

Thinking as drawing

Presentation for Memory and Touch
RIBA

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Drawings can dismantle
or disregard material
and weight, providing
insight into the unattainable

Mayne T. Connected Isolation
In Arch In Tras.

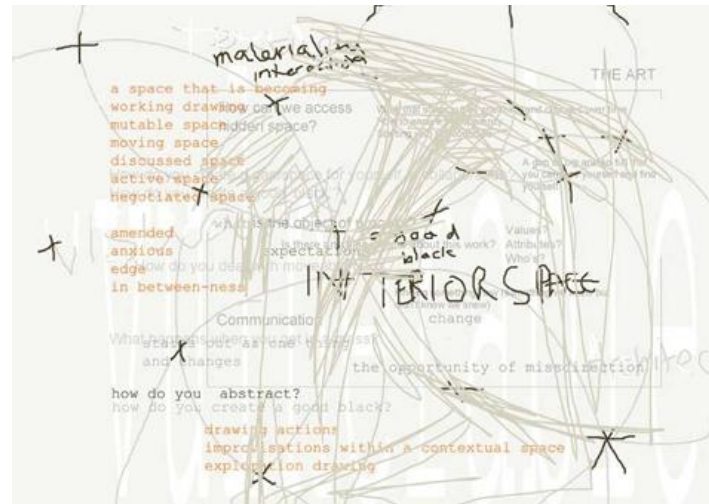
TB. notes created in preparation for power point/ref. in essay by Victoria Mitchell about MB

This presentation considers what, as artists, we can reveal about sensory experience by using drawing - a largely non-verbal means of communication - and testing it through the constraints of re-presentation.

As a short paper it serves only to introduce some of our dilemmas in practice. We will look at how the restriction of re-presentation might be seen to both facilitate and shift meaning. How as a result we can explore the **problematic context of re-presentation in relation to a dynamic and multi sensory field of experiences.**

We will identify key frameworks for our investigation drawn from practice, rather than theory. These are 'creating a good black' from Fine Art drawing practice and Joharis Window from communication design.

We will introduce drawing process as an occupied and performative place of thinking focusing on what Avis Newman and Catherine de Zegher discuss in the book of the same title 'The Stage of Drawing: Gesture and Act'.



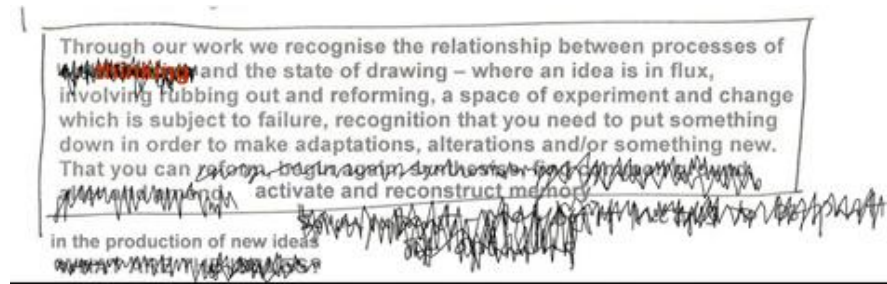
The work we will discuss was developed for a paper presented at the Telling Places conference at The Slade/Bartlett in Dec 07. It was in answer to the brief – ‘investigating hidden places’. The question was....

‘To what degree can the artist or designer reveal the process of production, in the work itself?..... What models, technologies, procedures, and dialogues have been developed to ‘reveal’, and how are these limited, (do they ‘hide’ as well?).

The question was particularly relevant to our thinking - in many of our projects the artwork has been made within the public realm, opening a process which is normally closed to view – exposing it to vulnerabilities, misinterpretation.

To investigate the notion of hidden spaces we decided to treat the development of our abstract as a practical collaborative drawing project. In doing this we would question our own methodologies in relation to the **constraint of abstract writing and conventions of conference presentation**. Technology, speech and virtual communication were used as the predominant means of exchange between us.

- So in essence this is a 2 part reveal
- of our practice for the Slade/Bartlett conference
- of the sensory aspects for today



Within collaborations we work in various ways often re-presenting processes and products in different contexts so as to alter and attach new meaning.

