

An Exploration of Drawing as it Relates to the Realisation of Concept in Art-Making

Meryl Louise Nobin

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Declaration

I hereby declare that:

- i. The research reported in this dissertation, except where otherwise stated, is my original work;
- ii. This dissertation is submitted for the degree of Master of Arts at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, Pietermaritzburg, and has not been submitted for any degree or examination at any other university;
- iii. Where the publications, data, pictures, graphs, of others has been used, it has been duly acknowledged in the text and in the reference sections

Signed:

Meryl Louise Nobin

As the candidate's Supervisor I have approved this dissertation for submission

Signed:

Vulindlela Nyoni – Supervisor

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Dedication

For my grandparents: George and Elizabeth Nobin, and Elizabeth Karodia.

Abstract

Drawing in the Visual Arts has been subject of scrutiny, fragmentation, and interpretation. Whether viewed as an objective academic pursuit or subjective experimental and explorative act, drawing can be perceived as largely changeable and mutable. In reflection on art history and art practice, it would seem drawing has been relegated to an unseen space in Visual Art, its role defined by purposes other than those that lead to drawing for drawing's sake.

The aim of this dissertation is to reaffirm the notion that drawing, with all its breadth and influence, is pivotal to the understanding of art-making. This dissertation examines drawing employed by artists following a historically Western discourse of art-making. From an initial look at Renaissance art practice around drawing, this examination tracks the characterisation of drawing to where its newfound status emerges in the 21st century. As a background to this research is established, reference is made to contemporary artists who have enlisted drawing as a contributing factor in their art practice. I then analyse my own art practice in relation to these artists and themes which I have discussed.

Drawing has rarely been subjected to theoretical discourse. This dissertation, through an inherent narrative, aims to acknowledge and identify hidden discourses around drawing with reference to authors such as Phillip Rawson, John Elderfield, and Johanna Burton.

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Introduction

This dissertation aims to investigate the role and purpose of drawing in Visual Art as a significant component in art-making. This will be led by an investigation into the connection that drawing establishes as a necessary process by which ‘concept’ or the ‘abstract’ is realised.

‘Visual Art’ is a term that indicates a variety of techniques in the practice of art-making, including drawing, painting, printmaking, ceramics, photography, digital imaging, animation, and sculpture—aesthetic processes that lead and in some cases may not lead to a visual product. Within this context, drawing has been a contradictory manifestation that has been interpreted and re-interpreted in its relationship to the above processes. The Western art sphere has held an unavoidable hierarchy in pedagogical notions of what constitutes aesthetic practice. It is within this paradigm that the role of drawing will inhabit space in the following investigation.

At this point drawing could be defined within that Western paradigm as principles of mark making or engraving lines onto a particular surface in order to create an image. Additionally the general academic understanding of this is that drawing is used to prepare for other art techniques such as paintings, sculptures, digital images and animations, but in itself is not seen for the purpose of drawing for drawing’s sake. However, in contemporary art, this understanding may not be considered as accurate. Drucker (2005) notes the acknowledgement made by contemporary art in indentifying the conceptual ground shared by a range of formal styles and means (2005: 77). Furthermore contemporary art seeks to engage cultural and historical aspects of art through specific materials, concepts, references and themes (Drucker 2005: xii).

The first chapter of this dissertation will outline methodological research procedures which aim to be utilised in this research paper. Visual Art, being both theory and practice-based, offers a distinct protocol when conducting research. Both of these areas constitute a large part of art reception, creation and interpretation, taking into account the use of primary sources such as artworks, as well as readings and theories which are generated. How the division between theory and practice is viewed will inform the methodology. This analysis is

necessary to establish the role of art-making in research, and identifying a standpoint of investigation when dealing with specialised data in Visual Art. This will lead me to a discussion in chapter two.

Chapter two will identify a theoretical framework around research into drawing utilising an applicable research methodology that pertains to Western art practice. Theory surrounding drawing had been a limited subject, until recent writings on art and modernism drew awareness of the space that drawing occupies as a discipline, for example, as in the texts of Elderfield (1983) and Rawson (1969). However discourses on drawing within the academic sphere have been inherent in discussions surrounding other modes of art practice and not simply drawing on its own. Through the examination of these texts and discourses some principles should be identified regarding what constitutes drawing as an activity in art-making. The theoretical framework should acknowledge writings on drawing which pertain to modernism, and discourses of drawing which relate to other areas such as academic teachings, taking into account primary and secondary source material and prominent discourses within the academic sphere. To substantiate this analysis, several artists and their works will be specifically referred to, as they relate to the areas being discussed. For example, I will query the involvement of drawing in painting-dominated modernist aesthetics such as in the works of Cy Twombly and Jackson Pollock amongst others. Moreover in postmodernist terms, the identification of the artist as author, creator and producer as well as the role of the public as spectator, audience and consumer (Gaiger 2003: 207) shifted the ambiguous spheres of drawing and art-making. A solid theoretical framework will help establish the variety of positions that drawing might inhabit within the parameters of contemporary art-making.

A contextualised study regarding the many perceptions of drawing will be the basis of the third chapter. This will be related directly to conceptual art practice and contemporary interest in concept and idea. Chapter two will have established a theoretical foundation for this discussion. Therefore, chapter three will be the crux of this research paper. The first section of this chapter will be concerned with the relationship between concepts, ideas and drawing. This discourse will be located in conceptual art and the cognitive processes that are lead by principles of drawing as established in the theoretical framework. Taking incentive from this discourse key attributes of contemporary drawing will be reviewed in a second section that focuses on an investigation into the re-emergence of drawing in contemporary

culture. Three primary artists have been selected for inquiry: Andy Goldsworthy, Kara Walker, and Heide Fasnacht. These artists represent diverse areas of art production in which their own validation of drawing is established. They differ in their approaches and choice of location; Goldsworthy is an environmental artist, Walker and Fasnacht favour the confines of a gallery.

Chapter four will be a self-reflexive component that serves as a response to my research findings, where I critically analyse my art making process in relation to a discourse on drawing. This chapter will focus predominantly on drawings and findings generated whilst completing the practical component of my Masters in Fine Art (MAFA) studies, taking into consideration influences and experimentation. Although this chapter serves as an introspective look at the relevance of drawing as a preferential discipline from my own standpoint, I will however allow for critical interrogation of my own processes including earlier works, second thoughts and amendments. In addition to the underlying principles of the key artists being reviewed, I will attempt to arrive at a personal definition of drawing for myself as an art practitioner.

Chapter 1:

Research Methodology in Visual Art

The following chapter highlights particular issues concerning research methodology in Visual Art and the various means of reasoning and evaluating knowledge and data in this area. Academic research is comprised of methodological and theoretical paradigms, all of which aim to assist researchers in compiling valid information in forms such as this dissertation.

Visual Art has been historically perceived as framed in two components: the practical aspect i.e. studio arts and the theoretical; more commonly known as Art Historical studies or Visual Culture studies. However, both areas when taken into account involve at their core the study of historical, social views in art, lead by academic pedagogical concerns and opportunities to delve into creativity and experience. This research paper explores that part of contemporary research in Visual Art where these two constituents overlap in order to fully research a ‘practical’ subject such as drawing – my research theme in both practical and theoretical contributions towards my Masters in Fine Art (MAFA) degree. Through the practical engagement within drawing, it has become apparent that a strong theoretical link exists in the conceptualisation and process of drawing. It is therefore important that a methodology be identified which suitably questions the practice and theory as research.

This section deals with a review of research methodologies in the Humanities and Social Sciences, particularly as they relate to Visual Art, with the intention of identifying and adopting a standpoint of investigation for this research paper. Such a stance needs to be placed into context and have a connection to the goals of the research. A methodology will be identified and put into a workable context. Attention will be drawn to two main threads of research in the Social Sciences – qualitative and quantitative methods. Steps taken towards acquiring specific data will be explained further, and expanded upon in a discourse surrounding research issues and themes in Visual Art.

1.1. Research Methodology

Silverman defines a methodology as ‘the choices we make about the cases to study, methods of data gathering, forms of data analysis, etc [sic] in planning and executing a research

study.’ (2006: 15). He further cites Gobo’s dissection of the term ‘methodology’ into four components:

- (a) A preference for certain methods: existing ways of obtaining data through reading, conversation, listening, and observation.
- (b) A theory of scientific knowledge: The role of the researcher in relation to the phenomenon, a set of assumptions about the nature of reality, and the concepts of action;
- (c) A range of solutions: devices and strategies used when solving a research problem;
- (d) Procedural steps: a sequence to ensue when following the selection of a method

(Gobo 2004 in Silverman 2006: 15)

In line with Silverman and Gobo’s explanation, a methodology can be understood to be a framework around which acquired knowledge, or the hypothesis can be constructed. Using a methodology in research facilitates the validation of research findings which are additionally open to comparison. Research methodology is broadly divided into two constituents—qualitative and quantitative, which will be discussed later in this chapter. Typically in academic research a researcher expects to adhere to methodological rules around constructing a hypothesis, organising principles, data collection methods, and philosophical approaches. Furthermore, these methodological rules can be more narrowly defined by analysing methods such as conversation and discourse analysis, grounded theory, and historical influences among others. However not all research utilises these tools. A degree of selectivity is required in developing a methodology. This selectivity is determined, to some extent, by the field in which the research is being constructed.

Based within the Social Sciences, research in the field of Visual Art entails a process of collecting and analysing information with the intention of developing a discourse, which usually supports a hypothesis. The main research paper will pose an inquiry into the role and definition of drawing in Visual Art by reflecting on historical (specifically Western) definitions and methods. This will hopefully evolve into a contemporary outlook on drawing based on works of selected artists, and the application of this research in developing an expanded definition of drawing as a process of art-making. As noted before, the applied methodology will also seek to acknowledge the studio-based practical engagement as contributing to the above inquiry.

This research will be conducted in various stages. Firstly, a methodology will be structured around the research hypothesis, which will involve identifying relevant theories in selected texts on traditionalist and academic drawing, and the evolution of drawing from modernist theories and postmodern theories to contemporary concerns. At this point, it may be necessary to establish a research hypothesis in order to arrive at a logical methodology for the remainder of this dissertation. My research hypothesis therefore is that *drawing in the actual and in the abstract can be read as a pivotal connector to **concept**, **process** and **outcome**. In each of these three areas, principles and theories of drawing can be used as deconstructive tools in establishing the relevance and realisation of these areas in Visual Art.* In the context of drawing, theories of meaning-making (constructivism and knowledge construction), readership and art reception (analysis of independent literary criticism) will be recognised. Works by selected artists, including myself, will be referred to in order to identify the use of drawing within the context of their art process. An in-depth literature survey will also acknowledge certain publications which support this research and open discourses on drawing.

I aim to evaluate contemporary drawing in terms of new styles, concepts, discourses and reception of artworks by chosen artists in relation to traditionally historical perceptions of drawing. Reception theory as a methodological tool strongly pertains to Visual Art as emphasis is continuously placed on the analysis of artworks by an audience or reader. Art is not simply received passively; it is interpreted in response to meaning as well as history and culture of not only the work itself but also of the viewer. Stuart Hall discusses hermeneutical issues between audience and producer, stating that meaning is made somewhere between the producer and the reader (Jahsonic: Accessed 2010). By implication, drawing facilitates such discourses between maker and reader.

A review will presently be conducted of the two constituents of methodology in the Social Sciences commonly used in research: qualitative and quantitative approaches, and through this review the method most applicable to the following study will be determined. Once clarified, there will be further enquiry into the selected methodology and certain sections which can be related to Visual Art.

1.2. Quantitative Research

Quantitative research can be said to be rooted within a scientific base, with the aim of obtaining information through a structural mode. A researcher using this approach draws on the use of variables – an ‘item of interest that can have more than one possible value’ (Goddard 2007: 15). Quantitative research establishes the relationship between an independent (cause) and dependant (effect) variable, drawing on a logical and conclusive outcome. In order to avert unjustified conclusions, the quantitative researcher weighs on the application of controlled and structured interviews, obtaining of data and data capturing, and generating statistics through large-scale survey research (Dawson 2007:16).

An example of the use of quantitative methods in research would be to calculate the effects of a multivitamin on a group of University students who have been given a dose in the morning. The research aim would be based on a pre-formulated question, e.g. ‘does a daily multivitamin taken with breakfast affect concentration levels in students?’ The researcher would record the behaviours of the participants prior to the investigation and provide appropriate doses of the multivitamins to the groups. The researcher then would be expected to administer questionnaires to the participants, making note of sleeping patterns, concentration, and energy increases and/or decreases. On comparison with pre-recorded information, the results can be further documented in graph form, statistics, scales, equations, and numerical measures. In conclusion, the researcher will arrive at a straightforward answer, stating (assuming the findings are positive): ‘Multivitamins increased concentration levels in ‘X’ amount of students when taken with breakfast.’

A quantitative research approach seems at face value to be less of a subjective approach than qualitative research. However, adopting a numerical and statistical approach relies strongly on participant feedback and therefore may include elements of subjectivity. Some researchers opt to combine both qualitative and quantitative data in order to obtain an inclusive perspective on the chosen topic. An additional method in this regard called *triangulation* entails evaluating both quantitative and qualitative data to inquire as to whether they support one another. By doing so, the researcher uses a combination of multiple methods and theories for example, the amalgamation of interviews with observation, or qualitative analysis with surveys (Silverman 2006: 291). Researchers utilising the method of triangulation look for corresponding findings within this data which can lead to a ‘fuller’ conclusion.

1.3. Qualitative Research

Also recognized as ‘anti-positivist’ or ‘relativist’, qualitative research relies on in-depth inquiry rather than statistical information, equations or measures, used to ‘understand meanings, or look at, describe, and understand experience, ideas, beliefs and values – intangibles such as these’ (Wisker 2001:138).

As may be implemented throughout the format of this dissertation, qualitative research explores aspects of behaviour, experience and observation through analysis of literature and data evidence – usually collected in stages – and working towards ‘gradually developing a theory inductively ... which is based on or ‘grounded’ in the data’ (Oliver 2004 :131). Where quantitative research is bound by organised variables and statistics in order to develop a conclusive outcome, qualitative research abandons limitations in favour of an open-ended argument which may or may not arrive at a resolution.

Qualitative research implies a narrative means of investigation where the researcher is placed in a position of playing a crucial part in developing a ‘finding’ or constructing an outcome, thus the role of the researcher is deemed highly significant within the research context. Alvesson in Henning (2004) states, ‘[In the qualitative research scenario] the social researcher is the main meaning maker of an inquiry ... and is the one who tries to present a balance between “some sort of reality ‘out there’ [sic]”, and the rhetorical and narrative nature of our knowledge of this reality.’ (Alvesson *et al*, quoted in Henning 2004: 39) (*Brackets inserted*).

The utilisation of this methodology when conducting my research paper will be beneficial, particularly due to the open-ended nature of the research topic. Paying particular attention to the theoretical and historical development and practice of drawing will support the methodology even though a conclusive outcome is not expected due to the multi-faceted nature of drawing. Also, the reliance on images and artworks which are essential to the research project will serve as qualitative data, which will be analysed through observation and other pre-existing readings, analyses and interpretations of the work. Such data, like most which is utilised in Visual Art, tends to have highly interpretive, allegorical qualities and requires a range of references. Taking note of the forms of data which will inform the basis of

my research project, it will be most likely that a predominantly qualitative approach will be most applicable for this dissertation.

Earlier I mentioned the notion of triangulation which may be employed as a data-gathering tool. This will prove to be beneficial to this research considering the founded and academic knowledge of drawing, experiential and interpretive understanding by an audience, and interpretation by artists. Within qualitative research, this serves to the benefit of looking at a subject such as drawing, where drawing being spoken of differs from it being seen.

1.4. Types of Data

The acquisition of data for a research project requires an in-depth consideration of source material, with a balance between primary and secondary sources. Primary data can be acquired through observation, questionnaires, interviews or personal communications. The most widespread data used in research projects is literature, which can be divided into both printed and non-printed (i.e. unpublished) texts, and even these can be classified as an aspect of secondary data.

Research which is specifically qualitative relies on texts that provide an evidential and often interpretive background and context of a chosen research area. Unpublished texts to be utilised in the intended research project include dissertations, theses, notes from syllabi and course content, student essays and exam essays. Published texts include: general informational texts, instructional manuals relating to drawing and art, books of reference (dictionaries and encyclopaedias), journals and articles.

The significance of electronic media and tools has increased, due to accessibility and availability in the research sector. Digital material such as DVD's and CD-ROM's, as well as video clips of my own drawing processes, will be drawn upon as sources. I intend to refer to a number of websites dedicated to drawing, e-journals and dissertations, online galleries and art portfolios despite the obvious problems associated with the validity and strength of these sources in the face of bias, accuracy and distortion. To avoid this, I would have to adopt a holistic or comprehensive view of the structures in which drawing can be defined.

Considering the practical association of the research project, I will be reviewing artworks and photographs, as well as drawing upon exhibition reviews. It is possible in this to document in-studio participation and discussions, for example, an evaluation of methods used in a drawing class at the University of KwaZulu-Natal from both perspectives of the instructor and the students. I will implement information reserved in a visual diary to aid a subjective exegesis. An exegesis could take the form of studying an artist's notes, journals, processes, and documentation of making. These tools in Visual Art research assist in creating and supplying additional data, which will be validated next in a discussion around research in Visual Art.

