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# WHY DRAW PICTURES THAT ALREADY EXIST? PHOTO-BASED DRAWINGS AND THE PRESENCE PHENOMENON

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It is widely held that, due to its causal nature, photography is the visual medium best suited for enabling individuals to form a sense of perceptual contact with distant or deceased subjects, and so to mitigate against the loss of the subject. Yet, a number of artists, who have meticulously recreated photographs by a slow, laborious process of drawing, have reported that this manual activity has afforded a richer sense of connectedness with the distant or lost subjects. In this article, I produce a phenomenological analysis of this experience, which I term the “presence phenomenon”. To explain this phenomenon, I employ recent work from philosophy of perception and philosophy of mind to argue that the act of drawing, unlike looking at a photograph, presents affordances for bodily action that, in combination with the realism of the work, trigger sub-doxastic associative mechanisms that produce an enhanced sense of connection to the subject.

## Introduction

It is widely held that, due to its causal nature, photography is the visual medium best suited for enabling individuals to form a sense of perceptual contact with distant or deceased subjects (Bazin, 1967; Walton, 1984; Currie 1999; Barthes, 2000; Sontag, 2000; Blood and Cacciatone, 2014). As Sontag specified, a photograph, while a token of absence, is also a pseudo-presence (2000, p. 16). Photographs help to mitigate against the loss of the subject by standing in for objects that are distant or no longer with us, and afford a sense of connection with them. But if photography is the means best suited to this end, then why have a number of artists, including this author and Christina Empedocles, copied photographs through a slow, laborious process of drawing and reported an enhanced sense of connectedness with their subjects? How can drawing enable ‘the hand and the eye [to] reach beyond the camera’ (Empedocles, 2013) and form a deeper relationship to distant or lost subjects?

My aim in this article is to explain which perceptual and cognitive mechanisms underpin this sense of connection, and why drawing in particular is a trigger of these mechanisms. In order to do so, first I examine my own experience and those reported by other artists, who carefully recreate photographs by drawing, to produce a phenomenological analysis of this experience, which I term the “presence phenomenon”.<sup>1</sup> Following this, I employ recent work from philosophy of perception and philosophy of mind to argue that the act of drawing, unlike looking at a photograph, presents affordances for bodily action that, in combination with the realism of the work, triggers associative mechanisms that produce an enhanced sense of connection to the subject.

## Drawing photographs

My practice largely revolves around meticulously recreating photographs by means of drawing. While this method can be employed to remove traces of authorship, I have used it to reassert an authorial presence. One of my earliest projects employing this process was prompted by seeing images in my grandfather’s photograph album that documented his experiences of serving abroad across North Africa and South Asia, in the British Royal Air Force, during World War II. As my grandfather had died when I was young, I was unable to ask him about these experiences. To compensate for the oral history that would have provided a narrative for the contents of the photographs, I began to draw the contents of the album as a way of recovering and relating to the events contained in it.

Considering that photographic images are easy to create and reproduce, these labour-intensive drawings prompted some questions: why go to the trouble of recreating these images in the medium of drawing? And why were the photographs I was working from insufficient for my purposes? Upon reflection, as I had re-photographed the contents of the album, it became clear that this was not a preservative project, but a generative one. It was generative in several senses. First, I wanted to recontextualise these images, which depicted historic events, and reconstruct a narrative by drawing them as photographs in an album and juxtaposing them with extracts that I had copied from several letters, contemporaneous to the photographs, handwritten by my grandfather to his family in the UK. Second, and most pertinent to the

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<sup>1</sup> By “phenomenological analysis”, I mean characterising and explaining what particular kinds of psychological states feel like, or ‘what it is like, experientially, to undergo those states’. (Cavedon-Taylor, 2015, p. 75) There are a number of theorists who have linked drawing and the field of phenomenology. Surveying the range of approaches to this connection would take us too far afield from the present investigation, but for an informative overview see Harty (2012b).

present investigation, was that I found that the act of drawing itself enhanced my sense of connectedness with the events and scenes contained in the album: as I carefully recreated these, I felt as though I was really there observing the military exercises (Figure 1), the restful moments, and the landscapes punctuated by aeroplanes and explosions.

