

Drawing and Loss 2022

Volume 16

Issue 1

DRAWING PROCESS AND LOSS AND LOST TIME

Anthi Kosma

University of Thessalia, Greece
anthokosmos@hotmail.com

Drawing as an action and exploration requires behavioural losses. A separation, an imposed distance, sometimes an abandonment, a feeling of incompleteness, of something missing, of lack or a need for fulfilment are all situations reflected in and related to drawing. In this article, loss in drawing is described during the action, from the process point of view, and more precisely as the process of losing attitude and attributes through different points of view. Loss during drawing can be found in represented objects which are configured differently, with less accuracy in the representation, in losing senses such as vision, by trying to configure invisible or inexpressible content, such as loss. In this case, loss in drawing is presented and investigated from the process point of view. During drawing as action, an inner experience and behaviour often require loss of one's certainties, control, habitus, bias, references or final scope. While alive, the loss of "the world around" or that of (first) references to poetical theories becomes the loss of the self, of the artist's identity during the poetic process. Finally, drawing is presented as a loss and a separation of the represented object from the action of its birth and, therefore, its time-contemporaneity; How loss is experienced when "you are present". Drawing becomes a transformation, while, after the action (once it is completed), the "loss of time" becomes memory and embodied experience.

*'Never such incompleteness remains in a human heart
to hear its dilation situate this heart' (March 2000, p.46).*

Introduction - The losses

Drawing and loss can be approached in many ways. Loss, as an expression of a feeling, memory of a loss or literally the loss of a member that is missing, can be a configurational issue or object to configure. Loss of vision can also be part of an antiocularcentric approach and critique (Jay, 1993). Derrida's writing on the 'blind' introduces drawing and gestures untied from the represented object: 'One should in fact not see it (let's not say however: "one must not see it") insofar as all the colored thickness that it retains tends to wear itself out so as to mark the single edge of a contour: between the inside and the outside of a figure. Once this limit is reached, there is nothing more to see, not even black and white, not even figure/form, and this is the trait, this is the line itself' (Derrida, 1993). In these cases, loss is perceived more as an unfinished image or as an image of the invisible. Lack of detail in representation, in comparison with a photographic or realistic approach, has lost something of the referential object. Or, when loss itself is the referential object, then loss is the formative force to present what cannot be presented. In this article, we investigate drawing and loss from the process point of view. During drawing as action, an inner experience (Dewey, 2005 and Bataille, 2014) and behavior often require loss of one's certainties, control, bias and final scopes. While drawing is alive, loss becomes also the loss of 'the world around', the loss of referential works, but also, and most important, the loss of oneself (Agamben, 1999, Csikszentmihalyi, 2013, Blanchot, 2015, Barthes, 1977 and Valery, 2010). During the poetical process, in the procedure "to give birth to form – to give birth in letting be born" (Nancy, 2014), the artist is missing or needs to lose his or her own identity. The disappearance of the image of oneself and the uncertainty that this causes is often, in the field of art, a prerequisite for the opening of the form. Whether form refers to an artwork or the self, by losing the image of form/the identity of oneself, more unpredictable images and ways of making/creating may arise. Loss of control, of scope or of ways of drawing, leads more to what François Jullien calls "the great image has no form". In the opening of the form, identity is unclear, diffuse, almost unknown, of course, if we let it arise.

The losses

The loss of identity of the artist, as many authors put it, is a state necessary for the creation of an artwork. "The Man Without Content" by Giorgio Agamben (1999), "Flow" by Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi (2013), "The Space of Literature" by Maurice Blanchot (2015) and "Writing Degree Zero" by Roland Barthes (1977), to cite some, are books about literary and poetical consciousness, loss of certainties, control, expectations and the author's identity. For Agamben, the process of artistic creation and the artist dissociate themselves from conceptions that relate process to control, consciousness, fixed or predetermined ideas. On the contrary, the process is presented as an opening to an unknown world to explore and the artist as an agent lacking identity and known content.

