

Susan Cross

Susan has her workspace in a studio complex occupied by a range of artists and makers. The group studio offers a supportive community and a critical context for her practice. The environment facilitates critical conversation, and encounters with other practitioners and their work. Points of contact that are centred around practice. Furthermore there is an atmosphere of work, of artists turning away from teaching and other distractions to make work.

The journey between home and studio takes about 10 minutes. The closeness is important to Susan, whose life, divided between teaching, making and home, could easily be fragmented. Going to and coming back has become a vital space in Susan's routine. As she journeys to the studio she settles into a frame of mind, on the way home she reflects on the day's work. Teaching is important; an outward looking occupation that feeds a habit of critique and dialogue, but the demands that it makes on Susan can draw her out of her practice. Away from the studio, activities that take her out of doors and into open spaces: horse-riding; walking and gardening, throw Susan back into herself and stimulate a reflective state. In the studio

she needs to re-occupy the space, change gear and prepare herself for work. Having arrived by mid-morning, it will be late afternoon before she is settled into what she describes as a "heightened state", where the work can flow.

Susan uses a variety of techniques to develop her work: drawing; collage; model-making. Drawing is particularly useful for generating ideas and Susan aspires to translate the quality of drawn marks into her making. But once she begins to handle her material she moves out from these starting points and the work becomes more open and fluid, driven by an intuitive process. Although Susan works principally with metal, the techniques she employs are often associated with textiles. She is drawn to textiles as a primary making practice. A practice that provides us with schema and a vocabulary for making sense of the world: threading; stitching; knitting. She likes the openness, the visual clarity of weaving and looping as constructional techniques. The forms are almost self-generating and the material is exposed to speak for itself.