DRAWING

THE EYE THAT THINKS

The activity of drawing usually precedes that of writing in the development of small children, although much depends on the label the parents use to describe it. Children have no language to describe this 'motor scribble', mark-making activity, and are likely to agree with whatever the parents suggest when they ask "would you like to do some drawing?" or, "are you writing?". If drawing is encouraged, repeated, and thereby re-affirmed, it is likely that children will become accustomed to the activity and its label, and want to draw more.

The pleasure for them is in the action, and the resultant mark, and at this stage in their development [aged two to three], it does not really matter what it is called. They will associate the activity with the materials, the marks, the label, and with the encouragement or discouragement they receive for their efforts. They have no concern for what it is that might be called drawing, and the outcome is most often scribbles and scrawls.

To children, a surface of black or coloured marks made by them on a piece of paper, or any surface, in pencil, crayon, or felt-pen is a mirror to the 'motor mark-making' movement of their hand and arm, and a visible and external affirmation of their existence: it is a gestural self-portrait.

At this point in their development, this purposeful action and the resultant kinesthetic marks are to a large extent the content of the drawing, and it is only later, [aged three–five] after being introduced by parents to the idea that a drawing should be of something, that they start to draw things—a horse, a whale, mummy, daddy, etc..

> FIRST I THINK, AND THEN I DRAW MY THINK. Anon (child)

Mark-making soon becomes picture-making and begins to carry a narrative. They are taught to write their name on the drawing, and if they are lucky, a parent, or teacher, will stick it on a suitable wall for everyone to see and admire. With such positive encouragement, it is likely that they will want to repeat the activity and continue to make other drawings.

As children get older, [aged five-seven] and the relationship between the visual, tactile, and spatial elements of their world become more integrated, their perceptions gradually become conceptualised, and more fixed as labelled ideas. Drawing becomes more coherent image-making, and they begin to make symbols and somewhat pre-conceived but recognisable images that stand for and represent their ideas.

> TO PERCEIVE IS TO CONSTRUCT INTELLECTUALLY, AND IF THE CHILD DRAWS THINGS AS HE CONCEIVES THEM, IT IS CERTAINLY BECAUSE HE CANNOT PERCEIVE THEM WITHOUT CONCEIVING THEM. Jean Piaget

Drawings by children often become a concrete realisation of what the subject matter they are drawing feels like, as a 'whole' sensory experience. A drawing of a pond might show how it is possible to walk around the shape of the pond—how a fence and trees enclose it—how the surface of the pond has ripples on it, how there are fish under the surface, and that there is a blue sky and yellow sun above.

At this stage the drawing incorporates the child's knowledge and experience of the pond as a whole body experience perceived through all of their senses, and not just through their eyes, or from a single point of view. In some ways, this is children's drawing at its best, and perhaps it exemplifies something of what Picasso was searching for when he is reputed to have said that he had spent 80 years learning to draw like a child.

Unfortunately this way of seeing does not last for most children, and as adult artists, we can spend a lifetime trying to re-discover qualities of naive expression, and resurrect moments of lost innocence. The wonderful qualities of an innocently expressed child's drawing are greatly admired by many artists.

> MY LINE IS CHILD-LIKE, BUT NOT CHILDISH. IT IS VERY DIFFICULT TO FAKE: TO GET THAT QUALITY, YOU NEED TO PROJECT YOURSELF INTO THE CHILD'S LINE. IT HAS TO BE FELT. Cy Twombly

Sometimes the images we make as children, are our own, and particular to us—'my house', 'my dog', 'my mum', etc., and we draw them in our own unique way, and sometimes we are unconsciously influenced by our educational environment and peer group.

This environment helps to influence and shape our shared understanding of the world in which we live, by what it stimulates, discourages and enables. We conceptualise the collective consciousness of our peer group and teacher, into an acceptable 'schema', and make drawings in which—the sky is always blue, the sun is yellow, tree trunks are brown, and most things sit on the base line.

> ALL THIS SHOWS THAT A CHILD'S EYE AT A SURPRISINGLY EARLY PERIOD LOSES ITS PRIMAL INNOCENCE, AND GROWS SOPHISTICATED IN THE SENSE THAT INSTEAD OF SEEING WHAT IS REALLY PRESENTED, IT SEES, OR PRETENDS TO SEE WHAT KNOWLEDGE AND LOGIC TELL IT IS THERE. IN OTHER WORDS, HIS SENSE-PERCEPTIONS HAVE FOR ARTISTIC PURPOSES BECOME CORRUPTED BY TOO LARGE AN ADMIXTURE OF INTELLIGENCE. James Sully

Nursery and Primary school teachers tend to encourage children to draw or paint mainly 'from their head' as a means of self-expression, and for most children this is entirely appropriate, and they produce original and exciting drawings. But as the educational environment continues to place emphasis on the development of memory, intellect, literacy, and numeracy, a child's ability to make visual equivalents of their perceived mental images often remains neglected, and their visual instincts remain undeveloped.

