires 'a more subtle, more situated understanding of how bodies and forces interact'. Repeated visits, invented marks and event-scores are my way of developing such a situated understanding: not as a definitive map of Hilbre, but as an ongoing, accountable conversation with a small tidal island and all the lively matter that composes it.

### blubilds as system: notation that “lifts off the page”

I use blubilds as a container term for a particular kind of drawing: diagram-pages that behave like event-scores. They are neither conventional sketches nor finished maps but sheets where lines, stains and scrawled words sit in a tense readiness, as if they were waiting to be reactivated. A *blubild* is therefore a system, not an illustration: it gathers traces of past walks while also proposing and speculating on future ones.

Leah’s account, the stain, smear and over-worked patch are not errors but operative marks that register “too-muchness, uncertainty and overflow” in edgeland sites, an excess. Rather than resolving ambiguity, they keep it in play, inviting the viewer “to inhabit the drawing as a provisional situation rather than a stable view.” Leah thereby shifts drawing from representation towards score-like proposition, where the page hints at movements, frictions and weather that exceed what is literally visible.

The Hilbre *blubilds* follow this logic. They are built from layered passes of tide-track, wind-arrow, slip-mark, annotation and wash. Each layer belongs to a particular outing, but the page is composed so that these layers co-exist temporally: crossings from different days tangle in one field, buoyed by stains where the pen has flooded in damp air or the brush has dragged sand. The result is not a clean chronology but what Deleuze, via Zdebik, would call a diagram: a “map of relations and forces” that operates as a machine for further thought and action, rather than a picture of how things were.

Reading Deleuze on the diagram in *Francis Bacon: The Logic of Sensation* is helpful here. For Deleuze, the diagram is an “operative set of asignifying marks” that scrambles the figurative image and opens it to new possibilities. It is the moment on the canvas when the painter throws down strokes, wipes, smears that are not yet image but potential. Zdebik extends this, arguing that the diagram is a “relational field” that configures intensities and trajectories rather than representing them. In that sense, my blubilds sit at the diagrammatic stage: lines of route, arrows of wind, densifications of ink are less about depicting a

walk than about activating a set of possible movements, positions and viewpoints that can be taken up again by body or camera.

Bois and Krauss’s (1997) adds another layer. Their account of the informe as an operation - in particular horizontality and base materialism - pushes drawing literally down onto the ground. On Hilbre, the page is often worked flat on rock or sand; spills, salt blooms and gritty deposits are inevitable. These deposits refuse the clean, upright, cartographic image and instead insist on contact: the drawing is of the island but also partially made by it. In blubilds, stains and grainy washes therefore double as records of matter’s agency and as compositional devices that pull the eye sideways, along tide-lines and horizons rather than up to a single vanishing point. The formless here is not a collapse into chaos but a method for keeping the drawing open to the island’s own unruly timings and textures.

Within this framework, I make a clear claim:

*blubild* scores are not static records; they are prompts for action-based drawing and performance and act in a serial processual manner of unfolding becoming live, drawing actions and films as embodied drawings and figures.

This becomes clear through the mechanism by which a blubild operates. First, a temporal sequence of walks is condensed: each visit adds new traces, notes and smears. Second, these traces are arranged into a spatial configuration: crossings cluster, loops echo one another, zones of danger or shelter are thickened through repeated marking. Third, this configuration can be read back out as a performable instruction set. These in turn inform A performer or camera operator can choose to follow only the thickened lines, or to seek out the gaps; to walk where stains darken, or to remain on the paler, less worked regions. In this sense, the blubild “lifts off the page” as a choreographic drawing.

Here Deleuze’s sense of the diagram as a “possibility of fact” is again pertinent: the drawing does not dictate a single route but outlines a space of potential events. When I re-enter a blubild with pen, body or lens, I am not

reproducing what happened; I am composing a new pass through a field of encoded tendencies. Leah's diagrammatic stain, Bois and Krauss's formless horizon, and Zdebik's relational diagram all converge to support this: *blubilds* are best understood as scores for further entanglement with Hilbre's tides, winds and paths.

