

## Drawing and Loss 2022

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# IN THE BLINK OF AN EYE: DRAWING AS AN ACT OF LOSS

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The following analysis examines my drawing practice in creating the work *Drowning in My Living Room. A Self-Portrait* (2020), focusing specifically on a particular emotive state I reached in the process of embodied mark-making. This condition, recognised as the 'gap', illuminates the underlying concept of the 'act' of drawing as a process of 'loss'. According to the French philosopher Jacques Derrida (1930-2004), the artist experiences loss in the instant between the thought or image in the 'mind's eye' and the split second the pencil or stylus touches the piece of paper or screen. 'The genesis of the present' (Newman 1994, 219) – that is the instant act of drawing as the origin of thinking – takes place within this Augenblick or blink-of-an-eye (Derrida 1993, 48); that momentary space or gap spawning interconnections between 'the now and the non-now, of perception and non-perception' (Derrida 2010, 73). Derrida deemed drawing to be an act of memory; that is, at the point of contact the image is already lost into the past (Derrida 1993, 68). The undrawn space has no present but is simultaneously the future and the past; in other words, is a trait or trace. However, I build upon Derrida's argument and propose that it is at this moment of blindness/loss there also exists the site of possibility, invention and originality, of wonder and astonishment. The Augenblick becomes an ecstatic temporal moment (Pasanen 2006, 221). It is within this un-filled space that the potential of creating a cosmopoietic worlding is found. In the work, *Drowning in My Living Room. A Self-Portrait*, the door (half open or half closed?) becomes an analogy for Derrida's Augenblick, which, like the door ajar, is a threshold between a serendipitous moment and the sense of the irreclaimable – of loss.

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### *Drowning in My Living Room. A Self-Portrait*

In September 2020, I completed a six panelled drawing, *Drowning in My Living Room. A Self-Portrait*. The drawing is 152 x 171cm and is executed in black pen, coloured/white inks, printed script and musical score on watercolour paper. It is autobiographical in its content: an on-going diarised 'graphic novel'. The panels can be reordered or interchanged at whim; here, chronological narrative and linear meaning are irrelevant (Figure 1).

The drawings combined create a multi-perspectival, scenographic mind's eye view into the imagination and objects of memory. There is no beginning or end; it is an eternally looping, revolving entity which is a manifestation of the artist's interior monologue or 'stream of consciousness'. I am trapped in my living room of multiple bevelled-edged glass doors, semi-submerged with a respirator, attempting unsuccessfully to find an exit. The script of Jean Paul Sartre's play *Huis Clos* (No Exit) and the musical score of Arnold Schönberg's *Verklärte Nacht* (Transfigured Night) blow through the *mise-en-scène* cascading into my space. I have referenced Cindy Sherman's, *Untitled Film Still #46* (1979). Sherman's 'guise' has a look of trepidation and fear of the unknown – of an intangible future and of a loss of moments past. This resonates with my current state of mind. This drawing as a self-portrait encapsulates 2020. I don't understand the full meaning of what I have drawn until long after I have drawn it. The drawing also exemplifies Derrida's argument which is the self-portrait as a 'ruinous simulacrum', *simulacra ruineux* (Derrida 1993, 65), in which the death or loss of the original truth (the object or the subject of the self-portrait) becomes objectified – a spectre (trace) of the real.



FIGURE 1: -. DROWNING IN MY LIVING ROOM. A SELF-PORTRAIT: MIXED MEDIA ON WATERCOLOUR PAPER, 152 X 171CM. 2020.

### The 'knowledge of the moment'

Critical to my drawing practice is the ability to generate fluid, agile and malleable cognitive processes between the eye, mind and hand. I begin with a spirit of adventure and discovery, unfettered by the constraints and practicalities of realism, linear narrative or meaning. This is where an embodied cognition is at its most critical. However, I discovered early in my art practice that achieving this state is determined by a very particular emotional condition: a sense of frustration – marked by hesitancy, apprehension and anticipation – which overwhelms me when initially confronted by the blank page. It is at this moment that I am desperate to grasp that elusive thought as an image or, as the neuroscientist Antonio Damasio suggests, the 'knowledge of the moment' (Damasio 1999, 125). He argues there is:

*a gap between our knowledge of neural events, at molecular, cellular, and system levels, on the one hand, and the mental image whose mechanisms of appearance we wish to understand. There is a gap to be filled by not yet identified but presumably identifiable physical phenomena. (Damasio 1999, 323)*

As he further maintains, it is in the 'knowledge of the moment' (Damasio 1999, 125) that the gap is made real. These gaps are seized by the desperate grasping gaze, only to disappear in a blink-of-an-eye. The drawing becomes the means of capturing visually those fleeting, fragmented moments which are a 'state of feeling made conscious' (Damasio 1999, 125).