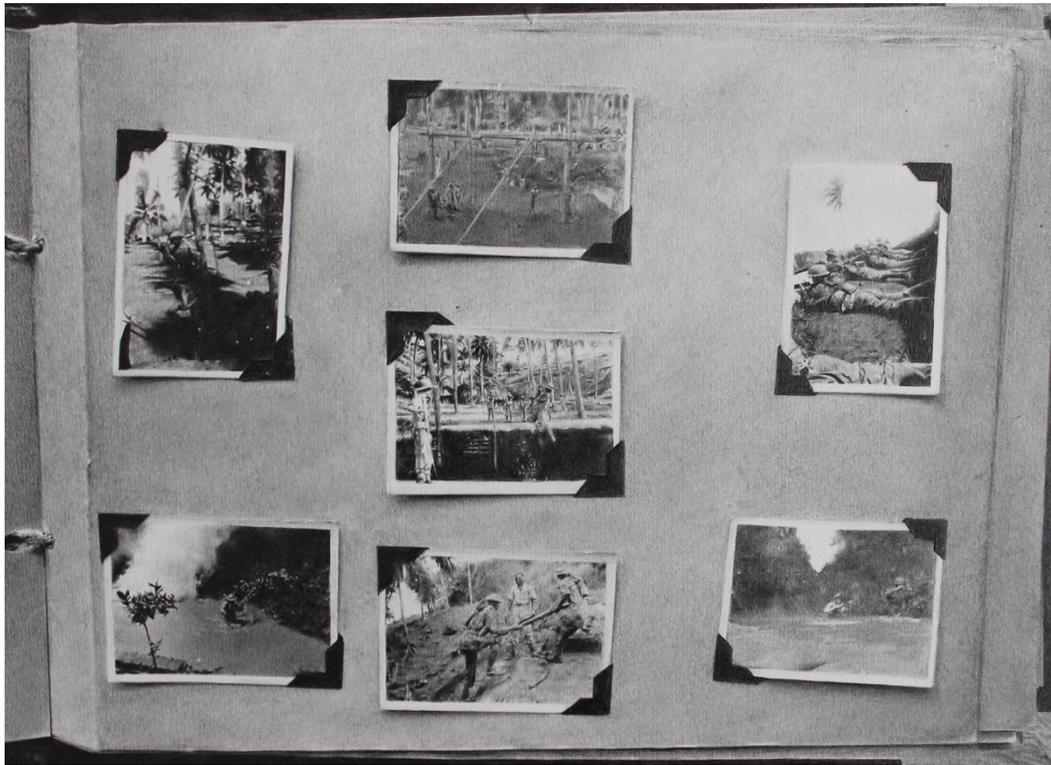


FIGURE 1: CLAIRE ANSCOMB, *ACTION*, 2013, GRAPHITE ON PAPER, 25X32.5CM

This phenomenon became manifest when, during an art school crit, a tutor provocatively pretended to rip one of my photo-based drawings. Curiously, I barely flinched at the sight of my drawing apparently being ripped in two. This was an unexpected response, considering the many hours that went into the work. However, at this moment it became clear that it was the process of translating the photograph through drawing that I valued most. That is, it became evident that it was not the product (the drawing) that was largely responsible for sustaining this enhanced sense of connectedness with the subjects of the photographs, but the act of drawing itself.

My experiences do not seem to be unique. Other artists who create photo-based drawings have offered similar reflections about the sense of connectedness created by the act of drawing photographs.<sup>2</sup> Take Christina Empedocles, who has said that the labour-intensive method of faithfully recreating the subject of a photograph by drawing results in a deeper and more profound understanding of the subject than making a straight photograph could ever offer (Empedocles, 2013). Empedocles was initially trained in geology and art, and was struck by the fact that drawing specimens under a microscope was valued more highly than photographing them (2013). That is, given that the drawing process is led by the selective

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<sup>2</sup> To be clear, this sense of connection is unlikely to be what solely motivates these artists to draw from photographs, but it does provide a rationale for some aspects of these artists' stated activities.

human eye, more pertinent information, relative to the epistemic purpose of the image, can be conveyed by this process. With this in mind, Empedocles later turned her hand to drawing for fine art purposes.

