

# DRAWING TEXTS

Edited by Jim Savage



*Occasional Press*

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I am particularly pleased that in this collection we are able to publish together for the first time (I think) three of John Berger's essays on drawing - and I would especially like to thank him for not baulking, when he was asked for three and not just the one we had discussed. It was a very generous gesture on his part.

Michael Craig-Martin displayed an equal generosity of spirit in allowing us to reprint part of his 1995 essay: "Drawing the Line", and I am much indebted to him.

I would also like to thank the late Patrick Hickey's family for giving permission for the reprinting of his 1975 essay: "The Act of Drawing" - and the artist James O'Nolan for his help and assistance in arranging the same; and the artist Jim Sheehy for bringing it to my attention in the first place.

Finally, I would like to thank the artist David Lilburn, who worked long into the nights and early mornings on the design and production of the anthology - without his interest and his generous and always good-humoured help this book would not exist.

Jim Savage

## **Introduction**

The modest aim of this anthology is to gather together in one volume a number of different ideas and opinions on the activity of drawing - from 'inside-practitioners', who actually make drawings, and from 'outside commentators' who might write about, curate, or criticize it.

When the contributors were initially approached to write a text, no one knew who else was writing, or what specifically anybody else was writing about. They were on their own. It was hoped that this collective 'blind mapping' would in some way allow for the opening up of the terrain of drawing for further exploration - that, like a map, text by text, a picture of drawing would unfold (albeit a fundamentally incompleteable one) to reach to wherever it would.

The anthology has fifty-three texts from fifty-one contributors. The texts range from speculative reflection to historical account, from the idiosyncratically anecdotal to the formally academic. As the reader moves from piece to piece (not necessarily sequentially) he/she will move into different depths and be taken in different directions, such is the nature (and perhaps the excitement) of anthologies. It is a book of distinct and individual voices, a compendium of jostling fragments. Some of the pieces are like spontaneous first thoughts, others are more the result of a long-considered questioning - but in their own ways, all contribute something to the picture.

The texts are loosely organized - many resisted being categorized neatly into one box or another. Broadly, the first section is concerned with general ideas and observations on drawing, including artists' statements on their own practice (texts 1 - 40), this is followed by five historically based essays (41 - 45), then by four that examine drawing and language (46 - 49), leading to a final four that ask about drawing in education. None of these loose groupings is hermetic; there are wormholes in all of the texts that would lead you directly into other texts, regardless of the present arrangement.

Dig through these fragments and mine the ideas that interest you - make more ideas with them - and against them. The value of this book lies in what happens next.

Jim Savage, *January 2001*

## The Basis of all Painting and Sculpture is Drawing

*John Berger*

For the artist drawing is discovery. And that is not just a slick phrase, it is quite literally true. It is the actual act of drawing that forces the artist to look at the object in front of him, to dissect it in his mind's eye and put it together again; or, if he is drawing from memory, that forces him to dredge his own mind, to discover the content of his own store of past observations. It is a platitude in the teaching of drawing that the heart of the matter lies in the specific process of looking. A line, an area of tone, is not really important because it records what you have seen, but because of what it will lead you on to see. Following up its logic in order to check its accuracy, you find confirmation or denial in the object itself or in your memory of it. Each confirmation or denial brings you closer to the object, until finally you are, as it were, inside it: the contours you have drawn no longer marking the edge of what you have seen, but the edge of what you have become. Perhaps that sounds needlessly metaphysical. Another way of putting it would be to say that each mark you make on the paper is a stepping-stone from which you proceed to the next, until you have crossed your subject as though it were a river, have put it behind you.

This is quite different from the later process of painting a 'finished' canvas or carving a statue. Here you do not pass through your subject, but try to re-create it and house yourself in it. Each brush-mark or chisel-stroke is no longer a stepping-stone, but a stone to be fitted into a planned edifice. A drawing is an autobiographical record of one's discovery of an event - seen, remembered or imagined. A 'finished' work is an attempt to construct an event in itself. It is significant in this respect that only when the artist gained a relatively high standard of individual 'autobiographical' freedom, did drawings, as we now understand them, begin to exist. In a hieratic, anonymous tradition they are unnecessary. (I should perhaps point out here that I am talking about *working* drawings - although a working drawing need not necessarily be made for a specific project. I do not mean linear designs, illustrations, caricatures, certain portraits or graphic

works which may be 'finished' productions in their own right.)

A number of technical factors often enlarge this distinction between a working drawing and a 'finished' work: the longer time needed to paint a canvas or carve a block; the larger scale of the job: the problem of simultaneously managing colour, quality of pigment, tone, texture, grain and so on - the 'shorthand' of drawing is relatively simple and direct. But nevertheless the fundamental distinction is in the working of the artist's mind. A drawing is essentially a private work, related only to the artist's own needs; a 'finished' statue or canvas is essentially a public, *presented* work - related far more directly to the demands of communication.

It follows from this that there is an equal distinction from the point of view of the spectator. In front of a painting or a statue he tends to identify himself with the subject, to interpret the images for their own sake; in front of a drawing he identifies himself with the artist, using the images to gain the conscious experience of seeing as though through the artist's own eyes

### The Experience of Drawing

As I looked down at the clean page in my sketchbook I was more conscious of its height than its breadth. The top and bottom edges were the critical ones, for between them I had to re-construct the way he rose up from the floor, or, thinking in the opposite direction, the way that he was held down to the floor. The energy of the pose was primarily vertical. All the small lateral movements of the arms, the twisted neck, the leg which was not supporting his weight, were related to that vertical force, as the trailing and overhanging branches of a tree are related to the vertical shaft of the trunk. My first lines had to express that; had to make him stand like a skittle, but at the same time had to imply that, unlike a skittle, he was capable of movement, capable of re-adjusting his balance if the floor tilted, capable for a few seconds of leaping up into the air against the vertical force of gravity. This capability of movement, this irregular and temporary rather than uniform and permanent tension of his body, would have to be expressed in relation to the side edges of the paper, to the variations on either side of the straight line between the pit of his neck and the heel of his weight-bearing leg.

I looked for the variations. His left leg supported his weight and therefore the left, far side of his body was tense, either straight or

angular; the near side was comparatively relaxed and flowing. Arbitrary lateral lines taken across his body ran from curves to sharp points - as streams flow from hills to sharp, compressed gullies in the cliff-face. But of course it was not as simple as that. On his near, relaxed side his fist was clenched and the hardness of his knuckles recalled the hard lines of his ribs on the other side - like a cairn on the hills recalling the cliffs.

I now began to see the white surface of the paper, on which I was going to draw, in a different way. From being a clean flat page it became an empty space. Its whiteness became an area of limitless, opaque light, possible to move through but not to see through. I knew that when I drew a line on it - or *through* it - I should have to control the line, not like the driver of a car, on one plane: but like a pilot in the air, movement in all three dimensions being possible.

Yet, when I made a mark, somewhere beneath the near ribs, the nature of the page changed again. The area of opaque light suddenly ceased to be limitless. The whole page was changed by what I had drawn just as the water in a glass tank is changed immediately you put a fish in it. It is then only the fish that you look at. The water merely becomes the condition of its life and the area in which it can swim.

Then, when I crossed the body to mark the outline of the far shoulder, yet another change occurred. It was not simply like putting another fish into the tank. The second line altered the nature of the first. Whereas before the first line had been aimless, now its meaning was fixed and made certain by the second line. Together they held down the edges of the area between them, and the area, straining under the force which had once given the whole page the potentiality of depth, heaved itself up into a suggestion of solid form. The drawing had begun.

The third dimension, the solidity of the chair, the body, the tree, is, at least as far as our senses are concerned, the very proof of our existence. It constitutes the difference between the word and the world. As I looked at the model I marvelled at the simple fact that he was solid, that he occupied space, that he was more than the total of ten thousand visions of him from ten thousand different viewpoints. In my drawing, which was inevitably a vision from just one point of view, I hoped eventually to imply this limitless number of other facets. But now it was simply a question of building and refining forms until their tensions began to be like those I could see in the model. It would of course be easy by some

mistaken over-emphasis to burst the whole thing like a balloon; or it might collapse like too thin clay on a potter's wheel; or it might become irrevocably misshapen and lose its centre of gravity. Nevertheless, the thing was there. The infinite, opaque possibilities of the blank page had been made particular and lucid. My task now was to co-ordinate and measure: not to measure by inches as one might measure an ounce of sultanas by counting them, but to measure by rhythm, mass and displacement: to gauge the distances and angles as a bird flying through a trellis of branches; to visualize the ground plan like an architect; to feel the pressure of my lines and scribbles towards the uttermost surface of the paper, as a sailor feels the slackness or tautness of his sail in order to tack close or far from the surface of the wind.

I judged the height of the ear in relation to the eyes, the angles of the crooked triangle of the two nipples and the navel, the lateral lines of the shoulders and the hips - sloping towards each other so that they would eventually meet, the relative position of the knuckles of the far hand directly above the toes of the far foot. I looked, however, not only for these linear proportions, the angles and lengths of these imaginary pieces of string stretched from one point to another, but also for the relationships of planes, of receding and advancing surfaces.

Just as looking over the haphazard roofs of an unplanned city you find identical angles of recession in the gables and dormer-windows of quite different houses - so that if you extend any particular plane through all the intermediary ones, it would eventually coincide perfectly with another; in exactly the same way you find extensions of identical planes in different parts of the body. The plane, falling away from the summit of the stomach to the groin, coincided with that which led backwards from the near knee to the sharp, outside edge of the calf. One of the gentle, inside planes, high up the thigh of the same leg, coincided with a small plane leading away and around the outline of the far pectoral muscle.

And so, as some sort of unity was shaped and the lines accumulated on the paper, I again became aware of the real tension in the pose. But this time more subtly. It was no longer a question of just realizing the main, vertical stance. I had become involved more intimately with the figure. Even the smaller facts had acquired an urgency and I had to resist the temptation to make every line over-emphatic. I entered into the receding spaces and yielded to the oncoming forms. Also, I was correcting: drawing

over and across the earlier lines to re-establish proportions or to find a way of expressing less obvious discoveries. I saw that the line down the centre of the torso, from the pit of the neck, between the nipples, over the navel and between the legs, was like the keel of a boat, that the ribs formed a hull and that the near, relaxed leg dragged on its forward movement like a trailing oar. I saw that the arms hanging either side were like the shafts of a cart, and that the outside curve of the weight-bearing thigh was like the ironed rim of a wheel. I saw that the collar-bones were like the arms of a figure on a crucifix. Yet such images, although I have chosen them carefully, distort what I am trying to describe. I saw and recognized quite ordinary anatomical facts; but I also felt them physically - as if, in a sense, *my* nervous system inhabited *his* body.

A few of the things I recognized I can describe more directly. I noticed how at the foot of the hard, clenched, weight-bearing leg, there was clear space beneath the arch of the instep. I noticed how subtly the straight under-wall of the stomach elided into the attenuated, joining planes of thigh and hip. I noticed the contrast between the hardness of the elbow and the vulnerable tenderness of the inside of the arm at the same level.

Then, quite soon, the drawing reached its point of crisis. Which is to say that what I had drawn began to interest me as much as what I could still discover. There is a stage in every drawing when this happens. And I call it a point of crisis because at that moment the success or failure of the drawing has really been decided. One now begins to draw according to the demands, the needs, of the drawing. If the drawing is already in some small way true, then these demands will probably correspond to what one might still discover by actual searching. If the drawing is basically false, they will accentuate its wrongness.

I looked at my drawing trying to see what had been distorted; which lines or scribbles of tone had lost their original and necessary emphasis, as others had surrounded them; which spontaneous gestures had evaded a problem, and which had been instinctively right. Yet even this process was only partly conscious. In some places I could clearly see that a passage was clumsy and needed checking; in others, I allowed my pencil to hover around - rather like the stick of a water-diviner. One form would pull, forcing the pencil to make a scribble of tone which could re-emphasize its recession; another would jab the pencil into re-stressing a line which could bring it further forward.

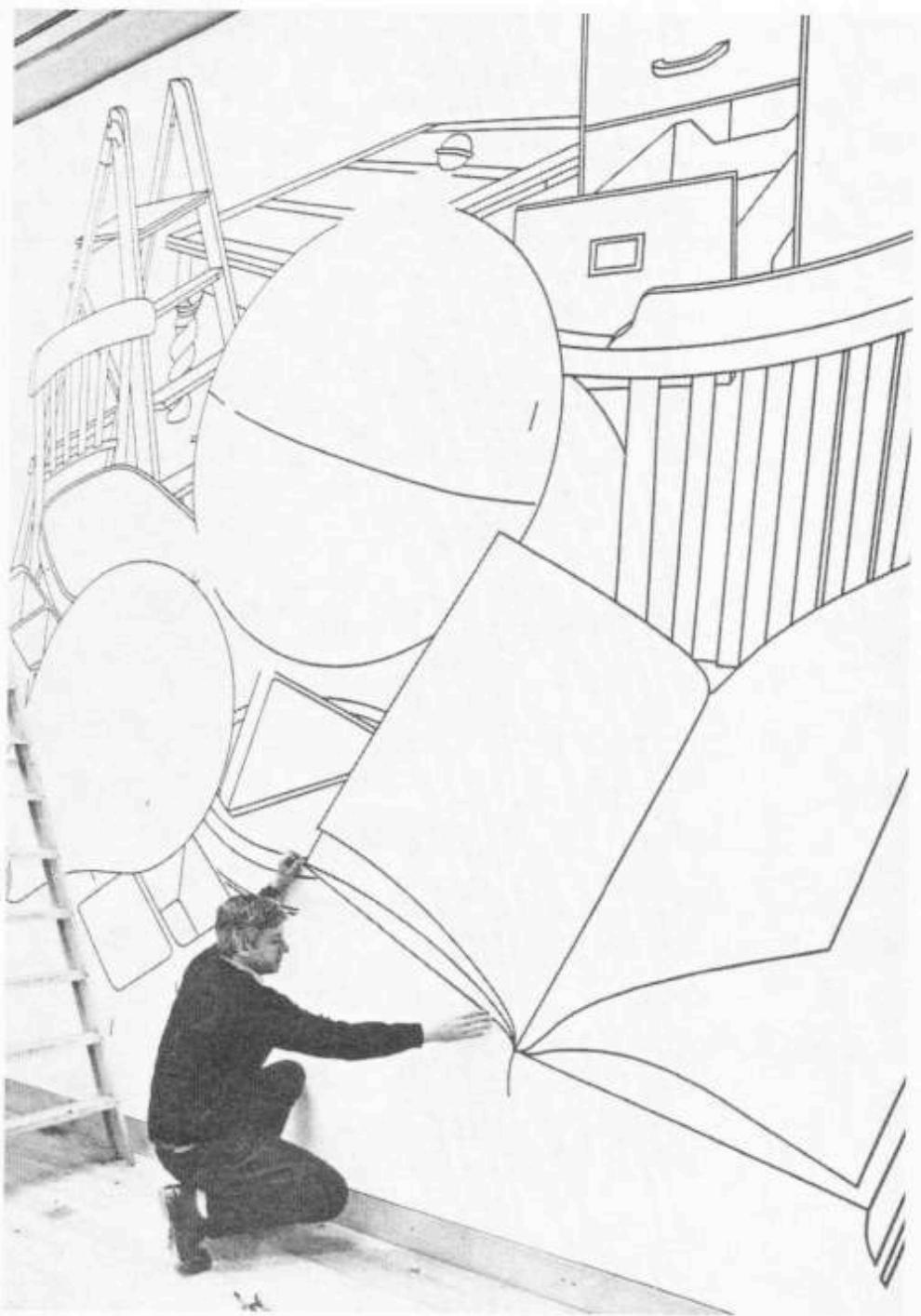
Now when I looked at the model to check a form, I looked in a different way. I looked, as it were, with more connivance: to find only what I wanted to find.

Then the end. Simultaneously ambition and disillusion. Even as in my mind's eye I saw my drawing and the actual man coincide - so that, for a moment, he was no longer a man posing but an inhabitant of my half-created world, a unique expression of my experience, even as I saw this in my mind's eye, I saw in fact how inadequate, fragmentary, clumsy my small drawing was.

I turned the page and began another drawing, starting from where the last one had left off. A man standing, his weight rather more on one leg than the other.....

*John Berger*

This essay was published in *Permanent Red : Essays in Seeing*. Writers and Readers, London, 1979. Orig. Methuen, London, 1960.



## Drawing The Line

*Michael Craig-Martin*

*"Drawing The Line" was an exhibition selected by the artist Michael Craig-Martin in 1995. It was an exhibition of line drawings from prehistory to the present day, juxtaposing contemporary works with those from different periods and different cultures. Selected extracts from his introductory essay to that exhibition follow:*

My approach to drawing, both conceptually and technically was greatly influenced by the drawing course devised by Josef Albers, which I took as a student at the Yale University School of Art. The course was based entirely on freehand line drawing.

I have always loved drawings. They are the great secret of art: vast in number, mostly unknown, often thought of as secondary, rarely reproduced, and, because of their sensitivity to light, seldom seen. Their usual characteristics of modesty and intimacy have conspired to deny them widespread recognition.

Some of the drawings in this exhibition were made to be seen in their own right, and many are of formidable aesthetic quality. Others were made as modest notes, with little expectation of public scrutiny. Some were made as studies for works to be realized by grander means, others were made after these grander manifestations had already been produced. Some are a form of visual thinking out loud, musings, sketches, speculations; others are like working plans with notes and measurements. Some are unfinished, others complete. Some were drawn from observation, some from memory, some from the imagination, some according to the rules of a predetermined system.

Technically these drawings range across many forms of dexterity and control, from precision to automatism. All of these drawings were produced by artists in response to their own particular needs and intentions. An artist's sense of purpose, and the quality and appropriateness of his or her response through drawing matters far more than skill or talent alone. Skill is the ability to do exceptionally well exactly what needs to be done. It manifests itself in any number of ways. But skill without vision is

empty: skill alone does not produce great drawing.

The differences between a drawing by Ingres and one by Agnes Martin are obvious. Despite these differences, they clearly share certain crucial characteristics: the pervasive sense of calm and order, the restrained passion, the exceptional subtlety and sensitivity of their use of line. Both require skills, related but different skills. They look different because the intent, the order of emphasis, of each artist is different. The great quality of each drawing as a work of art is its capacity to embody fully the singular vision of the artist.

There are two principal misconceptions about drawing. The first is that there is a single form of 'good drawing', a way of making drawings that is somehow basic and 'common sensical' (naturalistic representation), against which those drawings taking other forms are considered deviant. The second is that all drawing in the past conformed to the rules of 'good drawing', deviant drawing being exclusive to our own century. This exhibition clearly shows the falsity of both these ideas.

My purpose has been to take a fresh look at the art of other times and other cultures through the context of our own. For this reason, although the selection covers the whole sweep of history, about half the works come from the twentieth century, particularly from the past forty years. This is the culture of our own time, the lens through which we view the world. The present influences the past more than the past influences the present.

I was asked to select the works for this exhibition as an artist. My whole understanding of art has come from my experience as an artist. There is a difference between the way artists look at and consider works of art from the way historians, critics, collectors, curators, and dealers usually do. It is unfortunate that people trying to understand art often treat artists with scepticism, while giving credence to the views of art's 'secondary' interpreters, who often have unacknowledged agendas, prejudices, frustrations and limitations. They are never neutral observers. Artists can be fiercely partisan, but their position is always explicit - through their work.

A work of art, like everything else, has many uses, but for artists it is not primarily an object of connoisseurship, a historical or cultural record, or a commodity. For artists, a work of art is alive, a living reality, or it is of only marginal interest. To be truly experienced, a work of art needs to be felt more than understood.

Artists bring to the art of others, and to the art of the past, the same criteria of living critical engagement essential to their own work. To experience an ancient work of art as a work of art is not to be put in touch with the past, but to bring that work into contact with one's own present. My intention in this exhibition is to allow this immense and diverse body of work - ancient, old, modern and new - to be seen as part of the living present.

An exhibition of this kind is only possible because of the special character of drawing itself. What drawings have in common is greater than their differences.

It would be neither possible nor fruitful to try to make a similar exhibition of painting or sculpture. I do not mean simply for practical reasons, but because the differences between paintings or sculptures of so many ages and artists would overwhelm their potential points of contact. There is a cultural as well as a physical density that characterizes painting and sculpture that is in contrast to the fluidity of drawing. The great paintings of Rembrandt manifest most strongly the values of his own time, while his drawings manifest equally those of our own. The drawings of Rembrandt can speak directly to the work of Beckmann or Guston, those of Leonardo to Newman or Andre, of Michelangelo to Duchamp, of Cambiaso to de Kooning.

The most striking thing about many of the drawings of the past and of other cultures is how 'modern' they look. I believe that this is because the qualities we have come to value most highly in art in the twentieth century have always been present in art, but usually in the past have characterized only modest and 'secondary work'; that is, drawings. These characteristics include spontaneity, creative speculation, experimentation, directness, simplicity, abbreviation, expressiveness, immediacy, personal vision, technical diversity, modesty of means, rawness, fragmentation, discontinuity, unfinishedness, and open-endedness. These have always been the characteristics of drawing.

Seen in this light the continuity between the art of the past and that of our own time are both strong and clear. It is my view that the new art is never truly new, but the result of ascribing high value and importance to an aspect of art that was previously not thought worthy of serious consideration. In our own century, we have come to place the highest value on those characteristics which have previously been seen only as aspects of the early stages in the making of a work of art, stages exemplified by drawing. The

expressive freedom shown by artists in previous centuries in the preliminary stages of their work, in their drawings, is seen in much of the major finished work of the twentieth century.

The spontaneous, personal, and undogmatic qualities of drawing have been highly appropriate models for art in a century characterized by the fragmentation of both the systems of belief and the languages of expression. In a way unique to our times, artists today must discover, select, and develop for themselves the forms of expression appropriate to their needs and abilities. Our emphasis on individuality, innovation and originality is the inevitable consequence of our cultural circumstances. What our pluralist society has sacrificed by the loss of cultural coherence has been more than compensated for by the unprecedented growth of the range of expression.

How a drawing is made determines its character. Line drawing often reveals an immediacy and directness bordering on rawness. They show precisely what is needed, no more and no less. No other form is so flexible, responsive, or revealing. Line drawings manifest a particular rigour and economy, as though the eye and the mind of the artist was truly concentrated at that tiny point of contact between the marker and the surface - the pen or pencil or brush and the paper. They range from the sensual to the severe. At their most sensual they are indulgent. At their most severe, they do not lack feeling.

In my search I occasionally came across two similar drawings by the same artist, one of which had remained only as line, while the other had been coloured in or overpainted with coloured washes. The latter always seemed to me to have dated more than the simple line drawing, as though the colour was more particular to the period of its making, fixing the work more implacably in its own time. Line on its own seems capable of acquiring the quality of timelessness.

*Michael Craig-Martin, 1995*

## Drawing

Noel Sheridan

The difficulty of writing in prose about drawing is that prose is intended to move the eyes in one linear direction only, whereas drawing attracts the eyes onto the page in order to move them around. The promiscuity of the eye has been tracked in scientific tests where sensory indicators attached to the eyes map the eye movement of the viewers as they scan images. The usual example is of a nude in a landscape, which gives the predictable trace of the lusting eye returning again and again to the erogenous zones and only occasionally checking out trees and other aesthetic joys of nature's bounty. (Not artists, of course - and for the most part men.)

But whatever the drawing, whether nude, still life, or abstract, the autobiography of the eye as it finally engages the dramatic story of a drawing might, in writing, read as:

I was here I was there I was I was there I am here it was there it is here it is everywhere I was there here I am here there was everywhere where I was here I am there I am I was is it is was us now then it I am it is me and us and it is now and then is it us or me or it here and there or so it is.

To get this, one must set the space, create a syntax, punctuate. All of this is down to choice. I believe this is a model not just of reading a drawing, but something like making one. It is precisely because it is not a language - it has no set alphabets, grammars or syntaxes - that drawing can activate new areas of the brain that other means of visual communication can't configure.

The eye contact required for getting into a drawing is different to that of reading a book. We should get close to certain drawings, at least as close as we go to read a book then, moving the head in and out slightly, establish that adhesive moment when the eye is caught and brought into the unique 'land' of drawing. Suddenly everything has a different life to the real world, a different scale, and like a map it can lead us around its territory.

It is in this situation that we may sense something of language;

of something being stated in those mysterious glyphs, cadences and solitary shapes that are the signs of the special utterances of this place. In the fluid and gapped arrangement of marks on a page we may sense something of the development of a written language that, over time, codified such marks into the signs that became the letters that now evince the phonemes of language that go to make up words.

(Unless, of course, language came before drawing - and poetry before either; repetitive sounds and chants that called for the assist of visual clues to express fuller meaning. Those who draw can seldom believe this. The activity feels too primal, too charged with a sense of formal discovery and surprise, to be anything but inaugural.)

What good drawing announces is that "this is the beginning of making sense of something". If we look at something in the world for long enough, we realize that it is impossible to reproduce it. It is too complex. So, we edit and simplify - even the most worked drawings are evidence, finally, of what can't be done, of the limits of representation. But then it is exactly at those limits, those thresholds, that a new consciousness may dawn and it is that possibility that sustains all those who draw to find a new way and search.

The old methods clarify and make reasonable and, in time, they become accepted as real. But it is a virtual reality, and when we see this reality in computer games, with diminishing or expanding mathematical perspectives, we are shocked at how false it is. But this is that visual world of the Renaissance that has come to so dominate our ways of seeing, that we have come to accept it as real. Cameras and other means of mechanical reproduction use this methodology; it is ubiquitous and, at its monocular centre, it is a fiction.

However, it is a fiction, a myth, a meme, of great power, that has sustained itself over many hundreds of years. This is what people mean by "real drawing", and maybe this is what gives rise to the expression "I can't draw a straight line". (This *faux* real world is generated by straight lines, of which there are but few in nature.)

But give credit. It was an astonishing human achievement. Henry Tonks, the Professor of Drawing at the Slade at the early part of the century, laid it out so well that generations of artists (Robert Orpen was a disciple) based their art on it.

Here it is:

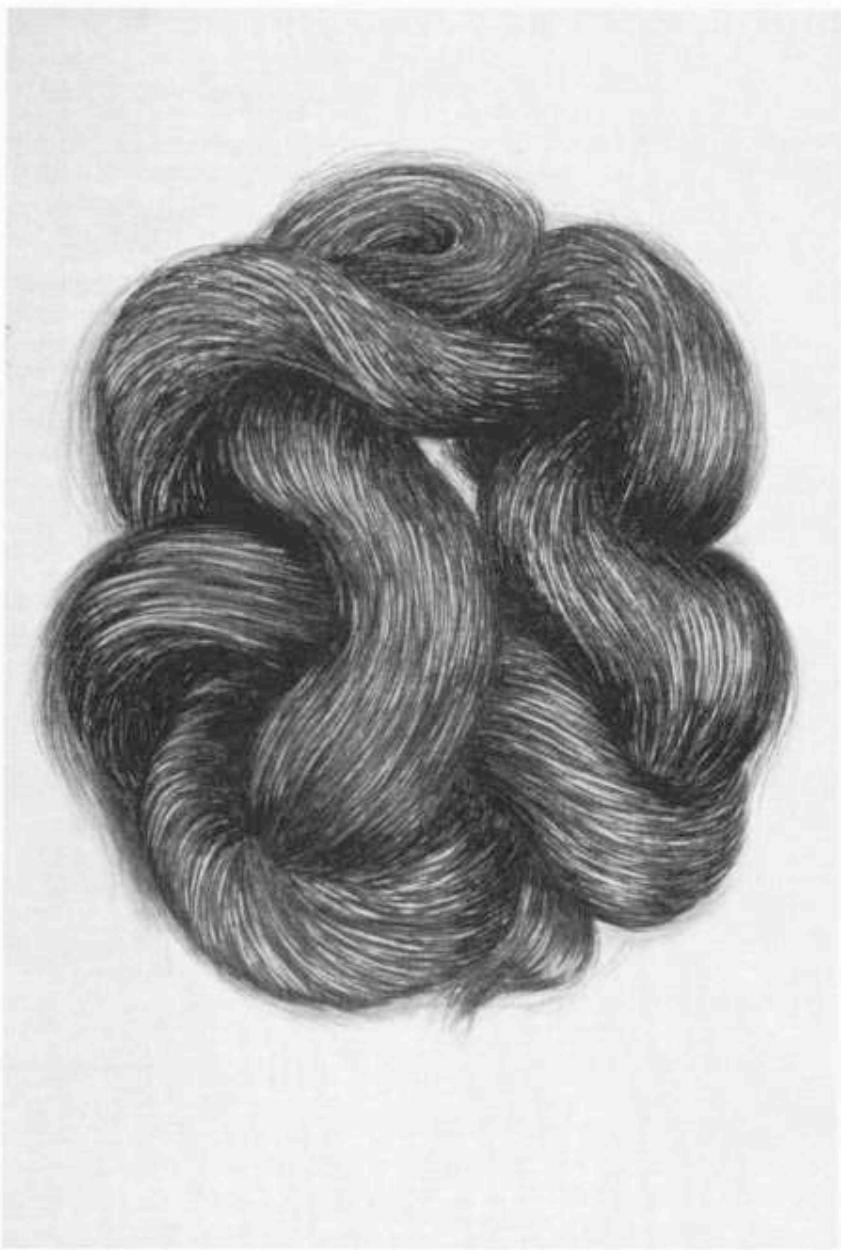
1. Drawing is the art of representing the forms of objects upon a flat surface, as they appear from one point of view. Drawing is concerned with form alone, and not with colour.

2. The form is expressed partly by the outline or contour (its boundary) and partly by light and shade.
3. An object may be represented by drawing its contour correctly, without considering it from the point of view of light and shade.
4. There are two constant and unvarying things to be remembered as aids in ascertaining the position and direction of an object in space; the vertical line (as of a plummet) and the horizontal line, at right angles to this.
5. In drawing an object by means of its outline or contour, its proportion must be observed; i.e. its apparent height as compared with its apparent width, also the direction of the lines bounding its shape; these may be inferred from their relative inclination to (actual or imaginary) vertical and horizontal lines.
6. The lines bounding one side of an object must be considered in relation to the lines bounding the other side, as they mark the boundaries of the form included within them, which is the thing to be expressed; and it is only by relating them correctly that the form is expressed.
7. Any solid object in direct light has some portion of its surface in shadow; and a shadow is cast from it onto the ground. It is necessary to observe well this division into light and shadow.
8. Those portions of the surface of an object which face the source of light receive full light, and as the direction of these surfaces faces away from the light, less light is received on them, until when they are at such an angle to the light that no direct light can reach them, they are in shadow. But whenever the surface receives direct light, be it ever so little (when it is called half-shadow) it must be considered as belonging to the light; and in observing the light and shadow of an object, the half shadow must be taken with the light, as opposed to the shadow.
9. It follows that it is most important to observe the junction of the light and shadow; and to notice whether the transition be abrupt, as with angular form, or gradual, as with a round form.
10. The shadowed sides of objects, and the shadows cast by these objects, receive by reflection from surrounding objects a certain amount of light. The variations in the depth of the shadows, caused by these reflections, must be observed.
11. It is essential that the masses of light and shadow be observed in their proper form, definition and gradation, and this is most successfully done by keeping in view the form of the object to be expressed.

12. The distance of the draughtsman from his object, and the distance of his eye from his drawing, determine the scale on which the drawing should be made. The nearer the drawing to the eye and the farther from its object, the smaller it should be: the farther it is from the eye, and the nearer to its object, the larger it should be.

This is so clear and logical that it can be programmed. The fine computer language of 1 or 0, on or off, yes or no, can be written to accommodate this. But in this language it must be either yes or no. There can be no maybe. Art, however, is essentially about maybe. And, drawing is where maybe may begin.

*Noel Sheridan, June 2000*



## Drawing is Thinking

*Alice Maher*

The very best part of doing a drawing is not when you are finished, nor just before you start, but when you are right in the middle, like the centre around which a knot is tied. The reason for starting the drawing is in the past, and you haven't quite turned the corner towards its end. It is an incomparably tactile and timeless moment. It is not stand-back time, not proportion time, nor light and shade time. It is the time where the concept, content and activity are at seamless play. You are not 'lost' in your own occupation, but surrounded by it, exquisitely busy, on an island between intellect and instinct. When I look at artists' drawings, I try to imagine where it was in that work that they got onto this 'island', where the fusion took place and the business kicked in.\*

When I am moving around, travelling, doing things, I am all the time drawing. Not with a pencil, or a piece of charcoal, but just drawing in my head: the trees flashing by the train window, the curl on the back of someone's neck, the length of the walk from my seat to the door, the feel of the seat underneath my bum. It's a feeling-thinking way of understanding time, weight, and space. I am even loathe to put this understanding onto paper sometimes, where it might lose its clarity. It's not weighing and measuring and getting it right. It's understanding something with your eyes and limbs and heart and mind. Drawing is thinking.

When I was a student, drawing was still considered a secondary practice, a study-thing, something you used to hone a composition for the 'real' artwork to come, i.e.: a painting. This was the eighties and colleges were still strictly divided into departments. One was not allowed to present for a degree with drawings alone.

However, as the multi-practice and installation thing began to gather momentum in the art world, departmental barriers dissolved and students immersed themselves in many different disciplines simultaneously. Photography helped a lot here. Because there were no photography departments, it was a free-form subject

that could be accessed by anyone.

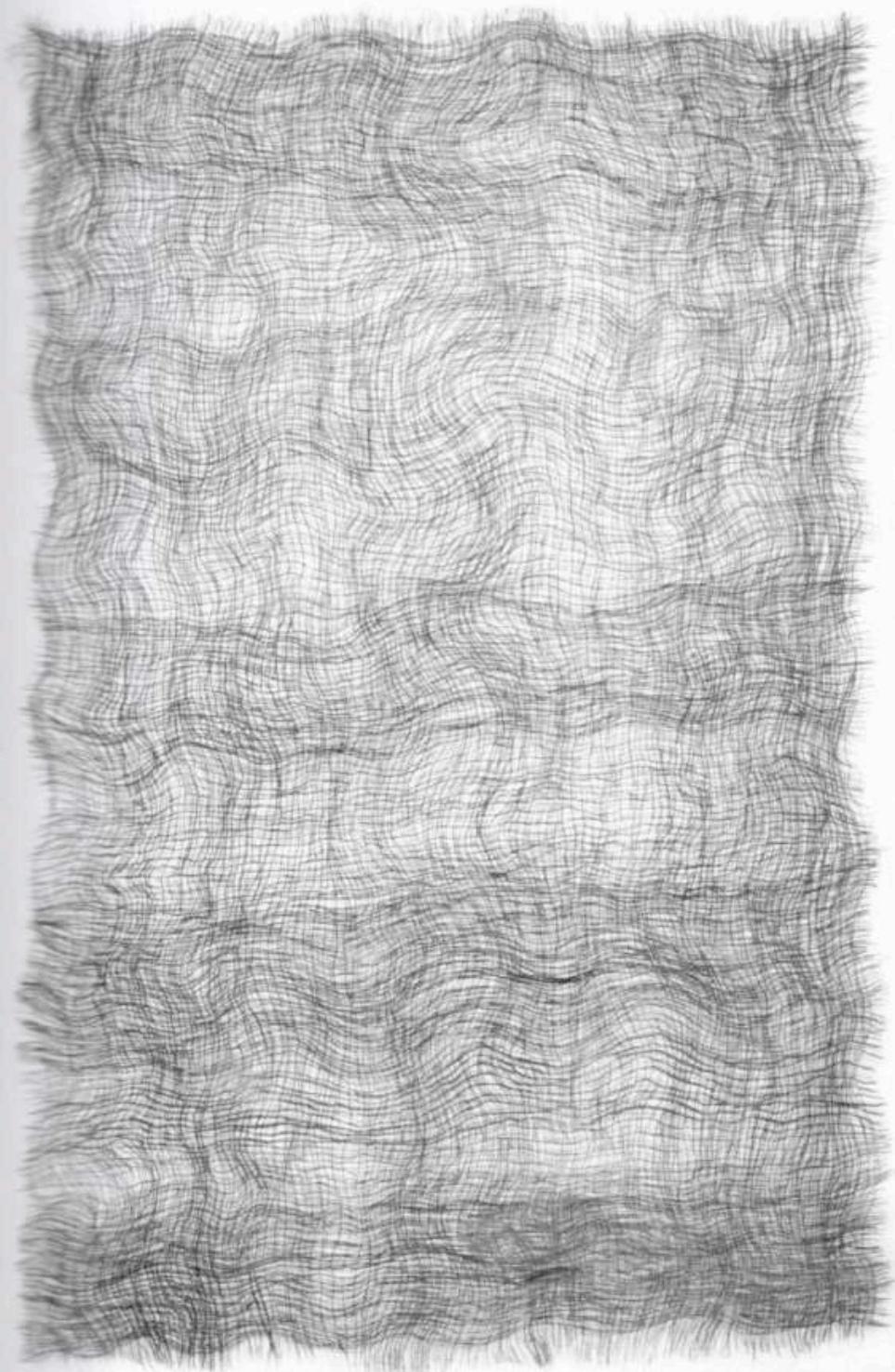
The art colleges held on for a mighty long time to the academic principles which justified drawing as a kind of charcoal workout, that toned and refined your perceptions for the serious job of producing paintings and sculpture. Drawing was the hidden work, the preparation, the prequel. Consequently you were encouraged to dash them off, lash them out, have folders full of them.

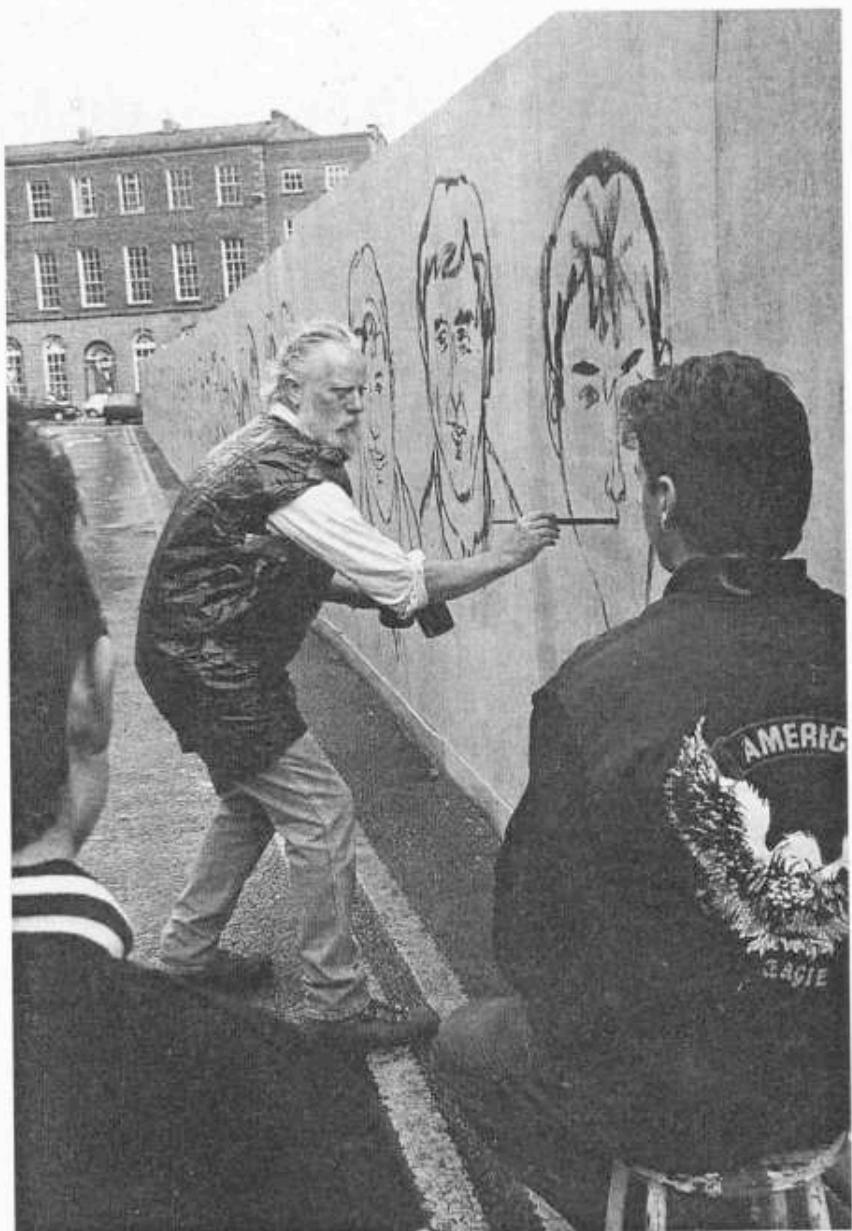
I don't know for sure when it was that I started to spend so much time on my drawings. I was still a student, anyway. I would spend days, weeks and months with a drawing, until it passed first the idea stage, then the recording stage, and finally got to the stage of being a drawing for its own sake, all its 'reasons for being' lodged firmly within itself.

I believe that drawing hasn't yet found its place in the teaching/learning situation. It is still equated by many with spending long days in the life room, lazy hours of skill development. But, laziness is the enemy of drawing. The act of recording can be ultimately an empty one. Drawing needs all your attention and all your feeling and mostly, all your intellect.

*Alice Maher, July 2000*

\* The first paragraph of this text was first published in *Knot*, the catalogue for an exhibition curated by the artist and held at the Hugh Lane Gallery of Modern Art, Dublin in 1999. It is reprinted here by kind permission of the gallery.





## **Behold: Some Considerations Concerning Drawing<sup>1</sup>**

*Paul M. O'Reilly*

In any comprehensive consideration of the state of contemporary art notice will soon be taken of the increasing expectation, even demand, artists make on the active, participatory, collaborative role they assign to their audiences, as audiences attempt to determine the meaning of what artists do. The widespread dependence on lens/screen-based media, the reliance on alternative sites/venues, almost always public in nature, show an anxious willingness on the part of artists to meet audiences on the audiences' terms and turf.

What prevents the audience from engaging more fully in this collaborative effort with the artist in the work of art is the bias we have for the visual sense, for what the sense of sight does. This bias has been instilled in us through school and by other institutions that enforce linear sequential, connected and passive patterns of behaviour. It is this bias that demands that a work of art concentrate on visual details, on literal-visual representation, and it denies meaning to, or devalues, works of art not based on this criteria.

### **Consider Sense:**

A bias for the sense of sight, as dominant over all the other senses, lies at the centre of western civilization's understanding of perception. The knowledge we have of ourselves is based on how we think we perceive how the world around us behaves. When Greek philosophers put perception to the question, they were able to isolate and name five distinct senses: they found smell, taste and touch to be far less important than hearing, and they declared sight to be pre-eminent, the king-sense. This understanding of perception remained the accepted orthodox version. It was

reinforced in the rise of western science, in the extension of technologies, and in the structuring of modern institutions such as school. Only in the last generation did psychologists realize that the right questions about perception were not being asked. New questions have led to far different answers and to a more accurate understanding of how we perceive. There are now some eleven senses identified, and probably more to be discovered. Many of them do not have, as yet, agreed-upon names. Some senses are orientated inward toward the body and remain hidden, invisible. The interrelation of the senses is now no longer based on the tradition of a hierarchy of perception with sight paramount. All the senses now are understood to be actively integrated; each one affects the other, all in constant contact, functioning together in a sensorium, a communion. This good news about perception is not widely or popularly known. The consequences of it are little appreciated. Yet it has already effected a basic change in how we do things, how we make, give and take meaning, how we draw for instance.

We all start out as humans making sense of the world and ourselves in a fully integrated, though childlike, way. Recall how an infant moves through its environment. It sees, hears, crawls, grabs, bangs, pulls, tears, tastes, smells in a constant, active penetration of where it is in the world; of the weight and mass of things, of the pain and pleasure it meets. Everything is investigated, everything dealt with in an open, direct, frank, honest, energetic way. It is this in children that modern and contemporary artists prize and emulate. This is why the audience will sometimes say of a work of art: 'a child could do that'. Precisely. Recall, too, how this investigative, fully integrated perceptual behaviour in children becomes thwarted, diminished and repressed by adult disciplines and values in institutions such as school. Growing up means becoming, to some extent, visually biased; we learn to forget or ignore the fullness in living that *all* the senses bring us.

Modern and contemporary artists have, for the past four generations, continually searched for the same actively integrated perceptual sense expressed in the art and life-styles of non-western cultures, or in sub-cultures of the west, where the visual bias is

weak, where school is as yet less dominant. Long before modern psychology began to question the received wisdom about perception, modern art in all its styles and movements, in one way or another, began to change the way art is made, how meaning in art is given and taken. Contemporary art continues this process, often with the acute realization that the new ways of modern art - now generations old - have so far failed to reach the wide, tolerant, collaborative audience it craves.

### **Consider drawing:**

*The impulse to draw is as natural as the impulse to talk. There is only one right way to learn to draw and that is a perfectly natural way. It has nothing to do with artifice and technique. It has nothing to do with aesthetics or conception. It only has to do with the act of correct observation, and by that I mean a physical contact with all sorts of objects through all the senses.*

- Kimon Nicolaides (1891-1938)<sup>2</sup>

In 1938 Nickolaides, an artist and teacher at the Art Students League in New York, died, leaving a draft of a book on his teaching methods that friends and colleagues posthumously published in 1941. Most books on 'how to do art', however useful they may be in minor ways, are fundamentally pernicious. This book is the exception, maybe the only one. In it Nickolaides outlines a series of 64 drawing exercises; if followed properly for a year, five days a week, three hours a day - or the equivalent in a more drawn out schedule - the student will know how to draw at the year's end. The exercises offer a great many variations on three basic or core approaches that aim at the integration of all the senses in the activities of observing and drawing.

1. In the exercise called *Contour Drawing*, the sense of sight and the sense of touch join so intimately together that the hand and fingers holding the pencil to the paper, and the eyes looking only at the object (not at the paper), move in tandem along and across the contours of the object with the conviction that you are precisely seeing and touching the exact same point at the same

time and going along the contours together at the same slow speed. What you see you touch; what you touch you see exactly. In this exercise the eyes learn to give in to touch; their wilful command authority over touch is broken, and sight becomes realigned with the other senses, especially touch.

2. In the exercise called *Weight and Modelled Drawing*, crayon is used to build up on the paper a loosely made, non-linear representation of not what the object's surface looks like, but what it feels like in terms of form, with the emphasis put on the physical sense of mass and weight in space. This slow, conscious build up of the form starts from an imagined (because invisible) core or centre-line of the form and goes out in slow patient strokes that give the feel of the object's three-dimensional bulk, of the push-pull shaping of that bulk from centre to edge, rounding the form, front and back, in space. It is as though you were not drawing on a flat paper surface, but modelling the object in clay on an armature, from centre outward, building up the masses, feeling the presence and energy of its weight with your own energy. This exercise puts together the senses of sight, touch and weight / mass / form. What you see you feel - the mass and energy of weight; what you feel you see.

3. *Gesture Drawing* is the third of the basic exercises, and perhaps brings to the reordering of the senses the most dramatic change. Gesture drawing, done properly, appears to be a random scribble. The scribble represents movement, but not the movement merely seen in the object being drawn. It represents felt movement. The pencil is placed on the paper and kept there. You move the pencil at speed - the faster the better - letting it record what you feel like, as though you were physically doing what the object you are drawing is doing. You feel with your imagination what it is like to actually be the object - physically. The scribble - the rush of strokes and lines - comes from what you feel like, doing what the object you are drawing is doing. Your body becomes the object. You identify your own muscle and bone with the movement in the object, and draw out of that physical reaction to it. You go out of yourself into the object, become the object, and return to yourself through the pencil and paper and the scribble. No attempt is made to make the scribble *look like* the object. You scribble so

fast that you can't plan what to do, or make choices of any kind. You pass through the object's movement in ten seconds, and the exercise is a continuous repetition of the same trip, but going deeper, over and over for thirty seconds, or sixty, or more. This exercise puts the sense of sight and the sense of movement, the kinaesthetic sense, into intimate, indivisible connection. What you see you feel - fully, bodily; what you feel you see.

These three basic exercises of Nickolaides, and their variations have important consequences. They retrain perception. They regain access to full, open, frank, candid expressions of being in the world, of being in the world in a more fully perceptual way. And this is a richer world than one given over to domination by the sense of sight, where all the other senses are held in check by the visual bias.

This visual bias in art, in drawing, as in any other pursuit, tends to encourage possessiveness. What you see, you possess or want to possess, control, manipulate, dominate. What you see, when seeing means more than merely looking with the eyes, when you do not ignore or repress your other senses, you can relate to openly, without exploiting or distorting the experience in an attempt to possess what is seen. Michelangelo's *David* is a prime symbol of the possessive spirit of western civilization: the stance, the stare, the large hands set to grasp what the eyes see. The spirit is not just that of the Renaissance, a Mediterranean-oriented phenomenon, but of the wider, global Reconnaissance, that massive campaign that put European powers in possession of the world's wealth, its seas, lands, its people and natural resources. *David* is the epitome of the visual bias as adolescent king.

### **Consider contemporary drawing:**

*How do you reason with people  
who insist on feeding themselves  
into a circular buzz-saw because  
the teeth on the spinning blade  
are invisible?*

By means of the invented styles, based on the altered roles given

to matters of representation, presentation and audience in their work, by changing drastically the way meaning can be made in their work, modern and contemporary artists have tried to get their work out from under that possessive spirit's dominance. Many artists have condemned it, rebelled and developed strategies and tactics to defeat it. Often they have found themselves co-opted, compromised by it or ultimately have given in to it, to become, ironically, supporters of it in newer, more subtle or fashionable versions. It is in modern and contemporary drawing that this widespread endeavour to expose and exorcise the spirit of the visual bias shows clearest expression. Because drawing is so readily practised and understood as an activity - a basic human activity - it lies very close to where these urges for liberation continue to spring from. Some attempts succeed better than others. Some, like the sown seed in the parable, fail for one reason or another. Artists, no more than their audiences, are not immune to failure, to being thwarted, compromised or seduced into co-operation with the very forces they start out to free themselves from. Much of contemporary drawing shows signs of this continuing struggle.

As an example, the National Collection of Contemporary Drawing, part of the Permanent Collection of the Limerick City Gallery of Art, shows evidence of how this struggle takes place. The idea of what constitutes a drawing is left up to the sense each artist makes of the activity. Anything an artist says is drawing, is drawing. So, styles vary enormously; they can even contradict one another. A kind of anarchy can be said to reign. This open, tolerant attitude toward the meaning of drawing provides the best chance, perhaps, of gaining that liberation artists and audiences alike seek through works of art: the chance to make meaning, to make sense out of the world they share, even if it is only to pull, or try to pull, the plug.

For all the diversity and contradictions in this struggle, there is a unifying principle: what R.G. Collingwood<sup>3</sup> refers to as 'the conscious expression of emotion'. He offers this as a working definition of art, of art understood as an activity. People, artists and audiences are continually engaged in this activity. In it they have the opportunity, they take the responsibility, to consciously express emotion openly, candidly, honestly. In the very act of doing

so, they confront themselves, they have the chance to find out who they are.

In drawing we become the things we draw and we confront ourselves in them. In a special, intimate and vulnerable way we then face and state the truth about ourselves and take another step toward liberation. All that drawings offer us are steps in the right direction.

*Paul M. O'Reilly, 1996*

*Notes*

1. These 'considerations' are taken from an essay entitled "Life, Drawing and Liberation." published in the *National Collection of Contemporary Drawing Volume I*, part of the Permanent Collection of Limerick City Gallery of Art, Limerick, 1996. pp. 9 - 12.
2. Kimon Nicolaides, *The Natural Way to Draw - A Working Plan for Art Study*, Andre Deutch Limited, London. 1993 (1941).
3. R.G. Collingwood, *Principles of Art*, Oxford Press, London, 1938.



## **Between In Here and Out There**

*Joe Wilson*

'Drawing' (verb) and 'the drawing' (noun) meet together at the interface between the 'drawer' and the 'drawn'; between the 'in here' and the 'out there' of looking, noticing, making sense. This interface is the energized area giving purchase to the activity of looking 'at' / looking 'for' - looking and sensing 'in here' and 'out there' simultaneously.

Using simple extensions of the hand (or toe!) drawing is a kind of personally energized 'probe' responding to stimuli 'out there' and reasoned argument (intellect) 'in here'. The activity proceeds in real (now) time and keeps pace with the unfolding of understanding on the part of the drawer. The 'hard copy' so to speak, bears witness to this process and in terms of building or constructing the drawing, one has to 'start'. The starting point is when the probe or sensor is activated by stimulus and intention. Procedure is then consequential. The initial marks, lines, gestures - on paper, in sand, in the air - set the stage and begin to establish the parameters by which the drawer examines the drawn and the drawn stimulates the drawer.

Points are reached at which the drawing begins to explain or clarify something to the drawer. The interface becomes an energized entity in itself and begins to behave as if one is metaphorically drawing on a pane of glass. Simultaneously and effortlessly the drawer can 'slip' from looking 'at' the surface to looking 'through' the surface.

Conceptually drawings can have the potential to 'slip' their status from being objects to look at to objects to look through. The products themselves (the drawings) become activated as interfaces between the observer and the observed. If for example we frame a navigational chart of the sea area around a particular coastline and hang it on the wall to remind us of our sailing days, then the drawing (reproduction) is endowed with a particular status which is different from the original intention of the drawing: being rolled

and unrolled on the table in the cabin and stowed away with the other 'equipment' when not in use.

In this example the chart was probably produced by a team according to standard cartographic procedures to be used anonymously and able to be tested out there in the field. As a piece of equipment this 'drawing' has a prescribed function which cannot be taken away even though as an object it can be folded up and used to swat a fly!

In its most primeval sense, however, when the 'out there' is confronted by the 'in here', the live experience begins from scratch; without a script - like climbing another hill. Climbing the same hill twice is very definitely not simply a repeat of previous experiences. Practice will, at best, give one the confidence to begin - perhaps start from a different place? Gazing at the hill from below may relive memories and inspire further expeditions but the first footing focuses the energy on the present - the 'now'. Likewise with drawing the first lines or marks focus the drawer on the 'now-time' activity. Experience may well give one the confidence and wisdom to 'start' but unless the localized, present 'occasion' is given undivided attention the consequences will be, at best, a kind of self-gratifying mimicry of one's own previous attempts or those of other artists, designers, 'lookers'.

Some people feel that the traditional 'low-tech' means of drawing: - pencil on paper; charcoal on paper; etc., provides an uncluttered arena allowing the drawer to get straight to the point, to confront the 'out-there', the drawn, with the 'in-hereness' of the drawer. The least invasive interface is probably drawing with one's finger in the air; tracing in the dust on the ground or feeling in the pocket for a biro and scrap of paper - anything 'ready -to -hand'. Perhaps if one had an intent to draw one would bring along what might be considered appropriate materials - pencil, notebook - i.e. equipment of a scale and fabric which will allow one to make notation as, when and where one's sensory 'Geiger-counter' begins to 'click'!

In the studio where one is likely to be working from a different kind of source - a model, objects, photographs or notes made on location - the stage has normally been set, so to speak, i.e.. the artist's/designer's tools and equipment; procedural formats for

drawing are 'habitually' laid out, ready to hand. However, familiarity with tools, equipment and procedures will again do no more than instil a confidence to 'begin' but if the 'live', localized occasion is given full rein then the habitual rituals will dissolve as purchase is made at the immediate interface between 'in here' and 'out there'.

*Joe Wilson, September 2000*





## **Undercurrent**

*Charles Tyrrell*

I find myself sliding in and out of active involvement with drawing. I do go through intensive periods armed with 2, 4, and 6Bs, giving graphic reality to loose ideas, testing and teasing notions, wandering, wondering, despairing, building, stealing, inventing, contriving, conspiring, rationalizing, discovering, revealing.

At the moment I am not at it, just shooting from the hip with paint. Yet I do not regard myself as having stopped, it's just that drawing is active at a different level.

I see it existing all around a painting, in the air, filling the studio. No artwork can exist without drawing. Drawing is the undercurrent of all art. It is not just a skeleton on which you build. It charts every movement, every action, every sequence of thoughts. Drawing is the dance needed for painting.

Drawing can be the movement of your eyes, the rhythm of looking. Drawing runs with paint, it soars above it, it plunges beneath, it exists in unthought-of rhythms.

It can go for a walk with you, it is the walk.

It leaves one painting and can move in an unbroken flow into the next.

It maps your passage to new arenas, and draws you into the heart of the matter.

