

# **Ichnographia: Arrogation *and* Alteration**

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The candidate confirms that the work submitted is her own and that appropriate credit has been given where reference has been made to the work of others.

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**στον Ζορμπά μου**

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## **Abstract**

This thesis is a meta-commentary that accompanies a portfolio of artworks produced over the course of the research project; one that explores tracing and the traced as a creative process in drawing. Despite the fact that there is notable information regarding tracing's preparatory role within the history of drawing (Bambach, 1999), there is little research regarding the shift of its role towards an independent and creative end in drawing today. Consequently, I see tracing as a process for drawing that is continually open to question and exploration.

The research takes the view that the reworking of pre-existing cultural products and models arguably now replaces the idea of originality and the new (in the sense of starting from zero) (Bourriard, 2002), a perspective which suggests that there are only specific re-readings and no originitive readings. (Derrida, 1976) Within this context, I suggest that tracing in drawing has now, by way of its character, become an exemplary process which can challenge a long standing dialectic: that of the measure of the eye and its judgment, contrasted with mechanical means and the execution of the hand. I believe that this offers up an argument for speculation on a centrality of tracing within drawing now.

Overall, the writing addresses a central question, namely what can account for a consideration of tracing as a creative agent in drawing today? It also gives the theoretical means needed to understand the underlying reasoning, preoccupations, and concerns behind the submitted work and provides supplementary information about the drawings and paintings developed as part of this research, thereby offering up a new perspective of tracing's cultural assumptions for those involved with the history and practice of drawing.

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## Question

Every drawing we see, and the way we happen to see it, is not simply just a given inert ability. It is connected with the ways our culture has shaped its constructs and its models of its ambition over time. Subsequently, any ideas of a drawing's originality and authenticity cannot be a fixed and self-determining fact, but is instead a product of negotiation within a practice significantly constrained by the contextual uses of its tradition. Observing that tracing and its recourse to the already produced appears to be no longer marginal, but it is now central to contemporary drawing, yet allowing that original works are those that appear to be without antecedent, my question is this. Is this pre-eminence for tracing simply the conclusion of the ease in which materials may now be copied, revised, and circulated, or is it a mode of motivation and invention relevant to its time that brings forward a process of arrogation? Which of these ideas potentially offers up an opportunity to speculate on tracing's ability and its capacity to provision a present-day idea of originality and authenticity?

## Prologue

As a means of unfolding this discussion, it is necessary to begin with the word *ichnographia*, which spearheads the title of this writing. I chose this term in part for its etymological meaning, and partly for its subjective evocative aura -which brings to mind childhood memories. Ichnographia (O.E.D.), via Latin, originates from the Greek *ιχνογραφία*: which comes from *ιχνος* (trace) and *γραφω* (write), and in Modern Greek it is a generic term for drawing. However, in my schooldays the word also referred specifically to a method of learning through tracing: for example, an Ichnographia block (fig.1) was used in combination with a geography lesson as a tool for learning and creative imagining through tracing maps. The block was made up of a one to one layer of plain and transparent (psilocharto) paper. Opening the geography (map) textbook, one placed the map between the transparent and plain paper and then traced the outline of the pre-printed country or geographical region. Next, one removed the map and firmly restated the maps trace. This process made a corresponding and inscribed trace on the plain paper below, which was then restated once more with pencil. (fig.2) If the map was geopolitical it was easy: one colour for each region or country. If it was a geophysical map the going was tougher: *how do I choose the colour or sign for designating different terrain?* Finally, one placed signs for cities, rivers, mountains, and everything else. *I recall that while I traced the outlines and contours of these maps, my mind's eye would invariably supplement them with imaginary figures, mythic places and invented narrative.*<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Perhaps this happenstance supplement illustrates the multifarious ways in which texts feed one another, where a meaning is not necessarily something made once and for all at the beginning of a work or settled at its finish. Thus, any interpretation of any work is always a supplement which relies on pre-existing text, and is always exposed to immeasurable re-readings; hence any addition can never complete the work as it is continuously open to supplement, an on-going re-reading, down an endless chain of contribution. (Derrida 1976:141-55)

## Introduction

This thesis will predominantly discuss the practical inquiries and outcomes within my practice, examining the mechanism of tracing and the traced as a creative route in drawing. Contextualizing the practice of tracing across time and across philosophies, this metacommentary combines a self-reflective studio writing (research journal) built around specific critical readings, alongside practical and technical information with regard to the submitted art works produced throughout this research. Before I progress any further, I would like to bring to attention the importance of my journal, (fig. 3) which I kept as a routine of discussion and observation (with myself and others) in the course of my studio activities. Perhaps these writings do not necessarily hold the objectivity of the journalist or have the philosopher's capacity for abstraction, but nonetheless it helped me to think (if not answer) and construct ideas that provide a necessary anecdotal and yet significant interchange to the text. To this end, and in the interest of intelligibility, I signpost all writings extracted from the journal and any additional personal asides with italics in the text.

