

Draft document:

An Expanded Definition of Drawing as a Contemporary Practice

Drawing is a discipline that interpenetrates many fields of human activity and is used to give form and visibility to concepts that struggle to be understood in other language formats, such as verbal or written communication systems. It has the unique ability to also merge with, and operates as, a point of access into other forms of language; witness how musical notation, diagramming or mapping enables musicians, mathematicians or geographers to visualise ideas through drawing. Some disciplines have rarely thought of their specific drawing or visualizing concerns as being doorways through which interdisciplinary practices can be developed, but because of the intense and long historical investigation by practitioners of art and design into drawing's wider possibilities, artists and designers are uniquely positioned to help academics and specialists from many disciplines to open their concerns out to much more diverse audiences.

The following expanded definition of drawing is essential to the development of interdisciplinary practices. In particular it facilitates communication between art and other disciplines that use drawing methods to visualize concepts. The definition stems from the concept of 'disegno', the Italian word for drawing or design, which carries within it a more complex meaning than the word 'drawing' in English, involving both the ability to make the drawing and the intellectual capacity to invent a design. It was therefore seen as an essential underlying discipline for painters, sculptors and architects, being therefore a principle or method that underlies a wide range of visualizing practices.

The range of extended drawing practices now undertaken by art and design practices covers traditional observational drawing techniques as well as the development of expressive personal worlds, illustration, graffiti, mapping, performance, abstraction, computer generated imagery, installation and collage. In the creation of three-dimensional objects, their designing often

involves planning and design in two dimensions, involving approaches to drawing that follow more classical definitions. When constructing three-dimensional objects by digital means their formulation on a graphics tablet, which is a two-dimensional drawing medium, involve procedures combined with orthographic views that conform to familiar conventions. More controversially, it might be considered that modes of drawing are involved in new technologies, especially where linearity is used to record, track, demarcate and extrude, etc. The piloting is an example in practice, where the object and in a more precise sense its mechanical eye are guided in a linear movement through space by the pilot. Interestingly, the focus of the pilot is away from the object and on the flight's representation on the console. This kind of displacement suggests the earlier technology of the hologram, where the illusionistic image – or, in drawing, whatever is the visual consequence of its focus of concern – is obtained only indirectly.

With, debatably, a current pluralistic situation that seeks to define architecture in relation to historical notions of its dependence on physical settings and static form, the definition of drawing in architecture is expanded from a static representation into investigations of interactions, or, in other words, investigations of what architecture is doing. The materializing of architecture's behaviour and what it is doing is mainly investigated through drawings. This involves some form of data visualization of material behaviour, sound and other aspects that integrate with human sensory awareness. Due to their high complexity, these investigations are isolated and embedded into their own methodology (concept) with specific rules (context). An aim of drawing in these terms is to investigate and visualize interactive behaviour that becomes content for a new perception of the parts within the intentionally *incoherent* whole.

Other influences of drawing range from popular cultures including folk art, comics and tattooing to scientific acts of recording, the translation and transformation of experimental data and research, constructive-reconstructive

processes as ways to model reality, and various records of physical traces of activities that occur whenever two or more objects touch or impede on each other. A particular instance of trace, registered physically in and as drawing, may be considered that of the drawer's experiential involvement and its and the drawer's engagement in time. Inasmuch as drawing has an image basis, the resulting drawing might indicate the latter in the process of its formation, as it were *captured* in process. While it is debatable whether artists should work with or at least acknowledge the viewer, it may be that in many respects the kinds of experience that drawing embodies are not unique to the artist, and are therefore potentially communicable. The proposition implicit in this expanded definition is that perception can be explored through drawing as a topic of research. In this respect the dialogue that the artist has with their drawing is variously between themselves as researcher and their findings, and with an audience, either passive or participatory, through expressed interest, needs and specialist disciplines.

In conclusion, drawing can be understood as a particular 'concentrate of thought': it has a particular epistemological status that initially resided in a certain type of materiality, but which now includes the wide range of digital new technologies that are used to host electronic information. Contemporary drawing is now more concerned with types of procedure than the construction of artefacts. It could be argued that what lies behind all these approaches is the fact that drawing enables us to reflect on the processes that lie behind both academic disciplines themselves and our experiences of life.

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