

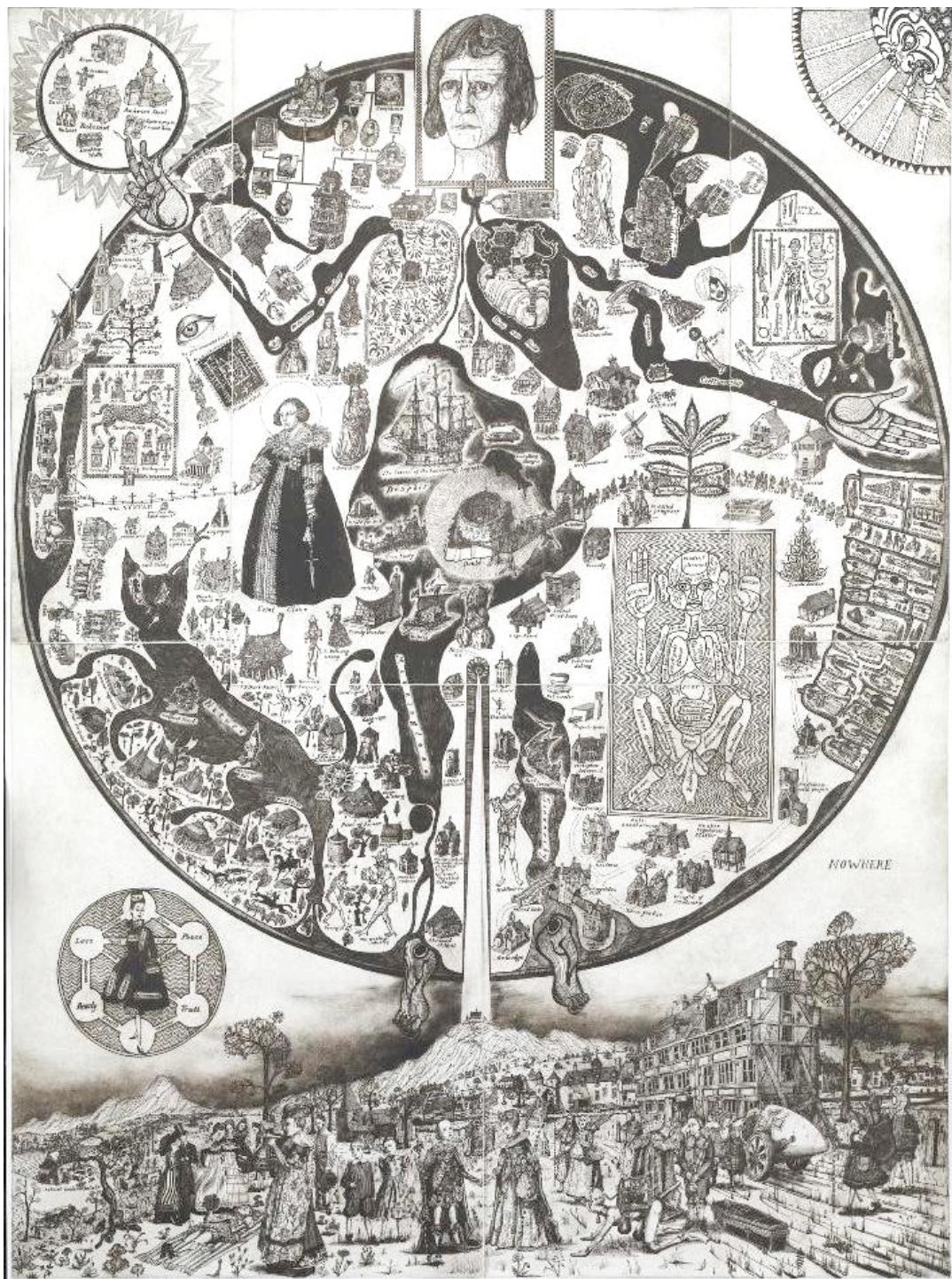
A SKETCHBOOK ABOUT DRAWING

BY

VINCENT AGARWAL

Until we can insert a USB into our ear and download our thoughts, drawing remains the best way of getting visual information on to the page.

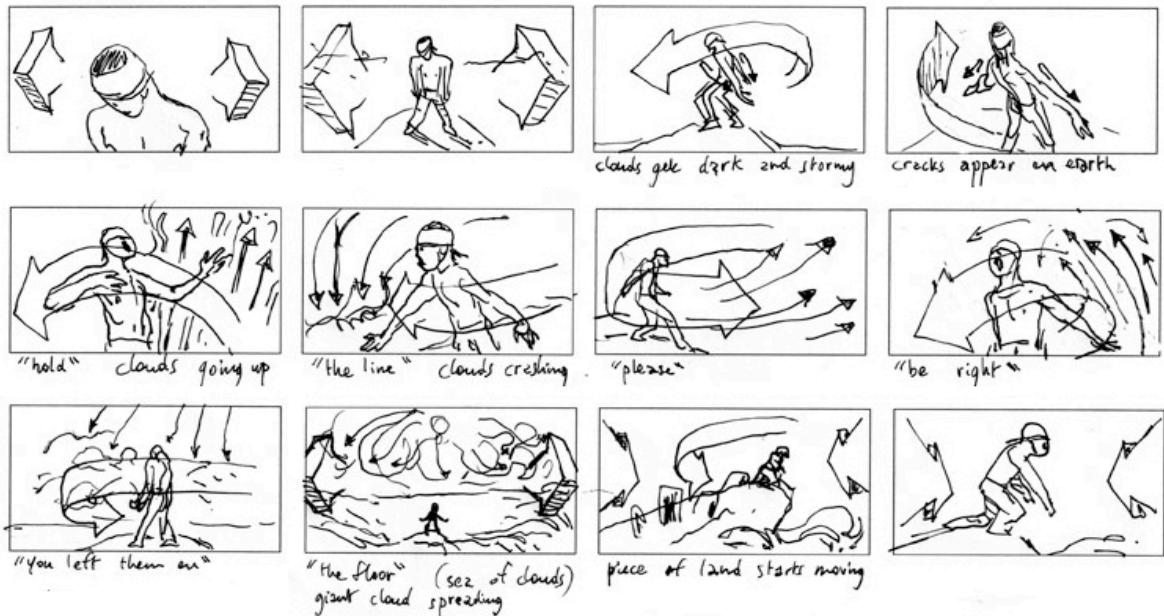
Grayson Perry, Turner Prize-winning artist



Grayson Perry, *Map of Nowhere*

Drawing is sometimes an end in itself. Sometimes it's a means of thinking. Sometimes it is about looking, sometimes about taking notes. Sometimes it's imagining the future, sometimes a diagram, sometimes it is a way to resolve a technical issue.

As children, we instinctively draw. The urge is unstoppable. Even as bad as the pictures are, we don't care. Children draw to help make sense of the world, to understand what they're seeing and to express what they're feeling. Our visual sense is critical to the way we understand the world. It's how we process what happens around us.