*Charles Tyrrell, September 2000*

## Drawing in Time

*Jill Dennis*

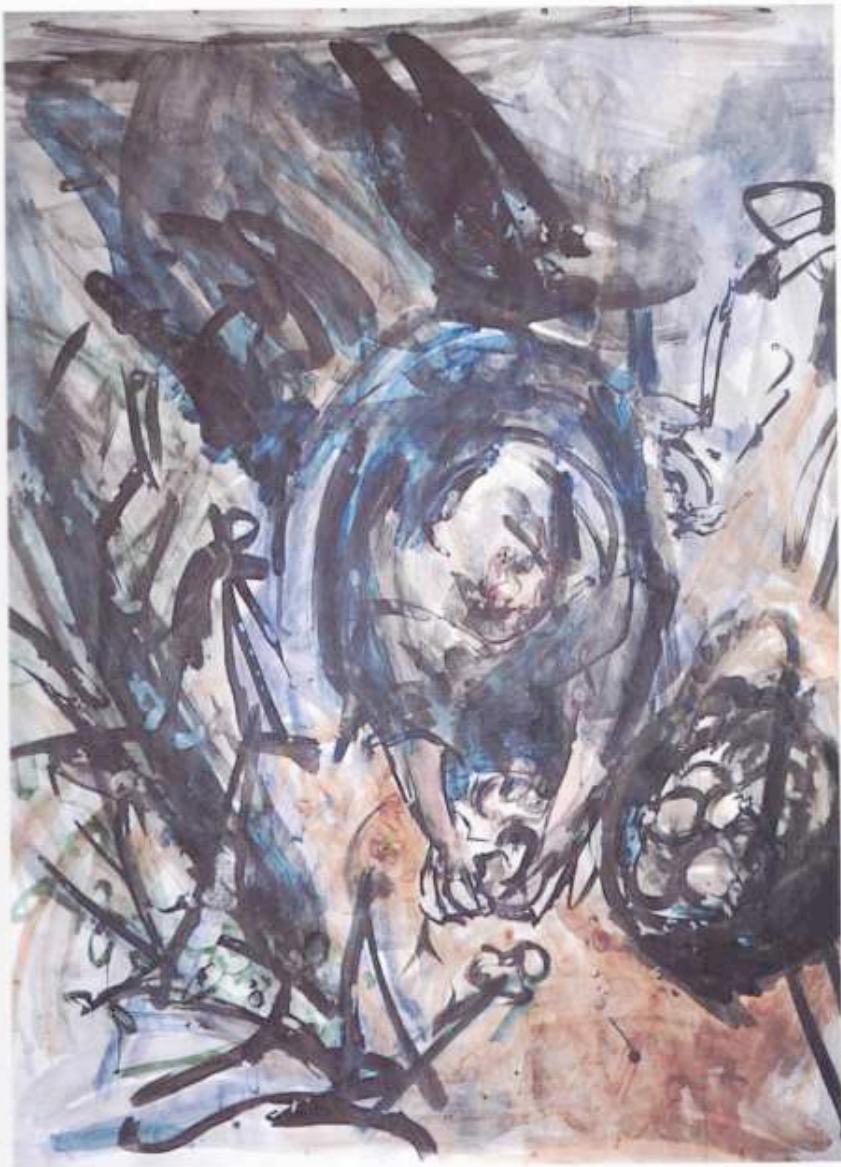
A drawing is an object. An object made over a timespan, which becomes a static object. (this excludes pieces which may physically change over time by the means used - though they also deal with time in a tangible sense) It doesn't have a beginning or an end, even though like a poem or a piece of music it is made in time.

A line is drawn in time, another may be drawn over it, a fast line or a slow line, the line or mark may show evidence of the speed at which it was physically made. Mark making in any form or using any process takes place over time and exists in time.

Whether a drawing is rendering an object, or is abstract, it exists in marks and materials which have been laid down over time, the overlapping or sequences exist as an object. If it takes time to make this object, it must nearly always show the experience of its history physically and/or mentally.

Drawing comes of sight. Sight is continuous. We do not see a whole thing but continually focus from one thing to another. That takes time. Looking at anything is a process which takes place in time. A drawing can be the result of numerous 'lookings' at a thing, place, memory, experience, or itself. Therefore becoming a composite image of time.

*Jill Dennis, October 2000*





## **Is Drawing an Anachronism?**

*Bob Baker*

Two of Europe's leading contemporary artists, Gerhard Richter and Cy Twombly, exemplify some of the complexity and contradictions surrounding drawing in contemporary art. One of them appears to draw, the other not to. Even the one who appears to draw, Cy Twombly, does not do so by any orthodox definition of the word, but is 'mark making'; an unfortunate term, as it has crude connotations of tyres in snow rather than anything intentionally artistic. Using Ian Simpson's definition of drawing "the translation, directly from observation, of three dimensional information into marks on a two dimensional surface", where surely the phrase "directly from observation" is crucial, then Cy Twombly is not drawing at all. His works do not contain images of directly observed objects, rather they evoke Greco-Roman and Italian culture by employing a more distilled, referential process. (Simpson 1980)

When the term 'drawing' is used, for me, it is a process more akin to that described by Simpson that springs to mind, rather than that practised by Cy Twombly, despite my regard for the latter. If Twombly's work depends on drawing it is not drawn observation, but on what would appear to be endless calligraphy with a deceptive scruffiness.

Cy Twombly was a seminal figure for the, then young, artists of New Painting during the 1980's. These expressive and figurative painters show figures and scenes from actual life but do not employ the exact realism of traditional figure studies. As Tony Godfrey points out, the 'patois' of commercial and fashion illustration seems more to be the progenitor of these figures than life drawing. This is, above all else, figurative art as made by artists with little or no training as figure painters. For them the style, immediacy and expressive power of the means of representation was more important than supposed 'objectivity'. Their work antagonizes its critics by its showmanship and neglect of traditional

craftsmanship; it reflects the way in which artists, and increasingly art colleges, have seen the broader observation of, and commentary on, societal contexts and cultural developments as more of a priority. For raw excitement the New Painting of the 80's remains as a rewarding contribution, with its invigorating reaffirmation of paint and painting. (Godfrey 1986)

Since Duchamp many artists have felt required to formulate an attitude towards the ready-made.

Gerhard Richter's practice is a painterly reflection on painting. It does not begin with an historical point-zero, such as drawing, but with the ready-made snapshot. Although dispensing with drawing as a starting point Richter has realized that painterly production can never come to an end and leave history behind. (Germer 1991)

Despite not drawing in the pictorial sense, Richter does employ a method of 'drawing' or dragging paint over a surface in his 'Abstract Paintings'. It is interesting to note that this definition of 'draw', "move towards oneself, pull or drag" is always dealt with first by dictionary writers, "making lines or figures with pencil" comes way down the list of definitions. Even 'lottery' is dealt with before "describing shape". Is Richter's invention of this drawing/dragging method another sign of his genius, in that he has redefined drawing as dragging, thus responding to the more universal meaning of to 'draw', rather than the merely specialized artistic one? Is this another intriguing breakthrough by Richter, or a mischievous red herring - probably the latter. (Chambers 1985 & Garmonsway 1965)

This irony though is an indication of the way in which the term 'drawing' and the supposed practice of drawing can come to mean all things to all people and the propensity with which some would have us see 'drawing' everywhere. Drawing in "the eye of the beholder", not only seeing drawing everywhere but also everything as drawing, which seems futile. At least with Ian Simpson's definition of "translating, directly from observation three dimensional information into marks on a two dimensional surface" one knows where one stands and it is this sense of security that makes it attractive.

Attractive as this may be however, the artistic currency of this

process has been undermined by the radical avant-garde. The destruction process engendered by Duchamp, with his ready-mades, Rodchenko with his 'Last Paintings', and Mondrian's systematic reduction process have altered artistic practice and the value of drawing. By questioning habitual practice the avant-garde have created a situation where it would seem to be a misconception to espouse that all of the various traditions of drawing are unproblematically available for artistic use. (Bois 1986)

Despite the consequences of the avant-garde's 'destruction', the value of drawing as an educational tool remains undeniable.

As Ian Simpson states: "For art and design students, drawing is the essential tool and is the basic component of visual research from which most of their visual ideas must ultimately stem." Because of its symbiotic relationship with seeing, drawing is a major factor in developing a 'learning to learn' ability. Surely it is the objective of every art college to imbue their students with this life skill, in which the increasing development of perception is the key.

Unfortunately, Simpson is also correct in saying that "Drawing is surrounded by mystique. Those few who can perform its magical rites are thought to have been invested with a divine gift, and even in colleges of art many students are convinced that drawing is beyond their capabilities and are happy to organize their methods of working in such a way that this deficiency is minimized."

Contemporary practitioners, like Richter and Twombly, don't help in this context either. By contributing to the process by which drawing has become more esoteric, in Twombly's case, or, in Richter's, by dispensing with it altogether and appearing to rely on mechanical reproduction, the more alien or redundant the surrounding world comes to see it; a world that encourages art and design students to see drawing as out-dated, or difficult, or mysterious, or possibly all three.

This conflict, of believing that drawing is relevant for students, but apparently irrelevant for practitioners, is hard to equate.

In 1969 Richard Hamilton recalled that "somehow it didn't seem necessary to hold onto that older tradition of direct contact with the world. Magazines, or any visual intermediary, could as well provide a stimulus." Yet Philip Rawson contradictingly asserts that "Drawing embodies a genuine and independent way of

thinking. Someone who draws actually sees more and knows more of the world he or she lives in than someone who does not draw." He also states that "Drawing is fundamental because you need to be able to draw before you can paint or make sculpture." If, in this context, he is using the term 'drawing' to mean the orthodox process described by Ian Simpson, it would seem that, rightly or wrongly, many art students and practitioners feel otherwise. Increasingly they feel compelled to formulate an attitude towards the ready-made and dispense with drawing, or consider it a specialized or personal, esoteric and expressive language, without its directly observational genesis.

These practices, together with history's accelerating velocity and the speed or apparent relevance of other media, are enhancing the perception of drawing as an anachronism.

(Hamilton 1981 & Rawson 1984)

*Bob Baker, August 2000*

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## Drawing

*Dorothy Walker*

Drawing is one of the earliest skills of the artist, from the quite beautiful line drawings in the caves of France and Spain, where artists fabricated 'pencils' made out of graphite some 15,000 years before Christ, to the pre-historic lines chipped out in the stone slabs of Newgrange c5000 years ago. But the artists of the twentieth century have extended the range and scope of drawing far beyond the often beautiful but limited range of western art of the last two thousand years. The development of drawing in the twentieth century has been phenomenal.

Artists like Sol LeWitt and Richard Long have taken over whole walls with their drawings, and have used a huge variety of media in the process, from simple pen, pencil, or blackboard chalk, to mud applied with the bare hand. Drawing has become a focus in itself, rather than, as often heretofore, a sketch medium for later painting or sculpture. Joseph Beuys famously pointed out: "to draw a line is to have an idea", and, as all art is necessarily based on an idea, whether shallow or profound, drawing a line leading to an idea is a fundamental activity of the artist.

One of the fascinating precursors of twentieth century drawing is the nineteenth century French writer Victor Hugo. Not only did he draw all his life, but his drawings have a definite conceptual base: since he was primarily a writer, he made his drawings only with the quill and ink which he used for writing, employing the nib of the quill for the linear elements of his drawing, and the feathered end for making wonderful abstract wash drawings, an abstract expressionist one hundred years before his time. These drawings - hundreds of them - may be seen in Paris, either in the Bibliothèque Nationale, or in the Victor Hugo Museum.

The great masters of Modernism, in particular Matisse and Picasso, were superb masters of drawing, Matisse in those seemingly effortless flowing lines in which he would catch the most subtle expression of a face in a single *coup de crayon*. Picasso,

while he too could reduce complexities to a disarming simplicity, could nevertheless produce linearity as complex as any Celtic interlacing, and with as much fantasy in the figures, animals and birds, as any Unfortunate Fursey; and he pioneered the use of such humble materials as old newspapers.

I am writing off the top of my head, and just mentioning those artists whose drawings leap to mind. The American painter, Ellsworth Kelly, takes time off from his large scale monochrome paintings and metal sculpture to make exquisite ink drawings of people and plants, and portrait heads which, like Matisse, capture whole personalities with the finest minimalist pen-lines.

The French painter Soulages also makes incredibly beautiful black ink abstract drawings, manipulating the density of the ink with all the skill he applies to drawing light from black paint. Obviously one could go on and on, from Paul Klee taking his line for a walk to Beuys' *Secret Block for a Secret Person in Ireland*, a collection of drawings made over forty years, some of such hairline delicacy that it is difficult to believe that they could have been done by the same artist as the maker of huge, massive, iron sculpture.

Irish artists have also extended both the scale and the materials used in drawing. Felim Egan has drawn with neon; Patrick Scott, when isolated in the country, with no drawing materials to hand, has dipped the cord of his pyjamas into a bottle of ink and whipped his drawings onto the paper. Louis Le Brocqy has used a brush and printer's ink to make what he calls "shadows thrown by the text" to accompany Thomas Kinsella's translation of *The Tain*, resulting in the finest book illustrations since Harry Clarke's fabulously oriental and theatrical works earlier in the century. Le Brocqy illustrated a second book - Desmond O'Grady's *Gododdin* - in much the same manner with ink and brush, except that he had broken his right wrist, and the entire book was done with his left hand. He said that there seemed to be no appreciable difference.

Mainie Jellett's early cubist pencil drawings lead into her gouache and oil paintings in much the same way as the tiny pencil studies of Malevich open the way into his Suprematist paintings. As both artists' finished paintings are coolly precise and decisive, the pencil drawings are fascinating in providing the live idea at its first inception.

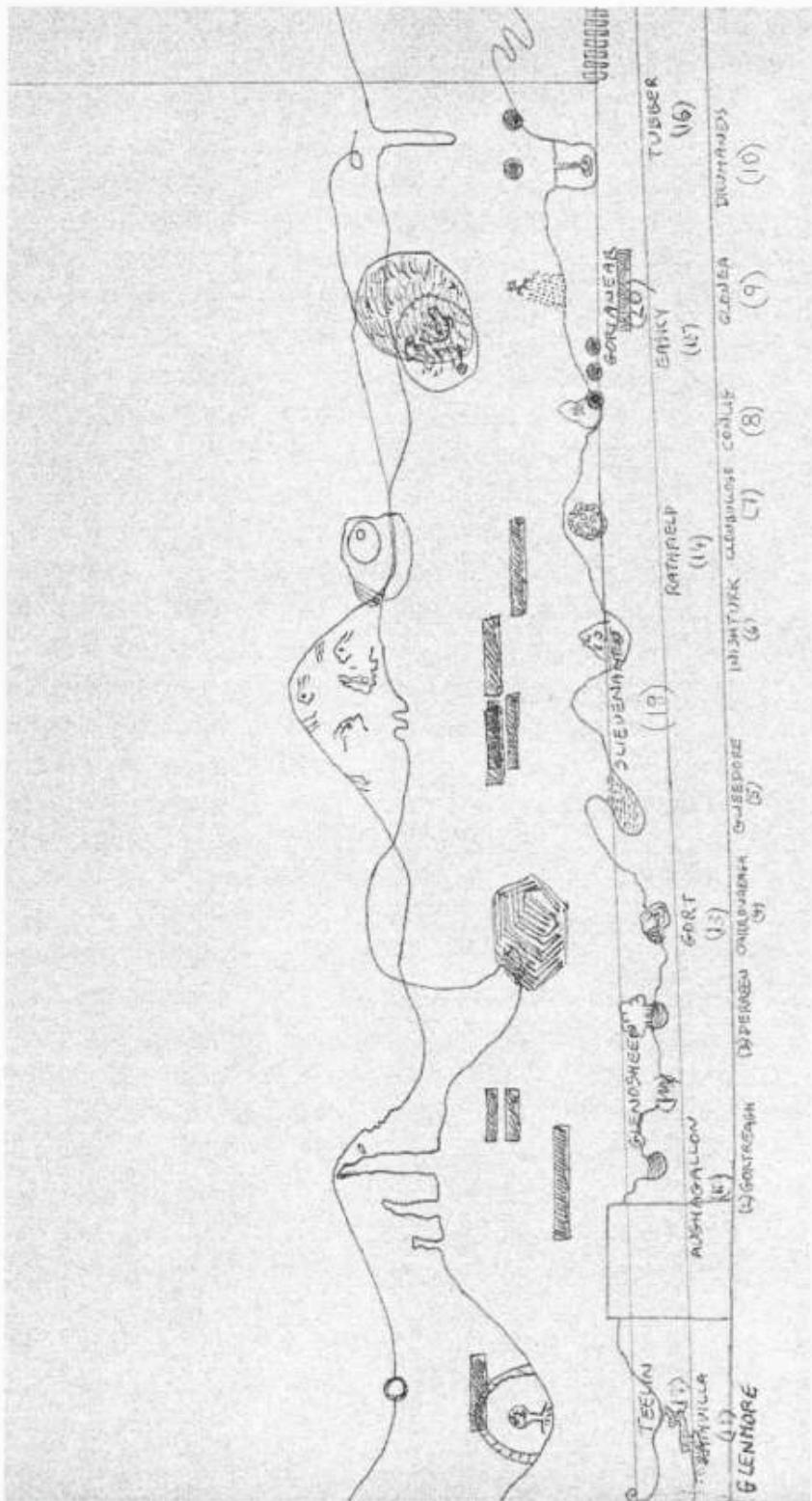
Samuel Walsh has also always had a real gift for abstract drawing, in which the black, whether charcoal or ink, has a powerful character on its own. In many instances, his drawings are stronger than his paintings; but, the supreme master of black drawing is the American artist Richard Serra. I have watched Serra draw, holding a brick of black oilstick in both hands, creating great planes of the richest, deepest black, which reaches back to a 'dateless night', creating an enveloping void.

The Mexican-based Dutch artist Jan Hendricks has extended landscape drawing far beyond its usual confines. In working with Seamus Heaney to illustrate two books of poetry, he has created exquisite prints using black ink combined with hand-applied gold leaf in one instance, and silver leaf in the other, on translucent paper, so that overlapping pages read through each other with the most subtle delicacy. He has also made large composite prints of the stony fields of the Aran Islands, almost abstract in their linear patterns, but quite accurate in their depiction of the islands' rectilinear stone planes.

The human face, on the other hand, has been studied at extremely close range by Nick Miller in his series *Closer*. These are drawings in which the body is barely sketched in, but the head and face are depicted from a distance of a few inches. This emphasis would seem to reinforce the general Irish interest in the head image, but in quite a different guise from Le Brocquy's head drawings, for example.

One cannot mention the art of drawing without including the artist Alice Maher. In her wonderful drawings of women's hair, from the 18ft high *Ombre* series - some on paper, some directly on the wall - to the handsome, coiled *Berenice* knots. She has taken women's crowning glory, and by her artist's alchemy, transformed it into visions of mythology, feminism, and human presence: sheer skill in the perpetuation and celebration of the archaic art of drawing.

Dorothy Walker, August 2000



## Drawing is.....

*Tom Fitzgerald*

Drawing is a tingle in the nerve-ends of the imagination  
Drawing is a primeval act  
Drawing is a way of saying "I was here"  
Drawing is the longest distance between two points  
Drawing is making connections  
Drawing is an electric shock delivered through a pencil  
Drawing is a journey with no end in sight  
Drawing is a language without words  
Drawing is energy recording itself  
Drawing is imagery resisting arrest

Drawing is a dialogue between implement and material  
Drawing is thought made visible  
Drawing is homage  
Drawing is a record  
Drawing is a joke  
Drawing is a violation  
Drawing is a meditation  
Drawing is a sight for sore eyes  
Drawing is a revelation  
Drawing is a vision

Drawing is a plan  
Drawing is a diagram  
Drawing is a dot  
Drawing is a sign  
Drawing is a mark  
Drawing is a sketch  
Drawing is a line going for a walk  
Drawing is a collision of lines going for walks  
Drawing is an accident  
Drawing is a design

Drawing is good  
Drawing is bad  
Drawing is black  
Drawing is white  
Drawing is big  
Drawing is small  
Drawing is beautiful  
Drawing is ugly  
Drawing is pleasure  
Drawing is pain

Drawing is personal  
Drawing is impersonal  
Drawing is objective  
Drawing is subjective  
Drawing is figurative  
Drawing is non-figurative  
Drawing is abstract  
Drawing is representational  
Drawing is realistic  
Drawing is surrealistic

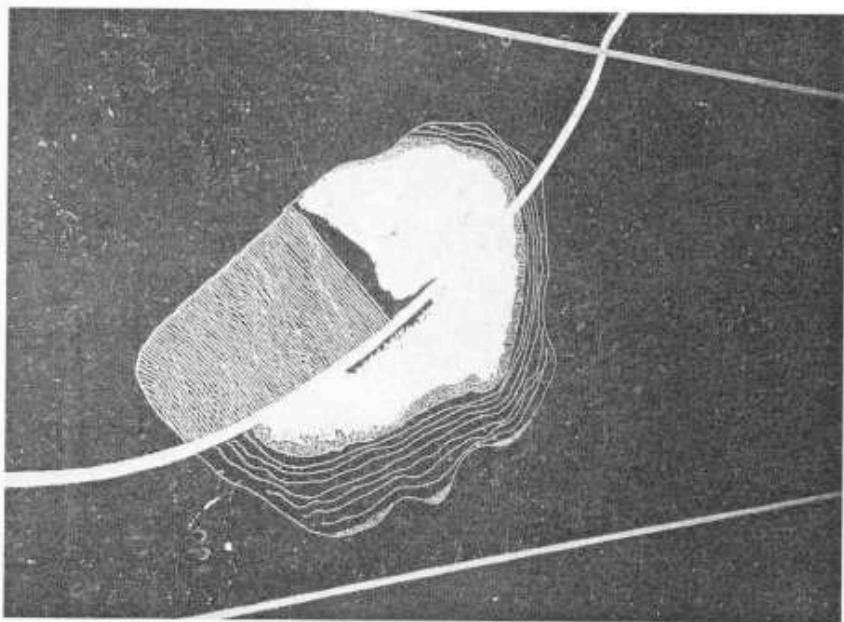
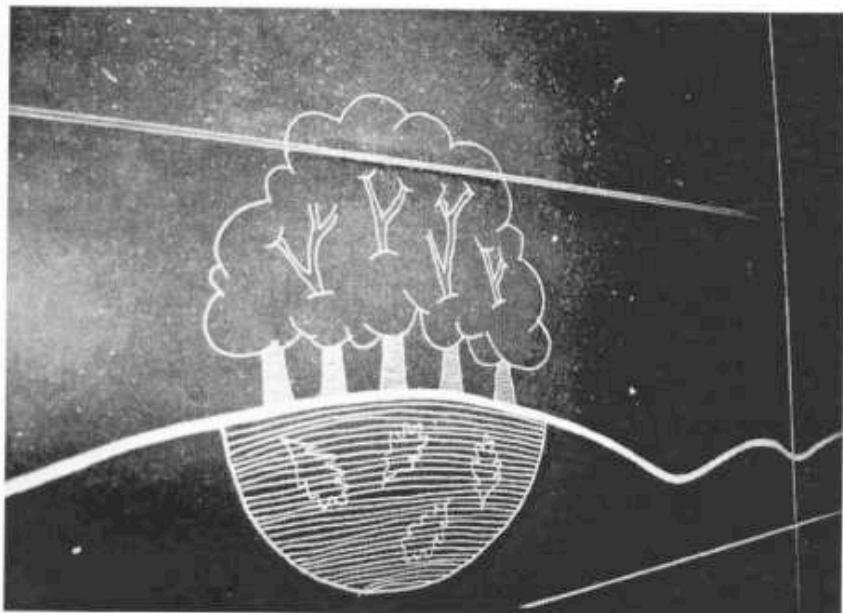
Drawing is arbitrary  
Drawing is planned  
Drawing is intuitive  
Drawing is poetic  
Drawing is crude  
Drawing is delicate  
Drawing is sculptural  
Drawing is flat  
Drawing is graphic  
Drawing is great

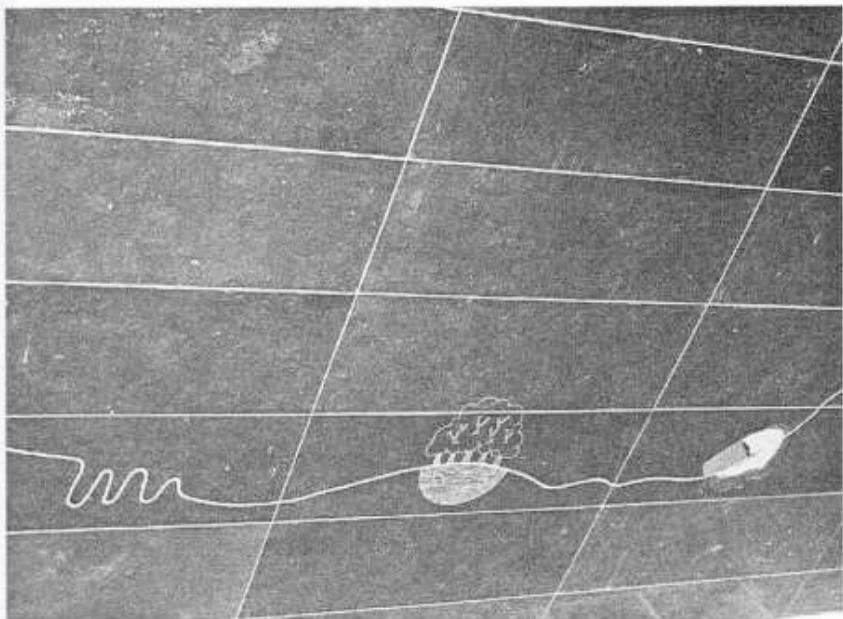
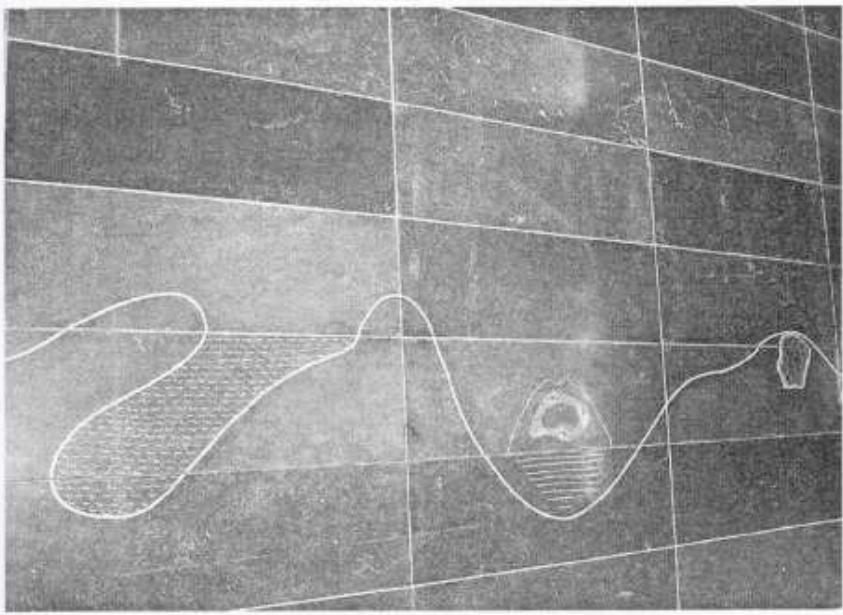
Drawing is a border  
Drawing is a boundary  
Drawing is a centre  
Drawing is a contour  
Drawing is a curve

Drawing is a circumference  
Drawing is an edge  
Drawing is a map  
Drawing is a path  
Drawing is a pattern

Drawing is digital  
Drawing is deadly  
Drawing is derivative  
Drawing is decorative  
Drawing is delightful  
Drawing is delirious  
Drawing is downright self-indulgent  
Drawing is delineation  
Drawing is direct  
Drawing is de limit

*Tom Fitzgerald, August 2000*







## A Diagram of Drawing

*Jim Savage*

If it were possible to peel away successive layers of visual expression hierarchically and reduce it down to its most basic form as a human activity, you would probably, in the end, be looking at something called drawing. There is a real sense in which drawing lies deep. It is historically deep in terms of the human race: reaching back at least into our Palaeolithic past; and, on another time scale entirely, it is deep in terms of our individual human experience: in that we all draw before we are able to write. It comes first in our attempts to know the world by making marks that 'think' it out for us before our eyes.

In this sense drawing exists as an elemental, aboriginal human response to the world, a primal inclination, long before it is co-opted into what we would now regard as art or design. This human depth is a part of its power and fascination.

As an activity, drawing is a very direct experience for the drawer. Very little physical means intervene between the artist and the image being drawn. It uses the simplest of technologies. There is none of the sheer paraphernalia for example of (even) painting: uncapping tubes, squeezing out paint, mixing colours on a palette, thinning or thickening paint, loading and cleaning brushes, waiting for paint to dry... etc., etc. With drawing, using a pencil (or whatever), the mind can be totally focused on just making the image.

This simple pencil is virtually wired into the nervous system of the drawer. When he moves his arm to make a mark it is as particular as a signature. It registers not only the outline of the thing being drawn for instance, but also the degree of control of movement that the drawer has: his nervous system slips its own particular trace into the marks that are being made, leaving an element of handwriting in every drawing.

To some extent, perhaps because of its directness and simplicity of means, drawing is regarded as a more personal and private activity

than some other forms of image-making: it is not necessarily as tied into the idea of making a public performance, as painting, print, sculpture or video might be. For the artist it tends to be something that can be used, initially at least, to make a direct communication with himself; he uses it to see himself thinking.

The minimal means employed in drawing gives it an unavoidable and very useful, visible distance from the abundance of world it attempts to represent. It is, perhaps surprisingly, the least mimetic of the visual arts. When you look at a drawing, generally speaking, it is not trying to offer you a convincing illusion of the appearance of the world in the same way as painting or photography might, but rather, it openly shows you that it is a constructed picture of the world. In this sense drawing, itself, is highly visible. You see that it is a code. There is something openly diagrammatic about most drawings. (Of course, all representations of the world are inevitably coded and at a remove from that which they represent; but in drawing this remove is particularly evident.)

Artists draw for any number of different reasons; one of those reasons, and perhaps the most important one, is to find things out. A drawing - or rather, a successful drawing - records a discovery. If it does not do that, then it is in some sense dead. That simple pencil is something with which the complex appearances of the world are to be probed, not merely copied.

If an artist were examining an object in front of him: the enquiry could be concerned with finding out something about the thing that is being examined itself - we might think of a botanical illustration for example, where the re-construction in drawing leads to (perhaps a structural) understanding - or the enquiry could be concerned with finding out the possibilities of *making meanings* with the thing being observed: finding out what one can 'speak' through the thing under examination, searching out marks that would generate meaning when applied to it. A Giacometti portrait drawing, for example, is not primarily about what the sitter looked like, though we might be able to recognize them from their portrait if they were to walk into the room, more fascinatingly it provokes our minds to other ideas than appearances. It has the possibility of carrying, in its accumulation of agitated lines, obsessive repetitions

and corrections, ideas about human experience, about life.

The world, of course, is not made up of marks; drawings are. The marks that are used to represent the world are not fixed to bits of that world in any pre-ordained way: they are open and arbitrary. I can make a drawing of some object in the world with rhythmic, confident flowing lines, or make a drawing of the same object with rough, broken jabs; in each case the possible meanings of the two drawings would be circumscribed in different ways. The marks themselves, in the context of the image they form, carry possibilities of meaning. If the marks are different, the possibilities of meanings can be different. Because of the arbitrary relation of marks to the world drawing never comes to an end; it is an open system.

In drawing it is movements of the hand, the arm, the body that generate marks. A line is the visual record of a movement, the graph of an action. When we look at a drawing we can to a large extent, consciously or unconsciously, read a mark back to the movement made by its author. Lines and marks, in this sense, can be seen to carry a trace of the human energies that put them there. We can see frenzy, or tentativeness, or excitement, or care, in a drawing, by reading it back to the drawer's actions.

Drawings have often been thought of as things that allow an observer into a much closer contact with the working mind of the artist than other visual forms. When you look at drawings you can often see not only what has been depicted, but also the artist's process of depicting: his *working things out*. Not only can you read the actions that generated the marks in the image, you can also see how the artist was thinking, or visibly rethinking and correcting. You see the trial and error being worked through. Though you are looking at a finished drawing it is sometimes as if you are looking at something that is unfinished, that is still going on - now - in front of your eyes. This can give drawing a powerful sense of energy, a sense of unresolved openness and life: like looking into a living face. And, because drawing tends to be the primary visual activity with which an artist tries to think his way into the future, to search for possibilities that can lead him forward, it often shows us the earliest kindling of ideas that go on to form the basis of later developed work, giving us access to an artist's thought in, perhaps, its most revealing and unpolished state.

From Palaeolithic times to the present day the psychological

power of drawing has been implicit. We can think our way into the world with it and attempt to get a mental 'grasp' on that world as we 'write' it out onto the paper. There is a sense in which the phrase to 'capture' a likeness is not merely poetic. Drawing is - as is writing - a means of the mind objectifying its engagement with the world it is part of. It allows us to hold the world up to investigation, to metaphorically stop the incessant flow of experience and artificially/humanly organise that experience in a structure. (John Berger has drawn our attention to the fact that photographs can make an enlightening comparison in this respect. Photographs also stop the world. It is interesting though that drawing does not stop the flow of experience in the same way as a photograph does: locking up an instant of time. A drawing, in contrast to a photograph, is the product of an accumulation of instants of time, an accumulation of discrete acts of attention: the result of a meditation through time.)

In drawing from observation you do not merely reproduce what you see, rather you accumulate and organize on the paper a record of the activity of looking at and examining what is before you. The drawing references simultaneously the object itself and all the separate acts of attention that have been involved in examining that object: it shows the way the object was looked at. When you look at the finished drawing it is all these accumulated acts of attention that you see.

It is interesting to note that whilst under construction the drawing itself operates on the drawer. It is not just the passive end-product of his activity. During its production it becomes a kind of view-finder (even a lens) to help him see more clearly what he is looking at, a means of focusing, of aiming, his sight *and his thought*.

The drawer looks at an object, then turns to the paper and begins his attempt to represent it. Bearing these tentative starts in mind, he goes back to the object once more and examines it now *in reference to what he has already drawn*. These initial fragments of drawing lead his attentions this way or that. In the light of this new examination of the object he returns once more to the original fragments of drawing on the paper - adds and amends - then, through this new construction, returns to study the object once again; and so on. The drawer is not particularly conscious of how

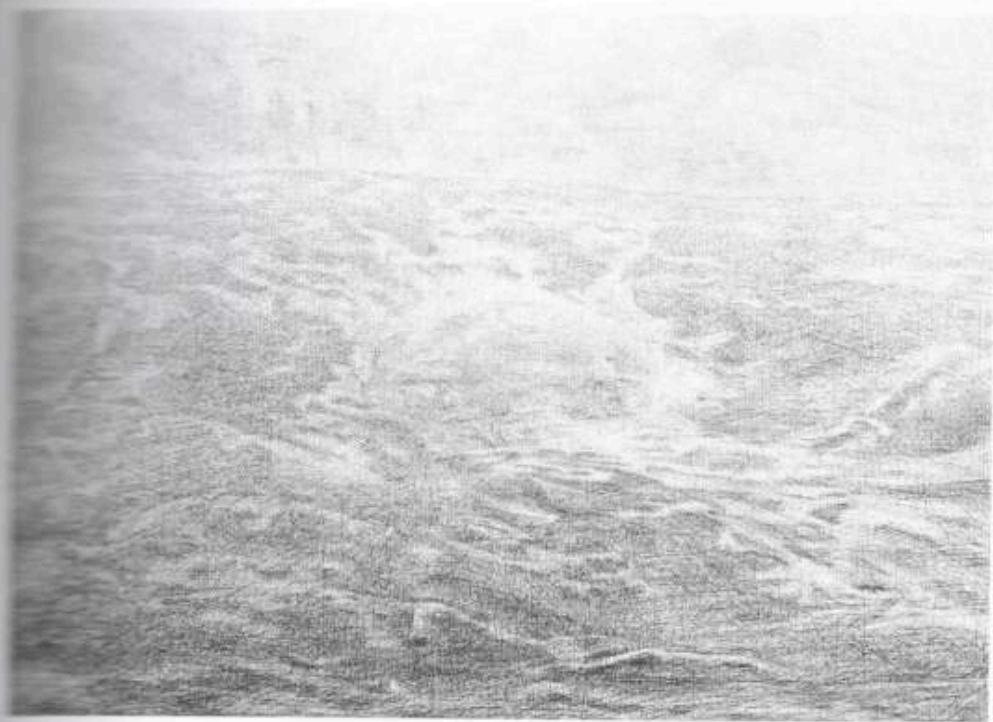
the fragments of drawing are steering him. He is in the middle of the activity, not looking at it from the outside, as we are here.

As more and more is drawn, the drawing gathers a sort of momentum, derived from the kind of notational marks already used so far. They exert an influence on what marks might happen next. A sort of internal 'grammar' is developed. The marks have to make sense in *relation to each other* as well as in relation to the object. (This effectively results in what we call the style of the drawing and it is capable of carrying its own meanings in the context of the image.) In fact, at certain stages, marks are made solely with reference to those already charted, without referring directly to the object at all - for instance, to make the drawing read more clearly, a certain part of it may be strengthened, or another part erased, all in reference to what is already there on the paper - and what is on the paper is an *emerging idea* about the object.

Drawing is at heart a speculative endeavour. Artists write their drawings onto the paper, often not knowing at the outset where they will eventually end up; tentatively, spelling out in an image their sensations, feelings and ideas, in dialogue with themselves: watching themselves exploring possibilities, seeing themselves trying things out, looking for what might be said. Drawing seems inherently bound up with this kind of creative, exploratory meandering.

Some drawings work, some don't. When they don't, it is because, at the end of the drawing, you realize that you were already there before you set out. When they do work, there is always a sense of discovery and a sense of arrival, of temporarily disembarking at an unforeseen and unfamiliar destination..... which is, in fact, but a new point of departure.

*Jim Savage, August 2000*



# Walking Drawing, Making Memory

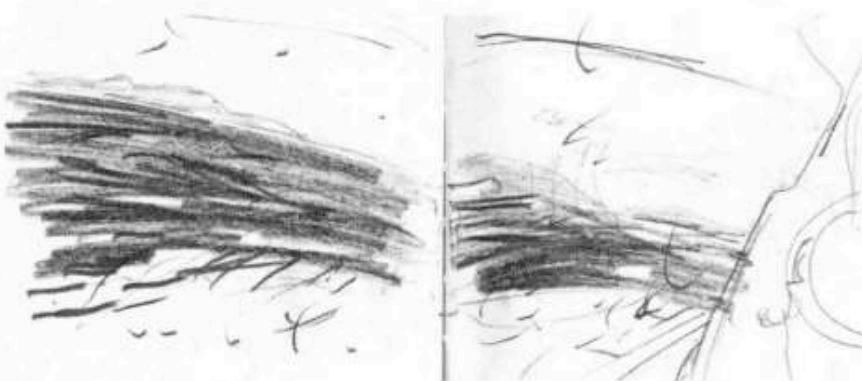
David Lilburn

*Memory is peculiar in the fierce hold with which it will fix the most insignificant - seeming scenes. Whole tracts of my life have fallen away like a cliff in the sea, yet I cling to seeming trivia with a pop-eyed tenacity.*

John Banville<sup>1</sup>

I like to make what you could call walking drawings. Drawings made quickly, sometimes frantically, while moving or caught up in movement. Apart from the sensual pleasure of moving a soft pencil across paper, walking drawing evokes a sense of freedom; the drawing is free from any expectation of likeness or worth, objectivity or narrow purpose. The drawings are immediate, not concerned with the distancing, static, photographic sense of space, but with energy and movement. The drawings are sketchy and littered with personal notation. Many of these drawings are drawn in small pocket-sized hardback sketchbooks. The pages recount visits to concerts and plays, boat trips, keeping company with friends (and animals) and urban, mountain and coastal walks. Making them is a way of connecting with the event, a way of constructing and preserving memory, and memory is precious.

August 1998



On a boat trip to the Skellig Rocks off the Kerry coast, I drew intermittently from the time the boat pulled out from Portmagee, to when it returned to the port some six hours later. I remember the trip: feet apart balancing on the open deck, splashed with spray, cold fingers, the sea and sky alive with birds, the first view of the black triangle of rock, in turn glimpsed and hidden by the swell, then towering above the open-decked boat.

The drawings made in the boat were drawn with water soluble pencils and many of the pages, which were worked on away from the comfort of the shore, were drenched in spray, which bled and smudged the urgent roughly drawn marks, creased the paper, and led to lines and marks running, causing mirror image traces of the drawing on the facing page. The blunt arcs and horizontal lines used to map the stone beehive constructions high up on the rock are also smudged and washed from the action of the drizzle and mist that enveloped me later that day as I wandered through the ruins of that ancient monastery.

### 1st June 1996

*...pages full with loose arcs and loops, scatters of dots and squiggles, concentrations of diagonal stabs, hatches, smudges, words, awkward marks, broken lines...others almost empty; a few spare lines and marks...*



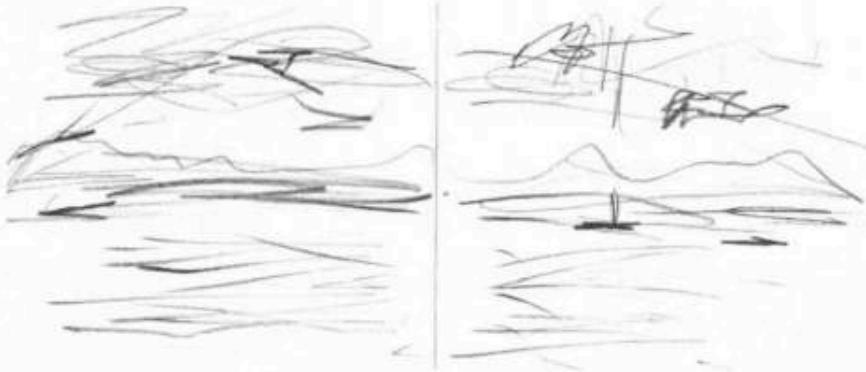
There is an anecdote told about a visitor to the artist Walter Verling's house in Lettermore. Setting out one morning with all the paraphernalia of an artist he came across a local man who, recognizing his intention, told him that he was wasting his time. "Werling has them all took".

Walking drawing has less to do with the almost acquisitive idea of 'capturing' a place, still less the grand role of artist as pioneer; it's more a way of expressing a relationship with the landscape, an intense cognitive and physical involvement with the terrain.

On Wine Strand, following the route of previous walks, the great sweep of the beach, marram grass, barbed wire, seaweed, stones, reflection of clouds on the wet sand, the feel of the wind and rain on your face, expectation of arrival in the pub, a recognition of that conical hill from last time, a sense of exhilaration at the experience of the space and the sea, watching and waiting for the rain to strike. As you walk north along the strand, the view of the mouth of the harbour, open to the sea, contracts. The northern headland moves to meet the southern point at the same speed as you walk along the strand.

### August 1998

*A web of wavy lines run across the pages; some strong and definite, others tentative, interrupted by patches of dark heavy marks and diagonal streaks..*

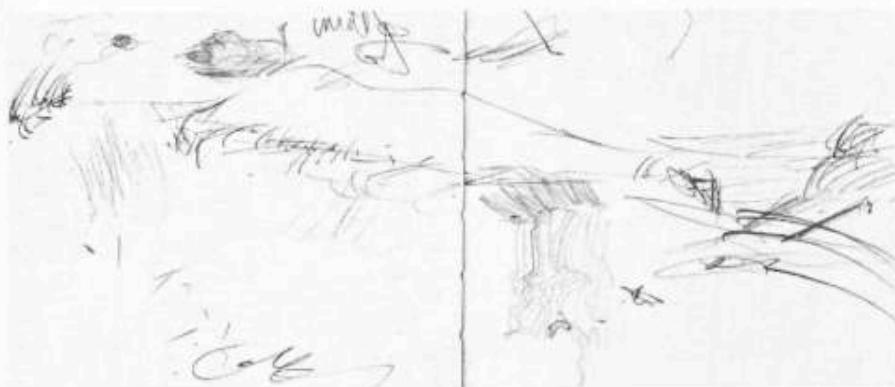


Moored during a storm in Smerwick harbour.

When a boat is tied up to a mooring the bow points directly to the wind, it's possible to sit in the cabin with the door of the hatch open, sheltered from the wind, watching the landscape spin past from port to starboard , starboard to port.

4th may 1996

Ballyferriter, Jos Verheyden in the last few weeks of his life, Bella,  
Ceann Sibéal, Na Gorta Dubha, An Ghráig, telegraph wires, gable ends,  
Dún an Óir, Thráig an Fhiona, rain...



Drawing, like mapping, is a sort of journey. When you set out to make a drawing you set out on a journey through space and memory, towards the source of drawing.

Drawing rapidly, on the move, with the full instrumentality of the body, while trying to map an environment and your experience of it, as it changes from minute to minute, is exhilarating in the same way as a fast-moving sport is. The concentration needed for the continuing struggle intensifies the experience of the present. Drawing is a way of constructing the present. Book and pencil in hand, trying to note down with a code of marks and lines the sea swell, a gannet's dive, the sweep of a bay, a cold splash of spray, is a way of conversing with the event or the landscape, as you experience it, making it memorable.

Each moment is new, transient. You keep missing, but you keep going. You are not sure what exactly you are trying to do, but whatever it is it's almost there, just beyond your grasp. You try to draw the un-drawable.

Working in this way can produce interesting drawings. The drawings were not designed especially to be looked at, but they may contain ideas not recognized or conscious at the time. The drawings were done rapidly, but the residual traces of the

experience are retained; they are stable and can be revisited later. Many of the ideas latent in these sketchy drawings have found their way into more considered work: ideas of how organize space, compress time, draw the weather, suggest vast areas of space or mass with the minimum effort. While struggling with the exigencies of the moment, solutions to as yet unspecified problems can make an appearance and remain latent in the drawing awaiting retrieval. The drawing becomes a container for ideas and thoughts and memories evoked by the experience. Reflecting the relationship between the work and the artist, it can embody time – an ingredient, if not the medium of its creation. And that's important because as Kitaj wrote, "of course failure is constant, breakthroughs are rare and time is running out..."<sup>2</sup>

*David Lilburn, October 2000*

*Notes*

1. Banville, John, *Eclipse*, Picador, 2000, p. 74.
2. Kitaj, R.B., "Interview with Richard Morphet", *R.B.Kitaj: A Retrospective*, Tate Gallery, ed. by Richard Morphet. p. 46.





## Phase Change

*Michael Quane*

Drawing is essential and irreducible. It is a distillate. Handwriting, with its meaning and content aside, shows what might simply be unavoidable difference in its style, or on the other hand shows something of an expression, if only of the ego. Nonetheless, given the imposition of necessary rules, i.e. spelling, composition, syntax, etc., difference or expression is unavoidable; something of the self will invariably creep into any process of individual production. The most accomplished of verists and imitators will succumb. Roland Barthes, speaking of the 'imitative arts', says: "...There is no drawing, no matter how exact, whose very exactitude is not turned into a style.....one can only anticipate that for all these imitative arts the code of the connoted system is very likely constituted.... by a stock of stereotypes (schemes, colours, graphisms, gestures, expressions, arrangements of elements)..."<sup>1</sup>

Drawing is the skeleton onto which is hung form, colour, texture, concept, etc. It needn't have a syntax, or composition. It is the automatic condensation of parcels of thought, like the condensating ooze of water droplets from a window pane. It involves a mighty phase change, like gas to liquid. It is a conversion of untetherable and elusive thought into footprint evidence of its being.

The principal material onto which I draw is stone. The chisel tears into the surface, scraping white abrasions into the black stone, as it strives to gather the form into itself. Each mark serves a purpose, but isn't cherished for its own sake. Its value in the whole is equal to how long it lasts before another scrape of the chisel obliterates it; that mark in turn to be supplanted by subsequent marks and scrapes. Hundreds of thousands of these serve to gather up the form from the loose, flabby boulder. They tuck the drawing's surface into itself where it needs to be tucked and wrap it ever tighter, until a stage is reached where the drawn surface stretches into form. Fragments of the drawing remain

proud of the form, having the appearance of a lesion on the surface, through which the subjacent quality of the actual rock can be seen. I am intent on immediacy and spontaneity and hence the drawings that I produce are part of the process itself of direct carving. Matisse, referring to his *papiers découpés*, says: "...I draw directly in colour, which is all the more measured since it is not transposed.....cutting into the raw colour reminds me of the direct carving of sculptors..."<sup>2</sup>

Apprehension is anathema to drawing. The conscious awareness of the connections between eye, hand and brain diminish with the shrugging off of wariness and hesitation, a stage is reached when it appears that it is enough to will the drawing: all the reciprocating stimuli between brain - hand - drawing - eye - brain no longer need to be translated, and trust in the creative mind is achieved. At this point, instinct and impulse cut a swathe through schooled thought and heretofore unimagined possibilities are there for the taking. Cézanne implied conception cannot precede execution, since "..expressions can never be the translations of clear thought."<sup>3</sup> and "it is only in the completed work itself that one sees the clear thought."<sup>4</sup> Drawing is an impression of something underlying at work. It is leakage from the invisible to the visible by means of alternating impulse and unprescribed ways of seeing, and the result, I feel, is the condensate of thinking.

*Michael Quane, September 2000*

*Notes*

1. Roland Barthes: *Image, Music, Text.* (Flamingo) 1977, p.17.
2. Henri Matisse, quoted in Pierre Schneider's "*Henri Matisse: Exposition Centenaire*" (Grand Palais Paris: April - September 1970), p.48.
3. Maurice Merleau-Ponty, "Cézanne's Doubt." trans. Sonia Brownell, *Art and Literature* (Lausanne) spring 1965, p.109.
4. Bernice Rose, "A View of Drawing Today", "*Drawing - A History of an Art*"(Skira/Macmillan) 1979, p. 200.

## Lifelines

Aidan Dunne

When part of the National College of Art and Design was still ensconced beside Leinster House and the National Library, it made sense to cut around the corner to the National Gallery to use the library there rather than travel further afield. The library has a rather strange history of use, disuse and renewal. But during a period when it was relatively accessible and relatively little used, soon after I started attending the N.C.A.D., I discovered it. One day, more or less browsing along the shelves, motivated by nothing more than idle curiosity as to what they contained, I came upon a book on Ingres' drawings.

I had a superficial, none too favourable impression of Ingres at the time. He was, I erroneously believed, merely the painter of the absurdly flesh-filled fantasy *Turkish Bath* and stuffed-shirt portraits of the French bourgeoisie. I had never given thought to Ingres as a draughtsman. But I loved drawing and the notion of a book devoted entirely to an artist's drawings was therefore very appealing, so I brought it over to the table to have a look.

I leafed through it, initially with surprise, then in a kind of daze, with awe. Here was something different. He wasn't Leonardo, he wasn't Durer, whose drawings I knew, liked and admired. The work consisted mostly of commercial portraits, modest, briskly made pencil drawings, as well as various preparatory sketches. All very workaday. Yet delivered with a beautifully even, offhand precision, with a quality of line, casual but exact, quite unlike anyone else I'd seen. His delicate pencil lines came across as incredibly fresh and contemporary, but more, they have a thrilling immediacy, as though they are carrying some vital equivalent of an electric current.

Now, David Hockney has come up with the theory that he used a drawing aid, the *camera lucida*, that had recently been invented. It's an appealing theory, because it seems to chime with a certain distanced neutrality about the drawings, which you could interpret

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Now, David Hockney has come up with the theory that he used a drawing aid, the *camera lucida*, that had recently been invented. It's an appealing theory, because it seems to chime with a certain distanced neutrality about the drawings, which you could interpret

as machine-like mapping of a given reality. It's worth pointing out that the *camera lucida* is very much a drawing aid rather than a drawing machine, and it was used by many artists and technicians with varying degrees of success, sometimes badly, sometimes well. But always in a more cramped, stilted way than that suggested by Ingres' drawings. So it's difficult to come down decisively for or against Hockney's idea. Does it matter? One way or another, Ingres produced drawings that, in their own subtle way, make us look anew at the world. That may sound rather grandiose in relation to what are for the most part a number of commercial portrait sketches of ordinary people on their holidays in Italy, but their workaday origins should not preclude their extraordinary qualities.

Ingres famously described drawing as "the probity of art". Teach someone to draw and you have a painter, he suggested, notwithstanding that his own paintings have a dazzling, heroic, monumental presence, that they are much more than coloured drawings, more than the sum of their parts. What he meant, of course, was that drawing underpins painting, a truism from the time of the Renaissance, until the dissolution of form that began with Impressionism which began to offer alternative ways of making paintings.

Yet, though it is entirely possible to describe the various admirable qualities of Ingres' drawings, in the end their appeal is mysterious, something impossible to pin down or paraphrase. It is something that happens when you look at them (or doesn't happen, because it's quite possible that for some reason you just won't like them). Just as with music, you suddenly hear a melodic line that grips you. Somehow Ingres' drawing technique becomes part of the way you see the world, it seems part of the world. You register echoes of his way of synthesizing an image in the work of Picasso, or Hockney himself, or Elizabeth Blackadder and others.

There are lots of good reasons for drawing, for teaching and learning drawing. It makes you look, and see, it makes you think, it shapes and enlarges your appreciation of the visual world in numerous ways. It is a live activity, a recorded performance, in which you constantly run the risk of failing - and you know when you've failed. But, the best reason of all is exemplified in the drawings of Ingres. The chance of making something so ordinary

yet also so beautifully, so exquisitely different, something incalculably and strangely right.

There is a sense that drawing, in the traditional sense of the term, is a dying art, even more so now than following the changes in art school curricula in the 1960s and 1970s which downgraded it. This has to do not only with the fact that so much fine art activity bypasses drawing, or employs it between inverted commas, as "drawing", but also with technological developments. Like writing, drawing has been such a continuous, ubiquitous tool in myriad human endeavours that its role has been almost invisible. But now that functional, if still artful role, is being decisively supplanted by the awesome number-crunching capacities of computers: with enough computational power, digital technology can tackle any number of tasks previously the preserve of skilled draughtspeople. Is this a cause for regret? In a way, it's just a case of one set of skills being replaced by another, a common enough process. Look at the way that Hockney figured out a way to draw with a camera. He is not untypical. Artists have been quite ready to take advantage of technological developments including, if Hockney is right, Ingres.

Yet, given the level of automation involved in the current revolution in computer-aided design, there is a certain loss involved, relating to the way technology progressively distances us from, for want of a better term, the natural world, to the extent that we increasingly live our lives in a technological context. Drawing, that is drawing remote from the mouse and the keyboard, in this context, inevitably comes to seem like a luddite or primitive activity. It is too primal, too direct, lacking the technological interface that currently appeals. Yet, it is exactly that primal directness, together with its infinite flexibility, linking it so intimately to the quirky individuality of the brain, that will ensure its continued indispensability and fascination.

*Aidan Dunne, September 2000*



## Drawing

*Martin Gale*

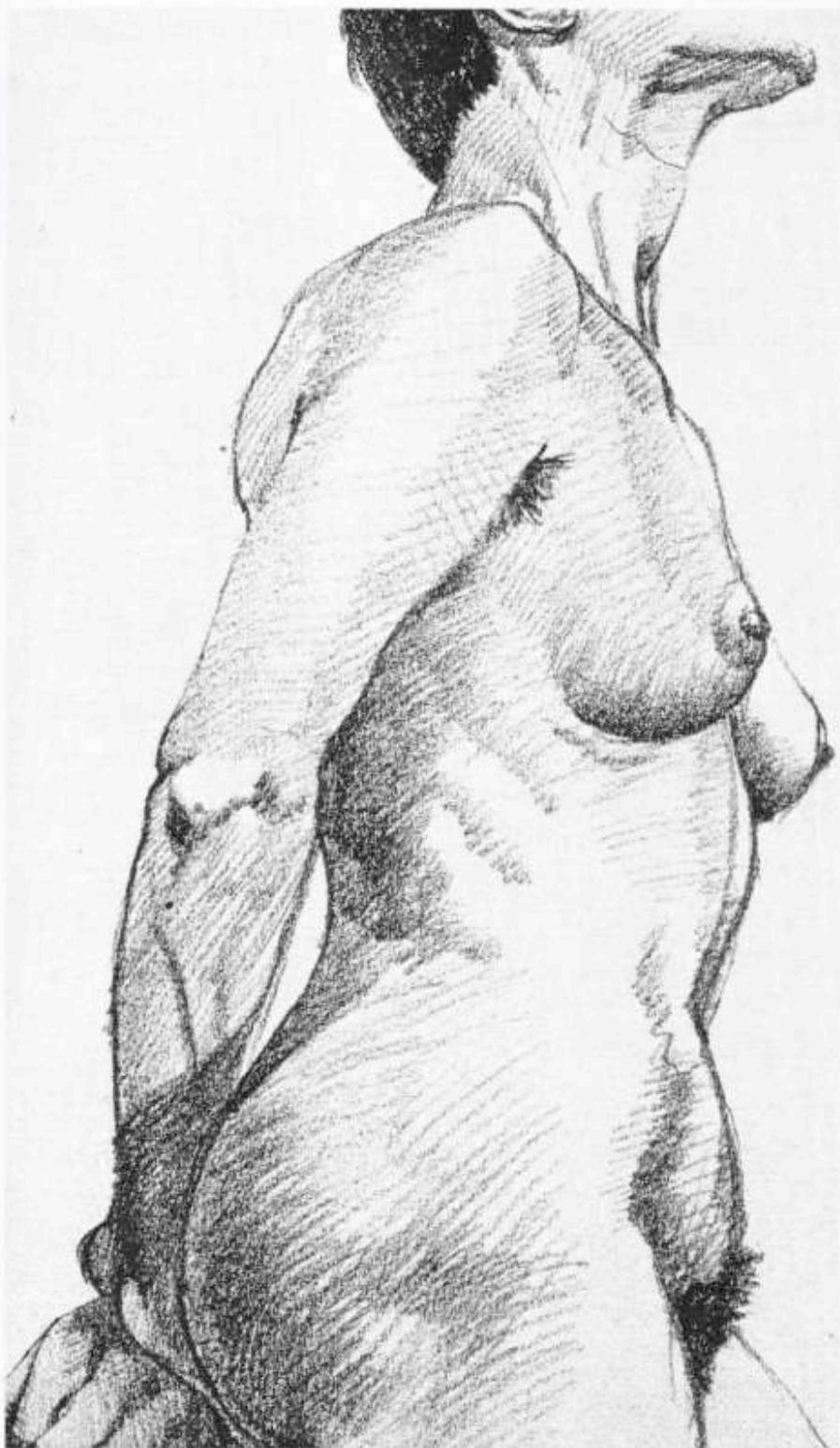
Most artists I know seem to be surprisingly secretive about their drawings. Or at least reluctant to show them, either publicly or to each other. I think the reasons for this are fairly easy to understand. Drawing is a highly personal and subjective activity and reveals a lot about the person who made the drawing. It has often been said that drawing is, in many ways, the artist's handwriting. Ten different artists drawing the same object will come up with ten different drawings. The result in each case will be partly a visual description of the object and partly a record of how the artist felt about what he was drawing. This instinctive response to the subject is as different and varied as the individuals involved. In one sense drawing can be taught: in the same way that you can learn to make words and sentences from the letters of the alphabet. It is a skill that can be passed on. A person can learn how to describe an object using line, shape, tone and texture. However that is only half the story. To draw with individuality, flair and self-expression must come from the individual himself.

