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Publication	<i>Drawing: Research, Theory and Practice: Issue 4.2</i> Drawing: Research, Theory, Practice 2019-11-01 Journal article DOI: 10.1386/drtп_00001_2 CONTRIBUTORS: Paul Fieldsend-Danks p. 177 - 184
Publisher	<i>Intellect</i> https://www.intellectbooks.com/drawing-research-theory-practice ISSN 20570384 , ONLINE ISSN 20570392
Title	Drawing Learning
Version	Article/ Author accepted manuscript (AAM)
DOI	https://doi.org/10.1386/drtп_00001_2
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Drawing Learning

There is no way to make a drawing – there is only drawing.
(Serra 1994: 51)

In this special issue of DRTP, the relationship between drawing and learning is explored through a diverse range of texts, each examining the role drawing plays in the construction of knowledge within an educational or learning context. With the massification of Higher Education and the current challenges posed to creative learning in mainstream schooling, drawing as a prerequisite asset for knowledge appears on the face of it, to be vulnerable. Richard Serra's statement about drawing gives us a helpful form of words to reimagine the potential *in* drawing as a form of self-determined learning. But it also suggests that the act of drawing is fundamental *to* the human condition, and is iterative by default. The symbiotic relationship between drawing and learning provides a mutually beneficial condition for us as worldly beings to express our thoughts.

In the context of an increasingly target-driven education system, the rise of new mainstream qualifications and control measures for secondary education (such as EBacc and Progress 8 introduced in the UK in 2010 and 2016 respectively) have steered a sharp course away from creative subjects, favouring measurable learning and raising the spectre of teaching to the test. According to Biesta, in 'educational systems that reduce children to test scores, that stifle creativity or only allow creativity if it generates the 'right' outcomes [], the arts definitely have an important role to play' (Biesta 2018). As the creative industries continue to grow globally, we are at the same time witnessing the strangulation of its pipeline. We face an increasing need to reassert the role and practice of drawing as an insubordinate and radical proposition in learning, capable of unlocking new ideas, thoughts and experiences in and of the world. Just what are the dangers of bypassing a generation for whom the act of drawing ceases to be a regular occurrence beyond their early years education, and what priorities should we instil in future education policies?

The newly theorised space of drawing that has gained critical momentum in the last 10 years within Higher Education, has also prompted many working in creative education to reimagine the relationship between the seemingly inseparable strands of drawing and learning. This special relationship is given credence by Orr and Shreeve in their excellent book *Art and Design Pedagogy in Higher Education, 2018*, in which they assert that 'knowledge that is tacit, explicit and experiential, including the known, the unknown and the search for the not yet "known", is sticky knowledge' (Orr and Shreeve 2018: 148). This analogous resonance to drawing as a speculative strategy, capable of unveiling and adhering to knowledge in its slipstream, is further supported by the importance placed by Orr and Shreeve on ambiguity and uncertainty as fundamental components in art and design higher education (Orr and Shreeve 2018: 13). Drawing's ability to outmanoeuvre the absolute is characterised by

Marshall and Sawdon in *Towards [hyper] drawing...through ambiguity*, in which its elusiveness supports a 'weaving through semi-permeable, perforated, disciplinary boundaries' (Marshall and Sawdon, 2016: 191). If we really want to break down barriers to learning and to teach between, across and through subject boundaries, it seems clear that drawing remains a fundamental asset.

The introduction of new technologies within creative learning has of course afforded new spaces of thinking and practices to emerge within the context of practice-based learning. Far from creating a polarity of practice situated in analogue and digital silos, new technology has provided an exciting bridge between the virtual and the real, offering by consequence simulated haptic experiences of material investigation. But drawing in its broadest sense has become increasingly marginalised outside of the orthodoxies of an industrialised and industry-focussed education system. Where drawing practice thrives in schools, colleges and universities, it is often in spite of localised approaches and government initiatives rather than through any lack of desire by participants and their teachers. That drawing is a universal form of transgenerational learning is surely still beyond measure, right?

