

CHAPTER ONE INTRODUCTION: VISUALIZING AN ARTIST'S LIFE

The true aesthetic phenomenon is the whole human experience of the totality of life – the dynamic process in which the creative or the receptive subject is one with the world, with the real life which is actually lived. (Hauser, 1982: 4)

1.1 Personal Artistic Dilemma

It is probably a universal truth that no artist is always secure in practice and direction. The dilemmas will be different, the anxieties diverse, the impasses on a continuum for the nagging doubt to the chasm – but they will inevitably exist.

In my case it was not so much a matter of an impasse. The looming threat was the seduction of a comfort zone that had become creatively dangerous. Indeed, I had reached a stage in my life as a visual artist (predominately in the medium of drawing) wherein the challenge is to recognize and confront the need for new directions in artistic practice. Over the years a drawing style and way of working in the studio had evolved but the danger that my practice might be becoming stale, mannerist and predictable now loomed mockingly. That a new way of looking might be needed leads to the sense that part of gathering the courage and the momentum to leap involves an honest revisiting of the past. Disentangling the various threads of and probing more cogently the relationship between life and art production offers a potentially viable working solution.

It has always been my way, and perhaps the way of all artists, to pause at a point in studio production and reflect on the immediate past and wait to seize those moments where a way forward seems possible. Passionate possibilities are never completely clear in their future outcomes but, through faith or habit, an intuitive sense of *rightness* (Langer 1982) clears a path to move onward towards some intangible,

interesting place. But what feeds intuition? How might it be somehow connected with past experience and an evolving artistic perception?

1.2 Drawing: Primary Artistic Medium

Drawing tends more often to be perceived as the first stage in a process towards actualisation in another medium. Preliminary sketches, plans, diagrams, cartoons and story-boards are not intended as *finished* works but as a foundation for the creation of other forms in a variety of domains, some not necessarily artistic. Paralleling the idea of drawing as a stage in a long process is the very materiality of the medium. Paper, graphite and charcoal are materials sensitive to the effects of light, moisture and time and therefore quite fugitive and difficult to archive in their original form. This potential lack of permanency combined with drawing's associated role as a stage in a process may have contributed to a collective perception about the relative valuing of drawing as an artistic outcome. When referring to Australian drawing, Kolenberg (1997) states:

Drawings may at times be preferred to paintings. When exhibitions of paintings and drawings are shown, public interest in drawings is obvious enough. Yet drawings are often treated as secondary and Australian artists are therefore assumed not to have special merit as draughtsmen. (Kolenberg, 1997:13)

While it is the case that, throughout my evolution as an artist, I have explored many materials and processes: ceramics, painting, sculpture, photography, video, textiles and drawing, the last has had primacy. The common thread through all these mediums has been the primacy of the linear, the potency of the line, the power of the mark and the sensual qualities of darkness and light. My first artistic response to any encounter with content and form is typically ideation through the immediacy of pencil on paper vindicating Petherbridge's (2003) claim that drawing is the least

mediated of all the visual arts as it is a direct response from the mind, by the hand, through a mark-making implement onto a surface and out into the world.

Yet that very immediacy leads to insinuations of gut reaction, of minimal conceptual value. That a drawing should be worked upon rather than transmuted into something *other* is a foreign notion to some.

1.3 Artistic Knowledge and Personal Knowledge

Personal knowledge is a complex mixture of the inherited and the experienced. Significant meeting places for this artist include the larger, physical places or geographical locations in which I have lived, the mid-sized locations such as institutions where I have studied, and the smaller physical environments such as the various studios in which I have created. Environments could also include those that are psychological (remembered, atmospheric) and/or sociological (family, friends, mentors). However, it would seem that that geographical environments, especially those that have challenged what I then knew, have been pivotal to me.

Like many Australian artists, I have felt the lure of far off lands and in the twentieth century has seen many examples of artists travelling and recording their vision of new geographies in their art works. The reasons for travelling are as varied as the artists. For example, Lloyd Rees¹ (1895-1988) journeyed to Britain and Europe to experience at first hand the environments he had previously seen in European masterpieces. Other Australian artists seemed to have been attracted by the exotic. Crooke (1922-2003), Friend (1915-1989) and Fairweather (1891-1974) roamed the

¹ In this instance, the first name of the artist is given in order not to create confusion between artist Rees and researcher Rees.

South Pacific Islands capturing the light, the colour, the landscape and the people. Perhaps these artists were attempting to refocus their practice by infusing their artwork with something richer than that they perceived their local geography to afford. In my case, however, environmental or place markers have shaped my perceptual frame in significant ways and made a major contribution to my personal knowledge.

On the other hand, knowledge is largely a learned response informed by instruction, stockpiled experience, perception, memory, belief systems and technical and material qualities. This knowledge is an essential partner to the cognitive dynamics and the processes of practice: the skills, the media and the studio mechanisations through and from which images are generated. Similar to linguistic knowledge, artistic knowledge is, for the most part, tacit. Osmotic, learned experience, its genesis is essentially tentacular yet untraceable except in the essences of documentation and individual memory. How might this be explored? What is the potential for generating a visual narrative, a landscape of memory? What roles do significant environments – physical and psychological – play in creating that landscape? To what extent do these environments retain their potency over time?

What lessons, benefits, and directions might an artist gain from such an exploration in terms of new creative directions? What is the potential inherent in the intersections between skills and memories? The issues implicit in such questions would seem to be provocative and potentially rich for it is in such performative states that past, present and future collide.

1.4 The Potential Double Jeopardy

I have an intuitive sense that certain experiences in my life have directly and indirectly fashioned studio outcomes in a particular way. If it is reasonable to assume that artworks are “deposits of experience” (Hauser, 1982:5), it is critical to explore how these experiences shape studio outcomes. It is with this need to reflect, not just as a small moment between the production of individual pieces of artwork, but on the whole of an artistic life, that is the essential challenge for this research. What possibilities exist for conducting such an exploration? To understand the dynamic process from the genesis of an idea through to its actualisation demands that the process be explicit and therefore examinable. There is advantage in rendering my own processes more knowable so that, in the periods of reflection, my decision-making can be more self-conscious and systematic and therefore, hopefully more dynamic. It is an opportunity to find pathways to challenge both the cognitive and technical processes in a way that is more focussed, and generative towards enhanced originality in the studio outcomes.

Yet the exploration of one’s own life and artistic practice seems a task subject to the minefields of excessive subjectivity, over-exposure and professional vulnerability. There is also the challenge of ensuring that what is extrapolated from an individual artist’s endeavours affords the potential to offer some level of generalization and contribute to extant research across the profession. Recent doctoral research by established artists such as Lee (2001) and Munster (2003) does, however, give legitimacy to the value of such self-exploration. Lee (2001) is a painter and

Munster (2003) works in digital media. Yet the advantage for both mediums is they are perhaps well regarded in the field either for their position in the hierarchy of artistic practice or because they are at the cutting edge of the field. Drawing does not have either of these unambiguous positions. Yet neither does it deserve its ambiguous toehold.

There are many forms of evidence that document a life and one of the most tangible records of my life resides in my artworks. These, I believe, are a record of my life experiences where I have responded to my world in very particular ways and, to a significant extent, they represent, in visual form, the autobiography of my existence thus far. They record the people I have known, the mentors who guided me, the places I have lived, and the kinds of perceptions I held at a certain time and the range of artistic practices I employed. However, to what extent has the medium of drawing the power and the depth to sustain this task of personal reflection? And what might this task actually entail? If, as has been surmised, place is a key driver of the artist's creative well springs, how might *place* be mined for its memory and shaping power? To what extent might place act as a metaphor for visual autobiography?

On one level it might be argued that, throughout my adult life, visual autobiography has not only been a way of describing my life's artwork but also a research tool that has evolved through artistic practice. While this has largely been unconscious, it may offer an appropriate conduit to employ it as a conscious exploratory technique.

Certainly both biography and autobiography are typically verbal media with the visual input normally restricted to photographic images illustrative of the life. The possibilities of visual autobiography as a research tool have rarely, if ever, been explored. Nevertheless, for a visual artist, this medium would seem to be both natural and consistent with the experience of art making. The artistic approach of experiencing life and then filtering the experience into a deposit of experience, the artwork, is a model for what Langer (1982) calls objectifying the subjective. While the degree of subjectivity remains an issue of concern, it is possible to construct a framework for data collection and subsequent analysis.

Biographical veracity relies on the biographer's skilful triangulation of multiple data sources leavened by internal and external intuitions. However, while the seeing-eye of autobiography is inevitably very different, it may be that the essence of the human experience can only really be revealed in the voice of the one living the life. I sense that the intimate details of a life are only available within an autobiography where concerns and subsequent actions are conceptualised within the minute, the ordinary and the major events that cause change, growth and reaction. The task of doing this seems overwhelming. How does one record the essence of a life and, in that process of recording, how is it possible to achieve objectivity amongst multitudinous subjective memories? To what extent is it possible to record and live in one's own life and then to step aside to observe, record and analyse in an objective systematic way? The triangulation afforded for researching the aesthetic phenomena of artistic practice reside within the counterpoise Head, Heart and Hand as schematised in Figure 1.4.1.

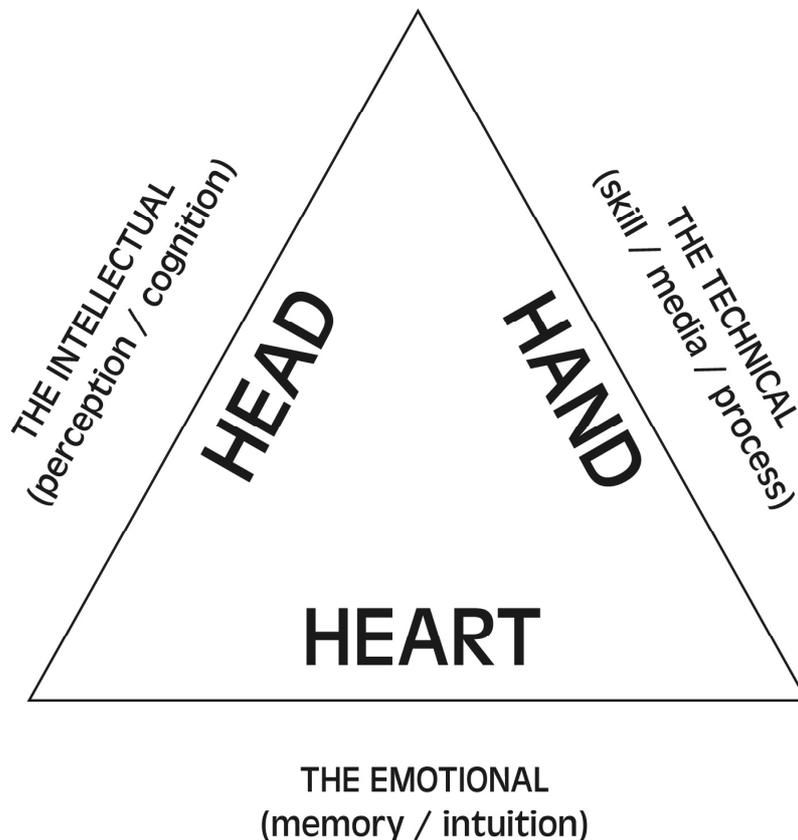


Figure 1.4.1 Head, Heart and Hand Triangulation Model

Equality of each side of the triangle may not be necessary for the creation of artworks and individual drawings could lean towards one or two sides of the triangle. For instance in the work of Le Witt (1928 -) (Plate 1.4.1) cross-hatched wall drawings illustrate a focus towards the Head while Twombly's (1939 -) (Plate 1.4.2) more emotionally driven calligraphic work indicates the Heart as the driver. In the rendering of realistic images of Sydney (Plate 1.4.3) Rees (1895 – 1988) reveals the mastering of the Hand. The intersections, the balance and imbalance of Head, Heart and Hand may offer insights into studio practice and its outcomes.

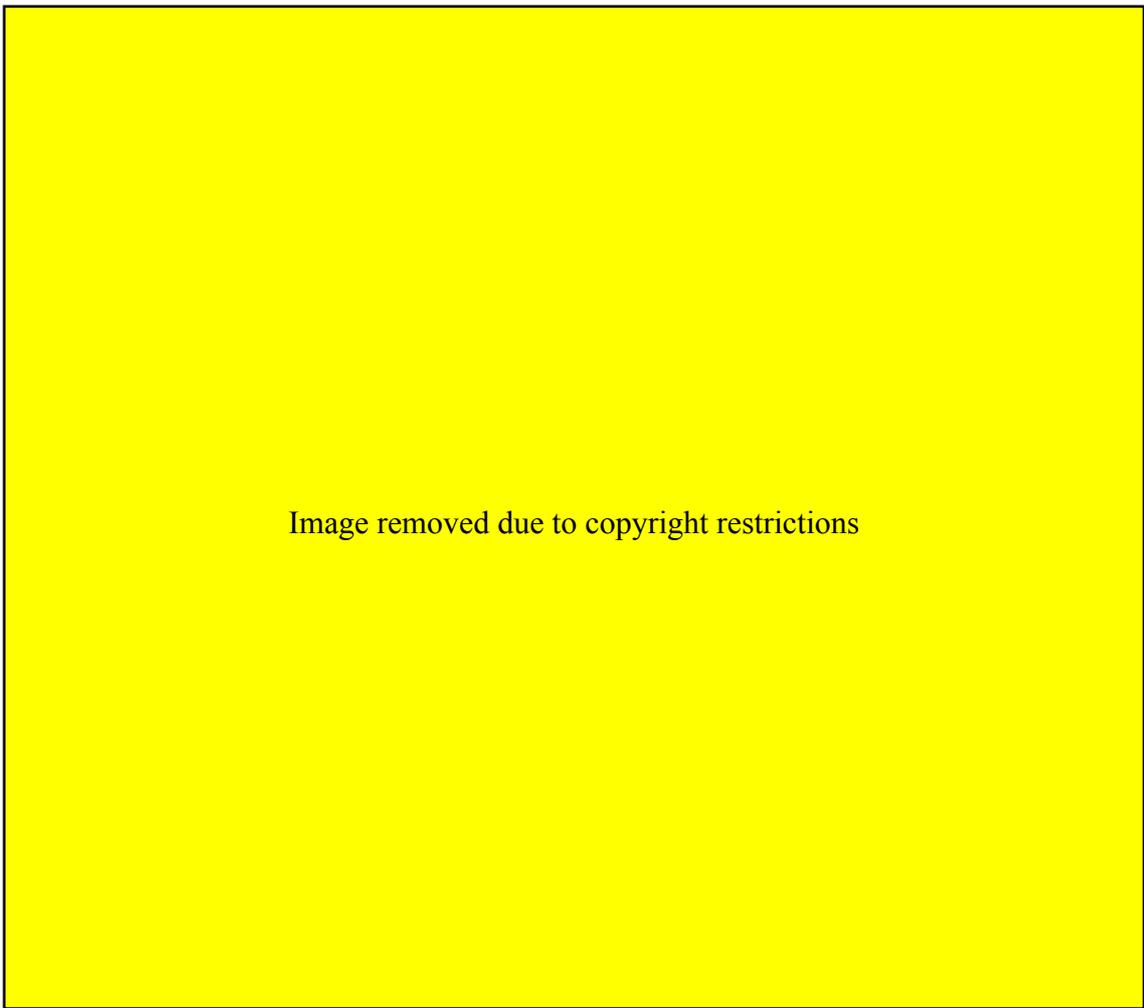


Plate 1.4.1 *Straight Lines in Four Directions Superimposed*, 1969. Sol Le Witt

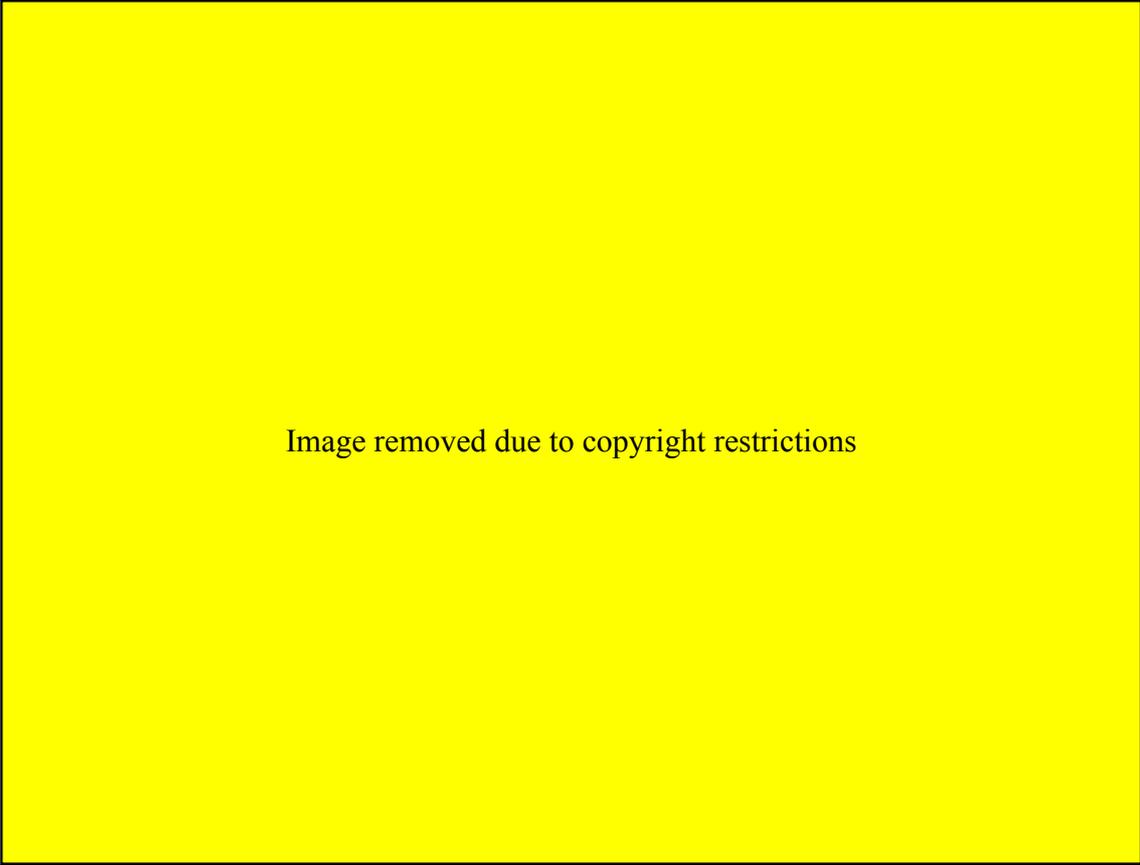


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Plate 1.4.2 *Untitled*, 1968. Cy Twombly.

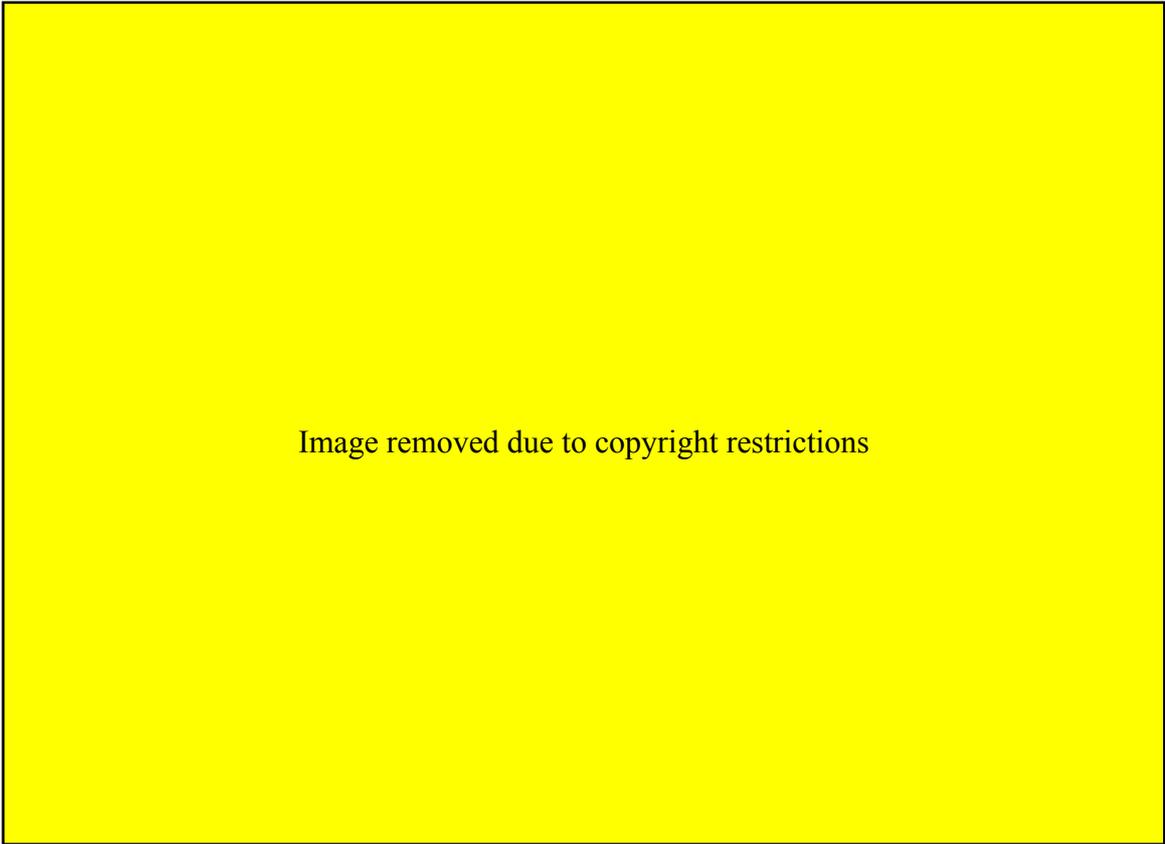


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Plate 1.4.3 *The Port Jackson Fig Tree*, 1934. Lloyd Rees.

