

Edge:Lands
Drawings and paintings by Paul Gough



**Front cover:
Twin Ribbon Tree**
Chalks, conte and crayon
on paper
2005-06
48 x 52 cm



Near Nuclear Plant ii
Chalks, conte and crayon on paper
2010
56 x 75.5 cms

Edge:Lands

Drawings and paintings by Paul Gough

Paul Gough is interested in drawing in-between places, liminal zones, waste grounds, empty places that were once something and now have been allowed to lapse back into their habitual shape. Look at his drawings of the former airbase at Greenham Common, or the ash-heaps of the old north Somerset coalfield, the abandoned village of Tyneham or the forlorn gullies on the Gallipoli Peninsula. They are powerful evocations of absence and embedded memory. Writer Marion Shoard coined these unloved, unseen and often unexplored spaces as the 'edge land', a mysterious hinterland of brick piles and rubbish tips, derelict industrial plant and ragged landfill, forlorn filling stations and scruffy allotments, abandoned ordnance lying amidst rogue plants.

Thirty years ago, the naturalist Richard Mabey in his book 'The Unofficial Countryside', had also opened our eyes to the vitality of these unkempt places. He, however,

found little to cherish and celebrate in these wasted hinterlands. Instead he marvelled at the resilience of nature in such abject conditions, its refusal to be ground down by toxic contagion.

Mabey's astonishment at the hardiness of nature is a reminder of another astute observer of the English scene, the painter Paul Nash. Before the Great War a modest painter of fluffy elms and vapid sunsets, Nash was transformed by his experiences while serving as a British officer on the Western Front in 1916.

In 1916, in a letter home he wrote of walking through a wood (or at least what remained of it after recent shelling) when it was little more than 'a place with an evil name, pitted and pocked with shells, the trees torn to shreds, often reeking with poison gas'. A few days later, to his great surprise, that 'most desolate ruinous place' was drastically changed. It was now 'a vivid green', bristling with buds and fresh leaf growth:

'The most broken trees even had sprouted somewhere and in the midst, from the depth of the wood's bruised heart poured out the throbbing song of a nightingale. Ridiculous mad incongruity! One can't think which is the more absurd, the War or Nature...'

Nash's ecstatic vision permeates Gough's recent oeuvre. Over the past decade his drawings and paintings have reflected a dread fascination with poetic dereliction and the quasi-industrial sublime, borne of long sojourns in and around many such No-Man's-Lands.

More recently, two young British poets have also wandered in (and wondered of) the hinterlands that make up the British banlieue. To Paul Farley and Michael Symmons Roberts the wilderness is much closer than any of us think. They describe the English edgeland as a set of familiar yet ignored spaces, 'passed through, negotiated, unnamed, unacknowledged', which are now the new wild places on our very own doorsteps. Theirs is a compelling vision, shared in Gough's many images

of former sites of battle, abandoned workings and ancient slagheaps, a land riddled with trenches and troughs, adits and mineholes, ivoried elm and wild buddleia.

Gough's drawings are not representations of any one particular scene. Instead they are accretions of places, spaces, times and seasons brought together on to a single surface; they are sites of both legend and anonymity, places emptied and yet full of emptiness, dis-membered topographies that have had their constituent parts re-membered through the act of drawing.

In his drawings, created over decades of measured practice, Gough has laid vision to his own complicated, unkempt and previously unexamined edgeland. He has made tangible those places that have long thrived on disregard. In his work he meets the challenge that we should 'put aside our nostalgia for places we've never really known and see them afresh'.

M.R.H.