It is very rare that children will be asked to draw the world outside of themselves and for example, examine the perceived colour of a tree trunk as they experience it through their eyes. They begin to inhabit a world whose consciousness is predominantly verbal.

By the time the child can draw more than scribble—by the age of three or four years, an already well formed body of

conceptual knowledge formulated in language dominates his/her memory and controls his/her graphic work.

Drawings are graphic accounts of essentially verbal processes. As a verbal education gains control, the child abandons his/her graphic efforts, and relies almost entirely on words.

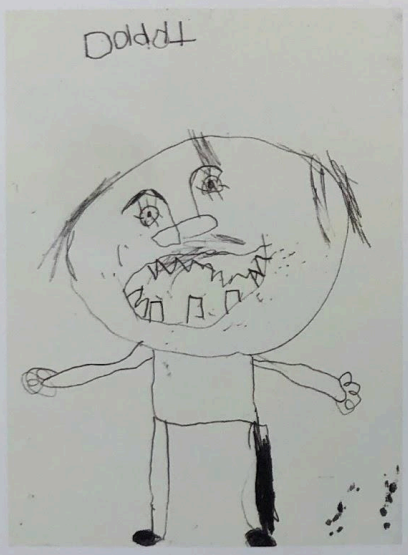
LANGUAGE HAS FIRST SPOILT HIS/HER DRAWING, AND THEN SWALLOWED IT UP COMPLETELY. Karl Buhler

As they get older [between the ages of ten and 15] they continue to draw from their imagination but become more consciously aware of what the world around them looks like. Their focus is now on how successful the drawing is as an end product as they strive to produce more 'adult-like' mature drawings. They recognise that in order to be able to draw this more grown-up three dimensional world, they will have to work hard and change the immature child-like way that they have previously drawn.

Making these adjustments can be difficult, and what seems to happen to some students is that if the drawings they make do not match their 'mental picture' of what the world they see looks like, they become very self-conscious and embarrassed by what they perceive their visible lack of ability—their confidence wanes and they decide that drawing is not for them. Because drawing is generally seen as a talent, and not a learned skill, they readily accept that they have no talent for it. Once they recognise that the world they are attempting to draw looks a bit like a photograph, their rational brain tends to only value a drawing whose likeness to what they see is photographic, and if they continue to draw, they are likely to start copying information from flat, two dimensional photographs because it is easier than drawing a 'real' object that exists in three dimensional space. Students of this age [14 to 17] often spend endless periods of time in their bedroom listening to music, and rigorously copying photographs in order to satisfy their creative needs and gain credence with their peer group.

Examining the three dimensional world of space and objects in a purposeful way, and learning how to see and describe it through the process of drawing is largely undervalued in school, and it is assumed that as the students' intellect develops, so will their ability to see and draw.

Unfortunately most adults' drawing skills do not develop beyond those of the young adolescents who gave up drawing. The world is full of educated people who, it is assumed, see the world as sophisticated adults, but draw like adolescents.



PREVIOUS PAGES Mick Maslen and Jack Southern introduce the workshops on the first day of Workshop 1, April 2010.

LEFT Daniel Magellan Maslen (aged five), *Dad*.

RIGHT Cy Twombly, *Leda and the Swan*, 1962, oil, pencil, and crayon on canvas, 190.5 x 200 cm. Acquired through the Lillie P Bliss Bequest (by exchange). Courtesy the Museum of Modern Art, New York. © 2011. Digital image, The Museum of Modern Art, New York/Scala, Florence.

THE HEMISPHERES OF THE BRAIN

In popular psychology, broad generalisations are often made about the lateralisation of certain functions occurring in either the left or the right hemispheres of the brain. These lateralisation's need to be carefully considered because the evidence is not entirely conclusive. However, it is generally accepted that the two hemispheres work together and share information through the *Corpus Callosum*, but that at the same time, they do retain aspects of difference. The main concerns of the left hemisphere are the verbal, numerical and rational processing of information, and it tends to have a preference for linear and logical thinking.

However, the right hemisphere is predominantly non-verbal, non-linear, and non-rational, and is primarily concerned with the state of 'being'. It intuitively links shapes and patterns of thought into relational states of 'wholeness' by sensing, and feeling its way towards a notional idea.

> THE MAIN THEME TO EMERGE... IS THAT THERE APPEAR TO BE TWO MODES OF THINKING, VERBAL AND NON-VERBAL, REPRESENTED RATHER SEPARATELY IN LEFT AND RIGHT HEMISPHERES, RESPECTIVELY, AND THAT OUR EDUCATION SYSTEM, AS WELL AS SCIENCE IN GENERAL, TENDS TO NEGLECT THE NON-VERBAL FORM OF INTELLECT. WHAT IT COMES DOWN TO IS THAT MODERN SOCIETY DISCRIMINATES AGAINST THE RIGHT HEMISPHERE. Roger W Sperry

Not many of our schools devote much time to the development of creative thought, or intuitive 'side-ways thinking', and non-verbal activities such as Art, Music, and Sport are often regarded as secondary subjects.

