

**DRAWING AS A GENERATIVE MEDIUM  
IN ART MAKING**

By

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**February 2013**

## DECLARATION

As required by University regulations, I hereby state unambiguously that this work has not been presented at any other University or any other institution of higher learning other than the University of KwaZulu-Natal, (Pietermaritzburg Campus) and that unless specifically indicated to the contrary within the text it is my original work.



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**27 February 2013**

As candidate supervisor I hereby approve this thesis for submission



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**27 February 2013**

As candidate co-supervisor I hereby approve this thesis for submission



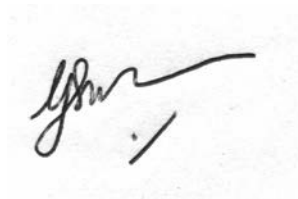
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**PROFESSOR JULIET ARMSTRONG†**

**13 July 2012**

## **CERTIFICATION**

We the undersigned declare that we have abided by the College of Humanities, University of KwaZulu-Natal's policy on language editing. We also declare that earlier forms of the dissertation have been retained should they be required.



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**GARY STUART DAVID LEONARD**

**27 February 2013**



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**LOUISE GILLIAN HALL**

**27 February 2013**

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## **ABSTRACT**

The research of a practice led PhD in Fine Arts consists of interrelated artwork and writing (Macleod and Holdridge 2005:197). In the dual practical and theoretical research for this PhD I examined drawing as a generative medium in art making.

This thesis constitutes the theoretical aspect of such research, which is rooted primarily in artistic practice and not in theory. As the other, practical aspect of this PhD I have produced and exhibited original art works, namely works in paint and drawing media.

The thesis presented here is an integrative text supporting this practical aspect. It examines the role and process of drawing as a contemporary medium of artistic expression, and pays special attention to its generative nature. The focus on drawing stems from the fact that drawing plays a seminal role in all aspects of my art-making.

The thesis examines the body of art works produced during this research as well as the artistic process and methodology used to produce it. It also contextualises the research within the contemporary Fine Art field where drawing has become an ascendant, primary and legitimate medium of artistic expression.

In the history of mainly Western art since Classical Antiquity, drawing served an essential and predominantly, though not exclusively, preparatory function. In the last fifty years the status of drawing has shifted, so that it has become a legitimate primary medium of expression for many contemporary artists. The historical function of preparation is consequently no longer the primary guiding rationale for drawing. The status of drawing as secondary and incomplete is now also obsolete.

As a consequence of this recent radical function and status shift, current drawing discourse and practice is continually open to question and exploration. Moreover, there is little consensus about the nature of drawing among key players in the Fine Art field. This, as well as the ambiguous nature of drawing which allows it to be a

constituent of other media as well as an independent medium, complicates any attempt to define drawing strictly.

Having given an outline of the parameters of my specific research topic and my rationale for choosing it, the text proffers a working definition of drawing. Notwithstanding the challenging nature of this task a working definition is necessary to discuss the focus of the research—drawing.

The thesis next examines my idiosyncratic use of drawing. Lastly, I address the central question of the thesis, namely, what accounts for the generative nature of drawing?

The title of the research, *Drawing as a Generative Medium in Art Making*, may seem to suggest that the generative potential of drawing is peculiar to the medium as a discrete entity. This research concluded that while drawing is indeed eminently suited to such a function, this exploratory and innovative capacity is the likely outcome of a complex of factors. These factors span artistic approach, drawing process and medium. These inextricably connected factors are difficult to treat discretely. Each of them plays an essential role in this non-formulaic, nuanced and dynamic thinking and art making process. It was therefore concluded that media other than drawing, if combined with a similar complex of factors, may have a marked generative potential as well.

**Key Terms:** *Artistic approach; Artistic/Drawing Schemata; Artistic innovation; Artistic media; Art making; Creativity in the Arts; Definition of drawing; Drawing schemata; Fine Art field; Finishedness; Generative; Modernism; Open-ended; Postmodernism; Practice led PhD; Secondary Process; Suprahistorical; Unfinishedness; Visual; Western art.*

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

DECLARATION	ii
CERTIFICATION	iii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	iv
ABSTRACT	v
TABLE OF CONTENTS	vii
LIST OF PLATES	xi

## INTRODUCTION

1.	Introduction	1
2.	Practice-led Research	1
3.	Background and Motivation for the Study	5
4.	Outline of the Research Problem and Research Objectives	7
5.	Structure of the Study	16

## CHAPTER ONE: DEFINING DRAWING

1.	Introduction	18
2.	A Brief History of Drawing	20
2.1.	Drawing in Relation to the Principles of Schema	21

2.2.	The Changing Function and Status of Drawing from a Secondary to a Primary Medium of Expression	24
3.	Four Definitions of Drawing	27
3.1.	Drawing as Preparation, Material Entity, Skill and Mark	28
3.2.	Drawing as Material Data	32
3.3.	Drawing Defined by Ground	33
3.4.	Line and Mark as the Fundamental Armature of Drawing	37
4.	Theories of Drawing	40
4.1.	Line and Mark	40
4.2.	Personal vs. the Impersonal Line	44
4.3.	Line as Erasure	45
4.4.	The Relationship of Drawing to Dominant Trends	46
5.	A Definition of Drawing	47
6.	Chapter Summary	51

## **CHAPTER TWO: MY USE OF DRAWING**

1.	Introduction	53
2.	A Rationale for Using Drawing	56
2.1.	Contextual Influences	56
2.2.	An Intuitive and Reflexive Motivation	57
2.3.	Material Thinking and Contemporary Media Theory	58
2.4.	Heuristics	60
2.4.1.	Artistic Approach	61
2.4.2.	Iteration	66
2.4.3.	Mimesis	69



3.	Permutations of Drawing	73
3.1.	Unfinished Fragments	74
3.2.	Developed and Consolidated Drawing	80
4.	Amalgam of Painting and Drawing	83
5.	Chapter Summary: My Use of Drawing Located Within the Contemporary Fine Art Field	87

**CHAPTER THREE: WITH PARTICULAR REFERENCE TO MY WORK, WHAT ACCOUNTS FOR THE GENERATIVE NATURE OF DRAWING?**

1.	Introduction	92
2.	Creativity	94
3.	Material Thinking, Contemporary Media Theory and the Notion of the Extended Mind	104
4.	Heuristics	107
5.	Tools and Materials	109
6.	Are There Specific Drawing Characteristics that Facilitate the Inventive Capacity of Drawing?	111
7.	Does The Generative Nature of Drawing Contribute to its Current Ascendant Status?	115
8.	How Has the Particular Integration of Writing and Artistic Practice in this Research Enhanced My Use of Drawing as a Generative Medium?	117
9.	Chapter Summary	121

## **CONCLUSION**

1.	Introduction	122
2.	Overview	122
3.	Conclusions	124
3.1.	Research Questions	124
3.2.	What Accounts for the Generative Nature of Drawing?	125
3.2.1.	A Definition of Drawing	125
3.2.2.	Drawing as a Generative Medium in Art Making	127
3.2.3.	Current Valorisation of Drawing Qualities	133
3.2.4.	My Use of Drawing Located Within the Contemporary Fine Art Context	135
4.	Reflection on Practice-led Research	138
5.	Contributions	145

## **BIBLIOGRAPHY** 148

1.	Primary Sources	149
2.	Secondary Sources	149

## **APPENDICES** 161

I	List of Plates	162
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## LIST OF PLATES

Plate 1	Peter Paul Rubens, <i>Portrait of Nicolaas Rubens</i> (1620).	162
Plate 2	Joseph Beuys, <i>I like America and America likes me</i> (1974).	162
Plate 3	Richard Long, <i>A Line Made by Walking England</i> (1967).	163
Plate 4	Gedewon, <i>Diagram</i> , (1991-1992), ink on paper, 100 x 75cm.	163
Plate 5	Richard Crotty, <i>NGC 5466 "The Ghost" Globular Cluster in Bootes</i> (2002), ink and watercolour on paper.	164
Plate 6	Jenny Holzer, <i>Protect Me From What I Want</i> (1990), LED lighting.	164
Plate 7	Richard Long, <i>Throwing Muddy Water</i> (1984).	165
Plate 8	Luciano Fabro <i>Contatto-Tautologia</i> (Contact-tautology) (1967), stainless steel.	165
Plate 9	Gego (Gertrud Goldschmidt), <i>Reticularia</i> (Ambientacion) (1969), iron and steel wires.	166
Plate 10	Henri Matisse, <i>Harmony in Red</i> (1908-1909).	166
Plate 11	Piet Mondrian, <i>Victory Boogie Woogie</i> (1942-43).	167
Plate 12	Jackson Pollock, <i>Autumn Rhythm</i> , (1950).	167
Plate 13	Julie Mehretu, <i>Rising Down</i> (2008), ink and synthetic polymer paint on canvas, 243.8 x 365.8 cm.	168
Plate 14	William Kentridge, Drawing for the film, <i>Tide Table [Soho Sleeping]</i> , (2003), charcoal on paper, 120 x 160 cm.	168
Plate 15	William Kentridge, <i>Stereoscope</i> (1998-99), 35mm animated film transferred to video.	169
Plate 16	Paula Rego, <i>Dog Woman</i> (1994), pastel on canvas.	169

Plate 17	Julie Mehretu, <i>Back to Gondwanaland</i> (2000), ink and acrylic on canvas, 244 x 305 cm.	170
Plate 18	Peter Schütz, <i>AMidlands Farm</i> (1989), bronze, 340 x 235 mm.	170
Plate 19	Doris Salcedo, Detail of the installation <i>Atrabiliarios</i> (1991-1996), shoes, animal fibre, surgical thread.	171
Plate 20	Doris Salcedo, <i>Untitled</i> (1989), shoe, animal fibre, surgical thread.	171
Plate 21	Paula Rego <i>Untitled</i> (1989), pastel on paper mounted on aluminium.	172
Plate 22	John Currin, <i>Mrs So-and-so</i> (2000), ink and gouache on paper, 35.2 x 27.6 cm.	172
Plate 23	Roy Lichtenstein, <i>Whaam!</i> (1963), 173 x 406.5 cm.	173
Plate 24	Paolo Caliari (Il Veronese), <i>Sketches for the Virgin</i> , (1580s), pen, ink and wash, 30.5 x 21 cm.	173
Plate 25	Anne-Marie Schneider, <i>Untitled</i> (2004), ink on paper, 19.7 x 23.6 cm.	174
Plate 26	David Shrigley, <i>Untitled (Arrow)</i> (2004), ink on paper, 29.7 x 21 cm.	174
Plate 27	<i>Going I</i> (2007), compressed charcoal on pastel paper, 65 x 50 cm.	175
Plate 28	<i>Going II</i> (2007), compressed charcoal on pastel paper, 65 x 50 cm.	175
Plate 29	<i>On the Back of a Bakkie I</i> (2007), mixed media, 35 x 50 cm.	176
Plate 30	<i>On the Back of a Bakkie II</i> (2007), mixed media, 35 x 50 cm.	176
Plate 31	<i>Turf I</i> (2007), mixed media, 34 x 48 cm.	177
Plate 32	<i>Turf II</i> (2007), mixed media, 25 x 55 cm.	177
Plate 33	<i>Turf III</i> (2007), mixed media, 22 x 47 cm.	177
Plate 34	<i>Those Who Go</i> (2007), oil on gesso-ed board, 123 x 141 cm.	178

Plate 35	<i>Promised Land</i> (2008), oil on gesso-ed board, 120 x 240 cm.	179
Plate 36	<i>Dreaming of Green</i> (2008), oil on gesso-ed board, 120 x 240 cm.	180
Plate 37	<i>Metamorphosis</i> (2009), oil on gesso-ed board, 120 x 240 cm.	181
Plate 38	<i>In Passing</i> (2008), oil on gesso-ed board, 123 x 141 cm.	182
Plate 39	<i>Temporary Slump</i> (2011), oil on canvas, 140 x 140 cm.	183
Plate 40	<i>Somewhere</i> (2012), oil on canvas, 140 x 140 cm.	184
Plate 41	<i>Becoming I</i> (2009), compressed charcoal on Fabriano, A1.	185
Plate 42	<i>Becoming II</i> (2009), compressed charcoal on Fabriano, A1.	185
Plate 43	<i>Becoming III</i> (2009), compressed charcoal on Fabriano, A1.	186
Plate 44	<i>Becoming IV</i> (2009), compressed charcoal on Fabriano, A1.	186
Plate 45	<i>Becoming V</i> (2009), compressed charcoal on Fabriano, A1.	187
Plate 46	<i>Becoming VI</i> (2009), compressed charcoal on Fabriano, A1.	187
Plate 47	<i>Becoming VII</i> (2009), compressed charcoal on Fabriano, A1.	188
Plate 48	<i>Becoming VIII</i> (2010), mixed media on Fabriano, A1.	188
Plate 49	<i>Becoming IX</i> (2011), mixed media on Fabriano.	189
Plate 50	<i>Becoming X</i> (2011), mixed media on Fabriano, A1.	189
Plate 51	<i>Becoming XI</i> (2010), watercolour on Fabriano, A1.	190
Plate 52	<i>Becoming XII</i> (2010), watercolour on Fabriano, A1.	190
Plate 53	<i>Becoming XIII</i> (2012), mixed media on Fabriano, 120 x 150 cm.	191

Plate 54	<i>Becoming XIV</i> (2012), compressed charcoal and pastel on Fabriano, 120 x 150 cm.	191
Plate 55	<i>Becoming XV</i> (2012), compressed charcoal on Fabriano, 120 x 150 cm.	192
Plate 56	<i>Becoming XVI</i> (2012), mixed media on Fabriano, 120 x 150 cm.	192
Plate 57	<i>Becoming XVII</i> (2012), compressed charcoal on Fabriano, A1.	193
Plate 58	<i>Becoming XVIII</i> (2012), embossing on Fabriano, A1.	193
Plate 59	<i>Becoming XIX</i> (2012), compressed charcoal on Fabriano, A1.	194
Plate 60	Drawing of <i>Capys Penningtoni</i> Pupa. Source: Hall (Visual Diary 2008).	194
Plate 61	<i>Venus of Willendorf Pupa</i> (2012), pencil on Fabriano, A1	195
Plate 62	Variation on the original <i>Capys Penningtoni</i> Pupa drawing (2009), compressed charcoal on Fabriano, A1.	195
Plate 63	Variation on the original <i>Capys Penningtoni</i> Pupa drawing (2009), compressed charcoal on Fabriano, A1.196	196
Plate 64	Variation on the original <i>Capys Penningtoni</i> Pupa drawing (2009), compressed charcoal on Fabriano, A1.	196
Plate 65	Variation on the original <i>Capys Penningtoni</i> Pupa drawing (2009) compressed charcoal on Fabriano, A1.	197
Plate 66	<i>Soccer player Pupa</i> (2009), compressed charcoal on Fabriano, A1.	197
Plate 67	<i>Stone Pupa</i> (2009), compressed charcoal on Fabriano, A1.	198
Plate 68	<i>Cyclist Pupa</i> (2009), compressed charcoal on Fabriano, A1.	198
Plate 69	<i>Motorcyclist Pupa</i> (2009), compressed charcoal on Fabriano A1.	199

Plate 70	<i>Motorcyclist Pupa</i> (2012), pencil on Fabriano, A1.	199
Plate 71	‘Unfinished’ drawing, pencil on A4. Source: Hall (Visual Diary 2007).	200
Plate 72	‘Unfinished’ drawing, pencil on A4. Source: Hall (Visual Diary 2009).	200
Plate 73	‘Unfinished’ drawing, pen on A4. Source: Hall (Visual Diary 2010).	200
Plates 74-79	Views of <i>Fine Lines</i> exhibition at KZNSA Gallery, Durban, 19 June to 8 July 2012.	201-203

# **DRAWING AS A GENERATIVE MEDIUM IN ART MAKING**

## **INTRODUCTION**

### **1. Introduction**

This introduction covers two main issues. First, I will provide a general overview of practice-led research. Second, I will outline the parameters of my specific research topic and my rationale for choosing it. This will include key research questions as well as a brief summary of the nature of contemporary drawing practice and discourse. Lastly, I will present an outline of the structure of the written text.

### **2. Practice-led Research**

As is typical for a practice-led Ph.D., this research comprises a dual submission of interrelated artwork and writing (Macleod and Holdridge 2005:197). More specifically it consists of the creation and exhibition of original art works, namely works in paint and drawing media, supported by an integrative, written text (or exegesis) that reflects on this body of work as well as the process and methodology used to produce it. The written reflective text also contextualises the research within the contemporary Fine Art field where drawing has become an ascendant, primary and legitimate medium of artistic expression.

Broadly speaking, practice-led research in the Arts takes the form of making art works, reflecting on these, and thereby endeavouring to develop new ways of art making, seeing and thinking. More specifically, the research in this double articulation between practice and theory is developed in such a way that theory emerges from a reflexive practice, while at the same time that practice is informed by theory (Barrett and Bolt 2007:29). My research will therefore consist of simultaneously developed imbrications of visual and verbal research which will



examine the generative nature, role and process of drawing—in my work, as well as in the contemporary art field in general.

Even though this practice-led submission will consist of simultaneously developed imbrications of visual and verbal research, each verbal imbrication will be a retrospective reflection on the art making process. However, since it comes before the next visual work, the relation is in addition, dialectical.

An essential aspect of practice-led research is that the research must originate in artistic practice (Barrett and Bolt 2007:30), and not in theoretical research. In my own case, the research arises from the seminal role of drawing in all aspects of my art-making. Drawing can refer both to a medium and to a particular art making process. Both of these aspects of drawing are fundamental to my work. Through the medium and process of drawing I generate and develop art works. Artistic practice—in my case, drawing—is thus a pivotal component and a starting point in this double articulation of practice and theory.

While the above circumscription of practice-led research may seem clear-cut it is important to note that there is currently much debate about this research in academic contexts, internationally. Some of these debates include first, the wisdom of rigorously integrating art making and writing into a research model, second, whether art making creates knowledge: “expression, Yes. Emotion, passion, aesthetic pleasure, meaning. But not usually knowledge...” (Elkins 2009:116), and third, the extent to which it is possible to define the nature of the knowledge that this model may generate.

Elkins (2010:241) holds that in the United Kingdom, Australia and Ireland, an economic rationale drove the development of practice-led research and in turn, the terms ‘research’ and ‘new knowledge’ with respect to studio practice: Tertiary institutions in these countries allocate “money and allowances to hire more teachers based on the graduation levels of their students”. In the light of this, the emergence of a Doctoral degree in studio practice is hardly surprising.

In contrast to Elkins' view, Taylor (2001:233-234) emphasises the value of integrating theory and practice: "theory without practice is empty; practice without theory is blind". Hence the need to "bring theory and practice together in such a way that we can theorise our practice and practise our theories". The Surrealists' use of Freudian psychoanalytic theory is a good example (Macleod and Holdridge 2010:87) of a case where a combination of theory and practice occurred, with ground breaking artistic outcomes as a result, although it is unlikely that the Surrealists had a thorough grasp of psychoanalysis – the sort that would survive a critical academic scrutiny.

In advocating such a relationship between theory and practice, Taylor (2001:233-234) stresses that the current dominant network culture is radically transforming the social, political, economic and cultural fabric of our context. As artists and academics we cannot ignore that information technologies "responsible for a shift from an industrial to a post industrial economy" are likely to bring unpredictable and unavoidable changes to higher education. And we thus cannot afford to disregard the changing ways in which we communicate and make sense of the world. I agree in theory with this position. However it is important that this research model does not become an academic imposition of a generic and inappropriate paradigm on artistic practice. One of the advantages in exploring the relationship of practice and theory in my research would be to offer my perspective on what I consider to be a viable combination of practice and theory; and for other candidates using this research model to add to this body of specific interpretations of theory/practice integration in order to actively shape a research model that facilitates best artistic practice.

The challenge therefore in this research is to ensure that the theory assists—rather than confuses, hinders, or is irrelevant to—my art making process. I do not want the written text to merely explain, describe or contextualise (Barrett and Bolt 2007:29) my artistic processes and artwork, but for it to play a role that is "critical and complementary" (2007:31) to the practice by helping me understand, as well as shift, the use of drawing in my work.

Practice-led research in visual art involves managing the inherent multiple roles of artist, researcher and critic, with the attendant subjective and objective positions required of this dual research. In general, artistic practice is an idiosyncratic, nuanced,

complex and uncertain process. While I will endeavour to rigorously and objectively examine and interpret my work in this research, it would be important to guard against creating the impression that I am under the illusion that I can wholly account for my artistic practice. It would be a mistake in this research to proceed as if I fully understand the art works I have made, including all aspects of my artistic practice and process. In conducting this research it will be important for me to be vigilant of and to endeavour to manage these differing positions required by this dual submission of interrelated artwork and writing (Macleod and Holdridge 2005:197).

In contrast to Elkins' (2010:246) above misgivings, Macleod and Holdridge (2010:87) argue that it is precisely the tension between the languages and thinking modes of writing and art making that helps generate "the depth of thought encountered in the final submissions". My view regarding these debates is that there are currently no incontrovertible solutions. Further application and debate of practice-led research within tertiary institutions over the following decades will serve to reveal what the possibilities and pitfalls are of practice-led PhDs. We may in addition, be better able to identify what kind of new knowledge practice-led research is likely to generate and whether, or how, it is possible to measure such knowledge. The task at hand for me is to research my topic using practice-led research while bearing in mind the debates and absence of conclusions about this research model.

Finally, it is important to note that at my institution no academic staff member holds a practice-led PhD in Fine Art. I am in the unenviable position of being the first candidate to attempt to comply with the expectations associated with practice-led research. While the structure of this degree has been debated at length over several years at my institution, both my supervisor and I are nonetheless working in new territory. It is inevitable that we will make certain assumptions about what is expected. It is likely that in the next few years aspects of this degree structure will be developed as the debates become grounded in specific candidates' application of this research model in our context.

### 3. Background and Motivation for the Study

As indicated in the above section, the explicit focus on drawing in this research has arisen from my artistic practice and the seminal role of drawing in my work. I could go as far as saying that I do not know how to make artwork other than through the medium of drawing. While all my artistic practice is founded on the process and medium of drawing, there are differences between my art works in traditional drawing media and those in paint media. Other than the obvious discrepancy in media, I do not fully understand what accounts for these differences in my art works. This research therefore is an attempt to extend my understanding of the nature of drawing in my work and to account for its characteristic qualities. In examining my drawing this research will endeavour to determine whether its characteristics are intrinsic to drawing in general.

In addition, the research will position my art work and in particular, drawing, within the contemporary context, where drawing currently holds considerable standing. In the history of mainly Western art since Classical Antiquity, drawing served an essential and predominantly, though not exclusively, preparatory function. It formed the basis not only for what were then considered major art forms, architecture, sculpture and painting, but also for many of the crafts (Osborne 1986:328). In postmodernism's spirit of deconstructing master narratives—including its emphasis on mass culture and the querying of the distinction between high and low culture—traditional media such as painting and drawing have been subjected to understandable scrutiny; their weight and validity as significant meaning-making processes have thus been questioned.

One of the outcomes of this postmodern questioning and *avant garde* practice of the last fifty years is that from the late twentieth century the status of drawing has shifted, so that it has become a legitimate primary medium of expression for many contemporary artists (Dexter cited in Sheets 2006:98). While the value of drawing has never been disputed, its status as secondary and incomplete<sup>1</sup> (Dexter cited in Sheets

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<sup>1</sup> It is important to acknowledge that while this *non finito* categorisation of drawing is historically entrenched, its binary opposite of *finito* is well documented from the Renaissance and clearly

2006:98-100) no longer holds. Drawing has thus relatively recently undergone a fundamental functional shift, whereby its historical function of preparation is no longer its main *raison d'être*.

Within the South African Fine Art context, drawing features prominently, though not always exclusively, as a medium of expression for many contemporary artists. Some artists include William Kentridge (b.1955), Dianne Victor (b. 1964), Judith Mason (b. 1938), Helen Sebidi (b. 1943), Deborah Bell (b. 1957), Jeremy Wafer (b. 1953) and Walter Oltmann (b. 1960). Importantly, The Standard Bank National Drawing Competition in the 1980s and early 1990s did much to promulgate the medium of drawing as a legitimate and potent means of artistic expression.

Working therefore in a context where drawing has become an ascendant, legitimate and primary medium of expression for many artists, the rationale for the research is as follows:

- i. In keeping with practice-led research, the focus on the generative nature of drawing arises from particular concerns linked to my idiosyncratic artistic practice. The mainly preparatory function of drawing has historically been integral to the practice and concept of drawing. The focus in this research on drawing as a generative medium in art making, stems from the recognition that there arguably exists a close correlation between given drawing characteristics and its traditional predominantly inventive role. In endeavouring to understand the role and nature of drawing in my work and to establish whether drawing, in general and specifically in my work, has intrinsic characteristics the generative nature of drawing must necessarily be rigorously examined.
- ii. I pay special attention to the changed status of drawing within the Fine Art field. I will use the research to help me position my work within the contemporary Fine Art arena, where drawing has integrity and standing.

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exemplified in the drawings of Leonardo da Vinci (1452-1519) and Michelangelo Buonarroti (1475-1564).

- iii. Finally, with particular reference to the theoretical aspects of the exegesis, Sheets (2006: 99), suggests that drawing offers a particular freedom because it has not been as densely theorized as painting. I intend through this research to contribute to contemporary debates about the concept and practice of drawing and in particular its generative capacity.

#### **4. Outline of the Research Problem and Research Objectives**

In this study, my key research question is:

- i. What accounts for the generative nature of my drawing?

In contextualising my work in a contemporary Fine Art field, ancillary questions that will be addressed include:

- ii. Does drawing demonstrate intrinsic, stable features or is this an out-dated modernist view?
- iii. Why are qualities of drawing currently highly valued?
- iv. What features, if any, of drawing and/or the contemporary fine Art field account for the current ascendant status of drawing?

Given my general aims, a brief historical overview of drawing will be essential to this debate, as will be a general account of drawing as a basis for discussing its generative nature and role. This will call for a working definition of drawing. One could think that establishing a working definition of drawing would be straightforward. However the renewed value and autonomy of drawing has not resulted in clarity and consensus among the various players in the Fine Art field. The irresolute character of contemporary drawing makes defining the medium a challenging task—and defining it in a way that does not oversimplify and impoverish the complex and evolving nature of drawing.

Some of the characteristics taken to define drawing concern appearance, others, the function of drawing and others relate to the activity that initiates drawing. Just as contemporary art making practice is not limited to particular materials, processes and approaches, what may currently be termed a drawing can include any material and whatever approach, intention and process an artist deems appropriate to a particular art making venture. Schwabsky (2005:008) asserts that contemporary painting, like contemporary art in general, defies containment within existing definitions and expectations and that one must therefore always be prepared to “add new aesthetic axioms”. This has equal relevance to contemporary drawing. Questions about the nature of contemporary art and drawing for example, “what is art or what is drawing?” are apparently simple but actually complex, apparently specific but actually broad and abstract (Griffin 2010:47). They demand careful reassessment of assumptions “regarding generally agreed on understandings of art and its operations, whether in the studio, the classroom, the boardroom, or the museum or behind the gallery desk” (2010:47).

As suggested above, to have a basis for discussion, it would be useful to formulate a working definition of drawing. However, formulating such a working definition is no easy task, given the lack of agreement among the players in the contemporary art arena (Griffin 2010:47). The following examples demonstrate this:

According to Molesworth (2010:294):

The production and distribution system [of contemporary art] is so vast that anything like consensus...is at the threshold of impossibility....And if consensus is not quite possible...then how does one find and commit to the work that is important? How do we create the conditions for a discussion of criteria?

Gilmore corroborates this:

Art History today must be defined so disjunctively that it often isn't clear whether there is anything on which feminists, poststructuralists, social historians of art...iconographers, connoisseurs and so on might agree such that their disagreements could offer a productive exchange (2003:36).

And finally Elkins (interviewed in Berger 2005:106) generalises that contemporary drawing is a “ghost subject”. Referring to his teaching experience at the Art Institute of Chicago, Elkins holds that drawing practice appears to exist in a limbo: In spite of the recent obsolescence of its secondary standing and mainly provisional role, drawing is still required of students and serves as a foundation to all forms of their visual practice. Elkins observes that drawing in his institution has not been given the official standing of a Department and neither has any other medium replaced drawing in its central provisional function. My view is that it is debateable whether any other medium should replace drawing in this regard. Nonetheless, what seems to be absent from most texts on contemporary drawing is a careful examination of how the absence of the historical and main *raison d'être* of drawing as preparation impacts on the nature of contemporary drawing—and in turn, how this may modify the characteristics used to define drawing.

Descriptive terms for drawing abound, but as suggested above, their use is seldom adequately justified. In rigorously examining the nature of drawing in the thesis I will scrutinise a selection of drawing descriptions. I will consider whether the qualities these descriptions identify as characteristic of drawing may be supra-historical.

Texts that will be useful to circumscribe drawing are recent publications such as *The Drawing Book* edited by Tania Kovats (2007); *Vitamin D* edited by Emma Dexter (2005); *Drawing Today* edited by Tony Godfrey (1990); Laura Hoptman (2002) *Drawing Now: Eight Propositions* which is the accompanying text for the exhibition of the same title; Catherine de Zegher and Cornelia Butler (Eds. 2010) of *On Line: Drawing through the Twentieth Century*; Jodi Hauptman (2004) in *Drawing from the Modern, 1880-1945* and Deanna Petherbridge (2010) *The Primacy of Drawing: Histories and Theories of Practice*.

Kovats, Dexter and Godfrey offer comprehensive surveys of contemporary drawing, revealing the vibrancy of contemporary drawing practice. Similarly Hoptman asserts the renewed importance and autonomy of contemporary drawing focusing in this publication on drawings that on the whole, are ‘finished’. In my view what is lacking in all these appraisals of drawing practice is a rigorous interrogation of drawings as such. These authors describe the varieties and features of drawing without



substantially accounting for the source of its characteristics. Furthermore, many authors seem to accept established definitions of drawing without question as a premise to their texts. For example, de Zegher and Butler (2010:23) use a dictionary definition of drawing without interrogating and justifying this choice. Their definition equates drawing to line: “let us begin with drawing as a matter of fact involving according to the dictionary, ‘the formation of a line by moving some tracing tool from point to point on a surface’”. Similarly, Hauptman (2004:17) works on the premise that drawing amounts to a mark on paper: “Historically, drawing has been understood as a mark on paper, the record of a bodily gesture, an inscription of the hand’s actions, an expression of the mind”. Recognising the complexity of the subject, Petherbridge (2010) in *The Primacy of Drawing: Histories and Theories of Practice*, chooses the notion of “Drawing as a Continuum” in lieu of an “all-embracing and inevitably flawed definition of drawing” (2010:3).

An examination of theories of drawing will be essential to understanding and discussing the complexity of drawing as medium and artistic process. The following texts will be valuable in this regard: E. H. Gombrich (1961) *Art and Illusion: A Study in the Psychology of Pictorial Representation*; (1979); *Ideals and Idols: Essays on values in History and In Art*; (2000); *The Uses of Images: Studies in the Social Function of Art and Visual Communication*; Philip Rawson, *Drawing* (1987) and *Seeing through Drawing* (1979); Richard Wollheim (1973) *On Art and the Mind: Essays and Lectures*; *Art and its Objects: With Six Supplementary Essays* (1980) and David Rosand (2002) *Drawing Acts: Studies in Graphic Expression and Representation*.

The above texts offer general theories of drawing, but on the whole these theories lie largely within a modernist rather than a contemporary tradition. For more contemporary theoretical insights on drawing I will refer to the following texts: Rosalind Krauss’ (1993) *The Optical Unconscious* and (2000) *A Voyage on the North Sea: Art in the Age of the Post-Medium Condition*; Paul Crowther (1993) *Art and Embodiment. From Aesthetics to Self-consciousness*, and Patricia Cain (2010) *Drawing. The Enactive Evolution of the Practitioner*. Cain’s account of drawing is holistic and focuses on ways in which the practitioner may use the drawing process to gain self awareness.

In summary, the knowledge gap is that many texts on drawing on the whole describe and give examples of a wide variety of drawings but few adequately interrogate established characteristics and definitions of drawing. In my view, few authors identify the possibility that because of the recent development whereby assuming a mainly preparatory role for drawing has become obsolescent, a genre of drawing may be spawned that is different from drawing as we have historically come to understand it. This genre of drawing may manifest distinct characteristics that are directly related to the obsolescence of the historical imperative of preparation and invention. Therefore at the heart of the motivation to research the generative nature of drawing in art making is the recognition that this historical function of drawing may be decisive in distinguishing whether drawing may have intrinsic characteristics. In other words, characteristics used to define drawing may turn out to be contingent features of drawing in a particular era. The importance of drawing for me and other contemporary artists may then lie in “contingent historical and cultural circumstances” (Kelley 1998:159) which have shaped the way I and other contemporary artists think and work.

As discussed, one of the challenges of this exegesis is adequately circumscribing drawing so as to create the possibility for discussion. Perhaps the strength of the dual submission of this practice-led research is that in this instance my artistic practice and specific use of drawing may serve to delimit what may otherwise be a quagmire of possibility and open-endedness. By focusing this research on my own work, the problem of getting a handle on drawing becomes tractable.

In this “age of the hybrid” (Yablonsky 2005:96) contemporary artistic practice in addition defies strict divisions between disciplines and media in any one particular work, and many artists do not consider themselves limited or defined by any one medium (Schwabsky 2005:004). In keeping with this loss of media specificity (Krauss 2000:15) the exploration of drawing in the research must take into account my idiosyncratic use of painting and drawing, which seem to coexist in my work. This research will attempt to clarify the nature and import of this coexistence.

The particular amalgam of painting and drawing in my work may be a consequence of my attempt to infuse painting with qualities typical for drawing, an objective that has

been driven first, by the recognition of my drawing's distinctive qualities and, second, by the need to understand what accounts for the characteristics and potential of drawing in general. For many contemporary artists the exercise of extending and examining definitions becomes the substance of the work (Yablonsky 2005:97). I do not generate work through thinking about definitions of drawing. However this research is similar to some contemporary artistic practice where the artist self-consciously and deliberately questions the nature of art and what is involved in the creation of art (Kelley 1998:67).

An important question arising from the contemporary spirit of self-conscious art making is whether drawing as art requires skill in the traditional sense, as taught in the academies (Kelley 1998:67). In this research a first hypothesis, aligned partially to a modernist view (as well as of course to a traditional view), will be that drawing is indeed a skilled activity, and that this is part of the reason it has such inventive and generative potential (1998:67).

In order to identify and examine the aspects of the medium and process of drawing—in general and specifically with respect to my work—that may account for its inventive potential, I will use both primary and secondary sources: As primary data, my research journals and visual diaries (2009-2012) are vital records of the development of my research. These documents record my experimentation with ideas, materials, images and artistic processes. The visual diaries demonstrate mainly unfinished renderings of images that provide clues for further work. The journals are regular, informally written records of my idiosyncratic practice as an artist. Written in the first person, the reflections in these journals are lightweight by comparison with rigorous theoretical research. However journaling is invaluable as a reflective practice. It often assists with distancing. In other words, this reflective practice helps me consider my artwork and artistic processes more objectively, thereby helping me recognise, for example, patterns of working, recurrent themes and connections, as well as the importance of ideas and imagery. These written documents contain details about my artistic methodology including the specific challenges I may be grappling with in particular works and possible solutions to these. In addition, my journals record comments made by supervisors or other artists about my work: an outside interpretation or simply a word—a noun or a verb—can occasionally be significant in

liberating, directing and shaping further work. Lastly, my journals and visual diaries contain data that will help integrate the visual and verbal imbrications of this research model.

The secondary sources that will be useful in examining the generative function of drawing are those that first, provide a broad overview of creativity and artistic methodologies and second, those that offer frameworks for interrogating innovative thinking, artistic practice and drawing in particular.

The concept of creativity is as problematic to define as that of drawing. However, the following texts will be useful to provide a broad concept of creativity within which to situate an examination of the generative function of drawing: Sternberg (2003) *Wisdom, Intelligence and Creativity Synthesised*; Boden (1992) *The Creative Mind*; Bailin (1994) *Achieving Extraordinary Ends: An Essay on Creativity* and McNiff (1998) *Art-Based Research*.

Galenson's (2001 and 2006) texts *Painting Outside the Lines: Patterns of Creativity in Modern Art* and *Old Masters and Young Geniuses: The Two Life Cycles of Artistic Creativity* will be important with respect to artistic methodologies. These two texts offer a twofold typology, as well as analysis, of two contrasting artistic working methods. These two cycles of creativity result in different kinds of work, neither of which has a monopoly on artistic quality or even greatness. Galenson investigated the relationship of age to artistic innovation, questioning why some artists produce their best work at the beginning of their careers and others towards the end. The two cycles which Galenson describes as Experimental and Conceptual are inductive and deductive respectively. While most artists adopt approaches from both cycles of creativity, Galenson's two books underline the complex and individual nature of art making. Of particular relevance to this thesis is that Galenson's work suggests that certain artists' working methods may be incompatible with certain construals of practice-led research—those that make it essentially a form of knowledge production, very much on a par with what happens in any other form of academic research. Galenson's ideas will help me extend my understanding of my artistic methodology and use of drawing.

An underlying rationale in this research is that drawing that may be considered ‘inventive’, ‘new’, ‘creative’ or ‘transgressive’ is the likely outcome of a complex of factors. The dynamic interdependence of factors spans artistic approach, drawing process and medium. It is difficult and imprudent to treat these elements as discrete, since each is nuanced but essential. If one takes a simple example where an artist uses drawing to create a few rough ideas for a project, her artistic approach is likely to be exploratory and open-ended, the materials and tools probably fairly rudimentary and the artistic process is unlikely to be highly technical and laborious. The drawing characteristics as a consequence, are liable to be ‘unfinished’ and imprecise. Although this is an obvious example, the interconnected nature of a variety of elements in this act of drawing is plain: If one of these factors is modified then the relationship of elements and the outcome is liable to be very different.

On the whole texts on artistic creativity focus on only some of these factors, with drawing media and drawing characteristics most commonly cited. However texts that will be helpful are those that take into account the multiplicity of factors that play a role. An example is David Rosand’s (2002) *Drawing Acts: Studies in Graphic Expression and Representation*. Rosand examines drawing as both “art and act” (2002:xx). His discussion embraces the relationship between the artist, the line as well as the “re-creative dimension” of the viewer. What seems to be lacking is that Rosand does not adequately discuss drawing tools and materials as essential components in this dynamic thinking process.

Most useful in examining the generative nature of drawing will be frameworks that interrogate innovative thinking and drawing, which in addition include the role of media in the complexity of factors. These include material thinking, contemporary media theory and the notion of the extended mind. These frameworks highlight (a) the interrelatedness of artist, process and media, and (b) the synchronised development of thinking and drawing.