Tree Tunnel
2012
Chalks, acrylic and conte on paper
56 x 74 cm



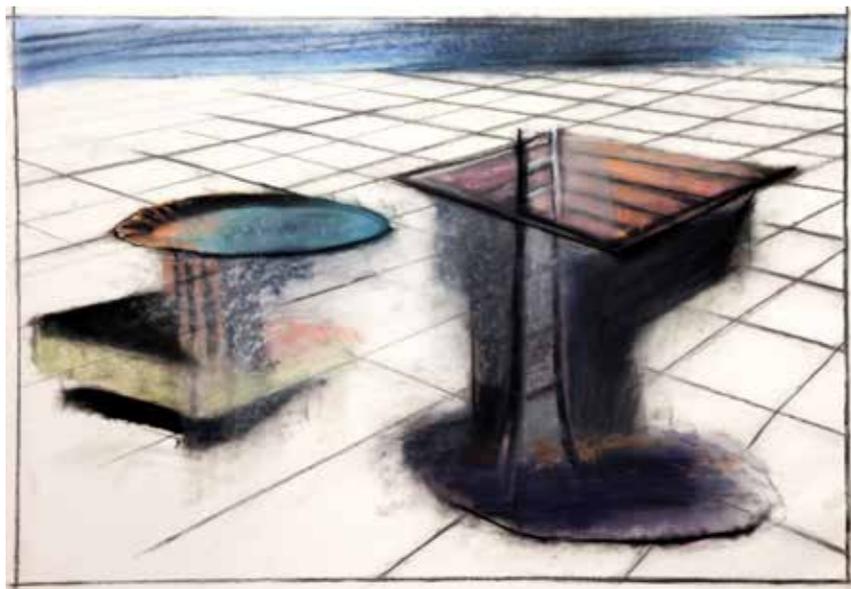
Near-Nuclear Plant iii
2010
chalks, ink and crayon on paper
56 x 75.5 cms



Near Nuclear Plant I (after Paul Nash)
