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THEME

Drawing||Phenomenology: tracing lived experience through drawing took place on the 19th and 20th September 2017 at Loughborough University. The conference aimed to investigate and consider the role of drawing as a means to explore and trace our lived experience of the world. The theme related to a growing area of research being undertaken by researchers within the Drawing Research Group at Loughborough University. This research stemmed from an interest in what many practitioners/theorists acknowledge as fundamental attributes of drawing: that it is an intimate and immediate process and medium capable of recording the trace of the drawer's thoughts and bodily movements. The act of drawing is said to reduce the space between the drawer and the drawing, leaving marks on the surface regardless of erasure, subsequently creating a visible trace of both the process of making and the drawer's thoughts. The conference aimed to discuss and debate these widely accepted attributes of drawing to question whether or how drawing really can be thought of as phenomenology.

The presenters responded to the following suggestions as starting points in the discussion, as possible themes, prompts and provocations:

- What is the relationship between the physicality of drawing and lived experience?
- When viewing drawings, is it possible to trace the movement of a drawer's mind/body?
- Are all drawing processes phenomenological?
- How can drawing trace the physicality of spaces?
- What are the limitations of drawing?
- Is materiality a necessity in drawing the trace of lived experience?

The following peer-reviewed papers in this edition, evidence some of the discussion and propositions raised at the conference, alongside the addition of papers by invited authors.

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PRACTICING PRESENCE: DRAWING NEAR AND FAR

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This paper takes the experience of drawing within two sites in states of transition, as a starting point to explore the changing nature of place as a catalyst for lived experience. Working from phenomenological perspective, I propose an alignment of manual drawing practice with meditation (mindful awareness), to ask how the act of drawing '… the state, or the being that is in question cannot be detached entirely from the sense of gesture, movement or becoming.' (Nancy 2013). Through a discussion of a non-representational drawing practice and mindful awareness (counting the breath), I will argue that drawing as process enables an experiential and intimate engagement with the world as 'grounded in availability and access' enabling 'presence' (Noë 2012). One that allows us to experience the physicality of spaces and the living body not as separate realities, but as entities that are thoroughly and deeply entwined, in which there is no separation of self, other and the lived environment. Dwelling (being present) and touch (making present) are key factors in this, as a means of understanding experience of the embodied self in relation to artistic expression and resulting knowledge.

'The world shows up for us in experience only insofar as we know how to make contact with it' (Noë 2012, p. 2).

Introduction

This paper aims through a first-person investigation, to contribute and build upon discussions that position drawing as phenomenology (Rosand 2002, Harty 2012). A Phenomenological approach in this instance asks how the act of drawing '… the state, or the being that is in question cannot be detached entirely from the sense of gesture, movement or becoming.' (Nancy 2013, p. 1). I propose to do this by focusing on a series of works titled Breath Drawings (2015 - 2019). These drawings emerged as a result of a project to explore what the particular value of drawing might be as an investigative practice, concerning the Circus Street site adjacent to the main Grand Parade Campus of the University of Brighton. This area was earmarked for demolition and redevelopment. Making drawings on site challenged me in ways I wasn't anticipating and led to an artist in residence opportunity at Gordon House, Margate where I would continue to develop these drawings[1].

FIGURE 1: GORDON HOUSE, MARGATE, 19TH JULY 2018. PHOTO: DUNCAN BULLEN

[1] Gordon House is the home of Dr Lucy Lyons, and a setting in which artists, writers and performers can make, test and share ideas. https://gordonhousemargate.blogspot.com

I intend to document and reflect on the what, how and why of this specific series of drawings, to open up an idea of presence described by the contemporary philosopher Alva Noë as something that 'is manifestly fragile' (Noë 2012, p. 1). In order to discover presence Noë suggests we need to 'give up the idea that the world shows up as remote contemplation' (Noë 2012, p. 3), rather, we need to find strategies to let the body come to the foreground. He states that 'If we are to hope to bring this pervasive feature of our lives, of ourselves, into focus, then we need … somehow to let the body itself crowd into the space of our attention and let itself be felt… Perhaps, it is one of the aims of practices such as meditation and yoga to enhance the kind of sense of self that arises out of a withdrawal from our worldly engagements'. (Noë 2012, p. 12).

Throughout the paper I attempt to weave together different discourses, through an experience-based methodology that is essentially phenomenological in approach, blended with Eastern philosophies, notably Zen Buddhism (Kasulis 1985), Japanese aesthetics (Lomas 2017, Blaser 1963) and mindfulness practices (Kabat-Zinn 1994, Varela, Thompson and Rosch 1993/2016) as they have been interpreted in the West. I situate this thinking alongside Western philosophy (Dewey 1934/2005, Noë 2012, Johnson 2007) and positive psychology (Lomas 2016, 2017), as well as thinking about drawing in particular and creative practice in general (Hughes 2014, Fisher and Fortnum 2013).

Experience, presence and mindful drawing

In Art as Experience (1934/2005), John Dewey contends that art resides in our experience, rather than in the object or performance itself. Dewey, states that 'in conception the work of art, is often identified with building, book, painting, statue, or in its existence apart from human experience. Since the actual work of art is what the product does with and in experience' (Dewey 2005, p. 1). Mark Johnson suggests that 'the basis for Dewey's idea of experience is an account of an organism continually interacting with its surroundings … and knowing is a matter of cultivating appropriate habits of intelligent inquiry that allow us to more or less satisfactorily reconfigure our experience … ' (Johnson 2010, p. 146).

Central to Noë's argument is that presence is something we earn, and may achieve through experience and engagement, that 'is grounded in availability and access' (Noë 2012, p.33). My conceit in this paper is to align repetitive, reductive and non-representational manual drawing, with the practice of mindfulness meditation, as a means to trace the physicality and presence of particular spaces and places. Johnson argues that it is how 'we are in touch with our world at a visceral level, and it is that quality of "being in touch" that importantly defines what our world is like and who we are' (Johnson 2007, pp. 19-20). Correspondingly, I aim to explore how space and place provide a situation for integrated lived experience, in which mental and bodily experiences are imminent, entwined and transactional with our surroundings.

For me, mindfulness meditation and mindfully drawing act as a means of accessing a clearing through the seemingly endless distractions of daily living to focus attention on present moment experience. In the Embodied Mind, Francisco Verela, Evan Thompson and Eleanor Rosch collectively suggest that 'mindfulness techniques are designed to lead the mind back from its theories and preoccupations, back from the abstract attitude, to the situation of one's experience itself' (Varela et al 2016, p. 22). In the introduction to the revised edition of Embodied Mind (2016), Eleanor Rosch suggests that mindfulness originating from Buddhist practices teaches us to experience our bodies as grounded, in touch with the immediacy of experience. Rosch proposes that 'the lived body, lived mind, and lived environment are all

thus part of the same process, the process by which one enacts one's world (in phenomenology speak, "brings forth a world") (Rosch 2016, pp. xxxviii-xxix).

In this context, I see practices such as sitting meditation and drawing with repetitive mark making as ways of consciously investing in and enacting well-being and well-doing. In this practice, making is an embodied act in which one is engaged with instructional and habitual practices as 'continuous acts of doing' (Jacob 2004, p. 166). Paradoxically, mindfulness has been described as a practice of 'non-doing' (Kabat-Zinn 1994). One sits and counts the breath, stares at a wall, and watches thoughts come and go. In my case, I align mindfulness with the drawing of horizontal lines or circling points one after the other in sequence as a strategy that oscillates between contraries. By this I mean adopting a methodology that is both near and far, that allows for mind-body attunement, and that asks how do we get close to an event, while simultaneously getting the self out of the way in order to let presence be felt? In these drawings the author's hand is present, yet the act of mark making is subjugated to rule based instruction and calculation, as a foil 'between touch and measured distance' (Malone 2012, p.9).

Background

Before discussing the Breath Drawings, I would first like to mention, what I would regard, as my primary drawing practice. I want to do this because there are core concerns that are relevant to a drawing practice that emphasises the simple act of making the same mark, one after another in predetermined sequences. In Chromatic Fields (2010), Gatherings (2011 - 2016) and Constructed Drawings (2017-present) the drawing process is a balance between pre-determined 'planned procedure and intuitive response' (Bullen 2012, p.11) in which mark-making is reduced to a set of point-to-point connectors, through which I activate the picture plane via a slow and patient marking of the surface of the paper (Figure 2a, 2b, 2c). These marks operate on thresholds and explore boundaries between visible and barely visible and as such, they have a clear hierarchical preference toward the visual and illusory pictorial space, where the white of the paper, the spaces between the drawn are activated (Bullen 2013). David Rosand sees drawing in terms of phenomenology and as a 'fundamental pictorial act' in which 'to make a mark or trace a single line upon a surface immediately transforms that surface, energizes its neutrality; the graphic imposition turns the flatness of the ground into virtual space, translates its material reality …' (2002 p. 1). The psychologist Richard L. Gregory in his influential book The Intelligent Eye stated that 'Pictures have a double reality', they are simultaneously object's in their own right, 'patterns on a flat sheet' and depictions, representations, symbols, emblems of something else: 'they are seen both as themselves and as some other things … Pictures are paradoxes.' He goes on to suggest that 'Pictures are perhaps the first step away from immediate reality' (Gregory 1970, p. 32).

Gregory's writings on visual perception have contributed to our understanding of the eye and brain, in terms of how seeing happens in the brain and in particular how seeing is an active, not passive, process. Noë takes an enactivist position and questions whether seeing is something that happens in our brain, that happens to us, or whether 'it is something we do, or make or achieve.' (Noë 2015, p. xi-xii). Building on the work of Dewey, Noë claims that art is experience, and that 'seeing (and all kinds of perception) is the organised activity of achieving access to the world around us' (Noë 2015, p. 10). Experience for Dewey, and likewise, Noë, is not a 'series of sensations, in haphazard sequences' but rather 'structured and integral … we make them. We don't just have them. We manage them' (Noë 2015, p. 204).

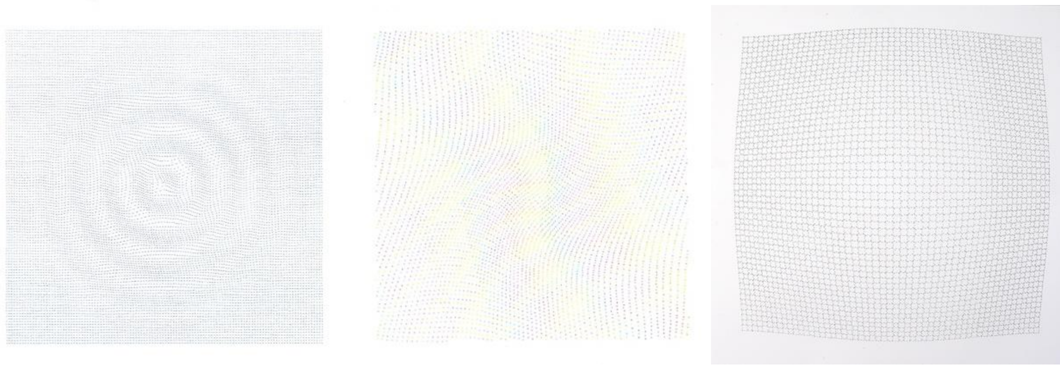

FIGURE 2A: CONSTRUCTED DRAWING: CIRCLING NO 2:17, PENCIL ON PAPER 50X50CM 2017. FIGURE 2B: DRAWING NO 33, CHROMATIC FIELDS, COLOUR PENCIL ON PAPER, 40X40CM 2010. FIGURE 2C: DRAWING NO 28, GATHERING, 40X40CM, 2011. PHOTOS LORRY EASON.

Mindfulness

As someone whose mind is prone to wander and drift easily, I initially began to explore meditation as an aid to concentration and a means of cultivating stillness, awareness and attention. I have found the writings by Jon Kabat-Zinn (2013,1994), the founder and director of the Stress Reduction Clinic at the University of Massachusetts Medical Centre a particularly helpful guide to developing a personal practice. He describes mindfulness succinctly as discovery through a 'paying attention in a particular way: on purpose, in the present moment, non-judgmentally (Kabat-Zin 1994, p. 4). In Full Catastrophe Living, Kabat-Zinn provides straightforward, practical techniques as a guide to develop a formal foundational practice. In exercise no. 1 Kabat-Zinn outlines seven basic instructions for mindfulness of breathing. It asks us to sit, relax the eyes, feel the breath rise and fall and that we focus on the sensations of the in breath and out breath. When the mind wanders the guidance is to bring it back to the breath, to keep bringing the mind back to the breath and to do this for fifteen minutes each day, whether you want to or not (Kabat-Zin 2013, pp. 52-53). Realising how difficult it is to do this every day, let alone follow the seemingly simple instruction to stay with the breath, I became increasingly interested in 'how the flightiness, the nonpresence of mind can be worked with' (Varela, Thompson, Rosch 2016, p. 24). I began to see how my interest in reductive yet visceral approaches to drawing could be supported and nurtured by exercises for mindfulness practice, as expounded by Kabat-Zinn. These exercises were not just an aid to concentration but formed through a procedural and instructional method in which I would draw in keeping with my breath.

It seems no coincidence that Dewey, whose Art as Experience has informed this text directly and indirectly (through Noë and Johnson in particular), studied and practiced the Alexander Technique and wrote the 'forward to three of F. Matthias Alexanders books '(Jackson 1998, p. 137). While the Alexander Technique is not mindfulness meditation, Philip W. Jackson writes that 'Dewey was no stranger to the kind of advice that Kabat-Zinn offers. He knew what it was like to focus on the act of breathing and on the posture of the body as a means of breaking old habits and establishing new ones' (Jackson 1998, pp. 137-138).

Dewey's influence is also profoundly present in publications by Jacquelynn Baas (2005) and Baas and Mary Jane Jacob (2004, 2009) in which they explore perspectives of pedagogy, contemporary art, and Buddhism. Dewey's writings do not mention Buddhism, yet, Baas claims that 'the roots of American Zen

[Buddhism] are … tangled with those of American pragmatism ...' (2005, p. 58 – my italics). She notes that 'Buddhism is essentially experiential' and that Dewey's conception of art 'is a distillation of experience', in which Dewey resolved the ontological divide between mind-body 'by understanding the mind as a product of natural processes and the web of interactive relationships between human beings and the world (Baas 2005, p. 58).

In her essay, The Space of Art (Jacob 2004) Jacob draws interesting parallels between the practice of art, the method of meditation and the mental space they inhabit. She interestingly asserts that both require not just practice but 'assuming a practice' (Jacob 2004, p. 166). She asserts 'that the space artists depend on to make their art … is … a transition space, a place of pause, a place of wait, to test and then move beyond… it's open… In the space of art dwells the "mind of don't know." Jacob equates this with the Buddhist idea of Emptiness in which she claims the 'Empty Mind or Unknowing Mind' is also the 'Creative Mind' (Jacob 2004, p. 166). The artist Anne Hamilton supports this and suggests 'Not knowing is a permissive and rigorous willingness to trust, leaving knowing in suspension, trusting in possibility without result, regarding as possible all manner of response' (Hamilton 2010, p. 68).

What Jacob describes as 'Empty Mind or Unknowing Mind' are terms which are close to the terminology of 'not knowing' valued by many creative practitioners (Fisher and Fortnum 2013). My view is in accord with the one offered by Dean Hughes (2014), who claims that 'not knowing while illuminating and necessary to creativity, subjugates a key element of its rhetoric.' Because of this, Hughes, advocates a space within 'not knowing" for an attitude that is concerned with dwelling and being resident' and argues that an appropriate schema in which this practice takes place is through repetition and stasis, one that imposes 'restriction and limitation' and dwells within a 'fixed parameter' (Hughes 2014, p. 74).

The artist Wendy Smith 'sees no contradiction between intentionality and not knowing' and suggests 'that when one is seriously in the dark, there is little choice but to be methodical' (Smith 2015, p. 42). After a visit to Japan, where Smith spent time copying the Heart Sutra, she was led to reflect in an interview with Ben Gooding 'that ritualising a practice might be a way of ensuring that however often it is performed … the operation commands one's full attention'. She goes onto say 'As one painstakingly traces the characters of the sutra, one could scarcely be more aware that this is not an exercise in self-expression: this is not about me; the world is not about me. The curious thing about this is that it is not as self-denying or self-effacing as it perhaps sounds. It opens one to the amazingness of everything that isn't oneself, but of which one is somehow apart. In a way, the challenge is to be the best possible nobody that only you yourself can be' (Smith 2015).

This view seems to be in accord with an outlook expressed by Mark Epstein, a therapist influenced by Eastern philosophy, who writes; 'The ability to be present while getting the self out of the way is the great discovery that meditation makes possible … Meditation teaches us how to put ourselves aside, and it shows us that when we achieve this we do not disappear, but we open to a more creative relationship with our minds, our feelings, and the world'. (Epstein 2010, p. 48).

Circus Street (April – June 2015)

Circus Street, adjacent to the main Grand Parade campus of the University of Brighton at the time of making the drawings, was a site soon to be demolished to make way for new educational development. The project involving staff and students asked two questions:

What can drawing offer as a method to explore changing urban spaces? Does drawing offer a valuable means of investigating and recording not only the function but the presence and impact of buildings that are about to be demolished?

When I first went into the space with a group of students to draw, my response was that I could not possibly document the entirety of the building to meet the proposition. So, while the students walked around and chose places to sit and draw, I found myself wandering around and just sitting. This initial sensing of location outside of my regular drawing board studio was a challenge to my customised practice. I remember in discussions leading up to this project saying that I felt no emotional attachment to Circus Street, however, what I was not prepared for were the feelings that this physical space would produce in me.

I felt a sense of not knowing what to do or how to approach the project and a feeling that I needed to be fully present in my body, in the moment-to-moment of the embodied experience of the environment in which I had placed myself. In short, I felt, as it were, 'out of touch.' This sense of longing and unknowing was initially unsettling and disconcerting. What I had not anticipated was the way being in the space provoked and collided with my emotional state. This empty shell of a building, which was once a thriving marketplace, somehow resonated with my particular circumstances. I need to explain; just previous to this project I experienced the death of my father, followed shortly by the death of my mother, as well as being reunited with my long-lost, but not forgotten sister. At the outset of the project I had no intention of speaking about this, and I am struggling as I write as to whether to include such personal material. I have thought long and hard whether to disclose this information and to speak about this in a more detached sense. It seems necessary to reveal this to capture the early phases of a project that was to lead onto a new body of drawings (Figure 3a, 3b).

Dwelling, being present in the space, just sitting and being still was a small but significant part of how I began to approach the project. This setting allowed me to connect to the space and the space to communicate to me. It allowed me to be exactly where I was in this moment in time, both my physical and emotional state (Bullen, Fox, Lyon 2017, p. 133).

My notes at the time asked questions about whether these feelings could be communicated. Was I interested in attempting to share them? Is it even possible to fully share a subjective experience? What was it about this place/space at this precise moment in time that triggered such an instinctive response? I remember feeling inadequate, having a sense that my intellectual faculties trailed behind. There were questions, but I kept returning to a perception and that there seemed to be no separation between being, doing and my lived experience and that I wanted to carry out an inquiry that 'does not assume the separation of subject and object and does not observe a distance between the researcher and the practice of art (Borgdorff 2007, p. 5).

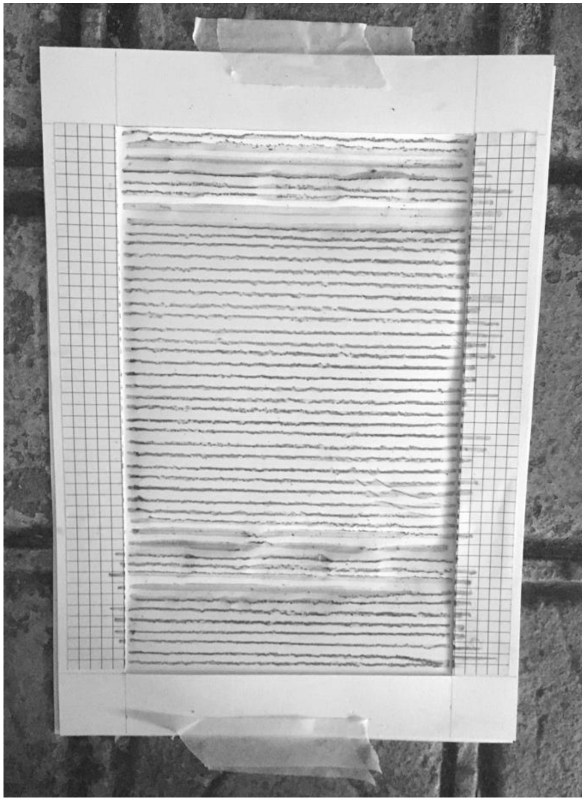

FIGURE 3A: BREATH DRAWING NO 16, PENCIL ON PAPER, 21X29CM, CIRCUS STREET, BRIGHTON MAY 2015. FIGURE 3B: BREATH DRAWING NO 16, IN SITU. PHOTO'S LORRY EASON.

My first attempts at drawing were graphite rubbings the frottage of surfaces to create a record of the process, topographical translations of place and archival documentation. The results of these, while visually appealing, and capturing something of a sense of place, did not seem wholly appropriate. An interest in reductive and rule-based approaches led to a simple system, predicated on 'touch,' 'receptivity' and a 'balance of agency and surrender' (Bullen, Fox, and Lyon, 2017, p. 130). Using this system, I made a drawing by placing paper onto uneven surfaces, upon which I attempted to draw a straight line from left to right with the aid of a pencil and ruler. To draw a 'straight' line was rarely in my grasp because of the resistance and disruption caused by the surface on which the paper was placed. Consequently, each line became a record of the moment of its making, determined by factors that sent the line in directions beyond my control. This act left a visible line but also a physical embossing and occasional rupture to the surface of the paper. With the drawings made at Circus Street I became particularly concerned with the necessity of a direct and physical process - the relationship between the hand, the drawing material, the straight edge and paper; how my body was positioned in the space as I knelt, stood or sat. 'While lines demarcate and define objects', wrote Dewey, 'they also assemble and connect … Lines express the ways in which things act upon one another and upon us' (Dewey 2005, pp. 104-105). Importantly, I began to draw with a rhythm that was concurrent with my breathing. I drew each line on the in-breath, as one might count the breath in mindfulness meditation.

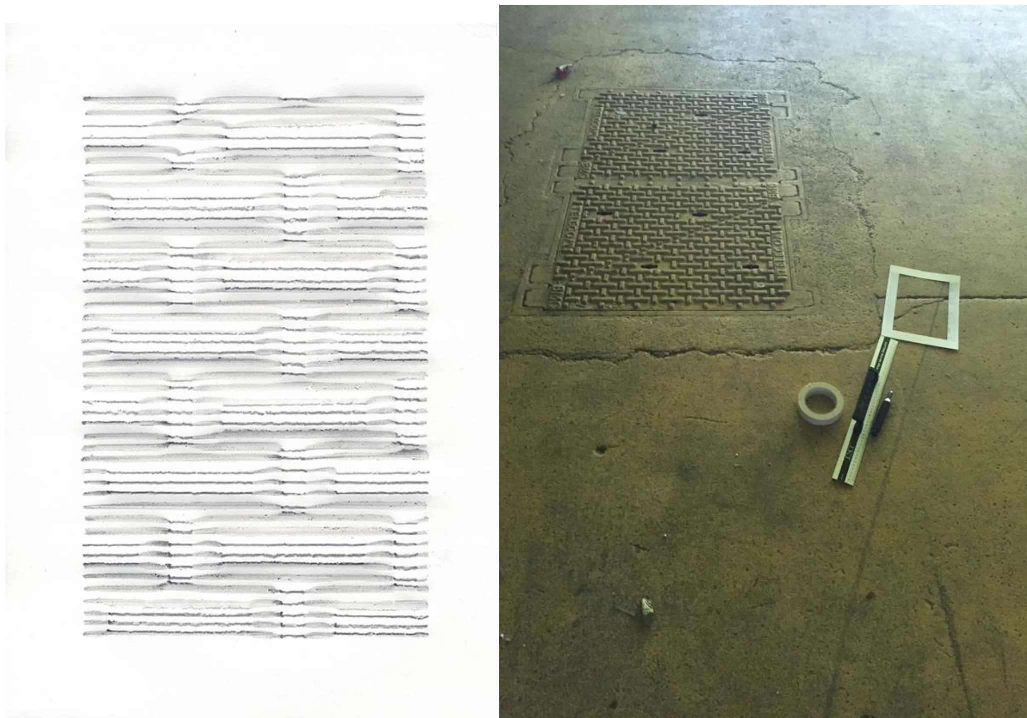

FIGURE 4A: BREATH DRAWING NO 17, PENCIL ON PAPER, 21X29CM. FIGURE 4B CIRCUS STREET, BRIGHTON MAY 2015: PHOTO'S LORRY EASON.

Shortly after making the Circus Street drawings my thinking was extended and challenged by a research project Touching the World Lightly[2]. I began to utilise the structures I had created for a set of drawings called Gatherings (2011 - 2016) and to formulate these as laser cut constructions in wood and card, upon which I placed paper and drew. Primarily, I was looking for a means to continue to explore ideas of drawing, touch, and breath, by contriving my surfaces which directed composition. In these drawings, I used a variety of different sizes and grades of graphite, from soft blunt chunky sticks, a flat Carpenters pencil (sometimes with a notch carved into the lead to produce parallel lines), to finely sharpened points. I used different rulers, from a standard straight edge to a French curve, to a ruler with a serrated edge designed for tearing decal edges on paper. I tested different papers and found 45gsm layout paper was robust enough to hold the pencil line, while being fragile enough, allowing for the surface to be broken. Making these drawings enabled me to build upon the drawings made in Circus Street, while simultaneously testing material possibilities through handling of a variety of tools (Figure: 5a, 5b).

[2] Touching the World Lightly is a project based in the School of Art, University of Brighton, which asks: how we can understand the pivotal value of touch and how do we articulate the generative nature of drawing practice-based research? http://blogs.brighton.ac.uk/ttwl/

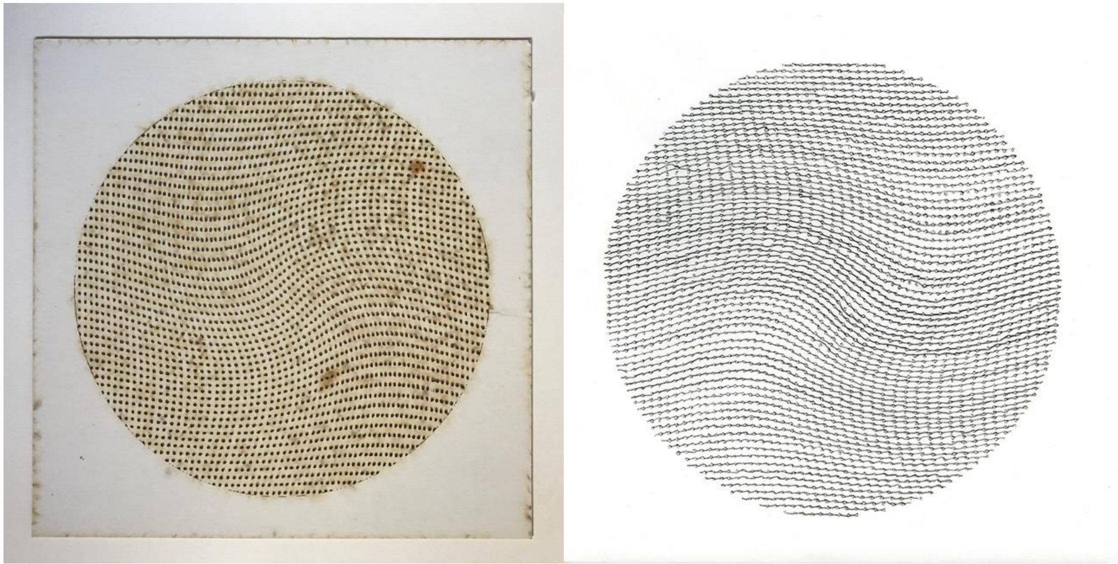

FIGURE 5A, LASER CUT STENCIL, FIGURE 5B, BREATH DRAWING 22.06.16, PENCIL ON PAPER, 30X30CM. PHOTO'S LORRY EASON.

Gordon House (May-August 2018)

The main body of work in which the changing nature of a place, manual drawing and mindfulness are fully aligned is through a set of drawings which are the result of two residencies at Gordon House, Margate. These were made possible by invitation from Lucy Lyons who suggested 'I examine, excavate and dissect the real and fictional hidden within the fabric of the interior' of the soon to be renovated Grade II listed Georgian building. The house is a five-story assortment of surfaces, a medley of original architectural features and modifications that are particular to previous inhabitants' tastes.

Here I decided to limit, restrict and work further within a 'fixed parameter' as a means to inhabit and stay close to the physicality of the surfaces of both the environment and the paper. I was also attempting to reside in the background, so to speak, to allow things to occur, to bring forth something into appearance, through co-emergence with materials, tools, and environment (Figure: 6a, 6b).

As in previous work, the drawings were made by placing layout paper cut to 30x30cm onto the uneven surfaces. For these drawings, I cut an isolating gridded window of 20x20cm. I chose a square to avoid choices of horizontal or vertical formats, thus leaving all compositional decisions to the subjective determination of where to place the paper. Drawing a line was aided by the use of the gridded window acting as a kind of viewfinder to frame and isolate a particular surface. For each drawing, I used the same pencil (an HB graphite stick, in a holder), the same ruler and the same size and weight of paper, and drawing each line on my in-breath, while trying to maintain an even pressure. It was this correlation between breath and the drawn line, each inhalation, and exhalation, each continuous action of finding and centering the tracing of the next line, that enabled me to feel fully present in moment-to-moment attention.

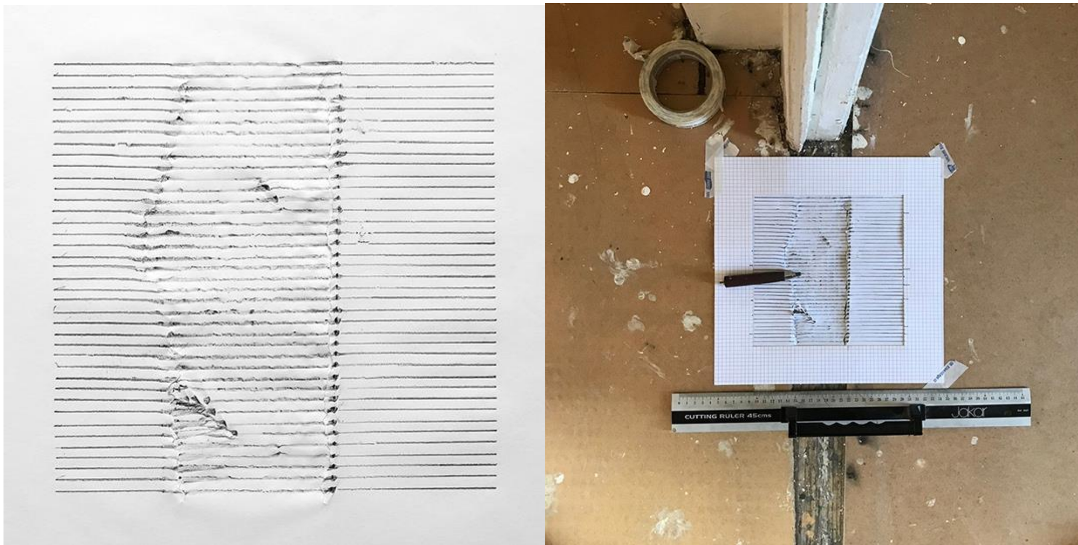

Figure 6a, Breath Drawing no 16 pencil on paper, 30x30cm. Photo Lorry Eason. Figure 6b,

Each drawing is produced in the time it takes to draw 39 horizontal lines with a 0.5cm space between each. Every line takes approximately 3 seconds to draw, with an approximate gap of 6 seconds to reposition the ruler before the next line. Separately each drawing took about 6 minutes from the first drawn line to the last. The drawings were made by using the following surfaces: oak floorboards, plywood, hardboard, chipboard, carpet, underlay, plaster, brick, concrete, different wallpapers, Artex, tongue and groove panels, ceramic tiles and formed plastics.

Figure 7a, Breath Drawing no 22 in process, Gordon House, photo Lucy Lyons. Figure 7b, Breath Drawing no 22, pencil on paper, 30x30cm, 2018, photo Lorry Eason.

Reading between the drawn lines, one notices that the 0.5cm gap is never an accurate measurement, nor is it negative space, instead, it is a fluctuating, pulsing, physical presence, actuated by the drawing process. In fact, in these drawings the whole of the paper is activated: the reverse of each drawing holds and reveals traces and indents, ruptures and inversions, vying for equal status to the front (Figure 6a,6b). Consequently, one can say that there is no back or front, left or right, up or down, and each drawing can be displayed and viewed, picked up and handled in whatever way one chooses in any given

circumstance. Treating the drawing in such a way is not a case of being indecisive or relinquishing responsibility, but rather it is an acceptance of the outcome of the process. A process that involves the cultivation of receptiveness characteristic of meditation practice and trust in the results as they unfold. The drawings enable a suspension of judgment, recognising that there are different and multiple viewpoints for any given situation.

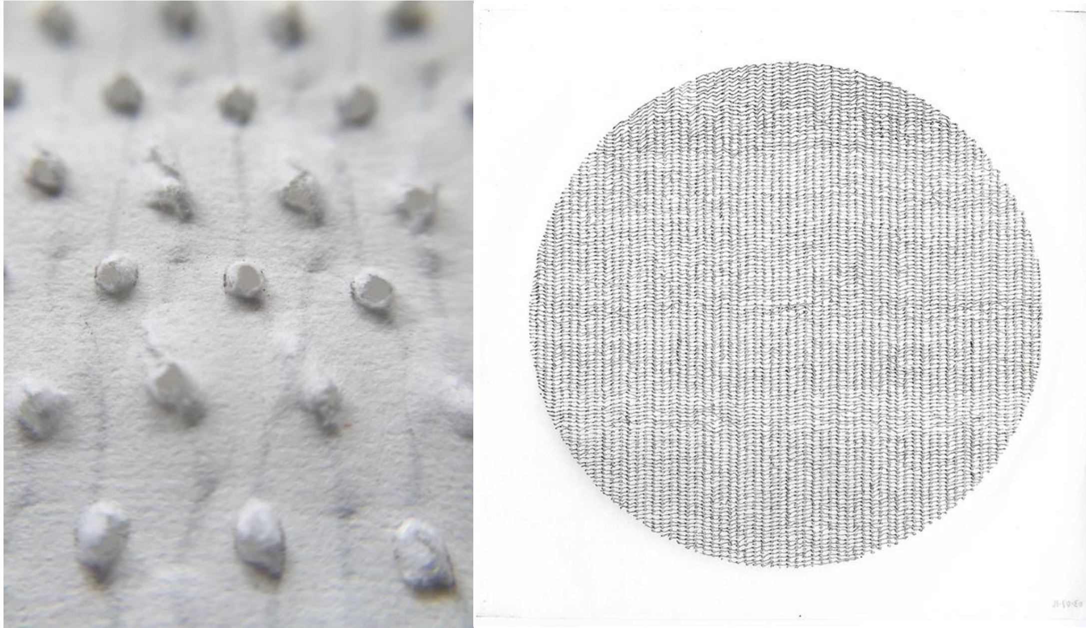

FIGURE 8A, REVERSE DETAIL OF BREATH DRAWING 03.07.16. FIGURE 8B, BREATH DRAWING 03.07.16, PENCIL ON PAPER, 30X30CM 2016. PHOTO'S LORRY EASON.

