



Matisse watching a diving cormorant, 1952



Mellis and Hirst converse on the beach, 1983

collages are often made not so much *in* the present as *from* it, no matter how fractured our sense of the present is.

Collage most certainly did not originate with Picasso's and Braque's papier collés in 1912, but it could be proposed that what was utterly fundamental to their achievements in this medium was the acknowledgment of the degree to which representation—particularly the creation of likenesses—depended on the medium's materiality. Cubism avoided or perhaps could not imagine sacrificing the long-established genres (portraits, landscapes, still lifes) subtending the history of painting and other modes of

picturing the world; unlike the artists that rapidly followed, often in their express wake, non-figuration, non-mimesis, non-representation was not on the menu—there was no turn towards abstraction in an absolute sense. If representation there be, it was a question, for Picasso and Braque of what representations are physically *made* of. Paraphrasing a remark from Merleau-Ponty's landmark essay "Eye and Mind," no representation can exist without a sustaining support.

Materiality is foregrounded in Carter's and Jones' collages, too. Casting our eye from collage to collage, we cannot help but see the diverse means here: charcoal, paint, and ink. Yet is not a matter of "mixed medium" insofar as these mediums are unmixed; such unmixedness is what guarantees the overlapping and division of fragments. Different papers heighten the fragmentation, but also, via their difference, emphasize their specific qualities. Paper is not mere support but accedes to facture. This is particularly evident in *Matisse watching a diving cormorant, 1952* where a white space dominates the centre of the composition. Space here is not empty; rather it's a *constitutive* blank. The paper's sheer materiality is exposed to the viewer (it evinces candour, as Stanley Cavell once said of the blanks in Morris Louis' *Unveileds*). Something else: masking tape affixing discrete elements together is left visible. Here it's worth pushing further. Whilst undoubtedly functioning to hold fragments to the sheet, it also serves as a part of the composition and its materiality as such; and it does so in such a manner that process is underscored. What the masking tape also draws attention to is how the surface of the collages are comprised from specific acts of layering. In each one, the masking tape is the topmost layer, existing sparingly across the surface of the collages. But its relative