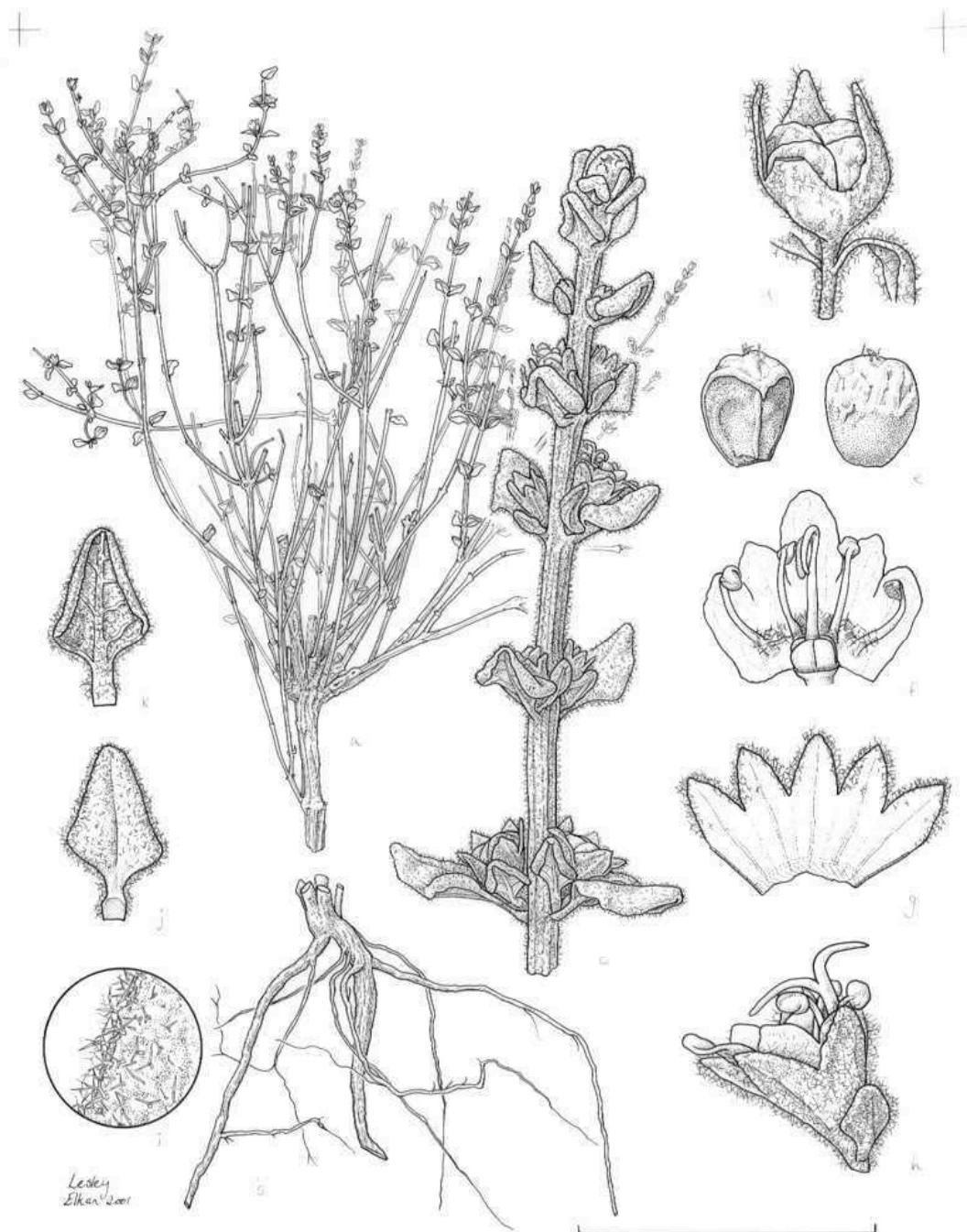
Perhaps we draw less as we learn to write, but the analytical results of the written word cannot replace drawing. Drawing is a language all of its own: a way of interpreting the world and an aid to thinking; a tool for solving problems and working things out.



Paul McCarthy, *Mad House Drawing 3*,
2011, pencil, charcoal on paper

WAYS OF DRAWING

There are many different ways to draw and many different types of drawing. You can draw from observation, from memory, from imagination, or any combination of these. Drawing can be a very physical act or a used for analysis, calculation, measurement, mapping.



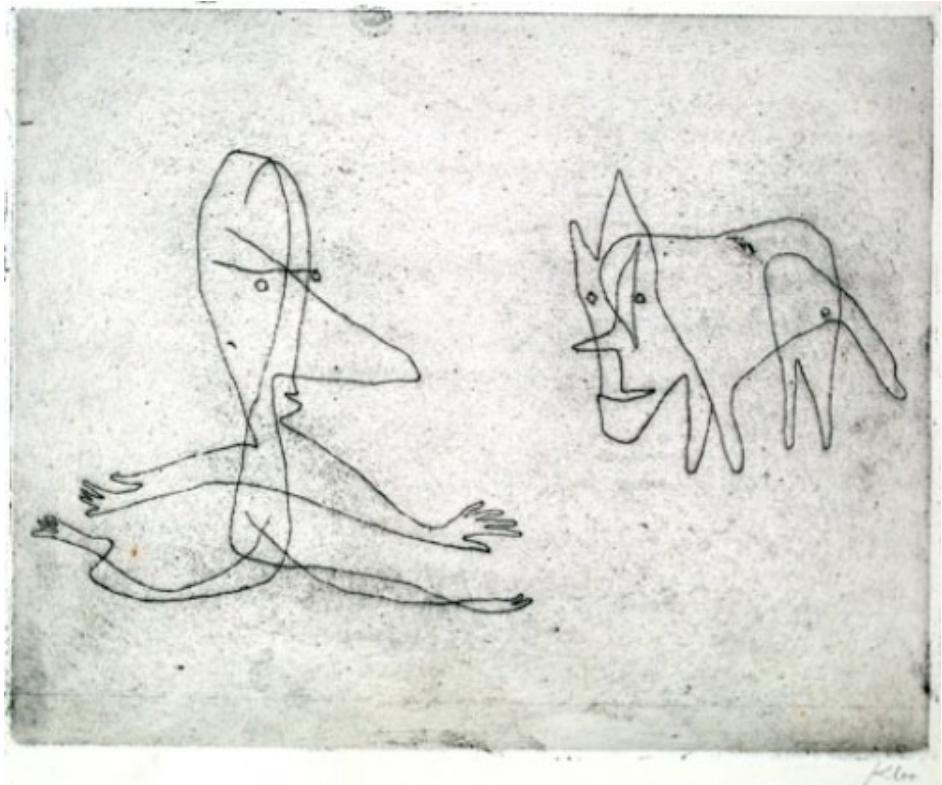
Drawing from observation takes practice and is as much about looking as it is about drawing. You could be studying at an object close-up and in great details or a vast landscape. Whatever you are drawing the aim of the exercise is to look, and translate what you've seen into marks on paper. If the more formal aspects of drawing interest you it may be helpful for you to refer to technical guide, for example the one found here: <http://www.ecuad.ca/~vsager/drawing/Drawing%20Handouts.pdf>

It can be useful to know about things like perspective, composition, tone etc., but by no means essential.

Drawing the human body can be very satisfying and informative as well as a great discipline to develop. It doesn't have to be a nude model in a studio if that can't be found, or if you don't want to. You could draw your friends and family going about their everyday lives or draw yourself by looking in a mirror. Draw people on the bus, draw your pets, draw buildings, draw plants, draw fruit, draw whatever you've got in your pocket, draw anything you want and do it often. Drawing from observation means looking hard, but it doesn't necessarily mean producing realistic, lifelike drawings. The important part of the process here is looking.

Drawing is taking a line for a walk - Paul Klee

Paul Klee Was lauft er?
(*Why is he running?*),
1932



Rachel Goodyear, *Wriggler*, 2010

Rachel Goodyear draws scenes from her imagination. But part of her process is to make drawings of real animals and real people, and to use all kinds of other sources – books, magazines etc, to develop her knowledge of human and animal anatomy.



Ceal Foyer, *Ink On Paper*, 1999, felt pen on paper

To make this series of drawings the artist held a felt pen on the centre of the paper until its ink gradually emptied out in a gradated circle. The shape of the drawing was dictated by the medium.