2010
Chalks, acrylic and conte on paper
54 x 74.5 cms



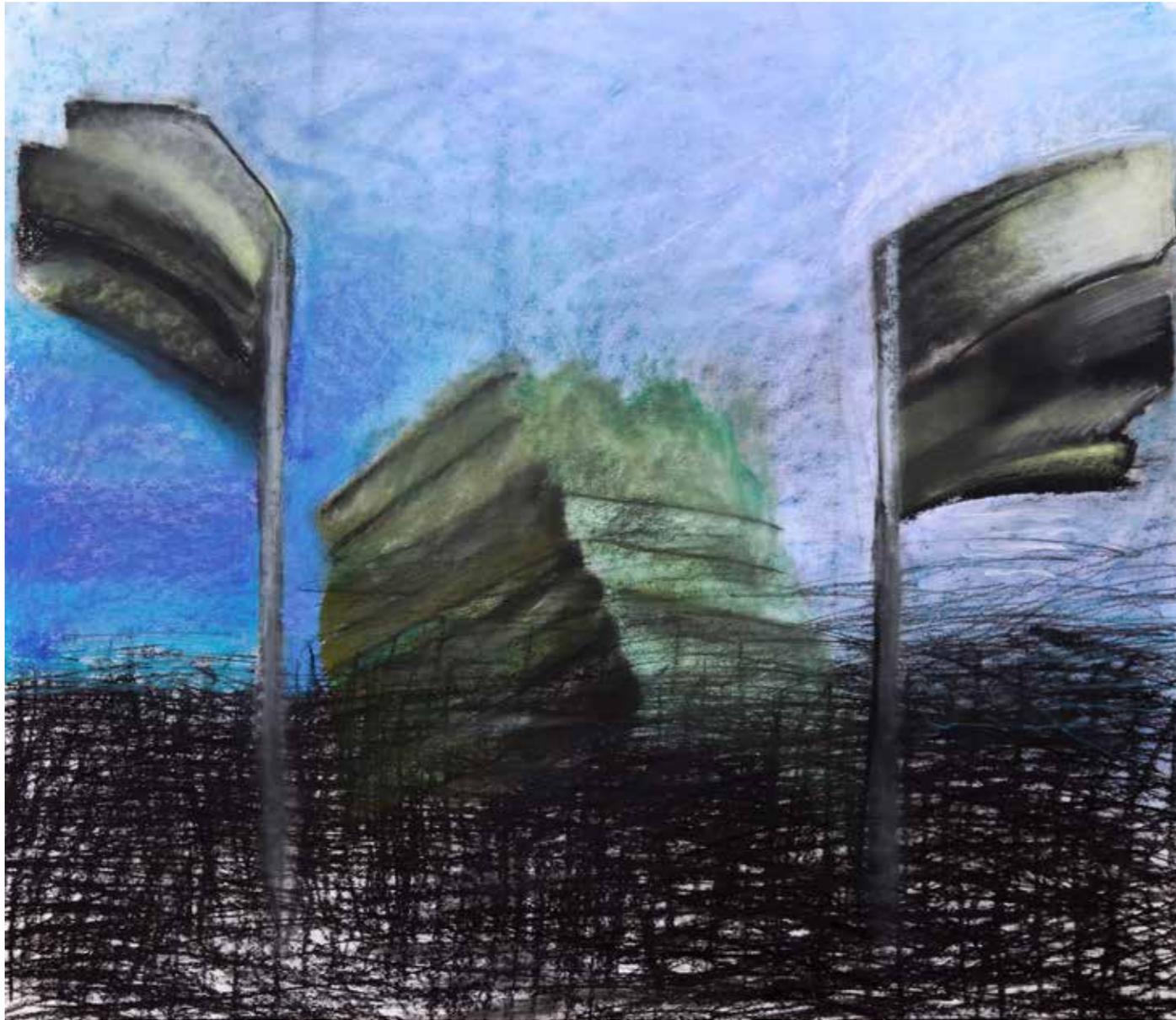
Chimney, stump, sump:
Penwith
2011
Chalks, acrylic and conte on
paper
55 x 74.5 cms



