

## CONCLUSION

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

The world's transcendence—its refusal to be absolutely fixed by our body's contact with it—obliges the embodied subject to be itself transcendent: to constantly change its perceptual positioning in relation to the world.<sup>1</sup>

My research has followed a critical application of drawing practice in order to examine *visionary* correspondences that connect drawing to other subtle or peripheral disclosures that occur within the(ordinary) events of visual perception. The project originally proposed a focused interrogation of links between drawing and the imagery inventions of sleep states: dreams and hypnogogia—a premise intended as an exploration of qualities common to these image-generative arenas. As areas of perception, drawing and sleep states share additional criteria and characteristics of being experientially ordinary while simultaneously exceptional; thus are *extra*-ordinary as event of perception. By contrast to the passive sensory input of the *percepts* that guide our days, the pictorial *image* as shaped by drawing—even when sourced in objective observation—is attended and actualised by the imagination as it constitutes itself within accruing marks cast by the hand upon the page. As drawing conjures its depiction of subject or event out of the previously empty ground, I contend that it is in its manner of emergence from the blank substrate, that drawing can be said to resemble—even be (in)formed by—the inventions of sight and sound that unfurl against the blankness of the sleeping mind.

From this initial premise, the research has led me to conclude that it is drawing *itself*—in activity and artefact—that portrays its own distinct enactment of anomalous and expanded perception regardless of the ostensible content or subject matter. The thesis has demonstrated this in practice examples that disclose extra and/or altered elements of perception, which become fixed into visible evidence through and within drawing. To accomplish this, I have delineated criteria of visual variation—criteria that expands to encompass additional avenues of visual anomaly, beyond the (original) sleep-based image content. Other perceptual measures now include seeming divergences in the organic sense of sight (myopia, migraine-related auras and occlusions), along with documentation of deeper revelations from within the objectively observable, which reveal themselves in drawing's conversation with a broader (and truer) scope of the visual field. The thesis presents and explains its evidence via *Case Studies* in *Chapters 3* and *4*. As previously stated, I have cited certain variations within vision, not for the purpose of addressing these as aspects or anomalies of sight itself—but instead because they demonstrate and clarify as evidence of

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<sup>1</sup> Crowther, Paul. *Art and Embodiment: From Aesthetics to Self-Consciousness*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993. p. 104.

perceptual modification as it operates in art: specifically within drawing. The selected peculiarities furnish a mode of epiphenomena as embodied circumstances, which then enable detection of more or other than the normative expectations of sight within the application of perception for drawing. By acknowledging these alterations in the disposition of looking—so as to enact as Hillman’s *perception of perception*—the activities of drawing’s apprehension are situated in a experiential domain which includes latent sensory data, thus concurring with Crowther’s definition of the *transperceptual*. I have also referenced and extrapolated from Patrick Trevor-Roper’s findings on the so-called ‘blunted’ visionary, in order to highlight that the nature of *seeing*, as it is applied to drawing, detects something other and/or additional to the activities of looking—over or apart from what we readily acknowledge as obvious to our more habitual measures of vision.

The thesis offers a clearer appreciation of the operation and scope of vision as embodied sense and interpretative form. This is predicated on data that establishes sight as always being transcribed by the imagination, always in flux, and always capable of revealing additional emanations from the perceptual field. As demonstrated, vision remains poised to detect additional possibilities—the altered and the surprising—within the routine events of looking. In short, this thesis has demonstrated that drawing, even within the conventions of its customary usage toward production of straightforward descriptions of objective form, is an investigative pursuit uniquely suited to opening (itself) onto the more unfamiliar strands or strata of (visual) perception. Hence, what may at first glance seem uncommon to vision, once it becomes fixed into the enduring record of the drawing becomes, in fact, an affirmation and documentation which verifies all *seeing* as a product of inner and imaginative translation. In this sense, observations derived from an external landscape will yield the same wonders as a dream, because it is the activity of drawing *itself* that facilitates a loosening of the holds of reason and expectation upon how we see into the world.

