

Drawing the line

A Supporting Paper
Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the
Department of Art
University of Minnesota

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2015

Committee Members:

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Christine Baeumler
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Reflected subjectivity (Memory and Fantasy)

We make choices everyday; some are simple, and some complex. Some are forgotten as soon as they are made, and some we will remember for the rest of our lives, for better or worse. Whatever the choice to be made, our decisions are the result of our previous experiences and learned preferences. I buy coffee, not tea, because I need caffeine and I have learned that Starbucks doesn't make good tea (from this Englishman's point of view), and Freud had a lot to say about romantic activities... If our experiences affect our choices, then our choices can be said to reflect our experiences. This is not really a "deep" observation, but fundamental. We don't pluck choices out of the air--at least most of the time. We respond to personal and sociocultural motivations and pressures, and as such the choices we make are reflections of who we are on many levels. The same can be said for who we are not, but aspire to be.

My art begins with choices such as these. I look through newspapers, magazines, photo albums, and choose the images that I respond to. Often these decisions are based upon an intangible interest. I let my subconscious make the choices. These images must contain something of myself if I am drawn to them; they must hold something for me. "Even what is at a distance must still be proximate, if it makes or leaves an impression."¹

¹ Sara Ahmed, *Queer Phenomenology: Orientations, Objects, Others* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006), p. 3. Also, "Importantly, even what is kept at a distance must still be proximate enough if it is to make or leave an impression."

The images I collect can initially be divided into two categories; those I have collected from outside sources, and those I make myself. These images either speak to a past experience, or offer material for departures of the imagination. Found images offer hints of new experiences that will most likely never happen to me--wars, riots, and other upheavals such as extreme poverty and devastation, or certain adventures that I would be too scared to undertake, or an array of sporting achievements.



Fig. 1. Image from the New York Times (date and issue unknown).

The process of drawing from these images requires extended periods of study and in these moments I am lost in the phenomenality of the image and its possibilities. I discover things I would otherwise miss, like a banana in the hand of a riot policeman in the process of attacking a protester, another policeman in the same image wearing Converse Chuck Taylor shoes instead of the boots worn by his colleagues (Fig.1), or the same image on a placard in an image from a paper the following week. I consider myself a fairly extreme introvert, and this escape into imaginary worlds is a regular event. The meditative action of drawing is perfect for getting lost in my own head.

Photographs I have taken inevitably lean towards memory. They are moments from my past that are fixed, but through drawing them I *re-live* those moments and their associations. These photographed moments are usually positive in my memory. I have no interest in re-living unpleasant experiences. However, the memory itself is not a significant contributor to the selection of the image. Quite often the image is not of an important moment, but contains interesting features or elements that I wish to explore through drawing. Photographs I take myself are a minority in my collection, perhaps implying my preference for new experiences rather than dwelling on past ones.

The passage of time/do-over/sequence of events

Once the choices are made I will start to draw. My drawings record the motion of my hand across the paper, which follows the path of my eye across the image. When I complete the drawing, I take a breath (metaphorical and physical), then select another

drawing medium and start again. Each medium requires me to attend to a different quality of the source image and I follow that line of work till it is done. These drawings build up in layers. Stratas of work laid down, building up the surface. Seen as a whole, the completed drawing is confused with layers misaligned, but the misalignment reflects a shift in perspective or a change of priority that must be followed. Each layer is treated individually but once completed exists inseparably as part of the whole. Time is required to complete the build up of layers, and only by giving time can the viewer hope to excavate the remains. Each drawing ends with a date that acts as a kind of geological marker in the reading of the work.

Subject and subjectivity (breaking the image)

It is inevitable for the viewer to search for meaning, and in art that most often involves jumping through the metaphorical “window” to explore the subject. When looking through actual windows people rarely notice the glass unless it gets dirty, and then just to observe that the window needs cleaning. *Sometimes the dirt holds information and that is where I see my drawings.* Once when I was a child a bird flew into a window of my home. The impact was fatal and left a pattern of dust on the window, which was an almost perfect image of the bird as it died. For a moment the window ceased to be an “invisible” device; suddenly the surface held information, it was an active player in a micro-tragedy. The surface became charged with the evidence of an action. In my work I aspire to create something of this. I wish to fill the surface of the wall with evidence of an action. I make representational images, but I shun subject. What matters is the

process, the activity of production, the act of looking at and analysing an image. The wall is the site of this activity, not an invisible vehicle for a representation.