Two strands can be identified in Empedocles' practice: in one, Empedocles juxtaposes ephemera, such as tickets and polaroids, from her personal life, while in the other she draws photographs of nature, including flowers, birds, and other animals, that she has printed from the Internet. In doing so, Empedocles has explained that, 'Through a practice of realism I am trying to monumentalize or archive an event, or memory, or create a relationship to something or someone I've never encountered' (SF Art Enthusiast, 2013). But how does a practice of realism create a relationship to a subject that the artist has never encountered? This relationship is certainly a fragile one in any case – as we are reminded by Empedocles' compositional choice to depict the photographs upon which the images of nature are printed as crumpled, ephemeral objects.

Another artist who has reflected on the complicated relation to the subject, while drawing it from a photograph, is Vija Celmins. Celmins first began producing her meticulous drawings in the 1960s, when the quick, mass production of images proliferated. Against this tide, from 1966 Celmins began to draw, through a slow, painstaking process of realism, postcards and images from magazines. This was initially to fight the loneliness she felt after being away from her family – the images she created of war were, for Celmins, nostalgic images that reminded her of a turbulent early childhood in war-torn Europe (2014, pp. 125-6). Following this, Celmins began to produce drawings of the Moon from photographs that had been taken there and transmitted back to Earth. This approach continued to inform her work, as she produced expansive, yet carefully cropped drawings of celestial bodies, deserts, and oceans. As Celmins has outlined:

*'The photo is an alternative subject, another layer that creates distance. And distance creates the opportunity to view the work more slowly and to explore your relationship to it [...] I thought of it as putting the images that I found in books and magazines back into the real world – in real time. Because when you look at the work you confront the here and now. It's right there.'* (Celmins et al., 2004, pp. 125-126)

While Celmins typically identifies the image itself as the subject, there are interviews where she hints at the complicated relationship that the act of drawing sustains with the real subjects of the photographs. In a recent video, Celmins was filmed carefully placing singular white strokes of paint on a canvas (Figure 2), and blending these with her finger (Figure 3), to produce an image of the night sky she had been working on for three years. As Celmins remarked: 'Tedious for some, for me, it's kind of like [...] being there' (TateShots, 2014). Although this is evidently a complex topic for Celmins, her reflections provide another example where the process of meticulously recreating photographs by means of drawing is experienced as a way of sustaining a sense of connectedness with the subject.



FIGURE 2: VIDEO STILL 00:00:33 (TATE SHOTS, 2014) © TATE, LONDON 2022



FIGURE 3: VIDEO STILL 00:00:38 (TATE SHOTS, 2014) © TATE, LONDON 2022

The documentary of Celmins at work also raises an important point about the specificity of this phenomenon to drawing. Considering that, while remarking on this sense of connection, Celmins was making a painting and there are plenty of photorealists who meticulously recreate photographs to produce paintings, is the described experience unique to drawing?

Definitions of drawing tend to privilege a certain kind of action, rather than physical material. Take Dominic McIver Lopes' definition of drawing as 'richly embodied mark-making' that traces 'a path congruent with the resulting marks' (2016, p. 84). This notion of trace is one that pervades the literature on drawing (Harty, 2012b, p. 11). Given this, it is plausible to suggest that Celmins practices a form of drawing that involves paint, not pencil, when she produces works on canvas, particularly as Celmins herself has conjectured that 'It is impossible to paint without drawing.' (2014, p. 125).

This is also likely to be true of a number of photorealist painters. However, while photorealistic painting frequently involves this kind of 'richly embodied mark-making', it does not do so necessarily – there are a number of techniques painters can use to mark a surface without thereby tracing 'a path congruent with

the resulting marks'. By simultaneously applying paint, with an airbrush for example, to a large area of the support, photorealistic painters are able to quickly build up layers of pigment on this surface. For reasons that will become clear, this sort of activity, which is distinct from drawing, is much less likely to enable artists to form the rich connection, of the kind described here, to the subject. In what follows, I will provide further evidence to establish that the act of drawing, as 'richly embodied mark-making', triggers and sustains an enhanced sense of connection with the subjects of the photographs.