Having outlined the research proposition, the text went on to review how my examinations of practice became increasingly directed to consideration and documentation of differently engaged perceptual dispositions—as accessed and confirmed in drawing—which brings with them the reconfiguration of vision itself. Before reviewing the resultant findings, future applications and proposed contributions to knowledge, I will again summarise the argument and key points from **Chapters One** through **Four**.

In **Chapter One (It would appear)**, I track the evolution and development of my premise of drawing as an occasion for seeing into more subtle and peripheral events within the visual. Here, for the purposes of comparison, I examine how routine perception is viewed (literally) as tool of reinforcement. As such, it is constructed from (cultural) expectations around what is found and believed as the reality of our external environment—a visual regime that reinforces ‘what meets the eye’ (or the ‘I’). The undertaking of drawing allows for reception and acknowledgement of additional data, because it is a disposition or reposition in the posture of perception that will un-enforce and expand what then enters into the *seen*. This expanded posture of perception in artistic and expressive endeavours encompasses into its view (or purview) previously dormant agents of perceptual experience/phenomenology; for example: sleep, dreams, Woolf’s altering sensorium in “On Being Ill”, and the hallucinatory intercessions of migraine aura. All these comprise events in perception which relax the stranglehold of received ideas of the ‘representational’. To support this discussion, I interject my theoretical companions: Paul Crowther, Anton Ehrenzweig, Richard Wollheim, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, psychologist James Hillman and anthropologist David Lewis-Williams. Of particular significance is the recent aesthetic philosophy of Paul Crowther, which addresses and defines a phenomenology of meaning within visual art. In **Chapter One**, I introduce Crowther’s aesthetic terminology and analyse how this assists in articulating a theoretical foundation for this study.

From the sources cited and introduced in **Chapter One**, **Chapter Two (It would appear to me)** delineates the specific methodology for the project; elaborating and reiterating the research premises in conversation with specific concepts from the theorists previously introduced. I examine Paul Crowther’s notions of *picturing*, along with his argument for the primacy of imagination as the cognitive mode that is the root of all cognition and perception. I discuss other significant sources: citing particulars of contributions by Gaston Bachelard, James Hillman, Anton Ehrenzweig, and Richard Wollheim—with specific attention to the latter’s concept and criteria of the *interesting drawing*. These sources aid the claim and contextualisation of the drawing enterprise as one that gathers up strands of perception in order to then weave impacts and elements from fleeting vision into explicit and enduring records. While developing my methodology in **Chapter Two**, I include an extended discussion around perceptual states of sleep and dreams, and how these are positioned as a (still) significant content area within my practice and research undertaking. Having established my methodology, I then apply it to evaluate practice content derived from *hypno*-states and—by extension—relate these to other selected and seemingly anomalous (while ordinary) events of vision, including drawing. I trace the project’s evolution to its current form: as examination of

drawing's own adaptive process of perception which can access and disclose (from) its similarities to other peripheral, subtle and/or *under-noticed* moments of vision and imagination. Here the drawing process operates as a fundamental impulse to enter into vision as territory of exploration. Thus drawing marks itself into being as if a map in search of its destination—while plotting and fixing a visible record of fleeting impression from the artist's distinct and inceptive *spatio-temporal* encounter within sight. In this, I hold that it does not matter whether the genesis of a drawing's vision comes as direct external perception, or from a flash of imagination. Drawing's significance arises from its intent and capacity to clarify some description from sight, through a process in which the artist seeks—rather than knows—the ultimate configuration of drawing's revelation.

**Chapter Three: The Views from Here (Methods: Part One)** builds upon *Chapter One's* examination of the research position and *Chapter Two's* methodological model. In *Chapter Three*, I connect the research proposition to evidence provided by selected practice events and outcomes that demonstrate how the perceptual posture, as enacted in the process of drawing, *un-enforces* the constraints of expectation upon vision or visual interpretation. In regards to viewing the drawing as product, I apply the findings to verify how this objectively independent artefact of the drawing remains as the revelation of perception, one which then sustains its potential for further perceptual conversations—which continue beyond the attention, lifetime, or singular imagination of its creator. Particularly relevant to this analysis are perceptual definitions offered by Merleau-Ponty in “The Visible and the Invisible”, and Paul Crowther's notion of the *transperceptual*; both concepts referenced in *Chapter Three* to show how drawing involves and evolves *insight* from dispositions of seeing that seek out a deeper engagement *inside sight*. This is demonstrated by the methodology established in previous chapters and, here in *Chapter Three*, it is applied directly to the extended examination of method through and within drawing practice.