Sump and Adit
2011
Chalk, acrylic and conte on
paper
55 x 73.5 cms



Ariege: plank bridge
2005
Conte on paper
54 x 74.5 cms



Stockade
2008
Chalks, conte, wax crayon
on paper
49 x 49 cms
48 x 70 cms



Crater Hill
2008-09
Chalks, acrylic and
conte on paper
56 x 74.5 cms



Rectangular pool
2005
Chalks and conte on
paper
48 x 72.5 cms



Banana Island
2008-09
Chalks, acrylic and conte on paper
48 x 70.5 cm



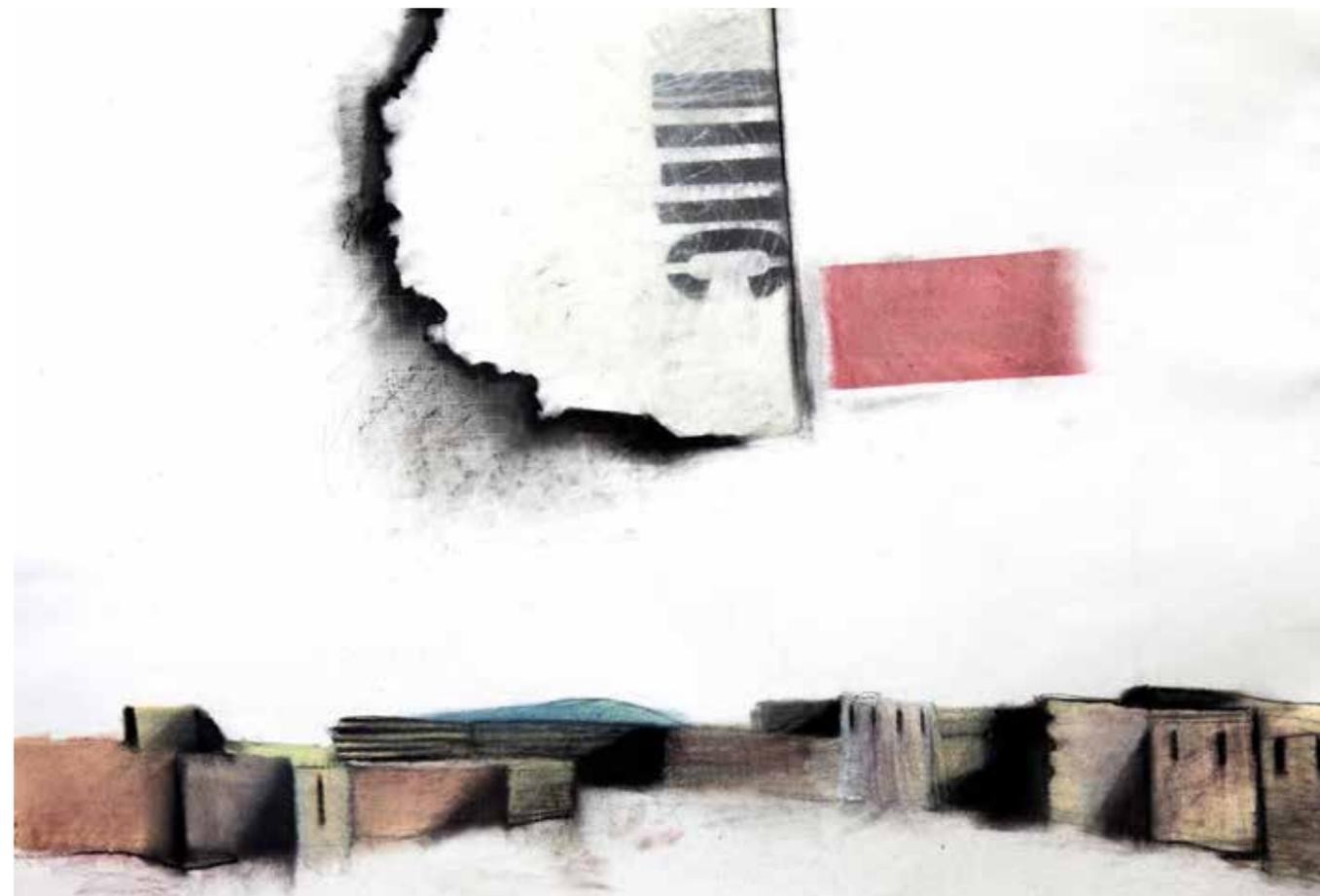
Obelisk: looking west from Portland
2006
Chalks, acrylic and conte on paper
58 x 74.5 cms