## The Feeling of Presence

First, it is necessary to elaborate on the nature of the described sense of connectedness. As Celmins reflected, recreating the photographic scene by drawing is 'kind of like being there'. This reflection, taken together with the others in the previous Section, suggests that this experience is constituted in part by a sense of presence. Evidently, for the artists under discussion, this "presence phenomenon", as I shall refer to it, is not an 'actuality-committing' experience (Matthen, 2010, pp. 114-115), as feeling the presence of an actual object is (Dokic, 2012; Dokic and Martin, 2017; Barkasi, 2020). Notably, the real object is still experienced as absent from the artist's egocentric space, and evidence suggests that this is a crucial component of the 'feeling of presence', which Mohan Matthen has proposed is a cognitive feeling carried by 'real life' scene vision, or 'the vision that one enjoys in a normal everyday setting, looking out of the window or around a room, for instance' (2010, p. 114). Importantly, this kind of vision makes the real-life objects seem connected to you in space (Matthen, 2010, pp. 114-115).<sup>3</sup> Nevertheless, the perceptual and cognitive mechanisms that underpin this aspect of the felt presence of real objects, in addition to pictorial seeing, are relevant to explaining how a feeling of quasi-presence is sustained by the act of drawing from photographs. To demonstrate this, in what follows I will examine several leading philosophical accounts of presence and picture perception that complement and advance empirical findings on the mechanisms involved in these experiences.

Two visual subsystems are relevant to the present discussion, the dorsal and ventral streams. These visual subsystems work together in order to give agents both an 'agent-centred' and 'scene-centred' experience that enables them to both navigate and catalogue their way through the world (Matthen, 2005, p. 299). The dorsal stream helps us perform 'perceptually guided actions with perceived objects' (Nanay, 2014, p. 183). This 'motion-guiding vision' performs independently of the classificatory part of vision in a direct and unconscious manner (Matthen, 2005, p. 297). Meanwhile, the ventral stream is responsible for 'descriptive vision' (Matthen, 2005, p. 296) – it helps us identify and recognize perceived objects (Nanay, 2014, p. 183). Importantly, motion-guiding vision accounts for egocentric seeing and entails that as an agent moves, their spatial relationships change with the objects of the visual field. Motion-guiding vision, then, accounts for agent-centred representations whereby agents perceive objects in relation to their person, while descriptive vision accounts for scene-centred representations of the world which entail that an agent perceives objects in relation to one another (Matthen, 2005, pp. 299-300). According to Matthen, together, descriptive vision and motion-guiding vision account for the feeling of 'presence' (2005, p. 301).<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> This notion of perceptual presence can also be linked back to Husserl's notion of bodily presence (O'Conaill, 2017, p. 145).

<sup>4</sup> It is worth noting that the experience of an object as located in egocentric space might be a necessary condition for the feeling of presence, but not a sufficient one (Dokic, 2012, p. 400; Barkasi, 2021, p. 18). As O'Conaill has additionally proposed, for instance, tense, or 'the subject's sense of something as occurring as *now*' (2017, p. 146) is also likely to be an important factor in accounting for perceptual presence. Meanwhile, Barkasi (2020) has contrasted Matthen's explanation with Windts', who argues that a feeling of presence is thanks to proprioception, to

Significantly, the feeling of presence distinguishes actual perception from pictorial seeing (Nanay, 2014, p. 189). This is due to the fact that, in normal cases of picture perception, the surface rather than the depicted scene is dorsally represented, while the ventral stream ‘attributes properties to the depicted scene’ (Nanay, 2014, p. 184). However, there are exceptions, including *trompes l’oeil* (Matthen, 2010; Nanay, 2015; Ferretti, 2021). *Trompes l’oeil* are pictures that, when viewed from a particular angle, appear to offer a real-life view of the objects in them. If a viewer is deceived by these pictures, or fails to perceive their boundaries, for instance, then their objects seem to be in the same space as the viewer (Matthen, 2010, p. 115). This effect is rarely lasting, however, as when the viewer’s perspective makes it clear that this is not the case, they dorsally represent the surface of the picture, rather than its contents (Nanay, 2014, p. 193), and the feeling of spatial disconnection that characterizes pictorial seeing occurs.