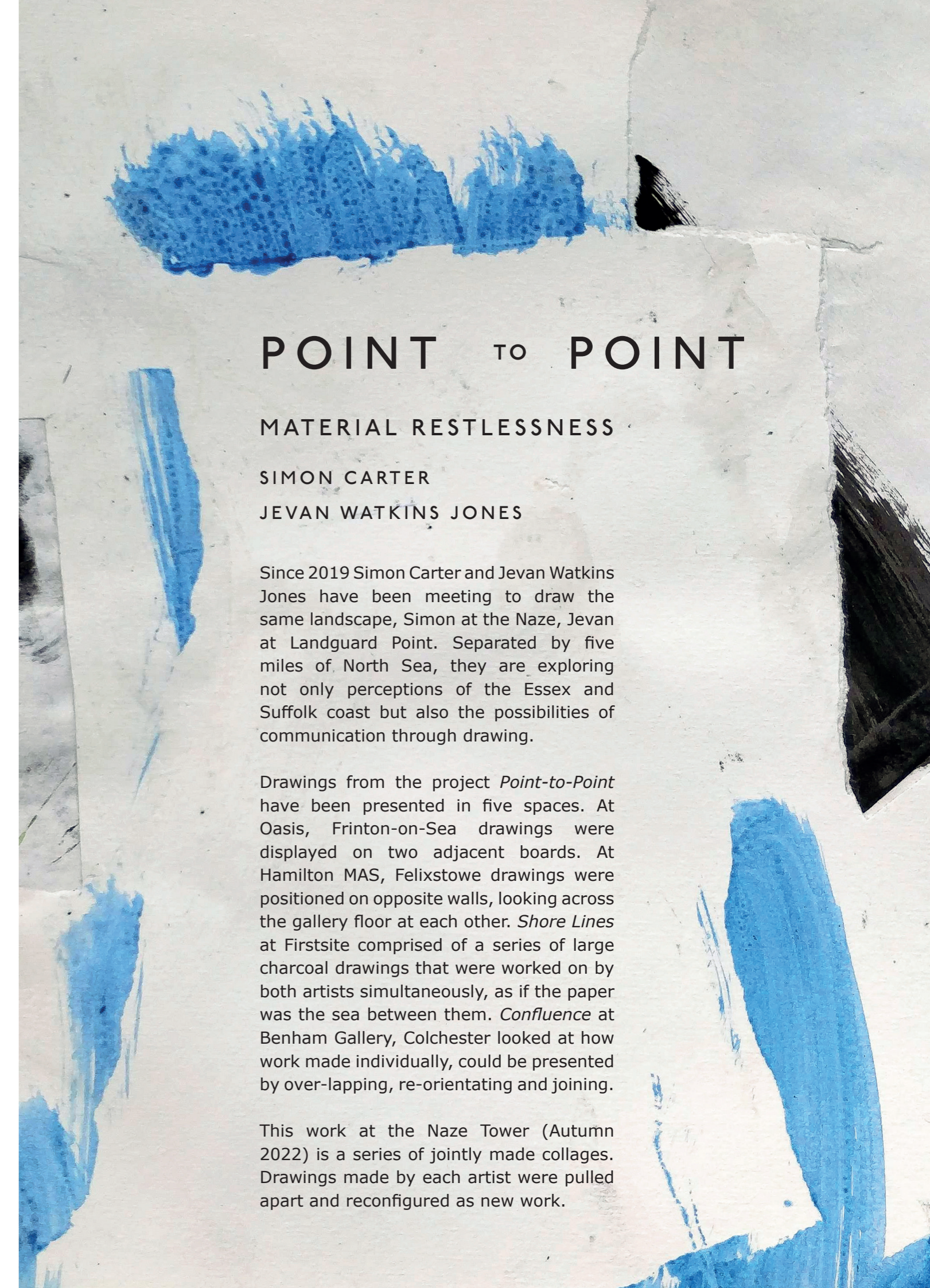
translucency means that what is beneath each "dab" of masking tape remains partly visible rather than occluded. This is perhaps most noticeable in *Mellis and Hirst converse on the beach, 1983* where the tilting grey mass on the right is held by three bits of masking tape, through which the grey is evident but given an off-yellow haze. Observe, too, how upon the same collage the small right-angled triangle on the left is half-covered by a scruffy quadrilateral dab of tape that simultaneously highlights the underlying triangle and bisects it into an upper quadrilateral and a lower right-angle.

The reader might have spotted how the last few sentences have neglected the issue of representation. Instead of naming things in the landscape given depiction in the collages, I have pointed my finger at various shapes, forms, and layers. This seems to me a justified approach. It perhaps dovetails with a longer reception history, particularly in the 1960s-1970s French context, in which Picasso's and Braque's *papier collés*, alongside Matisse's late cut-outs, are reinterpreted as testifying primarily to how surface can potentially disclose material depth, thickness, as opposed to masking it. Representation thus gets subordinated to examinations of materiality and how that materiality permits theoretical and political questioning. And it's in this context French painters such as Daniel Buren and Christian Bonnefoi, beginning early in their careers, took a special interest in collage's demonstration of materiality and interpreted it back into painting (both in the present and in its historical precedents), almost as if collage reveals the medium of painting anew.

Ultimately, Carter and Jones retain a degree of representation, depiction, in their collages, but complexly so. Because of the material process undertaken here,

it might be said that landscape functions in these collages not as a depicted reference—despite what the presence of semi-recognizable bits of specific places may suggest—but rather exists as displacement. And here, surely, the "place" within *displacement* is crucial. On the one hand, it speaks of two places (Essex and Suffolk) navigated into conjunction (collaged together, indeed); yet, on the other hand, precisely because they have been conjoined, the original specificity of their distinct placehood has been displaced. In a way, the collages make explicit a collaging principle already at play in the earlier instantiations of *Point-to-Point*. Although related to the pictorial history of landscape, these collages are also sceptical of the numerous assumptions instantiated during that history. To be sure, *Untitled* gainsays that the geographically remote landscape of Afghanistan is not essentially dissociable from the East Anglian shoreline.