With respect to material thinking, Carter’s (2004) *Material Thinking* will be essential. For contemporary media theory, Bolter and Grusin’s (1999) *Remediation: Understanding New Media*, Hansen’s (2006) *Theory, Culture and Society. Media Theory*, Kittler’s (1986) *Gramophone, Film, Typewriter* and McLuhan’s (1967)

*Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man* will be seminal. The underlying premise of contemporary theory is that the process of thinking is not neutral: all thinking requires a medium which both facilitates and shapes our cognitive processes and outcomes. The notion of the extended mind similarly questions the skull/skin boundary for cognitive processes, holding that external coupled relationships not only facilitate specific thinking but may be seen as cognitive systems in their own right (Clark and Chambers 2010:2). I will refer to texts such as Clark's (2003) *Natural Born Cyborgs: Minds, Technologies and the Future of Human Intelligence*, Clark and Chalmers (2010) *The Extended Mind*.

As is appropriate for the dual submission of practice-led research, I anticipate that the contribution of this research will be both theoretical and practical. This research will endeavour to contribute to drawing discourse and practice by offering an interpretation of the nature of drawing and in particular its generative potential. I will endeavour to clarify whether characteristics associated with drawing are intrinsic, or just the result of the now obsolete historical purely preparatory function of drawing. I expect to be able to identify why drawing is a medium of scope and potential and to account for its contemporary currency, especially now that its provisional imperative is no longer given. I anticipate that my particular interpretation of drawing will re-assert the importance of what may be considered a modernist tendency—drawing skill—as foundational to the generative potential of drawing.

Finally, it is important to note that any contribution or knowledge produced through this practice-led research will be subjectively-based. Practice-led research is similar to enactive knowledge in this sense. Varela *et al.*'s (cited in Cain 2010:54) interpretation of enactive knowledge confirms the interrelated nature of knowledge-making and subjectivity:

The individual plays a role in what comes to be known. What the individual comes to know is created from the inter-subjective relationship between oneself and the world; the self is not sealed off but part of the knowledge-making process. Knowledge is subjective because it is not independent of the knower but has the mark of an individual's structure on it. In other words, what we come to know is generated by and relative to ourselves.

## 5. Structure of the Study

The following is an outline of the structure of the present study:

- i. **Introduction:** In the introduction to the written text I have outlined the parameters of my specific research topic and my rationale for choosing it. The current project is an example of practice-led research, which is characterised in terms of a double articulation between practice and theory (Barrett and Bolt 2007:29). I therefore have thought it necessary to give a brief sketch of the nature of practice-led research and the debates surrounding it. I chose not to include a discussion of my artistic methodology since this will be discussed in detail in Chapter Two.
- ii. **Chapter One:** Here I endeavour to circumscribe the object of my research—drawing—in a satisfactory way. As indicated above, this objective is far from trivial: Preparation is no longer tacitly taken to be the exclusive or at least crucial function in contemporary drawing, and the nature of the medium and process of drawing is continually open to question and exploration. A working definition of drawing is necessary on two main counts, first, to make a discussion of this medium possible in the written text; and second, to evaluate whether drawing has intrinsic qualities and whether these are distinct from qualities developed from its historical generative role. Recourse to my specific use of drawing in this research may serve to delimit the open-endedness of drawing as a topic, and thus make my research problem more tractable.
- iii. **Chapter Two:** In this chapter I examine my own use of drawing. As a reflective investigation of my own work and artistic methodology it should be noted that this chapter may have a different writing register from Chapter One and Three. It is difficult to translate my reflective writing on my work into academic discourse.
- iv. **Chapter Three:** Here I address the central question of the thesis, namely, what accounts for the generative nature of drawing? In particular, this chapter will examine the complex of factors that contribute to the inventive agility of

drawing. I will refer to my art work and artistic methodology as well as to drawing practice in general. Lastly, the discussion will consider whether the current standing of drawing is related to its inventive capacity.

- v. **Conclusion:** As the conclusion to my thesis, I present a synthesis of the key concepts of my research and a formulation of my conclusions.



# CHAPTER ONE

## DEFINING DRAWING

### 1. Introduction

As I discussed in the introduction to this thesis, drawing is notoriously difficult to define. Notwithstanding the challenging nature of this task, this chapter will aim at establishing a working definition of drawing or some other means of describing drawing. This is fundamental to my understanding of my own drawing practice as well as to any interrogation of its generative potential. The focus of the discussion in this chapter will be to ascertain whether drawing has intrinsic characteristics which are distinct from those that stem from its historical provisional role. In other words, the discussion in this chapter will endeavour to clarify whether qualities historically ascribed to drawing are supra-historical. Alternatively they may be contingent features of drawing developed through a particular use of drawing in a specific historic period.

Over the past fifty years, drawing has undergone a fundamental function and status shift. From its historical and consistent use principally as a preparatory medium, drawing is now a primary medium of expression for many contemporary artists. Accordingly, the traditional view of drawing as important but secondary and incomplete (Dexter cited in Sheets 2006:98-100) no longer holds. As a consequence of this relatively recent function and status transition, the current practice and dialogue about drawing is fluid. In addition, there is little consensus about the nature of drawing among contemporary players in the art arena (Griffin 2010:47).

There are two factors in particular that may intensify this fluidity. First, the applications of drawing are wide-ranging. In other words, drawing is a discrete medium as well as a constituent of other media<sup>1</sup>. The simultaneous discrete and constituent nature of drawing accounts for the diverse (Petherbridge 2008:27) and democratic uses and manifestations of drawing in a variety of contexts. Drawing

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<sup>1</sup> This factor will be discussed in Chapter Three of this thesis as it is an important consideration in the generative nature of drawing.

practice is thus not confined to the Fine Art field but spans for example, the fields of engineering, architecture, design, science and music.

Second, the current open-ended exploration and discourse about drawing intensifies its irresolute and fluid status (Petherbridge 2008:27). In addition, how we make art as well as write and talk about it has dramatically shifted (Meecham and Sheldon 2005:1) since the beginning of the twentieth century, and particularly over the past fifty years. Current debate and artistic practice in general is premised on contingency, where nothing is absolute. Perspectives on artistic theory and practice are therefore provisional and partial and this contemporary theoretical plurality renders all positions open and equal (Meecham and Sheldon 2005:8). With this in mind, rather than a definitive, abiding and universal definition of drawing, an adequate circumscription of drawing which offers a means of locating the medium, may be a more realistic objective for this chapter.

As I discussed in the introduction to this thesis, descriptions of drawing usually concern ground, appearance, function and the activity or the intention that initiates it. The current open-ended debate and artistic practice concerning drawing, questions these factors as fundamental to the medium. Contemporary drawing, like most contemporary art, defies containment within existing definitions and expectations so that one must always be prepared to “add new aesthetic axioms” (Schwabsky 2005:008).

As discussed above, a central objective of the discussion in this chapter is to arrive at an adequate circumscription of the object of my research: drawing. Where necessary, I will indeed also “add new aesthetic axioms” (Schwabsky 2005:008) to current theories about drawing. With this purpose in mind, this chapter will include:

- i. A brief history of drawing within a broadly Western art tradition. The changing function and status of drawing from a secondary to a primary medium of expression will feature centrally in this history.

- ii. A systematic scrutiny of definitions and adjectives that are used to describe drawing as well as qualities ascribed to drawing. The strengths and weaknesses of such strategies for circumscribing drawing will be explored.
- iii. Arising out of the above two points, I will examine the validity of the idea that drawing possesses intrinsic, suprahistorical characteristics.
- iv. Theories of drawing. I will provide an overview of a select number of important theories of drawing (mostly modernist). These theories will pertain to line and mark in particular.
- v. I will conclude this chapter by providing a definition of drawing and give reasons for proffering this definition.

## **2. A Brief History of Drawing**

It is important to emphasise that in spite of its secondary and peripheral status, drawing since Western Classical Antiquity was considered essential and it was used consistently. The secondary status and fairly strict application of drawing as a mainly intermediate process and medium, did not translate into neglect or obsolescence of the medium. Instead, historically, drawing has been regularly used in a more experimental, open-ended way, rather than in a definitive, classificatory manner (Godfrey 1990:105).

Craig-Martin (1995:9-10) claims that qualities that we have come to value in art in the twentieth century, have typically been associated with drawing. He summarises some of these characteristics as being,

spontaneity, creative speculation, experimentation, directness, simplicity, abbreviation, expressiveness, immediacy, personal vision, technical diversity, modesty of means, rawness, fragmentation, discontinuity, unfinishedness and open-endedness.

In general, these adjectives emphasise personal artistic exploration and an open-ended artistic approach. For Craig-Martin (1995:9-10), these qualities “have always been the characteristics of drawing”, thereby suggesting the idea that these characteristics are intrinsic to drawing.

The historically consistent and exploratory use of drawing may have led to the development of particular characteristics often ascribed to drawing. The question however remains whether these characteristics are indeed intrinsic and suprahistorical.

### **2.1. Drawing in Relation to the Principles of Schema**

From the time of Classical Antiquity through to the eighteenth century, the practice of drawing was governed by the intellectual principles of schema (Goldstein 1988:29). The concepts of ‘open-ended’ and ‘exploratory’ therefore must be considered in relation to the use of schemata during this period.

In its broadest sense, a schema may be considered similar to a diagram. This chiefly linear construction reflected a basic structure of an object, figure or composition. This would serve as a model for developing an artwork (Martin 1986:180). Furthermore, schemata reflect what Gombrich (1977:131) refers to as “universals”. These may be understood as generalised and essential versions of visual reality that include harmonious, geometric proportions relating to ideals of beauty.

Schematic principles offered an intellectual and canonical approach to drawing. These principles functioned as a vocabulary and methodology to recognise and render an essential form underlying the idiosyncratic variations of visual reality. Adherence to the principles of schema meant that artists should judiciously imitate nature (Goldstein 1988:29). An artist would initially avoid recording the “particulars” (Gombrich 1977:131) of nature or what were considered the flaws of visual reality in the interests of rendering its essential form. Drawing was therefore conceptual in the sense that artists were required to understand and apply the tenets of schemata (1977:134) before being permitted to draw the “particulars” of nature.

Between the third and thirteenth centuries CE, artists' direct reference to the visible world when drawing was secondary to mastering established schematic canons (Gombrich 1977:129-130). Artists had to first learn and practise for example, how to draw a schematised version of the human form before being allowed to work directly from life. Similarly, academies from the seventeenth century (Kelley 1998:67) required artists to draw from prints and casts of classical sculpture for several years before they were permitted to work directly from nature (Gombrich 1977:135).

Pattern books played an important role in continuing the tradition of schema. These reference or source books contained ideas and schematic images intended for artists and craftspeople. The first known pattern book was composed by Villard de Honnecourt in the 1230s (Kelley 1998:67). The use of such pattern books remained commonplace until the late 1700s.

The concepts of 'open-ended' and 'exploratory' hinged therefore on the varying use of schemata. For the ancient Greek artists, schemata formed the basis for imitating reality which in their quest for beauty and proportion could then be "moulded and modified" (Gombrich 1977:126). Artistic practice during the middle ages valued strict adherence to schemata, thus allowing little room for individual interpretation and stylistic departure from these canons. For post medieval artists on the other hand, the schemata were the starting point for corrections, adjustments, adaptations, a means to explore visual reality and to grapple with the particular (1977:148).

Changing values during these periods meant differing emphasis being placed on the elements and process of drawing. A firm line indicated competence for the medieval artist. For the post medieval artist, the measure of excellence was a questioning approach demonstrated in the preceding drawings for a finished work (Gombrich 1977:148). For example, the range of such investigative drawings by Leonardo da Vinci (1452-1519) consisted of systematically developed rough drafts, sketches, studies and finally, finished drawings (Pecirka 1966:17). The post medieval artist was thus expected to re-work the image until it "reflected the unique and unrepeatable experience the artist wishes to seize and hold" (Gombrich 1977:148). The drawings or iterations of the image prior to the finished realisation were therefore intended to

assist with developing and refining an image or art work. These drawings were likely by definition, to be largely unfinished, exploratory and open-ended.

The practice of exploratory and open-ended drawing was thus related to the changing application of schemata. Notwithstanding its varied use, this intellectual and canonical approach to drawing must have instilled methods of working that shaped artists' perception and visual rendering of the visible world. Gombrich (1977:143) has interpreted this by suggesting a tension between the "universal" and the "particular" in an artist's work. Using Rubens' *Portrait of Nicolaas Rubens* (1620), Plate 1, as an example, Gombrich (1977:143-144) questions the extent to which a master like Rubens (1577-1640) would have been influenced by the principles of schema in his rendering of the "particular". Rubens was likely to have been schooled in the schemata evolved by Dürer for drawing children's heads. On the other hand, the painting is a portrait of Rubens' own child. It is probably safe to speculate that the artist almost certainly would have closely observed his own child. Gombrich (1977:144) thus queries whether the work reflected Rubens' organisation of perception acquired through a trained understanding and practice of schemata; or alternatively, whether the portrait is an accurate rendering of the "particular", namely, an idiosyncratic likeness of his individual child. The prevailing values for drawing would have supported adherence to schematic principles: the conceptual, symbolic and philosophical system of schematic convention was held to be grounded in science (de Zegher 2010:23) and metaphysics, rendering an artist's recording of the 'particular', inferior and imperfect (Goldstein 1988:30). One can only speculate on the inclination towards either the "universal" or the "particular" (Gombrich 1977:143) in Rubens' drawing of his own child.

During the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries CE, drawing continued to serve an important, predominantly preparatory role and naturalism remained the abiding basis for rendering form and space. This is demonstrated in Neo-Classicism (1760-1815) and Romanticism (1770-1900). This period from the late eighteenth century saw artists reject the dominating tradition of schema.

## **2.2. The Changing Function and Status of Drawing from a Secondary to a Primary Medium of Expression**

The break with the schematic tradition must be seen against the backdrop of what may be regarded as the onset of the modern age: the Enlightenment, in the seventeenth century. Enlightenment thinkers were “concerned about the role of culture in what they perceived to be wholly new conditions of life” (Greenhalgh 2005:13). Greenhalgh (2005:13) interprets two key issues arising from this recognition as foundational in the development of art from the Enlightenment. These have remained pivotal in our postmodern context: the “function” of art and its “volition”. In other words “what is art for and where is it going?”

Modernism may be seen as a loose confederation (Meecham and Sheldon 2005:15) of ideas and beliefs about the social, political and economic conditions transformed by industrialisation and urbanisation. In general terms, modernist artistic practice was a response to the emergence of modern culture. Modern culture was characterised by “the formation of the nation-state, the concept of the individual and of industrial and consumer capitalism” (Kelley 1998:248).

Aesthetic practice as embodied in this “response to modern culture” reflects a commitment to continual experiment and innovation (Connor 1992:288). It was informed by a rationale that first, works of art are unified and second, that they are autonomous (1992:288). This first claim of unity may be seen as a redemptive tendency to reconcile complex discontinuities. The rationale for unity is based on the belief that a work of art can provide a sense of control, order, shape and significance to the “futility and anarchy which is contemporary history” (Elliot cited in Greenhalgh 2005:13). The rationale for autonomy found in the second claim is diametrically opposed to the postmodern premise of hybridity, relatedness and contingency and focuses on the work of art as a separate and independent entity.

This artistic striving towards authentic and autonomous work called for a consideration of the specific nature and properties of the work of art and its medium (Connor 1992:288). This concept is well articulated by Clement Greenberg (1982:5-10) who in 1965 claimed that the task of art and criticism was to:

Eliminate from the effects of each art any and every effect that might conceivably be borrowed from or by the medium of any other art. Thereby each art would be rendered “pure” and in its “purity” find the guarantee of its standards of quality as well as of its independence.

Critical speculation on these allegedly transcendent values of modernist art and culture has suggested that these values served the interests of Western culture, and that the modernist endeavour towards a universal, non referential, formalist and *avant-garde* aesthetic effectively legitimised, concealed and collaborated in practices of oppression with regard to class, gender, ethnicity and colonial politics (Kelley 1998:251). While these claims are the subject of ongoing debate, the beginnings of postmodernism are often associated with the political turbulence of the late 1960s, characterised as it was by student unrest, anti-Vietnam War demonstrations, and the civil rights and women’s movements (Meecham and Sheldon 2005:15). Meecham and Sheldon (2005:47) have interpreted this political turbulence as a crisis of confidence in what they take to be the dominant and oppressive tendencies of modernism and in universal beliefs in general.

Connor (1992:289) refers to postmodernism as a “project of despecialisation”. In an endeavour to go beyond the modernist “fictive and restrictive claims for unity, identity and purity of the aesthetic object”, postmodernism embraces the opposite principles of “heterogeneity, hybridity and impurity” (1992:289). Modernism and postmodernism may equally be seen as responses to the increased complexity and uncertainty of the world. However, in general terms, while the modernist aesthetic endeavour aimed at unity and autonomy, that of postmodernism reflects the inescapably complex and contingent nature of the contemporary context (1992:292).

Modernist drawing was heterogeneous because it reflected key concerns in the diverse range of trends during this period. The role of drawing in the modernist commitment to the interrogation of mental and technical possibilities (Hauptmann 2004:17, 52) in art making should not however be underestimated.

Many modernist artists sought an “entirely new kind of vision” (Hauptman 2004:19). For such artists it was important therefore to “unlearn” what they had taken art making and drawing to be. For example, seminal texts such as Matisse’s *Notes of a Painter* 1891-1908 and Kandinsky’s *Concerning the Spiritual in Art* revealed an



emphasis on the expression of emotion and spirituality as the principal definition of art. For these artists, exploiting “the diverse [and plastic] elements at the painter’s disposal for the expression of his feelings” (Matisse in Benjamin 1987:197) or in Kandinsky’s (1866-1944) case, “the expression of the *soul* of nature and humanity...the *innerer Klang*” (Kandinsky in Sadler 1977:xiii) superseded any representation of natural appearances. Matisse’s (1869-1954) conception of drawing was not bound by traditional academic notions of ‘correctness’. The ‘rules’ that Matisse respected were those prompted by his own artistic temperament (1987:170). And terms such as ‘expression’ and “essential lines” (1987:160-161) with respect to Matisse’s drawing are to be understood as subjectively determined.

Towards the end of his life Matisse declared “At last, I no longer know how to draw” (Hauptman 2004:21). This author interprets this as meaning that Matisse’s process of “unlearn[ing]” (2004:21) did not amount to a complete rejection of drawing. Instead Matisse was able to eliminate the “rules and strictures of the academy” from his practice and re-taught himself to apply his own subjectively determined guiding principles.

For other artists in search of “seeing anew” (Hauptman 2004:19) their practice included testing the established two-dimensional format and artistic gesture as a repository of meaning and information. One of the central contributions of modernism to artistic theory and practice lay in shifting art making from the formal to the conceptual realm (Kelley 1998:251). Although it is not a drawing, Duchamp’s *Fountain* (1916) is iconic in its assertion of the conceptual basis of art making. The above writings of Matisse and Kandinsky as well as those of Clement Greenberg that supported a “formalist emphasis on visuality” (Hopkins 2006:145), contrast starkly with this conceptual predilection.

Within the diversity of trends during this period, and notwithstanding its importance, modernist drawing practice largely kept intact the traditional function and status of the medium as secondary and intermediate. The postmodern dismantling of hierarchies meant that artistic discourse and practice challenged the validity and dominance of traditional artistic media. This period thus ushered in an exploitation of drawing as a primary and independent medium of expression.

In keeping with the postmodern spirit of hybridity, heterogeneity and contingency, it now falls to each artist to define and validate the parameters of their artistic practice. In the same way that contemporary art making practice is not limited as to context, materials, processes and approaches, what may currently be termed a drawing can include any material and whatever approach, intention and process an artist deems appropriate to a particular art making venture. In examining contemporary drawing therefore, the terms ‘open-ended’ and ‘exploratory’ if they apply, must be considered in relation to particular artists’ work, their art making process and individual interpretation and use of drawing. Further contingent factors to be taken into account are the specificity and embeddedness of the artist’s historical, cultural and social context (Kelley 1998:252).

The preceding discussion has attempted to provide a brief overview of the use of drawing within the changing values and trends from Classical Antiquity to that of today. Until approximately fifty years ago, a historically static concept of drawing confined its use and status to preparation and peripheral, respectively. The transition of drawing beyond these parameters is therefore very recent. What is lacking however in the above discussion is a clear and specific concept of drawing.

### **3. Four Definitions of Drawing**

To establish an adequate circumscription of the medium, I will now investigate four distinctive definitions of drawing as posited by four art historians and curators:

- i. *Drawing as Preparation, Material Entity, Skill and Mark* (Osborne)  
“the trace left by a tool drawn along a surface particularly for the purpose of preparing representation or pattern” (Osborne 1986:328);
- ii. *Drawing as Material Data* (Godfrey)  
“an archaeology of the act of touching” (Godfrey 1990:9);
- iii. *Drawing Defined by Ground* (Elderfield)  
“works on paper” (Elderfield 1983:7);

- iv. *Line and Mark as the Fundamental Armature of Drawing* (Dexter)  
“a mark-making process used to produce a line-based composition” (Dexter 2006:005).

Together, the above ways of circumscribing of drawing refer to the appearance, ground and function of drawing. To probe their strengths and limitations I will critically discuss each definition separately.

### **3.1. Drawing as Preparation, Material Entity, Skill and Mark**

“the trace left by a tool drawn along a surface particularly for the purpose of preparing representation or pattern” (Osborne 1986:328).

Osborne’s definition refers to the historical, mainly preparatory, role of drawing. The word “trace” suggests the historical association of drawing with line and mark. Furthermore, the understanding of drawing as a material entity is implicit in the definition (as is in the other definitions above), namely, with the phrasing of drawing involving a tool on a surface, the inference is that the artist combines two material things, the outcome of which is an object or material, visible substance.

The concept of art as an object becomes problematised in the modernist transition from naturalism to conceptualism, where the materiality of the art work is questioned (Johnson 1995:10). Within Western art in the 1960s, the “dematerialisation of the art object” was originally intended to undermine the commodification of art and the dominance of the gallery, auction house and dealer as considerations in artistic practice. Conceptual, performance and land or earth art evidence this “dematerialisation” of the art object and do away with the equipment traditionally associated with art making, such as paint brushes, frames, chisels, marble, art galleries (Meecham and Sheldon 2005:245). Ironically, the resilient art market found ways to commodify these conceptual art forms in the form of documentary evidence. Examples of such documentary evidence include photographs, memorabilia and film or video, as well as, in some cases, sensational publicity (2005:245).

Contemporary artistic practice spans a vast spectrum of forms and possibilities of art work. At the one end of this spectrum, suggested by Osborne's definition, we find art work that acknowledges the materiality of form, consisting of "the craft of embodying...thought in external form" (Kelley 1998:67). Here, the art work consists of a material object form, for example, a drawing on paper. At the other end of the spectrum, equally valid contemporary artistic practice work consists of "the clarification of thought and feeling" (1998:67) without the materiality of the art object. This is demonstrated by the work of Beuys (1921-1986), severally considered shaman, trickster and cult figure (Rosenthal 2004:10, 24), for example, *I like America and America likes me* (1974), Plate 2. For this work, Beuys lived for several days in a gallery with a live coyote.

In the 1960s and 1970s, similar to much contemporary artistic practice, drawing became an action or an intellectual statement (Kovats 2007:14), for example, the seminal work by Richard Long (1945), *A Line Made by Walking England* (1967), Plate 3. This work demonstrates Long's direct engagement with landscape and his interest in relationships between time, distance, geography and measurement (Kovats 2007:24). In addition, it underscores the uncertain relationship between the art and non-artistic world (Connor 1992:289).

*A Line Made by Walking England* (1967) is a close amalgam of sculpture, performance and drawing. In this work, Long exploits what is often taken to be the fundamental structural component of drawing: line. The artist walked back and forth across a field in a straight line, flattening the wild grass. Long documented this and other similar works with black and white photographs as well as text works. These documentary accounts of the work are a version or copy of the original action and thought. The constant play between the original and its copy, that is, the interplay between an authentic source or version and its parody or pastiche is (as discussed above), characteristic of much postmodern artistic practice.

Long uses the process of walking as his artistic methodology and thus implicitly questions the skilled nature of making artwork. Modernist and contemporary artistic practice has interrogated skill as a fundamental requirement for drawing. If we return to Osborne's definition: "the trace left by a tool drawn along a surface particularly for

the purpose of preparing representation or pattern” (Osborne 1986:328), we see that his use of the word “tool” implies and involves drawing skill.

Until the twentieth century, the practice of drawing was indeed based on skill, “the uncanny coordination between the hand, the eye and the mind” (Dodson 1985:10), each of which is subject to training and habit (1985:10). Danto (1997:5) has suggested that the ultra self-consciousness of postmodernism has generated artistic practice that has become part of a discourse that critiques rather than represents. Hence, many artists self-consciously and deliberately question the nature of art and what is involved in the creation of art (Kelley 1998:67).

For a number of contemporary artists using drawing, the exercise of extending and examining definitions becomes the substance of the work (Yablonsky 2005:97). One of many concerns for contemporary artists is whether or not drawing as an art form requires skill in the traditional sense. Some of this practice probes relationships and discontinuities between on the one hand, what traditionally was considered part of a mainstream canon; and on the other, art forms and media traditionally regarded as belonging to the fringes of the mainstream. Some ways in which contemporary artists have interrogated the nature of drawing as a skilled activity include: experimentation with artistic process as well as the inclusion of writing, popular imagery, graffiti, children’s work and other references to “outsider” art. The term “outsider” art refers to art work made by artists who are mentally disturbed or institutionalised, by folk artists and more generally, by anyone without a formal art education (Kelley 1998:67). An example of “outsider” art is the talismanic work of Gedewon (1939-1995), for example, *Diagram*, Ink on paper, (1991-1992), Plate 4. Russell Crotty (b. 1956) is one of many contemporary artists who combine writing with drawing. His fine pen line drawings are often interspersed with notes, usually on astronomy or ecology. His nightscapes for example, combine “texts of snippets of nocturnal radio talk show dialogue, speeches against local ecological intrusions, as well as excerpts form some of his favourite writers such as H. P. Lovecraft, Gary Snyder and Carl Sandburg” (Kovats 2007:35), Plate 5.

The use of writing and intertextuality in contemporary artistic practice also demonstrates the extent to which verbal language has infused visual language. As

demonstrated in Crotty's nightscapes, it has become commonplace for artists to use diverse non-art historical texts including sociology, anthropology, linguistics, film and popular culture (Meecham and Sheldon 2005:4). The conceptual artist Jenny Holzer's work of the 1990s, for example, *Protect Me from What I Want*, Plate 6, consists entirely of this phrase in LED lighting and placed underneath Caesar's Palace in Las Vegas, Nevada. This work demonstrates the assimilation of a linguistic vocabulary into the lexicon of contemporary artistic practice (Meecham and Sheldon 2005:4). Further, Holzer's work ruptures traditional notions of drawing skill, subject matter, artistic process, and how audiences view an art works.

As in *A Line Made by Walking England* (1967), Long's *Wall Drawings* of the late 1980s interrogate the premise that drawing is a skilled activity. In addition, these works confront established artistic process and approach. To make these works, Long threw muddy water at a gallery wall, leaving it to dry in splatters and rivulets. Long's artistic approach in his *Wall Drawings*, Plate 7, involved visualising himself as a conduit through which nature might act (Godfrey 1990:29). These works do not employ drawing skill in a traditional sense, but rather contribute to the broader debate about what constitutes art and art making. The question of artistic authorship is therefore pertinent: whether Long or nature should be credited for the works (Godfrey 1990:29) given that the properties of mud and water overwhelmingly characterise this series. It has become commonplace for the acknowledged artist of an art work not to have directly made the drawing (Kelley 1998:67). Accordingly, many contemporary artists employ people to assist in the art making process<sup>2</sup>.

The current lack of consensus on the nature of drawing, including its traditional imperative of skill is evident in *Drawing Thinking*, at Von Lintel Gallery, New York, an exhibition curated by Marco Breuer as recently as 2007. This exhibition included eight artists who were asked to interrogate the question, "What makes a drawing?"

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<sup>2</sup> While his work is not drawing in the traditional sense, an unusual contemporary artist who employs assistants to make his work is Takashi Murakami (b. 1963) who runs a company called Kaikai Kiki Co., Ltd. Using digital and commercial media, painting and sculpture, the company is involved in art making, branding and marketing. Murakami employs ninety assistants in and around Tokyo and New York to make art and merchandise. Murakami is unusual in that he acknowledges the collective labour in his work, sometimes upwards of thirty five artists (Thornton 2008:191). In addition, Murakami actively helps his assistants launch their own artistic careers: Kaikai Kiki promotes seven other Japanese artists' work, six of whom are women (Thornton 2008:196).

(MacAdam 2007:139) and “draw in some broad sense, using and even perverting both ersatz and conventional media” (2007:138). Artists were encouraged to imitate thinking processes or ideas rather than represent anything in particular. Some of the works included pencilled scribbles by Christine Hiebert which mapped “the rhythms of her thoughts and creative activity” (2007:138); a geometric path created out of carpeting by Oona Stern; and Allyson Strafella’s contribution, a work resulting from constantly striking the colon key of her typewriter to form solid patterns on the carbon and coloured transfer paper until the fragile paper began to tear, thus merging “lyricism, aggression and vulnerability” (2007:138). Strafella’s methodology of striking the colon key of her typewriter, is in my view, a telling example of work that questions the skilled and personal nature of drawing.

### **3.2. Drawing as Material Data**

“an archaeology of the act of touching” (Godfrey 1990:9).

In using the words, “act of touching” this definition emphasises the personal and unique handling of materials in the art making process. Godfrey’s reference to archaeology suggests that a drawing may contain important ‘material data’ or information. Thus, in the same way that an archaeologist analyses material data, a viewer of a drawing may infer contingent details about the artist, artistic practice and process, including the context within which the drawing was made. In the discussion of drawing from which the above quote is drawn, Godfrey (1990:9) asserts that “drawings are everywhere” and should not be seen as a language but as the residue of an activity, perhaps similar to the footprints that a dancer leaves on the sand...these marks may not be intentionally meaningful, they may not use a ‘language’, but they will reveal patterns relationships, even a satisfying coherence (1990:17).

The notion of drawing as “an archaeology of the act of touching” underlines the democratic nature of drawing (Godfrey 1990:9). That is, we all draw in some way, often using materials at hand. Examples include making a plan of some alteration to our house on the back of an envelope, drawing a map showing directions to a certain

place, doodling when we talk on the telephone (1990:9) or drawing in the sand while walking on the beach.

For Dexter (2006:006), this democracy of drawing reflects the elemental nature of the medium. Dexter (2006:006) contends that drawing is “the human mark” because it is such an intimate part of our lives from childhood. Downs *et al.*, (2009:x) similarly hold that drawing is a primal means of symbolic communication which predates and infuses writing, for example hieroglyphics. These examples of democratic and universal applications of drawing may therefore suggest a suprahistorical quality to the medium.

Godfrey’s definition of drawing as an “archaeology of the act of touching” reflects the wide range of contemporary artistic practice. It does so by freeing the notion of drawing, first, from the historical role of preparation; second, from necessarily being a skilled activity, and third, from the use of particular materials or grounds. However, by being premised on a point of connection between two objects, whether skilled or “desultory” (Downs *et al.*, 2009:xi), Godfrey’s definition still presupposes that drawing produces something material.

### **3.3. Drawing Defined by Ground**

“works on paper” (Elderfield 1983:7).

Elderfield uses the (New York) Museum of Modern Art’s broad definition of drawing as “works on paper” (Elderfield 1983:7) which is similarly premised on the materiality of drawing.

In this definition drawing turns completely on this one element of ground. It is important to note that numerous grounds have been used in the history of drawing: the earth, rock, cave walls, gallery walls, bridges, parchment, wood and wax tablets, ceramic, fabrics, leaves, papyrus, paper, our bodies and a computer screen, to name a few. Craig-Martin’s (1995:9-10) description of drawing as being “technically diverse”, is apt since these grounds vary dramatically in format, dimensions and



texture. Each ground fundamentally informs the nature of the drawing, choice of drawing materials, processes and approach. For example, drawing on ceramics must take into account the possible three-dimensionality of the form (Rawson 1969:44) and the suitability of glazes; works on silk or parchment, expensive grounds, were regarded as prestigious and required of the artist “a particular kind of attentive care” (Rawson 1969:49) in the preparation, execution and completion of the work. Thus, writing in the fifteenth century, Cennini (1922:11) conveys the laborious technique of drawing on parchment. He suggests starting the drawing by:

First rubbing and spreading some...powdered bone-dust over the parchment, scattered thinly and brushed off with a hare's foot...when you have completed your drawing...in order to make it clearer, you may fix the outlines and necessary touches with ink, then shade the folds with watercolour made of ink, that is, water as much as a nutshell will hold into which are put two drops of ink, and shade with a brush made of tails of the minever, blunt and nearly always dry.

On the other hand, contemporary graffiti is often illicitly made on public walls or bridges, demanding swift execution with fast-drying materials such as spray paint. The use of a wall as a ground occurs in Pliny's (Pliny 1991:325) account of the first painting<sup>3</sup> involving the action of circumscribing a human shadow. The classical Greek myth describes how the daughter of the potter Boutades, distraught at the imminent departure of her lover, traces around the shadow of his head on a wall as he sleeps (Kovats 2007:8). While demonstrating drawing's “technical diversity” (Craig-Martin 1995:9-10), the above examples also show what may be called a drawing, consisting of the simplest and most rudimentary materials and grounds. Craig-Martin's (1995:9-10) “modesty of means” is thus equally apt.

While the definition “works on paper” (Elderfield 1983:7) historically and contemporarily appears too narrow, it is nevertheless understandable that paper still suggests itself as the defining component and symbol of drawing. With the invention

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<sup>3</sup> Pliny (1991:325) and Kovats (2007:8) refer to the same story. Whereas Pliny (1991:325) refers to the account as demonstrating the first record of painting, Kovats (2007:8) uses Pliny's account as evidence of the first recorded drawing. In addition to suggesting that drawing may be a constituent of painting, these accounts may be taken as a particularly instructive example of the current lack of consensus about the nature of drawing.

of moveable type in the mid-fifteenth century, paper became affordable, available (Kelley 1998:67) and synonymous with drawing.

The invention of moveable type created a demand for “information in print”, and this fuelled the development of relatively low-cost paper. This in turn made drawn experimentation on paper possible (Kelley 1998:67). Affordable and relatively durable paper in addition, allowed the preservation of these drawings (1998:67). As a result, preparatory drawings that recorded “the workings of the artist’s mind” (1998:67) came to be appreciated. Likewise, the accompanying qualities of spontaneity, intimacy and expressiveness (1998:67) recognised in these working/thinking drawings came to be valued.

Prior to the availability of paper, the pattern books referred to above used vellum, parchment and sometimes wooden tablets (Kelley 1998:67) as ground. Wax tablets or prepared wood (Kelley 1998:67) were alternative preparatory drawing grounds. Both of these required labour-intensive preparation (Rawson 1969:47). When paper became affordable and widely available during the fifteenth century, this dramatically influenced drawing practices (Kelley 1998:67): artists had the scope to experiment extensively and they were able to preserve their drawings. Accordingly, not only did the invention of moveable type dramatically influence drawing practices, but these new drawing practices underlined the value of drawing.

While paper was in use in China from the second century CE (Rawson 1969:51), it was only available in the West from the twelfth century onwards. The first paper mills in Italy were set up at Fabriano from 1276 (1969:51) and paper remained costly until the invention of moveable type in the mid-fifteenth century (Kelley 1998:67). Paper-making centres and paper mills using industrial processes in Europe (Rawson 1969:51) emerged to meet the demand for information in print, with different towns developing distinct types of paper (1969:51). Interestingly, as an indication of the origin and demand for paper for print media and apart from its intrinsically different qualities, sheets of paper continue to be produced in standardised rectangular formats, the dimensions of which correlate directly to book-printers’ standard sizes (1969:53).

It is worth noting the similarities between the values of “spontaneity”, “intimacy” and “expressiveness” (Kelley 1998:67) associated with drawn experimentation on paper and Craig-Martin’s (1995:9-10) aforementioned characteristics of “spontaneity, creative speculation, experimentation, directness, simplicity, abbreviation, expressiveness, immediacy, personal vision, technical diversity, modesty of means, rawness, fragmentation, discontinuity, unfinishedness and open-endedness”. As discussed earlier, these characteristics ascribed to drawing may be vestiges of the preparatory experimental role historically assigned to drawing, but may in addition, have a formal origin in the paradigm shift (Kelley 1998:67) that the availability of paper precipitated in the fifteenth century.

We see therefore that a wide variety of mainly two-dimensional grounds have historically been used in the practice of drawing, with paper later coming to be taken as the defining ground of the medium. Given the increased hybridity and blurring between media in the second half of the twentieth century, contemporary drawing need henceforth not be limited to two dimensions—three-dimensional drawings are now also accepted. The notion of ground as a principally two-dimensional plane has therefore been extended. By harnessing real space in three-dimensional drawings, the traditional physical relationship of drawing to ground has in addition been ruptured (de Zegher 2010:68). Luciano Fabro’s (1936-2007) *Contatto-Tautologia* (Contact-tautology) (1967), Plate 8, uses gallery space as well as the walls, as ground. The work consists of a metal beam extending from one wall to another. The beam however is cut in two, creating a tension because the two suspended pieces are unable to meet (2010:65). Gego’s (1912-1994) site specific piece, *Reticularia* (Ambientacion) (1969), Plate 9, is literally a drawing in space consisting of crisscrossing wire configurations based on the square and triangle. The spectator is able to walk inside the drawing and thus become physically surrounded by the work. Referring to these two examples, de Zegher (2010:68) holds that the physical detachment of line from planar ground is one of the central developments in drawing in the twentieth century.

### **3.4. Line and Mark as the Fundamental Armature of Drawing**

“a mark-making process used to produce a line-based composition”  
(Dexter 2006:005).

The previous two examples of work by Fabro and Gego are premised on an understanding that line is synonymous with drawing (de Zegher 2010:68). Dexter’s definition similarly whittles down her conception of drawing to line and mark as the fundamental armature of the medium. Though freed from its preparatory role, the implicit notion of drawing in this definition is as a skilled activity and a material entity: the use of the word “composition” denotes the skill of structuring, combining and arranging the artwork components to form a whole. Dexter thus contends that whatever else contemporary drawing may be, the elements of line and mark are the invariable constituents of drawing. It should be borne in mind that the discrete quality of an individual line or mark can be lost in a shaded or constructed form or surface.

Although the pictorial characteristics and process of drawing and painting may not be mutually exclusive, these media have been historically separated and associated with line and colour respectively. In contrast to the democratic notion of drawing discussed earlier, Pliny (1991:325) ascribes the formal invention of line drawing to the Egyptian Philocles or the Corinthian Cleanthes. Pliny’s (1991:325) accounts of the earliest record of Greeks practicing drawing, record works where the artists have not used colour and have added “extra lines within the outline”. Pliny (1991:325) claims that Ephantus from Corinth is said to have been the first to daub these images with colour made from powdered earthenware. It is worth noting the striking similarity of Pliny’s (1991:325) account of line drawing to his account of the first painting which began by outlining a man’s shadow. The second stage of Pliny’s (1991:325) account of the first painting consists of applying a single colour to the image. These mythical accounts of the first painting and the first line drawing posit the use of line drawing in the initial stages of the work. Pliny (1991:325) thus interprets line as the main component of drawing and colour as an optional or secondary addition. As demonstrated by these accounts, one of the conundrums in defining drawing is that it holds an ambiguous position of being a constituent (Petherbridge 2008:28) as well as a distinct medium. It is therefore difficult to categorically differentiate painting from drawing.