The inner world of the mechanisms of the artist's Head, Heart and Hand create the personal crucible² from which works of art are born. Explanations of creative forces and speculation about possible meanings in art have traditionally been the sole province of art historians, philosophers, theoreticians and critics, yet the whole truth, the secretive, intimate drivers of artist production have, until relatively recently, lain mostly untouched within the private world of the individual artist where there is a kind of "...inseparability of the artist from his or her creations". (Zolberg, 1990:55)

² The term "crucible" is defined in this research as a metaphoric reference to a place, time, or situation characterized by the confluence of powerful intellectual, social, perceptual and aesthetic forces.

1.5 Rationale for and Aims of the Research

In probing the issues raised thus far it is the intention of the present study to focus on one person's experience to explore both the potential of drawing as artistic outcome and the ways in which significant personal sites and environmental experiences shape an artist's conceptual development and artistic practice. As "creative-production" (Scrivener 2000:11) is central to these questions, visual autobiography is both the outcome and the tool of this research. It has the capacity thus to realize and reflect upon the various issues and concerns as they are realized through and from the artworks.

This research thus aims:

1. To test the potential of drawing as primary artistic outcome;
2. To probe significant personal intersections between Head, Heart and Hand through an exploration of environment as artistic shaping crucible;
3. To coalesce these explorations of environment into a visual autobiography of place;
4. To utilize 2 and 3 above as a starting point for evaluating the potential of visual autobiography as a research tool.

1.6 Organization of the Thesis

The four stages of this research trace the researcher's journey from initial questioning of personal studio practice through to finding possible answers. Chapter Two examines drawing as artistic practice, its particular language, history and the key artists, both international and Australian, who have contributed to the tradition. In Chapter Three a personal environmental autobiography of place exposes the life-

world of one drawing artist and provides an intimate and personal view through which the reader may perhaps understand the idiosyncratic nature of art making. Three geographical locations are identified in this chapter as pivotal to the research. Chapters Four seeks to shape and locate the research through a review of relevant literature and by addressing contemporary and historical preoccupation with human experience and cultural production. In order to build a focussed context from which to understand the research, the emphasis is on the visual arts, artists and artworks with particular enquiry into the practice and practitioners of the medium, drawing. Chapter Four also identifies overarching theories in relation to cultural production while the notion of artists as visual autobiographers is established in this chapter and helps to inform the construction of a personal methodology. Chapter Five traces the search for an appropriate research methodology through various methodologies for examining cultural practices. From these examples the researcher creates a personal research tool appropriate both for artist centred research and to this particular enquiry.

Chapters Six, Seven, and Eight explore the dilemmas signposted in Chapter One and make explicit the decision-making and studio processes within the context of three environments. A chapter is dedicated to each of the initially identified sites: Paris and Provence, France, Halifax, Nova Scotia, Canada and, Cairns, Far North Queensland, Australia.

Chapters Nine and Ten record the planning, installation and response to the visual outcomes, a body of drawings from the exploration of the three geographical locations. Chapter Nine discusses the plan and concept for the first exhibition while

Chapter Ten provides of a sequential record in terms of colour plates of each exhibited drawing.

Chapter Eleven reflects on and evaluates the knowledge, both theoretical and practical, accumulated during the research and employs this knowledge to drive studio practice into the creation of a further body of drawings based on the site of Sydney, Australia. Chapter Twelve reflects on the process and product of the research and speculates about the possible implications for future practice and research.

CHAPTER TWO OVERVIEW OF DRAWING

2.1 Drawing as Artistic Practice.

Drawing is both beginning and end, process and product, noun and verb, medium and technique. In the visual arts drawing seems to be the most democratic, for we all draw; we all seem to share the same obsession for making marks. Whether it is doodling while listening, scribbling over other marks; drawing lines in the sand or making plans for our dream home. Seemingly without thought, initial marks are made, often on blank surfaces. Slowly, low mental activity begins to join marks, patterns are constructed, connections are made and increasingly complex symbols are formed. What was once blank and void becomes altered, no longer new, used and manipulated. The unmarked paper or surface signals the chance of a new beginning, a pause in the creative process or the promise of a new adventure. Even when the marks are faded or erased, their ghost continues to mark time and evidence the human touch.

2.2 Defining Drawing.

The Museum of Modern Art (MOMA) in New York, an institution with huge influence within the contemporary art field admits that "... of all the modern arts, [drawing] is the most resistant to definition" (Elderfield, 1991:26). MOMA has titled drawing exhibitions as "works on paper"¹. The effect of this descriptor has been quite pervasive. In the last decade numerous exhibitions have adopted "works on paper" as a *de facto* definition that appears as a category in art competitions.

¹ In 1981 the Museum of Modern Art's Department of Drawing initiated a series of exhibitions called *New Works on Paper* that presented the work of younger artists not previously seen at the Museum. This seems to be the first time the description "works on paper" was used.

However, this definition seems far too narrow for the various kinds of drawing activity that have occurred in the late twentieth century, not least because it confines drawing activity within the four corners of a piece of paper. Godfrey (1990) offers a far less restrictive guideline:

What a drawing is should be defined more by the activity that initiates it rather than the material it leaves traces on. (Godfrey, 1990:12)

The materials and tools of drawing have not really changed significantly over the centuries. Charcoal, graphite, chalk, pastel and paper are still conventional materials even though new technologies such as the digital and the holographic are expanding avenues of exploring drawing as "a projection of the artist's intelligence in its least discursive form". (Alloway, 1975:38) Contemporary drawing needs a broader definition to be inclusive of a range of activities that may not be defined conveniently by materials or the ground on which the activity is made. Kolenberg (1997) also acknowledges the dilemma of defining drawing.

Unlike painting, however, drawing is not simply defined. As with sculpture, it is a term that describes intention rather than means. To add to the difficulty, art practice in the latter part of the twentieth century (including contemporary drawing) resists traditional categorization. Drawing is best defined within the practice of individual artists. It is no less vigorously practised, not more difficult to identify than it has been with the developing tradition of western European art over the last five hundred years or so..... (Kolenberg, 1998:9)

If drawing is best defined within individual practice, then the definition offered by Rose (1976) would seem to be inclusive of various drawing practices. She presents the notion of "... drawing as an autobiographic (indeed biographical) revelation, presenting the artist's first and most intimate and confessional marks". (Rose, 1976:9) Rose (1976) places the roots of this definition within a historic context by explaining that, in the Italian Renaissance, drawing was understood to be a range of

activity from invention (the first idea and intellectual plan of work) to drawing as graphological disclosure.

Since drawing is democratic and broadly based, its definitions vary greatly. In general, drawing is considered under two broad categories: drawing as preparation for other works and drawing as an end in itself, a finished drawing. Rawson (1969) provides quite clear categories that encompass most forms of drawing practices as indicated in Table 2.2.1.

Table 2.2.1 Rawson's (1969) Categories of Drawing

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The first four categories of Rawson's Table encompass the kinds of drawing artists and designers employ as preparatory to other outcomes in their profession. All except the final one are relevant to fine artists and designers who define their core professional practice as something other than *drawing*. To what extent, however, is drawing "core practice" for many artists?

2.3 Drawing as Core Practice

For some artists drawing is *a* core practice but not *the* core practice; that is, they have two or more areas in which they interpret the world. For instance, Australian artist Jim Croke (1998) both sculpts and draws and exhibits in both mediums.

I make both drawings and sculpture. It's an essential part of the way I work that when I go into the studio or workshop I have the opportunity to work on either. The drawings and sculpture influence each other without being dependent on each other. When the drawings are going well, I tend to leave the sculpture to one side for the time being. As soon as I find difficulties with the drawings, I tend to start to make sculpture, which gives me the time to think about and hopefully solve these problems with the drawings. (Rees, 1998:102)

Perhaps the most common combination of core practices is painting and drawing and this may be a result of several recent decades in which drawing has not been offered as a major study in art colleges but as a support to a major in painting.

There are, of course, artists whose core practice is drawing but they are relatively rare in the field. A champion of drawing as core practice is the British academic and practicing drawer, Deanne Petherbridge (2003) who states that "... drawing doesn't belong to particular kinds of practice – it is practice!" (Petherbridge, 2003). A prime example of a contemporary draughtsman is South African, William Kentbridge (1955 -) whose sustained practice over thirty years is centred on

drawing while his primary outcome may be defined at woodcut prints, lino prints, animation and film, the clear intention and content of his work remains firmly within the domain of drawing. For instance, for his animated film *WEIGHING...and WANTING* (1997-98), Kentbridge explained his drawing-centred approach to the representation of images:

They met the drawing process halfway. These images are already half-drawings, reduced to black and white and tones of grey. The smoky transitions in X-rays, the discrete marks of a sonar scan, the diagrammatic clarity of an MRI all translate, if not effortlessly, then certainly naturally into charcoal and paper equivalents. The blunt, stubby marks of a stick of charcoal make, of themselves, the codes, dots and dashes of a sonar; a brush of charcoal dust is an immediate transliteration of an X-ray. To do the same in oil paint, or pen and ink, would be an act of dissimulation. (Kentbridge, 1999:140)

Some of our finest Australian draughtsmen, Lambert (1873-1930), Dobell (1899-1970), Drysdale (1912-1981) and Rees (1895-1988) made their reputations as painters. Yet amongst contemporary Australian artists there are those who work across a range of practices but are becoming best known for their drawings, these include Parr (1945-), Cress (1938 -), Sharpe (1960 -) and Senbergs (1939-). It might be concluded that, in Australia drawing as core practice is still somewhat lacking a critical mass and it may be that "... drawings are often considered as secondary and Australian artists are therefore assumed not to have special merit as draughtsmen"(Kolenberg, 1997:13).

2.4 Drawing as a Support to Other Practice.

Drawing is often seen by artists as an integral though preparatory part of their practice in a variety of artistic fields. It is one of the tools for generating and refining ideas. In an earlier publication (Rees, 1998) the present researcher

identified a range of different contemporary Australian artists and designers who employ drawing in various ways but define themselves as in fields other than drawing. The following quotations encapsulate their perceptions of drawing as a beginning but not as an end:

Kramer, J. (1998) – Photographer

I use drawing during the researching and planning stages of my art making. I first draw the basic structure on paper and then consider the smaller details. These preparatory drawings are rough thumbnail-size pencil sketches are by no means precious. (Rees, 1998:108)

Whish A. (1998) – Jeweller

Sometimes, in my mind, I have a very clear picture of what I want to make and of what the surfaces, materials and finished work will look like. I use drawing to figure out how to make what's in my head and to join small pieces together. (Rees, 1998:106)

Robertson, E. (1998) – Fabric Artist

I also use three sizes of sketchbook: small, for carrying with me and recording thumbnail sketches and ideas; medium, for more-carefully observed drawing, which I usually do in my studio; and large, for sticking in visual research such as photocopies and magazine picture. I also often embroider straight over a drawing; this either becomes a finished piece or is a test for a larger embroidery on fabric. (Rees, 1998:110)

Elliott, C. (1998) – Animator

After completing the concept sketches – these could be of the character, the setting or storyboard images – the next step is development of these sketches to make completed designs. (Rees, 1998:112)

McKay, B. (1998) – Painter

For me, drawing forms the basis of all internal structure in picture making. Not only does it analyse objects' visual appearances; it puts the objects in a structural order. When I go into the landscape, I never travel without a sketchbook and pencil. (Rees, 1998:115)

For the above artists and designers, drawing, can be seen as preparatory for a finished painting, photograph, fabric, jewellery or film. It is a necessary, but non-

precious product, instrumental in recording, researching, structuring and visualizing but not intended as an end in itself.

2.5 The Language of Drawing

In describing the practice of drawing there is a need to understand the particular language that has evolved through its tradition. Significantly, then, any drawing is regarded as:

...artistically important when it documents an active moment of ideation quite independently of its formal aspects, which vary according to the shifting idioms of representation". (Grottanelli, 1961: 72)

In the Western art tradition the discussion is often about the *ideation* and the execution, the dichotomy between head and hand. Through the tradition drawing has come to be aligned with particular idioms of expression and techniques, and a range of mediums and tools that have been greatly expanded due partly to 20th century changes in technology. However, certain forms of drawing have remained consistent and fall Rawson's (1969) categories.

At its most basic level, drawing is about line and delineation. The purest form of line is normally associated with contour drawing. A shape or figure in contour drawing is reduced to essential form and separated from effects of its surroundings and light and shade. The contour line is often continuous and its emphasis changes from dark and thick to light and fine to create a sense of volume or emphasis. When a contour is broken it usually evokes a kinetic response in the viewer about the artist's movement of hand in the execution of the work.

In *form drawing* lights and shadows are added to the contour usually by a range of smaller linear marks such as hatching and cross-hatching or by washes of liquid tones. White chalks are added as highlights or soft light. *Form drawing* once again is not necessarily a recording of the actual light appearing on a form but tends to create an overall illumination. This is particularly exemplified in drawing for sculpture where the image appears marble-like.

A contrast to *form drawing* is *colour-value drawing* in which the subtle play of light and dark created by the context in which the form is placed expresses unique tonality. *Colour-value drawing* attempts to create tonally the effect colour rendering has on a form. This can be seen in Seurat's (1859-1891) drawings near the end of the nineteenth century.

Some drawings are of course created in colour washes or coloured lines such as the work by Hockney (1937 -) (Plate 2.5.1). In the twentieth century the line between coloured drawings and painting has become blurred especially in the case of de Kooning (1904 – 1997) and Twombly (1939 -) who drew broad marks and lines with paint and brush on paper as well as on canvas. Watercolours are often classed as coloured drawings and fit conveniently into MOMA's category of "Works On Paper". The term *collage* is the cutting and pasting of papers, often containing mediated images, to create a part or a whole of an image and is described by Matisse (1869 – 1954) as "drawing with scissors" (Rose, 1976:11).

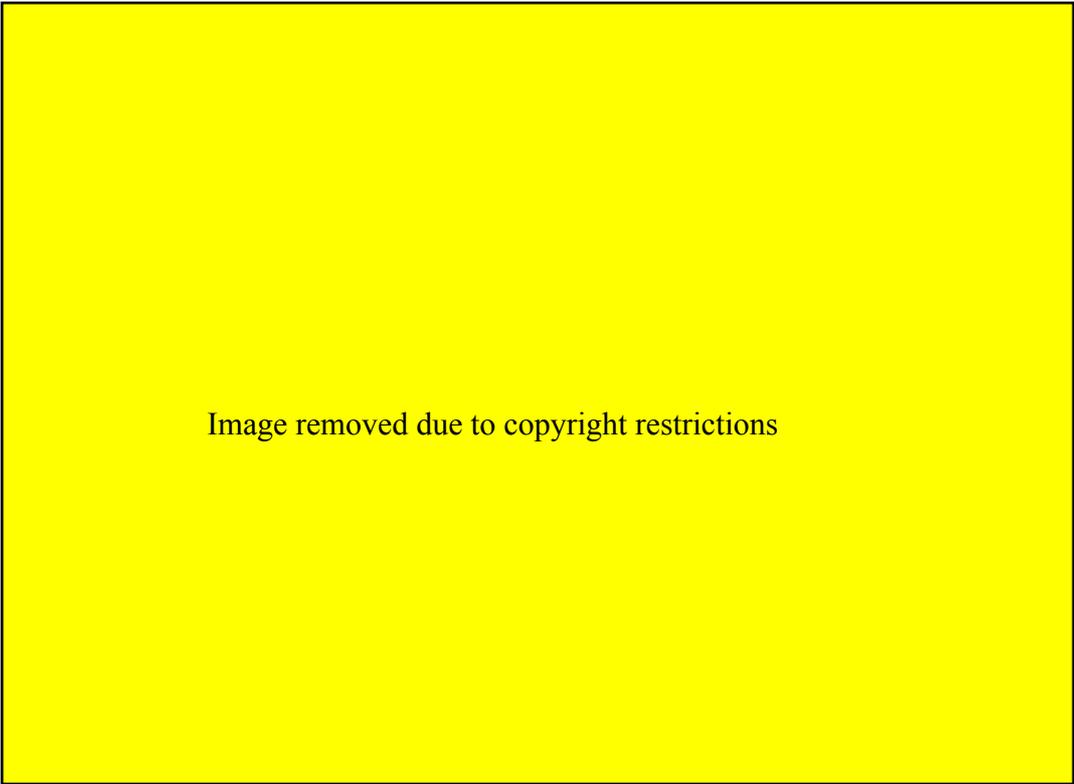


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Plate 2.5.1 *Views of the Sea*, 1989. David Hockney.

The tools of drawings are traditionally brush, pen, chalk, charcoal and relatively recent implements, graphite pencils and pastel sticks. The last one hundred years has expanded mark making tools to all forms of new and old materials and technologies including: liquid light, gun powder, fibre optics, thread, photocopiers and the digital media. These newer mark making technologies tend to be unencumbered with the expectations of craftsmanship inherent in the use of traditional tools.

The ground on which a drawing is created varies from culture to culture and from period to period. Cave walls, ceramics, stone and woven vegetable matter have all had their place in the history of drawing but it is paper of various weights, colour, surface and size that has become mainstream as a ground. The qualities of paper have also, in part, determined the positioning of drawing in the hierarchy of

Western art history. Paper is relatively cheap, easily disposed of, and vulnerable to atmospheric conditions. Surface marks crumble and detach, paper absorbs moisture and rots, is discoloured and structurally collapses with sunlight. To protect and frame a drawing is expensive.

Drawing as “preparatory” or “finished” are words that have recently become fluid in aesthetic debates. Modern aesthetics has come to regard the fragmented, the reduced, and the incomplete as important dimensions of works in their own right, thus disregarding their place as preparatory in traditional categories. Architectural drawings and plans have been retrieved from their storage cabinets, framed and appreciated as a drawing form separate from the buildings they informed. The mid-twentieth century painters who left canvas ungessoed and untreated also opened the ways for drawers to create images that did not necessarily address the confines of the four edges of paper. Le Witt (1928-) (Plate 1.4.1) made drawn marks directly on the walls of a gallery and Haring (1958-90) drew marks onto the pavement of New York streets. Thus, like other related visual arts areas, drawing began to break from its tradition and explore new possibilities of representation.

The language of drawing, like all modes of expression is changing with the living culture it expresses:

Therefore in speaking about ... drawing, one is speaking of nothing less than the momentary expression of a personality, of its uncertainty, of its wish and yearning within the framework of an era. Unlike any other creation produced by an artist, a drawing is the spontaneous residue of the intangible, made visible by a personality. (Koschatzky, 1987:105)

2.6 Some Perspectives on the History of Drawing.

In an attempt to provide a background to the evolution of drawing practice certain key periods and artists have been selected from the last six hundred years of Western culture with some emphasis on the Italian Renaissance and the more recent drawing history.

The history of drawing is as long as the history of human activity and fundamental to the history of art. Yet it would seem that in Western art, the established hierarchy of canonical works positions painting and sculpture at the very pinnacle of artistic activity whereas drawing, perhaps because it is perceived as preparation for other artistic forms, holds a relatively low position on the hierarchical structure. The recording of the history of drawing has also been disadvantaged by the ephemeral nature of certain drawing materials and processes. Paper, for instance, needs sensitive conservation techniques to be preserved. Charcoal has no binder so it tends to detach from surfaces that in turn fade. Large-scale drawings have been painted over and thus lost. Drawings for preparation were discarded after their purpose was fulfilled. Ancient drawings that do remain are often ghostly images that only hint at their original form or are fragmented pieces such as ceramic shards or flakes of lines and tones. This is not a suggestion that there is no evidence of ancient drawing for, as an example, Peck (1978) was able to gather enough Egyptian drawings on limestone to establish several categories of drawing practice for historical reference. However, it is suggested that, relative to other art forms, particularly painting and sculpture, historians have had far less data to consider and hence have given drawing far less attention.