“A story always slips into, or tends to slip into, the space between two figures in order to animate the illustrated whole.”² My work sits in the space between myself and the viewer, animating the location and connecting us through time and labour.

Between narrative and representation



Fig. 2. Sego Canyon Rock Art (Detail)

In Sego Canyon in Utah, a Barrier Canyon style pictograph has been the victim of over-painting and graffiti, both ancient and modern, as well as of natural erosion and

² Deleuze, Gilles, trans. by Daniel W. Smith. *Francis Bacon: The Logic of Sensation*. London: Continuum, 2003. p. 6.

decay. This combination of effects has created a confused and distracting surface comprised of many overlapping layers and gaps. Despite my initial aversion to the destruction involved, after further consideration I decided this area of the panel was in some ways the most interesting and enigmatic. The surface held more life, was subject to greater attention and activity than the less damaged areas. These interrupting actions of man and nature in the years since the original creative acts have become interposed between the original and subsequent representations and their associated narratives. It is the activity in the location, activity of mark making and destruction, and natural processes that have filled the space between narrative and representation. Located at the bottom of the panel, this section appeared “heavy” and seemed to anchor the whole composition (fig. 2).

Sites such as this continue to inspire new experiments in my work. I reproduce images in layers, breaking them down to components of lines and tones, analysis through dissecting and reconstructing. I allow errors and idiosyncrasies to enter my reproductions, efforts to fracture the connections of the image to subject, and create imperfections for the viewer to trip on. At the beginning of 2015 I began experimenting with seemingly obsessive reproduction through multiple layers and experimentation with scale and form to create a distracting surface. Time would be required to navigate the information, time that would allow the process to become a question before a narrative can get in the way.

With this in mind, after an exhibition in 2014 at the Quarter Gallery, Minneapolis, I decided that something was missing in my work. I felt like the piece I made lacked density, if not intensity. I decided that if the source image is important only as a path for the process to follow then it doesn't matter if it gets lost in the process; in fact it seems appropriate that the subject should get obscured by the process.

Thus, at the beginning of 2015 I started to draw from a series of images, working repeatedly one over the top of another. This approach creates areas of dense lines that are confused and hard to read (like the Sego Canyon pictographs). While working in these areas I cannot help but lose my place in the drawing; my lines stutter and stray, adding to the confusion. I am working in a way in which I can't help but get lost. "But 'getting lost' still takes us somewhere; and being lost is a way of inhabiting space by registering what is not familiar."³ In these spaces the lines cease to represent the original image, and begin to describe the narrative of the drawing's production. This breakdown of information also serves to give the viewer space to approach the work.

Images from the news media are charged with meaning and associations. However by breaking these images down through layering, much of these inherent meanings are dissolved in the visual maelstrom. The viewer is left with only suggestive fragments and a little space in which to find their own meaning.

³ Sara Ahmed, *Queer Phenomenology*, p. 7.

Narrative lines & Incidental Portraits

A line that contains a narrative without (or alongside) visual representation follows the movement of the artist's hand, the relationship of the hand to the eye, and the attention of the eye to the original image. "Following a line is not disinterested: to follow a line takes time, energy, and resources, which means that the "line" one takes does not stay apart from the line of one's life, as the very shape of how one moves through time and space."⁴ Drawing is a very literal example of following a line. But the drawing does not just describe the object or scene observed; it describes the intention to describe the object. It describes the inevitable errors in the attempt to describe the object. It describes the path of the eye as it sees the object, the location of the eye seeing the object, and the motion, speed, and confidence of the hand as it makes the line. The lines we make, in art, or even with footsteps on the ground, describe in a thousand small ways the narrative of our lives.

In Pompeii, at the intersection of two streets, is a water trough where Romans would go to drink. On the rim around the edge of the stone trough there are patches worn smooth by the repeated touch of a thousand Roman hands. This is an incidental portrait of a population. Unconscious gestures leaving evidence that describe the gesture. Richard Long's *A Line Made By Walking* (1967) can be seen in this way (Fig.3). A path can be formed by the repeated step of an individual, or by many people following the same line. "In landscape architecture they use the term "desire lines" to describe unofficial paths, those marks left on the ground that show everyday comings and goings, where people

⁴ Ibid, pp. 17.

deviate from the paths they are supposed to follow.”⁵ These “desire lines” are unconscious gestures that narrate the movements of a population; unconscious choices in the pursuit of convenience or time saving. In my layered drawings, as the lines get confused, I have to draw more by touch than by sight, but in spite of the discomfort I feel in this process there is a convenience there. My lines become more gestural; I unconsciously cut corners and save time.