A similar intellectual distinction between drawing and painting occurred during the Renaissance where the pictorial elements of line and colour were considered the distinguishing characteristics of drawing and painting respectively (Bois *et al.*, 2004:650). Renaissance theories of painting outlined three steps involved in the production of a painting: *disegno*, *compositio*, *colorito*. According to Alberti (1404-1472) (cited in Hauptman 2004:18),

*disegno* regulates the imitation of things as it creates a figure's contours. It is the equivalent of the idea, defining what distinguishes objects from each other as well as their place. *Compositio*, organises objects on a plane, like a phrase—while *colorito*, which Alberti calls the reception of light, distinguishes them through a luminous gesture.

Painting workshops in Rome came to be associated with drawing (*disegno*), which included the art of contour and composition, and those in Venice with colour (*colore*). The work of Raphael (1483-1520) and Michelangelo (1475-1564) were read as demonstrating *disegno*, while Giovanni Bellini (1430/40-1516), Giorgione (1475-1510), Titian (1487-1576), Tintoretto (1518-1594) and Veronese (1528-1588) became leading practitioners of *colore* (2004:650).

In France, the Academie des Beaux-Arts further entrenched this separation between the media of drawing and painting in the formal requirements of the Prix de Rome competition (Bois *et al.*, 2004:650) which was initiated in 1663. Evidencing bias towards *disegno*, the competition requirements stipulated “mastery of figure drawing in the production of an ‘academy’, or study of the male nude, and of a multi-figure composition in the execution of a complex history painting” (2004:650). The competition carried prestige and the prize consisted of working for three to five years in a state-sponsored studio at the Medici Palace in Rome. David (1748-1825) won the Prix de Rome in 1774 and Ingres (1780-1867) in 1801 (2004:650).

Although during this time, drawing was a secondary and largely preparatory artistic practice, those characteristics associated with drawing namely, the elements of line, contour and draughtsmanship, were valued and institutionalised. In addition, while these characteristics were associated with drawing, they were acknowledged as the essence of good painting. The institutionalised and separate values conferred on

drawing and painting at particular contingent historical points have become sedimented, making it difficult to decide whether certain features are intrinsic to drawing only.

This split between painting and drawing continued into the twentieth century. The work of Delacroix (1798-1863) is an exception to this trend. His work demonstrates exceptional competence in the synthesis of colour and draughtsmanship (Bois *et al.*, 2004:650). It could be argued that subsequently the work of the Impressionists privileged *colore* and the *avant-garde* artistic practice of Cubism, *disegno*. In the Impressionists' focus on recording their visual sensations, line and the construction of form became secondary to the rendering of light through colour (2004:650). In contrast, Pablo Picasso (1881-1973) and Georges Braque (1882-1963) relied on an extremely limited palette in attempting to record the fourth dimension; that is, recording a perception that takes into account the artist's movement through space over time.

Bois *et al.*, (2004:650) argue that the work of Matisse (1869-1954), Mondrian (1872-1944) and Pollock (1912-1956) was seminal in achieving a synthesis of line and colour. Matisse spoke of "colour by design" or "colour by drawing" (2004:650), and constructed space as much through planar areas of radiant colour as through concise linear drawing, in for example, *Harmony in Red* (1908-1909), Plate 10. Mondrian's coloured line in his abstract works for example *Victory Boogie Woogie* of the 1940s, Plate 11, further undermined this colour/line divide (2004:650). In his drip paintings in the early 1950s, Pollock literally dripped and threw liquid paint on his canvases. The linear skeins of colour in his work retain their abstractness by suggesting a sense of light and space without defining a specific form or contour (2004:650), Plate 12. In addition, the combination of line and colour in Pollock's work marks a further synthesis of abstraction and representation. Bois *et al.*, (2004:650) claim that the collective artistic practice of Pollock, Matisse and Mondrian thus ruptured the historical logic of the pictorial arts residing in the "oppositions that had come to mark the difference between painting and drawing". Significantly, Dexter, in keeping with contemporary practice, does not specifically exclude colour in her definition of drawing.

In what I view as a further perspective on this synthesis of abstraction and representation, Hauptman (2004:18) suggests that in contrast to the Renaissance fairly strict association of drawing with the “logic of representation” (*disegno*), [some] modern drawing reveals the “materiality of representation” through the *energia* of the trace. For example, Matisse’s fluid continuous line and the “liquid delirium” of Pollock’s line demonstrate this energy. And this energy is not necessarily the outcome of the use of *colore*.

Above, I have attempted to indicate the complex, contingent and irresolute nature of drawing by examining the limitations and strengths of four definitions of drawing. The task of identifying characteristics that may be intrinsic and suprahistorical remains however a challenge. I have shown that drawing has diverse uses and manifestations as a discrete and a constituent medium and process. In addition, the institutionalised and separate values given to drawing and painting, makes it difficult to transcend the sedimentation of this history and to categorically ascribe certain features as intrinsic to drawing only. In order to establish an adequate means of locating the medium, I will now examine more fully the qualities that have been ascribed to drawing as intrinsic: notably, line and mark. In particular, I will refer to theories of drawing pertaining to these elements and will present the work of South Africa artist William Kentridge (b.1955) as demonstrating features identified by theorists of contemporary art.

#### **4. Theories of Drawing**

##### **4.1. Line and Mark**

Directly associated with its historical function of preparation, drawing is often the initial formulation of ideas in visual form (Downs *et al.*, 2009:x). Petherbridge (2011:26) refers to the “swift, private, engendering first thoughts” as the sketch. Where preparation and exploration are the guiding functions of drawing, the medium thus holds a position “near to the conception of ideas and before the refinement of methods” (Downs *et al.*, 2009:x). It is therefore understandable that as a preliminary

articulation of images, artists using drawing in this way may choose to employ what may be considered the essential structure of drawing: line and mark.

Comparing spoken language with the language of drawing, Rawson (1979:21) asserts that mark and line are the fundamental elements of form in drawing. Rawson (1979:29) argues that the sounds we make that compose the words of our spoken language are similar to the drawn marks we use to construct an artwork: “marks compose the words, sentences, the expressive shapes of drawing” (1979:29). Mark and line in this sense may be regarded as similar to graphemes<sup>4</sup> (Bois *et al.*, 2004:650) in the language and structure of drawing. From the time of the twentieth century however, mark and line were freed from the function of defining form and space in the tradition of naturalism, and instead could be employed as graphemes in the service of representation or abstraction. Alternatively, artists could use these elements in whatever synthesis of abstraction and representation they chose.

It is important to stress that drawing is not seeing (Rawson 1969:21). This is the case even where drawing is based either wholly or in some part, on observation, as is the case with Kentridge. That is, drawing is an artistic construct that has a symbolic relationship with experience. Line for example is an abstract pictorial element: there are no lines in nature that for example, separate one form or plane from another (1969:21).

In order for drawing to operate as some form of communication, the lines and marks and their relationships need to function as analogies or symbols for seen experience. The analogising faculty of the human mind—which cannot be shut off and is continually at work on the visual perceptions presented to the eye and the brain (Rawson 1969:247)—evokes associated memories and responses and thus allows communication. Rawson (1969:26) claims that for drawing to function as communication the artist must be able to evoke appropriate analogy-responses from the viewer through line and mark.

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<sup>4</sup> A grapheme is “the smallest meaningful contrastive unit in a writing system” (Soanes and Stevenson: 2003:755). For example, alphabetical letters, numerical digits, punctuation marks. Lines and marks similarly may be seen as “the smallest meaningful...units” in two-dimensional visual language.



Marks and lines in drawing which function as analogies for seen experience (Rawson 1969:247) have traditionally been made on a ground with a point that moves (1969:15). Some wide ranging examples of points include, silverpoint; finger/s; a wad of cloth; a bunch of straw; a brush (1969:15); charcoal, pens; pencil; conté; the colon key of a typewriter—as in Strafella’s work. In addition—though indirect and virtual respectively—the nozzle of a spray paint can and a computer mouse: the mouse depends on computer software which approximates linearity through long sequences of clustered pixels (Petherbridge 2011:88). A digital mouse and the necessary computer software together function as a substitute or surrogate for the hand with its fingers (Rawson 1969:15). The ‘point’ in this drawing process is virtual rather than actual. However, whether actual or virtual, the function of a drawing point is to make marks that record thinking and the physical movement of the hand in the process of drawing.

Rawson (1969:15) argues that movement is the fundamental character of drawing. Although marks and lines in drawing are generally static they indelibly record the movement of the artist’s hand and the use of a point in the drawing process. Digital drawings thus similarly virtually infer movement.

Rawson (1969:16) further contends that lines are temporal, visual symbols in that they suggest the sequence of their making; namely, they record the chronological development of the artist’s perception and drawing process. Rawson (1969:17) argues that a spectator’s viewing of a drawing is implicitly guided by the “original movements of the point”.

My view, which is similar to Lauwaert (cited in de Zegher 2010:23), is that the exact chronological sequence of mark-making in drawing is obscure to the viewer of the end product. If one looks at the work of Julie Mehretu (b. 1970), as for example, *Rising Down* (2008), Plate 13, it is difficult to tell precisely which lines came first in Mehretu’s characteristically densely layered work. While all the linear layers of drawing are evident and suggest an artistic process of reassessing and reworking the image, the exact temporal sequence of the work’s evolution is not clear. Similarly, Kentridge’s drawing process is characterised by a linear, over-layered, “palimpsest” (Bois *et al.*, 2004:652-653) quality. This quality is reminiscent of some of the oldest

forms of graphic activity, for example, Palaeolithic drawings like those at Ruffignac where drawings of animals are layered over others (2004:652-653). The “palimpsest” (2004:652-653) character of Kentridge’s drawing suggests a kinetic, additive and subtractive drawing process, but the precise temporal sequence of its making is not clear, Plate 14. While these examples call into question Rawson’s (1969:16) analysis, a viewer may still grasp a sense of “the workings of the artist’s mind” (Kelley 1998:67) and thereby gain insight into the development of the work.

While Kentridge’s drawings are highly developed, the materials usually simply consist of charcoal on paper. As with much drawing and in particular, “swift, private, engendering first thoughts” (Petherbridge 2011:26), rudimentary tools and materials suffice. Where such elementary media are used, technical considerations are unlikely to interrupt (Downs *et al.*, 2009:x) or complicate the drawing process.

Simple tools and materials, as well as the fundamental constituents of drawing, line and mark, can be a particularly acute way of directly registering new ideas, perspectives and images. This acuity can get lost in subsequent processes where the work is developed, refined or translated to other media.

Rawson (1969:15) argues this point within the paradigm of the properties of media and the linear, kinetic quality of drawing. He contends that the linear, kinetic character of drawing is difficult to translate into other media, such as painting and sculpture. Moreover, the opacity of paint, especially oil and acrylic paint may conceal any earlier nuanced, linear work in a painting. Dexter (2006:006) similarly pinpoints the properties of media as key distinguishing factors between painting and drawing. Dexter refers to oil painting as an art of accretion and concealment and that it is possible to paint an entirely different painting on top of another.

The linear and kinetic expressive urgency in Pollock’s painted works however defies the above. Its linearity while layered and worked, offers transparency, rather than the “accretion” Dexter (2006:006) takes to characterise painting. Similarly, line remains an overriding feature in Cy Twombly’s (1928-2011) particular fusion of drawing and painting (discussed below). Rawson (1969:15) cites the work of earlier artists who managed to infuse painting with the distinctive linear kinetic character of drawing.

For example, the work of Rembrandt (1606-69), Goya (1746-1828), Rubens (1577-1640), and Renoir (1841-1919) evidences a loose technique and handling of paint, and in the work of Rembrandt and Goya, the careful preparation of a toned ground contributes to the retention of linearity.

#### **4.2. Personal vs. the Impersonal Line**

Writing more than three decades ago, Rose (1975:14) summarised the history of drawing since the mid 1950s as the “story of a gradual disengagement of drawing as autography or graphological confession and an emotive cooling of the basic mark, the line itself”. Demonstrating “graphological confession”, line in Twombly’s work for example, appears like a freely scribbled “graffiti-like scrawl...[registering] neuromotor and psychosexual impulses” (Bois *et al.*, 2004:650). Sol LeWitt (1928-2007) on the other hand, from 1968 developed a series of wall drawings executed in 8H or 9H graphite sticks. The matrix-like drawings consisted of ordered lines drawn either by LeWitt or assistants he employed, thus de-emphasising the personal, autographic (Bois *et al.*, 2004:650) “archaeology of the act of touching” (Godfrey 1990:9). In these works, LeWitt interrogates the role of line in making meaning as well the “emotive cooling” of line (Rose 1975:14):

Each line is as important as the other line. All of the lines become one thing. The viewer can see only lines on the wall. They are meaningless. This is art (referred to in Godfrey 1990:28).

A depersonalised, mechanical approach to making drawings took a different form in the work of Warhol (1928-1987) and Lichtenstein (1923-1997). Employing line as a grapheme in representation rather than abstraction, Warhol and Lichtenstein’s work was based in an industrial and public genre of drawing—that of magazine advertisements and comic books (Bois *et al.*, 2004:651). Similar to the artists of the middle ages who hardly adjusted the schema (Gombrich 1977:148), Warhol and Lichtenstein hardly adjusted the mechanical, depersonalised genre of drawing acquired from popular culture. Their anti-purist aesthetic which evaded individuality, ironically became their unique signature style (Meecham and Sheldon 2005:79,166).

In contrast to depersonalised drawing, Kentridge uses a personal, hand-drawn process in his animated works. Bois *et al.*, (2004:653) assert that Kentridge's methodology within a context where digital ways of making animation is commonplace is "a meditation on the fate of the arts under the pressures of advanced technologies". Whereas modernists like Lichtenstein and Warhol drew attention to the dehumanising effects of mechanics, Kentridge has exploited film and pre-cinematic devices to disenfranchise mechanics by experimenting with the manipulation and expansion of vision (Bakargiev 2009:123). Bakargiev (2009:123) thus interprets Kentridge's use of film and pre-cinematic devices as allowing for a more personal exploratory methodology rather than one confined and dehumanised by "mechanics" and "advanced technologies".

Given the diverse and provisional nature of current conceptual frameworks (Meecham and Sheldon 2005:8), it is necessary to be circumspect in suggesting dominant contemporary trends. Kovats (2007:16) however contends that in contrast to the predominantly detached stance of the 1990s, current drawing celebrates the artist's touch, with the process of "crafting an object" (Kovats 2007:16) once again valued. Kentridge's personally hand-drawn approach to making work is in this sense exemplary for contemporary practice.

### **4.3. Line as Erasure**

Post World War II drawing practice evidences various permutations of the principle of erasure—the will to un-mark (Downs *et al.*, 2009:x-xi). For example, in 1953, Robert Rauschenberg (1925-2008) asked Willem de Kooning (1904-1997) for a drawing (Meecham and Sheldon 2005:165) which he then erased and signed as his own work of art (Kovats 2007:14). This work contested not only the notion of drawing "as an additive process", but also the notion of authorship and the nature of subjectivity (Meecham and Sheldon 2005:165). Rauschenberg's act of conceptual creation through destruction was paradoxically a tribute and a dismissal of de Kooning's drawing. Metaphorical as well as literal, this act of erasure participated in the debate concerning the obsolescence of drawing as a skilled activity, interrogating concepts and methods of art making, bringing elimination and absence into focus.

Closer to home, while his oeuvre spans and combines drawing, printmaking, animation, theatre and film, in his drawn animated works Kentridge exploits erasure, corrections and as discussed earlier, layering of line (Bois *et al.*, 2004:652-653). Kentridge's animated works and their narrative slowly evolve in a fluidly additive and subtractive drawing process, with Kentridge filming each alteration, for example, *Stereoscope* (1998-1999), Plate 15.

#### **4.4. The Relationship of Drawing to Dominant Trends**

Downs *et al.*, (2009:x) suggest that the consistent use of drawing throughout history as a predominantly secondary and intermediate artistic practice may have allowed artists to use drawing either to engage with current aesthetic trends or to escape from the boundaries imposed by these trends. This claim seems to suggest that by being historically peripheral, drawing gave artists latitude to reflect and explore dominant trends. Alternatively they could use drawing in such a way that the work remained outside or beside mainstream canons and in some instances, subverted dominant artistic trends.

Contemporary practice seems to support this. For example, the immediacy and directness of drawing can offer authenticity. This quality stands in contrast to a key postmodern tendency referred to earlier in relation to Long's work, namely a mimetic and continuous exchange between authenticity and its copy (Downs *et al.*, 2009:xi).

Much contemporary artistic practice defies strict divisions between disciplines and media, and many artists do not consider themselves limited or defined by one medium (Schwabsky 2005:004). Kentridge's multidisciplinary oeuvre is in keeping with this "age of the hybrid" (Yablonsky 2005:96). Unlike Kentridge however, many contemporary artists such as Tracey Emin or Tacita Dean, use media and styles of work based on their suitability for a particular thesis or project, rather than out of a concern for, or experience with, the properties of the medium (Kovats 2007:36). Kentridge combines media, and in this sense reflects a dominant contemporary trend. On the other hand, his work has evolved through his idiosyncratic and consistent use of specific media and drawing in particular. In this sense, Krauss (2000:56) argues

that Kentridge (and James Coleman b.1941) have embraced the idea of media specificity which they understand they now have to reinvent or rearticulate. The ambivalent relation of the weight of the tradition of drawing to mainstream canons may be an advantage for contemporary artists intent on interrogating concepts of drawing.

## **5. A Definition of Drawing**

Drawing remains difficult to define. Craig-Martin's (1995:9-10) descriptions of drawing: "spontaneity, creative speculation, experimentation, directness, simplicity, abbreviation, expressiveness, immediacy, personal vision, technical diversity, modesty of means, rawness, fragmentation, discontinuity, unfinishedness and open-endedness", reflect characterisations of drawing that have historically been applied to drawing. As discussed in this chapter, the constant reference to drawing in these terms does not ensure that these are indeed suprahistorical characteristics of drawing.

In addition to the above descriptions of drawing, the elements of line and contour have been posited and institutionalised as the underlying structure of drawing. The historical main value and function of drawing—preparation and draughtsmanship—was also formally established over centuries. However insistent the historical reiteration and formalisation of these descriptions and functions of drawing, it does not follow that we here have intrinsic, suprahistorical features of drawing. The ambiguous, sometimes constituent and sometimes independent nature of drawing further complicates any attempt to define drawing strictly.

The debate on the precise nature of drawing therefore remains complex and unable to disentangle itself from what is historically contingent. The predominantly preparatory role of drawing and formal recording and institutionalisation of qualities attributed to drawing over several centuries has intimately informed the way in which contemporary artists regard drawing, and thus may attempt to reinvent or reinterpret the medium. The extent to which historical concepts of drawing determine the way in which contemporary artists view and develop drawing, is however a matter of conjecture.

As I have attempted to show in this chapter, contemporary drawing practice and theory interrogates given traditions of artistic approach, methods and process. Examples include: questioning whether drawing skill is imperative; experimenting with methods of making and exhibiting work—this includes experimenting with audience participation—and exploring the diversity and hybridity of media. For the current interrogation to have a bearing on concepts and the practice of drawing, common assumptions and points of reference need to exist between the viewer and artist/art work regarding these visual principles of the work. Rawson (1969:10-11) argues that these visual principles are like the rules of a game. However, it is likely that the relation between the artist's act of creation and the viewer's act of perception is somewhat looser than Rawson suggests. Unlike the binding nature of game rules, the principles of visual communication are constantly being adapted and changed (1969:11) as demonstrated in the practice and dialogue about contemporary drawing, and this again indicates a looser relation than the one Rawson takes to be the case.

These modifications however occur within a tacit understanding between artist and viewer of the principles upon which visual traditions, and those of drawing in particular, are founded. The implicit assumption is that those involved in this visual dialogue are familiar with—to a greater or lesser extent—the principles that are being flouted and extended. The significance of any work depends on a shared, or at least partially shared, mostly intuitive understanding of these principles. It is fair to suppose that artists who interrogate the nature of contemporary drawing do so with the assumption that at least some viewers have an understanding of the tradition of drawing.

An example of this is Strafella's work on the 2007 Breuer exhibition discussed above, which explores two factors historically associated with drawing: mark and paper. The artist uses a single mark, the colon, thus reflecting contemporary textuality in visual art. Strafella strikes the colon key of a typewriter until the carbon and coloured transfer paper begins to tear. Her artistic methodology deliberately de-personalises the mark. The colon, as the mark, does not function as a grapheme in representation. Assuming a viewer may know that durability of ground has historically been a concern where artworks have been preserved for posterity, Strafella presents an artwork that is simultaneously made and destroyed by what may be considered

drawing's fundamental components, the mark and its ground—in this case, paper. I speculate that Strafella tacitly assumes that those who engage with the work have an appreciation of some of the above principles in the history of drawing.

In endeavouring to provide a working definition or 'means of circumscribing' drawing, I anticipate that this definition will be articulated in relation to the history of drawing (Davies 2001:173). In defining what makes a work of art, Danto (1973:1-17) has argued that a work cannot become art unless there is a place prepared for it in the art world by the prior history of artistic practice, either in general or by the given artist. An example would be Duchamp's *Fountain* (1916), which although not a drawing, is directly relevant to this discussion on drawing. Duchamp's art work was especially contentious and pivotal in modernism as it challenged fundamental assumptions about the nature and purpose of art (Davies 2001:172). As discussed above, the conceptual basis of art making in this work was ground-breaking. The artist set out to repudiate the prevailing values of art with this "anti-art" ready-made, asserting that any object can become art if the artist declares it to be so (Osborne 1986:335). The place "prepared" (Danto 1973:1-17) in the art world for Duchamp's *Fountain* (1916) was prior theory and artistic practice to which the work was the antithesis. The prevailing artistic values provided a framework against which Duchamp was able to react in making this work. Prior theory and artistic practice thus made it possible for Duchamp to make this significant work. The weight of this conceptual artwork lies in its agonistic relationship to its history. One could similarly argue that the contemporary ascendancy of drawing occurs in a space prepared by its historical secondary and preparatory status.

A working definition or 'means of discussing drawing' must be shaped by contingent contextual theory and practice. It must be premised on an understanding that, the question, 'what may be considered drawing?' is not suprahistorical in nature. It must also recognise that as such, any definition is likely be revised (Davies 2001:171, 173) A current definition of drawing may be regarded as an interpretation of drawing in the twenty-first century, and appreciated in relation to the history of mainly Western drawing. Further, this interpretation may provide a basis for artists to interrogate this historically-based concept and practice of drawing.



Dexter's (2006:005) definition of drawing as "a mark-making process used to produce a line-based composition" in my view describes what has become the fundamental character and armature of drawing within a paradigm of the materiality of drawing. That is, due to the history of the practice and theory of drawing, line and mark have become the constituent elements of the medium. In keeping with the open-endedness of current practice, Dexter's succinct definition does not specify function or status, ground, materials, the use of colour or monochromacity, authorship or process. By using the word "composition", Dexter loosely insinuates skill as a drawing component, thereby denoting draughtsmanship, or at the very least, a consideration of composition.

If, as Dexter (2006:005) supposes, the arrangement of the elements of a drawing is a factor in drawing, this in turn suggests artistic intention and a choice to present the work in a particular way. This is in contradistinction to Godfrey's (1990:9) "archaeology of the act of touching" which includes incidental drawings. These particular drawing outcomes may be a consequence of an activity where two objects have come into contact. However, the process does not presuppose deliberate artistic intention (Godfrey 1990:17).

The aesthetic axiom I would want to add to Dexter's (2006:005) definition is that, as discussed above, it should be regarded as 'a means of discussing drawing'. Accordingly, Dexter's interpretation of drawing should not be considered a closed and unalterable concept (Davies 2001:171). Neither should it be understood as an abiding and universal concept of drawing. Dexter's definition should be seen as being located in the history of drawing: this characterisation of drawing may be considered the outcome of the historically mainly preparatory function of drawing. Moreover, it may be regarded as a starting point for contemporary artists to explore and reinterpret the concept and practice of drawing.

Jean Baudrillard (2005:43-49) is of the view that art can now only reiterate what has gone before. However, with respect to drawing, two factors may provide artists with the necessary scope to reinvent and reinterpret the medium: first, the relatively recent function and status transition of drawing from its mainly inventive and intermediate function to a primary medium of expression has made current drawing practice and

dialogue extremely fluid. This indeterminacy about drawing may thus occasion a useful flexibility to widen and reassess drawing practice and discourse possibilities. Second, the historical ambiguous relationship of drawing to dominant trends (Downs *et al.*, 2009:x) may serve as a model for drawing practice that either reflects or subverts mainstream artistic trends.

The contemporary context therefore is marked by first, theoretically provisional and open-ended artistic practice, in general; second, the fluid nature of drawing practice and dialogue; and third, the tradition of drawing holding an ambivalent relationship to mainstream trends. These factors may assist contemporary artists using drawing to produce work that goes beyond a mere reiteration of the tradition of drawing. On the one hand, contemporary artists may benefit in this task by embracing the specificity of the medium of drawing as observed by Krauss (2000:56) in relation to William Kentridge and James Coleman; while on the other, a worthwhile methodology may involve exploiting a current approach to art making in general: that of hybridity. Such an interdisciplinary and eclectic approach may likewise generate interpretations of drawing that are not mere reiterations of what has gone before (Baudrillard 2005:43-9).

## **6. Chapter Summary**

With the central objective of establishing a definition of drawing, this chapter has endeavoured to locate the current concept and practice of drawing within the history of mainly Western drawing. Through rigorously examining and evaluating adjectives, descriptions and definitions of drawing, the discussion has investigated the validity of the idea that drawing may possess intrinsic, suprahistorical characteristics. Moreover, this chapter has provided an overview of a few theories of drawing that pertain mainly to line and mark.

Notwithstanding the admitted complexity of the task, this chapter indeed offers and defends a definition of drawing: Dexter's (2006:005) definition of drawing as "a mark-making process used to produce a line-based composition" This definition must be seen as located in the history of drawing: it is the outcome of the historically

mainly preparatory function of drawing. Moreover, it may be considered a basis for the continued exploration of the medium and process of drawing.

The purpose of a definition of drawing in this thesis is to provide a means of locating and discussing the central focus of this research: drawing—and my own use of drawing, in particular. The following chapter takes Dexter's definition as a comparative starting point for examining my use of drawing.

## CHAPTER TWO

### MY OWN USE OF DRAWING

#### 1. Introduction

As discussed in Chapter One, the contemporary discourse and practice of drawing is fluid. Nevertheless, Dexter's (2006:005) definition of drawing: "a mark-making process used to produce a line-based composition" seems broadly to encompass what has become the fundamental character and armature of drawing within a paradigm of the materiality of the medium. This way of circumscribing drawing should not be considered absolute. It should be seen in relation to the history of mainly Western drawing. Furthermore, this characterisation of drawing may serve as basis for contemporary artists to extend and reinterpret the concept and practice of drawing.

In this thesis I refer to my specific use of drawing so as to narrow down the current diverse and irresolute nature of drawing and make the research problem of examining the generative nature of drawing tractable. Dexter's definition will thus be useful as a comparative starting point for discussing my work. The following is a brief account of my individual use of drawing which I will amplify in the course of this chapter.

Dexter's characterisation of drawing adequately conveys the linear and material basis of my use of drawing. The definition does not specify the function or status of drawing. This is appropriate to contemporary practice where drawing is a primary medium of expression and no longer bound by its historically mainly intermediate role. Similarly, drawing in my work is primary and seminal: it functions in the preparation, exploration as well as consolidation of ideas and images. In contrast, open-ended inquiry underpins my artistic approach, thus aligning my working practice with this fundamental tenet in the tradition of drawing. In examining the nature, and in particular the generative nature, of drawing in my work, it is this aspect of open-ended inquiry in my artistic approach that I have endeavoured to deepen in this research practice.

I make art works in paint and drawing media. These two media seem to coexist in my work. Furthermore, the preparatory function of these two media is similar: my art works in drawing media serve as preparation for those in paint media, but equally, art works in paint media serve as preparation for those in drawing media. This breaks with the traditional function of drawing as, for the most part, the singular medium of preparation.

In its conciseness, Dexter's definition is silent on ground and colour. Currently, these choices are the prerogative of each artist. I choose to use traditional grounds and materials, and make use of colour and well as purely tonal drawing. My materials sometimes consist of oil paint on canvas and gesso-ed board; and sometimes, with paper as a ground, the media include, conté, charcoal, pencil, inks and watercolour. I use these media separately as well as in various combinations as the image and artistic process requires.

Furthermore, in the choice of the word "composition" Dexter (2006:005) denotes at the very least, an intentional consideration of pictorial organisation. On the other end of the scale, the word "composition" seems to suggest skill as a defining feature of drawing. The imperative of skill may be considered modernist. In this sense, my drawing is modernist since it is the outcome of skill and technical proficiency and I pay careful attention to composition.

Finally, Dexter's (2006:005) use of the word "process" suggests that drawing can refer both to a medium and to a particular art making process: both aspects of drawing are fundamental to my work. Drawing underpins my entire artistic practice: it is central to discovering as well as navigating my artistic direction and voice. Moreover it is at the core of my methodology of producing images and developing individual art works. All these functions are closely linked.

The foregoing paragraphs indicate the centrality of drawing as medium and process in my work. The thematic and iconographic content of the art works in paint and drawing media on my research exhibition has to do with figurative images of journeying, transition, impermanence and change. As with many artists' work that develops from the whole of their artistic practice, these images and concerns have

evolved from my earlier figurative MAFA body of work concerned with physical movement. For example, the 2003-2004 *Walking Woman*, *Walking Figures* and *Cyclist Series* reflect an experience and observation of walking or moving figures, while in the 2003-2004 *Cinema* and *TV Newsreader Series*, movement suggests itself in the flickering screen.

As an abstract interpretation of physical movement, the art work in this practice-led research may also be regarded as a personal and artistic response to our contemporary context. Flux and uncertainty are inherent to our life and death cycle. These are made more pressing, in the South African context, by extreme criminal violence, poverty and the effects of the HIV and AIDS pandemic; and on a wider level, global warming, economic uncertainty and international terrorism.

The discussion will now expand on the above summary by closely examining my art works and artistic process. The following will be included:

- i. I will consider my (implicit, intuitive or reflexive) rationale for using drawing in more depth. My formative contextual influences will be discussed in this section. I will locate the examination of my artistic approach in the frameworks of material thinking and contemporary media theory. Furthermore, I will discuss my artistic approach in relation to the heuristics of an open-ended, exploratory approach, iteration and mimesis.
- ii. I will attempt to identify the various permutations of drawing in my work.
- iii. I will examine the above in relation to the nature of the particular amalgam of painting and drawing in my work.
- iv. To conclude this chapter, I will refer to current drawing trends discussed in Chapter One and compare my particular use of drawing with these general tendencies. This will help to contextualise my work within the contingent features of the contemporary Fine Art Field. A further question in addressing the latter will be whether drawing, more than typical painting, is particularly suited to the way in which the inescapability of flux (personal, societal, which

includes the South African, as well as the global context) has impressed itself deeply on me and is a central motif in my work.

## **2. A Rationale for Using Drawing**

### **2.1. Contextual Influences**

Modernist as well as contemporary contextual contingent factors have a bearing on the rationale for my particular use of drawing. The institutions which shaped my formative art making experience propagated modernist foundational concepts of drawing and art making in many ways. These included, treating drawing as a skilled, essential, but preparatory medium, as well as the notion of the artist developing a “unique, personal style” (Jameson 1985:114-23) and vision. The contemporary context has further shaped my treatment of drawing principally in the understanding of it as a primary medium of expression.

When I attended high school in the 1970s, drawing was presented as an indispensable, exploratory preparatory process and medium which purportedly provided integrity and substance for more consolidated works in other media, especially for painting. My working practice on the whole, involved working in series and developing images through an iterative, largely observational drawing process.

From 1979-1982, I studied for a BAFA at the Fine Art Department, Natal University, Pietermaritzburg. This context similarly reflected a “localised late Modernist idiom” (Leeb-du Toit 2011:56) as demonstrated, for example, in the structure of the courses. Thus, while it was not possible to major in drawing, courses or modules in object and figure drawing at first and second year level were compulsory, underlining the value of the medium, albeit as constituent and intermediate. Unlike contemporary hybridity, media and disciplines during this period were treated as discrete, with work accordingly reflecting media specificity.

As mentioned above, both of the above formal institutions held drawing skill to be essential in art making. This is largely in keeping with the historical academic treatment of drawing concisely summarised by Petherbridge:

Before the late twentieth century, learning to be an artist or architect as an apprentice in a studio or attending an academy or art school was entirely predicated on learning to draw. Drawing was conceived as a way of learning about past and present art, about recording the everyday world and achieving control of processes of representation, as well as perfecting the conduit between hand and imagination through practice. Historically, the passing on of skills by mature artists was understood as a sign of professional status, and equally, the renewal of creativity throughout an artist career, by continual learning through drawing, was an indicator of greatness (2011:210).

Although I did not serve an apprenticeship with a mature artist I was taught that “acts of observational drawing precede, stand alongside and underpin the complex intellectual programme of finished works” (2011:216).

Demonstrating the contextual influence apropos drawing on my artistic practice, my use of skilled, exploratory and open-ended drawing was extensive during my formative training and afterwards. As a consequence of this formative modernist framework that held drawing as an essential generative medium on the one hand, and my idiosyncratic affinity with drawing on the other, I have come to rely on drawing as a quintessential creative medium and process. I think that without drawing I would probably be at a loss as to how to make art work—though this is speculation. This is true for me even when I paint. In addition, because the contemporary art context supports drawing as a primary medium of artistic expression, it has become easier to focus on drawing in my own work.

## **2.2. An Intuitive and Reflexive Motivation**

My reflexive and intuitive motivation for using drawing has been shaped by contextual factors. In attempting to examine my reflexive and intuitive rationale for using drawing, it is necessary to briefly scrutinise interpretations of drawing as a medium, on the one hand and drawing as a process, on the other. The function of



drawing in my work may provide insights into these modes of drawing. As I discussed above, drawing is fundamental to the process of finding and charting my artistic direction and voice, as well as to producing images and developing work. Drawing is thus at the centre of the interlinked activities of discovering, preparing, exploring, as well as consolidating ideas and images.

It is necessary to briefly elaborate on the concept of artistic direction and voice. In my experience, artistic direction manifests as an idiosyncratic series of intuitive and rational choices in the art making process. This is demonstrated in my selection of subject matter, imagery, medium, materials as well as in my handling of materials, including drawing skill. These artistic practice decisions assist with the discovery, preparation, exploration and development of each art work. The sum total of these idiosyncratic choices reflects as a distinct quality in a body of art work. It is this quality or tone that runs like a thread throughout an oeuvre that I would consider to be artistic voice.

The above interpretation of artistic direction and voice further supports an interpretation of the close alignment of the process and medium of drawing. The interpretation and application of drawing as a medium and process are in addition, simultaneously abstract and concrete: the use of drawing as process suggests that drawing facilitates thinking and the evolution of work; as a medium, drawing may be considered a vehicle for thinking. This correlation of drawing as process and medium may be interpreted as allied to material thinking and contemporary media theory.

### **2.3. Material Thinking and Contemporary Media Theory**

The terms “Material thinking” or “material productivity” coined by Paul Carter and Barbara Bolt respectively (Barrett and Bolt 2007:30) take into account the collaboration of the artist’s creative intelligence with artistic processes. Carter (2004:XI) asserts that the making of works of art, which includes visual art, architecture, writing, performance and dance, involves material thinking. The concept of material thinking makes the “handling of materials” (Barrett and Bolt 2007:31)

essential to the artistic encounter. The above authors assert that artistic materials and processes of production are not inconsequential and passive, but play a significant “intelligent” (2007:31) role in interaction with the artist’s creative intelligence. Accordingly, material thinking may be thought of as the relations and insights that arise during artistic production where the artist’s creative intelligence collaborates with artistic processes and materials in a dyadic structure. My particular use of drawing depends on a direct and physical process of working in the dyad of material thinking.

The notion of material thinking correlates with aspects of contemporary media theory: McLuhan (1967:15) contended in 1964 that the “medium is the message,” implying a continuity of “informational meaning and technical expression” (Hansen 2009:2). The concept is broader than this and includes the idea that our experience and knowledge is brokered by media, as articulated by Kittler’s (1986:xxxix) claim that “media determine our situation”. Mitchell and Hansen (2010:4) make the McLuhanesque suggestions that media are the prosthesis of human agency. For the current research, this means that without the ‘prosthetic’ medium of drawing, particular insights will not materialise.

The frameworks of material thinking and contemporary media theory thus imply that my thinking and my art making co-evolve and correlate. Accordingly, the thinking that we ascribe to the artist would never have evolved had she not engaged with the particular materials she did. This dyadic view contrasts with popular ‘expressive’ theories of art making where (good) art does no more than faithfully render some inner state of the artist which predated any encounter or dialogue with artists’ materials. Thus my recurrent claim—that I do not know how to make art work other than through the medium of drawing—makes sense in the light of these two frameworks: I think through the medium of drawing; and drawing brokers interrelated thinking and art works.

It is important to note that before I had fully researched these two frameworks I intuitively understood some of their key aspects in my artistic practice. For example, in my journal I recorded that in process of making art works in paint I felt I had for relatively sustained periods of time managed to “discover and explore ‘in the paint’ or

‘with the paint’” (personal journal 5 September 2007). And when embarking on the *Becoming* (2009-2012) series I noted that as an artist I play only one part in the alchemy of my encounter with paper and charcoal:

...the work will happen because of my encounter with the paper and charcoal and with the action of drawing. The richness of the drawing doesn’t depend on me alone...I am...simply a part in the alchemy of what happens” (personal journal 27 May 2009).

If I were to apply these frameworks to Dexter’s definition of drawing, lines and marks as the fundamental armature of drawing may be the outcome of a complex of factors in the process and medium of drawing. These intimately connected factors, which span the medium of drawing as well as artistic approach and process, will be further explored in Chapter Three in relation to the generative nature of drawing.

As in many other contemporary artists’ work, for example that of Julie Mehretu (b. 1970) and Paula Rego (b. 1935)<sup>1</sup>, the particular type of material thinking manifest in my work reflects mainly the lexicon of two-dimensional visual language. This is not to say that verbal language plays no part in my art making process, for example, in the titles of the work. However, my art works do not evidence an explicit alignment of text and image as demonstrated in the work of, to mention just a few artists, Jenny Holzer (b.1950), William Kentridge (b. 1955), Richard Crotty (b. 1948), Yoshitomo Nara (b. 1959), David Shrigley (b. 1968) and South African-born, Berlin-based Robin Rhode (b.1976).

#### **2.4. Heuristics**

To examine my particular art making process, including my reflexive and intuitive rationale for using drawing as process and medium, I need to investigate the heuristics

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<sup>1</sup> I would interpret material thinking in Paula Rego’s work, for example, *Dog Women* series (1994) Plate 16, and *Pillowman* series (2004) as including the alchemy of Rego’s models. Rego has collaborated with Lila Nunes and Anthony Rudolf on several of Rego’s narrative drawing-based series of works. The models use costumes and mannequins to create staged scenes which Rego then paints/draws. Within a material thinking framework, I would therefore interpret Rego’s *Dog Women* series (1994) and *Pillowman* series (2004) as the outcome of the alchemic alliance consisting of herself as the artist, Nunes and/or Rudolf, her artistic processes and materials. The dynamic that her model/s brings should not be overlooked.