Students are usually educated in an environment that is left-brain dominant, structured to encourage and develop a rational and linear, a, b, c, sequenced sense of order, logic and reason. At the centre are the so-called "3 Rs"—reading, riting and rithmatic. A National Curriculum of subjects, measured grades, and competitive testing is the predominant norm of the school environment, and students are encouraged to collude with the system, by learning to answer teachers' questions with the 'right' teachers' answers. Schools tend to support the development of thought processes that involve constructing rational arguments to find the 'right' answer, and prefer the employment of logically reasoned thinking methods to solve problems. This is fine, but it tends to favour the student whose brain is left side dominant.

In his book *Hare, Brain, Tortoise, Mind*, Guy Claxton discusses a layer of thinking that is—"often less purposeful and clear-cut, more playful, leisurely and dreamy". "...able to tolerate information that is faint, fleeting, ephemeral, marginal or ambiguous". A place where we ruminate and allow the mind to wander, a place that he calls "the tortoise mind". A place where the unconscious mind "cultivates slower, mistier ways of knowing"—an 'open' place of mind that is often associated with creativity. Creative people—artists, musicians, writers, painters, chefs, footballers, comedians, scientists, and so on—tend to be able to think in this way. They often create problems to solve, and are interested in the question as much, if not more, than the answer.

> THE WRONG ANSWER IS THE RIGHT ANSWER IN SEARCH OF A DIFFERENT QUESTION. COLLECT WRONG ANSWERS AS PART OF THE PROCESS. ASK DIFFERENT QUESTIONS. Bruce Mau

Learning how to ask relevant and interesting questions is an essential feature of a curious and enquiring mind, and should be at the centre of everyone's educational experience. We see our world through the kind of questions we are able to ask about it, and by asking "more interesting questions", we will discover more interesting ways of seeing it. These 'more interesting questions' are more likely to originate in the "tortoise mind" or right hemisphere of the brain, in which our intuition links unconscious patterns of thought, and presents us with creative options—"out of the blue, eureka moments of insight".

What is the purpose of Education? What is worth knowing? How do we create an environment that caters for the 'whole' person and encourages the development of both sides of the brain, or other ways of thinking?

In the context of school the students who inhabit something of a "tortoise mind" tend not to be restricted by teacher's questions, fixed ideas, and learned behaviour. They learn by osmosis—are healthily sceptical, and unconsciously absorbed, ask questions and contribute an interesting point of view.

They are likely to be open-minded and flexible in their thinking—courageous in their risky and imaginative uncertainty, and because they are able to hold conflicting opinions—they are able to suspend judgement whilst making decisions.

In the educational environment these students can be perceived as being preoccupied, 'arty' and 'a bit of a dreamer'. The art room can become a haven of respite for them. To them, Art is a free-thinking shapeless subject where anything can happen. It has no fixed boundaries, and there are no 'right' answers—only interesting questions. It supports their way of 'being' because it can be a place in which they are encouraged to value their individuality and feel at one with themselves.

For the student who got stuck with attempting to rationalise visual reality, and gave up drawing, learning how to draw requires them to re-define their idea of what a drawing is, or might be, and adjust the way they think and see in relation to it. This necessitates a shift of consciousness, which for some students requires a significant amount of unlearning, mainly of habits and preconceptions already formed. In order to do this, it is important to set up the appropriate conditions in which to draw. The mind should try to free itself from the interfering, correcting influence of the left hemisphere, and the information overload and pressures of daily life that can block our state of being. It should occupy a neutral space in which seeing is the flexible interaction between unlabelled, projected and received information, and it should be in an unconditional state of focused empathy with its subject.

OPPOSITE Leonardo Da Vinci, *A Study of a Woman's Hands*, 1490, metalpoint, heightening and charcoal on paper, 21.5 x 15 cm. Courtesy The Royal Collection © 2011 Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II/ The Bridgeman Art Library.

IT IS OFTEN SAID THAT LEONARDO DREW SO WELL BECAUSE HE KNEW ABOUT THINGS; IT IS TRUER TO SAY THAT HE KNEW ABOUT THINGS BECAUSE HE DREW SO WELL. Kenneth Clarke

ON LEARNING TO DRAW

Every drawing has something to offer, and no drawing, or way of drawing will provide a permanent solution to what drawing is or should be.

Because of the subjective nature of drawing, and the massive potential for individuality, there are always alternative ways to make either different or better drawings. It is possible that the less skilful you are, the more skilful you wish to be, or the more skilful you become, the more, unsophisticated, and naive you wish to be.

Learning how to draw necessitates continual reappraisal of the criteria used to measure a drawing's success or failure, and it never exists in an attainable fixed state. We may only ever be just about good enough, and the quest is always the search to improve and make the next drawing better than the last. It is a continuing process that always starts in a different place, and follows neither a linear nor sequential route.