Having an authority founded on the measure and judgment of the eye, freehand drawing is commonly thought to be an accurate reflection of individual expression, which presupposes an idea of originality and authenticity. On the other hand tracing, other than its function as a preparatory tool, inhabits a minor place in the margins of drawing's history and is usually associated with emptied or hackneyed forms of copyism and a lack of creativity. However, these established formal categories get disrupted when tracing becomes the primary method through which an original drawing is conceived. (Eggleton, 2013:51) Questioning drawing's capability, or even its necessity to be original, (Sanders, 2006:1-14) the purpose of this text is to unpick tracing's dissonance between a past and present cultural esteem by extending it

to take in its contemporary instances while reconsidering its capability to create something new and original.

If tracing is a method of drawing that copies, reproduces, replicates, duplicates and reiterates an already existing source, then by nature the process of tracing has an innate need for 'the already produced'. A characteristic that can be linked to the view: that artists now work progressively by adapting, appropriating, and reworking existing cultural materials and models - not 'to be subjected to their authority but as tools' of enquiry - shifts an idea of originality (in the sense of starting from zero) and the new, to more of a concept of the 'specific' and a concept of 'one's own'. (Bourriaud, 2002)

It is no longer a matter of elaborating a form on the basis of a raw material, but working with objects that are already in circulation ... It is a matter of seizing all codes of the culture, all the forms of every day life, the works of the global patrimony, and making them function. To learn how to use forms ... is above all to know how to make them one's own, to inhabit them. (Bourriaud, 2002:13-18)

In view of this, if we reflect that 'the art of appropriation' in its broad term is seen as the art of reworking pre-existing objects or images, - *objects already informed by other objects* - in which the newly fashioned work which is re-contextualised has an end that is (usually) antagonistic or antithetical to the original,<sup>2</sup> then in its contemporary recall one can say that appropriation moves beyond quotation and citation to open-source<sup>3</sup> and arrogation,<sup>4</sup> Meaning it is designed to take or claim (something) for oneself without justification:

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<sup>2</sup> However, the original work must remain accessible as the original, without change, so the audience can grasp the opposition of the new message.

<sup>3</sup> While 'Open-Source' production methods emerged within software development communities as a way to work better, smarter, and freer, they are now understood more broadly as promoting the freedom to distribute and modify creative works in the form of free content by using the Internet and other forms of media. Artistic practices have inevitably developed in parallel with the Internet and the rise of communication technologies and their cultures. Stimulated by philosophical, social and ethical debates, artists adopt open source processes and metaphors that now affect both the institutional art world and art making practices.

<sup>4</sup> According to OED arrogation: is to take or claim (something) for oneself without justification: to claim unwarrantably or presumptuously; assume or appropriate to oneself without right.

It's simple, people produce works, and we do what we can with them, we use them for ourselves. (Sergey Daney, qtd. in Bourriaud, 2002:13)

I see that this perspective broadens and re-contextualises the concept that there are only specific re-readings, and no originative readings.<sup>5</sup> (Derrida, 1976) Bringing together these understandings, with tracing's need to have an 'already produced' material source, I suggest that by reimagining its textual and performative element, tracing can be considered as an exemplary process that is perhaps able to underwrite a present-day idea of originality and authenticity.

Following the introduction and the parameters of my specific research question and my motivation for choosing it, each chapter of this commentary deals with a different overarching theme that refers (in part or as a whole) to the submitted work. This occurs partly because of the practical emphasis in studio research and the often-spontaneous situation of artistic production, a trait that does not necessarily follow the linear characteristics of the work expected from an academic writing, and in some measure reflects a roving and disconnected approach to the discussion of an idea encountered in my choice of textual readings. The first chapter gives a brief summary of how I see artistic practice-led research functions regarding its twofold articulation (between practice and theory). Following this, the text assigns my drawing practice to a textual and inscriptive trait which underlines an idea of process and doing which is predisposed more towards how a drawing is done rather than what a drawing is. To further the discussion, the text brings in examples of (my) earlier work; where a medium-unspecific notion of drawing focussed on the apparatus of its appearance and its conduits of circulation, brings into view the foundational questions and stimulations for undertaking this research.