### The 'door'

There manifests right at the beginning of my drawing process an initial fear of loss. Fear of the empty page. Fear of losing that pivotal image which could spark that tenuous moment of retention and representation. Figure 2 is a preliminary sketch from direct observation sitting on my living room sofa in the Australian 'Pandemic Lockdown' March 2020. I did multiple sketches of the bevelled-edged glass doors. The 'door' is a portal into my memories. It is the entry into the artist's 'mind's eye'. The closed door of the consciousness is mysterious – concealing secrets. The open door conjures up images of the yawning abyss of 'disappearance', of loss. This sketch is executed in charcoal and white conte on layers of printed script and sheet music. As a means of erasure, I paste another piece of paper overlaying the abandoned drawing underneath; an autobiographical monologue becomes embedded into the layered fabric of the palimpsest, where the dramatic text/musical score is transformed into a trace, the scenographic script. This technique also reveals my ambivalence and uncertainty mixed with a sense of frustration. I am haunted by this indefinable gap between visual perception and the actual gestural mark where the vague intangible idea can suddenly disappear without warning into an abyss (Derrida 1993, 68).



FIGURE 2: -. OBSERVATIONAL DRAWING OF MY LIVING ROOM DOOR: CHARCOAL AND WHITE CONTE, MIXED MEDIA ON WATERCOLOUR PAPER, 148 X 210MM. 2020.

## The gap

*GARCIN: That's why there's something so beastly, so damn bad mannered, in the way you stare at me. They're paralysed.*

*VALET: What are you talking about?*

*GARCIN: Your eyelids. We move ours up and down. Blinking, we call it. It's like a small black shutter that clicks down and makes a break. Everything goes black; one's eyes are moistened. You can't imagine how restful, refreshing, it is. Four thousand little rests per hour. Four thousand little respites – just think! ... So that's the idea. I'm to live without eyelids. Don't act the fool. You know what I mean. No eyelids no sleep; it follows, doesn't it? I shall never sleep again. (Extract from Huis Clos) (Sartre 1989, 5)*

The above is an extract from the existentialist play *Huis Clos* (*No Exit*), (1944), written by Sartre as a theatrical manifestation of his seminal text *Being and Nothingness: An Essay on Phenomenological Ontology* (1943). Three damned souls or, as they are described, 'absentees' (Sartre 1989, 12), find themselves trapped altogether in the same room for eternity. This is hell according to Sartre. Sartre argued 'hell is other people', or *l'enfer, c'est les autres* (Sartre 1989, 45). Each cannot escape the unblinking gaze of the other two but all are mercilessly cognizant of their death, their irretrievable loss. This is the moment the character Garcin confronts the mysteriously elusive Valet (the Devil?) about his inability to blink. According to Derrida, the 'blink of the eye' creates a gap or moment of loss in our visual perception:

*the time of the (clin d'oeil) that buries the gaze in the batting of an eyelid, the instant called the Augenblick, the wink or blink, and what drops out of sight in the twinkling of an eye. (Derrida 1993, 48)*

This gap is where a memory or an image can disappear in an instant – in that moment when 'the small black shutter that clicks down and makes a break' (Sartre 1989, 5). Re-drawing, re-seeing and not seeing – disappearing into a black void – begins a transformative drawing practice exploring disappearance and loss as agency. Captivation and anticipation can lead to fear and loss, where 'the draughtsman is prey to a devouring proliferation of the invisible' (Derrida 1993, 45). As Derrida comments:

*My hypothesis...is that the draughtsman always sees himself prey to that which is each time universal and singular and would thus have to be called 'unbeseen', as one speaks of the unbeknownst. He recalls it, is called, fascinated, or recalled by it. Memory or not, and forgetting as memory, in memory and without memory. (Derrida 1993, 45)*