The drawing process is one of repetition, of doing the same action over and over, time and again, like a metronome, back and forth, back and forth. The consequence of these repeated actions is constant flux and change, where the uneven surfaces are revealed and affect the outcome. Each drawn line displays the textural nuances of the given surface and the inevitable variability of the hand. The contrast between surfaces, the peaks, and troughs, or the humidity and temperature, occasionally cause the paper to buckle and tear, or for lines to jolt and jar. Deborah Harty suggests that 'repetitive processes are phenomenological… and have the potential to record both the drawer's mind and the drawing's own making,' and such a process generates a 'fluctuating' state of consciousness which fuses awareness between internal and external features (Harty 2012, p1). Harty discusses this in relation to Flow theory, and there are parallels between Western psychology (Flow) and Eastern philosophy (Mindfulness) that have been acknowledged by the leading scholar Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi (2002). Both Flow and Mindfulness are seen very much as positive states in which through an engaged practice, one may notice similar qualities of attention, leading one potentially to experience a state in which there is no separation between the self and the object made or action performed, and through which our conscious awareness of time can be altered (Csikszentmihalyi 2002, pp. 53-54).

Nevertheless, during the practice of mindfulness, 'you might' asks Kabat-Zin 'wonder why it is that your mind is so quick to be bored with being with itself…you might wonder what is behind your impulses to fill each moment with something…what drives the body and mind to reject being still (2013:60)? Tim Lomas (2016, 2017) discusses mindfulness in relation to boredom and Zen aesthetics. Lomas (2016) re-evaluates boredom from one historically and commonly considered to be a negative mental state to one

that when worked with, can be a potentially positive place from which to develop awareness, concentration, and creativity. He cites the example of 'wall gazing', which is a form of meditation as practiced in the Zen Soto School. This particular meditation involves the meditator sitting about a metre away from and facing a blank wall for the duration of the meditation. For Lomas, this is an example of how boredom is valued and something that one needs to hold and work with, rather than see as negative. In so doing '… experiential insights can potentially be liberating and transformative' (Lomas 2016, p. 9) and can enhance levels of 'psychosomatic wellbeing' (Lomas 2017, p. 3).

John Cage, whose life and artistic practice was influenced by his exposure to Zen at Columbia University in the 1950s (Larson 2012) wrote of the need to stay with something over time: 'if something is boring after two minutes, try it for four. If it is still boring, then eight. Then sixteen. Then thirty-two. Eventually one discovers that it is not boring at all' (Cage 2009, p. 93). Writing on Cage's interest in Zen, Peter Jaeger suggests that 'boredom provides a welcome state for the development of concentration…'. He claims that boredom is accepted in '…all schools of Buddhist meditation, especially Zen as it is practiced in the West because Western culture is so heavily focused on the desire for excitement. The mindful awareness of boredom provides a strong antidote to that desire' (Jaeger 2013, p. 81).

Working with boredom in an experiential sense, as part of formal mindfulness practice, you may encounter how much of one's time is focused on desire, a quest for excitement and newness, or merely the ever-present 'to-do' list. In the context of habitual, procedural and repetitious drawing I can testify to a constant stream of thoughts arising. Should I vary the paper, draw to the edge of the paper, draw on a different scale, try a different pencil or a pen, use colour, draw lines vertically and right to left, rather than horizontally left to right, draw using a curved ruler or without a guiding ruler at all, draw diagonally, or draw directly onto the wall? Do anything but stay with and be present? Perhaps this is a legacy of my art school education which, as Hughes contends, 'values overt difference in creative thought,' one in which 'difference always looks to what is not present in a situation' (Hughes 2014, p. 74).

Final Remarks

I do not wish to dismiss the values of artistic experimentation. There was a period during the making of this body of work, where I tested various materials and technologies, albeit within a limited frame. My emphasis here, though, after Hughes is a space for 'dwelling', which for me is achieved through alignment of mindfulness and methodical drawing. So, if mindfulness is 'Knowing what you are doing, while you are doing it' (Kabat-Zin 2013, p. 16), then the idea of dwelling, and being methodical, means paying attention to what you are doing without distraction. When certain thoughts arise, just to let them come and go. I would contend that by staying close to an event, by being 'the best possible nobody that only you can be' (Smith 2015) you allow for a close engagement with the world by being in the middle of it, grappling with tools and materials, spaces and places, emotions and ideas and theories and discourses. I have found that drawing mindfully and reflecting on mindfulness practice allows me to be fully present with my senses so that I can come to inhabit the world and orientate myself through an experiential and practical engagement that is transactional, transformative and experiential. Nevertheless, Varela et al ask 'if the results of mindfulness/awareness practice are to bring one closer to one's ordinary experience, rather than further from it, what can be the role of reflection' (Varela, et al 2016, p. 27).

For Dewey, art is experience, and in a neat linguistic turn, Noë says after Dewey, that '…it's about the work of art' (Noë 2015, p. 133). Noë means that it is the work art does in transforming experience that allows us to shape meanings. Experiences may take place continuously. However, Dewey points out that it is not every experience, but one that '… occurs when the material experienced runs its course to fulfilment', which Dewey maintains 'is constituted by a single quality that pervades the entire experience in spite of the variation of its constituent parts (2005, pp. 37-38). In a recent paper in 'Contemporary Pragmatism,' John Russon (2015), provides useful commentary on 'artistic experience' as 'a way of establishing our intimate engagement with the world.' Russon draws upon Dewey and suggests that; 'Experience is an ongoing process in and through which one gradually comes to "inhabit" one's world, comes to dwell in it as one's home rather than encountering it as alien.' Russon proposes that it is precisely through the development of a connection with the world that allows us to experience not separate realities, but entities that are thoroughly and deeply entwined. (Russon 2015, pp. 40-41). Consequently, it may follow that reflection is not just on experience, reflection is itself an experience - and that reflective form of experience can be performed with mindfulness/awareness' (Varela, Thompson, Rosch 2016:27). Susan Kozel argues that 'Phenomenological reflection is a form of contemplation' and likens this to 'a moving meditation' which 'requires deep levels of focus and the ability to pursue a train of thought or physical impulse as it unfolds and transforms' She suggests that 'contemplation is a form of immersion, of dwelling in a system' (Kozel 2011, p. 213).

What I am proposing is that through a conscious choice to engage in repetitious processes of drawing within particular environments, the 'just sitting' of formal mindfulness, and theoretical reflection on experience makes possible a particular engagement with the world. In this practice, making present and being present align and are two different aspects of the same situation, in which I claim 'presence is…achieved in full understanding of its manifest fragility' (Noë 2012, p. 3). I conclude by saying that we need methods for attuning to our practices as a means to access awareness 'in which the mind is neither absorbed nor separated but simply present and available' (Rosch 2016, p. XI).

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DRAWING WITH THREAD UPON A DUSTER: A PHENOMENOLOGICAL INVESTIGATION OF FEMALE DOMESTIC EXPERIENCE.

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This paper explores the idea that drawing with thread upon duster can be a means of facilitating the phenomenological investigation of the modern-day female domestic experience. Presented through examples of my own creative practice and the development of an ongoing collaborative research project, which position a duster as the focus, it defines the procedural distinctions between drawing with thread and more typical drawing practices whilst investigating relationships between process, form, intention and context.

An exploration of the theory that underpins the concept of phenomenological drawing, citing Merleau-Ponty and Rosand in particular, supports the notion that drawing can embody thinking and experience. The duster is positioned as a catalyst for expression; drawing with thread as a route to unlocking memories of experience. It is argued that drawing 'into' an object can enable a deeper conscious and unconscious understanding of the object's particular materiality and visual language and that by framing the domestic as a context for phenomenological investigation, through an object that 'speaks' of domestic tasks, an embodiment of the domestic experience is made possible.

Female perceptions of domesticity are also discussed whilst referencing the role of stitch to empower and yet reflect the historical powerlessness of women. Additionally, definitions of the domestic experience explore how a phenomenological investigation might give form to the liminal state of tasks that are never fully completed.

Through thread-drawn mark making, an internal response to the context and content of the time spent engaging with the duster is made external, making the drawing of lived domestic experience a phenomenological possibility.

Introduction

This paper discusses drawing research that has evolved from an ongoing practice-based, collaborative project, which explores the contemporary and experiential relationship between women and domesticity by asking for individual perspectives and experiences to be embroidered upon a duster. The role of the duster is to prompt responses, providing a catalyst for expression through the act of drawing into it with thread. It visually identifies the domestic and social focus through its role as a cleaning cloth, then carries and performs these experiences as embroidered dusters through process and display. When discussing the phenomenology of gesture in drawing and painting Paul Crowther writes that '*images made by gesture are thence autographic expressions of the imagination'* (Crowther 2017, p.17). This theory establishes a connection between gesture and a personally identifying mark. I am however seeking to express recollection rather than pure imagination, through stitch-drawn rather than typically mark-made gestures. These stitch-drawings tell their own autoethnographic narratives, connecting personal biographies to the social issues they discuss, through participation, discussion and exhibition, whilst referencing the legacy of women's work through the process of stitch. This research seeks to begin to establish the theory that engagement with an object that visually and physically represents a particular theme, combined with the phenomenological process of piercing and drawing into it with a needle and thread, is a methodology that offers a route to uniquely informed and expressed narratives. In short, I'm asking if drawing with stitch into a duster can provide a new route to exploring and expressing the female domestic experience?

My collaborative 'Women & Domesticity – What's your Perspective?' project, started in 2014. It built upon my existing artistic practice and was partly inspired by the idea that the stitching of statements onto cloth can hold power and become a voice for women (Greer, 2014). Participants include members of the public from every walk of life, without prejudice towards skill or creative capabilities, nor age, social background or gender (although overwhelmingly women responded). The result is a growing collection of over 100 hand-embroidered dusters featuring personal reflections and insights that include poetic quotes, resentful statements, images and fond memories (figure.1).

FIGURE 1: A SELECTION OF DUSTERS FROM THE COLLABORATIVE PROJECT ON DISPLAY AT THE DE LA WARR PAVILION, BEXHILL-ON-SEA, UK, IN MARCH 2016.

The collaborative and outward facing element of this project provokes others into action and provides a platform for ongoing dialogue on the often-silent task of housework, discussing common experiences and commenting upon them without distinction. The collection is regularly exhibited, with accompanying practical workshops, 'performing' through display a collection of voices that call for acknowledgement. My aim throughout this project has been that through stitching and exhibiting these experiences upon dusters, these voices are heard and credited with the appropriate weight of their significance.

Dusters were selected because they are mundane and unadorned. I chose an object that is unacknowledged and kept under the kitchen sink as an aide to visualising the invisibility of domestic tasks. The traditional duster I've selected has a sense of nostalgia and is striking in its vivid yellow with its characteristic red stitched hem; it is pleasurable to embroider too, a reference to the comfort of domesticity. Embroidery was originally selected as a means of expression and embellishment to form a relationship with the past, as historically sewing is often defined as women's work (Barber*,* 1995). Red thread was chosen to match the hems, and because of its historical representation of femininity (Beverley, 2011). This transformation, from humble cleaning cloth to an embellished and significant object, imbues the duster with layers of meaning that are expressed and interpreted through both relational and performative engagement, for both the maker and the viewer relate to the cloth and its purpose; one participatory, one observational. The duster also performs in its own right as an object, embodied with experience through the stitch-drawn gestures it displays and the audience's reading of its purpose. Thus, relation and performance become an interdependent cycle. Whilst artists such as Cornelia Parker make work that challenges particular object associations (Parker, 1996) and others such as Catherine Bertola (2015) use dust to highlight the domestic experiences of women by making it appear as beautiful patterns, my work focuses instead on what happens when participants engage with

an object that speaks of domesticity within a given framework. This is more about the embodiment of an experience through the process of drawing; an investigation of how the perception of '*subject, object and meaning'* (Merleu-Ponty, 1968, p.200) combine to embody the domestic experience, so that the subject, object and meaning become one.

Project Developments

As the project evolved it became apparent that the thoughtful and time-consuming process of hand embroidery prompts reflective thinking and the careful selection of marks and words; something often more considered and insightful in than those simply spoken in related discussions. Through time spent engaged with the object, it was transformed into a catalyst for self-expression. This was evident through changes that happened when participants spent time handling the duster. They often became more reflective, at times even changing their response to the subject. There were also occasions when changes occurred as participants spent time stitching them at home. For example, one woman stitched two dusters; one started in a workshop, one at home. The first discussed the unappreciated invisibility of the domestic tasks she completed, the second discussed invisible tasks that bound her home and family together, a complete change of perspective. Whilst other factors could affect these changes too, it was notable that they always occurred after time spent stitching into the duster. This prompted further inquiry.

My research was directed away from the statement-led approaches, pictured in fig.1, towards the study of drawing and phenomenology through the need to understand the role that engagement with the duster plays in this process. As Merleau-Ponty writes *'phenomenology can be practiced and identified as a manner of thinking'* (1945, p.ix). This *'thinking'* requires a complex relationship between the body and the thing, which can be achieved through drawing because as David Rosand writes it is *'in essence, a projection of the body'* (2002, p.16). By virtue of the time-intensive and physical process of stitching into a duster, participant's '*think*' phenomenologically and consequently express experiences with stitch, through conscious and unconscious responses to the duster as an object. Central to my investigation is the idea that stitching, like drawing, can become a phenomenological tool. The marks made with a needle and thread reference those created through drawing, leaving a trace if unpicked and permanence through application and style, thus becoming the process of drawing with thread. This paper also discusses two workshops that sought to develop the workshop style used earlier in the project, which was discussion heavy and prompted statement-led responses, towards a directed embodiment of domestic experiences through drawing in response to and onto a duster. Whilst the workshops documented here do not fully resolve the research question, they explore possible routes to understanding it, which continue to inform my development of an established methodology for further workshop-led research practices.

Phenomenology in Action

'Drawing is the primal means of symbolic communication' (Downs et al, p.x). This communication need not be literal in order to communicate. When combined with concepts of materiality (of the object) and process (sewing) plus materials (needle, thread and cloth) this idea can be expanded into a performative process that is focused on investigation rather than clear visual messaging or aesthetic outcomes.

It should also be noted that drawing is a physical process. From precise line-based representational drawings to huge expansive gestural pieces rendered in charcoal, each requires the careful positioning of the drawing tool in the hand, considered movements of the arm and elbow, the position and motion of the body as it turns to perform gesture, to look at the subject, and to make marks. The lived experience of domestic tasks is much the same. We choose our task; the careful polishing of a treasured item or the physical push of the vacuum cleaner, the wiping of a surface or the reaching up towards cobwebs. All of these require the hand to hold the tool; the motions of arm, elbow and body; the need to look at the subject and to perform the gestures that wipe dust and dirt from our homes.

In each instance we look, we choose a tool, we position ourselves and make gestures with our hands, limbs and bodies. So, can it be that drawing it itself must be a phenomenological experience? David Rosand writes that *'drawing asserts itself as the main object of concern, the primary other in the subject-object relation'* (2002. p.13) and that *'different modes of drawing represent different modes of knowing and understanding'*. He discusses the *'haptic ambition of assurance'* (2002. p.14) to somehow reach the object in our attempts to record it. But what if we have already reached it, if we are also engaged with and reaching *into* it by drawing with thread? Surely this leads to a deeper phenomenological experience of the object itself. By relating directly with the object, not just the space it exists in, we are able to use drawing with thread as a tool for phenomenological investigation. According to Rosand the act of drawing, of making a line, extends a gesture made not just by the hand but by the body it extends from. We project ourselves, our lives and our dramas through the gesture of that line, even more so when the object *speaks* and the context is given. A connection is made that is not possible through other means, as David Rosand states: *'in no other art – save, perhaps dance – are means and end … so perfectly identified' (*2002. p.16).

Defining the Process of Drawing with Thread

Within the context of this research drawing with thread upon a duster should not be defined as embroidery, which is generally defined as the art of decoratively embellishing cloth with thread, just as drawing should not be defined as observational marks made upon paper. For the purposes of this investigation the focus is on drawing methodologies, so therefore definitions of drawing are challenged and yet underpinned by its *'peculiar dependence on a direct and physical process'* (Downs et al, p.ix). Within the context of drawing, it is worth exploring how working with a needle and thread alters the process and tools required for a different act of mark making, i.e.: how the medium changes the experience and how the materiality of the duster effects the purpose of the process.

Mark making with thread is undeniably a different process to traditional drawing. It is necessary to note the differences between these, in order to begin to understand the phenomenological differences too. Marks made on cloth require piercing, which is not a typical drawing motion. This requires an action into rather than onto the surface, supporting a deeper investigation of the surface because it is necessary to penetrate it and to hold it in both hands. The duster is also more pliable than paper and is therefore handled differently and cannot be easily damaged through excessive manipulation when mark-making (figure.2).

FIGURE 2: DRAWING WITH THREAD

Whereas an observational drawer might look away from their drawing to record an object, direct engagement with the object through stitch concentrates the focus. Whilst this is also true with mark-making focused drawing, when working with thread both the front and back must also be considered, as they are alternately experienced through the process of piercing and turning the cloth. Additionally, the two sides of the cloth look different when completed, resulting in an underpinning set of marks that evidence the making of those on the surface. It is possible that these marks could be 'read' as part of the phenomenological experience too.

The action is different; a push more than a sweep of the hand, although much like a drawing the action affects the way the marks appear; reflecting the skill of their creator but also the experience. Be they neat, messy, tight, loose, small or large, in much the same as an artist expresses with paint or a pencil, stitch too can be expressive. This is a significant difference to embroidery, which must almost always be neat if considered of value, particularly as a *feminine* skill, where skill usually holds precedence over expression (Goggin et al, 2009). The definition of drawing with thread offers release from this constraint but does not conform to a *'definition that confines [drawing] to paper and certain traditional materials'* (Downs et al, p.ix.) It is however possible for the differing methods to support the other; marks can be made as a direct stitch into the cloth but also in response to those made more traditionally on paper, so an interaction between thread drawing and traditional drawing is possible.

Typical drawing tools are held between the fingers but not in the same way as a needle; there is a necessary consideration for the tightness of the thread that follows the mark making tool, which does

not exist with drawing tools where the flow of a line is defined by the point of contact with the surface. When drawing with thread the flow of the line is defined by where the next pierce takes place; if a curve is required then several lines secured by several pierces are needed. This is a significant difference in the way that gesture is expressed. Paul Klee's popular idea of taking a line for a walk investigates the differences in these active lines (Klee, 1973) noting that a flowing line, such as can be drawn with a pencil, can move freely without a goal. An active line that is limited in its movement by fixed points, such as drawn with needle and thread, perhaps has less freedom and more intention but as Rosand writes when exploring the *'reciprocal relationship'* between line and maker, *'once begun, the line becomes more than a means toward an end'* (2002, p12). So, the line is defined by its possibilities in the hands of its creator; whether to express, explore or record. A phenomenologically focused line supports exploration.

Tim Ingold's investigation of lines notes that *'it is not enough to regard the surface as a taken-for-granted back-drop for the lines inscribed upon it'* (Ingold, p.42). He also explores the definition of a line discussing that it by no means limited to those formed through traditional drawing. Dr Samuel Johnson defines lines, amongst seventeen other definitions, as '*a slender string,'* a *'method'* and a *'delineation'* (Ingold, p43). Ingold defines lines as different traces; additive (for example charcoal on paper) or reductive (altering the surface they are imposed upon). Drawing with thread is both; additive because it leaves a layer of thread and reductive because the surface must be pierced. Therefore, because *'the material of the trace and the implement with which it is put on, are one and the same'* (Ingold, p.46). The duster and thread become one object. By virtue of exploring the object in this way, the record and residue of this investigation, '*the surface and the backdrop'*, actually becomes part of the fabric of the object.

Experiencing Materiality

Drawing Now describes drawing as the *'relationship between hand, material and paper'* (Downs et al, p.ix). Drawing into a duster is a different relationship, impacted by our knowledge of its purpose and materiality. Just as the tools and process are significant, so too is the cloth. It is not usual to stitch into a cleaning cloth, they are usually kept under the sink and taken out for the purpose of polishing and wiping away dust rather than embellished with meaning and experience. As Christopher Tilley writes *'things are meaningful and significant … because they provide essential tools for thought. Material forms are essential vehicles for the (conscious or unconscious) self-realisation…'* The duster becomes a tool for thought. Maxine Bristow notes how this *'silent, but, undoubtedly, potent nature of this embedded/embodied material language'* (2011, p.46 ed., Hemmings, 2012) resonates with her own practice. This is also the case with my practice and fundamental to the role that the duster plays in this research. It cannot be any cloth, it must be the duster, which *speaks* of cleaning. A phenomenological investigation of the duster and all it represents through its own materiality, supports the drawing of lived domestic experience.

Context in Search of Knowledge

The context introduced by the identification of the duster as a domestic object is crucial in defining the purpose and focus of the investigation. Conscious knowledge always has an impact on conclusions sought through unconscious investigation if full senses and pre-dated knowledge of the object exist. If I had never seen a duster in a domestic context before and had no idea of its purpose then I might simply

find it soft and colourful. Because I know it is a duster this knowledge is ever present. If we build this into a phenomenological drawing-based investigation then this knowledge surely becomes our starting point.

So, we have knowledge and purpose, what about the fact that I am a woman exploring and seeking to capture domestic experience? Social factors then come into play. As a woman do I feel that I am expected to clean? How does this make me feel? Satisfied like a 1950's housewife straight out of an advertisement, or rebellious, put-upon and angry? Does the duster belong to me or my house? Does it belong to anyone? Is ownership important in considering phenomenological experience? When I draw upon the duster with thread with the purpose of exploring the object and investigating domestic experience I cannot do so without some form of prejudice. As Rozsita Parker writes in her book The Subversive Stitch, history has established embroidery as signifying *'self-containment and submission', linked indissolubly to women's 'powerlessness'* (1984, p.11). The recent Craftivist movement has since established stitch as a voice of power, but whichever way you look at it, the use of stitch establishes certain prejudices that are arguably held most firmly for a woman. Stitch upon a duster is a powerful combination.

The domestic experience

In their essay 'Cleansing Dislocation: Make life, Do Laundry' Aritha Van Herk asks if laundry *'merely declare[s] cleanliness, or if has it come to occupy a liminal representational space, ever present, but never able to represent itself?*' (2008, p.195 ed., Briganti, 2012). Because laundry is a common mundane domestic task often carried out by women it is a useful example to consider. When discussed within the context of dislocation as in Herks essay the focus is in what the act itself communicates but what if we consider the more intangible *'liminal representational space'* instead? Is this what that drawing with thread upon a duster with phenomenological intent seeks to achieve, wherein other methods might succeed only in being figurative or representational? In attempting to represent the experience of mundane domestic tasks does a phenomenological approach offer the necessary scope to give form to a liminal state of being in-between? Is this in fact the only way to represent it? Is the constant liminal state of household tasks being completed and subsequently needing to completed again, summed up best in the saying 'a woman's work is never done', crucial to a definition of the domestic experience?

This raises questions about exactly what the domestic experience is and how it is that haptic drawing upon a duster can somehow contain and express it. Is it the recollection of physically performing domestic tasks, the feelings that arise from completing or reflecting upon them, the connection to the domestic environment that touching, holding and piercing a duster with thread and thread evokes, or a combination of them all? Domesticity provides the context by virtue of the purpose of the cloth and the presentation of the research question but an authentic phenomenological drawing requires conscious and unconscious investigation of the object, in which case could domestic experience be a secondary concern, one that provides a framework but does not define the investigation of the object?

I would argue that the focus on domesticity actually defines the phenomenological investigation by imposing necessary boundaries, which provide focus and are underpinned by the nature and purpose of the cloth itself. Unconsciously there is scope for deeper investigation of the tactile nature of the cloth through touch or smell but more practical associations exist within the unconscious mind as well, so once again the framing of the research question brings us back to the domestic.

Phenomenological Investigation of a Duster: a practical experiment

In an attempt to answer these questions practically I drew into a duster with the purpose of investigating it phenomenologically. In order to focus the practice, I set certain boundaries and framed it within the context of domestic experience with the intent that my marks would hold meaning. The rules were that I must engage with the duster through drawing with thread every day for one month and I must stitch it at home. There was no limit to the minimum or maximum amount of time I could spend on it. I was not permitted to plan my outcome nor to change it. No words were allowed and I restricted myself to a simple running stitch so that the focus would be on the object rather than on the technique.

I discovered that both the process and the outcome mimicked my domestic behaviour patterns. Some days it was just few stitches, sometimes just a touch. On other days I spent hours making marks, enjoying the flow of the stitches into the cloth - the equivalent of a Spring Clean versus a quick sweep. As a graphic designer by training and professional experience it took conscious effort not to be overly concerned with the aesthetics, inevitably however, visual patterns emerged. It is hard to say if this was a phenomenological failing or success on my part.

The natural path that the stitches took were remarkably similar to the motions that my cleaning takes – sweeping and wiping in particular (figure.3a). I think I wipe more than any other domestic action. Circles also emerged (figure.3b) as separate elements, set apart from the other groups of stitches. I often make piles of 'stuff' that are separate from other household detritus, believing that a neat, separate pile of items performs the act of tidying up. It is not unusual for several piles to litter a space, which I then wipe around. These are reflections after the act when considering the final piece, they were not conscious choices but unconscious marks made with domesticity in mind, in a domestic context, with a domestic cleaning cloth. Does this mean therefore that my duster bears witness to an authentic phenomenological investigation? I like to think that it does (figure.3c).

A marked difference of this drawing experience, as compared to making marks on paper, was the way observational references, were made *into* my object of focus. These references were also inspired by touch and thought, rather than sight. Time spent mark-making in this way has become second nature to me now, so there wasn't much conscious thought about the process, but its fluidity was notably different to drawing on paper; the marks took longer to make and therefore I had more time to consider their direction before I made the next one. I don't naturally draw from imagination so the haptic engagement with the duster was usefully all consuming as there was no need to look up to observe and record. I frequently looked beneath the work to pierce the needle again and again so that the drawing became multi-dimensional, dual sided and more textural as it progressed. Jean-Luc Nancy writes of the formative force of drawing, the role of gesture '*not to trace in order to reveal'* but instead to '*find, to seek a form to come*' (Nancy, 2013. p.10). The gestures I made, which were rooted in contemplation, imagination and experience of the duster and the domestic meaning it holds were formed from ideas but not of design. As Nancy writes: *'It is the thought of the thing… its formation, its reformation, or transformation into truth'* that lead the gesture and its mark. The gestures were not hugely expansive, as they might have been on paper, but the patterns they formed and the weight of thread held within the cloth became a gestural record; a thought-led drawing of experience.

Figure 3a: Stitching wiping motions

Figure 3b: Stitching piles

FIGURE 3C: MEDIATING THE MATERIALITY OF THE DUSTER. VANESSA MARR, 2018.

Drawing an Experience

Drawing with thread upon and into a duster whilst contemplating an experience requires imagination and emotion as a route to the necessary expression of meaning, although imagination in this context should creatively recollect the truth rather than literally imagine a new idea. In his reflections on the work of Sartre, Merleau-Ponty considers the quantitative research qualities of imagination and emotion, noting that *'one sees under what conditions the image is presented,'* going on to elaborate that *'the image is never altogether self-sufficient in our conscious life and that it serves only to resume a certain project of thought or to carry references to certain objects'* (1964, p. 59). As discussed, the intention of the duster is to be acknowledged as an object that makes a visual reference to domesticity (in this instance also acting as an image presented for response), so this is a valid starting point. Within the context of this project it is also specifically framed within a domestic context and presented as a route to expression. Participants generally have knowledge of the collection and an introduction to the project is given at the beginning of the workshops, so the '*conditions'* are set up: "here is a duster, use it to express your domesticity". Even outside of this environment, we see a duster and we have experiential knowledge to know its purpose and context, that after all it is the reason it was selected. But, what if we

aim to experience the duster on deeper, phenomenological level? Then we need both conscious and unconscious investigation to support a deeper and more quantifiable understanding.

It is the joining of imagination and experience to the duster whilst it is being stitch-drawn into that is crucial here. Paul Crowther discusses the challenges of imagining and its capacity to '*represent what is not immediately present to perception'* (Crowther, 2017. p.16), which suggests that it can be a route to recollections not held in the forefront of one's mind. He also notes it's '*little noticed'* unifying function. Can contemplative, object focused, drawing with thread channel the imagination towards the recollection and drawn embodiment of an experience? Is imagination the route to the unification of Merleau-Ponty's '*subject, object and meaning?'*

The drawing of an experience that embodies itself as an image *upon* the object (abstract or otherwise) also seems important in this equation. Whilst Merleau-Ponty argues that *'the image is not something observable'* (1964, p.60) and later that *'phenomenological analysis is a clarifying effort'* to '*identify with rigour'* (1964, p.63), the manifestation of our imaginative, emotional recollections through stitch-drawing does embellish the cloth, which is *'observable'* and the '*phenomenological analysis'* of the process brings clarification. It is also noted that these contributing traits that have potential to impact our experience of the thing as we embellish it. The point here is that the image and object become one through the process of phenomenological engagement. We could take the duster and simply illustrate our experiences upon it, but that would be subject only to the context and merely using the duster as a carrier of information, which is not phenomenological. In order to clarify our investigation of the dusting cloth we must engage with it on several levels; consciously employing intelligent knowledge and unconsciously experiencing it in another way.

What is this 'other way?' I would argue that in order to find it, we need to limit and focus our senses. We cannot hear it, and taste is not associated with a cleaning cloth, so sight, smell and touch become our primary means of experiencing it. Sight is notably subject to prejudice of knowledge. If it is removed then other senses are strengthened. Deborah Harty's essay Drawing through touch (2012) explores the phenomenological experiences of drawing with the blind and concludes that when non-sighted people *'experience drawings phenomenologically it helps to improve understanding of the world as experienced through touch'*. When considering Merleau-Ponty's reflections once again we can observe that the participant can 'see' through their other senses, undoubtedly engaging with their 'conscious life' and the given context, but also engaging with something unconscious that allows for a phenomenological exploration of the thing as an object.

Investigation Through Workshops

I sought a means of investigation that brought together conscious and unconscious thought; drawing offered a solution. Whilst most of the responses to workshops from the collaborative project have to date been text based and therefore statement led, drawing has played an important role in the methodology selected by particular participants; what words cannot express is literally drawn upon the duster with thread. These range from literal representations of objects (figure 4 a) that reflect their experiences, to abstract expression (figure 4b). The experience of the object is apparent in the way that the marks are made, in the space that they fill and in the forms that they take. Visually they speak.

FIGURE 4A: DRAWINGS THAT ILLUSTRATE OBJECTS TO REPRESENT FEELINGS OR EXPERIENCES. 'TIME, OR LACK OF IT' BY FELICITY TRUSCOTT, 2016.

FIGURE 4B: DRAWINGS THAT USE STITCH FOR ABSTRACT EXPRESSION – BLOTTED PEN MARKS CREATED DURING CLEANING, THEN STITCHED INTO A 'QUILT'. SARAH WELSBY 2016.

I ran two workshops as a means of practically exploring how my developing theories might play out in practice. They were essentially experiments, which sought to test the reactions and outcomes of the participants if the duster was positioned as the starting point, presented for conscious and unconscious investigation as a catalyst for discussion and response through drawing, rather than as a carrier of the

message as it had previously performed. The participants were not told exactly what to do with the duster as I wanted an authentic response that was framed by their own domestic experiences rather than my suggested interpretation, but they were undoubtedly somewhat prejudiced by knowledge of the project and the sewing tools they were given. I presented the cloth for them to 'read' and we discussed its associated meanings, as a route to prompting their responses. This was also underpinned by discussion of some relevant academic texts. Notably this workshop methodology constantly evolves each time I run it because it is a means of practically developing a clear methodology to ultimately support a more rigorous theoretical approach.

I was invited to run the first workshop of this kind at the Loughborough University Drawing and Phenomenology Conference in 2016. Primarily I wanted to know if drawing would provide a framework for a more authentic investigation. The result was both interesting and rewarding.

I distributed carefully designed packages that told people a bit about the project. These packages ask 'Women and Domesticity – What's your Perspective?' in large type and picture an embroidered duster than is crumpled up ready for use. The workshop had a loose structure; I suggested drawing but everyone was keen to stitch straight away so I read a number of text texts about domesticity to direct and inspire conversation. In hindsight the packs hindered the drawing process as they were too effective in communicating an end product. The workshop was not entirely unsuccessful however and I received positive feedback. One participant chose not to sew but instead used her needle as a tool to make holes in the cloth (figure.5a); another rolled her duster up tightly and embroidered RIP upon it rendering it 'dead' (figure.5b); others folded their dusters and stitched the ends together or changed its form in some way (figure. 5c). I concluded that in this workshop the dusters had indeed been engaged with in a different way to previously because we had focused more on the object (figure.5d). The duster led us to discuss domestic experiences, whereas usually it was the other way around. I wasn't convinced that we'd all been drawing with thread nor that the process was necessarily phenomenological but it was a start.

Figure 5a: Duster with holes made by a needle

Figure 5b: Duster rendered 'dead'

FIGURE 5C: DUSTER WITH ALTERED FORM

FIGURE 5D: A WORKSHOP PARTICIPANT INVESTIGATING THE DUSTER

The next opportunity came at the Marks Make Meaning Symposium and exhibition at the University of Brighton in March 2017, where once again I ran a workshop. This time I led with drawing and did not give out packages. Each participant was given an A2 sheet of paper, a soft pencil and an unfolded duster. They were asked to close their eyes, to touch and engage with the duster whilst simultaneously making

marks on the paper, which was intentionally large enough to accommodate the arm-wide gestures that are typically made when cleaning (figure 6a). At the same time, I read a number of texts with a domestic theme. Interestingly people began to scrunch and stroke their dusters, they lifted them to their faces to smell them and touch them to their cheeks. When they opened their eyes and began to work with a needle and thread about half way through the workshop, the scrunched forms mostly remained rendering more sculptural outcomes (figures 6b). Some tore their dusters, notably one in particular that represented domestic violence (figure 6c); another painted hers black; but for the most part participants held their dusters in the forms they would for cleaning and fixed them this way with stitch. Form mirrored the need for gesture, creating a mass of cloth that filled the hand, exploding around the fingers, at the edges; an object prepped ready for its cleaning task (figures 6d and e). Stitched marks were purposeful rather than pretty, they did not look like embroidery but more like the marks made on paper earlier in the workshop. The marks communicated an internal response to the context and content of the time spent engaging with the duster. As such they communicated but did not illustrate or embellish, the focus was on expressing the experience of engaging with the object (figure 6f). This was an exciting discovery.

FIGURE 6A: MARKS MADE WITH A PENCIL WERE DEVELOPED BY DRAWING WITH THREAD UPON A DUSTER

Figure 6b: Marks made with a pencil mirrored with thread and through form

Figure 6c: A torn, then mended, duster referencing the experience of domestic violence

Figure 6D: Stitched duster form, bound with thread, ready for use

Figure 6E: Stitched duster form, with folds flattened by thread drawings

FIGURE 6F: EXPRESSING THE DOMESTIC EXPERIENCE WITH DUSTER AND THREAD

Following these first exploratory workshops I concluded that the duster can indeed be more than a canvas and that it can lead thoughts and associated drawing actions towards an embodiment of a personal domestic experience. However, the method needed refining and defining. With these discoveries in mind I have since developed a method that simply leads participants through a series of haptic, sensory and recollective prompts. Their reactions to the duster are first invited through invitations to touch and smell the cloth with closed eyes whilst simultaneously making marks on paper with pencil. Next, they are prompted to translate and build upon these with a needle and thread onto the duster with open eyes, and so their investigation of the duster continues intuitively. This method is still being refined before true qualitative data can be captured and analysed. It has been inspired by the following theories.

Drawing Meaning from Memory

Fundamental to this investigation is the time taken to touch and hold the duster through the prolonged application of stitch, and the role of this stitch as a record of experience. Because this experience has passed we rely on our memory to recount it, which is subject to influences past and present. June Crawford et al sought to construct meaning from memory in their phycological study of emotion and gender inspired by Frigga Haug’s collective work on memories of female sexualisation. My study does not explore emotion specifically but it does explore gender specific recollections of an experience upon which emotion has a bearing, so some useful comparisons can be made. Both studies used a form of reflective story writing within which collaboration and sharing were also key, much like my workshops and exhibited collection.

