

INTRODUCTION

*Out of the Corner of the Eye/the "I":
Drawing as Disposition of Perception*

(I)n general a visible, is not a chunk of absolutely hard, indivisible being...but rather a sort of straits between exterior and interior horizons ever gaping open...a certain differentiation, an ephemeral modulation of this world... a momentary crystallization...of visibility...which for its part is not a thing, but a possibility a latency, and a *flesh* of things.¹

We may never stop to consider that, within the workings of our physical apparatus of vision, the eyes function in the manner of a *camera obscura*, as the raw impressions of sight are received upside-down by the retina. Seamlessly and reflexively, our complex brain intercedes and corrects that inversion of impression and, without even noticing, vision transpires in an operation that always requires modification and adaptation. Within drawing comes an added encouragement to direct our view upon the world a bit differently. It is in this manner that drawing, as perceptual and artistic pursuit, echoes other events of shifting observation—the ones that can reveal something more or other than what is expected.

My research focuses on examining drawing's capacity to translate and record aspects of the interior experience of sight. This capacity, arising from how vision is applied to the task, extends and expands the internalised 'outlook' on the visible. From this premise, I examine how drawing then reveals and recounts something of perception—over and above the subject or intention immediately apparent on its surface—so that the question asked becomes: *What else might be discerned and brought into the visible, by both the process and the enduring artefact of the drawing?* Additional subtle and transient emanations will always unfold beside the more dominant perceptual interests of waking visual life. Thus, our dreams, reveries and other (organically induced) fluctuations within perception are variations that also disclose into the visual life of those who do not take up artistic practices, like drawing. Any act of seeing necessitates selectivity and, hence, we overlook. There will always be more available to the potential of perception than can be derived from each fleeting moment or event of temporal sight. Drawing—in both its perceptual application and resultant artefact—can adjust, even slow, the processes of looking so as to receive and record the subtle views and peripheral revelations of imaginative life into exterior description.

This project emerged from a lifelong practice, study, and fascination with drawing; a facility that originated (and continues) from idiosyncratic participation within the visual sensory and the perceptual field. Drawing came early, facilitated by deviations from cultural standards of normative vision, and thus at a time when I was still unaware that I possessed any defect or divergence in my measurement of vision. I came into this research with the specified intention

¹ Merleau-Ponty, Maurice. "The Intertwining – the Chiasm", *The Visible and the Invisible*. Claude Lefort, ed., translated from French by Alphonso Lingis. Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1968. pp. 132-133.

to use drawing practice to investigate anomalous perception through dreams and related sleep states. These areas of perception had been a primary content source in my drawing practice for a number of years; yet were not chosen from any desire to probe for hidden meanings or psychological analyses of the dream's details. Instead, I was motivated by a curiosity about the mechanisms of *image-generation* occurring in dreams, and interested in whether (and how) the generative processes of drawing might correlate, or even continue, the pictorial inventions of *hypno-states*; both seemed to invite applications of perception unconnected to the identity and functional solidity of our daytime existence. The mysterious phenomenon of our suspension of self-awareness, while inside the depths of dreamless sleep, remains an ordinary and constant event of embodied perception and participation. Hence even the fugue of sleep might be shown to correspond to the potent intervals that accompany, even exceed, the literal or apparent depictions of other fabricated worlds, like the drawing.

While interest in these *hypno-states* continues as a central image source for the project's practice, I concluded early on in the research that exclusive focus on arenas of perception, that could never be simultaneously and directly available to each other (drawing and sleep states), would have imposed constraints on the research that did not serve or address its primary enquiries. The scope of my practice-as-research has broadened to consider how drawing, both as process and trace in and of itself, can disclose and accommodate additional impulses and elements which may remain overlooked by ordinary applications of sight. Within the scope of this criteria are variations and alterations that become discerned in ostensibly observed figurative drawing, as well as during other or odder manifestations of sight—with the latter category including impressions that do not reach the visual cortex by way of the retina. In addition to dream and hypnogogic states, these encompass organic hallucinatory input (the visual aura of migraine) and trace material of visual memory. Such content is reviewed in the practice—not to advance research into depicting such states in themselves—but because they can provide demonstrable data of additional traces of vision which are disclosed within the drawing. What I strive to reveal and explicate through drawing are elements of *the seen*—whether derived from odd or ordinary source—which appear as *other* or *in excess* of outcomes gleaned in more functional and fleeting events of waking vision.