I use. In art, there are no methods guaranteed to secure significant results—results which deserve being called ‘inventive’, ‘new’, ‘creative’ or ‘transgressive’. Instead, the challenge facing the artist is that of finding heuristics which, by and large, work for her. A hypothesis governing the practical and theoretical investigations conducted for this practice-led research is that valuable work often arises from the application of three heuristics, and that this is especially true in my own case. These three heuristics, which in addition are part of my reflexive and intuitive rationale for using drawing, are:

- i. The use of an open-ended, exploratory artistic approach;
- ii. The use of iteration to effect transformations;
- iii. Allowing drawing to function as a primary form of mimesis in my art-making process.

I will now discuss each of these.

#### **2.4.1. Artistic Approach**

The contemporary U.S. painter Susan Rothenberg (b. 1945) in her early Horse paintings from the 1970s gave herself a set of artistic problems which she articulated as ‘What if?’ “What if it (that is, the format) was divided in half? What if side bars locked it into place on the field (*North Wall 1976*) (Simon 1991:33)?” In an endeavour to exploit uncertainty for the purposes of extending artistic boundaries and widening artistic choices, my approach is a similar non-classificatory, ‘what if’ inquiry. (In my experience, anything from small changes to more ground-breaking work is usually a consequence of such an open-ended approach). For example, at the beginning of this research I translated some small drawings into works in oil paint on 240 cm x 120 cm gesso-ed board. These small drawings include, *On the Back of a Bakkie I* (2007, 35 x 50 cm) Plate 29, *Going I* (2007, 65 x 50 cm), Plate 27, and *Turf I* (2007, 48 x 34 cm), Plate 31, which were used in the translation of *Promised Land*

(2008), Plate 35. The key questions motivating the choice of this scale of *Promised Land* (2008, 240 cm x 120 cm) were:

- i. How does this scale affect my drawing?
- ii. In what way does this scale induce me to draw differently?
- iii. Can I make a work on this big scale equivalent in strength and energy to the little drawing?
- iv. Can I translate the marks and lines evident in the smaller works to a different medium, oil paint, and to a larger format?

The ‘what if’ questions that inform my work are arguably in keeping with the nature of practice-led research where a deliberate reflective and theoretical interrogation informs the practice, and the practice in turn presents further questions and research, and so on. These ‘what if’ questions regarding scale of format and differences in drawing by translating smaller drawings to the large scale of *Promised Land* (2008), *Dreaming of Green* (2008) and *Metamorphosis* (2009) prompted me to use bigger brushes. I used the widest ones I could buy at hardware stores, 4 inches (approximately 10 cm) in width. These hardware brushes rendered brushstrokes that were wider, bigger and more in keeping with the size format I was working on, especially evident in *Promised Land* (2008) and *Dreaming of Green* (2008). My physical gestures in making these marks with big brushes in addition, had to be more expansive than my drawing gestures in smaller works.

Further, the formats of *Promised Land* (2008), *Dreaming of Green* (2008) and *Metamorphosis* (2009) are substantially larger than my physical body. I needed a piece of furniture—a chair, table or ladder—to reach parts of each work while working on these pieces when they were vertical. I was concerned that I could become so absorbed in the artistic process that I would absentmindedly fall off the edge of whatever I was standing on. I therefore positioned the works to lie flat on the floor—as Pollock did for his drip paintings of the 1950s—and worked on them that way. This meant that I could walk around the work and then develop it from whatever side

seemed most appropriate. I was therefore able to see, evaluate and develop the image from various viewpoints. Occasionally I would stand the work vertically and develop it that way. The direction of my brushstrokes in all of these works reveals that I have drawn from many angles. The range of viewpoints that this method easily allowed was an unexpected advantage to what started out being a physically challenging art making process. Throughout my artistic practice research, especially with works in paint, I have continued to exploit this methodology of viewing and working on an image upright as well as flat on the floor. The translation of drawing from smaller works to large formats thus prompted a use of new tools and initiated an altered drawing practice methodology, especially with regard to larger works in paint.

Discrepancies in the spatial and tonal nature of the grounds between smaller drawings and large scale works in paint provided further translation challenges. In my experience a white untreated paper ground has a markedly different spatial quality to a large scale white painted ground. I speculate that this is a likely result of material differences in the two grounds. This includes the precise quality and tone of white in each of these grounds as well as scale (in other words, literally a very large expanse of white by comparison with that in a smaller drawing). I endeavoured to produce in *Promised Land* (2008) an equivalent richness of ground that the little preceding works contain, but found it difficult to create a white painted ground that was not stark. I therefore abandoned the idea of a white ground and opted to produce a ground using a mid-tone. In fact I have used a mid-tone ground in all of my works in paint except for *Somewhere* (2012), Plate 40.

As these examples show, this ‘trial and error’ exploratory artistic approach involves subjective and intuitive ways of working. As with qualitative research, such an approach to art making is therefore a non-formulaic process rather than a set of distinct procedures (Terre Blanche and Durrheim 2007:286) or a linear sequence of steps (McNiff 1998:43). Art-based and practice-led research, even when guided by carefully considered questions (as above), methodologies and experienced artistic practice, involves an implicit “embrace of the unknown” (McNiff 1998:16). End products of this research in the form of artworks are often uneven and unpredictable (1998:38). It must be noted that creative speculation and the “embrace of the unknown” (1998:16), yields some work or versions of work that must be discarded.

Uncertainty therefore rather than reliability is characteristic for this particular type of research (1998:43). Attempting to avoid such uncertainty will lead to playing safe by sticking to the tried and tested, which is hardly a good approach in creative endeavours. An entry in my journal confirms this: “I am not going to learn anything if I play it safe” (personal journal 5 September 2007).

While this research and art making process embraces the unknown (McNiff 1998:16) it nonetheless requires a clear intention that determines specific choices regarding, in my case, medium, scale of work, imagery as well as approach and method of working. In other words, artistic practice involves making discerning choices intended to generate a specific outcome (Bailin 1994:68). In embracing the unknown, practice-led research is not a chance and open-ended process driven by arbitrary choices. Howard (1982:110) holds the view, which he calls the “Unforeseen Theory of Creativity” that while it is not possible to know precisely what a creative outcome will be, one does have at least some general or vague idea of the form of this end product. He expands:

For even if it be argued that one never *knows* what one will do in advance of doing it, one may yet *intend* in greater or lesser detail to this or that and know one’s intention perfectly well. Only that is required to ‘foresee’ what one undertakes to create; not a prediction, or clairvoyance, still less full knowledge of results (Howard 1982:110).

The making of *Promised Land* (2008), Plate 35, demonstrates the above combination of specific choices and clear intention within an embrace of the unknown (McNiff 1998:16). My process and approach was guided by specific ‘what if?’ questions and choices, as above. The format chosen for this work (120 cm x 240 cm) was substantially larger but similar to the rectangular ‘portrait format’ of the *Turf* (2007) series, Plates 31-33. Although I had never used this combination of scale and shape in any previous work, doing so seemed worthwhile in the light of the above exploratory questions regarding drawing and translating images from small to very large. Furthermore, I chose to use gesso made from rabbit size in an attempt to increase the translucency of the oil paint and thus allow the linearity and history of the works’ development to be more evident<sup>2</sup>. The main intention in this work was to further

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<sup>2</sup> Readymade bought gesso as demonstrated in *Those Who Go*, (2007) and *In Passing* (2008) turned out to provide greater translucency than the gesso I made from rabbit size.

develop and explore an image that I had worked on iteratively (see below). Thus having in my view, adequately made particular choices and clarified my intention for *Promised Land* (2008), the embrace of the unknown (1998:16) lay in the subsequent direct and physical process of working in the dyad of material thinking where it not possible to foresee the precise outcome.

*In Passing* (2008), Plate 38, developed from minimal intention. All I knew at the outset—something that may be interpreted as a vague intention—was that I should include the figurative element somehow. The work evolved as I worked in the dyad of material thinking. Many artists would support this approach. Kentridge (cited in Kovats 2007:35), for example, considers the starting point for all his work as the insatiable desire to draw, with only a vague concept of image that evolves in the process of drawing. Henry Moore (1898-1986) (cited in Kovats 2007:265) on the other hand, suggests even less clarity of intention:

Sometimes you would sit down with no idea at all, and at some point you'd see something in the doodling, scribbling...and from then on you could evolve the idea...drawing is a means of finding your way about things.

A further exception to art works made with a clear intention, is an instance where the end product or art work is divorced from the original intention. For example, *Metamorphosis* (2009), Plate 37, started out as a reinterpretation of the main figure in *Promised Land* (2008), with the final image diametrically opposed to the original intention. This example reflects an artistic approach where clarity of intention only materialises in the process of working.

The above examples evidence my exploratory artistic approach which embraces uncertainty in different ways and at different stages in the artistic process. As a non-formulaic approach and process (Terre Blanche and Durrheim 2007:286) this exploitation of uncertainty risks uneven and unpredictable (McNiff 1998:38) outcomes. These examples of my work show in addition, the varying points at which I was able to gain clarity of my artistic intention for specific works. As a result, I was able to make certain art making choices to develop each work.



### 2.4.2. Iteration

The exploratory artistic approach which helps me embrace the unknown partly involves forms of iteration, often reflexive in nature. Iteration is understood as, first, the repetition or iteration of gestures or mark-making in the artistic process, and second, the iteration resulting from working in series or in making several versions of an image on separate formats, as well as on the same format.

With drawing the basis of my practice and therefore iteration, I draw from observation, memory and imagination. That is, I draw what I see, remember or imagine separately, or combine these modes as the art making process/inquiry demands. Like many artists, I use iteration in all of the above senses of the word. For example, in a single art work I build up painted or drawn surfaces through successive mark-making applications of media. In another sense of iteration, I work with an image repeatedly in a series of separate works, casting off details that seem superfluous, adding others, transposing the image into different media and onto different scales. Alternatively, related to the latter sense of iteration but in the same work, I make versions of an image on top of other versions of it, in a creative process of cyclical destruction and resurrection. I mainly use this form of iteration in my works in paint. My artistic practice and experience has shown that iteration in all of these senses allows the art works to change and evolve. These shifts occur with respect to the development of images, the relationship of forms, use of media, colour, mark, as well as the format, shape and size.

Aspects of this iterative process are demonstrated in the series of works made prior to, and including *Promised Land* (2008). *On the Back of a Bakkie I and II* (2007), Plates 29 and 30, *Going I and II* (2007), Plates 27 and 28, *Turf I* (2007) Plate 31, and *Those Who Go* (2007), Plate 34, are some of the works that evidence the development of the image which culminates in *Promised Land* (2008). All these iterations show adjustments in relationships of forms, media, handling of materials and colour as well as the shape and size of the work. For example, in *On the Back of a Bakkie I and II* (2007), *Going I and II* (2007), and *Those Who Go* (2007) I retained and varied the tightly bunched group of figures on the back of the vehicle. The main blue figure in *Promised Land* (2008) emerges as a dominant form in *On the Back of a Bakkie I and*

*II* (2007) and *Those Who Go* (2007). In these works, including *Promised Land* (2008), I treat all of the figures, and especially this central figure as simultaneously solid and weightless—the solidity dissipated by the wind and movement of the vehicle. On reflection (it now being a few years since I made these works) I recognise the beginnings of my exploration of paradoxes and contradictory states of being that I explored more fully in *Becoming* (2009-2012), Plates 41-59. I discuss these paradoxes in relation to *Becoming* (2009-2012) later in the chapter.

The installation of nineteen drawings *Becoming* (2009-2012), exemplifies a slightly different iterative process from *Promised Land* (2008) and the preceding works that shaped this piece. In *Becoming* (2009-2012) I worked with the same image—a motorcyclist treated as a pupa—successively in nineteen works without all of these iterative works culminating in one work as in *Promised Land* (2008). Each motorcyclist pupa evolved from previous iterations. Each iteration was driven by open-ended exploration of the significance of the metaphorical image as well as the experience of journeying and the transition between different states of being. Moreover, each iteration was an exploration of the nature of drawing.

*Promised Land* (2008) demonstrates a form of iteration discussed above, where a single image is repeatedly articulated in one work. Dexter (2006:006) aptly contends that painting is a medium of accretion and concealment. She claims that it is possible to paint an entirely different painting on top of another, thus obscuring or partly obscuring previous versions of the work that are discarded in the process. In my experience, accretion and concealment require a robust ground and paint that is thick and opaque. Oil paint can be translucent when it is used more sparingly—especially on a ground prepared with gesso as well as when translucent ('lake') rather than opaque pigments are used. The translucency may reveal the history of such an iterative process where the image is reworked several times on the same ground. However as discussed in Chapter One, this palimpsest character is unlikely to convey the exact chronological sequence of the work's evolution. *Promised Land* (2008), *Dreaming of Green* (2008), Plate 36, *Metamorphosis* (2009), Plate 37, *Temporary Slump* (2010), Plate 39, all involved successive iterations on the same ground, which moreover in my view do not reveal their exact temporal development. It is difficult to spell out the specifics of the palimpsest character in each work. Suffice to say that this

quality is demonstrated as a gestural quality of drawing and density of mark making. Similar to some of Giacometti's portrait drawings, this palimpsest character suggests in my view, that in venturing into uncertainty as the basis of my practice, I have struggled to realize the form. The nature of this 'layered' quality of drawing in my view suggests exploration rather than slick effortless execution. During my process of working on these pieces, at certain points, all of the work, and at others, only parts of the work, were covered up and reworked until the piece reached a point of resolution or completion. (The complex issue of when an art work should be considered resolved or complete will be further discussed later in this chapter). In *Metamorphosis* (2009), I endeavoured to exploit the translucency of the oil paint and the gesso-ed ground so as to allow the history of iterations in this one work to be partially visible.

It must be noted that the above iterative destructive/resurrective process is more difficult using traditional drawing materials on paper. While it is possible to work this way on paper fewer iterative destructive/resurrective cycles are possible, since the paper is less robust as a ground than board or canvas. (Plate 61 shows an iteration of *motorcyclist/Venus of Willendorf pupa* (2012) that explored the extent to which the ground of paper could endure these destructive/resurrective cycles). In general therefore, most of the works in drawing media in this research do not show the same degree of accretion and concealment (Dexter 2006:006) that characterises some of my works in paint.

This quality of "accretion and concealment" (Dexter 2006:006) in a few of my works in oil paint stands in contrast to the peculiar assimilation of drawing and painting in the work of contemporary artist Julie Mehretu (b.1970). The iterative gestural intensity of Mehretu's work remains transparent, never slipping into the density of accretion.

In the main, Mehretu's work is characterised by linearity and broad, largely transparent planar areas of colour—"pigments on a surface" (Schwabsky 2005:004). Her work combines aspects of cartography, architectural drawing, urban planning and abstract painting (2005:214). Mehretu's artistic processes and materials, including her handling of these materials, account for the characteristic transparency and resulting quality of space in her work.

Mehretu uses printing processes, ink, acrylic and latex on paper, canvas and gallery walls. As noted above, the over-layered, “labyrinthine” (Dexter 2006:196) linearity in Mehretu’s work does not become obscured in her iterative mark-making process, but is instrumental in achieving the quality of movement and expanding spaces typical for her work (2006:196). This linearity simultaneously suggests and defies logical, linear perspectival space. The space in her work is one born out of experience, memory and imagination. A good example is *Back to Gondwanaland* (2000, ink and acrylic on canvas), Plate 17.

The last painting I produced in this research body of work, *Somewhere* (2012), Plate 40, draws on the quality of space in Mehretu’s work, though it is only partially similar to hers. *Somewhere* (2012) shows less accretion and concealment than for example, *Promised Land* (2008). The linearity of the space in this piece alludes to maps and engineering drawings, details of which had their origins in *Metamorphosis* (2009). The space in *Somewhere* (2012) is suggested by linearity, but defies logical linear perspective. Furthermore, in exploring ‘absence’ as a consideration in states of transition (discussed below in respect to mimesis) the pupaic form in this painting is merely an outline. In contrast to most of the pupaic forms in *Becoming* (2009-2012), the one in *Somewhere* (2012) is relatively small in relation to the supporting space.

### 2.4.3. Mimesis

The preceding discussion on my intuitive and reflexive rationale for using drawing may be extended by interpreting drawing as a form of mimesis. Mimesis is one of the oldest and most fundamental terms in literary and artistic theory (Potolsky 2006:1). The word ‘mimesis’ is derived from the ancient Greek word *mīmeisthai* “to imitate”. However, its meaning has with time become much broader and more complex than mere imitation (Potolsky 2006:1). Derrida (cited in Kelley 1998:236) asserts that mimesis aims at “influence, appropriation, change, repetition, or the new interpretation of existing worlds”. Depending on the historical context, mimesis reveals itself in different ways and the following related terms may refer to a version of mimesis: “emulation, mimicry, dissimulation, doubling, theatricality, realism, identification, correspondence, depiction, verisimilitude, resemblance” (Potolsky

2006:1). Mimesis in both traditional and modern societies, as the anthropologist Michael Taussig (1993:19) argues, has never been simply the production of the 'same', but a mechanism for producing difference and transformation: "the ability to mime, and mime well, in other words, is the capacity to Other" (Mitchell 2005:25).

Of all the senses of mimesis listed above, "difference" and "transformation" (Taussig 1993:19) best describe the qualities I seek in my mimetic drawing process. On the whole, my drawing process demonstrates incremental evolution and change. Each drawing (each mimetic iteration) produces varying degrees of difference and transformation from the original source.

The installation *Becoming* (2009-2012) as well as demonstrating the above heuristics of iteration and open-ended exploration, may serve as a useful example for mimesis as "difference" and "transformation" (Taussig 1993:19). Having completed *Metamorphosis* (2009), I started drawing pupae and larvae from life and from photographs. My intuitive rationale was that the process of examining pupae using the medium of drawing was likely to offer clues in my search for further images, ideas and metaphors about metamorphosis and periods of change. The first recorded drawing of these pupae in one of my visual diaries on 17 October 2008 was of a *capys penningtoni* pupa, Plate 60. A few of the subsequent drawings in compressed charcoal Plates 62-65, while based on a *capys penningtoni* pupa are substantially larger than the original, thus lending an abstract quality to these now different and transformed pupae.

A distinct feature of a pupa is its temporary containment during a process of transition. Its outer protective casing in suggesting stillness and quiet belies movement and change. In exploring forms that are "suggestive of organisms in states of birth and adaptation" (as the examiner's report 2012:2 puts it) and through the indexical process of drawing I endeavoured to create an ambivalence and tension between containment and release (examiner's report 2012:10). Further "difference" and "transformation" (Taussig 1993:19) evolved from the original *capys penningtoni* pupa as I started inventing pupae using a wide range of images. Some of these included a soccer player, a stone, a cyclist and a motorcyclist, Plates 66-69. Of all the

pupa images I experimented with in 2009, the motorcyclist as an anthropomorphic pupa which evolved from the 2004 *Cyclist* series seemed to hold the most potential. Accordingly, I subsequently developed this image in the installation. In making this series of motorcyclist pupaic drawings, it is important to note that I did not conceptualise the whole installation before I started working. There were a few aspects of this art work that I initially clearly understood: I recognised the potential of this image and knew that I should continue exploring it through a mimetically iterative drawing process, in order to better understand the complexity of the image as a metaphor for transition. In other words, by drawing the image repeatedly, each time with subtle changes, and with each change driven by an inquiry, I was hoping to understand the image more fully, and thus find new ways of developing and rendering it. On reflection, the motorcyclist pupa contains other paradoxes, other than high speed and temporary stillness, which I have endeavoured to extend and explore. These include, noise and silence or muteness; mechanical griminess and organic newness/rebirth/growth; power and fragility; absence and presence; masculine and feminine. With respect to the latter, the embossed image in the installation makes subtle reference to the feminine for example, with a suggestion of the shape of the head of *Venus of Willendorf* (24 000-22 000 BCE).

*Becoming* (2009-2012) is not a narrative work, nor is it a piece that offers definitive conclusions. Instead, it is an open-ended inquiry, where each drawing extends and explores, on the one hand, the nature and process of drawing, and on the other, the image. The image of a pupaic motorcyclist serves as a metaphor for transition and states of change, and evokes a complexity of paradoxes about metamorphosis. The two concerns in this installation—drawing and the image itself—are intimately linked. Of all of my art work in this research this series of drawings demonstrates most clearly the generative potential of drawing, where importantly, open-ended inquiry—in contrast to any endeavour to draw conclusions—drove my practice more so than in previous works. This is aptly described in an external examiner’s report (2012:10):

Not only is this [series] committed to the principles of drawing discussed in the thesis but it sustains drawing as generative in both concept and in its realisation as an ongoing series. The drawings explore tonal mark made by traditional drawing materials on Fabriano paper. The paper’s capacity to receive the pressure of charcoal results

in different weights and densities of tone and gestural and repetitive marks. This creates tension between containment and release which is literally embodied in the pupae form which fuses organic and mechanistic elements...[These drawings reveal] an interest in passing or random movement in figures glimpsed, and the fixing of flux in containing form.

As indicated in the above quote I used fairly rudimentary tools and materials—compressed charcoal, watercolour and mixed media on Fabriano; there is in addition, one embossed image—*Becoming XVIII* (2012), Plate 58. A drawing-related concern in these works is the quality of line in rendering these cocoon-like forms. For example, I interpret the ‘line’ created by a template in the embossed image as lending a quiet presence to the image; and the skein-like quality of the line in *Becoming I-VII* (2009), Plates 41-47, I interpret as evocative of a process of binding and/or enclosing the form within.

A further concern in the drawing process, which is closely linked to the exploration of the motorcyclist pupa as a metaphor for transition, is the relationship of the image to its largely untreated supporting space around the image. After an interim assessment of my art work in November 2011, I realised that in emulating the way a pupa generally attaches itself to a surface, I had, somewhat predictably, in the early versions of these drawings ‘attached’ each drawn pupa somewhere on the edge of the format. In other words, in these early versions, a part of the drawn image meets the edge of the format thus conceivably suggesting that each pupaic form is physically attached to the edge of the format. This can be seen in *Becoming I-VII* (2009). Once I became aware of this repetitive detail, I understood the need to investigate further spatial inferences in the relationship between drawn image and format. In the following mimetic iterations of these motorcyclist pupae, for example, *Becoming XIII, XIV, XV, XVI and XVII* (2012), Plates 53-57, I explore suspension, separation and falling or plummeting. For example, in *Becoming XVI and XVII* (2012) I treated the images similarly, including their size. The scale is however different—120cm x 150cm and A1 respectively—which seems to evoke a distinctly different quality of space. As a consequence of difference in scale and positioning of the image within the format, the quality of suspension seems different in each of these two images. The pupa in *Becoming XVII* (2012) in my subjective view, though suspended, does not seem to be plunging. In contrast, the pupa in *Becoming XVI* (2012) appears unstable

and looks to me as though it is either about to fall or is actually falling. To further pursue “difference” and “transformation” (Taussig 1993:19), I made the image in *Becoming XIX* (2012), Plate 59, much smaller. As a consequence, again, in my subjective view, this image loses a quality of mass that the other drawings seem to contain. A pencil version, Plate 70, evokes a similar weightlessness.

In this installation of drawings, the iterative, mimetic drawing process, driven by open-ended enquiry thus seems to have served as a mechanism for producing “difference” and “transformation” (Taussig 1998:19) in each work. My artistic objective of seeking variation and change was to interrogate the closely linked concerns of the nature and process of drawing and the image itself, as a metaphor for transition and states of change. In addition, these drawings are the outcome of the direct and physical process of material thinking in which the artist and her materials form a dyad. For example, decisions about the precise form and the density of the charcoal in each image were made during the physical process of working with the materials and developing each pupaic form through drawing. Using the framework of contemporary media theory, the drawings and thinking that co-evolved correlated directly with the relatively simple drawing materials as well as to the artistic process and skill of drawing. Using a limited range of materials—mainly compressed charcoal on Fabriano, with some watercolour, conté and pencil—I drew each image differently. Some drawings were subtly different, others, markedly different from the preceding drawings. This can be seen in for example, the handling of the charcoal in describing the volume, the scale of image and relationship of the image to the format. The motorcyclist pupaic image altered from one drawing to the next, as I drew to deepen my enquiry about on the one hand, my use of drawing in the art making process and on the other, the weight and complexity of the image itself.

### **3. Permutations of Drawing**

Types of drawing evident in my work are on the one hand, quick, unfinished pieces mainly executed on paper on a small scale and on the other, more consolidated drawings in both paint and drawing media. These two varieties of drawings are similar to the traditional two poles of a continuum of finished/complete and



fragmentary/unfinished drawings. It is important to note that I constantly, and at times, concurrently, make both types of drawing. Moreover, it is difficult to predict whether some art works will end up 'complete' or alternatively 'unfinished'.

These permutations of drawing are the outcome of my artistic objectives of generating, preparing, developing and consolidating ideas and images. In the same way that I do not make fragmentary and 'complete' drawings consecutively, these drawing functions do not occur sequentially. My art making process is holistic and these functions are constantly, simultaneously or alternately taking place throughout the whole process (Beardsley 1968:53-72). For example, in the process of developing an art work, new images or ways of drawing may emerge which then provide a basis for subsequent works. The choice to develop these 'new images or ways of working' may be interpreted as an example of mapping and following artistic direction and voice. This demonstrates how I simultaneously make 'finished' and 'unfinished' drawings. Furthermore in the process of developing and generating work I continue to chart my artistic direction.

### **3.1. Unfinished Fragments**

There are periods when I make predominantly unfinished works, usually when beginning a new body of work. My methodology involves intuitively and reflexively recording through drawing, usually on a small scale, anything and everything I notice. In addition to drawing, I collect objects and images that may have some significance to the work. In addition, I collect quotations and written articles on anything seemingly related to my work. The quotations are mostly of artists talking about their work and their process of art making.

My focus, especially in these early stages of the process, is on making work rather than developing a theory. My artistic practice has shown that by generating a lot of art work, recurrent themes and images evolve. Accordingly, I produce volumes of experimental and exploratory work to broaden the possibilities. Importantly, in these early stages, I deliberately suspend judgement on whether the work is of any value. Many of these drawings are incomplete in the sense that they are not consolidated

pieces of art work. Rather, they are snippets of thinking and seeing. In other words, they are kernels of images and thought that contribute to more developed work. I think of these snippets, kernels or fragments as similar to building rubble: there must be a lot of it; only some of it will be directly used; and it is often messy, Plates 71-73. As the initial formulation of ideas in visual form (Downs *et al.*, 2009:x) this permutation of drawing, as discussed in Chapter One, is directly associated with its historical function of preparation. Where preparation and exploration are the guiding functions of drawing, the medium thus holds a position “near to the conception of ideas and before the refinement of methods” (2009:x). In my artistic process, preparatory and exploratory drawings also assist in finding and navigating artistic voice and direction. It is worth noting that the characterisation of drawing, discussed in Chapter One, aptly captures the nature of this first permutation of drawing in my work: spontaneity, creative speculation, experimentation, directness, simplicity, abbreviation, expressiveness, immediacy, personal vision, technical diversity, modesty of means, rawness, fragmentation, discontinuity, unfinishedness and open-endedness (Craig-Martin 1995:9-10), Plates 71-73.

The process of generating this permutation of drawings calls in part for an approach that is intuitive, subjective and non-rational. I have learnt to trust in the value of this largely non-rational part of the process where I collect and draw seemingly arbitrary and ordinary fragments, images, photographs, objects that I recognise as important. For example, while exploring pupae through drawing, I made a colour-photocopy of an image of a three-dimensional piece, *Untitled* 1989, by Doris Salcedo (b. 1958), an artist based in Colombia whose work emerged in 1990s. Inspired by the material qualities of sculpture—as well as poetry, philosophy and political human tragedy—her work is made from everyday objects, including furniture and cement. Working slowly and painstakingly, Salcedo transforms and combines furniture, shoes, and clothing, usually belongings of actual missing people, into works that bear the memory of those who have died but that also take on an extraordinary independent presence. Many of Salcedo’s art works commemorate human tragedies and vanished existences, for example, the installation *Atrabiliarios* (1991-1996), Plate 19. The piece I chose to photocopy, *Untitled* (1989), Plate 20, consists of a shoe encased in animal fibre and sewn up with surgical thread. Because shoes and articles of clothing do not rapidly decompose, in instances of political mass murder shoes are commonly

and fairly reliably used to identify the dead. This explains Salcedo's choice of this poignant object in her art work. To return to my apparently arbitrary choice to collect a copy of *Untitled* (1989) it was only after pinning up the image in my work space that I saw the visual and conceptual relationship between my work on pupae and this encased cocoon-like form. *Untitled* (1989) symbolises among other things, loss and death: loss and death are central to some forms of transition and metamorphosis.

A further example of the significance of my trust in my intuitive choices and recording of fragments, is the experience of seeing or glimpsing things that I then develop into more consolidated art works: driving along the road I often notice other drivers, most often men, holding the steering wheel with their left hand and letting their other arm hang out of the window. I am always struck by the cavalier, even machismo sense of command in this gesture. *In Passing* (2008), Plate 38, includes this posture in the main purple figure. Reading through my journals, I see that I had conceived the painting approximately two years prior to making it: "I have flashes of driver's arms out of windows, painted in a linear manner, also drapery—just a bit of a shirt, suggestive of underlying volume but also dissolved/defied by wind from the vehicle movement" (personal journal 3 August 2006). The image thus incubated<sup>3</sup> in my subconscious for an extended period of time before I painted it. While I did not include the drapery in this work, the dangling arm is central. In rendering this figure, I did not draw from observation, but rather accessed these glimpses from my memory and used my experience of skilled figure drawing to construct the figure. I recently noted a comment from a viewer that the purple figure in particular, is "disembodied". This quality stands in contrast to that of the intact nature of many of the pupa forms in the installation.

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<sup>3</sup> The reference to 'incubation' is supported by the following categorisation of the stages of the creative process: incubation, illumination or insight, and (in science) verification or (in the arts) elaboration. Preparation consists of the initial groping and systematic exploration of the problem or envisaged task. Incubation occurs when conscious work on the task is temporarily stopped; this stage is supposed to take place in a nonconscious or subconscious level of activity, which is presupposed although...not directly observed. Illumination or insight is the crucial stage when a solution is realised or when divergent ideas and qualities and materials fall into place and the 'aha' experience is reached. From the creator's point of view the new ideas seem to be discoveries. From the observer's or appreciator's point of view, the new ideas seem to be a creation. Illumination may occur in a moment...or gradually over a relatively long period of time. The final stage, verification or elaboration, consists in refining what appeared to be discovered or created in the stage of illumination (Wallas cited in Kelley 1998:454). While the permutations and processes of my drawing process encompass these stages, my experience is that that these stages are not clear-cut. In my artistic practice these stages are frequently combined and

In general therefore, discovering and charting my artistic voice and direction as well as generating and developing images rests primarily on my visual and drawing experience. This is not unusual. For example, among many contemporary artists, drawing forms the core of Paula Rego's working practice. Rego draws when she is,

'looking for a picture' whether narratively (searching for a story) or compositionally (seeking the best way to express a story through figures arranged across a canvas). She also draws when she is stuck; when she has finished an intense period of working and is casting around for something to do next (Rego cited in Bradley 2002:42).

Thus, similar to my own practice, drawing as process and medium in Rego's work is central to discovering and following artistic voice and direction. It serves an essential preparatory role and is fundamental to the development and final execution of most of her work. As in my work, drawing and painting are closely aligned in Rego's oeuvre. Rego's work however is much more emphatically narrative than mine. One could argue that many of her paintings seem like carefully observed drawings, though often "combined with a deliberate disregard for the conventions of scale and linear time" (Bradley 2002:6). For example, in the making of *Untitled* (1995), Plate 21, Rego (cited in Bradley 2002:82) asked her model, Lila Nunes to stand "with her legs turned inwards" so that they were as short as possible. Rego interprets the result in the drawing as "awkwardness" which suggests something of the "grotesque" in the protagonist.

As is typical for practice-led research, my work does not originate from theory. It originates in artistic practice and drawing in particular. In general, reflection through journaling and theoretical research subsequently inform my practice, which in turn informs my reflection. *Promised Land* (2008) is a useful example of a work that evolved from the outset through even more imbrications of visual and verbal source material as well as written self reflection. As discussed above, this work evolved in part through an iterative drawing process: *On the Back of a Bakkie I and II* (2007), *Going I and II* (2007), *Turf I-III* (2007) and *Those Who Go* (2007) are works that directly influenced the development of *Promised Land* (2008). Of these preceding

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occur frequently or continually throughout the art making process. However, my practice shows that a period of incubation does occur as discussed in relation to *In Passing* (2008).

works, *On the Back of a Bakkie I and II* (2007), *Going I and II* (2007) and *Those Who Go* (2007) originated similarly to *In Passing* (2008) discussed above, where in driving around Pietermaritzburg I frequently noticed people being driven around on the back of a bakkie<sup>4</sup>. Judging from the equipment in the bakkies consisting of garden tools, forks and lawn-mowers, these people were most likely garden service employees being transported to their next site of work. Driving behind these vehicles, I had glimpses of these people from the back, the wind rendering these standing figures simultaneously solid and insubstantial. Unlike *In Passing* (2008), I took photographs of these glimpses from which the above works developed.

In addition to this visual source material, the *Turf* (2007) series and *Promised Land* (2008) were shaped by written material on the symbolic value of land as well as personal reflection on my own experience. The written material included news events about land claims. Reflection on my personal experience was around a sense of belonging I felt to a specific place. Briefly, relevant biographical details are that I grew up on a farm in Mooi River. When I was a young adult my family sold the farm and I became aware of the extent to which my identity seemed to be bound up with this particular place. My own experience as well as the history of my family's experience with this piece of land seemed to have shaped my identity. Furthermore, having worked in the 1990s in the development facilitation craft sector in rural KwaZulu-Natal on a project initially associated with the Association of Rural Advancement (AFRA)<sup>5</sup>, my subjective view developed through contact and discussion with workshop participants. Some of the workshop participants were land tenants and some, owners of land. My view is that people's relationship to land and the ownership of land is often complex and abiding. For various reasons people frequently aspire to obtain a base, often in a specific place, from which to live. However the yen for a piece of land of one's own invariably appears to be driven by more than the aspiration for a base.

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<sup>4</sup> In South Africa this word denotes what elsewhere is called a pick-up truck.

<sup>5</sup> "AFRA is an independent NGO working on land rights and agrarian reform in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa. AFRA's work focuses on black rural people whose rights to land have been undermined, whose tenure is insecure, and who do not have access to sufficient land to fulfil their development aspirations or even their basic needs" Durham University International Boundaries Research Unit, 11 May 2012 <<http://www.dur.ac.uk/ibru/>> [Accessed 05 June 2012].

My personal view is that in general, land seems for many societies, at an individual and collective level, to be symbolic variously of security, wealth, status and a sense of belonging. Disputes over land rights, acquisition and ownership reflect many of these issues. Personal and collective histories situated in particular places inform and complicate such contestations. Examples of political disputes over territory are legion. Land reform in South Africa is ongoing, slow and fraught with the political and historical complexities of our context. In Zimbabwe, the redistribution and ownership of land remains a highly contested political issue. Further afield there are currently disputes over claims for access and rights to the Lomonosov Ridge in the Arctic. This was triggered in August 2007 by Russian scientists sending a submarine to the Arctic to gather data in support of Russia's claim to this continental shelf. The international interest in and claims to this shelf are fuelled by the prospect that global warming may make this virgin land accessible and the knowledge that it contains rich oil deposits and mineral resources.

I do not think that land can in fact be the bastion against impermanence people symbolically take it to be. In my experience, flux and uncertainty are more likely than stability and certainty<sup>6</sup>. *Turf I* (2007) therefore is an attempt to convey the flimsiness of this basis of our hopes and expectations for a solid foundation for ourselves. *Promised Land* (2008), as discussed above, derives visually from the *Back of a Bakkie* series, in particular, the physically moving figurative group. In addition, I tried to imbue *Promised Land* (2008) with a sense of the hope we seem to attach to land ownership, or the promise of it.

My questioning of the symbolic value of land continues in one of the watercolours in the installation, *Becoming XI*, (2010), Plate 51. The image in this piece is intended to suggest or resemble land or a map-like land mass. *Becoming XII* (2010), Plate 52,

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<sup>6</sup> This is not a new interpretation of the nature of existence. Many philosophies and religions acknowledge this as an inescapable condition of life. A few examples include Buddhism, Taoism and Christianity. Buddhism asserts that the nature of the world is transient. Everything is temporary and subject to change. The root of human suffering is a belief in the illusion of permanence. Taoism similarly acknowledges impermanence and uncertainty as inherent to the physical universe. This philosophy advocates an acceptance of the flux and uncertainty of the world. Personal transformation is possible when acknowledgment and adaptation to the ephemeral nature of things has occurred. Within Christianity, the believer is shielded against the uncertainties and trials of life by her/his faith and trust in a Triune God who remains sure and steadfast, the "Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change" (James 1:17 NRSV).

similarly makes use of a map-like rendition, but now of the absence of land. The main shape in both of these watercolours echoes the shape and form of the motorcyclist pupa. Among the questions that these two watercolour pieces may raise are: Is transition associated with land or place? Is transition about absence or loss—of place, of land, of certainty?

### **3.2. Developed and Consolidated Drawing**

This second kind of drawing in my work may admittedly be broadly defined as ‘complete’, developed or consolidated. However, *is* there such a thing as a complete work of art? In my view any notion of completeness in any work of art is problematic. In my artistic practice, every art work contains flaws and raises further questions and challenges. This makes every art work similar to a stepping stone in a much broader artistic process. Instead of asking whether an art work is complete, therefore, I prefer asking when an art work is ‘sufficiently developed’ and/or when I should stop working on it.

There is no single and authoritative way to relate to and assess a work of art and the elusive (and idiosyncratic) intricacies of art-making (McNiff 1998:47). Accordingly, in my experience, knowing when to stop working on a piece includes a non-formulaic complex combination of intuitive as well as rational assessment. My evaluation involves assessing whether I have addressed the ‘what if’ questions that I set for myself; whether the work would benefit from being developed further and lastly, whether the art work holds together as an independent aesthetic entity. This last aspect is difficult to define, but involves considerations of the cohesion of imagery and handling of materials, as well as the appropriate development or transformation of the image and content.

This concern with autonomy and truth to materials may be interpreted as modernist. Greenberg (1973:139) clearly articulates this concept:

a modernist work must try, in principle, to avoid dependence upon any order of experience not given in the most essentially construed nature

of its medium. This means, among other things, renouncing illusion and explicitness. The arts are to achieve concreteness, ‘purity’, by acting solely in terms of their separate and irreducible selves.

