

## SOUTH DORSET RIDGEWAY PROJECT

### Spirit of Place Exhibition



#### AMANDA WALLWORK - Artist Statement

I am intrigued by the marks and traces left behind by people on places and objects, both deliberate and accidental, and the stories they tell. Over time our landscape has become imprinted with our activities, many layers of history leaving traces in the earth. My work is a form of mapping, interpreting these marks in time and distilling them down to convey a story in a simple symbolic form.

Usually my work is generic - a coming together of influences from many sources, increasingly however I have begun to focus on particular places. A recent project has concentrated on a lost trackway in West Penwith, Cornwall - a trading route dating from Neolithic times known as the Tinnens Way. My 'discovery' of the Ridgeway site was one of those wonderfully coincidental occurrences that brought together various strands of my practice. Whilst working on research for a project exploring the archaeology and geology of the Jurassic coast I had been spending a lot of time pouring over maps and flying across the landscape using GoogleEarth. My attention was repeatedly drawn to an inland area of Dorset criss crossed with footpaths and absolutely littered with the remains and traces of archaeological sites. This area turned out to be the South Dorset Ridgeway, and a fortuitous meeting relating to my work as curator for Sherborne House Arts led to me finding out about the Ridgeway project and I knew that I had to respond.

One of the most visibly impressive features of this area are the Bronze Age round barrows. When I first walked this landscape I was preoccupied by the humps and bumps of these barrows and the way they came in and out of view as you walked. I was very conscious of their placing in the landscape, how they related to the skyline and to each other. Generally though my work makes reference to the view from above, the pattern of features often reminding me of maps of constellations. Using a simplified system of symbols, Ordnance Survey maps mark the positions of barrows, henges, stone monuments and field systems, however aerial photography reveals so much more. Changes in the colour of soil, crops and shadows cast by slight variations in the land surface level indicate the presence of long disappeared features. As my research progresses I am becoming more and more fascinated by these lost sites and in particular the faint shadows of ploughed out barrows looking rather like coffee cup rings on a table, traces of what was once there, a symbol of a moment in time. Recent findings from The National Mapping Project suggests that up to 80% of the archaeological features of this landscape are still unrecorded. This is a fascinating area and worthy of extensive study.

Uncharacteristically monochrome, taking its colour cues from the underlying geology of chalk and flint, I regard my work for this exhibition as sketch maps - just the beginning of what I expect to be an ongoing obsession.

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