Thus, I examine drawing as an adaptive mode of perception, which discloses as an *image-to-image* cognition in its own right. By doing so, I position the research as a means to also re-contextualise the perceptual conventions of drawing instruction. These conventions are the modifications of looking applied to isolate discrete attributes in the visual field, as in: *contour*, *value*, *perspective* or *proportion*—that have been historically and primarily applied to assist in

more accurately observed representations of the subject of study. However, if the end result of these coded exercises in looking for drawing is limited to that representational goal alone, we will only end up at what Anton Ehrenzweig called the “emotional sterility of the copy”², while neglecting a fuller apprehension and understanding of drawing’s revelatory range and potential. Instead, drawing can be counted amongst other authentic occurrences and outcomes of perception, ones that divulge sensations that lay slightly outside reflexive habits and expectations of vision. Such events—within drawing, but not only from drawing—share characteristics of being altered and altering which, at the same time, are ordinary and regular to embodied perception.

What I contend through my research is that these specific adaptations or visual rules, familiar to drawing practice, are themselves emblematic distillations or derivations referenced from the broader possibilities of alteration and fluctuation in perception. Variations in perceptual events are common to our sensory life; they occur as modifications that reach and reveal into experience—beyond the artist’s expressive toolkit and beyond visual categories in drawing instruction. In this way, drawing communes and connects along other sensory pathways to deepen appreciation and access within the perceptible. This evaluation of drawing as a process that subsequently expands our appraisal of visual experience is, at the very least, equal to and perhaps even more significant than familiar acknowledgements of drawing’s graphic capacity to successfully reproduce the facsimile of objective form onto a surface.³

Structure of the Thesis

The thesis is presented in two volumes. *Volume One* contains the primary text and addresses research positions, develops methodology, and outlines the practice methods that locate and demonstrate the findings. *Volume One’s* research text includes: this introduction, four chapters outlining arguments and evidence (with illustrations), and a conclusion—which encompasses discussion of contribution and implications as new knowledge. Also contained in *Volume One* are title, research abstract, acknowledgements, table of contents, and the bibliography. Research methodology is supported in concepts advanced by thinkers and theorists, including: Paul Crowther, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, Gaston Bachelard, Anton Ehrenzweig, Richard Wollheim and James Hillman. Practice outcomes are analysed through comparative considerations of Barbara Bolt’s practice-research findings, and philosophies of perceptual definition and experience as put forth by philosopher Colin McGinn and

² Ehrenzweig, Anton. *The Hidden Order of Art: A Study of Psychology in Artistic Imagination*. Berkeley & Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1967. p. 48.

³ See: Wollheim, Richard. ‘Why is drawing interesting?’ *British Journal of Aesthetics*, Vol. 45, No. 1, Jan 2005. This transcript is from a lecture given by Wollheim at Loughborough University in 1998.

anthropologist David Lewis-Williams. In composing my practice argument, drawing examples are derived and explored from a range of subject endeavours, including: dream imagery, transcription from works/masterworks by other artists, drawing from photographs as engagement with affective memory, sequential copying from successive drawings, and the *unintended* records of quirks and anomalies of vision arising within observational figurative drawing. Further examples reference—and apply findings—to the drawings of contemporary artists, including: Louise Bourgeois' *Insomnia Drawings*, Paula Rego's narrative process and figure studies by Richard Diebenkorn.

Volume Two comprises a comprehensive collection of reproductions from practice material cited—and shown as thumbnails—in *Volume 1*, along with *Appendices* including additional image examples that directly relate to and corroborate this research's findings.