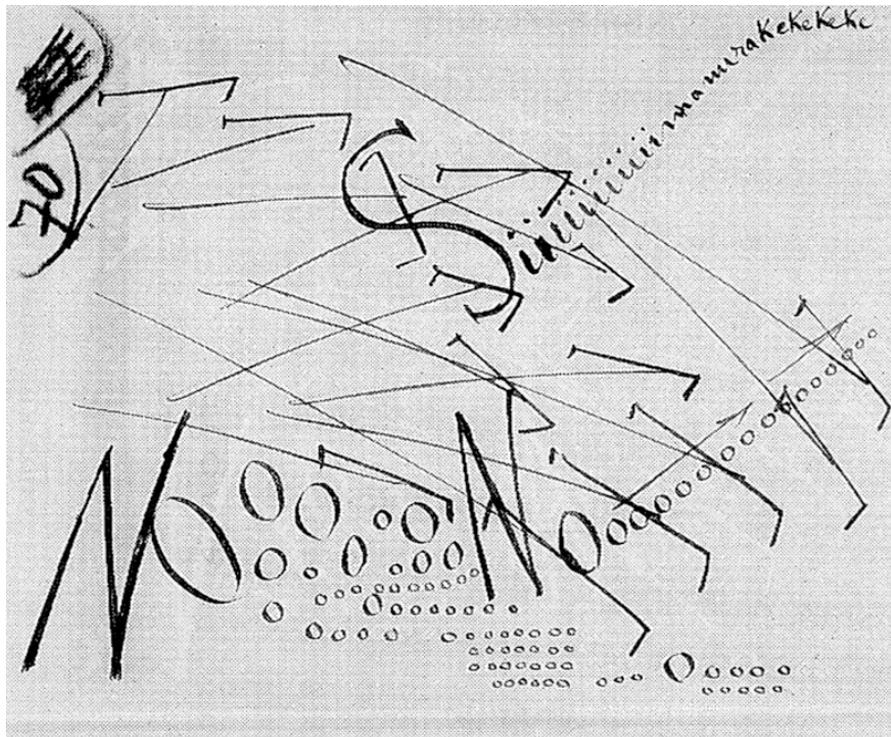
Anthony McCall, *Pencil Duration (short strokes)*, 1974, pencil on paper

Anthony McCall is interested in drawing as a time-based activity. All activity is 'time-based' or course, but in some drawings the time taken can be the subject of the drawing.

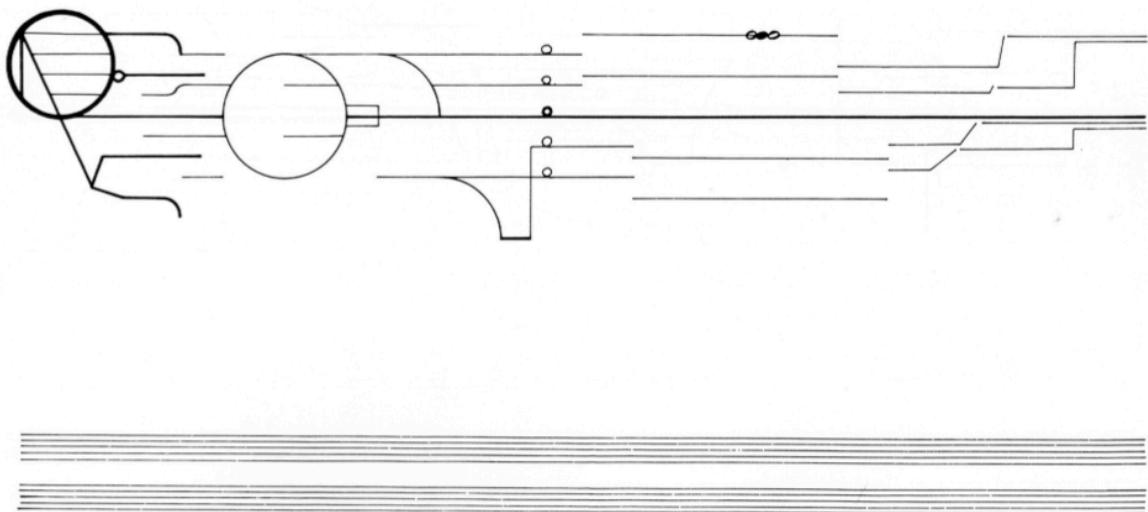
Efficiency of line: you can describe a scene with a few swift strokes of a pencil or make a recognisable portrait with a handful of lines. Or you can invest a drawing with layers of complexity. Frank Auerbach seems to combine both approaches – making gestural marks, then erasing them again and again until he gets the result he wants.



There are many ways of representing movement in drawing. The Italian Futurist, Marinetti, here uses dynamic lines and text.



Filippo Tommaso Marinetti, Action, 1915-1916. Ink on writing paper.



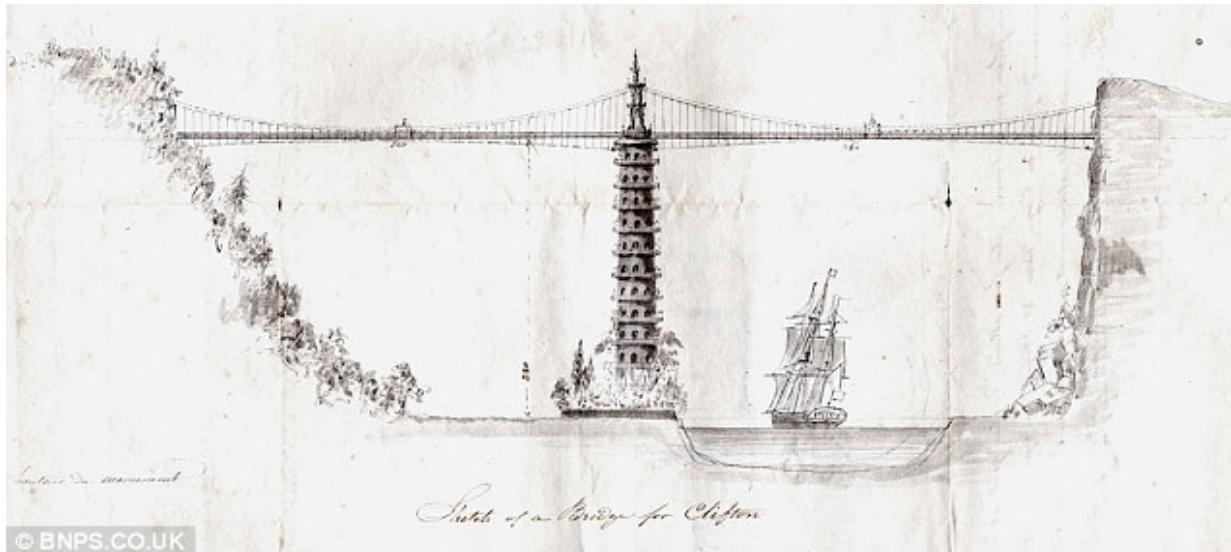
This is a page from the score to 'Treatise' by composer Cornelius Cardew. As you can see, it consists of drawings derived from musical notation, which the players of the orchestra are requested to interpret musically.

Those are just a few examples of drawing's many methods and purposes. Here's another:

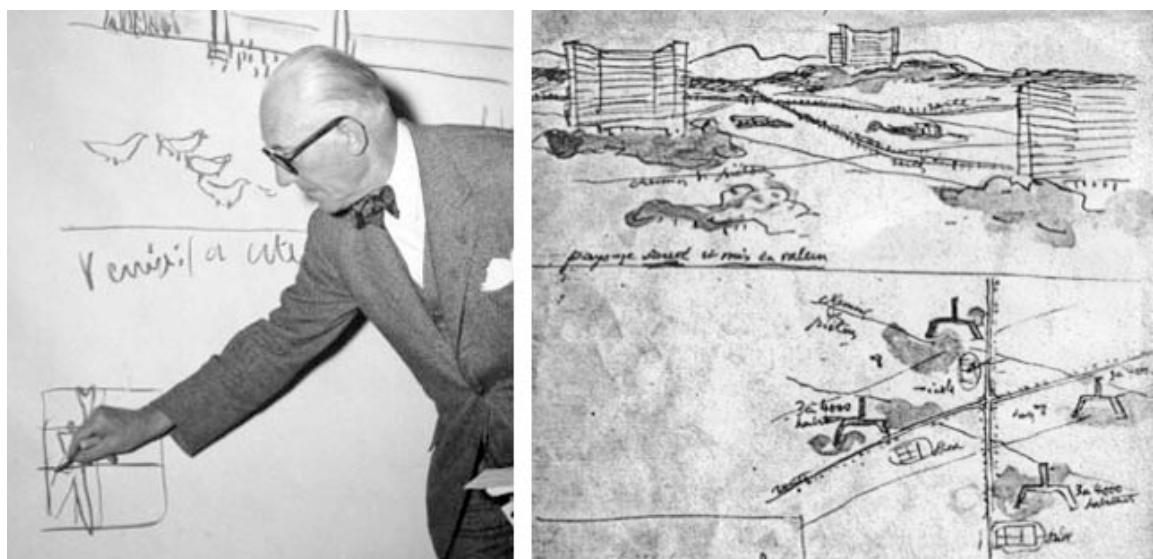
MAKE THE WORLD THE WAY YOU WANT IT

Without overstating the case, it can safely be said that drawing created our world.