Long’s line made by walking can be described as a very narrative line. It contains the narrative of its creation. It speaks to itself rather than representationally towards another narrative. Long’s lines are non representational, in the sense that they don’t describe anything other than themselves and the process of making them. My lines are representative since I work from (and towards) a representation. But the lines I like the most are the ones that while describing something from my source image, are farthest away from representation. Those that are simultaneously abstract and representational.

I enjoy the simplicity of the gesture in *A Line Made by Walking*, because it contains the most powerful subtlety. It speaks of absence, repetition, ritual, obsession, distraction etc. Yet the gesture was basic and universal.

⁵ Ibid, pp. 19-20.



Fig.3 *A Line Made by Walking*. Richard Long, 1967

Perhaps this universality is why it is such a powerful gesture. It is familiar and therefore readily identifiable. Anyone who walks can visualise the process of making this mark, and that is what makes a strong incidental portrait. Drawing is the art world's walking, the simplest gesture. I want the viewer to see my lines and visualise in mind and body the act that made them, and in the layers and repetition experience the time and labour.

Consider also an ancient hand print on a cave wall. We can instantly see in our mind's eye the physical gesture required to make that mark. Feel in the memory of our muscles and bones a facsimile of that gesture. We can occupy both the space and the gesture and feel the presence of the maker.

Preoccupied space

The gallery wall forms the furthest boundary of a space of activity. Working directly on the gallery walls turns the space of display into the arena of creation, enabling the viewer to see the work as it was made, where it was made. The studio is the home of artistic preoccupation. It is where the artist gives freedom to the instinct to follow the lines of thought, notions, and emotions. The studio is the home of the preoccupied gesture, it is where it thrives and gives birth to inspiration.

My process merges the gallery space and the studio and helps generate a "location" around the work. "Ceremonies of...scarification and segregation, circumcision and

deprivation are complex social techniques for the inscription of locality onto bodies.”⁶ If the walls of the gallery are the “skin” of our artistic lives, then I am inscribing locality onto it.

Our skin represents the boundary of our physical existence, and our most essential representation to the world. It forms both the metaphorical and literal horizon of our flesh, our rounding surface forming virtual edges that favour linear representation. This surface that retains the marks of our existence in scars, wrinkles, and blemishes, can also be altered and changed in ways that reflect what we want the world to see.

Tattoos, piercings, and surgical body modifications come to share space with the original features of our lives, aging and changing with us. We all occupy the space inside our bodies, but only a portion of us take active control of the boundary that defines us physically and perceptually to the world. Inside the gallery this is also true. Artists will make use of the inside space, but few acknowledge or directly engage with the physical surface of the gallery which is the “skin” that defines the creative volume.

Within our physical skin we live in a preoccupied space, full of constant action, movement, and processes that serve as constant distractions from the ongoing maelstrom of our inner worlds where ideas are born and first displayed. Thus it seems that the inner boundary of the gallery, the public container of our artistic lives, should be the surface upon which my preoccupied processes are best expressed.

⁶ Arjun Appadurai, *The Production of Locality* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996), p. 179, cited in Claire Doherty, *Situation* (London: Whitechapel Gallery, 2009), p. 171.

Anthropologists will say tattoos, piercings, scarification and other surface adornment (of bodies or buildings) are features of rituals in many cultures. Ritualistic activities are often physically connected to a site of importance, though the site's importance may be due to the ritual, cause and effect are blurred. The ritual occupies the location, fills it with charged activity.

In the novel *American Gods* (2004) by Neil Gaiman, two characters visit The House on the Rock in Wisconsin. They are there to participate in a ritualistic meeting of (American) gods. As they approach the House on the Rock, they discuss it as a site of power and ritual:

“‘This is a roadside attraction,’ said Wednesday. ‘One of the finest. Which means it is a place of power.’

‘Come again?’

‘It’s perfectly simple,’ said Wednesday. ‘In other countries, over the years, people recognised the places of power. Sometimes it would be a natural formation, sometimes it would be a place that was, somehow, special. They knew that something important was happening there, that there was some focusing point, some channel, some window to the immanent. And so they would build temples, or cathedrals, or erect stone circles, or ... well, you get the idea.’”⁷

⁷ Neil Gaiman, *American Gods: The Author's Preferred Text* (London: Headline Book, 2004), pp. 129-130.