Volume Two is composed as a hand-made artist's book and made to appear as a facsimile sketchbook— as the sketchbook is the predominant format for my drawing research. The purpose of this second volume is to display the drawing examples, recreated herein as high quality inkjet reproductions, in order to replicate the original quality and textures of the drawing as closely as possible. These reproductions are inserted into this volume as 'tipped plates'; thus further stressing their status as individual drawings and in a manner which references an earlier tradition of art monographs.

Volume One

Terms of Seeing:

In the text, I employ certain words to describe phenomena and data related to vision and what is attributed to be visual. Such terms include: looking, vision, sight, visual perception, seeing, 'the seen', and references to the frequently 'fleeting' nature of vision. In most contexts these terms are used interchangeably, in order to facilitate a flow of writing. However, when terms are employed to cover discrete or expanded meanings, I specify this within the text.

Reference to the *disposition* within vision holds a meaning around how we can orient or place our sense of sight and the posture the physical in relationship to specific goals within the endeavours of vision – whereas sight as *experience* indicates outcomes of practical contacts from such events of sense perception; that being the received data and impressions which comprise 'the seen'. Of course, the disposition of sight is not always intentional and most encounters then are *fleeting*; in other words, brief and cursory in duration within the limits of their the moment of usefulness in relation to the many and varied tasks and aims within the daily ranges of embodied existence.

On the Varieties of Sensory Experience:

There are passages (particularly in Chapter Three) where I employ the following terms: *extra-sensory*, *expanded sensory* and *additional sensory*⁴. It is my intention to separate these two latter terms from a notion of what may be of *extra-sensory*. What I identify in the research discussion as an *expanded sensory* or an *additional sensory* is indicative of sensory event which remains locatable within an expected scope embodied perception and, therefore, such terms are not interchangeable with definitions of experience said to be *extra-sensory* in nature—as the latter term privileges its attribution to sources beyond physical senses or known spatial habitations of the body.

Defining Imagination:

The understanding of the term *imagination* offered in this research, while supported by a number of the cited sources, is predominantly framed through Paul Crowther and James Hillman. Crowther's imagination is *non-derivative* among mental functions, not a "luxury experiential add-on", but instead central to all activity of perception or cognition. James Hillman defined imagination as the "thought of the heart"⁵ and proposed the word *imaginal* to also premise imagination as distinctive mode of 'thinking'; one transpiring within the precinct of embodiment referenced by our metaphoric (rather than medical) understanding of the heart. Crowther distinguishes imagination from the other primary cognitive operations: "thought per-se" or "direct sensory experience".⁶ From this, Crowther defines the approach to art as one of empathetic disposition and acknowledgement, sourced from recognition of individual interiority and imagination as collective condition, where art becomes "a *free* celebratory transformation...from the realm of the involuntary and private, to the voluntary and public."⁷ Thus drawing and other art practices, articulate material of vision that transpire concurrently within—and beyond—imaginative reflection of private reverie.

⁴ In noting the writing of Hans Hofmann's in *Chapter Three*, a quotation references his concept of *supersensory*, within his discussion of how prior interpretation or understandings is overlaid onto immediate events of seeing. As such, this term describes a quality of the cognitive function of imagination – rather than any meaning similar to *extra-sensory*, *expanded sensory* and *additional sensory*, as I intend or interpret these terms within my text.

⁵ Hillman, James. *The Thought of the Heart and the Soul of the World*. Putnam, CT: Spring Publications, 1992.

⁶ Crowther, Paul. "Imagination, Language and the Perceptual World: A Post-analytic Phenomenology" (*Continental Philosophy Review*, Vol. 46, Issue 1) accessed 24/06/2013, [http://link.springer.com.ezproxy.uwe.ac.uk/article/10.1007%2Fs11007-013-9247-](http://link.springer.com.ezproxy.uwe.ac.uk/article/10.1007%2Fs11007-013-9247-.). p/21.

⁷ Crowther, Paul. *Phenomenology of Visual Arts (even the frame)*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2009. p. 83.