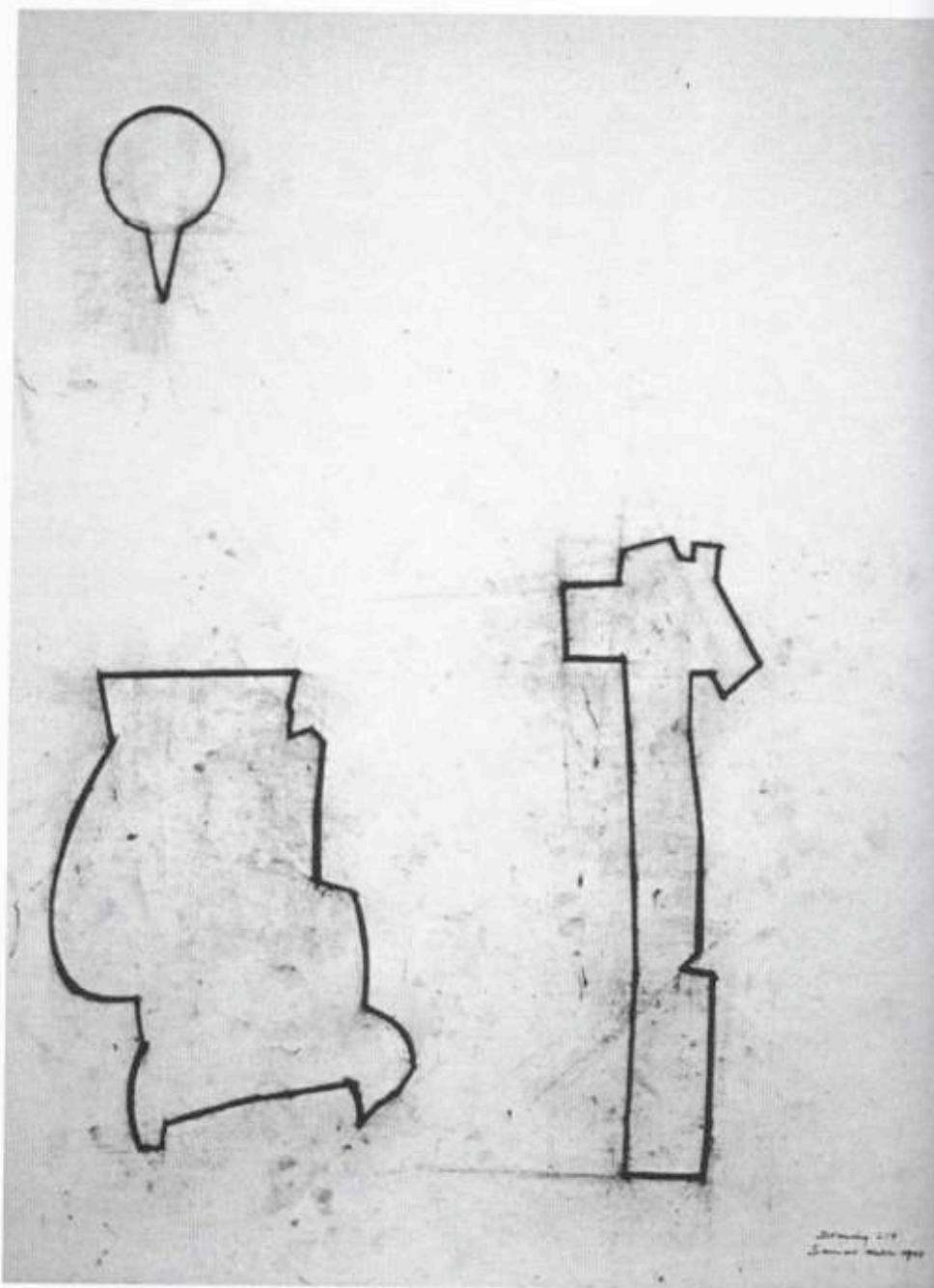
My own drawing activity falls into three categories: life drawing, i.e. from the model; working drawings for paintings; and drawing for the hell of it. Life drawing I tend to treat as an exercise, a bit like voice exercises for a singer - a way of keeping your eye in, as it were. Also I love the drama of it. I remember someone describing drawing from the model as an emergency situation. It is a situation that lasts only as long as the pose, and within that time-span you have to get your hand, eye, and mind working in unison. If things are going well there is a rising feeling of excitement and tension. When the pose ends the drawing is over, whether it is finished or not. If the result is satisfactory there is a great feeling of achievement and relief. If, on the other hand, things have not gone so well, it is a frustration and annoyance until a decent drawing is accomplished. As with all forms of drawing, life drawing teaches you to 'see'. You have never really seen a nose until you have tried to draw one!

Working drawings are a different matter. Every painting I have ever done has started with a pencil and a piece of paper. This is where the germ of an idea begins to take shape and become a reality. Creative curiosity comes into play here, as the viability of a possible painting is tested. This approach to drawing is a way of finding things out, seeing how they look. Problems which could later arise in the painting are often solved at this stage. Decisions are made and altered. Working drawings reveal a lot about the creative process and the way an artist thinks his or her way into a painting. Although they are never intended to function as finished pieces in themselves, for me they are essential. When I come across a painting or a sculpture that I really like I always find myself wishing that I could see the working drawings.

The third category involves drawing just for the sheer pleasure and fun of it. You find yourself drawing just to find out about things. You could say that drawing is much more a statement about reality than it is an attempt to copy it. Through drawing you can reveal things about the world around you - to yourself and to others. Degas said something to the effect that drawing is not about what one sees, it is about what one makes others see. If only artists were not so secretive about their drawings!

*Martin Gale, October 2000*





20 January 2018  
Jen and Anna open

## Drawing and Presence

*Samuel Walsh*

Drawing is always there; it has always been with us. From the walls of Lascaux to the circuit board designs for computers, its presence is felt like language. Essentially that is what it is: a language, a form of communication, often superior to that which is either spoken or written.

It was the American sculptor, David Smith, who first suggested that drawing came to us ... even before song.<sup>1</sup> He acknowledged, as I do, early man's instinctive action to make marks as a ... celebration of man with his secret self.<sup>2</sup> This is the act of drawing as an act of thinking: that knows that drawing is somehow as close to the outpouring of thought as speech is. Through this process we can understand the mind of man, irrespective of his time in history, or the nationality of his spoken and written language. Drawing crosses time and borders. It is both primitive and sophisticated; and under the right circumstances leaves no one out.

Drawing can be of our time and of another time. Michael Craig-Martin points out that ... The great paintings of Rembrandt manifest most strongly the values of his time, while his drawings manifest equally those of our own.<sup>3</sup> When I look at drawings I can feel myself following the movement of the work, tracing a line, tempted to raise my arm and match the mark. Drawing speaks to me in a way painting does not; it is the drawing element of Great Master paintings that holds me. Drawing is, as Tony Godfrey says ... a human activity with a rich and complicated history.<sup>4</sup> It is that history which threatens and unnerves the less talented.

It is now two and a half thousand years since philosophy first tried to understand the meaning of language beneath the meaning of speech, a language within a language so to speak. It is as if we have always been suspicious of what we say, not quite trusting our own voices. Language is a vehicle whereby thought can be presented. It is by what comes out of a person's mouth that we know a person's mind. But, as Wittgenstein has pointed out, the

individual words we use, do not give us ... new information, and we make sense, most of the time, of what people say by arranging what we have always known.<sup>3</sup> It is likely, therefore, that when we look at drawings we rearrange what we see in a shape so that it fits a form in our heads. A part of that form is the instinctive belief that drawing is like thinking and that we can see into the mind of the artist/maker by looking at their drawing. We can do this because a drawing is created more like thoughts than a finished painting is - or a finished sculpture, or a finished anything for that matter.

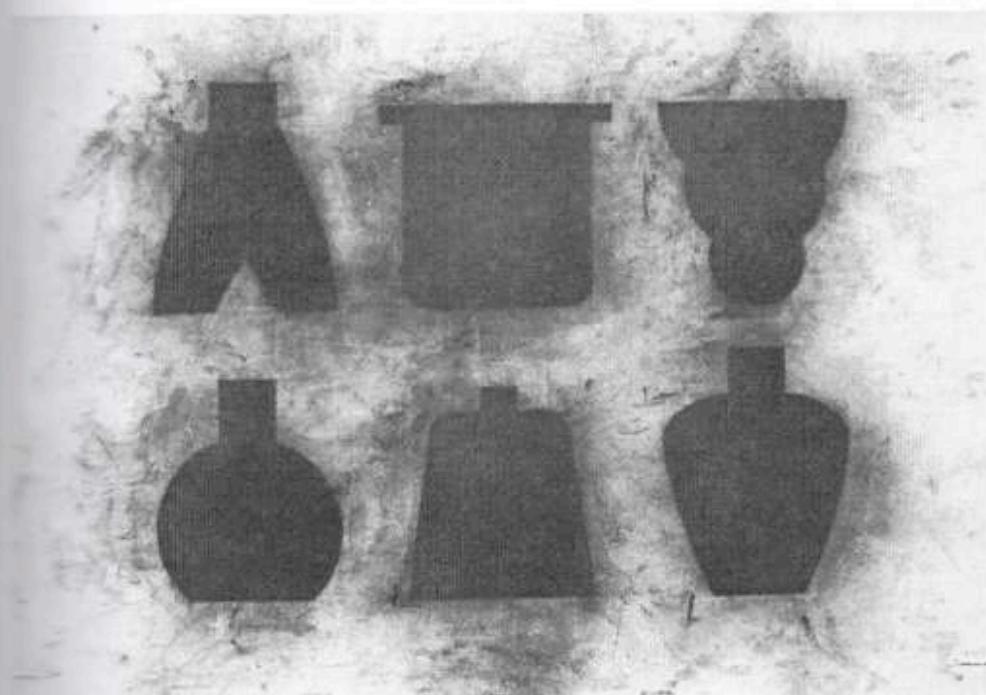
Man has often debated the existence of the soul. Socrates opted for death to release his soul so that it could continue to gain knowledge through another soul in another body. The soul of art is drawing; the secret self of man, as David Smith stated. This accumulation of knowledge through mark-making, makes visible the spirit of the artist, the working mind of a creator.

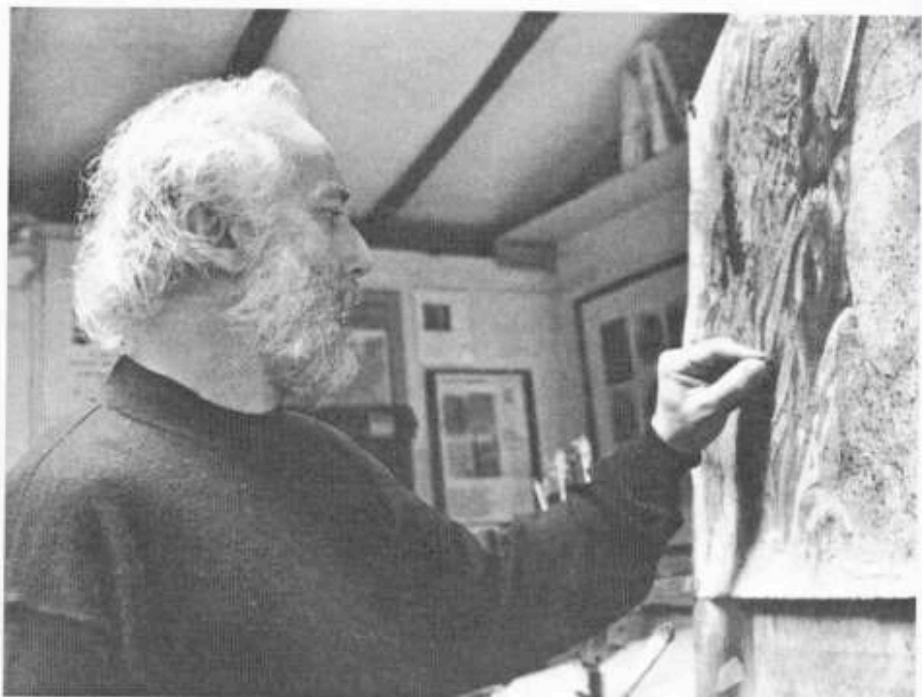
To put a value on things in our society we often ask: what would that society be like without them? Remove drawing from art and we are left with nothing.

*Samuel Walsh, July 2000*

*Notes*

1. David Smith is quoted from a lecture he gave to Newcomb College, at Tulane University, USA, in 1955; reproduced in *Drawing in Air*, Ed. Tony Knipe, Sunderland Arts Centre, 1983.
2. Ibid.
3. Michael Craig-Martin, *Drawing the Line*, The South Bank Centre, 1995.
4. Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, Blackwell, Oxford, 1953.
5. Tony Godfrey, *Drawing Today*, Phaidon, 1990.





## **Words: on Drawing as a Primary Expressive Medium**

*John Keating*

There is a directness in drawing - an uninterrupted flow between intention and execution, or at least between an inner germ, conscious or unconscious, and the outward expression through the line.

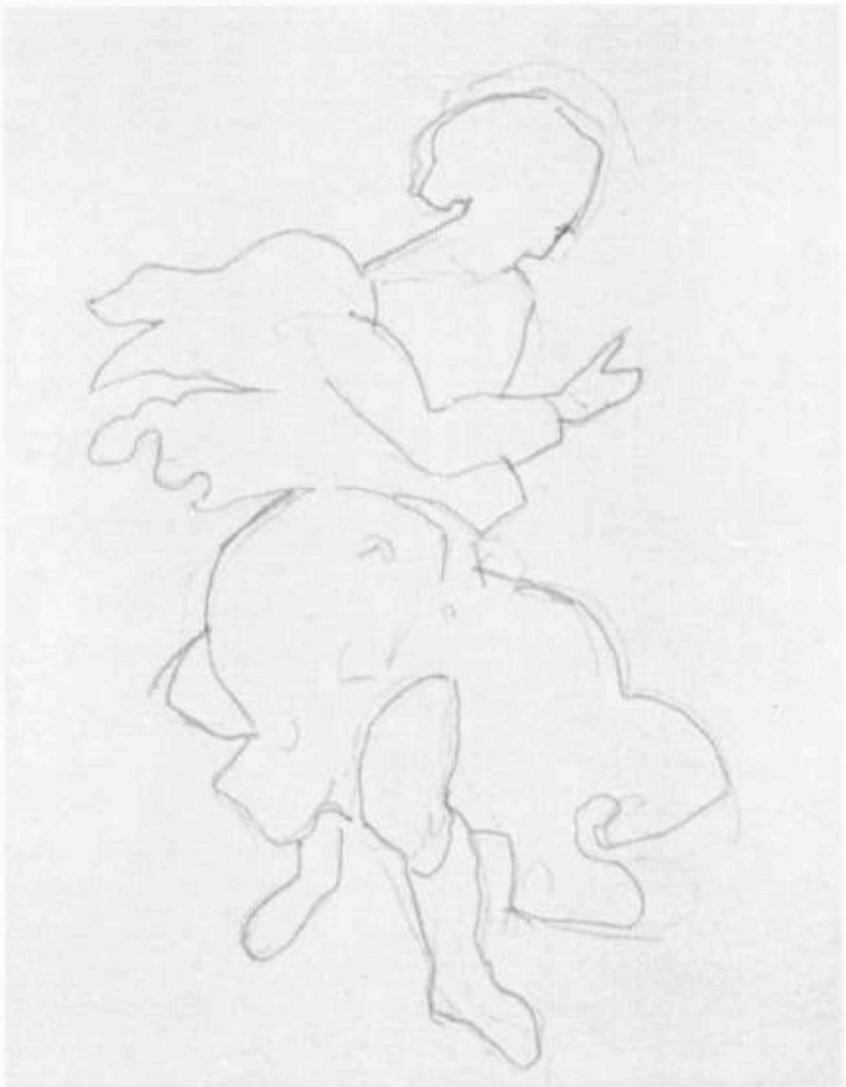
There is an immediacy, the opportunity for raw, uncensored exploration, which is in itself complete, without any need for further exploration - the mark, the line, exist in their absolute state.

Historically, drawing has suffered through suggestions that it is a cartoon for the major opus on canvas, or in stone, plaster or wood. But sometimes one can argue that the drawing has a vitality that the so-called finished opus may lack - that the energy of the initial journey can be lost in an attempt to revisit the impulse in a different medium.

The rhythm of attempting to grasp at something that is as yet only partially formed, within the urge to put shape or form on what is vague and shadowy, produces a corresponding rhythm and search in the line and this is the power of drawing. That is not to say that I disagree with drawing as exploration for a larger work in another medium, but it is to say that it should not be limited into that definition.

Commercial expediency has often helped reinforce that hierarchy, when an inferior painting or piece of sculpture can be erroneously valued as artistically more valuable than a drawing. When you deal with medium drying times there is a danger that the original impulse becomes diluted with the technical demands of pacing each stage. The instantaneity of drawing hurls the germ into fruition without interruption, and within that is the truth, the energy and the passion of a major art form.

*John Keating, September 2000*



## A Note on Drawing

Patrick Pye

I believe there are three major visual arts that we inherit from the past with which we have to contend: drawing, sculpture and painting.

They are each quite self-sufficient. They are primitive and that is their great strength. Drawing is the most primitive, painting the most complex. Only in the metaphysics of vision (the one developed alone by the artist in his studio, in the sweat and blood of creation) do they become translatable into each other.

"Vision is inside and outside looking into one another, in an encounter which is a struggle, a reciprocal influence."<sup>1</sup> This is how the spirit loses its embarrassment, how we learn to see before nature with imagination.

The primitive and original act of man-the-artist is to draw. Drawing comes from pointing. When the hunter has identified an object of his interest he points at it, and if his companion is a bit dumb he grunts some exclamation and describes what he is looking at by following a contour with his finger. This Adam makes his first drawing. It is as though there had been silence and now there is a word, but better than a word, because it has a 'likeness' to what is described: not the magic of verisimilitude, perhaps, but the revelation of perception which precedes it. This Adam is now able to identify the things he needs and plot their acquisition.

This is good for 'active' man, but not so good for his slower brother 'contemplative' man, for how is he to restore what he has identified to the great cosmos from which he has just torn it?

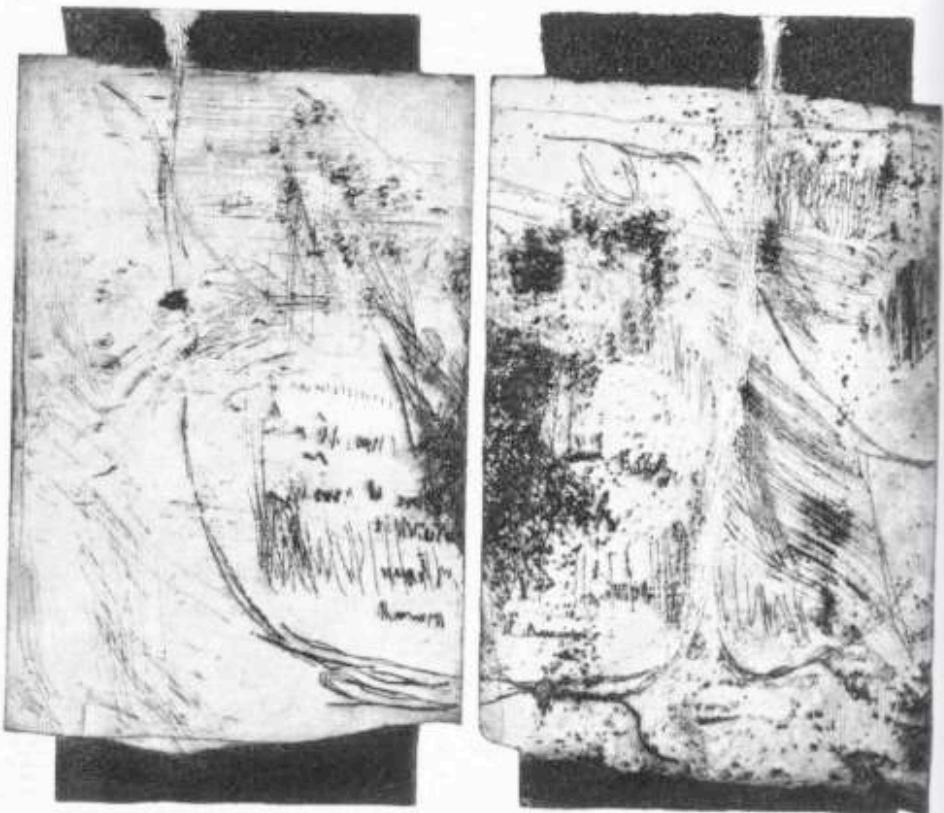
Drawing separates, but colour unites what has been separated. Colour erodes the edges of drawing and replaces things with the unity of light and space. Colour makes a cosmos of relationships by a sensible and formal analogy between those relationships and its own.

The drawing of Raphael (bequeathed by Carracci to the academies) turned generations of colourists into mavericks.

We will follow the drawn marks of Matisse and Bonnard that do not pre-empt colour's activity by modelling but leave colour to complete drawing's work in its own inimitable way.

Patrick Pye, August 2000

1. H.U.von Balthasar, *The Glory of the Lord* Vol. I, T&T Clark.



## The Act of Drawing

Patrick Hickey

....Let us think for a moment of an artistic activity in its essence. Every one of them, of whatever degree, from painting, sculpture and music, to the borderline cases where craft and art merge in architecture, pottery, illustrating or lettering, has as its essential quality the effort to form, to build, to make, to shape; and the only vindication and sanctification, as it were, of the effort expended is the result achieved. All activities, that is, except drawing. Drawing is, in essence, destructive.

To draw, you take your subject, your object, and you strip it of all that is not to your purpose, and which impedes your vision and your intention with regard to it. A tree, to take an example wider in its complexity and variety of qualities than the nude figure, cannot be drawn, annotated, as a light-reflecting object (Monet) or as a cylinder (Léger) or as a solid cipher limiting and punctuating space (Cézanne) or as a tumultuous affair of tangled leaves and branches (Bresdin) without excluding in each case a hundred other conflicting, interrupting qualities. You must strip down with your eye and mind, destroy, unmask, dissect; there is no human possibility of doing anything else if you want to arrive at your portion of truth, small or large according to your own stature, concerning the extensive, but for you limited, nature of the tree.

There is always of course, for the man of superhuman courage, persistence and stupidity, the possibility of a completely naturalistic drawing; but we strive for truth, however meagre our portion, do we not? And here is the great paradox of naturalism: that it is the greatest untruth, the greatest lie of all, for if we take a *trompe l'oeil* botanic drawing, the summit, I suppose, of naturalism, we are in fact faced with the supreme deception. We think we see leaves, a flower, where we really see paper, with marks on it.

The activity of drawing and other artistic activities, though their essential natures, that of destruction and construction are at two poles, nevertheless mingle in two ways. In drawing, though

you break down in essence, your marks, your notes on the paper are, of their nature, a building up. Yet, here is the trap; for as a rule once the drawing starts to build up, the breaking down is abandoned in favour of a seemly, good-looking result; the public esteem enters, even if the public numbers only one - yourself - and the trap is sprung. The result has been improved at the expense of the essential activity of drawing; but the end result of a drawing does not matter - it is not the end product that justifies it, it is the voracity of the attention expended on it, the singleness of purpose, the destructive power. Cézanne has a drawing of his son done in 1885 which for sheer awkwardness (like more of his work than a hushed and reverent world likes to admit) takes some beating. The left arm is particularly odd, yet in a way it is the work of a saint, for the drawing process is carried through regardless of the result: and there are not many who manage that. Da Vinci did the same in his study of water flowing round rocks. He was able, this man of singular ability, to abandon interest in all the qualities of water except this current flow, and to produce a drawing which shows precisely that; it is a drawing of some crudity and a fair slice of truth.

If the intention as regards your object, your subject, is, as I suggested, all, then it would clearly be expedient, for time is short, to have clearly defined intentions. What exactly is it about the tree you want to say? What it is you wish to single out and leave standing among the discarded debris of irrelevant, for you, attributes? But it is not like that, and parallel to the old argument as to which bears which, the thought the language or the language the thought, we find that the drawing begets the intention as the intention begets the drawing. The phenomenon of an empty mind is depressingly known to all artists; yet too is known the odd chain reaction of drawing and seeing, seeing and drawing: and that is not depressing.

Intention then is not always crystal clear - a stating of the problem with only legwork to resolve it. Yet experience in drawing does tend to tell you what is foreign to your purpose, what germane; and if more often we could listen to the small voice, which as a rule we recognize too late, that tells us time is being wasted, the vision has slipped or has been betrayed, then what an amount of time (precious) and material (unprecious, but saddening in its waste) would be saved.

(Some masters were, it seems, far from clear as to their motives and urges that sparked their activities. Watteau for example (who died many years before the French Revolution), according to the perspicacious John Berger, stood in a prophetic relationship to the passing of the old order of pomp and court finery. His drawings, infinitely sad among that light-hearted crew of degenerates, were a comment on all regret, all passing, on our lives.)

I spoke of the mingling in two ways of the creating and discrediting that go to make up a work and its preliminary investigation. The second way is through the material at hand, the pencil, the watercolour, the paper, what have you. For a man has two responsibilities in drawing - to his subject and to his drawing. There is on the one hand the tree, a thing of life and interest, isolated in importance, dominating and all-pervading: for you have, by your decision to draw it, made it so. Then there is the paper, empty but not dead, full of potential, waiting to be put on the tracks.

As the attributes of the tree are sorted out, those of interest, those to your purpose, transfer themselves to the paper, which now begins to exceed in importance the tree. The drawing grows, the tree diminishes; and given a successful conclusion to your work, you can walk away, the tree sucked dry, not worth visiting again, for its life is now under your arm. Given, as I say, a successful conclusion; but it is assuming a lot, and usually we return time after time to an elusive object, probing, dissecting, breaking down, and in the end failing, only to try again.

There is a phrase much used in criticism of painting, and this is: "his drawing is bad". All the critics used it in their remarks about the huge *Bathers* of Cézanne - we return to him as we return to Shakespeare - now in the National Gallery, London. They meant that Cézanne displayed no interest in the anatomical bone structure, as taught in the schools. Well, Cézanne would have been the first to agree, for he was drawing something else, space and the bits and pieces of feet and body that got in the way were simply chopped off, destroyed, unmade. His drawing was at work.

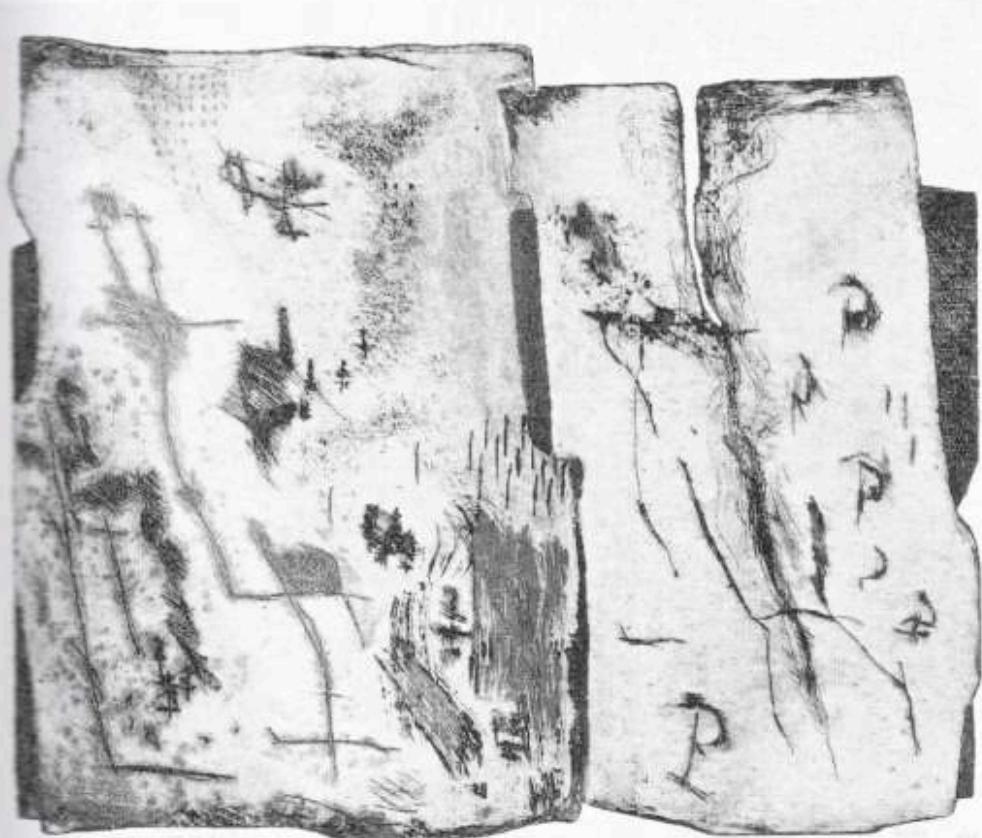
But when the phrase is used accurately, it is often misunderstood, and some vague notion enters the beholder's head that bad drawing means in some way that before the colour was applied the limbs were not fitted too well to the torso, or some such

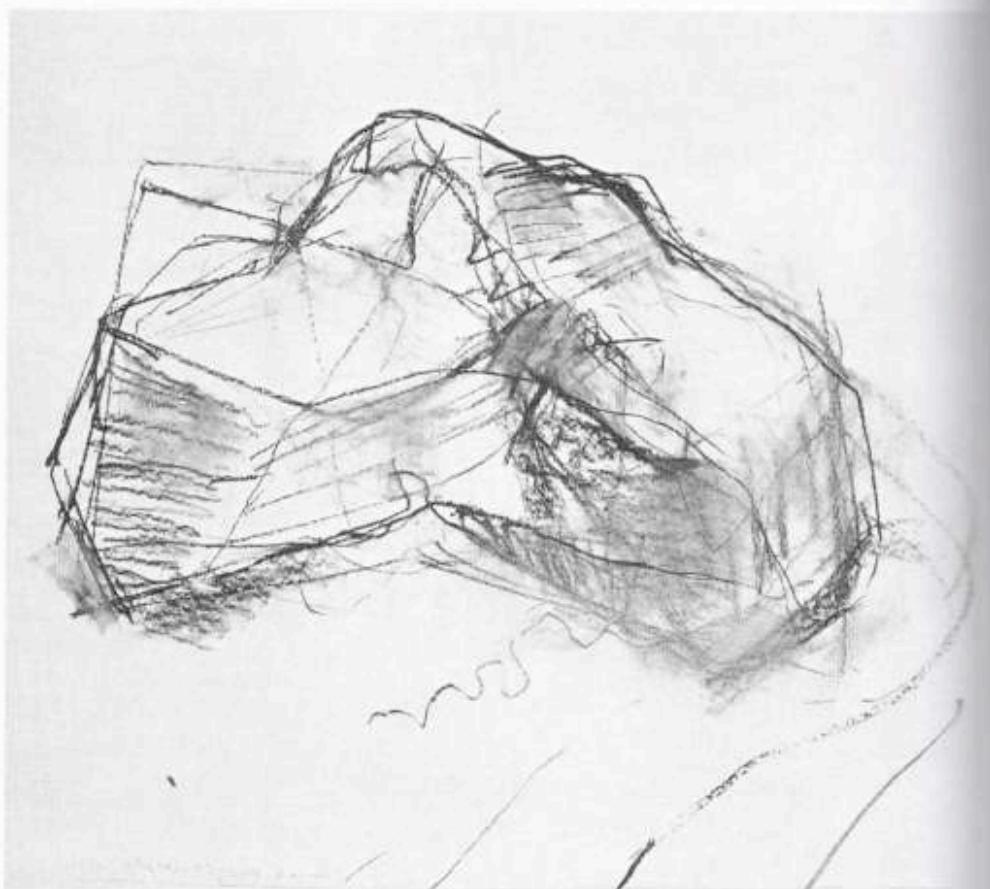
simplistic defect. It means, it should mean, that things in the painting do not combine to uphold the content of the painting - that irrelevance has entered, effect has been sought at the expense of meaning, not enough has been hurled out, destroyed before the embarkation. It means that too little thought has been used to excise the dross which surrounds all subject matter, and that the eye of the painter, and subsequently that of the public, is disturbed by a sort of unseriousness. There is no need to go to the Masters to see good drawing at work. It is often a feature of some of the strip cartoons, and it means fundamentally, a sense of direction and its pursuit, however light-hearted or passionate the path. Too often critics carp about one thing - it is generally structure - when they are dealing with an artist who is doing something entirely different.

It is much the same in art schools now - this tendency to obscure the issue by a wearisome insistence on structure. It is fine, and not wearisome for those who are interested in structure, but bad for those with a genuine curiosity, say, about force in a muscle, the shape made by the arm as it rests on the hip, the model as a solid cipher surrounded by a void cipher. He who draws lines of force in the first case, associating shapes in the second, and a black mark on a white background in the third, are groping with problems of their own vision, they are drawing. Others, less determined, less well instructed, are kept in unhappy subjection by the sure knowledge that they will never know all the eighty-two bones in the wrist, and are so kept for a good reason. It prevents awkward thoughts, and awkward questions about what drawing is and why they are doing it. And that is scarcely what schools of art are for.

*Patrick Hickey, 1975*

This essay in a fuller form originally appeared in the first edition of the journal *Introspect* in December 1975 (Editor: Patrick Pye).





## Drawing

*Barrie Cooke*

*What one seems to want in art, in experiencing it, is the same thing that is necessary in its creation - a self forgetting, useless concentration.*

Elizabeth Bishop

**The Means:** pencil, charcoal, ink, fruitjuice, paint, scratchings in sand, silverpoint... etc. etc. etc.

**The Aim:** that it will convey *Vitality*. An instant of *Actuality*.  
Above all else a drawing by Rembrandt or Bonnard, or Michelangelo or Sesshu has *Energy*.

Drawing for me has always involved two aspects, sometimes separate, usually interrelated. The first is the sheer sensuous pleasure of drawing, something shared with virtually all other painters. By this I mean the pleasure of playing with pencil, charcoal, or whatever - no aim or proposed function - total unseriousness.

The other aspect is a little more complicated: drawing as exploration - physical, spatial, or psychological exploration.

Drawing is simple. It requires few tools and is generally, though it doesn't know it, at the beginning of the development process (which is why we then paint). In this century anyway, every ten years or so Painting is pronounced dead, outdated, a dinosaur, an atavism to be replaced by CONCEPTUALISM (the 1970s), INSTALLATION AND PHOTOGRAPHY (the 1990s) and maybe now by COMPUTERS. Of course it always returns because it is so simple. Nearly all the great visual discoveries could be shown with a pencil. Probably drawing is as near to instinct as can be found in art.

Drawing is a way of remembering. It is a way of re-living. The process of drawing, not the drawing, is what counts. (Sometimes if I see something I want to remember or know better and I don't have pencil or paper, I 'draw' with my finger on the palm of my hand. This seems to be almost as good.)

Drawing is a way of focusing. In a museum, if you wish to examine a Titian, or a Rubens, or a Piero, then your best way is to draw it. Make a copy, even if it is only in your head.

A painter's drawings often precede the changes in his development. Why? Is it because drawing is the most direct line to the 'chips' of the unconscious (and so is the first to appear)?

Freud is supposed to have said "wherever I go a poet has been there first" and, of course, before the poem was the image.

The image first. Maybe there would have been no *Interpretation of Dreams* without the strange double line of Cézanne which quivered and tried to find his apple in space, or the water/skies of Monet when he tried to discover where air and water sat.

*P.S. Information* that horrid art school buzzword has little to do with Drawing.

*Barrie Cooke, October 2000*

## Drawing and the Presence of Line

*Maria Simonds-Gooding*

Whatever medium I am working with, I start out making the initial marks with pencil. The drawing may eventually be used on another scale, or be taken into another medium, but it is the initial drawing that gives reference to what follows. The drawing sets the whole observation in motion.

Since I do all my drawings directly from the subject, mostly on mountainsides where accessibility is sometimes difficult, carrying a pencil and paper is a lot easier than trying to carry all the paraphernalia of other materials.

The pencil is my tool, with which I can be direct and usually unselfconscious. It allows, with ease, the transformation of the subject to the inner self.

I draw on ordinary untextured pieces of paper, but I like to work with a proportion sympathetic to the subject, or vice-versa, usually this is an important starting point.

It was during my studies at Bath Academy, that my principal painting tutor, Adrian Heath, pointed out the potential of line, not necessarily in the representational sense, but in its *expression, variety and thrust*. These were the qualities he encouraged us to look for, not just the formal representation of the figure from which we were drawing - that was of secondary importance.

Line was not an end in itself - not at all - it was, as I saw it, a direct way of reaching what the subject demanded in its full and deeper presence.

Drawing took on a whole new meaning for me, and it became central to my work. Until then drawing had been restrictive, an obstacle in every way.

Once I had this new vision, all these obstacles disappeared and at this time I instinctively turned to plaster as a medium to use. It seemed a wonderful and obvious material to work with. Although it was not something used at Bath Academy, there was nothing to stop me using it.



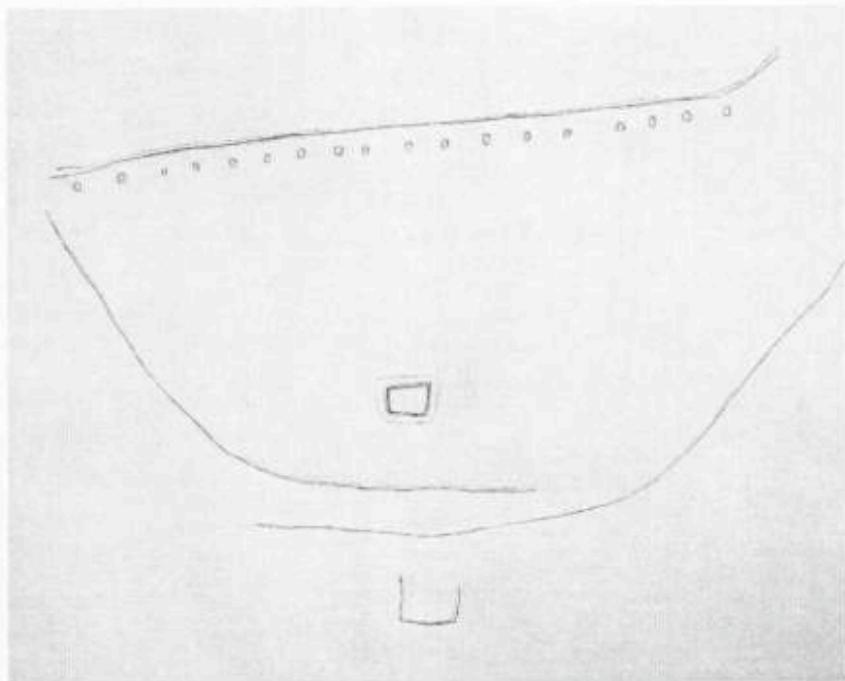
I applied great slabs of plaster to board. Here I had all the scope I needed, allowing for a much broader interpretation of my subjects. At Bath, and for a number of years, I painted onto the plaster. It was not until later that I disassociated painting from the plaster works. It gradually became clear that the plaster had its own importance, relevance and beauty. This, however, left me in a sort of limbo between painting and sculpture, or so I thought. The work did not carry a label or fit into a pre-established norm - and it did not have to.

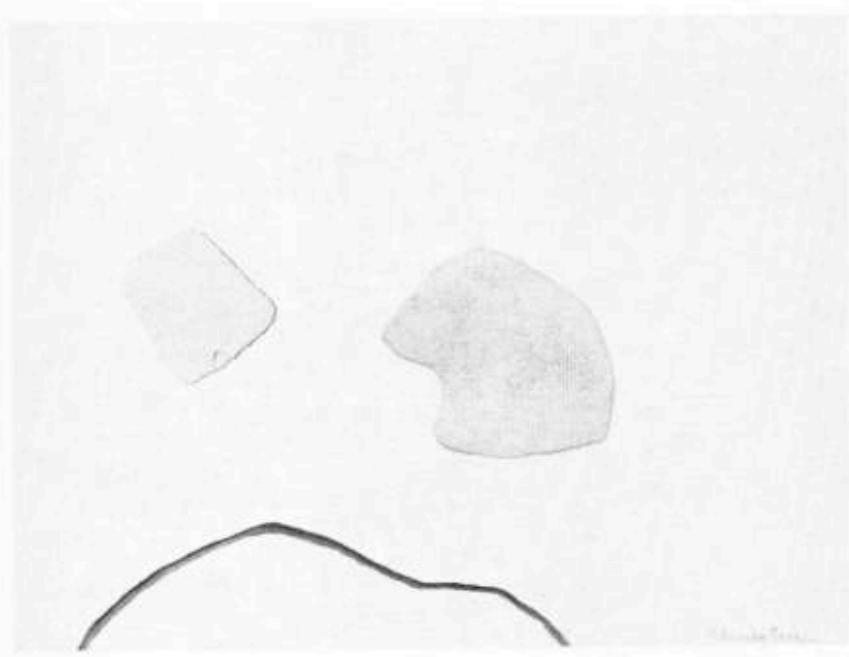
It was not an easy transition, but it had to be taken, as I became more and more convinced.

It was during this time that I met Betty Parsons who had seen a couple of my stark plaster works in a show in New York. She showed great interest in the work, and was interested in showing it in her gallery in New York. She was patient enough to wait three years while the transition took place, after which the work was entirely concerned with drawing on raw plaster - the lines being incised into, or lying flat on the plaster with fresco pigment. I had two exhibitions in her gallery, before she died in 1982.

Undoubtedly these were pivotal events for me, sustained subsequently by the Taylor Galleries of Dublin, and in particular through my last show with them a couple of years ago. In this work I used small planes of consistently low-key, textured plaster in unobtrusive relief - this draws its own boundary line by its mere existence, another sort of emphasis, in quite a different sort of way from inscribing or drawing lines in the plaster, affirming line's central presence in my work.

*Maria Simonds-Gooding, September 2000*







## **Thought Dancing (Personal Notes)**

*Cóilín Murray*

1. Drawing covers a range of activity - from small sketchbook work to large drawings; and to a big proportion of work that is then called painting or sculpture.
2. Each of these activities brings with them their own *physical* appropriateness in scale and medium, as well as mental and emotional appropriateness.
3. Sketchbook work is usually concerned with stuff that has previously been physically absorbed with the eye, but has not produced conscious thought.
4. Drawing, at this stage, is a sort of *clearing the 'white-noise' in the head*, or sifting through the baggage that comes with the object, or experience.
5. The shift from the observed to conscious thought is not a one-way movement, and it is what I call 'Thought Dancing'. The movement is more of a starburst.
6. Each objective (physical) growth has a constant subjective partner. This is essential for the development of any drawing. Thought Dancing starts between those objective givens and the subjective will. At the centre of the dance there is an evacuating self.
7. Feelings are nearly always the basis for thought and should not lose their connections to them - they are a touchstone.
8. Some thoughts may take feelings prisoner, particularly today, in our society of 'the Spectacle'. It is necessary to be subversive.
9. The world of art and the world of perceptual experience and life are not the same and the tension that exists between them is the base rhythm of 'Thought Dancing'.
10. There is a no-man's land that divides the activities of the 'maker' from those of a 'commentator'. This can be resolved through 'Thought Dancing'.

11. Drawing itself will let you know when you are on the right track, you have to learn to 'listen' to a drawing. What happens when you are Thought Dancing can be so unexpected - even when you are talking about yourself. To discover an unknown, you have to listen.

12. No story is singular (John Berger). Each of us changes things and is changed constantly through the dance. Constantly being - becoming and changing again - the 'hammer and the anvil'. Today no experience is singular and is changing more rapidly than at anytime, The constant change leads very quickly to the death of one state as it becomes another. But all experience, no matter how small, continues and that is a sort of infinity - worth celebrating. We are all part of the story.

13. It really isn't necessary to know everything. The bits you do know and your feelings and *passion* give you the capacity and the drive to discover. Sometimes what is discovered is difficult to articulate, but I recognize it as a pause in the dance.

14. When I feel I don't know how to dance, I will work with bits, marks and structures, in which I still hear the truth. There is a part in all of us unrelated to the passage of time or to changes in geography, and this part resonates to the dance when there is a truth. Once the dance starts again you go on to discover.

15. There is no such thing as 'Drawing' as an entity - no more than life. We must be willing to let more 'in', the known and the unknown, and let all the bits clash and bang in the dance, so that the most poetic, personal, private moments can complete a passage into the public arena.

16. The physical activity of making a drawing is determined by the above thoughts. The activity is a dance of physical movement and dialogue. The properties of the medium and its use are dictated by feelings and the passion to discover.

17. There are enough books in the world on 'How to Draw'.

*Cóilín Murray, August 2000.*



## Drawing

*Peter Murray*

Years ago, I attended life-drawing classes held in the evenings at various locations around Dublin's inner city. I remember one class, held weekly in an upstairs studio near Trinity College. The female model would generally sit on a bentwood chair or stool and hold one pose beside a gas heater for an hour or so. On chilly winter nights, as the minutes stretched to half an hour, her legs would slowly turn bright red, while the upper part of her body would chill at the same rate, until it was a pure marble white. I could remember no painting or drawing in the history of art that portrayed this disconcerting reality. I was somewhat at a loss. There was no tuition at these classes, one simply arrived with paper and pencils. Like many who attended the class, I quietly harboured the certainty that deep down the basis of fine art rested in the representations of the human body. My inept drawings, if nothing else, helped convince me of the dubious rationale of this assumption.

The artist Roger Shackleton, a gentle and unassuming teacher, opened my eyes to the wider potential of drawing. In his classes he would forbid students to look at the paper. "Keep your eye on the model," he said. "Don't look at the paper." The difference was startling. My drawings, done in this unsighted way, evolved instantly from rank amateur to something passable. It wasn't that the proportions were perfect - far from it. But in the drawings done in Roger's class, things that had previously been disconnected, suddenly connected. By resisting the impulse to look at what I was doing, I was able to escape from the dead-end of banal representation. I began to learn what drawing could do. Roger introduced me to other disciplines, unknown in the Trinity Lane classes. He would get the class to do series of five-minute sketches, or sixty-second sketches. He also had the slightly disconcerting habit of occasionally asking the models to dress in sexy black underwear and slips. I began to see that drawing was no simple

business, and over the years my regard for it as an extraordinarily diverse art practice has never wavered.

Drawing is a complex matter. To define it simply as the act of marking lines on a surface is an approximation that fails quickly enough when confronted with a Patrick Ireland installation, where cords are stretched between floor and ceiling are described by the artist, with some precision, as 'rope drawings'. For years, sculptors have been accustomed to refer to certain works as 'drawing in space' - works created in three dimensions, often with wire or other linear material. Metal wire is made by 'drawing', a word that describes the pulling of metal through a narrow opening to make a long, thin thread. Although the essence of drawing evades definition, it seems to subsist in a linearity, a quality contrasting with those broader effects achieved by brush, wash, or molten metal. Drawing is considered to be delicate, though frequently it is not. Drawings are very often, though not always, monochrome.

Whatever the definition, drawing, traditionally held to be the cornerstone of art practice, can easily slip into being an almost spiritual exercise, akin to meditation. Drawings are more autograph, and perhaps therefore more expressive, than paintings or sculptures. They connect the viewer to the artist's creative thinking with the minimum of filters. Regardless of whether the art is from Asia, Europe or America, and whether it is ancient or modern, there seems to be a direct link between brain and hand in drawing that appeals to viewers in a universal way.

There is something innately abstract about the act of drawing, perhaps because drawings rarely succeed in deceiving the eye. With painting, on the other hand, the ambition of virtually all European artists - from Classical Greece to the late nineteenth century - was to replicate reality and to fool the eye into believing that what was seen in the painting was close to reality. No eye will be fooled into believing that the scene depicted in a drawing is real. In drawing, the information conveyed in lines, dots or shadings, is clearly based on an agreed cultural system of shared beliefs, in the power of line to suggest solidity, space or form. With a polished painting in an academic style, it can be possible to be momentarily fooled. Is that shelf painted or real? Nineteenth century panoramas were the apogee of this mind-numbing ambition, which, through

photography, cinema and the microchip, continues this foolish quest, moving further into feigned reality, conquering new worlds of fiction, while leaving what passes for reality ever further behind. In the space of disassociation thus created, drawing can come back into its own, satisfying people's desire to be gently touched in their innermost selves, in a non-exploitative way.

This is not to say that drawings of necessity sustain qualities of innocence. The earliest drawings of walled towns in Ireland were done by army cartographers, and may well have been a genteel prelude to the destruction of those same towns. Artists accompanying colonial expeditions included John White, whose drawings of the native inhabitants of Virginia open a small window onto a native American society upon which a heavy European door would soon close. From the European Renaissance onwards, drawings were mostly done for the purposes of recording places and buildings, plants to be cultivated and bodies to be dissected. Drawings, in metalpoint, chalk or charcoal, were also considered a vital preliminary to mural and easel painting. In more recent times, drawings have provided an expressive record of emotional states. They have a seismographic quality, preserving a memory of experience, their quality residing in the line that means a great deal beyond itself.

In the 1960s, while rejecting traditional art practice, founders of the Conceptual movement such as Aleigheri e Boetti, William Anastasi, Patrick Ireland, and Sol LeWitt continued to favour drawing as a discipline. Travelling on the New York subway, Anastasi made 'unsighted drawings', employing a pencil stub and small drawing pad in his coat pocket. Other self imposed disciplines included the limit of his arm's reach, or the limit set by the clock. The force of gravity defined Anastasi's work from the early 60s, a thin red paint drip running vertically down a wall. In recent years, drawing continues to intrigue artists and the public alike. In 1995, Kathy Prendergast won the prize for the most outstanding young artist at the Venice Biennale. Her *City Map* drawings exhibited at Venice, and afterwards at the Drawing Center in New York, the Tate and IMMA, were extraordinarily simple, drawn simply with pencil on A4 paper. The rigour of Prendergast's style, taut and attenuated, appealed to audiences

around the world. Her work encapsulates many of the virtues attributed to drawing; spare, intellectual and honest. The emotions tapped into are far from superficial.

Are there grounds for supposing that expression through colour is somehow less honest than with monochrome drawing? Ingre's association of probity with drawing, has an enduring appeal. With drawing any weakness, evasiveness or indecision tends to be painfully obvious. Roger Hilton's misogyny is never clearer than in his drawings, nor Durer's melancholia. Even more than with minimalist painting, the nature of artifice is most clearly exposed in drawing.

The pen sits easily in the hand. A fine line of black ink. I enjoy the ritual of cleaning and filling the pen before starting the drawing - I'm inclined to say embarking, as if it were a voyage, rather than sitting for hours in a room, or in a landscape, without moving. In starting a drawing I embark on a journey into an unknown territory. The geography is contained within the sheet of paper. The journey can have a successful conclusion, or it can easily end in mild disaster.

There will be other journeys.

*Peter Murray, November 2000*



## **Stop Still And You're History**

*Jim Sheehy*

There's no doubt about it but we're living in changing times. Some months ago one of the mobile phone companies had large billboard ads throughout the country urging us to buy their latest product. The ad said "STOP STILL AND YOU'RE HISTORY". Mobile phone sales, as we know, have sky-rocketed; no-one it seems wants to be regarded as history.

I think it is very important for us to 'stop still', to look and to reflect on things. Issues that affect us, be they personal, or relating to society, or - for those of us involved in the making and teaching of art - the role and function of art and art schools, require time to analyse and fully comprehend. By rushing headlong into change we lose our capacity to appreciate or understand what we already have and to know what choices are available.

There are so many different art forms in use today that to a lot of people it must seem confusing. This is in part due to the fact that since the end of what was called Modernism there is no dominant 'school' or way of seeing. Some artists are now dealing with topics that were previously neglected; installation and video-based work is very fashionable and, of course, computer technology has opened up large areas of interest. There is a temptation to consider this new work as the only relevant art being produced today. This, I think, is a very short-term perspective. All change is chaotic and it takes time for new ideas and new technology to find their ultimate place and function in our lives.

Since the 1960s radical change has occurred in most art schools. The centuries-old connection of art with craft has been disbanded, the teaching of skills neglected and the accumulation of specialized knowledge regarded as unnecessary. There are a number of well-documented reasons why this occurred. In Ireland this change was compounded by a lack of appreciation of our own visual culture and inadequate support to our indigenous artists. But in rejecting all qualitative standards, novelty, sensationalism and an obsession

with imitating the latest international fads now take precedent over genuine effort and mature aesthetic judgement.

Drawing is the most basic, simple and direct method we have to place an idea into visual form. All that's required is a pencil and paper, although many diverse materials and supports are commonly in use today. I find drawing always necessary for my own work - it gives a plan to what I want to do and a structure to how I intend to proceed. The work may end as a drawing or, depending what happens on the sheet of paper (I turn the drawing upside-down every so often to judge its composition, placement of marks, etc., and use a mirror to see how it looks reversed) and my continuing interest in the emerging image, it may lead on to other drawings, or to prints, or to paintings. But it's the original drawing urge that triggers off all subsequent work.

Drawing is a stimulating, even an obsessive activity. It forces me to stop still, to look hard and to assess and condense my vision. It's a struggle with - *looking, remembering, feeling, analysing and touching*. Patience and a feel for the medium you are using are important. There are no rules; it is primarily an intuitive process. The same procedure is enacted over and over and over with each few strokes. Occasionally something happens by chance and the work goes well; much more usual, however, is that the drawing requires a lot of erasing and re-working. With time - which is increasingly becoming important in my work - the drawing begins to develop a history of marks below, on and above the surface. It gets more complex with various layers of information fragmented and entwined. The marks - different thicknesses of line, various shapes, light to dark tones etc. - ultimately must be forged into a blend to give the drawing its unique vitality. A certain amount of experience and nerve is required at this stage or the work may become just another illustrative product, rather than a reflection of a real-life experience. Fidelity to the motif is relative; it varies from one drawing to another as each drawing goes through its own unique process of expansion and reduction. No matter how the final image is obtained I try to retain hints of alternatives, and a sense of an underlying complexity. With a bit of luck and hard work the finished drawing may contain an authentic record of the tension

between information, memory, feeling, technique and perception. It's an act of discovery, the outcome beyond my control.

There's a primitive feeling when one drags a pencil, a piece of charcoal or a brush loaded with ink across a sheet of paper and this itself is a pleasure. The fact that drawing has a long historical record is important to me; this gives my work a connection with the past and a reference point to judge it against. And, as an artist, you have to be conscious that you are part of a history.

Will computer manipulated imagery take the place of traditional drawing as is being suggested by some? I don't think so. Drawing is one of our most basic human urges - the desire to feel and to touch and to leave a mark. A computer is an extremely versatile and useful tool for many diverse activities, including drawing (print?) methods, but do we need all that technology, all the software and hardware just to replace a pencil? It's the technology that seems to be the most visible feature in the computer-aided artwork that I've seen to date; the artwork itself often looks remote and impersonal.

Look at how we give directions to a stranger in the street - we point our finger and draw in the air - "go straight on till you reach that building - see the one with the flat roof." Our finger automatically draws a straight line.

Finally, it's important to stress that in writing (or reading) about drawing, it's the physical presence of the work that's essential. All the digitally enhanced photographic reproductions and informative word descriptions do not contain a single scrap of the magic and wonder of the drawing.

*Jim Sheehy, August 2000*







## The Ultimate in Drawing

*Michael Cullen*

In the beginning there was no drawing - and then there was drawing. "Emptiness is the beginning of all things" (Raymond Carver). "Nothing out of nothing comes - Nothing into nothing goes", so insists Shakespeare's King Lear. Bishop Berkeley held forth that nothing exists outside of the mind unless it is perceived to exist, thus ceasing to be the case when the perceiver no longer perceives it. "What you see is what you get" (Frank Stella). Now you see it now you don't. Out of sight, out of mind.

With all this in mind, the spirit moves me to say, I draw therefore I am. Or, I am therefore I draw. Either supposition seems viable enough, if drawn in an appropriate context. Certainly, having been moved to draw, some class of drawing will exist. The act of drawing will condition my thinking . . . my sense of being. (Drawing is thinking - the thinking eye.) And so on . . . until I begin to draw my next drawing. (This, one suspects, must be true of any act, but let's stick to drawing.) The pencil poised over a blank sheet of paper, this is where drawing begins. So begins the creative act of drawing. And drawing is a creative act. Before there was a drawing there was no drawing.

It's the creative aspects of drawing that I find the most appealing. Above all, as a painter it's drawing with paintbrushes loaded with paint or with any other mark-making means on canvas, or other support, in the prelude to the act of painting, or the combination of both painting and drawing, that transports me most readily through those much paint-bedaubed portals that open to the personal odyssey of the painter.

Paint . . . painting . . . painter . . . ! (In blazing rubrics). In the hands of great painters, the forms and styles of painting and drawing are powerful magical forces greatly to be reckoned with. But back to the act of drawing creatively - as if there was any other kind of drawing - though what exactly this means is not so easy to define, there being such a wide range of interpretation and so many different opinions along with notions of rectitude.

Jean Genet writing of Giacometti in his *Prisoner of Love*, says that, "what he, Alberto, makes is the last image of the world." This final image of the world is eternally unfolding. Time is a folding of eternity. Eternity is now.

The denouement of the future of the world can be, and is, expressed in the creative act of drawing. We draw the world with our eyes. We draw our idea of the world. What the eye draws is conveyed through the nervous system and externalized, into the world, by whichever medium is at hand. Having made this final image of the world, we are now in the position of being able to see what it is we think the world is. See what it is we think we are. See how it is that there is something rather than nothing.

And this something, this drawing, having been made, displays for us the last image of the world as it appeared then and the way it continues to appear in the ongoing now. Say, for example, from the hands of a denizen of the Palaeolithic period (the earliest drawing known to us), right up to present day cyberspace, and so it goes on. In the 35,000 years just spanned in the last sentence (was there something before that?) we see examples of humanity's ingenium evidenced in the creation and recreation of itself (sympathetic or imitative magic?) always as ultimate image in the Eternal Now. A phenomenon appearing to produce something anew, in place of the nothing new, that Murphy's sun, having no alternative, shone upon.