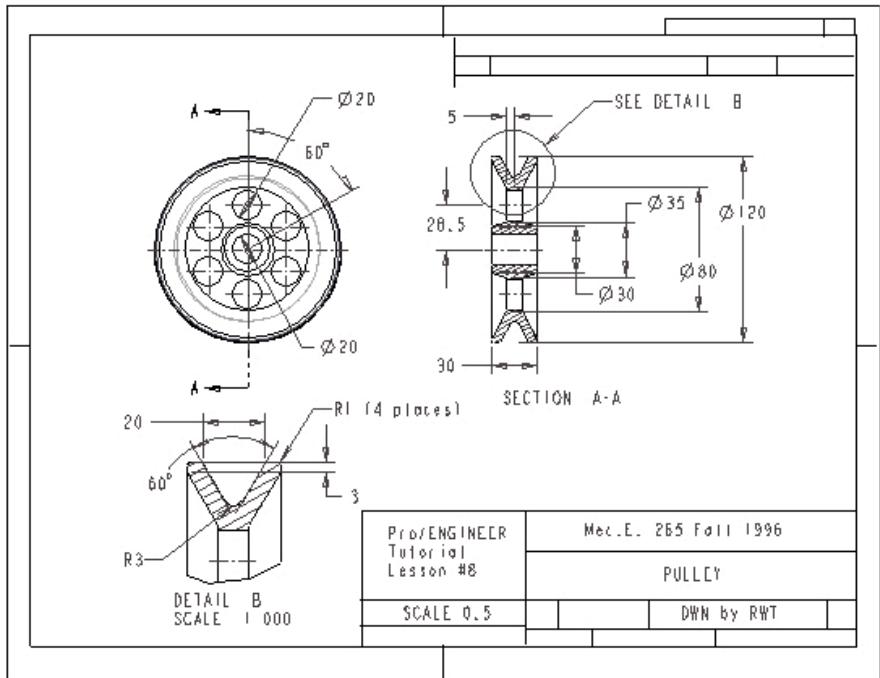
There is very little in that has been manufactured or built that did not start with a drawing. The clothes you wear, the chair you sit on, the phone you use. Every building on the street and every vehicle on the road. Knives and forks, door handles, toys, wheelie bins: near the start of the process, someone did a drawing – often a rough sketch, sometimes an idea quickly noted down on the proverbial back of an envelope (see also 'Drawing on the Hoof', below, for more about that.)



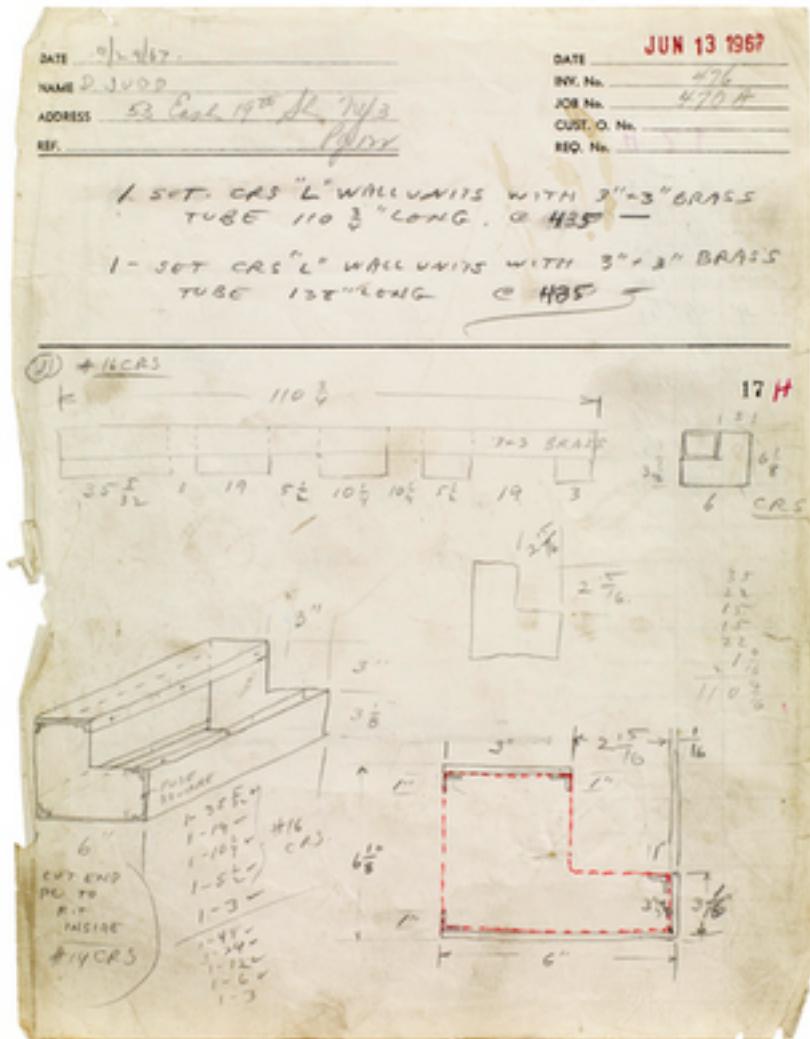
Marc Brunel's idea for a bridge at Clifton in Bristol included a pagoda-style tower in the middle. His son, Isambard Kingdom Brunel, rejected the plan and created a suspension bridge with no central support.



The Swiss architect Le Corbusier sketching out ideas.



An engineer's technical drawing for a pulley



Drawings and instructions by sculpture Donald Judd for the fabrication of one of his works in 1967.

DRAWING ON THE HOOF



Jenny Soep, Withered Hand

Jenny Soep is an illustrator who draws at events – gigs, performances, you name it. She turns up with her paper or sketchbooks and pens, pencils, pastels, paints and nestles in among the crowd and draws what she sees. Sometimes she draws the band on stage, other times it might be the audience, or both.

Drawing can be incredibly sociable too. You can draw your friends and draw with them – working on your own drawings or adding to each other's. In Glasgow there are a number of regular events that encourage such drawing. These include

- All The Young Nudes is a weekly life drawing session at the Flying Duck nightclub. There is no tuition and you must bring your own materials but a model or two are provided, as is a relaxing soundtrack to help you get immersed in your drawing.