1.5. Research in the Visual Arts

The MAFA, being partially comprised of a practical module, requires regular reference to artworks and objects, artists, collective exhibitions and exhibition reviews. A researcher in the Visual Arts conducting an investigation into drawing and image-based practice of art as they relate specifically to contemporary art theory may consider the following factors:

- i) The formalist study** – an ‘exploration of visual structure’ (Munsterberg 2009), consisting of a tonal, textural, linear and colour analysis;
- ii) A stylistic analysis** – the relationship between works of art, specifically the stylistic and schematic attributes pertaining to a specific art period and/or theoretical underpinnings of art-making, which are comparable with other similar artworks and;
- iii) Comparative study** – the relationship between the theory, practice and various discourses e.g. historical, economical and social history

In the case of this research project, the researcher is also an art practitioner and not purely an art historian, if one was to acknowledge the ‘divide’ between theory and practice. Certain insights and observations are made by an artist which could be overlooked by a researcher who is unfamiliar with the technical issues pertaining to art-making. This may result in an advantageous ‘practice-led’ (or ‘practice-based’) research methodology that involves an exegetical outcome in the form of journals and documented processes, as mentioned before. By posing the question, ‘how does practice inform theory?’ this methodology serves as beneficial to the contemporary arts practitioner, as explained by Barrett and Bolt (2007), ‘The discipline of practice-led research highlights the crucial relationship that exists between theory and practice and the relevance of theoretical and philosophical paradigms [for the

practitioner]’ (2007:1) (*Brackets inserted*). Barrett *et al* further suggest the inclusion of ‘interdisciplinary and emergent methodologies’ which extend beyond common research parameters. It is an understanding of the link between coherent and embedded knowledge and particular subjective thinking that makes practice-based research a comprehensive method when investigating a phenomenon.

Contextual studies are able to instruct the researcher and the reader on the experience of making an object/artwork. Such a study can be referred to as an *exegetical* study or an *exegesis*. An exegesis is described as providing ‘a vehicle through which the work of art can find a discursive form’ (2007:33). In relation to the practical component which will support this paper, an exegesis aids the research process by recording, contextualising and analysing the researcher’s own artworks and acknowledging a necessary subjectivity within the process of making. The use of an exegetical method will allow myself as the researcher to adopt a self-reflective approach, required when conducting an inquiry into a practical discourse such as drawing. Wisker acknowledges the stipulation towards doing so by stating that ‘[Arts] research often integrates theory and practice ... such as a performance artist researching their own or others’ individual relationship to, and interpretation of, the world in the context of the underpinning theories’ (2001: 203) (*brackets inserted*). I therefore concur with this statement as the practice/theory division, although present in the pedagogical scheme, for example, in current modes of instruction at fine art institutions, can and should be regarded as integrated. Thus the distinctions between the two have become blurred. By accessing knowledge obtained not only from a structured method of teaching and learning but also an experiential reflection on processes of making, one can pay attention to the relationships between the textual and the practical. An approach such as an exegesis is aided by the use of a visual diary kept by the artist, documenting process and progression, notes and photographs, all of which will be introduced and referred to in the course of research. As drawing provides a dialogue through active participation, a necessary angle to take would be an ‘autobiographical and narrative inquiry’ (Piantanida *et al* 1999: 47).

1.6. Research and Practice

A researcher in the Visual Arts adopting a mode of ‘material thinking’ will acknowledge the studio process as a method of a new acquisition of knowledge that is equivalent to the other modes of information gathering. Paul Carter speaks of material thinking, or ‘material

productivity’ as the process of what constitutes relationships between process and text, rather than image and text. The researcher draws upon his/her own self-reflective mapping (Barrett *et al* 2007) and utilises this work as enquiry. Here, knowledge is generated through reflection and action. However one must acknowledge the pitfalls of adopting accessing such information in light of accurate and valid research. The researcher may be inevitably prone to a biased perspective of what constitutes drawing and art-making, resulting in a distorted and one-sided perspective. Therefore, one needs to create a balance between objectivity and subjectivity by additionally maintaining a critical approach in light of material productivity.

Additionally, Carter (2007) lists the criteria required when undertaking practice-based research. These criteria assist in identifying separate constituents when evaluating data in this method. Carter states that the research -

- (a) is required to describe a forming situation i.e. should evoke the attitude of the artist and social context in which the work emerges,
- (b) should articulate the discursive and plastic intelligence of materials, and;
- (c) should establish the necessity of design.

When approaching the dissertation, specifically when adopting an exegetical method, the idea of bricolage (i.e. an aesthetic work which is constructed with a variety of materials available – in the case of this research, a thorough material evaluation) will be considered. It is noted in the writings of Barrett *et al* (2007) that such materials are not plainly tools – they are laden with historical and cultural associations, knowledge and theoretical frameworks, all of which need to be considered. Furthermore, this idea of bricolage can be applied to research methods, considering data retrieval and ‘practice *as* research’. The collection of data in research, specifically in qualitative methods, parallels the concept of employing materials at hand which is then used to construct an idea, image, or structure. Note is also made about method and material meanings that both artists and art historians have to bear in mind.

Using qualitative research in the Visual Arts allows the researcher to adopt critical documentation methods by reviewing socio-political and historical texts and resources. Theories are supported by the abovementioned notion of practice as research; this notion is supported through the findings that I have made through my as findings will potentially develop within my own studio work. In some cases, however, aspects of quantitative research could be drawn on when for example, reviewing the number of painting students who choose

to sketch as a preliminary measure. Visual Arts researchers additionally embark on fieldwork projects to review gallery and studio collections. Documenting such findings can be recorded through quantitative methods such as statistics and the record of the size of works for example.

1.7. Conclusion

The intention of this review was to examine types of methodological procedures and select a stance, or various stances, to adopt when exploring the subject of drawing. Delving into the research of a practice-based phenomenon such as drawing requires the acknowledgement of practice as a knowledge-generating activity, and the inquiry into further historical and theoretical aspects of drawing. This will contextualise the influential and changing characteristics of drawing, the practice of drawing, and the reception or understanding of drawing. Such information collected will be then analysed and organised into sections.

Drawing is comprised of a variety of methodological approaches, for example, textual understanding, studio-based practice, and information in the form of literature. A process such as triangulation will additionally be utilised to gather information around a holistic sense of what drawing is.

Considering the outline and aims of this research, and the manner in which it will be conducted, the chosen research methodology is generally qualitative, with a critical historical analysis, textual and exegetical constituents relating to the discussed principles of the Visual Arts. There may also be cause to use a type of quantitative measure, as noted previously in this chapter, regarding statistics for example. With this comes the implication of practice-based theory which contextualises the research and practice-led methods and enlisting the exegesis as a supplementary model. The following chapter involves theoretical concerns and a narrative review of past discourses around drawing.

Chapter 2:

Literature Review and Theoretical Framework

The following chapter aims to identify key texts and publications which will be utilised in this research paper, and provide a foundation on which theories can be built upon when considering the current hypothesis. To reiterate, the current hypothesis is that *drawing in the actual and in the abstract can be read as a pivotal connector to **concept, process and outcome**. In each of these three areas, principles and theories of drawing can be used as deconstructive tools in establishing the relevance and realisation of these areas in Visual Art.*

The body of literature to be explored requires engagement with publications and data that deal primarily with drawing and art. This will enable the researcher to participate fully in discourses underpinning the current research. To begin with, texts that facilitate a brief analysis on the historical contextualisation of drawing will provide an understanding of the structure and discourses surrounding this subject. Other forms of data to be accessed will assist in situating drawing in other discourses as it pertains to research such as modernism, postmodernism, structuralist and post-structuralist discourses.

2.1. Literature Review

The initial intention of this dissertation is to track the movement of drawing from traditionalist perspectives of Western art, modernism, postmodernism, and eventually arrive at a predominant focus on contemporary art-making. Identifying a background to drawing in art theory and practice is central to establishing a discourse where I question the practice of drawing as wholly integral to art-making processes.

In the previous chapter a variety of data was noted as valuable when conducting research, specifically in the Social Sciences; additionally, I identified methods of obtaining such data including published and unpublished texts, reviews, interviews, in-studio observation and journaling. Up until recently there has been generally standard literature on practical aspects of drawing. Such information served as part of an introductory chapter of commonly found instruction manuals and handbooks on other techniques such as painting and sculpture, for example, Goldstein's *Painting: Visual and Technical Fundamentals* (1979) which contains

an introductory chapter on drawing principles which form the basis of painting. Other texts generally fell into the domain of ‘how to’ instructional texts on drawing materials and techniques, such as Edwards (1999), which highlights drawing techniques pertaining to perception and observational drawing exercises, and Dodson (1985), whose text serves as a standard drawing manual with instructional sketching techniques. A full text on critical theory around drawing has been rare up until writers such as Rawson (1969). Among the select publications which provide analytical commentary on drawing, Rawson’s *Drawing: the Appreciation of the Arts* (1969) serves as a prototype of drawing as a developmental and foundational feature in art-making. A section in Rawson’s text, entitled *The Theoretical Base* refers to a somewhat limited definition of drawing. According to Rawson, drawing is constituted by, ‘[the] element in a work of art which is independent of colour or actual three-dimensional space, the underlying conceptual structure which may be indicated by tone alone’ (1969: 1) (*brackets inserted*). He describes the steadfast naturalistic qualities of drawing, making frequent references to ‘pure drawing’ evident in sculpture, paintings, and other artistic practices. Notably, Rawson’s perceptions are located within a modernist era which relied on structures which defined certain disciplines, and identified drawing as a potential structure on its own.

Evidently, the aim of *Drawing: the Appreciation of the Arts* is to give the reader a technical insight into drawing from Rawson’s point of view, and for the reader (both artists and non-artists) to be familiarised with material significance and to distinguish the characteristics of drawing as related to line, tone, scale, iconography, and form as main constituents of drawing. Additionally, Rawson accentuates the use and role of linear qualities in drawing, such as features relating to tone and mark-making. In chapter two of his text, Rawson reviews the significance of material and supports (i.e. the material base or surface of the work) as predominantly paper, cloth, and ‘natural’ materials such as stone, granite, animal skins, papyrus and so forth. Of interest, Rawson does not limit his perspective on drawing to a Western paradigm alone; rather he is inclusive of drawing in other cultures (for example, India, China, etc.) by looking for a common global understanding of drawing. This suggests a perceivably structuralist understanding of drawing as was common within modernist theory. As was characterised by modernist principles, it is implied by Rawson that a universal norm exists for drawing. Rawson analyses technical methods typically utilised by an artist, or, as he refers to, a ‘draughtsman’ [sic] (1969:76). He cites the works of the ‘Grand Masters’—a

group of early Renaissance ‘draughtsmen’ and painters regarded as a determining force in Western drawing, as it related to historical, patriarchal, scientific and religious paradigms.

A support and follow-up to *Drawing: the Appreciation of the Arts* is a text, again by Rawson, entitled *Seeing Through Drawing* (1979) which although similar to its predecessor, constitutes a more summarised form on which he touches on manners of drawing such as gesture and abstraction. This book is of increased relevance to the research project as one notes a significant reconsideration of subject matter, drawing style, and scale differing from drawings previously seen as ‘independent of colour or actual three-dimensional space’ (1969: 1) to a more expanded view of drawing in the citation of artists such as Cy Twombly’s large-scale abstract drawings [Plate 1]. This text refers to a body of drawings in which Rawson identifies and compares cultural, technical, material and schematic issues which is a development since the previous text. Furthermore Rawson considers the involvement with the representational and the cognitive process in drawing, when he states that ‘when artists make paintings or sculpture from their sketches, they are translating their thoughts out of pure drawing into another medium’ (1979: 9). Rawson’s definition of what constitutes ‘pure drawing’ in aesthetic terms remains problematic and sets the tone for part of the discourse in this research paper.

In trying to negotiate and resolve a problematic definition of ‘pure drawing’ as according to Rawson, Rose (1992) acknowledges and pursues the progress of drawing from the modernist phase to ‘contemporary’ art-making, where she states that ‘essential to the art of the late twentieth century and to a definition of postmodernism is a balancing act among written language, body language and visual language (and their popular expression) to which drawing is pivotal’ (Rose 1992: 12). The assumption of drawing as the most direct record of the artist’s concept and inspiration has been expanded upon and Rose draws light to an exhibition entitled *Allegories of Modernism: Contemporary Drawing*. In this exhibition emphasis is primarily placed upon the paradigm shift between modernism and postmodernism—Rose makes reference to Sol LeWitt’s ‘expansion of the fragment’ and ‘exposure of the preliminary’ (1992: 6-7), identifying the binary public/private issue, seeing that the formal purity of drawing has no longer become a concern. Considering this, LeWitt is also responsible for presenting the idea of the visual, idea and possibly process being of equal significance (2007: XIV) rather than the primary aesthetic importance of the product as (i.e.



Plate 1: Cy Twombly, *Untitled* (1970)
Distemper and chalk on canvas (http://www.cytwombly.info/twombly_gallery1.htm)

the artwork) end result. Considering the current hypothesis, it is in Rose's text that one sees the shift in perception regarding drawing. By citing LeWitt, known for his works on paper and large scale wall drawings such as *Untitled* (1971) [Plate 2] and *All Possible Crossing Combination of Arcs, Straight Lines, Lines Not Straight and Broken Lines* (1972) [Plate 3], Rose is more critically aware of structuralist perceptions which have been disassembled regarding support, scale, and rationale of drawing.

Rose further recognises drawing to be the primary conceptual medium (1992: 10) favoured by artists, and attributes this notion to drawing's 'asserted linear autonomy and conceptual control over other disciplines' (1992: 10). Rose traces the conceptual style of drawing to the 1960s and early 1970s, to the emergence of Conceptual art. During this time the gestural mark and conceptual line formed the basis of art. While acknowledging such concepts, *Allegories of Modernism: Contemporary Drawing* serves as a catalogue where Rose analyses artworks pertaining to the realm between modernism and postmodernism, evidently sharing analogous discourse with Van Wagner's *Lines of Vision: Drawings by Contemporary Women* (1989). In the vein of the former text, Van Wagner conducts in *Lines of Vision* a survey of drawings with a predominant focus on women and issues of femininity. Although gender discourse in art is not a causal theme of the current dissertation, I refer for the most part to the introduction of this text containing statements by Van Wagner on the relationship between artist and a drawing, or the drawing process. Van Wagner mentions that 'contiguity and directness of drawing as an active verb connects the artist's hand and mind' (1989: 13) and that 'drawing [for the artist] is often a stimulant that can exist in its own right or in a relationship with some other objective' (1989:13) (*brackets inserted*). In art-making, the 'other objective', or discourse, could be seen as a variety of art techniques such as painting, printmaking, sculpture, collage, digital imaging, animation and ceramics among others.

Downs (2007) makes reference to Rose's writings as she marks the significant new outlook on drawing in the twentieth century. He responds to her evaluation of artworks pertaining to larger scale, gestural and collage-based works all of which exhibit the artists' re-recognition and newfound interest in drawing. I therefore concur with Downs' objective to regard contemporary drawing as concerned with thought and idea, rather than as representational; reflection rather than observational (2007: ix).