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<sup>5</sup> Not inconsequently, I see these ideas aligning with Derrida's (1976) ideas on the supplement and the trace - that always works to conserve and to preserve even as it undoes. Derrida first and foremost is associated with "deconstruction", a multifaceted and nuanced approach to how we read and understand a written text. Derrida's mode of deconstruction is a way of reading texts while looking out for puzzles and impasses. Including in the reading of these breaches, cracks and contradictions, Derrida points out the uncertainty or doubt in a text and its indeterminacy of meaning. For Derrida, no resolution seems possible.

Chapter two and chapter three describe personal reflections examining my own work and artistic methodology. These chapters may have a different writing register from chapter one and chapter four. Basically, it is a tough task to translate my writings and subjective reflection on my own work into academic dialogue. These chapters principally observe an individual use of tracing and elaborate on the generative possibilities of impersonal materials and methods that problematize the authorial presence. Chapter two mainly discusses my method of tracing, its pragmatic handling of materials, and its inherent deficiency of formal invention, and by the same token questions a theoretical and abstract realm of trace<sup>6</sup> which is reconciled idiosyncratically in the sense of a medium and a technique, to tracing. Chapter three circumscribes and registers my works progressive swing toward a less ridged systematic approach by rethinking tracing and the traced within drawing's broader material and procedural basis and brings forward examples of contemporary artistic practices that make central the use of tracing, while the text reconsiders tracing's identity both semantically and materially, and by bringing together the commonalities in their media, methods, and their ratified implication for a repositioning of tracing, the writing pursues avenues of speculation in regard to the main thesis question. In chapter four I address the central question of the thesis, namely, is tracing able to underwrite a present-day idea of originality and authenticity within a drawing practice? In particular, given the encumbrance of tracing's lack of standing and its received idea, this chapter looks at the multifarious factors that contributed to this doubt regarding its reputation and its creative authority. Grounding and centering a discussion between tracing's historical and contemporary account, the writing forms a discussion around Arturo Herrera's practice, which is contextualised within Nicolas Bourriaud's 'art of postproduction' (2002). Lastly, there is the conclusion to my thesis, where I combine the key thoughts of my research and a formulation of my conclusions.

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<sup>6</sup> Boukla, E. 2012. *Drawing on the condition of not seeing*. [Online] [Accessed 15 August 2013]. Available from: <http://process.arts.ac.uk/content/drawing-condition-not-seeing>

Figure 1



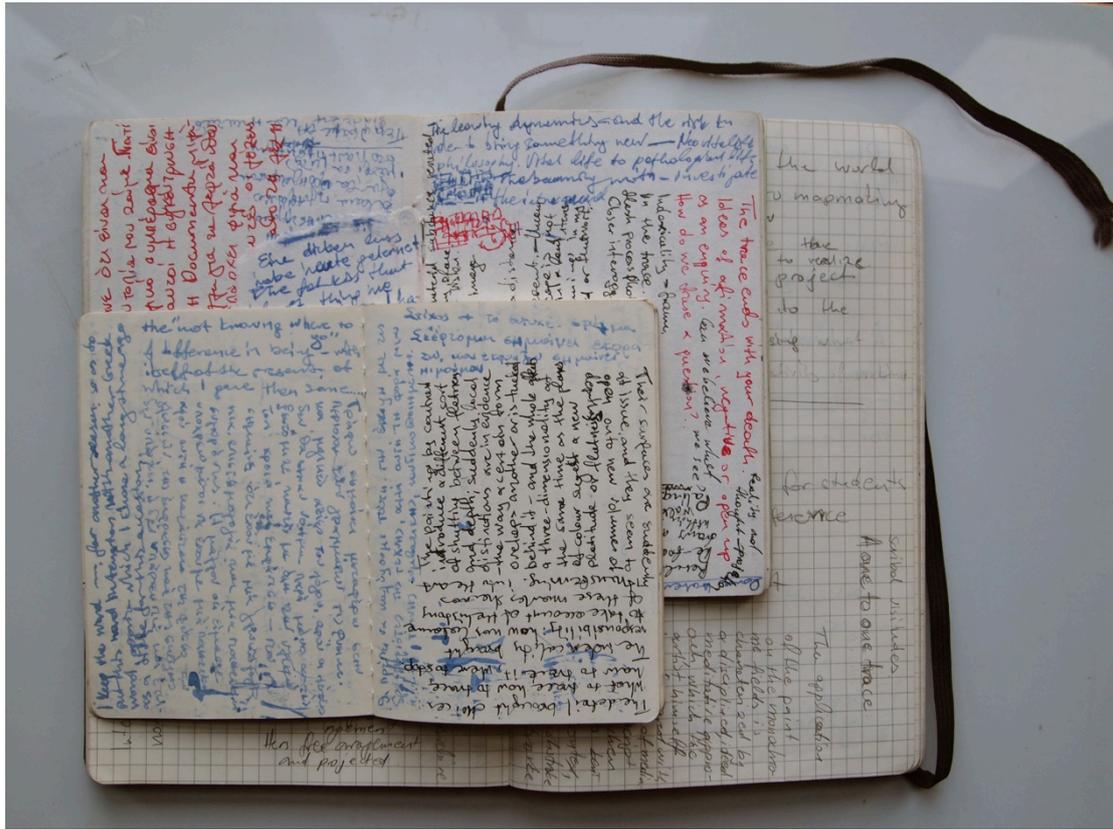
Τετραδιο Ιχνογραφιας. 1970s.