Shackleton's Dream (i)
2004
Chalks, stencil and conte on paper
48 x 72.5 cms



Shackleton's Dream (ii)
2004
Chalks and conte on paper
57 x 73.5 cms



Remembering Grenada
2007
Chalks, stencil and conte on paper
57 x 73.5 cms



Partition

2004

Acrylic, chalks and conte on paper
47 x 71.5 cms



Encounter (in green)

2006

Chalks and conte on paper
57 x 73.5 cms



Adit near the Batch
2005
Chalks and conte on paper
56 x 73.5 cms



Upas (double)
2009-10
Chalks, stencil and conte on paper
56 x 72 cms



Phantasmagoric Landscape
2005
Chalks, stencil and conte on paper
53 x 73.5 cms



Remembering Grenada
2007
Chalks, stencil and conte
on paper
57 x 73.5 cms



Airstrip Series i
2005
Chalks and conte on paper
46 x 74 cms



Airstrip Series iii
2005
Chalks and conte on paper
54 x 74 cms



Shelter Series iv
2007-08
Chalks and conte on paper
50 x 76 cms



Airstrip Series iii
2005
Chalks and conte on paper
54 x 74 cms



Airstrip Series ii
2005
Chalks and conte on paper
54 x 74 cms



From the 'Running on Empty' Suite,

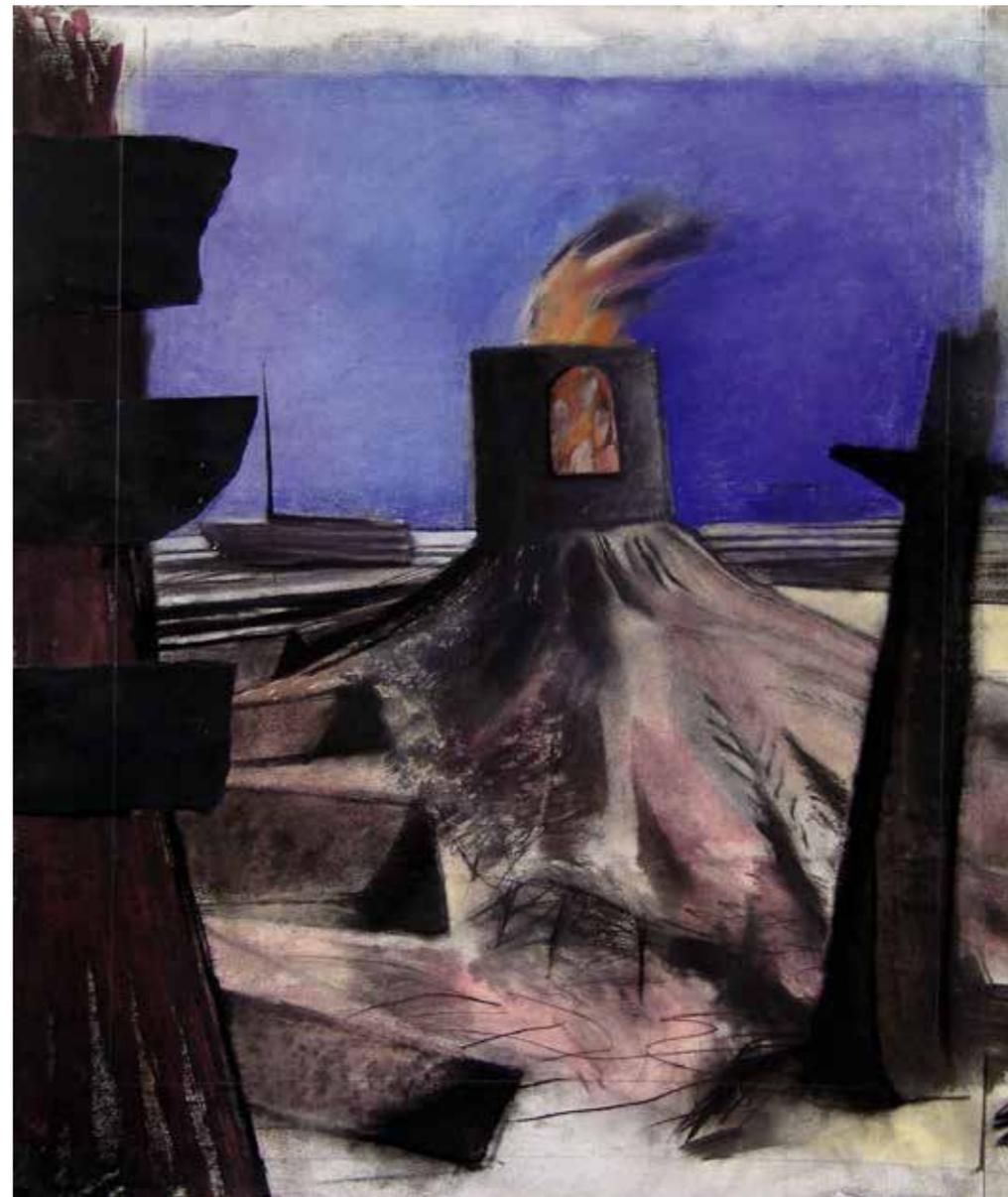
A series of drawings made in response to [un]occupied military landscapes - Tyneham in Dorset; Mynydd Epynt in South Wales; the former Mustard Gas Filling Station, Avonmouth, near Bristol.