'He has really penetrated a region where no other man would want to follow him, in proximity to a risk that threatens him more deeply than any other mortal being, still the artist remains on this side of his essence, since he has now definitively lost his content and is condemned forever to dwell, so to speak, beside his reality. The artist is the man without content, who has no other identity than a perpetual emerging out of the nothingness of expression and no other ground than this incomprehensible station on this side of himself.'(Agamben, 1999, p. 34)

In order to produce and reach to an authentic artwork, loss as an opening to the unknown, to chaos and uncertainty, a separation from security, is a condition. Because of their similarity as a consecutive way to mark over a surface, many descriptions from literature are borrowed to describe the process of drawing. In this sense, when Blanchot (2015) refers to the void – empty place – during writing, we can easily think that the description also applies to drawing. Emptiness is seen as a way of facing writing and drawing as a loss of objectives, as the loneliness that the author faces in an impersonal place.

'The work requires of the writer that he lose everything he might construe as his own 'nature', that he lose all character and that, ceasing to be linked to others and to himself by the decision which makes him an 'I', he becomes the empty place where the impersonal affirmation emerges. This is a requirement which is no requirement at all, for it demands [...] Whoever digs at verse must renounce all idols; he has to break with everything. He cannot have truth for his horizon, or the future as his element, for he has no right to hope. He has, on the contrary, to despair. Whoever delves into verse dies; he encounters his death as an abyss.' (Blanchot, 2015, pp. 38, 55)

Drawing does not work only with descriptive limits that can in a certain sense break down formal discriminations, differences and divisions between real and non-existent or imaginary places. It also breaks down the preconceived image of it, its bias and abilities. And often when something is missing and closes, something new comes to substitute and open. Such experience is something we may achieve, it 'is grounded in availability and access' (Noë, 2012, p. 33). When breaking with old ways, new arrangements, limits and different ways of communicating, and being with others and oneself, arise.

'For, contrary to what one might think at first sight, the breaking of tradition does not at all mean the loss or devaluation of the past: it is, rather, likely that only now the past can reveal itself with a weight and an influence it never had before. Loss of tradition means that the past has lost its transmissibility, and so long as no new way has been found to enter into a relation with it, [...], to found the present as the relationship between past and future.' (Agamben, 1999, p. 66)

For Nancy, drawing is 'the opening of the form' (Nancy, 2013) because it is gesture, power, possibility, force (dynamis) that is realized, exerted (energy) on a surface. However, form in this case is not only the form presented, traced on a surface, but also the form of a subject who moves in such a way that s/he traces, modifies, makes his/her movements and leaves signs on the surfaces s/he touches. Before the opening of the forms as figures drawn on a two-dimensional surface (the formation of exterior forms), there is another opening, opening of the form, of the body of the subject who draws and interacts with his/her environment through the trace. In other words, the form that opens by tracing is not the traced form, the one that presents an existing or forming object, but the form of the body that, when tracing and writing, extends, writes, presents itself, externalizes itself and its transformations. The form of this foreign body, with unknown limits, is the first shape that, by tracing, opens up the exchange between tracing and that which is traced.

Figures 1 and 4 belong to a series of drawing experimentations where traces become cuts and the represented objects were approached from their disappearance. What happens when drawing lines, the division of the surface, the trait that marks as Derrida comments is so strong that it modifies the limits and properties of the surface of drawing (Derrida, 1993, p. 27). A planar surface loses its planarity, just as Lucio Fontana suggested in his classical work, it can have depth, it becomes tridimensional and can be

folded. This “borderline” drawing of cutting traces reveals, among other things, the direct relationship between traces and surface. Whether lines are made with a cutter or laser, cuttings may break the surface into small independent parts or modify its borders in ways that it can sustain itself, be it in a folded or unfolded form. Cutting lines don’t permit “trial and error”. The surface is no longer a “white” background, neutral or in second plan in order to reveal figures. With cutting traces, the surface is suffering a loss and at the same time it becomes activated. As figure and background are merged and become unseparated, the drawing’s limits expand and, in a way, break.