Yet the primacy of drawing to the visual arts is based on its “direct and apparent simplicity of its means which make for an accessibility and ease of appropriation”. (Petherbridge, 1991:10) At its most basic, drawing requires an implement capable of making a mark and a surface to record that mark. It is reasonable to assume that drawing is the oldest form of the visual arts. For example, the drawings of bison on the cave walls of Lascaux in France from the Palaeolithic era (15,000 -10,000 BC) are often cited as the first known examples of human artistic activity. The literature of art education (eg, Gardner: 1973, Arnheim: 1974) compares these early drawings of people to the rudimentary marks made by children and argues a parallel between the visual, cognitive development of the child to adulthood. Such theories are based on accumulated knowledge and the belief that the child and early people drew what they knew rather than what they saw which points to a symbol system about reality rather than necessarily an exact verisimilitude.

2.6.1 The Italian Renaissance

It was only during the Italian Renaissance between five hundred and six hundred years ago that we started to see the emergence of an academic body of work that investigates the relationship between perception and the laws of nature. It is also during the Renaissance that artists and theorists began to discuss drawing as an independent medium and its relationship to painting and sculpture. Italian artists and theorist Vasari (1511-1574) described drawing "as originating in the intellect of the artist, its first concrete realisation being the sketch" (Rose, 1976:9).

During this time there is evidence of speculation about the dual nature of drawing in that it explores the internal world of the artist creating "ideas" and the external

world that has laws and rules governing reality. Rose (1976) explains that, at the time of the Renaissance,

... Drawing was both a poetic and scientific discipline with the highest intellectual credentials. Without drawing it was impossible to describe the newly emergent disciplines of anatomy, geometry, and perspective, which were considered basic to a scientifically accurate grasp of objects as seen in nature or as conceived in the imagination. Drawing was an integral part of Leonardo's exploration of both form and causes. (Rose, 1976:10)

Many of the poetic and metaphysical inspirations were considered forces coming from outside of the intellect and originating with constructions of God. Certainly this way of explaining where the ideas underpinning drawing seems to have survived into the early part of the twentieth century as noted in Bell's (1914) explanation of visual perception. Much of the speculation about the intellectual foundations of drawing seemed to diminish in the mid-nineteenth century when drawings were put under glass, framed and hung on walls. This may have been a result of the art academies in England and France teaching drawing only as preparation for painting and sculpture.

2.6.2 Connoisseurship

Connoisseurship is synonymous with attribution and provenance, with the decision as to when and where objects were made and, in most cases, in assigning names. Connoisseurs devote their energy to establishing masters and masterpieces as in greater, lesser, or minuscule. (Zerner, 1987:289) Traces of connoisseurship of drawing still appear now in the role of the art dealer and the annual Prints and Drawing Fairs that take place each year in major capital cities of the world. It may be that links between connoisseurship and the commerce of art have the potential to tarnish the intellectual potency of the medium.

2.6.3 Evolution of Contemporary Drawing Practice

At the exhibition *Michelangelo to Matisse, Drawing the Figure* (1999-2000)² at the Art Gallery of New South Wales, a large body of drawings, some 242 works spanning 400 years of mark making provided a remarkable insight into the changing intentions of artists but also certain narrow traditions about how form is perceived. The most obvious approach was the isolation of the human form from any context. The treatment of the human form from the High Renaissance to the present has been strongly sculptural in its treatment within the drawing medium. Even the fleshiness of the tonal rendering seems to suggest marble imitating flesh. This should not be so surprising when we examine art education practice and its long tradition of drawing from plaster figurines and ancient Greek sculptures. However, the aforementioned exhibition is testimony to the hierarchical place of drawing as an imitation of another practice higher up on the scale of fine arts. The majority of works in this show seemed to be preparatory for a sculpture whose location was not yet envisaged.

The other outstanding feature of this exhibition was the use of the continuous contour line that seemed to cut the figure out of its paper void as seen in Signorelli's (1450 – 1523) *Hercules and Antaeus* (Plate 2.6.1), Da Vinci's (1452 – 1509) *A Nude Man Standing Facing The Spectator* (Plate 2.6.2)) and Carracci (1560 – 1609) *Seated Male Nude* (Plate 2.6.3). The academic approach to drawing from the

² *Michelangelo to Matisse, Drawing the Figure* exhibition at the Art Gallery of New South Wales was on show from November 1999 to February 2000 and contained a majority of works on loan from the Queen Elizabeth II collection. This exhibition was considered by the researcher to be a rare opportunity to review a large body of drawings to historically contextualize contemporary practice and therefore as exemplar case study.

Renaissance created a convention, particularly concerning the figure, that treated the human form as an object seemingly carved out of its immediate context. Even in examples where the figure is placed with other symbols to form a narrative, the figure-as-object seems to be almost collaged, assembled from elsewhere. This may be illustrated by Michelangelo's (1475 – 1564) *Tityus* (Plate 2.6.4) where Tityus is placed on a symbolic landform and has a preying bird perched upon his body. The clean carved line around Tityus' body shows no effect of the bird's claws or the bondage around his arm or his body weight upon the underlying rock.

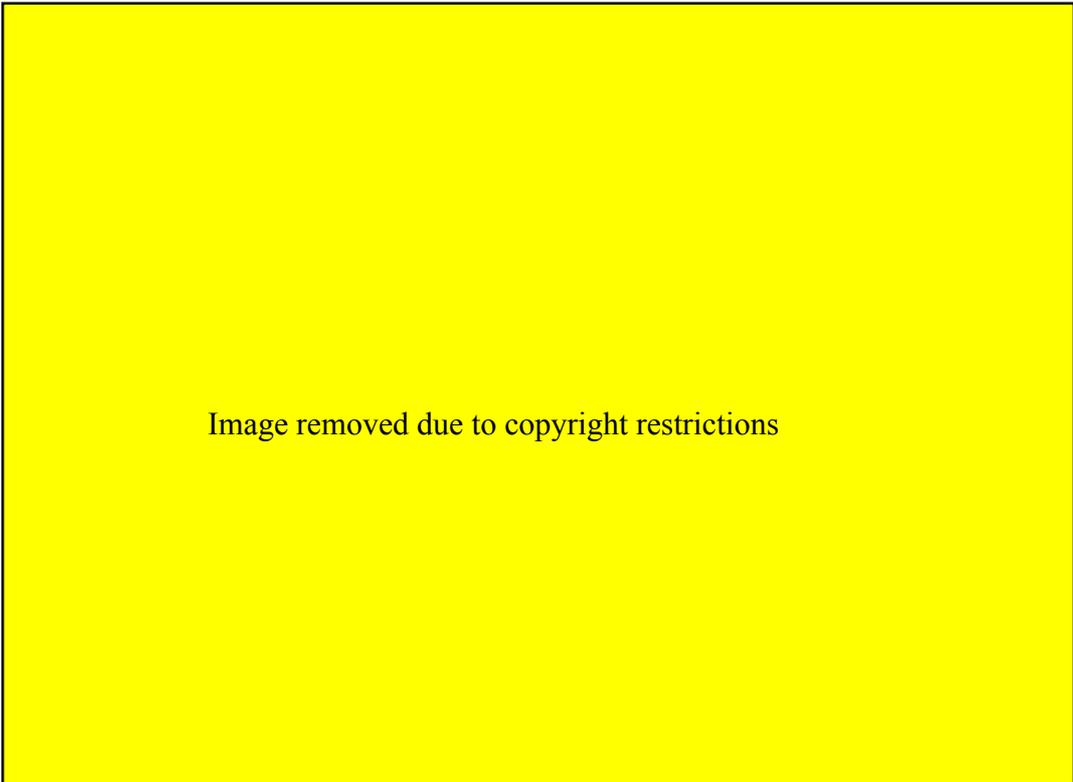


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Plate 2.6.1 *Hercules and Antaeus*, c. 1498-1502. Luca Signorelli

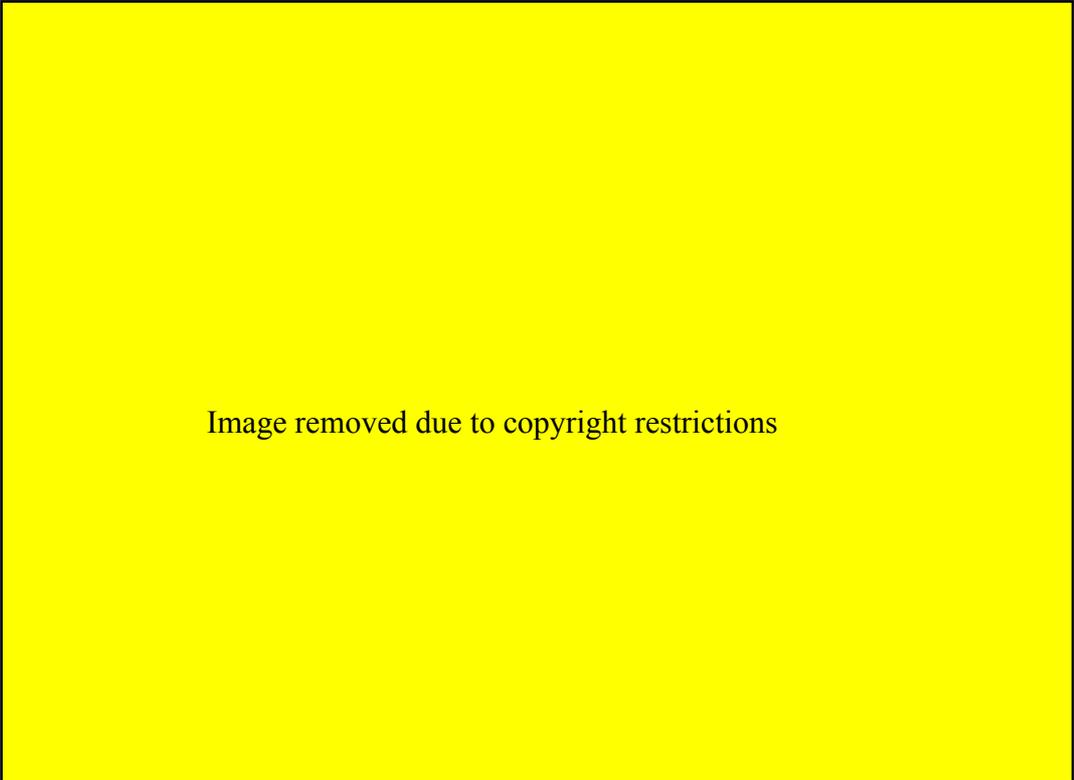


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Plate 2.6.2 *A nude man standing facing the spectator*,
c.1503-04. Leonardo Da Vinci.

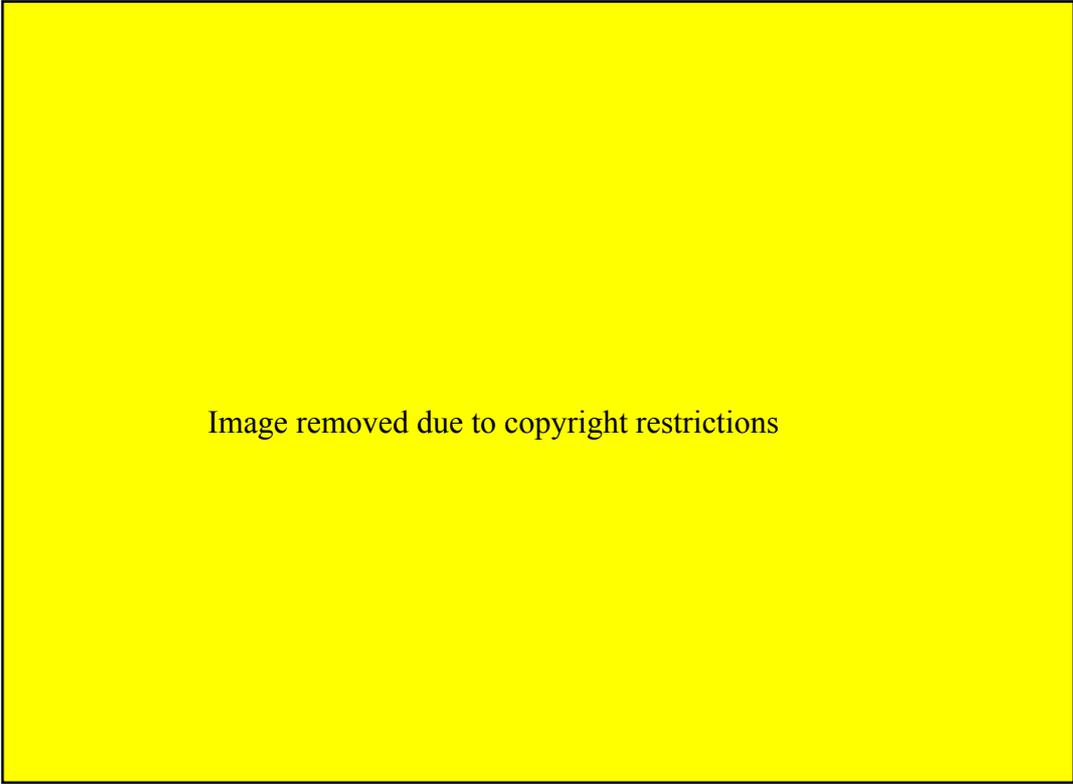


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Plate 2.6.3 *Seated Male Nude*, c.1590-1600. Annibale Carracci

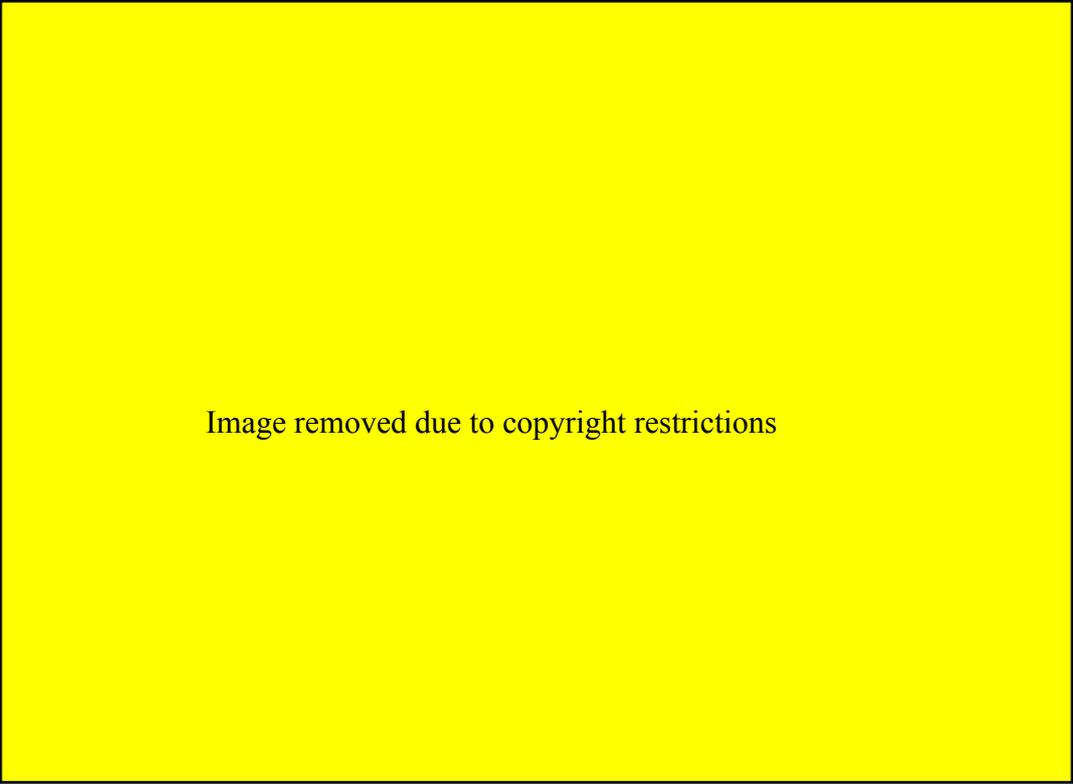


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Plate 2.6.4 *Tityus*, 1532. Michelangelo

Certain drawing conventions formalised in the Renaissance and centred on the figure included not only the carved out contour line but also the investigation into musculature, drapery, gesture and the three dimensional effects created by the twisting form: *figura serpentinata*. Elements of these conventions have continued into the twentieth century. Rees' (1934) drawing, *The Port Jackson Fig Tree* (Plate 1.4.3) displays a trunk twisting with strained muscles of wood and its form clearly delineated by a fine dark line that almost separates it from the surrounding landscape.

The primacy of line as a concrete convention in the tradition of drawing from the Renaissance to modern times has not gone unchallenged. Da Vinci's *sfumato* technique of allowing tones to gradually fade into one another and the artist's selection of media such as soft red and black chalk produced less sharply defined lines or, as Alberti (1966) termed it, "a neat cleavage" (Alberti, 1966:68).

In the nineteenth century the roots of modernism began to appear and doubts emerged concerning the limitations imposed or imagined by defining the object with a single contour line. For example,

This famous quality of beauty that some see in the serpentine line, others in the straight line ... they insist on only seeing it in lines. I am at my window and I see the loveliest landscape; the idea of a line doesn't enter my mind. The lark sings, the river reflects a thousand diamonds, the foliage murmurs; where are the lines that produce these charming sensations? People only want to see proportion and harmony between line: for them, the rest is chaos and the sole arbiter is the compass. (Malloon, 1999:74)

Delacroix (1798 – 1863) created over six thousand drawings and prints and, even though he was classically trained, his works show a deliberate move away from classical rendering to expressionistic, vigorous sketching. His artwork and writings can bring into question the validity of isolating objects from their environment. The simple premise is that encompassing lines do not define objects in nature and that all objects are part of their environment, influenced by all things around them. This revolution of thought became manifest in the artwork of the group known as the Impressionists.

The Impressionists were inclusive of all elements in nature so that a whole is created from figures/objects that were enveloped in their environment. The single object no longer stood out isolated from its context. Central also to the Impressionists was the *sketch* that quickly caught an *impression* of the moment: the flickering light; leaves moving in the wind; and edges merging into their ever changing surroundings.

Impressionism marked a beginning that has coloured much of the inquiry of artists in the twentieth century. This was a move away from strict recognition of objects, an objective phenomenon to a more subjective way of experiencing the visual world, an abstraction. Rose's (1976) view is that

Abstraction has gone hand in hand with extreme subjectivity already evidenced in Impressionism, the tendency to abstract, to relate all objects in terms of their interaction as lines and colors on a two dimensional surface. (Rose, 1976:11)

Paralleling the power of the Impressionists was the influence of photography on artists in general. The camera's ability to record the image of objects meticulously, to represent objects, challenged the artist to explore drawing beyond the object. It seems logical that the invention of monochromatic photography must have been even more threatening to draughtsmen and their tonal renditions. The reaction by many early twentieth century artists seems to have evoked a scale that the drawer should focus on the very elements that distinguish drawing from other mediums: drawing materials and their relationship to particular surfaces; the process by which drawing materials are applied; and, most importantly, the mark evidenced by the process. A further reaction seems to be a lessening emphasis placed on creating the illusionistic space of representation.

Certain key figures of modern drawing exemplify how drawing has changed from the conventions established in the Renaissance. Seurat's (1859 – 1891) soft tonal drawings appear as layers of charcoal dust gradually building form without the use of defining lines. Instead of relying on colour to construct the subtlety of representation, Seurat used shadow and light (Plate 2.6.5) and constructed an image devoid of delineation and therefore closer to the painted images created by his

contemporaries. Seurat is probably the first modern artist to present a drawing as a completed work of art and thus raise the status of drawing and challenge the view of drawing “as not mere preparatory for painting but as an alternative mode of expression”(Rose, 1976:14).

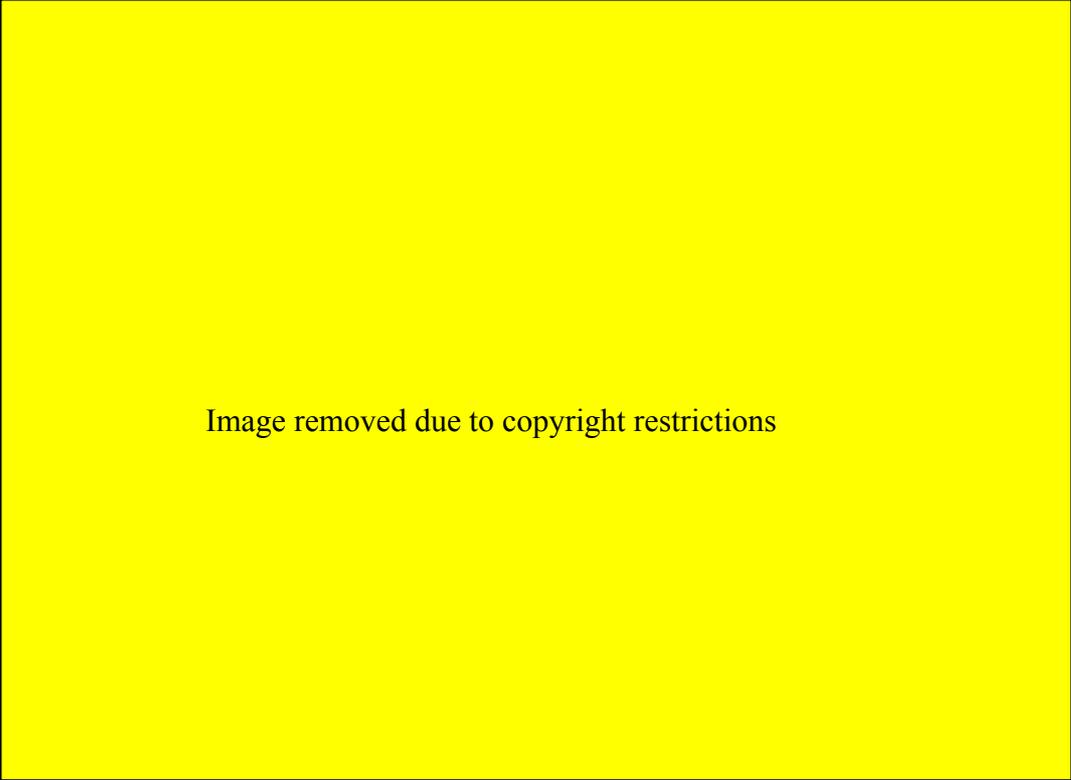


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Plate 2.6.5 *Une Promeneuse*, c.1882. George Seurat.