Given that the act of drawing to meticulously recreate photographs may require the use of magnifying glasses or a very close proximity to the surface, so that the edges of large drawings recede to, or beyond, the peripheries of the artist’s vision while they are working on it, one might conclude that, as in the case of *trompes l’oeil*, there are moments where the artist dorsally represents the contents of the photo-based drawing, rather than the surface. This would give rise to a feeling of the presence of the depicted contents and, by extension, the subject, until a different viewpoint makes it clear that the objects are not in the artist’s egocentric space. This explanation runs into difficulties, however, because were it true then it would be very difficult to interact with, nevertheless produce accurate markings on, the surface of a support.<sup>5</sup> As with other kinds of pictorial seeing, then, in the act of drawing photographs, an agent’s visual subsystems are segregated. Nevertheless, this need not entail that the experience of realistic pictures is entirely removed from a sense of seeing the actual subject. As Matthen has proposed, ‘...a picture can put you in visual states recognizably like those caused by the real thing’ (2005, p. 307).

Notably, as a result of pictorial seeing, viewers are able to learn about the visual properties of objects by looking at pictures of them (Matthen, 2005, pp. 306-13) – images can, then, function as valuable sources of non-spatially committed visual information (Cohen and Meskin, 2004, p. 204). For example, the experience of looking at a photograph of an object can, in some respects, resemble the experience a viewer would have had if they experienced this directly.<sup>6</sup> Accordingly, an image, such as a photograph, that appears to have a high degree of visual similarity to the real subject is highly likely to trigger a feeling of what I have referred to as ‘epistemic contact’ (Anscomb, Forthcoming), or a non-spatially committed experience of seeing the visual properties of the subject of the image that is similar to the experience one would have seeing these directly. This experience can vary in degree: one is likely to experience a stronger sense of epistemic contact if the picture is more realistic. This becomes manifest when viewing an image with a high degree of realism next to one with a lower degree of realism, where

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highlight that Matthen has intertwined an immersive sense of presence and a feeling of ‘motor presence’, which are, in principle, phenomenally dissociable (Barkasi, 2020, pp. 23-24). Alternatively, Dokic and Martin have argued that ‘the sense of reality is a specific metacognitive feeling based on various *reality-monitoring* processes’ (2017, p. 304). As these various approaches show, there is more to the feeling of presence than the experience of an object as located in egocentric space. Nevertheless, this likely quite crucial aspect of the experience is missing in the described encounters with the photorealistic drawings under discussion – hence why it is my focus here.

<sup>5</sup> Indeed, evidence suggests that drawing is a challenging activity if the support is not dorsally represented (Guerin, Ska, and Bellenville, 1999).

<sup>6</sup> One might question the degree of perceptual similarity between a real subject and its depicted counterpart, considering that photographs often display grain or monochromatic tones for instance. However, as Walden has argued, grain and monochromatic tones are not dissimilar to the visual experiences we have in low-light settings (2016, p. 43).

the contents of the former image seem more immediate, or more like they would if viewed without the mediation of a picture (Walden, 2016, pp. 39-40).

Epistemic contact is highly relevant to the experience of the photorealistic drawings under discussion. But it is not only similar visual states that are germane to these works. Other experiences of pictures with a high degree of realism show that mental states are also important to consider. As Ferretti (2017) has demonstrated, there can be a similarity of emotional responses triggered by real objects and their depicted counterparts. For instance, despite the manifest absence of the subject in the image, we might feel very uncomfortable cutting into, and eating, a birthday cake onto which has been printed a photograph of the beloved recipient (Anscomb, Forthcoming). This behaviour is clearly at odds with the beliefs of an agent that affirm the subject's absence (and so safety). To account for emotional responses to images, Ferretti has argued (in keeping with the dorsal/ventral account) that some parts of the dorsal and ventro-dorsal stream are activated in picture perception, which entails that 'when we look at the depicted object the response of vision-for-action subserved by dorsal visuomotor processing can be related to the emotional response concerning the perception of (aversive or facilitated) action possibilities' (2017, p. 609). As a complement to this explanation, we can draw upon an account of a subdoxastic, associative state that Tamar Gendler has termed 'alief' (2010), which can cause belief-discordant feelings and behaviours associated with the subject, thus triggering 'affective contact' (Anscomb, Forthcoming).