<http://atyn.co.uk/>

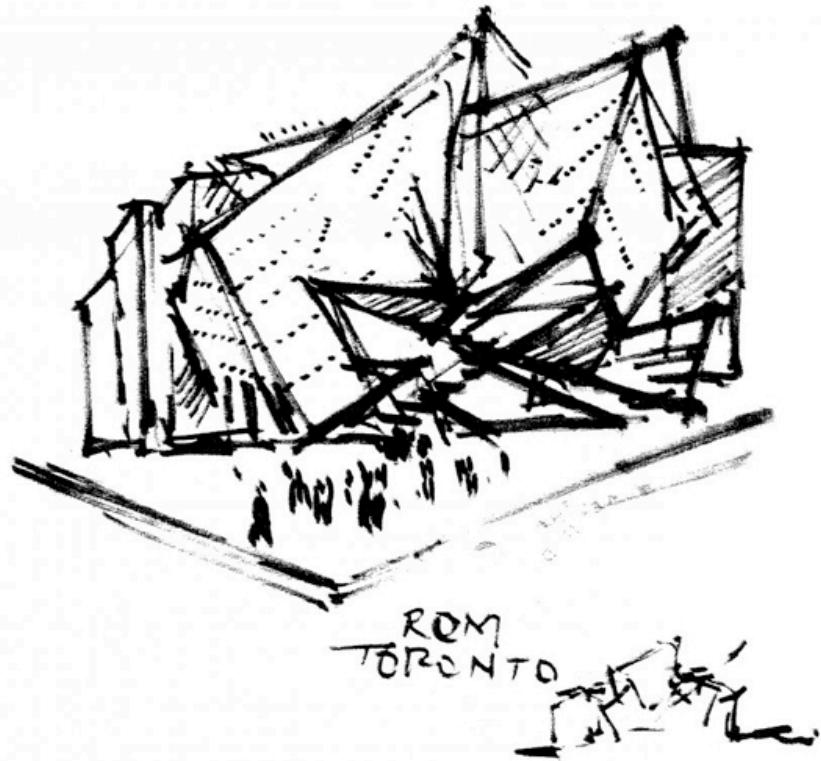
- Dr Sketchy's Anti-Art School is held twice a month at the Tron Theatre Victorian Bar. It mixes live music, drinking and drawing all in a burlesque style. There are branches of the club all over the world

<http://www.drsketchy.com/branch/Glasgow>

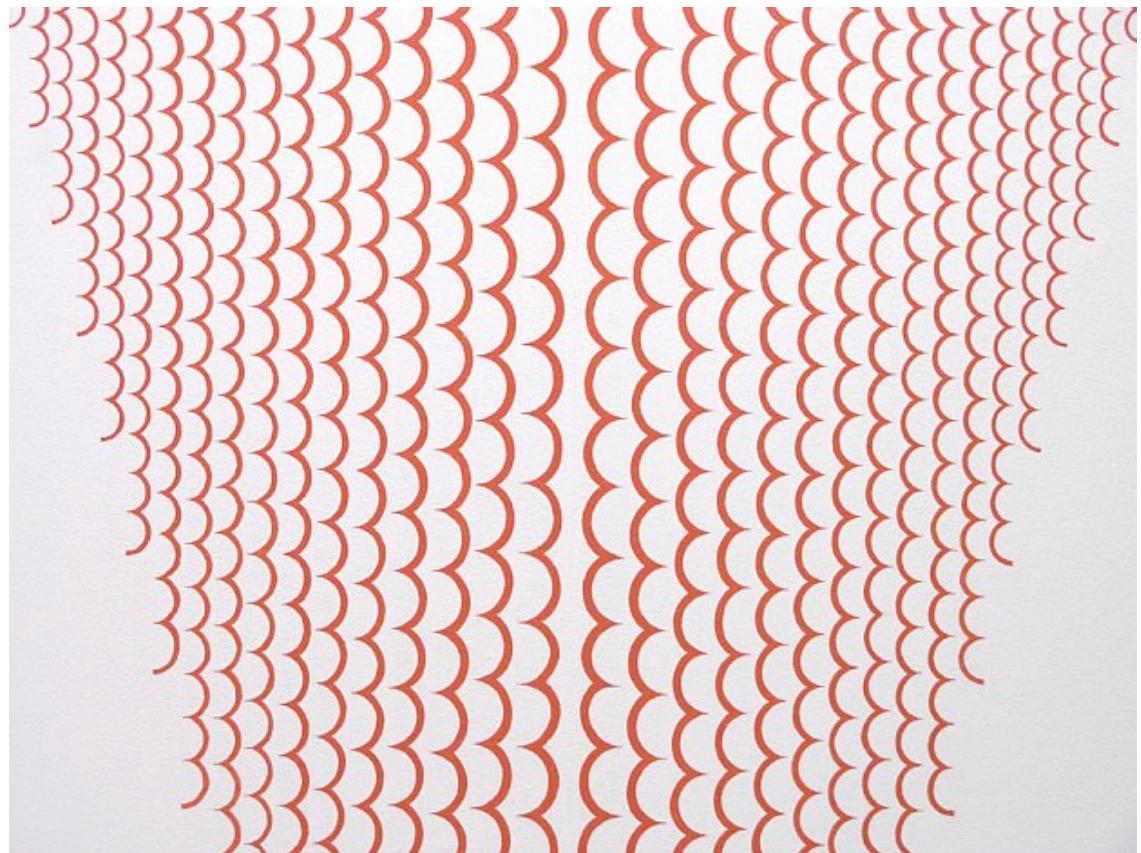
- Drawing In is at Centre for Contemporary Arts on Sauchiehall Street. Every Saturday the foyer of the CCA is used as a space where people can come and draw. Some materials are provided and there are occasional workshops and events. A place to draw and talk.

<http://www.cca-glasgow.com/page=236B7D10-868E-4F86-A306909B378E5655&eventid=7F58C242-ED38-46C8-906589580A3D0AF8>

Once you get over feeling self-conscious about it you can draw anywhere and everywhere. You just need something to draw on and something to draw with. It's handy to keep such things in your pocket or bag at all times. Many artists, architects and designers have famously drawn on the back of napkins to record ideas before they escaped them and in many bars and cafes there are plentiful supplies of flyers for doodling on the back of.



Daniel Libeskind is an internationally renowned architect, this is a concept sketch for a building he made with a marker pen on a paper napkin in a café in 1990



I draw nearly every day. I have a disordered atlas of fragments picked up and dropped. I return to things again, sometimes years later. It can almost seem like an accident that it should be this rather than that. I go to a museum or a library and draw whatever I can find. Often I never even look at these notes again.
Richard Wright, Glasgow-based artist, 2010 Turner Prize winner

MORE PLACES

There are many warm, dry places you can stop and draw in Glasgow. Glasgow Cathedral is a good place to go to study medieval, religious architecture as well as a very fine collection of stained glass and the way sunlight acts upon a large, interior space. Anywhere high up will give you splendid panoramas of the city and sometimes right out to the hills, such as the Cineworld building on Renfrew Street or most high-rise flats. If you would like to make botanical studies there are large greenhouses at the Botanics on Great Western Road, the Glasshouse in Queens Park and also the Winter Gardens at Glasgow Green. All of these venues welcome people who have come to draw their plants. If you prefer people watching, a café window is an ideal place to anonymously observe people and the weather from. The top deck of a bus also affords you an interesting perspective on streetlife.



Steven Spurrier Sketch for Glasgow demolitions 1926

SKETCHBOOKS AND WHY THEY ARE ESSENTIAL

A sketchbook puts you at the centre of your learning. It's somewhere to question your own work without necessarily finding answers. It's a place where you can log ideas that may or not be used later, playing with your ideas and externalising your thoughts. If you use one regularly all your various interests will be stored in one place helping you to make new connections. Sketchbooks can both widen and intensify your focus. They help you to think, explore, record, reflect, experiment and collect your thoughts.