Neither makes an obvious reference to drawing or phenomenology but when discussing the necessary *'tools of remembering'* Haug apparently seeks a *'key image'* to draw herself into the time and place of the memory. (1983, p.71). She regrets that this does not work for everyone but discusses the idea that smell and colour, or other senses, could have the same effect. The duster has potential to stimulate all of these. Could it be that by engaging several senses through the act of drawing with thread that we open a path towards memory and experience that is otherwise limited? Crawford's research notes that memories of experience can be subjective, so therefore potentially impacted by conscious thought, but also discusses the role of memory work in *'uncovering the processes of the construction of self'* (1992, p.39). The phenomenological experience with the duster is intended to be a route to expressing associated experiences of self, i.e.: perspectives on the relationship between a woman and her domesticity, so if a woman can access her experience in this way then in theory it is a more complete reflection, because both the conscious and unconscious mind are engaged.

Conclusion

Drawing with thread upon an object that 'speaks' offers considerable opportunities for a phenomenological investigation that embeds meaning into the object itself from the first point of engagement. Within what is fundamentally a material experience, both record and residue become one, consolidating conscious and unconscious responses into a collection of marks where gesture and form make meaning. The piercing of the duster through the act of drawing with thread taps an 'impulse' and 'energy' that is 'gathered from an entire culture and history'; from an 'experience' that is presented and performed in the 'vibration of the mark' (Nancy, 2009, p.101) upon the duster. In my opinion, there is no deeper way to gather, present and perform the female domestic experience.

The experience of drawing in this way changes the methodology and outcome through differences in action, touch and gesture, whilst the domestic focus effects the purpose of the process. Limiting the senses; piercing, folding, creasing and turning the cloth; all prompt a drawn response that demands complete engagement with the object. Whilst it can be argued that skill with a needle differs from that of drawing, the purpose of this research is investigation, so differences in stitch length or application support the presentation of meaning and evidence a potentially deeper engagement with the cloth.

Context and personal experiences or prejudices inevitably effect the way the duster is approached, particularly due to the gendered focus of the investigation. There may also be differences in responses made at home to those in a workshop due to peer influences or differing experiences of the home space. Personal memories that relate to a domestic context or task can also evoke influencing emotions. There are further aspects of the relationship between phenomenological action and domestic experience to be explored, including the role of collaboration and that which is reflected upon as opposed to that which occurs in action. These are distinctions between experience and action, present and past, performance and exhibition.

The brilliant bright yellow of the duster is easily recognized. It is an object that makes an easy reference towards to a domestic context, in particular the liminal state of ever repeating tasks such as dusting. Drawing has the potential to support a phenomenological investigation through its concern with the body-object-focus relationship; drawing with thread takes this even further into a relationship that reaches into the object itself. Within a phenomenological investigation of female domesticity through a

duster, drawing with thread is a process that enables a full investigation of the object and its potential to hold and present meaning (figure 7).

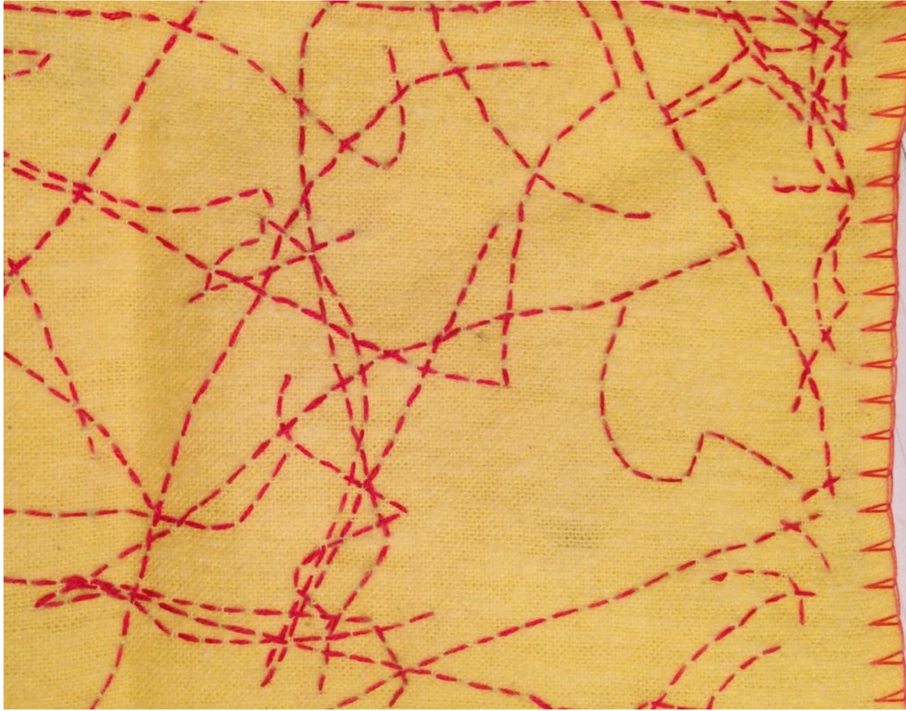

FIGURE 7: DRAWING WITH THREAD UPON A DUSTER

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MAPPING THE COMMON GESTURE

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The *Common Gesture* collaborative drawings are created through a series of directives that cultivate drawn relationships between body, material, and surface, between visual layers of gestures, signs, and marks, and between individual drawing participants and their collective presence. As an experiment in guided marking, graphic gaming, and shared creative labour, the drawings investigate both the limits and the potential of orchestrated group drawing. In the context of phenomenological discourse, the *Common Gesture* is a site of intersubjective drawing experience, wherein the image is figured and refigured according to the spatial rhythms produced by the material gestures and design strategies of the makers as enacted within, and emerging from, the drawing itself. This essay charts the evolution of a *Common Gesture* drawing developed at the TRACEY Conference *Drawing || Phenomenology: tracing lived experience through drawing* held at Loughborough University in September 2017.

Mapping the *Common Gesture*

The *Common Gesture* is a large-scale collaborative drawing process designed to cultivate play between randomness and structure, between visual, material, and conceptual layers, and, perhaps most vitally, between people, their gestures, graphic symbols, and embodied ideas. This process-driven workshop affords insight into how drawing may be considered as a form of phenomenology, one in which participants' direct physical and dialogic experiences with one another are graphically traced within the auto-figurative space of the drawing. Meaning is derived through the drawing of the thing itself, as it evolves within its specific time, place, and circumstance of creation.

Here, I will consider how the *Common Gesture* drawing process lends material form to the questions posed by the conveners of the 2017 TRACEY Conference, *Drawing||Phenomenology: tracing lived experience through drawing,* queries central to the larger concern of how drawing is phenomenological: "When viewing drawings, is it possible to trace the movement of a drawer's mind and body? How can drawing trace the physicality of spaces? Is materiality a necessity in drawing the trace of lived experience? Are all drawing processes phenomenological?" Each iteration of the *Common Gesture* drawing affords insight into phenomenological attributes of drawing as both action and object, while at the same time suggesting that drawing works as a site of multi-directional philosophical inquiry, a physical space in which concepts may, if only fleetingly, come to light in material and embodied form. The *Common Gesture* drawing enacted at the 2017 TRACEY Conference provides a prime instance of how drawing process and outcome alike can embody multiple modalities of marking, ideation, and auto-figuration.

While acknowledging the centrality of the work of Maurice Merleau-Ponty in considering the relationships between phenomenology and drawing, I find the meditations of philosopher Hans-Georg Gadamer proving equally vital to my evolving understanding of the experiential work being done by, and within, the *Common Gesture* drawings. Gadamer's hermeneutic phenomenology, while centered on language and its interpretation as an act of meaning creation, bears strong relevance when one imagines collaborative drawing as a kind of conversation, held in the language of bodily gesture and mark.

> *The dialogical character of his philosophy is such that Gadamer always interprets the matters themselves as the events which occur 'between' people and their tradition - the common understandings which emerge in a dialogue and which go beyond the intentions of the speakers. A genuine dialogue makes truth manifest beyond the subject: 'a genuine conversation is never the one we wanted to conduct.' (Moran 249).*
>
> *It is a phenomenology of understanding, of sense-making through the process, the dialectic, the conversation between participant-actors and the symbols they use to communicate… In this kind of conversation, the understanding reached is 'neither mine nor yours and thus exceeds the subjective beliefs of the partners in discussion.' (Moran 250).*

Both Merleau-Ponty and Gadamer emphasize, in varying degrees, the dialectical nature of phenomenological experience, the ongoing interplay and influence between environment and being, between subject and object, bodies of flesh, and flesh of the world. It is this sense of *the between-ness* that is at the heart of the eponymous impulse to "map the common gesture" in this essay, lending

attention to the relationships that emerge and evolve among, between, and because of, bodies, minds, marks, and materials working in concert through a semi-structured inscriptive practice.

A range of definitions of *mapping* operate here: “A diagram or collection of data showing the spatial arrangement or distribution of something over an area”; “To associate (a group of elements or qualities) with an equivalent group”; or, from mathematics, “An operation that associates each element of a given set (the domain) with one or more elements of a second set (the range)” (Oxford Dictionaries). Similarly, the choice of *common* references myriad aspects of the project, and resonates with almost every definition of the word. One sees the *prevalence* of the marks, whether the frottage-generated dots numbering in the thousands or the lines connecting them, the *simplicity* of geometric forms and the adoption of a *basic* gestured vocabulary of spiral, square, circle, triangle, or the deployment of *familiar* graphic images of eyes, hearts, and hands. A trademark of the drawings is an often-*unsophisticated* mark, a quality due in part to the material used (wax crayon), the time constraints imposed (often strict), and the prior artistic training of the participants (sometimes little to none). The marks are *shared by, coming from, or done by more than one person*, and the drawing’s production relies upon *collective and communal* marking. Choices about how to proceed with the drawing are made by *popular* agreement, with a majority decision pointing the way forward. The paper surface itself is equivalent to *a piece of open land for public use*, and, in at least one instance early on, succumbed to a tragically overworked fate (Oxford Dictionaries). Finally, *gesture* is cast in multiple roles as well, as “a movement of part of the body, especially a hand or the head, to express an idea or meaning” (Oxford Dictionaries), but also in the drawing-specific context of the line that works to capture the essence of that which is being observed or expressed.

Project Background

I designed and launched the *Common Gesture* collaborative drawing process in 2009, and have facilitated eighteen workshops to date in the US and UK. It emerged directly out of my studio practice, one driven by large-scale recursive organic patterning, mixed-media gestural marking, and social interactivity and engagement. As a collection of layers of inscribed gestures, debated aesthetic decisions, and communal symbol-making, the *Common Gesture* drawing process offers insight into how groups may generate a shared and internally-referential language of mark. Participants devise graphical games and strategize with partners and teams as they seek ways to create dynamic compositions, a sense of visual space, and color harmonies within the physical arena of the paper. During production, we discuss how body, mark, and material work in concert to create images that are imbued with intention and, by extension, meaning. Every drawing shares a similar set of rules of execution, which results in drawings that are nearly identical in process yet quite different in visual outcome, each a non-linear document of collaborative movement, marking, gaming, and choice. The drawings provide a structure to democratically and experientially arrive at a vocabulary of drawn symbols and patterns that can be accessed by each drawing participant, a network of marks that replicate and evolve in relation, and in response, to one another. Understood as a whole, a *Common Gesture* drawing is an auto-figurative record of shared bodily, conceptual, and material experience and, by its very nature, phenomenological.

In “The Common Gesture: Drawing in Relation,” included in *Gestures of Seeing in Film, Video, and Drawing* (Gronstad et al, 2017), I presented a method for producing these drawings executed through both aleatory and intentional means, using simple and highly adaptive drawn gestures of sign. The eighteen collaborative drawings executed over the past decade were each created under a variety of circumstances, in periods of time ranging from three to twenty hours, in spaces from cavernous galleries

to intimate classrooms, working with as few as twelve to over two hundred participants, from college students claiming no artistic skill to professionally-trained artists.

The drawing unfolds through a series of guided directives. In each directive, participants are asked to generate a particular kind of mark, to develop and play a graphical game, or to discuss, advocate for, and replicate a particular pattern of symbols or colors. Makers are encouraged to adhere to directives as closely as possible, while embracing the possibilities within each rule. Conversation, deliberation, and reflection occur between each of the latter stages of production, as we analyze the drawing and determine by majority vote how the formal design and conceptual logic of the drawing will proceed, based upon what is currently manifest on the page and the capabilities of the materials at hand. Each *Common Gesture* drawing is executed on a large roll of black paper, with the smallest dimensions of 5’x20’ up to 11’x40’, using white wax China markers and color and black oil pastels as the only marking materials.

While I facilitate the overall drawing process, the decision-making that determines the specific form and content belongs wholly to the participants, yielding results that are unique to each iteration of the drawing. It is vital to have drawing unfold in time, through physical drawing experience and engaged deliberation as it occurs between participants, as opposed to showing a finished work and saying this is the objective toward which the group should be working. In the life of the drawing, there is an overall movement from visual chaos to some kind of overall compositional order. The question pervades of what is gained and what is lost in this movement, and recognizing into what graphical habits and impulses our drawing bodies may default.

Directive One: The Dot Matrix

Each drawing starts by covering a hard floor surface with thousands of grains of rice and the contents of participants’ pockets, typically coins or keys, anything that can lay flat and not be damaged if stepped upon. These randomly-distributed elements are then completely covered by the roll of black paper. Each participant is given a white wax China marker to break into small pieces. Using the flat edge only, and working on hands and knees, the goal is to rub with enough pressure to bring forth the textures of the elements beneath the page, creating a frottage drawing of the rice and coins that fills the entirety of the page. Participants may alter the speed and pressure of the mark and the expanse of their reach. They may layer upon on another person’s set of marks or break the crayon into smaller parts to change the width of the mark. Given that the wax material is indelible, and the paper quite sturdy, participants can walk or sit on any part of the drawing without risk to the image. If working with an 11’x20’ page, one must physically walk or crawl upon the drawing to cover the entirety of the surface. Marks are often more concentrated closer to the edges, reflecting early hesitation to mount the page as a way to expand one’s physical reach.

In this first phase, the drawing approach is workman-like and proceeds quickly, as drawing on hands and knees can be physically uncomfortable (adapted positions are available for those who cannot work on the ground). The bodily gesture in this phase is one of kneeling, crawling, and sweeping the wax crayon, finding the limited number of ways to make the mark, and often colliding with other bodies performing same action. The resulting marks are chaotic and display little to no sense of organization. There is some slight differentiation and variation of mark quality, mainly due to physical pressure and speed of marking. Material and body are the main factors in play: the China marker that is quickly worn down through abrasion, the black paper, the frottage elements under paper, and the kinetic actions of

crawling, stretching, and rubbing. Participants often observe that the initial page of marks resembles a star field, with thousands of white dots in a black expanse, linked by gauzy traces.

Directive Two: The Laying of Lines, The Tying of Knots

After the frottage material is removed from beneath the marked page, participants take up positions on the edges of the paper, directly across from a partner situated on the opposite side. The instruction is to chart a path through the thousands of marks using a line that meanders from dot to dot, always moving toward a dot that is located spatially in front of the previous, traveling from paper's edge to the middle. The aim is for each player's line to intersect their partner's line at the same dot, near the middle of the page. When players encounter each other's lines, they then are asked to "draw a knot", however the partners choose to interpret the structure and meaning of a knot. After drawing a knot of line, each drawer's line then proceeds back to the paper's edge, following a different path from the first. This sequence is repeated two and a half times within the range of bodily reach, with each round establishing a different chain of connected dots, and coming to rest near the center of the page with one's partner, five lines later. There are a fairly limited number of ways this can be executed, yet the variety of mark that emerges is greater than in the first phase, depending on each drawer's individual choices around pressure, speed, angularity of line, and strategy for which dots to connect. The process produces an organic gridiron of meandering, loosely parallel, lines, with a chain of bundled, knotted, marks distributed roughly through the center of the page.

FIGURES 1 AND 2: DIRECTIVES ONE AND TWO, UNIVERSITY OF OKLAHOMA

Directive Three: Invent Game. Draw, Teach, Repeat.

Once paired drawers meet in the middle a third time, they must then devise a game to be played between them that builds upon the framework of existing marks and lines. The game must be predicated on a set of articulatable rules and involve inscribing marks on the paper surface that layer upon the existing graphic landscape. It can be based on established games, mazes, or puzzles that involve pictorial or written language, and "winning" is not a necessary condition. There is no spatial limitation as to where the game can be played on the page, but it must remain within the physical boundaries of the

paper. Each player abides within the drawing and the traces of process; the gaming of the page through drawing both opens the potential of the marks and limits the play to what is suggested by drawing and drawers alike. The game is played for approximately fifteen minutes, generating traces of its playing, *through* its playing. The relationship to Gadamer's theory of connection between the human act of play, the experience of a work of art, and phenomenological notions of auto-figuration are perhaps most present in this act. In "The Play of Art," speaking to artistic creation, he states:

> *For in human fabrication as well, the decisive moment of technical skill does not consist in the fact that something of extraordinary utility or superfluous beauty has emerged. It consists rather in the fact that human production of this kind can set itself various tasks and proceed according to plans that are characterized by an element of free variability. Human production encounters an enormous variety of ways of trying things out, rejecting them, succeeding, or failing. 'Art' begins precisely there, where we are able to do otherwise. Above all, we are talking about art and artistic creation in the preeminent sense, the decisive thing is not the emergence of a product, but the fact that the product has a special nature of its own. It intends something, and yet it is not what it intends. (Gadamer 125).*

At the conclusion of fifteen minutes, each pair of drawers must join with an adjacent pair to negotiate how their two separate games may be combined into one. Rules evolve, emerge, drop away, or are reconfigured to allow the foursome to play the new drawing game together for another fifteen to twenty minutes. Here, the marks are often at their most liberated, complex, and expressive. The games generate geometric figures, elaborate visual patterns, bodily outlines, scrawled signatures, renderings of realistic subject matter, combinations of letters and numbers, all manifesting as self-contained logics of play. Play is continued until the surface is layered with the visual traces of collective gaming. The material of the wax crayon is such that all traces are visible, with accumulation being the only method of obscuring a mark.

FIGURES 3, 4, 5: DIRECTIVES 3 AND 4, LOUGHBOROUGH UNIVERSITY

Directive Four: Seeking Gestalt

Participants then walk both the surface and perimeter of the drawing to survey the evidence of their drawn games from every angle, occupying the role of critical viewers of the drawing as a whole. The drawing at this stage is typically visually jarring and muddled, with no obvious unifying design or compositional principles in operation; marks read as disconnected in both form and intention, with shared gestures dominating discrete spatial areas. It is a collection of sets of unrelated symbols and traces of play, often united only through simple recurring geometric forms: circles, squares, triangles, polygons, and spirals, the most fundamental of Euclidian shapes, and common elements of several otherwise disparate games played in white wax crayon on the black ground.

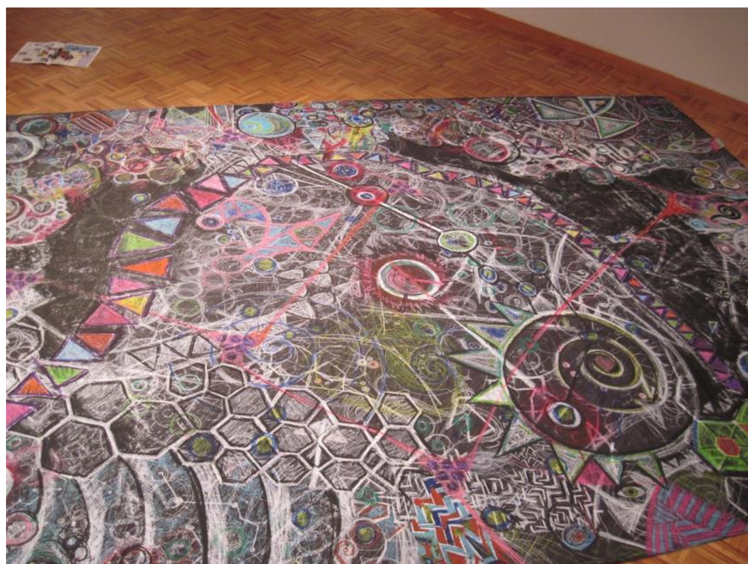
The question for group debate is then raised: what patterns generated within the individual games are seen as both visually and conceptually compelling to the majority of drawers, and why? Compositional integrity is introduced as an eventual goal for the drawing as a whole, with emphasis placed on creating visual passages and flows to unite the image from side to side, edge to edge. Asked to shelve the agenda of perpetuating one's own game, drawers nominate, discuss, and vote upon the top three existing visual forms to be replicated throughout the whole, to be drawn by the entire group. Based upon those selections, three teams of drawers are formed, with each tasked to repetitively draw one of the three elements, further overwhelming the surface. Questions of scale, thickness and quality of marked line, contrast, and directional movement are all part of the conversation. Clear emphasis is placed on cultivating awareness of what the drawing itself suggests as the next formal steps, and participants are asked to react to what they perceive are the most compelling needs of the image as seen within the present, experienced, moment. Gestalt design principles of similarity, continuation, closure, proximity, figure/ground, and symmetry/order are all evoked in conversation as new guides for the group discussion in the playing of this now greater drawing-as-game. (Creative Bloq).

From this point forward, there is a fluid movement between drawing and discourse, with the group pausing regularly to visually examine and evaluate the drawing in its entirety and determine by majority vote what would best lend a sense of wholeness and dynamism to the evolving image. This phase is marked by extensive discussion, and often "leaders" emerge from the group who are quick to identify and articulate what they believe will most benefit the drawing. I will often act as mediator between competing ideas. Again, the strongest suggestions for the next steps are embedded within the visual matrix of the surface, to which the artists are kinetically responding.

FIGURE 6: DIRECTIVE 4, LOUGHBOROUGH UNIVERSITY

Directive Five: Enter Color and Black

The final drawing phase is the addition of color and black oil pastel. At this point in the drawing process, the group's language for discussing how it should proceed has become refined through multiple rounds of practice, and there is a much easier and clearer sense of how to negotiate and draw as a collective. The aim in this stage is to determine if, why, and how to use color in the drawing, and to devise a strategy for its application. Black oil pastel may be used to add depth to the picture plane by introducing cast shadows, or to create more obvious relationships between figure and ground by manipulating tone and contrast. The success of this phase often hinges upon the prior artistic training of the participants, and their ability to readily recognize and respond to the options inherent in the drawing. Playing backwards from the end of allotted time for the session, the drawing is taken to a point where the majority of the group declares it to sufficiently "work" as an image that manifests design integrity and wholeness.



FIGURES 7 AND 8: DIRECTIVE FIVE, UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN – OSHKOSH

FIGURES 9 AND 10: DIRECTIVE FIVE, PRINCETON HIGH SCHOOL

Seen from the perspective gained at the conclusion of this sequence of drawing experiences, the Gadamerian position on game-play and the experience of an artwork now appears even more relevant:

> *The overall argument is not that game or artwork cannot be reduced to intention, material or convention but rather that each of these elements comes into their own when taken up within the playing of the game or in the practice which is art. It is the playing that draws spectator, player, intention, equipment and convention into the one event. This promotes an interactive view of art as a communicative event. It lends a dialogical dimension to art. An artwork involves more than one voice as, indeed, the word* inter-*pretation implies. Furthermore, the conception of art as an event requires a different ontological structure to those standard accounts of aesthetic experience grounded in subjectivity alone. (Davey 2016).*

TRACEY 2017: Activating Common Experience

A gathering of professional art scholars, educators, and artists, the two-day 2017 TRACEY Conference combined scholarly presentations and hands-on drawing workshops into an active forum for drawing researchers and practitioners to probe questions central to the idea that markmaking, given its immediacy, materiality, and fluid play between perception and experience, may in itself be considered a form of phenomenology (Harty 2017). Given the *Common Gesture* workshop's position in the schedule as one of the closing activities, it was possible to consider the directives that guide the drawing process as frames through which to reflect on and integrate concepts from the preceding talks. I modified two elements of the drawing process so as to incorporate references to my colleagues' work, affording a physical moment for participants to draw from, and across, conference content. Within the larger context of the Conference, the three-hour workshop also offered a framework for continued consideration of one of the key premises, the question of how (potentially all) drawing processes are by nature phenomenological, as embodied tracings and graphic evidence of lived experience.

Duncan Bullen's *Drawing Presence*, a meditative drawing project emphasizing mindfulness and breath, was incorporated as a condition of Directive Two. When participants were asked to draw lines to connect dots from the edge of the page to the middle, I added the instruction to mark each segment of line on

the body's exhale or an inhale with pauses falling on the dots, thus echoing Bullen's practice. This lent an additional level of body-awareness, of both self and other, as one worked to coordinate internal respiratory rhythms to an external material trace. Eleanor Morgan's *Fixing the ephemeral: the materiality of sand drawings* provided additional grounding for the next set of marks in Directive Two. Rather than generate random line-knots, I asked participants to integrate the visual logic of the Vanuatu sand artists, as presented by Morgan, into their knotting game, resulting in an array of symmetrical curvilinear forms drawn with increasing sophistication as the game progressed. The presence of both of these added directives altered the experienced nature of the drawing, as it was an occasion to recognize and manifest timely and relevant echoes of colleagues' research, and see these ideas-as-marks evolve on the page as the drawing progressed.

Embodied Spectacle

The final stage of hanging and interpreting the drawing is the phase where the work expands, temporally opens, and integrates Gadamer's state of play as one that encompasses the spectator in the act that completes the work. As a function of the method of its making, the drawing is one that can be interpreted widely and experienced on both intimate and grand scales. Analogies are often drawn to galactic and terrestrial maps, symbolic narratives, music, pan-sensory explorations, psychological states, architectural structures, and biological systems. There is a movement between familiar, or common, gestures and highly-individuated marks and signatures, present in varying measure.

Again, Gadamer's development of the "play" of the work of art encompasses the spectator as a vital figure, a key relationship in which the "between" is an activated space for creating meaning:

> *The analogy with drama and, indeed, sporting events, implies that art is eventual, an occasion that consciousness surrenders to and participates in. Spectatorial participation (like much art research) demands immersion in that which cannot be fully anticipated or controlled by individual consciousness. The game and the artwork are both forms of self-movement which require that the spectator play along with what they bring into being… Gadamer asserts the 'primacy of the play' over consciousness: 'the players are merely the way the play comes into presentation'... Participation takes the individual players out of themselves. The individual subject is that upon which success, satisfaction or loss is imposed from within the game. By analogy, the work of art is also 'the playing of it'. An autonomous event comes into being, something comes to stand in its own right which 'changes all that stand before it... Like the ancient* theoros*, the spectator not only participates in the event which is the artwork, but is potentially transformed by it…' (Davey 2016).*

Within the unique context of the TRACEY Conference, drawing scholars' contemporaneous presentations lent added perspective to the collaborative drawing as an "autonomous event [that] comes into being", as participants physically experienced (the) drawing as a forum for exploring bodily expressions of sensory engagement and awareness of the drawing self and other, material, surface, as manifest within the evolving image. As the workshop participants were all skilled drawing researchers and practitioners, the level of engagement deepened as it became evident that, as seen within the time and space of its making, the drawing enacted and embodied a number of the conference's key themes and questions.

Traces of both Juliet MacDonald's and Clive Cazeaux's talks preceding the workshop were particularly manifest throughout the drawing process. Cazeaux's *A phenomenology of indexical drawing* brought

keenly to bear a consciousness of auto-figuration, the lived history of evident marks, materiality of trace, and the physicality of the gestures that figure the space of the page. MacDonald's *Retracing the drawings of a chimpanzee* investigated typologies of visual relationships, the use of repeated gestural configurations, the following of pattern, and an awareness of a drawer occupying a state of wonder, versus a state of knowing, all of which may be reflected within the making of each *Common Gesture* drawing. MacDonald also raised the question of whether, as sentient marking beings, we all share a particular habit of drawing. That question is, I believe, borne out here in this shared act of drawing, in which recurring patterns become readily manifest, particularly if an objective is to create a drawing in which all drawers can participate. Individuation of mark is still present, but it is often absorbed within a mass gesture of recursive shapes and patterns. Within a *Common Gesture* drawing, participants are able to perceive both unique signature gestures of the individuals and their unification throughout the whole.

As drawing does more than illustrate a concept, it can enact the idea itself within, through, and often well after, the time of its making. Each *Common Gesture* drawing I have facilitated has afforded multiple glimpses into how this particular sequence of drawn actions performs and embodies ideas including, and beyond, the phenomenological. While these collaborative drawings are generally humble in their ambition and execution, they can nonetheless birth and nurture concepts with deep roots in the history of thought, manifest within their lifespan. When taken within the context of the 2017 TRACEY Conference, the drawing afforded a unique opportunity to draw (from) an experience in common.

FIGURE 11: *COMMON GESTURE* DRAWING, UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN – OSHKOSH (PHOTO ALLISON WELCH)

An archive of *Common Gesture* workshop images is located at www.saraschneckloth.com.

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SITES OF CONVERSATION: THE TABLE METHOD

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Through our lives we sit at many tables, eating, preparing food, playing, making drawings, doing homework, working and more. In other words, the table is a focal point where words and materials meet, cross each-other, collide or come together. The Phenomenology and Imagination Research Group (PIRG) is an independent research group whose aim is to develop research through active fine art collective practice. (PIRG)'s Table Method (*tm*) is a process that has grown organically over a period of five years and has been cultivated through a desire to bring words, texts, actions and materials together as it invites participants to respond to a text through conversation, the handling of materials and tools. The work draws from the new materialist turn through the ideas of Gaston Bachelard, Maurice Merleau-Ponty and Karen Barad. Informed by Susan Kozel's phenomenological enquiry, (PIRG) has extended its practice of conversation as a research methodology to include the phenomenological and material interaction that has become the *tm*. The *tm* is an unfolding dialogue between materials and phenomenological thinking, which expands the possibilities of what conversation can be and become, it utilises material thinking as a way to open out discourse beyond the constraints of language and other representations. This paper discusses the mechanisms and relationships at work in the process of the *tm* as drawing and material engagement enhance textual meaning.

Introduction

The Phenomenology and Imagination Research Group (PIRG) are a group of artists and researchers whose collective practice uses conversation as a research methodology to reflect on and develop their work, both as a group and as individuals. We share a common interest in how material practice can be researched and disseminated through verbal and non-verbal conversation. We are engaged in a 'long conversation' about phenomenological research, rooted in the writing of Gaston Bachelard, drawing on the concept of a phenomenological enquiry of Susan Kozel and reaching out to New Materialist thinker Karen Barad, with a particular focus on the relationship between imagination, ideas, material practice and embodiment.

The *tm* is part of the group's developing methodology of 'expanded conversation', emerging from and building on its history and on-going practice. This essay sets out to articulate the *tm*'s 'mechanisms and relationships' (participant's feedback at PIRG's *tm*, Loughborough 2017). In Barad's terms, it explores the apparatus, entanglement and intra-actions of the *tm*, the phenomena produced between things as space, places, words, people, imagination, tools and materials.

As art practitioners we work through and with material, intuitively and in relationship to text, as well as our thoughts and imaginations. We respond to our embodied experiences, the gestures, actions and marks we make. Gaston Bachelard's research of the imagination presented a poetic way of thinking and writing about the physical relationship with the world, opens out a space for dreaming.

Bachelard's notion of 'material imagination' and his attention to vibrations and resonances rather than to a causal way of thinking inspired PIRG's approach, understanding text in a performative way, through its connection to the lived body. Text, in the context of conversation, is not just a group of words printed on paper or on a computer screen. Rather, it is words, printed, read out-loud, spoken and listen to by all. In other words, text encompasses words, bodies, feelings, emotions, senses, objects, materials, places and space. A process of text-based conversation emerged and was developed by PIRG as a research method.

Seeking a means of linking theory and practice more closely, Susan Kozel's "A Phenomenological Enquiry in Five Acts" (Kozel 2007, p.53) seemed to be a process that supported the group's enquiry. Bringing it close to a phenomenological experience through the introduction of material engagement and space for reflection, the *tm* took form.

In her 'agential realism' theory quantum mechanics physicist, feminist Karen Barad proposes a 'diffractive methodology' which helps us move away from dualism such as theory/ practice. A diffractive methodology is

> *a method of diffractively reading insights through one another, building new insights and attentively and carefully reading for differences that matter in their fine details, together with the recognition that there intrinsic to this analysis is an ethics that is not predicated on externality but rather entanglement.*
> *(Dolphijn and van der Tuin, 2012).*

Barad describes an agential reality that emerges out of and in intra-actions which help untangle entanglements of matter and meaning. She writes: "Agency is not held, it is not a property of persons or things; rather, agency is an enactment, a matter of possibilities for reconfiguring entanglements." (Dolphijn and van der Tuin, 2012).

Conversation as methodology

As our connections to the global world depend more on technology, we grow more remote to the people with whom we interact. Increasingly, we live in a world where it is possible to connect with others in an instant through the click of a button or the thumbing of a text. But face to face communication is a much richer experience, involving the nuances of body language and intonation; we talk to engage and connect with others. Allan Feldman (professor of science education) distinguishes between conversation and other verbal exchange such as discourse or argument. He writes, "Conversation suggests a connection that is sustained or sustainable and goes beyond chit-chat or chatter." (Feldman 1999). PIRG has been using conversation as the means to discuss and understand theory, and as a way of sharing knowledge and generating new understandings. Inspired by Feldman's research, we set about developing a methodology of collaborative action research through conversation.

Conversation occurs between at least two people who have agreed to cooperate and is a process of exchange of words amongst people.

> *In conversation, ideas collide and mingle with other ideas and are diluted and complicated in the process. … In conversation, one may differ and still not disagree … People do not insist that partners follow, it is enough that they enter into conversation. Thus conversation is a great respecter of differences.*
> *(Buchmann 1983, 21 quoted in Feldman 1999, p.8).*

Conversation can take any direction and, as Feldman observed, direction in conversation happens when a shared understanding emerges. Whilst Feldman acknowledges the presence of the body, he mainly considered conversation in its verbal form.

PIRG's conversation has a text at its centre. Text is a product of usually a long thought process in which words are carefully placed to communicate meaning. In the conversation the text becomes an entanglement of words and bodies, ideas and materials, where words are read aloud, spoken and listen to by all. The conversation is a collective and transformative process that recognizes difference and change as each person brings his/her own subjectivity through voice, sensibility and body language, absorbed by feelings and emotions where traces of the person's history and memory have left their marks. It aspires to be heterogeneous in its participatory dimension; by this is meant that the criteria for a good conversation is not measured by how loud one's voice is or if one says a lot or little; attentive listening is a form of participation just as important as speaking. It is transformative through growth of understanding that emerges out of this entanglement. As Gadamer writes:

> *No one knows in advance what will "come out" of a conversation. … a conversation has a spirit of its own, and … the language in which it is conducted bears its own truth within it – i.e. … it allows something to "emerge" which henceforth exists*
> *(Gadamer 1992, quoted in Feldman 1999, p.9).*

In this sense, conversation is phenomenological.