Demonstrating this modernist tendency, I note in my journal while working on the three large works in oil paint, *Promised Land* (2008), *Dreaming of Green* (2008) and *Metamorphosis* (2009), that my intention in each of the works is to achieve an independent aesthetic entity. This includes cohesively incorporating layers of visual meaning and a full exploitation of the properties of my media:

What I am aiming for in these paintings is to make a ‘thing’—like Peter Schütz’ stuff [art work] is an independent entity—complex in its visual inferences of meaning [and] richness of media” (personal journal 26 March 2008)

In the journal entry quoted here I was referring to a work I had seen by the late South African sculptor, Peter Schütz (1942-2008) in the collection of the Tatham Art Gallery, entitled *A Midlands Farm* (1989 bronze, 340 mm x 235 mm), Plate 18. Qualities of this work had a certain resonance for me, many of which, as suggested above, may be considered modernist: These overriding qualities are the autonomy and metaphorical nature of this work. *A Midlands Farm* (1989) conveys for me the lush KwaZulu-Natal farming landscape while at the same time suggesting that beneath the surface of the beauty and orderliness of some farms in this area lie the destabilising stirrings of political upheaval. Schütz made this piece in the 1980s, a critical time in South African politics. In summary, it is the complex visual and conceptual references to a particular context I knew so well, to which I responded. In addition the importance for me was Schütz’ translation of these references into an autonomous art work; a work that is not a copy or a representation of something, but through what I speculate may have been an art making process that valued skill and rigorous attention to the nature of his materials, Schütz produced a piece that functions as a metaphor for a particular landscape at a particular political point in history. To return to my intention with respect to *Promised Land* (2008), *Dreaming of Green* (2008) and *Metamorphosis* (2009), I similarly sought to produce autonomous art works that were not merely copies or representations but which contained a metaphorical complexity of references. I endeavoured to achieve this using my artistic methodology that among



other things exploits drawing skill and aims to harness the optimum potential from the tools and materials I use—the materiality of my process.

To move on to the issue of knowing when to stop working a piece I will again refer to Salcedo. This artist identifies the materiality of art making as well as transformation in the art work as considerations:

I work matter to a point where it becomes something else, where metamorphosis has been reached. The handling of materials in each piece is the result of a specific act, related to the event that I am working on. It is an act of everyday life that gives shape to the piece. In some cases it is a hopeless act of mourning. The image is the result of what has happened to the materials as a result of this action. I work with gestures *ad absurdum*, until they acquire an inhuman character. The processes go beyond me, beyond my very limited capacity (cited in Basualdo *et al.*, 2008:21).

This quote is a sample of the quotes I have collected during this research and have pinned up in my work space. In this case it refers to the first type of drawing, discussed above which I identified as unfinished\_fragments. Salcedo's interpretation of developing a work has served as a useful guide in my own practice especially regarding when a work is 'sufficiently developed'. I am reminded that in making a work I can build up a drawing using my individual painting or drawing gestures in my encounter with the materials and the image. I may apply these repetitive idiosyncratic gestures "*ad absurdum*" (Basualdo *et al.*, 2008:21) if necessary, and importantly, they are not a consequence of preconceived, clever, sleight-of-hand working.

Although difficult to translate into the terms of a scientific or even just academic discourse, Salcedo's words have helped me assess whether a work has gone beyond mere representation, whether through material thinking, the image and work have become transformed. In other words, whether the work has become "something else" (Salcedo cited in Basualdo *et al.*, 2008:21) and whether the work stands on its own as an independent entity.

This second permutation of drawings in my work thus consists of drawings that are 'sufficiently developed' rather than in an absolute sense, 'complete'. Many of these works in addition serve as preparation for subsequent works. For example,

*Metamorphosis* (2009), with its central image of an upside-down figure, served as direct preparation for the pupa series of drawings. In my artistic practice not only do art works in drawing media serve as preparation for those in paint, but those in paint media serve as preparation for art works in drawing media. As discussed earlier this is inconsistent with the tradition of drawing being for the most part, the singular medium of preparation. In addition what may be considered consolidated or ‘sufficiently developed’ works serve as preparation for other consolidated works, which goes against a further historical view of drawing: namely that drawing, as an inherently ‘incomplete’ medium serves principally as preparation for more refined works in media other than drawing. In my work drawing and painting thus do not have the separate functions of preparation and refinement that were traditionally ascribed to them.

#### **4. Amalgam of Painting and Drawing**

Painting and drawing coexist in my work. This is in keeping with the current loss of media specificity (Krauss 2000:15). Yet, as with the work of Kentridge, my own work paradoxically demonstrates media specificity in that drawing is the consistent basis of all my work. Further, my approach to art making is not conceptual in the sense that I do not, for example, generate work initially through thinking about definitions of drawing or iconographical concepts that then become central theoretical themes in my work. However, as discussed in the introduction to this chapter, my artistic practice in general and the coexistence of painting and drawing in my work in particular is partially driven by questions about the nature of drawing. Namely, the particular amalgam of painting and drawing in my work may be a consequence of my attempt to translate qualities associated with drawing into painting. This artistic intention stems from the recognition of my drawing’s typical qualities as well as the need to understand what accounts for the nature and potential of drawing in general.

I have striven to translate two characteristics from works in drawing media into paint media. These are the open-ended approach discussed earlier and the quality of linearity. For example, in *Turf I* (2007), one of the images used in the development of *Promised Land* (2008), I used found objects as templates for linear drawing. These

included kitchen utensils, for example, scissors, serrated knives, spoons, a whisk. The mechanical abstract landscape on which the figure stands has been drawn using these. In an endeavour to translate this linear construction to a larger scale, I scoured waste metal depots and garages, discovering tools and scraps of metal. Traces of garden forks, spades and arbitrary scraps can be seen in the lower half of *Promised Land* (2008). The white linear structure containing the purple figure in *In Passing* (2008), further exemplifies this template drawing. While the direct translation of small to big templates does not in my view necessarily match the complex sensitivity that I achieve in my smaller drawn pieces, the use of large metal scraps and tools as templates has extended my mark-making vocabulary in the larger painted works.

In spite of the close alignment of painting and drawing in my work, it is worth noting some of the differences between my works in these two media. As discussed with respect to iteration, works in paint media on board or canvas evidence more readily the form of iteration where I destroy/cover up and redraw/resurrect the image successively on the same ground. This process depends on a robust ground as well as paint that can be used thickly and that can endure intense manipulation.

Related to this lengthy cyclical art making process is the question of time. On the whole, my works in paint seem to take much longer to make than smaller works in drawing media. One of the reasons for this is the obvious physical aspect of the difference in scale. Another may be the nature and intensity of the ‘what if’ open-ended artistic challenges that I set for myself. In addition, when making larger works in paint media, I have periods when I feel more confused and at a loss as to what to do, than I do in when making works in drawing media.

In having to consider the dual nature of practice-led research, it was necessary to consider the differences between visual and verbal language. These differences may offer some clues regarding the element of uncertainty in the art making process. In elaborating their claim that the capacities and strategies of visual and verbal ways of knowing are distinctly different (Aulich and Lynch 2000:46), Aulich and Lynch (2000:44) claim that verbal knowledge characteristically presents the complexities of experience in a logical, coherent and progressive sequence of events. Lived experience or the art making process—as it actually is, not as it is recollected—is

beset with uncertainty, confusion and “unknowableness”. In addition, all that is directly known, in this lived, art making experience “is a local situation, one position only in the field of interactions, a point of knowledge hedged about by ignorance” (2000:44). My artistic practice experience bears this out. Rather than seeing it as problematic, I have come to expect uncertainty, ignorance and “unknowableness” during my art making process, especially when working in paint media.

I am not sure why my experience is different in paint and drawing media. I can only speculate that the challenges I set for myself when using drawing media are not sufficiently testing or, that the iterative process is not a cyclical, destructive/resurrective one. On the whole, each drawing is a single iteration mainly because of the nature of the drawing materials that I use. In addition, the spectrum of choices may be less in smaller works. And finally, I may simply have a greater idiosyncratic affinity to drawing on a small scale.

Small scale drawings are easier to discard. These works, unlike those in painting media, are usually executed on paper, the materials cost less and there is very little or no preparation of the ground before I start working. With an exploratory open-ended approach to art making, I therefore understand that every work I attempt may have to be discarded and I would like to think I that I do not use labour, time and costs of materials as factors in my art making process. However, having incurred materials costs and spent considerable time and labour to prepare a large surface and begin painting, if the image does not seem to be working I am less likely to discard these works in paint. In addition, as discussed earlier, the nature of the paint and ground allow the medium to be intensely manipulated. On reflection, although I strive to work in an equally open-ended and exploratory way in paint and drawing media there seems to be a disparity in my approach to the different media. I bring a greater commitment and determination to find some resolution to the works in oil paint. Whereas with smaller drawn works, knowing in addition that the traditional drawing materials I use can become overworked more quickly, my approach is less fraught and more detached. It is as though with smaller drawings there is less to lose, because I can easily discard the work and start again quickly if necessary.

Such differences in approach and subjectivity between making works in paint and making works in drawing media are worth noting. In spite of aiming for an equally open-ended and exploratory approach in all the media I use, my experience of greater ‘determination’ and ‘commitment’ to works in paint media suggests that something simpler could have contributed to shaping characteristics historically ascribed to drawing. These characteristics include for example, spontaneity, creative speculation, experimentation, directness, simplicity, abbreviation, expressiveness, immediacy, personal vision, rawness, fragmentation, discontinuity, unfinishedness and open-endedness (Craig-Martin 1995:9-10).

What I experienced in my own artistic practice (above) suggests that other, very mundane factors may partly explain these drawing characteristics. These are the accessibility of simple drawing tools and materials as well as an informal and somewhat detached artistic approach that the historical role of preparation allowed. In other words, since the main function of drawing historically was generative, drawings did not necessarily have to be refined and finished. Consequently, artists were not under pressure to find some resolution to the work. The process of drawing was therefore more likely to remain a form of inquiry which offered choices and possibilities rather than a definitive conclusion. This artistic approach to drawing may have been bolstered by accessible and rudimentary drawing tools and materials. Especially since the invention of moveable type in the mid-fifteenth century, drawing materials have been affordable and required little preparation. All of the above factors may have given artists latitude to work with slightly more detachment and to discard images and ideas more readily if necessary. These factors may go some way in accounting for the characteristics that typified drawing in the particular historical era from which most of the exemplars for theories of drawing are drawn.

The above interpretation of a distinct approach to drawing adds weight to the claim of Godfrey (1990:105) that the use of drawing has historically been more experimental and open-ended, rather than definitive and classificatory. Dexter (2006:006) comes closer to addressing this issue when she aligns drawing with a unique subjective artistic approach: “Drawing is a feeling, an attitude that is betrayed in its handling as much as in the materials used”. This author does not specify particular drawing outcomes as a consequence of this artistic approach peculiar to drawing. She merely

implies that this approach manifests in the choice and handling of media. Though general, Dexter's view may support my speculation that drawing characteristics may have been shaped to an extent by an artistic approach peculiar to drawing.

By examining the relationship between my works in paint and those in drawing media, the discussion in this section has underscored the role of artistic approach. Generalising the insight gained from reflecting on my own work and applying it to the history of drawing, I conclude that a particular artistic approach to drawing may have contributed to shaping drawing outcomes. In addition, this discussion on artistic approach highlights the claim made earlier that breaking new ground is not absolutely dependent on the medium of drawing. New ground can obviously be broken using a wide range of different media.

## **5. Chapter Summary: My Use of Drawing Located Within the Contemporary Fine Art Field**

Many of the commonalities and differences between contemporary drawing in general and my particular use of drawing have been mentioned in this chapter. The following is a summary of the latter as well as an attempt to position my work within the current Fine Art field.

On the whole, my drawing straddles modernist as well as contemporary tendencies. In keeping with contemporary drawing practice, my use of drawing is as a primary medium of artistic expression. It is seminal to all stages my artistic practice.

Much contemporary artistic practice is not confined to one medium but is interdisciplinary and eclectic. I choose to work in paint and drawing media and these two media coexist in my work. Two characteristics typical of drawing that I have persistently endeavoured to translate to paint media are linearity and an open-ended exploratory approach. Notwithstanding this postmodern interdisciplinary approach, the quintessential nature of drawing in my work suggests a modernist tendency of media specificity.

Further characteristics that may count as modernist are that my drawing is the outcome of skill and technical proficiency and that I pay careful attention to composition. The skilled nature of my use of drawing is based on “the...coordination between the hand, the eye and the mind”, each of which is subject to training and habit (Dodson 1985:10). I draw what I see, remember or imagine, separately or combining these modes as the art making process/inquiry demands. In my concern with composition and drawing skill, I endeavour to achieve independence and uniqueness in each work. This too, would probably count as modernist. On the other hand, the interpretation of drawing using the contemporary framework of material thinking implicitly indicates that the skilled nature of my drawing is of great importance. Moreover within the framework of contemporary media theory my use of skilled drawing is pivotal to the co-evolution of my thinking and artistic practice. I believe that drawing skill enhances my capacity to think through the medium of drawing.

Open-ended inquiry is an overarching guiding principle in my artistic practice and use of drawing. This exploratory approach aligns my artistic practice with the established tradition of drawing as preparation and invention discussed in Chapter One. While my formative training was steeped in the historical notion of drawing as important but preparatory, drawing and painting in my work do not have the separate functions of preparation and refinement that were traditionally ascribed to them. In addition, all my work regardless of its state of ‘completion’ serves as preparation for subsequent work. Accordingly, art works in drawing media serve as preparation for those in paint. Equally, the latter serve as preparation for the former, thus flouting the historical parameters of drawing as the singular medium of preparation. In addition, in viewing my artistic practice as a process where no works are ‘complete’ in an absolute sense, so-called ‘incomplete’ works in both media equally pave the way for subsequent so-called ‘complete’ works. Equally, ‘complete’ art works pave the way for ‘incomplete’ works. Further, what may be considered ‘complete’, consolidated, or ‘sufficiently developed’ works, serve as preparation for other similarly ‘complete’ works, thereby rupturing an additional historical assumption about drawing: namely that ‘unfinished’ drawings serve principally as preparation for more refined works in media other than drawing.

Besides ‘incompleteness’, one of the features traditionally treated as intrinsic to drawing is line. Contemporary discourse and practice which interrogates concepts of drawing, makes the exploration of this element of linearity fundamental to the medium of drawing. My artistic practice does not involve questioning whether line is central to drawing. It involves harnessing linearity and exploring ways of appropriately translating this aspect of my drawn media to paint media. My artistic practice is therefore compatible with the traditional view that line is fundamental and intrinsic to drawing.

In the postmodern spirit of hybridity, heterogeneity and contingency, it falls to the individual artist to define the parameters of their artistic practice. I seem to be child of my time in that I employ whatever approach, intention and process I believe to be appropriate for my artistic practice. Yet, I acknowledge that the current valorisation of drawing is a consideration in defining the ambit of my work. In other words, although my choice of artistic medium is mainly idiosyncratic, it has become easier for me to focus on drawing in my work because the contemporary art context supports drawing as a primary medium of artistic expression. That said, my work is modernist in my concern with the autonomy of each artwork as well as in reflecting my unique personal vision and calligraphy. With respect to the latter, it is important to note that I do not self-consciously set out to cultivate a distinct ‘style’ of working. Further my art work does not demonstrate a multiplicity of styles based on their suitability for this research either. Lastly, my work does not parody a style, as demonstrated in the work of John Currin (b. 1962), *Mrs So-and-so* (2000), Plate 22, which reflects a parody or “re-imagination” (Dexter 2006:070) of old master pictorial genres and techniques.

Thematically my work is contemporary in that it reflects a personal and artistic response to our current context. One of the factors for me, is the inescapability of flux (personal, societal, in the South African context and globally) which has become a central motif in my experience and art work. My response to this aspect of our society is not unusual. Another South African artist whose primary medium of artistic expression is drawing, and who responds centrally to the transience and fragility of our lives, is Dianne Victor (b.1964). Writing about Victor’s recent smoke and ash drawings, for example *Lost causes*, *Brief Lives*, *Lost Beliefs*, *Fader Shades* and the *Transcend* series, von Veh (2012:6) echoes my own sentiments:



Fragility, transience, liminality, uncertainty, vulnerability, change and loss: these words...describe our lives on earth and are perhaps particularly apt at this point in South African history. As a nation we are engaging daily with changing social and political hierarchies, personal safety is sometimes in dispute, furthermore we endlessly negotiate what and who we are, where we stand, and what we remember as our post-apartheid society tries to reinvent itself.

It is impossible to be sure whether drawing, more than typical painting, is particularly suited to exploring the flux and precariousness of living. In the following chapter I will further examine this factor by investigating the characteristics of drawing with respect to its generative potential. Certainly particular drawing characteristics as well as my individual affinity with medium are considerations in this regard.

Similarly it is difficult to generalise whether drawing is particularly suited to being a “prosthetic medium” (Mitchell and Hansen 2010:4) in making sense of and articulating my response to this aspect of our context. As discussed, an artist’s individual choice and sense of appropriateness of materials and media for her artistic practice are idiosyncratic. The medium of drawing is apt for me. For other artists, different artistic media, including an interdisciplinary and eclectic use of these media, may be equally appropriate in exploring these current concerns. The discussion on the artistic approach peculiar to drawing underscored this factor.

In the contemporary diverse and provisional Fine Art context, where drawing practice and dialogue both evade consensus and generalisations, as argued above, the challenge for contemporary artists is to delineate the scope of their artistic practice. This presupposes a willingness to be rigorous in how they research, develop and evaluate their artistic endeavours in relation to the context within which they work. Given the fluidity of the current Fine Art field I would speculate that such an exercise may be advantageous, especially for artists who wish to make work that engages with contemporary artistic discourse and practice.

In my own case this may be interpreted as a benefit of practice-led research. In general, this practice led research has provided me with the opportunity to gain greater insights into the seminal role of drawing in my work, its generative nature, of

the context within which I practice, and lastly of how my work may be positioned in this context.

In the next chapter I will investigate the generative potential of drawing. In particular, I will situate this aspect of drawing within theories of creativity as well as the frameworks of material thinking, contemporary media theory and the notion of the extended mind. The discussion will in addition examine general factors as well as my specific use of drawing that may enhance its inventive potential. Aspects covered will include heuristics, the role of tools and materials, as well as the characteristics of exploratory drawing. Lastly and importantly this chapter will consider whether the particular integration of text and artistic practice required by this research model may have enhanced the generative potential of drawing in my work.

## CHAPTER THREE

### WITH PARTICULAR REFERENCE TO MY WORK, WHAT ACCOUNTS FOR THE GENERATIVE NATURE OF DRAWING?

#### 1. Introduction

The main objective of this chapter will be to identify and examine the aspects of the process and medium of drawing—in general, and my specific use of drawing—that may account for its inventive potential. Drawing has historically been synonymous with generating new ideas and images within the Fine Art field. As I have discussed earlier in this thesis, unlike other media, drawing is sometimes a discrete medium and sometimes a constituent of other media. The uses and manifestations of drawing, including its generative potential, are consequently diverse. The generative application of drawing is accordingly evidenced beyond the Fine Art field, in the fields of engineering, architecture, design, science and music (Petherbridge 2008:27).

In the history of drawing in the Fine Art field, the generative nature of drawing is demonstrated by one of its enduring applications as preparation for subsequent or more refined art works. The exploratory and experimental capacity of drawing is thus typically associated with the preliminary phases of art making as suggested by the historical categorisation of drawing as ‘preparatory’, ‘intermediate’ and ‘unfinished’.

In contrast, as discussed in the previous chapter, my own practice and that of many other artists has shown that this inventive function of drawing is an ongoing process. In other words, my particular use of the process and medium of drawing, which fundamentally relies on its generative potential, serves a decisive initial as well as an ongoing core function. The two broad functions of first, finding and navigating artistic voice and direction and second, developing images and making art work, are mutually supporting. This chapter is therefore premised on the idea that the inventive potential of drawing can be an underlying factor throughout the multifaceted art making process.

A further premise of this chapter is that breaking new ground in visual language is not unconditionally dependent on the use of drawing—the use, choice and combination of materials and artistic processes is diverse, interdisciplinary and idiosyncratic. Accordingly this chapter is in addition, premised on the idea that while drawing as a medium and process is well suited to producing new ideas and images, breaking new ground in visual language can occur using media other than drawing.

In this chapter, I will investigate the following:

- i. The generative nature of drawing is the likely outcome of a complex of factors. These interconnected elements span artistic approach, drawing process and medium. Importantly, these elements are difficult to treat discretely. The discussion intends to locate these factors within the following frameworks: (a) that of theories of creativity, and (b) those of material thinking, contemporary media theory and the notion of the extended mind. These various frameworks will inevitably show some overlap;
- ii. The general factors as well as my specific use of drawing that may enhance its potential to break new ground. This will include (a) heuristics, (b) the role of tools and materials, (c) characteristics of exploratory drawing, which Petherbridge (2011:210) refers to as the “sketch”;
- iii. Whether the indeterminate, ambiguous and therefore evocative nature of exploratory drawing contributes to its generative capacity, as claimed by Petherbridge (2011:210): “the provisional and experimental potential of drawing make it the medium and trajectory of change”.
- iv. Whether the current standing of drawing may be allied to its inventive capacity.
- v. Whether the particular integration of writing and artistic practice required of practice-led research may have enhanced my use of drawing as a generative medium.

## 2. Creativity

To situate the generative nature of drawing within a broader understanding of creativity, the notion of creativity needs to be delineated briefly. Theories of creativity are at least as complex as those of drawing. Nonetheless, it is clear that creativity is conceptually associated with bringing something new and valuable or significant into being (Bailin 1994:4-5). In addition to “novel”, Sternberg (2003:105) claims that creativity is the ability to produce “high quality” and “task appropriate” products. This often involves “going beyond given information and imagining new ways of reformulating old problems” (Sternberg 2003:i). Galenson (2006:2) offers a further criterion specific to artistic creativity, namely, that the importance and therefore the measure of artistic innovation “ultimately depend[s] on the extent of its influence on other artists”.

In psychology, a number of different approaches have been used to understand the complexity of creativity. These include: (a) Mystical approaches which suggest that creativity has ineffable properties that are impervious to scientific investigation. (b) Pragmatic approaches which focus on the use of creativity and how to increase creativity. (c) Psychodynamic approaches which focus on the unconscious processes underlying creativity. (d) Psychometric approaches which concentrate on how creativity can be measured. (e) Cognitive approaches which deal with the information processing and mental representations underlying creativity. (f) Socio-personality approaches which deal with the roles of other people and of personality traits as well as motivation. (g) Evolutionary approaches which view creativity as an adaptation that enhances an individual’s chance of survival and hence reproduction. (h) And finally, confluence approaches which integrate all of the above (Sternberg 2003:105).

In the Fine Art field, most studies on artistic creativity have focussed on three separate but related aspects: first, the artist and artistic personal traits, second, the process itself and third, the products or outcome (Kelly 1998:454). These three areas of focus relate to many of Sternberg’s (2003:105) approaches, above. For example, unquantifiable factors, for instance, God and personality traits, have historically been associated with artistic creativity. Unpredictability and mystery have consequently lingered as artistic creative constituents suggesting that the process is impervious to scientific

explanation and therefore cannot be taught or cultivated. Postulating a mystical basis for creativity as well as the importance of personal traits, namely, “a disposition, condition or capacity for bringing something into being” (Kelley 1998:454), Plato declared “the poet is an airy thing, a winged and holy thing; and he cannot make poetry until he becomes inspired and goes out of his senses and no mind is left in him” (cited in Bailin 1994:1). Nineteenth century idealism emphasised the role of the imagination and artist-as-genius (Meecham and Sheldon 2005:25) in creativity, similarly perpetuating a predominantly non-scientific notion of creativity.

Since the 1950s theories of creativity in general have embraced a more scientific paradigm, bringing creative process, thinking and outcome into focus (Bailin 1994:1-3), which in addition, suggests that creativity may be taught or at least fostered. Views which challenge the view of creativity as mystical and ineffable are articulated by, for example, Boden (1992:12), Weisberg (1986, 1988, 1993, 1999; cited in Sternberg 2003:98), Perkins (cited in Boden 1992:24) and Bailin (1994:131). On the whole, these authors claim that creativity is not a separate ability but “an aspect of intelligence in general” (Boden 1992:24). Furthermore, they claim that extraordinary or significant products emanate from a rigorously skilful use of conventional thinking and everyday psychological processes; and that these cognitive processes—which embrace rational as well as non-rational thinking—must exploit exploration and evaluation as well as skill and imagination.

Demonstrating the above, the gist of Bailin’s (1994:85) interpretation of creativity is that it entails creating significant products in a particular context which emanate from “the excellent use of our ordinary processes of thinking”. Creativity may thus be seen as the exploitation of ordinary thinking processes to allow us to “go beyond the information given” (1994:74). Moreover, it is fundamentally flawed to regard creativity as,

...arbitrary novelty, rule-breaking, unfettered imaginative and irrational processes. Rather creativity has to do with significant achievement which takes place against a background of dynamic and evolving traditions of knowledge and inquiry. It involves rule-following as well as rule-breaking and an understanding of when to do each. It involves skill deployed with imagination and imagination directed by skill. And

it involves rational processes of thought—judgement, criticism and therefore the possibility for evolution (Bailin 1994:131).

Like Bailin, Boden (1992:8:245) underlines the value of critical evaluation in creativity and offers specific examples of ordinary psychological abilities essential to creativity. These include, “noticing, remembering, seeing, speaking, hearing, understanding language and recognising analogies” which involve “subtle interpretive processes and complex mental structures”. Perkins (referred to in Boden 1992:24) further suggests that in addition to greater knowledge in the form of practised expertise (above), the motivation to acquire it and use it, [is fundamental to the creative process].

A common misconception about creativity is that rules, constraints and expertise obstruct this process. If creativity is considered to be mainly “marked by leaps of imagination, irrational processes, rule-breaking, the suspension of judgement and the spontaneous generation of ideas” (Bailin 1994:3), it may seem to follow that all parameters, rules and skills must be flouted in order to transcend prevailing frameworks (1994:87). However, I support Bailin’s (1994:82) interpretation that rules and skills have the function of “map[ping] out a conceptual territory of structural possibilities which can then be explored”. In addition, where skill and in my case, skilled drawing, is seen as an ability to do something which is acquired through repetition and through training, Bailin (1994:97) interprets the consequent proficiency as having been gained, not through its rigid application, but rather through critical judgement and a flexibility of application that allows adjustment to changing circumstances.

Bailin (1994:97) further contends that it is possible “to change rules or make a breakthrough and advance a discipline only where one is working at an extremely highly skilled level at the cutting edge of the discipline”. Along with many other artists, my own experience of drawing and art making bears this out. While my particular use of drawing relies on the skill of drawing from observation, memory and imagination, the application of this expertise is evolving and flexible: my open-ended exploratory use of drawing assumes a “constant possibility of revision” (1994:105), as I endeavour to extend my repertoire of drawing and art making. As the antithesis to

rigidity, drawing skill offers me a means of thinking and exploring flexibly and critically. In addition, drawing skill provides me with what I consider to be useful structural parameters in the “embrace of the unknown” (McNiff 1998:16).

In contrast to concepts of creativity marked by “leaps of the imagination” (Bailin 1994:3), my drawing practice involves a gradual process of modification as the information and image evolve (Weisberg cited in Bailin 1994:74). Some heuristics or “problem solving guidelines” (Sternberg 2003:99) that I use, include mimesis and iteration. As discussed in the previous chapter, my art works develop through an incremental and non-formulaic mimetic and iterative drawing process: each mimetic iteration produces varying degrees of “difference” and “transformation” (Taussig 1993:19) from the original source. The inventive and speculative nature of drawing in my work, as for many other artists, develops incrementally and is rarely marked by “leaps of the imagination” (Bailin 1994:3).

William Kentridge (cited in Kovats 2007:35) similarly identifies his skilled drawing process as a slow “testing of ideas”:

Drawing for me is about fluidity. There may be a vague sense of what you’re going to draw but things occur during the process that may modify, consolidate or shed doubts on what you know. So drawing is a testing of ideas: a slow motion version of thought. It does not arrive instantly like a photograph. The uncertain and imprecise way of constructing a drawing is sometimes a model of how to construct meaning. What ends in clarity does not begin that way.

For some artists therefore skilled drawing is an indispensable element in the incremental development of ideas and images. Within a concept of creativity where critical judgement and expertise are closely aligned to exploration and imagination, drawing skill is necessarily dynamic and flexible. This underscores the value of skill as a basis for exploratory drawing.

It is worth reiterating that the creative process, in common with ordinary thinking processes, exploits both conscious and subconscious cognitive processes. However, beyond identifying the subconscious as a creative principle, the precise role and functioning of the subconscious in creativity remains obscure (Boden 1992:117).



As mentioned earlier,<sup>1</sup> Wallas (cited in Kelley 1998:454) identifies four stages in the creative process: “preparation, incubation, illumination or insight, and (in science) verification or (in the arts) elaboration”. Hadamard and Poincaré (referred to in Boden 1992:19) similarly categorise creativity and view it as involving varying combinations of conscious and subconscious cognitive processes.

The first, exploratory phase, involves deliberate attempts to solve a problem; it is often “frustrating”, because there is no “apparent success” (Boden 1992:19). The second phase, namely, that of incubation, occurs over a varying time span, from minutes to months (1992:19). During this incubation phase the mind is focussed elsewhere, on other problems or projects. This phase may be seen as a period where “conscious work on the task is temporarily stopped; this stage is supposed to take place in a nonconscious or subconscious level of activity, which is presupposed although...not directly observed” (Wallas cited in Kelley 1998:454). Poincaré (cited in Boden 1992:19) claims that during this incubation phase, “ideas are being continually combined with a freedom denied to waking, rational thought”.

According to the above authors, this incubation period is followed by the illumination stage. During this stage as the designation infers, insights to a solution come to light. The Greek mathematician, physicist, engineer, inventor and astronomer, Archimedes (c. 287 to c. 212 BCE) leaping from his bath, in a possibly apocryphal story, and crying “Eureka” typifies a flash of insight in this “aha” experience stage (Wallas cited in Kelley 1998:454).

The story goes that Archimedes suddenly realised the solution to a problem which had been perplexing him for a long time, namely, how to measure the volume of an irregular object (Verstijnen *et al.*, 1998:519). This example demonstrates that while conscious insights appear unexpected, “long unconscious prior work” (Poincaré cited in Boden 1992:20) is at the core of such perceptions. During this illumination stage “a solution is realised or...divergent ideas and qualities and materials fall into place” (Wallas cited in Kelley 1998:454). The example of Archimedes may be misleading as the timeframe of illumination varies, whereby, illumination “may occur in a

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<sup>1</sup> See chapter two, footnote three.

moment...or gradually over a relatively long period of time” (Wallas cited in Kelley 1998:454). And alternatively, as discussed above, clarity and illumination may occur through an incremental skilled drawing process. Lastly, during the final or fourth, stage of verification or elaboration, the insights gained during the illumination stage are refined, consolidated, verified and/or elaborated.

Bailin (1994:76-77) interprets the division of the creative process in these four stages as inaccurate, asserting that the process of creativity must be seen as a whole. This view is supported by the claim of Beardsley (1968:53-72) “that these activities are mixed together; they are constantly (or alternately) going on throughout the whole process”. This certainly seems to be true for my own practice. While the stages identified by Wallas, Hadamard and Poincaré are useful in identifying and describing aspects of my particular process, the discrete and successive nature of the stages according to the description, does not reflect my experience of the holistic nature of art making. In addition, at face value, the above separate stages in the creative process may suggest that the generative function of drawing is confined to the first phase only. However, drawing as a generative medium and process in my work, as for many other artists, occurs throughout the art making process.

In endeavouring to locate the generative nature of drawing within a framework of theories of creativity, I interpret the aspect of artistic approach and process as requiring an optimal exploitation of conventional cognitive processes. These cognitive processes draw on the “dynamic and evolving traditions of knowledge and inquiry” (Bailin 1994:131) in which creativity plays a major role. Evidencing varying combinations of conscious and subconscious cognitive processes, the generative nature of drawing, as with creativity, depends on skill as well as imagination, and exploration as well as critical judgement.

An artist may benefit from recognising the weight of these ordinary thinking processes, including ordinary psychological abilities. For example, as discussed in the previous chapter, I collect and record seemingly arbitrary fragments as source material for images—a process which involves merely noticing, seeing and remembering. Hence in my experience, being aware of the significance of these ordinary psychological abilities may serve the inventive function of drawing.

In further examining drawing as a generative medium, the discussion must consider whether there are grounds for a distinction between conceptual and visual creativity, and in turn, how this may shape this application of drawing. Bowness' (1972:73) question, "Does creation reside in the idea or in the action?" is germane to twentieth and twenty-first century artistic practice and dialogue. It is relevant in addition, to the nature of this practice-led research, lastly, and most importantly, as stated above, to the generative nature of drawing. Galenson's interpretation of two cycles of creativity may be useful in this regard.

Galenson investigated the relationship of age to artistic innovation. His question was why some artists produce their best work at the beginning of their career and others, such as Paul Cézanne (1839-1906), towards the end. Galenson (2006:4-5) offers an analysis of the working methods of two cycles of artistic creativity. Based on an examination of influential and mainly twentieth-century artists, Galenson's (2006:4) two cycles of creativity are exemplified on the one hand, by aesthetically motivated experimental innovators who work inductively and on the other, conceptual innovators who work deductively (2006:185). Galenson (2006:4-5) interprets Paul Cézanne and Pablo Picasso's (1881-1973) methods of working as archetypes of these two cycles of creativity respectively. It is hard to improve on Galenson's summary, so I will cite it at length:

#### Experimental innovators

Artists who have produced experimental innovations have been motivated by aesthetic criteria: they have aimed at presenting visual perceptions. Their goals are imprecise, so their procedure is tentative and incremental. The imprecision of their goals means that these artists rarely feel like they have succeeded, and their careers are consequently often dominated by the pursuit of a single objective. These artists repeat themselves, painting the same subject many times, and gradually changing its treatment in an experimental process of trial and error. Each work leads to the next, and none is generally privileged over others, so experimental painters rarely make specific preparatory sketches or plans for a painting. They consider the production of a painting as a process of searching, in which they aim to discover the image in the course of making it; they typically believe that learning is a more important goal than making finished paintings. Experimental artists build their skills gradually over the course of their careers, improving their work slowly over long periods. These artists are

perfectionists and are typically plagued by frustration at their inability to achieve their goals.

### Conceptual Innovators

In contrast, artists who have made conceptual innovations have been motivated by the desire to communicate specific ideas or emotions. Their goals for a particular work can usually be stated precisely, before its production, either as a desired image or as a desired process for the work's execution. Conceptual artists consequently often make detailed preparatory sketches or plans for their paintings. Their execution of their paintings is often systematic, since they may think of it as primarily making a preconceived image, and often simply a process of transferring an image they have already created from one surface to another. Conceptual innovations appear suddenly, as a new idea immediately produces a result quite different not only from other artists' work, but from the artist's own previous work. Because it is the idea that is the contribution, conceptual innovations can usually be implemented immediately and completely, and therefore are often embodied in individual breakthrough works that become recognised as the first statement of the innovation.

The precision of their goals allows conceptual artists to be satisfied that they have produced one or more works that achieve a particular purpose. Unlike experimental artists, whose inability to achieve their vague goals can tie them to a single problem for a whole career, the conceptual artist's ability to consider a problem solved can free him to pursue new goals. The careers of some important conceptual artists have consequently been marked by a series of innovations, each very different from the others. Thus whereas over time an experimental artist typically produces many paintings that are closely related to each other, the career of the conceptual innovator is often distinguished by discontinuity (Galenson 2006:4-5).

The way in which Cézanne and Picasso succinctly and contrastingly, articulated their respective overarching artistic intentions aptly convey the two artistic methodologies: Cézanne (1995:329-30) held that "I seek in painting" in contrast to Picasso's (Barr 1946:270) unmistakable clear objective, "I don't seek; I find". Further, Cézanne's work in the final years of his life (approx. 1890-1906) is considered to be significantly influential on the next generation of artists (Galenson 2001:1-2). The influence lay in this body of work rather than a single art work. Galenson (2006:7) describes Cézanne's later work as "visual representations of the uncertainty of perception, for the more he worked, the more acutely he became aware of the difficulty and complexity of the chosen task". This differs from Picasso who, starting with *Demiselles d' Avignon* (1907), which he executed at the age of twenty-five, made

several significant single works which were profoundly influential on the course of artistic practice in the twentieth century. The historian Pierre Cabanne compared the output and working practice of Picasso and Cézanne thus:

There is not just one Picasso, but ten, twenty, always different, unpredictably changing, and in this he was the opposite of Cézanne, whose work...followed that logical, reasonable course to fruition (1977:272).

Where drawing is the basis of artistic practice for both conceptual and experimental artists in general, conceptual artists are likely to exploit the generative nature of drawing to make major decisions about their work during the initial planning stages of the process, whereas experimental artists may rely on this exploratory and experimental nature of drawing throughout the art making process. Exemplifying a conceptual orientation and careful planning of an artwork, Georges Seurat (1859-91) (Rewald 1943:86) remarked about *Un Dimanche d'été à la Grande Jatte* (1886): “they see poetry in what I have done. No, I apply my method and that is all there is to it”. Similarly, Bridget Riley (Kimmelman 1999:48) explained, “My goal was to make the image perfect, not mechanical...but perfect in the sense of being exactly as I intended it”. The execution of work therefore for many conceptual artists would be perfunctory; and accessing and exploiting the generative nature of drawing during the execution of works, largely unnecessary, or even undesirable.

In contrast, the main source of innovation for experimental innovators is situated in the process of painting. The generative function of drawing in such work occurs in the incremental process of art making. Joan Miró (1893-1983) (1992:211) for example, told an interviewer in 1948, “Forms take reality for me as I work. In other words, rather than setting out to paint something, I begin painting and as I paint the picture begins to assert itself, or suggest itself under my brush”; Pierre Alechinsky (b.1927) (cited in Gruen 1991:302) claimed, “I apply myself to seeking out images that I do not know....Indeed, it would be sad to know in advance that which is to come, for the simple reason that it deprives one of the sense of discovery”. Lastly, Susan Rothenberg (cited in Simon 1991:137) said of her paintings that “the results are a way of discovering what I know and what I don't”.

In Galenson's (2006:4-5) interpretation of artistic working methods, Picasso and Cézanne represent two poles of a continuum. Many artists' processes fall further away from the poles of this continuum and thus combine aspects of both methodologies. Reflecting the latter, my working methods in my own artistic practice are experimental on the one hand, where the emphasis lies on an incremental process out of which the artwork arises: motivated by the visual nature of art making—I “discover the image in the course of making it” (2006:4). My progress is gradual and driven by open-ended exploration; and I would like to think the skill of my work improves as my work progresses. On the other hand, similar to conceptual innovators, I endeavour to clarify my objectives for each piece and thoroughly plan and prepare most art works. Moreover, I am fairly confident about when to stop working on a piece: the completion of a work for me therefore is not provisional. As with many artists, my working methods combine Galenson's (2006:4-5) two cycles of creativity. The generative nature of drawing therefore serves a crucial primary as well as an ongoing core function.

To return to the question, “Does creation reside in the idea or in the action (Bowness 1972:73)?” Cézanne's and Picasso's output demonstrates that it can reside equally in the “the idea” and “the action” (1972:73). The generative function of drawing can therefore hold equal weight in both conceptual and experimental artists' work; in these two methodological orientations generative drawing is simply useful at different stages of the artistic process.