In considering a context for drawing and learning in this issue, it is helpful perhaps to think about the particular conditions which contribute to and facilitate this special relationship. Within education, and more specifically within Schools of Art and Architecture, these conditions adopt variable guises but are most commonly found in analytical and observational constructs such as technical drawing, diagrammatic representation or studies from life. But they are also manifest in a multiplicity of approaches such as drawing in-situ, where drawing is frequently employed to convey the intangibility of lived experience. This act of drawing in-situ extends the possibilities for learning through time and space, through a provisional act of mimicry. It reconciles the intentional with the unintended where 'even the most deliberate and conscious drawing activity is subject to the influence of chance factors arising from unconscious regulation of the hand, body or materials' (Ashwin 2016: 206). As such, drawing in-situ provides us with a unique form of speculative encounter that has the ability to expand our relational understanding of the world around us. According to Professor Anita Taylor:

There are distinct ways in which drawing functions as it distinguishes and aids us in understanding our complex world. Through signs and symbols, by mapping and labelling our experience, it can also enable us to discover through seeing – either through our own experience of seeing, observing and recording or through the shared experience of looking at another's drawn record of experience (Taylor 2008: 9).

In creative education, the act of drawing is often the vehicle of choice for exploration and analytical encounter. One needs only to think about 'one-minute' drawing exercises, so often the standard diet of the foundation drawing class, or watch the instantaneous responses of young children drawing at will. We are perhaps most familiar with such provisional acts through observing the sketches or shorthand drawings of others, of the kind used in a variety of artistic and design contexts to record a moment in time, capture creative thinking or convey structure and form. While art history has amplified the subordinate nature of such preparatory works in collections of art, it is also worth reconsidering the immediacy of this information as a primal force in the act of learning *in the moment*. A good example of this is

expressed in a small folio of drawings produced by J.M.W. Turner made between 1823-4. Known as the *London Bridge and Portsmouth sketchbook* (c.1824), it contains a quantity of rapid, shorthand drawings, some of which appear to have been made from a boat looking back to shore. One such drawing, *Shipping in Portsmouth harbour* (verso and recto, 1824) articulates the harbour scene through a progression of rhythmic notations as pencil dances on white wove paper (Imms 2014). That the drawing is inscribed with annotation by Turner and later numerically indexed by John Ruskin, gives an indication of the contemporary value placed on these drawings at the time. According to Stephen Farthing, Ruskin recast Turner as a visionary rather than a mere slave to objective transcription:

Purely topographical drawings, he argues, are those where nothing is moved and as such are simply records made by holding a mirror up to nature. The Turnerian Topography however records not just the place but also the place as either Turner thought others should see it, or possibly as he wanted to remember it. (Farthing 2008: 146)

As a tour de force, these sketchbook drawings embody Turner's intuitive call and response approach with each pencil mark an acknowledgment of deep understanding, as they skip and scurry across the paper. It appears as if each drawing reveals the act of learning *through* drawing, charting the experience of seeing. Through their energetic notation, the artist seems to lay bare his consciousness of being in the world, and in some sense, we feel his presence *in* these drawings. This circularity of drawing and learning appear to be mutually entwined, akin to Meskimmon and Sawdon's assertion that drawing is 'always already both an act and the outcome of the act in material form [] – drawing makes drawings make drawing' (Meskimmon 2016: 54).

Increasingly, contemporary drawing has become interested with what Angela Eames describes as 'drawing where there is seemingly no drawing' (Eames 2008: 125). In this expanded field, 'the historical markers of topographical or architectural fieldwork collide with a new understanding of spatial concepts emerging from satellite technologies, computer software, 3-d printing, and rapid prototyping' (Fieldsend-Danks 2014). Hybrid drawing practices spanning both traditional and digital processes are producing new forms of understanding as 'aggregates of experience' (Downs 2007: XV). The theoretical expansion of discipline discourse in recent years has questioned what constitutes a drawing, and in doing so has challenged how drawing is articulated and learnt within educational contexts. Its relationship to other dependencies has increasingly been the subject of academic investigation, given further cause by the conceptual art practices developed in the 1960s and 1970s:

Since drawing as practice, as medium and as specific set of skills (practiced by all artists as an essential part of artistic training) has shifted from its dependence to other media to a principle medium and the status of an independent art form (being used as an exclusive means), it has also shifted from by-product to end product, from end product to process, and back. (Ionascu 2016: 164)

In this edition of DTRP a range of authors have contributed to this discussion about drawing and learning through a range of stimulating articles, research projects and reports. They provide a diversity of positions ranging from personal reflective accounts, through theory and

praxis in architectural drawing, to innovative learning and teaching pedagogy where drawing is a central condition of forming new knowledge. As such, each contribution presents a new proposition for learning through drawing, and in doing so raises the flag for drawing as a vital component in arts education.