In practical terms, this means that every major *blubild* page is kept in play. Key sheets are pinned in the studio, carried back to the island, filmed, traced, re-inked. Still images from these pages appear not as illustrations of findings but as examples of operative notation: pages designed to be re-performed. They show how the project's drawing practice has moved from mapping to movement system, and how notation, here, is always searching for the moment it can once again step off the paper.

#### Four Hilbre vignettes

Short case studies where the method becomes a drawing articulation.

##### Vignette A: The causeway crossing as timed choreography

- How group movement forms/loosens; where the "molar entity" shows up.
- What your marks do that a map cannot.
- FIG.1
- Knowledge Claim **Vignette A: The causeway crossing as timed choreography**

The causeway crossing makes observable how Hilbre is produced through timed collective movement, where tide, ground, risk and group behaviour continually compose and loosen the island as lived space.

##### Vignette B: Observatory labour and bird record-making

- Diagram relations between birds, habits, and species movement.
- Notation as a "translation layer" between log and lived encounter.
- FIG.2
- Knowledge Claim **Vignette B: Observatory labour and bird record-making**

Observatory labour reveals how bird knowledge is not only recorded through lists and instruments, but generated through repeated acts of watching, waiting, sheltering, timing and attuning to species movement.

##### Vignette C: Wind/tide as co-authors

- Wind pressure, glare, current lines.
- Marks as material negotiations
- FIG.3
- Knowledge Claim: **Vignette C: Wind/tide as co-authors**

Wind and tide become co-authors of the drawing process, showing that marks are not neutral representations but material negotiations between body, tool, weather, water and surface.

##### Vignette D: Threshold encounters and co-present species

- Thresholds as moments: approach/withdrawal, avoidance, proximity.
- How narrative structures emerge from relational patterns.
- FIG.4
- Knowledge Claim: **Vignette D: Threshold encounters and co-present species**

Threshold encounters make visible how proximity, avoidance and restraint operate as practices of care within a more-than-human choreography of birds, seals, walkers, weather and tidal ground.

#### Cartographies and Drawing Collaboration

During 2025 I curated the Indy Biennial, inviting over twenty-five artists to respond to the call of Drawing Out Hilbre. Six national and international artists were paired with a group of local practitioners and volunteers. The invitation model was deliberately "from the inside" rather than parachute-in residency: each artist was asked to commit to repeated, tide-timed visits, to walk out with wardens and volunteers, and to treat the island as a collaborator rather than a backdrop.

The artists' responses tracked different material systems: one worked with weather data and cloud ceilings, another with micro-species in rockpools, another with the bedrock and sediment layers revealed at low tide, another with tidal convergences and currents. This variety echoed Bennett's emphasis on the "vitality" and "thing-power" (Bennett, 2010, pp.8-9) of matter and Coole & Frost's insistence that any contemporary practice must account for the agency of 'an ineluctably material world' (Coole & Frost, 2010, pp. 1). In practical terms this meant that workshops often started not with concept, but with standing and watching: where the wind hit hardest, where gulls repeatedly lifted, where algae made a particular ledge non-negotiable.

The Biennial was also the first context in which Drawing Out Hilbre and GULP began working with cormorant movement patterns as drawings, performances and films. Cormorant flight lines were traced as arcs and loops, and then re-scored for verbing and instructional Audio scores to create movement on the sand in GULP (2025) with Joanna Leah and Órla Bates. Victoria Hunter's work on "site, dance and body movement" was a quiet but important influence here: she argues that site-dance can reveal "synergies between material bodies and material sites," (Hunter, 2021, pp.272) and our cormorant scores tried to stay close to that ethic, letting the birds' habitual tracings choreograph human response rather than the other way round.