A Phenomenological Enquiry

The table developed organically as a conversation, firstly through reading and discussing text and then in the form of an 'expanded conversation', exploring words through material engagement. As artists/practitioners we tacitly understood that the unpicking of complex ideas can be enriched through

doing, through embodied action. Seeking a means of linking theory and practice more closely, Susan Kozel's "A Phenomenological Enquiry in Five Acts" (Kozel 2007, p.53) seemed to be a process that supported the group's enquiry. Kozel, a contemporary phenomenologist and dance practitioner, had developed a method of engagement with both theory and practice through the material of the body and its many subjectivities. Kozel writes: "potentially dense or difficult concepts can be demystified and given a sort of intuitive fluidity once they are read through the body" (Kozel 2007, p.xv). Kozel's method brings together philosophy and material creativity. Hers is a performative phenomenology which opens a shared space for the reflective and the pre-reflective, for working with the body, thinking and writing:

> *- Take your attention into this very moment.*
> *- Suspend the main flow of thought.*
> *- Call your attention to your body and what it is experiencing.*
> *- Witness what you see, hear, and touch, how space feels, and temperature, and how the inside of your body feels in relation to the outside.*
> *- Take a break (a moment, a day, a week, a year).*
> *- Describe what you experienced. Take notes, record sounds or images. Initial notes can be a sort of "brain dump". Do not worry about style, grammar, or relevance at this stage. This stage may occur immediately following your immersion in a specific sensory experience, or it may happen after an interval. Memory and imaginative reconstruction are involved regardless of the lapse of time between experience and documentation of the experience, but obviously too much time passing can dull the recollection.*
> *(Kozel 2013).*

Taking Kozel's process as inspiration, PIRG's *tm* developed as a way of engaging both text and the material in conversation. Participants sit at a table covered in black paper with drawing materials and tools ready to be used. The selected text is read aloud by the presenter which participants are invited to discuss; a brief pause is taken whilst words are digested; participants are then invited to use the materials and tools on the table to respond to the ideas in the text; and finally each participant is invited to speak about their experience of the text or resulting work. Referring to Merleau-Ponty, the body is understood as material through which we engage with the world, "we live our bodies as vehicles of our subjective experience of the world, which is shaped by our interests, values." (Matthews 2006, p.10). The *tm* creates a space for participants to bring together language, words, phrases and the material paste of the imagination to the table. The process engages with body and mind together, allowing space to read and knead an idea, a piece of chalk or to grind a sentence. The pauses are all important as they allow time and space, through the opening out of the breath and body for something to emerge - the pause acts as the material paste through which drawings emerge on the table.

Conversation here is thought of as a drawing, drawing together a group of people, from a text and then to the body, onto a table as a 'field of possibilities', to the many bodies, where the invitation is to allow thoughts, feelings and emotions to emerge through a collective act of drawing. Drawing "is an intimate and immediate process and medium capable of recording the trace of the drawer's thoughts and bodily movements" (Loughborough 2017, conference call), capturing the imagination and the making of knowledge through a process of hammering, breaking and drawing with knives, forks and lumps of chalk.

Figure 1: ' …… that which remains nameless', PIRG workshop, Birmingham 2016

- 'He wrote about the problem or the …

about concept

the tension between concept and the poetic image

"Any landscape is an oneiric experience before becoming a conscious spectacle."

that matter multiplies

that matter multiplies

that matter multiplies

I'll find it, see if I can find it …

FIGURE 2: MATERIAL CONVERSATION, PIRG WORKSHOP, LOUGHBOROUGH 2017

FIGURE 3: COLLABORATIVE RESPONSE TO SITE AS TEXT, PIRG WORKSHOP, FORT CUMBERLAND 2018

At PIRG's workshop for Birmingham City University's 'Research Matters: Conversations about research in Arts, Design and Media' (2016), Figure 1, the twenty participants of the *tm* came from such varied disciplines as jewelry making, textiles, design, photography, acting, philosophy and painting, and included both teachers, students and researchers. The focus of this *tm* was to discuss the relationship between studio practice and the academic requirement for a text-based methodology. Whilst the text set the context for the discussion, this *tm* became all about the engagement with materials, as evidenced by responses and feedback from participants. The playful and inventive nature of the *tm* was further enlivened by our host facilitator, Alberto, sprinkling water over the table. This intervention gave permission to participants to play beyond the boundaries of their work and engage with their neighbors.

'Material conversation', PIRG's *tm* at Loughborough (2017), looked at the relationship between the physicality of drawing and the lived experience of conversation, Figure 2. Here is a fragment of conversation, taken from a transcript of the Loughborough *tm*, in response to Bachelard's 'The oneiric source of aesthetics' (Bachelard*,* 2005, pp.35-36):

> *- For something to persist or to be more than just a fleeting thing it must finds its matter so the matter merely becomes an anchor. All these things are constantly going through and it sort of to hold it, to allow something more reflective to build.*
>
> *- I am a bit confused about what he is trying to say, about … he is saying that what you imagine comes before what you see?*
>
> *- He kind of contradict himself on that one moment he says you need to have the feeling before the landscape, another he says you need to experience the landscape before the reverie. The two are perpetual, it's like an artist who makes very imaginative work for their painting, sculpture, drawing and we have to teach them, we have to anchor them in reality in order for them to, in order for you to see the world clearly you need to offer a more day-dream experience of that. The two things are absolutely pulling-pushing.*

At the *tm* in Fort Cumberland, Figure 3, the participants were given a shared task, to explore the future of the Fort. They were asked to walk the boundary lines and ramparts, and then into the casemates and other redundant buildings. The site was used as the text. This process entangled the physicality of the body in a knowing of the place through the material and immaterial structures that form it. Human and non-human residents, the sound of seagulls, the wind and the smell of ruination were fed into the drawing process. This allowed the intra-actions of the site to emerge, as for instance a program of cutting the grass at a particular time of year to allow wild orchids to grow.

The drawing developed through a series of iterations; the surface of the paper was worked into over three separate events. Participants drew their own responses to the site and then into other people's drawings. This process allowed the paper to become multi-layered, tracing the lived experience of others, working with and into the marks they'd left behind. The act of drawing here was shared, the resonance of each participant's actions and mark making grew as they responded consciously and unconsciously to each other. Re-performing the work created an affective site where, through the actions of the table, the participants began to gesture possible futures for the Fort.

The *tm* is a collective experience, not generally one of collaboration, but the environment of the table and proximity of the group as they all set to work is affective. As we go around the table listening to each person speak the thoughts behind their actions or their drawings, we discover how varied are the

responses and thoughts from the same starting point of the text. Ideas emerge from the drawing that were not apparent in the conversation. There are stories behind every drawing or material engagement that were explored with gesture and mark before they had to be put into words. The telling of these stories shows how certain ideas have resonated around the group and how completely different tangents have occurred. It is the process of the table and the time and space of engagement with the materials that allows this diffraction to occur.

The dynamics of the group are important in building a relationship with the text; how people work and respond impacts on other participants and the shape of the conversation that follows. Thus we can say that the *tm* is both social and material, setting an entanglement of matter and meaning.

Discussion

The *tm* developed through Kozel's phenomenological practice has now been cultivated through a number of iterations in educational institutions, galleries, cathedrals, academic conferences – 'Research Matters', Birmingham 2016 and 'Drawing/Phenomenology', Loughborough 2017- and, more recently, on a historic site, Fort Cumberland. This essay makes explicit the mechanisms at work in it, through embodiment and the pre-reflective via Merleau-Ponty, the imagination as material paste in Bachelard and material assemblage from Barad. The *tm* is therefore an invitation to sit with, listen to, digest, allow time to experience, draw out, to collaborate and engage in a material conversation. Through doing this we build a phenomenological conversation of care and attention to ourselves and others, both human and material participants.

The pre-reflective

Phenomenology is an approach to life that includes the body and the experience of living in it, of our cultural, social and political experiences, of words and images that we interact with daily. The approach draws on the pre-reflective of memories in our deep brains of actions long forgotten but which continue to inform who we are and how we act in the world. Drawing on Merleau-Ponty's claim that the world exists already before reflection, before conceptual engagement in what he describes as the primitive state of the pre-reflective, Kozel warns of the political implications of reverting to the pre-reflective/pre-linguistic state that hint at the disadvantaged positioning, especially for women, suggesting a reversion to the irrational or "anyone even vaguely 'other'" (Kozel 2007, p.18). To describe this state such as "mysterious" or "primordial" allow us an alternative way of thinking about the pre-reflective and basing it in a linguistic, spatial and physical structure gives focus:

> *… the pre-reflective is considered through: first, language and gesture; next, a spatial understanding of regions similar to a topographical mapping of external landscapes; and, last, an internal mapping of the regions of the body as if moving from topography to tomography. (Kozel 2007, p17)*

Together, these elements build our understanding of our place in the world. In order to reach the pre-reflective, we have to employ the phenomenological process of 'bracketing' – dispelling all preconceived associations with something to leave only its essential state. However, Kozel asks, "Can a reflective practice bracket itself in order to reach a pre-reflective state without violating this state and itself in the process?" She suggests a side-step that conceives of reflection as a porous state that is open to "ambiguity of meaning" and "fluidity of existence" (Kozel 2007, pp. 18/19) that allows access to the pre-reflective without losing our foothold in the reflective. This subtle repositioning resonates with Barad's

preference for the diffractive rather than the reflective reading, that considers the entanglements of subject and object in a phenomenal experience of the world (Barad 2009, p.52).

It is an impossible quest, to consciously strive to not be aware, but perhaps the engagement with materials takes our conscious mind to a different place, to a state of reverie, that destabilizes our line of thought and distracts us into the material world. The act of drawing or engagement of materials in the *tm* allows us to access the pre-reflective state which, in the process of verbal reflection, then leads us to language that describes that place, that state of being and becoming. Perhaps this connection of mind and hand operates in a state that exists before the fixity of language. We then use the method of a phenomenological enquiry to think through and put into language our experience whilst drawing. As one participant in PIRG's Birmingham workshop said, "I don't know what I'm thinking until I draw it."

Material imagination

Whilst Kozel's phenomenological enquiry provides a model around which the *tm*'s process was based, Bachelard's research of the imagination provides a theoretical ground for the *tm*. There are four points as follows. First, dreaming comes before thought: '[L]earned thought is linked to a primitive material reverie; calm, durable wisdom is rooted in a substantive permanence' (Bachelard, 2005, p.35). The *tm* opens out the space of the 'pause', a space between listening to the words being read that allows the participants to digest the text through intra-action with the imagination. Second, the imagination acts as "the faculty of *deforming* images offered by perception … it is especially the faculty of *changing* images." (Bachelard 2005, p. 19) [Emphasis in the original text. YN-G et al]. Around the table participants become witnesses, through the process of mark making, to the deformation of fixed images and changing images. Third, the being of a poetic image can be experienced and known through tuning to vibrations and resonances, rather than a causal thinking. This leads to the fourth point which is that material imagination connects with the body. For it is in and through the senses of our bodies that vibrations and resonances are felt. Referring to images of matter, Bachelard writes, "Vision names them but the hand knows them." (Bachelard 2005, p.11). Here is the idea that knowing the world is not just a rational process of naming; the body has its ways of knowing too.

The mechanism of the pause, through the material imagination and the embedding of new images into the body, supports a readiness for "material thinking". In her paper 'Materializing Pedagogies', Barbara Bolt "borrows" from Paul Carter the term "material thinking" to give a new understanding of the process of making. Referring to Heidegger, Bolt asserts that it is only in handling materials that we can know their qualities or potential. However, Heidegger revises his theory when he talks about tools in conjunction with technology to say that the handling of tools and materials no longer seeks mastery, but a relationship of co-responsibility where understanding emerges through the 'care' for the qualities of materials in handling, which in art allows the product to emerge. "Handling as care produces a crucial moment of understanding or circumspection. This 'material thinking' not the completed artwork, is the work of art." (Bolt 2006).

What does the engagement with tools and materials add to our experience of the text that is absent in verbal conversation alone? The performativity of the *tm* engages not only our thinking and hearing in the reading and listening to the text, our bodily presence around the table creates a physical connection with others present. When we sit in silent reflection, we breathe the same space. When we reach for tools and materials, we perform a collective body of mark making. This is not a collaboration but the space of the table connects us in our gestures and engagement with materials. The array of tools

includes a ruler, hammers, sieves, mortar and pestle, strings, natural and industrial chalk. This intentional mismatch stimulates an almost child-like material exploration, pushing us to work in unfamiliar ways. The rhythm of response is individual, some preferring to sit quietly and reflect for longer before making a mark, others leaping in immediately with gestural sweeps of chalk. There are sounds of scraping and scratching, with occasional bangs as someone wields the hammer. Sometimes there is chatter, sometimes no voices. Sometimes the drawing has turned into a miniature landscape. As Bachelard writes: ‘Any landscape is an oneiric experience before becoming a conscious spectacle. … But the oneiric landscape is not a frame to be filled with impressions, it is a matter which multiplies’ (Bachelard, 2005, p. 36), ‘a field of possibilities’. Time is called and we sit back and look around the table.

PIRG’s use of chalk in the *tm* is a legacy of our first public workshop during the ‘10 days - Winchester’, a biennial interdisciplinary arts platform focused on chalk (2015), a rock typical to the area of Hampshire. We have continued to use chalk for its enormous versatility; its tactility and unrefined nature taps in to a different range of senses. Architect Juhani Pallasmaa states, “In human interaction alone, 80 per cent of communication is estimated to take place outside the verbal and conceptual channel. Communication takes place even on a chemical level; ….” (Pallasmaa 2009, p.14). The means of making visible our thinking about the concepts we have just discussed comes through our hands. The choices we make about how to use the tools and materials – the drawing - is accomplished by them. In his celebration of the attributes of the human hand, Pallasmaa first makes it clear that the hand is so embedded in the body as a whole that it is “… fundamentally beyond definability.” (Pallasmaa 2009, p.37). Evidence of the significance of the hand’s development, traced through the history of tool making and use, to the evolution of the brain and the emergence of symbolic thought highlights the important link between hand and brain (Pallasmaa 2009, p.34). We have observed in *tm* sessions that in the final reflection, following the drawing stage, when everyone at the table is given the opportunity to comment on what they produced, many different ideas emerge that were not evident in the earlier conversation. Using the materials gives both time and space for ideas to develop.

Drawing, the *tm* and new materialism

PIRG’s approach to drawing has developed through their practice of drawing, drawing together of many texts through conversation and is informed by Karen Barad’s ‘agential realism’ theory. Meaning is not the property of a word or group of words; discourse is not a synonym for language. Barad writes, “Discourse is not what is said; it is that which constrains and enables what can be said.” (Barad 2003, p. 20). While Feldman makes a distinction between conversation and discourse, where conversation is presented as perhaps a somewhat idealized structure, Barad’s understanding of discourse offers a cultural material construct rooted in both the human and the non-human. In this light, the *tm* is freed from the domination of words and allows an exchange that is based on equality while embracing and celebrating difference. Barad writes:

> *Statements are not the mere utterances of the originating consciousness of a unified subject; rather, statements and subjects emerge from a field of possibilities. This field of possibilities is not static or singular but rather is a dynamic and contingent multiplicity. (Barad 2003, p.20).*

PIRG’s *tm* can be considered as a return to this ‘field of possibilities’ as it brings together words, actions, bodies and materials. The table serves many functions in the past, eating, preparing food, working,

making drawings, doing homework and more. In other words, it is a focal point where words, the imagination and materials meet, cross each-other, collide or come together. If it takes us back to our childhoods, it is because it is a space-time-matter where "statements and subjects emerged".

Barad wonders how we came to believe that language is the only way to understand the potential of materiality. According to Barad:

> *to restrict power's productivity to the limited domain of the "social," … or to figure matter as merely an end product rather than an active factor in further materializations, is to cheat matter out of the fullness of its capacity. (Barad 2003, p. 11).*

While representation is based on substitutes, performativity allows us to grasp reality as it emerges and materializes in the present. Matter performs itself rather than represent a concept or another object. The *tm* is performative, making the process of materialization visible as an entanglement of matter, ideas, actions and the imagination. It enables an agential reality, a meaning making apparatus. As participants reflect verbally on their process and product of drawing, words are forming phenomenologically, out of and inside experience. "Is the table a solid mass made of wood or an aggregate of discrete entities moving in the void?" (Barad 2003, p.7).

Conclusion

The *tm* acts as 'a field of possibilities', a space where the materials of text, paper, words, written and spoken, each body and the many bodies around the table, act as matter to create a material conversation. The *tm* enables conversation to take place through a process of embodiment, through listening to text, engaging with a slowing down, of the mind through a pause to open out the material paste of the imagination. This process entangles the body with materials and words to engage with the conversation through a careful constructed mix of domestic and DIY tools. The hand held tools are juxtaposed with drawing materials to afford alternative ways to experiment and represent emergent thoughts or images. The performativity of the apparatus, tools, surface of the table, our bodies, the space we are in, entangle and cause diffraction patterns which grow and develop the conversation in unplanned directions.

Kozel's phenomenological enquiry supports the process of embodiment, Bachelard an engagement with the material imagination and Barad an ethics of entanglement with matter. The drawing process exposes conversation as a choir of many different voices, voices of those present in the room and those within our heads, imagination and held in our bodies and the materialities with which we live where matters of care, fact and concern come together.

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GAINED IN TRANSLATION: DRAWING ART HISTORY

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Drawing from drawing is a centuries-old practice. Emerging artists have typically started their journey to mastery faithfully transcribing the work of their predecessors. Today however, in the wake of post-modernism’s reaction against the authority of the 'master', transcribing another artist's work feels outdated and has thusly been erased from Higher Education fine art programmes in the UK.

Since 2014 the Bridget Riley Art Foundation (BRAF) at the British Museum has worked with nearly 2,000 university art students to revive and interrogate the value of drawing from drawing as a contemporary research method. In the process of over 250 workshops BRAF found that students who initially dismissed the practice as ‘servile copying’ began to legitimise the process with the language of translation.

Building on qualitative research collected through questionnaires and interviews, this paper examines the practice of drawing from drawing through the lens of translation theory, specifically in the manner of Walter Benjamin. By examining drawing from drawing as a phenomenological practice, this paper describes experience rather than the product. Ultimately, it argues for the potential of this practice to create empathy by dissolving ahistorical neoliberalist notions of individuality and originality.

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Introduction

Drawing from another artist's artwork has long been a staple of an academic artistic practice. Historically, students were expected to produce drawn copies of a masterwork as evidence of skill development and progression toward mastery. This process of transcription is still at the core of most GCSE, A-Level and entry-level further education fine art courses. These associations with academic tradition and basic proficiency have made this method of learning irrelevant in the theory-based curricula of contemporary higher education fine art courses in the UK. Drawing from drawing has been confined to the role of skill acquisition limiting its potential as an analytic exercise and a medium of reflection. To reclaim it from this relegation, drawing from drawing must be reframed and re-conceptualised as a meaningful research tool.

The Bridget Riley Art Foundation (BRAF) at the British Museum began in 2014 with a two-fold intention: to encourage emerging artists to draw from the Museum's graphic archive and to create an exhibition on drawing that highlighted its diversity as a medium, inspiring people to actively draw from drawing (Seligman, 2017). This is the legacy of Bridget Riley, artist and teacher who, when emerging as an artist, developed her style by drawing/learning from other artists (Klee, Seurat, Rubens), working from primary sources in places like the British Museum's Prints and Drawings Study Room (Riley, 2015). Seeing a shortage of taught drawing in contemporary university education, Riley wanted to specifically reinvigorate the practice of drawing from drawing for the benefit the current generation of art students. The artist encapsulates the foundation of the project at the British Museum and the transformative possibility of working from another artists' work in her 1997 lecture 'Painting Now*':

> *'If one regards these [artistic] achievements not just as historical events in the past but as a basis for the present, one can discover points of departure which are different from the ones taken by earlier artists, and that certain parameters which have been historically established can now be reconsidered, or even challenged. It is not a question of there being only one route from there to here, as it were, or that the last stop on this route inevitably the most advanced. Alternative directions may have been overlooked or obscured and these may be worth exploring.'* (Riley, 1997, p.620)

Riley's description presents the potential of historic works to speak with the present through the artistic experience of a contemporary viewpoint. She essentially describes the speculative phenomenological possibilities latent in the experience of working from another artist's work that will be explored through the theory of translation in this specific case study.

This paper traces the pedagogical development of the Bridget Riley Art Foundation at the British Museum that I have overseen as project officer and lead educator since 2014. It aims to provide a meaningful theoretical, primarily phenomenological, framework for the transformative processes involved when drawing from another artist's drawing by changing the language traditionally used to describe it. By shifting the term from 'transcription' to 'translation' the artist working-from gains an agency in the process.

Transcription is the systematic representation of form (e.g. copying) and is one of the primary means of training and assessment in foundation art programmes in the UK. Defined in education manuals as '. . .a visual analysis of a source aimed at exploring formal characteristics or how materials and techniques could be used to progress a creative journey' (GCSE Art and Design Portfolio task guide, 2017),

transcription is undoubtedly a valuable tool in developing technique and formal skill. However, students coming out of foundation art programmes into Higher Education are reticent about repeating the transcription exercises used to assess their technical development. Making the perceptual shift from transcription/copy to translation emphasises interpretation over replication. Instead of a 'top-down' assertion of a master's authoritative technique, translation stimulates an empathetic communication between peers. This paper will use translation theory in the manner of Walter Benjamin to reclaim the usefulness of drawing from drawing, asserting that working with art history in this way is a powerful, communal act that dissolves the toxic notions of individualism that pervade our contemporary neoliberal context.

Drawing from drawing: a (very) brief history

The Bridget Riley Art Foundation is unique in its direction as it focuses almost exclusively on drawing from drawing. This distinction is important. Drawings to draw from have had a special pedagogical function for artists in history. Drawing provides a greater insight into artistic process whether the work is a highly finished presentation drawing, preparatory for a larger work, a quick notation or a doodle. The immediacy of the media and, often times, scale offer more pathways to dialog between artists than historic (pre-modernist) painting and sculpture, which tends to dissemble the media and individual gesture by using what Clement Greenberg (1994) explained as 'art to conceal art.' Described in this way a drawing, more than print, painting, sculpture, or photograph is an open system that incites external interaction.

Deanna Petherbridge (1991) describes a drawing as an invitation to draw explaining that it is 'open to appropriation, both as act and subject' (p.20). This openness is reflected in the methods in which drawings and drawing have been used to teach. In the artist's workshops that emerged out of the Middle Ages (and continuing on through the 17th century) the master would tack their drawing to the wall of the studio and have students draw alongside on the same page as a method of imitating their own style. While some artists stayed working in the manner of the master, others developed their own voice through this method of learning, their master correcting and conversing within drawings exchanged and critiqued. Rembrandt, for example, habitually reworked the drawings of his students as a method of instruction; he also asked former pupils to instruct his workshop students with this method. The resulting drawings, such as Figure 1, where the dark wash to the right of the figure has been added after the initial sketch was completed, reveal the drawing of multiple hands as an exchange of ideas.

During the establishment of art academies in the 17th and 18th centuries drawing from another artist's work continued to be a skill building exercise, but it was also believed to stoke creativity. Addressing students of the Royal Academy in 1769 Joshua Reynolds (1997) argued for the relevance of working from past artworks:

> *'The more extensive therefore you acquaintance yourself with the works of [predecessors], the more extensive your powers of invention; and what may appear still more like a paradox, the more original will be your conceptions'* (Reynolds and Wark, 1997, p. 28).

Alongside these social structures, drawing collections were amassed by individual artists like Reynolds and, famously, Edgar Degas who collected hundreds of drawings as instigation of personal, private study, reflection and development (Dumas, 1997). So when did this change?

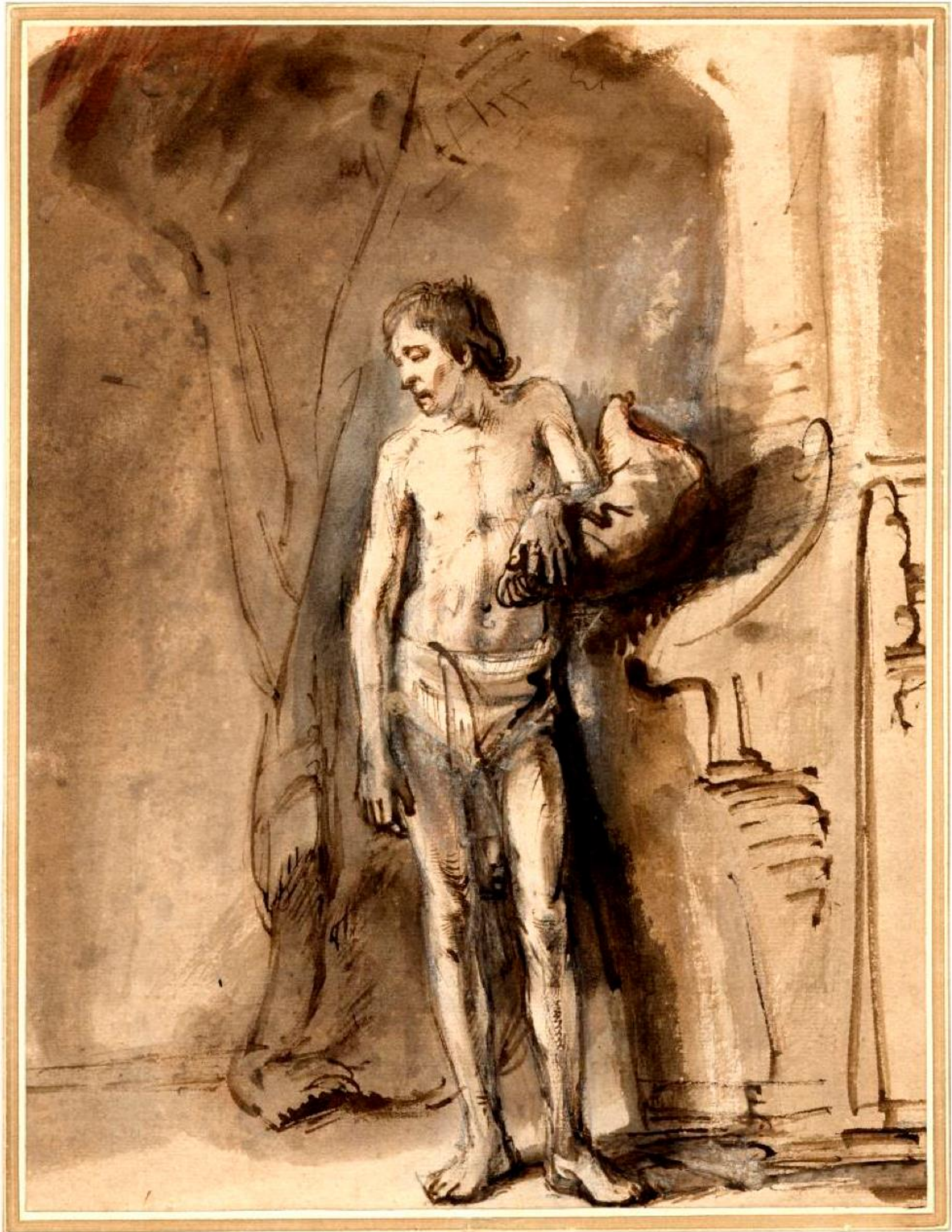

FIGURE 1: SCHOOL OF REMBRANDT, LIFE STUDY OF A MAN STANDING (C. 1646), PEN AND BROWN INK, WITH BROWN AND GREY WASH, TOUCHED WITH RED CHALK AND HEIGHTENED WITH WHITE, OVER BLACK CHALK. COURTESY OF THE TRUSTEES OF THE BRITISH MUSEUM

Because drawing from/working from another artist's work has this long, academic history entrenched within art institutions the practice became more restrictive than constructive. Rejection of what had become status quo artistic training and art historical knowledge was written very clearly in Charles Baudelaire's seminal manifesto of modernism 'The Painter of Modern Life':

> *'It is doubtless an excellent thing to study the old masters in order to learn how to paint; but it can be no more than a waste of labour if your aim is to understand the special nature of present-day beauty'* (Baudelaire and Mayne, 1986, p.13).

Here, Baudelaire creates a hierarchy that privileges contemporary expression over skill acquisition while summarily dismissing the study of 'old masters' as irrelevant. Although not all modern artists obeyed Baudelaire's dictum, the 'cult of modernist originality' advocated in this period shapes Western artistic systems throughout the 20th and 21st centuries.

It was Robert Rauschenberg's *Erased de Kooning Drawing* (1953) that was the death null of drawing from another artist's work. With the masterstrokes of his rubber Rauschenberg meticulously erases the presence of the master, making concept far more relevant than gesture. *Erased* was the ultimate denunciation of the need to transcribe the master's mark. The fact of the matter is that the erasure of art historical works and 'academic tradition' still dominates contemporary art education nearly 70 years later. Petherbridge (1991) references the expense of such rejections on drawing:

> *'In contemporary art schools in Britain, the process whereby students are encouraged to lose the "academic" pencil drawing skills they have acquired at school and discover personal expression is not so much a reversal of the former system, as the shadow side of authoritarian practice. It is equally manipulative'* (p.22).

In other words, a suppression of drawing skill (in part developed through transcription) does not equate to a freedom from repetition and derivation. What is suppressed is replaced by new systems of authority.

More recently in a synopsis of contemporary UK curricula Nick Houghton (2016) discusses the contradictions inherent in contemporary post-secondary Fine Art education that reinforce ahistorical, anti-academic approaches to artistic development. University curricula:

> *'. . .often includes a core that it does not believe in. It encourages a Romantic adoption of an autonomous, artistic persona, but also stuffs students full of theory which contradicts this. It has become the last resting place of an exhausted avant-garde, which, loaded with postmodern baggage, has turned into exactly what it once opposed: an academic discourse'* (p.12).

Both Houghton and Petherbridge point to the hypocrisy of a system that reinforces a 'cult of originality' while simultaneously critiquing such authoritative notions with post-structural theory. This structure compartmentalises drawing practices into oppositional categories: drawing that builds artistic skill versus drawing to reflect creative expression. This is the context in which the Bridget Riley Art Foundation (BRAF) emerged.

Developing a Relevant, Contemporary Context

BRAF drawing workshops were initially designed to open up a dialogue about the place of drawing in current fine art practice. The Department of Prints and Drawings at British Museum holds approximately 50,000 drawings made by European, American and Australian artists, encompassing the years of 1400 to the present. The workshops include approximately 15 drawings from different eras, usually based on a theme suggested by the tutor to correspond with their specific curriculum. In the sessions each of the drawings are discussed in relation to the theme and then students are invited to draw from them. Themes tend to be more about cultural theory than practice. For example: the tutor-chosen theme of ‘hierarchy and power’ made the drawings illustrations of theory more than the subject of practical, artistic enquiry.

The first year of workshops (2014-2015) was heavily theoretical and discursive rather than practical. Students listened and provided insightful comments to conversations about drawings, but they did not make drawings themselves. Many students photographed the works and when probed about why, explained that they did so to make an accurate copy. Students wanted an accurate copy, but the idea of drawing from the drawings in order to remember the work was called ‘a scam’, ‘not necessary’, ‘stealing’ (Questionnaire, 2014-18). What also emerged from these first sessions was that students were drawing as part of a preparatory practice or finished work; some kept sketchbooks, others photographs, blogs and other digital materials related to drawing, but few saw drawing from another artist’s work as a valuable research method.

To encourage drawing from works in the Museum collection BRAF provided students with sketchbooks and pencils at the start of workshops. Again, a majority did not draw. It is, of course, the student/artist prerogative and right to not be forced into ‘making art’ on the spot, but it seemed curious that a majority of artists who have been invited to draw, were resistant to the opportunity. Anonymous questionnaires were introduced so students could honestly express their aversions and apprehensions about the practice. These surveys asked what part drawing played in their practice and what types of drawing(s)/artists might help them in developing their practice. Most important to the development our pedagogy were the questions: before this workshop what were your thoughts about working from another artist’s drawing/artwork? And, has the experience of the workshop changed or confirmed your thoughts about working from another artist’s work?

By the end of the 2015-2016 academic year nearly 700 students from universities around the UK had completed questionnaires. Trends emerged in their responses; explanations as to why some students did not draw at all and why almost all of them rejected drawing from drawing as a valid research methodology. Most cited sixth form and GSCE as shaping their perception of drawing from drawing/working from another artist’s work. ‘During GCSE we were made to only ever create work by copying or being directly inspired by another artist without developing our own styles’ (Questionnaire, 2016). The emphasis on skill acquisition and master mimesis in foundational fine art education was explained as something to ‘get through’, something that suppressed artistic voice, reiterating the 150 year old modernist division of traditional skill from original concept. Student apprehension is backed up by looking at teaching manuals for GCSE preparation that place the ‘transcription, response, annotation’ formula at the centre of their assessment protocol (GCSE Art and Design Teacher’s Guide, 2016 and GCSE Art and Design Portfolio task guide, 2017).

Questionnaire responses also showed that the cult of originality is deeply entrenched in the popular consciousness of contemporary UK art students. One student explained: 'I remember I stopped drawing because I was feeling guilty by copying' (Questionnaire, 2015). Another declared: 'I am against the art of people recreating past artworks; be original!' (Questionnaire, 2018). Secondary school's emphasis on accurate copies and connections to an historic artist as a basis for assessment understandably concretises a rebellion against the past. The only way to make art history relevant is to reconceptualise its value thereby changing the experience of the process. This became the focus of BRAF workshops.

The students who push past their resistance and actively draw from drawing find the benefits are immediate. The time and space to draw from the work of another artist proved transformative to their thoughts on the practice and research. Many tutors began to see creative shifts in their studio interests. No two artists work the same; some make faithful transcriptions, others work on mark-making or scale, or place focus on a tiny detail on the page. For student, performance artist and sculptor Daisy Wooley (2018) drawing from drawing allowed her to explore her practice in new ways:

> *'Drawing, rather than performing, allowed me a freedom of expression by moving outside of my physical limitations. The gestures made while drawing wove their way into the physicality of my performance.'*

FIGURE 2: PETER PAUL RUBENS, ISRAELITES WRESTLING WITH GIANT SNAKES; STUDY FOR THE PAINTING 'MOSES AND THE BRAZEN SERPENT' (C. 1607), BLACK CHALK, PEN AND BROWN INK AND BROWN AND GREY WASH, HEIGHTENED WITH WHITE, ON BUFF PREPARED PAPER, HEAVILY CUT AND MADE UP IN VARIOUS PLACES, COURTESY OF THE TRUSTEES OF THE BRITISH MUSEUM

FIGURE 3: DAISY WOOLEY, (LEFT) UNTITLED DRAWING FROM RUBENS (2018) GRAPHITE ON PAPER, (RIGHT) TWIST (2018), PHOTOGRAPHIC STILL FROM PERFORMANCE, BOTH COURTESY OF THE ARTIST

The drawing of Peter Paul Rubens (Figure 2) was particularly inspirational for Wooley. The lines created by tangled drama of entwined bodies were translated through drawing and into her performance piece Twist (Figure 3). Drawing from Rubens Wooley places herself within the milieu of her art historical peers rather than at the bottom of a hierarchical scale she must ascend by copying.

The most significant trend to emerge from the questionnaires was the language students used to legitimise the practice of drawing from drawing. Dozens began to explain the process through concepts of dialogue, conversation, the merging of different languages. 'I can accelerate productivity of thought when engaged in dialogue [with another drawing]; it encouraged me to consider aspects that I thought were unimportant' (Questionnaire, 2017). Students were also trying to convey conceptual complexity of finding one's own language through the text of another. Their descriptions of a language exchange were more closely related to notions of translation rather than transcription. What translation, or the conversion of one text into another, allows that transcription does not is a level of difference between the source and what is produced. Translation gives the process of drawing from drawing a theoretical framework that better conveys what the practice is: interpretation developed through practical knowledge.

Gained in Translation

Concepts related to translation have been used in explaining art for quite a long time. It has been argued that the creative process is an act of translating the natural world, what is observed or felt, into art. However, it has not been thoroughly applied to working from another artist's work, nor has it been extensively used to understand the complex interaction of what is undertaken during the experience. Furthermore, the actual artwork is typically considered a translation, while the action has not fully been explored. Using the term translation removes the implication that working from another's drawing is limited to reproducing a 'servile copy'. Translation suggests a depth of knowledge prior to the action and with it the ability to generate new, wholly-valid interpretation to/from another language.

Translation studies is a relatively new area of philosophy (from 1980s onwards) that emerged out of post-structuralist, feminist and post-colonialist narratives. It is currently a major focus in comparative literature and cultural studies courses. Translation serves different needs of different agendas, time

periods and individuals. Lawrence Venuti (2000), in the introduction of *The Translation Studies Reader*, differentiates the translated product from the function of translation. 'An equivalence' (or a copy) can be defined by its accuracy, correctness, correspondence, fidelity to the original. Whereas translation as a function is:

> *'the potentiality of the translated text to release diverse effects, beginning with the communication of information and the production of a response comparable to the one produced by the foreign text in its own culture'* (Venuti, 2000, p.5).