Confronted by the vacant page, I begin frantically to draw those first marks, only to find those fleeting images disappearing into the gap – disappearing in the blink-of-an-eye. I find myself in a panic trying to prevent the spectre of thought escaping; where the image transfigures into something intangible, the ambiguous, the indiscernible and 'unbeseen'. The American artist Terry Rosenberg also alludes to this 'unbeseen' space. He suggests that for the artist there is:

*the impulsion...to form and transform. In this notion of blankness, drawing is thinking and acting between the not-yet-formed and the formed, in the space between form and form at the threshold between form and anti-form. (Garner 2008, 114)*

The South African artist and scenographer William Kentridge also identifies drawing as 'gaps' to be filled:

*It is in the gap between the object and its representation that this energy emerges, the gap we fill in, in the shift from the monochromatic shadow to the colour of the object, from its flatness to its depth and heft. (Kentridge 2012, 31)*

The French poet and art critic Charles Baudelaire (1821-1867) suggests that for the artist there is this increasing anxiety predicting the loss of that intangible image:

*a fire, an intoxication of the pencil or the brush, amounting almost to a frenzy. It is a fear of not going fast enough, of letting the phantom escape before the synthesis has been extracted and pinned down. (Baudelaire 1964, 17)*

Unlike Baudelaire, Derrida did not like to draw. The intangible image as a 'ghostly thing', a 'withdrawal (retrait) of the trait' (Derrida 1993, 53) is anthropomorphised; as it exits, it jeers at Derrida for his inability to draw:

*For it immediately flees, drops out of sight, and almost nothing of it remains; it disappears before my eyes, which, in truth, no longer perceive anything but the mocking arrogance of this disappearing apparition. (Derrida 1993, 36)*

The mind's eye

Drowning in My Living Room. A Self-Portrait engages a cinematic, multi-perspectival mind's eye view of the pictorial space. Each panel or drawing is a 'complete work' in itself – an encapsulation of a fleeting temporal moment (Figure 3).

This is a glimpse into a fuller embodied vision, drawn from my imagination. The mind's eye is one's visual memory. William Shakespeare coined this phrase in his most famous play, Hamlet (1603). Hamlet recalls the apparition of his father as an ephemeral, ghostly image in his 'mind's eye' (Shakespeare 2015, 18). My drawing is dream-like or, perhaps, a nightmarish vision – the notion of 'real space' is distorted to encompass a vast space, teeming with the spectres from one's own past, a space drawn from the intimate realms of the mind's eye. It is a phantasmagorical collision between reality and fantasy. Clive Ashwin identifies the imaginative essence of drawing as:

*the process of making material an otherwise immaterial form or idea that existed only as an idea or concept in the designer's mind until its commitment to paper. The iconic (image-like) nature of such drawing is interestingly reflected in the etymological link between image and imagine. (Ashwin 1984, 201)*

The desperate seizing of visual data in the mind's eye is also an act of pure imagination. Derrida reflects on the genesis of drawing as dream-like: a contemplative encounter between the image and the imagination.

*The thought of drawing, a certain pensive pose, a memory of the trait that speculates, as in a dream, about its own possibility. Its potency always develops on the brink of blindness. (Derrida 1993, 3)*

However, the drawing at its conception is also a ruin (Derrida 1993, 68). According to Derrida the drawing is already dead – a ghostly, barely visible representation of the original object.



FIGURE 3: -. DETAIL OF DROWNING IN MY LIVING ROOM. A SELF-PORTRAIT: MIXED MEDIA ON WATERCOLOUR PAPER, 152 X 171CM. 2020.

### The self-portrait as a ruin

*GARCIN: ...Sorry I fear I'm not good company among the dead.*

*ESTELLE: Please, please don't use that word. It's so – so crude. In terribly bad taste, really. It doesn't mean much, anyhow. Somehow, I feel we've never been so much alive as now. If we've absolutely got to mention this – this state of things, I suggest we call ourselves – wait! – absentees. Have you been – been absent long? (Extract from Huis Clos) (Sartre 1989, 12)*