2006
Chalks, wax crayon and conte on paper
50 x 76 cms



From the 'Running on Empty' Suite. Tyneham

2006
Chalks, wax crayon and conte on paper
55 x 76 cms



Remembering Fire Land

2001
Acrylic, chalks and conte on paper
52 x 44 cms



Upas Trees, with pool
2005
Watercolour, pencil and conte on paper
44 x 72 cms



Halki Tower
2009
Chalks, wax crayon, conte
on paper
53 x 77 cms



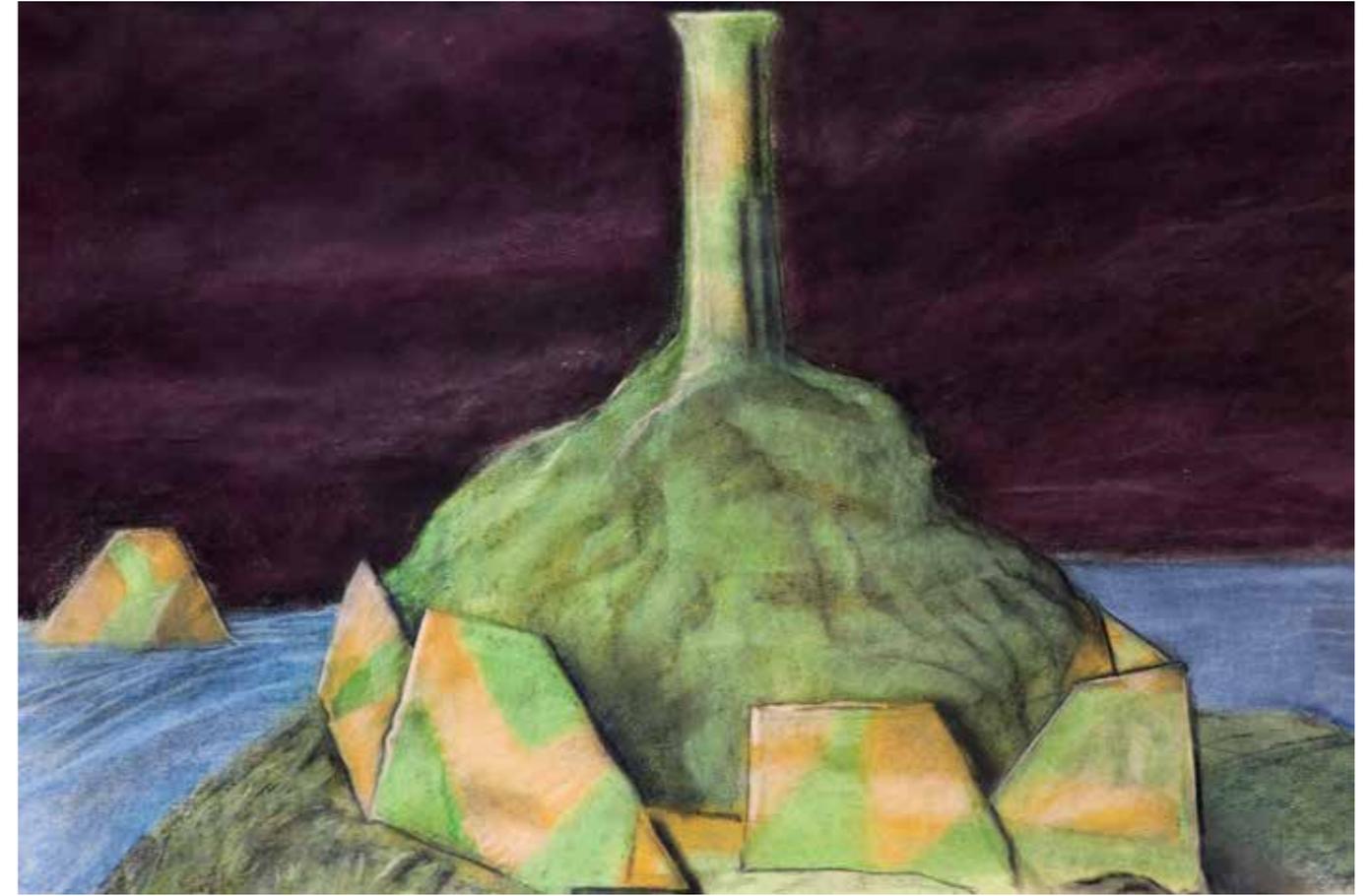
**MOD-Land with concrete
post**
2008-09
Chalks, collage, and conte
on paper
53.5 x 77.5 cms