Throughout the twentieth century Seurat's recognition of the autonomy of the medium has been upheld and works in drawing have paralleled conceptual issues in painting. Yet, even though certain issues are common to the visual arts, particular reactions can be identified with the notion of the line or mark as the common convention of drawing practice.

Seurat's dusted layers of black charcoal in preference over the constricting contour line perhaps served to turn attention to the sensuous qualities of the medium. The density of the black on black contrasting with the whiteness of paper has evoked contemplation of endless space or the void, about death or an experience of emptiness. (Godfrey, 1990:105) The works of Morris (1931 -) (Plate 2.6.6) Sultan (1935 -) (Plate 2.6.7) O'Donoghue (1931 -) (Plate 2.6.8) offer a contemplation, a marking of mood, a different aspect of mood and a kind of drama that is created by velvety surfaces and marks. The same kind of deep blackness and reference to the void can be also found in surfaces created by the photocopier. Australian artist Lee (1954 -) makes multiple works generated by layer upon layer of photocopy machine carbon that only just afford hints through light reflection and slight tonal variation of images that may be or may not be constructed in the endless blackness.

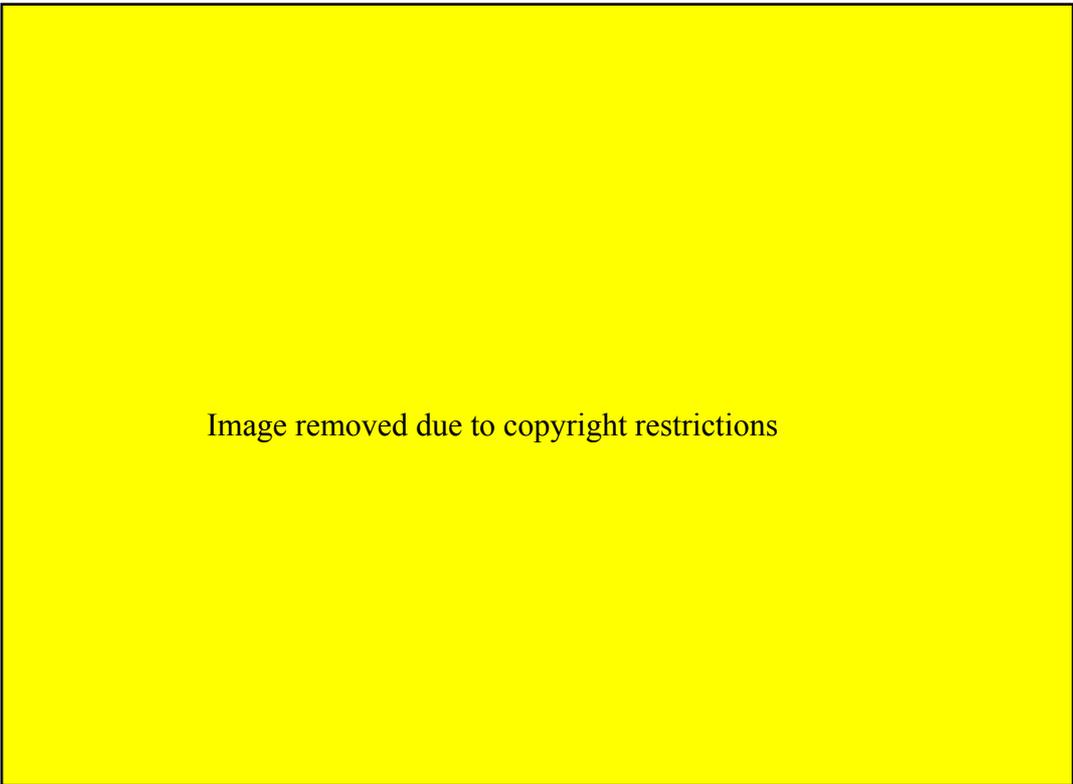


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Plate 2.6.6 *Blind Time III*, 1985. Robert Morris.



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Plate 2.6.7 *Black Lemons*, 1988. Donald Sultan.

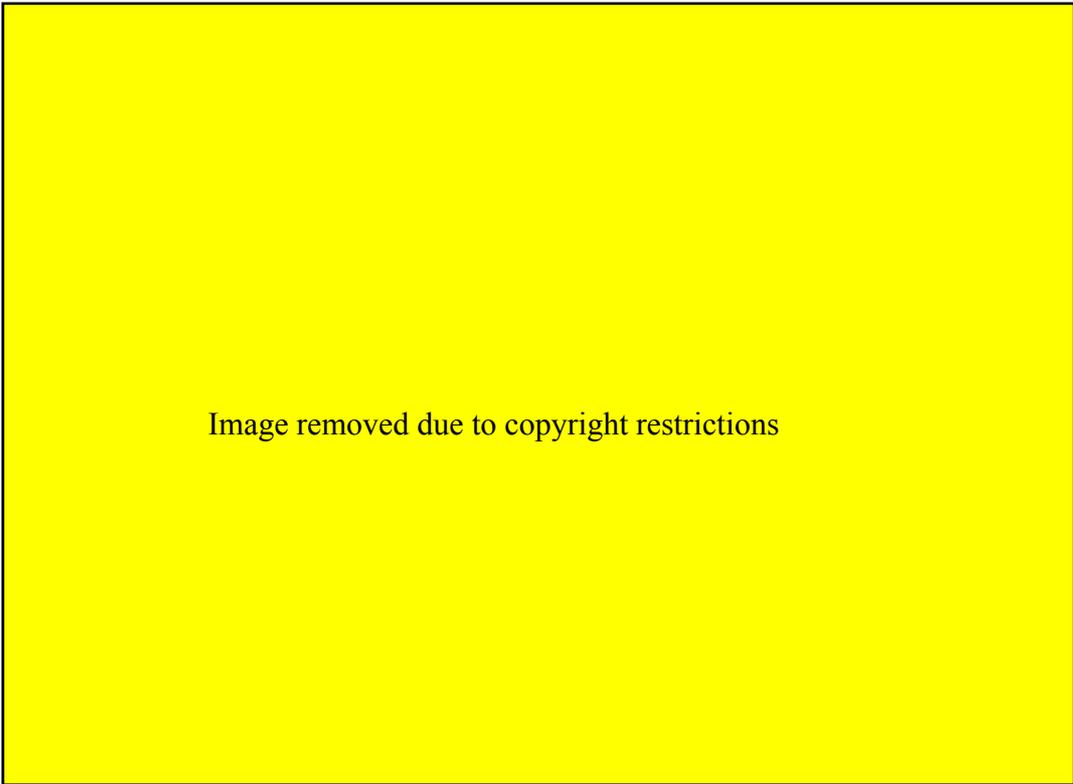


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Plate 2.6.8 *Olive Tree III*, 1987. Hughie O'Donoghue.

In contrast to these works that force the viewer's vision inwards, and avoid the focus necessary to define lines are drawings by Beuys (1931-) (Plate 2.6.9) and Twombly (1939-) (Plate 1.4.2) and even Pollock (1921-1956) in the 1950s. The works of these three are devoid of any illusion of the object separated from its surroundings yet the mark and the line are apparent. In this case the drawing is the object that contains marks that are highly expressive of the materials used and the action or making by the artist. Pollock's layers of rhythmical lines hint at the fleeting moments in vision first expressed by the Impressionists but without reference to illusions of recognisable objects. Twombly's (1939-) scribbles across surfaces resemble writing in form but speak a language of expression without or beyond words. The marks signify a mode of expression that cannot be articulated in another more conventional form. The marks are raw, charged with emotion and

seem to tap into a perception unbridled by the established historical conventions of drawing.

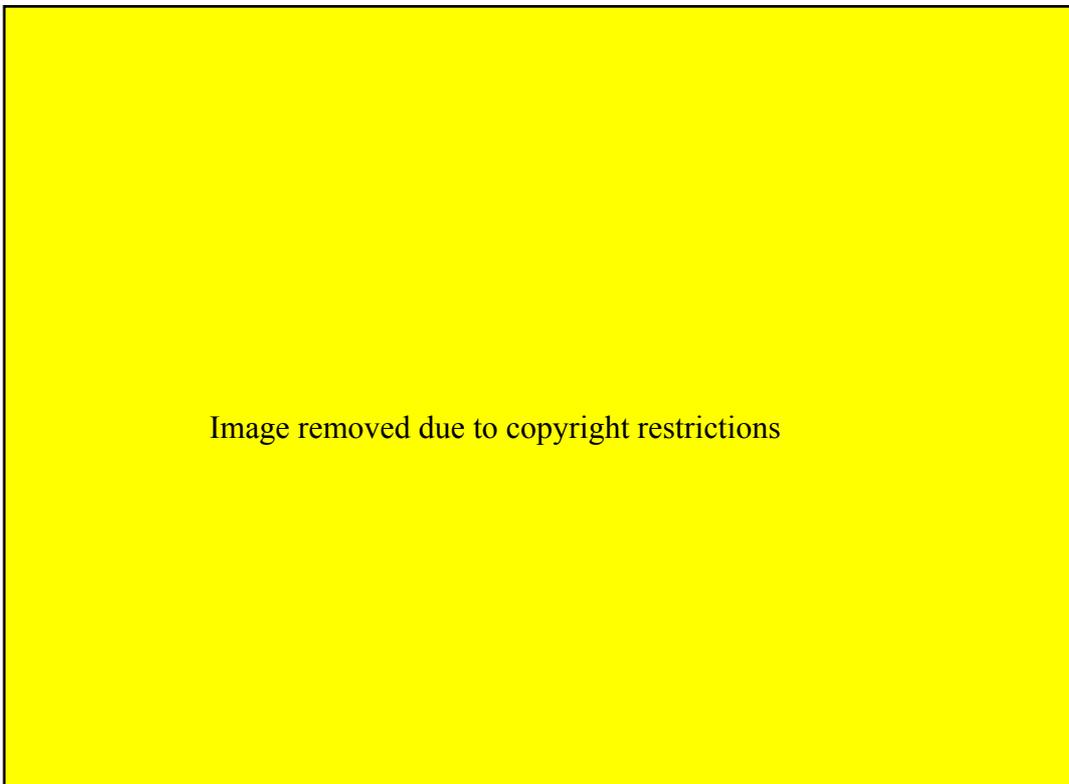


Plate 2.6.9 *Cleverness of the Swan*, 1956. Joseph Beuys.

In contrast to Twombly's emotional chatter or noise are drawings that emerged in the latter half of the twentieth century. These lack an autobiography but do seem to evolve in a linear fashion from those of the Renaissance. This body of work is

mechanical, de-personalised and lacking the poetic human qualities of the Abstract Expressionists (Pollock and Twombly). Warhol's (1930 - 1992) copies of copies of mass produced objects perhaps mirror the endless reproductions of drawings of the Renaissance masters. Yet Warhol's work seems more extreme because the perception has no traces of memory or touch of the individual. Lichtenstein's (1923 - 1997) comic-like images (Plate 2.6.10) employ all of the conventions of drawing, particularly the contour line and comments on art as style and about the possible uses of tradition. The clichéd images of Lichtenstein and Warhol create emotion that comes from being overfamiliar with the mechanical art approach of creating illusions of the actual world. For instance, Lichtenstein's comic book characters and Warhol's soup cans are familiar and easily accessible images that have been printed so many times so as to render them banal to our senses.



Plate 2.6.10 *Jet Pilot*, 1962. Roy Lichtenstein.

The most confronting contemporary examples of mechanical line as opposed to the beauty of the human made line, can be seen in the works of Martin (1912 -) (Plate 2.6.11) and Le Witt (1928 -) (Plate 1.4.1). Martin employs the simplest forms of drawing using the most conventional of tools: graphite pencils and ruler; single lines with hatching and cross-hatching. Le Witt and Martin belong to the movement known as Minimalism which, in painting and drawing, represented an attempt to integrate systems used in art to create the illusion of the third dimension

on a two dimensional surface and to reduce those systems down to their most basic conventions.

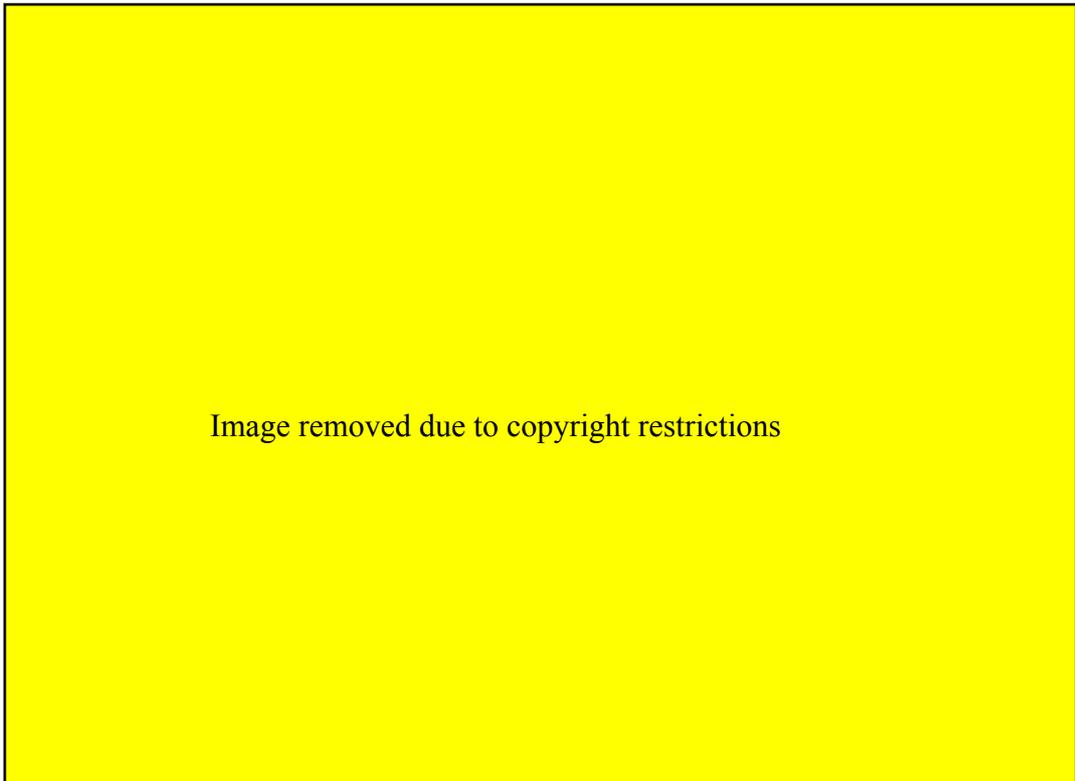


Plate 2.6.11 *Stone*, 1964. Agnes Martin.

In drawing, these are about the intellectual history of creating illusion; the system tested and employed to create such illusions. The degree of mechanical intervention gauges the import of the human touch, the balancing of Head, Heart and Hand of the individual artist. Le Witt advanced the expectations of the medium by having

other people (not necessarily artists) create the mechanical, pencilled lines according to his plans, ideas and instructions. “The artist as craftsman is eliminated from the start; personal touch becomes an irrelevant issue.” (Rose, 1976:76)

The debate stimulated by the Renaissance related to the intellectual capacity of drawing *vis à vis* fundamental skill, or the learned, mechanical, technical knowledge that may be argued to reach a conclusion in the Le Witt drawings. For Le Witt drawing is only a result made by others. Whose hand made the marks is unimportant. For the viewer there is no narrative, no object, no connection to the *real* world, only a perception attempted to be rationalised. What is left, no Heart, no Hand, only the concept (Head), only the intellect: “The idea becomes a machine that makes the art”. (Le Witt, 1975.79)

CHAPTER THREE

THE PERSONAL SIGNIFICANCE OF PLACE

3.1 Heritage and Childhood

3.1.1 The Parental Heritage

Born on June 12, 1955, the third son of Emrys (Rusty) and Dorothy (Dot) Rees in Cairns, Far North Queensland, the present researcher's father had also been born in Cairns to Welsh parents who had immigrated to Australia just after the turn of the century. Dorothy was from Ipswich in Southern Queensland, a third generation Australian, who moved to Cairns at the age of nineteen. There were, at the time, two older brothers, Russell, seven and Wayne, four years of age.

The family had just built and moved into a building in Sac Street in the centre of the Cairns township. Sac Street (later known as Grafton Street) at the time was the area owned by Chinese families and the site purchased by the Rees family had been a brothel and opium den; the street was filled with laundries and a Buddhist temple. The new building comprised a shop underneath and above, the family home until 2000. Dot and Rusty had a thriving motorcycle business, which expanded to cars, boats, pushbikes, trucks and tractors. Rusty was a local motorcycling enthusiast who built the Cairns Speedway Track, which later became the Cairns Show Grounds. Dot was the only female Pit Steward for the motorcycle racing and also administered the business. In such an environment, how did a son become an artist?

My father's family were artistic. They painted in oils, sculptured in wood, marble and metal, drew the world around them but kept all their work in their homes and spoke about their work in disparaging terms and apologised for their artistic output as if it were an evil, useless addiction. They all had real jobs of course that earned an income. These jobs were practical such as woodturning, carpentering, and taxi driving or were in business. We all knew there was no money in making art and even as a hobby it took up far too much time and expense. My

father was a mechanic and a successful businessman who employed his brothers and father. The model of success I came to understand was that his success was in some way attributed to the fact that he was not distracted by such hobbies.

The females of my family painted, sewed, embroidered, and crocheted and stayed at home but not my mother. She ran my father's office, was the accountant, the organiser of staff, public relations officer and the overseer of all buying and selling. Both my parents had only primary school education and saw schooling as something to go through and then leave as soon as possible. My brothers and I all worked in the business after school and during holiday breaks to begin learning the business. It was presumed that at fifteen when compulsory education finished we would all enter the family business. My two brothers did exactly that. One was mechanical like my father; the other good with bookkeeping like my mother. Even though I perceived both my parents as being reasonably intelligent they displayed an almost anti-intellectual attitude to formal education and learning from books. Business, practical experience and hard work were the avenues for success.

My earliest recollection of experiencing art was through materials. I remember working with commercially printed booklets that contained images outlined in thick, black lines and with colour that appeared when brushed with a wet brush. There was magic in the way these images appeared. More magic was contained in the drawers of my parents' office tables. Here were receipt books with carbonated sheets that transferred ghostly images from page to page, and an endless assortment of pens, pencils, stamp pads and erasers. My father made regular business trips to Japan and brought back Japanese technology – usually miniature radios, walkie-talkies, tape recorders and watches. These were wrapped in many layers of differing types of paper that I would collect and draw onto, tear and rearrange, glue and paint. Much of the paper was transparent and tissue-like in colours that were fascinating compared to the familiar brown paper that came in huge rolls and was used to wrap all things practical and beyond the festive.

Parallelling the beginning of a fascination with materials, was the change in the way I physically saw the world. At the age of six, the school nurse discovered that there was something wrong with my sight. The optometrist said I was short sighted and made me a pair of glasses. This moment was pivotal. I can remember quite clearly putting the glasses on in the front seat of my father's car and turning to this man beside me and saw my father as I had never seen him before. Detail at a distance and depth of space were new concepts and gave me a visual comparison that was accessible through the lenses and beyond their frames. Artist's Diary, 10th-13th November, 2000.

3.1.2 Business, Mechanics and Artist

During the 1960s the family business expanded and so did Cairns, which, by the end of the decade, had a population of 19,000 people. The Rees family business employed over sixty people and what had started as a business on a quarter acre block had now become a series of shops, hotel, motel, entertainment centre and car yard that covered three and one quarter acres. Conversations around the dinner table centred on the daily business activities of staff, sales, future plans and the next motorcycle race. Perhaps this kind of social modelling created an environment for a personal longing for something different beyond the geographical and family borders.

I have never been entirely comfortable with calling myself an “artist”. It has always seemed to be a term associated with two different types of people. One type seems to be associated with people of outstanding talent and recognition whose prime occupation is devoted to the creation of remarkable work that is printed in large volumes on glossy paper and hung on the walls of international museums and galleries in Paris, London and New York. Most of these artists were male, dead and had led lives filled with extraordinary circumstances.