Regarding Observation and 'Observational' Drawing:

Merleau-Ponty's notion of the 'invisible'...holds that whatever is visible is so only insofar as it emerges from the broader field of perceptual complexities. These are 'invisible' in that they are not usually noted or remarked upon in ordinary conditions.⁸

Within the research, drawing process is positioned to address subtleties of visual experience and visual data that become revealed by drawing's sensory enterprise. As such, the practice and analysis considers both the subtle selectivity that operates in data gathering attendant to the visual sense in drawing—as well as more subtle elements and emanations that would not readily registered or recognised as 'real' during more common practical events of vision-based orientation. Hence, practice examples address sensory data of dreams, myopia and migraine aura. The inclusion of such extra perceptual layers brings an additional dimension into this discussion of what is found and constituted within the observed and—by extension—within understandings of 'observational drawing'. I do not reference those latter visual subtleties in order to privilege their data over more concretely demonstrable perceptual input. Instead, I offer these as evidence of the fundamentally internalised and imagined nature of translation and transcription that is evoked by drawing, and in relation to the traces that will come to be counted as records of the observed. From my own drawing, I find that expanded definitions of what is *seen* are first transcribed through the drawing process and then, only after-the-fact of making, do these become apparent to sight/in-sight—as I stand apart and reflect upon a drawing's record as spectator. From that posture of looking I can then identify the material record of additional and/or subtle traces—ones received as part of a visual experience – rather than from less definable impulses of intuition or affect.

(T)he world is *what we see*...nonetheless, we must learn to see it – first in the sense that we must match this vision with knowledge, take possession of it, *say what we* and what *seeing* are, act therefore as if we knew nothing about it, as if here we still had everything to learn.⁹

In the remnants of his final and incomplete research, Maurice Merleau-Ponty suggests a methodology for considering the inexhaustible arena of existence, with its an unending potential for creative articulation. He engaged an extended meditation around what constitutes categories of 'the seen' versus 'the unseen' – that is, what he termed the *visible* and the *invisible*. To forward his argument, he challenged prevailing and limiting biases of *representation* in favour of a concept of *expression* as the fundamental cognitive positioning

⁸ Crowther, Paul. *The Phenomenology of Art and Vision: A Post-Analytic Turn*. p. 34.

⁹ Merleau-Ponty, M. (1968) *The Visible and the Invisible*. Trans, from the French by Alphonso Lingus. Edited by Claude Lefort. Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press. 4

assumed in relation to flows and overflows of visual inputs. He wrote that “the world is *what we see*...nonetheless, we must learn to see it...match this vision with knowledge, take possession of it.” This is accomplished as we “say what *we* and what *seeing* are, act therefore as if we knew nothing about it, as if here we still had everything to learn.” This supports my research position that outcomes of sight, particularly those inherent to drawing, are fundamentally more *expressive* than *representational*. In an earlier work, “The Spatiality of One’s Own Body and Motility,” Merleau-Ponty presents the human body as a composite sensorium that “reckons with the possible”¹⁰ when accounting for potential movement and interaction within available or unoccupied spaces (i.e., *negative*); thus defining and attributing appraisals of our physical surrounding, where “every movement has a *background*...not a representation associated or linked externally...but is immanent in...subject’s...original way of relating himself to the object...on the same footing as perception.”¹¹

Thus, I contend that what we actually see during the process and contemplation of (a) drawing, regardless of source or degree of figurative reference is, in truth, always an imagined and even abstracted presentation; therefore more of expression than of representation. Reading a drawing is wholly dependent on how deposits from graphite or other mark-making media are laid onto the surface, and how these stimulate a reverie of association on the part of the viewer. If a work is identified as realistic or representational this occurs because the accrued marks and tones have been organised to recall some physically identifiable form. However, whether drawing holds markings that evoke a more affective identification rather than a tangibly objective association, or whether the drawing depicts indications of tangible form which are, in fact, impossible to physical logic – all drawing is constituted and witnessed as abstracted presentation. (I will add further definitions for observational drawing specific to practice examples and findings within this research in Chapter Three: TERMS of OBSERVATIONAL DRAWING p. 70.)

Overview of Volume One: Chapters One through Four

Regarding Footnotes:

I have chosen to include *footnotes* rather than *endnotes* in my text, as I believe these will offer their additional information, without interrupting the flow of the writing or the reader’s place within it. The numerous footnotes provide information supplementary to the presentation of the main argument, either elaborating upon points articulated within the argument, or furnishing the sources for quotes, citations, and images.