To some extent, we draw what we are, and a drawing is a visible manifestation of the personality, process of looking, decision-making, and mark-making skills of the person/student who made it. All students' start from positions unique to themselves, and discover empirically by hard work, and critical awareness, their own pathway to better drawing. It does not follow however, that we continue to improve and develop *ad infinitum*, and that each successive drawing is an improvement on the previous one. If this were the case, we would all be master draughtsmen after a few years. Progress is often difficult to measure, and as something is gained, something else may be lost.

Drawing, like juggling requires us to keep an almost infinite number of possibilities in mind and at hand, all at the same time. There are endless ups and downs, peaks, troughs, plateaus and regressions, throughout all of which we must maintain a consistent level of faith in our ability to improve. It should be a personal inquiry, based on practice before theory, whereby we are always seeking our own unique and individual solution to the problem at hand.

Our whole personality is involved in the making of analytic and aesthetic decisions, and our personal preferences, form the basis for work that should always be an expression of our individuality.

Our study should emphasise both an intuitive and analytical approach to using materials and formative principles. It should be an inquiring investigation into the world of visual appearances—and the discipline necessary to make good work should not exclude the potential for free and 'spontaneous un-thought knowing' to occur.

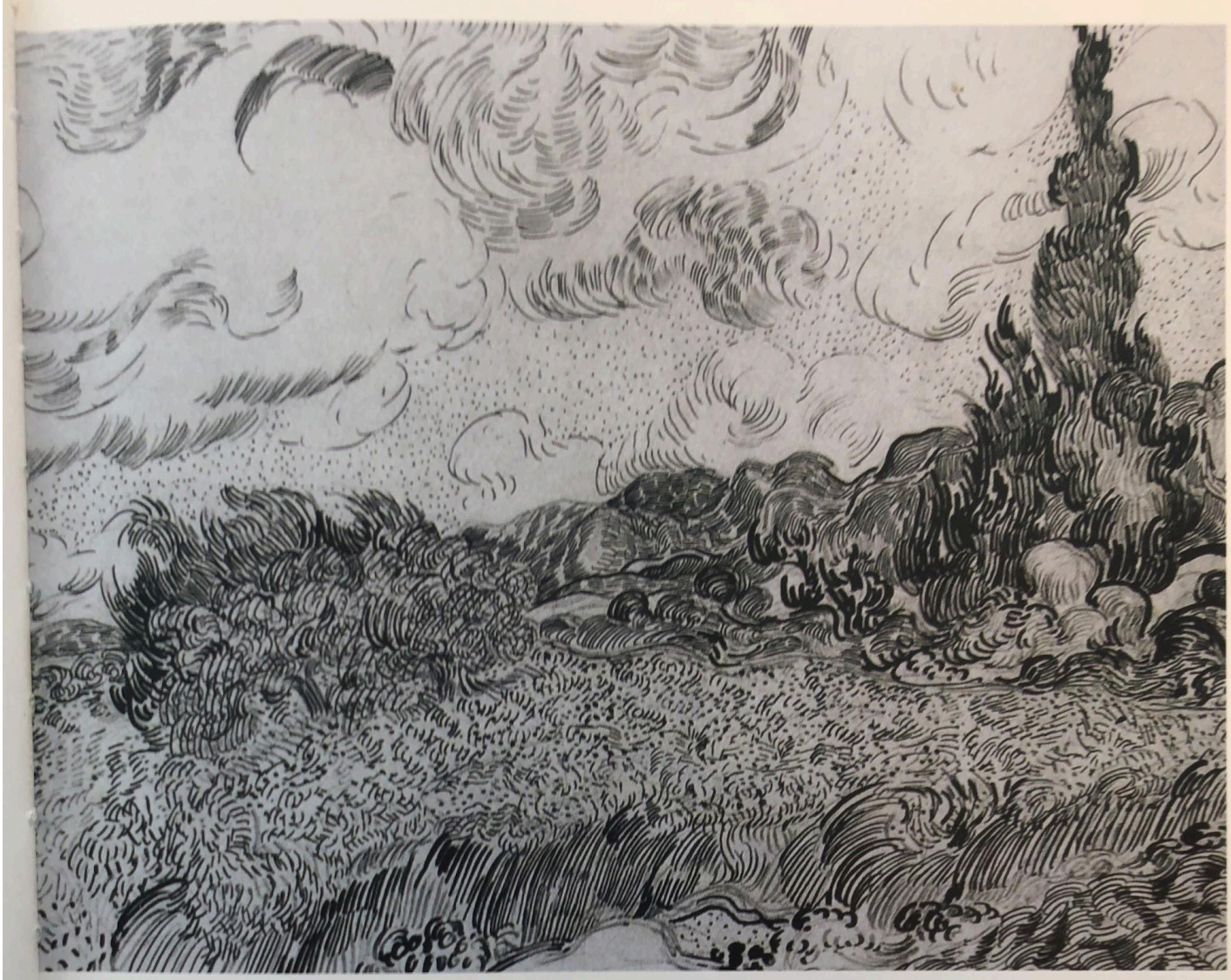
Unconscious impulses, following one's feelings, and the use of intuitive judgment, are absolutely essential elements in the organic development of drawing.