For artists whose working methods are experimental, conceptual or a combination of both, artistic innovation on the whole may benefit from the artist's ability to assimilate current trends in artistic practice and dialogue. Demonstrating this assimilation, Roy Lichtenstein made works in the early 1960s that embodied a trajectory for change (Galenson 2006:64-65). Having lived in the American Midwest and upstate New York, Lichtenstein took a teaching post in 1960 at Rutgers University, New Jersey. Here, his colleagues included *avant-garde* artists Allan Kaprow (1927-2006) and Claes Oldenburg (b.1929) who were experimenting with Happenings. Lichtenstein's work evidenced immediate change with his inclusion of cartoon characters from 1961. This artist produced many of his best known works in

1963, including *Whaam!* “the single painting by any American artist of his generation that is most frequently reproduced in text books” (2006:66), Plate 23.

I have argued above that the nature of contemporary drawing practice is fluid and discourse about drawing shows little consensus. To this it can be added that it falls to each artist to define the parameters of their artistic practice. By so doing, artists who wish to develop current concepts of drawing should define the parameters of their practice within the framework of the current irresolute nature of drawing. I interpret the current open-ended exploration and dialogue about drawing as intensifying the need for artists to gain a conceptual appreciation of current artistic trends, and in particular those pertaining to drawing. The generative potential of drawing may serve a pivotal function in expanding parameters of what the nature of drawing is taken to be.

### **3. Material thinking, Contemporary Media Theory and The Notion of The Extended Mind**

Having discussed theories of creativity and Galenson’s (2006:4-5) interpretation of the two cycles of creativity in relation to the generative nature of drawing, I next intend to locate this aspect of drawing within the frameworks of material thinking, contemporary media theory and the notion of the extended mind. These frameworks highlight two main factors in relation to drawing as an inventive medium and process: (a) the interrelatedness of artist, process and media, and (b) the synchronised development of thinking and drawing.

I begin with a brief recap of my discussion of material thinking and aspects of contemporary media theory in chapter two, so as to relate these frameworks to the generative nature of drawing.

Material thinking occurs in the process of art making where artistic creative intelligence collaborates with artistic processes and materials in a dyadic structure. The alchemic combination of the “intelligence” (Barrett and Bolt 2007:31) of materials and artistic process with artistic creative intelligence can generate particular

insights and works of art. All the elements in this dyadic collaboration thus play an indispensable role. Where the resulting insights and drawings are new, significant or valuable (Bailin 1994:3) the role of all components in the dyadic structure must be acknowledged.

This notion of material thinking relates to aspects of contemporary media theory, especially, McLuhan's (1967:15) contention that the "medium is the message," which implies a continuity of "informational meaning and technical expression" (Hansen 2009:2). However, the concept is broader and includes the idea that our experience and knowledge are brokered by media, witness Kittler's (1986:xxxix) claim that "media determine our situation". In this framework, thinking is therefore not neutral: all thinking requires a medium. Moreover, the evolution of thinking and the development of media, as in material thinking, are synchronised. As a consequence of this there is an "originary correlation of technics and thought" (Hansen 2006:298), with media the "ineliminable...aspect of experience that gives rise to thought" (2006:298).

In terms of my current research this implies that there exists a "continuity" (Hansen 2009:2) between artist and drawing medium, thinking and art making; and without the "prosthetic" (Mitchell and Hansen 2010:4) medium of drawing, particular insights will not materialise. Using this framework, if a drawing is described as generative, the drawing is likely to be the outward manifestation or the "exteriorisation" (Hansen 2006:301) of exploratory thinking. Exploratory thinking is not essentially an inner process but can only be realised through this "exteriorisation" (Hansen 2006:301). Exploratory thinking would accordingly show a particular correlation to the medium of drawing.

Clark and Chalmers' (2010:1-11) notion of the extended mind complements material thinking and contemporary media theory. Their notion of the extended mind similarly ruptures the skull/skin boundaries for cognitive processes, holding that the development of specific thinking occurs in collaboration with external coupled relationships. Moreover, this "coupled system" may be seen as a cognitive system in its own right (2010:2).



Examples of such coupled cognitive processes include, playing the word game, Scrabble and the efficiency of a fish as a swimming device. With respect to Scrabble as the external component in a coupled cognitive process, Clark and Chalmers (2010:2-3) argue that the external arrangement and rearrangement of Scrabble tiles is part of the thinking process: it is not merely an action in which a previously completed piece of thinking is executed. Further, it is part of a cognitive process that is specific to playing Scrabble.

As to the second example of a fish and water as a coupled cognitive system, Clark and Chalmers (2010:5) argue that as the fish swims, it builds the externally occurring phenomena of swirls, eddies and vortices into the fabric of its swimming manoeuvres. In this coupled cognitive system, the properties of the water substantially enhance the fish's ability to swim. The external component of the "coupled system" plays an "ineliminable role" (2010:3) in the development of specific thinking. Behaviour and thinking will be altered, or even thwarted, if the external component of the "coupled system" (2010:3) is removed. The external components of the "coupled system" (2010:3) are thus as causally relevant as the typical internal features of the brain (2010:2-3). Furthermore, for particular cognitive processes to develop, the external cognitive extensions must be reliably present when particular cognitive processes need to occur (2010:4).

Using Clark and Chalmers' notion of the extended mind, I could interpret drawing in my artistic practice—in particular the material components, for example, charcoal, conté or paper—as the active external component in my cognitive "coupled system" (Clark and Chalmers 2010:3). Drawing thus constitutes and extends my thinking in ways that my "on-board devices" (2010:9) namely, my consciousness within my skull and skin, cannot. Having drawn from observation, memory and imagination since the age of approximately five, drawing as an external component has thus reliably been present<sup>2</sup> (2010:9) allowing the development of particular thinking peculiar to this "coupled system" (2010:3). Moreover, because the tools and materials required for

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<sup>2</sup> A cautionary factor to consider in relation to expert levels of knowledge or years of using a particular "reliably present" coupled cognitive system, is that "tunnel vision, narrow thinking and entrenchment" (Sternberg 2003:113) may result. In other words, a mechanical and habitual application of these frameworks may result in rigid and unimaginative thinking and art works.

drawing (as discussed later in this chapter) are so simple, it is easy for this medium to be reliably present. It is probably safe to speculate that my brain has developed in ways that complements the medium and process of drawing; and when I use drawing my cognitive processes play a specific role within this “unified, densely coupled system” (2010:5).

How then do these frameworks clarify the generative nature of drawing? Material thinking, contemporary media theory and the notion of the extended mind emphasise that no single factor can be isolated as accounting for the generative nature of drawing: the complex interaction of artistic approach and process as well as drawing medium, may collectively generate new, valuable or significant outcomes. The medium of drawing, as an inanimate component, should not therefore be seen as separate or subordinate to the rest of the complex of factors. These frameworks in addition, examine the development of thinking and expertise, showing that thinking and drawing co-evolve. These two outcomes—conceptual insights and artworks—are in addition, closely correlated.

#### **4. Heuristics**

I earlier discussed the heuristics of iteration and mimesis. Both these heuristics are peculiar to my artistic practice and contrast with concepts of creativity marked by “leaps of the imagination” (Bailin 1994:3). In particular, I noted the incremental development of drawing using these heuristics.

An aspect of one further heuristic pertaining to my artistic practice may enhance the inventive potential of drawing. This heuristic, (as discussed in the previous chapter), is my open-ended exploratory approach to drawing. Through an examination of the differences between works in paint on board or canvas and those in traditional drawing materials on paper, I identified an inconsistency in my artistic approach. My artistic approach to smaller works on paper was more detached than when I worked on bigger art works in paint. Such an artistic approach that allows a measure of impartiality may account for particular drawing qualities, and may, in addition, facilitate the inventive potential of drawing.

As discussed in the previous chapter, I initially believed that my artistic approach to making all my work was equally open-ended and exploratory. On reflection, I recognised a disparity in my artistic approach between making large works in oil paint on board or canvas and making smaller works on paper using traditional drawing media. I realised that as a consequence of the time, labour and monetary costs involved in preparing the grounds for paint media, I was proportionately invested in finding some resolution to the work. In other words, I usually do not discard works in paint media without having thoroughly endeavoured to develop them. If I choose to discard smaller art works using traditional drawing media and start again, it is a straightforward and immediate procedure. It is therefore easier to discard smaller works as they require minimal preparation and material costs. Accordingly, I realised that my artistic approach to smaller works was more detached than my approach to the bigger works in paint. My artistic approach to smaller works could in addition, be more playful where a ‘finished’ outcome was less of an imperative.

I inferred earlier that historically, drawings may evidence particular qualities. These qualities may stem from their traditional comparatively small scale as well as their relatively accessible and rudimentary materials. In addition, these qualities may be the outcome of an artistic approach that is rooted in the historical intermediate function of drawing. In other words, the traditional standing of drawing as preliminary to the refinement of art works in other media thus came without the liability of working with expensive materials and labour-intensive artistic processes. Drawings were usually relatively small and did not carry the imperative of ‘refinement’ and ‘completion’. All of these factors may have given scope for a more playful and detached artistic approach, facilitating in addition the generative potential of drawing. The difference in artistic approach between works that are ‘finished’ and ‘unfinished’ may account for particular qualities evidenced in drawing and may be a factor in Dexter’s (2006:006) claim that “Drawing is a feeling, an attitude that is betrayed in its handling as much as in the materials used.”

Play is often associated with creativity. Indeed, as Boden (1992:47) suggests, play is open-ended, without any particular goal or aim. While intermediate drawings do generally have a goal or aim, the parameters for exploration are broader, allowing room for drawing to an extent “without any particular goal or aim” (1992:47). Such an

artistic approach may augment the generative nature of drawing: in particular, a specific brand of open-ended exploration which is playful and not strictly bound by goals or aims.

## **5. Tools and Materials**

In the above discussion, I have once again emphasised the close interrelation of factors associated with the generative nature of drawing, namely, that artistic approach, tools and materials may account for particular drawing qualities and outcomes. I next will examine in greater depth the role of tools and materials as well as drawing characteristics in enhancing the exploratory use of drawing. Beginning with tools and materials, it is useful to revisit the definition of drawing arrived at in chapter one: “a mark-making process used to produce a line-based composition” (Dexter 2006:005). Line and mark in Dexter’s definition of drawing are the invariable constituents of the drawing. These qualities may be the outcome of a wide variety of tools and materials, including the most rudimentary ones.

As I have shown above, Downs *et al.*, (2009:x) claim that rudimentary drawing media facilitate a direct, immediate and unencumbered recording of ideas and images. Technical considerations therefore minimally interrupt direct expression. Certainly, simple media suffice in the broadest application of drawing, as discussed earlier, where drawing is used as a means of generating, communicating and reviewing images, ideas and information in a variety of contexts. Given this democratic permutation of drawing, I would claim that more sophisticated tools and materials are not as a rule likely to enhance this speculative and inventive application of drawing. Alternatively, different tools and materials may suggest different ways of developing an embryonic constellation of marks.

The tools and materials I use in my artistic practice are pencil conté, pastel, charcoal, as well as watercolour, oil paint, oil bars and brushes on paper, canvas or board. These seem to be technically uncomplicated enough to allow me a direct, immediate and unencumbered recording of ideas and images. As discussed in relation to the notion of the extended mind, where the tools and materials required for drawing are simple, this

makes the medium of drawing “reliably present” (Clark and Chalmers 2010:4), thus facilitating an effective coupled cognitive system. In addition, drawing skill, which includes familiarity and dexterity with media, is likely to be an advantage in my use of drawing tools and materials.

The related aspect of immediacy in the use of rudimentary tools and materials is worth noting. As discussed, smaller works on paper, traditionally associated with preliminary drawing, require little preparation. In my practice, in order to record a glimpse of an image or idea, I merely have to find suitable paper and an appropriate format size, and at least a pencil before I can start working. Besides, I can carry these tools and materials wherever I go, unlike for example, a sculptor’s piece of marble. In my experience, the accessibility of uncomplicated tools and materials allows immediate artistic expression. Where technical considerations delay and encumber my focus, glimpses of ideas and images can be disrupted, confused or forgotten. In general, the accessibility of rudimentary tools and materials allows a more rapid and direct exploration of images and ideas. These factors may further contribute to the exploratory use of drawing.

Downs *et al.*, (2009:x) like the authors discussed above, claim that technical considerations when using relatively simple materials minimally interrupt artistic expression. With reference to my own practice, the choice of the word “interrupted” in is apt. In my art making process, it is as though I must pay careful attention to intuitive promptings or glimpses of what to do next. In accordance with Galenson’s (2006:4-5) interpretation of experimental innovators, my practice on the whole shows that my process of art making is one of searching, in which I “discover the image in the course of making it”. Tools and materials that allow me to instantly record hints of an idea or image are therefore important.

My artistic practice accordingly bears out Aulich and Lynch’s (2000:44) claim that the art making process, like lived experience—which is actual and not recollected—is beset with uncertainty, confusion and “unknowableness”. In addition, the art making experience “is a local situation, one position only in the field of interactions, a point of knowledge hedged about by ignorance” (2000:44). In the somewhat uncertain, exploratory interface between the conception of ideas and making of art works, tools

and materials—especially simple ones—can therefore be decisive in assisting with acutely registering perception while keeping in check the morass of ignorance, “unknowableness”, uncertainty and confusion (2000:44).

## **6. Are there Specific Drawing Characteristics that Facilitate the Inventive Capacity of Drawing?**

Chapter one conveyed the difficulty of defining drawing. In this section I will nonetheless scrutinise qualities frequently associated with exploratory drawing, and their function in the generative nature of drawing.

As I have discussed, drawing has historically consistently been applauded for particular qualities, some of which derive from its perennial role of realising new pictorial and conceptual possibilities: “fertility not tidiness” (Osborne 1986:328); “abbreviation, rawness, fragmentation, discontinuity and unfinishedness, open-endedness” (Craig-Martin 1995:9-10), are a few examples. These qualities in addition, suggest indeterminacy and ambiguity (Petherbridge 2011:26-28). Where drawing is used to think and explore in an open-ended way, it is likely that the drawing outcomes may be imprecise and ambiguous in appearance. However, such open-endedness does not apply only to the ultimate outcomes but also to the process.

Petherbridge (2011:26-28) interprets the characteristics of ambiguity and indeterminacy as fundamental to the inventive capacity of drawing, claiming (as stated earlier), that the provisional, experimental, indeterminate and ambiguous character of drawing “make it the medium and trajectory of change (Petherbridge 2011:210)”. This author (2011:26-28) claims that the sketch belongs to a preverbal generic symbol system. As a system which spans fields other than visual language, this preverbal generic symbol system evidences the beginnings or traces of thought and is inchoate and indeterminate.

This notion is corroborated and extended by cognitive scientists such as Vinod Goel (1995:218), who claims that “mental states have certain properties (those of being imprecise, ambiguous, fluid, amorphous, indeterminate etc.) shared by the symbol

system of sketching....Thus the claims made with respect to sketches apply equally to the linguistic forms of poetry, song and much of everyday discourse”.

Petherbridge (2011:26-28) holds that the imprecise, ambiguous nature of this symbol system suggests a wide variety of sequential cognitive and practical interpretations and procedures: “it allows for interpretations and reinterpretations, and lends itself to corrections, second thoughts, redrawing...and reordering” (Petherbridge 2011:28). Confirming this, Goel (1995:218) holds that “lateral transformations, that is, digressions from one idea to a completely different idea” most commonly occur during the sketch stage.

Petherbridge (2011:28) describes a variety of vicissitudes the sketch can undergo in an art work:

The sketch can be embedded within a work, so that its tentative outlines are erased by subsequent procedures or it can be discarded in favour of another beginning and another chain of development. It can function as a spur to radical changes of ideas and procedures in another medium or discipline, or it can serve as a rehearsal of the act of making, so that the necessary confidence or insouciance is exhibited in the final work of a trial chain.

Work that is indeterminate would then have the advantage that it does not prejudice its development in one way or another. Drawings that are provisional allow scope for images and ideas to gestate while direction or determinacy becomes clearer incrementally. Importantly, the suggestiveness of embryonic drawing offers the artist a wide variety of conceptual and visual choices in respect of the work’s development.

Similar to Petherbridge’s (2011:26-28) view that specific sequential interpretive or transformative iterations may arise from the sketch, the cognitive scientists Finke, Ward and Smith (cited in Sternberg 2003:98 and Petherbridge 2011:28) propose a model of mental synthesis, known as the Geneplore (generate and explore) model. This model is premised on two main processing phases in creative thought: (a) a generative phase and (b) an exploratory phase. Their model involves a cyclical process of alternatively generating pre-inventive forms or structures and then exploring their implications to develop creative ideas or outputs:

Pre-inventive structures are constructed during an initial generative phase, and are interpreted during an exploratory phase. The resulting creative insights can then be focussed on specific issues or problems or expanded conceptually by modifying the pre-inventive structures and repeating the cycle. Constraints on the final product can be imposed at any time during the generative or exploratory phase.

Finke, Ward and Smith's model (cited in Petherbridge 2011:28) is structurally similar to the stages that Wallas (cited in Kelley 1998:454), Hadamard and Poincaré (cited in Boden 1992:19) identify in the creative process. As already noted these authors describe four stages found in the creative process: "preparation, incubation, illumination or insight, and (in science) verification or (in the arts) elaboration". These models have in common with the Geneplore model the generation of new ideas and their consolidation or further exploration. The stage of consolidation may involve the cognitive processes of elaboration, evaluation, interpretation, retrieval, association, synthesis, transformation and analogical transfer (Sternberg 2003:98-99).

The Geneplore model is an abbreviated version of the stages of the creative process, described above. Similar criticism by Bailin (1994:76-77) and Beardsley (1968:53-72) levelled at the four stages of the creative process may be applied to the Geneplore model: that the process is more holistic and "that these activities are mixed together; they are constantly (or alternately) going on throughout the whole process" (Beardsley (1968:53-72).

Likewise, I constantly, or at least, recurrently, exploit the inventive potential of imprecise and ambiguous drawing in the development of my work. In particular, (as discussed in the previous chapter), when I make paintings, this involves an incremental process of "discover[ing] the image in the course of making it" (Galenson 2006:4). This entails successive stages of destroying and reconstructing the image until I "discover the image" (2006:4) or until the image emerges through this process. The 'destruction' of the image involves concealing or roughly drawing over sections of the image or the whole image. I speculate that by obliterating or 'messing up' the image or parts of it, I am intuitively producing ambiguity and indeterminacy in the work. I further speculate that I thus uncover a wide variety of pictorial and conceptual possibilities from which to reassess and develop the image, the whole art work and/or the artistic process. The 'incomplete' and therefore suggestive nature of exploratory



drawing thereby functions as a trajectory of change (2010:210) and, as above, occurs repetitively in my artistic process.

The inventive agility of generative drawing therefore lies in its incompleteness. In other words, the absence of ‘finishedness’ accounts to a large extent for the generative nature of drawing. Accordingly, the absence of a finite rendering of forms as well as the absence of a specific pictorial space is important in generative drawing.

The ‘incompleteness’ of exploratory drawing offers a fluid adaptability to other media without restricting, or overly prescribing to, these subsequent versions. For example, the scale of exploratory drawing—historically usually small—generally does not impede either the conceptualisation and/or translation to other or larger iterations. The ‘incompleteness’ of exploratory drawing allows essential qualities to be effectively translated to other media and dimensions. In demonstrating this with reference to Paolo Veronese’s (1528-1588) painting of *The Coronation of the Virgin* (1586; Venice, Accademia) and the late sketches for this work, Petherbridge (2011:33) argues that the small drawings (305 x 210 mm), Plate 24, contain the essence of the space of the finished painting while at the same time being an “indeterminate and experimental zone”.

Until recently, the historical reference to drawing as ‘incomplete’ bore the stigma of inferiority, however this quality of *non finite* is at the core of its generative potential. In particular, the characteristics of ambiguity and indeterminacy, which may in addition, belong to “pre-inventive structures” (Sternberg 2003:98), are at the heart of the generative nature of drawing. The significance of these characteristics is their suggestiveness, which offers a wide variety of pictorial and conceptual possibilities for the art work and artistic process. The evocative nature of ambiguous and imprecise drawings may thus function as a catalyst for subsequent art works that may transform or develop the original embryonic iterations.

## 7. Does the Generative Nature of Drawing Contribute to its Current Ascendant Status?

I will next briefly examine whether the above inchoate qualities associated with generative drawing contribute to the increasing stature of contemporary drawing. According to Petherbridge (2011:26-28), these characteristics reflect the beginnings or “traces of thought”. Historically these embryonic iterations form part of a larger inventive process in which these imprecise beginnings are subjected to a process of selection and development. However, in contemporary artistic practice a tension exists between the value of transforming and developing these embryonic drawings on the one hand, and of treating their ambiguous and indeterminate state as ‘finished’, on the other (2011:26). Various authors claim that the latter currently predominates:

Downs *et al.*, (2009:x-xi) interpret characteristics of contemporary drawing, in general, as “typically poststructural: uncertain, defiantly idiosyncratic, marking specific difference rather than aspiring to universal values, stubbornly refusing resolved forms and incorporating the principle of erasure”. These descriptions are wide-ranging. However, the phrasing, “marking specific difference rather than aspiring to universal values” seems to echo the contemporary fibre of contingency and open-endedness. The descriptions “uncertain” and “stubbornly refusing resolved forms” suggest work that is inchoate and ‘incomplete’.

Petherbridge (2011:28) adopts a more strident and critical stance, observing that the contemporary art world gives a platform to works that are ‘incomplete’—namely, that the ‘finished’ state of much contemporary practice lies in the suggestiveness of embryonic ideas and images characteristic of sketching. Petherbridge (2011:28) finds this lack of transformation in current drawing practice objectionable:

In contemporary practice...contingent developmental processes are no longer valued. Although much admired, the sketch lies beached and quivering on its original support, bereft of development. The denial of transformation or potential for growth is fetishised in post modernity, where the inchoate presence of and authenticity of sketching are valued more than its potential for completion in another state. The act of completion in another medium is what inflected conceptual notions of sketching in earlier centuries, when consecrated values of contingency

and *non finite* were held in reciprocal relation with the repletion of *finito*.

Of many contemporary drawings exemplifying this, the work of Anne-Marie Schneider (b. 1962) for example, *Untitled* (2004), Plate 25, and David Shrigley (b.1968) for example, *Untitled (Arrow)* (2004), Plate 26, asserts the inchoate quality of sketching as ‘finished’.

Pater (1986:86), in keeping with Downs *et al.*, (2009:x-xi) and Petherbridge (2011:28), briefly summarises the above: “most drawing aspires to the condition of the sketch”. This claim raises a number of important further questions: does it imply that many artists deliberately choose the unstable potency (Petherbridge 2011:47) of the sketch as the finished state of their work? In other words, do artists knowingly choose the suggestiveness of the indeterminacy and ambiguity of the sketch as the ‘complete’ state of a drawing? Do many contemporary artists in addition, choose these qualities while knowing the value of developing or transforming these embryonic traces of thought? Alternatively, might this suggest that some contemporary artists’ aim is to produce merely the appearance of these qualities? As I have discussed above, drawing has recently undergone a fundamental functional shift where open-ended exploration is no longer its primary guiding role. With the generative function of drawing therefore no longer an aspect of drawing that can be taken for granted, will some of the qualities that are associated with its historical preparatory role and for which drawing has consistently been applauded, now simply be imitated rather than produced through a genuine attempt to break new ground? As I have claimed with respect to heuristics, a more playful and somewhat detached artistic approach can manifest itself clearly in drawing outcomes. Is it thus possible that a specific brand of open-ended exploration sought for its own sake rather than for its potential for transformation in another form or medium, may render a corresponding brand of indeterminacy and ambiguity? In other words, indeterminacy and ambiguity are qualities that arose as ‘by-products’ of the historical preparatory role of drawing. Their value lay in their catalytic potential for the further refinement of artworks—rather than in themselves as end products. Where artists strive to create indeterminacy and ambiguity as end results their artistic intention is likely to be different from the way in which these qualities were historically generated. As my own practice has

shown, subtle changes to artistic intention can manifest clearly in artistic outcomes. Would this therefore mark a particular direction in the reinterpretation and reinvention of the medium of drawing? It is possible only to speculate the outcomes of such choices in contemporary artistic practice.

To return to the question posed for this section, does the generative nature of drawing contribute to its current ascendant status? The characteristics of indeterminacy and ambiguity associated with generative drawing indeed appear to be important in the increasing stature of contemporary drawing.

#### **8. How Has the Particular Integration of Writing and Artistic Practice in this Research Enhanced My Use of Drawing as a Generative Medium?**

It is difficult to pinpoint and measure the ways in which this research model has enhanced my use of drawing as an inventive medium in art making. In general the specific combination of writing and artistic practice in this research has extended my understanding and use drawing as a generative medium. Neither my visual inquiry on its own nor the written research alone, can be said to have been more useful in enhancing this aspect of my drawing. In this exegesis my examination of the key research and ancillary questions were all valuable and pertinent to the central concern of broadening my understanding and use of drawing and its generative potential. I endeavoured in each chapter except for Chapter One, to apply these findings to my own practice. I therefore am disinclined to summarise what has already been presented in the text.

Taken as a whole this research model has extended my grasp of the centrality and nature of drawing in my practice and how it functions as a generative medium for me. Again in general terms, the way this enhanced my use of drawing as a generative medium, is that the combination of practice and writing research served to clarify, challenge and validate the aspects researched, in my practice. This then allowed me to make art work more courageously and with greater assurance. In my view the most useful strategy in addressing the above question for this section will be to briefly

discuss a few examples where this research enhanced the generative function of drawing in my work. The following examples concern my artistic methodology, the role of different media in my drawing process and the nature of open-ended exploration in my practice.

Galenson's (2006:4-5) interpretation of two cycles of creativity endorsed and shed light on my own artistic methodology. Importantly, it helped me to accept the parameters of my artistic methodology and to work more effectively within them—rather than to suspect that I should be working differently. For example, as discussed in this chapter, in keeping with experimental artists' working methods, my work develops incrementally; my artistic practice is determined by the visual nature of my work and the image emerges in the course of the process of making it. The research was useful in helping me recognise that I have always worked this way and no imposition of a different artistic methodology is likely to hasten or improve the way I think and make art. This further underscores that my artistic approach and methodology is only one of the multiplicity of factors that combine to facilitate the generative potential of my drawing, discussed at length in this chapter. With respect to enhancing the generative function of my drawing, I was able to pay closer attention—without being conflicted—to the gradual development of my work and the emergence of the image, knowing that for me there was unlikely to be a superior methodology to produce innovative art works.

The insight I gained regarding the differences between my approach to drawing using traditional drawing media and works in paint—discussed in Chapter Two and in the Conclusion—profoundly assisted my understanding of the interconnectedness of factors in the generative function of my drawing. It helped me understand the distinction between my drawings in different media and importantly, that I am more likely to produce innovative art works using drawing media. This is well demonstrated in *Becoming* (2009-2012), discussed below.

In addition to the choice of drawing media, this research model clarified a few fundamental aspects of open-ended exploration, enabling me to extend my experience of it. This research model helped me develop my understanding that in addition to having clear artistic objectives, sound methodologies and experience, it is essential to

“embrace...the unknown” (McNiff 1998:16): to venture into uncertain and unchartered artistic territory knowing that the outcomes may be uneven and unpredictable (1998:38). The important principle is that uncertainty is a necessary and unavoidable factor in generative drawing; and the task for me as the artist, is to manage the insecurity of ambiguity and ‘not knowing’.

As discussed in Chapter Two I have always sought in my artistic practice to make work where I do not have obvious solutions and must push artistic boundaries. In making the *Becoming* (2009-2012) series of drawings I risked venturing into uncertainty more so than I had ever done in previous works: I had never made an installation of drawings; I had never explored this particular image; I had not drawn with charcoal as extensively as I did in this work; I was looking for clues about the image, in that I was endeavouring to explore and understand the image and finally, I was exploring the medium, process and skill of drawing. I started this installation in 2009 and made the final pieces in 2012. This installation was therefore unresolved for a few years. A very helpful aspect of this research model was the theoretical corroboration of my intuitive sense, based on my artistic practice, that deep, open-ended exploration was most likely to offer a way of developing this work. I finally decided that instead of trying to consolidate this installation by somehow visually and conceptually pulling the work together, offering a conclusion of sorts, I should simply ask further questions through drawing. I confirm this in my personal journal: “I keep coming back to the point of this installation: that I am asking questions” (personal journal 31Jan 2012).

It is important to note that the risk and uncertainty I had to embrace in this installation was not academic: I really did not know what to do for a lot of the process. In 2010 I wrote: “I don’t really know what to think about my pupa drawings; how and whether they are worth exhibiting—perhaps I should go back to my intention to find clues” (personal journal 11 February 2010). As late as 2012 I was still not sure:

Have I explored the image as fully as I can? What have I missed?...What have I done recently? Explored their relationship to space—size, size format, media, femininity, absence, falling, suspension...I don’t know what else to do until my assessment (personal journal 20 February 2012).

Having created a particular level of uncertainty in my artistic practice, and particularly in this piece, I was able to find a way to develop the work because I understood in practice and in theory that uncertainty is a necessary and unavoidable principle in my generative drawing.

The outcome of the above artistic approach was art work that is generative—visually and conceptually—and that may be considered original. This is confirmed by observations made by Dr. Elizabeth Gunter about *Becoming* (2009-2012) when she opened *Fine Lines* at Grande Provence in September 2012:

Ultimately, Louise's drawing drives a relentless and forceful becoming, constantly posing self-as-being against self-as-nothing, life against death. As such her mark making, her *trait* or trace occupies the wonder world of invention, fabrication, and illusion. These marks have never existed before, not out there, nor in here—they mark *becoming* always between the past and future, between legend and myth, between conjecture and construct, sense and nonsense, the visible and the invisible.

Louise Hall intuitively understands these dense, illogical, and obscure little encounters. She knows, whether we draw or not, that we as a result cannot really perceive reality as an unvarying phenomenon, constrictive with its edicts of fidelity. She refuses the formulae that ensure a repetitive and faithful mimesis. Hers is not a ritual echo of existing style languages that merely regurgitate legends. In her work we see no conformity to any canon or artist; no second-hand repertoire. Even if we can read in her work the pain and trauma of death, she poses the warm and bloody mess of life, the impossibility of predicting its flows. We see Louise—the multiplicity and complexity of her selves.

I must assert, then, that Louise's drawing process relates a fierce and fearless confrontation of her blindness, the nothingness of her sight, the hidden invisibilities of her mind and body that irrupt without precedent and without prefiguration *in*, and more importantly, durationally *through* her drawing process. What we see, therefore, is pure invention, the labour of this artist's abandonment of caution and conformity, a refusal to obey the narrow confines both of a single reality and of mere decorative copying. We see that which does not belong to 'the realm of spectacle', the nothingness of sight and self, each notation anticipating further sight as much as insight, notation that promises insight through the surprise and wonder of discovery.

Both the effort to capture the fleetingness of sight and the promise of insight create the force and flow of her drawing, finally enabling her to

exceed even invention, and decisively affording us a glimpse of an artist's body-mind who asserts her presence by facing her absence, or rather, by giving her absence a face.

The above examples have shown that artistic practice and theory can be complementary and beneficial. Moreover these are examples in this research where the integration of writing and art making enhanced the use of my drawing as a generative medium.

## **9. Chapter Summary**

In this chapter I have endeavoured to identify and examine the complex of factors involved in the generative nature of drawing and my drawing in particular. These inextricably connected factors spanning artistic approach, drawing process and medium, all play an essential role in this nuanced and dynamic thinking and art making process. While none of these factors can be treated in isolation from the others, the drawing quality of 'incompleteness' does seem to be at the heart of the inventive agility of exploratory drawing. This quality in addition, does seem to be central to the current valorisation of the medium. Further, what was traditionally regarded as 'incomplete' is currently a legitimate 'complete' state for an art work. I speculate that the current evolution of drawing may involve a preference in both drawing practice and discourse interpretations for *nonfinite* over *finite*.

The following chapter will give a condensed account of the conclusions reached in the course of this practice-led research.



# CONCLUSION

## 1. Introduction

As a conclusion to this research study, this chapter will:

- i. Provide an overview of the extent of the research.
- ii. Discuss the main conclusions I reached regarding the research topics I investigated, and provide a short account of the reasoning supporting each of my conclusions;
- iii. Provide some reflections on this practice-led research;
- iv. Summarise the contributions of this research.

## 2. Overview

Through practice-led research I have examined drawing as a generative medium in art making. This dual research consisted of interrelated artwork and writing (Macleod and Holdridge 2005:197). Accordingly, I have produced and exhibited original art works, namely works in paint and drawing media, and supported this with an integrative, written text (or exegesis).

While an exhibition of this body of work is not necessarily a requirement for practice-led research internationally, my institution identified this as important. The whole of the practical component of the PhD. was therefore conceived and executed on the assumption that the works made should and would lead to an exhibition, which would be the basis for judging the practical body of work. This research body of art work, entitled *Fine Lines*, was exhibited at University of Johannesburg Gallery (UJ), Johannesburg from 11-26 April 2012; at KZNSA Gallery, Durban from 19 June to 8

July 2012; and at Grande Provence Gallery, Franschhoek from 30 September to 26 October 2012.

In selecting the above galleries, I sought spaces that were substantial and where the space was uninterrupted. My art work looked different in each space. For example, UJ is a long minimalist space. Although this big body of research art work was generously accommodated in the gallery it was difficult to view the work as a whole. In my view the best curated exhibition of the three was the one at KZNSA, where my work filled all three inter-leading gallery spaces—the Main Gallery, the Mezzanine and the Park Contemporary.

The triple volume space in the main gallery was appropriate for the big works in oil paint. These works could be viewed at eye level in the Main Gallery as well as from above from the Mezzanine. The challenge in curating this body of work was to achieve visual cohesion of the art work in the Main Gallery and the Mezzanine. The work on these two floors could be seen simultaneously as a viewer entered the gallery, Plates 74-79. The utter expertise of KZNSA Gallery curator Bren Brophy was invaluable in achieving this. This example highlights the advantage of artists collaborating with professional curators.

I intended for my work to be examined at KZNSA Gallery but my examiners were unfortunately unavailable for the duration of the show. I therefore had to display my work in the Jack Heath Gallery, on the University of KwaZulu-Natal Pietermaritzburg campus in August 2012—a space that is not big enough or suitable for this body of work. This issue may be a consideration for future candidates completing practice-led research and who intend to exhibit their work. Space at commercial galleries must be secured eighteen months or two years in advance. Once a gallery has offered dates for an exhibition space, these dates are usually not easily negotiable. For such candidates effective co-ordination between University Higher Degrees administration and commercial art gallery requirements is imperative.

In addition to the above solo shows of my work, I participated in a number of group shows where I exhibited art work that I made as part of this research. The following is a list of these shows:

- 2007** CVA staff and post graduate exhibition, Carnegie Art Gallery, Newcastle.
- 2008** CVA staff and post graduate exhibition, Jack Heath Gallery, UKZN, Pietermaritzburg.
- 2009** *Creating Minds*, Joint performance/exhibition with pianist Christopher Duigan.
- 2009** *Contemporary Reflections*, Tatham Art Gallery, Pietermaritzburg.
- 2009** outofthebox, Jack Heath Gallery, UKZN, Pietermaritzburg.
- 2010** *Works on Paper and Ceramics*, John Milton Art Gallery, St. Pauls School, London.
- 2010** CVA staff and post graduate exhibition, William Humphreys Gallery, Kimberley.
- 2010** *Jabulisa 2010*—Natal Arts Trust juried exhibition opening at Tatham Art Gallery and touring KwaZulu-Natal and the rest of the South Africa.
- 2011** *Memories*, Artisan Contemporary Gallery, Durban.
- 2011** *New Identity*, Grande Provence Gallery, Franschhoek.

### **3. Conclusions**

#### **3.1. Research Questions**

In keeping with practice-led research, which is rooted primarily in artistic practice and not in theory, the focus on drawing stems from the seminal role of drawing in all aspects of my art-making.

My key research question was:

- i. What accounts for the generative nature of drawing, and my drawing in particular?

In contextualising my work in a contemporary Fine Art field, ancillary questions that have been addressed include:

- ii. Does drawing demonstrate intrinsic, stable features or is this an out-dated modernist view?
- iii. Why are the qualities of drawing currently highly valued?
- iv. What features, if any, of drawing and/or the contemporary fine Art field account for the current ascendant status of drawing?

## **3.2. What Accounts for the Generative Nature of Drawing?**

### **3.2.1. A Definition of Drawing**

In order to discuss the generative nature of drawing as the focus of this research, it was necessary to establish a working definition of drawing or at least a means of locating it. An ancillary question which was addressed, is whether drawing demonstrates intrinsic, stable features or whether this an out-dated modernist view.

In the last fifty years drawing has undergone a radical shift in status and function. In the history of mainly Western art ever since Classical Antiquity, drawing served an essential and predominantly, though not exclusively, preparatory function. It formed the basis not only for what were then considered major art forms, architecture, sculpture and painting, but also for many of the crafts (Osborne 1986:328). Considered essential, drawing was used consistently but principally for the innovation and preparation of ideas and images. In the last fifty years drawing has become a primary medium of artistic expression for many artists and the imperative of preparation no longer necessarily applies. Contemporary drawing practice and discourse is consequently fluid and there is little consensus about the nature of drawing. These factors compound the difficulty of adequately defining drawing. The ambiguous nature of drawing, which allows it to be a constituent of other media as

well as an independent medium, further complicates any attempt to define drawing strictly and in a way that does justice to its complexity.

One of the difficulties therefore in defining drawing is that drawing is “both itself and more than itself” (Petherbridge 2011:18). Besides being an independent practice, it is “tied into reciprocity” (2011:18) with other media, making its functions and uses numerous; and it has the versatility of being *finito* or *nonfinito*. With the collapse of distinctions between media, it is doubtful whether any contemporary artistic medium may be defined in singular terms. Nonetheless, contemporary drawing is part of an “embracing plurality” (2011:18), which combines to produce a variety of meaning and practice.

Despite the recent obsolescence of the idea that the role of drawing is mainly intermediate and provisional, historical and current characterisations of drawing suggest and valorise the experimental and generative function of the medium: “spontaneity, creative speculation, experimentation, directness, simplicity, abbreviation, expressiveness, immediacy, personal vision, technical diversity, modesty of means, rawness, fragmentation, discontinuity, unfinishedness and open-endedness” (Craig-Martin 1995:9-10). In my research, I concluded that the constant reference to drawing in these terms does not ensure that these are indeed suprahistorical characteristics of drawing.

In addition to the above descriptions of drawing, the elements of line and contour have been posited and institutionalised as constituting the essence of drawing. The historical main value and function of drawing—preparation and draughtsmanship—was also formally established over centuries. However insistent the historical reiteration and formalisation of these descriptions and functions of drawing, I concluded that it does not follow that we here have intrinsic, suprahistorical features of drawing.

The debate on the precise nature of drawing therefore remains complex and unable to disentangle itself from what is historically contingent. The predominantly preparatory role of drawing and formal recording and institutionalisation of qualities attributed to drawing over several centuries has intimately informed the way in which

contemporary artists regard drawing, and thus may attempt to reinvent or reinterpret the medium. The extent to which historical concepts of drawing determine the way in which contemporary artists view and develop drawing is however a matter of conjecture.