Plate 2: Sol LeWitt, *Untitled* (1971)

Folded paper

(http://www.moma.org/collection/browse_results.php?criteria=O%3AAD%3AE%3A3528&page_number=34&template_id=1&sort_order=1)

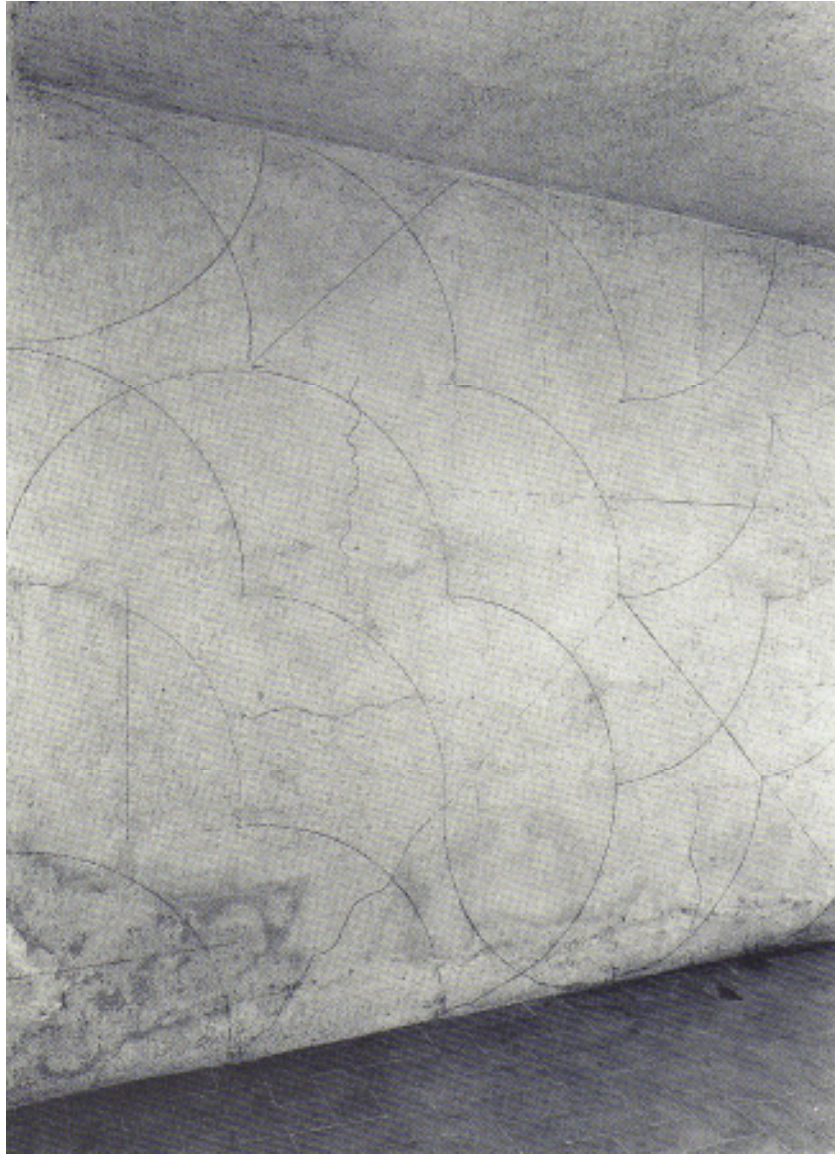


Plate 3: Sol LeWitt, *All Possible Crossing Combinations of Arcs, Straight Lines, Lines not Straight and Broken Lines (detail)* (1972)
Ink on wall (Godfrey T. 1990: 29)

In his writings, Downs acknowledges drawing to be the technique which ‘reflects postmodern preoccupations of appropriation, fragmentation, and indeterminacy, express in contrasting ways through gesture and allegory, and [has] potential to challenge what might be considered aesthetic’ (2007: ix). Downs, both as an editor for internet journal-based drawing research and as co-editor of a catalogue-based publication, outlines specific themes of drawing as will be discussed within a contemporary discourse in chapter three of this dissertation, and recognises such themes within a showcase of collected works. These outlines could lead to a greater definition and understanding of the role which drawing plays within art-making.

When dealing with contemporary discourses around drawing, Kovats (2006) and Burton (2006) assist with tracking, recognising and applying the complex definition of drawing in a chronological manner. Both texts analyse works by artists who have explored and exploited the infinite potential of the discipline (Kovats 2006: 16) ranging in style, location, and media, themes which are acknowledged as with Downs’s understanding of what constitutes drawing. Kovats presents a volume of drawings which range from the works of early Renaissance artists such as Albrecht Dürer’s *Adam and Eve* (1504), to basic sketches such as Alfred Hitchcock’s thinking process for his films entitled *Saboteur* (*Statue of Liberty struggle sequence*) (1942), to contemporary pieces, such as Russell Crotty’s *Globe Drawings* (2004). Kovats delves into themes which are to be discussed in this paper, whilst at the same time explores varied motives by artists relating to material support, scale, volume, cognitive process, and the relationship between drawing and other art techniques. For example, the reference Kovats makes to the relationship between drawing and sculpture provides insight into the parallel between 2 and 3-D techniques and how the idea of visual language can be extended (2006: 26). She maintains that ‘drawing helps the sculptor synthesise their ideas and feelings; they are in control and contact with the material, which they can modify, correct and discard in a moment’ (2006: 26). As a precursor to the discussion held in chapter three, the definition of drawing at this point is becoming more diaphanous than becoming realised. A definition of drawing becomes integrated with other disciplines before being established.

That is, the ‘return’ of drawing from the hegemony of modernism created a challenge for the artist as to what is regarded as concept, process, idea and outcome,, and at any step of the way a drawing could be referred to as finished.

2.2. Perspectives on Drawing as a Chronological Discourse

To locate the exact point of the origin of drawing proves to be somewhat vague as its presence of what some might consider drawing is detected within early prehistoric representations and at the core of the development of handwriting. The ‘primal’ qualities of drawing are attributable to its simplistic nature, transparency and honesty (Burton 2006: 6). Furthermore, ‘the act of drawing is suggested to be ‘the primal means of symbolic communication, which predates and embraces writing, and functions as a tool of conceptualisation parallel with language’ (Petherbridge in Riley 2001: 150). Art functioned as a form of symbolic representation (Adams 1996: 3) which incidentally influenced Abstract Expressionist symbolism. Kovats (2006) refers to Serge Tisseron’s notes in his essay *All Writing is Drawing* (1994) in which Tisseron has mentioned drawing to be a process rooted in basic human development, stating that ‘[the act of drawing can be seen] as part of our collective psychic history’ (2006: 8) (*brackets inserted*). Notwithstanding the comprehensive historical narrative that drawing holds, I have elected to briefly address the period of Renaissance art as the departure point from which drawing has played a significant role in Western art-making.

2.2.1. Classical and Traditional Perspectives

Within the spectrum of Western pictorial art-making skills, a strong focus on technique and discipline became a requirement during the Renaissance. As what had initially began as a communicative tool, (Illuminations, illustrations of manuscripts) the act of drawing proved to be central to a continuously developing phenomenon that was aesthetics at the time. In post-Middle Age Italy (approximately from 14th century), artists and art production displayed a predominant inclination towards painting and sculpture. While highly regarded, drawing had been subjected to the reputation of being an unfinished art. Artists within this period relied on drawing to epitomise the norms of social, economic, and political factors from the 14th century, and Italian architect Giorgio Vasari described drawing as the foundational component of the three arts – those being sculpture, architecture and painting (Williams 2004: 72). The inflicted status of drawing as the ‘foundational’ contributor of its more polished artistic counterparts made it somewhat alienated, although it demonstrated as widely utilised.

Renowned art historian Kenneth Clark maintains that ‘it is often said that Leonardo [Da Vinci] drew so well because he knew about things; it is truer to say that he knew about things because he drew so well’ (Genn 1995: 26). Drawing was regarded as a means of mapping out and planning ideas, a tool which proved to be immediate and convenient. The primary characteristic of drawing was line – a stroke which could be manipulated in order to represent a form or create tone and shadow values. Line is representative, which is also ironic, as Rawson (1969) points out, outlines do not literally exist around objects, structures or physical things for that matter. Humans are able to acknowledge the ‘border’ between such things existing in space and therefore, drawing is the tool used to describe an object’s perceived outline into two-dimensional form. In essence, these artists were faced with the challenge to observe, study, and convert what they perceived in 3-D reality onto a flat plane.

Additionally, the Italian term *disegno* was a familiar term to artists, meaning, ‘the act of bodying forth the creative idea using line, as opposed to using colour’ (Burton 2005: 8) which can be perceived as an early reference to the notion of ‘concept’. However, as a slight aside, I note that this is not the first time in which the act of bodying forth a creative idea when using line had transpired. Palaeolithic people for example, conceptually made drawings using lines as figments of understanding while in trance state. During the Renaissance period a group of trained and established male artists labelled, in contemporary terms, ‘Old Masters’ developed a particular and acclaimed mode of drawing which was both technically meticulous and regimented. This was characteristic of the period, in accordance with the concept of ‘rebirth’ and the implementation of knowledge and thought into art practice. Notably, Leonardo Da Vinci’s drawings influenced a number of inventions, sculptures and paintings. His drawings were potentially autonomous in their realisation, which are perceived as forms in nature becoming a visual metaphor (Adams 1996: 11). This is noted in his reputable sketch *The Vitruvian Man* (1487) [**Plate 4**] which depicted the artist’s carefully calculated breadth of scientific knowledge of ideal human proportion. Da Vinci’s ‘preliminary’ sketches and studies on paper have been highly regarded and famed but essentially as introductions to his more recognised paintings and inventions. As was commonly understood during the Renaissance, drawing became a way of investigation, study, and representation of natural life which contributed to architectural forms, paintings and sculptures.

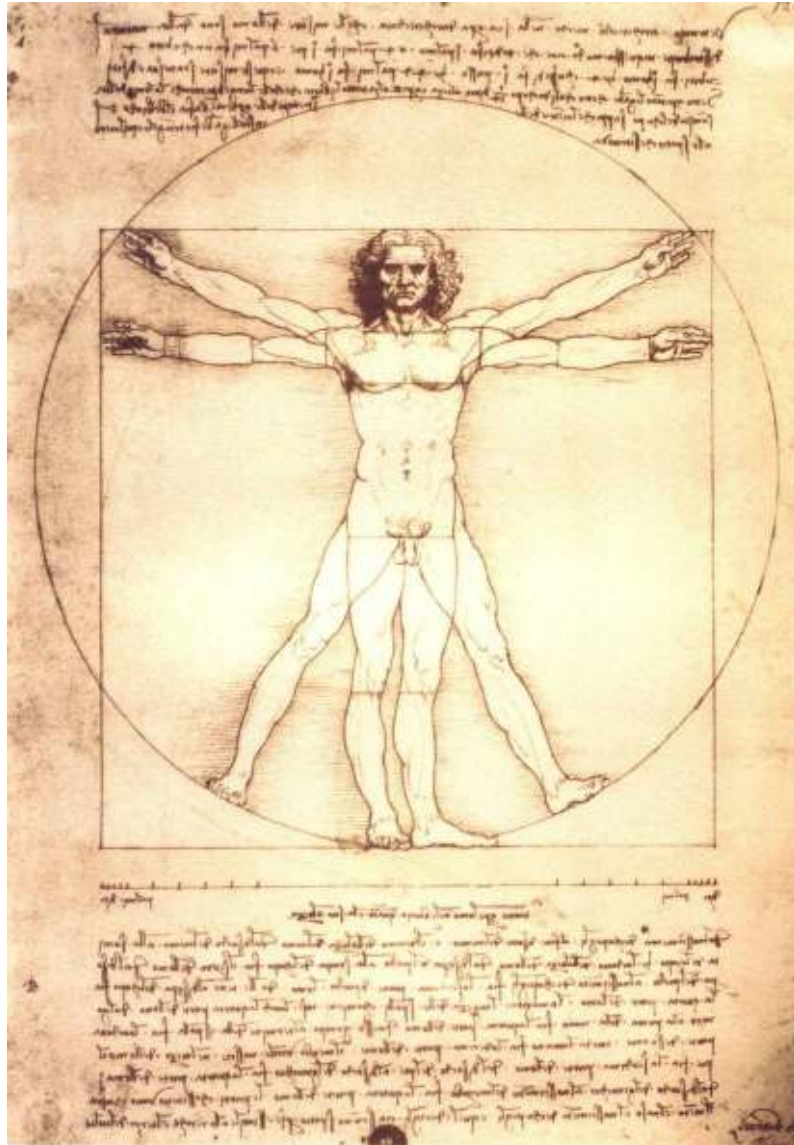


Plate 4: Leonardo Da Vinci, *The Vitruvian Man* (1487)
Ink on paper (<http://www.drawingsofleonardo.org/images/vitruvian.jpg>)

Rules governing drawing during this Renaissance period pertained to technical accuracy and depiction of the 'real' remained constant during the late Renaissance (or Baroque) period in the 16th century. In respect of society, art production with its basis in drawing followed explicitly prescribed techniques and details based upon a set of agreed principles with reference to issues of anatomy, proportion, perspective and geometry (Kovats 2006: 8). Through the course of this phase, and pre-Modern phases such as Neo-Classicism, Romanticism, and Realism, the role of drawing gradually became diminished in the development of other art techniques. Visual representation became a means of recollection and verification of an individual's knowledge of the world, thus the exclusion of drawing as a conscious and recognised technique appears paradoxical.

One could say that in the emergence of Impressionism, the urgency of representation and conceiving a mark which speaks directly to engagement was present. This allowed for the re-introduction of the conscious mark, exhibiting a newfound freedom of technique and heightened the perception of what drawing could do within other disciplines. Even more so during Post-Impressionism of the 1880's, drawing made a tentative re-introduction alongside the avant-garde vogue of painting, sculpture and so forth. I refer to Elderfield's acknowledgement of the structures surrounding pictorial representation and how such constructs were re-worked in the wake of Impressionism. The two 'central norms', according to Elderfield, consisted of discrete image-making and the illusion of sculptural form (1983: 14) which drawing could not essentially exist without following the Renaissance. With the rejection of these standards by Impressionistic rendering, drawing had to be re-established (1983: 14).

2.2.2. Modernist Drawing

Although perceptions of drawing began to diversify after the traditionalist period, academic characteristics of drawing persisted well into the 20th century. Within Western art-practice, leading up to modernism the preoccupation with the recognition of hierarchies within aesthetic paradigms led to a prominent shift in the 19th century. Modernism proved to be an economic and cultural catalyst, born of the impending tension between the traditional philosophical tendencies and social developments (Wheale 1995: 5-6). O'Shaughnessy (2004) notes how this shift exposed ways of thinking which concerned the new depiction of

reality as opposed to 'realistic' by foregrounding the very means of representation while questioning determining factors of how society experiences and sees the world.

The liberation from 'conventional' representation resulted in a newfound freedom in the changing conditions of the 19th century where art was concerned, and notions of the artist's freedom and as Bradbury (2005) describes, '[Modernism is] experimental, formally complex, elliptical, contains elements of decreation as well as creation, and tends to associate notions of the artist's freedom from realism, materialism, traditional genre and form...' (2005 in Childs, 2008: 2). Modernism constantly questioned the relevance of representation, with the reinterpretation of mark which was read in its relation to other marks in its tonality and application.

While Bradbury mentions modernism's delimiting definitions of the material, simultaneously there are also limitations on how people respond to a definition that is drawing, painting, sculpture, and so forth. Greenberg notes the development of art in modernism, by stating:

Guiding themselves, whether consciously or unconsciously, by a notion of purity...the avant-garde arts have in the last fifty years achieved a purity and radical delimitation of their fields of activity for which there is no previous example in the history of culture. The arts lie safe now, each within its "legitimate" boundaries, and free trade has been replaced by autarchy. Purity in art consists in the acceptance, willing acceptance, of the limitations of the medium of the specific art.

(Greenberg in Williams 2004: 209-10)

While considering the topic of this research, I refer to Greenberg's statement regarding the 'purity' of drawing in the general sense. Purity in Greenberg's definition could indicate the initial and primary action of placing marks on paper using a tool such as a pencil or charcoal, and thus creates such limitations on its definition of drawing. However, I argue here and in the following chapter that drawing could undoubtedly be the primary technique which does not cater for such limitations. The problem posed with modernism is that the limitations on drawing in the manner of locating purity contradict interdisciplinary principles of drawing.

Although drawing per se was seemingly subordinate during this period, it did serve as a catalyst to the experimentation of artistic phases. For example, painters painted with line, edges and mark. By reflecting on what is understood to be drawing as a deconstructive tool, these could be seen as tools which are used to dismantle drawing which are reflected in

modernism and practices such as painting, printmaking and sculpture. To reiterate, drawings, or artworks displaying a degree of colour, posed the confusing generalisation of being likened to paintings, although a discourse of drawing can be applied when viewing a work such as Emil Nolde's *Magicians* (1931) **[Plate 5]** and Paul Klee's *Laughing Gothic* (1938).

Elderfield's recollection of drawing is 'the most basic definition of drawing is: the record of a tool moving across a surface [...] drawing at its most basic ... is line drawing'. He elaborates further: 'Drawing at its most basic is therefore drawing at its most conceptual, for drawn lines are symbolic and conventional' (1983:20). However, artist Paul Cézanne disputes this by maintaining that 'line and modelling do not exist...drawing is a relationship of contrasts or simply the relationship between two tones, black and white' (1983: 20). Contrary to Cézanne's theory, his own pencil drawing *Mercury (After Pigalle)* (1887) **[Plate 6]** exhibits semi-gestural linear qualities adhering to contours of the sketched form. He employs the representational aspect of the traditional, though through his loose gestural marks the act of drawing becomes more of a discovery of form, rather than simply an emblematic figure. As Elderfield notes, 'He [Cézanne] made the symbolic component of drawing (line) the sceptical substitute for its illusionistic component (tonality); sceptical, because line in Cézanne's drawings is allowed neither a conceptual, contouring function nor an individualising one' (1983: 20) (*Brackets inserted*).

On the other hand, Georges Seurat supports Cézanne's sentiments by withholding deliberate linear qualities in favour of dreamlike, almost meditative shading seen in *Seated Woman* (1884) **[Plate 7]** which exposes yet another avenue in drawing production—consideration of negative space and tone. Elderfield writes, 'the silhouetted crispness [of the figure] whose geometric simplifications refer the eye to the geometry of the sheet as a whole, thus reinforcing that compositional effect of the figure as not so much within the space implied by the white sheet as resting, or hovering, on its bottom edge' (1983: 18) (*Brackets inserted*). Conscious marks made not only leave an impression on a surface, but also reaffirm the space/surface on which they occupy, thus creating a dual interpretation. Edwards acknowledges the fact that edges (of the represented physical object) share occupation with the space around it and that 'all edges are shared edges when two things come together' (Edwards 2001: 119).