Figure 2



Process of Ichnographia

Figure 3



Journals

## **Chapter One.**

### **An outline of the parameters of my specific research subject and the rationale for choosing it.**

#### **Introduction**

In this chapter I will attempt to explain the motivations and the background necessary to understand the aesthetic preoccupations and ideas behind my work and research. I will endeavour to do so by offering a brief summary identifying the binary nature of practice led research. Following this I seek to explain the position of how I see drawing functions within my own practice, and I am not attempting to give a definitive meaning to drawing here but an opinion which operates specifically and in a practicable way as an agency for locating the medium; I am able to position an understanding of drawing that subjectively shifts from a manual dexterity and expression towards mechanical manipulations and thinking. Moreover, by bringing in examples of (my) earlier work, contextualised with the writings of Nicolas Bourriaud, (2002) I introduce some concerns and questions that negotiate a critical position, where a medium-unspecific and extended notion of drawing emphasises the process over an end product and focuses on the apparatus of its appearance and its conduits of circulation, and also usefully brings into clearer view the foundational questions and stimulations for undertaking this research.

#### **1.1 Situating an artist practice led research.**

Artistic practice as research hinges on the word practice, meaning having a distinctive role from that of a theory. In other words, there is a distinction between 'knowledge on reflection' and what could be called 'knowledge in action', which opens up a 'dialogue with the situation' –

meaning a situated understanding grounded in the context. This position supposes that practical activity is itself intrinsically intelligent and is crucial to the generation of new knowledge obtained through practice. (Schon, 1983) Although my predisposition instinctively leans more towards this latter idea of knowledge, I am nonetheless aware that there is an unavoidable paradox operating between ‘what is shown’ (knowledge in action) and the ‘what is said’ (knowledge on reflection). This means that if we can say an artwork has no opinion, then it is the artwork’s outlying interpretative affairs that by proxy speak up for it and characterise it.

The perceived thing is not an ideal unity in the possession of an intellect ... it is rather a totality open to a horizon of an infinite number of perspectival views which blend with one another according to a given style, which defines the object in question. (Merleau-Ponty, 1964:2-16)

In other words, an artwork is elliptical and requires of us a prior perspective and interpretation, and paradoxically it can be said that it is preconditioned to the word and language rather than the eye, which

... never goes without being articulated with articulation, without the order being given with words. (Derrida, 1993:56)

Still, even if the necessary supplements of language here emphasises the what is ‘said’ over the what is ‘shown’, we should always keep in mind that this hypothetical discourse (of what is said) is in the first instance initiated by the artwork itself (the sensible), or in effect the what is seen.