For a boy growing up in a provincial town in Far North Queensland in Australia during the 1960s and 1970s, “real” artists were people outside of the life that those around me lived. The other kind of artist was people I met who seemed ordinary because their life and circumstances were familiar. Their claims of artistic gifts seemed exaggerated and lacking in substance and those around me treated them with suspicion and the word “artist” when used as a descriptor was filled with mocking and in an accent dramatic and reserved for talking about “southerners”. Southerners was a name for anyone who was not part of the Far North Queensland community. People from anywhere south of Cairns were believed to be opportunists who came north to exploit us. In the collective cultural cringe of Far North Queensland, southerners spoke differently about things we had not experienced. I believed, growing up, that southerners had access to a life that was somehow better and more privileged than the one that we experienced. Artist’s Diary, 10th-13th November, 2000.

3.1.3 Far North Queensland Landscape

Cairns is located on the coast over two thousand kilometres north of the State's capital city, Brisbane. To the east is the Great Barrier Reef with the Cairns area being surrounded by lush tropical rainforests and gentle green tablelands. During the 1960s and 70s the city was bordered by sugar cane farms; now these have mostly been turned into residential suburbs, golf courses and holiday apartments. To the north the coastline has miles of beaches and tourist resorts.

The strongest memories of Cairns are the heat, humidity and the constant rain. During the wet season (summer and autumn) the rain would sometimes continue from Christmas to Easter. Our street would often become a river of red mud and murky water filled with tadpoles and occasionally, a crocodile. If a cyclone was coming the energy in the air was magnificent – the preparation for possible disaster became a regular ritual, with the bath being filled, house windows and the shops large plate glass windows had to crisscrossed with masking tape and we would sit around the black and white television watching with excitement the direction the latest plotting of the cyclone's direction.

My family home was different from my school friends who lived in the suburbs. We lived always above the shop – no front or back yard – just the street to the front and the business's garage to the back. Drunken aboriginals would sit on the steps of our front entrance at night and coming home was always a challenge and a special experience for guests. Often fights would break out between warring aboriginal community members and from our verandah we would watch in great excitement. The view from our bedroom was street and shops but far in the distance you could see the blue grey mountaintops.

Holidays were spent on a friend's dairy farm outside Malanda and after Christmas we would join other families on Green Island. Both these places were very special and a contrast to living in town. Malanda was gentle, rolling green hills and it was possible to not see another person for miles around. I milked cows, shovelled shit, rolled in the grass and spent hours looking up at the endless blue sky. Green Island was a small island, small enough to walk around in half an hour. We would swim, dive on the reef and fish for hours each day. At night we would fish off the jetty and stare into a black ocean and up at star-studded dark blue sky.

It is the quiet of these places that I remember, places where you could be alone with such visual richness of the water, the coral, the sand, the fish and, the red earth, the green hills and the scents. Our house was never quiet. Sharing a bedroom with two older brothers, with the constant noise of traffic, passersby, panel beating, motor bikes and cars roaring and at night the yelling and screaming of aboriginals made home a place of considerable tension. The streetlights were always on and they shone through our bedroom shutters that were only shut when it rained. The bare tinned roof of our bedroom was sometimes hot enough to melt my plastic toys and many nights I slept on the cool tiles of the bathroom. I hated the heat and with my Welsh heritage I have very fair skin that was burnt each summer. I often felt I was born in the wrong place, always having to be inside during the heat of the day and having to suffer the embarrassment of wearing a t-shirt in the water. The tablelands were always cooler than Cairns and on Green Island I seemed to come alive in the early morning, late afternoon and at night. Artist's Diary, 10th-13th November, 2000.

3.1.4 Choosing a Career

During high school I chose the commercial stream of subjects, like my two brothers before me; these subjects included bookkeeping, typing and shorthand. But I also studied art. From the age of thirteen I was required to work after school and for part of the school holidays in the family business. It was presumed that after finishing school I would enter the family business and, naturally stay in Cairns.

Art and mathematics were favourite and most successful subjects. In 1970, my father took me on an overseas trip. Both my brothers had also had trips overseas and it was considered an important learning experience to see other places and cultures. During this time many Australians made the pilgrimage back to the “Home Country” of Britain.

In 1970 when I was in the middle of Year Ten my father announced one day that he and I were going “around the world”. This was both exciting and daunting. My father and I at that point were not close. He was deeply committed to the business and spent most of his time working

seven days a week. At night he and my mother would work on the books. My brothers at this stage were both working for the family company and in six months time I was supposed to join the business full-time. I remember my father thought that I was a “bit too big for my boots” and needed to see how the “other half lived”. Spending two months just in the company of my father seemed like hell but I was eager to see the world.

We travelled through the Philippines, Singapore, Hong Kong, Japan, Britain, Canada and the United States of America. My father had business friends he had met before overseas and also made new contacts through the Lion’s Club, an international organization of business people. We were still selling motorbikes and cars at that stage and had to visit the head offices of such places as Honda, Suzuki, Kawasaki and British Leyland. I was very awkward in these places – wasn’t at all interested in motorbikes or cars and especially, their engines. But in-between these factories and businesses we drove through wonderful cities, countryside, met interesting people and as part of the overall experience, went to some art galleries and national museums.

I loved these places and sensed my father’s discomfort and urgency to rush through exhibitions. In contrast to him, I felt very comfortable and was surprised at my knowledge of certain art works and places. I felt empowered that I knew more than he did about certain things and at last had seen him as slightly vulnerable and more as a person than as my father.

When I returned to Cairns, my perceptions had all changed. My friends were concerned with football and television and I felt a widening gap between their experience and mine. There was no way that I was going to spend the rest of my life working in the family business and because I now knew my father better, was more determined to set my own path. I didn’t stop studying at Year Ten but continued through to matriculation, sensing that an education might get me out of Cairns and out of the family business.

My typing teacher was Pat Miller (O’Shane) who later studied law to become a solicitor and eventually, a barrister. She was the first aboriginal teacher in Australia and I identified with her feelings that she was an outsider. She had enormous courage, was quite political and outspoken. I adored her and she would take time to listen to my stories of foreign places and encouraged me to do what I wanted to do with my life. In 1971 she let a few of us read a controversial book called “The Little Red School Book” – I can’t remember the details of the book but it was quite revolutionary in its discussion of politics and sex. The trouble caused by her showing my friends and I the book was memorable. A scandal – it hit the papers across the nation and especially in Cairns. Police were called in and questions asked. I remember the racist comments, the fears of communism and the discussions of sex education. Pat left the school to study law but I had the bad taste of narrowminded

attitudes in the north. My parents were quite surprisingly liberal for Cairns. Pat's father was a friend of the family and mum and dad were very supportive of her actions and dinnertime conversation centred on the issues raised in the local papers. I had to get out of this town. Artist's Diary, 10th-13th November, 2000.

3.2 Foundations of an Art Education

3.2.1 The Peer Group

At the end of matriculation I was awarded several teaching scholarships in Commerce, Primary and Art, and a scholarship to study art at the state Art College. I chose the art scholarship that was for three years of study for a Diploma of Teaching (Secondary Art) at the College of Advanced Education, Kelvin Grove in Brisbane. The scholarship offered a weekly living amount of nineteen dollars for the three years but, as part of the contract, the incumbent had to agree to teach anywhere in Queensland after graduation. For this scholarship holder the implications of such a clause were hardly noticed. What was important was moving to Brisbane and securing enough money to live on for three years. In other words it offered independence from family and family obligations.

I decided to study art teaching rather than straight art because art teaching was a sensible compromise. I could still learn about art but also get a job after finishing the course. Also, I wasn't confident that I had the talent to be an artist. I had scored well in the high school art subject but wasn't as talented as my mate, Vince who went on to art college.

The first day at Kelvin Grove was daunting. My group seemed to made up of such ordinary people, not the artistic types I was hoping for. Then I met Lindy Lee; she had already completed two years of an art qualification at the art college, was older, self-assured and had that quality of an art student that I was looking for. Anna was the next to be found. She had done two years of an Arts degree, was Italian, wore lots of scarves and talked about sex like a sophisticated woman. Kathy from my high school art class also joined the group. She and Vince and I shared a house. Vince's friends from Art College were more like the

type I had expected to find amongst my peers. I was embarrassed to tell them that I was studying art education and was to become a teacher. Art teachers were those who were not good enough to be artists.

Vince eventually dropped out of Art College and later studied to be an art teacher. He now teaches part-time in Melbourne but has not continued with his painting practice. Kathy took nearly ten years to complete her studies and now works in the hospitality industry in Cairns. Lindy Lee went on to be a full-time artist and has an international reputation for her art practice. Anna is still a high school teacher at the school she attended as a student. Artist's Diary, 10th-13th November, 2000.

3.2.2 Queensland Art Education in the 1970s

The early 1970s were an exciting time for art education in Queensland. The newly formed Colleges of Advanced Education offered an alternative tertiary education to the universities and a lower entrance score that opened up post secondary education to greater numbers of high school graduates. Art was offered as a matriculation subject in every Queensland high school and the number of students selecting art was steadily increasing as more students opted to stay at school further than Year Ten.

However, the content of art courses at Kelvin Grove, the only institution that prepared art teachers in Queensland was sadly lacking:

I was not impressed with what was being taught at Kelvin Grove. Lecturers with very little academic experience taught the education subjects. Most of them seemed to be ex-school principals and conducted lectures like high school classes. Most of the subjects required rote learning with very little time for expanding ideas. I barely passed my education subjects which included such mind expanding subjects as "Chalk Board Writing" – a subject in which we did just that – learnt how to write on a chalk board in a room filled with concertinaing boards.

The art education subjects were almost as banal. All of our lecturers were ex-high school art teachers who went to some effort to remind us that we were not artists but becoming art teachers. They were lovely people but not the kind of role models that inspired. Very little formal art education theory was examined and we simply worked through Lowenfeld's book "Creative and Mental Growth" which mainly examined the artistic stages of pre-adolescent American students – we were suppose to be high school art teachers. Art history was chronologically taught starting with Neolithic art, meandered around Egyptian art, celebrated the Renaissance and quietly speculated about the twentieth century.

My interests centred on the studio art lectures and art history. These subjects balanced my average marks in Education and my second teaching area, English. The first year had quite solid drawing and painting subjects but these constituted less than a third of all studies. The third year required a major but, as drawing was not offered as a major, I chose ceramics.

If art materials are genderized, then ceramics and sculpture were the manly visual arts. Large heavy forms and lots of bricks and high temperatures seemed a more masculine activity appropriate for a nineteen-year-old male. We got dirty with brown clay and talked about combustion, chemical reactions and power of heat. We carted bricks and fired kilns with kerosene, gas and the occasional, cow manure. The Craft debate was hotting up and the distinction between traditional fine arts and the newly elevated craft based arts was being challenged on the national and international level.

We also made the most horrible large organic forms that had no critical, analytical foundations and were destined to be around for hundreds of years. Process had more importance than aesthetics. Lindy and I both did ceramics. Artist's Diary, 10th-13th November, 2000.

3.2.3 Experiencing Paris

In 1973, through my father's involvement in the Cairns Lion's Club, I was sponsored to travel to Sweden as part of the International Lion's Youth Speaks for Australia Project. Lindy Lee was also part of this project and we were both billeted by families in Stockholm at the end of 1973 and early 1974. After several weeks in Stockholm, Lindy and I decided to leave our Swedish families and travel to Paris.

Sweden was quite bleak in winter, but a good experience, especially seeing snow for the first time. I lived with two wonderful families who

went to a lot of trouble to ensure that I saw as much of Swedish culture as possible. Lindy was not so fortunate. Her family mainly left her to her own devices. We were both conscious of the fact that just south of Sweden was so many interesting European cultural centres. Our time was limited so we decided to go to Paris for a week and then join the rest of the Australian Lion's youth when they returned home. I was eighteen and the Swedish Lion's Club was worried that I was too young to be adventuring on my own. But we were determined and booked our tickets and flew to Paris.

Paris was so much warmer than Stockholm and we were able to move around the city quite easily. Both of us had travelled before but Paris was special. It gave a context for all the examples cited in our art history classes and there was a cultural experience far different from that we had experienced in our home country and especially Brisbane. This was a magical time for two Australian teenagers in Europe. We were independent, free from parental responsibilities and the Lion's Club and eager to see things we were interested in. We were both convinced that our lives would centre on art and here we were in an art centre. We were tourists but felt that we had greater purpose than touring, we were experiencing the sights and places that were the very stuff of our learning and our futures.

One day we sat in Café Voltaire where Picasso and his colleagues had sat decades before, discussing art and looking across at the Seine and we thought at that point that we were on the same journey as artists before us and created glimpses of our future when we were also artists. We visited Notre Dame Cathedral, the Louvre and the Tour Eiffel and were fascinated by all that we saw. Each place created an enormous impression but none more so than Notre Dame for it was in this place that I experienced something so overwhelming that it influenced the rest of my life.

Stockholm was a great experience but Paris was the highlight of this trip. It marked the beginning of my adulthood and signalled a kind of determination to seek my own path and reassured me that there was so much more than the world I had experienced in Queensland. It also gave me confidence in the kind of life I sensed I wanted. I knew there was a world where you didn't have to apologise for being an artist or interested in things cultural.

Sharing these experiences with Lindy also reassured me that I wasn't alone. Artist's Diary, 10th-13th November, 2000.

3.2.4 The Beginning Art Teacher

At the end of 1975, I graduated from the Kelvin Grove College of Advanced Education and realised the full implications of the contract signed with the Queensland Education Department. Potential graduands had been sent a form on which three geographical areas from a possible five within the state were to be selected and these were then put into a priority list. My first choice was for the Brisbane metropolitan area, followed by areas around the State's capital and the third choice was the home area of Far North Queensland. I was given Biloela, a country town of two and a half thousand people in Central Queensland, far from the coast and far away from Brisbane and Cairns. Biloela was the place of jokes amongst my peers as the worst place to which someone could be sent to. Lindy was spared. She was offered the first full time scholarship to stay on at Kelvin Grove to work as a tutor.

I packed up my new little van, strapped a spinning wheel to the roof and headed off to Biloela. I didn't want to leave my house and friends in Brisbane and I certainly didn't want to go to Biloela but I knew I had no choice. The good times were over. I arrived at my new home late one night in January but missed it several times. There was only one street light in the town and I couldn't believe that this was a town, there must be more to it, but there wasn't. I met the principal the next day and he informed me that I would have to cut my hair before teaching in his school. My hair was long enough to touch my belt. I moved into a "teachers' house" with other teachers in a street where all the single teachers lived, into a house that looked exactly like all the other houses in the street. I was twenty and this was not the life I have envisaged for myself. I knew I had to get out of there as soon as possible. I hated the place.

Biloela was hot and dry. Schoolteachers surrounded me but I was determined to make a go of it and threw myself into teaching. I spent six days a week at the school and two nights a week I taught art classes as part of the adult education program bought a motorbike and rode into the country but I wasn't happy. Loved my students and tried to share with them my enthusiasm for the visual arts. I tried to make art several times but had lost the passion for my own work and fell into despair about the ordinary, boring life I was living. Tried to be normal like the

people around me, fell in love, got engaged to another teacher and dreamed of a life far away from football, owning a house, settling down and being a good passive teacher.

Lindy told me of an organization she had joined called the “Australia China Friendship Group”. I drove to Brisbane (a twelve-hour trip each way) for a meeting of the group, joined up and heard about how China was sponsoring people to experience the “new” China. Lindy and I both applied for the sponsorship and were both awarded a one-month trip at the end of my first year at Biloela. Lindy got ill and couldn’t go so after the last school day of the year I flew with a group of fifteen people to Hong Kong and then into China.

This was an exciting time to be in the People’s Republic, Chairman Mao had just died and the country was in turmoil as different groups were trying to take over control. The Gang of Four, led by Mao’s widow, had just been imprisoned and we were one of the first groups of foreigners to be allowed into the country. We were so privileged to be in China at this time and were taken into factories and schools but more importantly I got to walk into tombs, freshly opened, to see the dusted magnificent sculptures and artefacts of an ancient civilisation. I met the new Chairman Hu and had breakfast with Han Su Yin, the Eurasian author and doctor who started the “Barefoot Doctor” program and whose life had been made into a Hollywood film. I saw myself as someone who had been given so much and I certainly wasn’t going to waste it in some small backward town.

I returned to Biloela with a plan to get out of my situation. The first week back at school I showed slides of China, mainly of the art and the people and the following week the local newspaper had an article that announced that the local art teacher was teaching communism to students. My principal banned me from talking about China and threatened to send me further “out west” in the next teaching year. This strengthened my resolve to learn more about art and to change my life. I wrote to universities in Canada, USA and Britain, saved furiously, poured over the prospectuses from different universities and convinced Lindy to come with me.

Apart from wanting to get out of Biloela and teaching, I felt I lacked a depth of knowledge in art practice and art history and theory. I knew very little more than the students I was teaching. My three-year diploma also seemed worthless compared to my teaching colleagues who had degrees in science and other disciplines. I felt I had more of a post-secondary education rather than a university education. At that time there was nowhere in Australia that you could get a degree in art practice. So based on these reasons I made a choice to change my future. Artist’s Diary, 10th-13th November, 2000.

3.2.5 Changing Directions

At the end of 1977, I resigned from the Queensland Education Department after fulfilling two of the three required years with the department. I had been accepted into a four year Fine Arts degree at the University of Calgary, Alberta, Canada to start in the Winter session of 1978 with two years advanced standing based on the diploma of teaching. In this degree I majored in ceramics and had minor studies in drawing and art history. With enough savings to last eighteen months, the two academic years needed to complete the degree had to be compressed into three sessions rather than the usual four.

It was minus forty degrees Celsius when I arrived in Calgary, two days before the session started. This was quite a contrast to Biloela.

I had chosen this course for several reasons. Marilyn Levine, a contemporary ceramicist was going to teach at Calgary University (she later decided not to go to Canada) – I had been offered a place with advanced standing, could afford the fees and I had liked the glimpses of Canada I saw when I travelled with my father. The program was very broad and allowed a wide variety of subjects.

My priority was to get as much out of the degree in the shortest time possible. My finances were limited and my entry visa did not allow me to gain any income. I had wanted to major in drawing but drawing was not offered as a major. As I had advanced standing in ceramics I took it as a major and selected subjects in drawing as a minor. I also took as much art history as my program would allow – trying to compensate for what I felt I was lacking.

Through the insights of my ceramics professor I began combining my drawing materials and techniques with the materials and traditions of clay. The most overpowering images of Calgary was the snow-covered landscape. From my ceramics studio I could see the Rocky Mountains – the stuff of postcards – and it was these images that I started to create on clay. White porcelaneous clay replaced paper, and I found ceramic pastels, ceramic felt pens and pencils. What I found exciting was the edges between two traditions – drawing and ceramics – two dimensions with three dimensions – the multiple and the one off, craft and fine art, tradition and innovation – I was finding my own niche as an artist.

Lindy left after one session and went to Italy and then England to study painting. Left alone without her meant I developed more on my own and formed a vision that was not necessarily shared between us. As I

had noticed in northern China and reaffirmed in Calgary was the lack of strong colour in winter – tonal variations defined the landscape with the reflected blue of the sky making subtle blue shadows on undulating snow covered natural surfaces. But there were too many new adventures happening in art for me to delve too closely to the environmental changes around me. The abundance of the “ready made” and “found objects” was popular amongst contemporary artists and fed my fascination with office supplies developed as a child. The other element that was surfacing in my art practice was the factor of being “Australian” and a foreigner. The ceramic base of my structures was strongly influenced by the Canadian landscape in winter but the surface layers with different glazes and decals were about illusions of both “real” objects and my identity.

Through exhibitions in Calgary I gained some interest from the art and ceramic community and was offered a scholarship to take a masters degree but I was homesick and needed to return to Cairns. It had been seven years since I left Cairns and I felt now I could return home confident and informed. Artist’s Diary, 10th-13th November, 2000.

3.3 The Professional Art Educator

3.3.1 Commitment to the Profession

I returned to Cairns in July 1979 and within two days was given a job by the Queensland Department of Education at Trinity Bay High School. The school had seven art teachers already, a large art department for a secondary institution. The role was to take over the ceramics section and to write new subjects in craft, which was just about to be introduced into the school. Cairns had grown considerably since I had been away and the city and surrounding area was becoming popular with international tourists.

I remember flying into Cairns in the middle of the day and seeing the huge ocean and the vivid greenness of the landscape. I was surprised at how small the hills were and how tiny the city seemed and the heat as I left the plane was so overwhelming – and this was the middle of winter. I was twenty-four, felt I was sophisticated, well educated, had some talent, was totally broke, arrogant but strangely committed to becoming a professional art educator. The insecurities I had about my abilities in both education and art when I left Biloela were now replaced with a confidence in who and what I was. I enjoyed my job and within two years became Head of Department, people told me I was “going

places”. I bought an interesting house, got involved in local art societies, worked with a group called Cairns Artists United, helped get together a community art centre. Artist’s Diary, 10th-13th November, 2000.