I concluded that a working definition or ‘means of discussing drawing’ must be shaped by contingent contextual theory and practice. It must be premised on an understanding that the question ‘what may be considered drawing?’ is not suprahistorical in nature. It must also recognise that as such any definition is open to revision (Davies 2001:171, 173). A current definition of drawing may be regarded as an interpretation of drawing in the early twenty-first century, and appreciated in relation to the history of mainly Western drawing. Further, this interpretation may provide a basis for artists to interrogate this historically-based concept and practice of drawing.

I therefore proffered Dexter’s (2006:005) definition of drawing as the most encompassing of historical and contemporary drawing practice and discourse. This definition, “a mark-making process used to produce a line-based composition” in my view describes what has become the fundamental character and armature of drawing within a paradigm of the materiality of drawing. That is, due to the history of the practice and theory of drawing, line and mark have become the constituent elements of the medium. In keeping with the open-endedness of current practice, Dexter’s succinct definition does not specify function or status, ground, materials, or monochromaticity, the use of authorship or process. By using the word “composition”, Dexter loosely insinuates skill as a drawing component, thereby denoting draughtsmanship, or at the very least, a consideration of composition.

### **3.2.2. Drawing as a Generative Medium in Art Making**

The title of the research, *Drawing as a generative medium in art making*, may suggest at first glance that the generative potential of drawing is peculiar to the medium as a discrete entity. This research concluded that the exploratory and innovative capacity of drawing is the likely outcome of a multiplicity of interconnected elements. Artistic

approach, drawing process and medium are key factors in this dynamic complexity. This complexity does not easily allow each constituent to be treated discretely, as each plays an essential part in this non-formulaic, nuanced and dynamic thinking and art making process. The research concluded that indeed, drawing is well suited to its generative function. Yet a further conclusion in this research was that the multiplicity of constituents involved in generative art making implies that other media can function as equally generative.

The frameworks of material thinking, contemporary media theory and the notion of the extended mind underscored this interconnectedness of components in the generative nature of drawing: No single factor may be isolated as accounting for the generative nature of drawing; and the medium of drawing as an inanimate component, should not therefore be seen as separate or subordinate to the rest of the complex of factors. These frameworks in addition, highlighted an additional interconnectedness—that of outcomes. In particular, the frameworks of contemporary media theory and the notion of the extended mind demonstrated that thinking and drawing co-evolve. These two outcomes—conceptual insights and artworks—are closely correlated.

In locating the generative nature of drawing within theories of creativity, I interpreted the aspect of artistic approach and process as requiring an optimal exploitation of conventional cognitive processes—rather than a move to special cognitive processes found nowhere else. These cognitive processes draw on the “dynamic and evolving traditions of knowledge and inquiry” (Bailin 1994:131) in which creativity plays a major role. The generative nature of drawing, like creativity, depends on varying combinations of conscious and subconscious cognitive processes, on skill as well as imagination, and exploration as well as critical judgement.

Theories of creativity together with the frameworks of material thinking, contemporary media theory and the notion of the extended mind, emphasise an optimum exploitation of thinking processes to produce new, valuable or significant outcomes (Bailin 1994:4-5). If drawing skill is used to further exploit cognitive processes as well as to widen artistic practice methodologies, then theories of creativity and the above frameworks make a case for the importance of drawing skill in the generative function of drawing. This is corroborated by my own artistic

practice, where drawing skill enhances my ability to explore and think—flexibly and critically—through the “prosthetic” (Mitchell and Hansen 2010:4) medium of drawing. I concluded that, the skilled nature of my drawing is liable to augment the inventive potential of my use drawing.

Besides the interrelated nature of artistic approach, drawing process and medium, the research showed that the simplicity of tools and materials typically used for drawing as well as particular qualities associated with provisional, ‘incomplete’ drawing, must not be overlooked in the inventive capacity of drawing.

Until recently, the historical reference to drawing as ‘incomplete’ bore the stigma of inferiority. However the research has shown that the inventive agility of generative drawing lies in its ‘incompleteness’. In other words, the absence of ‘finishedness’ accounts to a large extent for the generative nature of drawing. In particular, the characteristics of ambiguity and indeterminacy (Petherbridge 2011:26-28), which may in addition, belong to “pre-inventive structures” (Sternberg 2003:98), are at the heart of the generative nature of drawing. The significance of these characteristics is their suggestiveness, which offers a wide variety of pictorial and conceptual possibilities for the art work and artistic process. The evocative nature of ambiguous and imprecise drawings may thus function as a catalyst for subsequent art works that may transform or develop the original embryonic iterations.

As suggested above, rudimentary tools and materials enhance the experimental and exploratory role of drawing. By being reliably present (Clark and Chalmers 2010:4) inexpensive and accessible, simple tools may facilitate an open-ended and experimental artistic methodology.

Examination of my own work and artistic intention supported this view. This was demonstrated in my reflection on differences between my art works in paint and drawing media. When making works in paint as opposed to those in drawing media I had assumed that my artistic approach was equally open-ended and exploratory. On reflection, I realised that there were discrepancies in approach and outcome. The difference stemmed (in whole or in part) from a discrepancy in time, labour and material monetary costs involved in making works in the two media. I concluded that



my approach to smaller drawings was more detached, playful and experimental than to larger works in oil paint, as I could discard works in drawing media if necessary and start again quickly. This distinct artistic approach manifested itself clearly in the drawing outcomes.

The above insight is an important example of an understanding I gained through careful written reflection on my artistic practice. It is worth noting that this insight was a valuable outcome of the integration of writing and artistic practice in this research model: As a result I was able to work with greater awareness of my artistic approach when drawing in a variety of media. This observation highlights the potency of fine shifts in artistic approach in my work, and in general. It emphasises the interrelated nature of artistic approach, drawing process and medium in the generative function of drawing. I concluded that on the whole, characteristics that have historically been ascribed to drawing may stem in part from a discernibly more playful artistic approach allowed by simple, inexpensive and accessible materials. In addition, particular drawing characteristics may stem from the latitude for open-ended experimentation bestowed by the intermediate role of drawing and therefore the absence of the imperative of refinement.

The following authors suggest an artistic approach which may be exclusive to drawing: Godfrey (1990:105) claims that the use of drawing has historically been more experimental and open-ended, rather than definitive and classificatory. In a related way Dexter (2006:006) aligns drawing with a unique subjective artistic approach: “Drawing is a feeling, an attitude that is betrayed in its handling as much as in the materials used”. Though I support the claims of both authors, this dual research was able to pinpoint more clearly the nature of this artistic approach that may be peculiar to drawing: As discussed above, different tools and materials may facilitate a degree of open-endedness in artistic approach that allows a subtly more playful and more courageously experimental approach conducive to pushing artistic boundaries—and which importantly, may give rise to particular drawing characteristics.

As mentioned earlier in this chapter, a premise in my examination of the central research question was that breaking new ground in visual language is not unconditionally dependent on the use of drawing—the use, choice and combination of

materials and artistic processes is diverse, interdisciplinary and idiosyncratic. While drawing as a medium and process is well suited to producing new ideas and images, breaking new ground in visual language can occur using media other than drawing. The research did not include a practical interrogation of this premise. However the following aspects of the written text support this hypothesis:

Theories of creativity and the frameworks of material thinking, contemporary media theory and the notion of the extended mind, emphasise that artistic medium is only one of the elements in the complex of factors involved in the generative nature of drawing. Furthermore, Goel (1995:218) claims that the symbol system of the sketch, characteristically imprecise, ambiguous and fluid is evidenced “equally in the linguistic forms of poetry, song and much of everyday discourse”. It follows that breaking new ground can occur in whatever artistic medium or idiosyncratic combination of media an artist chooses, provided that these media allow a certain measure of indeterminacy and ambiguity.

A further premise in the thesis is the idea that the inventive function of drawing can be an underlying factor throughout the multifaceted art making process. The historical, mainly preliminary use of drawing suggests that the experimental and exploratory role drawing is confined to the initial stages of art making. My own idiosyncratic practice, like that of many other artists, shows that this function of drawing underpins my entire art making process.

Open-ended inquiry is an overarching guiding principle in my artistic practice and use of drawing. This exploratory approach aligns my artistic practice with the established tradition of drawing as preparation and invention. While my formative training was steeped in the historical notion of drawing as important but preparatory, all my work serves as preparation for subsequent work. Art works in drawing media serve as preparation for those in paint. Equally, the latter serve as preparation for the former, thus flouting the historical parameters of drawing as the singular medium of preparation. The integrated nature of artistic practice and writing in this research served to clarify this factor.

I view my artistic practice as a process where no works are ‘complete’ in an absolute sense. Every work I make usually contains flaws and these raise challenges and questions for subsequent work. My artistic output consists broadly of ‘more developed’ or consolidated art works and those that are less developed, akin to unfinished fragments. These so-called ‘incomplete’ works in both media serve as preparation for subsequent so-called ‘complete’ or more developed works in both media. Likewise, more developed or ‘complete’ art works pave the way for ‘incomplete’ works. Moreover, what may be considered ‘complete’, consolidated, or ‘developed enough’ works, serve as preparation for other similarly ‘complete’ art works. An additional historical assumption about drawing is thereby contradicted by my own practice: that drawing, as an inherently ‘incomplete’ medium, serves principally as preparation for more refined works in media other than drawing. In my artistic practice the functions of preparation and consolidation are not confined to drawing and painting respectively; and neither are these functions correspondingly peculiar to ‘incomplete’ or ‘complete’ works. Regardless of the media I use and the state of completion of these works, the generative function of drawing is seminal to my entire artistic practice. It almost goes without saying that, like many other contemporary artists, I do not consider the ‘complete’ drawing as necessarily more successful, more valuable, than the ‘incomplete’.<sup>1</sup>

As the above discussion shows, the verbal and visual imbrications of this dual research served to complement each other, each highlighting and amplifying different aspects of the generative nature of drawing. In this research theory and practice have strengthened each other. However I would not go as far as saying, as discussed in the Introduction to this exegesis, that I have “theorised my practice and practised my theories” (Taylor 2001:233-4). The art making process in my experience is more complex and defies this strict application and imposition of theory. This highlights an area for further research which would be to examine more closely the differences between the languages and thinking processes involved in writing and art making. I speculate that this would assist in identifying the value and extent to which it is possible to theorise practice and practice theory.

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<sup>1</sup> See next subsection.

### 3.2.3. Current Valorisation of Drawing Qualities

Contemporary drawings “in an age of pluralism are as varied as the artists who produce them” (Petherbridge 2011:49). However, exploratory drawings—which Petherbridge (2011:26-28) refers to as “sketches”—dominate contemporary drawing practice and are valorised “by artists, historians, theoreticians, curators and art administrators alike” (2011:49).

Descriptions of such exploratory drawing have for centuries remained constant with the quality of ‘incompleteness’ central to these characterisations: “exploratory, spontaneous, abbreviated, unfinished, indeterminate, contingent and disordered” (Petherbridge 2011:27). Historically ‘incomplete’ embryonic drawings formed part of a larger inventive process in which these imprecise beginnings were subjected to a process of selection and development. However in contemporary artistic practice a tension exists between the value of transforming and developing these embryonic drawings on the one hand, and of treating their ambiguous and indeterminate state as ‘finished’, on the other (2011:26).

I concluded that the characteristics of indeterminacy and ambiguity associated with generative drawing indeed appear to be important in the increasing stature of contemporary drawing. However I can only speculate as to the current appreciation of ‘unfinishedness’ in contemporary drawing. The attribute of *non finite* in drawing seems to echo the contemporary bias towards contingency and open-endedness. Given this contemporary predisposition, the appeal of an ‘incomplete’ art work may be that a viewer can in a sense, “complete the work in the imagination and...[the] imaginative versions of completion may be more sublime than any finished version an artist can create” (Petherbridge 2011:47).

Petherbridge (2011:26) further suggests that the sketch is valued not so much for its “materiality as...[the] expressive evidence of invention, inspiration and innovation”. Historically the quality of ‘incompleteness’ in provisional drawings called for transformation and ‘completion’ in drawing media or more commonly, in other media. Petherbridge interprets the current penchant for these drawing qualities as evidence that ‘incompleteness’ in contemporary drawing is valued as an end result—

without due appreciation of the established reciprocal relationship between the contingency of *nonfinito* the repletion of *finito* (2011:28).

In this research I questioned whether some drawing qualities typically associated with ‘incompleteness’ which are the outcome of its historical preparatory role and for which drawing has consistently been applauded, will now simply be imitated rather than produced through a genuine attempt to break new ground. It will be worth noting as drawing artistic practice continues to evolve whether for example, as Petherbridge (2011:28) suggests, ‘incompleteness’ as will be sought for its own sake, as an end in itself. I speculated that if this quality characterises some drawing practice, it may be a particular brand of ‘incompleteness’—sought for its appearance and suggestiveness, and the outcome of an artistic process devoid of an urgent imperative to innovate and transform. I concluded that this tendency may mark a direction in the reinterpretation and reinvention of the medium of drawing.

My interpretation of the generative nature of drawing highlights the possibility of change in the nature and characteristics of drawing as a consequence of, as above, an altered artistic intention. This interpretation emphasises the intricate interrelation of artistic approach, drawing process and medium. Drawing outcomes are likely to vary when one or more of the complex of interconnected factors involved in the generative nature of drawing is amended.

Contemporary artists whose artistic practice aspires to the condition of the sketch (Pater 1986:86) must thus exploit the intricate interrelation of artistic approach, drawing process and medium if they intend to produce ‘incompleteness’ as an ultimate outcome. The artistic intention necessary to achieve such an outcome would be different from the artistic intention that was necessary historically, when the crucial issue was the catalytic potential of ‘incompleteness’ to transform and develop embryonic ideas and images. The quality of ‘incompleteness’ in contemporary practice may accordingly correlate with a distinctive artistic intention and thinking process. The frameworks of contemporary media theory and the notion of the extended mind support this speculation—that there is a direct correlation between the development of thinking (which would include artistic intention) and art work/s. This

speculation further emphasises that drawing characteristics that may evolve can hardly be taken to be suprahistorical.

#### **3.2.4. My Use of Drawing Located Within the Contemporary Fine Art Field**

The following is an outline of the commonalities and differences between contemporary drawing in general and my particular use of drawing, in other words, an attempt to position my work within the current Fine Art field.

On the whole, my drawing straddles modernist as well as contemporary tendencies. In keeping with contemporary drawing practice, my use of drawing is as a primary medium of artistic expression. Drawing is seminal to all stages my artistic practice, especially because of its generative nature.

Much contemporary artistic practice is not confined to one medium but is interdisciplinary and eclectic. I choose to work in paint and drawing media; and these two media coexist in my work. Two characteristics typical of drawing that I have endeavoured to translate to paint media are linearity and an open-ended exploratory approach. Notwithstanding this postmodern interdisciplinary approach, the quintessential nature of drawing in my work suggests a modernist tendency of media specificity.

Further characteristics that may count as modernist (as well as a continuation of premodern traditions, of course) are that my drawing is the outcome of skill and technical proficiency and that I pay careful attention to composition. The skilled nature of my use of drawing is based on “the...coordination between the hand, the eye and the mind”, each of which is subject to training and habit (Dodson 1985:10). I draw what I see, remember or imagine, separately or combining these modes as the art making process/inquiry demands. In my concern with composition and drawing skill, I endeavour to achieve independence and uniqueness in each work. This too, would probably count as modernist. On the other hand, as discussed earlier, the interpretation of drawing using the contemporary framework of material thinking supports the

implicit skilled nature of my drawing. Moreover, within the framework of contemporary media theory my use of skilled drawing is pivotal to the co-evolution of my thinking and artistic practice. I believe that drawing skill enhances my capacity to think through the medium of drawing.

Open-ended inquiry is an overarching guiding principle in my artistic practice and use of drawing. This exploratory approach aligns my artistic practice with the established tradition of drawing as preparation and invention discussed in chapter two. My formative training was steeped in the historical notion of drawing as important but preparatory. Regardless of the media I use and the state of completion of these works, the generative function of drawing is seminal to my entire artistic practice: all my work serves as preparation for subsequent work.

Besides ‘incompleteness’, one of the features traditionally ascribed as intrinsic to drawing, is line. Contemporary discourse and practice which interrogates concepts of drawing, makes the exploration of this element of linearity fundamental to the medium of drawing. My artistic practice does not involve questioning whether line is central to drawing. It involves harnessing linearity and exploring ways of appropriately translating this aspect of my drawn media to paint media. My artistic practice is therefore compatible with the traditional view that line is fundamental and intrinsic to drawing. Importantly, my practice explores the extent to which line can also be fundamental to painting.

In the postmodern spirit of hybridity, heterogeneity and contingency, it falls to the individual artist to define the parameters of their artistic practice. I seem to be a child of my time in that I employ whatever approach, intention and process I believe to be appropriate for my artistic practice. Yet, I acknowledge that the current valorisation of drawing is a consideration in defining the ambit of my work. In other words, though my choice of artistic medium is mainly idiosyncratic, it is important to recognise that it has become easier to for me focus on drawing in my work because the contemporary art context recognises drawing as a primary medium of artistic expression—no less valuable than any other media of artistic expression. That said, my work is modernist inasmuch as it demonstrates my concern with the autonomy of each artwork and in reflecting my unique personal vision and calligraphy. In contrast,

many contemporary artists use media and styles of work based on their suitability for a particular thesis or project. They use media and styles of work without a concern for, or experience with, the properties of the medium (Kovats 2007:36). In reflecting my unique vision and calligraphy, it is important to note that I do not self-consciously set out to cultivate a distinct 'style' of working. My art work does not demonstrate a multiplicity of styles based on their suitability for this research and neither does my work parody a style of work.

Thematically my work is contemporary in that it reflects a personal and artistic response to our current context. One of the factors for me is the inescapability of flux (personal, societal, in the South African context and globally), which has become a central motif in my experience and art work. I would not assert that the flux and precariousness of living to which I respond necessarily enhances my use of drawing as a generative medium. I would need to conduct further research using a different motif in my art work and perhaps to live and work abroad to test and measure this quality in my work. Furthermore, it is difficult to generalise whether drawing is particularly suited to being a "prosthetic medium" (Mitchell and Hansen 2010:4) in making sense of and articulating my response to this aspect of our context. As discussed, an artist's individual choice and sense of appropriateness of materials and media for her artistic practice is idiosyncratic. The medium of drawing is apt for me. For other artists, different artistic media, or an interdisciplinary and eclectic use of a variety of media, may be equally appropriate in exploring these current concerns.

I concluded that in the contemporary diverse and provisional Fine Art context, where both drawing practice and the discourse on drawing evade consensus and generalisations, the challenge for contemporary artists is to delineate the scope of their artistic practice for themselves. This presupposes a willingness to be rigorous in how they research, develop and evaluate their artistic endeavours in relation to the context within which they work. Given the fluidity of the current Fine Art field I would speculate that such an exercise may be advantageous, especially for artists who wish to make work that engages with contemporary artistic discourse and practice.

In my own case this may be interpreted as a benefit of practice-led research. In general, this practice-led research has provided me with an opportunity to gain a more



precise understanding of the seminal role of drawing in my work, its generative nature, of the context within which I practice, and lastly of how my work may be positioned in this context.

#### **4. Reflection on Practice-led Research**

I registered for a practice-led PhD in mid 2007. At this time there were no academic members of staff who held a practice-led PhD in visual art at my institution and neither were there precedents of other candidates who had completed such research at other universities in South Africa. I therefore was in an unenviable position of pioneering this degree at the University of KwaZulu-Natal.

From 2007 there was much debate at my institution about the nature and parameters of this research model. My understanding of the requirements of this research has evolved in such a way that were I to register for this degree again, I would approach it differently from the outset. Suffice to say my research was shaped by the decisions and assumptions made by my institution at the time and as well as by the availability of academic staff to supervise my research.

The international external examiner of this practice-led PhD defended the view that a practice-led PhD—including, crucially, its practical component—constitutes a form of research following the paradigm of research typical of any (other) academic discipline. This view has the advantage of supplying a clear rationale for why and how one should do a practice-led PhD, and what criteria should be used for evaluating it. I have no doubt whatsoever that excellent work can be done within this paradigm. Whether this is the right paradigm for every artist is however the question.

In reflecting on my particular experience of practice-led research it will be useful to return to key debates presented in the exegesis introduction. These include the wisdom of rigorously integrating art making and writing into a research model, whether art making creates knowledge and the extent to which it is possible to define the nature of the knowledge that this model may generate (Elkins 2009:116).

For Elkins (2010:246) the key conceptual difficulty with regard to practice-led research lies in the foundational requirement of simultaneously and/or alternately, making, understanding and writing about one's own practice: "it is hard enough to find the right words for visual art, but harder still to take the making along with the talk about the making". I concur with Elkins and would add that in my experience it is usually hard enough making art work in the first place.

Like Elkins, Garner (2008:20) interprets these requirements as driven by a defensive motivation for academic respectability and funding:

Historically it is...precisely because fine art education has abandoned many of its core traditions and traditional independence in order to come under the university umbrella that it finds itself having to 'defend itself' and its tradition in such terms, terms which are not always of its own choosing and finds itself having to squeeze into the often ill-fitting garment of 'Research'. Such it seems is the price of academic respectability and of course funding (who pays the piper calls the tune). This can turn out to be high price indeed when those outside the discipline impose their own sometimes inappropriate paradigms.

My interpretation of Garner's (2008:20) view—in which I replace the metaphor of garments with that of performance—is that candidates conducting practice-led research, depending on their idiosyncratic artistic methodology, may have to perform a kind of 'academic acrobatics' to fulfil what may be inappropriate requirements of this research model.

In contrast to Elkins' (2010:246) and Garner's (2008:20) doubts about this research model, Taylor (2001:233-4), as discussed in the Introduction to this exegesis, endorses a close correlation of theory and practice advocating that [we] should "theorise our practice and practise our theories". Similarly, Macleod and Holdridge (2010:87) argue that it is precisely the tension between the languages and thinking modes of writing and art making that helps generate "the depth of thought encountered in the final submissions".

In the following discussion I will outline the imbrications of writing and artistic practice that I developed in my research and I will discuss the above concerns in relation to my experience of this research model.

It would be useful to start off by outlining the pattern of the imbrications of writing and artistic practice in my research. From August 2007 to 2010, without an official supervisor, I embarked on developing my artistic practice with the objective, among others, to define my research question. Journaling is an integral part of my artistic methodology which I have employed consistently during this research, especially when I made art work. During this period (mid August 2007-2010) of intense artistic practice my research demonstrates consistent and even imbrications of reflective writing in my journal and artistic practice. From 2010 when Dr. Andries Gouws agreed to supervise my research, my focus changed to the written theoretical aspect of this research. I made very little artwork between 2010 and the end of 2011. My journals reflect this. I no longer required the process of journaling to help me chart my artistic direction and develop art work. Entries in my journal between 2010 and 2011 record, for example, reminders about collecting library books and issues pertaining to booking a gallery space: “go to the lib [library] pay fines and collect books. Make a loose open-ended drawing just—only just—to keep your head and eye in” (personal journal 14 March 2011) and,

UJ has offered me a space in April 2012. Mid April—so it is exactly a year from now. When I applied last year in June I was sure I would have completed my work, both practical and written text by early 2012....What has happened since my application is that I have realized how slow the whole writing process is and also how much work is involved (personal journal 14 April 2011).

Noteworthy in these entries is my experience of the writing process being slow and demanding, factors which prevented me from making much art work. In the long run it may have provided greater insights on my art making process but at the time I experienced it as frustrating and anxiety provoking. Demonstrated in the first quote above, I was concerned that I may lose my art making ‘fitness’ by having to write as extensively as was required by this research model, hence my plan to make a loose drawing in order to maintain my practice of drawing, literally.

From the beginning of 2012 until I submitted the research for examination, I produced fairly even imbrications of rigorous art making and theoretical writing and research. It is during this period that both reflection through journaling and theoretical research—

as rigorous as I could make it—for the text, fed directly back into my artistic practice. The artworks that emanated—the consolidation of the installation of drawings *Becoming* (2009-2012) and *Somewhere* (2012)—show significant development from earlier work. As discussed in Chapter Two, the drawings in *Becoming* (2009-2012) test the potential of drawing as a generative medium conceptually and visually in a way that my earlier work does not. *Becoming* (2009-2012) to my mind was a high point in my application of open-ended exploration and the embrace of the unknown (McNiff 1998:16)—discussed in the previous chapter in relation to the generative nature of drawing. *Somewhere* (2012) reflects a marked integration of painting and drawing by comparison with earlier works in paint which demonstrate an overriding concern with the physicality of paint (examiners’ report 2012:10). These works evidence an examination through artistic practice of key concerns and debates identified in the text, namely, the generative potential of drawing and the relationship of painting and drawing in my work.

Confirming Elkins’ (2010:246) view I found the task of writing clearly and insightfully about my art work difficult and very time consuming—“it is hard enough to find the right words for visual art but harder still to take the making along with the talk about the making”. As discussed in this thesis the primary medium through which I think is drawing. I believe, as with many other practitioners, I am less proficient using the “prosthetic” (Mitchell and Hansen 2010:4) medium of writing than I am in using the “prosthetic” medium of drawing. In line with the latter part of Elkins’ quote I found that each aspect of the research model—writing and art making—was very demanding, and that it was extremely difficult to carry out both simultaneously and adequately. In contrast, I experienced reflective writing through journaling, though less rigorous, as helpful and consistently compatible with my art making process.

My use of journaling is not peculiar to this research. As indicated above, I have always found it to be a worthwhile reflective tool in my art making process. As above, this research required a higher level of rigour in writing the thesis component than that of journaling. Nonetheless at the outset of this research I anticipated the written requirement to function similarly to my journaling: I anticipated that the exegesis would be a reflective written text that had the potential to offer distanciation and insights to my art work and artistic process. Kelly (2002:399-400) and van

Vlaenderen (1995:379) are of the view that reflection and evaluation necessarily involve an etic perspective (view from without) as well an emic perspective (view from within). Ricoeur (cited in Kelley2002:400) succinctly describes the value of distanciation:

Distanciation adds to meaning not by imposition, but by pointing to the subjective and contextual limits of understanding. No matter how thoroughly we understand a context from within, there are certain things about the context that are only going to become evident when we look at it from the outside.

I interpret the art making process as emic perspective and the written process as etic perspective, with the two perspectives being complementary. I accordingly endeavoured to use the writing process to reflect on my work and especially in Chapter Two, to write in such a way as to convey the nuanced, complex and idiosyncratic character of my art making process. I thus sought to harness the reflective and evaluative potential of this dual research and to guard against the exegesis imposing a straitjacket of order, coherence and meaning onto the artworks (Aulich and Lynch 2000: 46).

Having completed this research I still do consider the art making process as emic perspective and the written process as etic perspective. However additional factors during this research provided etic perspective, a perspective from the outside. In particular, in November 2011 I was given an interim assessment of my artwork by a panel of experts in the Fine Art field. The value of this assessment is discussed in Chapter Three with respect especially to the significant development of *Becoming* (2009-2012). My view is that a written reflective exegesis on its own cannot proffer all the necessary etic perspective an artist may need in this research model, and that discussions with experts in the field should be formalised and regular. Unfortunately I had only one assessment of my art work and would recommend that future candidates have the benefit of at least two more.

From the outset of this research it was valuable to be aware of the multiple roles of artist, researcher and critic, with the attendant subjective and objective positions required of this dual research. This awareness made it easier for me to manage these

contrasting positions. It is difficult to be certain whether these contrasting positions and the tension between the languages and thinking modes of writing and art making helped generate “the depth of thought encountered in the final submissions” (Macleod and Holdridge 2010:87). Was any depth of thought in my final submissions a result of the tension and combination of the two languages and thinking modes or was this the consequence of sustained enquiry in each? I experienced aspects of this research as frustrating—in particular, the fact that thorough writing and theoretical research prevented me from sustained art making for at least a year and a half. Did this frustration in any way contribute to tension between the languages and modes of thinking that in addition, also have generated “depth of thought”? I must admit that I am unable to answer this question one way or another with any conviction, despite having devoted a great amount of thought and research to it.

This raises a further key question with respect to practice-led research: if I take the installation of drawings *Becoming* (2009-2012) to epitomise generative drawing in both concept as well as in its realisation as an on-going series (examiners report 2012:10), do these drawings create new knowledge? Or will success here—even in the most favourable case—not lie in the creation of new knowledge, but in the fact that some powerful art works have been created—a consequence of sustained open-ended exploratory art making, drawing skill, excellent thinking (material thinking) and an exploitation of my particular artistic methodology?

At the heart of this research was my intention to extend my understanding of the nature of drawing in my work and to account for its characteristic qualities—if in fact it does possess particular intrinsic qualities—all essentially in the service of deepening my own artistic practice. I have a clearer understanding of this central research concern which I have tried to articulate in the written text. However, if I take the view that these art works are or contain new knowledge, what indicators with respect to my art works would I use to measure these shifts in understanding or what may be considered new knowledge? Are these inappropriate paradigms that are forcing artistic practice into “the ill-fitting garment of ‘Research’ (Garner 2008:20)?

In attempting to make sense of these conundrums I must ask a further question of myself: Would I as an artist continue to rigorously integrate practice and theory in the way that this research model requires? My view is that I would research to the extent that it assists my artistic practice and I would continue to journal but I would be very unlikely to write and research as rigorously as this research model demanded. I wish to continue to make art work but without subscribing to the idea that this must involve creating new knowledge.

The phrasing of the concept, ‘creating new knowledge’ seems inappropriate for my visual thinking and artistic methodology: It suggests that the outcome sought is a verbal response. It does not facilitate my particular visual thinking: Similar to experimental innovators’ working methods identified by Galenson (2006:4-5), my artistic practice is motivated by aesthetic and visual criteria and not verbal directives. I would rather describe what I am striving for as ‘producing powerful artworks’.

This underscores a suggestion made earlier that an important further area of research should examine the differences between the thinking modes of visual and verbal language. This would go some way in defining the “tension between the languages and thinking modes of writing and art making” that Macleod and Holdridge (2010:87) identify. It may lead to the depth of thought that these authors find desirable. More importantly, such research may fine tune the nature of the integration of writing and artistic practice in this research model—and thereby accommodate a wide variety of artists.

In conclusion, Galenson’s (2006:4-5) analysis of the working methods of two cycles of artistic creativity discussed in the previous chapter, may be salutary with respect to some of the above debates regarding the nature of practice-led research. In re-examining Galenson’s summary of conceptual and experimental innovators, I speculate that this research paradigm would probably be suitable for the conceptual clarity and precision of goals that seems to typify conceptual innovators’ working methods (2006:4-5). I speculate that in contrast, the paradigm of practice-led research would preclude artists whose artistic methodologies are mainly similar to experimental innovators: These artists’ working methods are tentative, incremental and slow; their goals are imprecise—many of them are “plagued by their frustration at

their inability to achieve their goals”—and they “aim to discover the image in the course of making it” (Galenson 2006:4-5). Galenson reminds us that these artists’ outputs are not inferior to those of conceptual innovators. Tertiary institutions would thus be unlikely to benefit from the insights on artistic practice coming from contemporary artists who are more ‘experimental’, rather than more ‘conceptual’.

## **5. Contributions**

Through the dual submission of artistic practice and written text, this practice-led research has endeavoured to make theoretical and practical contributions to the Fine Art field in the following ways:

- i. Through integrated artistic practice and theory this research has attempted to examine the generative nature of drawing. The combination of disciplined theoretical research and artistic practice has generated an interpretation of drawing and its capacity for innovation.
  
- ii. I used the frameworks of material thinking, contemporary media theory and the notion of the extended mind to examine the generative capacity of drawing. The holistic nature of these frameworks implies that thinking and innovative outcomes are inseparable from artistic approach and process as well as drawing medium. My interpretation of the generative nature of drawing as an interrelated complex of factors therefore emphasises the contingent nature of drawing characteristics. This is significant since most interpretations of drawing rely on drawing characteristics which on examination, stem largely from the historical provisional role of drawing. Furthermore, these interpretations do not adequately take into account the recent obsolescence of the mainly provisional role of drawing and the possibility that this factor may shape the nature of contemporary drawing. In other words a genre of drawing may evolve that will be markedly different from how we have come to understand the medium. Where once ‘incompleteness’ served as a catalyst to further transform the work, for many contemporary artists ‘incompleteness’ marks its final state of ‘completion’.



Qualities such as ambiguity and indeterminacy may therefore be sought for themselves as end results—rather than for their potential for transformation and which were once generated through a genuine attempt to break new ground. The frameworks of material thinking, contemporary media theory and the notion of the extended mind emphasise that artistic outcomes and thinking are contingent on all the factors involved in these processes. Consequently, where artistic approach is different it follows that drawing outcomes are correspondingly changed.

- iii. One of the research findings is that there is much disagreement about drawing among the various players in the field. The radical status and function shift that drawing has recently undergone has spawned much debate but little consensus about the nature and function of drawing. This context is ripe for practitioners and theoreticians alike to reinterpret and reinvent the medium and practice of drawing. As a consequence, this research asserts the scope and potential of drawing as a primary medium of artistic expression.
- iv. Within a context where the skilled nature of drawing is no longer imperative, a further research finding is that the skilled nature of drawing is a significant factor in its generative capacity, in general, and in specifically my work. Where drawing skill is used to further exploit cognitive processes as well as to extend artistic practice methodologies, drawing skill can enhance the generative capacity of drawing. This research asserts the value of skilled drawing especially now that the concept and practice of drawing is fluid and “waiting to be formulated” (Petherbridge 2008: 27).
- v. The exhibition of artworks is by definition original since a “particular, subjectively driven activity is always at its centre” (Higher Degrees Readers Report 2010:1). It is difficult to categorically identify originality in artwork. However in this research I was able to exploit the generative capacity of my drawing to produce some art works that may be considered innovative and original. This is demonstrated in the *Becoming* (2009-2012) series of drawings where in particular, I pushed the boundaries of open-ended exploration and the embrace of the unknown (McNiff 1998:16) in my artistic approach.

- vi. This final point may be aspirational. As one of the first practice-led PhD's in South Africa this research offers a test case of such research. As such it may serve as a basis for future candidates to criticise, develop and modify in pursuing their own research.

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# **APPENDICES I**

## **LIST OF PLATES**





Plate 1: Peter Paul Rubens, *Portrait of Nicolaas Rubens* (1620). Source: Baudouin (1977:364).



Plate 2: Joseph Beuys, *I like America and America likes me* (1974). Source: Rosenthal (2004:17).



Plate 3: Richard Long, *A Line Made by Walking England* (1967). Source: Dexter (2006:007).



Plate 4: Gedewon, *Diagram*, (1991-1992), ink on paper, 100 x 75cm. Source: Carlano (2003:27).

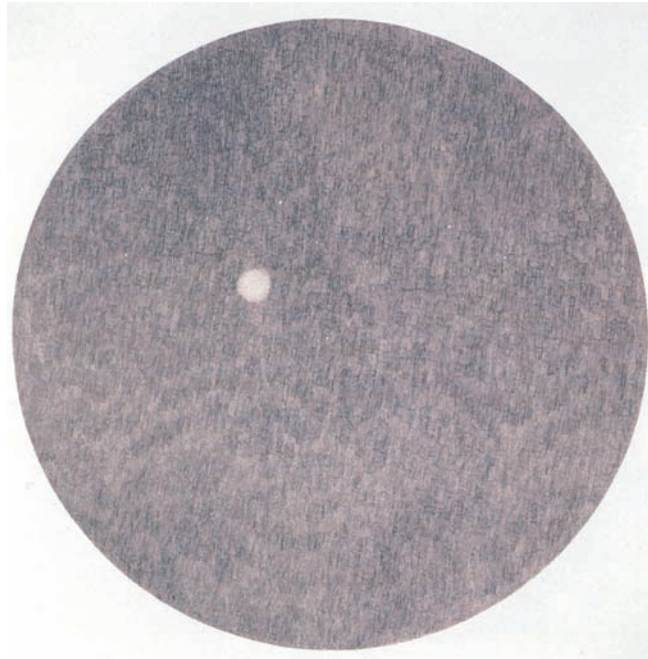


Plate 5: Richard Crotty, NGC 5466 “*The Ghost*” Globular Cluster in Bootes (2002), ink and watercolour on paper. Source: (Dexter 2006:066).

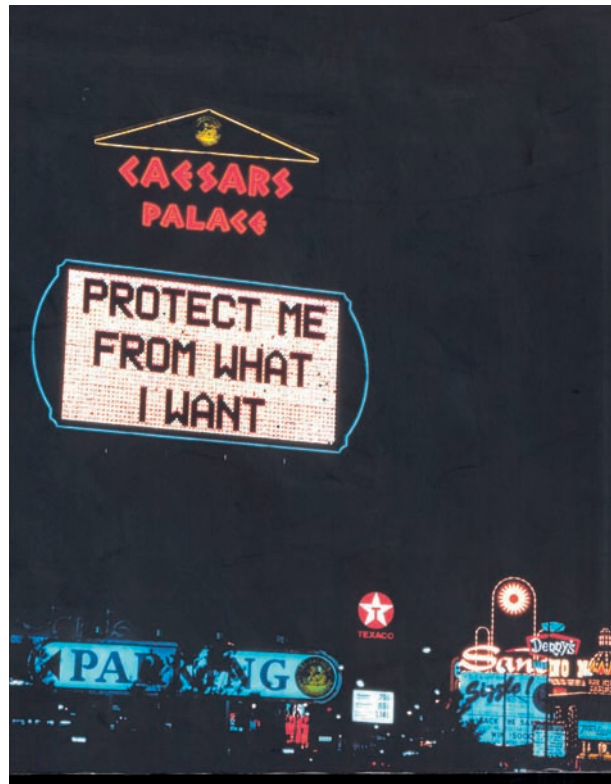


Plate 6: Jenny Holzer, *Protect Me From What I Want* (1990), LED lighting. Source: Waldman (1997:84).