¹⁰ Merleau-Ponty, Maurice. “The Spatiality of One’s Own Body and Motility,” *Phenomenology of Perception*. trans. by Colin Smith. London & New York: Routledge Classics. 2002.p.125

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 127.

Chapter One: *It would appear...*

Chapter One addresses the central premise of this research—as an endeavour that examines modifications in the disposition and reception of vision, as necessitated by drawing. This examination establishes that such adapted seeing then allows for realisation of additional, peripheral and/or unanticipated elements of perception to enter an enduring visible form, through the drawing. Thus, the basis for this project contextualises drawing as a perceptual undertaking; a context explained through the provided overview of my drawing interests and practice—historical and current—in relationship to varying aspects of perception and perceptual cognition. This study of adaptations within the visual *sensory*, as applied and expressed within drawing, is engaged in order to elaborate on drawing's capacity to extend the sensory experience of *the visual*. Also described and considered here are expansions or alterations of perception, which transpire in other moments or modifications of the visual sensory as ordinary events within embodied life. Based upon this premise of a varied spectrum of what constitutes seeing, I explore how drawing is, in itself, a cognitive perceptual state which shares characteristics with other such discrete states: the dream, sleep and other stranger shifts in vision which arise from the individual nervous system. To support this exploration, I introduce key theoretical sources applied in my research through the work of selected thinkers, including: Paul Crowther, Anton Ehrenzweig, Richard Wollheim, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, along with psychologist James Hillman and anthropologist David Lewis-Williams.

Regarding Crowther:

As I constructed my argument within this text, I came to rely considerably on recent aesthetic interpretations by British philosopher Paul Crowther. In his writings, he frames the artistic endeavour as a meaningful invention and intervention with its basis in the fundamental human drive to reflect and respond to the world from the interior imagination. Expressive practices, in the form of visual art, then serve to render the recognition of our collective interiority into an externalised and enduring artefact. By referencing particular concepts articulated by Crowther, I corroborate and extend these ideas into the specific proof of drawing while affirming, through practice and its disclosures, the cognitive function of imagination that operates, as Crowther states, “in relation to the horizon of present and possible appearance opened up by imagination...(t)o perceive...is inaugurate a *world*.”¹² Throughout the text of this argument I will reference certain terms and constructs advanced by Crowther; for example, the *transperceptual*, *picturing* and *presentness*, doing so in order to develop practice

¹² Crowther, Paul. “Imagination, Language, and the Perceptual World: A Post-Analytic Phenomenology”, *Continental Philosophy Review*, Volume 46, Issue 1, April 2013. p. 20. (Accessed 24 June, 2013 <http://link.springer.com.ezproxy.uwe.ac.uk>)

understanding of these theoretical propositions, demonstrating how they are extended and substantiated into the traces, specifics and events of drawing practice.

Other Sources:

Along with Crowther's contribution, other sources are introduced and discussed. These include: Anton Ehrenzweig's notion of a *hidden order* within art which is comprised as a fundamental depth of experience surpassing (secondary) surface depictions, and Richard Wollheim's criteria for the *interesting drawing*. Particular text-based meditations by Gaston Bachelard, Virginia Woolf and Helene Cixous are featured here; these articulate the imaginative disposition as an altering of the perceptual, as conveyed through creative exercise of writing. As such, these latter selections reflect a similar posture and territory to my proposition of drawing as record of a *re-orientation* in perception—informed by imagination and transcribed from interior vision into external chronicle. Anthropologist David Lewis-Williams' work is introduced and I discuss both his and Crowther's versions of an origin story for *image-making*. Those positions are then reiterated by addressing James Hillman's demarcation of the *imaginal* and dream territory; states that validate this interior basis for pictorial response and recognition.