Rituals are repeated--they would otherwise not be rituals, but merely one-off events, and repetition denotes ritual. So is a ritual such because it is repeated, or because it is worth repeating? The ritual of exhibiting art generates sites of importance which people visit over and over. My practice generates a sub-site of importance within the gallery, where my activity is temporarily evidenced by marks on the walls.

“So we walk on the path as it is before us, but it is only before us as an effect of being walked upon. A paradox of the footprint emerges. Lines are both created by being followed and are followed by being created.”⁸ The found images I work from, and which most often provide the path for my lines to follow, have already been “walked upon” by the original photographer and their editor. These images arrive predigested by editorial filters. They are not pure and honest, but arrive bearing the bias of a Western media’s perspective and needs. So I follow in the footsteps of the editors and photographers, taking their lead, tracing their path, and carrying their preoccupations onto the wall with my own.

Graffiti is the engagement of individuals with the skin of their environment. They seek to leave marks of their presence on their surroundings. On a recent trip to a valley in a remote national park, there were some other visitors who repeatedly disturbed the peace of the environment by yelling and creating echoes. It seemed to me that the quiet of that place became the blank wall upon which to make their mark, leave the evidence

⁸ Sara. *Queer Phenomenology*, p. 17.

of their presence. For long moments that huge space was occupied, and I became preoccupied, with their presence.

Use of space

In the past my wall drawings have directly referenced the environment of the gallery in which they are produced. This has become less important to me as I feel I am generating a new site with the work and do not feel the need to reference the existing site. But it is still an attractive option to embed the process more into the space, to create a greater sense of location. However I also think it could be a dead end if it was taken too far. Possibilities include creating drawings that reference the space and its features, or referencing local scenes/environments but not didactically. Bringing new images, unattached images (single/available?) into the space feels like day dreaming, letting the mind wander and project its reminiscences onto the wall of the cave. We are constantly distracted by our inner thoughts and they play over our awareness of the world minute by minute. I want my drawings to have something of that. Perhaps there should be something of the banal included underneath as a stepping off point for the journey of the imagination?

Looking at rock art, I can't help but be aware of the nature of the rock surfaces that have received the creative gesture. They are covered in texture and pattern, cracks, stains, chips, weathering, all working to create a field of information behind the motifs. This filled surface animates, it is full of "white noise" that can be tuned out but not denied.

These surfaces are an active part of the composition. Gallery walls are also full of incidental marks from spackle, nail holes, and paint drips; but we are trained to tune them out. I could treat the wall like a rubbing and by using pigment on my hands highlight the texture of the surface, bring out those marks, animate the surface, and in the process leave traces of my hands and movement. Much of this would get lost under subsequent layers but parts would remain to be found.

The death of art

Dead lines fill the wall, born with an expiration date. They represent a lived action yet they are static and unmoving. Their power exists in the movement they represent and soon they won't even do that. What does it mean for our experience with an artwork if we know it will not be around for long, that it will cease to exist (in all practical ways) in the near future, that our opportunity to see and experience it is limited? Death gives life meaning. The threat of non-existence brings passion and fervour. The deadline, by which time everything must be completed. Art does not have a personal relationship with death. Art is perpetual. Art does get destroyed but it never expects to and so it exists without that binary contrasting element.

“To live in the bright light of death is to live a life in which colors and sounds and smells are all the more intense.”⁹

⁹ Ira Byock, "The Meaning and Value of Death," *Journal of Palliative Medicine* 5, no. 2 (2002): 279-88.

I don't require the destruction, and would be happy for my work to persist indefinitely, but neither do I resent it. The work becomes a moment in time, an experience shared in one place by me and those few who see it.

Dating the work (on a date)

Each piece is dated once it is finished (or I think it is finished). Drawing is a personal activity, reflects a private introspective moment. A diary entry seems somewhat pointless without a date to position it in the stream of life, and I see each of my drawings as akin to a diary entry. To lump the work of a year into one big pile seems to me like denying it agency. These are personal moments; moments are small. A year is not a moment (except in memory or a TV channel new year montage), a day is closer, so I give them a day. Sometimes my drawings take more than a day but I just date them when I am finished because that is when their own "life" starts (think babies, birthdays, and conceptions).

I speak a lot about sharing the physical space of the gallery but there is another space I am thinking of when I date my work. When we are going about our business in the world we cannot be aware of the simultaneous experiences of the people around us, of the other 7 billion people in the world who are all at that moment experiencing their own moment equally oblivious of the rest of us. How often after a famous tragedy do we hear the phrase "I remember what I was doing when...."?