3.3.2 Combining the Roles of Artist and Art Educator

For the next four years I had a number of exhibitions in Far North Queensland in both ceramics and drawing. After one year I held a two-person exhibition with friend and colleague Jude Marsland. This exhibition was titled “Works on Paper”.

The first exhibition after Calgary was kind of a test. Could I in fact work as an art teacher and still carry on artistic practice? The question was not really about enough time but a prioritizing of time. To be a full-time educator is a valid excuse for not being able to produce art and one often used by my colleagues but has never rung true for me – it is an excuse not a good enough reason. This exhibition was proof that the two roles could be combined but what I did learn from this experience was the importance of control over the exhibition.

By the morning of the exhibition I had set up my work while my co-exhibitor chatted and continually reassessed which works to hang. By the early afternoon she had still not hung any works so I left her alone to play her part. When I arrived before the opening I found that the entire space had been changed around and my work repositioned. All of my twenty drawings had been placed on one wall and her work (now swollen to nearly fifty works) were arranged over the remaining three walls. I felt this new arrangement made my work look less significant and the sequence of my work has been changed and not as I had intended.

This lesson was once again repeated the next year when I sent work to Townsville for the First North Queensland Ceramic Conference and Exhibition. The work this time was ceramic drawings – these pieces were flat slabs of porcelain with hanging apparatus on the back and intended to be hung, like traditional drawings, on the walls of the gallery. When I arrived at the exhibition the curator had placed the work on bricks on the floor. This was the kind of rustic interpretation of ceramic display that was popular at the time, a post-hippie organic view of the nature of the material.

Exhibiting, like teaching, needed a structured, controlled environment in which the audience was considered.

I bought a house that had been the studio of a local architect. I converted the garage to a ceramic studio and altered the upstairs living space into a drawing studio and this in itself was evidence of my commitment to being a practising artist. It was possible to combine

both roles but it did require a discipline to achieve. My work as an art educator was defined by set hours in a day, terms, sessions and organized deadlines - as an artist the time was loose, undefined and as I worked at home, interruptions and distractions were frequent and a flow of working and contemplation was much harder to achieve. Artist's Diary, 10th-13th November, 2000.

3.3.3 Canada and Post-Graduate Study

In 1983 I applied for and was granted, a Full Time Post-Graduate Scholarship from the Queensland State Government as I had been accepted into the Master of Arts in Art Education at the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design (NSCAD) in Halifax, Nova Scotia, Canada; the two-year degree was by coursework and thesis. NSCAD was originally started by Anna Leonwens, the governess made famous in the movie, "The King and I" with the money given to her by the King of Siam. In this college located in several early eighteenth century warehouses on the shores of Halifax harbour I completed the degree in just less than a year.

I had heard about NSCAD while at student at Calgary University – it was seen as "the" place to study because of the influential artists who lectured there and because it was the leading institution on conceptual art (the application form for undergraduate students required them to create an artwork using a typewriter as a tool). I liked the degree because the course was set in an art college rather than in a university so I believed the emphasis would be on art rather than on education and this turned out to be true. The degree also dictated that postgraduate art education students must also be artists – art education students had to exhibit as well as write a thesis.

The degree was one year course work and one year thesis writing, as I had been given only one year off I wanted to do the whole course in that time. I had to carefully plan and be extremely disciplined. It was such a joy to be able to take a studio in drawing alongside of my art education subjects.

I lived in a highrise apartment and from my small windows I had a view of an area of parkland beside the apartment block. Halifax seemed to be always wintry (in the twelve months I was there some amount of snow covered the ground for more than nine months). The snow

covered ground that I saw from my window each morning showed evidence of nightly snow fall or melting which exposed or covered foliage, tracks (bicycle, human and animal foot prints, rubbish). My ceramics experience had exposed me to working in layers (clay, underglaze, glaze, decals and lustres) and this method seemed appropriate for the kind of drama that evidenced each morning on the field. Instead of glaze I started to use layers of transparent vegetable parchment with each being fixed and glued to laminate up to twenty layers of drawings. These were torn, scratched and cut back to expose various elements. This was the starting point for the drawings that then took on their own life into a world of floating and grounded forms that loosely referenced landscape but ideally recreated something else in the individual viewer's mind.

The geographical areas around the city of Halifax were the antithesis of the Cairns environment. What was common was the large sky, the water and gentle hills but the colours were so distinctly different and I began to understand the paradox of light in dark and, colour in shadow and light.

My thesis was an intimate exploration of a first year art college drawing class in which I was a participant and an observer. I chose this level of class because it was the next step on from the high school students I was teaching but it gave me more of an insight into the kinds of drawing conventions that are experienced to form a foundation for future practice. Artist's Diary, 10th-13th November, 2000.

3.3.4 Moving South

At the end of 1987 I once again resigned from the Queensland Education Department and took up employment at the Saint George Campus of the Sydney College of Advanced Education in Sydney. In 1990 the college became part of the University of New South Wales and in 1997 I was transferred from the St. George Campus to the School of Design Studies at the College of Fine Arts.

After returning from Halifax I was becoming bored with teaching at the secondary level and wanted something more challenging. I felt as though I had done as much as I could in Cairns both in exhibiting and teaching. Sydney seemed like an exciting city – I had good friends there. Lindy was exhibiting regularly and making quite a name for herself and I saw the College of Fine Arts and set a goal to try to eventually get a job there teaching drawing. I wanted to be a practising artist and an art lecturer.

My job at St. George was demanding. I had to teach a broad range of subjects including art education, drawing, ceramics and contextual

subjects for craft students. I had not envisaged the amount of administration that was required and this seemed to take over my life and the studio practice became less and less. I rented a studio space next to Lindy but found I was unable to make time to make work. Without solid art practice I felt in some way my self-image was diminished and once again I was just an art educator – the constant dilemma in my life.

In order to return to my studio practice I took a sabbatical in New York. Like Paris, New York seemed to offer so much and it did. New York in my romanticised way represented an important step in the ritual of becoming a successful artist. By a chance encounter with a friend from NSCAD I visited Columbia University and saw their gallery (Macy Gallery). This gallery seemed an opportune location – it was embedded in a very respectable university (which would impress my university colleagues) and this was New York, which had some importance for the art community. Timing was everything and the day I submitted an application and set of slides of my work, someone else had just cancelled their show for June.

I had only three months to make all the work needed for a one person show – this was a daunting thought which became even more difficult when my mother suddenly died and then my grieving father came to stay with me in New York. After he left I still had produced no work and only two months remained. I worked on images of Nova Scotia, New York and Far North Queensland and completed nearly thirty finished drawings. The show was successful in that I got it together. Surprisingly, all the works of North Queensland sold, none of the New York works sold, and only a few of the Nova Scotian works were purchased. This contrasted to the show I had soon afterwards in Cairns in which all the New York works and most of the Nova Scotian works sold. Audiences wanted to own images of places less familiar.

Perhaps at this time I also started to recognize certain factors in my own abilities or lack of abilities. I understood that I had the capacity to make art, to be an artist but I needed external pressures and timelines in order to come up with the goods. I had to put myself into a situation to create a responsibility to produce. This clearly corresponds to being an institutionalised artist and not one who makes simply for the sake of making.

I am driven by the external forces that produce an outcome other than just the drawings. These outcomes are job orientated centring on my profession as an educator of artists, designers and art educators. It is the external structures that drive the production of work but there is something entirely different that drives the content of the drawings. In some way I am looking for failure rather than success. Artist's Diary, 10th-13th November, 2000.

3.4 Educator, Writer and Artist

3.4.1 Tertiary Educator

I had been a qualified and practising educator all my professional life with over twenty-seven years of experience. Since 1988 I have taught exclusively in the tertiary education sector although the client base has changed repeatedly over this time, which has meant a change in the type of content delivered. From 1988 to 1997 the students were mainly those who were studying to be primary or secondary teachers or those whose interest was in becoming craft practitioners. In 1997, I moved into a School of Design Studies that required a distinct way of working and an opportunity to rethink how my expertise could accommodate a philosophically different way of thinking about artistic practice and product.

Working with designers, design educators and students who wanted to be designers was quite confrontational at first. Design, like Art is such a loaded term and carries with it the expectation of function, practicality and mass production and it is these elements that distinguishes it so much from traditional fine art endeavours. I felt like a stranger in a strange land teaching design but gradually understood that design is part of the art continuum. It was also some comfort to learn that the term “designe” originated in the Renaissance and meant drawing. This gave me a window to reinvent myself and made the connection between my practice and my new content areas.

There is also the feeling that I am in the right place at the right time. The edges between art, craft and design are quite interesting at the moment because the old rules no longer seem to apply especially with digital technology overlapping most knowledge areas, including the visual arts. Consumers are buying practical domestic objects and displaying them in a way that paintings and drawings were once collected and displayed. Contemporary designers such as Frenchman Phillippe Starck, and Australians Marc Newson and Susan Cohn have reached a cult status equal to their art contemporaries. At the Centre Pompidou recently I saw Marc Newson’s car, bicycle, cologne and dish rack exhibited in the main foyer alongside of a Picasso sculpture show. The dialogue between the two exhibitors’ works diminished the role of practical function and fell more into aesthetic and material concerns. A local example of this kind of dialogue is evident at the Object Gallery, Centre for Contemporary Craft in Sydney. The curators treat designed

objects as a unique, one off and honour the pieces in the same way that art objects are usually treated.

The experience of new ways to resolve differences and similarities in art, craft and design through my professional teaching role has made me consider more carefully the way my artwork is viewed and presented. I am thinking more about the drawing as an object in its final finished state and more about what happens to each work after it is considered resolved on my drawing table. It is not just the type of framing and hanging that is involved in my thinking but how the viewer and hopefully the consumer might interact with the object in the future, in their domestic life.

Designed objects have less distance with their owners due to the fact that they involve direct touch and it is this aspect of design that I am beginning to consider in the treatment of the finished drawings. As design educator I am conscious that students are dealing less with real materials and more with the virtual – that there is a perceptual shift from the real and the virtual and perhaps this also addresses a concern or a challenge for my exhibition. Artist's Diary, 10th-13th November, 2000.

3.4.2 Writing and Illustrating Books

From 1984 until 1987, I was the art writer for the Cairns Post. Weekly and fortnightly articles were submitted on local exhibitions, conferences and lectures. Articles based on local craftspeople and artists of Far North Queensland were also printed in professional journals for craft and art. I established a professional organization named the Peninsula Art Educators' Association and wrote and edited a quarterly journal for that association. In 1990 with co-author, Rhana Devenport, I published an art textbook titled Artifacts, Book One with McGraw-Hill Book Company. This book won the Andrew Fabrinny Award for best designed secondary school book at the Australian Book Publishers' Annual Awards and has sold more than 15,000 copies. In 1998 I wrote and illustrated another high school art textbook, Artifacts, Book Two – an exploration of drawing in art and design, for the same publishers.

I have always hated writing, its internal structures and rules have continued to be a mystery to me – I often feel like I write with a thick crayon – crude and awkward – in a style at its best, prosaic. At twelve years of age I was diagnosed as dyslexic and art seemed a good way to use the visual as my communication skill rather than the discursive. The spoken and written word has created great fear in me. As a teenager I felt that going into an art career would save me the embarrassment of ever having to write or speak to an audience. It seems now ironic that a major part of my life has been about writing and speaking to a critical audience.

However, like my art practice, the implements for creating images in both the visual and the written have been important links to achieving the production of ideas. I cannot draw unless my pencils are sharpened and I cannot write unless I have a pen with the right feel and flow of ink.

Illustrating the second book was quite timely as I had just moved into a design school and the area of illustration normally falls within the category of design. Illustrating was an interesting experience different in approach to the style and type of drawing I am used to. In most cases I had only twenty-four hours to create a drawing that related to the accompanying text and had to fit into a particular size and gap made by the text. Over a hundred drawn illustrations were done and these were continually adjusted by the publishers to fit the configuration of text and typography. By the final layout of the book my original drawings had been altered in size, colour and shape. The processes of computer scanning and printing and the aesthetic decisions of others involved in the publishing of the book created a product different to the original.

When I saw the first copy of the book, I recognized my drawings on the glossy pages but there was a strange distancing between the memory of the original and the reproduction – what was most distinctive was the lack of the material qualities of the originals- a kind of bland rendering that took away the potency. The sense of human touch, the hand, my hand, was missing. Artist's Diary, 10th-13th November, 2000.

3.4.3 Exhibiting and Artmaking

Over the last twenty-seven years I have exhibited in several countries in different mediums through solo, small group and large group exhibitions (Appendix A). The materials have included photography, painting, ceramics, mixed media and drawing and these works have been displayed in Canada (Halifax, Calgary) the United States

of America (New York) and Australia (Cairns, Townsville, Brisbane, Sydney). I have also curated several exhibitions in some of which I was also an exhibitor.

The act of exhibiting is an important part of the making process and for me marks the end of the process. It also marks the beginning of the next step of the ongoing act of art production. Generally, by the time the work is on the walls of a gallery I have already started a new series so the works on exhibition represent where I have been and not necessarily where I am going.

I am conscious of the fact that the exhibition must be well designed and requires the direct input of the artist at each and every stage of the exhibition design. This indicates that the artist speculates about how the works on the whole might be interpreted by an audience and to create an environment in which the desired communication between artwork and viewer is maximized. Each detail needs to be considered from the invitation which sets a certain perception of the kind of experience the audience will encounter, to the framing, placement of work, to any text accompanying the work. Artist's Diary, 10th-13th November, 2000.

3.5 Directions and Indicators for the Current Research

3.5.1 The Forming of a Personal Perception

3.5.1.1 Physical Realities.

Perhaps one of the most influential moments was the memory of wearing my first pair of glasses. The realization of two visual worlds, quite apart from the influence of impressionistic styles of the twentieth century, gave a young mind a comparative view of the world that was instantly available, through the prescription glass and just beyond the frame. Logically, for someone who draws or paints, this is an enormous advantage for I can see in my artwork throughout my life that I have constantly explored the difference between the focussed and the more subtle, dissolving forms that have constructed the content of my work. The age at which this occurred must also be important because the initial experience was early in my

life and therefore became a basis for investigating naturally. It seems logical that a style of working would be impressionistic, because that view of the world was already known first-hand and explored. The distant view is a noticeable element of my drawings and this conceivably is reflective of the background/foreground shift of pre and post glasses.

3.5.1.2 Family and Community

In spite of, rather than because of, the familiar role models presented within the immediate family structure, an identity was formed. Aunties, uncles and grandparents provided examples of artistic practitioners who may not have been financially successful, but were people who wove aspects of artmaking into their lives. What was lacking in the family was sought elsewhere. The continual search for a community of like-minded people became the stimulus to take the initiative to seek out places and people. Educational institutions are perhaps a logical safe ground for finding a welcoming community and offered the opportunity for a kind of freedom away from family expectations. However, educational communities also have their expectations.

3.5.1.3 Image of Self

The autobiography mapped out the struggle to feel comfortable in the role of artist and traced out the antecedents to how an almost impossible, romanticised view of artist was constructed. This view of artist has its roots in the

...time-honoured tropes of reclusive and obsessive studio practice [which] belong[s] to the mythologies of the melancholy and mercurial male genius which were honed in the late Italian Renaissance... (Petherbridge, 2003)

How does one reconcile the romanticized construction of artist with the reality of one's own life?

What is the worth of an artist? Measuring one's own worth is a difficult task. In an institution, standards are measured and clear indications are made about passing or failing. In fact, institutions go to much greater effort to explain the latter rather than the former. I am not sure of how an artist's success is really measured; it is too personal, subjective. But within an institution I do know how failure is measured.

The collective mentality is about evidence of art production, recognizable outcomes within quite narrow, but commonly held belief systems that determine importance and more particularly, prestige. Where you get your degree from, where you exhibit and where you publish and by whom become the currency for the degree of worth of outcomes. For the artist, trained within an institution, the goal is not so much about qualitative reflection and experimentation but about the quantity, frequency, recognition and placement of art outcomes. These are external factors driving creative outcomes.

As an institutionalised artist, I note that these external pressures drive my production. The result is a kind of project mentality, contained within a limited time period with expected physical evidence. Setting a date for an exhibition, declaring that the event will happen to my peers, speculation about what the community will think and, catering to a perceived pervading style are all conscious drivers of my art production. Therefore, I could not perceive of myself as an artist without the evidence of recent exhibitions. To what degree then are these external

pressures driving the creative production. To what degree am I conscious or unconscious of their importance?

Apart from recognising these realities about my own constructed image there is also some growing confidence about my own vision apart from categories of contemporary style, content and process. It is this small amount of conviction to my own vision that allows survival of a personal belief system that allows me some dignity and claim to the community of artists outside of the institution and academic structure to which I belong. Might there be an intersection between artistic worth and integrity?

3.6 Pivotal Geographical Environments

The autobiography and the biographical details (Appendix A) note a long list of places both within Australia and overseas either visited or lived in. It would seem that most of the travelling was not only by design but also by opportunity, a parent's insistence, serendipity, a connection with an organization or one location leading to another. Each one of these opportunities offered a solution to a personal dilemma: studying in Canada offered the opportunity to leave the life of a teacher in a small country town; a scholarship to Brisbane afforded escape from the family expectations and; an employment opportunity in Sydney presented new challenges at a time when change was so desired. The autobiography indicates a kind of connectivity between each place and how each informed the other. Amongst these variables of culture, climate, time and experience were two common elements: the traveller and Cairns, the starting point (and often the finishing point) for most of the journeys.

Why are certain destinations remembered in more detail? If changing geographical location was a solution to personal dilemmas, all destinations would be equally important, but that is not evidenced in the autobiography for it seems that in the detail particular geographical locations are deemed pivotal and of greater importance to the evolving perceptions.

Therefore it would seem Cairns, Far North Queensland is the most important location as it is the place where all the initial perceptions were constructed and these became the basis for most future comparisons. Cairns was also home for nearly twenty-five years and remains the dominant location in terms of time.

Destinations other than Cairns were places, on reflection, where quantum changes occurred. Nova Scotia, as explained in the autobiography, is the place that visually made such an impact by its light, colouring and climatic atmospheres. It is also the destination in which greater focus was achieved within academic studies. France, less by its physical appearance but more by what it represented also appears to have been significant in the forming of a perception of art and artists. Surprisingly, Sydney must also be deemed pivotal. It is surprising because before this study it may not have been considered important, as it is the place of *now* not necessarily of memory. It is not some exotic, far away place but the place now considered home for fifteen years. To a lesser degree, China, Sweden and the United States of America have played their part in forming of attitudes and ideas but perhaps by comparison did not offer experiences that were as formative as the aforementioned geographical locations.

Cairns, Far North Queensland, Halifax, Nova Scotia and Paris, France are sealed in memory with very particular images fed by initial experiences of them. How might these places be different in actuality? What changes have I made in memory? How has time coloured or reshaped them? What changes might I find in my own perception by revisiting? How much does context: psychological and emotional, influence my reading of a location? What might be discovered in exploring the nexus between the memory and the actuality of these pivotal, geographical locations.

3.7 Art Materials and Processes

The autobiography identified experiences with a range of art making materials and traditional processes over the years. In particular, ceramics and drawing were the areas of sustained practice over the longer amounts of time.

3.7.1 Transferral of Material Based Knowledge and Processes

The specialization in one area of art making could obviously create a depth of knowledge of materials and processes associated with that one area. However, the advantage of working with a range of materials and processes is in finding of natural overlaps between areas. Examples of this transferral of knowledge from one area being utilized in another area was evident in the way drawing techniques were created from the experience of layering glazed images and surfaces from the experiences of ceramics. This perhaps gives unique ways of visual problem solving and provides for the potential for interrogating traditional ways of working in one particular field.

A further issue that arose in the autobiography was the questioning of whether art materials and processes can be genderized. The claim that ceramics was a masculine activity with overtones of heavy labour, getting dirty and with potentially dangerous consequences may very well give the comparatively gentle activity of applying soft pastel to a pristine white surface, a gender designation.

3.7.2 Touch of Hand

Evidence of the artist's hand in the making of final art outcomes seemed to imply that art processes that involved a greater distancing from the art work and person who made them was, in some way, a lessening of the worth of the art. This emphasis on craftspersonship and the one-off, handmade implies a disregard for the printed, projected and especially, the new technology and outcomes attributed to the digital and electronic. Perhaps this perception could be challenged during further practice.

3.8 Degree of Control

The perception of the artist controlling the media, content, form and presentation of their artwork is somewhat implied in mastering one's craft or art. Ideally, this degree of control is meant to maximize the communication between the artwork and the viewer. The viewer, however, brings a variety of experience with them and it may be arrogant to expect a common view and experience of the work. The autobiography expressed a need to control all of the stages and elements of the artmaking and it may be interesting to give up some of the control over the process to allow for a variety of readings.

Upon entering the field of my first potential environment it may be opportune to start the process with only a diary and a couple of pencils so that the nature of the place suggests the media for responding rather than forcing my usual drawing media onto a new environment.

