

Copyright is owned by the Author of the thesis. Permission is given for a copy to be downloaded by an individual for the purpose of research and private study only. The thesis may not be reproduced elsewhere without the permission of the Author.

OTHER

Drawing Out

To Title a Drawing (*Nice Day*)

Drawing into Language

Drawing Out

This year, I travelled to Singapore for a residency - the 9th International Tropical Lab workshop hosted by Lasalle College of the Arts - without planning what sort of work I would make. I quickly realised that no matter what I ended up producing, it would be connected to my thesis project. It would be amongst it and surrounded by it, all the while remaining geographically and contextually separate. In amongst everything yet categorically *elsewhere*, this work is a new point of departure, gesturing outwards.

There were 25 other artists in residence, so I was only one among many. For around three weeks we journeyed between our hotel and a large, well-lit studio which sat adjacent to the city's centre. I was interested, perhaps concerned, as to what it meant to respond to the context of a city which you have known for only one week. My brief encounters with the city-state and newly forming thoughts of the space were to be materialized and exhibited at the Institute of Contemporary Arts for one and a half months. Everybody was busy, travelling from the studio to the shopping centre to buy tools and materials.

I realised that all I could do here was record or translate something about the place, rather than express anything emphatically. I felt the need to produce my work within in

this unknown context, outside the comfort and familiarity of this studio. I had wanted an opportunity to be amongst, if only for a little while, the people and environment which made up this space.

One day I got out of the studio and made my way up and down the road. At times I would stop to ask those who were on the street to *draw just one mark* on my one piece of paper without looking. It was a deliberately opaque invitation and I took comfort in this open and indeterminate approach. In each case, two bodies: one moves towards the other, words are exchanged, one hand gestures outwards, the other hand rises (much slower than the first), glances are exchanged, and then a blue biro is too, thoughts collected, and ultimately some small gesture on the page.

At the end of the drawing day, it was evident that to *draw just one mark* was a provocation subject to interpretation. Even the bare minimum of drawing is able to retain a distinct individuality from one line to the next. Each line is an anonymous autograph, its trajectory fundamentally different from any other. The page is marked with different intensities: direct, indirect, sustained, broken, hard, soft, straight, fast and slow. They have various weights and lengths.

I borrowed many hands. It was an occasion mediated by blue biro pens, hands and words. The resulting drawing refers to multiple authors and multiple interactions. This page holds together these angles and directions together in a

precarious arrangement expressing the gulfs in a silent communication. It's the kind of image where "one is no longer anything more than an abstract line, or a piece in a puzzle that is itself abstract."¹ These different signatory gestures do not index the artist, rather the autographs of an other's hand.²

For the exhibition, this drawing was scanned and then reproduced as a large print on rag paper. It took 15 minutes. It was a single event. The lines, appearing on a vaster and sparser plane, were once more removed from myself. Someone said afterwards that it was both a drawing and not a drawing. It was caught between myself as artist and other mark makers, caught between copy and original. Perhaps it just looked like a drawing. I enjoyed this slippage, the limits of what 'a drawing' could be.

¹ Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guittari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. Brian Massumi (London and New York: Continuum, 2004), 308.

² See the ongoing drawing series *Following the Right Hand of...*, created by Pierre Bismuth. Mapping gestures from film, the artist captures the specific movements traced out by the lead actress or actor's right hand. The resultant drawing plays with and complicates the notion of autography.

To Title a Drawing (*Nice Day*)

A title is a peculiar thing. I have discussed the methodology of this drawing in order to emphasize my process of titling the work. For instance, this work could have been titled *lines drawn over the course of a day by strangers* or something in this vein, but that wasn't the point. I had felt the need to once again bring in an aspect of otherness to the work, an appropriation or borrowing from what was already there. Walking through the city I found a coffee shop called 'Nice Day'. I felt this phrase would be a suitable title and accepted its presence instantly as another contingency in the work, as I would have done a line. To borrow this for the title further distanced my relation to the thing, to the drawing that *may not be a drawing*.

To clarify, I felt it was important to title the work in a way that enabled the lines themselves a certain primacy in the reading of the work. The title *Nice Day* allows a space for *response*, rather than enacting a statement it asks a question. [see: **READING**] *Nice Day* obscures the work's methodology, disallowing language to explain it. The affective and symbolic qualities of each lines' form, weight and texture contributes more directly to one's sense of the work. It has been said "matter-of-factness dampens

intensity”,³ and I too had found myself more interested in the affective and communicative potential of the drawing. These marks were meaningful semantic units unto themselves over and against any concept which drove its making.

Drawing into Language.

I later reflected on Catherine de Zeger’s philosophical assertions that drawing, in all its manifestations, fundamentally concerns a “coming into language”.⁴ Marks on the page, the outcome of the moment of contact between drawing implement and ground, open up “processes of symbolization and contributes to the construction of a mental framework that produces and renews meaning”.⁵ As one person saw an image of a lady sitting, another read *Nice Day* as a map of the exhibition. The work withstood both figurative and abstract readings, and I considered the title to be an important factor in this. I was interested in the work’s capacity to articulate and considered that patterns of response would differ from context to context.

The nonsense of the composition created a desire for sense, a need for meaning. In turn, I found the line as a metaphor

³ Brian Massumi, ‘The Autonomy of Affect’, in *Cultural Critique*, No. 31, *The Politics of Systems and Environments*, Part II. (Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 1995), 3.

⁴ Catherine de Zegher, ‘Drawing as Primary Medium.’ *Walker Arts Centre Lecture*, 1:12:42, November 6, 2009.

<http://www.walkerart.org/channel/2006/drawing-as-primary-medium>.

⁵ Ibid.

as that which reached out to and a established connections and relationships with the other, binded me, for better or worse, to others. Here, drawing can be seen to concern communication just as much as it does artist or the event constituting its making. In de Zegers words, a drawing hands to you a “response-ability”.⁶

⁶ Ibid.