I can broadly describe my process as an effort to offer the viewer a route of connection with my practice, and the final path is in time. I date my work both as a record for myself (and as a motivator when it has been a while), but also with the thought that one day a viewer will see the date on one of my drawings and say "I remember what I was doing when this was made!" and suddenly that person is aware of a parallel moment to one of their own, and their experience of the world is a little broader.

Dating is a good metaphor for my process. To make a drawing I go on a date with an idea. We spend time together, share moments, stories, struggles. Most of the time it is fun, though often awkward. Occasionally it ends early by mutual agreement. Drawings and dates have to end sometime, and whether with a kiss, a handshake, or a slap, this action acknowledges the experience, reflects its success, and hints at the probability of a repeat. Inscribing the date on a drawing fulfills this function for me, it is the ritualised ending of a shared experience.

(15th May 2015)

Bibliography

Ahmed, Sara. *Queer Phenomenology: Orientations, Objects, Others*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2006.

Byock, Ira. "The Meaning and Value of Death." *Journal of Palliative Medicine* 5, no. 2 (2002): 279-88. Accessed October 31, 2014.

<http://www.nacc.org/docs/conference/Meaning and Value of Death.pdf>.

Deleuze, Gilles, and Francis Bacon. *Francis Bacon: The Logic of Sensation*.

Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003.

Doherty, Claire. *Situation*. London: Whitechapel Gallery ;, 2009.

Appadurai, Arjun. *The Production of Locality*,, 1996.

Gaiman, Neil. *American Gods: The Author's Preferred Text*. London: Headline Book, 2004.

Roelstraete, Dieter. *Richard Long: A Line Made by Walking*. London: Afterall Books ;, 2010.

Image List

1. Underlined Action (Installation View)
2. Underlined Action (Installation View)
3. Figures Playing Baseball - 20th March 2015
60 x 65 inches
Chinese ink and acrylic on paper
2015
4. 33 Figures with Arms Raised - 5th December 2014
60 x 65 inches
Chinese ink, acrylic, and graphite on paper.
2014
5. Two Figures Touching - 4th November 2014
60 x 65 inches
Chinese ink, acrylic, and graphite on paper.
2014
6. Underlined Action (Installation View)
7. Figures with Plants - 2nd April 2015
84x108 inches
Chinese ink and acrylic on gallery wall.
2015
8. 96 Untitled Studies (Installation View)
9. 96 Untitled Studies
144 x 144 inches
Chinese ink and graphite on Kozo and tracing paper
2015
10. 96 Untitled Studies (Detail)

Image 1.



Image 2.



Image 3.