CHAPTER FOUR SURVEYING THE TERRAIN

4.1 The Significance of Head, Heart and Hand

In Chapter One, the triangulation of Head, Heart and Hand (Fig. 1.4.1) shaped three components of the aesthetic phenomena of artistic practice, the intellectual, the emotional and the technical. The quest now is to begin to understand this phenomena and how it might underpin artistic practice, and more specifically, drawing. What is the potential of these components to form a basis from which to construct a theoretical model that signposts the stages and relationships in aesthetic decision-making? How might a theoretical model assist in greater understanding of the possible relationship between perception and the artist's interpretation of place?

4.2 Environment and Perception - the Shaping Nexus: Head

Most artists have spent a good part of their lives with a mark-making implement in their hands communicating through images, plans, sketches, diagrams their thoughts at the time. For the visual artist, the practice of making marks is both an integral and specific activity. Drawing is the process whereby artists communicate their perceptions of the world through forms, marks, tones, textures and colours. What are these perceptions? To what extent do they stand apart? How does the artist *perceive*? What are the connections between perception and the creation of artworks?

A number of theoretical propositions derive from other disciplines. For example, Gestalt theory (Arnheim, 1974), based on experiments in sensory perception of shape and form demonstrated that the appearance of any element depended on its place and its function in an overall pattern. Arnheim (1974) argues that these visual

patterns are not merely the result of “mechanical recording of sensory elements [but] ... proved to be a truly creative apprehension of reality - imaginative, inventive, shrewd and beautiful”(Arnheim, 1974:6). He further argues that artistic production cannot be considered a self-contained activity separated from other forms of human activity on the basis that the artist’s perception is not simply unbounded subjectivity or mechanical recording of vision, but an interplay between the observed properties of an object or environment and the very nature of the individual artist/observer. If this is so, then questions may potentially be asked of individual artists as a basis for building models in relation to how a particular visual perception is formed.

Artists are, of course, well aware of the fact that the quest for excellence in their field does not simply lie in the rendering of fine details of an object or environment but in images that are valid despite being abstracted or removed from what might be universally known as realism. Australian artist Lloyd Rees (1895-1988) explains that

...good drawing is expressive drawing. It reveals what the artist is thinking and feeling concerning his subject, and is a creation separate and apart from the subject which inspired it. (Rees, 1940:13)

Rees’ long artistic life produced a large body of drawings that primarily explored various environments experienced in Australia and Europe. His exhibitions, sketchbooks, biographical details and personally written comments provide clues about significant places that may have achieved perceptual primacy and possibly infiltrated all subsequent perceptions. These kinds of visual and written evidence

perhaps indicate ways in which research can be triangulated to trace patterns in the shaping nexus of environment and perception of the individual artist.

In Rees' later years of art practice, he was no longer physically able to venture out into the landscapes but produced drawings that "are essentially semi-abstract improvisations of subjects remembered" (Kolenberg, 1995:17). These later drawings by Rees were obviously not environments created from direct perception by the senses, specially the eyes, but were images that for particular reasons survived in his memory. How and why do particular images remain and become significant? Arnheim (1974) offers one possible answer to the *how*:

The past as such is never available to the mind. The percepts and feelings, not only of yesterday but of a second ago, are gone. They survive only to the extent that within us they leave remnants, i.e. memory traces. Whatever the nature of these traces in the brain, they certainly persist in spatial simultaneity, influence one another, and are modified by new arrivals. (Arnheim, 1974:375)

The accumulation and constant modification of memories seem to indicate some prioritizing for the general purpose of everyday survival - remembering where you live, the emergency phone number, who people are and how to make a meal. For the visual artist, as Arnheim (1974) suggests, the archaeological dig into visual memory must follow a similar pattern but for a different purpose. The reason why traces of certain objects, places, atmospheres, events or images remain in memory must not be purely a function of the mechanical processes of the Head but have traces in matters of the Heart, and emotionally charged perceptions.

4.3 Intuition - Finding One's Way as Artist: Heart

The starting point for all systems of aesthetics must be the personal experience of a particular emotion. The objects that provoke this emotion we call works of art.

This emotion is called the aesthetic emotion; and if we can discover some quality particular to all the objects that provoke it, we shall have solved what I take to be the eternal problem of aesthetics. We shall have discovered the essential quality in a work of art. (Bell, 1914:222)

Bell's (1914) theory that "significant form" (Bell, 1914:8) is a fundamental quality in all works of art and is a construction of relationships between formal elements of line, shape, tone, colour and form that evoke aesthetic emotions. For Bell (1914), significant form does not exist in works of art that are essentially descriptions of reality (therefore they are not art) but in an ultimate reality that gives all things their individual reality, a quality that is perhaps metaphysical. What is this metaphysical quality that elevates an artwork from more than mechanical recording to a level of significance?

Langer (1953) perhaps offers some answers when she theorises that works of art are significant forms that are expressive of feelings. For Langer (1953), aesthetic emotion is a result of artistic perception, a personal reaction to the discovery of rightness and necessity:

To recognise that something is right and necessary is a rational act, no matter how spontaneous and immediate the recognition may be; it points to an intellectual principle in artistic judgment and a rational basis for the feeling Bell calls "the aesthetic emotion". (Langer, 1953:33)

Langer (1953) calls a work of art a "symbol of feeling". Significant form through its internal structure of elements creates a powerful image of ideas about feelings.

For an artist creating a work of art, a symbol of feeling, the very notion of what is right and what is necessary belongs to that strange force called intuition. If Langer's (1953) arguments are sustainable, then it is reasonable to assume that intuition is an intellectual process rather than some divine or spiritual intervention that suddenly inspires the artist. There seems to be a reasonable paradox in operation here for artists are often (but rarely always) spontaneous in creating a work of art. Inspiration does seem to explode from somewhere and is quickly expressed in materials. There are periods of being *seized* by the vision. These specific activities are often the way of the artist.

Crucial to artistic practice are also the periods of reflection, the re-organization of elements, the rationalising of relationships of symbols, the logical focussing on the next creative step and the disciplining of the spontaneous bursts. These may seem paradoxical - discipline and spontaneity, logic and creativity, rational and intuitive - yet in this case, both sides of the coin are essential to the total experience.

What we see emerging is a model of artistic vision, a merging of Arnheim's (1974) theory of how artistic perception is formed, with Langer's (1953) theory of how that perception is expressed. If the artist is expected to create unique insights through symbols of feelings, significant forms that elicit aesthetic emotion, then this uniqueness must derive from the personal experience of the individual artist.

The question arises as to how one finds one's way as artist? What constitutes significant traces of memory? What pivotal environmental experiences influence artistic perception? What informs the individual artist's intuition? How can these

data be collected and examined? The answers to these questions may be embedded in the evidence of the artist's practice - artworks, artist's journals, and biographical and autobiographical writings.

4.4 Making - the Process of Artistic Practice: Hand

What if Rees (1895-1988) had no technical skills or understanding of drawing materials? To what extent would it still have been possible for him to create significant forms symbolic of human feeling? Creating a work of art is more than simply an arrangement of visual elements, it is the relationship between, art and physical skill, feeling and expressing and making. The making of significant form "is the creative process that enlists a man's utmost technical skill in the service of his utmost conceptual power, imagination". (Langer, 1953:41) Of course, if Rees had *utmost skill* and yet limited *conceptual power*, his work would not transcend mere mechanical recordings.

An understanding of tools, materials, techniques and processes is grounded in technical knowledge and the craft of making and is manifested in the work of art that, in turn, sends out signals and feelings about skill. Jeffery Smart's (1921-) exhibition (2000)¹ at the Art Gallery of New South Wales is a good example of how a deep understanding of materials and execution of fine skills can be *felt* by an audience. There is a kind of undeniability of the power of masterful skill when we are in its presence. Bateson (1973) calls this felt experience the "message of skill" and "the sensations and qualities of skill" (Bateson, 1973:243).

Artists learn their skills in different ways “...from the tacit acquisition of knowledge through observation and practice to the systematic learning of codified knowledge through instruction of various kinds” (Rowley, 1997:XV). How competent an artist is tends to be judged by the work itself. Yet many contemporary artists learn their skills within institutions that cultivate certain attitudes towards skill acquisition. Artistic skills are not popular amongst those who subscribe to theories of postmodernism. It takes time and teaching resources to impart the traditional skills of artistic practice. The crisis of skills teaching and learning is further compounded by the greater financial restraints placed on institutions not only in Australia but also in the United States of America, Canada and Britain. These ever-changing attitudes within institutions have an effect on the artists they produce and, in turn, on the art works that are created.

A possible way of understanding the relationship between the individual artist and his/her relationship to the importance (or lack of importance) of artistic skill is by examining how acculturation into the role of artist was constructed. Langer’s (1953) view of utmost skill may no longer have any relevance and perhaps it may be that significant form does not require high levels of skill to create it. However, there does seem to be a growing reaction against a media world filled with technology-generated, virtual digital images that lack the touch of an individual hand and have lost a sense of human-ness.

¹ Jeffery Smart, Australian. Major retrospective exhibition at the Art Gallery of New South Wales, January, 2000.

4.5 Revelations from the Terrain

Figure 4.5.1 brings together the theories of Bell (1914), Langer (1953) and Arnheim (1974) into a logical visual form that explains the cyclic nature of artistic perception. Essential to this model is the idea that, once an object has been interpreted and interrogated through the art process, the initial perception of the object changes and continuously changes as the process is repeated and knowledge is accumulated.

Contemporary drawing practice exists within the tradition of accumulated knowledge and for this artist to contribute to human experience the point for potential to innovate needs to be reached though it may take many turns of the cycle. This conceptual model can now drive the research in practice.

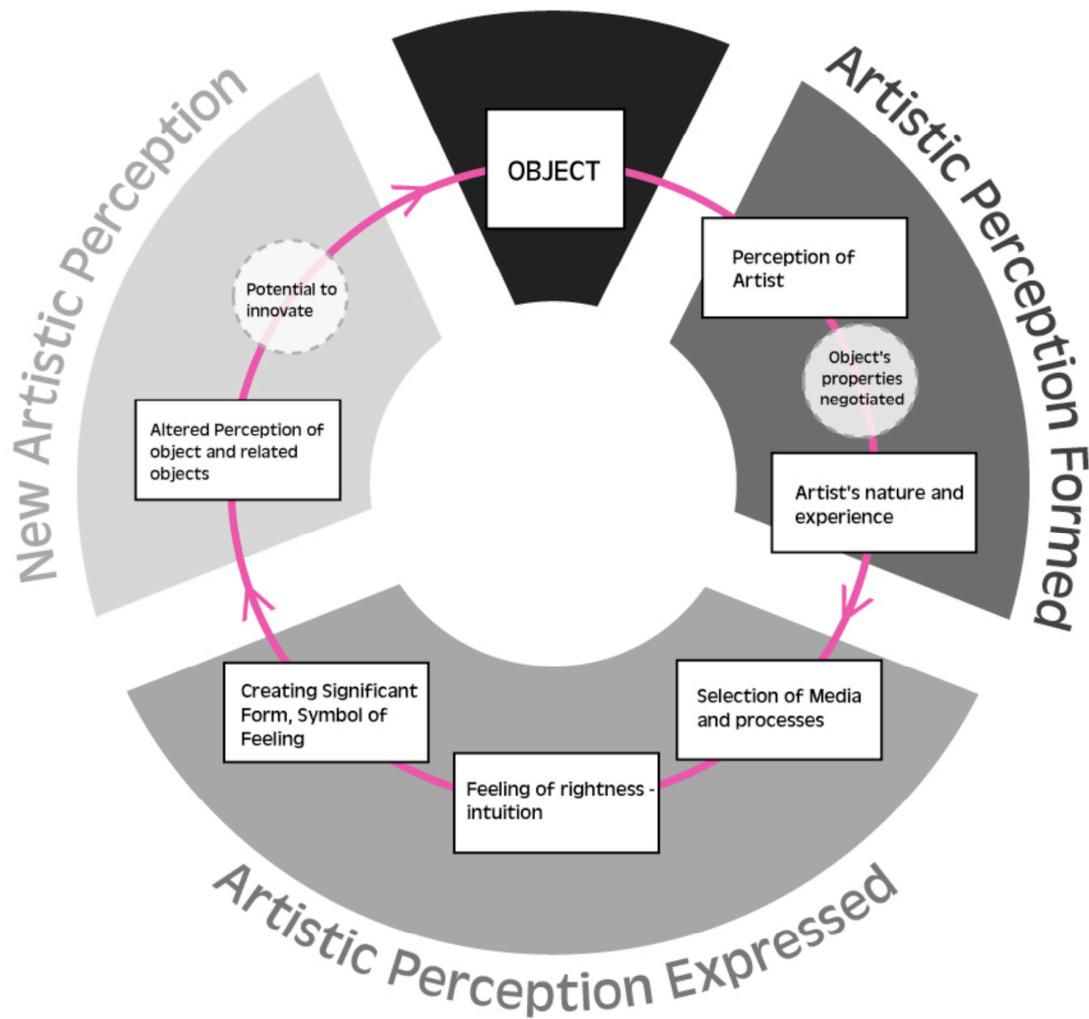


Figure 4.5.1 Artist Perception Model

As experience and knowledge are continually accumulating, perception therefore must be in a state of flux where greater focus and expansion are happening simultaneously. At the point of altered perception there is the potential for the artist to reinterpret the object. On one level this could constitute a new understanding of the object for the individual artist yet on another level may have the potential for creating new knowledge for a larger community.

For the cycle to begin it seems that the logical first step is for the artist to search his own personal knowledge base to explore perceptions formed through his very nature as an artist and his accumulated experiences.

In Figure 4.5.1 the Object is seen as a possible starting point for the cycle of artistic perception. If the Object is argued as a geographical *place*, then what connections might be made between the artist's perception of place and their artistic production?

4.6 Personal Artists of Place

Artists influence other artists and we learn from those who go before us. As we create our own history there are certain artists, usually older than ourselves, with whom we feel a connection. Perhaps a greater connection is made with those whose experiences intersect with our own. All of the selected personal Australian mentors are most often regarded generally as painters but it is within their drawing practice that I see a visual autobiography emerge.

4.6.1 William Robinson

Robinson (1938 -) is a *Queenslander* that is important for an artist whose work is so directly influenced by place. Significance of place (Fern, 1995:17) is fundamental in his drawings and paintings as it traces a narrative of the different geographical locations in which he lived. For Robinson the lure of exotic far off places does not seem to have had any importance in his practice as he found inspiration within the local environment. We see from his drawings that he never moved too far from home. His earlier works created while he lived in the suburbs

of Brisbane are filled with images of his domicile and record the physicality of his home and the people and animals that dwelled there. Through these works the viewer gets a glimpse into his life, his way of living, and those with whom he lived. These visual autobiographical tales inevitably changed when he moved locations and moved to a farm several hours from Brisbane.

Once again, through his artwork we experience his new lifestyle and his next significant environment in the south-western area of Queensland. No longer is his work filled with interior views but of the exterior – the shed, the goats and the chooks. We see Robinson portrayed in his drawings as an almost comical character set amongst the ordered chaos of twisted galvanized roof sheeting and knock-kneed cows. We note that he has certainly moved out of the suburbs.

From the late 1980s Robinson's images of his environment become a unique view of the Australian landscape. He breaks with the tradition of the horizontal landscape and manipulates perspective and space to create a multi-perspective where the natural order of landscape folds in upon itself. There is a sense that Robinson is no longer the outsider viewing the landscape from a distance or the city dweller who is visiting the bush, but someone who is profoundly part of the landscape.

As a living artist, Robinson's drawn visual autobiography is an unending tale but through his work thus far, we are able to come to understand the person, his changing perspective and the senses in which environment is his artistic crucible.

4.6.2 Donald Friend

Friend (1915-1989) was born in Sydney in the suburb of Cremorne but, unlike Robinson, actively sought out the exotic, both within Australia and beyond its borders. He travelled to Sri Lanka, Nigeria and the islands of the South Pacific that gained him the title of an Escape Artist by Wilson (1998). Also, unlike Robinson, through his drawings, Friend always appears as the outsider, an alien commenting on what he saw. Friend produced nearly fifty diaries that are filled with notes, letters and sketches that have been recently published in two volumes as The Diaries of Donald Friend (2001, 2003).

The drawings in the diaries are not illustrations of text but are a separate act of responding to environments and events. Text and image build a context separately and together build a context – autobiography and visual autobiography working together to create an insight into the mind of the artist and also a cultural history of the twentieth century through the eyes of an Australian artist.

The images of Friend are primarily about the exotic. Even when he responded to people and places within Australia, he seemed to seek out images that must have been vastly different from those he had experienced in the suburbs of Sydney. Drawings of Malay Town in Cairns and the Torres Strait Islands give a view of the *other* and a broader view of Australian culture at a particular time. Perhaps Friend is best known for his drawings and paintings of Bali and the perception that he “showed great foresight in viewing Australia as part of Asia” (Sayer, 1989:6). His fascination with Bali noted in his autobiography and visual autobiography could

also be generalized to the nation's now firmly connected relationship to this significant place.

4.6.3 Lloyd Rees

Rees (1895 - 1988), like Friend, created a large number of diaries with intimate insights into his changing perception of the places he visited and the landscapes he interpreted. He seems not to be lured by the exotic. Rees's travel to Britain and Europe reads more like a pilgrimage to the places he had seen represented in European painted masterpieces. His travelling might be argued to be a kind of artistic apprenticeship for a person born in the colonies where examples of great art were scarce and the landscape seemingly less dramatic. Yet, through his artwork over a long period of time, we see a changing perception that moves from the factually observed to a far more individual interpretation of the Australian landscape.

His work is probably the most conservative of these three in terms of his subject matter and style and represents more mainstream Australian artists in the twentieth century. These drawings and paintings represent also the conservatism of mainstream Australian culture over this time. Possibly, as Australia matured, so did Rees and the drama recorded in England, France and Italy may have broadened his appreciation and insight into the drama of the Australian landscape.

4.6.4 Personal Mentors, Visual Autobiography, Travel and the Significance of Environment

For Robinson, Friend and Rees the location of practice was significant for their generating of content for drawing and it could be said that for them *place* was the crucible of their studio practice. Their visual autobiography is the outcome of their artistic activity and, collectively, may offer some insight into the history of 20th century Australian visual culture. Their autobiographies, recorded in their personal diaries and biographies written by others, offer insights into the larger context of their lives from which drawing, in particular, emerged. Travel, either singularly or repeatedly, to far-way places or just a few hours away, offered each the possibility for changed practice and it is in the *physical relocation* that we witness the forming of perception and inseparability of life and art production.

The relationship of these artists to their environment is interesting. Friend always appears to be a tourist in the exotic places he *visited* rather than *lived*. He seems to record places and people almost like an anthropologist collecting data for a cultural scene. Rees, in his earlier work, also appears to be separate and viewing from a distance (and this is further enforced by the biographical photographs of him drawing and painting in Europe). However, in the work created in his last twenty years, Rees (like Robinson) seems finally to have become one with the landscape. This distancing or immersion into the environment is a psychological aspect inherent in their drawings. Whether the distance, either geographically or psychologically, was slight or profound, their visual autobiographies provide models for studio practice.

CHAPTER FIVE – TOWARDS A METHODOLOGY FOR THE STUDY

5.1 Towards an Artist Centred Model

Searching for a methodology may seem a strange quest for an artist who must, by the actions employed in creating an artwork, already have a system, a method, a way of organizing the flood of sensations, ideas, feeling, experience and techniques. Yet, as acknowledged in Chapter One, the predictability of ways of making can lead to *ennui*, even staleness of practice. A key focus of the current research is to find ways of making the quantum leap, of finding new and challenging artistic directions, of sustaining practice which both excites and surprises. However, there is a need for a framework within which to conduct such explorations.

5.2 Trawling Potential Models

An inherent problem with traditional research models in the current context is that they are based on words, scientific symbols and geometrical forms that obviously must suit the kind of cultures who generate them and read them. This being the dominant culture in the research field, it is the expected method to reduce highly complex ideas into a simplified structure. In a mechanistic experiment of cause and effect and trial and error, evidence and demonstrable results are logical and worthwhile endeavours. However, within these scientific quantifiable experiments, the human experience of serendipity, intuition, desire, memory and longing are not acknowledged.

On the other hand, ways of *knowing* have been explored through the twentieth century. The researcher's encounters with Margaret Mead's (1901-1978) mentor, Hortense Powdermaker in her book, Stranger and Friend (Mead, 1967) introduced

the potential of an outsider to describe an insider's way of understanding the world. Since then, social interactionists have refined models for creating research that explains to some extent what it is like to walk in someone else's shoes. Spradley and McCurdy's (1972) refined model for ethnographic description of sub-cultures (street gangs, hitch-hikers, etc.) gives examples of data collecting techniques that describe and explain cultural phenomena. Manning and Callum-Swan (1994) speak of narratives and analysis in naturalistic settings while Denzin (1989) provides guidelines for interpretive biography and autobiography. Art educators Carroll (1998) and Hawke (1996) use socio-cultural models for constructed case studies examining art practice and the teaching of art. These models operate at the periphery; they describe particular practices within a social context but neither offers an evolutionary model for research nor encapsulates the insider's perspective.