Working with the notion of an abstract, and what might normally be seen first as a written, then as a verbal presentation enabled us to experiment with new ways to exchange, challenge and develop our thinking.

This quote is important in the context of this paper because of the relationship to memory and the movement backwards and forwards in thinking – the rubbing out and reforming through our senses. The notion of an idea being in constant flux, in a space of experiment and change. The relationship between processes of thinking and the state of drawing.



Our challenge was how to generate the physical drawing of an abstract which also re-presented it.

Here is the whole abstract – text as drawing and object. A constructed rearrangement in relation to the brief.

The difficulty for us was how do we express these things without writing linear sentences? You can see that was our starting point.

We needed to retain the opportunity for dynamic interaction and for textural engagement with paper cutting and drawing to contribute to the process. In relation to the central question 'how do we access hidden space?' Trish identified this rectangle in the structure.

The tracing paper was about the difficulty of finding and revealing. Words were put in about what was hidden. We questioned what do we do with moving parts – of which there were many.

It passed between us on email through a series of interactions. The exchange took place at a distance, but what that meant was that other people, other activities in other spaces also became part of our process.



Earlier dwg version of D&P abstract photographed

Technology made exchanging information hard. The scanned piece could not be transmitted, so for me it became impossible to receive.

We worked with a photograph instead and this is how it arrived to me. We were at a point when the subtlety of the drawing had disappeared into the dense black stripes of the printer.

Dilemmas and slippage emerged as a result. We were dealing with what had been discussed, imagined, what was remembered but I couldn't see it and I didn't have the physical abstract either.

The gaps created opportunities. Lost touch became fixed. But what was actually fixed were the blurs and the smudges, the gaps which demanded searching.



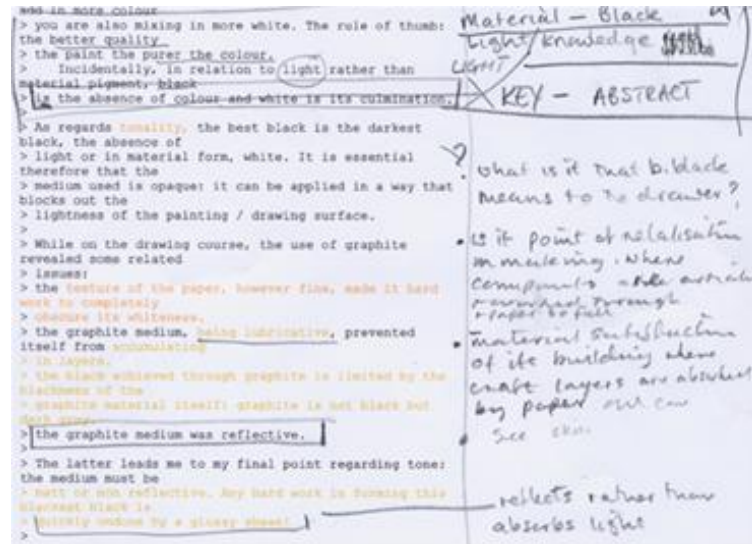
In deconstructing what we were doing two tools collided – powerpoint and a blackboard.

Given the constraint of technology and power point- we also needed to think of our exchange as something physical.

Trish found the unfamiliar powerpoint difficult – for her it is not a drawing tool and has no sensitivity in the mark, no touch, no gesture. We started to question - what does power point remove?

Powerpoint is a familiar means of communication in the business world but....it has no edges, it suggests certainty, it offers no opportunity for change for the viewer or recipient. It suits the domain in which it is predominantly used.

What is interesting is that there is now more recognition of its limitations – powerpoint is being removed in favour of different forms of media for communication. Business is going back to simpler methods offering opportunities for interaction, dialogue and interpretation.



Email from Emma Moxey highlighter/printed +notation by Trish

So how did our frameworks help?

First let's look at 'a good black' – from fine art practice.

During the process of exchange on the abstract the phrase of 'a good black' arrived.