Chapter Two: *It would appear (to me)...*

Chapter Two provides closer readings of key theoretical elements in order to establish the methodology for the project; accomplished here through more developed discussion of distinct ideas from theorists introduced in *Chapter One*. These concepts are shown in their applicability to my current drawing-practice-as-research, and are traceable and relevant within examples from my historical drawing practice. Criteria for the analysis of altered applications of perception, considered within this project and practice, is specified in relation to the methodology. Central to this methodology is Crowther's concept of *picturing* along with his argument for the primacy of visual imagination in all cognition. Other key voices and concepts further developed within this practice query are: Merleau-Ponty's "Eye & Mind", Bachelard's "Oneiric Space", Anton Ehrenzweig's *depth analyses* of art, and James Hillman's explanation of imagination as an authentic experience produced by 'the thought of the heart'.¹³

Chapter Three/Methods, Part 1: *The Views from Here*

Chapter Three connects the methodology, as established in the previous chapter, directly to cited examples of drawing practice. Practice examples are interrogated for their evidence confirming my assertions around alteration and anomalies of vision, as revealed through

¹³ Hillman, James. *The Thought of the Heart and the Soul of the World*. Putnam, CT: Spring Publications, 1992.

drawing. Within the process and artefact of drawing, I demonstrate alterations and expansions in both range and complexity of what can be received and harvested from vision, then brought and fixed into the visible. Here I also define and describe the specific terms and phenomena of vision—and vision within visual art—as explored and articulated within the project’s practice. Additional theoretical sources, which consider attributes of perception, are offered to support practice findings, including: Merleau-Ponty’s “The Visible and the Invisible” and Crowther’s *transperceptual*.

As further analysis of my practice findings, I respond to the practice-led research of another artist, that of Australian painter and scholar Barbara Bolt. I consider and interrogate her contention that the additional expressive source or force within the art object is constituted as an enactment of *performativity*, on the part of the artefact itself. Through a review of Bolt’s argument, I can advance a more clearly comprehensible formula for understanding the *imaginal* perceptual basis and mechanisms behind enduring impacts and expressions within drawing and thus, by extension, within the processes and artefacts of visual art. My findings, like Bolt’s, regard the orientation and significance of adaptive deployments of perception. However, while Bolt predicates her findings and evidence on broad cultural assumptions, I have found that “the ‘work’ of art”¹⁴ is enabled from within ensuing interior perceptual engagements that are, instead, ‘performed’ by individual participating imaginations.

Chapter Four/Methods, Part 2: Case Studies

Chapter Four presents and interrogates specific practice examples to demonstrate distinct instances and evidence in support of my research findings. This chapter deepens the examination of practice as *method*; by citing specific *case studies* and examples of drawings produced over the course of this research. The drawings included here are the primary source material for my findings, conclusions, and subsequent contribution to knowledge through drawing practice. Research positions and analysis is also applied to evidence of adapted perceptual undertakings from drawings by other artists: Richard Diebenkorn, Louise Bourgeois, and Paula Rego.

Conclusion/Contribution

Finally, I summarise and review what is presented and developed in the prior chapters of the text. I outline my contribution to scholarship around drawing and drawing practice, and discuss possible future implications or applications of research findings, methods and methodology.

¹⁴ Bolt, Barbara. “Chapter Three: The ‘Work’ of Art,” *Art Beyond Representation: The Performative Power of the Image*. London & New York: I.B. Tauris, 2004. pp. 87-122.

Volume Two

Volume Two contains reproductions of the research drawings. The first section holds larger 'Plates', which correspond to the image thumbnails that are presented in *Volume One: Chapters One through Four*. A detailed index precedes *Volume Two's* 'Plates section', listing the thumbnail illustrations in order of appearance in the text (*Volume One*) and their correspondent *Plate* numbers which follow. A second section of *Volume Two* includes *image appendices* as additional reproductions of drawings that are germane to the practice findings; cited as further documentation of the research outcomes. All *Volume Two* reproductions are presented as *tipped-in* plates; that is, individual images are hinge-mounted onto a backing page in the book—with details and attribution printed *under* each plate. This structure is chosen to reference earlier traditions of art books, and to distinguish the format or presence of an individual drawing from its receiving page. In this manner, I hope to bring the research reproductions into closer correspondence to the effect/affect of the original drawings.