The artist draws herself blindly, contending with a loss of visual perception from that first moment the implement touches the empty page. This void necessitates memory to recall the image. 'As soon as the draughtsman considers himself fascinated, fixed on an image, yet disappearing before his own eyes into

the abyss, the moment by which he tries desperately to recapture himself is already, in its very present, an act of memory' (Derrida 1993, 68). As Derrida further argues, this is particularly pertinent to the self-portrait because the artists drawing themselves do not see themselves; even if the artist is drawing from a mirror – the split-second they look away – the image drops out as a memory. The image is also the artist's chiral twin – an asymmetrical reverse representation of the subject seen by the spectator. The artist's 'alter-ego' inhabiting the mirror becomes an absent presence, an 'absentee' or 'ruin' (Derrida 1993, 68). As the French philosopher Éliane Escoubas suggests in Derrida and the Truth of Drawing: Another Copernican Revolution?:

*The self-portrait is the very paradigm of this moment at which the artist is blind. And since the blind-being involves the "drawn" (the object of the representation) or the drawer/self-portraitist (the subject representing), there is a loss involved (losing sight, being lost from sight), a lacking or a privation. The self-portrait and/or the drawing are related, obviously, to the notion of ruin. (Escoubas 2006, 201)*

The drawing at its origin is a spectre of the real, a 'ruinous simulacrum', simulacra ruineux (Derrida 1993, 65). As Derrida posits:

*In the beginning there is ruin. Ruin is that which happens to the image from the moment of the first gaze. Ruin is the self-portrait, this face looked at in the face as the memory of itself, what remains or returns as a spectre from the moment one first looks at oneself and a figuration is eclipsed. The figure, the face, then sees its visibility being eaten away; it loses its integrity without disintegrating. (Derrida 1993, 68)*

The work, Drowning in My Living Room. A Self-Portrait was a last-minute, sudden inspiration to represent myself as one of Cindy Sherman's multiple personas. I chose Untitled Film Still #46 (1979) as a trigger because all that is visible are her eyes through the blurry mask of the swimming goggles. There is the un-nerving sense she is being watched. I have never before figuratively inhabited an artwork – only metaphorically through objects as an absent presence, an 'absentee'. Like Sherman, all that is characterised are my eyes (Figure 4).

I looked into a mirror and copied my eyes. It was this process that made me aware that each time I looked down to the paper I had to remember what I had just seen – my eyes with my own eyes. In this drawing the spectator is fixed in the imploring gaze of the artist, haunted by memories. Drawing or the drawing as an object is an act of memory.

This drawing developed over several months. The music of Schönberg's Verklärte Nacht, along with a few glasses of Australian sparkling, prompted a spectatorial scenographic encounter in my 1920s heritage apartment full of bevelled-edged glass doors. Within this space, dramatic noir shadows were cast across the walls, heightening the theatricality and performativity of this initial 'happening' (Figure 5).



FIGURE 4: -. DETAIL OF DROWNING IN MY LIVING ROOM. A SELF-PORTRAIT: MIXED MEDIA ON WATERCOLOUR PAPER, 152 X 171CM. 2020.

Ink is the preferred medium, whether on a pen or a sharpened end of a paintbrush dipped in ink. Both allow my thoughts to be put down quickly before they disappear. Ink, a rapid fluid medium, renders indelible, irreversible and permanent marks; a scarification. Derrida's blind draughtswoman is haunted by the 'spectre of the instant (stigme) and of the stylus, whose very point would like to touch the blind point of a gaze' (Derrida 1993, 64). Derrida again questions:

*does he not also try in vain, up to the point of exhausting a ductus or stylus, to capture this withdrawal (retrait) of the trait, to remark it, to sign it finally – in an endless scarification?. (Derrida 1993, 56)*

There is no means of erasure, except to paste yet another piece of paper overlaying the abandoned drawing underneath. The palimpsest becomes layers of trace and memory. The drawing blends history and memories with contemporary experience and visual perception. Visual links echo memories and experiences. There is no linear form to these memories. They are disparate, often contradictory and chaotic in construction. This inner state of anarchy, merged with a paralytic anxiety, is where I begin. 'Found' images stimulate the memory and unearth memories hidden in the dark spaces of the

consciousness. Memories become interwoven with the present; recurring metaphors emerge as a trace, a 'ruin' in the drawing; as an autobiographical monologue.



FIGURE 5: -. DETAIL OF DROWNING IN MY LIVING ROOM. A SELF-PORTRAIT: MIXED MEDIA ON WATERCOLOUR PAPER, 152 X 171CM. 2020.