5.3 Towards an Organic Model

An artist's creative production involves both internal and external processes. These processes are not generally linear or mechanistic. There are perhaps, exceptions in the case of particular artists, for example, Stelarc (1950-) who uses computer chip technology, extensions of body and Internet connections in his performances. However, for most artists, their perceptions are grounded in the rich soil of experience and are shaped by various environments (See 4.6) and grow and extend into new territories until they eventually flower and spread the seed of future ideas that, in turn, take on their own particular growth trajectory. Thus is made consciousness where particular thoughts become partially recognizable shapes in clouds filled with ideas, desires and ambitions. Hence the panoramic view of the

landscape for a life and the focussed, refined view coalesce. An organic model attempts to achieve a way of documenting the process of living within the landscape and the process of creating the landscape.

One method for documenting, explaining or interpreting visual arts practice is:

[Exegesis which] ...relates to the thesis by exhibition in much the same way that a road-map relates to the territory it describes. Through words it explains the work and puts it into context. (Hill, 1995:12)

The exegesis model for recording practice involves professional artists writing about their visual arts, music or theatre practice. This model covers the process of making (usually through diary entries), the location of personal practice within a historical and/or theoretical context and the artworks themselves (exhibited). Like ethnography, the exegesis model describes and locates practice/cultural processing. What this model lacks is a structural relationship of research to practice in which there is reflectiveness.

On the other hand, Davis's (1995 model The Crucible of Visual Arts Professional Practice: Outcomes and Pathways (Appendix B) affords opportunity for the kind of tacit knowing of artists to be explored and made explicit in a fluid way, which allows emerging research and emerging artistic practice to collaborate in positive ways. Indeed it is a crucible where research and practice intermix to form outcomes and outputs merely hinted at or only half known at the beginning of the research. Indeed, for research in which the attributes of humanness are not only celebrated but also considered essential, Davis's (1995) "implicit and unacknowledged therefore covert process [es] to performance" becomes crucial factors of humanistic qualitative research.

The following Artist-Centred Model (Fig.5.3.1) derives from Davis's (1995) model but is visually less complicated. Further it attempts to position the artist centrally and illustrate the artist's relationship to data generation and collection.

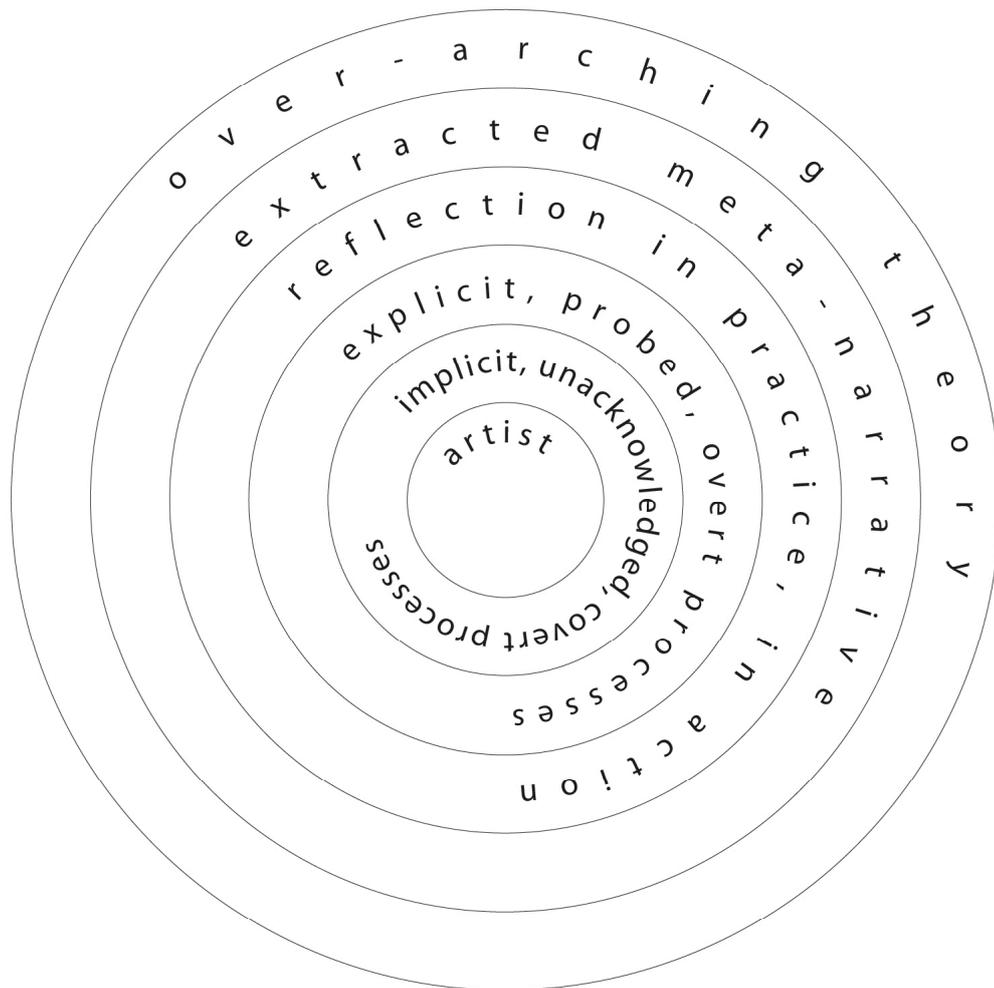


Figure 5.3.1 Artist-Centred Model

Nested within the epicentre of Figure 5.3.1 lies the potential for the cyclical process of *Reflexivity* “... whereby the way we describe a phenomenon changes the way it operates for us, which in turn changes our perception, which changes our description of it, and so on.” (Scrivener, 2000:10) A creative project of this type begins with the individual practitioner’s personal knowledge and perception from which issues/questions are framed. When current knowledge is found to be inadequate, new knowledge and theory is acquired which leads to a reframing of the issue before creative action is taken. Scivener’s (2000) exploration of ways in which creative-production can be documented is in many ways similar to Davis’s (1995) model except that, in his research project, a description of reflection in and on action and practice, is explicit and central to the research. Scrivener (2000) emphasizes the organic nature of creative production noting that, during production, there is the situation’s talk-back, which needs to be recorded and reported for action to be understood in context. Consequently reflection becomes the primary conceptual tool for handling the unexpected during the creative process.

5.4 Customizing the Model

Figure 5.3.1 utilizes the direction provided by both Davis (1995) and Scrivener (2000) to create an organic model of creative production.

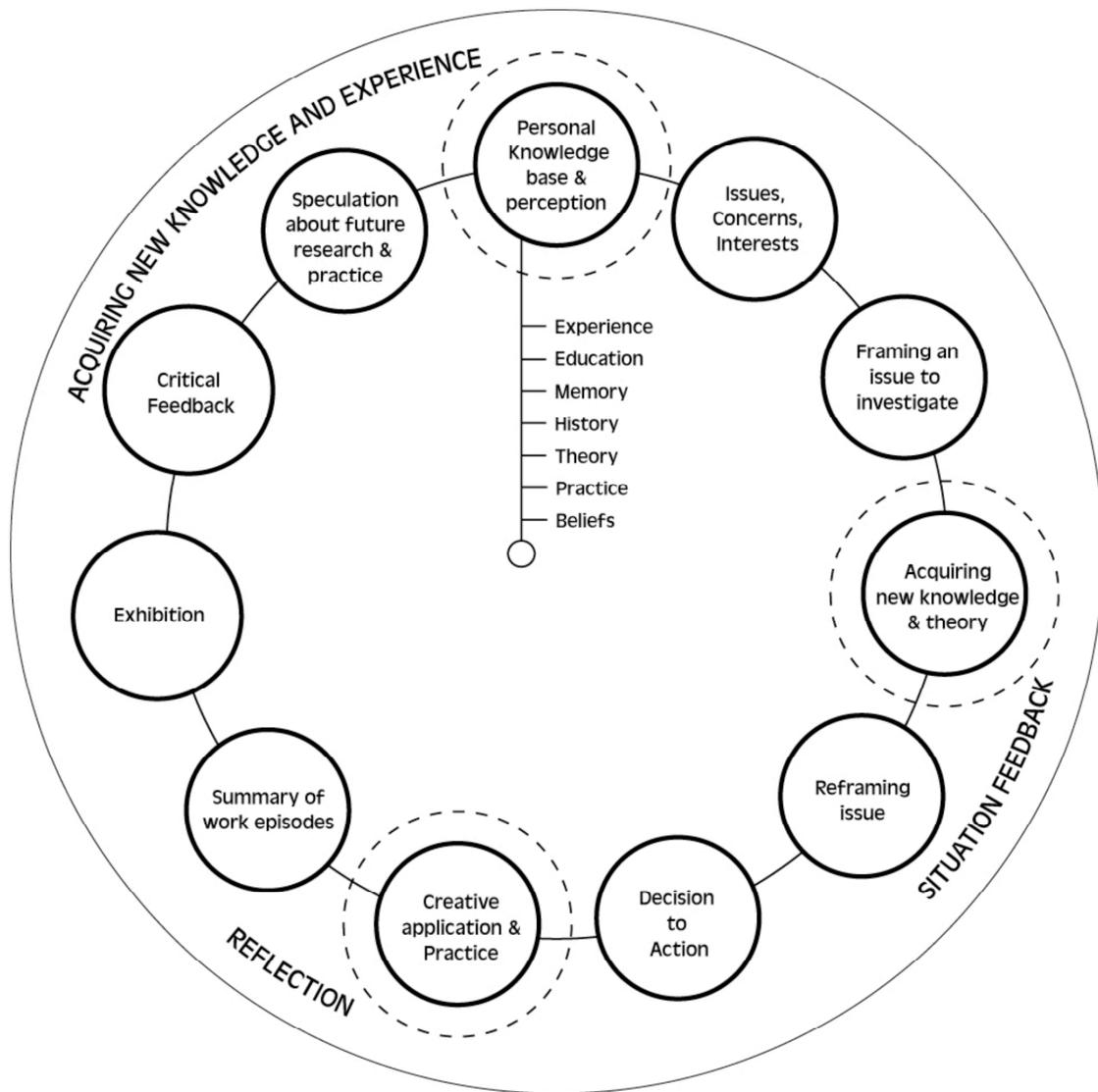


Figure 5.4.1 An Organic Model for Creative Production

The first step in the cycle presented in Figure 5.4.1 is coming to know the personal knowledge base and perception in the quest to find out how I know what I know (Damasio, 1999). Hence reflection integral to action and practice will be documented at key stages, e.g., during periods of action, at the end of each work episode and, finally, on the project as a whole.

5.5 Potential Modes of Documentation

The use of artists' diaries as a tool to record both visually and verbally, personal thoughts at a particular time in a particular place is common in the literature.

You know sometimes I rather doubt if people reading all this will credit it with truth to my record. But I assure you it is true as anyone could expect. After all, one can never do more than translate the facts through the medium of one's own personal perceptions. (Friend, 1943:240)

The diaries of artists, of course, are not necessarily intended for anyone's eyes but the author of the diary for they often include matters delicate or far too personal for publication:

Yet, if the most interesting diaries are fundamentally candid – containing more-or-less immediate responses to circumstances – they rarely claim to be objective. Diarists regularly invent or consciously shape the events they recount; are sometimes self-deceiving; are subjective and partial; and inevitably present themselves, at least by implication, as the chief protagonists of their narratives. (Hetherington, 2003:ix)

Social anthropologists also use diaries and field notes to "...discover the information that is used to organize behaviour." (Spradley and McCurdy, 1972:11)

Analysing and sorting material into categories and sub-categories as they develop and cluster offers the potential to achieve objectivity. Subjective and unrestrained diary description can thus become the basis for the creation of a more objective meta-narrative.

Spradley and McCurdy (1972) offer the following schematic flowchart for such a sequence (Fig. 5.5.1).



Figure 5.5.1 “ Selective Observation and Interpretations” (Spradley and McCurdy, 1972:14)

While it would be possible to use a tape-recorder to document the progress of the creative work orally, this has the potential to distract the practice rather than facilitate it, as diarising has become almost second nature to the artist. Hence the artist’s diary will be the main tool for collecting and recording data. However, in keeping with the original intention of an artist’s diary, it is not envisaged that the full contents of the diaries will be utilized. Excerpts will be extracted where relevant and placed within the emerging categories and sub-categories to exemplify behaviour and to build the life-world of the artist. Validity of the knowledge gleaned will be in its usefulness in providing significance of the knowledge for personal practice. (Polkinghorne, 1997)

5.6 Autobiography of Place: The Potential?

Traditionally autobiography has been conceived of as a literary medium:

Autobiography is the rendering of memory into discourse. Memories densely populate our minds; it is the act of attempting to communicate them which turns them into autobiographical text. (Rosen, 1998:99)

Discourse is written or spoken communication but within this medium, however, styles of autobiography differ, for example, the socio-cultural psychological viewpoint (Bruner, 1990), the literary (Lejuene, 1989); the ethnographic (Spradley and McCurdy, 1972); the narrative (Bruman, 1986); the recollection in natural contexts (Neisser, 1982). In the case of Chapter Four the orientation was more towards the Bruman (1986) and Neisser (1982) models because of the need for the timbre of the voice of the teller to create another layer of authentic experience for the reader.

By contrast, the term “Visual Autobiography” is a relatively unused one in most larger disciplines as evidenced in the 2001 DAAI CD-ROM, the Bibliography of History of Art, Dissertations Abstracts and the Index to Theses in the United Kingdom and the United States of America. The earliest citation identifies the term as used by Robert Rauschenberg (1925-) when, in 1968, he named a lithograph “Visual Autobiography”. In her doctoral dissertation on Hippolyte Bayard, an inventor of photography, Nancy Keeler (1991) used the term to describe Bayard’s garden still-lives and portraits “...in which he defines his role as cultivator of the new medium of photography”. (Keeler, 1991:VI) The only other citation found was by a doctoral student, Eileen Hsu (1999) who in her study of a Buddhist monk, Sangchou, states:

The sculptures at Xiaonanhai are a visual autobiography of Sangchou, whose imperial connections not only motivated him to have his spiritual journey recorded in stone but also contributed to the fine pictorial carving of these sculptures. (Hsu, 1999:IV)

The website,

http://directory.google.com/Top/Arts/Visual_Arts/Installation_Art/Artists/

(accessed 20th June, 2002) is dedicated to artists who feel that their work (mainly installation art) is visual autobiography. These artists use photographs (predominately self-portraits) and arranged personal items (letters, clothing, memorabilia) to create an installation about periods in their lives.

None of the above artists or researchers defines *Visual Autobiography* but leave it as an obvious reference to a visual equivalent to verbal autobiography. It is possible, however, to conceptualise it in a way that encompasses the visual, drawn description of one living being

Visual	To the eye
Auto	Self
Bio	Environmental
Graphic	Descriptive drawing

In some sense any artist's *oeuvre*, after the fact, may be regarded as visually autobiographical. However, in the case of the present research, the focus is deliberately so and will probe the subterranean channels of experience of *place*.

It is clear from Chapter Four that the artist's response to a personal *cul-de-sac* has typically been to re-locate, to source a divergent environment in which to seek solutions. The significance of place has thus been seminal. The plan is thus to re-visit significant places as the fulcrum for the visual autobiography and thus to embark on a journey of artistic re-vitalization and re-direction.

5.7 The Chosen Medium

The artist is the primary informant and main instrument (Woolcot, 1975) of visual art practice driven research and the primary data gathering instruments are the tools by which he/she constructs visual data and generates eventual visual outputs. The visual artist as researcher may have much in common with other qualitative researchers except of course that the tools of the artist are not generally perceived to be so within the academic community:

The fact is that most artists have always done research but have never been given academic recognition for it. (Hill, 1995:12)

Perhaps this is because there is an implicit hierarchical research structure that places words and scientific symbols above all other forms of symbolic representation. Ultimately for research, the processes of gathering, deciphering and analyzing are essentially to record, to see the footsteps or tracks that led to outcomes. It is not the tools or the processes *per se* which relate to research but the *intent* of the person using them as tools.

For each researcher and artist there are the familiar, time honed tools that are wielded by experience in a particular way to interpret in some meaningful way towards a particular conclusion or goal or answer. Every researcher utilizes Head, some leaven Head with Heart but few employ Hand. If, as in this research, Head, Heart and Hand are to be brought into play, the primary use of Hand in the artistic sense is to draw.

Hence, the tools of this artist/researcher are specific but neither highly technical nor complex although the process may be. In fact, they are probably the most

conservative and essential instruments within the tradition of visual arts and, more specifically, the domain of drawing, typically a two dimensional process. From the broadest range of two, three and four dimensional processes and surfaces available to artists, pastels, charcoal, pencil and paper are the ones to begin this study. These traditional materials lend themselves particularly to the nature of this research, given its purposes, time limitations and varying geographical locations.

The immediacy and the ease of transportability of the materials are important to ensure that making of marks and the rendering of information can be sketched at will in ways similar to those an anthropologist uses to jot down notes or record a audiotape of a pivotal cultural experience. The pencil not only records part of the data but also simultaneously creates a kind of kinesthetic response. This process in the state of *flow* (Csikszentmihalyi, 1993) serendipitously creates information not always consciously known to the artist at the time of recording.

The most immediate responses to an environment will thus be recorded in the artist's diary:

Indeed, practitioners themselves often reveal a capacity for reflection on their intuitive knowing the midst of action and sometimes use this capacity to cope with the unique, uncertain and conflicting situations of practice. (Schön, 1991:viii)

Within the diary visual data will be collected quickly *in situ* and later used to inform the studio drawing. The artist's diary notes provide evidence of reflection in the action of creation. These sketches are often small as in a thumbnail sketch or may take up the entire page. Often notes and/or colours and textures were placed close by like swatches for further reference. The role of the sketchbook or artist's diaries

is often the companion of the artist as *flâneur* who is described by Edmund White (2001) describes as

...a stroller, a loiterer, someone who ambles through a city without apparent purpose but is secretly attuned to the history of the place and in covert search of adventure, aesthetic or erotic. (White, 2001:37)

The visual thinking contained in artists' diaries are not necessarily intended as *finished* art works however, in more recent times, they have been explored and exhibited but only in the case of very well known artists, for example, *Lloyd Rees in Europe, sketchbooks and related works*.¹

Photography will be used in this study in several informing ways. In the initial phase of entering a field or pivotal environment, photographs may be taken when there is a sense of potential experienced in a variety of locations. These coloured photographic prints may become part of the data gathering and act as visual clues or references for future constructions of artworks. Photographic slides and digital images of finished and in-progress works will become archival evidence for future investigation and as a record of the visual outcomes. The camera, like paper and pencil, is easily transported, readily available and able to record details that memory and on-site sketches may not include. However, photographs are not necessarily an end in themselves, but an additional tool to the sketchbook. Note is taken, however, of Kolenberg's (2002) observation in relation to artist Lloyd Rees:

Our increasing reliance upon the convenience of cameras and other mechanical aids is such that we often have difficulty in recalling what we saw without them. The practice of drawing, which was a lifelong activity for Rees, sharpens the capacity to observe and to remember. It is the coordination between eyes, brain and hands which is miraculous and of which Rees's drawings in his European sketchbooks are such a good example. (Kolenberg, 2002:9)

¹ Art Gallery of New South Wales, 9th February – 28th April, 2002

However, the decision of this research to utilize the primacy of the hand through drawing is designed to militate against the intrusion of technology.

A visual autobiography through drawing will thus describe part of a physical expedition and, in a way, synthesize the journey of becoming conscious of the various perceptions constructed – the tacit, unacknowledged, overt processes (Davis, 1995). The Artist Perception Model (Fig. 4.5.1) illustrates how perception relates to the object and it is through drawing practice and the documented reflections on practice and on action that the process of artistic production might be known. The process is best described below:

You know that you are conscious; you feel that you are in the act of knowing, because the subtle imaged account that is now flowing in the stream of your organism's thoughts exhibits the knowledge that your proto-self² has been changed by an object that has just become salient in the mind. You know you exist because the narrative exhibits you as protagonist in the act of knowing. You rise above the sea level of knowing, transient but incessantly, as a *felt* core itself, renewed again and again, thanks to anything that comes from outside the brain into its sensory machinery or anything that comes from the brain's memory stores toward sensory, motor, or autonomic recall. You know it is *you* seeing because the story depicts a character - you - doing the seeing. (Damasio, 1999:171)

Damasio (1999), a neurologist, beautifully describes the act of constructing an account of what has been seen and how one can gain a feeling of knowing results.

This is an extension of the theories noted earlier in Chapter Two by Langer (1953).

² Proto-Self: The proto-self is an interconnected and temporarily coherent collection of neural patterns that represent the state of the organism, moment by moment, at multiple levels of the brain. We are not conscious of the proto-self (Damasio, 1999, p. 174).

5.8 A Skeletal Workplan.

It is acknowledged that, within the parameters described in previous sections, this research is designed to be a journal of visual discovery, revisitation, and experimentation. In pursuit of the aims detailed in 1.5, the overarching plan is to reconnect with significant locations – Paris, France, Nova Scotia, Canada, and Cairns, Far North Queensland – in that order.