Alief has earned its name in light of its associative, automatic, arational, action-generating, and affect-laden nature (2010, p. 288). While some aliefs are formed by habit, many are innate, having been formed as a result of evolution (Gendler, 2010, p. 300). Essentially, given the visual-motor input associated with the apparent actual stimuli, slicing a knife through what appears to be a loved one, one may alieve the following all at once: 'harmful action directed at beloved, dangerous and ill-advised, don't cut and eat' (Anscomb, Forthcoming). Accordingly, there are three stages to the associative chains responsible for this mental state: Representation, Affect, and Behaviour (R-A-B). While paradigmatic instances of alief involve a four-place relation (i.e., an agent alieves R-A-B), in many instances 'the salient content falls primarily in only one or two of these domains' (Gendler, 2010, p. 290) so that an agent may primarily feel rather than behave in response to the representation.

The details of these mechanisms need not detain us too much here – what is important is the fact that, as the foregoing shows, visual and mental states can be generated that are associated with the subject, despite its manifest absence from the viewer's own environment. However, the described experiences of contact caused by these mechanisms arise in relation to viewing, not making realistic images. As the contrast with *trompes l'oeil* shows, the acts involved in drawing photographs must also be considered to provide a satisfactory explanation of how this activity can give rise to a rich sense of connectedness to the subject.

## The Presence Phenomenon

Most philosophers have focused on pictorial experience, as an ocular-centric phenomenon, concerning completed works from the perspective of viewers.<sup>7</sup> This experience of seeing something as a picture, which entails representing both the surface and the content, is primarily the result of looking. However, artists have a relationship to pictures as they produce them, which entails that, in addition to the work affording certain kinds of ocular attention and interaction, pictures also afford a host of bodily interactions for the production of marks on the surface. As is typical of pictorial seeing, artists dorsally represent the surface of the support and ventrally represent the contents of the picture, but importantly and distinctively of those producing a given picture, the surface is perceived as a tactile one – a place where an artist can produce and manipulate marks, in the cases under discussion, to reproduce the visual properties of the subject. This tactile and ocular experience is highly significant in relation to the presence phenomenon because it helps to generate a sense of physical interaction with the contents of the drawn photograph, as I shall now explain.

In order to translate the contents of a photograph into a drawing, motion-guiding vision and descriptive vision is engaged so that an artist is able to make movements that trace, on the support, ‘a path congruent with the resulting marks’, and to check these visual properties. With regard to the former kind of vision, the dorsal system is specifically responsible for the ‘encoding of categorical and coordinate relations and spatiotopic mapping’ (Kosslyn and Koenig, 1992). As Guerin, Ska, and Bellenville have outlined: ‘The encoding of categorical relations involves the spatial relations between two objects or parts of an object that remain stable despite their position (e.g., connected to, at the left, on the side)’ (1999, pp. 468-9). Coordinate relations, meanwhile, allow one to estimate distance between objects or parts of objects, say between the eyes and ears, that guides movements and actions (Guerin, Ska, and Bellenville, 1999, pp. 468-9), while the spatiotopic mapping component’s role is to ‘locate objects in space and place their coordinates inside a unique reference frame’ (Guerin, Ska, and Bellenville, 1999, pp. 468-9). Accordingly, when drawing the contents of the photograph, the artist relays the contents of the image in relation to each other and also themselves (i.e., “I need to move over *there* to make this mark next to the left of that object” or “I must draw a line *here* to represent this side of the object”). In doing so, an agent-centred representation is formed of the support and the materials manipulated on this to produce marks that, as the image is gradually built up, increasingly resemble the visual properties of the real subject.

Celmins has described the lengthy process of carefully placing tiny marks on the surface of the support as ‘tedious for some’. Yet, these aspects of time and realism, along with the physical interaction with the support and the materials deposited on it, are important factors that account for the presence phenomenon. Many layers of the material the artist is drawing with are required to achieve a photo-realistic level of detail. The initial layers, at least as I have experienced them, do not tend to produce such a strong feeling of connection with the subject, largely because they do not yet resemble their subjects to a high degree (Figure 4). However, once these layers are refined, the picture increasingly

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<sup>7</sup> For an exception to this, see Lopes (2002).