A creative drawing affords us a sense of the last image of the world, as it appears to be, while the drawing is being drawn. The impressionistic sketches decorating a Julian work calendar at the beginning of the previous millennium; a book of hours; marks on a wall from ancient Mesopotamia; an Egyptian tomb or a Mayan temple; Mesoamerican codices; figures on a vase from Greek or Roman times; comic strips; cartoons consisting of animated drawing enacting an impossible tragicomic run-through of a theatre of the absurd. Everything and anything that will give us some idea of what we are not.

The purveyors of art (be it on the grandest scale or of more modest dimension; with or without rectitude) travel in the company of a High Consistory that attempts the impossible, thinks the unthinkable and achieves the incredible. These much vaunted GREATS. All, users of



the simple act of drawing, which, if one be permitted to draw such comparisons, is the basis of all art in one way or another. Herein one finds the whole gambit of creative activity: writers (i.e., poets, philosophers, novelists, playwrights, songwriters); musicians, actors; photographers, film-makers; architects, engineers, cartographers; et cetera, et cetera. All, drawing on the first tentative strokes of an idea for their sketch or draft wherein lies the, as yet, inchoate germinal seed of the last image of the world.

Hey you Guys! . . . always reaching out to a sense of the heroic. Conferring on lesser mortals as communicants, the Host, the stuff of exalted spirit, spilt or splashed, in a range of bleedin' reds and accompanying hues, upon our grey altars of the human condition.

Thus art (and to a greater extent, great art, itself, by times, being barely perceptible as being such the while being made manifest as last image of the world) and artists (often marginalized and disempowered during their own lifetime) contribute to the colouration and texture of our existence as human beings.

Comparisons aside. Drawing in the conventional sense is understood as being the creation of an image through a process of mark-making; ink on paper (paper never refuses ink), or any

appropriate support. Drawn with lead pencil, with paint; drawn with light...with darks; drawing in sand; land drawing; (anything that will serve as a medium for the drawing eye) and as such is a way of expressing an idea: of thinking one's way through ideas.

Drawing can be employed to make an objective interpretation of the subject under scrutiny, as it were, or equally to express subjectively the feelings of the artist apropos the object or motif of their creation (*ad nauseum*). All this aside, it is the form of the drawing as it enters into the nervous system, via the ocular nerve, that gets us first...that excites us the most. Drawing as stylistic arrangements of experience. The medium is the message. The cutting edge of the creative act as it produces the last image of the world.

*Michael Cullen, October 2000*

## Closer

*Nick Miller*

The texts that follow were first published in *CLOSER: Drawings 1993-1999: Before The End* a catalogue to accompany an exhibition at the Rubicon Gallery, Dublin; Art Space Gallery, London; and as part of the Kilkenny Arts Festival in 2000. In this present context they stand alone and hopefully can give some insight into my sense of drawing.

The first text: "Closer: The Anatomy Lesson" refers to a suite of small drawings executed in lithographic crayon at the Royal College of Surgeons, Dublin in 1993, while teaching life drawing through anatomy to ACCS students at Dun Laoghaire College of Art and Design. I brought the students to study there, and as is often the case, found that my best teaching is by example. I lost the teacher in myself and began drawing.

The second text: "Closer: To a New Perspective" refers to a series of large charcoal drawings, measuring five feet by four feet, of family, friends and models. These evolved from 1996-1999 as a largely unconscious response to a powerful sense of 'seeing' experienced in the Anatomy Department. Over the years I had begun to work closer and closer to the subject, until with these drawings I reached the practical limit of physical intimacy and closeness with the person I was drawing.



## Closer: The Anatomy Lesson

I am taken by surprise while teaching; the connection between life and death is not clear. This is a room for science, where bodies are given for the study of Anatomy. I am in a trance at the intimacy with material that is preserved past both life and death; it is out of nature's cycle. Now I am drawing.

I have no pride about my work, just nervous curiosity. Sound seems hollow and the Formaldehyde makes me queasy.

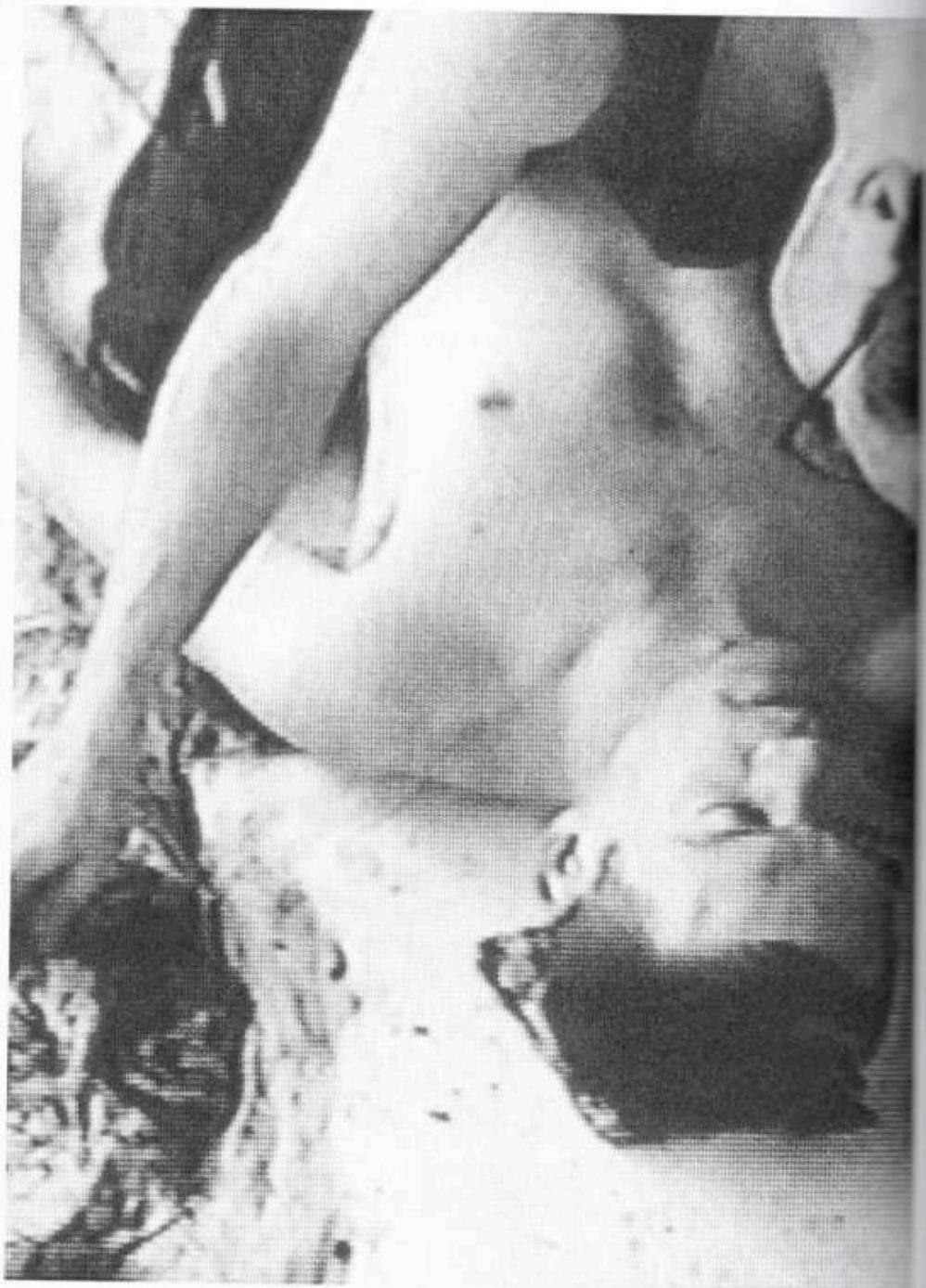
Physical proximity and stillness fire adrenaline, hurrying my freedom to look. There is a strange sense of shrunken scale, perspective feels changed from the surface to the interior and beyond. Something is happening between hand and eye, a heightened concentration that brings clarity. I will remember this feeling.

I will remember the hair follicles and the painted nails.

Leaving I return to life, struggling with learning and awkwardly facing into painting people, I feel dissatisfied with distance. Unconsciously in the studio I begin to move closer, as if I am short-sighted and cannot find focus.

These small drawings make a big black hole in my mind, art is sucked in and lost. Since then, drawing is different; looking for a momentary sensation, an almost physical connection to the subject; a life-line of energy out of the void.

I return another time to anatomy, but this time my curiosity feels morbid, there is no energy. Going underground to where the bodies are stored, it is impossible not to connect back in history with the weight of death. It overwhelms me. Living in this time of endless fracture, it is not easy to comprehend a relationship to history. But I begin to understand something of a cyclical order, of how all things come to an end to begin again.



## **Close to a new perspective**

Ideas leave me cold.

I thought drawing you across the room, naked and draped on that couch would be enough to wake me up. But I have become stuck behind the easel, distanced and wooden.

Before the end of the century, take me out of Formaldehyde, take me into nature - I am starting to learn a different sort of knowledge.

This is not science.

I say it is about learning, but it is also about hunger and desire. Somewhere there is an ambition to make a drawing.

I began working with people for company, to try and face my connection; to see what I know, and to be known - I want to shift the balance from art to life. In the studio, space is made, time is out and I am travelling.

Form and flesh are important, even central, but energy is the nearest description of a subject - I need to be closer to see who I am with you.

Because I am too far away.

*If you lie there on the paper while I trace around your body....to mark your position.....now... just move over to the left a few inches, you can rest your head on this small cushion...relax if you can, I'll put on some music.....I am going to kneel across your body like this.....(laughter).... and start drawing with my face directly above yours.....I hope it will not take long.*

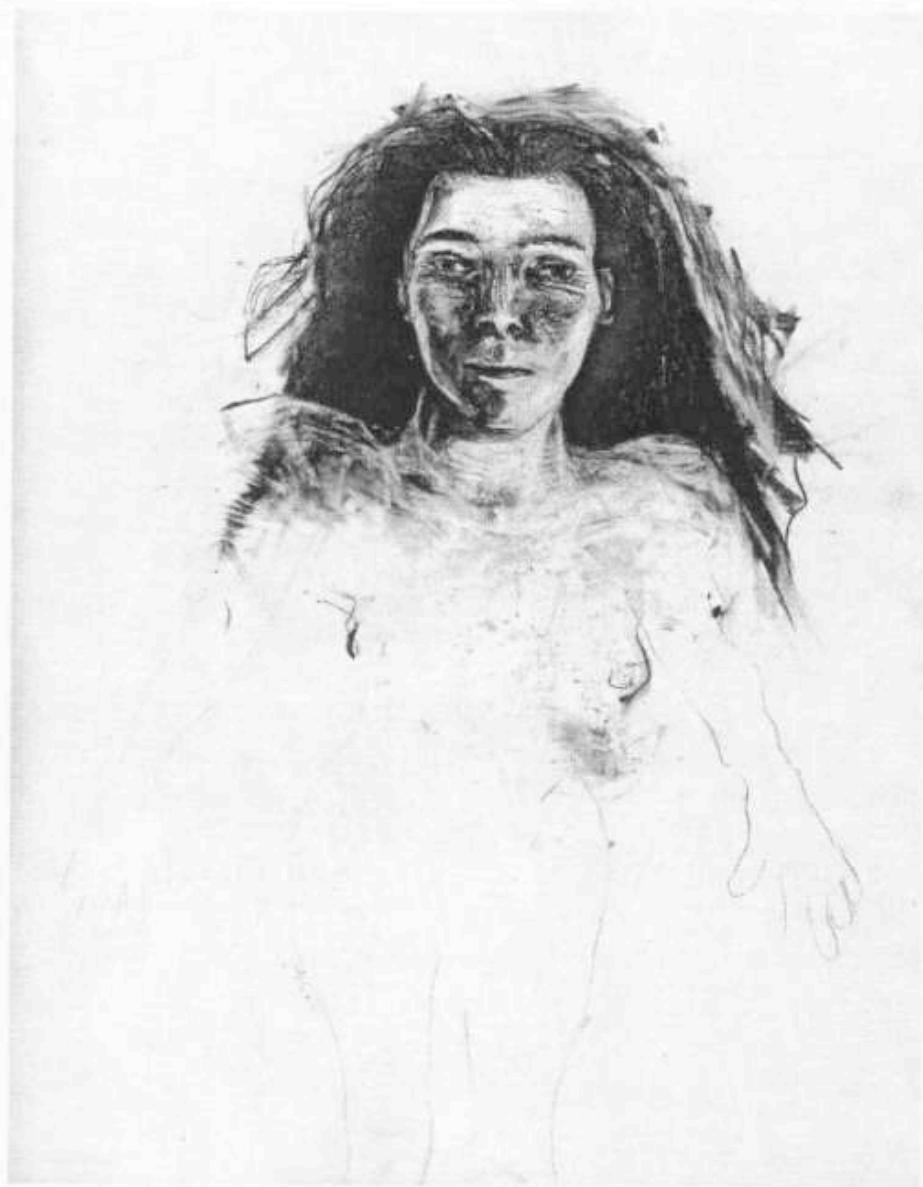
To make you present.

Remembering the anatomy lesson - something is revealed.

*Nick Miller, 1999*

*Drawings: "Before The End", Co. Sligo, 1996 - 1999.*





## Drawn to that Moment

*John Berger*

When my father died recently, I did several drawings of him in his coffin. Drawings of his face and head.

There is a story about Kokoschka teaching a life class. The students were uninspired. So he spoke to the model and instructed him to pretend to collapse. When he had fallen over, Kokoschka rushed over to him, listened to his heart and announced to the shocked students that he was dead. A little afterwards the model got to his feet and resumed the pose. "Now draw him," said Kokoschka, "as though you were aware that he was alive and not dead!"

One can imagine that the students, after this theatrical experience, drew with more verve. Yet to draw the truly dead involves an even greater sense of urgency. What you are drawing will never be seen again, by you or anybody else. In the whole course of time past and time to come, this moment is unique: the last opportunity to draw what will never again be visible, which has occurred once and which will never reoccur.

Because the faculty of sight is continuous, because visual categories (red, yellow, dark, thick, thin) remain constant, and because so many things appear to remain in place, one tends to forget that the visual is always the result of an unrepeatable, momentary encounter. Appearances, at any given moment, are a construction emerging from the debris of everything which has previously appeared. It is something like this that I understand in those words of Cézanne which so often come back to me: "One minute in the life of the world is going by. Paint it as it is."

Beside my father's coffin I summoned such skills as I have as a draughtsman, to apply it directly to the task in hand. I say directly because often skill in drawing expresses itself as a manner, and then its application to what is being drawn is indirect. Mannerism - in the general rather than the art-historical sense - comes from the need to invent urgency, to produce an 'urgent' drawing, instead of submitting to the urgency of what is. Here I was using my small

skill to save a likeness, as a lifesaver uses his much greater skill as a swimmer to save a life. People talk of freshness of vision, of the intensity of seeing for the first time, but the intensity of seeing for the last time is, I believe, greater. Of all that I could see only the drawing would remain. I was the last ever to look on the face I was drawing. I wept whilst I strove to draw with complete objectivity.

As I drew his mouth, his brows, his eyelids, as their specific forms emerged with lines from the whiteness of the paper, I felt the history and the experience which had made them as they were. His life was now as finite as the rectangle of paper on which I was drawing, but within it, in a way infinitely more mysterious than any drawing, his character and destiny had emerged. I was making a record and his face was already only a record of his life. Each drawing then was nothing but the site of a departure.

They remained. I looked at them and found that they resembled my father. Or, more strictly, that they resembled him as he was when dead. Nobody could ever mistake these drawings as ones of an old man sleeping. Why not? I ask myself. And the answer, I think, is in the way they are drawn. Nobody would draw a sleeping man with such objectivity. About this quality there is finality. Objectivity is what is left when something is finished.

I chose one drawing to frame and hang on the wall in front of the table at which I work. Gradually and consistently the relationship of his drawing to my father changed - or changed for me.

There are several ways of describing the change. The content of the drawing increased. The drawing, instead of marking the site of a departure, began to mark the site of an arrival. The forms, drawn, filled out. The drawing became the immediate locus of memories of my father. The drawing was no longer deserted but inhabited. For each form, between the pencil marks and the white paper they marked, there was now a door through which moments of a life could enter: the drawing, instead of being simply an object of perception, with one face, had moved forward and become double-faced, and worked like a filter: from behind, it drew out my memories of the past whilst, forwards, it projected an image which, unchanging, was becoming increasingly familiar. My father came back to give the image of his death mask a kind of life.

If I look at the drawing now I scarcely see the face of a dead

man; instead I see aspects of my father's life. Yet if somebody from the village came in, he would only see the drawing of a death mask. It is still unmistakably that. The change which has taken place is subjective. Yet, in a more general sense, if such a subjective process did not exist, neither would drawings.

The advent of the cinema and television means that we now define drawings (or paintings) as static images. What we often overlook is that their virtue, their very function, depended on this. The need to discover the camera, and the instantaneous or moving image, arose for many different reasons but it was not in order to improve on the static image, or, if it was presented in those terms, it was only because the meaning of the static image had been lost. In the nineteenth century when social time became unilinear, vectorial and regularly exchangeable, the instant became the maximum which could be grasped or preserved. The plate camera and the pocket watch, the reflex camera and the wrist-watch, are twin inventions. A drawing or a painting presupposes another view of time.

Any image - like the image read from the retina - records an appearance that will disappear. The faculty of sight developed as an active response to continually changing contingencies. The more it developed, the more complex the set of appearances it could construct from events. (An event in itself has no appearances.) Recognition is an essential part of this construction. And recognition depends upon the phenomenon of reappearance sometimes occurring in the ceaseless flux of disappearance. Thus, if appearances, at any given moment, are a construction emerging from the debris of all that has previously appeared, it is understandable that this very construction may give birth to the idea that everything will one day be recognizable, and the flux of disappearance cease. Such an idea is more than a personal dream; it has supplied the energy for a large part of human culture. For example: the story triumphs over oblivion; music offers a centre; the drawing challenges disappearance.

What is the nature of this challenge? A fossil also 'challenges' disappearance, but the challenge is meaningless. A photograph challenges disappearance, but its challenge is different from that of the fossil or the drawing.

The fossil is the result of random chance. The photographed image has been selected for preservation. The drawn image contains the experience of looking. A photograph is evidence of an encounter between event and photographer. A drawing slowly questions an event's appearance and in doing so reminds us that appearances are always a construction with a history. (Our aspirations towards objectivity can only proceed from the admission of subjectivity.) We use photographs by taking them with us, in our lives, our arguments, our memories; it is we who move them. Whereas a drawing or a painting forces us to stop and enter its time. A photograph is static because it has stopped time. A drawing or painting is static because it encompasses time.

I should perhaps explain here why I make a certain distinction between drawings and paintings. Drawings reveal the process of their own making, their own looking, more clearly. The imitative facility of a painting often acts as a disguise - i.e. what it refers to becomes more impressive than the reason for referring to it. Great paintings are not disguised in this way. But even a third-rate drawing reveals the process of its own creation.

How does a drawing or a painting encompass time? What does it hold in its stillness? A drawing is more than a memento - a device for bringing back memories of time past. The 'space' that my drawing offers for my father's return into it is quite distinct from that offered by a letter from him, an object owned by him or, as I have tried to explain, a photograph of him. And here it is incidental that I am looking at a drawing which I drew myself. An equivalent drawing by anybody else would offer the same 'space'.

To draw is to look, examining the structure of appearances. A drawing of a tree shows, not a tree, but a tree-being-looked-at. Whereas the sight of a tree is registered almost instantaneously, the examination of the sight of a tree (a-tree-being-looked-at) not only takes minutes or hours instead of a fraction of a second, it also involves, derives from, and refers back to, much previous experience of looking. Within the instant of the sight of a tree is established a life experience. This is how the act of drawing refuses the process of disappearances and proposes the simultaneity of a multitude of moments. From each glance a drawing assembles little evidence, but it consists of the evidence of many glances

which can be seen together. On one hand, there is no sight in nature which is as unchanging as that of a drawing or painting. On the other hand, what is unchanging in a drawing consists of so many assembled moments that they constitute a totality rather than a fragment. The static image of a drawing or a painting is the result of the opposition of two dynamic processes. Disappearances opposed by assemblage. If, for diagrammatic convenience, one accepts the metaphor of time as a flow, a river, then the act of drawing, by driving upstream, achieves the stationary.

Vermeer's view of Delft across the canal displays this as no theoretical explanation ever can. The painted moment has remained (almost) unchanged for three centuries. The reflections in the water have not moved. Yet this painted moment, as we look at it, has a plenitude and actuality that we experience only rarely in life. We experience everything we see in the painting as absolutely momentary. At the same time the experience is repeatable the next day or in ten years. It would be naive to suppose that this has to do with accuracy: Delft at any given moment never looked like this painting. It has to do with the density per square millimetre of Vermeer's looking, with the density per square millimetre of assembled moments.

As a drawing, the drawing above my table is unremarkable. But it works in accord with the same hopes and principles which have led men to draw for thousands of years. It works because from being a site of departure, it has become a site of arrival.

Every day more of my father's life returns to the drawing in front of me.

*John Berger, 1976*

"Drawn to that Moment" was first published in *New Society*, 8th July 1976, and was reprinted in *The White Bird*, The Hogarth Press, London 1988.



## Growth By Drawing

*Bernadette Kiely*

The kitchen table, my father, my sister, my brother. They are all drawing, I am drawing. We are drawing with blue biro on pages from my mother's writing pad, small blue sheets with lines. It is 1963. I am five years old. My father is drawing a horse, more horses, racing past the winning post. My brother is drawing horses. I don't know what my sister is drawing. I am drawing people, little people, a little family.... I am trying to draw a horse, my father is good at horses..... and faces like my mother's.

My father says, how do you know you are here?.... this might be a dream... the dream might be real and this might be the dream....

I grasp my arm.... how do I know I am here? I am frightened.... I feel alone.... of course I am here.... I can feel my arm, I kick the leg of the table.... I am here, I know I am here....

I am eleven, I stay up to watch the first landing on the moon.... it is fantastic.... I can see where I am in the universe. They are there and we are here... my god, I am so amazed.

I am still eleven.... my father is drawing a plan.... he is building a back-kitchen. I am drawing a plan.... I add onto the plan.... I put in bedrooms, a sitting-room, a hallway, bathrooms, I get really excited by this.... I begin drawing plans of houses, houses a lot bigger than my house.... my father brings home a Scandinavian or American cedarwood house catalogue.... I pore over it.... I love it.... the houses are fantastic, like nothing I have ever seen. I spend hours drawing plans..... I look at the book and see how they draw the windows, the way they show the doors, open always..... I draw and draw... families.... happy families, I draw the mother, the father and give them eight children, I give them all names..... I draw plans of houses.... big houses where these fantasy families will live.... trees and gardens.... I live in my own world of my own creation. I never think about drawing.....

I am 16. My boyfriend is training to be a draughtsman. He is able to draw real plans of real houses. He brings me blueprints....

they are fantastic..... so big, the paper is lovely.... I look at all the architectural words, down-pipes, sumps, cavity walls.... I look at the elevations, the two storey elevations.... the back, the front.... they are fantastic.... I love them.

I am 17. I apply for college, I put down my two choices.. No.1 Art and Design, No. 2 Architecture. I get my first choice. We draw from the model. It is hard work. I have never looked close. I have always made up my own. I've never thought about drawing. I've always just done it. It's just been a way for me to create my own worlds. I look around. I see people's drawings. They are really good. Mine are awful. I can't draw. I go into graphic design. I can draw. I can draw my ideas. This is better.

I am 19. I am in New York. I am working for an architect/designer. He is one of the designers of the Air and Space Museum in Washington DC. He is fantastic. I make blueprints on the machine.... now I know how they are made.... I paste and cut. I go to Washington to see the Air and Space Museum. It is so fantastic. I see the lunar modules. I am fascinated by space travel.

I am 21. I work in London. In a graphic design company. I cut and paste. I draw a little. I can't draw. I am in Dublin, laying out magazines. I draw a little. My illustrations are terrible. I go to life drawing classes at Trinity College. I draw from the model. My drawings are wooden. I hate them. There is no teacher.

Shem says, look in the mirror.... draw what you see....I look in the mirror.... I draw what I think..... I look in the mirror.... I draw what I see.... I compare the drawings.... My god, there is no comparison.... I can see.... I go back to college.... I draw from the model.... I can see better. I finish my Diploma.

1985. My baby daughter is asleep. I begin to paint. I love it.

1986. I am 27. I begin to teach drawing. I know very little about it. I draw from the model. I learn... I draw, I draw... I never paint from the model.

I draw plans of houses, extensions... extensions.... I draw plans for big houses. I constantly draw plans for extensions.... I never think about these drawings... I just do them... whenever anyone mentions building on.... as they do a lot.... I say... I'll draw it for you. It's not hard work.... I don't have to look.... I just use my imagination.... I never measure...

1993. I think I am able to draw... I use line well. I teach by looking. I take a course in drawing.... a two week intensive workshop. The teacher says you are *entrenched*.... I say I am *not entrenched*.... he says you are not using your gift... I think, what does he mean? I eventually think I see what he means.... I am not looking close enough. I am relying too much on my imagination. I draw, I look, I draw, I look.... I go out into the landscape and draw..... I draw portraits... I look close.... focus....draw....think.... don't think.... focus.... I draw fields, trees, flowers, leaves, clouds, figures.... I draw with my eye..... I draw water, the river.... I hardly look at the page anymore, I draw by eye.... I use both my hands.... my hands are but a tool for my eyes.

Summer 2000. I am at the Slade School of Fine Art in London. The course is Experimental Drawing. I don't know what it is going to be like.... the brochure says... time ... space.... identity... relationships.... my plan is to gain some precision in my drawing. There are two models.... I don't want to draw from the models.... I don't want to draw people, groups of people.... haven't I done enough of that? I do want to deal with space.... but... it's such hard work..... I resist....I resist....I begin..... to use the model as an activity point.... an energy source.... I embark on a 'space programme'. I begin to map out from the model... I have to measure... I really have to measure..... I decide to make a plan of the room. I start a drawing of the room, two rooms... I decide to draw everything in it.... the easels... the paper... the feet as they walk in and out... the chairs, the stools.... I think I will draw the legs of the chairs and the legs of the easels at the point where they touch the floor. I begin.... I am forced to draw upwards in order to locate the objects in space... the drawing grows.... it becomes confused. I erase....I erase...I distil....I eliminate.... I measure, measure, measure... I keep turning.... according as I turn the location shifts and I am constantly erasing and redrawing.... the drawing becomes my map of the map of the room.... I am in the centre.... the drawing grows... and grows and I know that to rely on my eye is good.... but it is also good to measure. By measuring I experience again how subjective and how restless my eye is..... my way of drawing is draw..erase...draw..shift...draw..shift again... I am forced to measure... and to become somewhat more precise....

For the first time in my life I pay attention to my drawing of a plan.... a plan within a plan, and families...relationships between families of objects and people in space.... I didn't just do it.... I thought about it, really hard...

Like my father I sometimes still wonder how I know if I am really here. The activity of drawing, no matter where I am, or how I am, makes it possible for me not only to make a connection with my own reality, but also to take myself to places of my own creation that cannot be done in the same way by any other activity.

*Bernadette Kiely, July 2000*



# **Art Therapy in Drawing**

## **Up, Out, In The Beginning, Together and Down**

*Rupert Cracknell*

### **Drawing up and out**

The action of drawing on the paper can be seen as one of 'drawing up and out' of the inner image from the unconscious. Therefore the drawing can represent, for the therapist and non-therapist alike, a compelling object, of which 'Herr Professor' knows, through his diagnostic system, the real meaning of the images.

This idea that images are to be drawn up and out of somewhere is well described by Mary Watkins in her paper *Six Approaches to the Image in Art Therapy*<sup>1</sup>.

In 1. she shows how the image if related to diagnostically belongs to the clinician rather than to the patient. In 2. she points to the view that relates to the image as potentially dangerous. This view holds that we should be circumspect about whose unconscious we encourage to draw images up and out from. In 3. the image is beckoned via the therapist to be healed, and in 4. the image is to be analytically interpreted in order that the latent meaning can be revealed.

In her two final approaches she sees the image and its possible meanings as belonging to its creator.

### **In the begining etc.**

Whatever else drawing is, it is the genesis of the work. Drawing precedes other aspects of art-making - from the creating of paintings and buildings, to films. Drawing like the possible doodle in the sand or mud of several millennia past, plays an essential part in getting all manner of things started.

I see little distinction between drawing and painting, and see painting as drawing on yet a broader scale. In the same sense we can look at all human action in the world as a form of unconscious

drawing. The conscious aspect of the action is associated with the name, for example, agriculture and architecture are two of the many ways we humans 'draw' on the fabric of the world.

Looking at drawing specifically, as a particular area or discipline, we can see how it becomes associated with analytical thinking as embodied in the use of the pointed tool. The use of which defines, points and lines in space at a fundamental level, bringing awareness to one side of something from the other, forming the basis of any concept of space.

If drawing was used in the development of the understanding of division and analysis it has equally held the perception and understanding of relationship between things in interdependent space, as manifested in the awareness of the space in-between.

### Drawing together

*Drawing and painting together* has emerged as an aspect of art therapy practice which has not received much attention in art therapy literature.

There are a number of forms of drawing and painting together, one being art-making as a group. This is probably the most familiar to art therapists and students of art therapy, as it plays a central role in the training. This way of working is also sometimes used in clinical settings. Another form is, in individual and group art therapy, where the art therapist works on art-making alongside or in parallel to the patients' art-making process. A third form would be where the art therapist works with the patient on a shared piece of art-making.

These ways of working, apart from the first, have not been taught in art therapy training courses and are used to a lesser extent and by experienced art therapists.

One of the difficulties associated with the two latter ways of working is the concern that the art therapist's ability to 'attend to the needs of the patient' may be compromised by a loss of awareness of transference and counter transference material, through the art therapist being absorbed in his own art making.

My view is that of course the point is valid, the more so if we view 'attending to' as an absolute state. This needs to be taken on board, whatever form our practice takes. Art therapy in Britain

has, at times, and particularly in the beginning, emphasized the value of trainees coming from a background of art training, in the belief that the intimate knowledge of art-making, as a process of 'attending to images' thus gained, would benefit art therapy practice.

To work in the way that I am describing might be said to require a change or development of the idea of the 'artist attending to the image', towards the art therapist 'attending to' the other and his image through the art therapist's own art-making.

I did drawings in the 1990s alongside patients' art-making in both individual and group settings. This does not stand as a research project, due to the pressure of working in the N.H.S in Britain during the nineties, when no research time was available. It is my belief based on the experience of working in this way that I was helped to both attend to my patients' process and needs. A further quality of this style of working is the recognition of the intimacy of working therapeutically through this form of mutuality.

The three images accompanying this text show different stages in a joint drawing made this summer by Richard Lanham, an art therapist and lecturer, and myself. He speaks about this in the following passage:

#### **The Emerging Image**

In a poem called *Ego Dominus Tuus*, W.B.Yeats gives us a vision of what some of us have come to call art therapy:

*By the help of an image  
I call to my own opposite, summon all  
That I have handled least, least looked upon.*

He goes on to criticize a culture that avoids this:

*We have ...lost the old nonchalance of the hand;  
Whether we have chosen chisel, pen or brush,  
We are but critics, or but half create,  
Timid, entangled, empty and abashed...*

In exploring process, in seeking to get deeper into what happens when a 'nonchalant' hand picks up the brush, I have developed a practice of

photographing art work at frequent intervals during its execution. Some of the work has been done blindfolded, an idea initially inspired by a suggestion that some of the early cave paintings in deep caves may have been painted in the dark, thus reliant entirely on gesture in their execution.

This drawing together with Rupert Cracknell arose within the context of discussions about our interest in art therapy process and our desire to engage more publicly with these issues within the profession. It begins blindfolded and is then developed without the blindfolds. During this latter period I found myself mainly preoccupied with images of horses, the indication of muzzles can be seen in the lower right area of the picture. Rupert afterwards spoke of seeing these too, but what struck both of us after we had finished (and we had agreed to finish after an arbitrary number of photographs) was what he initially described as the 'screaming pixie' towards the top left. Neither of us had seen it at all as we were working, but once seen, it dominated the picture for us both. This image terrifies, yet as I stay with it I find in its dark shadows a strangely benign, compassionate warmth and understanding. As we drew towards the end of our discussion the figure shouted loud and clear in relation to our earlier discussion about writing about or exhibiting the process; "Get on with it, Just do it!" What particularly fascinates me here is not so much this capacity of the image to speak to us and to thus engage in our concerns, this to me is relatively familiar. What really fascinates me is the way in which this image emerged unbeknown to either of us. Looking back throughout the photo series, it seems to me that an indication of a face with a pointy hat is there from photo no. 6 onwards (i.e. beginning when we were still blindfolded). The 'badge' on the hat is clearly there, a suggestion of eyes, and, though changing, other facial features can be seen. Now of course, I may be 'projecting' and I certainly have the benefit of hindsight, but I want at least to suggest that this experience may indicate something about the way in which images emerge, something about their insistence, their determination to emerge no matter what we do.

A.A.Milne seems to speak of this as Rabbit quizzes Pooh (the 'bear of very little brain') about his musical compositions:

"...Did you make that song up?"

"Well, I sort of made it up," said Pooh. "It isn't brain," he went on humbly, "because You Know Why, Rabbit; but it comes to me sometimes."

"Ah!" said Rabbit, who never let things come to him, but always went and fetched them.

Richard Lanham, October 2000.

Drawing and painting together has emerged as a way of working in art therapy, since the early sixties. I believe that it can be thought about as being as central to art therapy as transference is to psychotherapy. In an art therapy session, even where there is only one person engaged in art making, there are potentially, two minds attending to the process of the emerging image. This distinguishes art therapy, in which art work is created, from psychotherapy to which art work may be taken.

### **Drawing down**

Therapy, despite the primary intention, of exploring the depth of human experience, often concerns itself with the level of the persona concerning its struggles to exist and maintain and fulfil its desires, while at the same time avoiding its fears in an impermanent world.

As Hillman points to in his book *The Dream and the Underworld*<sup>2</sup>:

*Narcissism does not account for Narcissus and even falsifies the story. Narcissus does not know that it is his own body he sees in the pool. He believes that he is looking at the beautiful form of another being. So it is not self-love of his 'own' image (narcissism), but the love for a vision that is at once body, image, and reflection. .... Hadot..... Connects Narcissus with Dionysos and Persephone because of the "chthonic" elements (moisture, narcotic drowsiness, death) in his character. I would add, the chthonic essence of "narcissism" is further revealed in the single importance given to the image, which takes one into the depths.*

Through our narcissistic preoccupations we may miss the call of the 'drawing down' of the image to the depths of dream and the underworld. The history of art making can serve as the original inspiration for the ideas contained within art therapy about 'process' as away of working through, on, and by images. Art therapy, as we all have, has been helped by all the so called 'movements' in art, whether of this or that 'ism', inside or outside of the favoured canon, they have made all marks possible. Freed from ideology our marks are neither right nor wrong.

Yet I sometimes feel when viewing the current tide of the art world that I seem to be washed up on a 'shocking shore', littered with thin and thick conceptual debris, mixed defensibly with transcendent

abstraction, all viewed against the desired minimal background.

Of course there are always the new incoming and outgoing tides out of which, and into which, the compelling images, pulling down, speak.

I have not head-lined the concept of 'process' since by its nature,  
process is there and not there,  
yet it is

the central inspiration to the soul spirit of art therapy,  
as seen in evolving and expanding images.

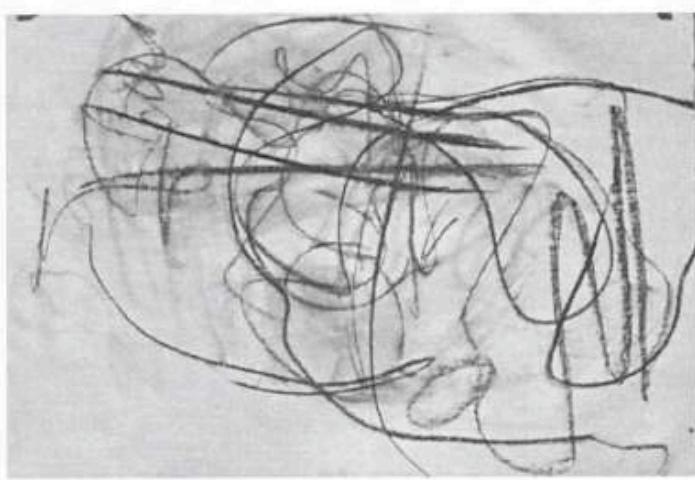
Process has one of its origins in the art makers'  
experience of the working surface;  
working across and back around in up and out  
down always down  
from the cataclysmic to the touchingly gentle  
in the beginning and through-out.

We are brought down  
by the gravity of the soul's need  
to the coincidence and continuity  
of endings and beginings  
with the conviction of certain  
uncertainty.

*Rupert Cracknell, October 2000  
with a passage by Richard Lanham*

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*Three stages of a joint drawing by: Rupert Cracknell and Richard Lanharn.*

## Taking a Lion for a Walk

*Michael Kane*

One takes drawing so much for granted that to write about it seems slightly odd, if not absurd (like most theory) - which will probably be the case in the following instance.

Drawing is the quintessence of pleasure and, for that reason, of subversion. The mother's sneery sigh, "Always ddrawin'!", and the teacher's explosive, sex-suppressed rage at the doodles in the schoolboy's copybook (pubescent evocations of arsey females) are philistinisms that have to be resisted to allow the biology of aesthetics to have its head.

The provocation to lust has always been the sharpest stimulus to drawing. The oldest drawings known to us, on the walls of cliffs in Africa and caves in Europe, are sex-inspired and sex-inciting. Giacomo Manzu, the favourite artist of the late Pope John XXIII, made his best drawings in what they suggest was a brothel.

The earliest pleasure known to the child, after the satisfactions of the breast, is the satisfaction of the scribble, the magic creation of a chaotic image on a surface that becomes a world to be filled with a dynamic drama of kinetic energy. The child sees no separation between his own actions and the turbulence they describe. He is part of the drama created; he grunts and grimaces like a lover, lunges like a rapist.

Similarly, in the drawings of the mentally ill, the pencil becomes a magic wand in the service of the ego, fending off the threats that continually afflict the psyche. What is equally powerful in this context is the urgency, the need for speed that drawing allows for, in order to record as quickly as possible the scenes of nightmare and hallucination that invade the mind of the sufferer, so as to have power over them and hold the world together in the face of their destructive force.<sup>1</sup>

The act of drawing in its infantile/psychotic expression unconsciously embodies the imagined rites that accompanied the worship of Dionysus, so graphically described in Thomas Mann's *Death in Venice* through Aschenbach's fearful dream:

"Foam dripped from their lips, they drove each other on with lewd gesturings and beckoning hands. They laughed, they howled, they thrust their pointed staves into each other's flesh and licked the blood as it ran down...."<sup>12</sup>

Like a dream, the primeval bursts into the waking life of the child, or the psychotic, who forcefully enact a kind of orgy. The twin realities of biological life, sex and death, are already implicit in drawing from the beginning.

Paul Klee says: "I begin logically with chaos, that is the most natural.....chaos is an unordered state of things, a confusion. "Cosmogenetically" speaking, it is a mythical, primordial state of the world, from which the ordered cosmos develops..."<sup>13</sup>

The life class and (of old) the antique room set out to tame the primordial and impose a sense of classical order on the seething instincts within. The skills developed are used in later life (by those who are honest) to depict or imply the erotic. In the case of Hans Bellmer everything becomes phallic, with Egon Schiele, almost everything, with late Picasso the female genitalia predominate.

The very nature of the drawn line, with its capacity to cavort and pirouette, is inherently sensual; it invades the space of the drawn-on surface with the same abandon as a wanton couple invades the space of a room.

Blake speaks (I seem to remember) of "the lineaments of...desire". Desire permeates the drawn image. Drawing is invocation. Bacon enhances news photographs with a drawn overlay that releases the erotic impulses intrinsic to the original and reveals the motif: a batsman's bum, a boxer's balls.

"When a linear form is combined with a plane form the linear part takes on a decidedly active character and the plane a passive character in contrast." (Klee)<sup>4</sup>

Drawing itself is an act of genesis according to Klee, its actions:

scribbling, hatching, scratching, rubbing, pricking, jabbing, hacking; the tool, whatever it is, gliding, floating, diving, driving, rearing, falling, plunging, pushing, pulling, dragging, drifting, pressing, loosening, holding, releasing....not so much a ritual, as a frenzy, not so much a dance, as a set of actions that could equally accomodate a murder.

Taken productively the.....process signifies growth.....taken destructively, death." (Klee)<sup>5</sup>

The scribbled lines and linear outlines of Klee's landscape drawings of 1910/12 foreshadow the boldly abstracted planes of the paintings of twenty years later: another meaning for his "act of genesis", for the mysterious, protracted morphological evolution of the drawn image.

Cracks on a ceiling, stains on a wall, peeling paint on an old mews door, cement patches outlined on the pavement: random, fortuitous studies, involuntary impregnations. Grosz found the "obscene" grafitti of public lavatories more honest than the drawings of the Masters.<sup>6</sup> In pursuit of the subversive he drew himself in tableaux that the snooty see fit to call pornographic. The pornographic belongs properly to the sacred. Prior to the rise of the puritanical regimes inaugurated by the great authoritarian religions (resisted by Hinduism) the sacred was humane and embraced all natural activity and aspiration - and quintessentially, desire.

The Greeks embodied desire in a sophisticated system of iconography. Their most delicate expressions of human instinct are now included in compilations of "erotic" art. Their frank celebration of physicality has survived the onslaughts of centuries of sensual repression and can now be enjoyed not only as a subtle turn-on, but as drawing.

According to Sandford Schwartz (New York Review of Books, June 15, 2000) Fairfield Porter - who was a very different kind of painter - thought of the American Abstract Expressionists as "continuing where Monet and Vuillard left off", because (he thought) they had dispensed with drawing, whereas, it seems equally plausible that what they were doing, whether consciously or otherwise, was returning to the great primordial frenzy that gave rise to drawing in the first place. We may add "dripping" and

"splashing" to our lexicon of terms describing the act of drawing and, in the case of certain other practitioners, "slashing". What we envisage in this twentieth century return to source is not, we suspect, predicated in Klee's erudite deliberations on the primordial genetics of line and plane, but in a funny kind of way, it fits in with the remarkable prophetic propensity of this Swiss shamen. Could it be that, all along, it was not a line he was taking for a walk, but a lion?

*Michael Kane, August 2000*

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1. See Nils Lindhagen, *Hill Redivivus* (catalogue) and *Carl Fredrik Hill*, Malmö, Konsthall, 1976.
2. Thomas Mann, *Death in Venice* p. 76, Penguin, 1985.
3. Paul Klee, *Notebooks*, Vol. 1, p. 9
4. Paul Klee, *Notebooks*, Vol. 1, p. 7
5. Paul Klee, *Notebooks*, Vol. 1, p. 7
6. *"I copied the folkloristic drawings in lavatories; they seemed to me the most direct expression and translation of strong sensations."*  
From: "Die Kunst ist in Gefahr", Wieland Herzfelde and George Grosz, quoted in *George Grosz*, Hans Hess, Studio Vista, 1974.







... a project to produce new types of organic  
and inorganic materials to enhance the



## **Line's Odyssey**

*for Dave Lilburn*

*Ciaran O'Driscoll*

These are outhouses poised for flight  
or tense with a force about  
to spring. The country  
bustles like the city,  
and everything shouts its origins  
in lines that will not rest  
until the thrumming energy  
of stillness is manifest.

This is line's odyssey  
through colour's archipelago,  
marks on paper that condescend  
to wear the temporary mantle  
of what's to hand,  
shape-shifting in their elemental  
permanence to become  
a swollen stream, trees in a circle  
of seasons, dockland;  
to feed the wiry strength of marshgrass  
or cut cranes down to size, fatten to pregnancy, midwife birth.

Equal to anything on earth,  
marks that remain themselves in all.

*Ciaran O'Driscoll, 1991*

## Drawing on Paper

*John Berger*

I still sometimes have a dream in which I am my present age with grown up children and newspaper editors on the telephone, and in which nevertheless I have to leave and pass nine months of the year in the school to which I was sent as a boy. As an adult, I think of these months as an early form of exile, but it never occurs to me in the dream to refuse to go. In life I left that school when I was sixteen. The war was on and I went to London. Amongst the debris of bomb sites and between the sirens of the air-raid warnings, I had a single idea: I wanted to draw naked women. All day long.

I was accepted in an art school - there was not a lot of competition, for nearly everyone over eighteen was in the services - and I drew in the daytime and I drew in the evenings. There was an exceptional teacher in the art school at that time - an elderly painter, a refugee from fascism named Bernard Meninsky. He said very little and his breath smelt of dill pickles. On the same imperial sheet of paper (paper was rationed; we had two sheets a day), beside my clumsy, unstudied, impetuous drawing, Bernard Meninsky would boldly draw a part of the model's body in such a way as to make its endlessly subtle structure and movement clearer. After he had stood up and gone, I would spend the next ten minutes dumbfounded, continuously looking from his drawing to the model and vice versa.

Thus I learnt to question with my eyes a little more probingly the mysteries of anatomy and of love, whilst outside in the night sky, audibly, RAF fighters were crossing the city to intercept the approaching German bombers before they reached the coast. The ankle of the foot on which her weight was posed was vertically under the dimple of her throat - directly vertical.

Recently I was in Istanbul. There I asked my friends if they could arrange for me to meet the writer Latife Tekin. I had read a few translated extracts from two novels she had written about life in the shanty towns on the edge of the city. And the little I had read had deeply impressed me by its imagination and authenticity. She must herself have been brought up in a shanty town. My friends arranged a dinner and Latife came. I do not speak Turkish and so

naturally they offered to interpret. She was sitting beside me. Something made me say to my friends, "No, don't bother, we'll manage somehow."

The two of us looked at each other with some suspicion. In another life I might have been an elderly police superintendent interrogating a pretty, shifty, fierce woman of thirty repeatedly picked up for larceny. In fact, in this our only life we were both storytellers without a word in common. All we had were our powers of observation, our habits of narration, our Aesopian sadness. The suspicion between us gave way to shyness.

I took out a notebook and did a drawing of myself as one of her readers. She drew a boat upside down to show she couldn't draw. I turned the paper around so it was the right way up. She made a drawing to show that her drawn boats always sank. I said there were birds at the bottom of the sea. She said there was an anchor in the sky. (Like everybody else, we were drinking raki.) Then she told me a story about the municipal bulldozers destroying the houses built in the night. I told her about an old woman who lived in a van. The more we drew, the quicker we understood. In the end, we were laughing at our own speed - even when the stories we told were monstrous or sad. She took a walnut and, dividing it in two, held it up to say, Halves of the same brain! Then somebody put on some Bektasi music and the company began to dance.

In the summer of 1916, Picasso drew on a page of a middle-sized sketchbook the torso of a nude woman. It is neither one of his invented figures - it hasn't enough bravura - nor a figure drawn from life - it hasn't enough of the idiosyncrasy of the immediate.

The face of the woman is unrecognizable, for the head is scarcely indicated. Yet the torso is also like a face. It has a familiar expression. A face of love becomes hesitant or sad. The drawing is quite distinct in feeling from the others in the same sketchbook. The other drawings play rough games with cubist or neo-classical devices, some looking back on the previous still-life period, others preparing the way for the harlequin themes he would take up the following year when he did the decor for the ballet *Parade*. The torso of the woman is very fragile.

Usually Picasso drew with such verve and such directness that every scribble reminds you of the act of drawing and of the pleasure of that act. It is this which makes his drawings insolent. Even the weeping faces of the *Guernica* period or the skulls he drew during the German occupation possess an insolence. They know no servitude. The act of drawing is triumphant.

The drawing in question is an exception. Half-drawn - for Picasso didn't continue on it for long - half woman, half vase; half seen as by Ingres, half seen as by a child; the apparition of the figure counts for far more than the act of drawing. It is she, not the draughtsman, who insists, insists by her very tentativeness.

My hunch is that in Picasso's imagination this drawing belonged somewhere to Eva Gouel. She had died only six months before of tuberculosis. They had lived together - Eva and Picasso - for four years. Into his now-famous cubist still lifes he had inserted and painted her name, transforming austere canvases into love letters. JOLIE EVA. Now she was dead and he was living alone. The image lies on the paper as in a memory.

This hesitant torso - re-become more child than woman - has come from another floor of experience, has come in the middle of a sleepless night and still has the key to the door of the room where he sleeps.

Perhaps these three stories suggest the three distinct ways in which drawing can function. There are those which study and question the visible, those which put down and communicate ideas, and those done from memory. Even in front of the drawings of the old masters, the distinction between the three is important, for each type survives in a different way. Each type of drawing speaks in a different tense. To each we respond with a different capacity of imagination.

In the first kind of drawing (at one time such drawings were appropriately called studies) the lines on the paper are traces left behind by the artist's gaze, which is ceaselessly leaving, going out, interrogating the strangeness, the enigma of what is before his eyes, however ordinary and everyday this may be. The sum total of the lines on the paper narrate a sort of optical emigration by which the artist, following his own gaze, settles on the person or tree or animal or mountain being drawn. And if the drawing succeeds, he stays there forever.

In a study entitled *Abdomen and Left Leg of a Nude Man Standing in Profile*, Leonardo is still there: there in the groin of the man, drawn with red chalk on a salmon-pink prepared paper, there in the hollow behind the knee where the femoral biceps and the semimembranous muscle separate to allow for the insertion of the twin calf muscles. Jaques de Gheyn (who married the rich heiress Eva Stalpaert van der Wiele and so could give up engraving) is still there in the astounding diaphanous wings of the dragonflies he drew with black chalk and brown ink for his friends in the University of Leyden in 1600.

If one forgets circumstantial details, technical means, kinds of paper, etc., such drawings do not date, for the act of concentrated looking, of questioning the appearance of an object before one's eyes, has changed little throughout the millennia. The ancient Egyptians stared at fish in a comparable way to the Byzantines on the Bosphorus or to Matisse in the Mediterranean. What changed, according to history and ideology, was the visual rendering of what artists dared not question: God, Power, Justice, Good, Evil. Trivia on the side could always be visually questioned. This is why exceptional drawings of trivia carry with them their own "here and now", putting their humanity into relief.

Between 1603 and 1609 the Flemish draughtsman and painter Roelandt Savery travelled in Central Europe. Eighty drawings of people in the street - marked with the title *Taken from Life* - have survived. Until recently, they were wrongly thought to be by the great Pieter Breughel. One of them, drawn in Prague, depicts a beggar seated on the ground. He wears a black cap; wrapped round one of his feet is a white rag, over his shoulder a black cloak. He is staring ahead, very straight; his dark sullen eyes are at the same level as a dog's would be. His hat, upturned for money, is on the ground beside his bandaged foot. No comment, no other figure, no placing. A tramp of nearly four hundred years ago.

We encounter him today. Before this scrap of paper, only six inches square, we come across him as we might come across him on the way to the airport, or on a grass bank of the highway above Latife's shanty town. One moment faces another and they are as close as two facing pages in today's unopened newspaper. A moment of 1607 and a moment of 1987. Time is obliterated by an eternal present. Present Indicative.

In the second category of drawings the traffic, the transport goes in the opposite direction. It is now a question of bringing to the paper what is already in the mind's eye. Delivery rather than emigration. Often such drawings were sketches or working drawings for paintings. They bring together, they arrange, they set a scene. Since there is no direct interrogation of the visible, they are far more dependent upon the dominant visual language of their period and so are usually more datable in their essence; more narrowly qualifiable as Renaissance, Baroque, Mannerist, Eighteenth century, Academic or whatever.

There are no confrontations, no encounters to be found in this category. Rather we look through a window on to a man's capacity to dream up, to construct an alternative world in his imagination.

And everything depends upon the space created within this alternative. Usually, it is meagre - the direct consequence of imitation, false virtuosity, mannerism. Such meagre drawings still possess an artisanal interest (through them we see how pictures were made and joined - like cabinets or clocks), but they do not speak directly to us. For this to happen the space created within the drawing has to seem as large as the earth's or sky's space. Then we can feel the breath of life.

Poussin could create such a space: so could Rembrandt. That the achievement is rare in European drawing (less so in Chinese) may be because such a space only opens up when extraordinary mastery is combined with extraordinary modesty. To create such immense space with ink marks on a sheet of paper one has to know oneself to be very small.

Such drawings are visions of "What would be if..." The majority of them record visions of the past which are now closed to us, like private gardens. When there is enough space, the vision remains open and we enter. Tense Conditional.

Thirdly there are drawings done from memory. Many are notes jotted down for later use - a way of collecting and keeping impressions and information. We look at them with curiosity if we are interested in the artist or the historical subject. (In the fifteenth century the wooden rakes used for raking up hay were exactly the same as those still used in the mountains where I live.)

The most important drawings in this category, however, are made in order to exorcise a memory which is haunting, in order to take an image once and for all out of the mind and put it on paper. The unbearable image may be sweet, sad, frightening, attractive, cruel. Each has its own way of being unbearable.

The artist in whose work this mode of drawing is most obvious is Goya. He made drawing after drawing in a spirit of exorcism. Sometimes the subject was a prisoner being tortured by the Inquisition to exorcise his or her sins: a double terrible, exorcism.

I see a red-wash and sanguine drawing by Goya of a woman in prison. She is chained by her ankles to the wall. Her shoes have holes in them. She lies on her side. Her shirt is pulled up above her knees. She bends her arm over her face and eyes so she need not see where she is. The drawn page is like a stain on the stone floor on which she is lying. And it is indelible.

There is no bringing together here, no setting of a scene. Nor is there any questioning of the visible. The drawing simply declares: I saw this. Historic Past Tense.

A drawing from any of the three categories, when it is sufficiently inspired, when it becomes miraculous, acquires another temporal dimension. The miracle begins with the basic fact that drawings, unlike paintings, are usually monochrome. (If they are coloured, they are only partially coloured.)

Paintings with their colours, their tonalities, their extensive light and shade, compete with nature. They try to seduce the visible, to solicit the scene painted. Drawings cannot do this. The virtue of drawings derives from the fact that they are diagrammatic. Drawings are only notes on paper. (The sheets rationed during the war! The paper napkin, folded into the form of a boat and put into a raki glass where it sank.) The secret is the paper.

The paper becomes what we see through the lines and yet remains itself. Let me give an example. A drawing made in 1553 by Pieter Brueghel (in reproduction its quality would be fatally lost: better to describe it). In the catalogues it is identified as a *Mountain Landscape with a River, Village and Castle*. It was drawn with brown inks and wash. The gradations of the pale wash are very slight. The paper lends itself between the lines to becoming tree, stone, grass, water, masonry, limestone mountain, cloud. Yet it can never for an instant be confused with the substance of any of these things, for evidently and emphatically it remains a sheet of paper with fine lines drawn upon it.

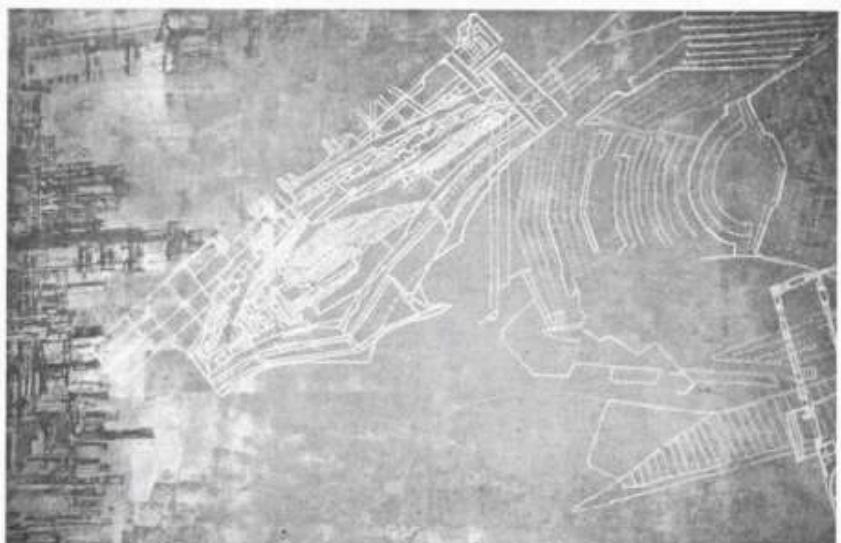
This is both so obvious and - if one reflects upon it - so strange that it is hard to grasp. There are certain paintings which animals could read. No animal could ever read a drawing.

In a few great drawings, like the Breughel landscape, everything appears to exist in space, the complexity of everything vibrates - yet what one is looking at is only a project on paper. Reality and the project become inseparable. One finds oneself on the threshold before the creation of the world. Such drawings, using the Future Tense, foresee, forever.

*John Berger*

"Drawing on Paper", first published as "To Take Paper, To Draw" in *Harper's Magazine*, September 1987.

Published as "Drawing on Paper", in *Keeping A Rendezvous*, Granta Books, London, 1992.



# Drawing in Cyberspace: From the Panorama to Virtual Reality

Eamon O'Kane

In this paper drawing will be referred to in two ways:

1. The academically accepted form of drawing (be it academic, preparatory, autonomous), which will be referred to as 'drawing'.
2. Drawing as a metaphor for observation, construction, information architecture etc. This type may take on forms such as performance, video, installation, NetArt etc, and it will be referred to as drawing\*.

In cases where there is a hybrid of both notions, it will be referred to as 'drawing\*'.

The paper first charts the development of the panorama as a 'drawing\*', from its earliest beginnings through its heyday in the early to mid-nineteenth century and into its demise during the advent of cinema.

The paper then draws parallels between some early twentieth century art and the panorama aesthetic or influence and develops it through the introduction of video installation. Finally, the paper establishes the current development of virtual reality as the realization of the unfulfilled dream that was at the core of the panorama.