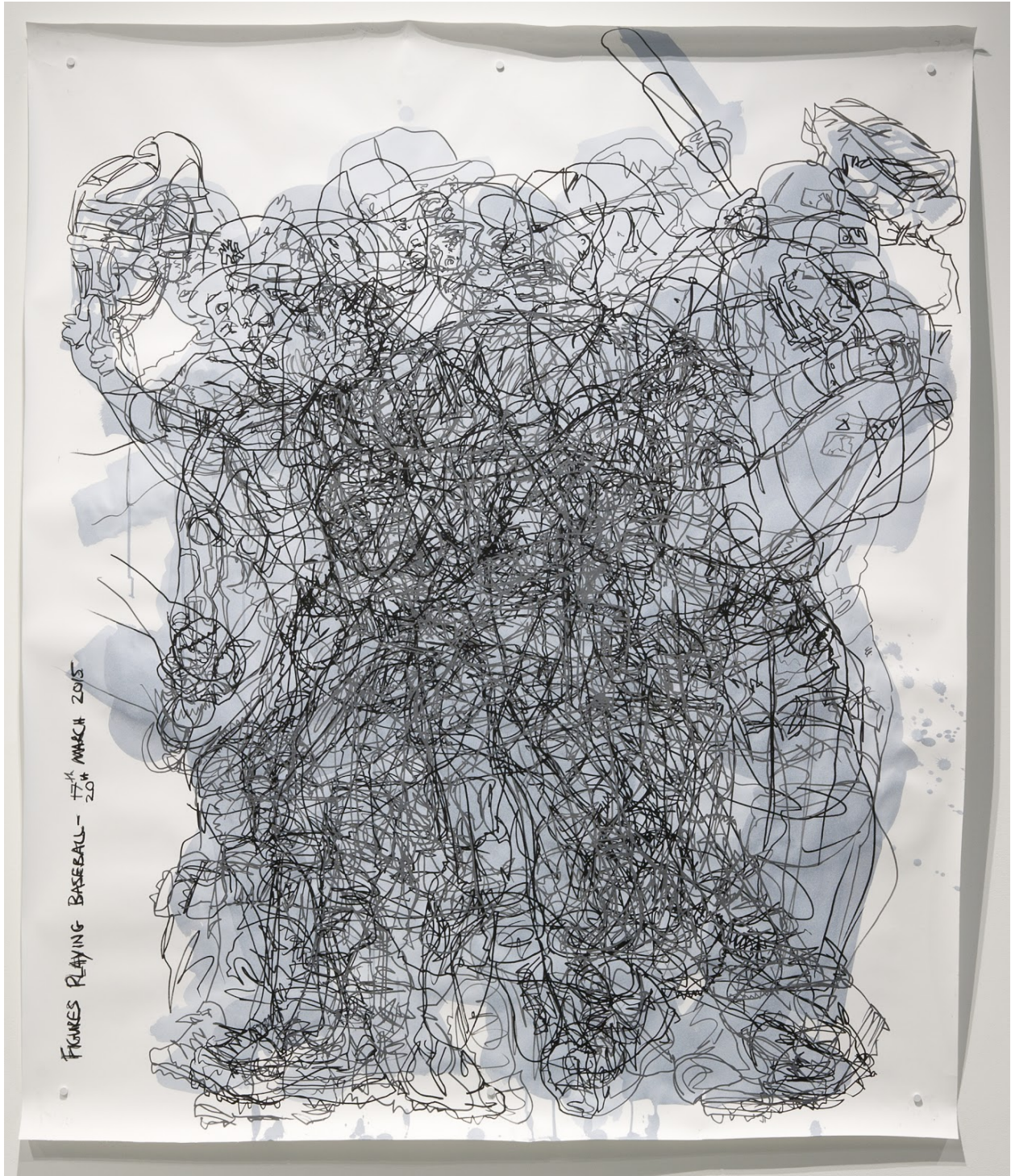


Image 4.



Image 5.



Image 6.



Image 7.



Image 8.



Image 9.