### The 'unfurling' wave

In 'Spectres Of Marx' (1993) Derrida employs the French verb *déferler* to mean to 'unfurl', to spread out, or to unfurl like the movement of waves folding over each other (Pasanen 2006, 227). In the work *Drowning in my Living Room. A Self Portrait*, the body of water crashing and tumbling into the interiority of the 'in-between' drawn spaces unfurls as a complex, convoluted space of temporal folds. Derrida's waves become an analogy of the artist's internal consciousness of time. Also Gilles Deleuze in 'The Fold' (1993), writes of the consciousness as a 'monad' (Deleuze 1993, 27), which 'endlessly produces folds...twists and turns... the fold, unfurls all the way to infinity' (Deleuze 1993, 3). I extend Deleuze's argument to the multiplicity of fine black drawn lines in my drawing. The monad begins and ends at the

same metaphysical point: 'folding and unfolding, wrapping and unwrapping' (Deleuze 1993, 123). The interweaving, unfurling unfolding, folding lines have no visible beginning or end and therefore as a monad is 'a fixed point that infinite partition never attains, and that closes infinitely divided space' (Deleuze 1993, 28). The line embarks on a metaphysical journey, entering into: 'a labyrinth dividing endlessly, [where] the parts of matter form little vortices in a maelstrom, and in these are found even more vortices, even smaller, and even more are spinning in the concave intervals of the whirls that touch one another'. (Deleuze 1993, 57) An apt quote written by Escoubas resonates with the theme of water as a wave of memory unfurling through the pictorial space in my drawing (Figure 6):

*Downstream, there is the void, that which is not yet drawn, the "not yet"; upstream, there is the past, the time that is over, the "no longer" – drawing or writing resides therefore in a continual disappearing of the point's point: the point's point always escapes...The line is the "après-coup" (the flash-back) of an act – the act of marking - that was never seen, that was never seen in its very presence... One sees therefore only in the past, in memory. One does not see, one sees again. (Escoubas 2006, 205)*



FIGURE 6: -. DETAIL OF DROWNING IN MY LIVING ROOM. A SELF-PORTRAIT: MIXED MEDIA ON WATERCOLOUR PAPER, 152 X 171CM. 2020.

Escoubas describes a void that is a liminal space between downstream (the future) and upstream (the past). The British anthropologist, Victor Turner, also views the limen or threshold as 'a noman's-land betwixt-and-between the structural past and the structural future' (Turner 1990, 11). In a similar vein, Stephen Scrivener identifies the potential for cognitive surprise at the liminal sight of perception where:

*the extent that they are surprising, then we encounter something new...they facilitate the cognitive readjustment necessary to expand our understanding to encompass the*

*surprising and the new. In this sense, they project a future whilst reflecting the past.*  
(Scrivener 2010, NPF)

The in-between space is the thin space or limen between the thought or image in the mind's eye and the 'act of marking' (Escoubas 2006, 205). Unformed spaces constantly in flux; ambivalent, unpredictable gaps and go-between doors and passages of binary constructs; visible/invisible, true/false, dark/light, reality/illusion, presence/absence, known/unknown, past/future, discovery/loss. Derrida applies this delineation to drawing:

*This limit is never presently reached, but drawing always signals toward this inaccessibility, toward the threshold where only the surroundings of the trait appear that which the trait spaces by delimiting and which thus does not belong to the trait. (Derrida 1993, 53)*

The theatre director and theorist Richard Schechner also wrote:

*A limen is a threshold or sill, a thin strip neither inside nor outside a building or room linking one space to another, a passageway between places rather than a place in itself. What usually is just a "go between" becomes the site of action... It is enlarged in time and space yet retains its peculiar quality of passageway or temporariness... (Schechner 2002, 58)*

The 'door' on stage, or as a representation of a door in a drawing, embodies this 'go between' threshold as 'the condition of presence, of presentation, and therefore of Vorstellung [idea]...' (Derrida 2010, 73).

The door as an 'in-between' space

*GARCIN: Open the door! Open, blast you! I'll endure anything, your red-hot tongs and molten lead, your racks and prongs and garrottes—all your fiendish gadgets, everything that burns and flays and tears—I'll put up with any torture you impose. Anything, anything would be better than this agony of mind, this creeping pain that gnaws and fumbles and caresses one and never hurts quite enough. Now will you open?*

*THE DOOR FLIES OPEN: a long silence.*

*(Extract from Huis Clos) (Sartre 1989, 41)*

In *Drowning in My Living Room. A Self-Portrait*, the representation of the 'door' as a meta-theatrical trope becomes an analogy for Derrida's Augenblick which, like the opening and closing of the eyelids, is a threshold between the flash of 'cognitive surprise' (Scrivener 2010, NPF) and the risk of the thought falling over a yawning precipice – of disappearing into a void. The three doors, revealing passages leading to more doors, create an air of expectation and suspense, of things hidden. Who or what is going to appear through the door?