Additionally, in *Chapter Three* I review the recent and notable contribution of artist Barbara Bolt's practice-research, and her proposition of the enactment of *performativity* as a central animating force—one which she specifically locates within the art object. I have taken this opportunity to reflect on the practice-led findings of another artist and to include an additional 'practised' voice, so to speak, among the referenced non-practitioner theorists—while also considering the commonalities and divergences from Bolt within my own practice and research understandings. Although my findings, like Bolt's, regard the orientation and significance of what I call adaptive deployments of perception, I have found that any evidence of

‘performance’ sits adjacent to the work of art. What is enacted *then* in the encounter transpires within a timeless dialogue between perceiving imaginations—between the original artist and subsequent viewers and artists—rather than as something ‘performed’ independently by the artefact itself. Through this comparative discussion, I further demonstrate my case for drawing as a state of perception.

Carrying on from *Chapter Three*, which comprises the first part of my methods analysis, ***Chapter Four: Praxis/Case Studies (Methods: Part Two)*** offers dedicated appraisals of specific *Case Studies* that form the basis of this research exploration, evidence, and subsequent findings. Included for this discussion are selected drawings from my own research practice, along with germane practise and practice examples of other artists: Louise Bourgeois, Paula Rego and Richard Diebenkorn.

#### ***Contribution***

I do not know which to prefer,  
The beauty of inflections  
Or the beauty of innuendoes,  
The blackbird whistling  
Or just after.<sup>2</sup>

The questions posed and juxtaposed in this research consider *the what* and *the how* of the ingredients of perceptual data—what Crowther calls the *elsewhere* of our quasi-sensory cognitive operations of imagination—as accessed and brought into the visible through drawing. As such, these elements disclose along side of a drawing’s details that will appear—at least on the surface—to be records of objective recognition alone, in the same way that latent elements are always present to potential perception during the ordinarily fleeting projects of our vision. Perception for drawing approaches a broader purview than the sense of sight alone, and thus has a capacity to detect and incorporate additional sensory influences into the appreciation and formation of the perception, preserved thereafter in the drawing artefact. For example, there is the common and constant sensory crossover in ordinary applications of sight that allows us to imaginatively anticipate sensations of touch and texture. When drawing, vision acts in concert with the tactile tool-wielding hand and these sensory attributes combine to detect and embrace a widened range of sensation, which is then reflected (back) into the visible through the drawing. This new reflection incorporates (gives corporality to) a more richly textured realisation of our embodied space occupation than a matter-of-fact exercise of

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<sup>2</sup>Stevens, Wallace. “Thirteen Ways of Looking at a Blackbird,” *Wallace Stevens: Collected Poems*, London/Boston: Faber & Faber, 1990. p. 92.

looking, which will evaporate from view immediately following its discrete moment of usefulness. Routines of sight, as applied to orient us through day-to-day existence, are generally too fleeting in duration and too cursory in focus to allow for attended cognition which reveals additional subtle trace or sensation.

The thesis argues that the study of drawing, as it has evolved in western traditions of practice, has been distilled into a set of rules intended and utilised to encourage accuracy of transcriptional mimicry. This is accomplished by applying specified modifications within the project of looking, where we separate aspects of seeing into isolated assignments: for tracking only the visible edges of form (contour), the actualities of light and dark (value), or the relationships within space occupation (positive/negative shapes, proportion, perspective) or, finally, for framing an overall creation of a picture world (composition) that separates the resultant image itself from the ever-fleeting flows of our habitual progressions through the perceptual. What I demonstrate in this research is that these perceptual codes of drawing—and thus the practice of drawing itself—have their origin in much broader adaptive experiences of how the world is (has been) perceived and interpreted. Further, those ordinary *in-sights* relate to, and derive from, commonly encountered fluctuations of vision normal to the nervous system and an embodied life.