It is the manifestation of a mental dialogue, an expression of visual thought, the product of an assimilating process, by which information is taken in through the eyes, and other senses, examined, and restructured in the language and materials of the activity of drawing. It offers us a chance to really look at the forms, structures, spaces, and surfaces of the world in which we live, and thereby gain a greater understanding of them. It provides us with the means by which to describe, assemble and form this understanding in other materials, and express our own particular and personal point of view.

This examination of appearances, through the drawing process, forms the backbone to all the traditionally valued activities of the artist, and is the essential base upon which all the Visual Arts are formed. It is a complex dialogue of two-way selective information processing, that results in a direct and immediate means of visual communication.

WHEN YOU CAN DRAW, YOU ARE ALWAYS AN ARTIST. This quote has been attributed to Ingres, and to a large extent it is as true today as it was in his lifetime. All you need is something to draw with, and something to draw on. On a basic level, a pencil or stick of chalk or charcoal and a piece of paper, wall or any surface will be enough. You can be an artist anywhere in the world and need only the minimum amount of equipment and materials necessary to draw. To see the world through drawing is to see the world through the eyes of an artist.

ONE MUST ALWAYS DRAW. DRAW WITH THE EYES WHEN ONE CANNOT USE A PENCIL. Balthus



OPPOSITE *Half Eaten apple*, Mick Maslen, pencil on paper, 20 x 20 cm.

ABOVE Vincent van Gogh, *Wheat Field with Cypresses at the Haude Galline near Eygalieres*, 1889, 47 x 62 cm. Courtesy Van Gogh Museum, Netherlands.

DRAWINGS

TELLING THE TRUTH WITH LIES

> ONE OF THE THINGS I'M DOING IN YORKSHIRE IS FINDING OUT HOW DIFFICULT IT IS TO LEARN NOT TO SEE LIKE THE CAMERA, WHICH HAS SUCH AN EFFECT ON US. THE CAMERA SEES EVERYTHING AT ONCE—WE DON'T. THERE IS A HIERARCHY. WHY DO I PICK THAT THING, AS OPPOSED TO THAT THING, OR THAT THING? David Hockney

Photographs are the most accessible representation of our visible world, and are generally accepted by people as being fairly accurate pictures of our shared reality. When learning how to draw, adolescents sometimes struggle with their developing understanding of what they see as reality, and their limited ways of describing it. If this is the case, it is likely that they do not have a usable definition of what the activity of drawing might be, and their limited level of understanding settles on deciding that the success of a drawing is measured by its likeness to a photographic illusion.

To make a drawing that looks like a photograph requires you to make measured judgements that have no individual human qualities or personality, and in which any trace of the human condition or gesture of the hand is denied.

> EXACTITUDE IS NOT TRUTH. Henri Matisse

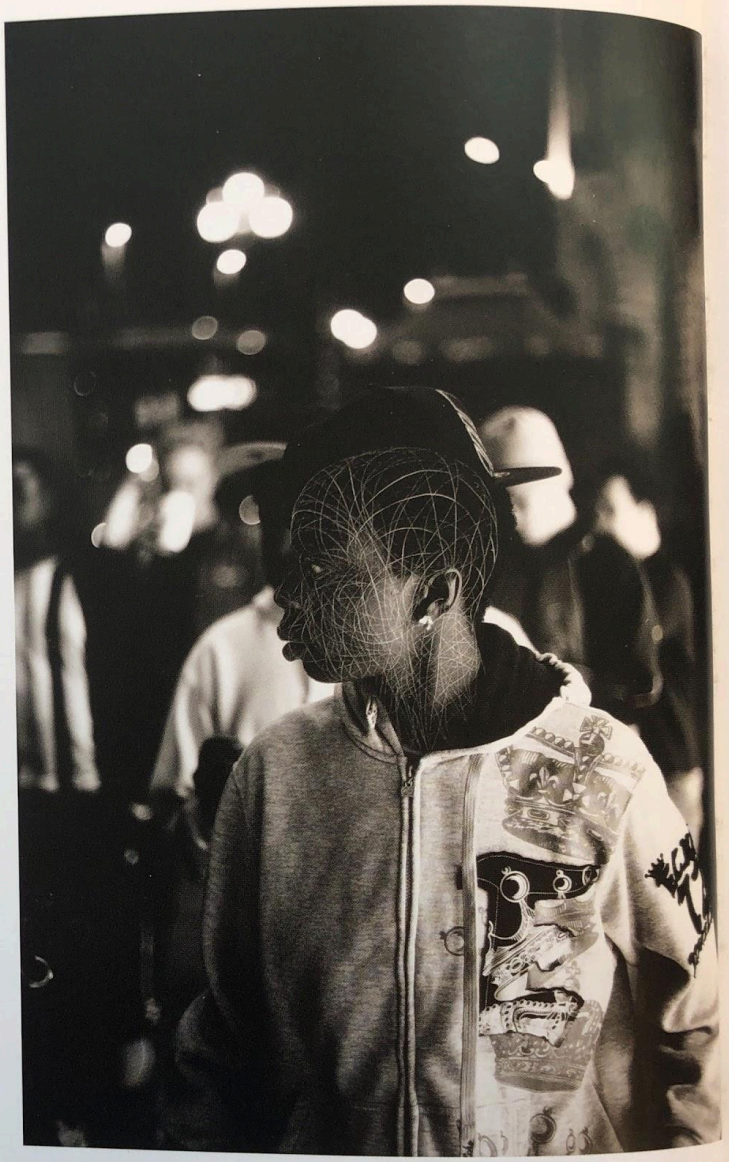
A camera has no feelings or spontaneous thoughts. Imagine a computer reciting Shakespeare, and then think of the camera/photograph as its metaphorical equivalent. If 20 people were all to draw the same thing, and all of the drawings looked like the same photograph, it would be difficult to distinguish the unique and individual character of any of the people drawing.