Plate 5: Emil Nolde, *Magicians* (1931)
Watercolour (Elderfield, J. 1983: 158)



Plate 5: Paul Cézanne, *Mercury (after Pigalle)* (1887-90)
Pencil on paper (Elderfield, J. 1983: 20)



Plate 7: Georges Seurat, *Seated Woman* (1884-85)
Conté crayon (Elderfield, J. 1983: 18)

Echoing the above implications, I refer to the Cubist's approach to art-making through impressions of faceted, two-dimensional planes. Their drawing technique, like those of the Fauves and Expressionists, was generally obscured by the hierarchy of painting. In spite of this the Cubist collage described as 'mixed media' technique re-interpreted space on a two-dimensional plane. The tendencies of torn or clean-cut, constructed and assembled fragments allowed for considerations on compositional placement and negotiation of self-governed edges. Additionally, Cubists such as Juan Gris and Georges Braque applied pencil, pen or charcoal to these collages. Collage suggested a more conceptual depiction of space by the juxtaposition of fragments, and thus created an entry of 3-D consideration into art-making while emphasising edges which share occupation with space around them.

Other variants of gesture and immediacy were artists of the Dada and Surrealist movements, as Elderfield suggests that these artists 'loosened and expanded Cubist design while retaining its formal stability' (1983: 154). As noted in Joan Miró's *The Beautiful Bird Revealing the Unknown to a Pair of Lovers* (1941) **[Plate 8]**, an open composition and quicker hand drawing style allowed for new understanding of curvilinear terms which influenced the development of Abstract Expressionism (1983: 170).

Within another section of what is considered to be modernism, Abstract Expressionists allowed for the exploitation of painting by delving into spontaneous, gestural painting techniques. Rorimer (2001) observes that during this time, self-contained disciplines 'each with its own methodology and history, were first opened to cross-fertilisation' (2001: 11). The impression of line using paint breached the boundary between painting and drawing and is notably the certain period in which painting could be classified as a form of drawing with colour. Jackson Pollock's use of easily spread paint allowed his obsessive, large scale works to accommodate gestural attributes by using line which '[on a large scale] operates between description and non-description' (2006: 18) (*Brackets inserted*). Here Pollock expands on the planarity and distortion evident in Cubist works by altering linear qualities as well as the space in which they occupy. Despite the notion by Abstract Expressionists that drawing was needless, Elderfield recognises the 'purely drawn' paintings which Pollock generated in 1951, in which he pursued the style of dribbling and pouring paint and inks onto large areas (1983: 190). Pollock's use of a monochromatic palette are manifested in early drawing techniques although he engages with specific areas of tonality, space, and shadow attributes



Plate 8: Joan Miró, *The Beautiful Bird Revealing the Unknown to a Pair of Lovers* (1941)
Gouache and oil wash (Elderfield, J. 1983: 170)

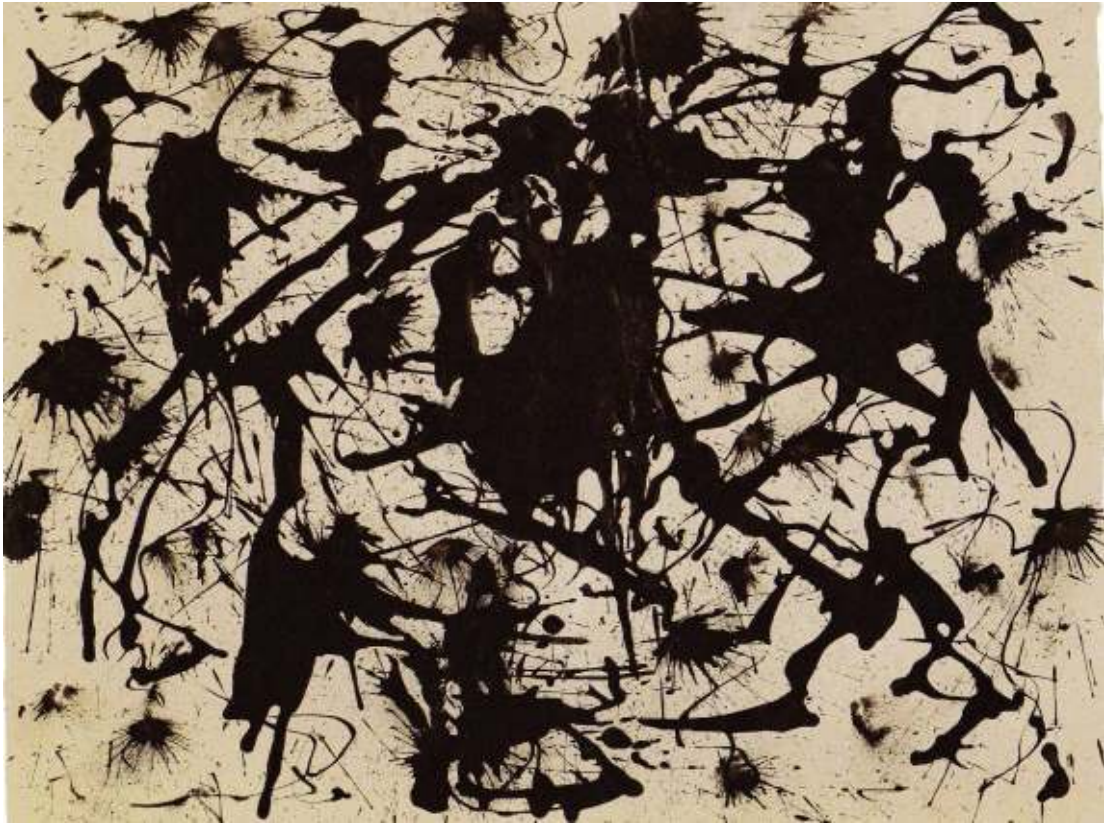


Plate 9: Jackson Pollock, *Untitled* (1950)
Ink (Elderfield, J. 1983: 190)

of the drawing, evident in his *Untitled* (1950) [**Plate 9**] work, through realisation of the mark, translation of the act and capturing of gesture. According to Elderfield, the relationship between the black shapes, lines and components and the space in which it exists is both coincident and intangible, although the only tangibility of this drawing tends to be the physical surface (1983: 190).

2.2.3. Postmodern and Contemporary Thinking on Drawing

In view of what has been discussed thus far, the period leading to what is recognised as the postmodern phase of Western art history allowed for drawing to come into the foreground as a redeveloped autonomous art form—or the space in which it can be perceived as such. Both modernism and postmodernism are considered the two most influential phases in the history of Western art making and hold contradictions and concerns. Here it is necessary to acknowledge the vastness of extensive issues regarding postmodernism and its predecessors in art theory and making, yet in this paper the notion of the postmodern will be noted in order for a suitable contextualisation of contemporary drawing.

The postmodern era pertains to ‘the movement of the arts relating to prevailing social condition’ (Jencks 2007: 16) which offered a set of critical alternatives to the hierarchy of modernism. Sandler notes the following, ‘in the modern era, each of the arts – or the tendency that was modern in each – had been progressing toward what is autonomous and immedicable in the medium or purely of the medium towards “self definition”’ (Sandler 1996: 2). Additionally, Malpas (2005) notes that a concise definition process and definition of postmodern is one of the key elements of rationality that the postmodern sets out to challenge (2005: 4) Malpas goes on to say that ‘postmodernism seeks to grasp what escapes these processes of definition and celebrates what resists or disrupts them’ (2005: 4). In light of Malpas’s statements, it can be said that through postmodern thought, drawing had been progressing towards a self-directed status.

The general critique of culture in postmodern theory and society also stimulated a new vocabulary on language and art. The thinking of postmodernism is spurred not just by what limitations are, but by the change of language and culture. Lovejoy (1997) acknowledges the postmodern notion of viewing texts and images as radically polyvalent (1997: 69). According to Frederic Jameson ‘[Postmodernism is a] mediatory concept ... descriptive of a whole series

of different cultural phenomena ... [and] a principle for the analysis of cultural texts [as well as] a working system that can show the general ideological function of all these features taken together' (in Gaiger 2003: 3) (*brackets inserted*).

Theorists Derrida and Rousseau established an ideology of signs and their relationship to what is signified. The theory of deconstruction introduced the dynamic flexibility between the sign and signifier which came to the awareness of no definitive author in art (Adams 1996: 165). Wheale observes the challenged hegemony of painting as posited by modernist thought in the manifestation of technological advancements in art such as photography, installations, and mixed media. He references Craig Owens' six characterisations of postmodern art practice, which are as follows:

1. **Appropriation:** Challenging the 'uniqueness' of the image by use of reproduced photographic and digital images;
2. **Site specificity:** Installations and constructed conceptual works, located within a specific environmental context;
3. **Impermanence:** The use of ephemeral materials drawn from mass-produced images from popular culture, in order to challenge the elite status of gallery-accommodated art;
4. **Accumulation:** Works in a series with the intention of utilising repetitive logic and imagery in order to extend the creative process;
5. **Discursivity:** Contrasting and paralleling of both the visual image and written commentary of the image in order to create an argumentative and articulate discourse;
6. **Hybridisation:** The combination of materials, genres, and period references to produce forms of art which are diverse in form and character, once more to challenge the aesthetic value of the art object

(Owens 1992: 58, in Wheale 1995)

Owens' delineation of postmodern aesthetic development highlights the narrative of contemporary drawing and its newfound tendencies. These attributes of postmodern art ideally support the notion of artists during the 1960's onwards who sought to test the boundaries of art. Derrida additionally notes a 'disseminated meaning, which remains fragmented, multiple and dispersed, as opposed to gathered together and totalised' (Derrida in Downs 2007: XI). The dematerialisation of the art object allowed for the action of drawing to be recognised as a statement. Furthermore the establishment of new technologies engaged the

processes of drawing with mass media and industrialisation (Kovats 2006: 14). The postmodern engagement with the notion of nostalgia and recycling of earlier art genres into new contexts formulated critical enquiries of art and society.

Contemporary artists such as Kara Walker, who will be one of the artists to be discussed shortly in the following chapter of this dissertation, encompasses a degree of postmodern theory in her work, as Heusel observes, “Postmodernism is disconcerting because it disrupts traditional and accepted societal norms, and the postmodern context of Walker’s work is formed visually—through viewer double-take’ (2006: 64). Moreover in the works of the artists to be reviewed in the next chapter, postmodern theory interrogates process, performance and happening (Malpas 2005: 7), relating to Hutcheon’s definition of postmodernist thought as ‘employing a mode of self-conscious representation’ (Hutcheon in Malpas 2005: 6). Walker’s work usually involves aspects of drawing that do not necessarily conform to what has been described as drawing previously; such as her use of 3-D gallery space, walls, paper cutouts, and photography. In turn, new media provided a threshold to a new territory of postmodern conditions and cultural issues (Lovejoy 1997: 66).

2.3. Conclusion

The intention of this chapter was to create an understanding of historical discourses around drawing pertaining to the Western arts. This was realised by referencing standard qualities of art-making as they related to specific periods in time, while referring to works which exhibited (or, began to show signs of exhibiting) themes underpinning the spectrum of drawing. It is noted that drawing encompasses a broad reputation and stating every outlook on this subject is idealistic and complex.

The following chapter will consider what has been discussed thus far by analysing how artists breached the distinctions between 2 and 3-D art-making by exposing the progressive passage of concept, and how it has influenced drawing today.

Chapter 3:

Contextualisation of Research

The end of chapter two introduced the beginning of the postmodern paradigm and the varying artistic styles stemming from this phase. This chapter will explore contemporary notions of drawing as it relates to conceptual thinking and even more so its amalgamation of principles of drawing with other art practices. These viewpoints will be applied to contemporary drawing particularly as art practices have developed considerably to include more than just the traditional aspects of art-making. Contemporary art practice which is ambivalent in its nature has had an impact on discourses of and what constitutes drawing. In order to understand this, it is necessary to be familiar with conceptual art practice, lending influence not only to the postmodern development, but also to the broad understanding of contemporary art. These findings will later be applied to Andy Goldsworthy, Heide Fasnacht and Kara Walker.

3.1. Conceptual Art: Emphasising the Idea

Firstly, one needs to understand what is meant by ‘conceptual’ and how it pertains to art and drawing. The term ‘concept’ can be loosely described as a conceived notion or idea. For the artist, general art-making may rely knowingly or unknowingly on the formation of preconceived ideas, some observation and preparation in order to formulate an artwork. Considering this, conceptual art places emphasis on the idea and the process of realising the idea as a way of art-making. The journey towards conceptual art could have its roots in abstraction or abstract art, for example, through a move away from the realistic and representational in favour of the interpretive. Perry notes a slight confusion which still exists between conceptual and abstract art by those who involuntarily categorised art which deemed difficult to understand or unfamiliar as ‘abstract’ (Perry *et al* 2004: 50). Conceptual art may have also been spurred by cultural and aesthetic norms being challenged through public engagement with art and arenas that may have been beforehand difficult to note for aesthetic relevance. Originally identified as a subject of the postmodern sphere, abstraction initially was an unsettling notion, although (as seen in the works of Willem De Kooning and Jackson Pollock for example) it did make styles of drawing ‘acceptable’ which were previously obscure. Harrison (1989) notes ‘the success of a readily distributable postmodern art

represents the cultural defeat of those critical aspirations by which conceptual art was impelled' (in Gaiger 2003: 205).

The conceptual art movement can be traced to the period of the late 1960's, following unbounded methods utilised by artists following the hierarchal systems of the modernist philosophy. Harrison recognises conceptual art as providing 'a form of context within which the members of an avant-garde might identify themselves and each other' (in Gaiger 2003: 206). Sheets (2006) identifies drawing activity to have stemmed among conceptual artists who found that its notational quality suited their process-oriented art (2006). In addition, conceptual art was said to have served 'well beyond the historical confines [of modernism] to designate a current art that is generic, in the sense of owing little or nothing to the material traditions of painting or sculpture' (2006: 114 – Article 509748) (*brackets inserted*).

The extension of the pictorial space 'released drawing from the page' (Kovats 2006:23) and allowed for a boundless, emancipated viewing space. Earlier in this research, reference was made to Sol LeWitt, a key figure of Western conceptual art gained significant regard after he exhibited plans for his wall drawings in 1969. He reputedly stated that 'when an artist uses a conceptual form of art, it means that all of the planning and decisions are made beforehand and the execution is a perfunctory affair...conceptual art is only good when the idea is good' (1967: 846). His support of the idea and process is further exemplified as cited in Kovats (2006):

'If the artist carries through his idea and makes it into visible form, then all the steps in the process are of importance. The idea itself, even if not made visible, is as much of a work of art as any finished product. All intervening steps—scribbles, sketches, drawings, failed works, models, studies, thoughts, conversations—are of interest. Those that show the thought process of the artist are sometimes more interesting than the final product. (LeWitt in Kovats 2006: 54)

A practicing artist, or an individual/group intending to create an artwork, may map out ideas by methodically gathering data, pictures, and information of interest, or spontaneously sketching with a pencil, dabbling in paint and shaping clay until suitable characteristics emerge. Rawson provides speculation on the fact that the link between the artist's conceptual discovery and the physical act of drawing, in any form or means, 'Drawing methods are a major part of stipulating the 'IS' [sic], attributing an affirmative quality to his [the artist] topic; without them he [the artist] can make no affirmation' (1969: 19) (*Brackets inserted*).

Traditional aesthetic concerns became of a more inconsequential nature and made way for the notion of thought process and idea. Drucker (2005) recognises the ‘rich dialogue’ between conceptualism and studio practice in ‘the combination of “idea” and material in a synthetically imaginative mode of art-making’ (2005: 77) as well as ‘art becoming the *idea* to keep itself distinct from the concept of *image*’ (2005: 75). Farthing maintains that ‘the best drawings create a sense of limbo, a conceptual space where ideas can be stored in an untraceable state...the information just sits there, it doesn’t go away’ (Kovats 2006: 15). Postmodern discourses on art questioned the relevance of the art object and brought to light contributing aspects and an engagement between the artist, artwork, and finally the spectator. As noted before by Rawson, drawing methods therefore a major part of stipulating the ‘is’ to an artist’s engagement.

Petherbridge states the following, ‘Outline drawing, where detail is suppressed or subjugated to the containing and defining contour, is the most conceptual means of drawing. It is the most abstract, in that to arrive at a clarity of outline is a process of reduction and deliberate simplification and stylisation’ (Petherbridge in Downs 2007: xiv). Here I would like to draw similarities to the idea as basic and containing no detail, and Petherbridge’s statement, where this outline of idea as similar to the perfunctory, basic outline of drawing. The root of conceptual discovery remains, according to Petherbridge, in the reduction of art activity to the bare essentials—the initial act of plotting and mark-making.

In light of the emphasis of idea in art-making and its role in understanding principles of drawing, discourses on drawing have been re-established in a contemporary outlook pertaining to experiences rather than visual representation (2007: x).