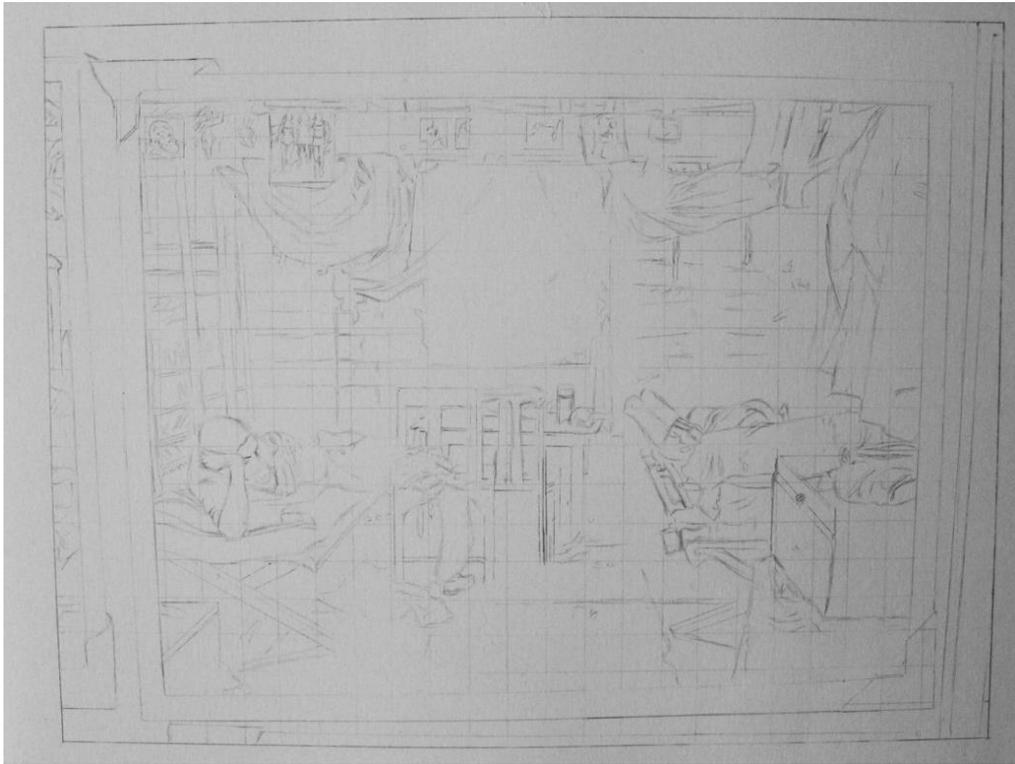


FIGURE 4: CLAIRE ANSCOMB, *REFLECTION (IN PROGRESS)*, 2013, GRAPHITE ON PAPER, 25X32.5CM

resembles the subject, and so, for the majority of the time when one is working on such a picture, one is confronted with a state of increasing epistemic contact, where the visual properties of the subject are experienced through the drawing as being similar to how they would have been had they been seen directly (Figure 5). Moreover, to the practised eye, these different layers are perceptible and offer affordances for different kinds of bodily actions – which continues to affirm a sense of physical interaction with, what appears to be, the contents of the picture.

One might object that, as a result of closely and carefully recreating the photograph with handmade marks on a surface, the facture that is visible to the artist during this process may fail to cast such similar patterns as those cast by the real subject and thus may not resemble the visual experience one would have if seeing the subject directly. However, there are several reasons why this objection does not go through. First, the process of drawing in the manner under discussion entails switching between an extremely close-up view of the work, to produce the marks, and a distanced view to see how the overall picture is looking. So, in the initial stages of developing the drawing, while attention to the marks in the former case can reduce the experienced resemblance to seeing the subject directly, this is somewhat mitigated by the experience in the latter case, which can quickly start to resemble the visual experience one would have if seeing the subject in real life.