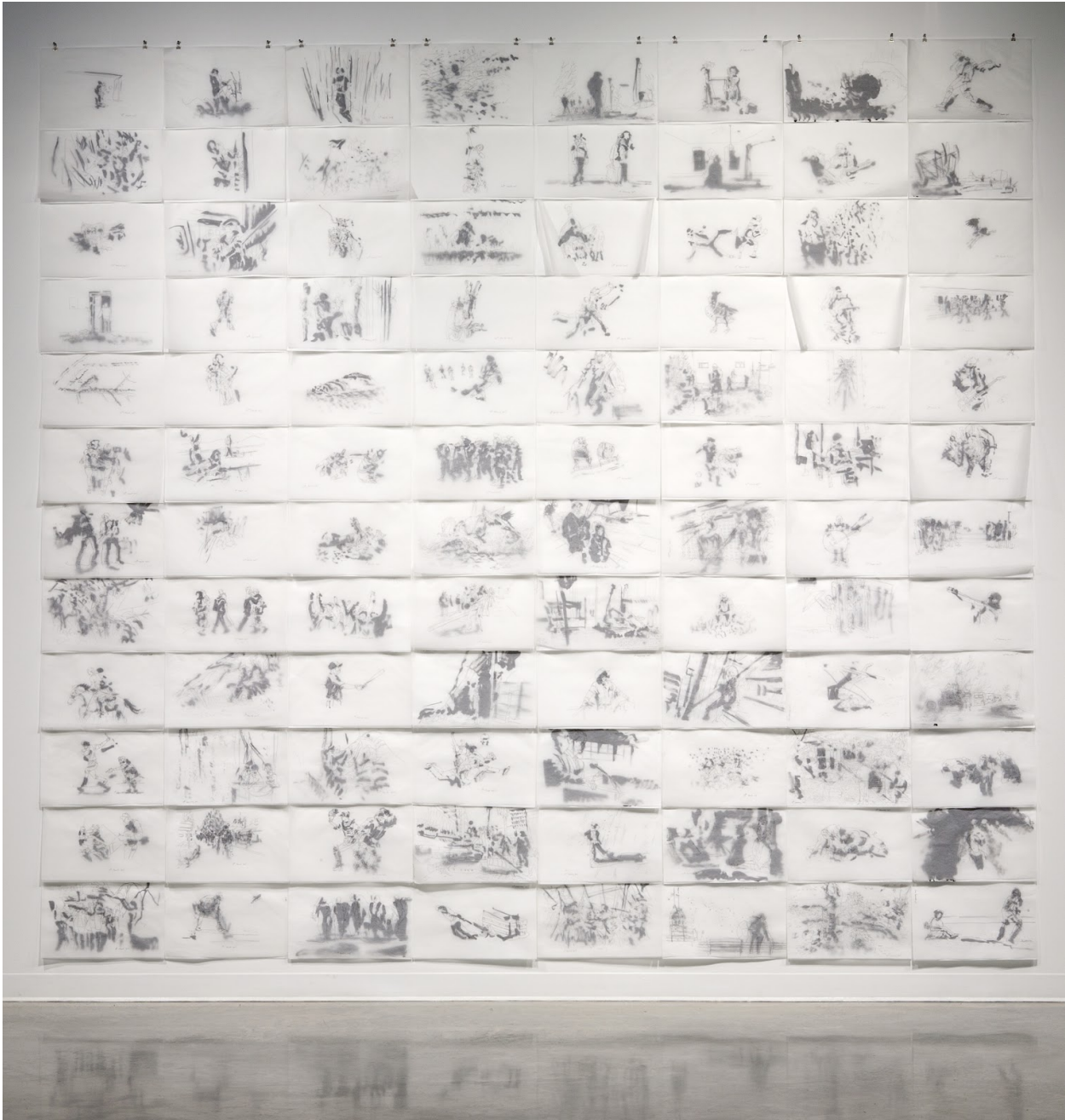


Image 10.



Curriculum Vitae

Selected Exhibitions

2015

The (Non) Fictional Heart, Biomedical Library, University of Minnesota, Minneapolis (Invited participant)

Those Who Matter, Wilson Library, University of Minnesota, Minneapolis (Invited participant)

Underlined Action, 2015 University of Minnesota MFA Thesis Exhibition, Katherine E. Nash Gallery, Minneapolis.

I Will Wake Up in the Real, General Public Collective, Indianapolis

2014

Here We Are Nice, Soap Factory Volunteer Biennial, Soap Factory, Minneapolis

For a Limited Time Only, Quarter gallery, Regis Center for Art, Minneapolis

Blinking Fresh 2014, Quarter gallery, Regis Center for Art, Minneapolis

Curbside Umibōzu, Hosted by Gallery Hangman at The Midnight Brigade, Minneapolis.

Digifabulous, Quarter Gallery, Regis Center for Art, Minneapolis

More Brains than Brawn, Regis West Gallery, Regis Center for Art, Minneapolis

2013

Tales of Environmental Turbulence: The Common Trail of Art and Science, Institute on the Environment, 1954 Buford Avenue, St. Paul

Laundry Fresh, Quarter Gallery, Regis Center for Art, Minneapolis

Meditation and Medium, Coffman Union Gallery, Washington Ave SE, Minneapolis

Hinckley Fire Annual Exhibition, Hinckley Fire Museum, Hinckley, Minnesota

He(Art) Show, The Friction Collective, Washington Ave S, Minneapolis

2012

Appreciation, The Quarter Gallery, Regis Center for Art, Minneapolis

Minty Fresh, The Quarter Gallery, Regis Center for Art, Minneapolis

Life is life, and kind is kind, The Telfer Gallery, Glasgow (solo)

2011

Vault Art Glasgow, The Briggait, Glasgow (art fair)

Art and Mavis's Shoe, IRONBBRATZ, Glasgow (juried)

Weeks:Three, Studio 41, Glasgow

Self Portrait, Mash Gallery, St. Helens

2010

Shame, IRONBBRATZ, Glasgow

IRONBBRATZ Launch Exhibition, IRONBBRATZ, Glasgow

Versus, Market Gallery, Glasgow (group residency)

2009

Mezzanine, 51 Grant St, Glasgow

2008

Empty Nest, 300 Duke St, Glasgow

2006

Society of Scottish Artists Annual Exhibition, Royal Scottish Academy, Edinburgh (travelling)

2005

Art with less Carbs, Bistro du Sud, Glasgow (solo)

Members Exhibition, Transmission Gallery, Glasgow

Film and Music Show, Kazoo Club, Barfly, Glasgow

Curating

For a Limited Time Only, Quarter gallery, Regis Center for Art, Minneapolis (2014)

Collections

University of Minnesota.