FIGURE 1: ‘CUTTING LINES’, ALBA GONZALEZ GIMENEZ, WORKSHOP IMPROGRAFIKA-‘PAPER SHOW’, MADRID JULY 2015. PHOTO: ANTHI KOSMA



FIGURE 2: DRAWING OF NATALIA VIME, WORKSHOP IMPROGRAFIKA, MADRID JUNE 2016. PHOTO: ANTHI KOSMA

Loss of references, usefulness and scope

Another kind of loss which takes place during drawing and more specifically during drawing as a process of exploration, when it comes to a project, is the necessity for a loss of references, bias, habitus and preconceived images (Bourdieu, 1996). In this case the loss-abandonment, negation of the known, the initial images and references are a prerequisite for the appearance of new configurations. You always need a first exposure, a negation, a first going out into the unknown and a first break, a break with the known, the familiar, the habitual and the routines. 'You never project [design] for oneself, always against someone or something. It projects against something so that it changes' (Argan, 1969, p. 50).

Such an example is well described in Deleuze's book "The Logic of Sensation", where diagram is described as a 'catastrophe' (Deleuze, 2003). Based on the work of Francis Bacon, loss of reference and representational image is presented in the painter's gesture of destroying his/her configurations, the figures of his/her paintings. The loss of control in the gestural movement intentionally leads to the loss of reference and the painted image. Catastrophe in this case is proposed and forced with the aim to avoid clichés, repetitions and common imitations. Francis Bacon is making zones of "cleaning", he destroys the painted figure, arbitrarily traces cleaned areas that reveal a world of possibilities. In this case diagram represents the catastrophe of the picture, erasing previous clichés. It is chaos through which new forms begin, a matrix for configurations. Catastrophe is the seed/core but you have to provoke one.

Paintings remain referential but, in a way, they present a loss of configuration's literacy, and of brush and gesture control. For Deleuze, diagram describes this situation. 'The diagram is indeed a chaos, a catastrophe, but it is also a seed of order or rhythm. It is a germ of rhythm in relation to the new order of the painting. As Bacon says, it "unlocks areas of sensation". The diagram ends the preparatory work and begins the act of painting' (Deleuze, 2003, p. 102). When the diagram becomes a gesture-destruction, the body, we could say, is placed out of rational control. The movements are not controlled, the eye can no longer follow and control the hand that is being 'blind' and activated by internal forces. The act then is a 'total catastrophe'; the 'destruction' of the familiar, stereotypical images and clichés, disconnecting the creative process from the instrumentalist logic that stifles it. Simultaneously, it exonerates, releases and also invites to a game of emergence of new images.

In his book "Being Drawing [Ser dibujo]", Javier Seguí de la Riva, Professor Emeritus at the Department of Graphic Expression in the School of Architecture in Madrid, explores the state of being drawing and live-in drawings as a radical imaginary way, experience and loss. He describes drawing making dark comments, that it starts with the 'loss of contours, of the appearance of backgrounds, contexts' (Seguí, 2010, p. 45) and when he analyses the act of erasing as a configurative way, he relates erasure to destruction, from traces to identity, as prerequisites to attention, alteration and freedom. 'The loss or removal of the limits or conditions of something (of the entity, for example) leads to alienation, loss of identity. Anything that causes that loss is a metaphor for erasure. Get alienated, get drunk, persist. The suppression of certain characteristics of things would also be an erasure. The suppression by fixation of attention (endeavor, compromise ...). And the suppression by alteration (transformation, liberation ...)' (Seguí, 2010, p. 31).

When drawing is not considered as a movement that looks outwards, outside, refers to, restores and reproduces an external aspect, and tries to place itself far from the useful, controlled, purely operational, measured and known, it is presented as a radical imaginary technique, [it becomes] a configurational

'therapy' with the capacity to experiment with oneself (Sloterdijk, 2003). 'No drawing is known; we draw to know' (Moraza, 2006, p. 114). It is a state of exploration, of limits and the unknown, a loss of certainties that is not necessarily directed at a specific result, or a final object, but rather consists of openings, of ways of opening possibilities.