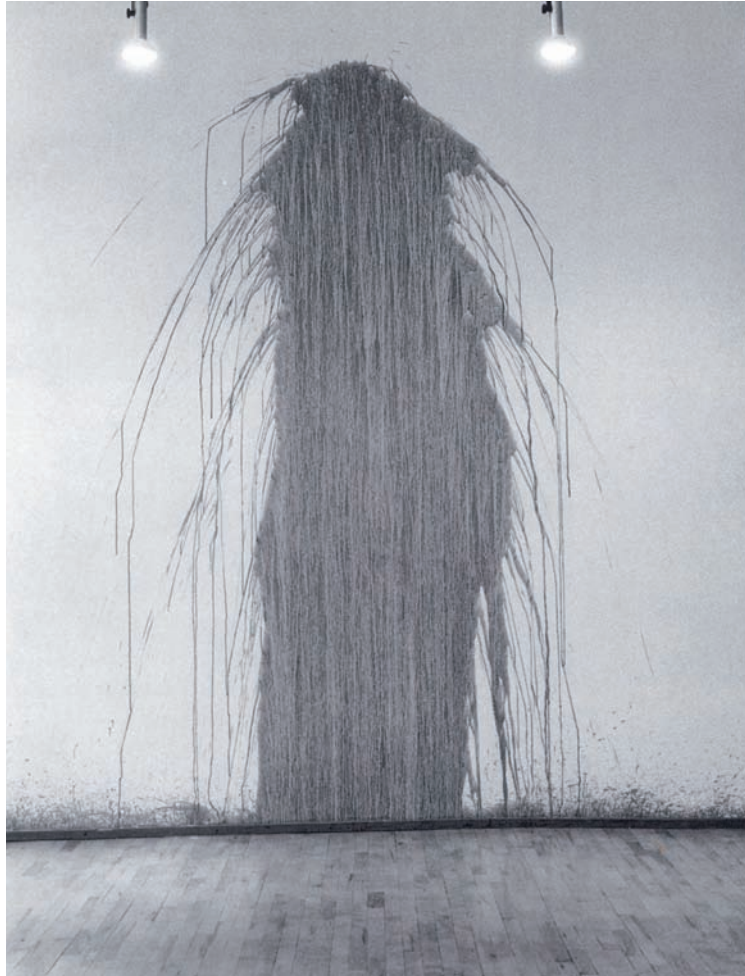


Plate 7: Richard Long, *Throwing Muddy Water* (1984).  
Source: Fuchs (1986: 113)

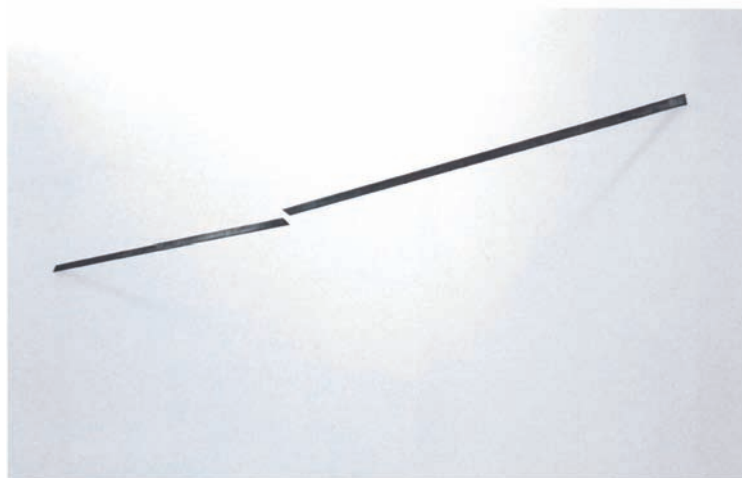


Plate 8: Luciano Fabro *Contatto-Tautologia* (Contact-tautology) (1967), stainless steel. Source: de Zegher (2010:65)



Plate 9: Gego (Gertrud Goldschmidt), *Reticularia* (Ambientacion) (1969). iron and steel wires. Source: de Zegher (2010:87)



Plate 10: Henri Matisse, *Harmony in Red* (1908-1909). Source: Lucie-Smith (1983:10-11)

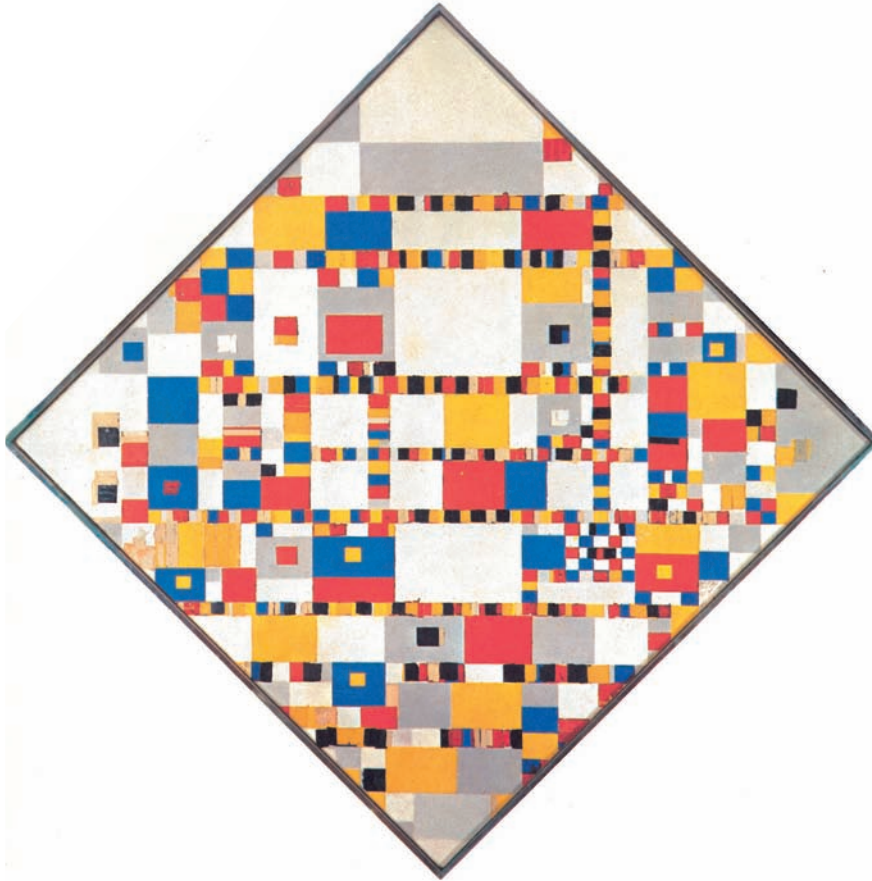


Plate 11: Piet Mondrian, *Victory Boogie Woogie* (1942-43). Source: Lucie-Smith (1983:28)

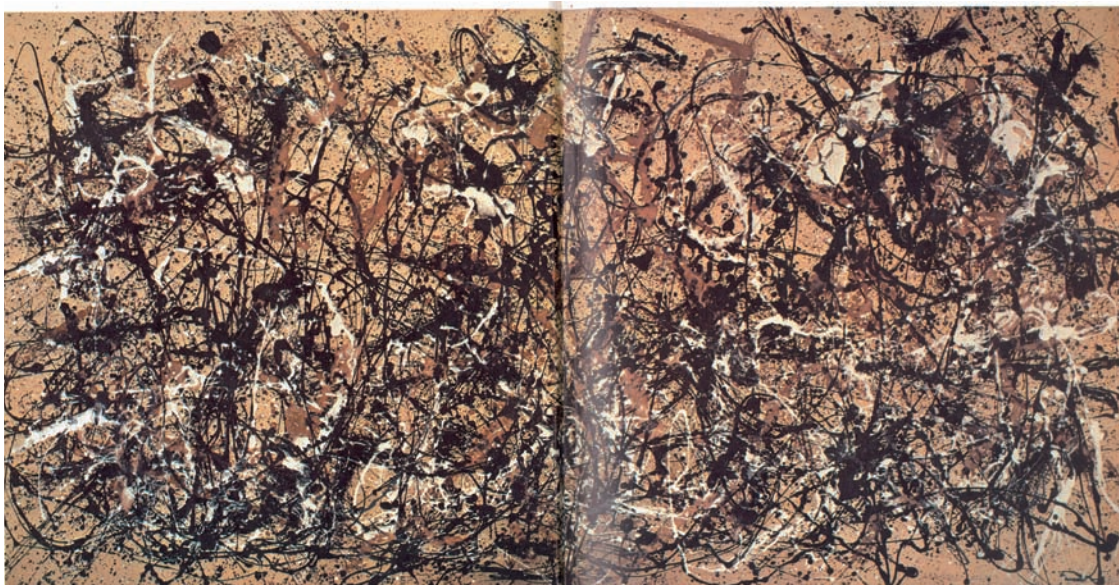


Plate 12: Jackson Pollock, *Autumn Rhythm*, 1950. Source: Lucie-Smith (1983:64-65).



Plate 13: Julie Mehretu, *Rising Down* (2008), ink and synthetic polymer paint on canvas, 243.8 x 365.8 cm. Source: de Zegher (2010:110-111)



Plate 14: William Kentridge, Drawing for the film, *Tide Table [Soho Sleeping]*, charcoal on paper, 120 x 160 cm. Source: Rosenthal (2009:107)

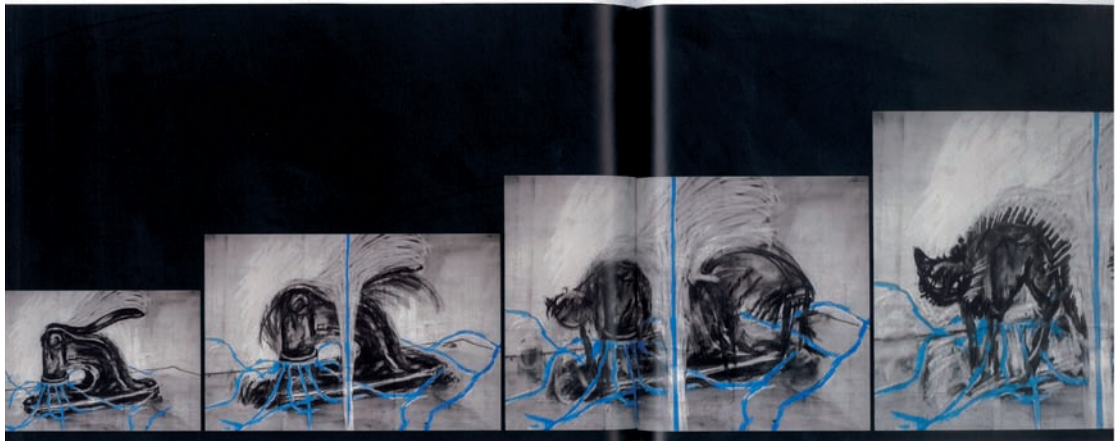


Plate 15: William Kentridge, *Stereoscope* (1998-99), 35mm animated film transferred to video. Source: Rosenthal (2009:98-99).



Plate 16: Paula Rego, *Dog Woman* (1994), pastel on canvas. Source: Bradley (2002:68).





Plate 17: Julie Mehretu, *Back to Gondwanaland* (2000), ink and acrylic on canvas, 244 x 305 cm. Source: Schwabsky (2005:214).



Plate 18: Peter Schütz, *A Midlands Farm* (1989) bronze 340 mm x 235 mm.

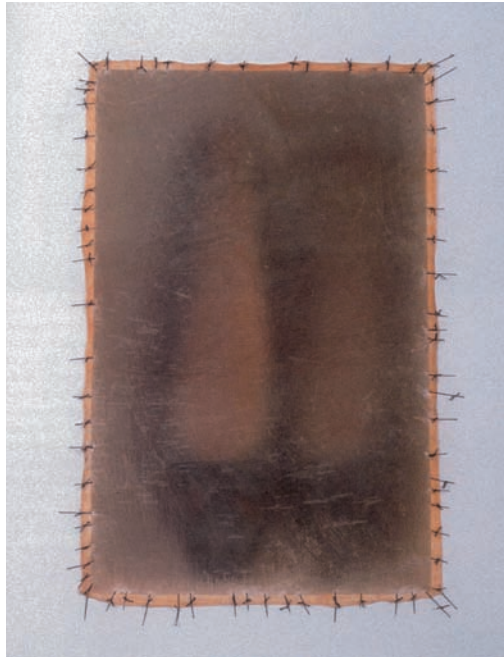


Plate 19: Doris Salcedo, Detail of the installation *Atrabiliarios* (1991-1996), shoes, animal fibre, surgical thread. Source: Basualdo *et al.* (2008:53).



Plate 20: Doris Salcedo, *Untitled* (1989), shoe, animal fibre, surgical thread. Source: Basualdo *et al.* (2008:15)



Plate 21: Paula Rego *Untitled* (1989), pastel on paper mounted on aluminium. Source: Bradley (2002:85)



Plate 22: John Currin, *Mrs So-and-so* (2000), ink and gouache on paper, 35.2 x 27.6 cm. Source: Dexter (2006:070).

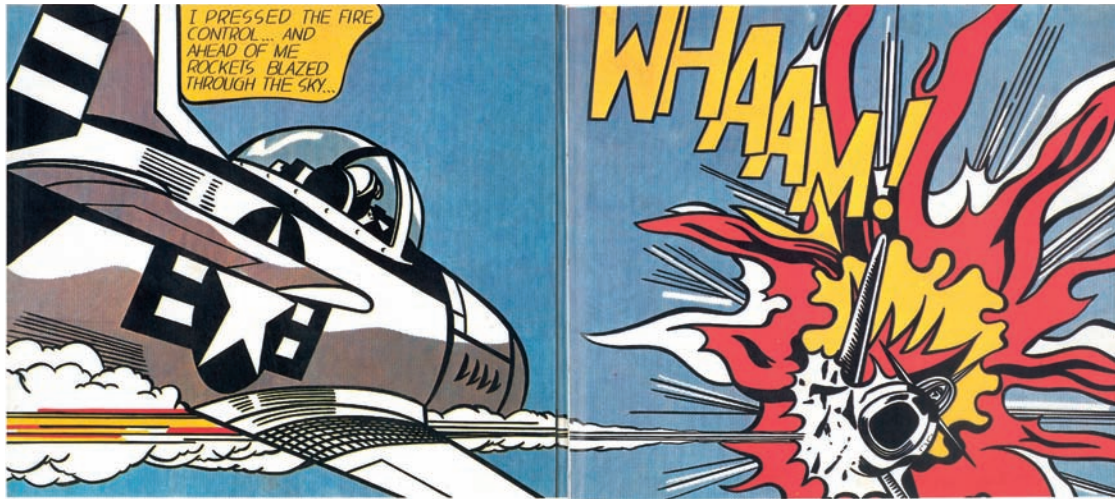


Plate 23: Roy Lichtenstein, *Whaam!* (1963), 173 x 406.5 cm. Source: Lucie-Smith (1983:209)



Plate 24: Paolo Caliari (Il Veronese), *Sketches for the Virgin*, (1580s), pen, ink and wash, 30.5 x 21 cm. Source: Petherbridge (2010:34)



Plate 25: Anne-Marie Schneider, *Untitled* (2004), ink on paper, 19.7 x 23.6 cm. Source: Dexter (2006:278).

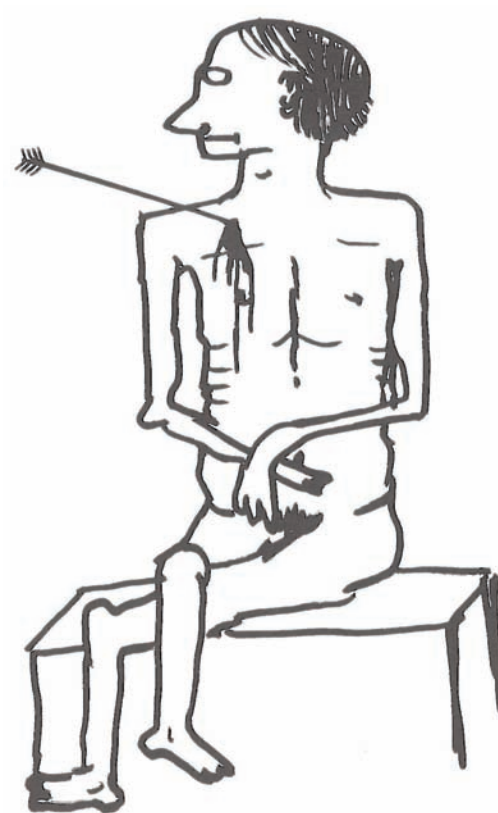


Plate 26: David Shrigley, *Untitled (Arrow)* (2004), ink on paper, 29.7 x 21cm. Source: Dexter (2006:284).



Plate 27: *Going I* (2007) compressed charcoal on pastel paper, 65 x 50 cm.



Plate 28: *Going II* (2007) compressed charcoal on pastel paper, 65 x 50 cm.



Plate 29: *On the Back of a Bakkie I* (2007), mixed media, 35 x 50 cm.



Plate 30: *On the Back of a Bakkie II* (2007), mixed media, 35 x 50 cm.



Plate 31: *Turf I* (2007), mixed media, 34 x 48 cm.



Plate 32: *Turf II* (2007), mixed media, 25 x 55 cm.

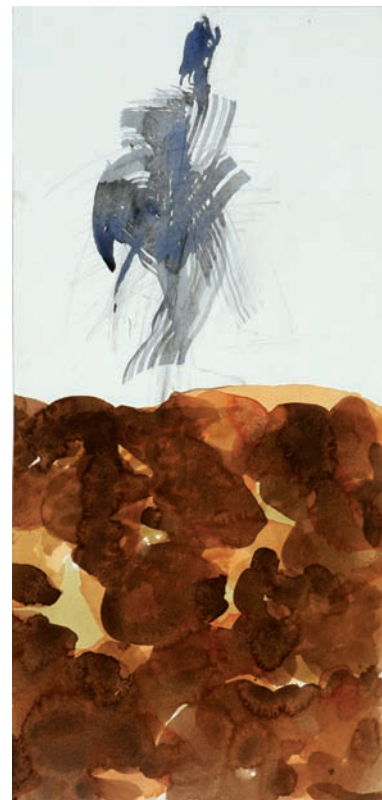


Plate 33: *Turf III* (2007), mixed media, 22 x 47 cm.





Plate 34: *Those Who Go* (2007), oil on gesso-ed board, 123 x 141 cm.

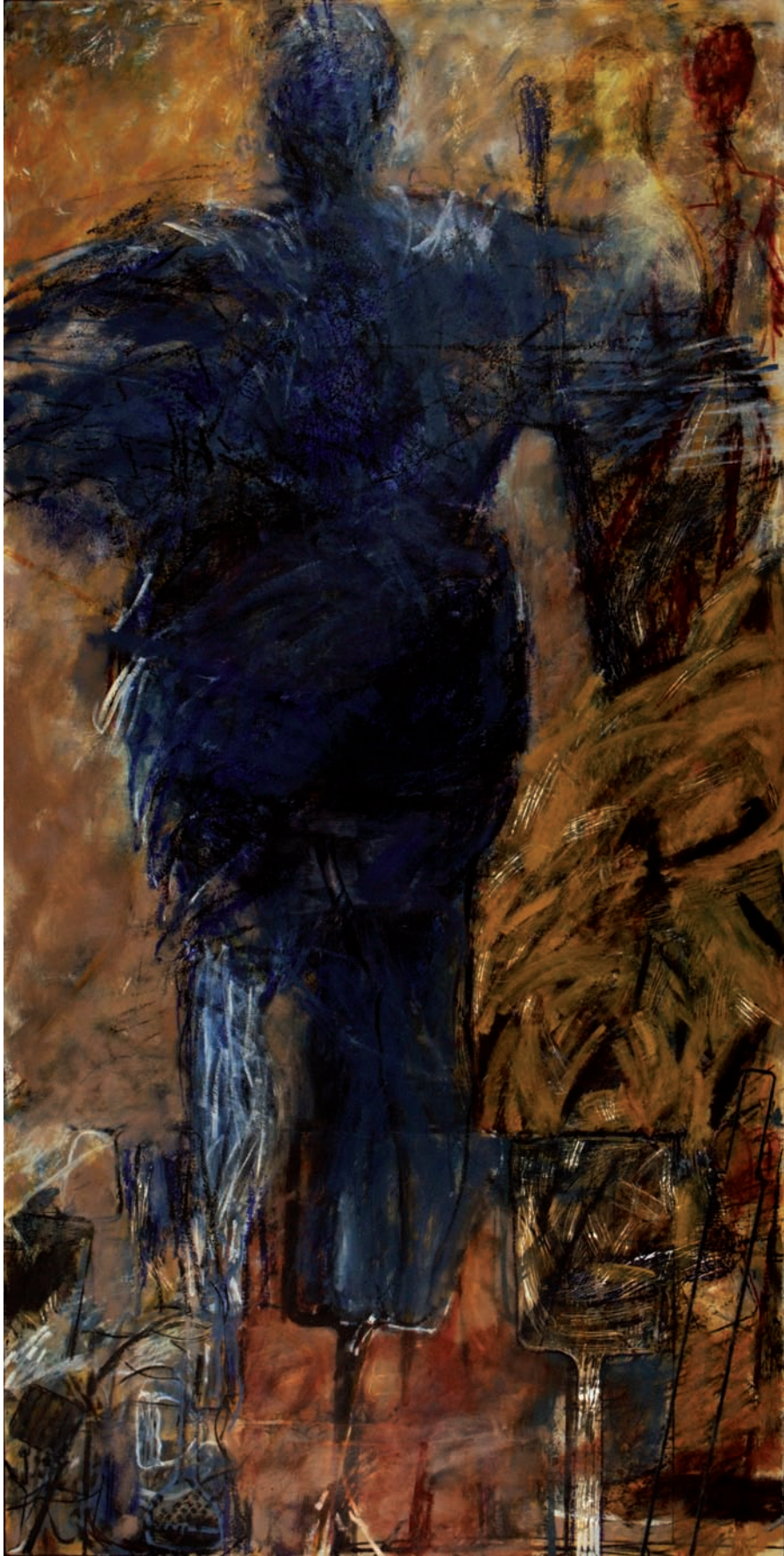


Plate 35: *Promised Land* (2008), oil on gesso-ed board, 120 x 240 cm.



Plate 36: *Dreaming of Green* (2008), oil on gesso-ed board, 120 x 240 cm.



Plate 37: *Metamorphosis* (2009), oil on gesso-ed board, 120 x 240 cm.



Plate 38: *In Passing* (2008), oil on gesso-ed board, 123 x 141 cm.



Plate 39: *Temporary Slump* (2011), oil on canvas, 140 x 140 cm.



Plate 40: *Somewhere* (2012), oil on canvas, 140 x 140 cm.



Plate 41: *Becoming I* (2009)  
compressed charcoal on Fabriano, A1.



Plate 42: *Becoming II* (2009)  
compressed charcoal on Fabriano, A1.





Plate 43: *Becoming III* (2009)  
compressed charcoal on Fabriano, A1.



Plate 44: *Becoming IV* (2009)  
compressed charcoal on Fabriano, A1.

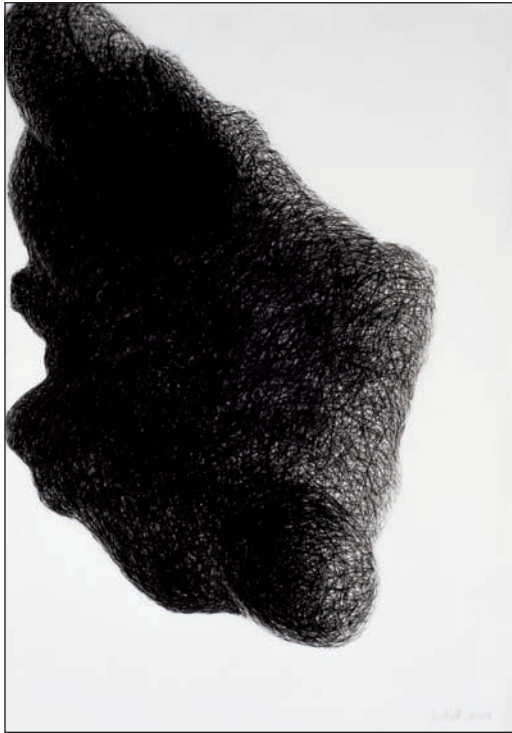


Plate 45 *Becoming V* (2009) compressed charcoal on Fabriano, A1.



Plate 46: *Becoming VI* (2009) compressed charcoal on Fabriano, A1.



Plate 47: *Becoming VII* (2009)  
compressed charcoal on Fabriano, A1.



Plate 48: *Becoming VIII* (2010) mixed  
media on Fabriano, A1.

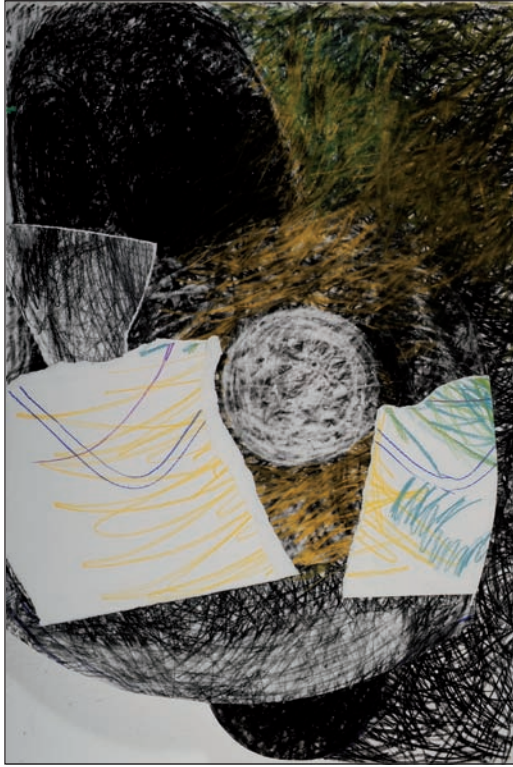


Plate 49: *Becoming IX* (2011) mixed media on Fabriano.



Plate 50: *Becoming X* (2011) mixed media on Fabriano, A1.



Plate 51: *Becoming XI* (2010) watercolour on Fabriano, A1.



Plate 52: *Becoming XII* (2010) watercolour on Fabriano, A1.



Plate 53: *Becoming XIII* (2012) mixed media on Fabriano, 120 x 150 cm.



Plate 54: *Becoming XIV* (2012) compressed charcoal and pastel on Fabriano, 120 x 150 cm.



Plate 55: *Becoming XV* (2012) compressed charcoal on Fabriano, 120 x 150 cm.

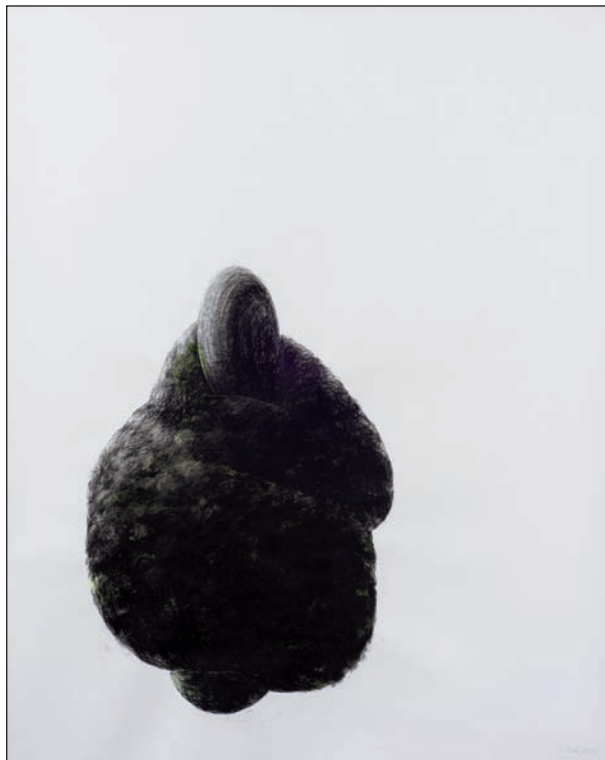


Plate 56: *Becoming XVI* (2012) mixed media on Fabriano, 120 x 150 cm.

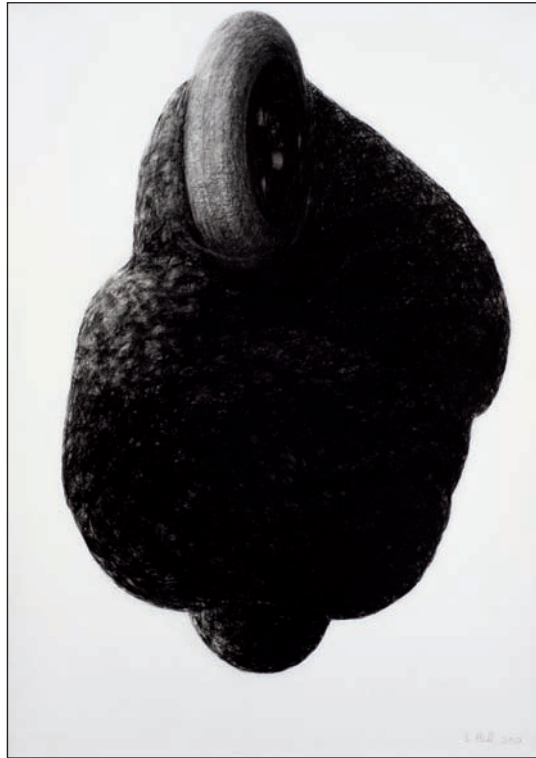


Plate 57: *Becoming XVII* (2012)  
compressed charcoal on Fabriano, A1.



Plate 58: *Becoming XVIII* (2012)  
embossing on Fabriano, A1.





Plate 59: *Becoming XIX* (2012)  
compressed charcoal on Fabriano, A1.

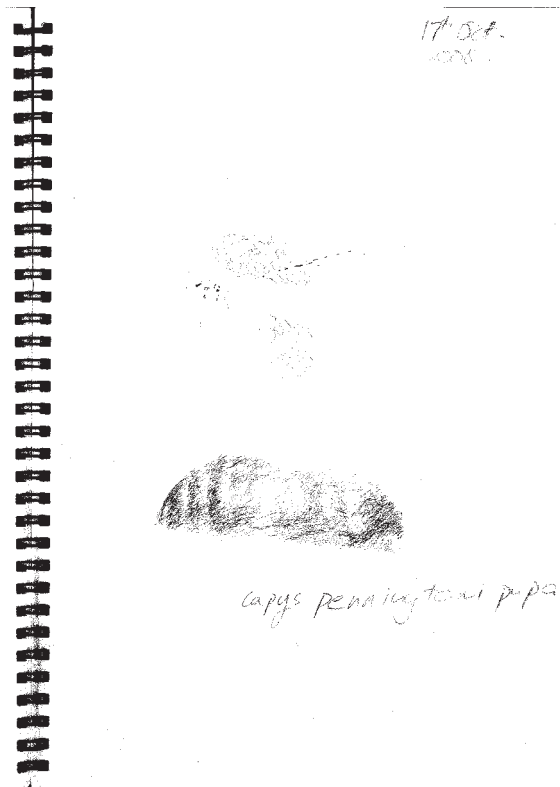


Plate 60: Drawing of *Capys Penningtoni*  
Pupa. Source: Hall (Visual Diary 2008).



Plate 61: *Venus of Willendorf Pupa* (2012)  
pencil on Fabriano A1.

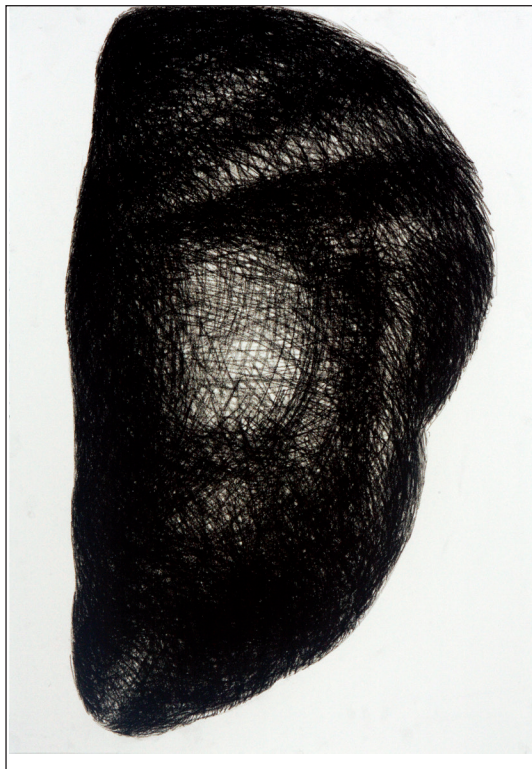


Plate 62: Variation on the original *Capys Penningtoni* Pupa drawing (2009)  
compressed charcoal on Fabriano A1.

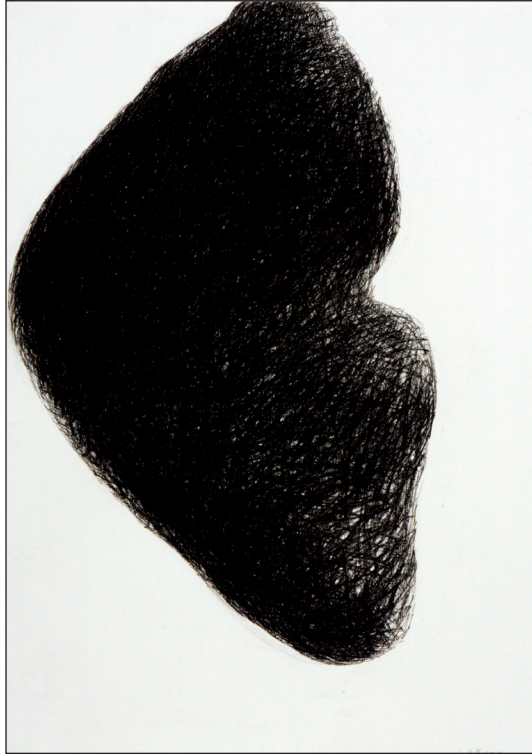


Plate 63: Variation on the original *Capys Penningtoni* Pupa drawing (2009) compressed charcoal on Fabriano A1.

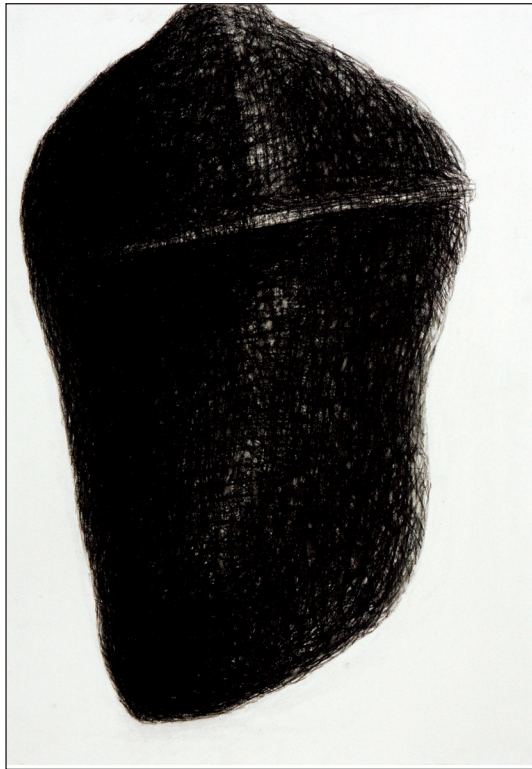


Plate 64: Variation on the original *Capys Penningtoni* Pupa drawing (2009) compressed charcoal on Fabriano A1.



Plate 65: Variation on the original *Capys Penningtoni* Pupa drawing (2009) compressed charcoal on Fabriano A1.



Plate 66: *Soccer player Pupa* (2009) compressed charcoal on Fabriano A1.



Plate 67: *Stone Pupa* (2009) compressed charcoal on Fabriano A1.



Plate 68: *Cyclist Pupa* (2009) compressed charcoal on Fabriano A1.



Plate 69: *Motorcyclist Pupa* (2009)  
compressed charcoal on Fabriano A1.

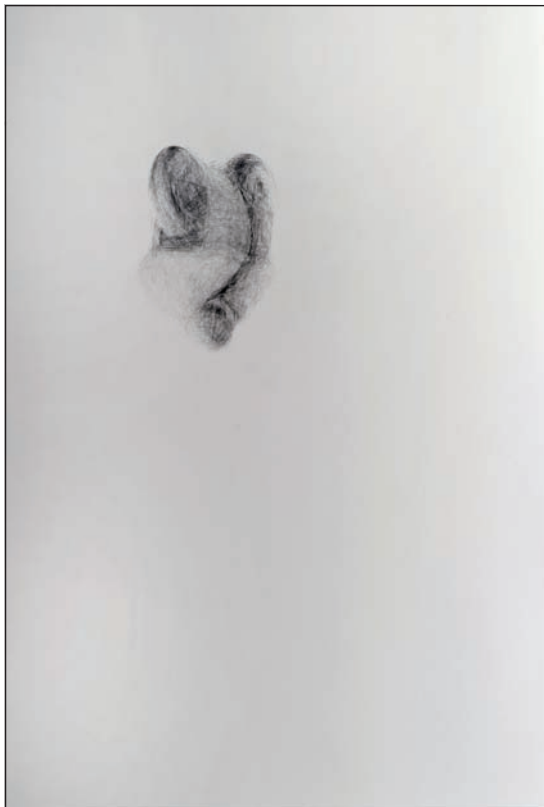


Plate 70: *Motorcyclist Pupa* (2012) pencil  
on Fabriano A1.



Plate 71: 'Unfinished' drawing, pencil on A4. Source: Hall (Visual Diary 2007).

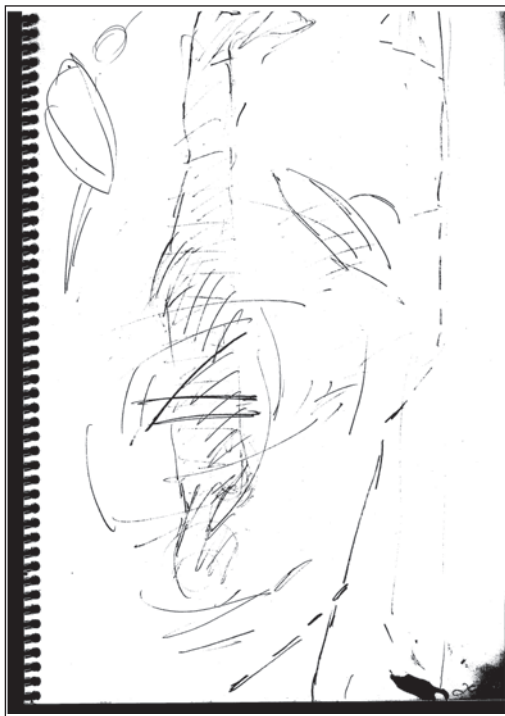


Plate 72: 'Unfinished' drawing, pencil on A4. Source: Hall (Visual Diary 2009).

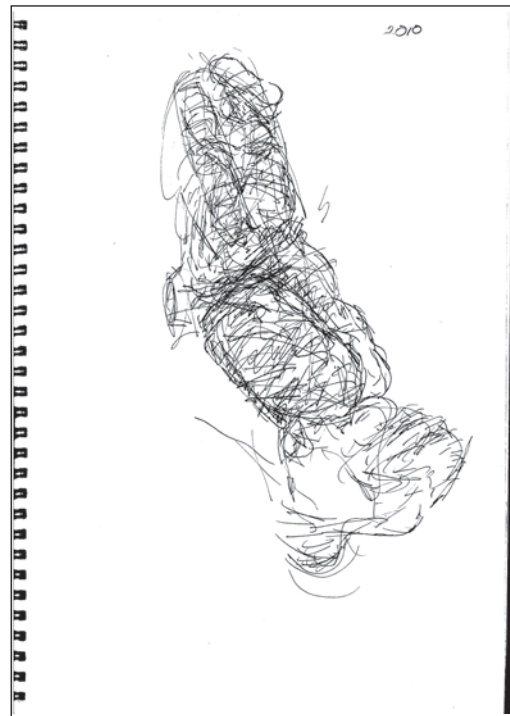


Plate 73: 'Unfinished' drawing, pen on A4. Source: Hall (Visual Diary 2010).

The following Plates are views of *Fine Lines* exhibition at KZNSA Galley, Durban, 19 June – 8 July 2012.