It is this second definition that students tap into when they describe the act of drawing from drawing in terms of language acquisition and interpretation. For example, one student explained drawing from drawing as a process of 'developing a personal language in relation to another artist's practice' (Questionnaire, 2014).

Although the historical discussion of translation is riddled with questions of what type of translation is accurate, subjective, or truthful, (Venuti, 2000) it was Walter Benjamin who first engaged with the phenomenological possibilities inherent in translating. His 1921 essay 'The Task of the Translator' is less concerned with training someone to make an accurate rendering of an original text and more concerned about critiquing the cognitive processes of the individual who undertakes translation and the historical implications of speaking through another's point of expression. Following Benjamin, translation does not produce a finite replica; instead, it becomes a mode of experience. Translation is a phenomenological act in which the artist is faced with the various subjectivities that emerge when in dialogue with another artist's work. He describes this as a 'critique of cognition':

> *'. . .It is a question of showing that in cognition there [can] be no objectivity, not even a claim to it, if this were to consist in imitations of the real; in the former, one can demonstrate that no translation would be possible if in its ultimate essence it strove for likeness to the original'* (Benjamin, 2002, p.256)

Benjamin frees the translator from associations of replication by underscoring that translation legitimately creates both difference and harmony. Framed in this way students are better able to consider their subjectivity as they draw from drawing rather than 'transcribing' an original. This greater insight is concisely summarised by a post-workshop student revelation: 'I always expose my emotions honestly, even when mimicking other artists' (Questionnaire, 2018).

Benjamin rejects a singular authority, pointing to the absurdity of believing one can actually make a copy at all. Under his terms translation is an unlimited field of experimentation deeply rooted in skill that is already present in the translator; if the original is definitive how can there be room for copies?

> *'The traditional concepts in any discussion of translation are fidelity and license. . .These ideas seem to be no longer serviceable to a theory that strives to find, in a translation, something other than reproduction of meaning. . . .What can fidelity really do for the rendering of meaning?'* (Benjamin, 2002, p. 259).

This is essentially the question students ask when they feel they are being asked to transcribe: how does replication add to the conversation? Benjamin answers: translation does not reproduce meaning, it creates meaning. By explaining the act of drawing from another's work as translation rather than transcription, a new, conceptual dimension is added to the process.

Drawing from drawing is the meeting of two artistic languages in conversation. '[Translators] must expand and deepen language by means of the foreign language. It is not generally realised to what extent this is possible, to what extent any language can be transformed' (Benjamin, 2002, p.262). Benjamin presumes no fixed outcome from this dialogue other than a greater awareness of individual experience in process; his description places emphasis on pathways not products. In the foreignness of another's language an artist confronts their own. This again, has resonance with a student insight: 'I use the process to find my own interpretation of the original drawing' (Questionnaire, 2016).

Benjamin's translation theory provides a description of the structure of this experience, which one undertakes by placing oneself within the social dialogue of history. The task of translator is to be loyal to one's own context and to the historical work; past and present are not in opposition. They are dependent on one another in the process of making meaning. For Benjamin (and later Venuti) the relevance of translation lies in how it resonates in the present, not how well it replicates the past.

> *'Translation is so far removed from being the sterile equation of two dead languages that of all literary forms it is the one charged with the special mission of watching over the maturing process of the original language and the birth pangs of its own'* (Benjamin, 2002, p.256).

In working from the past our present is enriched rather than suppressed. Shifting the frame from copy to translation, one student was able to articulate the new relationships gained in translation: we are 'developing a personal language in relation to another artist's practice' (Questionnaire, 2015).

Once framed as translation (especially in the mode of Benjamin), the perceived hierarchies of the master/copyist system dissolve. In *The Ignorant Schoolmaster* philosopher Jacques Rancière (1991) identifies the power structures that we place ourselves in when we participate in learning. The situation of copying from a master sets up a power dynamic that places students in what Rancière calls a 'manifestation of intelligence' rather than a place of emancipation. He explains that there is 'no hierarchy in intellectual capacity' (p.27). Copy implies intellectual capacity needs to be expanded; translation implies an equal-footing, both sides coming together to be understood. This is Rancière's emancipation through learning:

> *'Essentially, what an emancipated person can do is be an emancipator: to give, not the key to knowledge, but the consciousness of what an intelligence can do when it considers itself equal to any other and considers any other equal to itself'* (p.27).

Historic work is irrelevant without contemporary interest. The task of the translator is not to make a degraded simulacrum of the past to prove their technical worth and progression toward mastery. Nor is the task to dominate and reject the past for some myth of originality. The task of the translator is to see themselves as equal contributors to the conversation of human expression in the visual arts; the simplest, most effective and immediate way to do so is to draw from art history.

The qualitative data gathered from BRAF questionnaires and discussions has made the programme reactive to student needs. Insightful feedback has very much informed the evolving perception of BRAF workshop practice, allowing us to better articulate the relevance of drawing from drawing in our contemporary context. Removing authoritarian notions of copying, reclaims the validity of the practice by giving students an agency. Benjamin's singular text provides a theoretical framework through which to comprehend the hundreds of student comments given in BRAF workshop questionnaires. His ideas

address the apprehension of copying, the experience of actually undertaking the work and, most significantly, the empathetic relationship that can be stoked between two individuals from foreign languages and/or distant times.

Drawing empathy

Although her essay 'Marking Politics: Drawing as Translation in Recent Art' focuses on drawing from documentary evidence, primarily photographs, Claire Gillman's (2010) drawing as translation stresses the cultural need for drawing from another artist that has been argued in this paper. She explains: 'putting pencil to paper might counter the disconnect that constitutes our experience' of the neoliberal agenda and 'reenactment is in this sense a productive, empathetic model. . .' (p.117). Gillman's assertion that drawing is 'a more patient form of investment' (p.120) is again echoed by student experience in the BRAF workshops: 'Drawing from drawing is like empathising with an artist through a practice that is relatable to my own work' (Questionnaire, 2016). Drawing from requires a new type of consciousness, which, in turn, gives rise to new self-understanding, shaking one out of complacency.

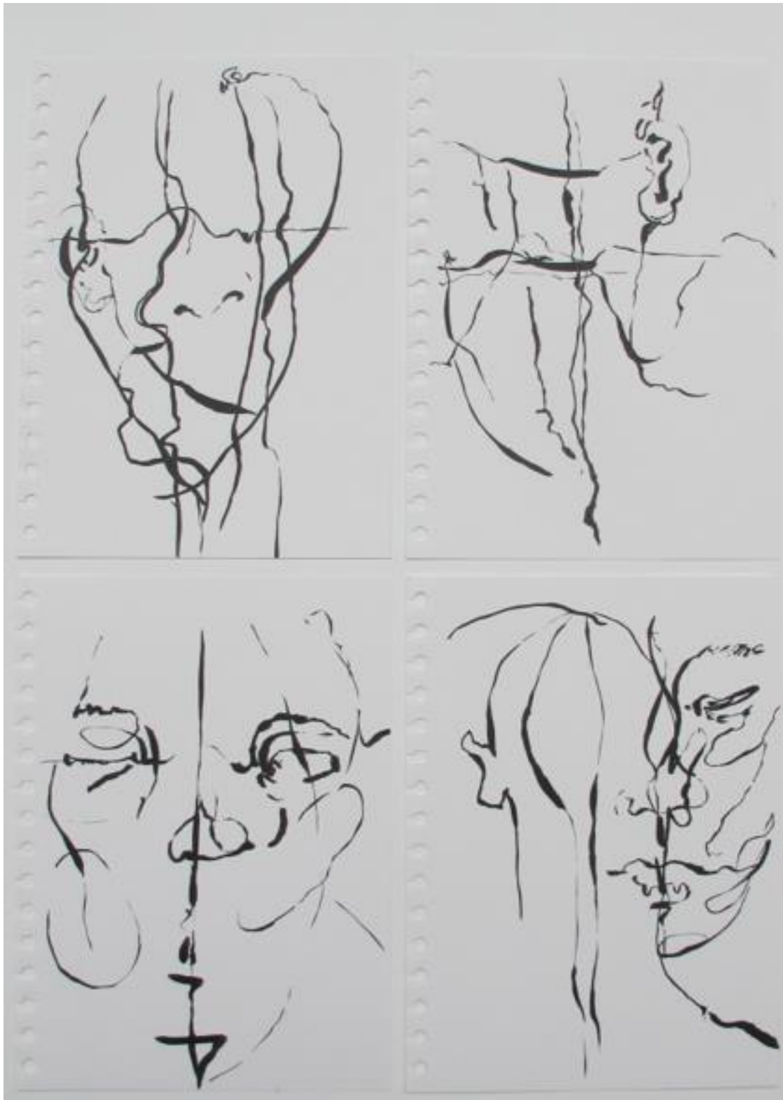

FIGURE 4 CRYSTAL CHIA, SELF-PORTRAITS (2017), INK ON PAPER, COURTESY OF THE ARTIST

FIGURE 5 (FORMERLY ATTRIBUTED TO JOHN EVERETT MILLAIS) PORTRAIT OF A DEAD CHILD (AROUND 1850), GRAPHITE AND BLACK CHALK; ON BUFF PAPER, COURTESY OF THE TRUSTEES OF THE BRITISH MUSEUM

Crystal Chia (2017) explained her transformation while drawing from drawing over a series of five BRAF workshops that focused on different manifestations of translation:

> *'For a long time I had abandoned drawing as my form of practice. This project (drawing within the British Museum collections with BRAF) has freed me from my over-analytic mind, reminding me of the importance of connecting to the reality of looking and observing, putting sight onto paper and allowing me to return to the most simple and direct way of making art.'*

Upon seeing the drawing of a dead child, once attributed to John Everett Millais (Figure 6), Chia was moved to see her entire working process differently. After attempting a meticulous transcription of the drawing's soft lines and variations in tone she felt discouraged by her inability to replicate what was driving her interest in the drawing. After sitting with the experience, Chia began to experiment with concepts of sight and presence. Her abstracted series of self-portraits (Figure 5), created with closed

eyes, does not resemble the drawing drawn from, it represents the translation of what she found to be the most powerful aspect of its content: seeing and being seen.

Drawing from drawing is a simple proposition that has the potential to inspire expressive experimentation. However, it is loaded with complicated authoritative associations linked to basic skill and artistic hierarchy. Freed from these associations by translation theory, this research practice becomes an exercise in empathy that may help to dissolve the solipsistic individualism stoked by the neoliberal, ahistorical cult of individuality. Giving students the time to draw from art history through the lens of translation provides them with a valuable introspective site for communication with their historical peers. Rather than formal assessment of a product, the artist self-assesses the experience of undertaking the action.

To conclude with the thoughts of Riley (1997), echoing Benjamin's theory: translation is a necessary conceptual method that places the artist within the social sphere of their art historical peers.

> *'The compelling and urgent task of a poet, a painter, etc. is to translate their text and it is this task which can be thought about, examined and discussed. . . .Whatever may –or may not-have happened at art school, the museums and art galleries can be relied upon as the great durable book of painting. Of course, one has to be willing to look, to find out. Without being willing, nothing can begin to happen'* (p.616).

Through art historical work in museums and galleries the artist can 'translate their text'. In other words, it is possible for an artist to manifest their personal expression within the social space of history. The BRAF project has tried to encourage the will to do so. We have found that transcription removes that will while translation inspires it.

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THE SPACE OF DRAWING: THE PLACE OF ART IN MODERN PHILOSOPHY'S THINKING OF THE VISIBLE

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In this article we engage with Maurice Merleau-Ponty's claim as it is articulated in his famous last work, 'Eye and Mind', that Descartes' account of space derived from the Renaissance art of perspective. We argue that not only is this account of space an essential element of Cartesian metaphysics, but that it plays a key role in modern philosophy and modern science. In part our aim is to underscore Merleau-Ponty's recognition of the role that art plays in the genesis of the modern conception of space. However, we also argue that by way of this recognition, Merleau-Ponty seeks to release us from the limitations of this conception of space and the view of the human subject it entails, and return us to the world upon which the acts of drawing and painting draw, namely the ambiguous world of perception replete with creative potential.

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Introduction

Maurice Merleau-Ponty published just three essays on art — 'Cezanne's Doubt' (1993a [1945]), 'Indirect Language and the Voices of Silence' (1993b [1952]), and 'Eye and Mind' (1993c [1960]).[1] Despite this slender output, he is regarded as one the twentieth century's greatest philosophers of art. Not only is what he says directly about art creative and powerful, his entire philosophical endeavour, dedicated to showing that if we knowers have never really known ourselves it is because we have not truly thought our bodily-being, is informed by an artist's sensitivity to perception and the perceived world.[2] His engagement with art is not for all that simply a matter of personal inclination or disposition; [3] for Merleau-Ponty, reflection on art is what forces philosophy — the thinking of thinking — into a reconsideration of its essence.

Although we are here primarily concerned with what Merleau-Ponty says about drawing, underlying our argument is this claim that art makes on philosophy, and which amounts to the admission that art is not the indifferent object of philosophical scrutiny (the mode of scrutiny constitutive of the regional discipline of aesthetics). Art is the very condition of philosophy's possibility, for the enquiring mind, far from being sufficient unto itself, owes its illumination to the divine fire of artistic inspiration.

FIGURE 1 VANESSA FIRTH UNTITLED 2018

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[1] All three essays are available together in English in G.A. Johnson 1993. Johnson details their publication history in his 'Introductions to Merleau-Ponty's Philosophy of Painting', pp. 3-55.

[2] For example, in the essay 'Since Lascaux', Olivier Mongin writes that, 'aesthetics permanently subtends Merleau-Ponty's thought and permeates his entire work, to the point of becoming synonymous with his philosophical reflection.' (Mongin, 1993: 245). Mongin is echoing Michel Lefeuvre: 'To the degree that Merleau-Ponty's philosophy is a phenomenology of perception, it may be said to be in its entirety within the domain of aesthetics.' (Lefeuvre, 1976: 353).

[3] For just such a claim, see Dufrenne 1990: 'I would willingly say that if Merleau-Ponty chose to write 'Eye and Mind,' it is simply because he loved painting.' (74)

Our intention in what follows is to explain the role and significance Merleau-Ponty attributes to drawing in modern philosophy's construction of its understanding of space. However, before we get into this argument, we would like first to introduce the heart of Merleau-Ponty's late enterprise, with the aim of providing sufficient context to understand the place and significance of drawing in relation to philosophy.

1. The Dismemberment of the Lived Body

As its title suggests, in 'Eye and Mind' Merleau-Ponty is concerned with the relation between *aísthēsis* and *nóēsis*, or, as these terms have been appropriated by the modern age, the relation between *intuition* and *understanding*, between *body* and *mind*. This affirmation apparently borders on the banal, for it can hardly be said to circumscribe a limited horizon of inquiry within which Merleau-Ponty's investigations can be shown to have a certain sense, justification or structural necessity. However, what we wish to highlight in making this affirmation is that rather than simply consisting of a positive thesis, expressed in positive, affirmative judgements, 'Eye and Mind' is the continuation, or better, the instantiation, of Merleau-Ponty's claim that phenomenology is either 'all or nothing', and it is thus an attempt to appropriate the philosophical tradition — through its repetition — by a reflection on both eye and mind.

The understanding of this relation — or better, the modulation of the understanding of this relation — is historically definitive. The human being has long been seen as a peculiar double, as a strange duality of *psuchê* and *sôma*, mind and body. Aristotle's definition of the human as *zōon logon echon* presents us with a being, an animal, which possesses *logos*, language. A similar doubling is found in the Latinate tradition, which defines the human as the *rational animal*; yet this time, in contrast to Aristotle, reason sets us against our own animality. This same doubling arrives at its most acute formulation in the *cogito ergo sum* of Descartes, which leaves us with what we have come to know as the mind-body problem — the rending of the human being into two discreet substances, a material body and an immaterial mind, the interaction of which it is impossible to explain.

For Merleau-Ponty, the mind-body problem is no mere category mistake arising from a deficiency of thinking, an error that could be corrected by thinking more carefully.[4] The metaphysical sundering of the mind and the body is an event — it is an occurrence with real historical consequences, consequences thoroughly implicated in our experience of ourselves and our world. Modern science and modern technology as much as modern philosophy are outcomes of this division. As Merleau-Ponty puts it, they are 'monsters born' from the 'dismemberment' of the human being, and they consequently disinvest us of our lived experience of the body (Merleau-Ponty, 1993c: 138).

By attending phenomenologically to our embodied experience, Merleau-Ponty discovers beneath the dissociated substances of mind and body, as their fundamental ground and possibility, the *corporeal* self. This is a self that exists neither entirely as consciousness nor as a thing, and which thus eludes the classical philosophies of reflection and empirical science since it is neither wholly transparent to itself nor wholly knowable as an objective given.

This corporeal self's experience of itself and of its world is, then, essentially ambiguous, unclear and uncertain, and it is closer to the perception of the world presented in painting and poetry than the world-pictures found in either modern science or modern philosophy. For this reason, it has often been suggested that Merleau-Ponty appeals to the arts to disinter this primordial corporeal being, and bring to

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[4] Gilbert Ryle (2000) makes the classic statement of this view – although Ryle would say that the error originated in the misuse of language.

light the ambiguous perception of the world that it entails — a world which is replete with possibilities precisely because its givenness is ambiguous and uncertain. As common as such claims are, they miss something essential. In 'Eye and Mind', Merleau-Ponty's appeal to art — or more precisely his appeal to painting and to drawing — is more complex, more nuanced. It is not undertaken with the aim of simply translating into theory the lessons of drawing and painting, as if Merleau-Ponty's sole intent were to say with clarity and distinctness what the artist had obscurely felt — the original, ambiguous unity of mind and world that had inspired her to paint and draw. Instead, Merleau-Ponty's intention is to offer a genealogy of the mind-body problem, by way of which he is able to provide a perspective on the central philosophical problem of modernity, namely how it was possible that the reflection on our practice of thinking, how the attempt to grasp and sustain the essence of transcendence, issued into an objectification of thought itself.[5] The question, then, is how painting and drawing help explain this problem, and how they hold out the promise of its overcoming.

2. The Mind's Eye: Modern Philosophy's Thinking of the Visible

What Merleau-Ponty finds in modern philosophical thought – in the 'philosophy of reflection' as he calls it – is the attempt to comprehend both what the world is and our relation to the world through the separation of *aísthēsis* from *nóēsis*, eye from mind, and their 'reconciliation' under the rule of reason. What this reconciliation then amounts to is a *theoretical* appropriation of our lived experience, a methodological reconstruction based on, but disavowing, 'a brute, existent world' (Merleau-Ponty, 1993c: 122). For the philosophy of reflection our experience, our contact with the world, must be, and can only be, presented as meaningful if it is rendered explicit and unambiguous, if, that is, it is grasped in the *form of a thought* of the world. At one stroke, the very possibility of meaning, the meaning of meaning, comes to have its condition in a thought in contact with itself, in thought's effort at an internal adequation.

Prior to this idea of thought in absolute possession of itself, Merleau-Ponty recovers an inherence of thought in the sensible, and, consequently, reconfigures the very meaning of *aísthēsis* as such. The movement or, and to use this term with a certain reservation, the method of Merleau-Ponty's thinking is what he terms a *hyperreflection* — a thinking that does not reduce itself to a mere consequence or simple effect of a material given, as in the case of empiricism, but which unearths the ground of thinking in its factual enrootedness in the world. As Merleau-Ponty says, this *hyperreflection* is:

> *what takes hold of me as I am in the act of forming the ideas of subject and object, and brings to light the source of these two ideas; it is reflection, not only in operation, but conscious of itself in operation. (Merleau-Ponty, 1968: 219)*

Stated quite formally *hyperreflection* represents the overcoming of the aporias of the philosophy of reflection. *Prima facie* this movement of thought would appear closely to resemble the Hegelian sublation of the historical problems of transcendental philosophy. However, whereas Hegel overcomes the limitations of Kantian critique in attempting to ground thought in and from itself — that is an absolute *nóēsis* that recovers the aesthetic as but an alienated moment of itself — Merleau-Ponty, on

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[5] Merleau-Ponty speaks of a genealogical phenomenology in The Phenomenology of Perception (1962: 220). Genealogy is itself the explicitly philosophical response to the mind-body problem. To believe that this problem can be solved, as if it were a puzzle, in thought alone, is itself the consequence of the separation of mind from body, whereas what Merleau-Ponty tries to do is replay the foundational themes of modern philosophical thought, to grasp their meaning, motivation and origin and thereby de(con)strukt that thought's purchase on reality.

the other hand, recovers an originary intertwining of *nóēsis* in *aísthēsis*, in, that is, a *logos* of the perceived world. As a result, it is this intertwining that requires a rehabilitation of the ontological value of art after and beyond the Hegelian thesis of art's end.

There are two points worthy of consideration here. The first is that this rehabilitation of art by Merleau-Ponty is not employed as an illustrative example of a thesis — which would once again be the abstract reduction of art to an ideal meaning, a separation of a form from a content — but a return to art in order to understand how it shapes and informs our understanding of the inherence of form in content, of *aísthēsis* in *nóēsis*, of, in other words, an inherence of meaning *in* the world. It is therefore an affirmation of art as a 'central operation contributing to the definition of our access to Being' (Merleau-Ponty, 1993c: 132). The second, and related point, is that Merleau-Ponty's rehabilitation of art should not be understood as a summary judgement or critique of the Hegelian thesis that, for modernity, art no longer constitutes a formative experience. Rather, on the contrary, it is the case that in 'Eye and Mind' he implicitly affirms both that the Hegelian thesis offers the truth of modernity and that this thesis can only be comprehended by a reconsideration of the essence of art itself.

How to think, then, the essence of the modern understanding of art? As is known for Hegel the end of art is realised within the self-recognition of truth as *Begriff*; a truth that cannot find an expression in sensuous experience but only in the immanence of thinking unto itself. This thesis — one that cannot be understood apart from the question of ontology — is one that Merleau-Ponty traces through the Cartesian reduction of truth to subjective certainty. For Descartes, insofar as truth is determined on and with the self-grounding of the *cogito* as an immanent act, the world as given to the body is rendered superfluous. Consequently, objects and ideas are not perceived as mediated through the senses, rather they exist with the same necessity as the *cogito* and are part of it — it is not the eyes that see, *for example*, but the mind itself that constructs the visible as an order of thought. Consequently, for Descartes, there can be no question of according to painting a meaning in itself: it is a technique of rendering the visible by means of signs and indices sufficient for us to form an idea of the thing represented, but which in no way contributes to its definition: both are merely impoverished 'variant[s] of thinking, where thinking is canonically defined according to intellectual possession and evidence' (Merleau-Ponty, 1993c: 132).

We should note here, however, that the question of vision and of painting is not merely brought forth in 'Eye and Mind' as one example amongst others of this subordination of *aesthesis* to *noesis*. Rather, it has a singular significance, and it for this reason that Merleau-Ponty appeals to art in order both to trace the genesis of this subordination and to extricate our thinking from its grip. Two arguments suffice to show this:

1) Vision is the exemplary vehicle of this subordination inasmuch as it is the *eîdos*, the outward and visible aspect that a thing offers to the eye, that becomes the visible in an emphatic sense — *the idea* —, and which finally re-appropriates actual vision as a confused version of itself, thus realising the independence of the world of thought from the 'world' in the 'real' sense of the word. Merleau-Ponty does not claim, however, that the *metaphor* of sight is unwarranted, that there is an ocularcentric bias to modernity, and that, consequently, we should instead think in terms of a more 'tactile' or 'corporeal', that is to say, pragmatic relation to the world. Rather he suggests that modernity has always already determined the very idea of sight, of seeing, through the *metaphor of touch*, by way, that is, of the

Begriff.[6] Thus Merleau-Ponty is in accord with Heidegger's — perhaps surprising — account of metaphysics as that way of thinking that is too abstract because it tries too hard to be concrete; as that thinking that determines Being by way of its understanding of beings, and which, consequently elects the factual at the expense of the possible. It is, then, the very prevalence of the metaphor of thought as vision that hides the reduction of vision to the mastery of touch.

2) The determination of transcendence — the *arête* of the human being — by way of sight is valid inasmuch as it is the peculiar virtue of vision '[to show] more than itself' (Merleau-Ponty, 1993c: 138). Sight is more than the passive reception of stimuli, of sensations, it points beyond itself and brings us into a relation with 'external' being, it opens up a field of existence, it goes beyond the situation that has occasioned it by means of its capacity to *express*. As Merleau-Ponty writes, it is,

> *capable of leaping over distances, piercing into the perceptual future, and outlining hollows and reliefs, distances and deviations — a meaning — in the inconceivable flatness of being … it possesses this world at a distance rather than being possessed by it. (Merleau-Ponty, 1993b: 103—4)*

It is by reflecting on the nature of sight, then, Merleau-Ponty shows that modernity, which, with Kant, finally comes to determine the essence of the human being on the ground of its spatio-temporal intuition, had a certain validity insofar as it took its inspiration from the nature of sight, and yet, in the end, denied what it sought by reducing sight to a *pure mathematical intuition*. This domination of the visible by the rational, the determination of *aisthesis* by *noesis*, is reductive in a two-fold sense. On the one hand it gives us the visible, but the visible abstracted from a specific point of view so as to arrive at a notation of the world which will be valid for all, a particularity, then, that becomes absolute by forgetting its origin in the 'flesh of the world'. On the other hand, and in order to forget, it has to reduce that dimension which is characterised by the ambivalent implication of seer, seen and world, the 'existential dimension' of depth.

3. On Cartesian Space, Drawing and the Art of Perspective

According to Merleau-Ponty, Descartes, the architect of modernity, took inspiration from the experiments with perspective undertaken by the artists — the painters, the draughtsmen, the engravers — of the Renaissance. Their innovations did not just help Descartes express his ideas about space; they helped him have those ideas.

Before we consider how Descartes derives these ideas from Renaissance perspective it is first necessary to make some remarks on the relation between drawing, perspective and the fine arts — in particular painting – as they have been classically conceived. Etymologically, the word 'drawing' comes from the Proto-Germanic *draganan*. Its root sense is 'to impart motion by pulling; to drag, to haul, to trail or tug'. From this root, an indefinite series of meanings and usages branches out. It comes to be applied to the act of tracing a line or figure by the action of drawing a mark-making tool (a bone, chalk, charcoal, a

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[6] The German term Begriff is a modification of the verb greifen – 'to grip'. The Begriff is the concept that lays hold of, or that grips, what it comprehends. In English we speak of grasping the sense of something when we employ an idea properly. In the essay 'The Grip (Mainmise)', Jean-François Lyotard considers the thematic of gripping or grasping in Western thought. Lyotard is principally concerned with the notion of emancipation, but his remarks are relevant to the point we are making insofar as it touches on the Cartesian project of mastery of self and nature. He writes, 'Born children, our task would be to enter into full possession of ourselves. Master and possessor, as Descartes put it, thus insisting on the act of seizure, an act to be carried out on the self of existing things (called nature).' (Lyotard, 1993: 148)

stylus, a pencil, a pen), across a surface, as one draws a plough through the soil, cutting a furrow. To draw, in this sense, when applied to the arts, or when used of the act of drawing, denotes the making of a mark, perhaps even an incision.

Figure 2 Albrecht Dürer *Draughtsman Making a Perspective Drawing of a Reclining Woman* circa 1600

It is customary to oppose drawing as the making of a mark, to painting.[7] In his treatise *On Painting*, Alberti says that the painter (the term *painter* as he uses it is synonymous with our *artist*) is concerned with the visible – 'no one,' he says, 'will deny that things which are not visible do not concern the painter, for he strives to represent only the things that are seen' (Alberti, 1991: 37). According to Alberti, painting is, then, a figurative art, and the function of the painter is 'to draw with lines and paint in colours […] bodies' (Alberti, 1991: 87). According to this definition, drawing is, as Félix Ravaisson says, painting 'simplified', abstracted 'from colour in all its variety' (Ravaisson, 2016: 160), and reduced to the depiction of visible forms.

Drawing is not for all that merely an impoverished variant of painting. Classically conceived, drawing is the depiction or delineation of the 'borderlines of surfaces and their proportions' (Alberti, 1991: 47). Since these borderlines and proportions together comprise the shapes and forms of things, it can be rightly said that 'the one who draws […] holds the key to all [the figurative] arts' (Ravaisson, 2016: 160).[8]

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[7] In truth, this conventional demarcation is unstable as the experiments of modern and contemporary artists with line and mark remind us. Cy Twombly, for example, has ceaselessly undone the distinction between the linear art of drawing and painting. Peter Schjeldahl (2005) has described Twombly's 'paintings' as 'seemingly random distributions of smudges and scribbles on large canvases', and as 'flurries of impulsive line in pencil, crayon, or paint.' He goes on to invoke Twombly's 'loopy tumults of line in white wax crayon on grounds of dark-grey house paint', which he says, 'resemble chalked blackboards.' In conversation with Nicholas Serota (2008), Twombly himself commented on the relation between his own works and graffiti: 'graffiti is linear and it's done with a pencil, and it's like writing on walls. But [in my paintings] it's more lyrical […] it's graffiti but it's something else, too.' In fact, the distinction between painting and drawing is not only recently unmade by the transgressions of modern art; the distinction is always already inhabited by instability inasmuch as the artist's line carries a qualitative inflection essential to it, while the geometer's line is a measure of magnitude only. Through this inflection the line is always open to, or caught up in, colour. Even if it is itself an art of definition, the art of drawing is, then, not easily defined. That said, the distinction between painting and drawing that serves to define both cannot simply be set aside, as if it were an arbitrary artifice. To be sure, there is no line that is not coloured – least of all the artist's line, which is, as we have already said, always a visible sign and qualitative mark. Nevertheless, drawing and painting are opposed as line and surface are. The former is the art of the line, whereas painting, which is the art of colour, is for that reason, the art of surfaces.

[8] Ravaisson drew his views from the principles of 'the great masters' (Ravaisson, 2016: 159). Those views had considerable influence on the teaching of drawing in France in the latter part of the 19th century. In 1853, the Minister for Public Instruction appointed Ravaisson to chair a commission on the reform of the teaching of drawing in schools. The article cited here was written for Ferdinand Buisson's 1882 *Dictionnaire de pédagogie et d'instruction primaire*.

This idea of drawing as the key to all the figurative arts, is captured in the idea of *disegno* as it was developed in the Italian Renaissance, and which, in its contrast to the art of *colore*, initiates a dispute that resonates long thereafter in the history of art.[9] As well as designating the technique of drawing, *disegno* denoted the creative idea sketched-out and made apparent in the drawing – the preliminary design that is, at the same time, the underpinning structure and thus the final form of the finished painting.

The technique of perspective is an essential element – if not *the* essential element – of drawing so conceived. For if the visual artist is concerned to depict bodies not as they are abstractly , then these bodies are subject to deformation dependent on their distance and position vis-à-vis the viewer – shortened according to their obliquity, shrunk according to their distance. It is the function of drawing, then, to depict the visual form of bodies as they present themselves to the viewer, and that means insofar as they appear perspectivally.

Now, as Merleau-Ponty shows, the artistic practice of *perspectiva artificialis* plays a constitutive role in the genesis of Cartesian metaphysics by virtue of the conception of space that Descartes derives from it.[10] To unpack the philosophical significance of this claim we have first to understand how the practice operates. Paradoxically, and as many others beside Merleau-Ponty have noted, in its very attempt to render depth it distorts it.[11] Merleau-Ponty offers an account in the following terms:

> *[The artist] sees the tree nearby, then he directs his gaze further into the distance, to the road, before finally looking to the horizon; the apparent dimensions of the other objects change each time he stares at a different point. On the canvas, he arranges things such that what he represents is no more than a compromise between these various different visual impressions: he strives to find a common denominator to all these perceptions by rendering each object not with the size, colours and aspect it present when the painter fixes it in his gaze but rather with the conventional size and aspect that it would present in a gaze directed at a particular vanishing point on the horizon. (Merleau-Ponty, 2004: 40)*

When following this technique the artist arranges objects on the canvas along lines that run from herself towards a point marked on the horizon. By projecting these lines she is able to open the canvas onto a space. However, these lines are not anchored by the artist's particular perspective; instead, they are assimilated into a geometrized projection, a perspectiveless position that embraces all particular points of view. Because of this, the space that the canvas opens on to is a space that 'remains absolutely in itself, everywhere equal to itself, homogenous' (Merleau-Ponty, 1993c: 134). By opening the canvas onto this space, painting becomes the ancillary of representation. From here, the painter's task is to arrange

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[9] The distinction between drawing and painting was not the invention of the Italian Renaissance, but it underscored the sixteenth century *paragone* between the partisans of *colore* on the one hand, and *disegno* on the other, the former championing Titian, the latter Michelangelo. The dispute passed down through the antagonism in the late 17th-century *Academie* between the *Poussinistes* and the *Rubenistes*, through to the twentieth century with the popular distinction between the two giants of modern painting, Picasso and Matisse, beyond.

[10] *Perspectiva artificialis* was the name given to the technique of linear perspective developed in the Renaissance that sought to provide a reliable way of constructing images on the two-dimensional surface. It was contrasted with *perspectiva naturalis* or *communis*, 'which sought simply to formulate mathematically the laws of natural vision' (Panofsky, 1991: 35).

[11] See, for example, Panofsky (1991).

objects along the x, y, and z axes, relative to the projected vanishing point. The image is configured by offering it to an absolute observer, to a vision that is abstracted from its involvement in the world, a vision that takes place without a body.

In this technique, Descartes discovers a vision of space rendered clear and distinct, denuded of all its latencies and hiddenness, which is to say, space purged of true depth. This is a paradox in appearance only, for as the art of perspective shows, the illusion of depth can be created on the two-dimensional picture-plane in the same way that it is painted on the interior surface of the eye — suggested by way of height and breadth. In this account, depth is, then, nothing real; it is but 'breadth seen from the side' (Merleau-Ponty, 1962: 255). The phenomena of encroachment and latency, integral to the perceptual experience of depth, is not for Descartes part of the true definition of bodies, it is simply the confused expression of 'my incomprehensible solidarity with one of them — my body' (Merleau-Ponty, 1993c: 134). From the picture-window of perspectival drawing, Descartes derives a conception of space reduced to its own simple self-evidence. It is space pictured as a mosaic of parts, spread out side-by-side, *partes extra partes* — it is space identified with extension.

For Descartes, depth does not tell us anything about the world; it is not an attribute of things. Descartes offers us a geometrical space, everywhere identical to itself and indifferent to its contents — a space in which things are no longer those rivals for my vision which can only be seen in a 'temporal cycle in which each gain [is] also a loss' (Merleau-Ponty, 1964: 50), but in which objects are spread out and comprehended by an order of thought, a universal power that enables them to be connected. In short, it is space regarded in an instantaneous synthesis, in and from an indifferent now point.

As a consequence of what he takes from the perspectival technique of classical painting, Descartes was able to 'elevate certain properties of beings into a structure of Being' (Merleau-Ponty, 1993c: 134). It is this elevation that is generative of his metaphysics. We have seen how for classical painting outline – or rather, the form – of an object takes precedence over its colour, and texture, so for Descartes, such 'sensory qualities' are reduced to a second order, because they do not directly pertain to the geometrical properties of extension, definitive of the entity as it truly is. Just as images composed using the technique of *perspectiva artificialis* look frozen in time and peaceful, because they present a world which, held beneath a gaze fixed at infinity, 'remain[s] at a distance and [does] not involve the viewer' (Merleau-Ponty, 2004: 40), so Descartes conceives of space as it would be seen by […] a geometer looking over it' (Merleau-Ponty, 1993c: 138), projecting a vision of a world in which objects are indifferent to the space they occupy, and space is indifferent to the objects organised within it.

Such a world, reduced to extension, is a world of certainty, a world with which thought can reckon, calculate, over which it can exert mathematical mastery, insofar as it is essentially inert. The Cartesian conception of space is the correlate of a vision that constructs what it sees. It is a vision that sees insofar as it thinks what it sees, and refuses to abandon itself to the actual, ambiguous spectacle offered up to perception. It presents us with a world that thought can know, but to which it remains essentially indifferent because it is uninvolved in it.