3.2. New Ideas on Drawing

The link between the act of drawing and conceptual realisation has been inherent but questionably unacknowledged until recently. Since 1976, a notable interest in the need to establish the status and definition of drawing has resulted in numerous exhibitions and writings with reference to ‘modern’ drawing; however the advent of postmodernism sought to grasp what escaped processes of definitions and celebrate what resists or disrupts them (Malpas 2005: 4). Expansion in the fields of painting, sculpture, and technology enabled

drawing to adapt and form cross-disciplinary traits. Contemporary drawing does involve the inclusion of new media, i.e. 2 and 3-D animation, digital drawing and design and logos, cartooning and illustration, touch-screen technology and the field that is still expanding. Gaiger (2003) explains that ‘the unprecedented expansion of media in the Visual Arts contributed, at least in part, to the alteration of the very category of “Visual Art”, which now encompasses everything from painting to sculpture, to hybrid forms in previously unthinkable materials: the human body in performance, invisible matter (gases), energy (telepathy), large-scale projects and earthworks in remote landscapes and urban centres, interventions in social and political institutions, and computer and other electronic works including virtual reality’ (2003: 3). However this is not simply the only shift drawing has taken in recent years. To reiterate the content of the previous section of this chapter, the surfacing of a new approach to drawing stems from the notion established by conceptual art, which allowed drawing to become aligned with thinking and ideas, rather than with representation (Downs 2007: IX). Following this notion is the emergence of ‘the kind of drawing that derives from reflection rather than from observation, and which accesses a different sort of knowledge to that gathered from perception’ (2007: x). Kentridge (in Benezra 2001) reaffirms this in the following statement:

Drawing to be is about fluidity. There may be a vague sense of that you’re doing 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 of thought...the uncertain and imprecise way of constructing a drawing is sometimes a model of how to construct meaning (2001: 12).

To expand on the above, Downs (2007) references Immanuel Kant’s articulation of the key relationships between understanding and conceptual realisation by distinguishing between two modes of thinking: rational and aesthetic. These two ideas, as outlined by Kant, are the two ideas of what constitutes drawing. A ‘rational idea’ pertains to speculation, or ‘the demonstration of another space, or a map of another dimension’ which is ‘visualised as measurable and graspable’ (2007: XVI). An ‘aesthetic idea’ on the other hand is observed by Kant as ‘that representation of the imagination which induces thought, yet without the possibility of it being in any way definitive or adequate to it, and which language can never [...] render completely intelligible’ (2007: XVI) (*brackets inserted*). In turn, an aesthetic idea is the subjective intuition of the imagination.

Burton observes the contemporary interest in drawing which alludes to a newfound respect for the process. She refers to the re-establishment of painting following the emergence of installation art 'by virtue of positioning itself [the historical journey which painting has taken] as an indexically complex medium' (2006: 8) (*Brackets inserted*). This statement, although concerning painting, is comparable to drawing in the sense that drawing has been a complex medium in itself to decipher, and therefore comprises of its own historical discourse.

According to Burton the increased interest in contemporary drawing can be attributed to its immediacy, historical diversity, accessibility, and its multi-faceted approaches to its application. For example, New (2005) addresses examples of drawing, writing, journaling and photography as documentation of engagement. Although drawing is not defined per se, Burton identifies drawing as a subjective, conceptual and anecdotal activity which could be applied to a multitude of art-making processes. It is within these limitless situations that drawing has its own relevance and immediacy. In fact, arriving at a definition of drawing today is not a necessity, nor a straightforward feat.

For instance, Wolfe (1991) reveals her process leading to the acceptance of drawing as her primary choice of medium. In an essay entitled *Drawing with Sound*, Wolfe states the working definition of drawing she has adopted as being '...the description of form and space with line...and of line, a series of points side by side in a row' (1991: 23). Her installations consist of built structures made of wood, speakers, electronics, and a tape recorder which captured currents of voices as they moved along panels. That being said, the definition of drawing, like the art itself, is ever-changing and erratic which allows for artists today to fittingly implement a definition into their work. Wolfe's work exhibits an unconventional digression from drawing in the 'traditional' sense, and by assuming drawing involvement is simply one of using touch, by creating installation pieces which create line in response to movement and sound.

In contemporary art, drawing is employed by artists with a wide outlook on their characterisation of art-making. While drawing in itself is a form of documentation, attention has turned to the display of such concepts as artworks in themselves. Sketchbooks, journals and visual diaries along with narrative process-based photography and video documentation have served as a means of comprehending progression and deliberation in art-making. New (2005) attributes journals as the source of observation and reflection, capturing the moment

of realising an idea (2005: 10). Recording processes has been verified, through widespread use of visual diaries by artists across the visual art spectrum, as an essential means of development. Although previously shrouded from public view and kept to each individual as simply a preliminary side product, these means of recording have extended to the forefront of display and are becoming a tangible product subject to the same scrutiny as what would have been in the traditional means, a finished work of art.

In reflection to the new discourses on drawing, study and attention has been devoted to drawing. The emergence of institutions such as the Drawing Center (sic) in New York aims to produce exhibitions of historical and influential drawings, as well as showcasing upcoming contemporary artists who identify drawing as a key aspect to their art-making. Executive Director of the Drawing Center, Brett Littman, that in founding the gallery the objective was that ‘drawing had to be legitimized...now it’s seen as a legitimate activity, not preparatory, not something between one thing and something else.’ He adds, ‘I’m trying to move to a simple message: drawing is all around us; it’s intersecting with contemporary life in so many ways’ (Falkenstien 2008: 65). Alternately, the online peer-reviewed journal *TRACEY* is a database exclusively devoted to contemporary drawing research. In this case, artists are feeling less pressured to label their art as a certain technique, rather encompassing drawing as a non-conformist idiosyncrasy which accesses various methodical pieces of art-making both directly and indirectly.

At this point I will now review three selected artists, who encompass various concepts of drawing to illustrate the varying facets to the practicality of drawing. The following artists are not considered as bona fide drawing specialists, however I aim to identify the role that drawing plays as an active process driven engagement in these artist’s respected fields.

3.2.1. Andy Goldsworthy

I have chosen to examine the work of Andy Goldsworthy in relation to the hypothesis of this dissertation despite the fact that he is known as a land/performance artist. The term, or categorisation, given to artists and artworks whether willingly or otherwise imposed on by the viewing public can be restricting. Goldsworthy is recognised as a renowned sculptor and environmental artist, and while this is a label which is associated to the quality and material of his work as it relates to natural environment and its temperament, inherent traits of

drawing are adopted by Goldsworthy and are evident in his creative process. His drawings range from the straightforward and direct such as *Dark dry sand drawing* (1987) [Plate 10] to the structural and emblematic *Balanced Rocks* (1978) [Plate 11]. Publications on Goldsworthy's work are categorised into volumes according to thematic concepts on which his works are based. For instance, *Time* (2000) brings a narrative, open-ended sense of possibility to what may or may not occur in nature, while simultaneously pressurised and contained within a moment. *Hand to Earth* (2004) reads as more of an introspective experience, literally Goldsworthy's 'hands-on' approach to inscribing line and movement, while creating personal and tangible space in seemingly boundless locations.

Goldsworthy's preference for landscape art is observed by Lubow (2005), who writes on Goldsworthy's response to depicting the physical world. He mentions that Goldsworthy's challenge, like most 20th century artists, was 'to convey an experience of the real world while acknowledging the immediate physical reality of the materials—the two-dimensional canvas, the viscous paint—being used in the representation' (2005). Goldsworthy works either within a natural environment, or natural materials which can be manipulated and relate to his interest to human engagement with nature. As a draughtsperson would consider and understand the materiality of chosen tools such as pencils and surface to be worked on, Goldsworthy's way of interrogating his medium is similar in the sense that he acknowledges his material's limitation. Goldsworthy's primary tools are his surrounds, open fields, grass, rock, stone, sand, smoke, wood, leaves and water and other naturally occurring materials. The materiality evident in Goldsworthy's artistic practice can be said to correspond with Rawson's evaluation of material value as it relates to drawing. The formation of concept to an artist working towards a sculptural, 3-dimensional structure relies on the ability to piece together an idea and for it to translate into a reality. Goldsworthy encompasses the notion of a 'material thinker' (Barrett *et al*, 2007: 29), a production which entails an individual's 'responsiveness to or in conjunction with the intelligence of materials and processes in practice' (2007: 30).

The natural environment is active and exists unpredictably, and allows Goldsworthy to carefully consider his creative process. Goldsworthy explains that 'the challenge has not been simply to wait for things to decay, but to make change an integral part of a work's purpose so that, if anything, it becomes stronger and more complete as it falls apart and disappears' (2000: 7).



Plate 40: Andy Goldsworthy, *Dark dry sand drawing* (1987)
Compton Bay, Isle of Wright. Photograph (Goldsworthy, A. 1990: 66)



Plate 11: Andy Goldsworthy, *Balanced Rocks* (1978)
Morecambe Bay, Lancashire (Goldsworthy, A. 1990: 10)

In the works of environmental artists, the effect and involvement of processes are acknowledged, as stated by McKeever, 'In the case of drawing residue occurs as the process moves through action, onto mark and representation' (McKeever in Godfrey 1990: 33). Incorporation of the shifting environmental changes allow for the work to become more reflexive, allowing new concepts to be born out of chance and compromise. Goldsworthy's acceptance of time sets the tone for more questions which he has addressed in his work; these of which need to be considered when acknowledging principles of drawing. For example, one needs to consider the negotiation of time, or identifying the beginning and end of a work (Bryant 2007: 150).

In further negotiating principles of drawing as they relation to Goldsworthy's work, I refer to *Clay Wall* (1996) **[Plate 12]** which holds linearity, and evidence of engagement with surface and materiality which are elements of drawing principles. This work depicts a wall covered in clay by Goldsworthy and allowed to crack over time whilst drying, while prepared and modified by Goldsworthy. He explains the difference between hanging a work on a wall and literally making the wall an artwork, observing the issues art and surface as two different entities. I make note of, in *Clay Wall*, the cracks made in the surface and Goldsworthy's preoccupation with line. When a surface has been handled in such a way, one could surrender to the volatility of such a substance. Goldsworthy has monitored the emergence of line in a subtle way, although his second *Clay Wall* (1998) **[Plate 13]** may suggest otherwise. He contemplates a careful interaction with the surface in the latter work, an obviously pre-meditated endeavour, with the inclusion of a snakelike spiral form incorporated within the fractured surface area. Goldsworthy's primary choice of location is constantly an outdoor environment, but selected works such as this are exhibited in a gallery setting. Although challenging to convey an engagement with natural matter in a manufactured space, Goldsworthy regards the gallery environment as 'just a place' he says, 'of the time I spend with my art, only a fraction is spent in a gallery, so I can't elevate it to "the place" in the same way as the public does' (Goldsworthy and Lovett 1995: 44).

Additionally, Goldsworthy makes notations of his sculptures as sketches, which are finished drawings in themselves. This represents his conceptual exploration relating to drawing and idea, while the sculptures that follow are the grounding *realisation* **[Plate 14]**.



Plate 12: Andy Goldsworthy, *Clay Wall* (1996)
(Goldsworthy, A. 2000: 8)

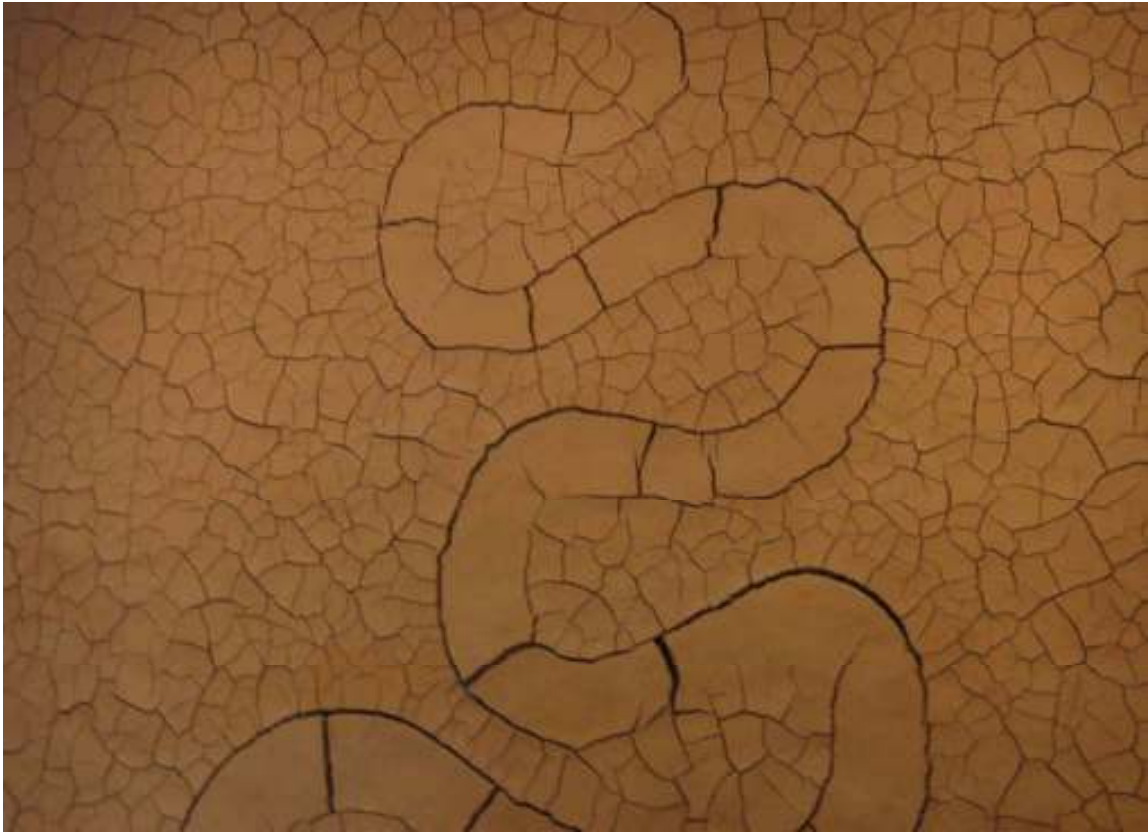


Plate 13: Andy Goldsworthy, *Clay Wall* (detail) (1998)
(<http://www.fotopedia.com/albums/bc7a68db-6f9e-f915-a6f2-82b26ff069d3>)

Hazel stick throws (1980) [Plate 15] is an example of Goldsworthy's gestural involvement while relying on photography as an aspect of his intention. Here, by the act of throwing sticks

up in the air, Goldsworthy has mapped out a broader area while expanding his intention into the capturing of time and acknowledgment of space. He is executing what an artist may not be able to do who has a single point of intention. The use of thin, long sticks, found in the British countryside, have been utilised as fragments which occupy a space for a brief time. Goldsworthy threw these sticks into the air, and photographed the specific moment in which they were suspended in a fleeting moment. The effect of this was a silhouetted hatching of lines against the sky. It is argued that this constitutes a drawing, despite the rigidity of a physical, tangible surface area and when photographed, the drawing becomes suitably recognisable. As McKeever notes, 'Drawing and photography [are] different ways of registering marks [...] drawing and photography are like the landscape in that they are able to both expose and obscure, reveal and conceal.' (McKeever in Godfrey 1990: 33) (*Brackets inserted*). He continues to say that 'Photography became that other in which drawing must pit itself. Photography is closed, drawing open; photography is illusory in its completeness, drawing is as unfinished as nature itself.' (1990: 33). In works such as Goldsworthy's, documentation serves a significant role by 'the uncovering of processes of slippage, deferral and indeterminacy, these practices approach their various sites in a blurring of the distinctions under which a work's integrity and place is fixed' (Kaye 2000: 215).

Additionally Goldsworthy does not simply employ the use of line in the literal sense; his close observation of nature allows him to encounter hidden geometrical attributes in organic forms such as leaves and plants. This is evident in his works *Bracken fronds Pinned with Thorns* (1985) [**Plate 16**] and *Reeds, Bracken and Horse Chestnut Stalks Pinned with Thorns* (1989), where on moving to a gallery, leaves are meticulously placed together on a wall to create a coiling image held together by a precise single outline formed by straight edges of the leaves.



Plate 14: Andy Goldsworthy, Working sketches for monuments (1983)
Sketchbook 8 (Goldsworthy, A. 1990: 156)



Plate 15: Andy Goldsworthy, *Hazel stick throws* (1980) © Andy Goldsworthy
(http://www.goldsworthy.cc.gla.ac.uk/images/l/ag_01555.jpg)



Plate 16: Andy Goldsworthy, *Braken fronds pinned with thorns* (detail) (1985)
(Goldsworthy, A. 1990: 79)

3.2.2. Kara Walker

Both Walker and Fasnacht, in contrast to Goldsworthy's countless environmental locations, are both site-specific artists who choose to work within a gallery setting. Installation art is heavily dependent on rehearsal and careful consideration of location. Perry and Wood define installation art as a means of allowing the viewer to 'look beyond isolated objects to see the context within which a work is produced, presented *and* received' and that as they are situated within a 'discrete cultural context, often relating to, or being inspired by their direct environments, they draw art into a dialogue with the immediate material...' (2004: 186). The same could be said of Andy Goldsworthy.

The gallery setting is traditionally the emblematic display area of Western art, commonly a white-walled, open space utilised for hanging or positioning works of art. In the case of these installation artists in general, space is considered part of the work itself, rather than simply selected for aesthetically pleasing purposes. The gallery space can be both liberating and constricting, but mainly serves to contain an artist's aesthetic endeavour. Furthermore, both artists are regarded as contemporary art practitioners, an umbrella term which allows for broad utilisation of the art-making spectrum, as opposed to being classified as a 'draftsperson', 'painter' or a 'sculptor'. Walker and Fasnacht as seen below, both rely on paper drawings as a basis and a support to larger installations.