John Baldessari, *Study for Splattered Faces*, 1990, cut-and-taped printed paper with crayon, pencil and felt-tip pen on graph paper

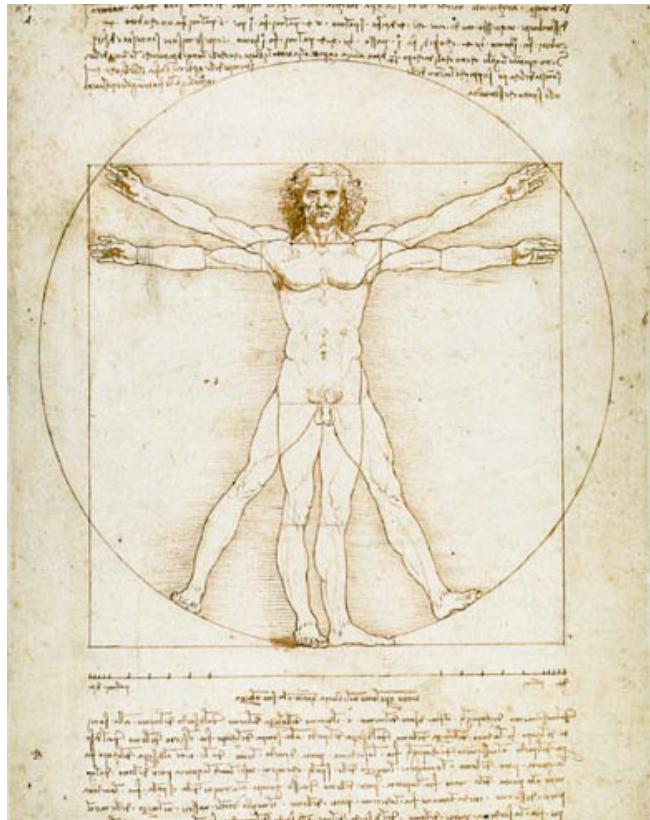
Things to include in your sketchbook...

- o Drawings from observation
- o Notes, lists and annotations
- o Doodles
- o Painting
- o Printing
- o Collage
- o Images/text/fabric/photos etc that you've collected
- o Referencing e.g. From books, magazines, films, songs, quotes, exhibitions
- o Writing and reflecting, personal thoughts and things to remember
- o Colour studies
- o Diagrams
- o Ideas, plans for the future
- o _____
- o _____

Leonardo da Vinci's notebooks reveal a brilliant mind at work. They show the studies of anatomy and plants and animals that underpin his paintings. He uses backwards writing that can only be read with a mirror – no one knows why, maybe to keep things secret, maybe he just thought that way.

Clearly the notebooks were written for his own personal use. The organisation is minimal. The lettering is quick, sloppy and often without punctuation. In many places the pen seems to race along trying to keep up with the revelations of the mind. They are full of inventions and ideas and they recognise none of today's divisions between science and art.

Whatever he is interested in becomes part of his work.



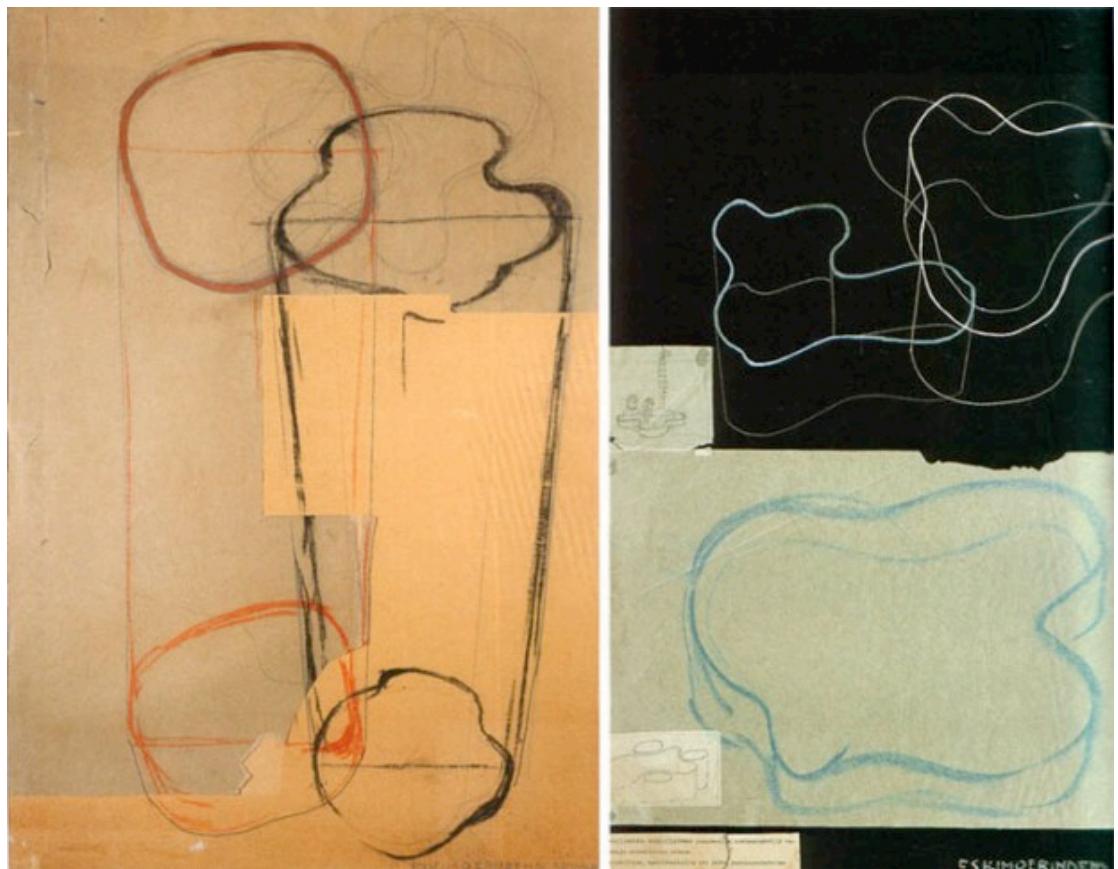
Even if you are a genius, you will sometimes feel that what you are doing is useless. But you can always rub it out, scribble over it, stick something on top or tear out the page.

Better still, just write down why you think it isn't working, for future reference.

Drawing by film-director and animator
Terry Gilliam
from
The Brand New Monty Python Bok (1973)



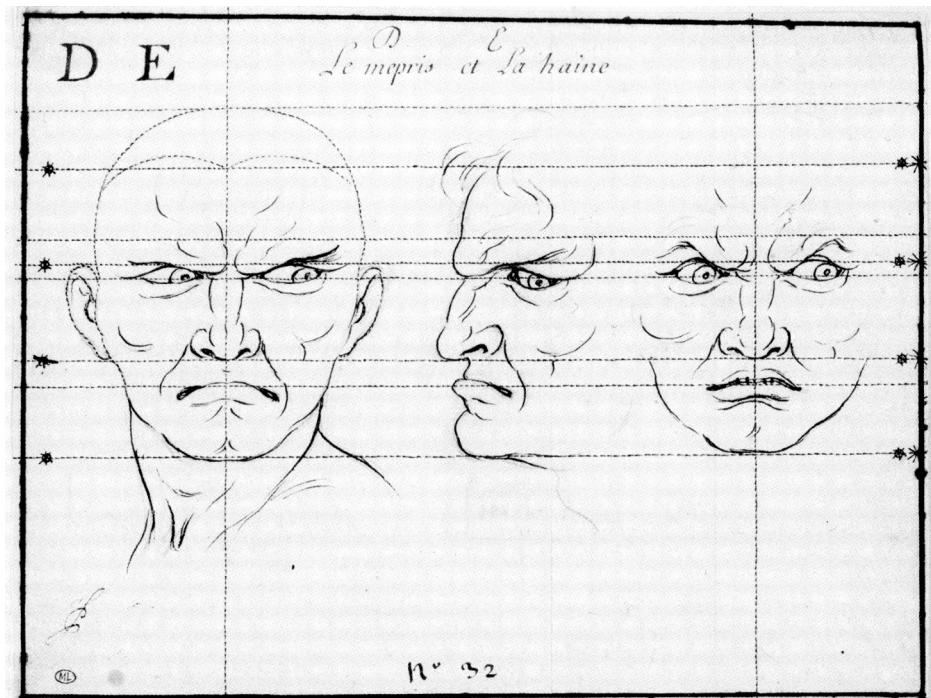
You don't have to take your sketchbook seriously. It's a private place, no one else need ever see it but by investing time in your interests you encourage your thinking to deepen. Time spent drawing is never wasted.



Sketches for a glass bowl design by Finnish architect Alvar Aalto

A sketchbook can take any format.