Conclusion

Descartes took inspiration from the technique of perspective drawing. Now, for the early Renaissance artists this technique was more than just a 'tool' – something that could be called on should the occasion

call for it. Instead, they sought to make this technique into the principal dynamic of all painting. If this technique was held in such high esteem, it was because the artists thought it 'capable in principle of founding an exact construction' (Merleau-Ponty, 1993c: 135) of the external world. For them, *perspectiva artificialis* did not simply augment the practice of painting; it was supposed 'to bring an end to painting's quest and history, to found once and for all an exact and infallible art of painting' (Merleau-Ponty, 1993c: 135). However, as Merleau-Ponty observes, there was a degree of bad-faith in this enthusiasm. As time passed, the painters came to realise 'that no technique of perspective is an exact solution and that there is no projection of the existing world which respects it in all aspects' (Merleau-Ponty, 1993c: 135). What's more, perspective projection was developed along several different paths: 'the Italians took the way of representing the object, but the Northern painters discovered and worked out the formal techniques of *Hochraum*, *Nahraum*, and *Schrägraum*' (Merleau-Ponty, 1993c: 135). What this reveals is that such techniques are more regulative than prescriptive – more the herald of further possibilities for painting than the final and absolute solution to its problems. It is this that Descartes forgets.

Descartes' fateful error, then, was not so much in taking his inspiration from the technique of perspective drawing, but in treating that technique as absolute, as if it offered an unimpeachable insight into the nature of space and vision. We should not see in his derivation of a philosophy from art the weakness that a modern thought that prides itself on its dispassionate objectivity might suspect. Such a suspicion is more Cartesian than it knows, for it is Descartes who sought to found a science that forgets its origin in art, by suppressing the intertwining of thought in sensuous experience. Nor, however, is it a matter of condemning this forgetting; what is important is to reckon with its consequences. By suppressing the intertwining of thought and sensuous experience, the entanglement of *nóēsis* in *aísthēsis*, Descartes is able to found a self that experiences itself as a clear and distinct *a priori*, the ground and possibility of all meaning. But as a result the body itself loses its primary ability and possibility, its *actio in distans*, and it is this ability and possibility that is nothing other than the *ground* of what Descartes mistakenly takes to be an *attribute* of the spontaneity of the mind — its transcendence.

Rather than purge itself of its artistic inclinations, thought must continually embrace art. The meaning *of* art, *of* painting and *of* drawing – and we should understand the genitive in its twofold sense – cannot be understood as a more or less refractory indication of a thought in full possession of itself. Art is not a symbolic form, it does not encode evidences that are already present in the interiority of a consciousness. Rather it is by lending her body to the world that the artist brings its evidences into existence, and illuminates a *meaning in genesis*, for the body as the locus of our transcendence in immanence, our ability to project a space of expressiveness — our corporeal power of securing from and giving sense to the world — is the ground of, and is made manifest in, painting and drawing.

FIGURE 3 VANESSA FIRTH UNTITLED 2018

To consider the meaning of art, then, is to reconceive the relation between thinking and being, the very meaning of meaning itself. It brings us before the ability and possibility of expression that, as grounded in our being-in-the-world preceding the reflective objectification of the world, cannot be reduced to the consequence of an autonomous intellect. It thus reveals the possibility of transcendence as historicity itself, a historicity of expression that is also an expressive historicity, and opens a field of experience in which possibility exceeds actuality.

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DRAWING IDEAS SOCIETY

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This article explores the possible relationship between drawing and contemporary art practice in the shift of art into public life. In this shift artists have invented ways of working that situate their work socially, economically and aesthetically in new configurations. How might we rethink drawing as opening up to society? What might drawing reveal about ideas in society? What might drawing become? The article focuses on a drawing research experiment (2017/19) as part of an accumulation of experimentation that seeks to rethink drawing as an activity that can be shared by more than one person within different experiences of community. Jean Luc Nancy’s 2013 text The Pleasure of Drawing opens up insights into what drawing means as a practice within social experience and what drawing in turn reveals about what we imagine society to be.

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Introduction

We currently live in a society in which the arts are increasingly opening up to issues and content normally considered outside of art, to ecological and social issues such as identity, social justice, health and biodiversity. In this opening the social function of art has shifted from that of representing the world by creating objects of contemplation, to participating, contributing alongside others, melding with the world rather than reordering it from an objective distance. This has brought about a movement away from instituted ways of working as an artist that are purely dependent upon the concert hall, gallery and museum and their associated economies and forms of practice. Although these institutions continue to have an important function, it is in relation to a movement of contemporary art practices into public life and *its* processes. Artists have invented new ways of working as part of this change. These reconfigure traditional skills, techniques and public/private forms of dissemination and engagement creating new poetics of practice that situate the work conceptually as well as materially, aesthetically and economically in the world.

The opening up of the arts to public life stems from a growing dissatisfaction from the mid twentieth century onwards with the widening gap between artist and their audiences. Herbert Read (1967, pp. 13-14), writing in the mid twentieth century, described this as a form of alienation between the individual and society that had emerged with industrialization. While it might be tempting to see the root cause as economic, in capitalism and its current development in neoliberalism, Read attributed alienation to the separation between human beings and nature that was an unforeseen consequence of industrialization. This had brought with it a separation between artist, artwork and viewer in modernism that had not been the case in pre-industrial civilizations (Read 1967, pp.13-14). Artists such as John Cage (1912-1992) and Allan Kaprow (1927-2006) in the mid to late 20th century developed experimental processes that specifically addressed the gap that Read highlighted, in their case as a counterpoint to the increased commodification of the arts. Claire Bishop, the critical theorist and Grant Kester, the art historian, have traced the emergence of participatory forms of art practice to an avant-garde tradition and the increasing desire on behalf of artists to reconnect critically with larger economic and political issues and structures, uncovering possible alternatives to current ways of living and their systems of value (Douglas 2018).

What of drawing? What might it become in response to this shift in the social function of the arts? What might drawing reveal about what we understand society to be? What is 'idea' to drawing?

As a practicing artist and researcher, drawing has always been an important part of the way I think and explore the world. For a number of years I have been involved in researching the changing relationship of art to public life through doctoral and postdoctoral research that is predominantly practice-led and experimental (Douglas, 2016; Douglas and Gulari, 2015). Drawing is dynamically positioned in this research between a personal, quite intimate activity of exploration and the social, relational and verbally discursive practice that public art has become. As such drawing jostles for a relevant place and function as a practice and a research approach in relation to emergent forms of art in public life.

In this article I refer to a number of drawing experiments. Many of these have been part of other funded research. These experiments have a number of characteristics that are relatively unusual in comparison to mainstream drawing practices. First, all of the experiments are participatory activities, sometimes shared between several individuals, sometimes two or three. Some involve the use of scores or instructions as a means of sharing the space of an experience, influenced by the work of Allan Kaprow,

the American artist and theorist. Kaprow used score poems to rethink the relationship of art to life as a shared experience (Kelley, 2004). Another method is copying the work of more established artists. Taken as a whole this body of experimentation brings drawing in relation to the shift of art into public life. (Of less importance is what each experiment generates in itself). These experiments create spaces of different kinds as experiences of community in which singularity is an important element, in contrast perhaps to the more familiar idea of drawing as a lone activity between artist and their material production. The asterisks indicate the experiments that I reference in detail in the article.

- *Calendar Variations* 2011, the Barn Banchory in collaboration with Georgina Barney, Chu Chu Yuan, Chris Fremantle, Reiko Goto-Collins, Fiona Hope, Jono Hope, and Janet McEwan (Coessens and Douglas, 2011)
- *Sounding Drawing* 2012, AHRC funded *Time of the Clock, Time of Encounter* research PI Johan Siebers 2012-13 in collaboration with the Orpheus Institute of Research in Music, Ghent (Douglas and Gulari, 2015; https://ontheedgeresearch.org/sounding-drawing/)
- *Sipping Water* 2013 in collaboration with Amanda Ravetz, Manchester Metropolitan University and Kathleen Coessens, Brussels Conservatoire (Douglas and Coessens, 2013)
- ** Why drawing, now*? In collaboration with Amanda Ravetz, Kate Genever and Johan Siebers, AHRC funded Connected Communities research investigating the legacy of artists within 'Connected Communities' research (PI Pahl, 2014-5) (Douglas et al., 2014)
- ** Drawing out the white* 2017 in collaboration with Nicola Chambury, Marc Higgens and Paulo Maccagno, ERC-funded *Knowing from the Inside* advanced grant into experiential ways of knowing across anthropology, art, design and architecture (P.I. Ingold, 2013-18)
- ** Finding something small* 2017 in collaboration with Chris Fremantle
- *Copying Klee* 2018, a second project funded by the ERC-funded *Knowing from the Inside* (2013-18)

This list functions to provide a context for an ongoing set of research questions. However, I will start in the middle with *Why Drawing Now*? (Douglas et al., 2014) as an example of an experiment in more detail and therefore not move from project to project. Then I will discuss the new experiment, *Finding something small* 2017. Underpinning all the work is the question: If drawing is fundamental to the practice of art, then how does it relate to contemporary art practice and its emergent relation to public life?

Why Drawing Now? (2014)

In *Why drawing, now?* Ravetz, Genever and I undertook a series of drawing experiments as artists and researchers. We explored drawing as a material process of mark making, consciously withholding any sense of an end product or outcome. We set out to understand what drawing might be beyond an individually centred experience, in particular how drawing might help us understand a possible interplay between individuality and community.

By sharing drawing activities of different kinds over a time limited to three days, and reflecting on these with the philosopher, Johan Siebers, we came to understand through this particular experiment that drawing is profoundly entangled with us and the material world of surfaces, implements, techniques and skill. This entanglement becomes visible through the dots, lines and planes that trace our interactions.

A way to imagine the implications of this approach as a social, cultural experience is perhaps through Deleuze and Guattari's description of improvisation manifest through the refrain and its function in society. They explore this function through three scenarios that are all part of the same phenomenon. In the first the child copes with the dark by means of a song whose rhythm counters the black hole of chaos. In the second we are at home. But home does not pre-exist. It needs to be created by drawing a circle around a fragile centre in which the forces of chaos are contained as much as possible. The third aspect of the refrain is the opening back out into the world from a different point in the circle where old forces press against it i.e in another place that allows for a small degree of control (Deleuze and Guattari, 2002, pp. 310-11).

In our experiment we effectively contained (but by no means controlled) the chaos of everyday life within a temporary space. In this way we created the conditions within which to take risks and move beyond our individual comfort zones, before opening back into everyday life. As three artists working together collaboratively, we encountered an additional element– the need to discuss and agree a set of parameters within which we would work. The time and space afforded by this experiment created a world in formation, a world that could not have been anticipated. It was an experience of community between initially three, then four people working together. Community was immanent, its presence rendered visible through the lines and marks that literally traced our collaborative effort, including reflective writing.

The contribution this phase of work has made to the relationship of art, ideas and society was to rethink a common belief that community can be constructed. This assumption is rehearsed by governments, for example, as they increasingly reduce public funding, putting pressure on citizens to make good the gap in public resources. Nancy argues that community is a state of being. It can neither be constructed nor escaped. Human existence is dependent upon social relationships. Community is an aspect of life itself (Nancy, 1991). In our small experiment we experienced community in this, Nancy's sense, as immanent between three people exploring the materiality of drawing (Douglas et al., 2014).

Finding Something Small (2017/19)

This current article takes a different trajectory underpinned by the same concerns developed through a different quality of experimentation. The underpinning research continues to address how and what we know through the arts, including how the practice of art, in this case drawing, reveals the tropes through which we imagine society. This new work is written as a letter to the author, "C", of an experimental score (Figure 1). The author is a close friend with whom I have collaborated on thinking and writing for many years. Unlike the first experiment, the process did not consciously set out as a research experiment. It began as a generous gesture on behalf of one friend helping another to address a creative block.

The score created a set of constraints that I needed to attend to each day by drawing, alternating between the space of home and the outdoors. The account that followed the drawing is written from a first person perspective. I found myself handling the writing as a generative process that parallels the drawing. The resulting letter is therefore not an analysis of the drawing experiment (as had been the function of writing in *Why drawing, now?*) but a creative, open-ended and exploratory process in its own right. I have taken my time, listened carefully to the way I responded to each day's instruction and tried to communicate the sense of this experience through the correspondence with "C". I explore selectively

where the score took me within a process of reflection. As such both drawing and writing as a response to something given, simultaneously undertake a 'research' and a 'creative' function, sensitising me to insights that I had not previously recognised.

The second part of the letter deepens the experience by creating a context through Jean Luc Nancy among others, in particular Nancy's short series of essays "The Pleasure of Drawing" (2013).

I conclude by recounting a recent conversation in which "C" has helped me to see the body of work as an accumulation that all along had addressed the question of drawing and the social turn in the arts. I came to realise that each experiment had constructed and continues to construct spaces and experiences in which community and singularity come together, co-constituting social experience but without undermining difference. In fact difference comes to the foreground as an important way of experiencing community as lived, as felt.

Finding something small 2017 is a collaboration in this case between just two individuals, the author and a friend with whom I correspond and who has shared the research journey into art in public life. There are a number of stages to the dialogue of *Finding something small*; the framing of a different kind of experience in the form of a score that is gifted, the response in drawing and the reflection that is offered back. It is perhaps unusual to imagine this experiment as a participatory and social experience when it appears to narrate the experience of only one correspondent.

It is important to acknowledge that the dialogue has continued since 2017 when the first version of this article was written and so this article becomes a moment in time of a more extended, reciprocal process. It is also important to note how we have worked, corresponding through email, text and image i.e. practices of communication that are integrated into our social, political and economic order. In this way "C" and I are acting in a world as bodies created by discourses that already exist, to which we join. We become involved as individuals that are shaped by such discourses while also shaping them. In so doing we enact a social relationship in which "I" does not stand outside, but within the social and cultural. In this sense both projects *Why Drawing Now?* (2014) and *Finding something small* (2017/19) question the tendency to separate the private and public into different spheres and instead seek the private within the public, acknowledging the one as co-constituting the other.

Dear Anne

The Score

Day 1 Find something small and man-made in the street and draw it.
Make a noise with the piano that 'represents' it.

Day 2 Find something small and natural in the street and draw it.
Make a noise with the piano that 'represents' it.

Day 3 Find something large and man-made in the street and draw it
Make a noise with the piano that 'represents' it

Day 4 Find something large and natural in the street and draw it
Make a noise with the piano that 'represents' it

Day 5 Hear something man-made in the street and draw it
Imitate the noise with the piano

Day 6 Hear something natural in the street and draw it
Imitate the noise with the piano

Day 7 Rest

Day 8 Start again

FIGURE 1 THE SCORE 2017

Dear C

Many thanks for the score. It is wonderful, thought provoking, reminiscent of the 1970s *Calendar* score of Allan Kaprow (2003, p.120) that we worked with as a research group back in 2011 and that you are still working with. I wanted to take the opportunity to write to you about how I have gone about interpreting this new score through drawing and the kinds of thoughts and associations it has provoked along the way. I suspect there will be many deviations, developing a narrative that is more drawing-like in the way I understand drawing as an open-ended process, rather than one of resolved thought. I wanted to lead with this recent drawing experience as a way into drawing and phenomenology.

I have taken the liberty to interpret some elements in this new score. For example, 'noise' has become 'sound'. I understand 'sound' to be anything that we hear i.e. a wider category of things than 'noise'. I understand 'noise' to mean a sound that is not particularly pleasant. I know you understand these terms differently. Your 'noise' is my 'sound'.

Also sound (in my meaning) gives me more scope. I am finding this element by far the most difficult aspect of your proposal and have frankly made very few real attempts to create sound though I intend to do so. The suggestion to "make a noise with the piano" that represents what I have drawn is a complex task as sound is immanent, it surrounds us and cannot represent anything other than itself. Nonetheless I want to acknowledge how sound is influential in what I have been developing visually.

On Day 5 for example, the instruction is as follows

> *Hear something man-made in the street and draw it*
>
> *Imitate the noise with the piano*

I heard the *whoosh* of a car passing, or rather a number of cars passing at chance intervals. Through this sound and its stochastic rhythm I became intensely aware of how the infrastructure of the street and car is man-made and formally consistent but the quality of sound of each vehicle is distinctive and subject to chance. I tried to reproduce the *whoosh (fading)*, with various drawing materials – thick charcoal, pencil, black conté and a sheet of paper. My response felt a bit literal (Figure 2).

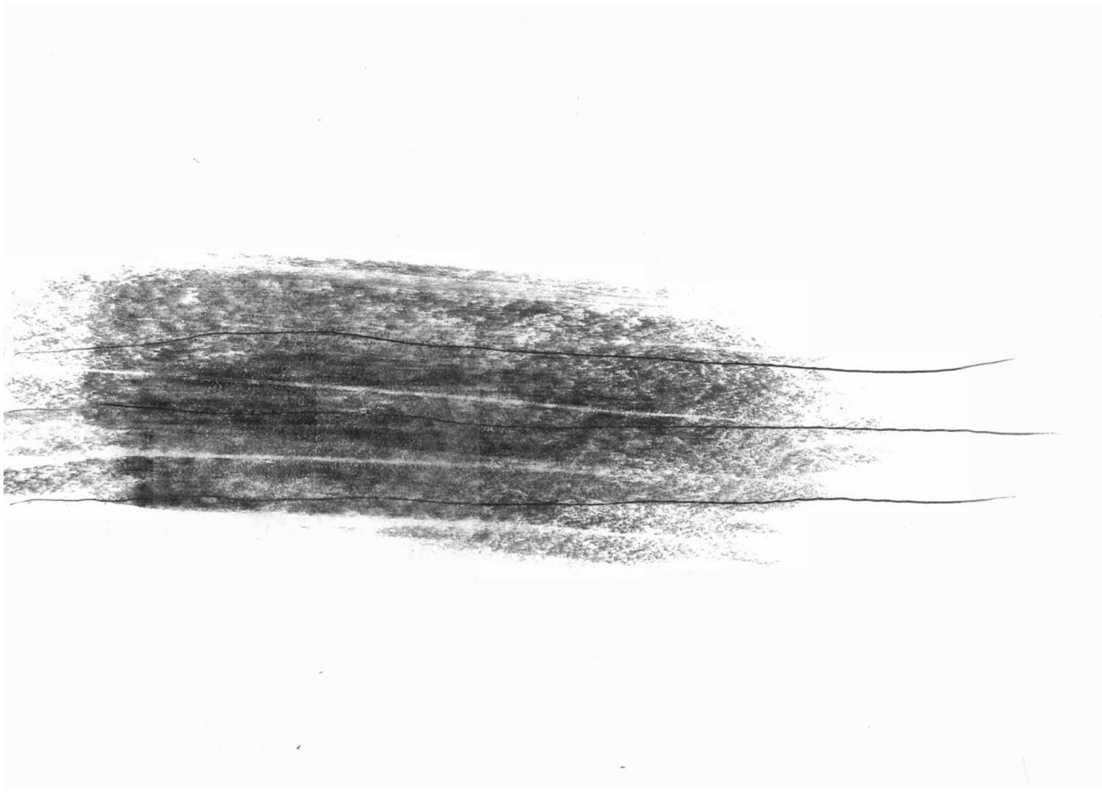


FIGURE 2 DAY 5: A CAR PASSING 2017

The frustration of literalness led me to relook at the work of Tom Marioni (b. 1937) and the book that you lent me entitled *Beer, Art and Philosophy* 2003. Marioni has followed the trace of a movement in a similar way to my response to the passing vehicle in a number of works, but with an additional element. Drawing is an important part of Marioni's conceptual approach. His *Violin Bird* (1972) for example is a sound experiment that results in a visual trace. He describes this piece as follows

> *…rubbing and beating against large sheets of sandpaper with steel wire brushes like jazz drummers use. The action is repetitive and makes a rhythmic, rasping sound. As I drum over a long period of time, steel from the brushes is transferred to the paper to make a drawing that reminds some people of the shadow of a bird flying – a pictorial record of the sound activity (Marioni 2003,pp.123-4)*

Copying Marioni's drawings exposed the gap between his approach and my own. The happenstance element of *Violin Bird,* of capturing a moment in which physical materials come into contact with each other, creates something new and unforeseen in this piece. It transports us to a place where we see two previously unrelated things in terms of each other, 'bird' in terms of 'violin', drumming in terms of flight and so on. My copy does not achieve this third unrelated element. In this sense it is literal i.e. neither conceptual nor metaphorical.

What do we mean by 'conceptual' in art? And is this the same thing as 'idea' in society? The Tate Gallery website conflate 'idea' and 'concept' and suggest that it is the idea behind the work of conceptual art that is more important than the finished art object. This is somehow resonant of Plato. Idea 'eidos' referred to 'form' or 'shape' in classical times and through Plato, this was deeply connected to experiences of fabrication. Ideas/forms/shapes were considered eternal, given to the human mind, not

created by it. The craftsman who makes a bed can only follow an idea of a bed or couch. It is the idea of bed or couch that guides his fabrication and this idea does not disappear but outlives his final object (Arendt 1998,pp.141-142).

Violin Bird emerges unexpectedly out of a process not of drawing directly but of creating rhythm by drumming. The drawing is a consequence of another action with a different purpose. The idea once born lives on and is repeatable in Plato's sense of the idea of table or couch, living as a repeatable form that we encounter from time to time. In fact different versions of the same process of fabrication have been produced over three decades within Marioni's own portfolio.

The Tate's definition of conceptual art also includes a quote from Sol LeWitt (1929- 2007), who increasingly used instructions that are more directive than the kinds of scores we have been working with to enable his work to be fabricated by individuals other than himself.

> *In conceptual art the idea or concept is the most important aspect of the work. When an artist uses a conceptual form of art, it means that all the planning and decisions are made beforehand and the execution is a perfunctory affair.*
>
> *LeWitt, S. 1967 in Tate 2018*

Far from handing over creative agency, LeWitt appears to me to reinforce the persona of the artist as sole author of the creative aspects of a work that can take form as instructions. These are realised by assistants rather than co-creators. His separation of fabrication and idea within a hierarchy of value does not appear to correspond with Marioni's sensibility. Marioni comes across an experience as a phenomenon, as something that he becomes conscious of through an experience. *Violin Bird* resulted from a chance encounter between drummer, drumming, steel brushes and a surface, one that Marioni makes last through its trace as a visual work. It is closer to John Cage's aleatory methods (in music and the visual arts) than Sol LeWitt's instructions.

Let me try to explain what I mean by this difference as it speaks to different understandings of intentionality i.e. how attention becomes directed in an experience. In the body of work *To quieten and sober the mind* (Brown, 2000) that Cage developed with Kathan Brown, Marioni's wife, in the late 70s at Crown Point Press, California, he (Cage) was able to resolve in the visual so many of the problems he had encountered in music in relation to chance methods, managing to counter the tendency of pure chance to overly constrain the creativity of the artist. Cage sought a quality of relationship between constraint and freedom in terms of determinacy and indeterminacy and increasingly brought others (performers, fine art printers) into the creative process. He understood that the artist/composer needed to become very aware of which aspects of the creative process he/she seeks to control or determine in a composition and what can be left indeterminate. Bach, as one of his examples reveals the impact of this kind of creative freedom. Bach rarely indicated in his scores the dynamics of a piece in terms of loud and soft, leaving the performer free to create his/her own dynamic, effectively to become a colourist and transform the sequence of notes of the score from one performance to another (Cage, 1973, p. 35). Is Cage creating the circumstances of happenstance where we come across something that is unforeseen and, in finding meaning, really notice it? Is this what we mean by an experience of phenomenology?

Even though Cage rejected improvisation as too concerned with taste, I have always found this work on determinacy/indeterminacy an important way to understand creativity in terms of improvisation i.e. as working with the contingencies (material, social and/or cultural) that life presents, while refusing to be

trapped by these. Cage appears to get deeply to the heart of what constitutes freedom in life as freedom within constraint.

I have always been predisposed towards drawing as improvisation. This is a concern with how to sustain a quality of life or experience in a drawing. The unexpected will always occur in the sheer materiality of a drawing process but how do we understand its value? How might we harness its energy going forward? Where is 'idea' situated in such a process of keeping something going, energised and alive?

Drawing out the white 2017 (Figure 3*)* was a collaboration with another artist (Nicola Chambury) and two anthropologists (Marc Higgens and Paulo Maccagno). This drawing predates the score you wrote in 2008 *Find something small*. The constraints in this collaborative piece (*Drawing out the white*) were severe and nonetheless very powerful in the direct and simple relationship between material and gesture. The thick paper, water, paint-brush and trace afford a mark that the camera reveals quite unexpectedly as an experience of tone. It was entirely dependent upon the happenstance of being in a room with particular directional light. We did not set out to achieve this result but it occurred in the process of immersing ourselves in the materials, listening and watching carefully to what was presenting itself at the time. We developed the short film to somehow savour the beauty and wonder of this moment.

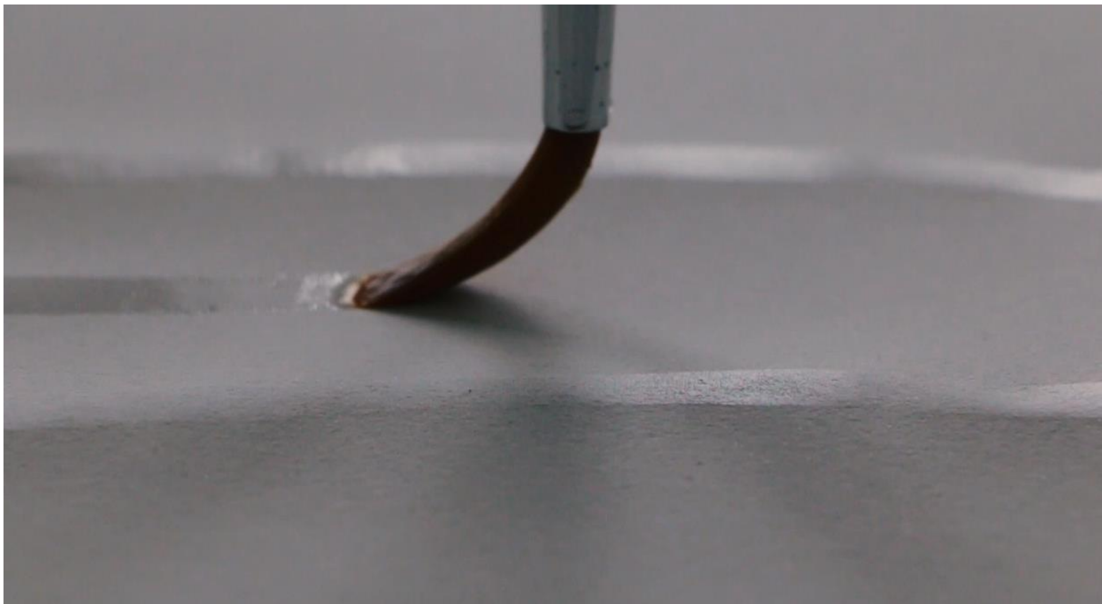


FIGURE 3 STILL FROM *DRAWING OUT THE WHITE* 2017. LINK TO VIDEO HTTPS://VIMEO.COM/USER12444840/REVIEW/302481876/D30F63FDDB

Where is 'idea' in this piece? It is not conceptual in Marioni's sense of transposing one experience into another, where a pictorial record of a sound activity makes possible a new sensory experience of the shadow of a bird flying. I am not sure what 'idea' means in *Drawing out the white?* Is it the formal experience of tonal modulation that directs our attention?

Let's return to your score, C…

Movement is powerful in this new score – the movement from day to day, and within each day of finding, drawing, making, hearing. 'Street' for me needs to include 'path'. That is because many of the routes I take from here are semi-rural. Street implies an urban, man-made thing, tarmacked, and under

(human) control. Wendell Berry, the writer and ecologist, talks of roads and paths as evidence of the different ways in which human beings intervene in nature:

> *The difference between a path and a road is not only the obvious one. A path is little more than a habit that comes with knowledge of a place. It is a sort of ritual familiarity. As a form, it is a form of contact with a known landscape. It is not destructive. It is the perfect adaptation, through experience and familiarity, of movement to place; it obeys the natural contours; such obstacles as it meets, it goes around. (Berry 2002, p.12)*

Wendell Berry contrasts 'path' with 'road' that somehow works against and resists the land. Roads are worked through haste and try to avoid any contact or experience that might delay progress. Roads 'translate place into space in order to traverse it with the least effort' (ibid). They are destructive, seeking to remove or destroy all obstacles in its way.

> *The primitive road advanced by the destruction of the forest; modern roads advance by the destruction of topography***.** *(ibid)*

I like the notion that a path is a habit, a ritual, a thing created and re-created by repetition. Movement is essential to its coming into being. It is also virtuous, respectful and not destructive of its surroundings, in contrast to a road that resists, goes over, destroys. A path, in this sense, is a way to think about drawing, not just in the time-honored sense of Klee, of a line moving "freely and unbound… without a goal" (Klee, 2013,p. 9). Drawing is also a practice. It needs a degree of familiarity, a craft skill or technical knowledge. As a practice there is repetition and rhythm. At the same time, by drawing I am constantly looking for something new and unexpected to occur but the unexpected only becomes possible through repetition.

Repetition in this sense of path-finding, is key to creating something new each time through what is familiar. Perhaps that is why I tend to draw the same subject over and over again as if the sameness will somehow yield difference. A particular thing – subject- can act as a kind of constraint within which infinite variation might be possible? (Figure 4 a,b,c,)

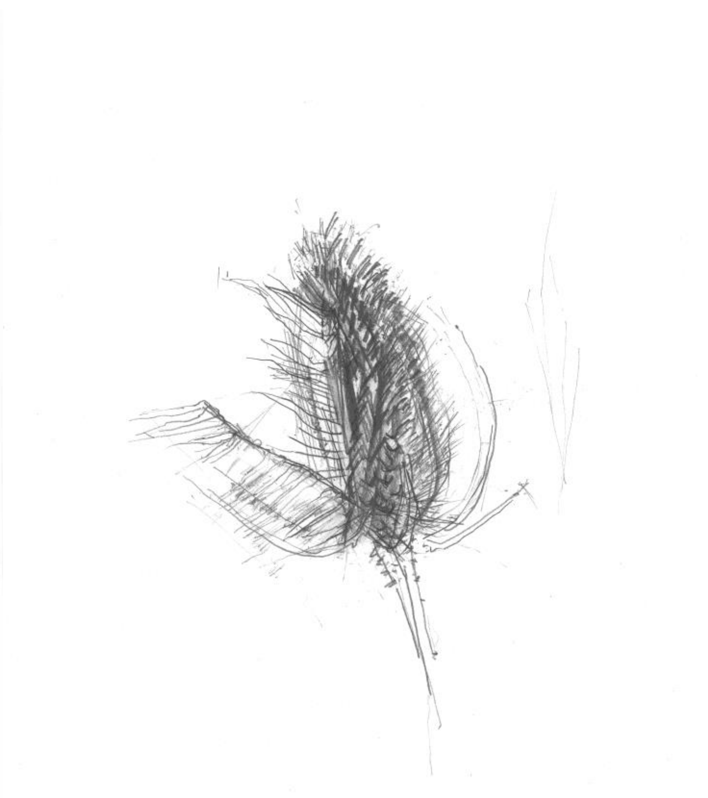


FIGURE 4 A,B,C. *DAY 2 TEASEL DRAWINGS* 2017/19

Going back to paths and roads, the score has made me curious about what differentiates ‘ man-made’ from ‘natural’. On Day 4 the score instructs as follows

> *Find something large and natural in the street and draw it*

It happened to be Sunday. I found a forest at Scolty Woods, Banchory, Aberdeenshire and started to draw, understanding but not fully realising that it was a pine forest planted by the Forestry Commission and no doubt soon to be cropped. It is large but is it natural? It grows but in a highly controlled way. What interested me was the odd intrusion/subversion in which nature tries to take back control. Other tree species, a rowan or birch, kept appearing at the edges of the forest. A spindly tree creeked, protesting that its height had overreached what its girth could normally support in the force of upward growth in search of light. The tree was in danger of being forced over by a strong wind. In the forest nothing stops. Everything constantly changes in this confined, yet over determined space. Even the forest debris is recycled into new forms of energy (Figure 5).

FIGURE 5 DAY 4 FOREST AT SCOLTY, BANCHORY 2019

Day 8’s instruction is the same as Day 1 as follows

Find something small and man-made in the street and draw it

I glanced at various urban drain covers, thinking about pattern in something that is highly functional, wondering if pattern in this instance was significant or merely decorative. I thought of them at first as a kind of willful excess and then thought of pattern as a very important way in which we read and make sense of the world, then realized that the drain covers needed to communicate a lot of information and physicality, not least preventing us as pedestrians from slipping (Figure 6 a,b,c).