Doors as a scenographic device are an on-going preoccupation in both my art and scenographic design practice. The source of this reappearing image stems from a very early memory of mine as a four-year-old child growing up in the Welsh countryside. My memory is of a rambling, derelict Georgian mansion, Cottrell Manor (Figure 7), across the fields from our home.



FIGURE 7: COLOUR PHOTOGRAPHIC SLIDE OF A DERELICT GEORGIAN MANSION, COTTRELL MANOR, WALES (-).

In my dreams there are endless passageways and doors, a sprawling architectural space spawning spaces within spaces, a labyrinth of dark mysterious space somehow waiting to be illuminated. Long dusty corridors, winding endlessly through space; walls slashed with doors, leading into more corridors; leading through eternal space. Figure 8 is a close-up detail cropped from the original colour photographic slide, (taken by my father) of my mother, sister, and me standing outside this extraordinarily beautiful but totally abandoned building.



FIGURE 8: DETAIL OF ME (AGED 4 YEARS) ON THE FAR RIGHT (-).

The enormous, empty ruin was filled with bales of hay. I remember entering through the neo-classical portal and unlocked, majestic front door to be confronted by the most amazing staircase which spiralled endlessly upwards. My recollection was of me wandering from room to room – or was that just in my childhood dreams? The building was demolished in the 1970s to accommodate the Cottrell Park Golf Resort. I look upon this ghostly image with a sense of disappearance, discombobulation and loss. I am also haunted by the thought that the Manor never actually existed, other than as a ghostly illusion conceived in my mind's eye. The Polish artist, director, scenographer and writer, Tadeusz Kantor (1915-1990), wrote an apt description of the door which resonates with my own memories and art practice:

*There is also a place "BEHIND THE DOORS",  
a place that is somewhere at the back of the ROOM;  
a DIFFERENT space;  
an open interior of our imagination  
that exists in a different dimension.  
This is where the threads of our memory are woven...*

*We are standing at the door giving a long farewell to our childhood;  
we are standing helpless  
at the threshold of eternity and death.  
In front of us,  
in this poor dusky room,  
behind the doors...  
it is enough to open them. (Kantor 1993, 143)*

For Kantor, the door is an analogy for human consciousness – a site concealing secrets and memories. The single door jamb alone on the stage, or as a symbolic motif in his drawings and paintings, becomes an object of memory, abandonment, and death. The American theatre theorist, Arnold Aronson, posits: ‘On the stage, a door is a sign of the liminal, the unknown, the potential, the terrifying, the endless’ (Aronson 2004, 340). The single lone door in performance establishes this boundary by delineating ‘two separate spaces: the world seen and the world unseen; the world known and the unknown; the tangible and implied’ (Aronson 2004, 332). For Aronson, the closed door becomes a ‘memorial device’, resonant of death and loss. He proposes:

*on some level ... the doors [entrances] on stage ... echo this opening onto the inner world  
of the soul. Every time a door opens on the stage, a cosmos of infinite possibility is  
momentarily made manifest; every time a door closes certain possibilities are  
extinguished and we experience a form of death. (Aronson 2004, 332).*

The art works of the American Surrealist painter Dorothea Tanning (1910-2012) reveal an obsession with the ‘door’ as a liminal space between alternate states of reality. She produced a body of drawings and paintings between *Birthday*, (1942), and *The Guest Room*, (1950-1952), which evidences this persistent leitmotif in her art and literary practice. The images are from deep within her sub-conscious interiority; dreamscapes fragmented by walls, corridors and doors exposing her inner psychodrama. As Tanning commented;

*endless stairs, the unscalable walls, even the doors I had painted, half open like Venus’s  
flytraps, irresistible snares inviting me in ... From there it was an easy leap to leap to a  
dream of countless doors. Oh, there was perspective, trapped in my own room. (Tanning  
2001, 62-63)*