"And the primary theme reflected in this mirror was travel, defined variably and very broadly. Panoramas recreated the experience of global vastness, of floating in limitless expanses, of hurtling through space and time. Immersing themselves in these large-scale, circular views, audiences envisioned major cities like Rome and Berlin. (...) Panoramas became the field of dreams, the stage upon which Everyman could lose himself in order to find his image floating all over the globe."<sup>1</sup>

Panoramas were a popular form of entertainment in the nineteenth century. They were huge circular paintings exhibited in purpose-built architectural structures, buildings which were often called panoramas themselves. Standing in semi-darkness at the centre of the interior structure, spectators viewed the illuminated paintings, which were done in such precise scale and perspective that they approached an almost perfect representation of reality. Often they also consisted of sculptural elements merged into the foreground of the painting. The types of paintings varied and included battle scenes, cityscapes, and landscapes.

In the panoramas, conventional 'drawing' was used as a tool to construct the framework for the illusion that was the 360 degree painting. At the same time, the space between the viewer on the platform and the painting was being drawn\*. The simultaneity of the 'drawing' and the drawing\* makes it possible to look at the panorama as a hybrid form of 'drawing\*'.

The artist Robert Barker, who in 1788 exhibited a circular painting of Edinburgh, created the first panorama. Other comparable exhibits followed and were shown in London, Paris, and other European and U.S. cities. Among the many variations, which included the cyclorama, the diorama and the later developed cinerama, was the moving panorama. This was a long strip of painted material that manually or automatically unwound slowly from one vertical roller to another at the opposite side of a stage. This form subsequently became a dramatic feature of nineteenth century theatrical productions. The panoramas were very popular and caught people's imagination on a global level. With the advent of cinema, however, the panorama craze had already disappeared and the structures that once housed these fantastic paintings were converted for other purposes or demolished.

Nevertheless, artists continued to be influenced by this urge to create all-seeing vistas. Claude Monet was obviously influenced by the panoramas when he painted his large-scale *Water Lilies* housed at the Orangerie in Paris. Gustav Klimt's paintings in the Secession Building in Vienna have close links to the panorama aesthetic and point in the direction of installation art. Early twentieth century movements such as the Dadaists similarly explored theatrical

environments, and this interest extended on into the performance-based happenings in the 1960s. Many artists thus continued to work with spectacular panoramic forms of 'drawing\*' and some, such as the abstract expressionists Mark Rothko and Jackson Pollock, experimented with the immersive qualities of installations of large-scale painting. Rothko interestingly situated paintings within very specific environments with delicate lighting and coloured walls and Pollock came close to the panorama aesthetic with his large-scale paintings worked on rolls of unstretched canvas. Many artists from the late 1960s onwards have experimented with immersive installations and environments that point towards the panorama aesthetic, including Nam June Paik, Doug Aitken, Stan Douglas, Bill Viola, Sol LeWitt, Patrick Ireland, Tony Oursler, Pippilotti Rist, Richard Serra etc. For many, the computer has become an important tool for constructing 'drawings' and this has developed into an interest in drawing\* within virtual spaces. Dan Sandin publicly showcased his work *The Cave 'Virtual Reality Theater'* at Siggraph in Chicago in 1992. This piece involved a virtual reality, which was accessed by viewers through dark stereo glasses and it enabled a navigation of a virtual space located within a physical cubic room. Virtual reality technology is developing rapidly and it is only a matter of time until we are living in a world of two realities - the actual and the virtual.

The notion of drawing\* as a metaphor for the creative thinking process is very important as a thread or series of threads that link a multitude of mediums and vocations. The conventional form of 'drawing' is a unifying medium as it can cross boundaries between science and art. 'Drawing' is used in architecture, biology, anatomy, medicine, chemistry, design, advertising etc.

As it was used to construct the proportional framework in the panoramas, 'drawing' can also be used as a tool to construct the framework for computer generated imagery. The other form drawing\* is simultaneously happening on several levels within the structure of the computer, both within the software and physically in the hardware. Again the simultaneity of the 'drawing' and the drawing\* makes it possible in some cases to look at image making (still, animated, filmed etc.) using the computer as a hybrid form of 'drawing\*'.

"The idea of what constitutes a drawing is left up to the sense each artist makes of the activity. Anything an artist says is a drawing, is a drawing. So styles vary enormously; they can even contradict one another. A kind of anarchy can be said to reign. This open, tolerant attitude toward the meaning of drawing provides the best chance, perhaps, of gaining that liberation artists and audiences alike seek through works of art, the chance to make meaning, to make sense out of the world they share, even if it is only to pull or to try to pull the plug."<sup>2</sup>

In terms of the development of new technology, this places the artist in an interesting position as s/he has the possibility of rendering a 'drawing' through binary computations without the use of 'skill' (in the traditional sense of the term). As the computer uses 1s and 0s or high and low pulses of electricity in their physical form to render or record an image, so does the artist use opposites of light and dark or negative and positive spaces to build up a 'drawing'.

Through investigation of new computer-based applications it becomes apparent that, rather than create a series of new mediums, these applications tend to emulate mediums and practices already established e.g. photography, montage, painting and 'drawing'. 'Photoshop' for example uses filters to change the apparent medium of an image from photography into charcoal or relief and 'Painter' can change the style of an image from realism to impressionism.

This derivative nature extends across the new technology spectrum and provides a stimulating environment for development of modes of creativity.

When looking at the artist's relationship towards 'drawing' in terms of skill, some interesting thoughts appear in an interview with artist Stan Douglas by curator and writer Lynne Cooke.

"Cooke: What led you to these media? How did you end up working primarily with reproductive technologies?

Douglas: Part of it is the fact that I can't draw. But it's often also the result of trying to find the appropriate medium for the subject matter of the work. I learned quite a bit about these different media trying to make the projects as different from each other as possible. A certain subject will eventually draw me to a particular medium...

Cooke: When you say you can't draw, is that a consequence of your art school training?

Douglas: I did go to art school, where I did a bit of drafting and technical drawing. But I was just too lazy to learn how to draw.<sup>3</sup>

Stan Douglas thus presupposes the necessity of skill to execute a 'drawing'. However, even Douglas's analogue (never mind digital) video pieces are inextricably linked to the act of 'drawing' in that the 'automatic' mark making of photography, video and film are connected to the composition and the chiaroscuro of the drawn image. It seems that society (and the artists that live within it) has been conditioned to view 'drawing' in relation to academic flair or craft. This attitude can have positive effects when applied in the right circumstances, but it can be very negative if applied to all types of 'drawing\*' without giving regard to the concept behind the work. Douglas's statement suggests that the new media he is working with empowers him and bypasses the necessity of skill that 'drawing' requires. This seems to be a misguided commonly held belief: new technologies enable otherwise unskilled people to be creative? This is not necessarily the case.

Jeff Wall has a different attitude to the development and use of new media in drawing\*. He argues that new media is bringing the artist back to skill and application in the traditional sense of 'drawing'.

"I like the fact that these different technologies collide in the picture. The layering of technologies is part of the nineteenth century 'spirit of the panorama', and we are still involved with that spirit in our own fascination with technological spectacle. One paradox I have found is that, the more you use computers in picture making, the more 'handmade' the picture becomes. Oddly then, digital technology is leading, in my work at least, towards a greater reliance on hand making because assembly and montage of the various parts of the picture is done very carefully by hand by my collaborator and operator, Stephen Waddell, who is a painter."<sup>4</sup>

New technologies are also drawing the maker back to the collaborative group ideal. The Renaissance encouraged this hierarchy of the master and apprentices, but this was dispelled through a nineteenth century construct of the artist as the 'autonomous genius' trapped in his/her own struggle for enlightenment. Since the mid nineteenth century, society has become more and more skeptical of artists who use other craftspeople to construct their work. The myth of the artist as an

autonomous 'tortured genius', set aside and alienated from society has held too much currency for too long.

New technology is now making it almost impossible (in certain instances) not to work collaboratively. For example, an artist wanting to 'draw\*' in Java programming code on the web or through constructing an application, may need to employ or collaborate with a Java programmer in order to complete the work. In terms of artists 'drawing\*' on the web, a greater possibility for collaborative 'drawing\*' has emerged through the development of Internet communities. Artists, programmers, designers etc. can collaboratively 'draw\*' and communicate without ever meeting one another physically.

Jeff Wall's notion of the paradox in new technology and its application in fine art can be linked to the paradox of the panorama and indeed virtual reality. Wall rightly suggests that a panorama cannot be experienced properly in representation through any other medium. In his piece *Restoration* he made a 180-degree panorama photograph of a 360-degree painting. This meant he was only able to show half of it; this in itself expresses the fact that the panorama is 'unrepresentable' and Wall sees the irony in outlining this fact.

"Maybe this unrepresentability was one of its great historical flaws. The fact that panoramas emerged so strikingly, and then died out so quickly, suggests that they were an experimental response to a deeply felt need, a need for a medium that could surround the spectators and plunge them into a spectacular illusion. The panorama turned out to be entirely inadequate to the challenge. The cinema and the amusement park more or less accomplished what the panorama only indicated. The panorama has pretty much always been understood as a proto-cinematic phenomenon, a precursor also of other forms of mass culture. Lately with 'virtual reality' devices, we've come back in a way to a 'panoramic aesthetic' which doesn't want to have any boundaries."<sup>5</sup>

If one considers Ray Kurzweil's prophecy that virtual reality systems will be commonplace by 2019, it follows then that the panorama was probably almost two centuries ahead of its time. Kurzweil calls the display technology connected with producing virtual environments, "virtual reality overlay display". This will apparently involve "virtual reality optical lenses" and "virtual

reality auditory lenses" that will integrate real and virtual environments. He suggests that the virtual environments will slide (in the optical lens displays) as the individual's head turns thus deceiving the eyes and ears that the virtual view has remained stationary and merged realistically into the real environment.

Today, the possibility of drawing\* in an immersive environment is very limited and still bears the tell-tale markings of the computer rendering and chunky pixelation. Armed with Kurzweil's prophecy, the possibility for sophisticated drawing\* in cyberspace would become a reality.

Some of the original panoramas from the nineteenth century used a cylindrical glass with the drawing of the panorama etched onto it in detail and a light source at its centre. This device projected the image from central viewing platform onto the surrounding canvas. The projection enabled the artist to maintain the correct proportion at a large scale. The artists would have 'drawn' the detailed image using pencil or charcoal, tracing the projected image in much the same way artists used the *camera obscura*. Real objects were used in the space between the platform and the panorama and these blended into the actual image. This theatrical panoramic 'drawing\*' where two-dimensional and three-dimensional representations co-exist brings the panorama image close to being a backdrop. However in its theatrical manifestation the backdrop is secondary to the actors being viewed by the audience. In the panorama, the audience become the actors on the platform stage surrounded by a representation of a certain 'reality'. Viewers/actors are enticed into a space which they cannot enter, and their point of view is a privileged one, free from views of the supporting structure and practical trappings involved in the panorama's construction. In the virtual reality equivalent, the viewer is presented with the image and the programming code is concealed from view.

In a virtual reality space, the panoramic 'drawing\*' becomes both the architectural structure and support underlying the three dimensional space and the 'drawing\*' of the character within that space. It is understandable why the initial stages of any sophisticated computer animation have as their basis a wire frame 'drawing' that is eventually rendered. Just as a line 'drawing' would

be rendered with tone. Many artists have produced 'drawing\*' in three-dimensional spaces using string and wire etc. These installations are probably more three-dimensional than the backdrops acting as three-dimensional spaces. This presents the question that, if a successful model of virtual reality were constructed, would it be a two-dimensional space masquerading as a three-dimensional (as suggested earlier) or would it take the shape of what Ray Kurzweil calls a nanobot swarm?<sup>6</sup>

The nanobot swarm would enable the possibility of 'drawing\*' in a three-dimensional space and interacting with the immediate three-dimensional context.

Within a virtual world the possibilities of 'drawing\*' are infinitely extended, as are the readings of the subject, object, author, model study etc. For unlike 'drawing' in a 'real' physical space, where normally there are limitations of the body to contend with, 'drawing\*' in cyberspace places the draughtsperson in the position of being the tool of the creator and the author of the narrative. The author in this case could be seen as another piece of the construction of a complex narrative that involves the subject, the context and the author. The program or initial 'cyber-drawing\*' is under control of the author of the original virtual program (who, depending on the permutations of the program, has little control of what form a narrative takes.)

Stan Douglas's piece *Panoramic Rotunda* (1985), which involves a series of photographs displayed on a curved structure, taking its cue from the tradition of the panorama, presents us with the impossibility of truly observing a 360-degree 'drawing\*' in panoramic terms or even in cyberspace. Being surrounded by and wanting to see all at once can frustrate the viewer more than stimulate him/her. Furthermore, the effect is cinematic in much the same way other artists work across the boundaries of 'drawing' and drawing\* in animated studies of the construction and deconstruction involved in the process of drawing. His work also points out the limitations of 'drawing' in a physical sense and the possibilities provided by creating hybrids out of new and old technologies.

Virtual reality has the potential of moving in the derivative direction that affects other new technologies (as mentioned earlier), especially if it employs the two-dimensional image (screen

or goggles) masquerading as a three dimensional environment. There will be new avenues for artists to explore in 'drawing\*' within this medium, but it is limiting in its focus on a two dimensional space. The performative aspects of a two-dimensional 'drawing' show evidence of the modes of its creation when being viewed as an object. However the interactive nature (between the viewer and the object/'drawing') focuses on the visual senses and ignores most of the others. This provides a restrictive interface to the history of the drawing both in its formative/performative stages and in the experience of the eventual exhibited piece. Cyber-drawing\* could extend much further if Kurzweil's vision of 'Nanobot Swarms' came true. This form of 'drawing\*' using millions and trillions of tiny visual and tactile elements in motion tends towards a simulation of natural creation. It can be compared to the way nature is thought to manipulate atoms in both micro and macro contexts.

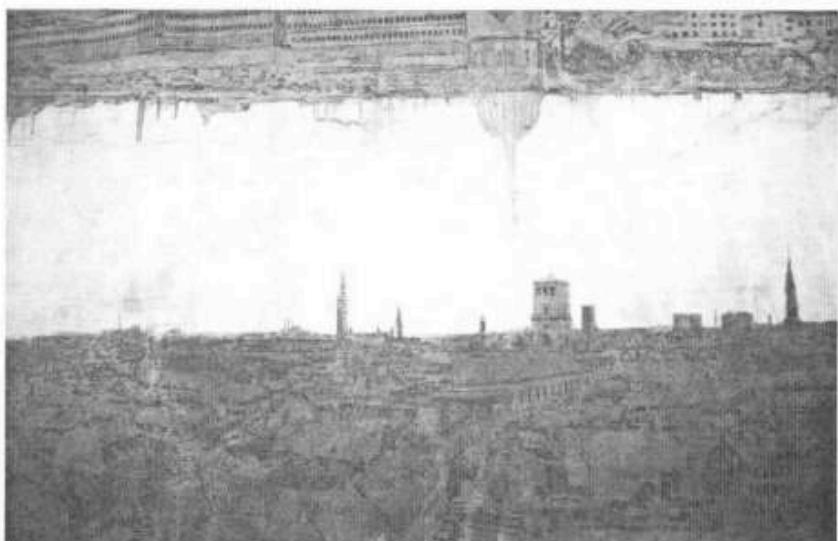
'Drawing\*' within cyberspace would enable the draughts-person to manipulate both visual and tactile stimuli in relation to the viewer. It also would enable the viewer to become more proactive in determining the outcome of the drawing\*, thus creating an environment where the viewer is actually part of the drawing\* itself in the same way that the panorama tried to position the viewer within the drawing\*. As virtual technologies are still in their infancy, the question is whether 'drawing\*' in cyberspace will be restricted to the two-dimensional depiction of a three-dimensional space or if the 'drawing\*' will truly take place in a virtual reality.

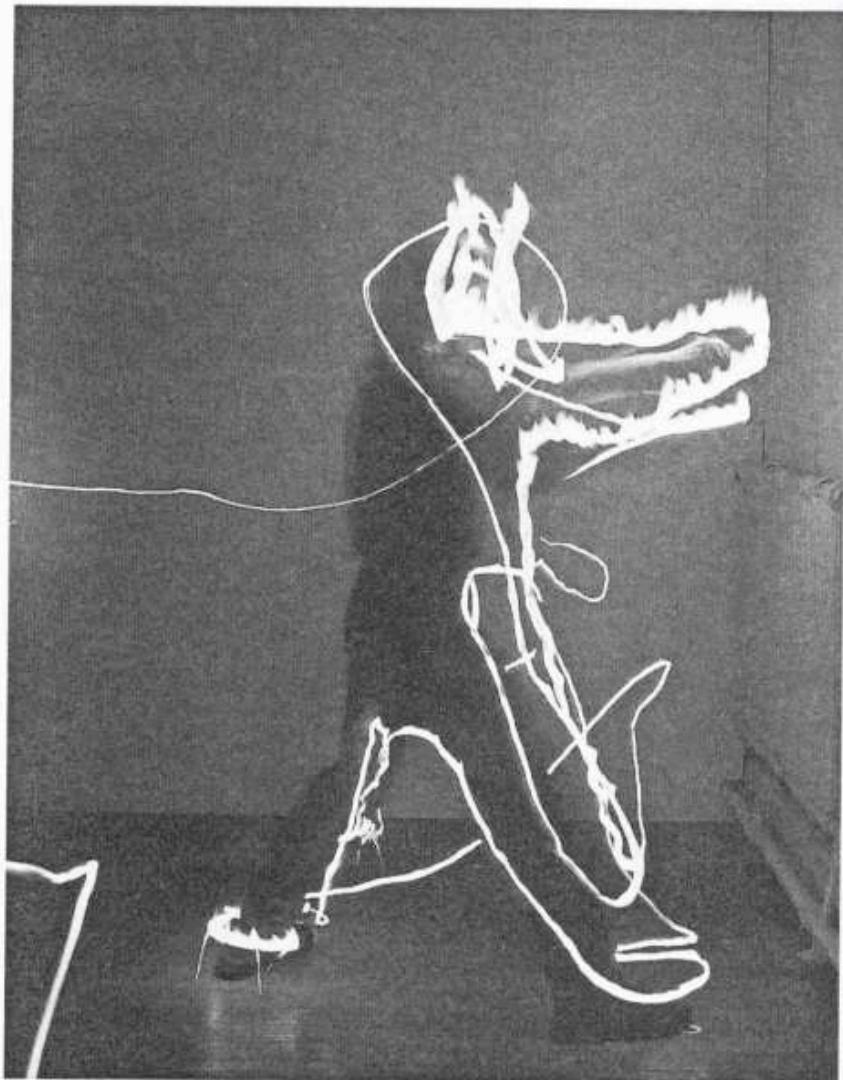
Eamon O'Kane, November 2000

Notes.

1. Shelley Rice, *Inverted Odysseys* (New York: NYU Press, 2000) p.11-12.
2. Paul M. O'Reilly, *Contemporary Drawing Vol. 1* (Limerick: Gandon Editions, 1996) p.12.
3. Interview with Lynne Cooke, *Stan Douglas*, (London: Phaidon Press, 1996) p.116-117.
4. Interview with Martin Schwander, (1994) *Jeff Wall*, (London: Phaidon Press, 1996) p.134.

5. Interview with Martin Schwander (1994), *Jeff Wall*, (London: Phaidon Press, 1996) p.134.
6. 'Nanobot swarm: In the last half of the twenty-first century, a swarm comprised of trillions of nanobots. The nanobot swarms can rapidly take any form. A nanobot swarm can project the visual images, sounds, and pressure contours of any set of objects, including people. The swarms of nanobots can also combine their computational abilities to emulate the intelligence of people and other intelligent entities and processes. A nanobot swarm effectively brings the ability to create virtual environments into the real environment.' Ray Kurzweil, *Age of Spiritual Machines; When computers exceed human intelligence* (New York: Penguin Books, 1999) p.307.





## Drawing in the Dark

*Dan Kenny*

Drawing is a multi-faceted activity - both simple and complex. The further one delves into its hidden depths of meaning the more involved the interpretations become. It is an external exercise dependent upon internal responses to the subject. The term 'to draw' is immediately suggestive of extraction, or the outpouring of something.

Artists draw from their accumulative reservoir of emotion, expression and perception to create their unique interpretation of the world around them. It can never be a purely objective exercise. It will always divulge character traits of its creator. With each mark imposed on the paper, plate, stone or canvas the relationship between subject, artist and image becomes more clearly focused and more evident to the viewer.

The range of drawing materials available to artists has never been greater and yet this diversity does not diminish the essential honest endeavour that is at the heart of great drawing. People draw for all sorts of reasons: in order to really see something, to focus the mind and to develop ideas, to experience the transformation of a three-dimensional form into a two-dimensional image, but whatever the reason, I believe the strength of a drawing lies in the evidence it transmits of the artist's involvement.

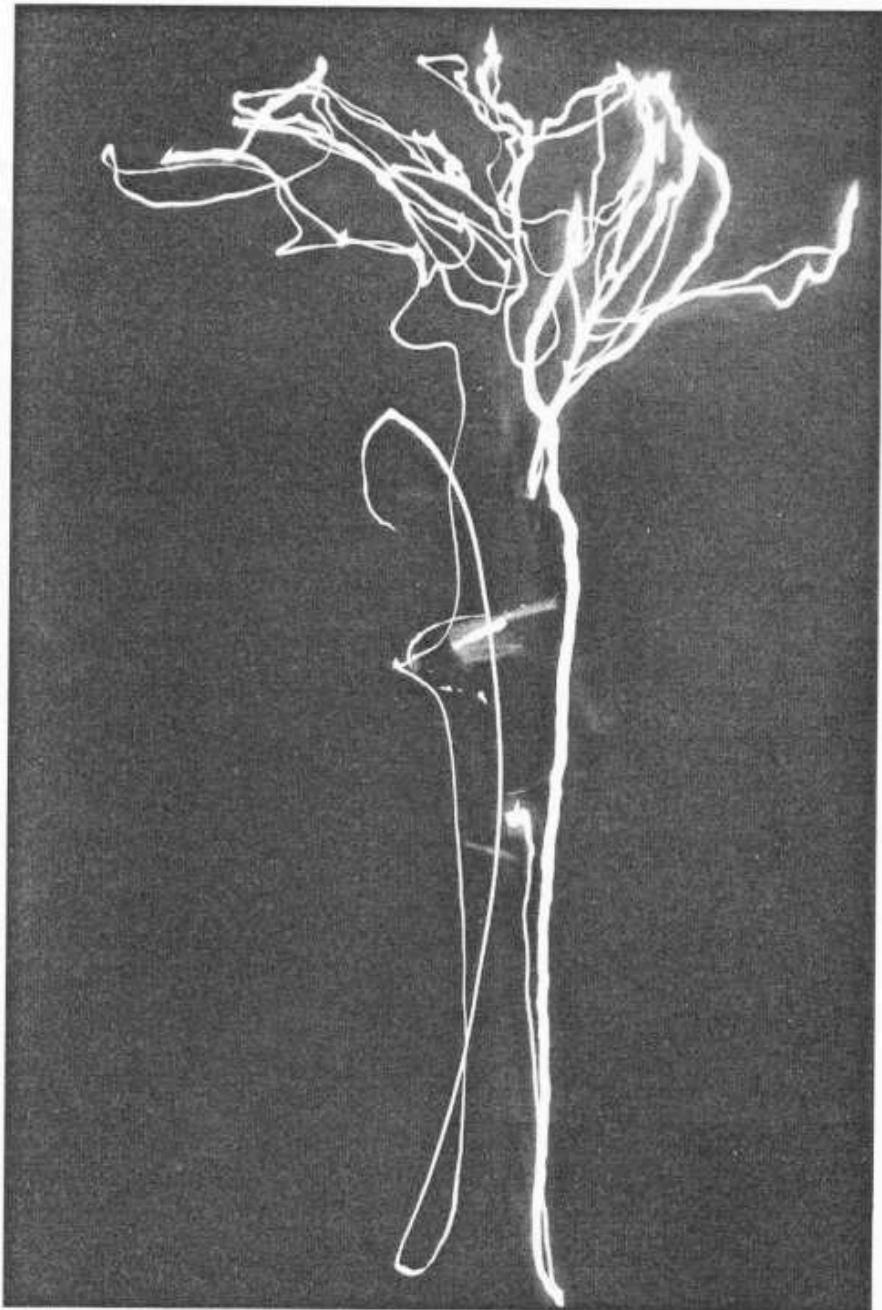
I tend to work in a variety of media, and am presently exploring drawing with light on photosensitive materials. This can take the form of working in a darkened studio with a camera - its shutter held open while the image is made with any light emitting object, or of exposing light directly onto photographic paper.

There are a number of interesting aspects to these methods. One of the main differences between this and any other method of drawing is that the image remains latent until developed. Rather than starting with a blank page and watching the drawing take on its unique character with each additional mark, seeing it evolve into the finished image, each gesture is visible only in your

memory, and no mark can be removed.

Their are in fact two drawings going on in this process: firstly you have the imagined image: which is your memory of the image actually being made ( where you have already drawn with the light, where you started or stopped a previous line, etc.), and then later you have the physical image as the light-sensitive material recorded it. While making the image each gesture is held for a split second in the mind's eye, to be replaced by the next in a flowing sequence, which accumulates in your mind into a perception of what you have created. How close this perception is to the physical image actually recorded is a matter of experience and understanding of materials used. However, the final result is seldom without an element of surprise. Also, because the drawing takes place in the dark, the subject is being translated from memory, not vision. If you are drawing a specific object, it is your memory of that object that your gestures are trying to capture and interpret. How familiar the subject is to you, how much of it has been absorbed, through not only your eyes but all your senses, will determine the visible outcome.

*Dan Kenny, November 2000*



## Drawing is Also a Dialogue Between the Brain and the Hand: Blindfold Drawing #1

*Peter FitzGerald and Margaret Corcoran*

P: OK?

M: Umm hmm.

P: So just move towards...I think that's going to break on you, do you not think?

M: No, it's all right, I'll...

P: OK. Now draw downwards towards your left, down and leftward in a sort of curve.

M: It's a bun. <laughs>

P: OK. OK. Can you draw upwards and right in a sort of curve?

M: Will that complete the outline?

P: You don't need to know.

M: <laughs> Well, I need to know if it's a large sweep or a small sweep.

P: Sort of a medium sweep.

M: Taking up most of the page?

P: No. Just start moving. OK, stop. OK, from there, just lift, go up a bit, left a bit, bit more, a bit more, a good bit more, OK, now I want you to do a sweep downwards in a sort of semicircle bowing out towards the right.

M: Would you like me to do that again?

P: Yes, can you bow out towards the right, so in the middle you'll be further out to the right than at the start or at the end. Does that make sense?

M: No. <laughs>

P: OK.

M: But to me you're describing an open, open semicircle...

P: Yeah, which bows out towards the right...

M: Beyond the line of the...

P: ...so you're coming...

M: Beyond the line of the thing I've just described?

P: You're coming down towards the bottom of the page.

M: Yeah.

P: And you're bowing out towards the right as you go down, and bowing back in.

M: An ellipse?

P: It's only a semicircle.

M: Say it again.

P: You're drawing a semicircle coming downwards, bowing out towards the right.

M: Cutting the outline that I've just described earlier?

P: Yes.

M: Halfway?

P: I'll worry about that.

M: OK. <sound of drawing>

P: Which is your right hand?

M: This is my right hand.

P: OK.

M: Don't be sarky. <laughter>

P: I'm not sure why you're bowing to the left.

M: This is the right!

P: Yes.

M: I'm bowing to the right.

P: Oh, I see. <laughter>

M: You told me to bow to the right.

M: OK, yes, we understand different things by it.

M: What is a bow...

P: But yours is a perfectly good interpretation.

M: Yes, I know this! <laughs>

P: OK. Move...move towards the middle of the page. OK. Start drawing leftwards.

M: < French accent> In a bow <laughs>...or a straight line?

P: Don't worry...don't...don't. Just draw leftwards. OK. Raise up, up, and start heading upwards. Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah, and around to the right, a lot more to the right, more more more to the right, more more more to the right, down down down, OK, left, and stop.

<laughter>O..K...<laughter> OK! Lift. OK, over to your left. Down. Move towards the top. More, more, much more,

much more, bit more.

M: Why don't you try describing measurements to me and I can gauge them? OK, I won't ask any more questions.

P: Move two inches further north. OK.

M: Was that good?

P: That's good. Now you're drawing more or less due south, but slightly southwest. <sound of drawing>

M: For how...

P: Can you do that again? Go back up to where you were, if you can.

M: Was I there?

P: Bit more, about another two inches.

M: Where? Up, down?

P: Up that line.

M: I can't see the line. <laughs>

P: OK. Another inch further north...straight up. OK, stop there. Now this time you're drawing towards...if it's on a clock you're drawing towards six-thirty.

M: For how long?

P: For the whole length of the page. <sound of drawing> Very good. Stop.

M: Was it not very straight?

P: It's OK. Now, can you move to the right about four inches? And now draw a line going upwards parallel to the one you just drew. <sound of drawing> OK, stop. Now...

M: <deep heavy breath, mock concern> This is hard for you, isn't it? <laughs>

P: It'll be hard...feel sorry for you.

M: It's great.

P: Go to your left about twenty centimetres.

M: Nah, stick to the inches.

P: OK, go to your left about ten inches.

M: Is there that much on the page? Is there?

P: Do about eight inches to the left. Yes! A bit more to your right, about two, three inches to your right...

M: That's not eight inches...

P: OK, stop! OK, now draw a line towards four-thirty. <sound of drawing> That's loads. Keep going. <sound of drawing>

Curve around to your right.

M: Are you sure you know what you're doing?

P: Yes, curve around to your right, curve, curve, curve, curve, curve, curve, go, start heading upwards, heading upwards, heading upwards, heading left, towards the left, that's good, keep going, and left, keep going straight now, and stop, OK, leave it there. Now, you're going to draw... <laughter> ...a quarter circle, heading downwards and towards your left, so start off heading towards seven o'clock.

M: <laughs> A quarter circle?

P: Yeah.

M: Oh, I get you. <sound of drawing>

P: Left, left. And curve towards, more, the other way, the other way, the other way, stop, down, OK, stop.

M: Ooooh! Sorry.

P: It's OK. Now can you...draw something...!

M: Would you like me to do any shading?

P: No! <prolonged laughter> Shhhh...

M: Ah, go on! <laughter>

P: Oooph! Go north about two inches. Stop. <sounds of drawing> Draw a curve, sort of head to your right, start heading to your right.

M: I...you see, when you say "draw a curve heading to your right" I don't know whether to go...wait now, that way...

P: OK.

M: ...or that way.

P: Sure. OK. Just head straight across to your right, slowly.

M: Which way?

P: To your right. Just draw...

M: No, I mean, do I go like...

P: Start drawing a line straight across to your right. <sound of drawing> No, straight. You're heading way up the page. Straight across to your right.

M: Oh! S...sorry.

P: OK. That's good. That's good. Now start curving it upwards. <sound of drawing> OK, that's great. Now start curving it back. Keep going upwards though...OK, stop. <deep sigh>

M: <dopey voice> This is hard, really.

- P: It's very hard work. OK. Now. Where you are, draw a circle about four inches in diameter, six inches in diameter.
- M: OK. <sound of drawing> <sound of charcoal falling or breaking, laughter> Did I do good?
- P: <pause> Don't ask. <laughter> It's sort of circular anyway. <laughter> What are you doing? What are you looking for?
- M: My tea...good.
- P: OK. Move your hand to the centre of the page. OK. Go up four inches. <sound of drawing>
- P: OK... <laughs> ...without drawing!
- M: Ah, you didn't say that!
- P: OK. <sound of rubbing> Oh, thank you. OK, now draw a circle. <sound of drawing> <outburst of laughing>
- M: A circle is the hardest thing to draw. Why don't you just go...instruct me centimetre by centimetre? This would be precise.
- P: Do you think? OK, start drawing down towards your left. <sound of drawing> OK, down, down, OK, now start curving towards the right...OK, more, more, start curving up, OK, up, up, up, up, up more, more to your left, curve around to your left, tightly, that's good, that's good, more, more, more, more, more, curve downwards, and to your...stop. OK, where you are go back sort of towards northeast. OK, stop. Want you to draw a small circle...
- M: <sigh/gasp> Always with the circles.
- P: Small circle. That's excellent. Perfect. Stop. OK. Start moving down, draw down towards your, towards southwest. <sound of drawing> Curve to your right, curve to your right fast, faster, faster, much faster, OK, keep going, go across, across, across, across, don't go up, don't go up, go across, across, across, across, start curving up to your left, curve more, curve more, curve more, keep going up, stop... This is a really terrible drawing! <laughter>
- M: Why didn't we do this kind of thing sooner? It's great.
- P: How much longer are we doing this?
- M: <laughter> Well, this blindfold will soak up a lot of my eye-watering, so we should be OK for a while. <laughter>
- P: OK. Go up to the top left corner of the page.

M: Will I be drawing or simply removing myself?

P: No, just move, move. <sneezes>

M: Woohooo! I hope you had a hanky.

P: OK, come towards the southeast...without drawing.

M: Oh! It's just as well you said that.

P: Don't draw, don't draw. Stop! OK, there I want you to draw a line from the left side of the page to the right side of the page. <sound of drawing>

M: Did I do good?

P: Did pretty good.

M: OK. <sigh>

P: Now, go back to where you just were.

M: Oh, that's easy for you to say! <laughter>

P: Oh, excellent, OK, now draw, draw towards your left...that's good, that's good, OK. Now move your hand six inches to the right, stop.

M: That's not six inches...oh, maybe it is.

P: What am I doing?...Draw a... <frustrated laugh>

M: Would you like a rabbit, maybe a deer? <laughter> Perhaps something in stripes? Zebra?

P: Draw a...draw a circle out to the right...

M: Oh, the circles.

P: ...about three inches in diameter...So that's the middle of the left-hand side, I think.

M: Is that good? <sniff; laughter>

P: You headed left for some reason.

M: Yeth! Where did you tell me to go?

P: Draw a circle out to the right.

M: Oh, sorry.

P: But that's life. Draw a circle out to the right.

M: Starting from where?

P: Where you were at...No, where you were at.

M: Ah, Peter, you know I don't know that!

P: OK.

M: OK. <sound of drawing> Out to the right.

P: Yes. Thank you. OK. Move your hand up an inch and a half to the right.

M: You can be very bossy, you know.

- P: Stop. Bit more to the right. OK, now I want you to shade diagonally.
- M: Oh, great!
- P: OK, yeah, that's good, up more, further up, OK, more to the right, OK... <sounds of shading>
- M: I can shade the whole thing, you know.
- P: No, that's quite all right.
- M: <laughs> No, do you know what I mean...
- P: Bigger movements, bigger movements
- M: ...you can work with me in shading. <sounds of shading>
- P: OK, that's pretty good, that's pretty good. Stop! <laughter> Brilliant, brilliant. Take up your left hand. Put it down, put it away.
- M: <laughs>
- P: Nobody wants to see it.
- M: <laughs>
- P: Put it away! OK, now. Move about nine inches to your left. That's it, just...bit...OK, an inch to your right, another inch, OK, there, you're going to shade again...and this time you're going to shade down towards the southeast.
- M: Oooh. Do you have a preferred 'application of density'?
- P: Just like you did last time.
- M: Southeast?
- P: Southeast. <sound of shading>
- P: Excellent, excellent, excellent stuff, good stuff, OK, stop! OK.
- M: Broader?
- P: Now, I'm going to get the eraser.
- M: Oh, great!
- P: Because we haven't used that and we really should. OK. Put your left hand down. OK. Put your left hand down. No, sorry, on the page. OK, move it an inch to the left. Yeah, there, I want you to start rubbing there. You can rub all around there.
- M: See the way I'm working with two hands? Would you like me to do anything with this one. No, I'm serious.
- P: No, thank you, you're very good, I have only one brain. Move to your right with the hand...

M: <quietly> I have two, I have two.

P: ...with the rubbing, with the rubbing.

P: OK, stop. Move down, down, down, down, down, down, that's good, up and to your left, yeah, more to your left and up more, up more, up, up, up, up, up, up, up, up, no stop, stop, stop, up more, up and to your right more, to your right more, OK, around there, that's good, and stop, stop! That's good. OK, can you lift your hand? Thank you! That's so much better now. Definitely is.

M: <laughs>

P: Oh...You're brilliant...We're going to have to stop soon because it just simply couldn't be any better.

M: OH! I'm so excited!

P: Do you want to stop now?

M: It's going to be dreadful, isn't it?

P: We'll stop.

M: No, I want to do a little more, please.

P: We can do another one.

M: How about a little highlights?

P: We can do another one.

M: Nooo...OK, will I have a look? You sure now?

P: Yes.

M: I sense maybe three more movements would be good.

P: Ah, you haven't a clue. What do you think it is?

M: Uhhh...it's a cup. No, hold on, I did some zigzagging, so...a card upside down...it could be the spools thing. <blindfold comes off> Waaa! It's marvellous! It's very good!

P: You're very talented.

M: I think so. Well, it's a large lady seen from above.

P: <laughs>

M: That's the lid. Oh, that was the circle.

P: That was supposed to be the cup, but you did it that way first.

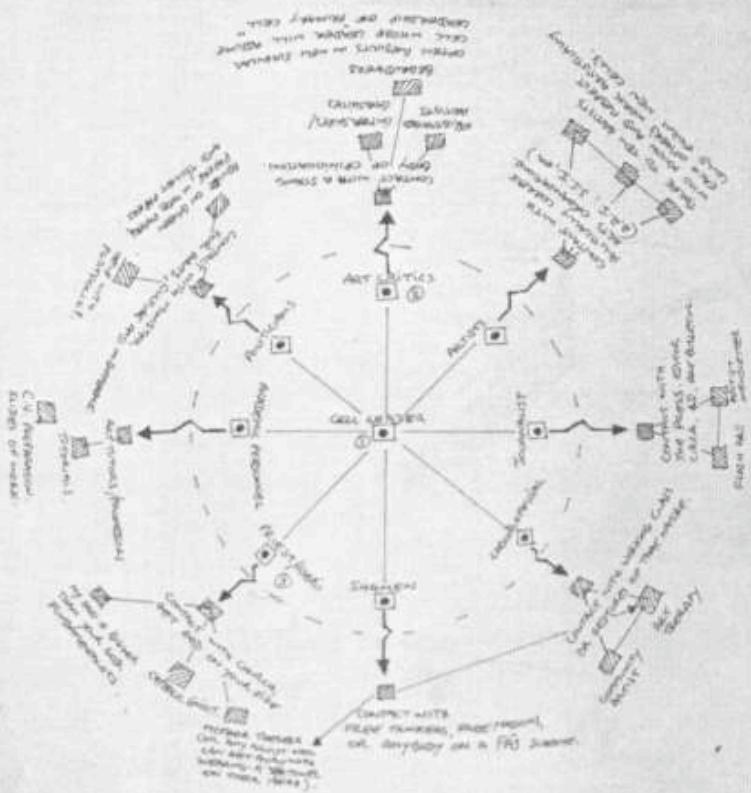
M: You gave up on that one, didn't you?

P: But you moved that way first.

M: I like it. I think you gave great instructions.

<ends>

PART 3. ORGANIZATION OF AEROTIC UNDERGROUND CELL  
 (WORK = TWO - PLACES)



- ① **Cell Leader or "Primary Cell".** SHOULD BE AN ANT WHO HAS ACTUALLY ACCOMPLISHED RED BIOCILL BUILDING.
- ② **ANT CAVITY** ARE AN OPTION, AND SHOULD BE CONSIDERED AS A NECESSARY LUCKY (THEY NEED TO, MORE THAN WE NEED THEM!)
- ③ IT IS IMPORTANT WHEN ESTABLISHING A LINK WITH THE UNDERGROUND RESIDENCE, THAT YOU THOROUGHLY CHECK OUT THEIR BACKGROUND FOR CRIMINAL RECORDS, UNLESS OF COURSE YOU ARE A PERIODICALLY ARREST.

## A Year with Drawing Text, August 1999 - August 2000

*Sean Taylor*

*A Year with Drawing Text* is a text-based artwork using selected and random sentences that specifically mention the word 'drawing'. This text has been selected from reviews of shows, and feature articles from the artistic publication *Contemporary Visual Arts* from August 1999 - August 2000.

In 1930, the archaeologist Person discovered in a Mycenaen tomb a jar bearing a certain "graphism" on its rim; imperturbably, Person translated the inscription, in which he recognized certain words which resembled Greek; but later on, another archaeologist, Ventris, established that this was not writing at all, merely an incised pattern; moreover, at one end, the drawing ended in purely decorative curves.

Similarly he thinks of the drawings he makes on a canvas as simple, as obvious, it is strong enough to carry the complexity of the paint and the colour, a St. Christopher. Paul Noble's *Nobson Newtown* is presented in the form of a dozen or so large scale pencil drawings, each one of a separate fantasy building, or group of buildings, in a shared fictional landscape. The output of an adolescent obsessive who had pencil, rubber, ruler and three years to scribble away? There are two pencil drawings mounted on the wallpaper back in the main gallery. The second drawing presents a bleaker scene. On the wall are two drawings in progress, seemingly larger than I've seen so far. There is a problem keeping the paper dry, and the drawings are taking longer than expected. Paul has been meticulously drawing boulders strewn over the dug-up roads on one street, which means he'll have to do the same with the other three. And when he was working on the *C.L.I.P.O.N.*, drawing all the tubes and pipes and cylinders gave an opportunity for him to practice lots of Tom-of-Finland-style shading. I stop searching for connections and influences, and look again at the drawing on the

wall. On the studio wall is a water-colour sketch of *LIDONOB* which is the subject of another large drawing. What is at first unequivocally full-frontal is pushed into perspective, the ellipse now reading as a circle seen edgewise on a receding plane, or, as is more clearly demonstrated in the drawings, a gaping hole with jagged edges.

Panamarenko and Sarah Size are also exhibiting, and more than one hundred sketches by Moebius - who helped to make the films *Alien* and *Dune* - reveal how simple drawings can describe a vision of the future as clearly as any high-tech robotic work. The drawings, adapted here as a gallery installation, enable the viewer to enter the remembered space. The drawings being exhibited by Rodney Dickinson are inspired by UFO witness accounts of the instruments that people say were used on them within the alien crafts - thus focusing in on the wider culture's questioning of memory, and the breakdown of belief that has been accelerated by the publicity surrounding the fabrication of memory on the analyst's couch. Finally, in a side room, is Rachel Lowe's wall drawing and projection, the nearest thing in the show to a painting.

For his first solo show at Alexander and Bonin the artist is producing an entirely new body of work that employs a range of media, often juxtaposing sculpture, photography and drawing in a single piece. A few years ago Graham Gussin executed a series of wall drawings that took the form of skeletal plans for landscapes. Prendergast's pencil-on-paper map works - *Lakes of the World* and *Rivers of the World* (both 1999) - subvert the colonial cartographic tool. The arbitrary scribbles and closed forms show the simulacra that precede and shape the political. He shows me a drawing that he's making, a plan of *Tile Hill* showing every street and a 3D representation of each building. The project - with all its attention to detail, its obsessiveness - reminds me of Paul Noble's map and drawings of *Nobson Newtown*, although an important difference is that *Tile Hill* was - and is - a real place. The drawings are intense and cryptic: many are entirely abstract in their visually encoded vocabulary. The artist continually drew and painted on newspapers in an attempt to embody his obsession with the passing of time.

The process of continuous drawing and erasure mimics that of psychological denial.

France's Aviva Blane's four small charcoal drawings are powerful and positively ache, perhaps a little too much, with that difficulty. The small letters have been drawn in pencil and then 'coloured in' - in that sense the surface rather lacks interest. Paladino had hung drawings, rapidly executed on white paper, on nails hammered into the brickwork.

The Irish Museum of Modern Art purchased Prendergast's huge series of *City Drawings* in 1995, just three years after the artist had embarked on her project to transcribe in pencil the complex and organic geographical fabric of every capital city in the world. When finished, the series will comprise 180 drawings. The 113 completed drawings, the largest number to be exhibited to date, are now showing for the first time in Ireland. Kathy Prendergast's large early drawings lack the human scale and intimacy of her more recent *City Drawings*. This is exemplified by her untitled pencil drawings, which appear to be just un-crumpled bits of paper. This sense of amused ease is also present in the drawings, which revisit the modernist language of collages and grids. Her paintings and drawings work to deviate the photographic gaze, confronting its implied assumptions about gender and race, identity and representation.

It is like frenetic drawing, subconscious doodling. In the mid-eighties there was a subtle change as Lasker began to work from small sketches and doodles...In this way he is not unlike Philip Guston who, in his late works, transmuted scruffy, scrofulous, cartoony drawings into large paintings of great formal integrity (Guston was ultimately influenced by Piero della Francesca and Poussin, not Robert Crumb).

Gainborough's later landscapes, symptomatically, were often based on drawings of models constructed with mirror for water, coal lumps and broccoli for trees. These concealed objects are shown in conjunction with a set of *Cloud Drawings* - delicate,

assured pencil drawings of cloud formations.

A collection of drawings derived from the work in the artist's sketchbooks reveals some of Carlisle's preoccupations. Perhaps there is a hint of this in *Winter Game*, the final exhibited work, which hovers between drawing and sculpture. D. J. Simpkins "drawings" are made on manufactured wood boards coated in Formica or aluminium laminates. Drawing is not fashionable. Life classes and the patient study of still life are practices long ago abandoned in most art schools. Yet drawing is the preferred medium of the South African artist William Kentridge, a form he uses as the basis of his 'stone-age film making'. Kentridge sticks a piece of paper on his studio wall, does a charcoal drawing, walks across the studio, shoots it with his old bolex, then walks back to the drawing, erases and marginally changes it, and shoots it again. Each sequence is thus based on a single drawing: battered, erased, rubbed-out, and overdrawn. Drawing for Kentridge is a model for knowledge - a temporal process rather than a frozen instant; a fluid physical, slow-motion version of thought where emotions and fact are tentatively revealed, erased and rediscovered.

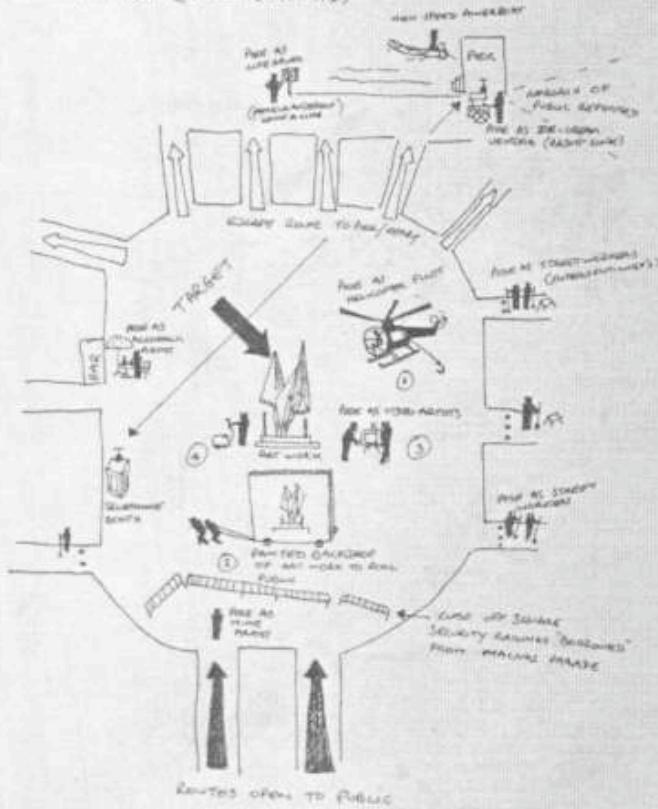
Gober's numerous drawings point to an underlying psychodynamic, and their role in this exhibition is to demonstrate the process of turning fantasy concepts into realized sculptural forms. As a group, Gober's most engaging works on paper illustrate monomaniacal tendencies in the endless permutations of his trademark sinks.

Deirdre Morgan showed delicate pencil drawings of organic patterns drawn from memory on a grid. Maria Doyle exhibited hauntingly dark drawings of personal experience and mediaeval images.

*Sean Taylor, August 2000*

OPERATION TO SUCCESSFULLY REMOVE "BAD" PUBLIC ART WORK FROM OPEN PUBLIC AREAS, WHILE CONTRIBUTING AESTHETICALLY TO THE PUBLIC ART DEBATE

A. THE DIRECT APPROACH (WITHOUT GRANT-AID)



- ① Plan A REMOVE OBNOVEL PUBLIC ART WORK BY HELICOPTER  
CUMULUS DISPOSED AT TRAFFIC-JAM OVERVIEW
- ② BACKDOOR REMOVED FROM THEATER LINKS WITH "SCULPTURE" IN PROPERTY
- ③ REPLACE ART WORK, WITH VIDEO ART WORK OF NEW OR GOLIGHT WORK. EXPLOSION OF PHOTOSHOP HELPER
- ④ "MISS" IN S.S.I. CURRENTLY DESIGNATED AS ICE CREAM VEHICLE  
REMOVE SCULPTURE WITH DAY-GLO GREEN CUTTER

# Drawing Texts

Katie Holten



## Tools

pencil  
pen  
markers  
ink  
charcoal  
pastel  
chalk  
ashes  
stick  
paint  
egg yolk  
beans  
water  
tomato ketchup  
wine  
blood  
leaves  
acid  
needle  
potatoe  
paper  
oil  
soil  
light  
fire  
smoke  
wash

14  
 215  
 210  
 240  
 360

draw your own conclusions

disconnected ideas

~~put together~~  
~~link~~  
~~connect them~~

thought  
view  
thought  
view

etc.

source

presentation  
organized

notes  
reminders  
plans  
thoughts  
diagrams

work through ideas

• mistakes  
inevitable

plan "made up as you go along"



schemes

• yet to be realized

• for something bigger

one thing  
leads into  
another  
and creates  
something else.

- connections between things.  
- draw your own conclusions

## line

- a line of thought
- draw the line
- line dancing
- don't cross the line
- between the lines
- direct line
- bad line

## Subterranean

redefinition of

model

innocence

a lost state

- truth
- no clutter
- eden
- alimony / lead
- no lies
- creates order  
(out of)

privileges

meanings → language

Complex style

- political
- personal
- documentation
- diary

arrangement

- a track
- trekking ~~trekking~~
- path

changing interpretation

- about their thoughts
- enlightenment
- process of self discovery

Katie Holten, August 2000

## Negotiating Transience Between Matter and Surface

Kristina Huxley

*She is standing totally alone in the kitchen.*

*She is wearing white; her pale arms bare, joining jet black gloved palms and fingers outstretched at her sides. She is momentarily frozen in a bathing of yellow light from the open refrigerator. She has removed everything from the refrigerator and replaced it with coal.*

Memory snapshop, circa 1974

Being hooked on my own curiosity has paved the way for venture and disaster, both of which have equal importance to me. Changing the context of things has always been the most immediate physical route to the exploration of change. This is what has always encouraged me to draw. One of my earliest memories is of being taught how to draw a duck. Putting pencil to paper, my grandmother showed me how to draw a duck based on the number 2. Simply by drawing another joining 2-shaped line directly beneath the original number 2 and adding shapes such as triangles to delineate beaks and feet a duck shape is formed. The ducks were clever; there was only ever one duck per page, with no attempt to draw a duck pond or surroundings. Neither the duck nor the number two was important. It was the simple process of transformation in the act of making this drawing that occupied me. Drawing had the potential to change something and the potential to change the very context of that something, even at the age of three. Drawing, in addition to recording experience, transformed looking into seeing, and seeing is process.

Drawings are an intimate part of my work. They are the first thoughts that incorporate the physical senses, brought on to a surface. They are unfiltered, concentrated and precise, they are not precious and they are never profound. They are a reservoir of ideas and intentions, experiments and energy; they are the place where metamorphosis takes place and where energy is transformed into

form. It is for this reason that I refer to most of my drawings as 'process drawings'.

*An amorphous wind is blowing over us at a point where shore becomes dune. I am a brace for my eyes; the tripod is cloaked in my shadow, sheltering from the wind. Before me spreads a sea of marram grass, stretching for at least a mile. I see the wind. It reveals itself as it travels across the surface of the grass, combing great lines and casting fissures. It is more precise than any other drawing that I know.*

Note from The Wind Drawings, Summer 1999

Treading along the fine line that divides inquisition and intrusion has occupied uncountable hours of concentrated looking. The intimate anonymity when in front of a person, object or material underlines the gap between the viewer and the viewed. Even in composed stillness this puts everything in flux. Drawings are not frozen moments; they record their own fluid form and spatial complexity over a period of time.

The landscape and/or journey is both an analogy for drawing and a way of looking at or considering drawing. A road, for instance, may travel across land as a line may on paper. Landscapes and drawings have more to do with process than product, time than place. They both embody the drama of movement, creation and regeneration, integrating the past into the present: the elements are trapped in layers of time ingrained into a single surface. The surface upon which a drawing is made can also be looked at in terms of landscape. The material used to make a drawing is detached by the surface it is placed upon as it is woven into the depths of what is no longer a surface but a landscape of fibres. Drawings are places where the materials themselves can take on different guises and forever be transformed.

*The pencil heaves deep, rapid breaths over a herd of calm, cream coloured cattle into the waking dark. An arm's reach and a pause is all that separates them. All eyes are frozen into the sound of weight slightly shifting in mud. The lead probes their enveloped eyes exploring the dark fluid wells. Time marks the drawing as the light changes. The pencil moves left to right, right to left, left to right, repeating the same movements over and over, mapping every fibre in its grasp, as architecture maps stone.*

*Heavy coats sweat clouds of steam; the electric cattle boiling over the blanket of evening chill. The rising vapour laces itself into a sheet of deep green, crescendoing in orange milk. The cattle stand silently still; the pencil is worn. Warmth is made visible, breathing change into the sky of paper.*

Notes from the documentation of process drawings, Summer 2000

Any movement is drawing and any change is drawing. Drawings are perpetual webbings of states of permanent unrest. They are the surface where extreme times can collide; where the invisible is visible, where transience faces permanence. They are places of negotiation and manipulation. They seal evidence as memory seals image. Wastelands exist between changing states; they are the edges between times. The places between transformations are the focus of the catalytic drawings for the rest of my work; they point to where one process is revealed and informed by another. The drawings are the initial visual traces of articulating transient processes. They are made on surfaces that are anonymous and neutral to avoid confusion and distraction. The drawings themselves have had to become transient in order to question. The wind and the process drawings are about drawing. They are about the process of drawing, the nature of drawing and the idea of drawing.

My relationship with drawing, how I consider drawing and my use of drawing is changing constantly. Drawing is not complicated; it is seeing and asking what is visual and what is translation.

*The light is piercing the glass window; it melts its way through leaves. The light's gaze is burning a hole in the antique table in front of me. Transient pools of yellow dance on silver shadows. It fades for two moments then returns, turning the brown surface into golden ochre. I slide under it. The drawing fits into the palm of my hand.*

Notes from the documentation of process drawings, Summer 2000.

Kristina Huxley, November 2000

## **Do Drawings Draw Themselves? Art, Co-poiesis, and Ecology**

*John Wood*

This essay draws out some deliberations about the drawing of drawings, and what they mean to this drawer, in both time and space. We may remind ourselves that the word 'drawing' has evolved from several possible ideas, including the physical notion of 'pulling out', or eliciting that which may already be there. It challenges the popular Romantic idea of a genius who actively and single-handedly 'creates' the drawing from his own mastery and wisdom. In reflecting upon such ideas, it looks at Maturana and Varela's neuro-biologically-inspired idea of 'autopoiesis' (literally, 'self-creation').

**KEYWORDS:** autopoiesis, co-poiesis, drawing (verb), ecology, science, shamanism

Marcel Duchamp - that most cunning artist of the twentieth century - was once quoted as saying: "People give more to my pictures than take from them". This always struck me as an important idea. When I was two or three years old, someone gave me a small toy camera made out of black plastic. Behind the hole where the lens should be was a pink face the size of an aspirin, concealed by an opaque shutter. It was a very simple toy; when you pressed a red button, the face would jump out on a spring. What always amazed me, was that no matter who you chose to point the camera at, the little face always resembled that person. Admittedly, it did not work quite as well for some faces; but, as any adult will tell you, some sitters are more photogenic than others....

*(image of two hands drawing each other, by Maurice Escher)*

This is a famous drawing of two hands, which appear to have

drawn each other. Aesthetically, it is a rather unsatisfying and anodyne image. Why is it so often used by scientists, such as Hofstadter, Penrose, Maturana and Varela, Hawking, Capra? In science, there is a concern for generalized, and perpetual truths, rather than for experiences. Experiences are unreliable because they seem parochial and unquantifiable. In mathematics, it is not the experience of recursion, but the general idea of recursion that is supposed to fascinate us. What is recursion? We may get a bit closer to this idea by thinking of fractal shapes, in which self-similarity is made by using proportions or forms that can, in theory, be infinitely nested into one another. In popular science, we may find drawings by Maurice Escher, Piero della Francesca, or Leonardo da Vinci used to introduce Mandelbrot or Julia sets. Such pictures have been used to illustrate riddles about the idea of 'self-organizing systems', a kind of autonomous state, in which certain things are said to regulate, define, or even create themselves. The 'A' sizes of paper are an example in which, by cutting an A4 sheet in half you get an A5, and by cutting an A5 in half you get an A6, and so on, to infinity. However, this is a game that uses fixed, static proportions to create a map, or snapshot of an imagined recursion. It is like a drawing. However, what about the more active idea of self-creation? Where is the draughtsperson? This entails dynamic growth, and therefore must work within spatio-temporal parameters of evolution and change.