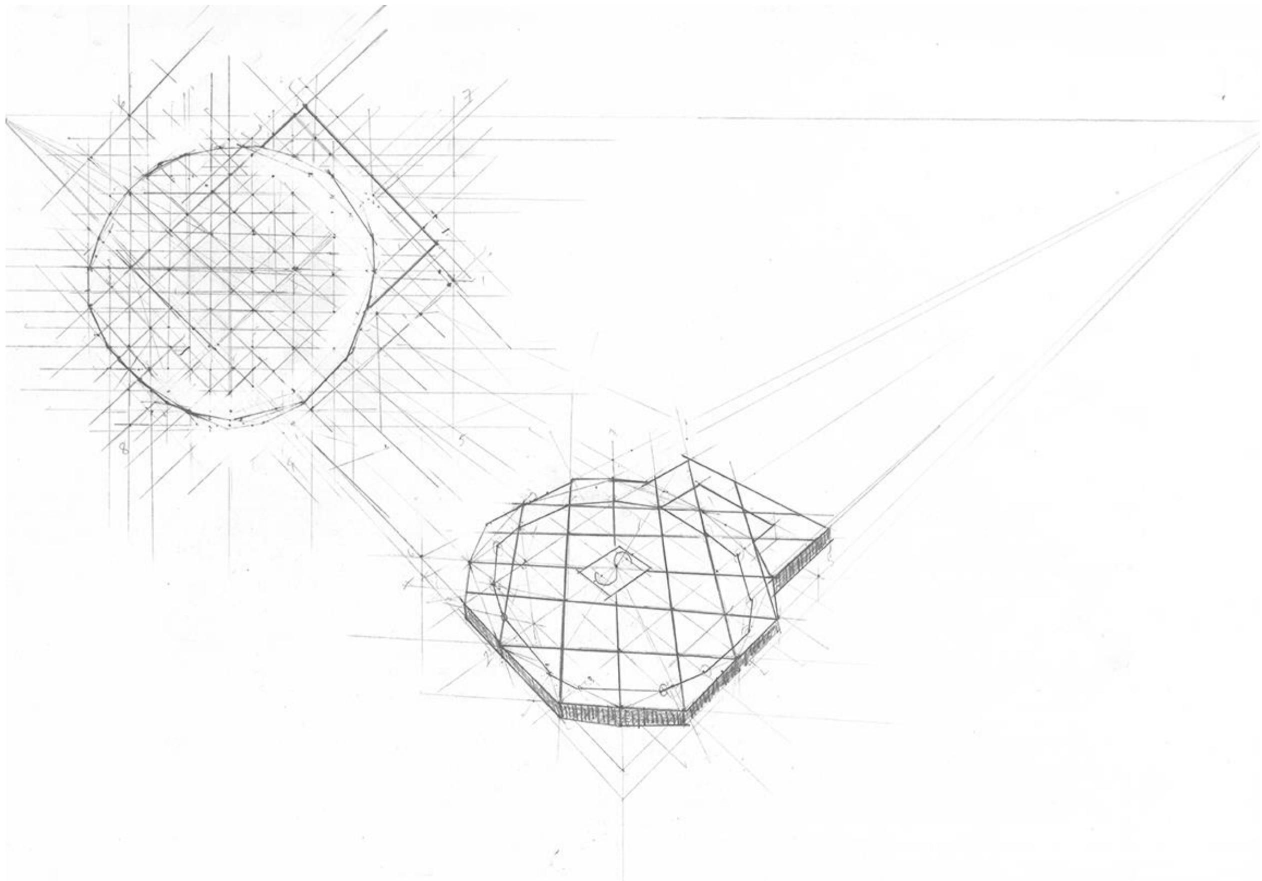


FIGURE 6A DAY 8 DRAIN COVER 2019

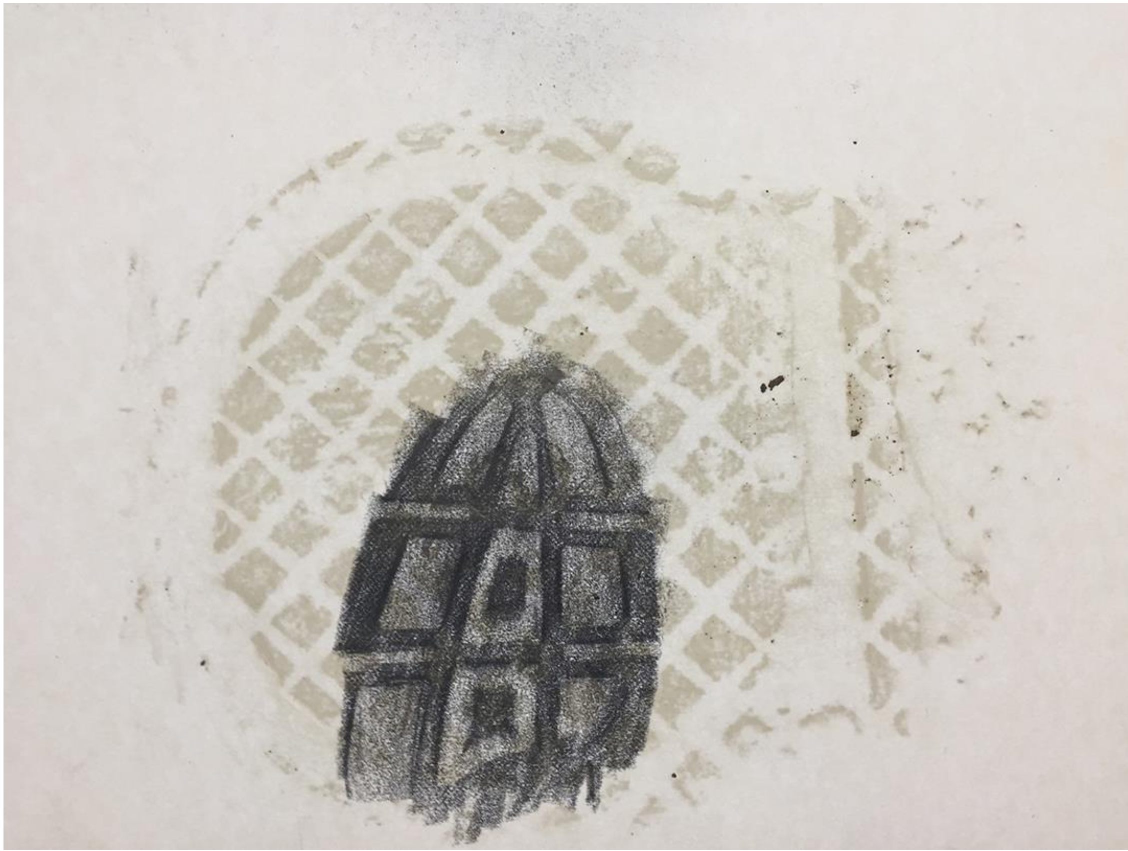


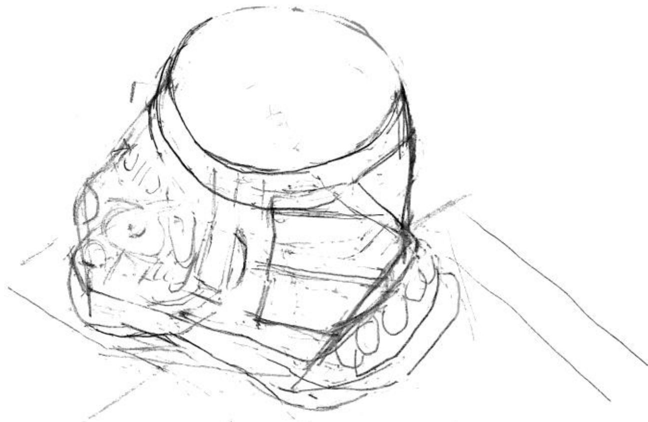
Figure 6 b & c *Day 8 Drain cover* 2017

Pattern is crucial in the work of the ecology artists, the Harrisons', as a means of reading the specificity of place and what it affords in terms of its ecology.

> *But nonetheless this work [The Serpentine Lattice] represents a basic strategy wherein the artistic, ecological, and ethical agenda is set by asking four questions. 1 — Where is here? 2 — How big is here? 3 — What's happening here? 4 — What do we see as needed in this here as we experience it? (Harrisons, 2001 unpaginated)*

Pattern is difficult to draw convincingly. The Harrisons handle this difficulty through maps, manipulating their patterns visually to create emphasis and to draw out an ecological point.

However, I needed to take a different tack and go back to the world of objects, of the flow of energy through three if not four dimensions i.e. including the flow of time. When I came across a discarded noodle pot in a narrow passage en route to and from the local secondary school, its distorted shape distracted me. It was energised in its crushed state. I picked it up, brought it back, washed it and drew it (Figure 7 a,b). It was challenging to draw, hard to capture that sense of the huge architectural upheaval that had occurred when it had been pushed out of its original geometry.



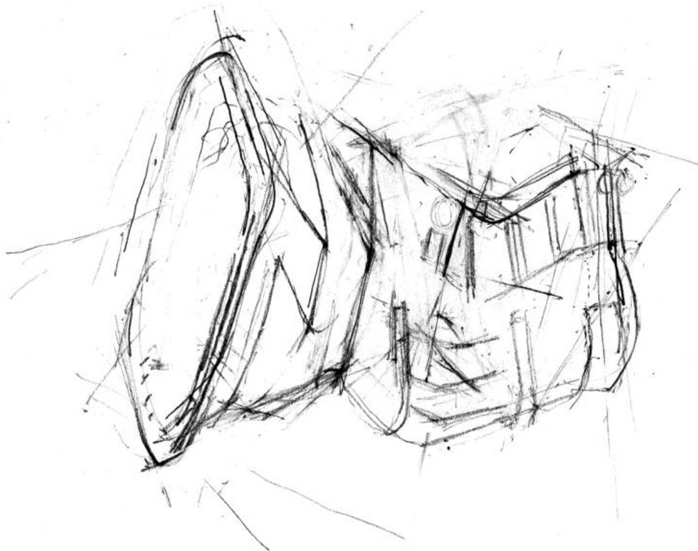


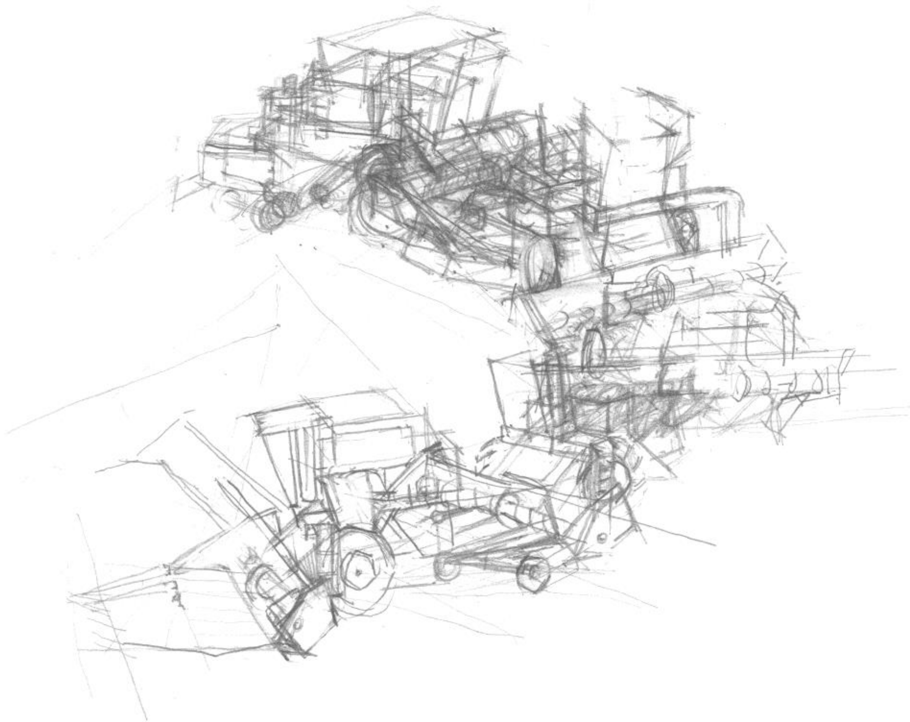
FIGURE 7 A & B *NOODLE POT DRAWINGS* 2017/19

Day 3

Find something large and man made in the street and draw it

The direction in Day 3 took me to a combine harvester parked in a field just off the path at Newton Dee. A few minutes into the drawing a couple of young farmhands appeared. One jumped in the cab, drove off and started harvesting the crop in that field and another adjacent to it. I was forced to abandon the 'still life' and walked on.

After a number of false starts in terms of trying to capture a moving object, I realised the subject of my drawing could shift to the movement of the blades cutting a path through the crop (Figure 8 a & b).



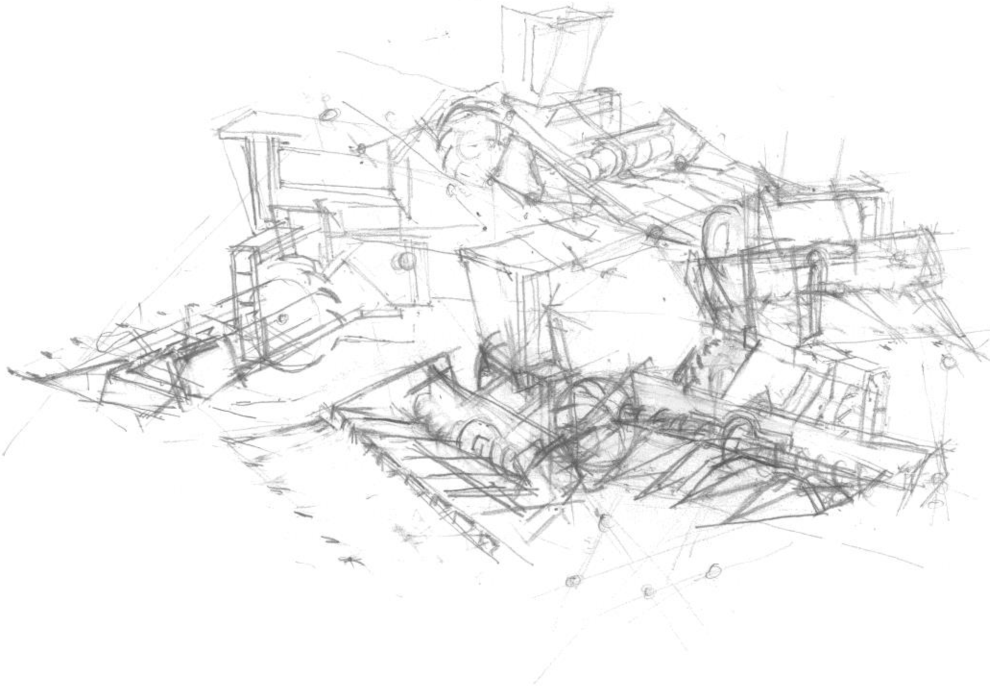


FIGURE 8 A & B *DAY 3 COMBINE HARVESTER* 2017/19

Thus harvesting became a form of drawing and redrawing of a path through a field, separating wheat from chaff, leaving in one direction a trail of stalks, a new path and pattern, and in another, a heap or mass of wheat to be milled into flour, constant transformation.

Almost a week later I was into day 9

Find something small and natural in the street and draw it

Very close to the field I noticed that the grasses that I had walked through and taken for granted as 'grass', were actually a large number of different things growing, each with a unique identity. I picked a small number, all of which had grown within a very short distance of each other, a huge diversity in a very small space. I was conscious that the important thing in the drawing to come was to retain this uniqueness and variety despite similarity (Figure 9). In the process the 'small' thing had opened up. It felt like a very large thing in terms of diversity of species. It made me aware of the monocultures of the fields, each ruthlessly controlled for maximum yield and the cost of this to nature. A comparatively much smaller area at the edge of the field yields significantly more biodiversity and it is within this small border or edge that life keeps going, not in the monotone of the field.

FIGURE 9 DAY 9 GRASSES 2017

Reflections on Drawing, Idea and Society

These are a small number of the many experiences that the score has offered me. Drawing in the way I have explored through the score, is an experience, a process in time while paradoxically it marks the passage of time spatially, whether literally of a moving object (such as that of the combine harvester) or one's own movement across a page in the act of exploring something still by building up marks.

Is this simply the pleasure of a developing a skill for its own sake in an individual? Is it something deeper?

I struggle a little with where 'idea' comes into the mobility of drawing as tracing a line, making a mark. 'Idea' seems to have come to mean something with a beginning and end, complete in itself and offering completeness to the world – a concept, perspective or understanding, even an abstraction. None of these meanings appear to correspond to what I experience in drawing and why I keep it going, the sense of not knowing but being curious enough to find out, of participating in a world undergoing change and transformation. That said, I can see that drawing also moves in the opposite direction, taking from or taking in the world, distilling in the sense of abstracting or conceptualising as in so called 'objective' drawing.

Writing at the height of the second industrial revolution in the UK in the late 19th century, the poet and critic Matthew Arnold (1822 -1888) dared to question science and technology. He proposed that a society without access to ideas was philistine and it was the arts, poetry in particular, that formed ideas.

The arts stood between the individual and a chaotic world, enabling us to cope with the illusory nature of life itself. In this Arnold prefigures aspects of Deleuze and Guattari and their understanding of improvisation.

> *But for poetry the idea is everything; the rest is a world of illusion, of divine illusion. … More and more mankind will discover that we have to turn to poetry to interpret life for us, to console us, to sustain us. Without poetry, our science will appear incomplete; and most of what now passes with us for religion and philosophy will be replaced by poetry. (Arnold, 1880)*

Herbert Read, writing in the interwar years of 20th century, resonates Arnold's positioning of poetry and the arts as the root source of ideas in society.

> *Only in as far as a society is rendered sensitive by the arts do ideas become accessible to it. (Read 1932/1967, p. 17)*

Herbert Read wrote *Art and Alienation* at the height of modernism in art. As mentioned in the introduction Read was looking to the arts to counter the alienating effects of industrialization. He also saw this as a loss of audience to make sense of modernist art.

Is it possible for drawing to address this gap in the present? What do we mean by 'ideas' in the context of a phenomenological understanding of drawing as process and movement in the world? Is there an inherent tension between drawing as experience and drawing as 'idea'?

In exploring the human condition through the three domains of labour, work and action in classical societies, Hannah Arendt, the political philosopher points to a profound interlacing between thought and making that gives form to political leadership.

> *In the Republic, the philosopher-king applies the ideas as the craftsman applies his rules and standards; he "makes' his City as the sculptor makes a statue. (Arendt 1958/1998, p.227)*

However the separation between 'idea' and 'fabrication' in Plato's construction as "first perceiving the image of shape (*eidos*) of the product-to-be, then organising the means and starting the execution" (Arendt 1998, p.225) predisposes us perhaps to create a clear division between 'idea' and 'making' such as is manifest in Sol LeWitt's instructions. This hardening of a boundary also occurs at a societal/political level in the separation between leading and following that Arendt discusses in one of her sections on action, *The frailty of human affairs* (pp.188-192). In Greek and Latin, unlike modern languages, the verb 'to act' is designated by two different but interrelated words: Greek *archein* meaning 'to begin', 'to lead' and finally 'to rule', followed by *prattein* meaning 'to pass through', 'to achieve', 'to finish' or Latin *agere* meaning 'to set in motion', 'to lead' and *gerere*, originally 'to bear' (Arendt 1998, p.189). In Plato these are two faces of the same coin but in conceptualising them and with time they have come to be separated. In Arendt's thinking they have become " spoiled by actualisation" (Arendt 1998,p.302).

Drawing as a practice of 'ideas' in Arnold and Read's sense reverses the hardening of difference. It sharply focuses the inseparability of 'idea' to 'fabrication' as is evident in the word itself. 'Drawing', a noun and verb in the form of gerund, refers simultaneously to process, a product-to-be, as well as the final artefact. Perhaps Plato's sequential process of first perceiving the image or shape of the product-to-be then organising the means and starting execution, has predisposed us towards fixing the meaning

and value of drawing in a singular way as a means of representation, increasingly focusing on standards of 'realism' particularly in Western art. In this sense 'idea' within drawing has come to mean the skill to 're-present' the world through images that correspond to the appearance of things, rather than to more complex levels of experience that include a sense or consciousness of self in relation to the world.

So C, drawing your score invites one to join with the shape that the world takes as it is emerging or becoming. The experiment begins in the spirit of an encounter. Nothing that actually occurred in my experience of it, could have been anticipated, nor is there any reason, cause or meaning to their occurrence. Each day of the score results is an experience of serendipity, of coming across a configuration of elements and then, through drawing, of building on what is there. By closely tracing this process of encounter, listening to its shifts and changes of direction through the writing, I sensitise myself to what is given. This me-and-the score –sketchbook- and -pencil - daily 'routine' is lived experience in which the world pushes back, resists preconditioning to allow something new to be made. Some days, some encounters work better than others. By following the materiality of this process, I become sensitive to its generative potential.

In what sense do these observations enrich our understanding of drawing in the social/political function of the arts?

Jean-Luc Nancy in his text *The Pleasure of Drawing* (2013) notes that drawing is an element that is common to all aesthetic fields if we define aesthetic as feeling, perceiving by using the senses, not a faculty of recording information but a sensing 'ressentir'. Nancy makes a clear distinction between 'sensing' as feeling and 'taking note' as taking in information without necessarily feeling.

> *To sense ['ressentir'] is to receive a sense (to receive and give indiscernibly), the sense or value of a sensation…to feel without sensing, as in the simple perception of data (a smooth surface, the noise of a car etc is not to feel ['sentir'] in the strict sense but only to take note. (p. 21)*

For Nancy drawing is fundamental to any act of perception. In art 'sense' as idea, thought, or form is nascent, 'nowhere given in advance'. Drawing is a joining with the movement, gesture, or expansion of the mark ['*trait*']. But there is a paradox at work in the idea of drawing as forming through movement and drawing as trace, as something left behind

> *Its pleasure is in the sensual pleasure ['jouissance'] of this unfolding …as it invents, finds and summons itself further, projected onto the trace that has nevertheless not preceded it (p. 22)*

To return briefly to the example of *Drawing out the white*, the slowing of time between the action of the paint brush creating a line in water and its yielding of tone within the traced line hints at this experience of unfolding that is sensual and pleasurable for its own sake.

So to draw is to give birth to form – in "*letting* it be born – and this to show it, to bring it to light [*mettre en évidence*]". This in fact relates to the etymology of 'idea' from the Greek – *idein* – "to see", to make visible, to form a mental image of something.

Drawing is perpetually mobile. It has no stable state "…never stops preceding and extending itself beyond itself" (Nancy 2013, p. 25). However 'Idea' is a state of tension between two forces - " birth

cannot simply be an interminable process (a mark must be traced) nor can ostension[1] simply present a formed or closed form" (ibid). It is desire that drives us to continually open up, to form and even deform the fixing of truth. Any completion or conclusion is provisional. Nancy points to the first cave drawings as endlessly modulated in a repetition of gesture and unlimited variation.

He also offers us a new element in our social being. He introduces desire. Desire is not a response to an object but a response/reflection to being itself (Nancy 2013, p. 28), to what might be possible (Nancy 2013, p. 38), to possibility as a principle of existence. We speak of line in music, architecture, choreography and film. All share the same quality of entering into an experience that exceeds intention but opens itself up to its own formation irrespective of what is given.

> *Sensing …is the impulse and pulse of being in the world, and all the senses, sentiments, sensitivities and sensualities are delineations of this impulse and pulse- taken up again in order to be more finely and intensely draw, carried toward an infinite force [puissance] across what we call the arts….The pleasure of making oneself available to this chance, which is the chance and risk of existence…or the pleasure of a certain abandon, surrendering to grace. (Nancy 2013, pp. 41-42)*

To Conclude

In our recent discussion you pointed out that the commonality between each of the experimental projects we have undertaken beginning with *Calendar Variations* 2011. Where I felt I was oscillating precariously between drawing as a singular, personal activity and the social practice of art, you saw the whole set of experiments as an accumulation of different ways of taking drawing from a singular activity to an activity between more than one person, each time effectively creating a dynamic between whoever was participating and in whatever way. You pointed to the importance of this accumulation of experiments in terms of making the transition from the personal to connecting drawing to the wider issues that contemporary art practice now needs to address, effectively as Nancy suggests opening drawing up to life through chance.

In the same conversation we discussed the importance of method (such as instructions, scores or copying) as a way of moving beyond the conventions of the lone artist in the studio. In this sense each of the drawing experiments has resulted in an experience of community in Nancy's sense, not as something constructed but as already present, as immanent, effectively brought into consciousness through an experience of art. You also pointed out that this quality of community does not simply fall out of method in the way, for example, that the surrealist game *Exquisite Corpse* generates a result that appears to be collaborative but is instead an inevitable outcome of a technique, not necessarily of experience.

These insights reminded me of some of the struggles we have had between individuals and the group in the different experiments, even between a group of researchers that apparently shared common interests. Difference is crucially important as is being open to conflict and disagreement as this necessitates that we negotiate and arrive at mutual understanding or simply agree to differ and move on.

---

[1] an act or process of showing

Well, C, this is a work in progress at all levels – the drawing itself using the score, understanding drawing and its relation to the world. The score has brought me back into drawing as a practice – thank you for this immense gift. It is only by being submerged in that practice that I can feel my way through the issues…and hopefully, by feeling, draw better. It has also brought me to a different level of understanding of the research questions that are not answered as such, but enriched and made more complex by your initiative.

The big challenge is the sound element that is still unresolved but incredibly important. Perhaps I can hand the baton over to you now and look forward to what you make of it.

Stay well

Anne

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AGITATING THE VOID: DRAWING AND PHENOMENOLOGY

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This paper is adapted from a presentation given at the Drawing Research Network PGR conference on 11 September 2018 at Loughborough University. It takes elements of my PhD research, completed in late-2018, to develop void-like connections between phenomenologic observation and the dichotomy of certainty and uncertainty in the act of drawing. Grounded in Edmund Husserl's characterisation of phenomenology, I postulate and advance a link between conscious experience – of cognitive and remembered impressions of the void – and its materialisation in drawing. This link, in my approach as an artist, is explored through my own memories of experiences observing geological rock formations at wild and remote places in the world.

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Introduction

Our conscious experience of things is what gives them meaning distinct from the things themselves. Through an analysis of drawing as an exploratory, immediate, and intimate embodied form of mark making this paper develops connections between phenomenological observation and the dichotomy of certainty and uncertainty in the act of drawing as being void-like. I am interested in the void because, as a subject, it is ambiguous in definition, and fluctuates in presence and meaning. Similarly, I feel these characteristics when I observe certain types of landscapes and when I am engaged in the act of drawing. The void I explore involves intensity and fragility as well as gaps where ideas relating to phenomenology; such as remembering and forgetting, emotion and the senses, combine. In these circumstances, the void agitates connections between thinking, feeling and material things. Within this, the paradox of the void in drawing is revealed – it is empty yet full, it is both form and nothingness, and in a pictorial sense it is both representational and abstract. This approach creates a new pathway to gain tacit knowledge and understanding of phenomena, experience and their interpretation and expression through artistic practice.

Husserl's Phenomenology

Phenomenology is the study of the essential nature of the conscious experience. My work is contextualised through reading works of phenomenology in relation to experience and memory by German philosopher Edmund Husserl. Crucial to Husserl's phenomenology, as developed in his book *Ideas: General Introduction to Pure Phenomenology*, is that it articulates an essence of experience as a method for observing, objectifying, reflecting and enriching, through faithful and rigorous recording (Husserl 2012, pp. 84-85).

I use a phenomenological approach to drawing to compose essences of experiences of the world that I observe with intentional thoughts through sense perception. This occurs by my being in and moving through the world and remembering it. I consider my experience through writing, photographing and sketching before finally making a drawing of it sometime later. The first phase involves fieldwork, as experiential understanding, followed by re-evaluation and re-contextualising as a way in which to provoke the memory through drawing. It is, in itself, an act of transformation, of observing, imagining and proposing – a combination of my mind and my body sensing things as they are formed in the world. This is where French philosopher Maurice Merleau-Ponty's views on phenomenology are important; that the meaning of conscious experience is emphasised by the sensing body as a conduit between the perception of the thinking mind and things (or in my instance, the geological rock forms I seek and observe) as they exist in the world (Merleau-Ponty 1964, p. 17).

For the most part, my phenomenologic inquiry responds to Husserl's writing. I am interested in Husserl because a major component of my thought process involves my mental aptitude of observing specific things in conscious experience. Although, I do not deny the importance of Merleau-Ponty's contribution, my aim is to attain an understanding of psychological impressions of the void, and the effect these have on my relationship to site and drawing. For the purpose of my inquiry, Husserl's insights of reality, memory and imagination, with fragments of the later tenets interspersed with reality, offer a more practical and workable framework (Husserl 2012, p. 66).

To experience, Husserl writes, one must be conscious (Husserl 2012, p. 3). But not all experiences are the same. Perception plays tricks; memory is a dilution of fact; imagination can never fully grasp the totality of empirical fact. This is what Husserl refers to as the 'transcendental' of reality (ibid. p. 3). Within the transcendental of reality is the essence of my exploration of void.

An example of this involves British archaeologist Christopher Tilley's practical application of Husserl, and Merleau-Ponty's, phenomenology as a method for him to gain propositional insights into the meaning and purpose of ancient rock formations in Europe, and of the people who built them (Tilley 1994). I apply the process of phenomenology engaged with by Tilley and Husserl, by using their theories and practice of phenomenology as a method to advance my own knowledge when observing, recording and interpreting the content of my own streams of intentional conscious experiences of the rock forms that I visit, either *in situ* or in memory. A process of personal and existential observation, reflecting the emotive content of each experience on site, is followed by remembering when in my studio drawing at a later date.

Agitating the Void

Void is a concept integrally linked to the thinking interior mind – which has parallels with Husserl's theories of articulating conscious experience within the transcendental of reality, memory and imagination. The void I explore is located in the relationship of elements, or essences, of my experience in the observation of things (geological rock forms in a landscape), together with emotive moods and atmospheric states.

Throughout this paper, the terms 'void' and 'void-like' are frequently used and refer to the fluid, ambiguous, unknowable and uncertain qualities of the void as a phenomenon. These terms are unravelled and expanded upon in relation to drawing and phenomenological experience. For example, I use drawn scribbly lines to explore palpable corporeal forms of energy that I have experienced; or, being on edge by picturing a corner or an edge of a rock form. Further, these rock forms characterise the unknown of the void as they refer to a sense of deep metaphysical time relative to their formation.

Void-like qualities are also developed as forms of emptiness with fullness. These qualities include negation, as flat or yielding areas of tone or as loosely drawn open-ended space. Emptiness with fullness is an expression coined by Susan Sontag, in her essay *The Aesthetics of Silence* (Sontag 1978, p. 6), and is a binary term used to consider the way artists broaching the perception of emptiness, or the void, in the world should consider it alongside that of fullness, which marks it off. It is a way to subtlety provoke the void; to engage with emptiness and the unknowable, and the contradictions of these as material entities. Sontag explains, to create a sense of emptiness in art, the artist must focus on the fullness of that emptiness to enrich its meaning (Sontag 1978, p. 4).

Integral to Husserl's phenomenologic method is that there is a lag or gap in time from when the experience occurs and its retracing as memory. Acknowledging the effect of this gap in relation to the void is important. Husserl defines this as the 'second level' (Husserl 2012, p. 97) of seeing, or the direct focus on reflective experiences, such as the memory of immediate experiences, or the recall of long past experiences.

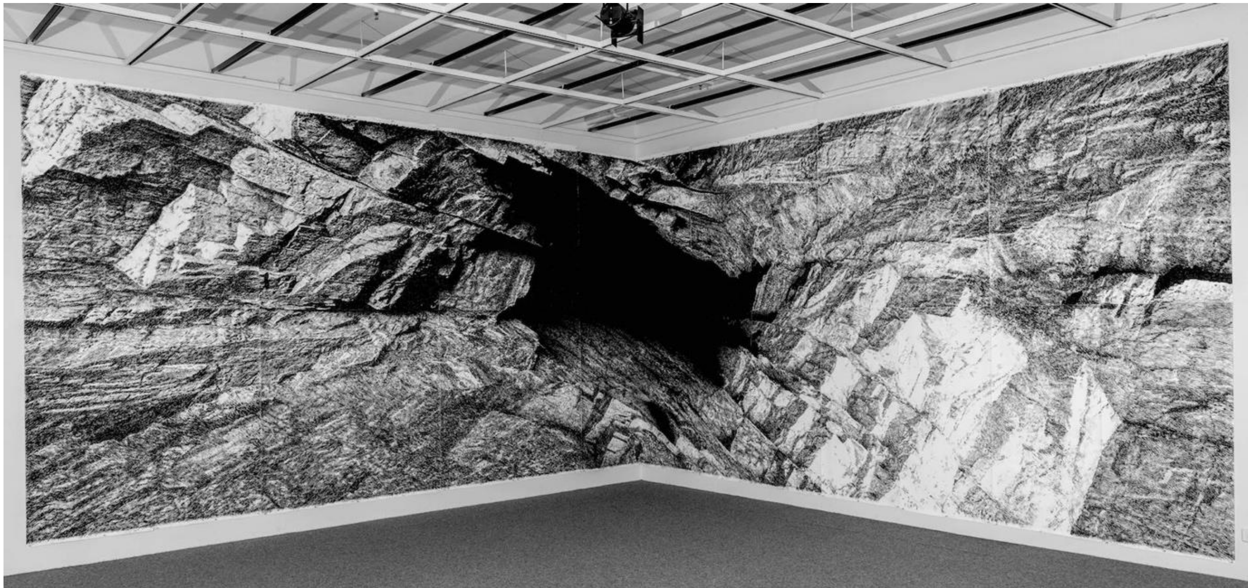

FIGURE 1: DAVID EDGAR, *REMOTE EXERTION 2*, 2015. CHARCOAL ON 28 SHEETS OF PAPER, 300 X 1050 CM.

Memories are imperfect but they can reactivate and accentuate traces and rhythms of things previously experienced. Memories can also merge the past and present. Memories can be built on with other memories as connections between experiences and can be built upon further into infinitum. They can be mixed and added to current experience in their reproduction (Husserl 2012, p. 296). We are prone to augment significant memories in order to preserve them. But in doing so can also lose track of the original experience, perhaps even altering older memories with such distance that they can become disturbed or disconnected, almost beyond recognition. Memories thus describe things previously experienced, "replete with absences, silences, condensations and displacements" (Radstone 2000, p. 11). The characteristics of memory explored here, as remembering and forgetting, creates something else. This something else is akin to imagination where a different type of perception develops. Husserl suggests memories behave this way because they are "a modification of perception" (Husserl 2012, p. 212).

My experience moves from observations in the world to reflection and re-evaluation many times over whilst I am in my studio preparing to make drawings. Absence as gaps in experience occur through this process, such as experiences that may be forgotten over time, as well as the physical gap or dislocation from the source site. These gaps conjure qualities of the void, like a missing memory. The drawing process enables an engagement with these gaps. A mark made is a trace of a remembered conscious moment, its erasure, an absence. The act of my representing rock forms with drawing develops its own void-like qualities.

FIGURE 2: DAVID EDGAR, *UNWILLING*, 2018. CHARCOAL ON 2 SHEETS OF PAPER, 145 X 253 CM.

Representing by Means of Drawing

Geoffrey Bailey, in his PhD thesis on drawing and phenomenology, writes of drawing representation as a becoming of the relational structure of an artist's vision of the world (Bailey 1982, p. 49). Bailey's assertion suggests the artist fashions his drawing from his own unique vision (ibid, p. 49). This is reached via careful observation of the subject matter being drawn and the context to which it is placed. Of importance is the relationship to and application of the medium to enhance the subject matter and context. With these many levels of engagement feeding into the drawing, the process is arduous, and as Bailey notes calls "for prolonged and concentrated guided vision" (Bailey 1982, p. 42). The manner in which I make a sketch or a drawing either *in situ* or in my studio after fieldwork involves a process of drawing made up of many different glances of the thing being drawn manifest from the "residue of many visions always from memory" (Bailey 1982, p. 40) with each of these continually changing as the drawing process progresses. Philip Rawson acknowledges that a drawing conveys meaning "... not by a general similarity of surface but by a structure of symbolic elements which are formulated as method" (Rawson 1969, p. 24).

As I start to draw, building-up marks, form and tone, my sensory experience and memories of the rock forms deteriorate and fade further as the act of drawing continues. What is crucial is that I create various types of forms from marks as illusions of three-dimensional form. This is one of the fundamental problems I have to deal with when drawing objects with verisimilitude from observation in the world – the ability to reinterpret the three-dimensional world as one dimensional marks into a two-dimensional illusion. Drawing, in this instance, presents itself as an artificiality of the world where tensions in pictorial illusion lurk. This is a persistent issue for me at the time of making a drawing. Dewey writes, this "demands abstraction from the usual conditions which they exist" (Dewey 1980, p. 98). An abstraction that modifies each drawing and gives it added meaning. Hence, the rock forms that I draw do not always conform to the observed qualities of the rock forms as recorded *in situ*, rather they interrelate with

other ambiguous spatial forms and marks made relative to the qualities of void that I am seeking to represent.

The rock forms in my images are viewed separately from the process (the marks made) that go into making a picture. Dewey writes of this as the "individual contribution" (Dewey 1980, p. 85) of the artist, which makes the picturing of the rock forms something new. Things, that is the rock forms that I draw, are not merely represented, rather, they picture the presentation of:

> *"a material passed through the alembic of personal experience. They have no precedents in existence or in universal being. But, nevertheless, their material came from the public world and so has qualities in common with the material of other experiences, while the product awakens in other person's new perceptions of the meanings of the common world" (Dewey 1980, p. 86).*

To add to the uniqueness of the drawing, Patrick Maynard writes, "… representations are things with the function of mandating that we imagine in certain ways, mainly depending on their relevant properties" (Maynard 2005, p. 88).

The marks I make respond to my own unique existential emotive moods and temperaments as recorded in my diary, and when remembering the experiences as they subtly alter over time. These marks are fragile in representative qualities as they either counteract with other marks to reveal marks existing independently from the rest of the picture, or as they interact with other marks to create the illusion of a rock form. The loosely drawn marks inform the presence of the rocks in the pictures. But they also suggest a peeling away of the representational qualities of the rock formations, like the peeling away of memories over time. Avis Newman writes, "Only during the process of marking is a cohesion found, a somewhat precarious frame constructed, almost as the byproduct of the articulation of marking thoughts, which by definition are open-ended in a state of flux, and suggestive of a perpetual potentiality" (Tate Gallery. et al. 2003, p. 169).

FIGURE 3: DAVID EDGAR, *MIRROR*, 2016. CHARCOAL ON PAPER, 150 X 80 CM.

Drawing, Void and Phenomenology

Conveying a deeper engagement with these complex and fragile interpretations of drawing is French thinker Alain Badiou, who, in an essay published in 2014, examines drawing as a type of 'seeming' (Badiou 2014, p. 76). Badiou's thinking about drawing indicates how drawing transforms things by giving form to deeper and alternative types of understandings and expressions of the world. Badiou attempts to explore an 'essence' (Badiou 2014, p. 77) of drawing, and in doing so provokes characteristics of the subtlety of the void. He conjures this as relationships between imagining things in the mind, by acknowledging the blank space of a drawing's surface paper for example, and as the space or gaps that occur between the thinking mind and the act of making marks.