FIGURE 5: CLAIRE ANSCOMB, *REFLECTION*, 2013, GRAPHITE ON PAPER, 25X32.5CM

More importantly, however, the kinds of drawings under consideration are those which are rendered in such a way that they do not betray any obvious signs of mark-making when completed. Accordingly, as the work develops, and the drawing media are carefully blended together, the marks that make up the image become more difficult to perceive, even when one is up-close to the surface of the work. Hence why the sense of “being there” becomes stronger as the drawing comes to increasingly resemble the visual experience one might have of encountering the subject directly. By contrast, many photorealistic paintings, such as *Accordi* (2015) by Luciano Ventrone, are made with ‘surprisingly loose strokes of paint’ (Fox, 2020) in order to meditate on the superficial or deceptive nature of appearances, so that the image ceases to have such a high degree of similarity to the subject when viewed close-up. Taken together, these factors reinforce the idea, as revealed in the earlier phenomenological analysis, that it is a slow, cumulative process of drawing, encompassing a range of experiences of the work in its different states, that produces the presence phenomenon.

Significantly, these experiences may differ in kind, but nonetheless overlap in content. For the most part, in addition to objects in their environment, the artist’s scene-centred experience consists of the visual properties of the subject of the photograph, while their agent-centred experience is focused on the support and the materials they manipulate on this. Importantly, the content of both these experiences increasingly overlaps as the artist acts to produce marks with materials on the support that, as the image is gradually built up, increasingly resemble the visual properties of the content of the photograph – and, by extension, those of the real subject. As these experiences converge on the same content, it can appear to the artist that they are able to interact with the contents of the picture, as they carefully reach towards and touch different represented objects in the drawing, generating visual-motor inputs that resemble tactile interaction with the subject. Given this representation of the apparent actual stimuli, it

follows that associative mechanisms are triggered so that the artist experiences a sensation that is akin to an agent-centred experience of the real subject of the photo-based drawing.

This is distinct from the aforementioned affective contact because, importantly, it is a different set of associations that are triggered, which give rise to the presence phenomenon. In the earlier example, of an agent apprehensive to cut into a cake with a photograph of a loved one on it, the aliefs triggered pertained to that individual. Given their emotional connection to this individual, and the harm apparently about to be caused to them, the agent experiences the impulse to protect the apparent actual stimuli. The presence phenomenon, however, pertains to scenes and events that are far removed from the artist's own experience and, in many cases, personal connections. Notably, unknown subjects cannot cause feelings and behaviours that are specific to them and the individual artist, but certain responses can arise in relation to the appearance of interaction with the objects of the depicted scene. That is, aliefs are triggered by an agent orienting themselves towards the contents – that visually resemble the subject to a high degree – and coordinating actions based upon the visual interaction, so that in the moment when they are drawing, the objects feel as though they are visually locatable relative to the artist and the content of the drawing is experienced as if connected to the artist in space – despite their knowledge and proprioceptive feedback which reveals that this is not the case. Resultantly, in copying the contents of a photograph by drawing, one feels as though one is part of the real scene or event depicted in the photograph.

## Conclusion

Looking at photographs can generate experiences of epistemic and affective contact. However, the foregoing demonstrates that it is the slow, laborious act of meticulously drawing photographs that triggers the perceptual and cognitive mechanisms that can sustain a sense of physical connectedness with the subject. Nevertheless, as Empedocles' work reminds us, this is a fragile relationship – it is not an experience of the real subject of the picture, but it is one that, as per my own experience and the experiences of the other artists discussed, produces feelings that are *like* those experienced when encountering the subject directly. Although it might be a feeling of quasi-presence, this experience helps to generate a deeper sense of connection with the subject of the image than simply looking at a photograph. Hence why artists might go to the trouble of recreating photographic images through the process of drawing – this process is a powerful tool that sustains the presence phenomenon to mitigate against the loss of the subject. Considering both the ocular and tactile aspects of drawing is key to understanding why this is the case. Accordingly, this account, among other phenomenological explorations, should serve as a further challenge to the ocular-centrism that has tended to pervade the literature on experiences involving pictures.<sup>89</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> For other examples of work that challenges this dominant way of thinking about images see Marks (2000), Harty (2012a), and Korsmeyer (2019).

<sup>9</sup> I wish to express my thanks to two anonymous reviewers for this journal for their helpful comments and suggestions on this work, aspects of which originated from my doctoral thesis that was funded by a University of Kent 50th Anniversary Scholarship awarded between 2016 and 2019.

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