These collaborations are being developed to inform Drawing Labs that develop drawing articulations with participants who are not necessarily artists or researchers: volunteers, students, casual walkers. The emphasis is on drawing as a way to take part in the island's patterns of care rather than merely observing them through drawing labs and stations. In Tim Ingold's terms, drawing becomes "drawing with" and "drawing in," (Ingold, 2007, 2013), a mode of correspondence with materials and co-present beings, rather than "drawing of" a finished scene. The method is therefore transdisciplinary in two directions: between art, conservation and field science; and between different human and nonhuman agents who co-produce Hilbre as an event.

This gives the project a policy-facing dimension by developing diagrammatic and score-based choreographic drawing as a material practice of care. Through drawing and writing labs (Gansterer; Cocker), artists, scientists, and local observers co-produce notations that are usable on the ground: diagrams that visualise relations and forces (Drucker; Rubidge), and scores that guide attention and behaviour at the right times, in the right places, with the right sensitivities. Following María Puig de la Bellacasa's matters of care, these drawings are not neutral representations or simple knowledge-transfer devices. They are repeatable, situated practices of looking-with, moving-with, and listening-with Hilbre's ecologies, cultivating stewardship as a durational ethic of watchfulness, responsibility, and response-ability. This political approach that demands located bodies and watchfulness, attention, care and line making means drawing becomes a political gesture, an act of attention, deliberately produced to be moved, to move in drawing. Deliberate and wilful care in this way holds promise of action and activism that is gentle and minor along the lines of Erin Manning (2016). For Manning, the minor gesture matters because it opens possibilities that dominant structures, habits, and "major" narratives often suppress. It is political and ethical because it does not simply obey the already-given order of things. It works from within a situation, gently warping it, making room for other ways of sensing, moving, thinking, and being together. Related to a wilful action of care, the minor gesture can be understood as a deliberate but delicate act of attending. Care here is not passive softness. It is a wilful orientation: choosing to notice, respond, adjust, protect, sustain, or remain with something that might otherwise be ignored. In drawing, this could be the careful pressure of a hand, the decision not to over-control a mark, the bodily patience of staying with material resistance, or the refusal to force matter into a fixed outcome.

### **Drawing Ecologies for Situated cartographies in Hilbre**

#### **what does drawing do here that other methods do not?**

First, drawing functions as a conservation record, but not as a substitute for survey data, bird counts, or Geographic Information System mapping. Instead, it registers what those systems struggle to hold: the textures of attention,

relation, and lived timing. A tide-score can show, at a glance, not only where paths are eroding but when they become risky; which ledges attract seals and gulls under particular swell conditions; how wind direction reshapes circulation across the island and how birds congregate, huddle and circulate; or how walkers cluster too close to roosting birds at specific tidal states. These pages do not compete with spreadsheets. They sit alongside them, offering human-scale, time-thickened accounts that can inform discussions about access management, signage, seasonal zoning, and the practicalities of care. This thick description (Geertz, 1973) and Haraway's expansion into a 'thick ongoing presence' (Haraway, 2016, pp.2).

Second, drawing operates as a heritage method attentive to the island's everyday stewardship cultures. Hilbre's formal archive understandably privileges buildings, artefacts, and documented events. The blubilds, event-scores, and screendance traces archive something harder to fix: the patterns of care, labour, and encounter that sustain the island as both sanctuary and recreational space. They record where wardens routinely pause to scan the horizon, how volunteers manage the material choreographies of litter collection and maintenance, where birders habitually shelter from prevailing winds, or how visitors learn to test sand firmness and negotiate risk. In this spirit, drawing becomes witness to subtle phenomena that exceed conventional documentation, foregrounding micro-practices through which conservation is lived.