## **1.2 Situating an idea of thinking and doing within my drawing practice**

Since the turn of the century there has unquestionably been an upturn in drawing’s significance amongst artists, curators and institutions alike. Witness its growing dedicated spaces, exhibitions, and increasing

opportunities for undergraduate and postgraduate studies. All indisputably evidence the notion that drawing has shifted from its traditional position as a secondary preparatory instrument to that of a medium in itself, and that now firmly establishes drawing and its models ‘as a primary mode of expression’ in its own right. (Hoptman, 2002:12) However, drawing is not limited to the field of fine art, it also extends to the fields of engineering, architecture, design, science, and anthropology. Moreover, given the plurality of art making and its discourse, which now renders all positions open and equal,<sup>7</sup> it is difficult to define or account drawing with a definitive characteristic. (Hall, 2013:18-52)<sup>8</sup> With this in mind, rather than seeking a definitive and all-encompassing definition of drawing, a subjective opinion here functions as a specific method of locating the medium within my own work, which I consider is a more feasible objective.

When I think about the whys and the what behind my own drawing practice, I see that my thoughts incline towards Kate Macfarlane and Katherine Stout,<sup>9</sup> who pinpoint drawing’s current prominence to textual and inscriptive characteristics that became synonymous with the terms ‘conceptual’ and ‘process’ in the art of the 1960s and early 1970s, namely by locating the artwork at the level of ideas rather than that of objects, drawing in subsuming writing operated as a device of conceptualisation parallel with language which endeavoured to reduce the material presence of the work to an absolute minimum, thereby emphasising the process of making art over the end product.

As the object dematerialised throughout the late 1960s and early 1970s, drawing became a way of recording an action or an intellectual statement. It became the medium of choice, alongside writing, for expressing art as

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<sup>7</sup> That is, premised on porosity and contingency an ‘anywhere or not at all,’ in which the path between places is favoured in relation to the place itself, and perhaps asks how to inhabit the world without residing anywhere.

<sup>8</sup> Hall, L. G., 2013. *Drawing as a generative medium in art making*. [Online]. [Accessed 15 August 2013] Available from: <http://researchspace.ukzn.ac.za/xmlui/handle/10413/9225>

<sup>9</sup> Kate Macfarlane and Katherine Stout, co-founders and directors of The Drawing Room, London. The Drawing Room, established in 2003 at Tannery Arts in East London, was the first not-for-profit gallery space dedicated to drawing in the UK.

idea, and has remained at the core of this enduring strand of contemporary practice. (Kovats and McFarlane, et al., 2008:14)

Likewise, (and I think not coincidentally) taking up abstract qualities that originate from a reflection rather than an observation, Catherine De Zegher and Avis Newman in 'The stage of drawing: Gesture and Act' (2003) exhibition and publication, influentially<sup>10</sup> presented both historic and contemporary drawing in the context of 'a generative space of thought' rather than in the appearance of objects. (De Zegher, 2003:267)

On the other hand, it can be argued that an idea of conceptual and process in art today is a relative and not a critical choice, meaning that is simply another stylistic choice.<sup>11</sup> (Godfrey, 1998:379-383) As a result, the inherited aesthetic that accompanies 60s and 70s propositional and procedural works maybe also plays no small part in determining my contemporary reworking. However, if my work is simply nodding to *and measuring the distance from* its forbears, (such as the pre-determined, logical system of Sol Le Witt (fig.4) and the process based performative material actions of Richard Serra (fig.5)), then this is not a proposed contextual ironic correction from a position of a disgruntled critic, nor the adulation of a dedicated fan, but is instead an intuitive rational approach *provoked by a self-doubt of my drawing facility and capabilities* to an inscriptive and textual means in which manual facility and the once centred employment of traditional craft-based methods of making, are radically disrupted. This means appointing feasible objectives (rather than romanticized ideals) within artistic performance, a situation of (my) uncertainty becomes in a sense a search for aesthetic measure vis-à-vis its process for doing.

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<sup>10</sup> Drawing Now. Between the lines of Contemporary Art. 2007: ix-x

<sup>11</sup> Freed from the historical authority of "correct" methods and materials, the artist today occupies a position of liberty. Such liberty, however, is not without its problems, for caught up in the unrest of unbounded possibility how does the artist choose an appropriate or valid artistic approach to his or her work?