Trish had been on a drawing course in Bristol and was reflecting on the drawing process she had been engaged in during the week. She remembered that towards the end of the week there was excitement – people with black faces – she was wondering what was it that a 'good black' means to the drawer – the question on the slide.

It was very exciting. It offered new language, new perspectives. A welcome relief from the tyranny of powerpoint and technology, even if it arrived through email.

It made us think about drawing through process, the difference in engagement. We thought about the physical in relation to your head.

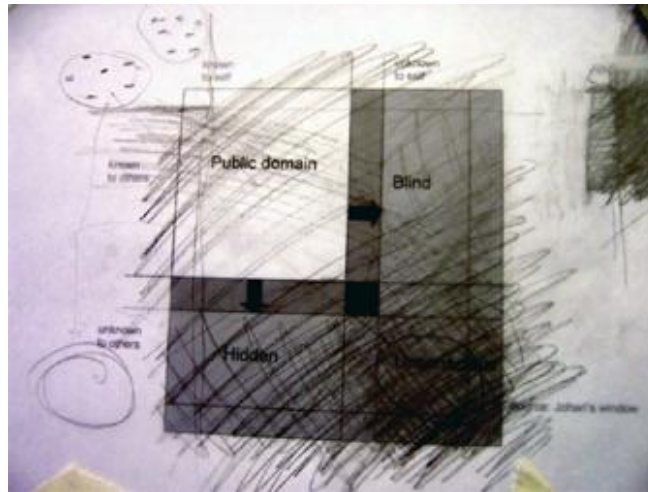
We talked about the realisation of something being found, the point at which something arrives.

About how something is made – the nature of the medium, its lubrication, sheen, reflectivity, the interaction of light and dark

The process of trying out and removing.

The feeling of producing a good black.

It talks of inclusionof touch



Next Johari's Window.

It offered us a dialogue of hidden spaces described by a framework.

A framework brought from communication management. It is often used in relationship counselling on a one to one basis but also to help individuals/teams work better together.

It offers a means of understanding and improving communication and relationships. It is designed to build self awareness.

Within the window there are 2 parties (self and others)

There are 4 areas - public, blind, hidden, unconscious

The lines that divide them are not fixed, they move in response to what you choose to disclose, what feedback you and others choose to give.

For us it was a means of discussing what is revealed, it offers objectification, a process of identification, a means to acknowledge others.

It was helpful because it put the public space into context. It opened up the unconscious although we fundamentally disagreed with the scale given. We extended the discussion into some dissatisfaction with the framework. It continues the dialogue on an intellectual level but it is limited.

So we built it using ladders, tables, wood, dust, tape.

We were able to inhabit it/visit it.

What this process revealed was a different frame. New senses were acknowledged – senses like time, climate, emotional state, personal association, landscape, a sense of who you are.



It alerted us to the importance of being ‘present’, of alignment between the conscious and the unconscious. It highlighted the fact that we can only see from own perspective (however hard we try).

Like when we are drawing there are many actions and marks – things which are both known and unknown, recognised and unrecognised, public and private. Building Johari’s Window highlighted the tension between the benefit of the simplicity of a grid but its inability to diagram the complexity of many elements – like touch and the interaction of memory and experience.

Even with its limitations the process helped identify a new direction. The frameworks provided us with a way of thinking and exchanging knowledge about practice based experiences. They helped us to recognise the importance of the kinds of spaces and activities which facilitate exchanges.

The last 4 slides map an animated space of action experienced through sensory exchange. They begin to describe a new direction.

The key for us in this mapping is the gaps. The gaps so big you can lose yourself in – gaps that offer the possibility of opening out engagement and memory.



As we have described this process is about edges and meeting places, about looking for the spaces in between – about searching through difference, in approaches and frameworks, to answer the same questions



It is an active process – which happens in time through sensory experience.



public

It is a process in which we are aware of the power and importance of different view points. It raises questions about the expectations of spaces, activities, and the difficulty of being in someone else's space. It is about awareness of the anxiety of difference.

Finally, in any engagements there are private and public spaces. Maybe we need to work in the half light and try to access that which is hidden.

To access that which we don't yet know we are looking for?



public



hidden