The French philosopher Gaston Bachelard (1884-1962) in *The Poetics of Space* argues:

*The door is an entire cosmos of the half-open. In fact, it is one of its primal images, the  
very origin of a daydream that accumulates desires and temptations: the temptation to  
open up the ultimate depths of being, and the desire to conquer all reticent beings.  
(Bachelard 1964, 222)*

Doors also appear in the dreams of the American architect, sculptor and scenographer George Tsypin. Their hidden mystery stimulates ideas within the mind’s eye, creating worlds within worlds:

*The mystery doesn’t get cracked open. You touch it – you encounter it. Or at least you  
discover a little door. You never enter that door, but at least you identify the door. My  
role is to identify the door... there is a world inside your head. And I see if I can bring that  
world to a live installation, but essentially you only have your own world in your mind.*

*There is only that, and you just have to have the courage to make it happen. (Ebrahimiyan 2006, 147)*

My argument is that Tsypin's 'little door' into the artist's imagination can either slam shut on creativity in a blink-of-an-eye, giving rise to an inexplicable sense of loss – or open and embody a worlding.

## Worlding

*VALET: Outside?*

*GARCIN: Damn it, you know what I mean. Beyond that wall.*

*VALET: There's a passage.*

*GARCIN: And at the end of the passage?*

*VALET: There's more rooms, more passages, and stairs.*

*GARCIN: And what lies beyond them?*

*VALET: That's all.*

*(Extract from Huis Clos) (Sartre 1989, 6)*

In *Drowning in My Livingroom. A Self Portrait*, there is created a meta-theatrical *mise-en-scène* as an assemblage or 'worlding'. The term worlding identifies an active, ongoing process with no end; there are only infinite possibilities and embodied encounters. The anthropologist, Kathleen Stewart, in *Tactile Composition* claims:

*An atmospheric world or thing is mobile and generative; it produces multiple potentialities for coherence and shift. An emergent world, always almost there, is itself always leaning into a mobilization. (Stewart 2014, 120)*

This philosophical stance is pivotal to my argument, which speculates how drawings have the quality of cosmopoiesis, of world creating (Thea Brejzek 2018). Drawing encapsulates the potential to visualise multiple alternate and heterogeneous realities. The act of drawing can transform the immaterial – the manifold of images in the mind's eye – into a material 'force as some kind of real, a world.' (Stewart 2014, 119). These worlds, or rooms within the interiority of the artist's imagination, first materialise as memories in *Drowning in My Living Room. A Self Portrait*. The drawing can potentially engender a spectatorial encounter at Derrida's 'brink of blindness' (Derrida 1993, 3). At the threshold where that elusive image can be lost for ever, I claim, is also the site of invention and originality; of wonder and astonishment. Like the waves crashing through the world of my living room, my intention is to immerse the spectator in the existentialist condition of worlding, where the accumulation of seemingly incongruent objects and meanings (doors, water, exit-sign, typewriter, violin etc.) can generate a scenographic ecology, a worlding. As Stewart also maintains:

*Here, compositional theory takes the form of a sharply impassive attunement to the ways in which an assemblage of elements come to hang together as a thing that has qualities, sensory aesthetics and lines of force and how such things come into sense, already composed and generative and pulling matter and mind into a making: a worlding. (Stewart 2014, 119)*

## Conclusion

What is beyond the door? A precipice in which the image or thought 'drops out of sight in the twinkling of an eye'? (Derrida 1993, 48). Or is there 'a gap to be filled but not yet identified but presumably identifiable physical phenomena?' (Damasio 1999, 323). For a split-second, thoughts hover in the realm of possibility; that imagined 'knowledge of the moment' (Damasio 1999, 125). The Augenblick as ecstatic temporality, becomes a 'moment in vision' (Pasanen 2006, 221). The blank sheet of paper or empty screen stages the potential of a micro-world – worlds within the artist/scenographer's room of imagination and memory, revealing the slippage between an illusion and reality, an absence and presence, the imagined and the corporeal, innovation and an unfathomable loss. I seek in my drawing practice the creation of a cosmopoietic worlding: a visualisation of an emergent scenographic assemblage of forces. Distant echoes unite into a single sensory experience which, as Bachelard suggests, is 'an inner state that is so unlike any other, ... transports the dreamer outside the immediate world to a world that bears the mark of infinity' (Bachelard 1964, 83).

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