One research objective has been to situate a reminder of drawing as fundamental mode of visual literacy, on a par with its verbal counterpart and, therefore, as an essential tool not reserved for the artistically-inclined alone. Drawing allows for wider applications of interaction through and within the wonders of the imagination: itself the foundation for all cognition. Due to its tactile immediacy—what Bolt identifies as a Heideggerian simplicity of *handleability*—drawing positions itself as a mode of communication that can surpass not only linguistic translation, but also its own more limited readings which occur if we were *only* to consider surface expectations of the copy when making or viewing the drawing as ‘art object’. Yet even in this, a drawing can be privileged as a *more* universal transmission than what is contained by documentation that requires fluency in specific verbal language. Furthermore, as a practical medium, drawing is accessible to a larger segment of the population than the portion who’d learn or engage more cumbersome or ‘professional’ media: like painting or sculpture. As documentation, the drawing remains available in its distinct communication, one that holds true to its singular expressive configuration that originated with the artist, and constructed in an *imaginal* conversation with him or herself. Revelations of visual cognition, once interpreted into secondary verbal description, sacrifice some of the precision of their visible clarity. Or,

whenever otherwise unnoted, the products of sight weaken and dissipate as they drift, morph and flicker along with internal visualisation alone. Drawing—as act and object—fixes an interior view outwardly so that *then* the private enters the public, while its originator comes to join in with the wider community of viewers.

The thesis also asserts that these findings have the potential to inform several significant areas and applications. The most substantial is as affirmation of drawing as a skill that is of value to a variety of individuals, usages, and disciplines. By shifting the emphasis of drawing's benefit away from outcomes ascribed to talent or resemblance and by, instead, favouring it as a diversification of opportunity for perception, drawing is situated as a central tool of human imagination, exploration and expression—on a par with verbal literacy.

These findings, as they address and demonstrate the inherent modification of the visual sensitivity that occurs in drawing, also extend the conversation around a broadened understanding of adaptive sight—that leads beyond the specified perceptual strategies that comprise current conventions of drawing process and instruction. By seeing these adaptations as derivations of more general, yet variable, moments and approaches within looking, drawing practice is de-mystified, thus more available and accessible as perceptual tool-kit for those whose interest lay outside of creative specialities. In reviewing the directives of modified sight familiar from drawing practice, I have stepped back from those 'conventions' in order to spend time wondering about how we might have arrived at these in the first place. From other sights (and heights) noticed when drawing, I trace these towards their more primary source and implications in perception. The findings also expand and extend the positioning of drawing, away from its connotation as talent-dependent speciality, and towards a means for appreciating the possibilities of experience available in (all) embodied perception and perceivers.

Additionally, the research provides a basis for future re-examinations of those discrete perceptual rules of drawing—to consider whether these are still the only and most adequate formulas for facilitating and teaching drawing. That is to say, it raises the following questions:

- a. How might the discrete perceptual rules of drawing be expanded or even re-framed?
- b. How do these compare or relate to perceptual strategies or conventions developed and coded within drawing and artistic practices in other, non-western traditions?
- c. *What else then might be brought into the visible through drawing?*



Finally, the thesis demonstrates the need for revisions in Barbara Bolt's application of *performativity*, which may be of benefit to future practice-based researchers. Certainly, what is performed through what Bolt calls 'the work of art' is enacted as perception. To imply the location of *performance* as somehow occurring from inside the artefact itself—whether true or false—presents a supposition and conundrum that tilts towards anthropomorphism. Instead, I argue that understandings of art's meaning and enactment must be squarely situated within a performance of perception—carried out by, between, and within individual human agents—however remote from each other in time or place. Furthermore, I establish that drawing traces itself out from the imagination of its maker, constructed during an initial image-based dialogue with the reflective self, and subsequently continuing as recurring conversation with those others who come to look upon the resultant drawing. This model of understanding drawing as adaptive perception ratifies the meaning and magic of drawing—a mode of expression and communication that remains accessible, as well as an interesting way for us to collectively see (into) and watch (over) our world.