'The question, however, is whether the time is ripe for such a destruction, or whether instead the consequence of such an act would not be the loss of any possible horizon for the understanding of the work of art and the creation of an abyss in front of it that could only be crossed with a radical leap. But perhaps just such a loss and such an abyss are what we most need if we want the work of art to reacquire its original stature.'
(Agamben, 1995, p. 6)

In graphic exploration, search is not driven by the 'value of the useful'. In this production, along with certainties, a disposition to lose energy and efforts is also common. Changes and transformations in the production process are found more in the attitude related to 'unproductive spending', the 'exhaustion' of 'useful behaviors that have no value in themselves' (Bataille, 2005, p. 34), which revolves around the 'perfectly useless' proposed by Bataille in 'The limits of the useful'.

'But in the attempt, he ends up with nothing in his hands but signs – signs that, although they have traversed the limbo of non-meaning, are no less extraneous to the meaning he was pursuing.' (Agamben, 1995, p. 8)

The image of Natalia Vime's drawing (Figure 2) belongs to this kind of drawing: useless, made for and with pleasure. Made in a workshop of graphic improvisation, on a day of continuous production of images occurring unexpectedly, it reflects and helps us understand how flow between gestures, colors, water, people's energies, personal feelings and loss of scope, references and usefulness is the condition for the openness to the unknown and to new images. Figure 3 is a collective drawing. It is there that the loss of the author's control and identity arises and is required inevitably by the collaborative technique.



FIGURE 3: COLLECTIVE DRAWING, WORKSHOP IMPROGRAFIKA, MADRID JUNE 2016. PHOTO: ANTHI KOSMA

Loss of control

It is true that we can never really know what we're doing (Arendt, 2006, p. 106). Hannah Arendt and the principle she vindicates according to which one does first and then thinks is also significant in the case of drawing, which is perceived as an action and a process related to the loss of control. This article describes here how during the action of drawing and loss of control of gesture and body enter – especially in abstract painting – in a new state, a series of movements, a gestural dance which is unpredictable, without knowing, without following any representational rules, where the hand is not looking for a particular similarity.

The center of the action of drawing as a technique not based on prefabricated and imposed rules moves towards a technique that considers the drawing's surface an open field for exploration, where the subject draws freely. In this sense, drawing as a graphic exploration serves both the generation of non-existent configurations and as an encounter with oneself and autobiographical writing.

'Drawing is a constant rectifying / superimposing [...] open and "blind" groping that can only be developed by successive approximations, stimulated by what the drawing itself presents at each reflective (perceptual) moment as a configured trial.' (Seguí, 2003, p. 9)

The movement of the gesture as an activity in itself is the search to take the situation to its limits, turning the body into a medium that transmits states, emotions, tracing ultrasound of an unknown body. 'In this sense the artist is no longer the subject who performs the action but the medium through whom the drawing is able to manifest itself' (Alphen, 2008, p. 64). The gestures and traces of drawing, gestures that are not classified, hierarchical, articulated or verbal, seem to be capable in many cases of breaking national, cultural, social, gender, religious limits and, in general, any limit of identification. The drawing body, always open to new appearances, configures its own identity documents, its 'papers' that give it permission to communicate through a writing of affection, the spellings of feeling, its fears and its deepest dreams. This state of the body is also called a state of flow that:

'involves new procedures or requires an unexpected variation. [...] The flow state tends to occur when a person's skills are fully involved in overcoming a challenge that he [or she] may face.' (Csikszentmihalyi, 2013, p. 58)

In the residues of the different, diverse, and unrepeatable graphic explorations, not only the form of the trajectory and the path of the movements are recorded, but also the effort, the struggle of the author. The traces show the movements, the vibrations of a body that suffers-feels tracing. In graphic exploration operations, the body transmits, externalizes, draws out. The disposition, degree of openness, ease, decision to participate in the action, manner, type, and manner of 'attacking' of the drawer is reflected in this strange choreography.

The body that moves and vibrates, transmits using the traces as means, as links between the body (interior) and the surface and the traces (exterior) (Nancy, 2010). The traces traced on the surfaces are observed as a product of this constant reciprocal exchange between interior and exterior. Traces are seen as residues, 'ashes' of that action, but also as witnesses related to an unknown interior. When drawing, the body is a silent body, which nevertheless vibrates and sounds.