You could buy one that you love – the perfect size, shape, texture - or you can make one. It can be an actual book or just a collection of paper or envelopes held together with an elastic band. It could fit in your pocket or bag so you could take it everywhere or live under your pillow for working in privately. Don't be afraid of that first white page. Start in the middle or the back, or make your own sketchbook using non-blank paper.



Charles Lebrun *Le mépris et La haine* (contempt and hatred) 17th century

WHAT ART SCHOOLS ARE LOOKING FOR

- o an independent and creative mind
- o an ability to go beyond the requirements of the school curriculum
- o strong motivation
- o visual curiosity
- o imagination
- o an informed awareness of contemporary art

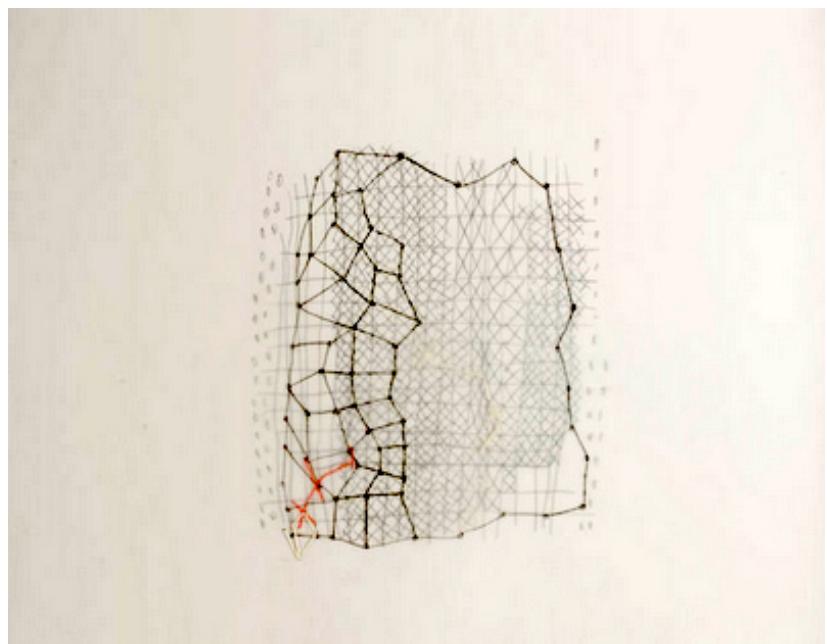
Drawing is fundamental to a range of creative practice within art, design and media. Art schools recognise drawing as a discipline at the core of all visual learning. As mentioned earlier - it's a language in its own right.

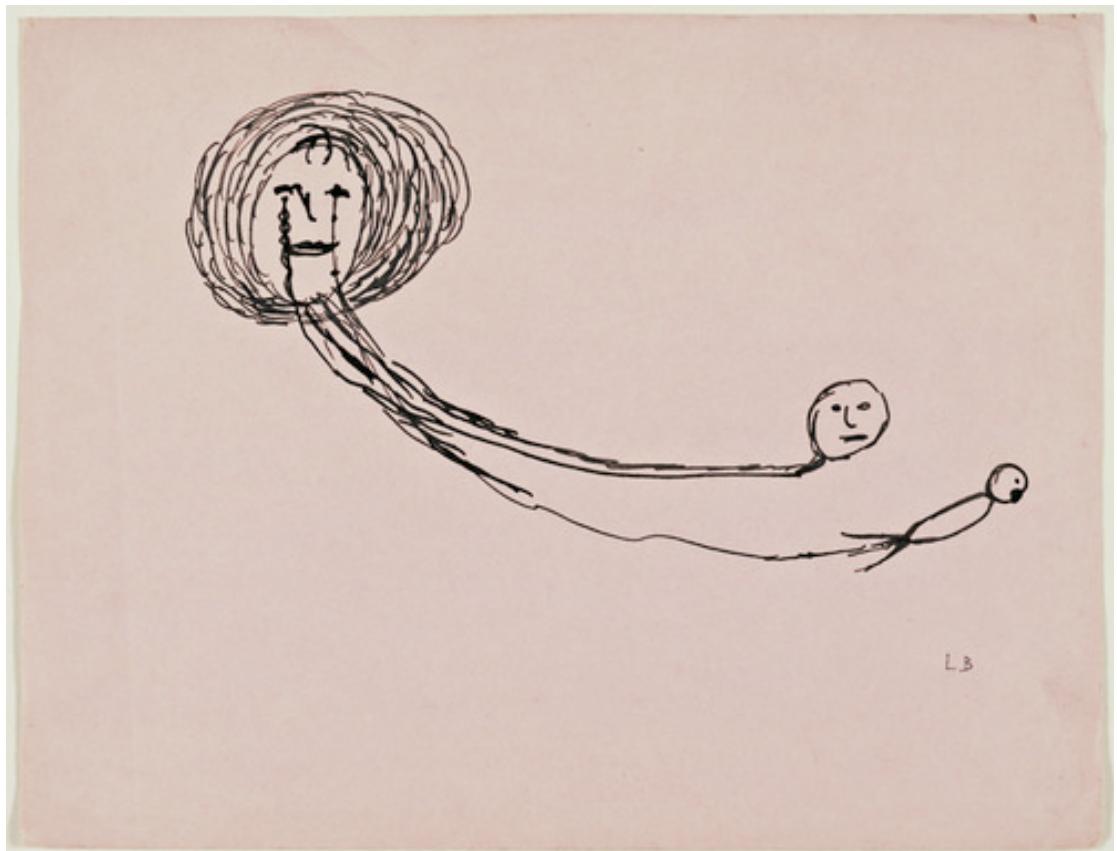
Paul Chan, *Untitled (drawing for 5th light)*, 2006, charcoal and cut paper



Art schools want to see a range of drawings, including non-standard definitions of what drawings might be.

Susan Hefuna, *Building*, 2008, pencil and embroidery on tracing paper





Louise Bourgeois, Untitled, ink on coloured paper

As well as developed pieces of work, art schools will expect you to keep a sketchbook. It is worth restating: sketchbooks are an important tool in informed, adult learning, they encourage you to

- articulate, externalise and sort your thoughts
- visualise
- share and communicate your ideas
- make your thoughts real
- promote self-directed learning
- focus
- inspire confidence
- link learning to life



Martin Kippenberger, Collage, 1989

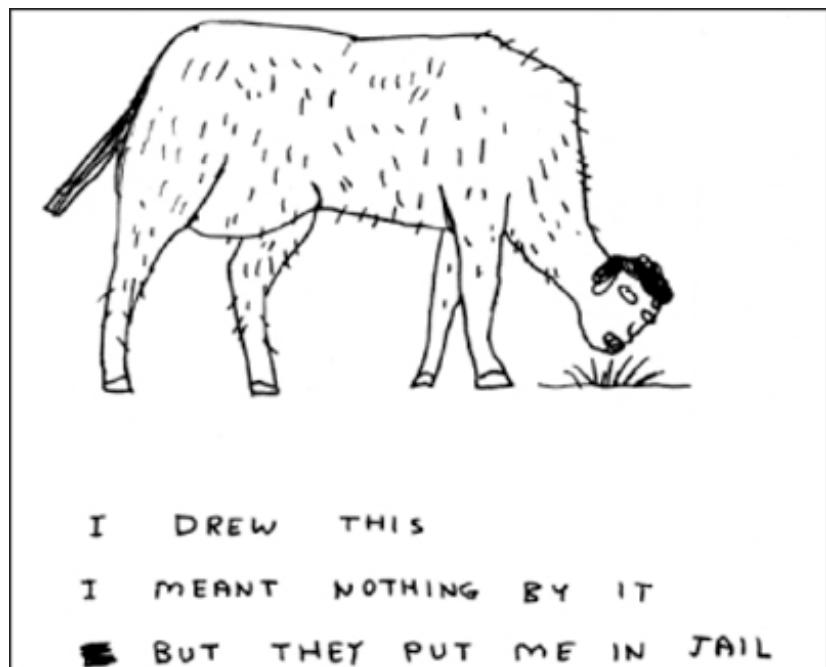
THE ONLY RULE IS WORK*

(*see appendix)

Having any sort of creative practice constantly throws up lots of questions. How do you find your own style? How to accept your own style of drawing – what if you simply don't like how you draw? When should you persevere with a drawing and when should you give up on it? How do you continue when you're feeling lost?