In attempting to clarify this process of doing specifically within a drawing context, I found it useful to track the word drawing via its etymological origins. The Oxford English Dictionary tracks the word ‘drawing’ as a verb back ‘to draw’<sup>12</sup> meaning ‘to pull’. The online etymological dictionary extends this path from ‘draw’ via the old English word *dragan* ‘to drag’. Likewise if we trace the words to pull, to drag, or to draw, we are led to the verb ‘trahere’<sup>13</sup> meaning ‘traction’, which is ‘the action of drawing or pulling a thing over a surface,’<sup>14</sup> which in turn indicates movement of both agent and thing. On this basis I see the idea of drawing is essentially to act upon something and make it move.<sup>15</sup>

In the case of the 1997 ‘ice piece’, Paradox of Praxis I, which corresponds to the axiom ‘sometimes doing something leads to nothing’, and involved pushing a block of ice around the streets of Mexico until only a puddle was left... (Alÿs, 2009)<sup>16</sup>

Pointing to certain discrepancies between an effort put in and an outcome achieved, Francis Alÿs perhaps illustrates (fig.6) how both a literal and metaphorical (operating between thought and body) doing becomes the agent of drawing, and drawing becomes the agent of doing. The act of drawing then, whether a pencil dragged across a surface of paper or a block of ice pushed through the city’s streets, becomes a prime site of experimentation and a conceptual device, primarily because of its ability to show the artist's decision-making process where

12 Etymonline.com. 2013. *Online Etymology Dictionary*. [Online]. [Accessed 26 August 2013]. Available from: [http://www.etymonline.com/index.php?allowed\\_in\\_frame=0&search=draw&searchmode=none](http://www.etymonline.com/index.php?allowed_in_frame=0&search=draw&searchmode=none)

13 Etymonline.com. 2013. *Online Etymology Dictionary*. [Online]. [Accessed 26 August 2013]. Available from: [http://www.etymonline.com/index.php?term=tract&allowed\\_in\\_frame=0](http://www.etymonline.com/index.php?term=tract&allowed_in_frame=0)

14 Oxforddictionaries.com. 2014. *traction: definition of traction in Oxford dictionary (British & World English)*. [Online]. [Accessed 26 August 2013]. Available from: <http://oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/traction>

15 Here move operates as a noun; as in a change of place, position, or state.

16 Mirroring the dreary toil of the thousands of street sellers carrying or lugging wares on the same streets Alÿs points to the enormous discrepancy between effort put in and outcome achieved. At the same time, the block of ice is a commonplace object taken from the artists everyday surroundings which references the materialist practices of modernist and minimalist sculpture and their departure in post-conceptual contemporary art and exemplifies his oft quoted *Sometimes doing something poetic can become political, and sometimes doing something political can become poetic*.

Dezeuze, A. 2013. “Walking the Line: Francis Alÿs interviewed by Anna Dezeuze,” *Art Monthly*, no. 323, February 2009, pp. 1-6. [Online]. [Accessed 4 August 2013]. Available from: [http://www.academia.edu/324259/\\_Walking\\_the\\_Line\\_Francis\\_Alys\\_interviewed\\_by\\_Anna\\_Dezeuze\\_Art\\_Monthly\\_no\\_323\\_February\\_2009\\_pp\\_1-6](http://www.academia.edu/324259/_Walking_the_Line_Francis_Alys_interviewed_by_Anna_Dezeuze_Art_Monthly_no_323_February_2009_pp_1-6)

... there may well be no goal beyond the process, which is almost always a series of more or less tentative moves towards an idea (Ferguson, 2007:12)

- a bridge between thinking and doing. (fig.7)

### **1.3 A necessary understanding of the outlook and procedures of (my) earlier work.**

To take these thoughts further and to add to this discussion, it is necessary to bring forward earlier views and works that sparked this research. At the time, drawing for me was not based upon mimetic forms but was more connected to the idea of drawing as a cognitive mechanism able to operate somehow as a bridge between thinking-doing and doing-thinking, (Butler, 1999) a physical and mental process which links isomorphically and rises and falls (a process, and always in process) around each other.