> A PHOTOGRAPH IS STATIC BECAUSE IT HAS STOPPED TIME—A DRAWING IS STATIC, BUT IT ENCOMPASSES TIME. John Berger

Drawings that use photographs as their source material can be mutually supportive and can extend the potential of both. They might enhance something that is particular about the image being used—perhaps the subject matter, or any visual qualities that are integral to, and suggested by the photographic process/medium itself. A drawing made 'from the photograph' might personalise the artist's relationship with the photograph in a way that re-invigorates any personal intimacy they might feel and have for something in the content of the photograph, and in essence, their drawing transcription might describe something in a way that the photograph does not.

A drawing is often a two-dimensional illusion of an aspect of our three-dimensional world. It is a marriage of decisions and marks that are brought together and accumulated in a considered and carefully constructed order, to represent, or re-present the 'reality' of the experience, being seen, discovered, understood, and known through the eyes.

A drawing can be seen as an act of theatre. To make a drawing from life requires the artist to engage in an interactive dialogue whereby they are immersed in a performance—as,



ABOVE Dryden Goodwin, *Cradle 15*, 2008, scratched black and white photograph, 160 x 110 cm. Courtesy the artist.

OPPOSITE Dryden Goodwin, *Amit*, from the Red Studies series, 2009, watercolour on paper, 57 x 38 cm. Courtesy the artist.

actor, audience and subject. In much the same way as the actor convinces us by intelligent trickery and deceit about the truth of the character he or she represents, the good draughtsman convinces us of the truth of his drawing by making a clever illusion. It is not an exaggeration to say that the draughtsman must learn to tell the truth with lies. Being able to see the truth, and learning to approximate it with a constructed surface of carefully chosen and expressed marks/lies, is the stuff of good drawing. Sometimes these lies need to be made more dramatic, and almost presented as caricature, in the way the actor's gestures are demonstrative, and made available to the whole auditorium. Other occasions will warrant a more subtle approach. Actors get into the part they play, and develop a feeling for it. Good draughtsmen often do the same. They feel the marks they make, and believe in them as an expressive equivalent of truth, and like the actor, they must say/draw it with feeling.

THE HAND THAT SEES, LEARNING TO SEE

Learning to see is an essential part of learning to draw, and it is an ongoing and continuous process of achievement that develops with every drawing we make.

Before you are able to draw, you must learn to see, and you learn to see by drawing. Drawing is the process of seeing made visible. It is the mediating experience between looking and responding by which we learn to see.

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. John Berger

Re-appraising the habits and conventions of the way we see is part and parcel of the continuing practice of drawing, and the development of a visual awareness through critical analysis is a necessary part of the process. Learning how to see the world as a potential drawing becomes clearer to us as we make more drawings.

The 'Medium' is still part of the 'Message' and in some ways we see the world around us through the particular and special qualities of whatever medium we use to describe it. How well we describe it is dependent on how well we are able to use our knowledge of the medium as a vocabulary of descriptive language.

WE ARE IMPRISONED SO TO SPEAK, IN A HOUSE OF LANGUAGE Edward Sapir and Benjamin Lee Whorf

Sapir and Whorf are of course referring to written and spoken language. A five year old child with a limited spoken vocabulary might describe a situation as "the cat sat on the mat". The same event might be described by an articulate 12 year old as "marmalade, the ginger cat, sprawled sleepily across the Indian rug".