A final few words strike me as being in order. Although materiality has been crucial to what I have written, the titles in themselves proffer another angle. Humorous and even outlandish, maybe rather discordant, the titles similarly obey a collage principle. They also suggest how much collage depends upon receptivity and spontaneity—both the trusting recognition of those qualities and their engineering—and how the spark of contingency will bring new meaning to that which already exists. Receptivity and spontaneity, trusting in these is also a trusting in difference and the difference of each other's experiences. One's ego is self-subsumed in acknowledgment of the other's needs; but, in doing that, one's self-identity is not discarded but rediscovered in the other. And perhaps, then, any genuine collaboration between artists is to submit to one's practice, one's way of seeing and thinking, to an ethics of collage.



POINT TO POINT

MATERIAL RESTLESSNESS

SIMON CARTER

JEVAN WATKINS JONES

Since 2019 Simon Carter and Jevan Watkins Jones have been meeting to draw the same landscape, Simon at the Naze, Jevan at Landguard Point. Separated by five miles of North Sea, they are exploring not only perceptions of the Essex and Suffolk coast but also the possibilities of communication through drawing.

Drawings from the project *Point-to-Point* have been presented in five spaces. At Oasis, Frinton-on-Sea drawings were displayed on two adjacent boards. At Hamilton MAS, Felixstowe drawings were positioned on opposite walls, looking across the gallery floor at each other. *Shore Lines* at Firstsite comprised of a series of large charcoal drawings that were worked on by both artists simultaneously, as if the paper was the sea between them. *Confluence* at Benham Gallery, Colchester looked at how work made individually, could be presented by over-lapping, re-orientating and joining.

This work at the Naze Tower (Autumn 2022) is a series of jointly made collages. Drawings made by each artist were pulled apart and reconfigured as new work.



Still from *Shore Lines* by Noah Carter Studio

SIMON CARTER is based in Essex and has been a practising artist for over 30 years. He has exhibited with Firstsite, The Minories and with Messum's London and Wiltshire. He has been artist in residence at The Minories and University of Essex. He is co-founder of the artist collective Contemporary British Painting, is President of Colchester Art Society and programmes exhibitions at Art:Oasis in Frinton-on-Sea. Recent Exhibitions have included *As Seen on the Radio*, International Gallery of Contemporary Art, Alaska, *Beyond Other Horizons*, Romania, *Made in Britain*, Gdansk, Poland and Messum's, London.

Point-to-Point, a twenty minute film about the project, was commissioned from Noah Carter Studio. Noah Carter also made a short film of the making of one of the *Shore Lines* drawings for Firstsite.

Point-to-Point has been supported by a Firstsite Collectors Group Bursary.

JEVAN WATKINS JONES is based in Suffolk and has been a practising artist for nearly 30 years. He has completed residencies at The Minories, Aldeburgh Beach Lookout and Dumfries House. He was an Associate Artist at Firstsite from 2009 - 2014 and is founder of the Chatto Art Group. Recent exhibitions include *Occupied with Plants*, Art Exchange, University of Essex, Facing-Recovering, collaborating with wounded & injured soldiers, Firstsite, Royal Armouries, House of Commons. Group shows include *Notes from the Underground*, Dostoyevsky Museum, St Petersburg and *Tout a Fait*, Académie Royale des Beaux-Arts, Brussels.