The most recognisable characteristic of Walker's works is her use of black paper shapes, which are usually adhered to white gallery walls. The creation of black 'silhouettes' as Victorian cameos and decorative accessories were considered in vogue as a decorative hobby, notably in 16th century Europe and later, in American aristocracy as a craft. Walker has adopted this technique as a means of modelling her significant fairy-tale-like characters and imagery associated with social, race and gender issues through a narrative form as seen in *Gone, An Historical Romance of a Civil War as it Occurred Between the Dusky Thighs of One Young Negress and her Heart* (1994) [Plate 17]. Walker utilises drawing techniques that span through contemporary progressive drawing history. In a review of her work in *The New York Times*, the following commentary is made: 'Whether in large cut-outs, or notebook-sized drawings, or films that are basically animated versions of both, her draftmanship [sic] is excitingly textured—old masterish here, doodlish there—and all of a piece' (Fremson 2007).



Plate 17: Kara Walker, *Gone, An Historical Romance of a Civil War as it Occurred Between the Dusky Thighs of One Young Negress and her Heart* (1994)
Paper cut outs, Installation view (<http://www.slate.com/id/2177536>)



Plate 18: Kara Walker, *A Work on Progress* (1998)
Paper cut outs, (http://hammer.ucla.edu/exhibitions/detail/exhibition_id/85)

Her work is highly personal, dialogic and has sparked controversy in her representation of African-American caricatures engaging in conflicting scenarios [**Plate 18**]. Walker's trademark technique has initiated the artist's proceedings into new directions such as puppetry, murals, magic-lantern projections, 2-D animation and video (Landi 2006: 173). Her method is illustrative and narrative in the sense that her images are almost puppet-like and exhibit a theatrical chain of events, analogous to the animations of South African artist William Kentridge.

Walker's monochromatic images aim to be disconcerting to the viewer, which are further exemplified in her collages and charcoal drawings. These sketches—whether preliminary, doodles or works in their own right—allow what seem to be observable shapes to become obscure at Walker's own discretion. As Burton notes, Walker's characters are 'shadows and figures grown out of their own accord...' (2006: 322). Regarding Walker's technical facility, the application of each paper silhouette is carefully considered, although Weil (2008) notes that 'she, in a precise aesthetic sense, removes herself temporally by "cutting out", choosing to work instead in a nostalgic ideal' (reference needed). Walker's affiliation to the postmodern is noted through her drawing process, as 'Walker ensures the complicity of her audience through our physical, if unwitting, involvement' (Weil 2008). Each image is initially drawn on black paper with soft white pastel, and then cut using a craft knife. Already Walker is traversing the traditional principles of drawing by inscribing with a knife. The images are juxtaposed onto wood, cardboard, additional paper or directly attached to the wall of a gallery using wax and adhesive. Walker's work can be likened to Seurat's *Seated Woman* [see **Plate 11**]—where the context of the dark shape seems to hang on the surface of the white ground—and focuses on the element of the shape which can relate and be applied to her choice of surface, whether a flat or curved wall, suspended in the air, or animated.

In addition to her customary technique, Walker released a publication entitled *Do You Like Crème in Your Coffee and Chocolate in Your Milk?* (1997) [**Plates 19-22**]. This volume comprises of 66 drawn images which she has generated considering responses to her work. In contrast to her seemingly preferred choice of medium, these images are hand-drawn, varying in technique and evidently a 'brazen handling of media' (Weil). As evident in these works Walker's graphite, charcoal and pencil drawings on paper, akin to her monochromatic



Plate 19: Kara Walker, *Do You Like Creme in Your Coffee and Chocolate in Your Milk?*
[Detail 1] (1997)
Watercolour, graphite, pencil on paper (<http://www.artsconnected.org/resource/86846>)



Plate 20: Kara Walker, *Do You Like Creme in Your Coffee and Chocolate in Your Milk?*
[Detail 2] (1997)
Graphite, pencil on paper (<http://www.artsconnected.org/resource/86846>)



Plate 21: Kara Walker, *Do You Like Creme in Your Coffee and Chocolate in Your Milk?*
[Detail 3] (1997)

Watercolour, graphite, pencil on paper (<http://www.artsconnected.org/resource/86846>)



Plate 22: Kara Walker, *Do You Like Creme in Your Coffee and Chocolate in Your Milk?*
[Detail 4] (1997)

Watercolour, pencil on paper (<http://www.artsconnected.org/resource/86846>)

silhouettes, are deliberately shaded and provide full manipulation of negative space, as her images create a distorted sense of reality. Walker can be regarded as an extension of modern drawing, in her choice of materials which are representational of her dialogue. For example, in using dark paper on stark surfaces when addressing race, Walker chooses to refer to the sign, or symbol of race when portraying her characters. This resonates with the postmodern utilisation of appropriation, parody and pastiche as critical imaging methods (Lovejoy 1997: 81).

3.2.3. Heide Fasnacht

Like Walker, Fasnacht is an American artist who works with a variety of media to capture brief moments in 2 and 3-D works. She favours the large scale; this assists in her intention to translate her preoccupation with the linear structures of highways and roads as drawings on paper. Her drawings, commonly graphite sketches on white, display a mediated understanding of her subjects which are translated into a range of intersecting lines and shapes, for example, *Travelogue History (Düsseldorf)* (2007) [Plate 23]. Fasnacht further broadens the perception of these images by accompanying the drawings with a detailed installation which is diverse in its materiality and takes the form of a continuation of certain paper drawings.

In a way, Fasnacht's use of insulation tape breaks down the application of line into a simple and standard entity in itself. The contrast between her loose, gestural pieces on paper depicted with basic media and her rigidly constructed installations consisting of Styrofoam, tape, wire, and mesh (amongst other materials), identify a means of bridging 3-D and 2-D. Of this relationship, Kovats states 'the act of drawing keeps ideas flowing while major sculptural works are in the planning and manufacture stage, and at the same time subtly feeds into their origination and refinement' (Kovats 2006: 26).

While Goldsworthy is preoccupied with the ecological and Walker converges on issues of race, gender, identity and power, Fasnacht opts to deliberate the urban landscape, man-made structures, buildings, roads, construction sites which occupy space in a typical metropolitan dwelling. The notion that these constructs occupy a space (and ideally, in themselves, occupy individuals), shares a link with her preferred location for these installations. If one had to



Plate 23: Heide Fasnacht, *Travelogue History (Düsseldorf)* (2007)
Graphite on paper

(<http://www.heidefasnacht.com/pages.php?content=gallery.php&page=9&navGallID=3&activeType>)

characterise Fasnacht's work in a broad sense, it would be a description including an amalgamation of architectural and installation drawings. Megan and Murray (accessed 2010) note that Fasnacht 'understands the shape [of things] and places' (*Brackets inserted*). It is through this understanding that she is able to interpret the linearity of structures in which she exists.

Fasnacht's work can be applied to the term 'spacial drawing' which, as explained by Kovats, is 'a field co-extensive with real space, no longer subject to the illusion of an object marked off from the rest of the world' (2006: 23). Spacial drawing allows for a literal construction of an idea; that being said, a diverse relationship between sculpture and surface-inscribed linearity is formed. Drawings by Fasnacht, including *Jump Zone* (2005) [**Plate 24**] and *New City* (2008) [**Plate 25**] challenge the perception of space and boundaries of an area, creating an illusionary take on perspective. Like Goldsworthy, Fasnacht tends to breach the notion of 2 and 3-dimensionality in a carefully constructed and premeditated approach, allowing for the deliberate use of line in the form of duct tape as seen in both these works. Fasnacht utilises line to create a play on perspective by the manipulation of an indented wall using tape. *New City* makes for compelling viewing as the notion of depth is challenged by her drawing construction of structural forms assembled with tape in the corners of gallery walls. The distinct preference for room corners, particularly for these installation drawings, allow for a reinterpretation of readings of space. By doing so, Fasnacht makes the viewer respond visually to her works, questioning the stability of structures and logic, creating structures upon each other and reinterpreting structures in this way. In addition she questions where the drawing exists on and in a surface which is changing as one perceives it. Fasnacht applies black tape, which is a standard hardware item, which is changed into a drawing tool or medium. This is similar to Goldsworthy who also utilises media which he formulates as his own drawing tools. Fasnacht's use of a utilitarian device such as black tape reduces the intention to the standard uncompromising, unforgiving line. Additionally this is in relation to commentary on urban structures, roads and dwellings. In doing so Fasnacht breaks down these original structures in a way which reveal shapes and forms which are unintentionally aesthetic (Megan *et al.*: 2010). In a review of Fasnacht's *Jump Zone*, Shulman (2006) observes the following: 'the corner of the gallery appeared to jut out at the viewer ... large pieces of foam hurtled on a trajectory from [the tape constructs], shattering the girders and picture plane and adding to the special confusion' (2006: pp. 147) (*Brackets inserted*).



Plate 24: Heide Fasnacht, *Jump Zone* (2008)

Tape, Styrofoam, Neoprene

(<http://www.heidefasnacht.com/pages.php?content=gallery.php&navGallID=5>)



Plate 25: Heide Fasnacht, *New City* (2007)

Contact paper, pantone

(<http://www.heidefasnacht.com/pages.php?content=gallery.php&navGallID=3>)

In addition to her wall installations using tape, mesh, wire, and a number of various media, Fasnacht returns to large-scale graphite drawings on paper, favouring scenes of tangled urban roads and highways. The subject becomes simplified in Fasnacht's gestural techniques in an assortment of linear symbols and hieroglyphs (2006). Shulman's review concluded with this statement, 'Fasnacht's evocative work charts the fluid dialogue between the second and third dimensions, between motion and inertia, and between creation and ruin' (2006).

3.3. Conclusion

In this chapter I selected to review the works of Goldsworthy, Walker and Fasnacht for the purpose of identifying the diverse interpretations which drawing is used in contemporary art. At face value the differences in these artist's techniques are evident, through choice of material, the spaces in which they exhibit and intention behind their work, although their commonality is in the extension of drawing as a validation of their art-making. All these artists subvert what drawing was regarded as in the past and engage in the concept of tradition versus new drawing.

Through the analysis of Goldsworthy's art-making process, attention was brought to his choice of location, materials and reasoning behind his work. His drawing processes are evident through a notion of material productivity which allows for the recognition of the relationship between knowledge and process. Alternately, gallery installations for example *Horse Chestnut Stalks and Throws* (1989) isolate the applied mark in space. In the works of Goldsworthy, his concept of making lines and structures are interrogated which eventually erode. Fasnacht on the other hand identifies the artifice and subverts the environment and structure in which she works with. Her drawing can be regarded as an act of subversion. Walker's drawing additionally can be seen as an act of subverting tradition, race and gender and where a drawing takes place.

Additionally these three artists have in certain means influenced my own methods of art production, and considering this, the following chapter will be a self-reflective analysis of my practical drawing fabrication.

Chapter 4:

Meryl Nobin

This final chapter will review my own practical art-making processes and works in view of what has been examined thus far. This section serves as a self-reflective discourse where I, as a researcher, can relate the written component of my MAFA to my own production as an art practitioner majoring in drawing. Here I aim to utilise the approach of practice-based, or practice-led enquiry as mentioned in chapter one of this research, which articulates the knowledge generated whilst employing drawing as my chosen medium, and informing the theoretical issues.

4.1. Background

The history of my work has been highly developmental regarding style, medium and subject matter. Drawing or practical engagements that stem from principles of drawing have been personally been an inherent preference when art-making, from early childhood to the present. Up until the mid-years of tertiary study, I was drawing in virtually a basic sense as highlighted by Rawson, i.e. sketching, using pencils on standard white paper, erasing when making a mistake, and occasionally using ink pens, although ink drawing proved difficult at the time as it seemed challenging to adapt to the permanency of the medium and applied mark.

A ‘formal’ introduction to painting in a school environment and later, at tertiary level exposed me to typical didactic academic art processes. These traditions were structured along modernist and postmodernist traditions within art, with separate structures pertaining to painting, printmaking, and ceramics which were not necessarily integrated; partly because learning was skills-based. Although I was subject to the understanding that a major in 2D art-making meant either painting or printmaking, my inclination was to return to principles of drawing as my basis of art-making.

I found there to be limitations on both process-driven printmaking which requires a finite resolution and the process of painting that is aesthetically driven tended to separate me from my intention. For me drawing still served as an open discourse regarding applied marks,

surface and materials to be utilised and thus created open potential and immediate engagement. Part of the motivation of this was issues raised with Goldsworthy's work, i.e. permanence and impermanence, finished and unfinished state and where the artist situates him/herself through this process. Additionally drawing exposed a malleability that came with its materiality.

Painting and printmaking do engage with principles of drawing; however I needed direct engagement with surface, material and mark. In drawing, action expressed process rather than process being governed by other devices. When drawing, subject matter and themes were not my primary concerns, as implied by William Kentridge: 'the themes in my work do not constitute the starting point, which is always the desire to draw' (in Benezra 2001: 12). My motivation seemed to be in exploring process, materials, and technique. However, I noted my gravitation towards drawing from imagination and memory of objects and people rather than observation. Inspiration was drawn from comic books, graphic novels and their characters, and found objects which I chose to memorise and adapt to paper. I would rather draw a misrepresented version of an object, for example a can or a pair of scissors, rather than have the object in front of me to study when drawing. In a way, this approach served to establish a challenge of drawing from memory, likening the drawn image to the subject, and making the image recognisable or vaguely accurate to my own knowledge. From this point on, I would choose to distort and alter the shape and structure of the object to my satisfaction. This procedure was honed whilst on an exchange program in Sweden where I was not resident in my own studio and was therefore limited by resources and materials which I did not have in my possession. Additionally, Stiles (1996) regards the reductive and minimalistic tendencies of conceptual thinking as acknowledged in Sol LeWitt's works and texts in the following statement, '[LeWitt] examined the differences between conceptual modes of information and the paradoxical changes, permutations and disorder that occur when priori intentions are converted into concrete images or objects' (1996: 805). In light of this statement, I began to interrogate from a minimalist extent to which point I could apply these notions to my work and questioned how much I needed in the way of mark-making and material to convey a drawing.

I have always held a fascination with the ability of an illustrator to link a visual concept to a narrative piece, relying on the formation of imaginative ideas and collaborations with authors. Styles of inking and 2-D line found predominantly in comic books greatly influenced my use



Plate 26: Meryl Nobin, Detail from Honours Exhibition (2007)
Charcoal, eraser and tape on paper (Collection of the artist)

of line and inclination towards a monochromatic approach. While studying towards my BA (Honours) degree in 2007, a recommendation to work on a larger scale urged me to substitute pencil and ink for charcoal. The larger scale enabled me to become less 'precious' about my art, and more aware of individual mark making, the aspect of chance and learning to identify 'errors' as integral to the process of drawing [Plate 26].

For my Honours dissertation entitled *The Conceptualisation of the Process of Drawing* (unpublished) I chose to examine the work of prominent South African draughtsperson and animator William Kentridge and used his application of drawing as a model and inspiration for my Honours work. I drew upon his method of erasure and 'palimpsest', i.e. the acknowledgement of exposing the layers or the hint of previous alterations and erasures which suggest the history of a creative process or engagement. This technique enabled me to consider the developmental stages of a drawing which originate from the initial thought processes to being fully realised. A drawing does have a beginning, the initial attempt or concept, but realising the end proves to be somewhat indistinct. However there are varying factors that might bring a drawing to a conclusion, such as constraints on time and materials.

In working towards an Honours exhibition, concern was not only on the quality of work produced but also upon presentation and ideas surrounding the display of the work. The difficulty surrounding the display of work arose when I had to take into account the area I was given to exhibit (the Jack Heath Gallery in the Centre for Visual Art, University of KwaZulu-Natal). Working with large-scale drawings made it easier to select areas of the drawings which were stronger than others, or which corresponded together. Eventually, I decided to use a number of drawings which complimented each other and chose a layout similar to monochromatic comic book panels, which were then displayed on a wall of the gallery extending from near the top of the wall to the bottom. The result of the display, though partially pre-meditated, was a body of work which possibly could be read as a whole drawing while allowing focus on individually drawn objects produced either in detail or insinuated within specific drawings. The constraints of working in this manner dictate to some degree what the end product does.

4.2. MAFA Practical Work: 2009-2010

In order to undertake a research project that stimulated a discourse around practical work and theory within a studio environment, it was necessary to identify a subjective approach to the perceptions of drawing. It is evident when discussing drawing with art practitioners such as fellow peers, artists, students and teachers, that it is as much of a personal engagement as it is a tangible process. Drawing in many respects remains a very individual and subjective subject.

In the assessment of my own art-making, I consider the following areas as several distinguishing principles of drawing which are closely linked to principles of aesthetics as defined by Riley (2002) [diagram 1], perception, observation, realisation, and implementation.