Both say the same thing, but one uses 'better', and more descriptive language. A novelist or poet is likely to have a more extensive vocabulary from which to select. The writer James Joyce was reputed to have been able to speak 13 different languages. This allowed him to view his experiences through an extensive range of language, and selectively translate and re-structure them as literature in his native tongue, English. Robert A Johnson in his book, *The Fisher King, and The Handless Maiden*, states:

A poverty-stricken vocabulary for any subject is an immediate admission that the subject is depreciated in that society. Sanskrit has 96 words for love; ancient Persian has 80, Greek three, and English only one. This is indicative of the poverty of awareness or emphasis that we give to that tremendously important realm of feeling.

DRAWING LANGUAGE SKILLS

In much the same way as the articulate 12 year old increased her knowledge of words and enhanced her descriptive writing skills, we can improve our drawing language skills, by extending our vocabulary of marks, materials and approaches. Having the right language elements—selecting the right materials, point of view, etc., making the right marks in response to what is seen, and learning how to organise and structure a drawing to provide the best possible outcome is an ongoing and continuous process of achievement that develops with every drawing we make.

OPPOSITE *Sultar* (detail), Gemma Anderson, 2010. Courtesy the artist.

ABOVE Joseph Mallord William Turner, *A Great Tree*, 1796, watercolour over graphite on paper, 25.2 x 38.6 cm. Courtesy the Yale Center for British Art, Paul Mellon Collection, USA/The Bridgeman Art Library

LEFT Samuel Palmer, *Old Cedar Tree in Botanic Garden, Chelsea*, 1854, pencil on paper, 26.7 x 36.7 cm. Courtesy the Yale Center for British Art, Paul Mellon Collection, USA/The Bridgeman Art Library

THE EYE THAT FEELS

We must learn to think with our feelings and feel with our thoughts.

EVERY VISUAL EXPERIENCE IS AT ONE AND THE SAME TIME A RECEIVING OF FRAGMENTARY INFORMATION, A GIVING OF FORM TO THESE VISUAL SENSATIONS AND THE AROUSING OF A FELT RESPONSE. WE MUST BE CAREFUL TO REMEMBER THAT FOR THE ARTIST WHAT ULTIMATELY MATTERS IS THIS QUALITY OF FEELING WHICH RESULTS. Maurice de Sausmarez

TOWARDS A FEELING RESPONSE

We live in an age when computer generated reprographic processes provide us with a world of 'technological perfection' and 'high definition'. Three-dimensional imagery offers limited, but enhanced and often 'super-real', virtual reality. It is a time in which the large flat TV screen is providing our children with replacement substitutes for what might to a previous generation have been an exposure to, and an active involvement with, an experience of rich sensory pre-verbal childhood play. It is more important than ever that, in this world of 'perfect reproduction', our children do not literally get 'out of touch' with their senses, and that a drawing retains its value as a unique, hand-made object, which contains and expresses qualities that are as individual and special as its creator.

Human beings are lumps of perceptions in a state of flux, and 'being' is a constantly changing state of infinite variety. Drawings are made by human beings and like their makers, they can be complex, somewhat vulnerable, unresolved, and imperfect. Equally, they can be confident, measured, controlled, well understood and decisive.

A drawing is a lexis of marks that represent and describe what our eyes see, and to some extent what our minds/bodies know and feel. It is made by the co-ordination of the eye/brain/hand/medium, and arranged in an organised and cohesive way to form a visual description/illusion. It is a trail of contained energy, incorporating the history of its own making, and recorded through a passage of time. It is an approximate attempt at depicting a perceived truth, and will have been made in either a confident, cautious, well seen, well understood, generalised, decisive, indecisive, 'right,' or 'wrong' way.

I MERELY DRAW WHAT I SEE. I DRAW WHAT I FEEL IN MY BODY. Barbara Hepworth

It is a hand-made object that includes passages of difficulty and trauma—areas worked at, struggled with, disguised, hidden and overcome, whose accessibility lies to some extent in its 'body odour' and state of imperfection.

Drawings are almost always the product of adventure and struggle, and metaphorically speaking, every drawing has a potential dragon that needs slaying on the way to freeing the princess, or securing the pot of gold. It is the fisherman's struggle to lure and land the fish, and our own search for the Holy Grail.

DRAWINGS REVEAL THE PROCESS OF THEIR OWN MAKING—THEIR OWN LOOKING. John Berger

Every drawing should tell a story, the tale of the looking, the seeing, and the making. It should be the creation of a problem solved, whereby the viewer is offered a glimpse of the problem, and the journey and story of its solution.

Young drawing students are often rather self-conscious and tend to be anxious and over concerned about their 'style' and need to have a style. Style is naturalness consistent with the temperament and aim of the artist, and is evident in the personality of the drawing and the manner and quality of language used to describe what is seen. It may have qualities that can be described as being 'tight', 'loose', 'generalised', 'sensitive', 'tentative', 'bold', 'dull', 'lifeless', 'lively', or 'well seen'.