The contemporary notion of self-creation ('autopoiesis') was inspired by biological descriptions (Maturana and Varela) in which we find the very old idea that every cell contains a 'picture' of the whole organism. Just like the 'A' sizes of paper, we may justifiably imagine this as bricks in a wall. If we look at the way science is currently exploring molecular biology we might assume that DNA is merely a set of binary codes that can be logged, decoded, understood, and even patented. As such, it fits into our western categorical logic of memes. We are still stuck in the digital era, in which alphanumeric programming codes are used to design a world of dependable repetition, where '1' = '1' and '0' = '0' in any situation. This seems to confirm what science had promised us in the way of absolute power (e.g. Archimedes), absolute knowledge (e.g. Pierre Laplace), and absolute control of resources (e.g. the

agribusiness corporations). In the digital era, we design by writing algorithms, and texts can therefore be synonymous with pictures. Pictures are therefore seen to have quantifiable meanings. In etymological terms, the word 'theory' meant 'picture', and we may remember how the young Wittgenstein tried to make a theory of perfect language using the idea that every proposition is a picture. He believed we could invent a grammar engineered into precisely interlocking shapes (unique signifiers). Later, Wittgenstein realized that he had ignored the emergent properties of language, which ensure that creation cannot be sustained by a static logic of categorical truths. As the experience of freehand drawing shows us, we live in a world of dynamic logic that cannot be repeated exactly. Similarly, a speaker's meanings are always co-created from within the context of their speaking. They cannot be simplified or decontextualised without a significant loss of meaning. The Escher drawing is disappointing because it merely illustrates the idea of a pun in a literal - rather than in a visual and time-oriented way. Puns only work when they are performed, just as a joke fails to be funny if it is explained. Personally, in drawings, I like to experience some of the uncertainties and risk of the performance, even if it is somewhat theatrically staged.

(*picture of the Dancers* by Matisse)

The idea of autopoiesis offers a dynamic description of how the organism collects itself together and enables its individual parts to work as a whole system. Equally importantly, it also acknowledges how the system must find its balance within a larger context. This idea may be difficult for us to grasp, especially in a society where hierarchical power has often seemed to be the most effective mode of organization. It has also emerged from an era in which technology seeks to outwit, or to trick Nature on a daily basis. Nevertheless, if we can forget the classical image of the orchestra conductor, reading from a pre-determined musical score, we might give up looking for the 'cause', or 'origin' of life in either the body, or in the 'mind' - or even in the language that reconciles their relationship. Without the logic of the 'Book', or the computational paradigm, we may be able to see DNA as a dynamic counterpoint

of wave harmonies that 'perform' their own existence - perhaps like a leaderless, conductor-less orchestra. Most of us have been saturated with the romantic myth of the lone genius who is single-handedly responsible for a work of art. Yet, if we imagine a living organism as an ensemble of players, we might understand it as a continuous co-creation of all factors. On the other hand, if you look at the orchestra as a whole, we might see it as a mode of self-creation. How does this equate to art and the tradition of drawing? It is hard for artists to admit the synergy between artists, curators, public, journalists, collectors, gallerists, and critics. There are historical reasons for this. In the past, their art has been misunderstood and reviled by critics and the general public, and patrons have often demanded the starring role in their portraits, even though their immortality may derive more from the artist's fame, rather than their own. Perhaps this is now the time to rethink the relationship between the 'drawing' and its 'drawer'.

(*drawing by Giacometti*)

Arguably, in classical art history in both east and west, we have tended to ignore the dynamic relationship between artist, subject, and drawing, tending instead to valorize each as a separate domain. Certainly in today's globalized society, the wealthy (most of us) are inclined to reify the finished artwork as trophy, relic, or product. This is supported by a dominant Kantian ontology that emphasizes the discreteness, rather than the dynamic interconnectedness of things. Hence, it is customary for us to see 'drawer', 'sitter', and 'viewer' as distinct players, each in their own autonomous worlds. It is this belief that sustains our commodification of artworks as perfect 'things'. Ecologically speaking, this is a misunderstanding of what is happening. How can we see beyond these boundaries of language? Michael Fried used the idea of 'absorption' as a way to analyse phenomenological devices in eighteenth century figurative painting. Here is a much simplified outline of some of the more obvious zones of absorption for the three players involved in the task of freehand drawing from a human sitter when a third person is watching. I have used a conventional view of three separate domains - drawer, sitter, and

observer, and tried to use this as the basis to focus on the relationships between the three. (Wood, 1998)

(*Godbold & Wood installation - "Striking Water from the Rock"*)

	MODE	STATE WHILST DRAWING
the drawer	{ self-absorbed	oblivious of the 'look' of the drawing
	{ action-absorbed	barely aware of the 'look' of the drawing
	{ field-absorbed	focused onto the picture plane (e.g. paper)
	{ subject-absorbed	focused upon subject being drawn
	{ image-absorbed	focused upon the 'look' of the drawing
	{ task-absorbed	reflecting upon the work's strategy
	{ viewer-absorbed	imagining what the viewer will see
	MODE	STATE WHILST BEING SEEN
the sitter	{ self-absorbed	oblivious of being looked at
	{ task-absorbed	focused upon set task for its 'look'
	{ rapport with artist	empathizing with the task of drawing
	{ object-absorbed	focusing attention upon something nearby
	{ beholder-absorbed	focused upon an imagined voyeur
	MODE	STATE WHILST LOOKING
observer	{ self-absorbed	oblivious of the drawing altogether
	{ self-absorbed	barely aware of the drawing
	{ task-absorbed	focused upon 'looking' but hardly sees
	{ field-absorbed	focused onto the picture plane (e.g. paper)
	{ subject-absorbed	focused upon what is depicted
	{ image-absorbed	focused upon the 'look' of the drawing

If we follow Fried's concern for absorption to its mathematical limits, we may acknowledge that the fascination of painters such as Greuze, or Fragonard, or Chardin for the gaze of their sitters that permits a world of co-creation, whereby every figure depicted has the power to gaze at any other figure. This may remind us of the philosophical theory of George Berkeley (1685-1753) in which an entity can be said to exist only when it is perceived by other entities. This is a profoundly ecological argument. In digital computer terms

it is like the world of object-oriented programming, where discrete parts of the system have their own rules of behaviour, and relate to one another in their own way, rather than being controlled like puppets from a central point. When we replace autocracy (dictatorship) with autarchy (self-responsible anarchy), we find that the scale of interactions ranges from the highest to the lowest level of organization. In a modest way, holography may remind us of this process, because - unlike the monocular tyranny of lens photography - every particle of light-sensitive emulsion on the holographic plate works to gather its own view of what it sees.

(*Vermeer painting of pensive woman*)

(*Chinese traditional landscape drawing*)

Every artist is both a single point within the social landscape, and yet also a manifold set of points within his, or her, whole organism. If artists were to live their lives in the knowledge of this truth, they would probably become shamanic tricksters. When we sit in front of our drawing board and gaze at someone gazing back at us, we are confronting a vast complexity of simultaneous possibilities. Even more alive than the holographic plate, we are sensitive to many more modes of organization and creative possibility. As civilized people, and dutiful consumers, we can only survive by 'filtering-out' most of what surrounds us, how we feel, what we want to do. Arguably, the implied transgression of this reasonable mode of being is the high drama that provides the basis for drawing. To some extent, many twenty-first century artists have been turned into consumers by a cynical and artful art world. Today, artists can choose their preferred practice from a beautifully-documented range of 'genres' through which to filter their options. Our semantic relativism means that we know that everything we draw will inevitably have a meaning for other humans, whether or not this is what we intend or expect. In a way, all of these conditions have made it more, rather than less difficult for the artist.

(*image of graffiti artist at work*)

The creative process works in multiplying itself at these different levels. When we include the unknown viewer into the picture, we have a form of autopoiesis that takes place at many levels simultaneously. The graffiti artist, for example, may be working to impress other graffiti artists, but also manages to create many things besides. In choosing a particular site, he manages to 'draw into existence' a particular wall that has 'withdrawn' itself from everyone's attention until that moment. In achieving pride in his identity - he has reminded himself how good his own name is - he loses his anger and frustration in a brief moment of self-creation. In making a human scale drawing, the graffiti artist makes us relate to our own scale in a self-creative way. Like all the best drawings, there must be interplay between perfection and uncertainty. What we are looking for is not the algorithm behind the skill, but the evidence that decisions are born out of a unique moment in which many lesser alternatives could have been taken. In the age of commodification, this is not how we are supposed to feel. Even when we see the evidence of the artist's hesitation, or changes in her perception, we are still inclined to desire it merely as a technique for making a 'successful' image.

This is also what the school system now educates us to expect. Why is it that we still find it natural to believe in Euclidean diagrams as 'truth-objects' in their own right, rather than as remakes of line traces by a dead man called Euclid? Plato led us down this strange path in his argument about ideal ('real') forms. Instead of trusting the proximal world around us, he encouraged us to imagine that what is 'real' is beyond our senses. How does this equate to autopoiesis? Western epistemology created the long established theory of axiomatic truth. If we consider that axioms were regarded as closed systems that encapsulated self-evident truths, they can be seen as dubious claims to self-creation. They are dubious because they overlook the part played by human beings, who are co-sustained by a particular belief system, which is co-sustained by a particular social order, which is co-sustained by a particular ecological context. This is a mistake we can no longer afford to make.

*(picture of objects and an "=" sign)*

Another dangerous legacy of the western mind set is a guiding belief in teleological time. This shows itself in a faith in 'progress', rather than a rootedness in the present moment. This is one reason why we seek to maintain control over everything in the world, and why current problems are seen to be soluble by forthcoming technologies. As dutiful consumers, we must desire the 'next' product, rather than the one we already have. Teleology also manifests itself in an increasingly bureaucratic, technologically focused, attainment-driven world of schools, teaching that every 'creative' act must be justified in advance by a plan, and a sense of propriety. Where pretext is the dominant context, 'painting by numbers' is the logical outcome. Can this really be the case? Why else would we be always astonished by the drawings of pre-teenagers in comparison to those of their older brothers and sisters? We cannot simply blame the education system. Again, this is the result of a kind of exuberant false consciousness, in which we long for the future and miss the present. In daily life, we justify today's (temporary) misery by matching it against the numerical truth of expected exam grades and eventual pay-scales.

Where is the bridge between the (true) 'virtual' and the (suspect) 'actual' that Platonic thought contributed to Christianity? St. Paul famously tried to absolve our longing for the 'unattainable virtual' by resorting to the Roman grammar of power and materiality: "faith is the evidence of things unseen, and the substance of things hoped for". Aristotle was more interested in epistemological questions when he suggested that, if we are in doubt about the truth of a theoretical syllogism, we could immediately verify it by comparing it with its practical counterpart. In this mind set, axioms needed no reference to external factors unless we want to justify their truth by referring to members of the same logical class. Semantically speaking, we are led to believe that they are self-creative. In axiomatic logic, truth is seen to exist independently of its larger context. This is a dangerous belief, both for social, and for ecological reasons. Once we believe that mathematics creates reality, rather than vice versa, we risk losing the faith in our ability to make freehand drawings.

*(picture of an Ordnance Survey map)*

Descartes used axiomatic logic to invent the grid system for map references. Here, a map is seen as a truth that may overshadow our experience of the journey. Cartesian logic is an extreme example of a claim to master time and space. Its heresy, ecologically speaking, is to make us believe that we can be in any, or even all regions of the territory at once. Using a map, we are always, in a sense, 'above ourselves'. We tend to forget that when we 'read' the map, we always have to choose which detail to focus upon, just as we can only occupy one place at a time. In drawing an 'accurate' map, we must abide by 'facts' and conventions that have already been determined in advance of the drawing. Just as we have come to believe the 'true' time of mechanical clocks, so we trust the process of 'blind' measurement, rather than immediate human observation. It is ironic that the 'truth' of an ordinance survey map derives from its meticulous attention to rules and measurements, rather than from the situated human judgement, say of a draughtsman in a helicopter. What do instruments know about what it is like to travel across the landscape? Borges made a brave attempt to rouse us from the sleepy assumption that maps are simulacra of 'reality' when he described a map of the world that was made on a one-to-one scale.

(picture of Spider's web)

Do non-humans have mental 'maps' in this Cartesian sense of the word? Does the spider really preconceive its finished 'web drawing', in the way that many school students are taught to visualize and to plan their paintings? Another possibility is that the situated action of spinning the 'web' will have an isomorphic relationship to the form of the completed web. This may sound like a subtle philosophical point, yet it has an ecological importance. As we may notice, spiders are always 'on duty' as predators, even when they are absorbed in spinning their webs. As such, if they placed their faith in a 'perfect' web that would catch all the flies in the universe, they may be distracted from catching the first one that came close to them. For this reason, their 'web drawings' are never dress rehearsals, but always part of a larger opportunistic web of activities. Likewise, drawings always have a

context that, ultimately and continuously, is co-sustained by a situated ecology of being. It is worth reminding ourselves of the use, rather than the form of the map, and the way in which we find our way around. Often, by asking the way, we will be given a 'back of the envelope' sketch that, to an anthropologist from the future, will look almost identical with every other such sketch. However, in this type of drawing, the active context of the drawer and observer create almost all of the useful meanings. For these participants, specific references are established in a cursory, yet highly cogent way on the paper, and are thereafter reinforced by the (memory) of the act of drawing itself. (Fischer, 1995) The drawing(noun) and the memory of the drawing (verb) become fused together in an experience linked to travelling.

*(sketch map on envelope)*

Similarly, in contrast with the strictures of Cartesian map making, Klee's celebrated idea of taking a line for a walk, reminds us of the 'experience' of drawing, and the evidence itself becomes part of the drawing. If we take a line for a walk, do we make a map? That is not the point. What we see in Klee's 'unmapped' type of drawing is the spatio-temporal celebration of a symbolic journey, rather than the purely spatial record of a known destination. In a sense, there is an aspect of Klee's idea of drawing that makes sense only if we can see some benefits in throwing away our maps. It is only meaningful also when it reminds us of what it is like to have an empty sheet of paper and a pencil in our hand.

*(image of hands....Escher)*

The Escher drawing uses a particular kind of rhetoric in which the viewer is shown a combination, or summary, of moments in an extended action. The effect is like the climax of a conjurer's illusion. Here, we may be reminded that rhetoric is seldom fully intrinsic to the whole. It always seeks to fill the listener's, or the viewer's attention, so that other features are eclipsed or overlooked. In western art, this has often seemed to follow a theatrical convention that ignores the time of rehearsal and enactment. Let

us consider the time of this drawing. When did the hand start to draw itself? Is this co-poiesis (co-creation) in which the whole image is created in a simultaneous set of actions that produce each other, or are one or more of the hands to be regarded as 'real'? If we say that the picture is an example of rhetoric, we could see this as the 'theatrical stage-front' of a web of structural elements. In this sense, the making of the drawing is carefully hidden from the spectator's view. We cannot tell from the drawing how long it took to make, or, how many previous versions have been destroyed to maintain the illusion of instant perfection. Rhetoric is seldom given a temporal frame, yet it would be sensible to do so. If we consider the temporal whereabouts of rhetoric, it could be said that it is always at the leading edge of a wave that reaches us before anything else.

(*Rembrandt self-portrait*)

It is interesting to consider whether there would be any need for rhetoric in a world that is self-created. On the scale of the universe, why would God bother to make a rhetorical gesture? Self-directed rhetoric is a case of vanity, or self-delusion - like when we look at ourselves in a full-length mirror when nobody else is around; why do we bother to stand up straighter, or pull our stomach in? The scientist Richard Feynman calculated that the way energy and matter is distributed in the universe would be accounted for by there being only one particle that rushes everywhere at superluminal speed. This is a beautiful idea that has a comedy and pathos in it. It is as though God is drawing the whole world with one pencil.... very, very quickly.... endlessly, and continuously, without even the shortest holiday, or tea-break. If true, it would also be a shamanistic trick by God. It is like making a pun, or a joke that you know nobody else will understand, but you tell it anyway. If Feynman is right, the world is an autopoietic drawing and we are the (co)artists, sitters, and audience - all at the same time.

(*drawing by Rebecca Horn, or Jean Tinguely*)

But how do we - as artists and creators - fit into such a system? My conclusion is that - yes, the drawing can create itself, but that this is always part of a larger context. The human understanding of autopoiesis is an illusion caused by our need to see things in a localized way. In more formal terms, any finite system of autopoiesis is always co-poietic with a larger system. When I was two or three years old I was fascinated by my Auntie Muriel's grand piano, and used to spend hours kneeling on the piano stool and getting mesmerized by this wise old instrument. My understanding of how it worked was quite different from how my school science teachers might have explained it to me, a decade or so later. However, at the time, I had a very simple 'grand piano hypothesis' that I still believe. Indeed, it is not too dissimilar from David Bohm's theory of 'elevation' in quantumphysics. I cannot claim to have been influenced by quantum mechanics in those days, but older readers may remember a gramophone record of the 1940s called 'Sparky's Magic Piano' which inspired me to think in this way. I must emphasize that my hypothesis does not work when you have been taught to play the piano, or studied physics in school.

Here is my hypothesis. When you look at the black and white bars that are lined up in front of you, you must decide which ones to push down with your knuckles. This is the difficult part. However, once you have decided which to push down, the piano tells you which are the ones you should press down next. After that, you are working like a team, and forget what you did. There is no point in trying to remember which order you pushed down the keys, because the piano or the room may feel different, next time you visit them. The piano, the room, and the time you spend together are special times that can never be copied or learned. They create themselves, and they co-create us, in the same way that everything always draws, or plays itself into being.

Thank you for drawing us to our attention, and for your kind co-creation.

*John Wood, October 2000*

1. Fried, M., *Absorption and Theatricality; painting and beholder in the age of Diderot.*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago and London, 1980, p. 108.

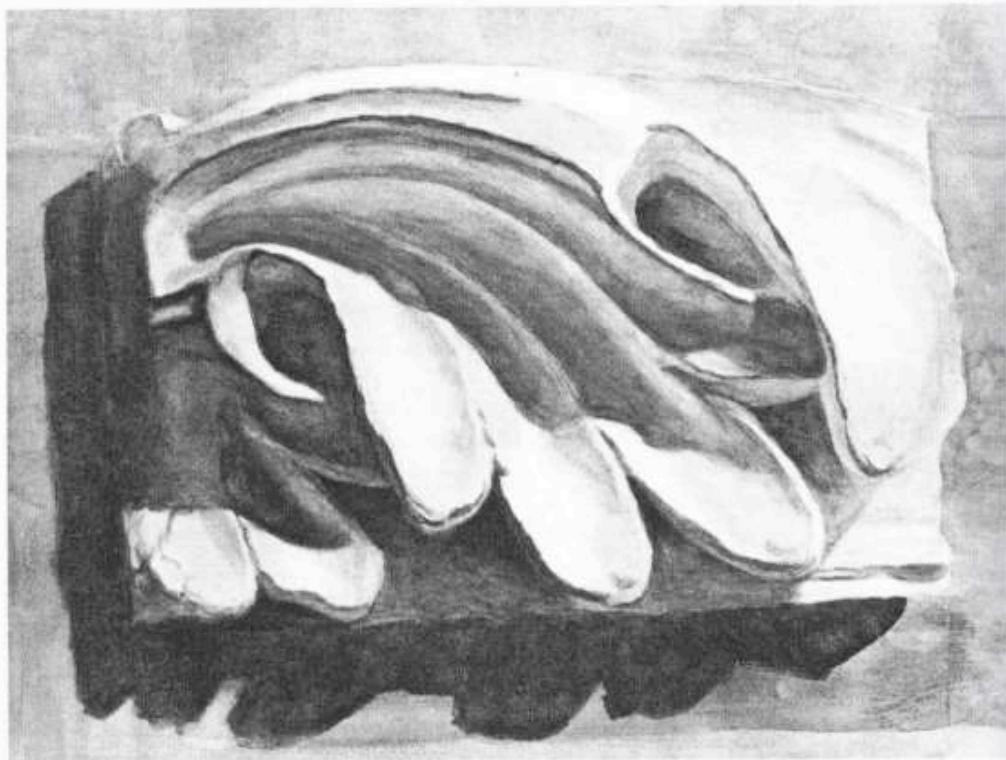
## Drawing and Design

*Professor John Turpin*

For the layman, drawing and art are usually regarded as synonymous. Indeed at one stage in the 1960s the Irish Department of Education replaced 'Drawing' as a subject on the Leaving Certificate by 'Art', without considering the full theoretical implications of such a change. The activity of drawing can be seen as an end in itself as a Modernist would, or as an instrumental practice as is normally the case in the design process.

Because of the intellectual dominance of the fine art tradition it is worth reflecting very briefly on this. The essential point about drawing or 'designo' in the Renaissance was that it was the clearest indicator of the intellectual character of fine art, distinguishing it from an artisan craft activity. Drawing addressed issues such as perspective, composition, and included the study of the body, externally and especially the internal articulation of the skeleton and muscles. In the academic tradition of the seventeenth century there was continuing debate between the rational and intellectual character of drawing, as contrasted to colour with its emotional associations. Neo-classicism in the late eighteenth century re-emphasized the primacy of drawing in fine art education, promoting the study of the antique and the live model. However this academic tradition became very restrictive, requiring the production of highly finished representational exhibition drawings as ends in themselves, whereas for the old masters, drawing was generally part of a larger developmental process.

The Romantic idea of intuition and spontaneity favoured rapid sketching, especially of nature. The Modernist position was to sweep away Neo-classical figure drawing, thus causing a revolution in art education (as at the National College of Art and Design, Dublin, in the late 1960s). While the prestige of traditional drawing suffered, the practice of drawing in a variety of media, as a specific art practice, was recognized. Drawing was no longer corralled, as it had been, as a private or preparatory activity, but



became one of the many possible visual languages to be evaluated on its own terms. Individual drawings, old and new, were acclaimed as valuable art works and were collected and displayed by art galleries, as had not been the case hitherto. In short, in fine art, drawing moved to a state of complete autonomy as an art form in itself.

The concept of drawing for design is a tautology. The idea of drawing for manufacture comes under the heading of 'design'. However this use of the word arises from a misunderstanding in eighteenth century Britain of the French *Écoles des dessin* - or drawing schools devoted to the education of artisans for the craft industries. (The original Dublin Society Drawing School was one such institution.) The word 'design' was given a new English meaning of 'drawing for manufacture'. In time the word extended its meaning to include anything and everything in the complex relationship of art to industry. The essential point was that drawing was instrumental to a physical production process. It was the first stage in fulfilling a manufacturer's requirements. It is worth noting that the concept of the instrumentality of all drawing was still around in the eighteenth century for both fine art and the decorative arts before the exalted fine art claims of the Romantic movement detached fine art into an increasingly esoteric realm. In the sixteenth, seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, artists provided drawings for the decorative arts: silver, ceramics, tapestry, book illustration and festival decoration. In cases where artists' drawings were reproduced in engraved form, their influence was diffused. The Neo-classical fine art view conceived manufacture as the mechanical realization of an ideal defined by drawing.

The issue of drawing for manufacture became a pressing one with the Industrial Revolution and, the establishment of factories with a division of labour. Conceptualization and production were quite separate functions, unlike the practice of the traditional hand craftsman who worked with customary forms - gradually modifying an object from start to finish. This disjunction of conceptualization and execution had long been a feature of architecture where architect's drawings of plans, elevations and sections were a highly sophisticated division of drawing by the eighteenth century. In mass-production industry the issue of design had to be tackled in a

self-conscious way to give visual definition to new products using new technical production processes.

Drawing for engraving and other forms of reproduction, was one of the most important aspects of drawing and was enormously influential. Without such drawing and engraving, up to the mid-eighteenth century, the classical style in architecture and painting could not have spread throughout Europe and the Americas. Architects and artists, as well as jobbing draughtsmen, could provide such drawings for artisans to cut into steel plates. Printing was the earliest mass-production industry; vast numbers of architectural, engineering, medical, agricultural, botanical and natural history volumes depended on drawing for reproduction. There was also the market for individual reproductive prints and for political cartoons, where an artisan had to convert a drawing into an engraving or a lithograph. The great *Encyclopédie* of the French Enlightenment and its many later imitations all depended greatly on engraved illustrations. The illustrated magazines of the Victorian period had special artist-correspondents who supplied drawings of news events. Up to the 1950s drawing still dominated the world of advertising: outdoor posters, and print advertisements. In the fashion industry, lithographic fashion plates were central to marketing.

In the area of three-dimensional manufacture, drawing was essential. Factories had to maintain a design studio with reference books of historic examples to facilitate drawing for production, as with the great metalwork industry of Boulton and Watt, and the pottery of Josiah Wedgwood. He employed the sculptor John Flaxman to design vessels based on the engravings made after the drawings of Sir William Hamilton's collection of Greek vases. Ornamental ironwork balconies, door furniture and cast iron columns were all the outcome of designs, often by engineers.

The textile industry was massively dependent on up-to-date designs for silk weaving, printed linens and cottons. Technical drawings on large sheets of squared paper were prepared for execution on Jaquard looms (as in the Belfast textile mills). Behind the final design lay a long apprenticeship at flower and plant drawing from specimens. Such work was central to the teaching of the schools of design in the nineteenth century.

Before photography, drawing served mainly as a recording practice. The British school of watercolour drawing grew out of the factual topographic interest of the eighteenth century. That was connected to map-making, where drawing skills were essential. For army officers, engineers, as well as for lady and gentlemen amateurs, a basic mastery of drawing skills was deemed socially desirable to enable them to record their travels for professional or personal reasons. Drawing as a representational skill was a characteristic of the educated person. Drawing masters were employed by the well-off and by institutions to teach the 'Rules of Drawing'. Instruction manuals of drawing proliferated in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. In a certain sense drawing was more highly socially valued then than at any time before or since.

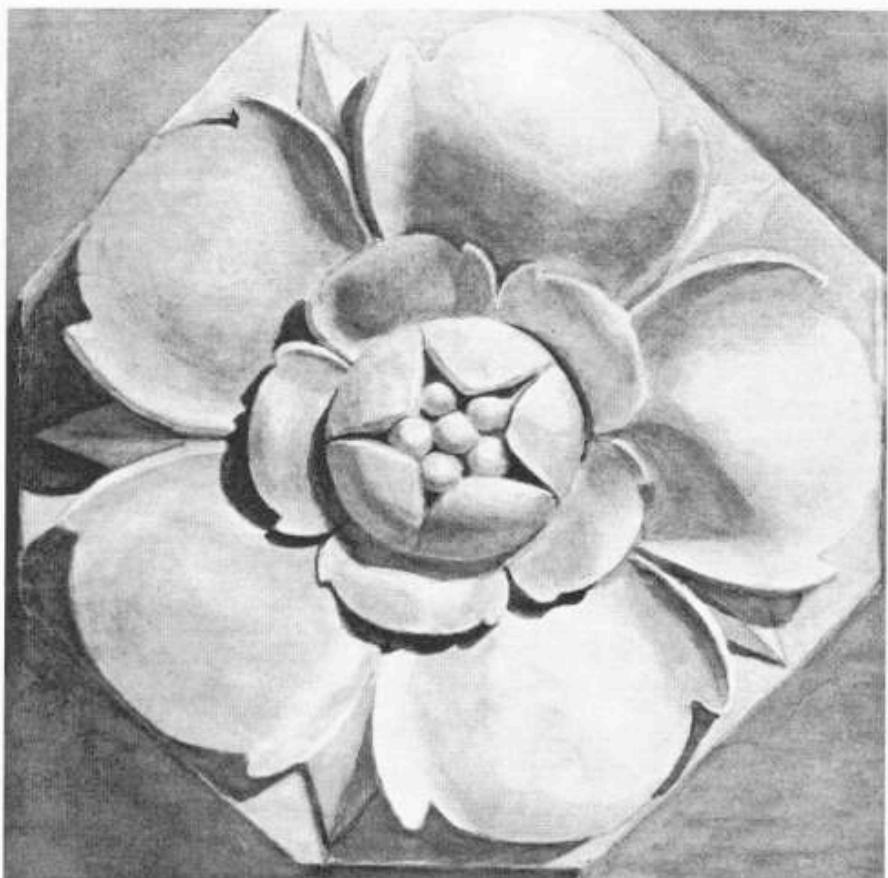
This matter-of-fact enlightenment attitude to drawing, as a basic rational representational language for all educated people, was a far cry from later Romantic and Modernist views of drawing as an expression of personal subjectivity. The schools of design were supported throughout the United Kingdom, including Ireland, in the nineteenth century to teach such basic skills, theoretically (but ineffectually) to improve drawing of patterns for manufacture. It was a utilitarian approach to drawing which originally banned life study as irrelevant to industry. These debates about the role and value of drawing continue to oscillate between a vocationalist utilitarian approach and an expressive one.

Within design for industry, photography has replaced many of the functions of drawing, such as the recording of views and descriptive scenes for reproductive purposes, magazine illustrations, posters and other printed advertising, generating printed fabric patterns or transfer printing on ceramics. Computers with scanners and Photoshop programmes have taken over photographic imagery and page lay-out. The computer has also a role in design for a range of products. Electronic digital processes can move from computer-aided design to computer-aided manufacture. Hitherto designers tended to work in straight lines, but the computer has made it much easier to work in curves in three dimensions and thus to produce more innovative shapes. This is not just an aesthetic response to the design of traditional products like refrigerators, but a response to CAD/CAM

technology. This has had a liberating effect on design, not possible within the traditional techniques of technical drawing.

Does this mean the elimination of drawing from the conceptualization and production process? Is drawing to be confined to the fine art of self expression? Certainly, new technology has released drawing from many of the laborious repetitive functions it had to perform - such as complex three-dimensional model drawing for industrial products, (now that drawing can be replaced completely as three-dimensional models are scanned into the computer). It has facilitated drawing patterns for textiles and wallpaper, or hand-rendered letters in posters. The computer combined with the photograph, has released the designer from the drudgery of making working drawings. It eliminates tiresome hand-work and allows the designer to concentrate on the essential conceptual character of drawing: tracking the imagination on paper: idea leading to idea, some discarded, others developed, until a concept is sufficiently coherent for more elaborate technical drawing on computer. Drawing is a trace of visual investigation. Traditional object, plant and figure drawing can still sharpen the powers of observation, analysis and selectivity, and in terms of skill can foster a personal graphic language. In its fundamental conceptual sense drawing is still central to the design process.

*Professor John Turpin, July 2000*



## **Life Drawing**

### **The Origins of an Exclusive Practice**

*Pat McKenna*

The glass ceiling for women artists in the eighteenth and much of the nineteenth centuries was in the 'minor' genres of portrait painting and still life. Beyond it lay 'history painting', the highest genre/category of painting, out of the reach of women, except for a brief period in Paris, after the French Revolution. The reason why women could not train as history painters was because they were not permitted to attend public art academies. As these schools were the only places where life drawing classes were permitted for much of this period, women artists were unable to draw directly from the model, an exercise which was considered essential for aspiring history painters.

Drawing from the life/nude model was seen as the way to overcome problems of lifeless, static figures in a history painting. As undertaken at the influential French Academy school, life drawing was an advanced practice, only for pupils who were already adept at drawing from engravings and from casts from the antique. The teaching methodology adopted shortly after the *Academie Royale* (of Painting and Sculpture) was instituted in 1648, remained much the same up to and well beyond the period of institutional upheaval during the French Revolution, when the Academy school was re-constituted as the *École des Beaux Arts*. Twelve academicians, appointed as *professeurs*/teachers of life drawing, took turns in posing the model. Their pupils' task was to make an *académie*, taking information from the model and correcting and perfecting the figure, in accordance with academic teaching.<sup>1</sup> This was a slow process and very demanding of the pupils and the model. The pose, usually derived from an antique statue, was studied for two hours daily over a four week period. The established procedure was to begin by seizing the pose in a rapid sketch and centring it on the page. Next came the drawing of

clearly defined contours of the figure, at the same time correcting any 'defects' in the model, i.e. ways in which he did not measure up to classical proportions. Equal emphasis was placed on modelling the figure; on the massing of light and shade and the use of parallel lines and cross-hatching, to suggest relief, and on the mastery of half-tones. At first, red and black chalk were the preferred materials for life drawing, but pencils were introduced in the early nineteenth century, and charcoal and conté crayon came in slightly later. Pupils were encouraged to concentrate on capturing the composition of the figure as a whole instead of dwelling on individual parts or on unnecessary details. A *professeur* held 'correction' sessions, during which he corrected the anatomical or proportional defects of his pupils' drawing.

Only male models were used there between 1655 and 1863.<sup>2</sup> The exclusion of female models owed as much to the long held belief in the superiority of the male physique, as it did to propriety. Propriety did play a part in the exclusion of female pupils from the life room. It was inconceivable that they should draw from the male nude model, not to mention doing so in the company of male pupils. (Female pupils were not, in fact, admitted to the *école* until 1896, thirty-three years after the introduction of female life models). Furthermore, in the realm of art, women were considered irrational creatures, incapable of becoming history painters, as they were thought to lack the inventive powers necessary for history painting.

To understand why the French Academy rated history painting so highly, and why life drawing was considered indispensable for 'great' artists, it is necessary to return to the written source which first promoted both of these, and which the French Academy adopted as its 'bible' over two hundred years later. This was a treatise, simply entitled *On Painting*, which was published in manuscript form in Florence in 1435. The first edition was in Latin and an Italian translation, dedicated to the architect Brunelleschi, was made a year later. Its author, Leon Battista Alberti, was born into a Florentine family, which had been exiled from the city-state before his birth. A brilliant young Humanist scholar, in his mid-twenties, his education had familiarized him with the Greek and Roman literature of antiquity, with its many

passages devoted to descriptions of works of art, to painters and painting in general. Alberti visited Florence for the first time in 1428. Overwhelmed by the pioneering nature of the architecture and sculpture of Brunelleschi and Donatello, with whom he became friendly, and by the innovative work of the sculptors Ghiberti and Lucca della Robbia and that of the painter Masaccio, he rated their art the equal of any work by the famous artists of antiquity. In Alberti's terms, this was the highest praise he could possibly give.

In the opening pages of *On Painting*, Alberti stated that he was writing as a painter, for painters. He had in mind ambitious young painters who sought fame through their art. Though he did not come from a workshop background, he did some painting himself, at a time when painting was not acceptable as an amateur pursuit. It is evident from the text that he enjoyed not only painting, but reading about the art of antiquity, observing the paintings of his contemporaries and giving the subject a great deal of thought. He had an eye for composition, - he was the first to apply this term to painting - for shading used to create a sense of relief, for colour and for the manner in which its appearance is affected by light and shadow. Of most significance for his own time was his development of a system for the application of linear perspective in painting. He hadn't a great deal to say about drawing *per se*, and nothing at all about materials and techniques. However, he certainly recognized drawing as a stage in the process of making a painting.<sup>3</sup> It was of fundamental importance in the processes of fresco and egg tempera painting, the painting methods used in 1430's Florence.

Alberti was fully convinced that it was not good enough for a painter to work without understanding why he was doing what he did. "Let no man doubt that the man (sic) who does not perfectly understand what he is attempting to do when painting, will never be a good painter."<sup>4</sup> At a time when painting was seen as a manual activity, Alberti emphasized its intellectual basis, and termed it a "noble and beautiful art, (which) arises from roots within Nature herself."<sup>5</sup> In his view, nature was the only source of good painting. He understood geometry to be based on the laws of nature and the sequence which he recommended to the painter to follow in his

painting, - that of outlining the space to be occupied by the figure, composing the figure, adding colour with reflections of light and shadow, - was, he believed equivalent to stages in the process of seeing, based on the science of optics.

When he came to explain how to apply the theoretical knowledge of perspective, to walls and panels, he let his reader into the approach which he himself adopted.

"First of all, on the surface on which I am going to paint, I draw a rectangle of whatever size I want, which I regard as an open window through which the subject to be painted is seen; and then I decide how large I wish the human figures in the painting to be...I divide the height of this man (sic) into three parts."<sup>6</sup>

Every student of Renaissance art is familiar with the first part of the first sentence, but it is the last part, and the sentence which follows, which are of concern here. The Humanist Alberti could not have conceived of a great painting without a human dimension, lacking in human figures. He devoted several pages of the treatise to advising on the representation of the human figure in painting. The last sentence above reveals that when he wrote of the human figure, he had the male figure in mind. In using a length of measurement taken from the male body, to establish a modular system for his painting, he was following classical and medieval precedents in art. Furthermore, Alberti's identification of the human figure with the male figure fitted in with Aristotle's view of male and female figures, based on his explanation of the conception of an infant. This view was widely held at the time and it led Alberti - and others - to see the male form as perfect, and the female form as an incomplete male and consequently a less than perfect form. Aristotle's guess at the nature of conception served to provide a biological explanation for the place of women in fifteenth century Florence. Women's role was to replenish Florence with citizens.<sup>7</sup> They were not destined to be painters, 'great' or otherwise!

More than halfway through his treatise, Alberti began his analysis of the *historia*, which he identified as the great work of the painter. The term was his own invention and he intended it to signify uplifting dramas, derived from a literary text; large paintings with life-size figures, depicting a variety of human

actions and reactions. (*Historia* later became known as history painting.) Though he didn't specify any particular literary source or theme, religious texts, the source of the noble subject matter given to painters of his day, and new themes from classical literature and history, were what he had in mind. Above all, he favoured a subject which provided the opportunity for introducing a variety of beautiful figures. Beauty was at the heart of Alberti's theory on painting and it was present in a painting when every element, every part came together to form a harmonious whole. A variety of beautifully proportioned, life-sized figures would convey to the appreciative onlooker the drama inherent in the narrative. Ideally the number of figures would be limited to nine or ten men (sic). The drama would be best expressed through appropriate facial features and gestures, through poses suggestive of body movements. In order to achieve this, the painter needed to keenly observe nature. Alberti advised that the movements of the body should be taken directly from nature, with great skill. Here, for the first time, is advice on history painting linked to advice on working directly from the model.

Alberti devoted several pages of the treatise to working from nature - on the need to draw the bones, sinews, muscles and flesh before painting a nude, in such a way that it was easy to sense the positions of the muscle beneath the skin of the painted figure. In this instance, the painter should do just as he did when painting a clothed figure, first draw the naked figure underneath. Some of the advice is very elementary - eg. not giving a venerable philosopher the physique or body language of a wrestler - but he was writing for a generation of artists for whom the keen observation of the human figure was relatively, if not entirely new. If a painter felt it necessary to take another artist's work as a starting point, as was common practice at the time, Alberti advised him to work from a piece of sculpture, even one of mediocre quality, in preference to copying a painting. The sculpture would at least provide him with the opportunity for observing the effect of the fall of light on the surface of the figure. Alberti concluded by repeating the advice he had already given. The ideal method of practice for both the painter and the sculptor was drawing from some excellent model.

It is obvious that the treatise focuses on the male figure. What

does Alberti have to say on the use of the female figure? His proposed 'variety of figures' does include maidens and matrons, as well as men of all ages, children and a variety of animals. Beyond that there appear to be only two specific references to female figures in painting. In a passage dealing with the need for pleasing and graceful movements suited to the narrative, he gives some examples, starting with, "in young maidens movement and deportment should be pleasing and adorned with a delightful simplicity, more indicative of gentleness and repose than of agitation, while Homer, whom Zeuxius followed, liked a robust appearance in a woman."<sup>8</sup>

The other reference comes towards the end of the book and is much better known as it is offered as proof of the treatise's core value, the significance of beauty in art. Alberti's concept of beauty in painting was, first and foremost, based on figures with harmonious proportions. Such proportions, he believed, were not readily found in nature and never in a single body. The painter's duty was to select the most beautiful bodies in nature and from these the most beautiful parts, to create beautiful figures. He should never draw figures from memory or imagination. Instead he should follow the example of the Greek painter Zeuxius, who when commissioned to make a painting for the shrine of a temple, did not foolishly attempt to work without a model, but sought out from the youth of his city, the five most beautiful girls. From these five he took the most beautiful features of feminine beauty, found in each one, to create the most beautiful figure. What is most relevant here is the implication that the Greeks used female models. At a time when Florentine women were usually represented in profile portraits, not, as might now appear, in emulation of the profile portrait on classical medals, but as a means of conveying the sitter's innate modesty and avoiding any suggestion of eye contact with the viewer, the knowledge that a highly praised artist in antiquity had used female models of any sort, must have been well noted by painters and patrons. It may be worth mentioning here that a later reference to Zeuxius, in the Latin text, relating how he was famous in antiquity for his paintings of the female body,<sup>10</sup> was omitted from Alberti's Italian translation. The Latin original was destined to be read by his

fellow Humanists and, hopefully, by well-educated patrons. The translation into the Italian vernacular was allegedly aimed at artists. Though seeming to encourage the study of the male nude, Alberti would not have wanted to encourage Florentine painters to work directly from a female model, clothed or nude.

Martin Kemp, a present day Leonardo scholar and author of the introduction to the 1991 Penguin edition of *On Painting*, recognizes its importance for art practice in Florence from the 1430s onwards and for later treatises on art, including Leonardo's notes on painting.<sup>11</sup> Leonardo shared Alberti's belief in nature as the only source of good painting, but he differed from Alberti in his understanding of beauty in painting and in seeming to reject the need to correct and perfect bodies found in nature.<sup>12</sup> From the 1430s onwards, drawing from the model became much more widespread in Florence, - partly due to the growing availability of paper. In Verrocchio's painting workshop, during the period of Leonardo's apprenticeship in the 1470s, apprentices drew from the model, but only after having first learned to draw by copying the Master's drawings and 3 D models. The main function of drawing practice in the workshop was to train the hand and to furnish the memory with a range of figures and motifs which could later be adapted, as needed. When Verrocchio, or his senior assistants, were faced with new problems of representation in a painting, apprentices and other members of the all male workshop were summoned to pose as models, either dressed in their workshop attire, draped, or wearing loin cloths.<sup>13</sup>

Recent research by Karl Goldstein, based on a study of the works themselves suggests that the use of the live model of any kind, was far less usual in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries than was previously thought.<sup>14</sup> Throughout most of the sixteenth century, drawing directly from the model was not deemed necessary at the preparatory stage of making a painting. The mind of the artist was considered the source of figures realized in painting or sculpture. Vasari, in his book on technique, valued working from nature solely as a means of enabling a painter to draw anything from memory with ease, and without reference to the model. It may be no more than a coincidence that a few women emerged as painters from their father's workshops in Italy at this time. They

mostly painted portraits, which were considered less demanding than history painting, as the art of portraiture relied more heavily on the model and less on the inventive powers of the painter.<sup>15</sup>

Towards the end of the sixteenth century, the practice of working from the live model was revived and it was introduced into the public academy in Rome. Female models were prohibited there and it goes without saying that the few women who practised painting, were not admitted. In her own time Artemesia Gentileschi was the best known of these. She was trained in her father's workshop in Rome, at a time when Caravaggio's unidealized figures were exerting a strong influence on other painters. The taste for unidealized figures seems to have provided Gentileschi with a unique opportunity for specializing in stories featuring biblical and classical heroines. She is believed to have based these paintings on drawings which she made from female models.<sup>16</sup>

The taste for unidealized figures did not survive long in Rome, nor did Gentileschi's success as a history painter make her a model for later women artists. Meanwhile, new subject matter, depicting scenes from everyday life, (somewhat confusingly termed genre painting), landscapes and still-life painting, was being depicted throughout Europe. In Rome, these were considered inferior to history painting and portraiture, insofar as they depicted, at best, ordinary everyday life and, at worst, still-life or *nature morte*, (trans. dead nature) to use the French term. These 'minor' genres were thought best left to foreign artists and were not fit subjects for 'great' art, or worthy of 'great' artists. Alberti's concept of 'great' painting, - uplifting dramas, derived from a literary text, depicting a variety of human actions and reactions, - held good in the academies in Rome and Paris. Though there were painters specializing in the minor genres among the founders of the French academy, a number of young history painters who had worked in Rome quickly took over.<sup>17</sup>

The first French translation of Alberti's *On Painting* was published by the French Academy in 1653, five years after it opened. It was included in a volume entitled *Treatise on Painting* by Leonardo da Vinci, a posthumous compilation of Leonardo's notes on painting. This book became the standard reference for the new academy, to be consulted as required. When it came to training its

young pupils, the academy followed Leonardo's advice on having them copy from engravings and casts from the antique, before letting them confront the model. In 'correcting' the model and in privileging theory above practice, the academy believed it was following Alberti.

A very limited number of women painters who, from necessity, specialized in one of the minor genres were begrudgingly admitted to the French Academy, as ordinary members.<sup>18</sup> They could never progress beyond that level. The words of the Count d'Angiviller, Director of the academy before the French Revolution, best express the why and wherefore of the limited role which women artists could play at that time "Women cannot be useful to the progress of the arts because the modesty of their sex forbids them from being able to study after nature."<sup>19</sup>

Whereas the role of women in society had evolved since the time of Alberti, women painters were still thwarted by his insistence on the practice of life drawing to fulfil his concept of great painting, and by their own sense of propriety. Though dispensed with for a brief period in France in the aftermath of the revolution, the glass ceiling, unwittingly invented by Alberti, was to remain in place for a further century. By then the supremacy of history painting had been successfully challenged.

*Pat McKenna, November 2000*

#### *End Notes*

1. For further details of life drawing practice at the French Academy, see C.Goldstein, *Teaching Art. Academies and Schools from Vasari to Albers*. Cambridge University Press, 1996. p. 40, p. 45 and pp. 159-185; and A Boime, *The Academy and French Painting in the Nineteenth Century*. London, 1971, p 22-23.
2. Goldstein, op cit p. 42 and G. Doy, "Hidden from Histories: Women History Painters in early 19th Century France", *Art and the Academy*, (eds. R. Carduso Denis and C. Trodd) Manchester University Press, 2000, p.84, note 25.
3. L.B.Alberti, *On Painting*, Penguin Books, 1991, p. 94.
4. ibid. p.59.
5. ibid. p. 35.

6. ibid. p. 54.
7. E. Welch, *Art and Society in Italy, 1350 - 1500*. Oxford University Press, 1997, p.280.
8. Alberti, op cit. p.8.
9. P. Lee Rubin, *Renaissance Florence. The Art of the 1470s*. National Gallery, London, 1999, p.327.
10. Alberti, op cit. p. 93.
11. ibid. p. 23.
12. M. Barasch, *Theories of Art, From Plato to Winckelmann*, New York University Press, 1985.,p. 139.
13. Goldstein, op cit. pp. 11, 12. See also Lee Rubin, op cit. p. 117.
14. ibid. p. 36.
15. C. King, *Gender and Art*, Yale University Press and the Open University, 1999, pp. 61/62.
16. , op cit. pp. 164/165.
17. ibid. p. 40.
18. 17 women were admitted as members in the period between its inception and abolition in 1793. See G. Doy, op cit.
19. E Barker, "Women Artists and the French Academy: Vigee Le Brun in the 1780s", *Gender and Art*, op cit. p. 110.

## Drawing Diaries

*Marianne Hartigan*

For a lot of people interested in art history there is little greater pleasure than coming across a collection of drawings by an artist you are researching. Painting offers to the viewer a finished product, a comparatively polished creation - but drawings can, in some instances, offer even more...

When studying painters, from the Old Masters to top contemporary artists today, it is fascinating to look through their collections of sketchbooks and loose leaves. And it is better again to be able to add to the more formal drawings, compilations of more casual sketches on scraps of paper and unconventional materials such as the backs of envelopes or say, flyleaves of books.

Drawings, from highly worked preparatory drawings for complete paintings, to a rapidly scribbled sketch, can give you a huge insight into the artist's working methods, interests and even his day to day life and social setting.

Many of these little vignettes are the equivalent of the writer's notes, or jottings en route to the finished novel. The preparatory sketches which slowly evolve over a number of sessions, and a quantity of pages, can be equivalent to the first, second and third tortuous drafts of a book with the same principles of spontaneously creating, then disciplining, editing and refining. The quick visual notes, the subject that catches the artist's eye and forces him to take out his pencil or crayon and record this sighting, is on a par with the writer's jottings in his notebook on the train or when working on something else, or when he wakes in the middle of the night with a sensational idea and knows he must capture this thought in ciphers before it is lost in his muddled dreams.

That is not to suggest that all drawings are simply contributing parts of a greater whole. There are plenty of drawings that are complete works in themselves. You could see them perhaps as the visual equivalent of the writer's short story or poem.

But drawings - especially those from the hand of a master (or

mistress) of the arts who records the detail of his daily life in visual form, can become the most intimate, revelatory jottings, the diary of the artist which can give you a much more three-dimensional picture of the artist himself, as well as his approach to art.

For instance, look at the wonderful German artist Albrecht Durer, (1471-1528), renowned in his time for his prints and engravings, such as the *Apocalypse* (1498) and *The Knight, Death and the Devil* (1513), as well as altarpieces and portraits. He was a superb draughtsman and his drawings reveal the extent to which he worked and reworked at details, such as hands and drapery, in order to get them exactly how he wanted. His characteristic, highly individual, style is stamped on the pages. His private works also reveal one of the first self portraits, that of himself as a thirteen year old, done in silver point. Those drawings and watercolours not produced as preparatory work for prints are quite different in execution, yet undeniably by the same hand. They also reveal a more private aspect of himself and his interest in nature. From his hand come some of the first views of landscape or townscape painted other than in a fairly stylized format, (just look at the fairytale landscape he records in his *View of Innsbruck from the North*), and some beautiful nature studies in the form of *The Hare* and *The Quarry* studies. Nature became his mentor. He was also aware of the importance of drawing in its fullest sense, as in 'extracting from' and 'realizing in lead and ink': "But the life in nature illustrates the truth of this. Therefore study nature diligently, be guided by nature and do not depart from it, thinking that you can do better yourself; you will be misguided. For truly art is hidden in nature and he who can draw it out possesses it."

And what would we know of Leonardo da Vinci (1452 - 1519) if we did not have access to his drawings? State engineer and court painter to the Duke of Milan, his painted legacy consists of the now considerably deteriorated *Last Supper* mural, the world famous *Mona Lisa*, a couple of serene versions of the *Madonna and Child*, an incomplete *Adoration of the Magi*, and not a huge amount more. Through his own painted works - with his use of aerial perspective and his radical treatment of the background, his introduction of *sfumato*, the blurring of outlines through graduating tones, and his use of the pyramid structure for

grouping figures - he revolutionized painting. He was a considerable influence on contemporary artists such as Michelangelo, Raphael, Giorgione and Bramante. But if we did not have his drawings we would have a very incomplete picture of this Renaissance man. While we might have some idea of his mastery of the visual arts, we would not be aware of how these were achieved, his methods of working, never mind his diverse interests - so instantly apparent from his numerous sketches. The sketches, to a much greater extent reveal the man behind the works.

His notebooks and drawings show an immensely inventive and enquiring mind. He studied aspects of the natural world, from anatomy, including tiny foetuses, to aerodynamics. Drapes and head-dresses and complex (and sometimes not entirely accurate) human physiognomy, botanical studies, swirls of rushing water, completely accurate and beautiful maps, and detailed mechanical inventions (some of which preceded their actual invention by hundreds of years), are all revealed in the pages of his sketchbooks. These works contribute considerably to our understanding of this great artist, his personal interests and indeed of the concerns of his time.

Whereas we might feel we know Rembrandt (1606-1669) quite well from his sixty penetrating self portraits, a greater insight can be gleaned from studying some of his one thousand three hundred etchings and drawings. He draws almost compulsively, and a record of his surroundings in Amsterdam and Leiden in his time is revealed in his beautiful sketches. He draws everything: from gentle country scenes complete with thatched cottages and windmills, to bustling street scenes, to an informal portrait of his first wife, as she looks at him amorously just days after their engagement. Babies suckling, toddlers throwing tantrums, street traders pedalling their wares, urban scenes with medieval buildings, compete for space with his massive output of biblical scenes.

Some are detailed and carefully worked, others are a favourite scene revisited and adjusted, others again just brief sketches, some with a linear economy and minimalism more familiar to the twentieth century. As his fortunes declined, his first, then later his second wife and his only surviving child died, and he became bankrupt, it is possible to imagine that this is visible in the work. Certainly his painting becomes darker, more sombre, revealing a

deeper emotional content, and this too is reflected in his sketches.

Equally famous and perhaps a bit nearer to our own time, another Dutchman, Vincent Van Gogh (1853 - 1890) recorded the events of his life through his letters to close friends and family (notably his brother Theo, who remained so supportive throughout Vincent's short, rather tortured life), but he also drew compulsively. His travels, where he went, who he met, who he was emotionally involved with, artists he admired, are directly or indirectly documented in his sketchbooks. He drew while he worked as a schoolmaster, as a preacher, as an art dealer, before finally dedicating himself to an artistic career. It was drawing which kept him going. "Often I draw far into the night, to keep some souvenir and to strengthen the thoughts raised involuntarily by the aspects of things here," he wrote when working as a lay preacher among miners. While, perhaps unusually, his painted works rival his sketches in number, his drawings depict aspects of his life from childhood onwards. (On a totally incidental note, it is fascinating to see the windmills and thatched cottages and flat landscapes of Rembrandt appearing so many years later in Van Gogh's works. The distinctively shaped cottages also appear again later in the work of Mondrian.)

Van Gogh's drawings reflect his artistic development from being an accomplished copyist at the age of nine, through his sampling and exploring of other influential styles, from the Old Masters to the Impressionists and Japanese prints, to the final release of his own highly personalized vision with its fluid, free style and expressive use of patterning.

With many artists, particularly those such as Rembrandt, who meticulously kept his drawings neatly filed and preserved, it is possible to chronologically trace the progression of their work and see the tangents which were explored but never followed through, as well as the sketches that became preparatory studies for major works, or steps on the way to the development of a particular overriding theme or style.

But, apart from the information on interests and events in the artist's life, the insight into working methods, such as treatment of artistic problems, and the progressive development of his work that is apparent in sketchbooks, apart from all that, perhaps the

most attractive feature of drawing is the intimacy it can offer. Those meanderings and musings with a pastel or pencil, those quick, jotted visual discourses in pen and ink are part of the communication process, creating a fuller picture of the art and the artist. But in many instances they are intrinsically valuable as entities in themselves.

Take quick drawings by any of the Old Masters, or more recent ones such as Berthe Morisot, or Jack Yeats, Picasso or Francis Bacon - who built up sketches on top of snapshots and illustrations - in the rapid sketches, you are looking at the artist's first thought, or first impression on the eye. In the initial, spontaneous, fast flowing work, translated fluidly into a linear image there is an immediacy, a freshness, a directness that in some instances, no amount of polishing or translating into paint can improve upon.

*Marianne Hartigan, September 2000*

# From Watteau to Seurat: the Golden Age of French Drawing

*Julian Campbell*

*"I wish I knew less, and had drawn more."*

John Ruskin.

I can remember a seminar with a small group of students a year or two ago. One of the students had chosen the subject of Drawing for discussion, and she was showing a selection of images: from cave painting to drawings by the present-day Irish-based artist Hughie O'Donoghue. She showed a couple of studies by Leonardo, followed by some slides of drawings by Rembrandt. I recall the moment. Our eyes widened, and there was a gasp in the room, the contrast between the two artists was so great. Leonardo's studies of faces, of horses, of running water, or scientific instruments, seemed cool, analytical and brilliant, while Rembrandt's drawings: of members of his family, infants, religious groups, or Dutch landscapes, were relaxed, down-to-earth and living. Using chalk, pen and ink, or ink wash, Rembrandt worked quickly, employing a variety of loose lines, heavy or light, to indicate forms, textures or distance. Sometimes the lines were blotted or smudged. There was also an economy of means, parts of the page having been left bare. Yet somehow Rembrandt had captured the essence of the subject. A warmth and humanity seemed to rise from the pages of his sketchbooks.

Those images selected by the student, and the effect of seeing drawings by Rembrandt after Leonardo, made me realize that drawings still retain a magical power.

According to Macmillan's *Dictionary of Art*, drawing "has always been considered amongst the most intimate and personal of all the arts."<sup>1</sup> To the modern viewer, at least, the most memorable or touching drawings are not necessarily highly skilled, detailed studies of important historical or topographical subjects, but

rather the small personal pieces by the artist that have an expressive quality. Often they are of humble subject matter. They may have been made as studies for something larger, or simply for the artist's own pleasure, and never intended for show.

It is often such small, individual pieces that we remember: Rembrandt's chalk study of an elephant, (1637), Corot's tiny drawing of a small, naked girl, seated on the ground (1840), Millet's touching study of a girl seated by a haystack; Ruskin's watercolour study of a kingfisher, or a Chinese brush drawing of a hermit in a mountain hut; a small self portrait in pen and ink by Käthe Kollwitz, Jack B. Yeats' magical drawings of West of Ireland life, an impromptu Picasso sketch, made on a piece of newspaper, or Franz Marc's small visionary sketches of animals in forests, made whilst serving in the trenches in 1914.

In the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, we do not ask that a drawing be complete; it may be unfinished, and there may even be mistakes or corrections visible. Rather than simply the subject matter, we also admire the expressive or abstract qualities of a drawing, its sense of spontaneity or immediacy, its calligraphic and gestural elements. We may be interested in its process: both in the activity of drawing itself, and in the ways the artist's thoughts may be revealed.

The intention here is to look at one great period in the history of art: French drawing in the nineteenth century, an era to which I find myself returning again and again, with endless fascination. But before the nineteenth century there was Watteau, a leading French artist of the early eighteenth century. Watteau's skill as a draftsman was recognized in his own lifetime; his drawings were praised for their 'freedom of execution', 'delicacy of contour', and 'lightness of touch', and their expressiveness,<sup>2</sup> qualities that would certainly appeal to the modern sensibility. Many of Watteau's studies were executed in red chalk, but this was often combined with white and black crayons. He used gentle, soft lines giving a sense of warmth, and evoking a human interest. Of especial interest are his sketches of working or 'marginal' people: musicians, shoeshine-boys, Savoyards (poor people from the Savoy region, one of the poorest in Europe), or vagabonds. There are touching drawings of a youth carrying a pet marmot in a wooden box, or of a ragged, bearded pilgrim, with a strange collection of

shells around his neck. Then there are delightful sketches of a sleeping dog, or of a leopard stretching. Watteau's relaxed style, and his interest in people outside society, link him to the following century and beyond.

However, at the beginning of the nineteenth century, the graphite drawings by neo-classical painter Ingres: portraits of women or figure groups, are in complete contrast, controlled, classical and cool. Ingres could put down a minimum of marks, not afraid of leaving much of the page white. Yet few other artists could suggest the outline of a neck and shoulder, the volume of an arm, or the delicacy of fingers, with such spare, yet perfect lines as Ingres. It is these qualities that the present-day artist David Hockney admires so much. Ingres, supposedly, was a perfectionist. Yet there is pleasure in the way that he changes lines in his sketches, and leaves his corrections visible upon the page. These convey not only an alteration of pose in the model, but also reveal Ingres' changes of thought while he is drawing. How fascinating this must have been for Matisse!