Awards & Other Activities

2015

Nominated for 2015 Dedalus Foundation MFA Fellowship.

2014

Installation Coordinator for Nash Gallery, Regis Center for Art, Minneapolis, MN

Recipient of Joye G Harris Fellowship, University of Minnesota, Minneapolis, MN

Recipient of Graduate Research Partnership Program Award in support of summer research project *In Search of a Preoccupied Space*, University of Minnesota

Graduate Student Representative, Painting and Drawing Faculty Search Committee, University of Minnesota

2013

Commissioned by the University of Minnesota to make artwork celebrating the 75th Anniversary of the Coffman Union building, on public display at 300 Washington Ave. S.E., Minneapolis, MN.

Installation Coordinator for Nash Gallery, Regis Center for Art, Minneapolis, MN

2012

Installation Coordinator for Quarter Gallery and Public Spaces, Regis Center for Art, Minneapolis, MN

Recipient of Zelda and Max Berman Scholarship, University of Minnesota, Minneapolis, MN

5th Annual Monster Drawing Rally, Midway Contemporary Art, Minneapolis, MN

Mirror Museum, Walker Art Centre, Minneapolis, MN

2011

Artist Member, Royal Glasgow Institute, Glasgow

Drawing Booth participant, Vault Art Glasgow, The Briggait, Glasgow

2010

Glory, an exhibition by Pietro Fortuna, Tramway, Glasgow (Invited participant)

Group residency, VERSUS, Market Gallery, Glasgow

2004

Collaborative Film Project with Stonefloat, Portal Music Café, Madison, WI

Winner, Rotary Club Photography Competition, Henley Bridge Branch, UK

2001 - 04

Collaborative Film Projects with YourGardenDay, Sussex, UK

Education History

2012 - 15 MFA, University of Minnesota, Minneapolis, MN, USA

2000 - 03 BA (Hons) Fine Art, Northbrook College of Art, Worthing, UK

2000 - Art Foundation Course, Reading College of Art, Reading, UK

1999 - Ceramics A-Level, Henley College, Henley-on-Thames, UK

Artist Statement

Whether in Scotland, England, or the USA, my life has always been occupied by curious looking, collecting, and finding connections. In childhood I would often gather collections of things, always modest objects like badges or souvenirs. One such collection consisted of train tickets, I was fascinated by the connection they offered to a place and time in someone's life. These innocuous coloured cards evidenced a specific period of time in a specific (yet mobile) place. I liked being aware of an experience parallel to my own.

I now collect clippings from newspapers and magazines. These are also modest objects that contain evidence of parallel experiences. I'm drawn to newspaper clippings for their tactile qualities. They're insubstantial and low resolution, but often represent moments in time that deserve better treatment. Moments of passion, joy, grief, anger, birth, and death. Ranked by size and page position according to the editorial needs of the day, the few selected from the countless. From these few offered by the editorial process, I further select depending upon my whims and desires. Some images inspire my imagination and sense of adventure, some attract my sympathy, and some appeal aesthetically.

These clippings are the beginning. They serve as a kind of map, providing a path for my pencil to follow. Drawing becomes a meditative practice allowing my mind to wander. It's also a way of studying the image by breaking it down into textures and lines, requiring a closer look and deeper understanding than I would give it otherwise.

As I build up the layers in my larger drawings, and the lines become dense and confused, I get lost and have to lean increasingly on the clipped image and the tactile experience of moving the pencil to keep track. These become forced contour drawings where accuracy breaks down and the act of drawing becomes a performed gesture, symbolic of the desire to reproduce what I see without recognisable product. As my lines get lost and I am unable to follow my progress, I am repeatedly kicked out of the artistic space of creation and have to search for the path back in. These moments when the image breaks down are the sweet spots in my process. The lines I make become abstract and can only be considered as unrecognisable fragments, produced in the pursuit of representation but lost to that representation. Now the line can be seen for itself. The gesture steps forward; the value of the journey is appreciated when we stop searching for the destination.

When working directly on a wall, the history of the space becomes part of the work, which in turn becomes part of the history of the surface. My drawings built up in layers generate preoccupied spaces, where the viewer becomes aware of my presence, my gestures, and my labour, and can themselves become aware of an experience parallel to their own.