THE STYLE IS THE NATURE. Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres

What is displayed as an important quality of the drawing and available for all to see, is the nature, character, personality, and style of the person that made it. It is not an exaggeration to say that the drawing is as much about the artist as it is about what is being drawn, and it may on occasions tell you more about the artist's state of mind, level of understanding, etc., than it does about their subject matter.

ABOVE Richard Busk, *Untitled*, 2001, charcoal on paper, 59,4 x 84 cm. Courtesy the artist.

OPPOSITE Augustus Edwin John, *Dorelia Asleep*, 1903, black chalk, 35.1 x 29.7 cm. Courtesy the Yale Center for British Art, Paul Mellon Collection, USA/ The Bridgeman Art Library.


John 03

CONCEPTS & PERCEPTS

Although our eyes are very flexible, they can only focus on a small area of the large visual field at any one time. They are generally undirected, and arbitrarily scan their field of vision, only focusing on objects of potential interest and the spatial context in which they exist. This information is perceived on the retina as a visual image, and deciphered, categorised and understood by the brain. The looking eye is largely indiscriminate in its behaviour, and it is as if its initial function is to operate slightly ahead of the brain in order to inform the brain of what is worth taking time to look at. Most of the time, it scans the world like a video camera—digests what it sees as recognisable information, and it is only when interested in the unfamiliar, that the brain directs the eye to pause and explore.

WHAT WE KNOW, AND WHAT WE SEE

Part of the continuing process of seeing the world around us is the transforming of perceived information into conceptual information. We do, in part, see with our experience and knowledge, and are thus able to comprehend that a round plate when seen in perspective as an ellipse, is understood conceptually and with prior knowledge to be a circle in real space. Both our perceived world, and the Drawings we make are a hybrid of projected and received information. They are a marriage of 'what we know', and 'what we see'. They are 'perceptual concepts'—felt thoughts that are turned into—

> 'REPRESENTATIONAL CONCEPTS'—THAT IS THE CONCEPTION OF THE FORM BY WHICH THE PERCEIVED STRUCTURE OF THE OBJECT CAN BE REPRESENTED WITH THE PROPERTIES OF A GIVEN MEDIUM. Rudolf Arnheim

What distinguishes the artist's way of thinking is his ability to translate his concepts into a particular medium.

When we are making drawings, we must learn to use 'what we know' selectively, and only when it helps us to communicate a clearer understanding of what it is we are attempting to describe in the drawing. Students are constantly being told by their teachers to "look more carefully", and to "draw what you see and not what you know". The most common mistake we make is to draw our limited and ill-conceived knowledge as a pre-conceived fact, and in this case we are making it up from what is probably our poor and limited visual memory. As a general rule, it is always better to look very carefully, and draw what you see. Not looking intently enough usually results in using generalised and 'unseen' information that has been conceptualised and become fixed.

> EVERY MAN MISTAKES THE LIMITS OF HIS VISION FOR THE LIMITS OF THE WORLD. Arthur Schopenhauer

LABELS

Language and labels can either limit or free us.

> WHATEVER STRUCTURE THERE IS TO ANYTHING IS A PRODUCT OF THE COGNITIVE PROCESSES OF THE STRUCTURER—I.E., THE PERCEIVER WHAT WE HAVE TO REMEMBER IS THAT WHAT WE OBSERVE IS NOT NATURE ITSELF, BUT NATURE EXPOSED TO OUR MEANS OF QUESTIONING IT. Werner Heisenberg

In other words, we do not get meaning from our environment, we assign meaning to it. What is 'out there' isn't anything until we make it something, and then it 'is' whatever we make it. Most of our 'meaning-making' consists essentially of naming things. Whatever we say something is, it is not, but in a certain way, it is. Once the label has been learned, it becomes a shorthand substitute for what the 'object' is or does.

It contains and defines our understanding, and inhibits any need to discover or re-discover the object as something unknown and new. Students of drawing have a tendency to 'draw the label', and their memorised knowledge. They allow themselves to draw without really looking at their subject and make poorly informed generalisations that approximate their limited understanding and knowledge.

A student of the painter James Whistler told him that she only painted what she saw. His reply was "but the shock will come when you see what you paint". For the purposes of drawing, we should always look at objects as if they were new and unfamiliar—in a state of enquiry—and without the labels.

> WISDOM IS THE FORGETTING OF ALL YOU KNOW. Arthur Schopenhauer

OPPOSITE Cornelia Parker, *The Negative of Words*, 1996, gold residue accumulated from engraving words, 10.5 x 10.5 x 7.8 cm. Courtesy the artist and Frith Street Gallery, London.

ABOVE Willem de Kooning, *Attic*, 1949, oil, enamel, and newspaper transfer on canvas, 157.2 x 205.7 cm. Courtesy The Bridgeman Art Library. Collection of Muriel Newman, Chicago, USA. © The Willem de Kooning Foundation, New York/ARS, NY and DACS, London 2011.