Ingres' contemporary, the romantic artist Delacroix, is totally different: his exciting studies of galloping horses, of lions and tigers, in pen and ink, and in ink wash, have a dynamism, and capture a vital sense of the animals' nobility or fierceness.

Honoré Daumier is well known for his satirical caricatures of lawyers and politicians, where his fluid line and exaggeration vividly convey expression and gesture. But he also made drawings of working people: huddling in the street, crowded together in an omnibus, or ravenously drinking soup in a dingy kitchen. Daumier is a master in the use of expressive line, in pen and ink, or sepia wash, (regrettably media neglected by artists today), suggesting light and shadow, and evoking a mysterious shadowy world. Showing the oppression and hardship of working peoples' lives, his drawings are expressive, satirical, and compassionate. With his speed of execution, sense of human drama, and remarkable shaking line, he is a precursor of the twentieth century Expressionists.

Degas' classical training, and admiration for Ingres, gives a crisp precision of outline to his figures, yet his studies of ballet dancers also have a sense of movement and relaxation, reminiscent of Daumier.

There has been increasing popular and critical interest in the drawings of Daumier's friend, Millet. Viewers respond to their simplicity and directness of expression. Millet drew peasant subjects: men splitting wood, women raking hay, a man leaning on his spade, pausing for a moment from digging, lovers embracing, a woman knitting while her cow grazes behind her. Some of these are studies for paintings, but many were made for their own sake. Millet's line is broad, yet gentle. He could be clumsy, yet he isn't. He appears to brush the paper gently with chalk or crayon, allowing traces of the medium to remain on the rough grain.

When the young Irish artist Paul Henry was a student in Paris, he was an ardent admirer of Millet. Walking in a wood near Paris, he encountered a charcoal burner, and the man gave him a piece of the material. Henry wrote, "from that chance meeting in the forest I date my love of charcoal. No chalk or crayon has the same soft, velvety quality; no other material is so sensitive and tractable. And I felt every time I used it that the vine leaves from which it was made brought me nearer to the spirit of France..."<sup>3</sup>

Millet's drawings are both earthy and mystical. In pastels such as *A Sheepfold by Moonlight* or his drawing of lobstermen fishing by moonlight, there is a mysterious, Biblical quality. In his drawing *First Steps*, an infant reaches from his mother's arms towards his father; no artist has conveyed family life with such intimacy. Millet's studies of a little shepherdess leaning against a tree, stick in hand, or a young girl in a hood, seated against a haystack, head tilted, eyes half-closed, conveying weariness, are deeply touching.

Van Gogh's early drawings of peasants, or copies after Millet, made with heavy chalk lines, are sometimes clumsy, but they have an ardent sense of identification with their subjects. His later landscape studies, in pencil, chalk or brown ink, are remarkable, making use of short strokes, curls and dots as a kind of shorthand, to suggest texture, movement and distance.

Towards the end of the nineteenth century, Seurat's tone drawings are fascinating, unlike anyone else's. Crayon is brushed across the grain of the paper to create dark and light forms, like blurred photographic negatives, and mysterious shadowy figures.

As has been suggested, many of the tendencies in twentieth century art, such as Expressionism and Abstraction, an interest in

gesture and 'mark making', have their origin in the work of these nineteenth century artists. The drawings of these artists have a vitality, a sense of relaxation, a modernity, and express a freedom of spirit, that has remained to the present day.

On reflection, I think it is for their own sake, and because they do belong to the nineteenth century, (and not because they look forward) that I admire them so much! These drawings tell us much about the era in which the artists lived, indeed about the artists' own personalities. There is an intimate engagement with the living world, with ordinary people, rather than the privileged, with animals, and with nature, and a great warmth and humanity is expressed.

*Julian Campbell, November 2000*

*Notes*

1. Beverly S. Jacobi, in Macmillan *Dictionary of Art*, 1996, vol 9, p.212.
2. Margaret M. Grasselli and Pierre Rosenberg, *Watteau 1684-1721*, National Gallery, Washington 1984, p.53.
3. Paul Henry, *An Irish Portrait*, London, 1951, p.29.

# Toward a Topology of the Fringe: Gothic Intimations in the Drawings of Seurat and Schiele

Kieran Cashell

*...clear to me at last that the dark I have always struggled to keep under  
is in reality my most -*

Samuel Beckett.<sup>1</sup>

## I

He died in 1891 aged thirty-one. Yet, at his death, Georges Seurat bequeathed a pictorial corpus that included some of the most enigmatic and perplexing paintings in the discourse of art. Perplexing, not through their imagery, but rather because of the eccentric pictorial methodology invented and deployed by the artist in their construction. Secretive and reticent as his own character, these strange works continue to perplex. As is perhaps too well documented<sup>2</sup> to obligate further comment, Seurat's research into contemporary optics led to the elaboration of a scientifically defensible pictorial theory; he envisaged developing a discourse of pure impressions that would be founded on the perceptive synthesis of chromatic atoms.<sup>3</sup> As Kant demonstrated in the *Critique of Pure Reason*, the categories of the mind tend to unify the scattered stream of experiential data that constitutes the flux of reality into coherent, well-formed schemata.<sup>4</sup> Thus Kant was able to argue that, even if reality in itself may ultimately remain unintelligible, its phenomena must conform to the synthesizing structures of consciousness. Seurat was convinced that he could successfully translate these epistemic events into a fully elaborated aesthetic form. Building on the contemporary colour-theory of Ogden Rood,<sup>5</sup> he began to explore the conditions of possibility of raising the conceptual synthesis of phenomenal coherence (through the transcendental ideas) to pictorial technique. This was the origin of his unprecedented painterly method, divisionism or pointillism: the atomization of chromatic

patches and fields and their local distinctions into discrete pockets of unmixed pigment - dots of paint, in other words. In the resultant image, the swarm of spots and specks of paint on the canvas would be synthesized, Seurat believed, by the mind; they would crystallize, he hoped, into a well-formed, brilliantly luminous, figure and ground dialectic. We have recently witnessed Howard Hodgkin's haphazard parody of this meticulous analytic technique in his interpretation of *Bathing at Asnières* (1883-84) exhibited (alongside the original) as part of the *Encounters* project in the National Gallery, London.

Although the paintings of Seurat deserve comprehensive and sensitive reconsideration, the principal purpose of this short inquiry is to re-open the case of his drawings.<sup>6</sup> Leaving aside facile references to Pandora's box, let us table these drawings, spreading them in an imaginary sheaf across the notional interview-desk of inquiry. Surveyed in the company of the paintings, the drawings are decidedly dark. Tendering their antithetical image, the drawings appear darkly at the fringes or subcutaneously under the surface of the paintings as the negative plates of a Kodak-hued superscript. Reason: primarily because they are black. We do not say 'monochromatic' or 'black and white' but black. (This insistence, which is here intended to raise the term 'black' to a categorial concept, will become clear in due course.) These drawings are black - black as nineteenth century dust, black as Seneffelder ink, black as the pit.

The drawings of Seurat present the investigator, therefore, with a packet of problems. Not only are the drawings distinct from and different to the paintings, they also present an antithesis to the affirmative drawings of the other representatives of Impressionism. Again, Seurat's drawings distinguish themselves from his own inquiry into optics and chromatic theory and, also, *a fortiori* from the drawings of other Impressionists, simply and primarily due to their absence of colour. Along with colour goes clarity. Distinctness likewise concedes to a more forcible obscurity. Thus the drawings give the lie to his own conviction that aesthetics ought to be founded on scientific axioms.

The subject is Paris. No surprise there. Submerged in the shadow-play of these drawings, the great metropolis documented

in Baudelaire's *Tableaux Parisiens* two decades before, reappears in trace and intimation - here and there. Here the fragment of a lamp-post, and there, a chimney - here, a skeletal park-tree shivering in the lamp-light, and there, a distant, lonely monument fading in the twilight.

Desolate parkland, disconsolate squares, devoid of all but absence, constitute the flatfield of Seurat's city. We witness Paris, the 'capital of the nineteenth century,' in these drawings become a damp circle of hell. Let us go there.

Through the dense curtain of a nineteenth century fog, the flickerbook figures step. Matted silhouettes of waifs and ragpickers, invalids and squalid street performers shamble through the subtopia of the city, while in the smoky hole of the café-concert, prostitute-*danseuses* raise their slender arms for the delectation of a shady congregation. Next: a cloaked, frock-coated and hatted tableau of figures, their funereal umbrellas and canes spiking the fog's dark epidermis, perambulate through the night. Dogs and monkeys, with rough urban pelts and wet fur, follow. A widow in her weeds, her eyes veiled, drifts through the desolate, shadowed street.

Such are the shades that haunt the black heart of Seurat's Gothic Empire. As in Baudelaire's poem, these ephemeral passers-by resist delineation, avoid the outline, by-passing the effort to seize them in a coherent framework.

If, as Walter Benjamin maintains in "The Paris of the Second Empire in Baudelaire": "the etchings of Meryon (around 1850) constitute the death mask of old Paris", then Seurat's drawings constitute the death mask of the Second Empire, "the great period of noctambulisme".<sup>7</sup> In the first decade of the Third Republic, before it had been given a chance to evaporate completely, the *grande cité* was suffering a hangover from the intoxication of the narcotic Second Empire years. The party was over; and as Benjamin instructed, whatever in the next moment will be irretrievably lost becomes an image.<sup>8</sup> What Geffroy said of Meryon's etchings therefore also applies to Seurat's drawings, "although they are made directly from life, they give an expression of expired life, something that is dead or is going to die."<sup>9</sup>

Let us suggest, therefore, that Seurat's drawings seek, through

retrieval, to embalm the fading traces of the Second Empire. This suggestion is not adventitious; it is well known that Seurat wanted to retrieve the aesthetic philosophy of early Impressionism, an aesthetic conceived from the ambivalent coupling of melancholy for a fading past with the anticipatory optimism of an utterly new order of things; an aesthetic born from the union of spleen and an ideal. From the intuition of an essence lurking in the experience of what Baudelaire famously called the "transitory, the fleeting, the ephemeral"<sup>10</sup> a "paradoxical beauty"<sup>11</sup> was born. It seems now that this aesthetic sensibility was specific to the Second Empire.

The definitive aesthetic expression of the Second Empire is provided, not by the painting of the period, but rather by the poetry of that strange augury, Charles Baudelaire, whom the outrider of Impressionism, Edouard Manet followed. Let us inch our suggestion provocatively further, and maintain that Seurat's drawings constitute an afterimage of the Paris of Baudelaire's *Les Fleurs du Mal* (The Flowers of Evil, 1857, 1862). In the *Tableaux Parisiens* (a cycle added to the 1862 edition of the latter work), the "thousand floating existences which circulate in the subterranean labyrinths of a great city - criminals and prostitutes"<sup>12</sup> come to a crepuscular kind of light and are thus darkly revealed.

One hears the hissing kitchens close at hand,  
The playhouse screech, the blaring of a band.  
The tables at the inns where gamesmen sport  
Are full of swindlers, sluts, and all their sort.  
Robbers who show no pity to their prey  
Get ready for their nightly work-a-day  
Of cracking safes and deftly forcing doors,  
To live a few days more and dress their whores.  
(*Le Crémuscle du soir* [Evening Twilight] )<sup>13</sup>

For the gothic Baudelaire, the morning was no brighter.

The roofs are islands in a ghostly sea.  
This is death's moment. Unremittingly  
She walks the wards for victims, and they choke.  
Young men in evening dress stroll through the park  
Or step from taxis, tired with the night's work.  
(*Le Crémuscle du matin* [Morning Twilight] )<sup>14</sup>

Or consider this fragment from *Les Sept Vieilliards* (The Seven Old Men, which, Benjamin informs us, was originally titled *Fantômes Parisiens* [Parisian Phantoms]<sup>15</sup>).

Like the sap in a tree, a dark mystery streams,  
And ghosts clutch a man's sleeve, in broad day, as he  
<sup>16</sup> passes.

Could it be that what we glimpse in the drawings of Seurat - in those cinematic flickerings and those dead souls - is the recollection of the spectral, gas-lit Gothic Empire (a melancholic nostalgia perhaps also seen in Manet's *Bar aux Folies-Bergère*, 1881-2)?

Seurat's barely legible drawings skirt the fringe of unintelligibility. Like a cryptic *chiffre indéchiffrable*, they have no key; for the zone they map is a liminal zone. As they exploit the texture of the paper to disrupt the contour, these crepuscular, tenebrous drawings, crumbling at the fringes, allow the phantasmagoria of the city to emerge in its indistinct traces and fading forms. As they flirt with the indistinct - whether with shadows creeping along the pavements with the lonely stealth of phantoms or the flickering translucent naked girl shivering in a corner of the studio - the drawings flirt with the rebarbative interaction of conté crayon and the rough tooth of their *Michelet* paper ground. Is it possible therefore to identify Seurat's drawings as the "disruption of the contour" or, better, as "the invagination of the boundary"? For like the city spaces they depict, they too are liminal; here, too, to use Levinas's formulation, there is a "swarming of points."<sup>17</sup> His drawings direct a tacit argument against the clarity and distinctness of the Cartesian idea and firmly invest the related anti-Platonic notions of obscurity and unintelligibility with inestimable value. Black: in these drawings, the forms seem cancelled by the invasion of a malignant black. Figures become anonymous, impersonal un-shapes. Seurat's silhouettes are compounds of conflictual oppositions. They combine insubstantiality with volume, presence with absence and concealment with revelation.

Grainy (and spiky) as Mike Leigh's cinematic project, *Naked*, these coal-black *dessins* reveal something lost in the paintings. Seurat systematically leeches all traces of his personality out of the

paintings through the chelating process of pointillism; and this discovery may indeed clinch the elusive rationale of his unprecedented method. Paranoid concerning his ideas, the secretive Seurat used his art to conceal his art. The result is that monumental frieze of totally impersonal, dispassionate, expressionless paintings; however, these paintings can be made to breathe again through discerning the contradictory, subcutaneous presence of the black drawings, which light out, like a darker, almost obliterated, subscript beneath the chromatic palimpsest of the paintings

## II

An epidemic of Spanish influenza stalked Europe during World War One. Egon Schiele contracted it and died on October 31, 1918, three days after his wife, Edith. He was twenty-eight.

Where Seurat's drawings are enigmatic and strange, Schiele's are simply weird. In their malignant economy, they become the fragments of a single chord scratched out furiously on an old cello. Yet there is also a heartbreakingly tender, an eye always focused on the poor fragility of the human body, to be discerned in Schiele's drawings. His work is reminiscent of Benjamin's dictum: "Only because of the hopeless is hope given to us."<sup>18</sup>

If, as Husserlian phenomenology maintains, essences are intuited by consciousness,<sup>19</sup> then the process of drawing testifies to this. Drawing draws the essence of the phenomenon from its shell of adumbrations and nucleates it, delineating and delimiting it, giving it, in the process, definitive outlines. Thus drawing constitutes the "move from the individual intuition to the grasp of the universal ... a move to grasp the essence."<sup>20</sup> This move refers to what Husserl called the "eidetic intuition".<sup>21</sup> Drawing defines. Part of the meaning of the object, as Levinas suggests, is its cognitive access; "access to the object," he claims, following Husserl, "is part of the object's being."<sup>22</sup> He quotes Husserl as maintaining that "phenomenology as a revelation of beings is a *method of the revelation of their revelation.*" The quotation continues:

"Phenomenology is not just the fact of letting phenomena appear as they appear; this appearing, this phenomenology, is the essential event of being."<sup>23</sup>

The process of drawing, considered in terms of definition, determines the conduit whereby the essential event of being comes to be revealed as such.

Such an eidetic searching for the essential lineaments of being becomes very clear from studying the sketchbooks of Egon Schiele.<sup>24</sup> Again, as is the case with Seurat, the sketches have a living, shivering existence that the finished works painfully lack. The latter are frozen to death in contrast to the living - or better say "undead" (as Schiele's figures can never be said to be truly alive) - drawings.

Consider the *Second Sketchbook* (1912) in the Albertina Museum in Vienna. What at first appears to be only the remains of a grey-black thread thrown at a wall - clinging here and there - slowly crystallizes into something: some inexplicable event, half-glimpsed through a wire-reinforced window.<sup>25</sup> Let us shadow the unfolding of this ontological event.

A procession of transparent skeletons file uncertainly past the grid-lines of Schiele's squared maths-copy. This cat's cradle of lines constitutes the severest complement to the cross-wires of their grid-field. What is the pathology of Schiele's drawings - merely an unconstituted tangle of figures, ciphers of compressed stigmata, neurotic track-marks up and down the pallid inscape of the arm?

Suddenly, amidst the tortuous tangle, a face appears. A heavily-lidded eye, half-hidden by the beaked brow, cracked open dryly, is widely revealed; a pallid stretch of skin over cheek-bone and chin, parts to let the dry mouth fall open: agast.

This stylistic poverty is Schiele's singular achievement. It is there in those pinched, thin and lopsided, expressionless faces and shadowed, dry-winged heads of hair, it is there in the casts under the eyes and in the vivid mouths; it is there in the pink-rimmed, black nostrils that we see again and again in Schiele's work.

Next: fading forms of frozen waifs and outlines of cold girls come to light. These anorexic forms fade in front of our eyes, gradually thinning out like pigment dissolving in rainwater. On page sixteen of the *Tenth Sketchbook* (1916/17), for instance, five female forms, thin and fading simulacra of women, raise their emaciated limbs.<sup>26</sup> Red tangled pen-marks scratched like track-marks into the surface fill the opened internal forms with a new

plastic infrastructure. This web of scratches - *Blair-Witch-Project* twig-patterns - nevertheless introduce a certain translucency to the internal organization of the forms. In the *Fifth Sketchbook* (1914/15), a mother with her two children is three-quarter inscribed on the recto with the remainder of the drawing displaced onto the verso of the book.<sup>27</sup> Mother, nothing but a huddled mushroom form with hooded skull wearily inclining to her crumbling brood of marionettes: whence this ghost trio?

If the central characteristic associated with Seurat's drawings is blackness, then that of Schiele's is coldness; it may be the anorexic fading away in front of us with each passing day, or the decrepit child; it may be the depraved, attenuated man with the numbered ribs and thin arms, but they are all cold; and this feature is replicated in Schiele's cold style. Each contour that maps out every stare emanating from these figures is cold.

In the lithograph, *Nude Girl with Bowed Head* (1918)<sup>28</sup> a gothic girl, chalk-pale and vacant, lies prone: nothing but the pallid mask of a face posited on a tangle of dis-articulated, etiolated limbs. The hung-over eyes of this vacuous mask stare frozenly inward with the loveless air of the repentant goth. As so often the case with Schiele's work, she wears the traces of bruises and scratches on her tarnished limbs. Marks, the evidence of manipulation, mar the surface of the time-dulled skin. The only thing truly alive about this girl is her hair that falls and curls down her face, her back and upper arm.

### III

It would be too precipitous to contrast the drawings of Schiele to those of Seurat by employing the categories of Wölfflin's *Principles of Art History* (1915); to say, for instance, that for every linear pattern there is a corresponding painterly direction. That, I believe, would be facile.

Another route is required to navigate these works. A strange, spectral phenomenology, perhaps diluted in the finished paintings, underpins the drawings of both artists. The drawings of both artists haunt the fringes of the finished works like another darker afterimage, barely discerned, skulking in the peripheries; and they are always on the margins, in the fringes. Like a corrupted border, the fate of these drawings (and perhaps the same can be said of all

drawings) is to remain irreducibly marginal. The drawings of both artists inhabit a liminal zone, not only in the history of art, but also *vis-à-vis* their own body of work.

Drawing is essentially explorative. Since the fifteenth century, drawing has been construed as essentially preparatory; it has been classed in the history of art as a process of constructing designs intended for recycling in other works. This was the thinking behind the *libro modelli*, the collection of models or sketches to be used or copied in later works. This was standard scholastic practice in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. Drawing is a questing projection, an inquest; but what is the goal of this strange cartography? Perhaps the very idea of a finished drawing is incoherent.

Both Seurat and Schiele, through entirely different and distinct methods, explore what I would have called the "topology of the fringe" in their drawings. Both artists have a strange presence in the history of art; they haunt its text; but both artists have also left their marks on the history of art - in Seurat's case like a thumb print in its margins, in Schiele's case like an infected track mark marring its textual surface. Through Schiele's obsessive compulsive exploration of the dark calculus of the fragile human body, and Seurat's borne witness to the horror with which the centre of the everyday is traced, both artists continue to occupy uncanny, liminal zones in the history of art; hidden away in the attic, consigned to the depths of the filing-cabinet, the interstices of the dry corridors of the history of art remain haunted by their double presence.

Perhaps one of the reasons for this is that the paintings of both artists gutter out, conceding defeat to the more powerful, more disturbing drawings that nevertheless constitute the infrastructure - the condition of possibility - of those same paintings. The work, as Walter Benjamin writes in *One Way Street* (1926, itself a frieze of exploratory notes and fragmented inquiries) is the death mask of its conception.<sup>29</sup>

*Past midnight. Never knew such silence. The earth might be uninhabited.*

Samuel Beckett.<sup>30</sup>

*Kieran Cashell, November 2000*

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3. Rewald cites Seurat's conviction (expressed to Gustave Kahn) that aesthetics be founded on the precepts of science. Rewald, *ibid.*, p 159. Most of the information we have regarding Seurat's 'theories' come to us from the correspondence with Maurice Beaubourg in August 1890 where the following passage appears before the conclusion. 'Taking as given the phenomena of the duration of the impression of light on the retina. Synthesis follows as a result. The means of expression is the optical mixture of tones and of colour (local colour and the illuminating colour in sun, oil lamp, gas lamp, etc.), that is to say, of light and their reactions (shadows) according to the laws of contrast, gradation of irradiation.' Cited in Rewald, *ibid.*, p 166. There are also valuable clues to be gleaned from the writings of Paul Signac (the most pertinent are cited by Courthion, *op. cit.*) concerning Seurat's technique.
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## Drawing: From Others

*Margaret Corcoran*

Exploration is the root of drawing. Many questions - but often no particular words, follow around in the head as the hand moves. The marks that describe the gesture and turn are heavy also with other ponderances. At times I draw in order to follow the routes travelled by artists such as Manet, Whistler or Courbet about their canvases - sometimes I refer to this engagement as a kind of backstitch - moving back, to move forwards. Recently, I interviewed James Elkins, for this article and for CIRCA Art Magazine. James Elkins is Professor of Art History, Theory, and Criticism at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago. He is a highly prolific author and specializes in unusual and compelling areas; but most especially in art, and the nature of seeing.

### Interview with James Elkins 20-08-2000

MC: Peter FitzGerald and I have been doing blindfold drawings and taping out the instructions. I wanted to mention that to you because you have written beautifully in *The Object Stares Back* on drawing and blindness...

JE: We could talk about that very interesting text, - Derrida's book *Memoirs of the Blind* which is alluded to in *The Object Stares Back*. However, Derrida's impetus is always to move away from purely visual matters. One of the difficulties with that book is that when he comes to theorize the visual traits at the core of the theories - the nature of the drawn mark, as opposed to the written sign or character - there is a moment in which the visual resolves itself into the written. It happens, for example, like this: imagine you make a black brushmark on a white canvas. The three areas (white, black, white) have borders. Those borders can be imagined - or perhaps, have to be imagined - as lines. Such lines aren't visible, any more than the outlines that students routinely draw around live models, but they are conceptually indispensable.

In Derrida's account--and here he repeats an eighteenth-century analysis--the invisible 'lines' become the signs of the division of the surface. Like writing, their 'plastic' character is not relevant, and like writing, they operate principally to divide the surface, which was once a mark on a ground, into three equal areas. In that way whatever is 'purely' pictorial loses ground, literally, and becomes subordinate to the 'written' signs that give it sense.

This is not so much in the end a theoretical failing, because Derrida knows what he's doing. He's impelled not to theorize directly about the visual, but always to think about it otherwise, and ultimately in terms of written marks. And so, the visual bleeds out of the discourse and in the end you have the theory of the trace which is compatible with what happens in books like *Dissemination*. I love a lot of the individual observations in *Memoirs of the Blind*: for instance the idea that drawing is blind because the pencil moves across the paper into whiteness, into nothingness. Drawing is blind because you are also often not looking at the page while you are looking or vice versa. It is blind in a different sense because you are looking at the page and the model has either never been there or is not there or has moved...

MC: And then working towards the image that is not yet formed....

JE: Yes, it is blind in the sense that it is anticipatory. But the whole question of the history of theory, of the written, of the drawn mark, which he gets into a little bit - and which I answer in a couple of things that I've written - all painted marks have this affinity to writing. Much of it, I think, can be made to turn on a story in Pliny's Natural History, describing how the painters Protogenes and Apelles competed with each other to paint an unsurpassably fine line. Each one painted a line inside the other's, until Apelles won by painting a line that could not be split. The Rembrandt scholar Hans van de Waal wrote a wonderful article about the contest, bringing together various scholars' interpretations of what happened. He counted thirty readings; his own made thirty-one, and then E.H. Gombrich wrote one... and I added a thirty-third in the book *On Pictures and the Words that Fail Them*.

MC: All of these interpretations based on lines and the mark...

JE: Using these thirty-two interpretations you can historically

ground different ideas about what pictorial marks are, and you can make specific distinctions between mark and ground, or fill and colour. So, for example, in the sixteenth century there were traditions of draughtsmanship following Michelangelo where you draw the outline round the figure in a kind of braided stroke, going back and overlapping and weaving alternate contours into one line. That is a specific kind of painterly mark, different from a number of others - in other words it isn't Derrida's ahistorical phenomenology of the trace, but a link between that approach and one that might be recognizable to a historian, an artist, or a critic.

MC: You are grounding historically the debate about drawing and mark-making...

JE: Yes, for instance my notion in the book *Pictures and the Words That Fail Them* is that you can use this kind of historical example to show how there is such a thing as a pictorial mark that doesn't reduce in any consistent way to something that you could read as a written mark. That particular kind of Michelangelesque contour - which has a proper name in Italian, *contorno* - that kind of mark actually has to be sometimes legible as a written sign. If you step back from such a drawing the figure really does function as a three-dimensional illusion, as Michelangelo expected. But when you step up close the thing is indefinable by turns, by fits and starts, depending on how you are looking, how fast you are looking, what you are looking for. My idea was to contribute to a current debate in art history and philosophy, in which it's claimed alternately that visual marks are distinct from written ones, or that they are both simply kinds of 'signs' in a universe of semiotic meaning. I wanted to say that you can speak of graphic marks and you can make them disjunct from written marks - but only if you are willing to allow that they are conceptually impure, because sometimes they become written marks. In other words: at root, the visual is an independent realm, distinct from the verbal, but the only way to make sense of that claim is to allow that visual marks sometimes - not eventually and always, as in Derrida's account - masquerade as writing.

Margaret Corcoran, August 2000

## **Remarks on Drawing, Design and Rhetoric**

*Professor Hanno Ehses*

### I

Drawing, as well as other modes of visual communication, constitutes a significant idiom of our daily diet of visual rhetoric which is often rendered 'a-rhetorical' by aesthetics, utility, familiarity and a cultural context that directs attention away from its rhetorical constructiveness. Human beings are mark-makers of significance. Visual marks, which at a young age first take the form of scratches and scribbles, are in fact equipotential: they can become drawing, writing, and other notational forms. With practice and training, these ubiquitous forms of re-presentation shape systems of meaning-making and serve as prolific resources for communication and development in art and design making, in specialized work activities, in daily life, as well as in the fields commonly associated with arts, science, and technology. An extended frame of reference like this implies that drawing should no longer be simply regarded as an exclusive domain of visual art forms and artistic expression, often appreciated for their aesthetic value only, but instead as a 'language instinct' and widespread skill, an intelligible generative and analytical tool, and a rhetorical mode of communication.

### II

We should view drawing as an extremely useful tool of perception and visual thinking, as well as a vivid technique for interpreting and communicating. It can be a direct or immediate medium, employing few materials and operative with the simplest technologies. The speed and simplicity of drawing allows one to conceive, note, and evaluate ideas in any stage of development. Drawing or sketching simplifies and clarifies interaction with oneself as well as with others. In the process of drawing, one can have an internal dialogue or hold a public debate.

As a technique of communication in conversation with oneself,

drawing helps one think in an orderly and concentrated fashion. Drawings can tell what the mind is thinking but is unable to express in words; drawings can reveal relationships, hierarchies and inclusions that are difficult to capture through linear thinking and the sequentiality of words. Those who understand the language of drawing can even project their voices boldly, or whisper to themselves in secret.

Drawings provide a record of decision making, tracing the route of one's thoughts. The visibility of this process helps clarify intentions to oneself as well as to others involved in a challenging task. By making the path of inquiry more visible, drawings may reveal a divergent thought or locate an inconsistency in thinking. Dragging ideas out of the imagination by drawing them on paper promotes an intelligent dialogue during the problem-solving task, rather than after the fact.

Time is required to develop a rapport with ideas. Although it is a direct and rather quick action, drawing requires time and demands concentration on one's own perceptions and ideas. In exchange, drawings leave a physical record, mapping the pattern of thought and the course of inquiry. At the conclusion of a project, drawings provide the individual with a visual account of problem-solving processes that can be a precious source of self-knowledge and a source for further growths.

Across the page and against the running clock, drawing traces the path of mind and hand. The visible markers in preliminary sketches are useful indicators of the need for further observation, thinking, or inquiry. Process-drawings recount the efforts made, difficulties encountered, and decisions taken en route to the final product. Appropriate solutions seem to come from nowhere. Drawings reflect the labour preceding insight.

Drawing provides a means for testing imagination against realized form. Furthermore, drawing forces this juxtaposition of imagination and form in the context of perception and interpretation. In the process of drawing, an intention can be viewed from a different corner of the mind. For the task of examining suppositions and testing the appropriateness of images and visual symbolism, drawings can provide a working laboratory for the designer's or artist's persistent examination of intended and derived meaning.

As a generative tool for the invention, disposition, and visual expression of content and form; as a reliable map to chart one's thinking process; and as an evaluative tool measuring the articulation of intended meaning, drawing is an invaluable skill and tool for anyone interested in communicating visually.

### III

Although not obvious at first glance, when dealing with the influence of designers or artists and the uses and effects of drawings on an audience, we move deeply into the domain of rhetoric. For example, when we are concerned with the process of conceiving or developing an idea, or in addressing the influence of a designer's personal attitudes and philosophy, or the selection of drawing materials and techniques; or similarly, when treating a drawing not only as a quality in itself but also as a means of interpreting and passing information, as a means of shaping the appearance of objects for whatever intended effect - all these concerns involve a significant rhetorical component because they consider drawing as a mediating agency of influence and persuasion between designers and their intended audience.

According to Richard Buchanan<sup>1</sup> "rhetoric is both the practice of persuasive communication and a formal art of studying such communication". It is a discipline with a long tradition, often misunderstood in popular view as the mere styling of verbal or written expression; it has been neglected for most of the past three centuries, but is now slowly reappearing on centre-stage in our post-modern world. What makes the field appealing for visual arts is the fact that it represents a body of knowledge which includes principles, procedures and devices, with a potential for transfer to other media. Its long tradition of involvement with the fields of architecture, painting and music has been well documented by a number of scholars. In contrast to most communication theories, rhetorical theories tend to regard communication as an invention of arguments (logical, ethical, or emotional) that induce belief or identification in an audience.<sup>2</sup> Persuasive communication is commonly thought of as being the way a speaker, in a specific situation, invents and organizes arguments and presents them in appropriate words, sentences and larger speech segments

underlined by facial expressions and gestures. The goal is to shape consent and to induce in the audience some belief about an issue of concern.

The parallel to drawing as persuasion becomes more obvious if we think of designers and drawing instead of speakers and words. Designers and visual artists are involved in the vivid expression of competing ideas about social life, directly influencing attitudes and actions of viewers or users. Drawings, like other visual artefacts, embody cultural values and knowledge extracted from many fields of learning, and drawings consequently express values and knowledge in a complex debate conducted not in words but typically in non-verbal symbols. By considering the medium of drawing in the wider context of persuasive communication we are able to argue that its persuasive power comes through arguments presented in the form of drawn imagery, rather than speeches.

Arguably, all individuals engaged in some future prospect to be realized unwittingly explore rhetorical procedures and devices during the process of generating ideas expressing visual arguments through sketches and drawings in favour of realizing a plan. This is done in order to externalize and make concrete the objects they design before these designs are realized. In the early stages of development, these drawings are a kind of 'ill-formed' argument where the designer is working through conceptions of what 'might be'. These preliminary drawings reveal a primary set of functional relationships or perhaps a more general basic concept influenced by rhetorical figures, for example 'synecdoche', in which some part is representing an as yet undeveloped whole, or such as 'simile', where an emerging idea is developed by explicitly comparing it to something else. The next step usually concentrates on the formal values of the designed object that refines and clarifies the visual aspects of a proposed design, which helps to move an idea from 'ill-formed' to 'well-formed'. At any stage in the process, designers employ drawing as a means to interpret and manipulate a given subject matter in both form and content in an attempt, to convince themselves or someone else to believe in the relevance of their conceptual and visual work. Rather than searching for 'truth', the rhetorical objective emphasizes the appropriateness of analytical and generative procedure - ideas and their presentation are

conjoined and evaluated based on appropriate selection of means and tools in a specific situation.

We mentioned earlier, that a drawing constitutes a non-verbal argument employed to develop and realize a design object in the context of design process. Not unlike in speaking and writing, the common ingredient of all visual argument depends on discovering and maintaining a proper balance among three appeal elements that include the classical themes of *logos*, *pathos* and *ethos*.<sup>3</sup>

For the rhetorician, *logos* is the intelligible argument of a speech. For the designer or artist, *logos* should be viewed as technological reasoning or the intelligent structure of the subject of their thinking and process-drawings. In essence, technological reasoning refers to the way the designer manipulates materials and processes to solve practical problems. Drawings and other visual media are persuasive in this mode when, in addressing real needs, they meet those needs in a reasonable and expedient way. Form and content are explored in close relationship and designers are required to gain a high level of understanding of subject matter taking into account many fields of knowledge. Success in resolving the problem of *logos* or technological reasoning means that the drawing produced is *useful*.

In contrast, *pathos* for the rhetorician is the strand of argument that appeals to the feelings, interests and peculiarities of the audience. For the designer, *pathos* means the suitability or 'fit' of a drawing to the intended viewer or community of use. From a developmental perspective, a set of preliminary sketches may indeed capture a certain problem-solving approach, but unless they can be read and understood by another party, they fail to convey and clarify a proposed solution. Success in solving the problem of *pathos* means that the produced drawing is *useable*.

Finally, *ethos* for the rhetorician is the implied character of the speaker and the relationship between that character and members of the intended audience. For the designer, *ethos* can be characterized as the 'voice' of a drawing which addresses the personality of the designer as it is represented in a drawing and as it creates a relationship with the viewer. Aesthetics is part of the concern of shaping the 'voice' of a drawing or sketch, but only a part. The range of aesthetic styles in drawing is exceptionally wide

with no agreement upon standard of quality. Therefore, aesthetics is perhaps best viewed as an expression of the 'voice' of the designer or artist. The appeal of aesthetics lies primarily in the kind of identification we make between ourselves and the 'voice' of the drawing. When aesthetic quality becomes so compelling that it becomes the sole focus of attention, a drawing, sketch, illustration, etc. is often regarded as a work of fine art, which is perhaps an indication of the human capacity for the appreciation of experience that is unalloyed with utilitarian demands. Success in solving the problem of ethos means that a person can identify with the produced drawing and that it is therefore desirable.

If drawings or other visual media are convincing and persuasive in a specific situation they are so because a designer or artist has achieved a strong and compelling balance of what is perceived to be useful, useable and *desirable*.<sup>4</sup>

#### IV

We have briefly addressed the significance of drawing in the process of designing visual objects and alluded to the rhetorical constructiveness of sketches and drawings. In contrast to familiar views of drawing as aesthetics or utility, the rhetorical framework suggests that the designer, instead of simply creating sketches or drawings, is actually creating a persuasive argument that comes to life whenever a designer, for himself or for a client, decides to use drawing as a communication tool for some concrete end. The quest of rhetoric is to employ all available means of persuasion in a concrete situation as long as they are chosen appropriately. We like to suggest that rhetoric can stimulate and provide a higher order of thinking about the value of drawing. Without a command of drawing, of 'thinking with the pencil', employed through the rhetorical appeals of logos, pathos and ethos, all available means of persuasion are not in the designer's or artist's hand.

*Professor Hanno Ehses, October 2000*

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## Writing, Drawing and Visual Culture

Paul O'Brien

The tension between writing and drawing, letter and image, the literal and the visual is one that permeates society itself, not just colleges of art. An examination of this contrast reveals some deep fissures in Western society. In a sense the division can be mapped onto the tension between Jewish ethics and Greek aesthetics, asceticism and libertarianism. On the one hand there is the Hebrew love of the "word" and suspicion of representation: "Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth: Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them" (Exodus 20:4).<sup>1</sup> On the other hand, there is the Greek love-affair with the idealized human form, particularly the nude. Martin Jay notes that "If the Jews could begin their most heartfelt prayer, 'Hear, O Israel', the Greek philosophers were in effect urging, 'See, O Hellas'."<sup>2</sup> Aristotle (in contrast to his mentor Plato) endorsed in his *Politics* the teaching of drawing at school as assisting appreciation of the beauty of the body, passing that beauty on to the future as a model of perfection.<sup>3</sup>

In the modern system, however, Plato - with his suspicion of art as imitation - has tended to win out over his pupil. Drawing plays a poor second role to writing. Though the basic mechanical process - holding a pencil in your hand - is the same for each activity, drawing is mimetic (it imitates something in the world<sup>4</sup> whereas letters - at least in the Western alphabet - are (or have become) abstract and arbitrary. There is no particular reason why the letter A or any other letter is the shape it is.<sup>5</sup> (It may be a coincidence that the letter O looks like the shape of your mouth when you say it, or that the letter I looks like the upright human form.) There is no particular correspondence either between written words and the sounds they refer to, or even between these sounds and the concepts or objects to which they refer (with the possible exception of onomatopoeic words like "splash", though even these vary

widely from language to language). To think about the deeply arbitrary nature of language is to reflect on the tenuous grasp we have on reality itself. (To think too deeply about it is, perhaps, to risk ending up like Nietzsche in the asylum.)

While children "naturally" learn spoken language in the home, writing is imposed through the benevolent domination of the State, backed up by the fiction of the social contract (which, oddly enough, no-one ever gets to sign - despite being forced to learn how to write!) Something in us - a primitive joy in freedom, a "natural" unmediated immersivity in the world - is killed by literacy, a fact known more or less consciously by gypsies (and, historically, by Druids). This is perhaps why such groups incur the deep dislike of "civilized" people and have tended to suffer cultural or physical eradication - we envy them the freedom that we have (involuntarily) surrendered. It is not by coincidence, then, that artists - who retain some of the pre-literate human joy in freedom - were historically called "Bohemians", or that dissenting artists have always been the first to bite the dust when totalitarianism takes over. (Or, to put it more accurately, when the fundamentally totalitarian nature of modern social organization becomes manifest under the pressure of economic conditions.)<sup>6</sup>

There is an element of the work ethic involved. Images are easily accessible - you don't have to work at understanding them to the extent that you have to do with letters.<sup>7</sup> There is an implicit belief in Western culture that if you don't work for something, it's not worth having.<sup>8</sup> It is true, of course, that mimetic representation in drawing is also learned. Parents encourage children to abandon the "primitive" gratification of making meaningless marks on paper as soon as possible, and applaud their efforts insofar as they are perceived to correspond to "reality". Art educators at third level sometimes call for a "return to drawing" as a defence against the tide of conceptualism, installations, text-based art and multi-media - drawing in art schools thus plays something like the same ideological role ("back to basics") that reading and writing play at second level.

Historically, drawing has been seen as the basis of the three major arts - architecture, sculpture and painting, and has always been stressed by adherents of a classical and academic approach.<sup>9</sup>

Leymarie notes the interminable quarrel which began between the partisans of line (looking to Poussin) and the adherents of colour (looking to Rubens).<sup>10</sup> In Monnier's terms: "In the second half of the eighteenth century the antagonism between drawing and colour....was the central theme in the widening debate which soon came to oppose the two great movements.... of Neo-classicism and Romanticism."<sup>11</sup>

But contemporary critics of mimeticism make no such distinction between Classical rectitude and Romantic indulgence. Feminist academics, echoing in their way the religious condemnation of "the lust of the eyes", attack the traditional depiction of the female nude in art, whereby the female model is the passive object of the male gaze of the artist (and cite the historical lack of access by women to life-drawing as a major reason for the lack of noted female artists). Against this, life-drawing from the nude itself - much like medical intervention - is defended precisely for its "non-erotic" nature, and there are anecdotal stories such as that of the model in nineteenth century Paris who thought nothing of posing nude for art students, but screamed when she caught sight of workmen looking at her through the window.

The feminist critique, then, has tended to focus not only on issues of degradation, passivity and possession in regard to the role of women in society, but in its extreme form has also attacked the depiction of the female nude itself, both in pornographic and purely "aesthetic" mode, sometimes refusing to draw a distinction between the two. There seems to be something like an implicit adherence to the idol-prohibition of ancient Judaism, a puritanical condemnation of the "lust of the eyes". And despite much feminist antipathy to the "patriarchal" thrust of Christianity, there is perhaps also a resonance between this "antiocularcentrism" and the traditional Christian preference for ethical, unconditional love *agape* over pagan, aesthetic, visually-based, conditional *eros*.<sup>12</sup>

In fact, the puritanism of our image-suspicious society in some ways exceeds that of the Victorians.<sup>13</sup> Cultural conservatives still eye TV askance - unless perchance a programme encourages children to read more books. It is commonplace to attack the "dumbing down" of culture, particularly the marginalization of

ideas in favour of a 'surface' fetishization of images. (A cultural saturation of superficial visuality has swamped traditional classical and religious values to such an extent that - horror of horrors - there is nothing for young artists to rebel against any more.)

But in a sense the suspicion of the visual arts is a lost cause. Films have replaced books as the focus of casual conversation. Scandalously for traditional pedagogy, there is a sense in which writing is deeply inferior as a cultural vehicle to image-making. Language, as contrasted with images, is highly abstract and mediated - both to produce and comprehend, it involves a kind of deliberate wrenching of oneself from the world. Perhaps this is the reason that creative writing is to such an extent the province of the fragile egos seeking some kind of permanence in a (futile) attempt to stave off mortality - the book as a kind of "immortality machine".<sup>14</sup> For reasons not fully understood, visual artists - even very accomplished ones - are often much humbler beings than writers.

To understand the literal/visual, ascetic/libertarian dichotomy, one should recall that Western civilization rests on a more-or-less uneasy amalgam of Jewish morality, Roman law and Greek philosophy (including aesthetics). The spiritual purification offered by early Christianity with its body-soul dichotomy, went hand-in-hand with an often masochistic contempt for the body, represented by the sufferings of the early Church fathers (who regarded body-lice as the "pearls of God"). The closing of the Roman baths in early Christian times heralded two thousand years of bodily dirt and disease, ending only recently with indoor plumbing (and that apotheosis of civilization the fitness club, with its steam-room and jacuzzi).

Yet it would be wrong to lay the blame for this somatic degradation entirely at the doors of the Christian version of Judaism. For the body-soul, matter-spirit dichotomy entered Christianity from Greek sources themselves, particularly Plato. It was Plato who downgraded visual artists as mere imitators, echoing in his way the strictures of the Hebrew puritans regarding mimetic representation. For Plato in *The Republic*, the craftsman who made a bed was creating an imperfect imitation of the pre-existing object in the ideal realm - the artist who then made a representation of the bed was merely making an imitation of an imitation.<sup>15</sup>

But although in one sense the abstract nature of letters saves them from both the Jewish condemnation of graven images and from Plato's downgrading of art as mere mimesis, for Plato this was not a mere word-image dichotomy. For Plato was equally scathing in regard to poets, since the latter dealt not just in imitation but in emotion rather than - like the philosopher Plato - in reason. For him, the real tension was not between words and images, but between art and philosophy.<sup>16</sup>

It is hardly surprising, then, that the visual - downgraded by both Plato and Moses - has been sent to the margins of the modern educational system. (The dire social consequences we can see all around us, from litter on the streets to ugly architecture.) It is perhaps more surprising that philosophy has suffered similarly, at least in Christian-dominated school systems - perhaps since its rationalism might be seen as tending to undermine faith.<sup>17</sup>

The real winners in the school system have been language and literature, which form the basis of the Western educational procedure.<sup>18</sup> You can get away with not drawing in school, but you can't avoid reading and writing. (The horrors for dyslexics of the traditional school system can only be imagined by those not subject to the condition, and for whom school is rough enough anyway.) In Ireland, the basis of cultural nationalism was language (Irish) and literature (Anglo-Irish or Hiberno-English). The poet W.B. Yeats was the real cultural icon of Ireland's conservative revolution, not his brother Jack the painter.

Image-making and image-appreciation, then, are marginalized in the contemporary educational system for reasons that may lie largely in its social unconsciousness: an amalgam of Puritanism, ignorance, utilitarianism, philosophical disdain and snobbery. (The Greeks drew a sharp class-distinction between artists who worked with their hands and writers who worked with their heads, though, if you think about it, both sets of people work with their hands, unless they happen not to have any.)

And yet, for all the fourteen years of literary conditioning, it is dismally familiar to tutors at third level that secondary schools still manage to disgorge a mass of school-leavers unable to write a proper sentence. ("What on earth were they doing all that time...?") A conservative might attack TV and computer games, citing also

the decline of Latin and grammar teaching. A sociobiologist could point out that the problem arises from forcing males - hard-wired to think in "spatial" terms - to learn in "female" language-based ways. A socialist - if there are any left - might argue for more money for education and less for financiers. An anarchist might observe that the situation says something about the real reason for schools, which is to keep teachers off the streets and give them something to do...

Meanwhile children, that is future generations, come out of school illiterate not just in the traditional sense, but - far more dangerously for the well-being of the natural, cultural and built environment - in visual terms as well. Just as the proliferation of mass "literacy" goes hand in hand with a decline in literature, so the proliferation of images of Western culture goes hand in hand with the evanescence of anything worth looking at - and, indeed, anyone who can tell the difference. The reasons at the level of schooling are opposite ones: the effects are the same.

*Paul O'Brien, August 2000*

#### *Notes*

1. Lyotard links the Jewish hostility to images with an abandonment of the feminine represented by the pre-patriarchal mother-goddesses, the rejection of the "visible" mother in contrast to the "invisible" father. See Martin Jay, *Downcast Eyes: The Denigration of Vision in Twentieth Century French Thought*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994, p 578. (Taken literally, Exodus 20:4 would seem to prohibit photography as well as drawing, but religious fundamentalists tend to pick and choose the bits of Scripture they interpret literally.)
2. *Downcast Eyes*, p.33.
3. Jean Leymarie, "Drawing and Art Theory", *History of an Art: Drawing*, trans. Barbara Bray, London: Macmillan, 1979, p. VIII.
4. Descartes points out the limitations of mimesis: "Indeed the perfection of an image often depends on its not resembling its object as much as it might. You can see this in the case of engravings: consisting simply of a little ink placed here and there on a piece of paper, they represent to us forests, towns, people, and even battles and storms; and although they make us think of countless different qualities in these objects, it is only in respect of shape that there is any real resemblance. And even this resemblance is very imperfect, since engravings

present to us bodies of varying relief and depth on a surface which is entirely flat. Moreover, in accordance with the rules of perspective they often represent circles by ovals better than by other circles, squares by rhombuses better than by other squares, and similarly for other shapes. Thus it often happens that in order to be more perfect as an image and to represent an object better, an engraving ought not to resemble it." Rene Descartes, "Optics", in *The Visual Culture Reader*, ed. Nicholas Mirzoeff, London: Routledge, 1998. pp. 64-65.

Rawson remarks that drawing, whose essence is the use of monochrome marks to convey meaning, is more subjective than painting, since painted areas of pigment may correspond with coloured surfaces, but nature does not present us with lines and their relationships which are the basic stuff of drawing. In any case, he points out, it is a fallacy that works of art are a record of something seen: "they are artistic constructs, based on ingrained scanning procedures".

Philip Rawson, *Drawing*, Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1987, pp. 10, 1, 21-22.

5. Rawson observes (p. 13) that the capital letter "A" is the upside-down version of the face of an ox. But even if our letters originally had a mimetic meaning, they have long since lost it.

6. The converse of this fact is that the most extreme bearers of totalitarianism, the Nazis - sometimes referred to as "armed Bohemians" - themselves promised to reinstate, through domination, a primitive "strength through joy" and the aesthetic dimension of human life. And, of course, while critical artists often came to a sticky end under totalitarianism of Left or Right, compliant artists - as long as their work remained mimetic as well as uncritical - often did much better in a material sense than they would have done in a free society.

7. A TV programme featured a youngster caught in possession of drugs who was put on a "character-building" mountaineering course, which he remarked ruefully, was far more dangerous than the illicit substance in his pocket.

8. A philosophy which, oddly enough, doesn't apply to the rich.

9. Genevieve Monnier, "Drawing and Art Theory", *History of an Art: Drawing*, p. 17.

10. Jean Leymarie, "Introduction", *History of an Art: Drawing*, p. XVIII.

11. Monnier, "Drawing and Art Theory", *History of an Art: Drawing*, p. 19.

12. Jay traces the development in the English-speaking world of feminist critiques of the "gaze" from the germinal essay "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema" by Laura Mulvey, through the contributions of Jacqueline Rose, Stephen Heath, Annette Kuhn and Constance Penley. In France, the critique of ocularcentrism in feminist theory included interventions by Hélène Cixous, Julia Kristeva and Luce Irigaray and was stimulated by Derrida. Of these writers Jay singles out Irigaray with her stress, critical of Freud and Lacan, on

the role of vision in patriarchal domination and her endorsement of tactility and fluidity over masculine visuality and "solidity". (Jay, pp. 490-491). Jay also cites the work of Levinas in linking the antiocular impulse in postmodernism with a traditional Jewish approach to visual representation (p. 556) and note that the Protestant theologian, Jacques Ellul, denounced the "humiliation of the word" in the society of the spectacle (p. 548). In Jay's words, echoing Levinas, "to care for the other meant refusing to turn him or her into an object of visual knowledge or aesthetic contemplation." (Jay, p. 556). The agape-eros dichotomy is traced in Anders Nygren's *Agape and Eros*, trans. Philip S. Watson, London: SPCK, 1982.

13. The photographs of Lewis Carroll, unremarkable to the prudish Victorians, are deeply shocking to contemporary eyes. And one can now be put in jail for downloading certain images from the internet (though not written texts).
14. In Woody Allen's terms, "I don't want to become immortal through my art. I want to become immortal through not dying."
15. Plato, "Against Imitation", in David Goldblatt, Lee B. Brown (eds.), *Aesthetics: A Reader in Philosophy of the Arts*, New Jersey, Prentice Hall, 1997, pp. 5-9.
16. Ironically, a swathe of Derrida-influenced post-modern culture now sees philosophy itself as a branch of literature. Doubly ironically, Derrida cites Plato himself as evidence for the inability of language to represent any fixed or grounded meaning. See Jacques Derrida, "Plato's Pharmacy", in *A Derrida Reader: Between the Blinds*, ed. and introd. by Peggy Kamuf, London, Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1991, pp. 112-139.
17. In secular France, where students read philosophy at second level, some commentators cited the teaching of philosophy, with its subversion of received political ideas, as responsible for the "events" of 1968.
18. At least until future scientists and "humanists" split into two mutually uncomprehending cultures in their early teens.

## In the Beginning Was the Word? Drawing Analogies

Tom McGuirk

Within our culture, there is a rank order in our attitude to forms of communication which places visual communication on a far lower rung to that of the verbal. In a recent tutorial one student presented some extraordinarily sophisticated graphic novels for discussion (what we used to call comics) and a debate ensued. What emerged was the recognition of an entirely spurious attitude to this hybrid form, not so much within the group, more the general culture, and to my shame I remembered my own surprise many years ago, when on an Italian train, I first noticed an adult engrossed in a 'comic'. Inherent in my reaction then was a bias which unconsciously regarded such a visual form as inferior, juvenile, the literary equivalent of learner wheels on your first bike. Where does this bias come from? And more importantly what are its implications particularly in relation to the art of drawing and education in such an art?

Plato attacked mimeses in all the arts but he focused on the visual arts if only to make a point:

*Painting, and mimetic art as a whole, produces a work that is far from the truth; it consorts with a part of ourselves that is far from intelligence and it is companion and friend for no healthy or true purpose... Mimetic art being an inferior thing and having intercourse with something inferior, produces inferior offspring.<sup>1</sup>*

For Plato the mimetic artist is someone "whose produce is at two removes from nature", from "what is", from the Form. In his famous example, he describes the painter of a bed as merely the maker of a copy of the bed, which in its turn is at one remove from the Form of the bed. The "lovers of sight and sound" have "only belief and not Knowledge, because Knowledge... is tied to Forms".<sup>2</sup> For Plato only philosophers, who are after all wordsmiths, have true knowledge, because they deal in Forms,

whereas the painter's wares, were at two removes from the Forms they represented. Indeed as we know, Plato so distrusted the mimetic arts that he wished them banished from his ideal city and ominously from the well governed soul.

This polemic in favour of the verbal in opposition to the visual, echoes down to our time. In the eighteenth century, for example, it was decided that the testament of eyewitnesses was of lesser value relative to textual accounts, after all the eyes play tricks on us.<sup>3</sup>

Barbara Stafford traces the history of this intellectual bias towards the verbal through the Enlightenment's rejection of the culture of spectacle and show, that had grown up around quasi-scientific entertainment and 'Romish' idolatry.

*Recent literacy studies have revealed the growing split in early modern Europe between a popular, but lowly, oral culture and a polite, upwardly mobile middle-class company of readers and writers. What has been insufficiently emphasized to date is the fact that this past oral culture was also fundamentally visual. Beginning already with the great seventeenth century religious polemics, literacy was seen as a weapon in the Protestant arsenal fending off Catholic idolatry. To their detractors, "Romish traditions" and the monstrous impurities of Jesuitical baroque art relied on superstitious speech, wanton gestures, and abominable fetishes to reach the common unlettered man and woman through multisensory spectacle.*

*Crushing mindless credulity (verbal and visual) with knowledge or reason (writing) was not just at the core of mass education drives from the eighteenth century forward: it was also the chief goal of the Enlightenment.*<sup>4</sup>

That great legacy of the Enlightenment, modern science, is far from untarnished by this bias which was most visible in this century in the social and cognitive sciences. One example, in psychology, being the denial of mental imaging by the Behaviourists, whereby verbal communication was once again championed at the expense of the visual, in an attempted uncoupling of the concept of mental imaging from the idea of the imagination. Thought was essentially verbal. Syntax is still regarded in some quarters as what primarily separated us from our evolutionary predecessors.<sup>5</sup>

Dennett suggested that those scientists involved in the sciences of the mind might be separated into two camps of 'iconophiles' and 'iconophobes'.<sup>6</sup> N. J. T. Thomas identifies J.B. Watson, one of

the founders of behaviourist psychology, as an iconophobe (along with Plato), and indeed it is not hard to see why. Watson in his denial of the significance of mental imaging and indeed his championing of the verbal nature of our thought processes, was emphatic:

*There is need of questioning more and more the existence of what psychology calls imagery... I should throw out imagery altogether and attempt to show that practically all natural thought goes on in terms of sensory-motor processes in the larynx.*<sup>7</sup>

Thomas also cites a questionnaire from the 1880s in which, while the majority of the respondents reported having experienced mental imagery, a small number, significantly scientists and intellectuals in the main, denied ever experiencing any such imagery. He notes that a more recent survey calculates this proportion of the population as between ten and twelve percent.

The profoundly influential analytical philosophy of the twentieth century rejected the 'pictures in the mind' model presented by Aristotle. For Wittgenstein and others, philosophical problems could be solved by the analysis of language; the very fact that one can talk about the world must mean that "the structure of language corresponds with the structure of the world".<sup>8</sup> As A. J. Ayer put it:

*...the distinction between 'about language' and 'about the world' isn't all that sharp, because the world is the world as we describe it, the world as it figures in our system of concepts. In exploring our system of concepts you are at the same time exploring the world.*<sup>9</sup>

The philosopher Bryan Magee came across this view in Oxford in the 50s and 60s. He rejected the premise "... that the categories of our system of representation are in any fundamental or primal sense linguistic".<sup>10</sup> However this view of the dominance of a language model for thought prevailed to a significant degree and has been regarded as a stumbling block to scientific investigation of the role of mental imagery in cognition. This contentious debate rages on.<sup>11</sup>

Magee's insightful explanation for this rejection of this view is illuminating:

*If I look up from the writing of this sentence, my view takes in half a room containing scores, if not hundreds, of multicoloured items and*

*shapes.... There is no conceivable form of words into which this simple unitary act of vision can be put. For most of my waking day my conscious awareness is a predominantly visual experience .... Whatever I see, all that language can do is to indicate with the utmost generality and in the broadest and crudest terms what it is that I see. Even something as simple and everyday as the sight of a towel dropped on the bathroom floor is inaccessible to language.... no words to describe the shape it has fallen into, no words to describe the degree of shading in its colours, no words to describe the differentials of shadows in its folds, no words to describe its spatial relationships to all the other objects in the bathroom....It is emphatically not the case then, that the world is the world as we describe it ( through language ).<sup>12</sup>*

Reading this passage it will strike anyone who draws, that presented with just such a challenge; to describe Magee's bathroom, they would have a perfectly adequate means of proceeding. For drawing will find analogies for all these specifics, in lines, marks and smudges on the page.

Indeed discovering, analogizing and coming to an understanding of our physical universe is an important aspect of what we do when we draw. If an artist, or for that matter a botanist, wants to describe or understand something, one of the most natural responses would be to draw it, if only as a 'getting to know you' exercise.