For example, in '480 pages' (2007) (fig.8) a process of reading and folding became at one and the same time mental and physical. Here, a certain idea of drawing as process and artifact conjoins to present a situation where objective material actions, once rendered, become subjective and expressionistic by context and authorial intent. The particular procedure of this reading and folding encompassed only a recto reading of a books page (Homer's Odyssey). That is, once the forward-facing side of a page is read (i.e. page 1,3,5,7,9,11 and so on) it is removed from the main body of the book and is folded and re-formed as a paper boat. This reading and folding continued in progression to the last page of the book. Ending and in a sense beginning this process, these paper boats (480) were launched on a nearby river. This process of doing that moves towards movement as both action and metaphor by interrupting the originally intended reading, produces new connections within the text that questions the fixed textual meaning and encourages

... the ongoing, evolving production of meaning, and an ever-expanding network of textual relations. (Sanders, 2006:3)

Likewise 'A daily route' (2007) is another example (fig.9,10) which offers up a *purposeful activity*<sup>17</sup> as both a method to produce work and the embodiment of a hypothetical standpoint. Responding to ephemeral and contingent circumstances, an everyday journey between my home and the city is measured and determined by a perfunctory filling of the public waste bins with shredded colour paper echoing the surrounding urban aesthetic. *A union of colour, where a physical and temporary space goes beyond a pictorial space into a physical space, and in a sense as an antithesis to renaissance perspective, the bins become an infinite series of points (of an imaginary line) and the spectator the 'vanishing point'*.<sup>18</sup>

The project sought to render visible our movement through the built environment of the city, revealing patterns of passage flow through the urban body: the privileging of one route over another, the concentration of movement through particular neighbourhoods, and the repetition and variation of a traveller's movement over time. (Boukla, 2009:52)

Defined by questions of production and usage rather than questions of expression and meaning, a doing then emphasises an idea of an art work more as an attitude rather than as a medium, and in a sense becomes itself the objectification of process and material that can bring a work of art into being.

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<sup>17</sup> Activity that depends on consciously planned and directed involvement. That is to say, where all of the decisions are made beforehand and the execution of the work is a perfunctory affair. Specifically, Sol LeWitt's *'The idea becomes a machine that makes the art'*, which marked a moment of real alliance between the non-productive (but authored) labour of art making. At this time I saw drawing more as an attitude rather than drawing as a medium, locating itself in the art of the late 60s, at which time virtuoso artistic technique was displaced or suppressed in order to bring attention to art's conceptual underpinnings. That pulled the concept of artistic authorship away from any obligation to craft skill and promoted an understanding of art as thought based. See Sol LeWitt *"Paragraphs on Conceptual Art"*, Artforum, 1967 June. 2013. [Online]. [Accessed 4 July 2013]. Available from: <http://www.paulj.myzen.co.uk/blog/teaching/voices/files/2008/07/Lewitt-Paragraphs-on-Conceptual-Art1.pdf>

<sup>18</sup> Both 480 pages and A daily route situate drawing as a residual object in which the process of making dictates the form of the drawing and echoes, for example, Sol Lewitt's so called '\$100 Drawings' (that encompasses folded and manipulated paper, photographs, maps and newspapers), while likewise at its record recalls a particular approach to embodied and process-oriented work such as Richard Serra's (1968) *Hand Catching Lead* (and more recently, Francis Alÿs)

Even though I recognise now that these works in effect take up ideas of social production of representation and critical reflection on the labour of representation, at the time I had only understood them in quite a superficial way, and likewise I connected with Bourriaud's ideas in the first place simply because of the work's assumption associated with movement, displacement and travel. In his writings Bourriaud puts forward that an 'idea of travelling, moving and commuting,' particularly with regard to the accelerated, compressed and densely populated urban environments of the 21st Century, produces 'a new approach to form'. (Bourriaud, 2008) In an interview with the curator and critic Bartholomew Ryan, (2009) Bourriaud suggests that artists now are 'wandering in space and in times,' exploring the past 'as if it was the last continent to explore'.<sup>19</sup> Passing from one linguistic system to another, decoding and recoding in order to reveal connections between heterogeneous relationships, it seems artists are crossing boundaries between disciplines and formats as easily as geographic borders. With this in mind, perhaps it could be said that travel has become a medium in itself and the artist a traveller, and mobility has become the metaphor par excellence of the contemporary turn.