Detritus

2006

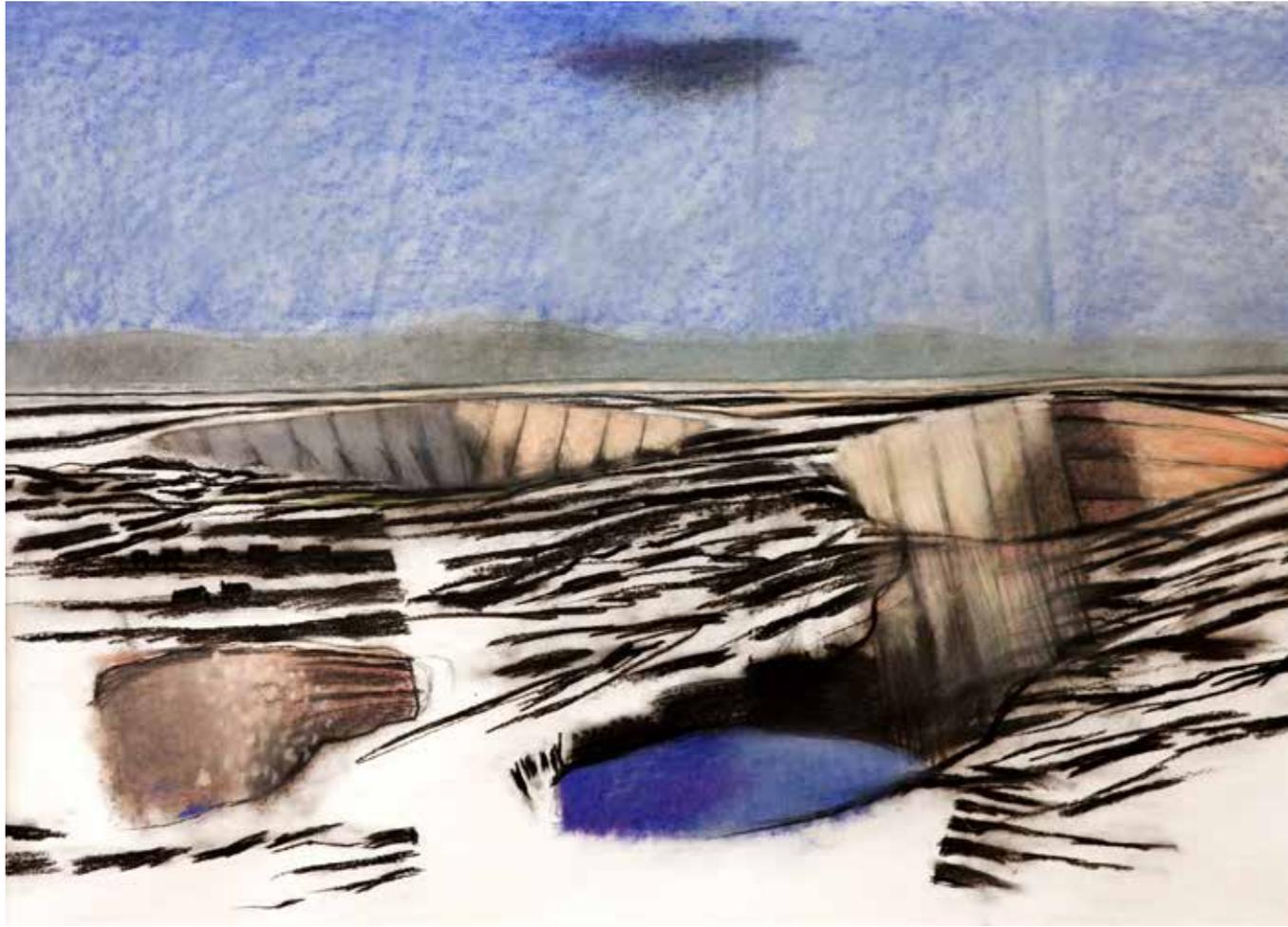
Chalks, collage, and conte on paper
53 x 74.5 cms



Hill 57 (To the Cape)