In Badiou's essay, titled *Drawing: On Wallace Stevens,* he cites examples of verses in Stevens' poem *Description Without Place* where Stevens is writing of the sun in the sense of it as being and as seeming (Badiou 2014, pp. 75-82). Badiou, in relation to the poem, considers when one thinks of the sun, there is the real sun and then there is an impression of the sun as poetically manufactured by writing.

In a sense, Badiou matches Husserl's example of imagining an essence or a construct of things as perceived in one's consciousness. Badiou reiterates his point by quoting a short passage of Stevens writing: "description is composed of a sight indifferent to the eye". However he also argues that the poet is attempting to "fix a point where appearing and being are indiscernible" (Badiou 2014, p. 77).

In relation to drawing, Badiou argues that this is where the mark or trace coalesces with the white background or surface (ibid, p. 77). Where the mark is at once a being and a seeming, thus, they are the equivalent of existing and not existing. He continues that the paper as surface exists, but the marks do not exist by themselves rather they compose something on the surface.

Badiou also declares that a background as surface does not exist, "because it is created as such, as an open surface, by the marks" (ibid, p. 77). This 'moveable reciprocity' (ibid, p. 77) of material, mark and space is Badiou's essence and fragility of a drawing. This description of drawing also encompasses Mark Levy's view about the void occurring in the space or gaps between words. Levy, a westerner, has researched and practiced eastern spiritual traditions for more than 30 years particularly in relation to the void. He writes of manifesting the void through subtlety, and considers the space between words or two objects, or of blank spaces in an artwork, or as marks activating as an 'energy field' (Levy 2006, p. 2), to characterize qualities of the void.

Expanding on Badiou's notion of mark and background as surface, Derek Pigrum asserts the studio similarly acts as a kind of surface, with both studio and background surface (paper as example) acting as membranes from which a drawing emerges (Pigrum 2010). The studio is a place where the examination of questions occur - where the mind and body, and experience and memory, interacts – or, as Daniel Buren suggests, where we can "practice metaphysics" (Buren 2010, p. 107).

An artist, whilst drawing, fuses with the drawing medium and the surface as they are absorbed in the act of drawing as a mark is made onto a surface. John Rajchman writes, "the act of drawing dismantles consciousness and plunges the self into a zone of experience or sensation liberated from the closures of representation and open to the free play of possibilities" (Tate Gallery. et al. 2003, p. 220). Thus, a drawing is the manifestation of a fragile relationship that binds the thinking speculative mind with the body, in my case generally the arm and hand, etc., and the medium (for example charcoal), to a surface

and a studio. If, at the time of making a mark, consciousness is dismantled, then what occurs? The act of drawing has encompassed the void.

Drawing, in this way, involves qualities of ‘flow’, whereby, as an artist, I am consumed in a state of self-consciousness – in which I am deeply immersed and concentrating in what I’m doing – that a sense of time and self-awareness, such as emotional problems, are put aside (Csikszentmihalyi, M, and Csikszentmihalyi, I. S. 1998, p. 5). Mihalyi Csikszentmihalyi suggests this sensation is an “exhilarating” feeling of transcendence, because the experience involves “a sense of union with the environment” (Csikszentmihalyi, M 2002, p. 63) as it is being pushed to the limits of its boundaries.

FIGURE 4: KÄTHE KOLLWITZ, *SELF-PORTRAIT*, 1933. CHARCOAL ON BROWN LAID INGRES PAPER, 47.7 × 63.5 CM. NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART, WASHINGTON DC, (WIKI COMMONS).

Drawing thus fuses ideas, memories, temporality, emotions, the senses, surfaces and the body. There is an intriguing example of this implied in a self-portrait by German artist Käthe Kollwitz from 1933. In the work, the artist has drawn in a realistic fashion, her portrait in profile and her hand holding a piece of charcoal in the act of drawing. Near her hand is a drawing board in profile represented by a simple line.

The fascinating part of the work is the way Kollwitz has drawn the internal contours of her arm, the conduit between her head and hand, with rapid abstracted marks suggestive of the energy of a compressed coiled spring. The drawn treatment of the arm, made with loose, vertical scribbly mark making, entices my reading of the picture as the physical manifestation of this void-like state of flow whilst in the act of drawing. The picture captures the fragility of the process of drawing as the speculative artist’s mind is caught in the act of thinking about making a physical mark. Kollwitz’s drawing of her own arm in this way suggests wavering ideas that extend the act of mark making during its transition from thinking mind to hand.

The drawing of the arm represents abstract mark making; the potential of drawing itself. The arm embodies the possibilities of drawing, located midway between the realistically drawn representations occurring in the mind when being translated and transformed via the hand. The arm, in scribbled form, embodies the space or void-like gap in between.

Badiou continues, “Drawing is something that is composed”, therefore it is an artificiality. A drawing “is not a copy of something. It is a constructive deconstruction of something, and much more real than the initial thing … [it is] intenser than actual life. A drawing is fragile. But it creates a very intense fragility” (Badiou 2014, p. 79).

When I draw, there is a relationship between presence and absence, an instability of the figure and ground relationships in the unravelling placement of related yet unrelated marks that I make onto a surface. To highlight this effect, in elements of some of my drawings, the paper is intentionally left blank to allow a tension between the surface, as a non-existent background and as a surface to develop. As Avis Newman describes, drawing is the externalisation of “vague thoughts” (Tate Gallery. et al. 2003, p. 78). I would argue that these vague thoughts are conscious manifestations of the void.

Jacques Derrida, like Badiou, writes of the act of drawing as being a search for the translation of objects through the body, hand and eye, with the use of materials (such as charcoal) and surface (paper). For Derrida though, drawing’s ‘vague thoughts’, as proposed by Newman, and its ‘artificiality’, as identified by Badiou, are the traits of a thing, or traces, which is the ruin of that thing. Not ruin as in destruction, but as in defacement. Or as a rearrangement or shift/change in the thing being drawn, such as the way drawing re-interprets three-dimensional objects through mark making qualities into two-dimensions. A ruin of the object remains invoked in the drawing.

Derrida ponders this as a type of non-seeing and presents an analogy of the blind. He writes of the blind as, at times, having a greater sensory awareness than those with clear vision (Derrida & MusÈe du Louvre. 1993, pp. 4-6). For example, a blind person may have a more attuned sense of hearing, or in their reaching out for clarity with touch and feeling their way around things with their hands held out in front of them, they parallel with the mark maker when making a drawing. As a blind person might do, I am an artist who uses drawing to find (and represent) by holding out my hands and arms in front of me and feeling my way around a surface.

Derrida argues that the void in the notions of drawing is a ruin of a thing and a type of non-seeing. He provokes the theory of phenomenology, in acknowledging that drawing cannot holistically record experience but is used as a method to engage a deeper understanding of things. For Derrida drawing is based in the idea of Husserl’s ‘second level’ (Husserl 2012, p. 97) of seeing – as the memory of the just remembered short term, and of various levels or layers of remembering. For example, if I am walking into the entrance to a dark cave in a rocky landscape the stability of my perception of it from one perceptual layout to the next alters. My memories of it are thus always dislocated from itself as it disturbs the next view layered upon the next and so on and so forth. However, when I remember the rocky cave entrance, I identify the essence of the things in it that I was spatially engaged with, such as the rocky edges or darkness. This is crucial to my understanding and comprehension of what it is.

Further, when confronted by an experience of intensity, such as entering into the unknown darkness of the cave, the amygdala part of my brain awakens commandeering other parts of my brain to attend to the situation at hand (Eagleman 2015, p. 70). These parts of my brain are where memories are laid down

in explicit detail. Thus, when intense experiences/memories are embedded into my brain they are laid down in more detail. When I recall the experience, it appears to have great clarity, and I feel like I have slowed down what I think I have experienced even though this is not the case. David Eagleman writes, "conscious awareness is nothing but lots of fast memory querying: our brains are always asking "What just happened? What just happened?" Thus, conscious experience is really just immediate memory" (Eagleman 2015, pp. 72-73).

Derrida writes of this 'what just happened' moment in relation to drawing: "As soon as the draftsman considers himself, fascinated, fixed on the image, yet disappearing before his own eyes into the abyss, the movement by which he tries desperately to recapture himself is already, in its very present, an act of memory" (Derrida & MusÈe du Louvre. 1993, p. 68). The coiled scribbly line in Kollwitz's drawn arm acts as a metaphor for the abyss or blindness that occurs in the act of Derrida's description of drawing. Within this is a void-like gap between the thinking mark and the actual mark made.

FIGURE 5: DAVID EDGAR, *THE ABYSS*, 2018. CHARCOAL ON 8 SHEETS OF PAPER, 250 X 500 CM.

The act of drawing can be likened to an act of unravelling streams of consciousness. Drawing can invoke layers of experience into a whole, and embed broader and deeper levels of information from the mind into what is being drawn. Drawing, like phenomenology, is an inaccurate means of holistically describing experience but it can be used as the framework and method to better understand it as it engenders a process of deeper learning about things, being drawn by the act of getting to know the things better, through the translation of those things into marks.

The great mystery of drawing, Avis Newman writes, is its fusion of the "infinite space of sensation in both the sensations of the body and the sensations of the mind" (Tate Gallery. et al. 2003, p. 233) in relation to the material world. I use drawing to explore representing qualities of the void as located in the experience of things. When I start a drawing, I use exploratory and suggestive lines. These lines relate to the types of marks I observe existing at each site. These lines also explore the interval between my felt experience and memory. Deanna Petherbridge proposes artists use drawing, particularly loose forms of sketching, to explore new ideas, render thoughts and emotions visible in an immediate way, and to

capture “nuances of the observed world” (Petherbridge 2010, pp. 2-4). John Willats writes of the artist relinquishing “the object to the obscure necessity of drawing as such,” (Tate Gallery. et al. 2003, p. 218) and John Ruskin wrote in similar terms stating this is the artist seeking the “leading lines” of things, “that embody in their very formation the past history, present action and future potential of a thing” (Ingold 2007, pp. 129-130).

Phenomenologically speaking, each suggestive mark that I make projects my embodied knowledge and memory of the observed world. Each mark has its own personality, mood and rhythm. A drawing evolves as the marks continue against and over each other over time. A mark made activates against another mark made. A drawing becomes and develops an overall personality. The drawing thus is embedded with the observation of physical and existential qualities of experience. Paul Crowther notes, “the image affirms itself through the autographic presentation of spatiality more than through signification” (Crowther 2017, p. 6). The act of drawing concerns an uncertain spatiality whereas the outcome presents, and is embedded, with signification.

Drawing is a type of visual alchemy, a concoction of energy and expression, pace, flow, movement and duration, intimacy and immediacy, a description of experimentation with form, play, memory and embodied knowledge, exaggeration, informality, additionally dreaming and imagination. When these things coalesce and something else emerges, is when I find drawing comes alive.

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THE SENSING, KNOWING HAND: A PHENOMENOLOGICAL DRAWING TOOL

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Endorsing the proposition that drawing is phenomenological, this article presents an argument for hand drawing as a creative, communicative activity which contributes significantly to our awareness of being human. I also argue that, far from being mechanical, fine art printmaking is a highly creative graphic and sculptural activity undertaken not to reproduce an image but to create one. The specialised, trained human hand participates in an intense hand-eye-brain relationship, intentionally drawing signifying graphic marks to communicate information visually. When drawing for intaglio printing, artists learn to handle new tools to draw and craft lines and tonal shapes on a rigid plate surface. They engage in labour-intensive technical processes and conscious reflection of the emergent image in order to create meaningful, aesthetic content developed from printing processes that deliver a limited edition of handprinted drawings.

My examples are drawn from work that is little known in the West, namely intaglio printed drawings made at and published by The Caversham Press in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa. I discuss the drawing processes of two etchings and a drypoint to explain drawing and printing processes and I consider the mind's eye imaging that intersects with information from the physical eye, both of which contribute to decisions made by the brain informing the hand of motor actions required to create printed drawings.

The flesh and blood hands characterising *Homo sapiens* define not only our biological distinctness as a practical, problem-solving hominid species, but our human capacity for empathy and creativity. Hands transmit loving contact with other living bodies and respectful interaction with the phenomena they encounter and handle in myriad functional and imaginative ways. A highly evolved, very complex structure, the human hand is fragile; only a thin layer of skin, muscles and fat protect the joints, tendons, nerves, blood vessels and fine bones constituting our hands and enabling us to gesture, touch, hold, and execute power or precision grips. Four digits with three-jointed fingers and an opposable two-jointed thumb differentiate *Homo sapiens* from other hominids. This significant adaptation facilitates the hand-eye-brain interactions and sensory-cerebral, haptic-optical relationships defining hand drawing. The hand itself is a drawing tool – a finger dipped in liquid, grease or powder makes organic lines – but the hand's structure enables it to shape and manipulate drawing tools, and to create a range of drawn lines which add aesthetic and intellectual sophistication to signifying marks and provide evidence of phenomenological experience.

Our two hands are capable of independent movements and the preferential hand, using a precision grip, usually executes the actions required to handle drawing tools skillfully. Reaching out into space, the hand moves away from the eyes while sustaining the intimate hand-eye relationship intrinsic to drawing. The act of 'motor intentionality' (Merleau-Ponty 1962:112) directing hand action is driven by the body responding to signals from the brain. Fingers, hand, articulated wrist, forearm[1], elbow, and shoulder connections adapt motor actions when training hands to draw with a range of different drawing tools, or to experiment with graphic conventions.

'For me', Bridget Riley comments, 'drawing is an inquiry, a way of finding out' and she elaborates, 'It is as though there is an eye at the end of my pencil, which tries, independently of my personal general-purpose eye, to penetrate a kind of obscuring veil…', adding 'that while drawing I am watching and simultaneously recording myself looking…' (Riley 2009, n.p). Here we might think of M.C Escher's paradoxical image, *Drawing Hands* (1948) with its close observation of one hand actively drawing the other hand as a passive, volumetric form and conflating 'drawing' as noun and verb in one representational statement.[2] Riley's reflection on drawing was generated by observation; she watched her trained hand holding a pencil and drawing on a flat sheet of paper. However, when two tools are required to impose penetrative marks on a resistant mass the preferential hand exerts force with a hammer and the weaker hand functions creatively, guiding a sharp chisel. Barbara Hepworth explains,

> *My left hand is my thinking hand. The right is only a motor hand. This holds the hammer. The left hand, the thinking hand, must be relaxed, sensitive. The rhythms of thought pass through the fingers and grip of this hand into the stone (Hepworth 1970: 79).*

Hepworth's reflection on her carving process equates 'thinking' with the sensory receptivity of her hand and, uniting 'rhythm' with 'thought', she alludes to embodied, tacit knowledge generated by tactility and sight.

[1] Long tendons pass through a flexible wrist to connect forearm muscles to finger bones.

[2] M.C. Escher, *Drawing Hands* (1948), lithograph, 28.2 cm × 33.2 cm. Available online.

This article focuses on the roles played by hands and the sense of touch in designing and crafting hand-drawn, printed drawings, my preferred term for describing drawings created as multiple, original handmade prints produced in limited editions by printmaking technology and collaboration between a drawer and master printer. The term 'multiple originals', used to describe handprinted drawings, seems to be a contradiction. It is not. In modern and contemporary print practice the drawing is the artist's *original* work. The drawing, specifically drawn to print multiples rather than to exist as a single, autonomous statement, is not a printed *reproduction* of an existing drawing or painting. My discussion focuses on the intaglio processes of etching and drypoint to raise the issue of what hands, which are anatomically capable of innumerable intricate movements, learn to do in order to make a drawing which will be translated through the mediation of technological processes into a limited edition of drawings printed on paper. But first, a mention of the drawing-print relationship is necessary.

Most major art museums have departments and collections of Prints and Drawings.[3] This terminology identifies two different genres which, traditionally, are works on paper, but in fact the vast majority of prints are characterised by *drawing* which precedes and determines the process known as print*making*. The print content is drawn intentionally to be hand*printed* and editioned but, interestingly, if one consults the indexes of printmaking publications few have an entry for 'Drawing'. Their texts are devoted to technical instruction and the crafting of prints. Informative though these manuals are they overlook the significance of drawing as the origin of and reason for printmaking, and as the purveyor of meaning. However, in *A Theory of Craft: Function and Aesthetic Expression* Howard Risatti (2007:17) comments,

> *By arguing that drawing is an essential and formative component of most printmaking, the intellectual and provocative nature of images escapes the confines of being merely 'crafted' by sophisticated technology. Rather technology serves the will; the intention is to express ideas graphically and to ensure that they are expertly crafted to deliver the drawer's intentions.*

By serving the will in drawn image/printmaking, technology empowers the intention to create expressive, informative drawing capable of communicating graphic content in multiple, original drawings. Printmaking requires commitment to a prolonged process of image realisation and time-consuming, labour-intensive analytical and technically complex procedures. Responsive to the evocative and signifying capacity of the lines, tones and shapes intrinsic to drawings, artist-printmakers face the challenge of translating a drawing (the source language) into a final graphic state with aesthetic resonance and evocative meaning, delivered by ink imprinted into paper. In printmaking hand-drawn images literally work hand-in-hand with mechanical printing and both activities demand recognition and respect.

[3] The sequence of terms differs. 'Prints and Drawings': British Museum, Tate collections, London, Museum of Fine Arts Boston; 'Drawings and Prints': Metropolitan Museum of Art New York. The Museum of Modern Art New York separated the print and drawing collections in 1972 and created a Department of Prints and Illustrated Books. Christie's auction house uses the term 'Prints & Multiples' as one of their auction categories.

Hand Drawing and Printing

Hands perpetually engage in multi-tasking when drawing. Using fingertips as sensory haptic agents, artists experience the tactile aesthetics of drawing – the feel of smooth cartridge paper or tooth of a rough paper receiving the imprint of crumbly charcoal, the silkiness of powdered graphite, surface of a waxy linoleum block, and viscosity of hard ground resin on a resilient metal surface. Material judgements are made by the skin and fat pads of fingertips which possess extremely high concentrations of nerves. They transmit sensory information about pressure, vibration, temperature, pain and, for artists, pleasurable corporeal sensations produced by touching and handling material objects.

What do we ask the hand to do when drawing on paper, wood, metal or stone? Many artists know instinctively how hold charcoal to sketch or graphite pencils to evoke tonally modulated forms on paper, but different skills are required to make intaglio prints by engraving or etching. When engraving a copper plate the preferential hand holds a burin with the handle resting in the palm. The thumb and index finger guide the tool, pushing a sharp blade into the metal while the other hand manipulates the plate. The hand extracts a metal ribbon leaving a surface plane incised with lines of varying depth or stippled dots. Operating on the cutting edge of uncertainty, only a highly trained hand renders sinuously rhythmic, curved hatching lines that signify halftones on rounded forms; there is no margin for error in images characterised by precision and clarity.[4]

The technique of drawing an etching is entirely different to that of making an engraving. Here no hand pressure is required to draw on a bevel-edged plate covered with hard or soft ground. The hand, holding a small needle (stylus) tool, makes delicate movements with fingers and wrist as it scratches through a dark, resinous ground substance which has been rolled onto the plate. Fine needle marks expose the metal and, when placed in an acid bath, chemical action 'bites' or etches lines to produce grooves of varying depth which will retain sticky printing ink after the surface is wiped clean. Etched half-tones may be created by linear hatching or by using aquatint. Rosin (finely powdered, purified pine tree sap) is shaken over the plate from a rosin bag or in a rosin box, and the plate is warmed to fuse the granules to the metal surface. Aquatint tone resembles stippling because the acid corrodes the gaps between the protective rosin dots, producing mid-tones ranging from delicate pale grey to intense black. The erosion of exposed metal lines and shapes must be watched when a plate is in the acid bath. Bubbles form as the bite becomes discernible and the hand, holding a feather, brushes it gently over the plate to release acid gas. Both touch and vision determine how long plates should be subjected to the chemical action controlling light or dark tonality in the printed drawing.

Paper character and quality influence the appearance of inked images. The fibres must be sufficiently flexible when damp to yield to and penetrate a rigid intaglio plate to absorb ink. In so doing, flat paper sheets acquire subtly three-dimensional moulded forms because the plate formats are indented while ridged intaglio lines protrude and can be felt by sensitive fingertips. Completed editions of printed intaglio drawings demonstrate the actions of sensing, knowing hands, those of the drawer and the printer working in tandem. The final mark on engraved and etched paper is made by the printer; it is the publisher's 'chop mark', a blind stamp impressed into the bottom edge of the paper below the artist's image.

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[4] For exemplary assurance in cutting an engraving plate see Hendrick Goltzius, *Farnese Hercules.* Engraving, 41.5 x 29.5 cm. Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, illustrated in David Rosand , *Drawing Acts*, 2002:156. Goltzius demonstrates equal confidence when using pen and ink on paper in *Goltzius's Hand*. Pen and brown ink, 22.9 x 32.8 cm. Teylers Museum, Haarlem in Rosand 2002:157.

Two etchings (Figures 2 and 3) printed by Malcolm Christian, master printer and publisher at The Caversham Press in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa, explain the appearance and processes of producing drawn and etched lines and tonal marks. *Lytton* (1987), by Robert Hodgins (1920-2010), and *Where to go?* (1991) by Mmakgabo Helen Sebidi were created by experienced South African artists. Their art education and career trajectories were very different. Hodgins (1920-2010), born in England, emigrated to South Africa in 1938, served in World War 2, studied art and education at Goldsmiths', University of London, and returned to South Africa to begin academic teaching at the Pretoria Technical College in 1954. He lectured at the University of the Witwatersrand from 1966-83, retiring in 1983 to work as a full-time artist. Sebidi, born in 1943 in Marapyane in what is now Mpumalanga Province, gained a comprehensive knowledge of traditional Tswana mural painting on domestic buildings from her grandmother, completed her elementary education and entered domestic service in Johannesburg. She studied painting informally, being mentored by John Koenakeefe Mohl (1903-1985), and took art classes at the Johannesburg Art Foundation where she learnt drawing skills and collage techniques. Hodgins and Sebidi had different experiences of learning to draw and, as a white man and a black woman they lived different lives in late and post-apartheid South Africa. However, when working in a print studio to produce etchings, both artists had to learn how to draw for printed outcomes. Their hands adjusted to new phenomenological experiences as they handled new tools to make marks on resistant metal, not soft paper.

Figure 1. Robert Hodgins, *Lytton,* 1987, etching, 20 x 12.5 cm

Figure 2. Mmakgabo Helen Sebidi, *Where to go?* 1991, etching, 24.5 x 20.5 cm

Hodgins' intention in *Lytton* was to draw and interpret the personality and appearance of Lytton Strachey (1880-1932; essayist, biographer and member of the Bloomsbury Group). This etched drawing is characterized by a range of lines scratched by a needle. Straight lines, ruled mechanically, constitute a half-tone background and jacket. Rhythmic freehand lines depict Lytton's head, facial features, and tie. Needle, multiple-line engraver, burnisher and roulette tool add different tiny marks and smudges to convey significant details on the face and represent the eye glasses. Dark tone on the right, the result of deep-etched aquatint, forms a dense plane on the right and depicts the black hat brim, face planes and beard. This portrait of Lytton is an early print made by a painter exploring the capacity of etching tools and processes to deliver pictorial ideas about the distinctive appearance of a named man.

Helen Sebidi employs a less complex mark-making vocabulary – a fragile, wandering line travels over the entire picture plane moving circuitously back and forth. By stopping out lines and continuing to work into other areas of the plate requiring tonal depth and density, the full tonal range from black to white contributes to an oppressively restless image, replete with fragmented and reconstituted forms originating in the artist's practice of tearing her independent drawings and collaging them into new drawings. Sebidi's etched drawing conveys her personal experiences of the discriminatory apartheid policy of social dislocation and restricted movement of the black population controlled by pass laws. This is implicit in her title: *Where to go?*

Experience

Matisse, speaking after decades of drawing experience, commends the actions of his hand, commenting,

> *If I have confidence in my hand that draws, it is because as I was training it to serve me, I never allowed it to dominate my feelings. I very quickly sense, when it is paraphrasing something, if there is any discord between us: between my hand and the 'je ne sais quoi' in myself which seems submissive to it.*
>
> *The hand is only an extension of sensibility and intelligence. The more supple it is, the more obedient. The servant must not become the mistress', (Matisse, Jazz, 1947 in Flam 1973:112; Flam's translation).*

Explicit in this comment is Matisse's desire to ensure that his trained hand serves his intellectual and expressive, sensory needs with regard to rendering his subject. This is the antithesis of formulaic hand drawing and it is an inherent danger in digital drawing controlled by a hand-held mouse and algorithms, where a click produced by light pressure from an index or middle finger on the mouse selects the means to simulate pen and ink lines. Matisse asserts that his hand is 'an extension of sensibility and intelligence'. In French *sensibilité* translates into English as 'sensitivity and feeling'. *Sensibilité* was a concept much debated in the 18th century and it could convey a range of meanings. It was favoured by Diderot when arguing for the expression of emotion though sensations within '*le corps vivant*' (the living body) and he also aligned it with consciousness, or the ability to receive sense impressions. It is clear that Matisse, in attributing *sensibilité* to his drawing regards his hand as the tool to transmit his sensitive awareness of his hand in action responding to the impulses of the moment, and not as his agent executing learnt techniques.

Well versed in French art history and fluent in French, Roger Fry investigates 'Sensibility' in the second chapter of *Last Lectures* (1939), where he asks what we mean by sensibility. He offers a description of drawing:

> *The simplest case we can take is the comparison between a straight line made with a ruler and one drawn by hand. The ruled line is completely mechanical and as we say insensitive. Any line drawn by hand must exhibit some characteristics peculiar to the nervous mechanism which executed it. It is the graph of a gesture carried out by a human hand and directed by a brain, and this graph might theoretically reveal to us first, something about the artist's nervous control, and secondly, something of his habitual nervous condition, and finally something about his state of mind at the moment the gesture was made. The ruled line expresses nothing but the mathematical idea of the shortest distance between two points and this it does almost perfectly.*

Fry is not talking about the aesthetic qualities of hand-drawn and ruled lines; he is commenting on the nature of straight lines, and he concludes that the drawn line 'will tell us something of what we call the artist's sensibility', (Fry 1939: 22-23) and he adds, 'we might say that an artist's line is sensitive when it registers very subtle changes of form, when it has great power of variation' (Fry 1939:24). In short Fry discerns corporeal responses by the hand, which results in a quality of drawn line that can be described as 'sensitive'.

Sensibility, or feeling, is closely related to consciousness of what a drawer is *doing* and *seeing* (drawing as a verb and as a noun). As Bridget Riley noted above, when drawing by hand the artist watches and is conscious of the hand in action making marks on a surface. The drawing process is invariably punctuated by reflection in which the eye-brain sees and appraises the emergent image until drawing activity ends and a unique or single artefact – a drawing – exists. Consciousness of something (a drawing) generates reflection in the form of a silent, critical, internal monologue which may subsequently become spoken dialogue or written notes.

The consciousness required to make printed drawings is generated initially by the technical requirements of a chosen print method (etching, drypoint, lithography, wood and linocuts, and screen printing). Next, an extraordinary feat of imagination is required to make planographic and intaglio prints and it goes against the grain of all accumulated experiences of drawing graphic imagery. Drawing on a plate, a drawer observes the hand in action knowing that the final outcome will look radically different because the image will be *reversed* when the final state is pulled off the plate after being rolled through the printing press under pressure. To cope with image reversal, the inner eye generates an imagined graphic configuration that contradicts evidence generated by the physical eye and which is interpreted by the brain. One can of course gain insight into image appearance by viewing it in a mirror but there is another problem: the quality and nature of the marks, and the tone and colour of stones and metal plates covered in ground, are wholly different to the white paper and tones of printing ink desired in a final image. In short, conceptualizing drawing in the mind's eye for a printed drawing is different to making an independent drawing begun and completed on one surface and continuously evaluated by the eye. However, a print process provides a solution to the problem of accommodating image reversal when drawing on a plate. An analytical, reflective evaluation of a drawing in progress can be undertaken by printing a proof of the incomplete image on white paper.

FIGURE 3. DAVID KOLOANE, LAMP OF KNOWLEDGE (2010). DRYPOINT ETCHING ON ZINC PLATE, PROOFS I, III, VI, X (FINAL STATE).

Reflection

Lamp of Knowledge (2010) by David Koloane (1938-2019) is a small drypoint etching on a zinc plate. There are 10 proof prints (Figure 3, Proofs I, III, VI, X). Used on its own as a graphic technique of drawing, or employed with etching and aquatint, drypoint is an intaglio print method where the hand engraves the plate with a sharp stylus, and pushes up a ridge of metal known as a burr, which remains attached to the plate. This imparts an irregular, organic quality to printed ink lines and ensures subtle linear differences in the individual prints in what is, of necessity, a small edition of drypoint etchings because the burr collapses under pressure in the press.

John Ross offers clear and precise information on the subtleties achievable when executing drypoint drawing:

> *Hold your needle in a manner that feels comfortable. … If you hold the needle almost vertically, you will get a burr on both sides and get a line with a dark centre and soft edges. When you angle the needle, the burr rises on the opposite side and will print softly on the burr side. As the angle increases, the burr increases and the line thickens. Too great an angle, however, produces a weak burr that will not withstand many printings' (Ross 1990:84).*

The artist who draws to make prints develops a particular form of consciousness when observing an emergent image in the form of a proof state. Reflective consciousness has a complicated function. In assessing etching proofs the drawer determines, for example, if fragile lines need to be stopped out to retain their fine quality, or if areas of a plate require erasure by burnishing. Aquatint might be considered as the means of providing subtle tone, or additional drypoint line might be added for crisp detail. In short, the artist evaluates the existing image and postulates linear additions and further physical transformation by acid to achieve image finality on paper. The final proof, the *bon à tirer* print, functions as the quality control print against which the editioned prints are judged.

In Koloane's drypoint the subject is a solitary figure in a room engrossed in reading a book. There is a framed image on a wall, and table with a paraffin lamp, a source of light frequently used in South African township homes. The title suggests that the lamp is both object and metaphor for enlightenment so its prominence is significant. There are 10 states and, as is immediately apparent when examining Proofs, I and X, the initial linear thinking in the first proof is radically different to the resolved image in the final proof. A study of proofs supports John Berger's observation (2005: 5) that 'drawing records the unfolding of an event, not the fixed reality of an object' and it is obvious that drawing for print is about the related events of image generation, loss, retrieval and development. Drawing, as an event, is continuously provisional and performative. From the first to final state, Koloane draws freely, cutting the metal plate with his drypoint stylus. The needle point moves, leaving the traces of its action in time. When printed, stand-alone dots, dots spreading into blots, and blots stretched into shaped marks mingle with gestural and rhythmic lines travelling randomly over the landscape format. This information, derived from the close, intimate viewing we accord to small prints, delivers to viewers an experience of formal visual language and emergent content in Proof III and Koloane's drawing declares itself spatially and temporally through his purposeful or meandering lines and through scrapings that reduce lines to the ghostly traces evidenced in Proof VI.

Koloane commenced his drawing with a cursory visualisation of a figure seated in an interior (Proof I) but by Proof III the initial provisional statement has become a more emphatic representation of space and forms. A vertical plane on the left pushes the figure back into space and the picture on this wall seemingly depicting two figures carries more detail, books are indicated on the table and a lamp is clearly recognizable, as are the man's features. In Proof VI lines on the open book and lamp base have been burnished out and the head contour strengthened with dark tone. Proof X offers a resolution of tones, lines and shapes which reassert the two-dimensional picture plane and allude to spatial recession. Black lines and shapes now represent a triadic interaction between a man's head, a lit lamp and an open book, signifying physical and conceptual relationships between a verbal text, a representation of the phenomenal spatial world, and the geopolitical content of an image named as *Lamp of Knowledge*.

Although the way in which Koloane draws has similarities to his style of creating unique drawings on paper, his drawing for print acquires its distinctive quality through his hand directing a sharp tool in an encounter with a resistant metal plate. The depth, roughness, or precision of Koloane's linear incisions are dependent on his hand and his tool as prosthesis. We see how the artist's hand moved delicately or with decisive pressure to establish slight or deep cuts, or to erase indentations by scraping - a physical activity different to erasing graphite lines on paper. In establishing the drawn content of a drypoint, drawing is visual and tactile, graphic and sculptural. The hard, rigid surface and the drypoint stylus contribute to linear aesthetics, while hand and eye transform depictions of man, interior space and lamp into a socio-political comment on black South African citizens' intellectual aspirations and the realities of

township lives. The image is also autobiographical: Koloane was a man distinguished by his personal search for knowledge and his respect for learning across cultural boundaries.

Conclusion

Far from being mechanical, fine art printmaking is a highly creative graphic, sculptural, and phenomenological activity. It is undertaken not to reproduce an image but to create one, and this explains why the final print is 'original' while also being 'multiple', possessing evidence of the artist's sensibility transmitted by hand. William Kentridge, always articulate and insightful when discussing drawing and printmaking, comments on 'the way in which an idea gets tested' and observes;

> *There's a difference between simply making a drawing and having to put it through another process; having to ink it up, send it through a press, and at the other side find a version that's very different – it's as if done by another hand. There's a separation from the gestural mark of your hand and what you get on the sheet of paper. It's more or less a logical syllogism. You've got a proposition, which is your inked plate. And then it goes through the pressure of the press, and you get out at the end what you call a proof. And the hope is that you are convinced by the proof of the rightness of the first proposition (Kentridge in Hecker 2010:66).*

The subtle differences discernible in a limited edition of printed drawing are attributable to the hand of the artist working on a drawing and the hand of the printer inking a plate. Kentridge again offers some useful observations about master printers with whom he has worked, saying of Malcolm Christian, 'He has a particular style of inking and wiping the plate which is quite clean' (Kentridge in Hecker 2010:66). He also observes, 'The relation between the artist and the printer may be like a singer and the accompanist. …it's not simply a technical skill; it changes the nature of the print. Different studios make different things possible' (Kentridge in Hecker 2010:67).

Printed drawings require the sensing, knowing hands of drawer and master printer. The latter, facilitating the translation of drawing into printed drawing, draws on a deep well of tacit knowledge to forge a productive collaboration with the drawer to deliver the artist's intentions. Malcolm Christian, working with professional and informally trained artists understands the importance of drawing to the printing process and comments on drawing,

> *Well it's the most direct expression of thought on paper without the intrusion of technical knowledge or expertise. It's almost a form of thinking visually in a tactile sense … everything we did was autographic – in other words was drawn, or mark-making was part of that process… I think that drawing at Caversham was a way of distilling and formulating the images that would finally find their life or existence in print form (Conversation Marion Arnold and Malcolm Christian 23 August 2016).*

Printed drawings are drawings transformed and re-formed. They are rendered first by sensing, knowing hands engaging with tools that require knowledgeable handling, and by visualisation in both the mind's eye and physical eye to take drawings to completion. The plate is then handed to a printer, who may be the drawer or a master printer, to translate lines on a metal plane into graphic lines and marks imprinted on paper by ink. The print studio is a generative space and the printing process is characterised by consciousness of multi-sensual experience, tacit knowledge and being-in-the-world. Malcolm Christian describes his consciousness and experience eloquently:

I think it is that wonderful thing … going into that studio which is filled not only with memories and with things on the walls which remind you of past activities, but the smell – the linseed oil that is a component in the inks, the kind of ring of the press when it starts to be engaged it is almost like a bell and it reminds me very much of Tibetan meditation symbols – this wonderful kind of ring in the quietness. And then there is also just engaging with a plate in a creative dialogue that is based in activity where I found I would have to print a plate upward of five times before I actually understood not only where to start, how much ink to carry for the pressure of that on the soaked nature of the paper. One forgets about the conscious activity of your hand wiping and squeaking across that plate or the kind of roughness of the scrim removing the ink from that surface and leaving more in another area. And then there is the picking up of the paper and putting it onto a press and the laying down – it's almost like making a bed with beautiful linen (Conversation Marion Arnold and Malcolm Christian 24 August 2016).

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