Third, drawing can act as a participatory catalyst within the contested realities of coastal conservation. Critiques of top-down protection models point to the gap between designation and the day-to-day complexities of public access, volunteer capacity, and long-term resourcing. Event-scores and participatory blubild sessions respond by offering low-threshold ways for people to think with the island: tracing their own routes, annotating points of unease around erosion or disturbance, and exchanging stories of near-misses, seasonal change, or unexpected encounters. In workshops, drawings often become boundary objects, enabling conversation between birders, dog-walkers, wardens, kayakers, and cultural practitioners who might otherwise remain in parallel worlds.

Finally, drawing keeps the politics of attention in view. New materialist perspectives remind us that matter is not neutral: it is shaped by historical decisions, management regimes, and economies, as well as by tides, weather, and erosion. The act of drawing under these conditions, sitting on cold rock attempting to register a tide-edge before it vanishes or tracking cormorant flight through wind-streamed eyes, makes visible the researcher's implication in the island's forces and frictions. The drawings do not present Hilbre as pristine wilderness. They hold it as a site where leisure, heritage, conservation, tourism, and climate change continually rub against each other. In doing so, drawing functions as a method for keeping those frictions visible, as prompts for both policy and practice.

### **Speculative Drawing Cartographies**

Given the above, evaluation has to respect art's specificity while still offering partners something tangible.

### **Ecological and heritage-facing indicators**

- Archival contributions: number and type of items deposited with partners such as the Heritage Centre and local archives (e.g. bound sets of blubilds, digitised diagram sequences, filmed scores with metadata, annotated maps).
- Partner usefulness: structured feedback sessions with wardens, curators and ecologists asking how, if at all, these materials have informed decisions or been used in displays, education sessions or interpretation panels.
- Temporal coverage: tracking which seasons, weather conditions and tidal states are represented in the drawings to identify gaps for future work.
- Participation counts: numbers for public walks, drawing labs, school workshops and screendance sessions, including repeat engagement.
- Volunteer reflections: short written or recorded reflections from volunteers, birders and wardens about whether drawing has changed how they look at or move through Hilbre.
- Co-authored outputs: creation of at least one co-written or co-drawn "Hilbre field kit", incorporating local knowledge (best routes in different winds, quiet look-out points, areas to avoid at pupping or breeding times).

Some of these indicators will only become active in 2026-2027, when Drawing Labs with Joanna's DRA|W (Drawing Radical Articulations Work) are planned. These labs will invite participants not just to look at existing scores but to generate their own movement scores and drawing articulations, fostering "active looking" and situated attention rather than passive reception.

- **Iteration depth:** tracking how specific notational devices evolve across visits (e.g. how the bird-flight symbol becomes more nuanced; how slip-marks or hazard zones are refined). Versioning dates on each blubild will make this visible.
- **Transferability:** testing whether the score-method can be used without my presence. So far, performers have worked from the scores in rehearsal, but the general public have not. In 2027 I plan to develop audio scores - spoken verbal notations drawn from my field recordings - that invite participants to draw and move in response.
- **New notational systems:** ongoing development of a bird-notation system that encodes species, flight pattern and flock behaviour as gestural marks. The aim is to make these legible enough that participants in public performances can interpret and embody them, turning field observations into shared choreographies.

Success, in this framework, is less about fixed outcomes and more about depth of correspondence: the degree to which drawing practices become embedded in both conservation thinking and everyday visiting.

### **Speculative Drawing Cartographies**

Any evaluation of Drawing Out Hilbre must respect art's specificity while still offering partners forms of evidence that can be used, revisited, and built upon. For a tidal archipelago defined by the convergence of the Dee, Mersey and Irish Sea, the project's outputs are not "maps" in the conventional sense but cartographic-choreographic propositions: drawings that hold time, movement, and relation as primary data. I therefore propose a mixed-methods evaluation model that can register both the measurable reach of the work and the less quantifiable depth of care it generates.