Morris and Munnings walk the shore and talk, 1943

COLLABORATION AND THE COLLAGING OF EXPERIENCES

Matthew Bowman
Art critic, writer and lecturer

Building upon a recent series of collaborative drawings titled *Point-to-Point*, Simon Carter and Jevan Watkins Jones have created several collages extending and transforming that series. *Point-to-Point*, overall, can be understood as mapping the geographical area where the rivers Stour and Orwell meet and flow into the North Sea. The start of this mapping, and subtending it throughout, are two sets of drawings made in-situ and responding to the specificities of the Essex and Suffolk coastlines; one set is made by Carter from the shoreline at Walton-on-the-Naze, while the other set is made by Jones from his position in Felixstowe. Although Carter and Jones are working separately whilst making these drawings, they are produced synchronously with the two artists agreeing to be at their respective locations at a certain time. These drawings are brought back to the studio, serving as the trigger for larger charcoal drawings that are worked on collaboratively. The collages continue the project, furthering the studio work, reformatting what has been previously produced and giving it a different future.

At the time of writing, there is a little uncertainty on my part concerning which works would appear, what precise form they would take, and how that form will be dependent upon curatorial choices made at the exhibition. My initial experience of the works derives from a studio visit conducted in June where I was lucky to see, at first hand, the works in progress and process. My uncertainty is worth underscoring and should not be read merely as self-defensive rhetoric insofar as it attests to the *material restlessness* of these collages. That restlessness has been a hallmark of

Carter's and Jones' collaboration, as evidenced by two previous exhibitions. Several months into their *Shore Lines* exhibition at Firstsite (December 2021 to September 2022), and partly in response to its extension, Carter and Jones asked the gallery to reinstall the drawings so that each one had been rotated 180 degrees, thus changing the presentation of each drawing's form without, however, physically changing the form itself.

The possibility of transformation was perhaps signalled to, or by, Carter and Jones during their *Confluence* exhibition at the Benham Gallery. Opening in February 2022, and thereby briefly concomitant with the Firstsite show, Carter and Jones displayed numerous drawings in a manner deeply responsive to the specific quirks of the space. Moreover, playfulness was also manifest in how they permitted themselves to abut and overlap separate drawings, generating new and hitherto unintended correspondences between them. All this demonstrates, then, that the works produced actively refuse a fixed, definitive form. And because each work is crucially exposed to the temporality of incessant making and remaking, of *marking* and *re-marking*, it heightens the degree to which my discourse—my own *remarks* on their mark and re-mark makings—is constitutively a snapshot seeking to capture, what, at that fragmented moment, is significant to the work.

As the deployment and recontextualization of readymade fragments, collage, alongside its sibling, photomontage, has occupied a formative role within twentieth-century art. In many accounts, collage's and montage's staging of fragmentation



Edwin Edwards writes to Henri Fantin-Latour from Felixstowe Beach, 1861



Miller and Picasso discuss the virtues of the North Sea, 1937



The Madox Brown family holiday at Walton, August 1859



Mary Newcomb painting the dunes and the wind, 1978



The Ever Given docks at Trinity Terminal, Felixstowe, 3rd August, 2021



Harwood imagines a boat signalling across Pennyhole Bay, 1972



Gainsborough contemplates the shipping lanes from Landguard Fort, 1753



SC and JWJ cross the Medusa Channel, 2021



JMW Turner departs Harwich Harbour aboard The Ariel, 1842

is apprehended as an embodiment of the increasingly fragmented condition of human experience under the weight of modernity and the rapidly urbanization of capital. Walter Benjamin's landmark essay "On Some Motifs in Baudelaire" brilliantly plots the enforced and ultimately necessary transfiguration from *Erfahrung* to *Erlebnis*—that is, from a capacity for experience in which depth, tradition, and unity are preminent to a capacity for experience defined by superficiality, forgetfulness, and fragmentation. Some of that history is redolent in Carter's and

Jones' collages and we might add that experience continues to be fractured today. For example, *Morris and Munnings walk the shore and talk, 1943* especially calls to mind Picasso's papier collé *Violin* (Autumn 1912), in which the newsprint speaks of war in the Balkans. Fast-forwarding 110 years, the newsprint selected by Carter and Jones reports war crimes in Afghanistan. In both cases there's uncertainty whether the newsprint is to be read or seen, to be received as words or quasi-picture (graphic, to be sure, either way). However we decide,