Nobody has definite answers to any of these questions but asking them is an important part of developing your practice. It is always valuable to take risks and push yourself out of your comfort zone. If you prefer to spend a long time on a drawing then force yourself to do some quick sketches. If the opposite is true of you then set yourself a longer period to spend on a drawing. See, think, invent, take action! If you find you are just never satisfied with the drawings you produce look around at how others approach the problem of depicting a three-dimensional object or space in two dimensions. By looking at or even copying other artists you can learn a great deal about how they achieve certain effects.

The only way to get really good at drawing is to draw.



Drawing by David Shrigley

ACTIVITIES, GAMES AND EXERCISES

Below are some activities. Some help loosen up the hand, some sharpen the memory while others are to do with discipline and drawing regularly. Almost all put an emphasis on looking.

- Do a drawing from observation with your non-writing hand. As you have less control over this hand you will be less able to draw what you think you should and more likely to draw what you actually do see. Some believe this is because you are using a different side of your brain than you usually do when drawing with your writing hand.
- For a similar lack of control, put your drawing implement (charcoal, pastel, chalk) on the end of a long stick or a heavy object. The result will not be a neat, life-like drawing but it will have qualities a controlled drawing lacks.
- Blind contour drawing is when you do not look at your paper at all. You keep your eye trained on the object you are drawing and follow its contour, your pencil, charcoal etc never leaves the paper. As you trace the outline of the object with your eye, your hand does the same on the paper.

It can be interesting to impose restrictions on the way you draw.

- Take a large object and try and draw it and all its detail on a very small scale. Do the same with a small object on a large scale. Is it frustrating to do? Does it change the way you look at the object?
- It can be helpful and instructive to look at an object repeatedly to really get to know it to draw it well. Take an object and draw it many, many times – from different angles, in different media, to different scales. This will force you to look closely.
- Do an intricate drawing. Once completed spend 15 minutes or so exerting yourself physically – running, dancing whatever. Come back to the drawing and try to replicate it twice the size while your heart pounds. How easy is it to focus on the detail? How do the two drawings differ?
- Put some loud music on and draw. Do different beats and tempos affect the way you draw?
- Rumour has it that Whistler used to ask his students to observe a model on the ground floor of their building and then rush up to the first floor where their easels were to paint it. They could run back down to the model whenever they needed to but with practise the students were able to keep the details in their mind's eye for longer and longer periods. As they became more proficient their easels would be moved higher and higher up the building until eventually they were racing up six flights of stairs to work on their paintings. This may or may not be a myth but does illustrate how the memory can be trained and fine tuned for the purpose of creating accurate drawings. Could such an exercise be adapted to your circumstances?
- The best way to get really good at drawing is to make it part of your everyday life. Do a drawing every day. A social media project called 28 Drawings Later took place in February 2012 to encourage people to do just that. <http://www.facebook.com/28DrawingsLater>
- Set a timer and allow yourself to become absorbed in drawing. Turn off your phone and eliminate all other distractions

FURTHER READING

A very small selection of things to inspire you

Links

GRID art map This is a map of what's on at contemporary art galleries in Glasgow, it is published in printed form every two month, but the website is updated more frequently. Going to galleries is not just about seeing as much art as you can, it is about being part of a community. You are not alone.
www.gridglasgow.co.uk

Central Station: The Creative Social Network

The site for those involved or interested in all areas of the creative economy.
www.thisiscentralstation.com

We Make Zines The international online community for zinesters

www.wemakezines.ning.com

William Kentridge – Tide Table. One of the South African artist's wonderful animated charcoal drawings.
www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ij-c4N2njwg

Books

Lee Lozano - Notebooks 1967-70 (Primary Information). An amazing insight into the working process of a pioneering artist who transited Pop art, Feminist Expressionism, Conceptualism and Minimalism.

Vitamin D (Phaidon Press) A huge book with nearly 500 images of drawings by contemporary artists, along with descriptions and analysis.

Drawing Projects: An Exploration of the Language of Drawing (Black Dog Publishing) ten key contemporary artists and illustrators reveal their working environments and practices, and there are 15 exercises to work through

The Primacy of Drawing: Histories and Theories of Practice by Deanna Petherbridge (Yale University Press). A heavyweight book in every way, taking a serious look at drawing throughout history.

John Berger - Ways of Seeing. One of the most stimulating and the most influential books on art in any language.

Corita Kent & Jan Steward, Learning by Heart (Bantam Books) Teachings to 'free the creative spirit', from the iconic artist, educator and nun Sister Corita.

Bookshops

Aye-Aye Books at the Centre for Contemporary Art in Glasgow, a specialist shop packed with books about art, books and zines by artists, art theory, politics, esoteric fiction and much else.
www.aye-ayebooks.com

Goode Press. A gallery and bookshop based at Mono bar in Glasgow, specialising in all things zine
www.goodpressgallery.co.uk

GmbH. An outlet offering a wide range of magazines, books, and bespoke publishing sourced from around the world, focusing on art, fashion, design, film, music, lifestyle, culture and current affairs. At the Lighthouse centre for architecture and design in Glasgow
www.gmbhshop.com

APPENDIX

Ten rules devised by Sister Corita Kent

IMMACULATE HEART COLLEGE ART DEPARTMENT RULES

Rule 1

FIND A PLACE YOU TRUST AND THEN TRY TRUSTING IT FOR A WHILE.

Rule 2

GENERAL DUTIES OF A STUDENT:
PULL EVERYTHING OUT OF YOUR TEACHER.
PULL EVERYTHING OUT OF YOUR FELLOW STUDENTS.

Rule 3

GENERAL DUTIES OF A TEACHER:
PULL EVERYTHING OUT OF YOUR STUDENTS.

Rule 4

CONSIDER EVERYTHING AN EXPERIMENT.

Rule 5

BE SELF DISCIPLINED. THIS MEANS
FINDING SOMEONE WISE OR SMART AND
CHOOSING TO FOLLOW THEM.

Rule 6

TO BE DISCIPLINED IS TO FOLLOW IN A GOOD WAY.
TO BE SELF DISCIPLINED IS TO FOLLOW IN A BETTER WAY.

Rule 6

NOTHING IS A MISTAKE. THERE'S NO WIN AND
NO FAIL. THERE'S ONLY MAKE.

Rule 7

The only rule is work.

IF YOU WORK IT WILL LEAD TO SOMETHING.
IT'S THE PEOPLE WHO DO ALL OF THE WORK ALL THE TIME
WHO EVENTUALLY CATCH ON TO THINGS.

Rule 8

DON'T TRY TO CREATE AND ANALYSE AT THE
SAME TIME. THEY'RE DIFFERENT PROCESSES.

Rule 9

BE HAPPY WHENEVER YOU CAN MANAGE IT.
ENJOY YOURSELF. IT'S LIGHTER THAN YOU
THINK.

Rule 10

"WE'RE BREAKING ALL OF THE RULES. EVEN
OUR OWN RULES. AND HOW DO WE DO THAT?
BY LEAVING PLENTY OF ROOM FOR X QUANTITIES." JOHN CAGE

HELPFUL HINTS: ALWAYS BE AROUND. COME OR GO TO EVERY-
THING. ALWAYS GO TO CLASSES. READ ANYTHING YOU CAN GET
YOUR HANDS ON. LOOK AT MOVIES CAREFULLY, OFTEN.
SAVE EVERYTHING - IT MIGHT COME IN HANDY LATER.

THERE SHOULD BE NEW RULES NEXT WEEK.