Ecological- and heritage-facing indicators include contributions to local archives, partner usefulness, temporal coverage across tides and seasons, participation counts, volunteer reflections, and co-authored outputs such as a Hilbre Field Kit that incorporates local knowledge, protocols, and notational tools. These indicators become most active through 2026-2027 as the project's Drawing Labs develop through DRA|W, hosted by BADA/CASS. The labs do not ask participants to interpret finished works; they invite them to make with the island by generating their own movement scores and drawing articulations. In this way, evaluation is not only retrospective reporting but a record of how practices of watchfulness, timing, and restraint become collectively learned.

Additional measures focus on iteration depth, transferability, and the emergence of new notational systems capable of working with Hilbre's micro-ecologies. Versioning dates on each blubild will trace how marks evolve across repeat visits and changing conditions. The score-method will be tested beyond the lead artist's presence through audio scores built from field recordings, enabling the practice to travel while remaining site-responsible. A developing bird-notation system will encode species, flight pattern, flock behaviour, and disturbance thresholds as gestural marks that can be read and embodied by participants, converting observation into shared choreographies of attention. Success, in this framework, is less a fixed "outcome" than the degree of correspondence achieved: how deeply drawing becomes embedded in conservation thinking, partner planning, and everyday visiting as a practice of care.

### **Discussion: Mapping beyond maps in a tidal convergence**

The project's central claim is that Hilbre is not best approached as an object with a stable outline, but as a tidal event: a continually re-made nexus of waters, winds, substrates and bodies. Traditional cartographies stabilise the island through fixed borders, depth soundings, and hazard marks. By contrast, the choreographic drawings developed here treat mapping as a live practice, tuned to Hilbre's tidal convergence and the micro-ecological thresholds that arise within it. The blubilds, movement diagrams, event-scores and screendance traces function

as situated cartographies that map what is otherwise hard to hold: when certain routes become unsafe; how erosion on sandstone edges accelerates after storms; where overwintering birds gather under particular wind and tide states; how visitor flows compress or disperse around roosts and ledges.

Following Barad, these are not simply interactions between separate entities but intra-active phenomena in which birds, waters, people, rock, and weather co-compose what the island becomes at any given moment. To map Hilbre's eventfulness requires a method able to hold uncertainty, duration, and entanglement. Diagrammatic marks, broken lines, stains, and hesitant horizons are not aesthetic flourishes; they are attempts to register thresholds and forces as they emerge, fade, and return. In this sense, choreographic drawing becomes both a cartographic tool and a stewardship practice: it does not pin Hilbre down, it trains us to meet it at the right times, with the right sensitivities.

The work also has limits that must be acknowledged. The island's conditions and the researcher's availability produce gaps: storms, bodily capacity, and life constraints shape what can be recorded. Participation is necessarily partial: not everyone can or wishes to cross slippery rocks and tidal sand, and some shoreline users will remain outside the drawing labs. There is also an ethical risk that drawing erosion, stranded seals, or storm damage could aestheticise vulnerability. The project counters this by foregrounding process, failure, discomfort, and responsibility, but the risk remains and must stay visible within the research. For drawing studies, the contribution is threefold. First, it demonstrates observational drawing as located and relational, shaped by who is present, how long we stay, which tides we choose, and what the island permits. Second, it advances drawing as a diagrammatic practice where marks function as relational machines for thinking and acting, not merely descriptive outlines. Third, it situates drawing within ecological and new materialist inquiry as a way to sustain a politics of attention, where care is enacted not only through policy and designation but through the slow labour of returning, noticing, and adjusting behaviour.

In sum, mapping beyond maps on Hilbre means accepting that no single diagram, film, or workshop can capture the island's tidal convergence. What the project offers instead is a repertoire of choreographic cartographies: scores, notations, and collaborative lab practices that archive Hilbre at a fragile historical threshold while also rehearsing more careful futures. These tools do not simply represent the island; they help shape how we move through it, how we time our presence, and how we learn to stay with its ongoing changes.

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