Umberto Eco has described just such a process undertaken by Galileo in his observations of Saturn.<sup>13</sup> Galileo ran into an immediate problem. What presented itself to him at the end of his telescope was something no one had seen before, and in one important sense he couldn't see it either. Yes, his apparatus was primitive by today's standards, this however was not the real problem, the same lenses had served him adequately in observing more obscure objects. The problem would seem to have been that the form of the object projected onto his retina; Saturn with its rings, was so unexpected that he could not recognize it. He imagined that Saturn must have two satellites, he was after all familiar with planetary moons. In 1611, in a letter to Giuliano de' Medici , he inscribed ooo to describe the arrangement. Language was of little help, in a further letter of 1612, he attempted a description of it as "in the shape of an olive". Only through a laborious process of drawing

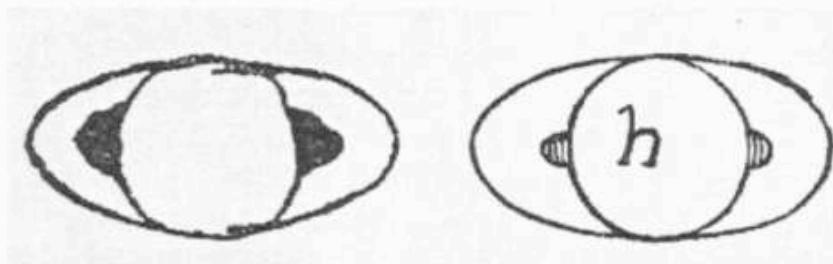


Fig. 1. Galileo's sketch of 1616 and engraving in *The Assayer* of 1632

and redrawing did he slowly arrive at a description which at most approximates something we might recognize from our own familiarity with Saturn's unique form (Fig 1.). However he never really succeeded in describing it accurately whether in his drawings or his words, speaking of a sphere bordered by two semi-ellipses. The reason surely is that he had no mental schema, or what Eco describes as a cognitive type, for the form of Saturn, (unlike his 'moons' scenario where he did have a schema) so could neither draw nor understand it properly (Fig 2.).

Eco presents a fascinating model for Galileo's cognitive process. He describes the order this process would normally take as follows:

Saturn-in-itself > Saturn on the lens > Cognitive type > Drawing

However, because Galileo was observing something for the first time and had no cognitive type, Eco's model in his case differed as follows:

Saturn-in-itself > Saturn on the lens > Drawing > Cognitive type.

I would suggest that this model might suffice in the case of any well observed drawing.

For Galileo this process of discovery was in no way linguistic, if Galileo had no schema he certainly was also lost for words.

In learning to draw as indeed in all our drawing (in which we are forever students), we find ourselves in something of Galileo's pioneering dilemma. One of the first obstacles to overcome is our often inadequate or erroneous (Saturn's moons) schemata.

An important aspect of our learning process involves continually negotiating evolving schemata for the forms we encounter and draw. And as in Galileo's case each form that

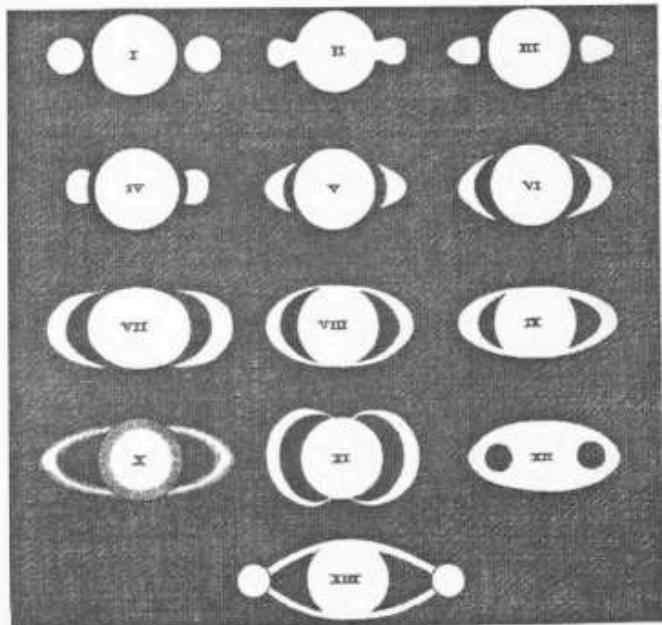


Fig.2. The composite figure from Huygens' *Systema Saturnia*

presents itself is fundamentally new to us, given the myriad possible permutations and combinations of context, viewpoint and other environmental variables.

Philip Rawson in his book *Drawing* makes observations which share something of Magee's insight. For Rawson both the drawer and the viewer involve themselves in continuous visual analogizing, which he saw as lying at the root of all human thought and constantly active. He believed that the mind was also constantly involved in a reflective activity, whereby memories of these analogized forms were worked on in their turn by the analogizing faculty, developing further analogies, creating a vast storehouse of forms in the memory; 'forms and forms of forms'. In making a drawing the artist unconsciously draws on this store of forms and it is a two-way street as the viewer is similarly active.

*Our verbal language reflects our everyday life pretty comprehensively. But there is a huge number of genuine, valid 'forms' of experience, produced by the analogizing faculty and therefore perfectly 'true'... for which we have no conventionally associated words. They probably constitute a submerged ninety-eight percent of our actual, perceived experience. But they lie atrophied and inert in our minds, unless we can*

*find ways of bringing them forward into consciousness. By vivifying them and vitalizing them we can make ourselves aware of that lost part of ourselves, our suppressed perceptions and memories. This is what the arts do.... The marks made by the point in any drawing he looks at become part of the spectator's world of phenomena. His analogizing faculty sets to work on the marks, their patterns and arrangements.*

In learning to draw we are developing and honing this analogizing faculty and entering into a commonwealth of drawers and viewers, who access this shared store of forms, on which our collective analogizing faculties work. The form of learning encountered in learning to draw, has broader implications in terms of developing creativity in the student than the mere development of rendering skills, which might justifiably be regarded as anachronistic, given the development of new and complex forms of image generation. There are complex benefits in learning to draw which are commonly not appreciated in relation to drawing's role in the education of artists. As Leslie Perry has put it "The eliciting and training of the imagination is a valuable part of the training given to us by drawing". In this context the acquisition of drawing skills in developing this analogizing faculty, is significant for the development of the artist in the broadest of senses:

*Analogical thought - as a similarity-creating power - is profoundly intertwined with meaning-producing high level perception. As imaginative insight, it recognizes in something unfamiliar, alien, something familiar; a correspondence, not a comparison.... Sensing affinity goes beyond vaguely intuiting resemblance when the viewer can demonstrate the existence of a reciprocal proportion between two unequal or unlike terms. Creative analogies, therefore, can bring powerful and unexpected insights to apparently asymmetrical relationships, inventing harmonizing correspondences that literally did not exist before being made. Not just any analogy, but the most dramatically meaningful one, singled out from a swarm of possible linkages is at the core of human creation.*<sup>15</sup>

Drawing teaches us about our physical environment in a unique way, to draw is to learn to understand and conceptualize the concrete universe, which in turn equips us to extrapolate ideas and investigate creative scenarios which alter that three dimensional reality (Architecture, Sculpture, Installation), or which refer to

that plastic environment conceptually and imaginatively as we do in two-dimensional image making, whether traditionally in painting and graphic media or in the new media of computer generated imagery. Although photography involves itself in the type of activity we learn through drawing, photographic techniques are comparatively passive.<sup>16</sup> In film the drawn storyboard remains a vital stage in the generative process and an equally vital means of communicating visual concepts. Learning to draw is an active grappling with the plastic world. For the student it involves an introduction to a language which equips them to handle visual concepts, in this it parallels written language. Indeed, as a rich and sophisticated means of expression, drawing has a history certainly older than the written word with which it shares a common root and much else.

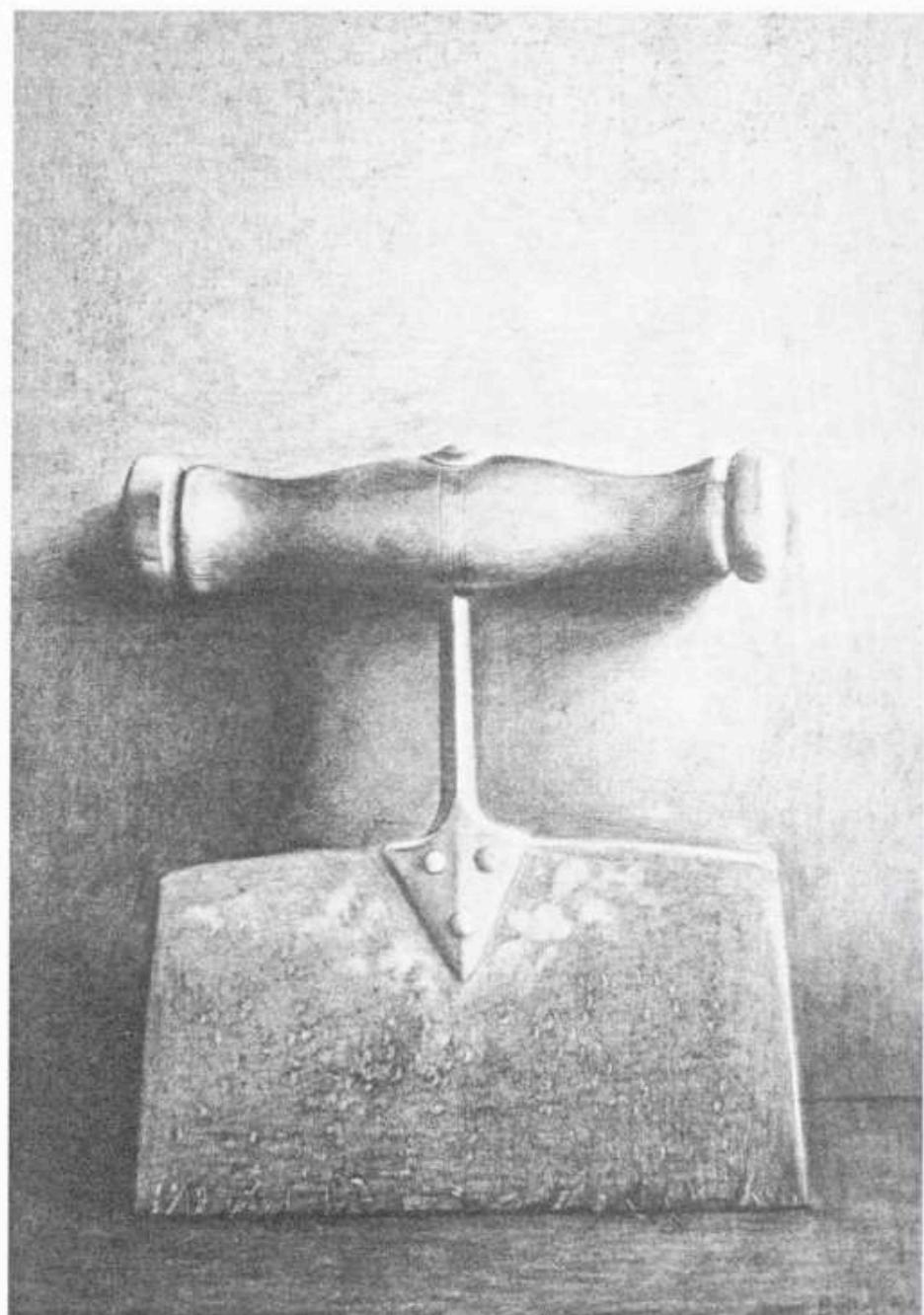
*Tom McGuirk, November 2000*

#### *Notes*

1. Plato 603a 10-b4 Janaway's translation, Janaway Christopher. *Images of Excellence, Plato's Critique of the Arts*, Oxford University Press, Oxford 1995, p.146.
2. Ibid.
3. Stafford, Barbara, *Good Looking, Essays on the Virtue of Images*, The MIT Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1996, p.50.
4. Ibid., p. 47-48.
5. Calvin, William H., *How Brains Think, Evolving Intelligence, Then and Now*, Weidenfeld & Nicolson, London, 1997, pp. 82-83.
6. Thomas, J.M. (1989). "Experience and theory as determinants of attitudes toward mental representations: The case of Knight, Dunlap and the vanishing images of J.B. Watson", *American Journal of Psychology*, 1989, 102, 395-412.
7. Ibid.
8. Magee, Bryan, *Confessions of a Philosopher*, Weidenfeld & Nicolson, London, 1997, p. 93.
9. Ibid., p. 95.
10. bid., p. 96.
11. Thomas, J.M. (1989). "Experience and theory as determinants of attitudes

toward mental representations: The case of Knight, Dunlap and the vanishing images of J.B. Watson."

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13. Eco, Umberto, *Kant and the Platypus, Essays on Language and Cognition*, English translation: Secker.
14. Rawson, Philip, *Drawing*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1969, p. 26.
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## Drawing: A Basis for Art Education and Practice

*Liam Belton*

While I was a student in the National College of Art and Design in the 1960s, I travelled to Amsterdam and saw Van Gogh's sketchbooks. It was a strange experience, almost like leafing through someone's diary. These drawings were intimate, not done for public consumption. This lack of the 'finished product' was what gave you the feeling that you had a direct line to the artist's inner thoughts. This approach was the antipodes of that prevalent in our own National College at the time.

Up until the end of the 1960s, the emphasis was entirely on analytical and tonal studies done from the Greco-Roman antique plaster casts and from the live model. This was the traditional approach handed down through William Orpen, Sean Keating, Maurice MacGonigal to John F. Kelly, James Nolan and Carey Clarke. It was akin to a scientific approach. Everything was pared down to essentials. "Never use two lines when one line will do." was the constant refrain drummed into the students by Maurice MacGonigal. Two years drawing from the antique casts, followed by six months anatomical studies and visits to the cadavers in the College of Surgeons was the prerequisite before you were allowed into the life-drawing room.

When it became clear to the students, through travel and books, that this approach had long since been abandoned elsewhere, they reacted angrily. Two students took it upon themselves to destroy the large collection of antique plaster casts. This was an act of pure vandalism and was totally condemned by the Students Union at the time. However, it was a seminal moment and it marked the end of the traditional approach to drawing in Ireland. There is the viewpoint that they threw out the baby with the bath-water.

William Orpen had imported this French technique of drawing from the Slade School of Art, University College London. The Slade School was founded in 1871. Its tradition was founded upon

the study of the Old Masters and laid special emphasis on draughtsmanship - on the interpretation of line as the Old Masters understood line, and of anatomical construction.

"Drawing is the explanation of the form" was the Slade motto. William Orpen arrived there in 1897 encrusted with prizes from the Metropolitan School of Art in Dublin. He was taught by Whistler and Henry Tonks. One of the students, William Rothenstein described the methods of teaching drawing: "As a rule we drew larger than sight-size, we studied the relations of light and half-tone, at first indicating these lightly, starting as though from a cloud, and gradually coaxing the solid forms into being by superimposed hatching. This was a severe and logical method of constructive drawing - academic in the true sense of the word.... we were urged to train our memories, to put down in our sketchbooks things seen in the street.... to copy during school hours in the National Gallery and in the Print Room of the British Museum." This was very similar to that which pertained in our National College in the 1960s where we had to go out, memorize a building without taking notes and go back to the college and reproduce it from memory. We had numerous visits to the National Gallery, the National Museum, the Natural History Museum, the Botanical Gardens and even the cats' and dogs' home. The approach was always scientific: what we were after was not character - it was always tonal values that mattered, scale, perspective, economy of line, etc. There was an antipathy to the invasion of Post-Impressionism, Cubism, Futurism and all abstract art. As Henry Tonks in the Slade said: "It is interesting to observe and this is a fine lesson, how degradation sets in at once with the coming of contempt for Nature, we are no good without it, we are like children, without guardians." There is much truth in that statement, but of course, it is not the full picture when we consider what was going on in the rest of Europe some decades earlier.

The French Symbolist poets, who came to prominence in the 1880s believed that the old academic realism in poetry and painting was outworn and had never come to grips with life in the first place. The real truths lay in dreams, memories, phantoms and hallucinations. This was also the opinion of Sigmund Freud, who at that time was developing his theories of psychoanalysis in

Vienna. In literature and art it was necessary to express ideas by new means - by veiled hints and allusions, effects of strangeness that convey not the mere appearance of an object or situation, but what the artist feels about it. It was time, in the phrase of the French novelist J.K.Huysmans to substitute the dream of reality for reality itself. When Gauguin expressed such ideas as "Art is an abstraction. Seek it in nature by dreaming in the presence of it.", he seemed a nineteenth century soul, brother to the Symbolist writers who adopted him. Maurice Denis, (1870 - 1943), said: "A picture before being a painting of a nude or war-horse is first of all a series of shapes and colours disposed across a rectangle."

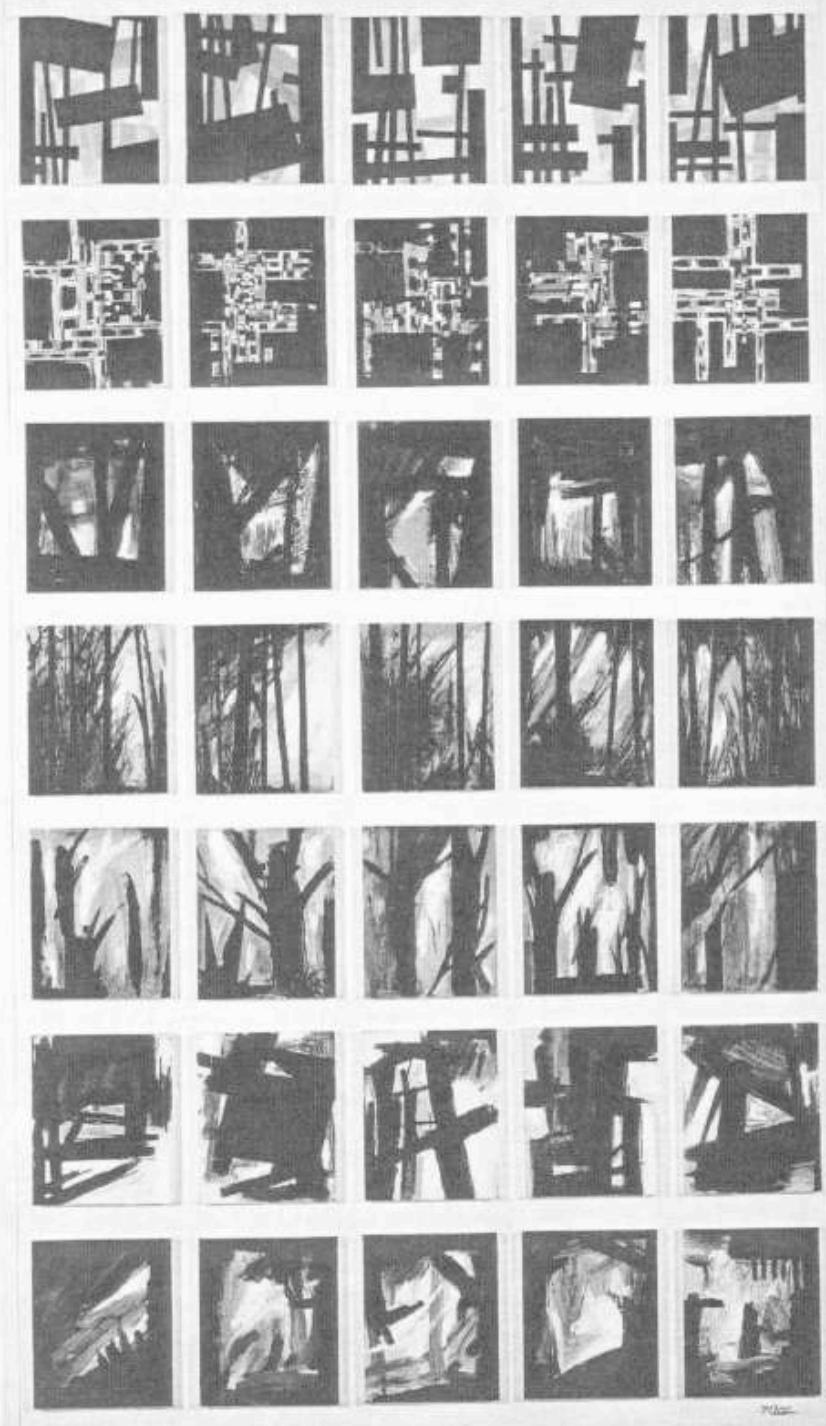
The tension between realism and abstraction has always been a source of confusion for the student of art and can seem irreconcilable. Delacroix wrote in his journal in 1860: "Realism should be described as the Antipodes of Art. It is perhaps even more detestable in painting and sculpture than in history and literature," and in 1857: "Man has in his soul innate sentiments which real objects will never satisfy and it is these sentiments that the imagination of the painter and poet is able to give form and life. Music, the first of the arts, what does it imitate?"

Getting back to our own National College of Art, Professor John Turpin takes up the story....."A modernist attack was mounted against the dominance of compulsory life drawing, which had dominated the National College of Art, like all other European and North American art schools, since the Neo-Classical period or longer. Modernism rejected the whole concept of copying in favour of a stress on originality. Modernists asserted the value of mark making, rejecting drawing as exclusively the imitation of nature. Life drawing and painting rallied in the new, more pluralist post-modern climate, when the figure returned in importance, although a far greater diversity of ways of using the figure was now attempted."

Where do we go from here? Is it possible to construct a suitable framework where students can acquire the skills and knowledge necessary to explore, enrich and secure that diversity of talent we all hope for? The artist's function is to look beyond appearances, to subvert, to provoke, to synthesize, to uplift, to explore, to dream, to imagine, to reflect, to assimilate, to invent. Drawing continues,

I believe, to provide the basis for art education and practice. It is the most instinctive, natural, unpretentious and versatile of media. The two main approaches - the scientific, analytical, objective approach, and the emotional, expressive, subjective approach - are not mutually exclusive. Rather they are mutually interdependent and necessary. Venturi put it this way: "We see in the artist two natures: the meticulous, diligent, tenacious realist without flights of imagination; and the exalted, monumental romantic. When one of these natures predominates the artistic value declines or disappears altogether. But when they coincide and the realist is carried away by his imagination while the romantic is present and acts through the realist, then great works of art are born."

*Liam Belton, October 2000*





## Drawing to a Conclusion?

*Jim Dennison*



My earliest recallable and critical experience of drawing was as a four year old endeavouring to draw a Spanish galleon.

When I say critical, I mean being able to make an 'intelligent' and conscious response to quality as I defined it then. Essentially this response was determined by a desire for accuracy and likeness of image, and as a child, the notion of expression could only be delivered through such means.

Drawing for me then, and through my early childhood, was an act of pleasure in being able to do something, which not only gave

me enormous fulfilment, but which others thought relatively highly of, and culminated in my primary school teacher telling me, when I was eight or nine years of age, that I was "good at art" and should consider taking it up seriously, later in life.

At the age of twelve, I was awarded a scholarship to a special art school, and there drawing took on a different dimension. No longer was I a big fish in a small pond - outdrawing all around me - the class was now filled with fifteen other big fish with whom I was going to have to compete! Drawing now took on the mantle of sport - it became competitive!

After the initial affront and shock to the system, I settled rapidly into the game, spending every weekend walking for miles to find suitable material for my sketchbook assignments, and with a grim determination that I was not going to be beaten.

Monday morning was the day of reckoning, when each of us in the class had to parade up to the teacher's desk with our sketchbooks, where we received a grade. Very quickly a pecking order established itself - based as much on effort as on quality, and which drew an even more frenzied response from those of us who took up the challenge.

Taking my lead from a plethora of 'old masters', I went through a phase of constructing beautiful 'vignettes', then on to conté, drawing in the style of Ingres, changing styles with a ruthless abandon, as the occasion demanded (the occasion being what type of drawing received the greatest reward the previous week). This now was real sport, with the adrenalin-rush on Monday mornings worth all the hardships of the weekend. Whoever said that taking part was more important than winning was talking codswallop - obviously someone who has never won, and was never likely to!

What I did begin to be aware of, however, was that the focus of pleasure had shifted from that which I enjoyed as a small child, before the adult world took notice. It was now no longer enough that I was gratified by what I did, it was now diminished or enhanced by the response of others, and as my technical prowess increased, I and my fellow 'contestants' frequently became mystified when our Monday morning mark often didn't seem to reflect our growing capabilities. What could be wrong? Surely the teacher could recognize the exemplars of virtuosity that were placed before him - or could he?

As my student career progressed, so did my exposure to the mechanics of drawing and an understanding of form and space. From anatomy drawing classes to life drawing, to drawing for print, pattern, design, the coverage was extensive. Drawing now became no longer an opportunity to display a virtuosity, however limited, it became the most fundamental tool at my disposal for the articulation and development of ideas. I couldn't conceive any creative act I might make not including drawing.

When my primary school teacher said to me: "You're good at art", what she meant was that I was good at drawing, and this notion of the inseparability of drawing and art has remained with me always. The idea that one could be creatively excellent in any of the visual or applied arts or design fields without displaying more than an average competency in drawing is a concept that I still find extremely difficult to understand. Drawing taught me to see, to comprehend, to define the world through my eyes, in a manner that was unique to me. How then could one produce creative work if one was blind and uncomprehending?

Alas! Over the last few decades it seems that the pendulum of art education has swung to the point where principles and strategies for the development of seeing and understanding no longer apply and where the desire and demand for expression is compelling. Very often, of course, such demands are portrayed as an acceptable substitute for coherency and clarity, when in fact they are very often a smokescreen for blindness and incompetence. Why is this? Notwithstanding the counter criticism that the methods of delivering coherency and clarity that I refer to are considered to be outdated and no longer relevant to contemporary practice - is there something wrong when expressive need seems to be running far ahead of an ability to synthesize and translate information effectively and meaningfully?

Josef Albers in the 1950s ran a drawing class at Yale University, where he extolled the relationship between art and language - indeed the number of books dealing with the 'language of art' are too numerous to mention. What is meant though by the 'language' of art? If such a thing exists, is there a 'language' of drawing? When we blithely talk about 'visual literacy' are we referring to the ability to understand and utilize language? I believe we are -

further I believe that if we, as educators, regained a clear understanding of how language is constructed our ability to teach drawing would be considerably enhanced.

Language essentially consists of three components: vocabulary, grammar and expression; and it is absolutely vital that we comprehend what these mean within the context of drawing and the teaching of the visual arts.

"...art may be said to consist, in part, of a visual language of marks and symbol systems, given coherence by a certain grammatical and syntactical conventions that may be recognized, understood and used. As in other realms where languages are crucial - literacy and numeracy - the deployment of marks and symbol systems both confirms what is already known and promotes further gains in knowledge..."<sup>1</sup>

What is both surprising and frustrating is that, while the structure of learning in literacy and numeracy are both well understood and accepted, the structure of learning in visual literacy is barely understood at all. Even in the teaching of music, vocabulary and grammar are recognized as indispensable prerequisites of expression. Imagine a child beginning to learn to play the piano, being allowed to sit down and 'make sounds' in the same way that our students make marks - without any comprehension of the vocabularies required, and that as long as one can verbally justify the sounds made, it becomes an acceptable act!

Over the last twenty years or so within art and design education, much debate has taken place on the role and the value of drawing - particularly its role in the new electronics age, and this will continue to gather pace - yet, here in Ireland, the deficit of the absence of such philosophical debate is plain to see. The deficit in real terms is that whilst there has been some decline in the role of drawing within the curriculum for the education of artists and designers, the real decline is in: a) the understanding of what exactly are the functions and values of drawing in contemporary art and design education, and b) how to provide a structured learning environment, where vocabulary and grammar are clearly defined and appreciated.

In Britain in 1990, the Secretary of State for Education appointed a working group to identify the soundest practices for

the teaching of art and design and to determine the necessary provision required for the subject for the future. Its report "revealed a subject, in the later stages of the twentieth century, taught largely through drawing, with ceramics, printmaking, textile work and other two and three-dimensional study areas having supporting roles. Drawing is the discipline in which the highest standards of achievement are realized. These achievements are central to art and design, (graphic recording, investigating, designing, expressing, communicating and experimenting)...."

It further noted that: "...the 1990s marks the end of a period in which uncritical or unstructured practice in drawing could be regarded as acceptable."<sup>2</sup>

This then is the problem still facing us - how to provide structure without compromising creative, cutting-edge expression.

Vocabulary and grammar without expression is mere virtuosity.

Expression without vocabulary and grammar results in gibberish.

As twelve year olds, what my peers and I failed to appreciate on those fateful Monday mornings was that as our comprehension increased, our marks were no longer based on our skill in rendering, but in being competent and articulate within a language. A language which expressed artistry and individuality, delivered through craftsmanship.

*Jim Dennison, October 2000*

#### *Notes*

1. D Thistlewood. *Observational Drawing and the National Curriculum*.
2. Seymour Simmons. *Philosophical Dimensions of Drawing Instruction*.

## **On Drawing**

*Brett McEntagart*

So what is drawing? Firstly, it is about observation; learning to see and record what we see. Secondly, it is about analysis; probing and investigating what we see; and thirdly, it is about expression/interpretation; expressing what we see in a way we consider most effective. There is no doubt that the interpretation is the secret ingredient, but it flows from the first two - observation and analysis. This may sound simplistic, and of course there are other factors that come into play, feelings, personality, etc., - the human element is always there. However, it is the element of observation which I want to emphasize, because it is a fact that only through drawing can you really learn to see, to know and understand the true form of things.

There is an urgent need to restructure the teaching of art so as to place greater emphasis on drawing, for drawing is the basis of all art and design work - and it is also an end in itself. As Sargent claimed, "Painting is only drawing with a brush." When we truly understand this we start to progress. The Chinese make no distinction between drawing and painting.

During the seventies, that turbulent period in art education, it was fashionable to decry drawing and particularly life drawing, as being of no intrinsic merit in the training of the artist - indeed it was considered by many to be injurious to the creative process! In an era when abstract art was king, there was indeed little reason to learn to observe the natural world. We have moved on from the esoteric precipice and now accommodation is made to pursue all types of approach to image creation, whether it be realism, expressionism, surrealism, conceptualism, geometric abstraction, or narrative art. You can take your pick. No matter which mode of expression you wish to pursue, drawing will always enhance your ability to do it. Drawing is as fundamental as the alphabet.

*Brett McEntagart, June, 2000*

## Drawing in Schools

*Kieran Meagher*

At the present time there are many issues in second-level art and design education which bedevil that area's objectives, methods and aspirations. Among these is the absence of a coherent rationale on the nature and place of drawing as an endeavour in itself (its intrinsic value), and as it relates to the broader art and design curriculum as an enabling medium (its instrumental value). This problem is an indication of the difficulty of identifying essentials and setting priorities within a climate of cultural ambivalence. In this short paper I wish to explore the influences on and concepts of teaching and learning in the area of drawing. One strand of influence emerges from the very act of teaching: those interactions - between teacher and students and among students - that constitute the practice, while a second strand of influence can be described (somewhat simplistically) as external: those substantive doctrines from which education takes its purposes and orientations.<sup>1</sup> What actually takes place in the classroom in the name of drawing is therefore a dialogue fashioned by shared (situated) experience and a reflection of larger forces. Drawing in schools, I am convinced, ought to be a practice which takes its commitment from the former, but in reality externally sanctioned ideas have always been dominant.

It is revealing to consider the history of drawing in schools and in particular to examine the legacies of key dominant philosophical views before going on to comment on imperatives for today. When John Ruskin said "I would rather teach drawing than my pupils may learn to love Nature, than teach the looking at Nature that they may learn to draw."<sup>2</sup> he was not only stating a view that the refinement of perception is all important, it was also an expression of his contempt for the then pervasive utilitarian economic and industrial process<sup>3</sup> and for the kind of mechanical drawing methods so readily embraced by that dehumanized outlook. Henry Cole's injunction that "It should be felt a disgrace

to everyone who effects to be well educated if he cannot draw straight lines"<sup>4</sup> fits neatly into our impression of the schooling portrayed in *Hard Times*.



While the utilitarians were busying themselves with how drawing instruction, imparted to "all classes", could be provided by the "readiest, simplest, and, at the same time, most effectual means", they were in fact working to a substantive doctrine. Having children undertake step-by-step drawing tasks (linear exercises), followed by freehand drawing of geometric solids, were practices validated by rationalist philosophy. The philosophy in question followed neo-Platonic theory that the essence of objects (their structure and beauty) is determined by ideal archetypes possessing universal geometric attributes, and Cartesian method, which championed the capacity of reason to provide certain knowledge of the nature of things by reducing every problem to its simplest elements.<sup>6</sup> Thus what children were expected to draw were perfect abstractions, so to speak. Moreover, the analytical approach to drawing (systematic investigation of discrete features and inherent structure et cetera) which we are well acquainted with in schools and colleges bears the same philosophical ancestry.<sup>7</sup> In contrast to Cole's rationalism, Ruskin's espousal of direct

observation of the natural world was grounded in empiricism: that is to say there are no universal essences to be apprehended, rather the mind is a *tabula rasa*, a plain surface that registers impressions of the world through the senses.<sup>8</sup> Ruskin's objective then, in the words of Seymour Simmons, was "to use drawing as a means to train visual perception freed from the intermediary schema".<sup>9</sup> Drawing instruction would therefore dispense with formulaic conventions and instead concentrate on the real world, the individuality of perception and representational techniques.<sup>10</sup>

The rise of observational drawing to the status of anchor discipline in art and design studies is a late twentieth century phenomenon, however. Another substantive doctrine had intervened. Founded on neo-Darwinian pragmatist philosophy, the 'progressive movement' in education, with its concern for active learning and learner-centred (in contrast to subject centred) curriculum, provided a climate in which the notion of art as creative self-expression could flourish. In effect, 'drawing' in schools became 'art'.<sup>11</sup> In John Dewey's philosophy the older idea of mind as ready-made and static (something to be trained and filled with facts) was replaced by the developing or organic mind, growing and changing via contact with environment (especially the social environment). All knowledge was taken to be provisional and so education was to be a means and not an end. The emphasis shifted from immutable content to the educational experience and explorative learning; concepts which are embodied in experimental drawing approaches (attention to subjective and spontaneous response, process, gesture drawing, et cetera).<sup>12</sup>

High claims were made for the role of art in education as a result of these developments. Herbert Read postulated that organic theory was an appropriate contemporary version of Platonic philosophy (placing the advancement of virtue and moral goodness as the goal of education). Accordingly, aesthetic education in its widest sense could foster the growth of each individual personality, which would in turn form the basis for a harmonious society.<sup>13</sup> The belief in the essential rightness of form to be found in organic growth could be supported by the scientific thesis that natural phenomena demonstrated an inescapable equilibrium, revealing patterns and structures of life that Read

thought humankind should understand and emulate.<sup>14</sup> By extension, a society alienated by the historicity and intellectualism of academic art would have more affinity with the preoccupations of the avant-garde whose interests resided in basic and elemental artistic forms.<sup>15</sup> The originating power of free creativity in art, as in a new natural (organic) form of education, would act as a catalyst for the creation of a balanced, civilized social order. In short, this was a call for nothing less than education through art or, to put it another way, art as a total means of education.<sup>16</sup>

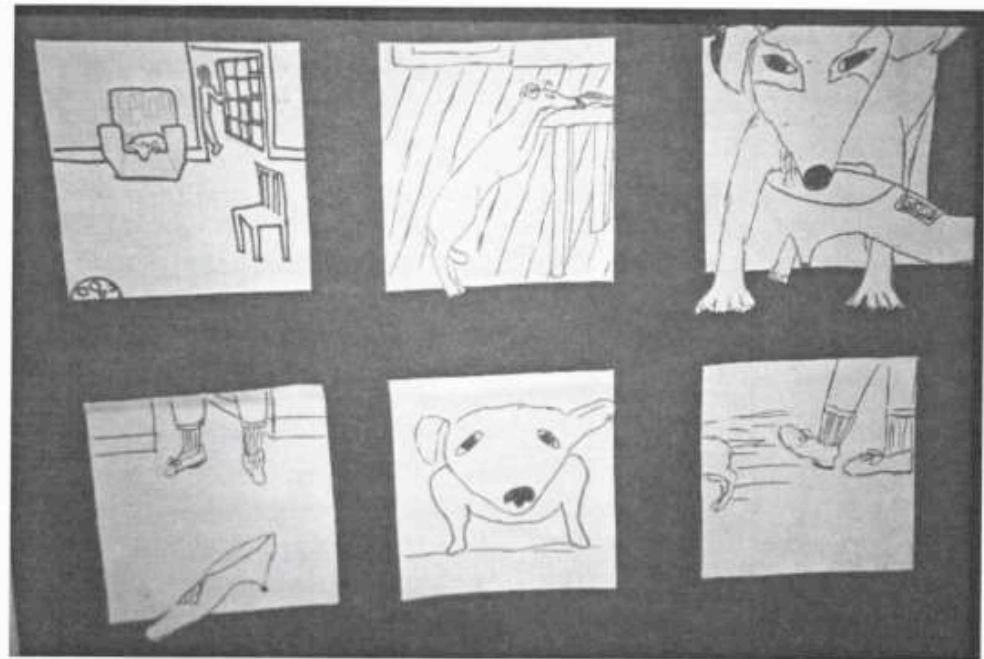
If rationalism gave rise to schematized drawing (and pockets of this perpetuate in the drawings of 'basic' objects in still-life arrangements and in simple 'how to draw' prescriptions), and empiricism licensed realistic imagery (that can descend to mere copying, which seems, to adapt Wordsworth, "too much with us"), then progressivism and organicism can be said to have placed an inordinate degree of faith in subjectivity, or autonomous selfhood<sup>17</sup> - encompassing the notion of the independent and revolutionary creative artist, and its corollaries, the artistically freely-expressing child and the latent, but confidence-stricken, artist-adolescent. The former corollary presupposes the native purity of children's imagery and, crucially, the latter underpins the apparent need to place issues of form over issues of content or meaning, in the second-level art and design curriculum.

All the foregoing philosophies share something in common; a penchant for fundamental laws and products (of a type).<sup>18</sup> This point refers us back to my opening remarks on what should count most in the teaching of drawing in schools. If it is a shared experience, then by definition the teaching and learning of drawing is a reciprocal process. As Padraig Hogan reminds us, we bring pre-conceptions (in the cognitive sense) and pre-dispositions (in the emotional sense) to any event of understanding, and these sensibilities, he argues, are the basis for the 'cultural inter-play' that is teaching and learning.<sup>19</sup>

Stemming from this the question arises as to what might such an intersubjective approach to drawing be like? In practice it would allow greater scope for students' sensibilities to emerge, but this is contingent on locating drawing in contexts broader than the 'official' curriculum. Arthur Efland makes a strong case for the

view that what students produce in classrooms is 'school art', an institutional art style in its own right; it reflects the culture of school(ing) rather than the sociocultural world (incorporating what professional artists and designers do) beyond the school.<sup>20</sup> If this is so, we have then a disavowal of cultural interplay. In this way drawing becomes an empty self-referential activity, its intrinsic value is reduced to fantasy, its instrumental value reduced to an 'enabling' that begets more school art. Teachers function nonetheless within the constraints of schooling and there are always larger philosophies (and political ideologies) impinging. But as Michael Fullan advises "you can't mandate what matters" (in education), namely, creative thinking and committed action on the part of teachers.<sup>21</sup> Our challenge is to ameliorate a situation where school drawing probably tells us more about the schools and the formalities of drawing curricula and less about students and what's on their minds.<sup>22</sup> Our commitment should be to revitalise the school drawing curriculum as a kind of unfolding cultural interplay; the first step would be to acknowledge the important - mostly hidden - interests and concerns of students.<sup>23</sup>

*Kieran Meagher, October 2000*



*Notes and References*

1. The underlying themes presented in this paper on the play of influences on education, the integrity of the practice that is teaching and learning as a cultural interplay are drawn from Padraig Hogan's (1995) *The Custody and Courtship of Experience: Western Education in Philosophical Perspective*. (Columba), see pp. 11 & 168.
2. John Ruskin (1857) *The Elements of Drawing*, (George Allen, 1907 edition) pp. xv & xvi.
3. Monroe C. Beardsley (1966) *Aesthetics from Classical Greece to the Present*. (University of Alabama Press) p. 304.
4. Henry Cole (1852), quoted in MacDonald S. (1970) *The History and Philosophy of Art Education*. (University of London Press) p. 233.
5. Richard Redgrave (1853) *Addresses for the Superintendents of the Department of Practical Art on the Methods Employed for Imparting Education in Art to all Classes*. (Chapman & Hall) pp. 47 - 54.
6. I have drawn also on a very useful overview of the philosophical positions which underpin different approaches to drawing in a paper by Seymour Simmons (1992); see "Philosophical Dimensions of Drawing Instruction", in D. Thistlewood (Ed.) *Drawing Research and Development*. (Longman), see p. 113.
7. Ibid. p. 133.
8. Robert R. Rusk & James Scotland (1979) *Doctrines of the Great Educators*. (Macmillan, fifth edition) p. 86.
9. Simmons (n.6) p. 113.
10. Ibid. p. 13.
11. Arthur Hughes, Nick Stanley & John Swift (1990) *The Art Machine*. (Glasgow Museums & Galleries, Birmingham Polytechnic, NSEAD) p. 13.
12. Simmons (n.6) p. 114.
13. Herbert Read (1943) *Education Through Art*. (Faber & Faber) p.65.
14. The organic theory in question is perhaps best exemplified in the morphology of D'Arcy Wentworth Thompson, see *On Growth and Form*. (Canto, abridged edition 1992) Association Books, 1985 edition.
15. David Thistlewood (1993) "Herbert read: A Critical Appreciation at the Centenary of his Birth", in *The Journal of Art & Design Education*, vol. 12, no. 2, pp. 143 - 160.
16. Dick Field (1970) *Change in Art Education*. Routledge & Kegan Paul) p. 55.

17. See Hogan (n.1) p. 166, for a philosophical critique of the primacy given to "subjectivity, or autonomous self-hood".
18. Roger Clark (1996) *Art Education: Issues in Postmodernist Pedagogy*. (NAEA) esp. pp. 7 - 30.
19. Hogan (n.1) pp. 166 - 169.
20. Arthur D. Efland (1988) "The School Art Style: A Functional Analysis", in G. W. Hardiman & T. Zernich (Eds.) *Discerning Art: Concepts and Issues*. (Stipes) pp. 518 - 527.
21. Michael Fullan (1995) "Strategies for Implementing Large Scale Change", in J. Coolahan (Ed.) *Issues and Strategies for the Implementation of Educational Policy*. (St. Patrick's College, Maynooth) pp. 19 - 20.
22. This is a reworking of a statement made by Efland. It is noteworthy that he concludes his paper by speculating on whether it is fruitless trying to change school art when the more important task is to try and change schools, see (n.20) pp. 525 - 526.
23. Rod Taylor is well known for his work on critical studies approaches that aim to elicit insight and interests about art and design from students. To my mind, the stress he places on the importance of 'hidden interests' (and 'home art') are especially valid in relation to drawing; see his book (1986) *Educating for Art: Critical Response and Development*. (Longman) esp. pp. 10 -17 & 70 - 82.

## Contributors

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**Barrie Cooke** is a painter. His work is shown nationally and internationally. He was born in Cheshire, England, educated at Harvard, and has lived in Ireland since the mid-1950s. He currently lives and works in Co. Sligo. Recently he was the subject of an essay by Seamus Heaney, in *Modern Painters*, Autumn, 2000.

**Margaret Corcoran** graduated in Fine Art Painting at the National College of Art and Design, Dublin, where she now teaches life drawing and anatomy. In 1998 she held a six-month residency on the Artist's Work Programme at the Irish Museum of Modern Art. She exhibits at the Kevin Kavanagh Gallery, Dublin - her next solo show is in March 2001.

**Michael Craig-Martin** was born in Dublin in 1941. He grew up and was educated in the United States, where he studied art at Yale University. He has lived and worked in Britain since 1966. He has exhibited his work widely in numerous solo and group shows in Britain and internationally. A major retrospective of his work was held in London, at the Whitechapel Art Gallery in 1989. He has been involved in teaching in art schools in Britain since the 1960s, and in 1993 was appointed as Millard Professor of Fine Art at Goldsmiths College, London. Using both real objects and drawn images, his work has asked fundamental questions about the nature of art, about representation, authorship, and the role of the viewer. In 1995 he curated an exhibition of drawing called *Drawing the Line*, which entailed an ambitious survey of line drawings from pre-history to the present day. He lives and works in London.

**Rupert Cracknell** is an art maker - devoted to the process, who from the mid-sixties, earned his pennies as an art therapist. He now lectures on the Art Therapy course at the Crawford College of Art and Design. He lives on the Beara Peninsula, Co. Cork.

**Michael Cullen** is a painter. He was born in Co. Wicklow in 1946. He has exhibited widely, in this country and around the world, since the mid-sixties.

**Jill Dennis** is a painter. She studied at Birmingham Polytechnic and at the Royal Academy Schools, London. She has been living and working in Ireland since 1982. She has exhibited widely in Ireland and Europe, with solo exhibitions since 1984.

Agent: the Taylor Galleries, Dublin.

**Jim Dennison** initially went to art school to study painting. He eventually specialized and graduated in painting and ceramics. Later he undertook postgraduate study in Design Education. He came to Limerick in 1974 and instigated the ceramics course there. He is currently the Head of Department of Design, Limerick School of Art and Design, Limerick Institute of Technology.

**Aidan Dunne** is a painter and writer on art; he is the Art Critic of the Irish Times.

**Professor Hanno Ehses** is head of Communication Design at the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design in Halifax, Canada. His published articles include: "Representing Macbeth"; "Design and Rhetoric: An analysis of Theatre Posters"; "Rhetorical Handbook"; and "Visual Rhetoric: Old Ideas, Strange Figures and New Perspectives".

**Peter Fitzgerald** is Editor of CIRCA Art Magazine. He holds a degree in Fine Art Painting from the National College of Art and Design, Dublin, and a Doctorate in Psychology from Oxford University. He began a series of blindfold-painting performances while on the Artist's Work Programme at the Irish Museum of Modern Art in 1997. He has exhibited in EV+A and in group shows at the Kerlin and Rubicon Galleries, Dublin.

**Tom Fitzgerald:** recently retired as Head of Sculpture in Limerick School of Art and Design. He now devotes his time to public and private commissions and is presently preparing a new body of personal work, which he hopes to show in 2001.

**Martin Gale** lives and works in Co. Kildare. He was born in Worcester, England in 1949. Educated in Ireland, he graduated in painting from the National College of Art and Design, Dublin. He has had numerous one-person exhibitions, including an Arts Council Touring Exhibition, and has exhibited widely in Ireland, England, Europe and the USA. His work can be found in many public, corporate and private collections. He is a member of Aosdana and the RHA. He is represented by the Taylor Galleries, Dublin.

**Marianne Hartigan** is an art historian and journalist. She is the Art Critic for the Sunday Tribune.

**Patrick Hickey** was born in India in 1927 and studied architecture and later history of art and Italian at University College Dublin. He began painting in 1954, and in 1957, having received an Italian State Scholarship, he studied etching and lithography in Urbino. He was one of the founders of the Graphic Studio Dublin in 1962 and he presided over production there until the studio moved to Green Street East in the eighties. He was one of the chief designers of the Irish currency notes in 1974 and he continued to create prints until his death in 1998.

**Katie Holten** is an artist. She was born in Dublin in 1975. She studied at the National College of Art and Design, Dublin and at the Hochschule der Kunst, Berlin. Her work has been exhibited in Ireland and in USA, Holland and France.

**Kristina Huxley** is an artist. She studied at the Ruskin School of Drawing and Fine Art, Oxford University; and at the National College of Art and Design, Dublin. She works as a Visiting Lecturer at NCAD and a number of other art colleges. Her most recent exhibition was *One Mile's Time* at the Temple Bar Gallery, Dublin; and in February 2001 she is exhibiting at the Butler Gallery, Kilkenny; in August she takes up a residency on the Artists Work Programme at the Irish Museum of Modern Art, Dublin.

**Michael Kane** is a painter and printmaker. He was born in Dublin, where he lives and works. He exhibits in the Rubicon Gallery, Dublin and the Art Space Gallery, London. He has published two small books of poems, and also published prose and poems in various periodicals.

**John Keating** is an artist. He studied at the Crawford College of Art and Design, Cork; Trinity College, Dublin; and the Art Students League, New York. He has exhibited extensively nationally and internationally. He has won numerous awards for his painting in Ireland, France, Italy and the USA.

**Dan Kenny** is an artist working in Photography, Print and Mixed Media. He was born in Birmingham, England. He has a degree in Photographic Studies. He has exhibited his work in Ireland and abroad in group, solo and open exhibitions.

**Bernadette Kiely** is an artist. Her work is exhibited nationally and internationally. As well as recent exhibitions in the Taylor Galleries, Dublin and the Fenton Gallery, Cork, she has also shown work in Denmark and in England. She teaches drawing at the Grennan Mill Craft School, Co. Kilkenny, where she lives and works.

**David Lilburn** is an artist. He was born in Limerick. He works mainly in drawing, through drypoint and etching and monoprint. His drawings are often made on a large scale, both physically and thematically. Politics and history, place and identity are some of the concerns that weave through his images. Since the early 1990s he has been exploring the possibilities of mapmaking as a narrative form.

**Alice Maher** is from Tipperary. She has been making art since 1987. Recent solo shows include: *Gorget* at the Nolan/Eckman Gallery, New York in 2000; *Coma Berenices* at the Hugh Lane Gallery of Modern Art, Dublin in 1999; and *Acre* at the Green on Red Gallery, Dublin in 1997.

**Nick Miller** is a painter. He was born in London in 1962 and graduated in Developmental Studies from the University of East Anglia, Norwich, in 1984. He moved to Dublin in the same year and now lives on the border of Co. Sligo and Co. Roscommon. He has had solo shows of his work in Ireland, England, USA, and Holland. He is currently represented by the Rubicon Gallery, Dublin.

**Brett McEntagart** is a printmaker and was Head of Fine Art Printmaking Department at the National College of Art and Design up to his retirement in August 2000.

**Tom McGuirk** is lecturer in painting in the Faculty of Education at the National College of Art and Design. His paintings, drawings and prints have been exhibited widely, and are represented in private collections in Ireland, Britain and Scandinavia. He has been awarded an Italian Government Scholarship and the Count Niccolo diCaracollo RHA, Gold Medal for Painting. He is currently engaged in postgraduate research into drawing at third level.

**Pat McKenna** has been a lecturer in History of Art and Design/Critical and Contextual Studies in the Limerick School of Art and Design at the Limerick Institute of Technology since 1987. Before that she was a part-time lecturer in the History of Art Department at University College Dublin. Her Master's

Degree in History of European Painting, done under the late Dr. Francoise Henry, led her to specialize in Italian Late Renaissance and Baroque art. Later on, attending the stimulating lectures of her colleague, Professor Alistair Rowan, she developed a lasting interest in History of Art History. It was this that motivated her to investigate the extent to which L. B. Alberti's text may have influenced life-drawing practice in Italy and France from the Renaissance onwards.

**Kieran Meagher** is Course Leader of Art and Design Teacher Education at Limerick School of Art and Design. His main research interests are in the areas of curriculum theory and curriculum development.

**Peter Morgan** is an artist. He is currently working for a percent for art project with the Cork Fire Brigade, an artist's residency in Cloughjordan, Co. Tipperary, and a touring exhibition to Australia, 2001. He has worked with photography and video and has produced several books, most recently: *Lives Less Ordinary*.

**Cóilín Murray** is a painter and printmaker. He was born in Dublin in 1945. He has exhibited his work nationally and internationally since 1964, and is represented in most public and private collections. He moved to West Cork in 1983, where he now lives and works.

**Peter Murray** is the Curator of the Crawford Municipal Art Gallery, Cork.

**Paul O'Brien** teaches aesthetics and theory of art and culture at undergraduate level at the National College of Art and Design, and conducts seminars in the field of cyber-culture to post-graduates. His current research interests are in the area of the intersection between art, culture, philosophy and technology, and he is particularly interested in the developing field of interactive art and virtual reality. He has published numerous articles on art and culture.

**Ciaran O'Driscoll** was born in Callan, Co. Kilkenny, and lives in Limerick, where he lectures in the School of Art and Design at Limerick Institute of Technology. He has published four collections of poetry, the most recent of which is *The Old Woman of Magione* (1997). In January 2000 he was awarded the Patrick and Katherine Kavanagh Fellowship in Poetry. *His New and Selected Poems, Moving On, Still There*, is to be published by the Dedalus Press in 2001.

**Eamon O'Kane** was born in Belfast in 1974, and grew up in Co. Donegal. He graduated from the National College of Art and Design with a 1st class joint BA hons. in painting and art history in 1996 and received his MFA with distinction from the University of Ulster in 1998. 1998/99 he was the Research Fellow in Painting at Cheltenham College of Art, England and received the Tony O'Malley Travel Award for painters and a Fulbright Award in New York. To date he has had 10 notable one-person exhibitions in Ireland, England, Denmark, Sweden and the USA. He has taken part in over 70 group exhibitions worldwide.

He is currently lecturing at the Limerick School of Art and Design.

**Paul M O'Reilly** is a painter, who lives in Moycarkey and Limerick. He has written on and taught art and art history since 1969, served as the first, now former, Director/Curator of the Limerick City Gallery of Art (1985 – 2000) and has been the Administrator of the Exhibition of Visual+ Art, EV+A, since 1979.

**Patrick Pye, R.H.A.**, was born in Dublin in 1929. He is a painter, stained glass artist and etcher. He has fulfilled numerous commissions throughout Ireland for churches and colleges. He is a writer on art and a member of Aosdana.

**Michael Quane** is a sculptor, who lives and works in Co. Cork. He has exhibited in Dublin, London, Glasgow, Paris, New York, Ghent, Amsterdam, and Basle. He has publicly commissioned works sited in Ireland and Switzerland. He was elected a member of Aosdana in 1998.

**Jim Savage** studied at Manchester School of Art and the Slade. He works mostly with drawing and collage and teaches at the Limerick School of Art and Design.

**Jim Sheehy** is an artist, known primarily for his printmaking. He was born in Macroom, Co. Cork in 1945. He lived in the USA from 1966 - 1978, where he studied at Cornell University; the State University of New York, at Buffalo; the Pratt Institute and the Art Students League of New York. He worked as a lithographic printer at Hollander's Workshop Inc. in New York from 1970 - 1974. From 1974 - 1978 he worked as an Intaglio printer at Prawat Laucharoen's Workshop NYC and also owned and ran his own independent printmaking workshop. Since 1978 he has taught printmaking at the Limerick School of Art and Design. He has had eleven solo exhibitions and has shown his work widely in Ireland and abroad. He lives and works in Cork City, where he is a director of the Cork Printmaker's Workshop.

**Noel Sheridan** is an artist, born in 1936. He has exhibited in Ireland, USA, and Australia, directed the Experimental Art Foundation in Adelaide, South Australia and has been the Director of the National College of Art and Design since 1980. He is a member of Aosdana.

**Maria Simonds-Gooding** is an artist. She was born in India. She studied at the National college of Art and Design, Dublin; Le Centre de Peinture, Bruxells; and Bath Academy of Art. She exhibits regularly and has had numerous solo exhibitions in Ireland and abroad. She is a member of Aosdana and lives and works in Co. Kerry.

**Sean Taylor** is an artist. He was born in Cork. He studied at the Crawford College of Art and Design, the University of Ulster and at the Kunstenacademie Rotterdam. Since 1983 he has exhibited in numerous solo and group exhibitions. He is currently Course Director of Sculpture at Limerick School of Art and Design.

**Professor John Turpin** is an art historian. He was born in Dublin. He studied art history at University College Dublin and at the Courtauld Institute of London University. He taught in the schools of art in Cambridge and Cheltenham before being appointed Professor of History of Art and Head of the Faculty of History of Art and Design and Complimentary Studies at the National College of Art and Design in 1975. He served as Director of the College 1989-94. He has published extensively on the history of Irish painting and sculpture, and the history of Irish art and design education, including a history of NCAD. He is a member of numerous professional bodies in Ireland, England and the United States.

**Charles Tyrrell** is a painter. He was born in Trim, Co. Meath in 1950. He studied painting at the National College of Art and Design and graduated in 1974. He lives and works in Allihies on the Beara Peninsula in Co. Cork. Since his first exhibition in 1974 at the Project Arts Centre, he has had numerous solo exhibitions in Dublin, Cork and London. He has represented Ireland on a number of occasions in international exhibitions. He is a member of Aosdána.

**Dorothy Walker** is a writer and art critic based in Dublin. She is a former Vice-President of the International Association of Art Critics. Her books include: *Louis le Brocquy* (1981), *Michael Scott Architect in (casual) Conversation with Dorothy Walker* (1995), and *Modern Art in Ireland* (1997). She is working on a forthcoming book: *The Brain of Europe: Joseph Beuys and Ireland*.

**Samuel Walsh** is an artist. He studied at Limerick School of Art, Mary Immaculate College of Education, Limerick and at the National College of Art and Design, Dublin. He lives and works in Co. Clare. He has exhibited nationally and has represented Ireland internationally on many occasions. His work is in numerous collections, both in Ireland and abroad. In 1997 he was elected a member of Aosdána. He is the founder of the National Collection of Contemporary Drawing that hangs in the Limerick City Gallery of Art.

**Joe Wilson** is an artist living and working in Co. Wicklow, and also a lecturer in Core Studies at the National College of Art and Design, Dublin. His work is inspired by the dynamics of the landscape, which, together with his teaching practice, is informed by the processes of noticing, describing, explaining and inventing.

**John Wood** was Deputy Head of the Fine Art Department at Goldsmiths College, University of London, before writing and co-ordinating several innovative design courses, including the MA Design Futures Programme. As an artist in the late 60s and early 70s he developed electronic systems to facilitate interactive user experiences. In the mid 70s he invented and marketed energy conservation systems and published in polemical journals. He has shown his art in 21 countries, including the Australian Biennale (1988). As a performer he recorded four albums and toured extensively with the rock band *Deaf School*. He also co-founded the experimental music ensemble *The Kreutzer Quintet*. He is

the author of many papers and articles on ethics and design in the age of over consumption. Other published texts on design related issues include editorship of *The Virtual Embodied* (Routledge, NY and London, 1998), and papers on the ethics and phenomenology of 'flow', given at international conferences of science, sociology and cybernetics.