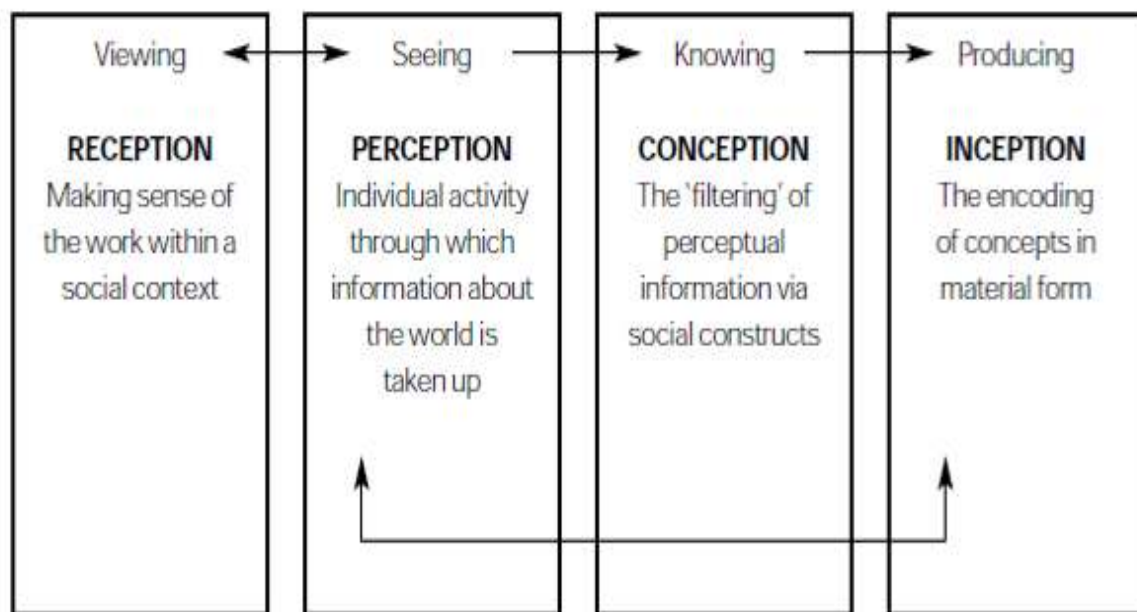


Fig 1: Riley's illustration of the visual aesthetic process
(2002: 259-260)

The basis for this extends from a background in art education where, firstly, observation exercises were crucial to understanding not only the subject, but the space in which it occupies. For example, I recall during my studies an individual explaining to a fellow colleague who struggled to draw a realistic representation of an object by suggesting, ‘draw what you see, not what you know’. The student insisted that she was definitely drawing what she was seeing. By studying my own drawing, and then the object, I realised this was significant advice as only then did I fully learn that observational drawing involved time, attention, particular engagement and most importantly, perception. This raised an awareness of the limitations of drawing education and teaching. In the learning process, certain rules and processes of seeing drawing are relevant, but raise the question as to whether the only aesthetics in existence are those that are governing the rules of what drawing should be. In order to create a conventionally ‘accurate’ observational drawing—of say, a still-life—seeing and comprehending the existence of forms (as attributable to one’s own perception) is a basic tool. I therefore concur with Mendelowitz’s sentiments on drawing as a means of comprehension in that;

‘Just as the written or spoken word, by fixing fragments of thought in logical sequences, makes possible the formulation of intellectual concepts of the greatest complexity so drawing, by fixing visual impressions in static forms, makes it possible to build knowledge step by step and eventually come to know the nature of forms that are too complex to be comprehended at a single glance’

(Mendelowitz in Elderfield 1971: 13).

Being firmly rooted in a 2-D mode of thinking when producing art, the challenge of relocating my discourse on drawing from a practical way to focussing on the concept of drawing was catalysed to an installation based work, and away from the confines of paper and other supports. My intentions in art-making would begin with the objective to find unorthodox tools and materials to draw and make marks with, which could be seen as a replacement for a commonly used pencil or pen. The second aim would be to acknowledge the surface of a work and the relationship between mark and surface of the drawing, and explore characteristics of material surface, space and environment.

Marks can be made by using a tool to inscribe onto a surface, such as a printmaker might etch onto a copper plate with a sharpened nail, or drawing could be simply the act of placing a mark so that it forms a correlation with the negative space or surface. Instead of inscribing onto a surface as one might conventionally do with a pencil or charcoal, I began to question



Plate 27: Meryl Nobin, Detail of pins (2009)
Straight pins in polystyrene (Collection of the artist)



Plate 28: Meryl Nobin, Details of curved pins (2010)
Straight pins, ink and polystyrene (Collection of the artist)

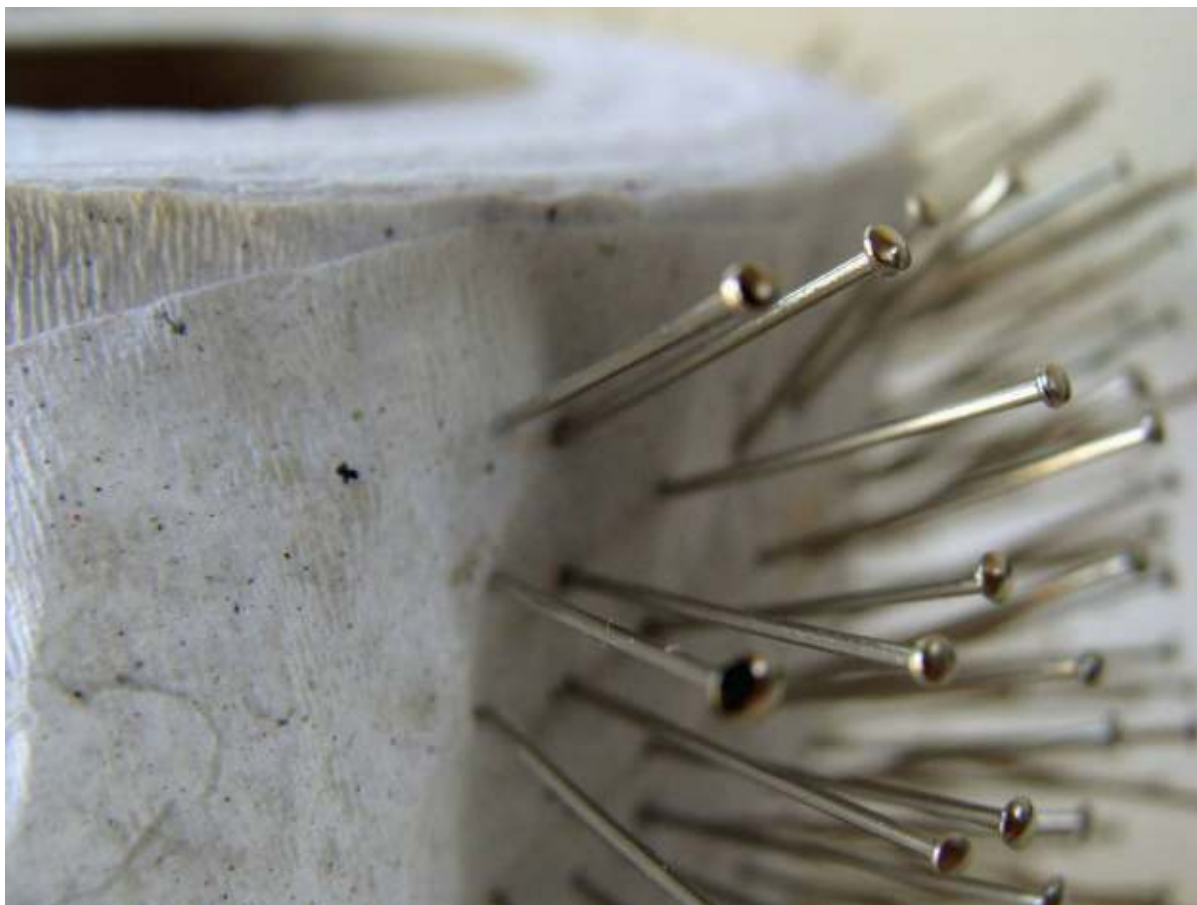


Plate 29: Meryl Nobin, Detail of toilet roll drawing engagement (2010)
Toilet roll and straight pins (collection of the artist)

the notion of negating the surface by applying the concept of covering it with marks. With this in mind, I used straight steel pins to represent my tool, or mark, and pressed them to a piece of polystyrene. These pins were grouped into clusters, represented points, and lines [see **Plate 27**].

I experimented with various shapes of polystyrene: round, flat, square, thick, and irregular forms. These shapes needed to be negated by inserting pins at different points and heights into the surface. Line and mark was tracked around the curves of my chosen object, as Fasnacht for example interrogates the corners of her space. She negates her corner and responds to the structure which exists already. My engagement was similar on a smaller scale with objects that remained the same but had a subverted surface [see **Plates 28-29**].

Eventually an alternative to polystyrene was needed despite its unyielding pliability and therefore the nature of numerous workable surfaces required further exploration. I experimented with inserting pins in common objects such as toilet rolls and corks, focussing on covering each object entirely with pins and eventually disassociating it from its recognisable purpose. Found objects on this context would no longer primarily serve as representational subject matter, but as the tangible record of the journey between the concept and final realisation.

As mentioned in the previous chapter, photo or video documentation has proven to be a beneficial method utilised when recording these various abstract notions relating to process and identifying concepts, particularly adhering to Conceptual or Installation Art. Kaye (2000) attributes such documentation as acting out some of the complexities of the relationship between work and site (2000: 216). Kaye writes, 'Paradoxically, these strategies [of documentation] suggest, whether in the work or subsequent to it, documentation has a place within site-specific practice precisely because it explicitly presents itself in the absence of its object' (2000: 218). To some conceptual artists photographs in the art realm are considered an independent and evolving discipline, as well as part of the drawing process which creates an understanding of where the artist starts and ends. However, my use of photography and video recordings has been for the large part a means of tracking my process. Stiles (1996) describes process 'when used in the context of art, is both precise and imprecise, an historical referent and an historically specific periodising marker' (1996: 577). He goes on to note that 'process visualised both the actual conduct of materials and behaviours of artists in their

studios [...] and also functioned as a point of intersection and transit between traditional painting and sculpture and the profusion of experimental practices ... which collapsed form and content into a continuous state' (1996: 577) (*brackets inserted*). Video clips presented the matter of time constraints, and have enabled me to consider the time aspect when conducting a drawing. In the previous chapter, mention was made of Goldsworthy's process which is governed by his unpredictable, mutating natural surroundings. Limiting myself to 10-minute periods (for example) in which to execute a drawing, whether planned or spontaneous, allows for a divergence from accuracy and over planning and a stronger focus on the accidental and chance-driven elements of drawing,

Rolling (2010) consisted of two pre-considered performance clips for the duration of ten minutes each. I used Goldsworthy's *Clay Wall* as partial inspiration for a methodological placement of my chosen objects, cardboard toilet roll cores. I elected to perform this act outdoors on a paved stone foundation on which the toilet roll cores were arranged to create one constant line. However, during the first attempt, I did not anticipate the changing weather conditions, and the strong wind hindered my initial structured plan. I continued to lay down a line of 'toilet rolls' despite them constantly collapsing, and the result was a significant relationship between the making and chance circumstance [**Plate 30**].

Occasionally I choose to return to the previously mentioned 'accuracy and over planning' which serves as a grounding and meditative period. A series of drawings entitled *Lines and Points* (2010) began as a reflection on my pin works, as a somewhat reversal of the preliminary-secondary idea [**Plate 31**]. In this work I chose to occupy a studio space and consider various objects within that space that altered my physical involvement in this space. I decided to surround myself with monochromatic line that quite literally traced my engagement with this space. I inserted pins into the top edges and on the surface of the white screens which sectioned off my work area from others in an attempt to establish points similar to the 'join-the-dots' activity, although these points were applied in an unsystematic manner. I fastened black wool to the nearest 'point' to me at any one time, and proceeded to take the wool with me as I moved around the cubicle, attaching it to corresponding points. As my work space is restricted, the wool lines mapped my activity as I walked to my locker, window, desk, and to the entrance when I left the area. The result was a spacial 'spider web'-like drawing which served as the initial prototype for the *Lines and Points* drawings. I have chosen to not see this as separating 2-D drawing from 3-D drawing, but to establish a link and



Plate 30: Meryl Nobin, Frames from *Rolling* (2010)
Video still images (Collection of the artist)

relationship between the two, and identify the similarities and recurrences which run through both standard drawings on paper and conceptual artworks.

I hold a preference for working within a pre-meditated space. My ‘cubicle’ or studio workspace at the Centre for Visual Art created a boundary for experimentation, and for my MAFA exhibition I chose to extend this boundary to an extent by utilising the Jack Heath Gallery once again—although I will have additional space and not purely a single wall. My reasoning behind this was to test to what extent I can alter and manipulate a familiar space which for the first time, would be wholly at my disposal.

4.3. Masters Solo Exhibition: August 2010

The final exhibition consisted of four major works, accompanied by video documentation of the process involved and my studio space which served as a model for concepts. The four works represented my personal realisation of drawing, incorporating characteristics which I had previously experimented with. The four principles of drawing I chose to highlight were plainly: line, tone, mark, and space. As basic as these terms seemingly are, my aim was to hone in on these characteristics and expand them as the grounding concept behind each work. The realisation through the process of drawing also allowed for new readings to evolve.

Installation art entails in large parts pre-meditated consideration of materials, space, intention, and possible outcomes. It also requires in most part exertion and physical engagement with each piece. Additionally ideas and concepts are based on time, cost, and space restraint. Bearing this in mind, the results of all four works were that an installation or space was formed which had reference to itself as an art object, although its discourse was accessible to an understanding of drawing as it applied to making art. These installations did not change the concept in which I had started.

The first work, *Marks* (2010), began as a depiction of the structured pencil drawing on paper which was translated onto the wall of the gallery using individual pencils to represent the pencil-drawn lines. The idea from this piece stemmed from a similar work I had done for a postgraduate student/staff exhibition, *Untitled* (2009) [Plate 32], an installation in which I chose to create movement and a cluster of marks using a traditional mark-making tool,

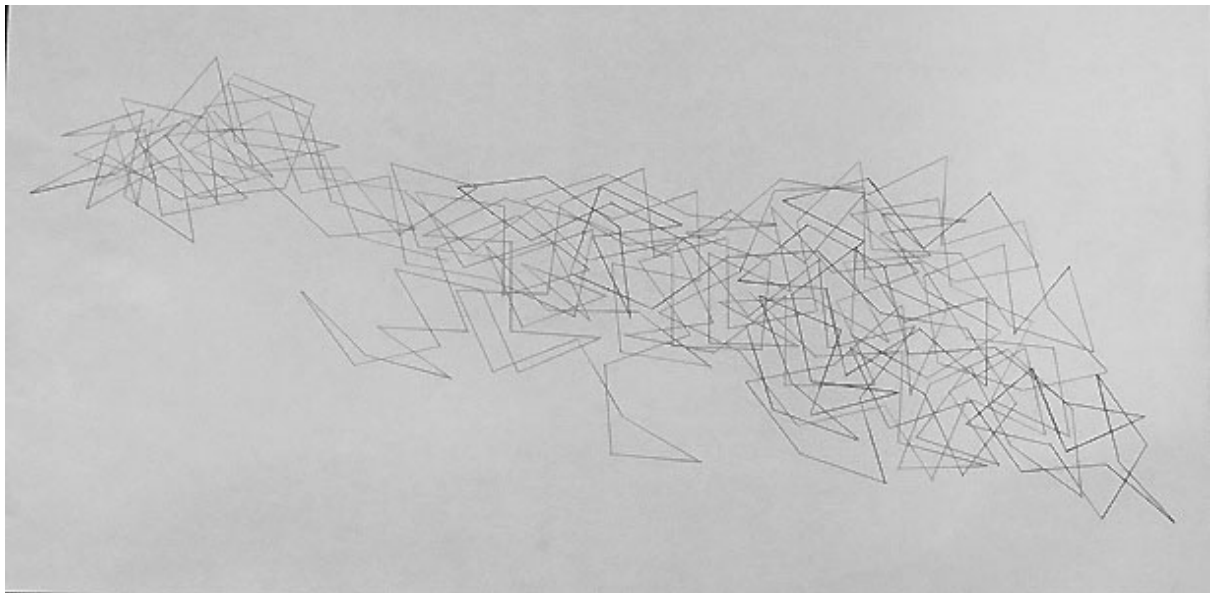


Plate 31: Meryl Nobin, *Lines and Points [I]* (2010)
Pencil on paper (collection of the artist)



Plate 32: Meryl Nobin, Installing *Untitled* (2009)
Photograph (collection of the artist)

pencil. A degree of irony lies in the description of these works (“drawing with pencils” or, “pencil drawings”, for example), and the realisation that a pencil could literally be a mark-making tool or a drawing in itself. Using my pencil drawing *Lines and Points* as a model for this work, I began a general construction on the wall by adhering the pencils in no specific shape or form, but by joining them via their individual points. By placing each mark/pencil down, a new point was established and created a new section of the form that was taking place. What started to evolve was a skeletal, almost organic form which unconsciously began clustering in areas and creating movement across the wall. When this began to occur, it was through constant re-evaluation of this work that I initiated some changes in the overall structure and visual arrangement of the work as a whole [Plate 33-34].