'To sound is to vibrate in itself or by itself: it is not only, for the sonorous body, to emit a sound, but it is also to stretch out, to carry itself and be resolved into vibrations that both return it to itself and place it outside itself.' (Nancy, 2009, p. 8)



FIGURE 4: DRAWING THE LIMITS, WORKSHOP IMPROGRAFIKA, MADRID JUNE 2017. PHOTO: ANTHI KOSMA

Loss of the world around

The work as an opening is the exploration of an unknown territory that artists themselves often ignore; becoming under this point of view in the opening, an entity that draws, while it unites with its environment by doing, by drawing. Dewey (2005) and, later, others like Maturana (2004) start from the integration of the subject with his/her environment and also the integration of the subject with his/her environment by doing. The subject transmits by expressing his/her subconscious, converting the field of footprints into derived signals.

There are moments during the experience of drawing, moments of deep concentration, when imagination is completely merged, "circulating" in the imaginary world of the miniature of the drawing, where the designer/drawer has lost any scope, "global" vision, direction and is simply moving from one line to another, fabricating traced worlds. This moment of dreaming during the action of drawing, as in dreaming during writing, is a moment of loss. Immersed in 'knitting' a 'text' of traces, drawing is losing the image of oneself, losing corporal control and the scope of each/the drawing. Remaining in or looking forward to reaching this state of drawing where tracing is an experience of dreaming in/into a miniature is an enjoyable state. In this case, the loss of the "world" around and the loss of the image of oneself are the prerequisites for the pleasure of being into drawing miniature. Drawing in its appearing, birth, the 'opening of form', as Nancy says, shows the essential incomplete, non-closed or non-totalized form of the figure (the figure's essential incompleteness, a non-closure or non-totalizing of form) (Nancy, 2013, p. 28).

'Imagination is always considered to be the faculty of forming images. But it is rather the faculty of deforming the images offered by perception, of freeing ourselves from the immediate images; it is especially the faculty of changing images.' (Bachelard, 1964, p. 19)



FIGURE 5: DRAWING RESONANCES, WORKSHOP IMPROGRAFIKA, MADRID JANUARY 2015. PHOTO: ANTHI KOSMA

To capture and communicate the experience of dreaming and “the loss of the world around” during action is quite difficult if not impossible. In Figure 5 a group of people are dreaming in front of a window full of drawings posted on its glass. By finding their place on a window, a series of drawings made in white A4 paper without tools result in a day-dreaming experience. Lightening the reverse of papers transformed these minimal drawings, revealing them as different territories. Papers’ edges, folding, shadows, holes or wet parts appeared completely different. Papers’ edges and folds appeared as traced lines, and wet parts were converted into luminous sources provoking estrangement, letting all participants imagine new traced universes in front of a “window”.

Loss of all the non-expressed

Abstract and non-configural painting and drawing are visual expressions more related to corporal forces and moving with an internal rhythm. Loss, consciously or not, often becomes the expression and the theme of non-expressed feelings and situations. In this case, loss is that of control as mentioned above, but also an exteriorization, expression and ‘retch’ of inner feelings, preoccupations and unconscious states of mind.

'It [Rhythm] is the original ecstasy that opens for man the space of his world, and only by starting from it can he experience freedom and alienation, historical consciousness and loss in time, truth and error.' (Agamben, 1995, p. 62)

‘Letting yourself be carried away by the hands without trying to control your gestures, only spying on your vicissitudes,’ says Javier Seguí (2010, p. 10). While the hands move freely, without mediators, “judges” and rules, without trying to recognize or be recognized, it seems they are closer to that body

that escapes the limits of the skin. While they 'dance' freely, they are closer to the body that feels, sweats from agony, cries because they left it, smiles because they looked at it and forgets the 'outside' and the 'how it looks like/it can be seen'. It is something more about that body that somehow always eludes us; something that we feel everywhere, but never see as a whole. That we carry with us, with so much patience and whose limits, colors, hormones or inherited desires torture us, forms of knowing/unknowing, haptic memory, muscle memory and others.