2004

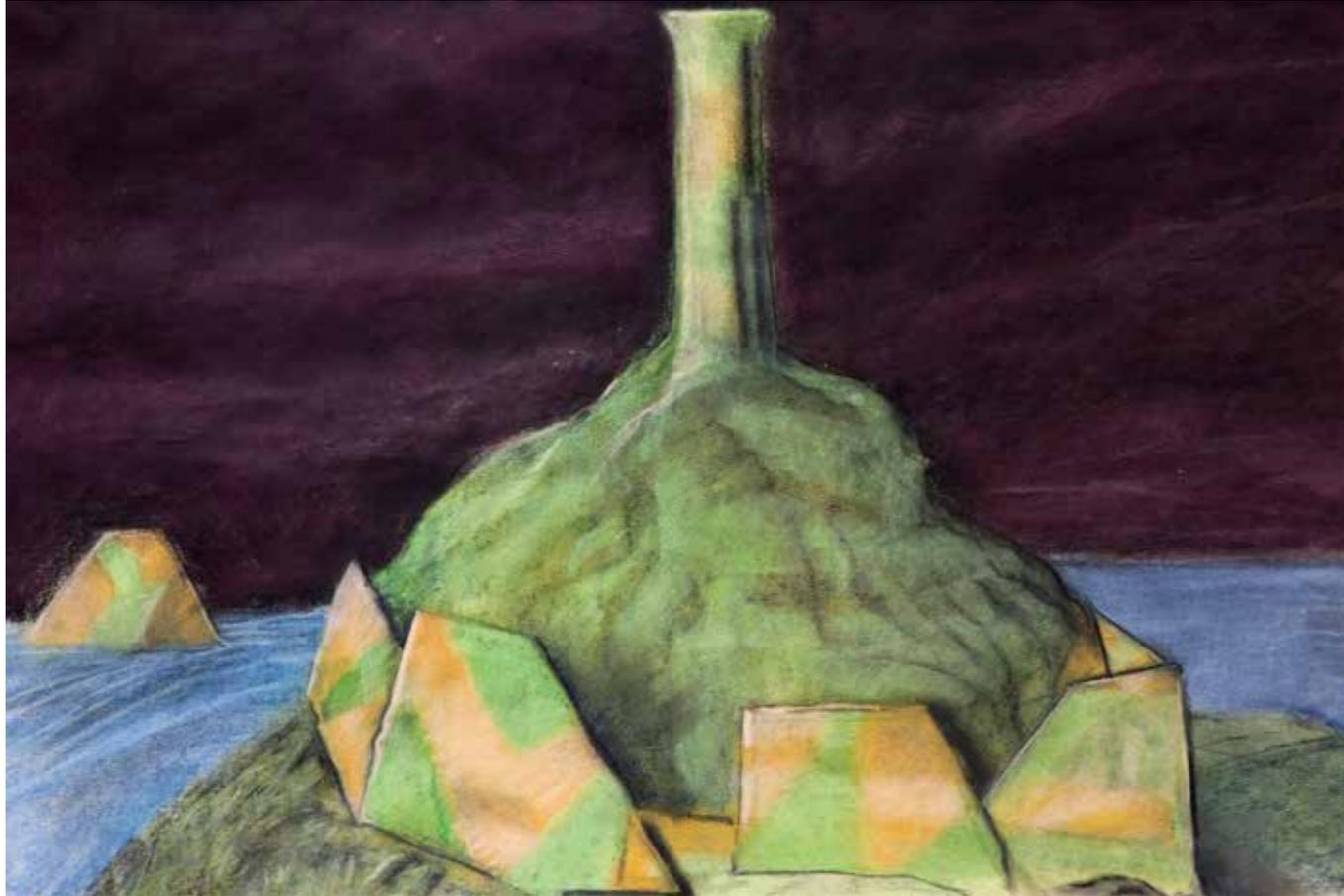
Chalks and conte on paper
40 x 70 cms



From 'The Shelter' series
2005
Chalks and conte on paper
48 x 72 cms



From Cape to Cape
2004-05
Chalks and conte on paper
52.5 x 76 cms



Hill 57 (To the Cape)
2004
Chalks and conte on paper
40 x 70 cms

Paul Gough

Professor Paul Gough studied his masters degree and doctorate at the Royal College of Art, London. He lives in Bristol and works at the University of the West of England where he is Deputy Vice Chancellor, and formerly Executive Dean in the Faculty of Creative Arts. He is also an occasional broadcaster and a writer, and has exhibited widely in the UK and abroad. He is represented in several art collections, including the permanent collection of the Imperial War Museum, London, the Canadian War Museum, Ottawa, the National War Memorial, New Zealand.

His most recent exhibitions have been in Melbourne, London, and Wellington, New Zealand.

Amongst his recent publications is a monograph on the British artist Stanley Spencer (2006) and *A Terrible Beauty* (2010) an extensive study of British art of the Great War. An edited volume of correspondence between Stanley Spencer and Desmond Chute was published in 2011, and a book on the street artist Banksy, *Banksy: A Bristol Legacy*, came out in April 2012.

References mentioned in The Introduction

Paul Farley and Michael Symmonds Roberts, *Edgelands: Journeys into England's True Wilderness*, 2011.

Richard Mabey, *The Unofficial Countryside*, 1973.

Marion Shoard, *Edgelands: an essay*, 2002.