Since starting this installation, numerous rearrangements and edits were made. The drawing was no longer limited to one section of the wall as intended. Rather, pencils strayed beyond the horizontal and vertical barriers that one might expect from a rectilinear format similar to a piece of paper or canvas. Eventually some pencils even began protruding into space and away from the wall, adding another dimension to the work. Similarly several pencils were placed in a direction heading towards the ground and plunging to the floor. Space was no longer an issue, as the individual marks in this work showed kinetic characteristics when grouped together and approached the rim of the wall which was no longer a flat plane.

A solid and unyielding mark became more of an acquiescent entity which, when directed, was able to re-establish the edge of a wall, recognised as an intransigent structure. In addressing this edge and extending the surface area of the pencils onto an additional wall, I was able to dissolve the conception of pencils as tool, and each as individual entity. In clustering numerous red pencils together a flow was created where construct had collapsed and re-established as an unrefined form. Each mark in its individual entirety created a kinetic energy which was captured and traced across and around the surface.

Whilst working with *Marks*, I began contemplating the wall directly opposite this work. My plan for this space was to juxtapose black with white and carefully engage with the concept of monochrome in basic drawing. I selected black insulation tape as my primary material, and began *Shading* (2010) [Plate 35] about three-quarters of the way through my pencil drawing, working on both simultaneously. This piece was inspired by Fasnacht’s wall installations which, as previously discussed, contained a variety of tape to create structural forms and the



Plate 33: Meryl Nobin, *Marks* (2010)
Installation view, red pencils on gallery wall (photograph collection of the artist)



Plate 34: Meryl Nobin, *Marks* (2010)
Second installation view with detail (photograph collection of the artist)

illusion of 3-D constructs. The nature of this tape, when unravelled, is that it appears to be a standard, flat black line, unyielding, and uncompromising. Rather than using this material as line, however, I opted to create shape and mark in a clustered and contained arrangement on the gallery wall. In the application of each piece of tape, the starkness of the white surface area became more evident and began taking form as an object. Although the general impression of the piece was a black form upon white, working at a close range with this drawing allowed me to become aware of prominent negative spaces taking form within certain areas. Ideally, working on two drawings (both 2 and 3-D mark based) allowed a constant deliberation of composition, as well as critical contemplation of both works.

My initial idea for *Line* (2010) was to recreate a ‘web-like’ structure (as experimented with in my work space) within the gallery, and contemplated various areas within the gallery in which to achieve this. Ideally, a string structure down the length of the gallery was my first option, suspended from light beams and hooks from the ceiling. This would create a domineering, bold piece that would utilise gallery space and redefine what is perceived to be predetermined areas of the gallery. I was partial to the idea of a viewer’s ability to interact with a structure occupying three-dimensional space, rather than being restricted to a 2D plane. However, this to some extent seemed impractical considering time constraints and problems which came with such a concept. For example, I had to consider how something would adhere to the ground.

The name of this work, *Line* [**Plate 36**], is an acknowledgement of the use of line by a draughtsperson. When we draw with line, we resort to the application of individual marks, long or short strokes, and the impression of edges as perceived by the eye. The differences of line in drawing is seen in cross hatching, contours, or one continuous line used without lifting the tracing tool. The use of line when drawing holds vast possibility; here I refer to Paul Klee’s concept of a static dot kinetically transcending into linearity. He notes that a ‘free’ [flowing] line begins with a point which shifts forward, and adapts to rendering through not only other forms, points, and planes, but also by circumscribing itself (1953: 16-17) (*Brackets inserted*). The linearity of this piece was evident in using a single linear form which, through manipulation and guidance around an object, created a dense tangle through ‘circumscribing itself’. In this case I utilised an artifice or construct, i.e. a wire frame, which was a rigid form such as my studio and contained the mark and line. This differed from my studio in the sense that I operated outside of this construct and had to wrap my line around it, feeding the line



Plate 35: Meryl Nobin, *Shading* (2010)
Insulation tape and ink on wall, installation view (photograph collection of the artist)



Plate 36: Meryl Nobin, *Line* (2010)
Wool on wall and metal frame (photograph collection of the artist)



Plate 37: Studio space (2009-2010)
Area of concepts and experimental works



Plate 38: Meryl Nobin, *Space* (2010)
Straws and fishing line, multiple installation views (photograph collection of the artist)

from point to point [**Plate 37**]. Additionally the challenge was to constantly step back from the piece and evaluate the work as a whole before making decisions on where the line would venture to next.

The final piece of this exhibition, called *Space* [**Plate 38**], was generated with the intention of rendering space within a space, drawing upon Goldsworthy's *Hazel stick throws* (1980). As Goldsworthy utilised three-dimensional mark in space, which was captured by photographing specific moments, I intended to not only record my process but to create a piece which gave an illusion of a drawing being frozen in time without the use of still photography.

In the gallery, in an unutilised space indented with one available wall, I was to initially create a construction where points (in this case, nails and/or hooks) were fastened onto the wall which could create a foundation for my suspension drawing. The key question was whether it was possible to create a kinetic feeling while engaging fully with the drawing process and the marks/lines themselves as they moved away from the wall. I came to the realisation that the mark and line are both complex and boundless to work with and therefore attempted to suspend my engagement with mark and line within 3-D space. I therefore found a way to create a seemingly weightless mark within the confines of an area, using black drinking straws not unlike Goldsworthy's choice of sticks as mark/line. These straws depicted solid marks and to some, therefore could give the impression of having some substance. This effect was achieved by threading these straws onto clear fishing line and attaching areas to points on two white screens. The actual drawing process of this work became evident only when, during the next phase, I had to physically move the straws around to create the desired effect. In this case, drawing was not only apparent in the application of the mark, but in also the positioning and composition of such marks, which was not present beforehand but needed to be negotiated. Due to the intricate web-like form made by the fishing line, the most effective way to establish the composition and position of the marks was to view the entire piece from a distance. Thus the recording of my process became increasingly significant. By viewing my process through video documentation, I became aware of my behaviours and perception of my work throughout my engagement with this piece. Here I refer to an interview with William Kentridge, in which he expresses the relationship between his animated films and his initial drawing process: '[...I have an] interest in seeing my drawings in progress...what is interesting in doing the animated films is that it's a way of holding on to all the moments and possibilities of a drawing' (in Benezra 2001: 12). When engaging with a drawing, one

deliberates and adopts a number of stances and viewpoints, and thus concepts are created. Each mark was the tell-tale point of my own physical position in space as I moved around whilst making the work. In watching the video recording during the process I became aware of my own presence as author of the piece and thereby reflected on drawing as the recognition of intention and subjective experience. Therefore my realisation was that the act of drawing cannot only be assumed limited to object-to-surface application but also within the artist's experience of making.

4.4. Conclusion and Reflection on Key Points

The objective of this chapter was to establish what reasoning, role and purpose drawing has formed in my practical art-making. In reviewing my own work and Goldsworthy, Walker and Fasnacht as notable influences, I have come to openly acknowledge drawing as my preferred medium in which to work. Additionally drawing has taken me on a meander through various media, concepts, subjects and reasoning—more notably in the past seven years of my tertiary education. Drawing has assisted me in understanding space, materials, and recognise (as well as prepare) concepts. Through experimentation with found objects, working indoors, outdoors, in confined spaces and subjected to different conditions, where drawing has been both influential and open to influence.

The MAFA exhibition outlined in this chapter aimed to acknowledge these principles of drawing and come to a realisation, through application, documentation, and implementation, of what constitutes drawing for myself. I had to consider my limitations and not only how the work would fare on its own, but how it would work in terms of the exhibition as a whole. When executing this exhibition, a large part of the drawing process was reflection on my activity for the day. I would meet with my supervisor daily and hold conversations about my drawing concepts and engagements during assembling my exhibition. Additionally I would reflect on my video pieces, outline and make record of my concepts and thoughts in a visual diary [**Plate 39**], as well as interrogate audience reactions to the development of my work.

Furthermore in my drawing activity, I have noted the application and manipulation of mark, the record of movement, and the documentation of such concepts. In the context of my own work and MAFA exhibition, drawing has been all of the above presumptions as one artwork influenced the other in several means. In this instance, for an artist who is preoccupied with

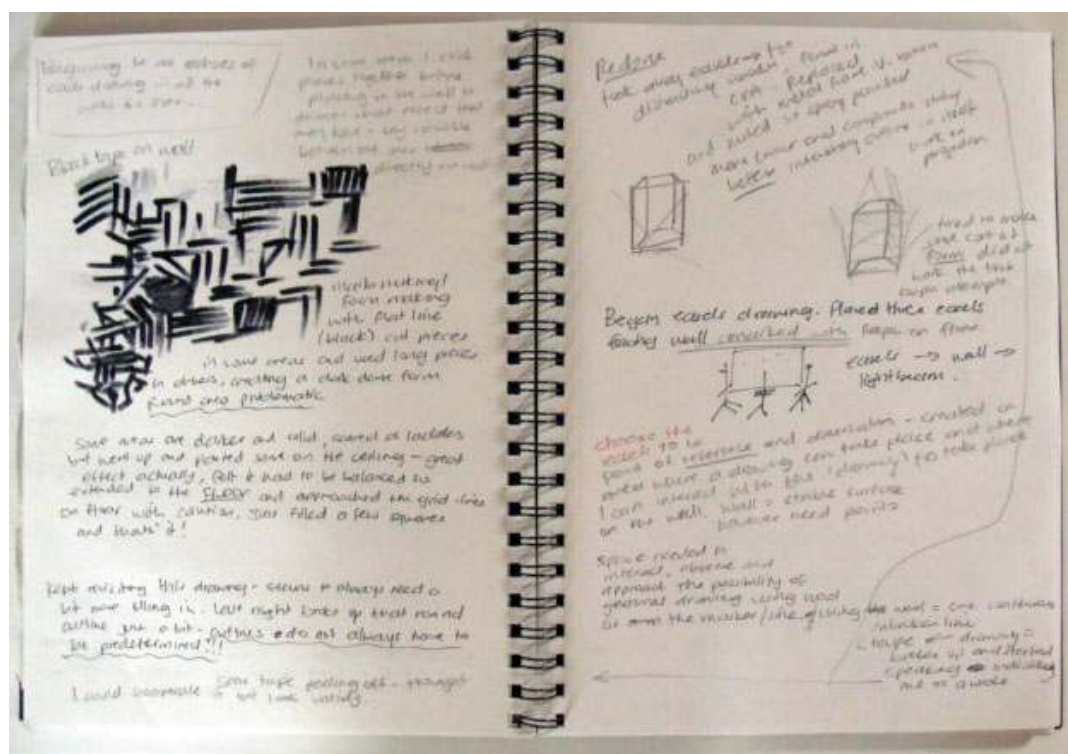
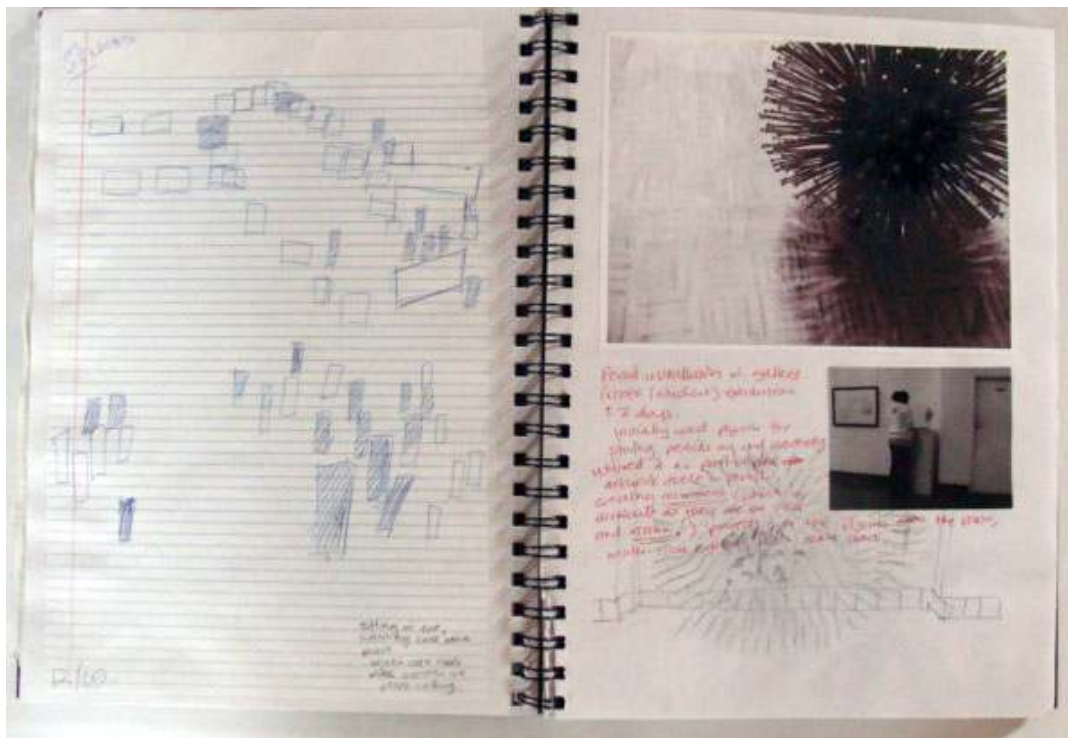


Plate 39: Meryl Nobin, Pages from Visual diary (2010)

being 'precious' about art, the realisation of the ephemeral potential of art was one which took time being accustomed to. Drawing can be permanent or impermanent, and up until embarking on a contemporary drawing style, I was not fully aware to what extent this could be acknowledged.

In the involvement of the drawing process, and through reflection, drawing for me can be seen as the tracing of an act or engagement. This understanding stems from self-observation as I draw and acknowledging my physical presence as an artist through executing a work.

Conclusion

The subject of drawing has been one of great debate and generalisation. The aim of this research was to explore a topic which has been a constant contributor in art-making and yet has been decidedly elusive, even now in contemporary art.

Kovats expresses, in a section entitled *Return of the Repressed*, the following statement, ‘No one ever declared drawing to be dead, as critics, curators, and artists did painting. Was this because drawing was so unimportant as to not warrant mentioning, or indeed was it because it was thought to be dead already?’ (2006: 8). I concur with Burton’s sentiments; by reviewing drawing within the historical discourses in Western art, I aimed to acknowledge principles of drawing in keeping with the varying modes of art practice. However, considering drawing styles and mannerisms found in a wide variety of art disciplines, drawing can be regarded as being inherently present throughout the history of art, and in that case, never has been ‘dead’.

In chapter one I illustrated the methodologies which were to be used when researching a specialised area of study such as Visual Art. In utilising practice-led research, for example, the relationship between practice and theory is acknowledged and considers art practice as a knowledge generating activity. The newfound interest in drawing is warranted by the fact that artists have a wide range of resources accessible.

Thus, drawing is considered as a knowledge generating activity when regarding the hypothesis of this research, which was that *drawing in the actual and in the abstract can be read as a pivotal connector to **concept, process and outcome**. In each of these three areas, principles and theories of drawing can be used as deconstructive tools in establishing the relevance and realisation of these areas in Visual Art.* In chapter two, I identified Western discourses surrounding drawing and in which drawing played a significant role. This was attained by beginning to establish principles of drawing which were evident in art practices regarded as painting, sculpture, printmaking, photography and digital media. Authors such as Rawson, Rose and Elderfield provided a general Western perspective of these principles which lead to a sense of what drawing was regarded as. They acknowledged the destabilisation of modernist thought, and drawing as a destabilising tool through their evaluation of artworks where drawing plays a pivotal role.

Chapter three comprised largely of an analysis into drawing methods utilised by Andy Goldsworthy, Heide Fasnacht and Kara Walker to create a more holistic view of what drawing is. Goldsworthy's drawing style emphasises his use of materiality, as he sources the natural environment which he comprehends through a relationship with nature. Through his appreciation of nature's temperament, his intention is informed when executing works. Through his process-driven engagement, Goldsworthy has acknowledged the issue of permanence versus impermanence which is an issue when dealing with installation pieces. In this case documentation of process finds a direct affinity with the tactics and processes underpinning site-specific practice and engagement (Kaye 2000: 218). Walker's intention is to address concepts of race, gender and tradition through a discourse on dialogue. Her material consideration includes paper cut outs and the influence of Victorian cameo-like images which negotiate space, edges, and the allegorical relationship between black and white. Fasnacht subverts structures and artifice and addresses the reading of space. Her material concerns link 2 and 3-D drawing by complimenting works on paper with large installations, and thus creates a relationship between traditional and new drawing. All three artists resort to preliminary sketching and traditional drawings on paper and eventually translate these thoughts into works in which a personal engagement through action and process can be achieved.

In understanding the works of Goldsworthy, Walker and Fasnacht, I turned to an analysis of my own work in chapter four. In reflecting on my earlier works, processes and exhibitions I identified drawing to be present in my material and spacial engagement, process, and reflection in form of an exegetical analysis. My understanding of drawing is similar to that of Burton, who states, 'it is a map of time recording the actions of the maker' (2006: 10). Therefore, my consensus is that drawing is the act of tracing an engagement.

In reviewing drawing, it is clear that its place in art-making is significant. Every individual draws, knowingly or unknowingly. It is being re-interpreted and steered in new directions due to its flexibility and ambiguity. Drawing is directly related to conceptual discovery and is responsive to materials, language, environment and abstraction. Thus in exploring a drawing, an individual can reach an understanding of concept and latent intention.

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