There are those moments where the body somehow loses control. As long as the movements of the hands are not defined by the grammar, the syntax, the positions of the letters on the keyboard, the requirements and the objectives they must meet, they begin to draw more freely. As it happens when the hands are carried away caressing and sliding over the body of the other. Similarly, they are left, somewhat sloppy, to draw lines and colored spots. Over there, in the non-intermediary, in the flow, but also, listening to the need and desire for the body to manage to go out. As the hands transmit, they act, according to Aby Warburg, like 'seismographs of the human body' and its emotions (Didi-Huberman, 2009). Emotionographers whose traces are psychographies, small inexplicable signs linked to that body that feels and is overwhelmed with emotions it does not know how to describe. Also, the loss of the image of oneself and outer environment during drawing is seen as an inner experience. The loss of identity, the loss of the image of oneself, the loss of control, the loss of the preconceived images, but also drawing as the loss of all the non-expressed. The feeling of loss and lost expression reflected in the traced lines, traces revealing drawing as the writing of the lost expression.



FIGURE 6: UNCONTROLLED, 2018. PHOTO: ANTHI KOSMA

Drawing in Figure 6 was made in an attempt to describe a forced and almost violent personal loss of the author. Initially, it was called "topologies of violence" after the title of the book by Byung-Chul Han who

writes about violence that is not physical and that is rarely talked about. This violence that we often feel and quietly incorporate in our times, times of competition, so-called justice, of the free and global market. However, later, with the help of a friend, the drawing was named “hematomas” [μελανιές-melanies], which in Greek also means black ink spots (the signs of the ink were identified with those of the accumulation of blood on human skin). Bruises that in this case were internal and “from within”, with the help of the ink were “transported” “out” to “paper”. The words came later to interpret and reveal: “Hematomas” were many, in different layers, some were covered with “dense color”, others took the “form of letters” and others of “cuts”. The truth is that all these signs have a relationship with the violence of loss and all the feelings that the body has suffered and could not express. It was as if the drawing said “Don't forget that I'm touching you”, my “ink” fills in and heals from the loss.

Epilogue

The lost times

Loss is a separation, an imposed distance, sometimes abandonment, a feeling of incompleteness, of something/someone missing, of lack or a need for fulfillment. For some authors drawing is often a separation, at least a division of a surface into many pieces, a fragmentation.

The act of drawing is related to separation, as drawing requires an amount of time or at the same time configures the state of an object at a certain time, while drawing as an image presents the time the drawing was made at. Furthermore, drawing is first of all the loss of time, the time of its configuration, the duration of this experience and also the lost times.

Drawing traces over a surface, at first, represents a loss, that of the moment of their generation. In that sense traces mark a loss, loss of time where traces are the remaining of the movements and the gestures that formed them. Testimonies of another time, of a vivid experience, of a body in a moment of exteriorization, expressing itself, its moment, its emotional state. In this sense, drawing is the image of the loss of its appearing, always related to the absence of that moment, that body, those ‘cries’ over the ‘paper’.

The image of loss

Drawing as the action of forming the unformed, the invisible, the unknown, requires at first a loss of one's certainties, preconceived images, habitus, bias, loss of oneself. The action of drawing as a loss has been described as the loss of attitude and attributes, the end of certain situations and, as a consequence, the beginning of others, less known, controlled and predictable. The image of the body while it is tracing is not the image of the drawings traced over a surface or a configured body, but the image of this body in action, during the practice of tracing. The image of drawing as loss cannot be separated from the aspect of the body while it exteriorizes itself, changes its attitude and performances. It is a mnemonic image of the body experiencing its limits. During the movement of drawing, the changing ‘loss’ images are the configured forms but also the forms of the body while it is moving, changing and challenging. Drawing loss as images of the body is neither a fixed image nor that of a descriptive figure. Loss is an inner drawing, a living experience.

‘from self toward self [...] Manifesting itself in this way the subject comes to distance itself from itself and can experience pleasure or pain, in other words, the expansion or retraction of its being.’ (Nancy, 2013, p. 28).



FIGURE 7: UNCONTROLLED, 2020. PHOTO: ANTHI KOSMA

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