In a richly complex study, Linda Matthews and Samantha Donnelly provide an in-depth insight into both digital and analogue drawing processes, affording new understanding of physical (architectural) space. The authors introduce new approaches to enhancing tertiary learning in digital and abstract literacy by exploring new drawing techniques in a pedagogical context. Combining an array of methods such as digital mapping, analogue drawing, digital abstraction, composing and constructing, a series of immersive workshops enable students to formulate innovative approaches to design thinking. The authors refer to these as ways of *seeing* spaces, that ultimately lead to innovative image construction. The development of new pedagogic approaches to learning architecture through drawing is further explored by Simon Kay-Jones, who introduces students to the possibility of 'drawing-in experience' through what is referred to as the 'act of rupturing'. Through this process, the author presents a reframing of drawing within a project-based learning context, demonstrating the resultant possibilities for new perspectives on cultural and architectural assemblages in architectural education.

The new possibilities afforded by these hybrid pedagogical models in architectural learning, specifically in terms of spatial representation, are thoughtfully explored by Yvette Putra who provides two observations of architectural drawing in the context of a critique employing Frascati's theory of cosmopoiesis. Putra considers the idiosyncrasies of analogue drawing and their relationship to digital translation, perception and representation. Despite Frascati's view that digital drawing demonstrates 'limitations' in translating form lost through its processing speed and accuracy, the discussion centres on a consideration of the intangible qualities of architectural drawings, supporting a case for the hybridisation of analogue and digital techniques and tropes.

The long history of analogue drawing, given its affiliation to the hand and by extension the body, is explored by Jenny Wright who investigates the premise of dexterity through the lens of applied surgical skills in the taught curriculum undertaken by dental students in the first two weeks of their studies. In considering the correlation between the acquisition of fine motor skills required for holding surgical implements, and the kinaesthetic experience of drawing, we are invited to make relational observations supported by qualitative data. The learning of drawing is of course well documented, and its many forms and manifestations have been forged over centuries in formal and non-formal education settings. In the context of institutionalised learning, Andrew Hall tracks the development of drawing across a 150-year period, providing a narrative account of the emergence of drawing practice through the lens of a single British art school, Central St. Martin's in London. In considering the profound importance of drawing within and across subject domains, Hall also speaks for the myriad of art schools for whom drawing remains an essential condition for creative learning in the twenty-first century. Considering the 'categorization of drawing', Hall's study converges on the emergence of conceptually driven embodied practices as relevant and vital developments in the teaching of drawing, not just as the preserve of Fine Art practice but of great significance to a wide array of art and design learning contexts. Drawing as pedagogy is explored further by Clancy and Felmingham who present the outcomes of a collaborative

international student project in which peer to peer learning *through* drawing is employed as the central or 'middle ground' activity. The authors suggest that drawing as a means of research-informed teaching can help to provide students with a bridge between a results-led education and creative learning in Higher Education.

The role of the teacher is given voice by Oona Wagstaff, who explores drawing as learning. Using the author's own drawings to explore Biesta's notions of 'interruption' and enactive learning, we are invited to reflect on creative education from the perspective of an 'artist-teacher-learner'. By contrast, Howard Riley positions visual perception and its articulation through drawing as a formal antidote to the drift in contemporary art school education towards the neoliberal imperatives, that the author describes as having permeated art school pedagogy in the last decade. Presented as if a call to arms for drawing, Riley poses a poignantly critical question about the disappearance of visual primacy within formalised education.

The once indelible relationship that drawing had with the flat plane of the paper surface is reconfigured in a world configured by big data, new technologies, VR, AI, and by hybrid forms of visualisation. As drawing continues to bend and shape itself into new applications and opportunities for learning, so too must modern curricula redress the deficit in the measuring of drawing's usefulness (in all its forms and stages of learning) as a critical visual language for all. In a recent TEDx talk on the nature of creative learning and social justice, Professor Andrew Brewerton asserted that 'art is about living. The purpose of learning is inseparable from that of living your life' (Brewerton 2018). If this is true, then drawing in all its manifestations, still holds a vital key to unlock a universal, transgenerational vehicle for learning that defies categorisation and the limiting conditions of target driven education. Reclaiming drawing as insubordinate and a radical proposition, will ensure its relevance and vitality in creative learning. Is drawing still vulnerable? Not if we can help it.

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