*... mobilisation, economical migration and political displacement, have marked the passage to a multicultural and nomadic global society and have in fact inundated the quotidian in all of its forms, work, leisure and culture. (Excerpt from authors journal)*

Significantly here, my interest is not simply on Bourriaud's ideas on travel and mobility but on his views allied to an historical return, not as an appropriation but as a reactivation of the mechanisms of art that had earlier acted to criticise and question habitual and customary practices. Expanding and situating these ideas, I would like to refer to the 'How Latitudes Become Forms: Art in a Global Age' (2003)

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<sup>19</sup> An interview with the curator and critic Bartholomew Ryan (2009) in Art in America magazine. [Online]. [Accessed 4 August 2010]. Available from: <http://www.artinamericamagazine.com/news-opinion/conversations/2009-03-17/altermodern-a-conversation-with-nicolas-bourriaud/>

exhibition, where the curators Philippe Vergne, Douglas Fogle and Olukemi Ilesanmi surveyed how the contemporary shifting of reading a place;

... influenced by air travel, the growth of the Internet and transnational flows of people, capital and ideas - affected the making of contemporary art and its absorption by culture at large. (Trainor, 2003)<sup>20</sup>

In questioning how art translates once removed from this particular locale into a global arena and how new meanings appear while original assumptions get lost in the course of this passage, the curators, in embracing a multidisciplinary approach, brought together work that combined popular culture with the mundane and the traditional. Often operating between procedural and conceptual borders, these works resisted any cursory artistic designation.

These multi-faceted pieces invite us to acknowledge that there cannot be a homogenous definition of what constitutes a work of art, and that our own criteria of evaluation should be constantly reassessed. (Morsiani, 2004)<sup>21</sup>

Moreover, this exhibition linked the current geographical informed art to the explosion of commercial air travel in the late 1950s and the 1960s which changed not only society but also its art, emphasising the curators' choice to link the present to its past by appropriating and reactivating Harald Szeemann's title (1969) exhibition 'When Attitudes Become Form',<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> James Trainor. 2003. *How Latitudes Become Forms: Art in a Global Age*. Frieze. Issue 76, June-August. [Online]. [Accessed 18 December 2010]. Available from:

[http://www.frieze.com/issue/review/how\\_latitudes\\_become\\_forms\\_art\\_in\\_a\\_global\\_age/](http://www.frieze.com/issue/review/how_latitudes_become_forms_art_in_a_global_age/)

<sup>21</sup> Paola Morsiani, Curator at the Contemporary Arts Museum Houston.

Villarreal, I. 2013. *How Latitudes Become Forms: Art in a Global Age*. [Online]. [Accessed 5 September 2010]. Available from: [http://www.artdaily.com/index.asp?int\\_sec=2&int\\_new=10838#.UhzhBX8pjTg](http://www.artdaily.com/index.asp?int_sec=2&int_new=10838#.UhzhBX8pjTg)

<sup>22</sup> Harald Szeemann - the first of the jet-setting international curators. From 1961 to 1969 he was Curator of the Kunsthalle Bern. Szeemann's ground-breaking 'When Attitudes Become Form,' which opened at the Kunsthalle and introduced European audiences to artists like Mel Bochner, Joseph Beuys, Eva Hesse, Richard Serra and Lawrence Weiner. It also introduced the now-commonplace practice of curating an exhibition around a theme.

... which not only declared Conceptual and Process-oriented art practices as the new reality, but also embodied a new jet-setter<sup>23</sup> transnational reality in art making and exhibitions. (Trainor, 2003)<sup>24</sup>

Keeping in mind the distances and differences between eras and attitudes, I see a contemporary appropriation of conceptual means is more of a situation rather than an ideology (that is to say, established as a unity of thought), which nevertheless is integrated by a general validation of its numerous tendencies and convened into general tendencies. However, whether a situation or an ideology, it seems to me that there is a recirculation and a reactivation of ideas that share an emphasis on the concept and process, and like its earlier precursors its historical return it is possessed 'With the sense of mobility and change that pervades their time,' (McShine, 1970:139) and continues to focus both bodily and abstractly on the idea of travel.<sup>25</sup>

#### **1.4 The draft inquiry that started up this research**

Wishing to take this interest further, I originally proposed to research the historical, theoretical and imaginative encounters of travel, its experience, its re-experience, and the figure of the artist wanderer today. Hypothesising the view of a City as a mediated projection of the travel industry (that constantly projects parts of the world onto other parts of the world) as the place that can be seen both as 'foreign and yet familiar', my intentions were to examine how the artist could navigate and orient himself in a culture composed of proliferating merchandise and casual consumption.

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<sup>23</sup> The term "jet set" is attributed to Igor Cassini, a reporter for the New York Journal-American. The term, which replaced "café society", came from the lifestyle of travelling from one stylish or exotic place to another via jet aircraft.

<sup>24</sup> James Trainor. 2003. *How Latitudes Become Forms: Art in a Global Age*. Frieze. Issue 76, June-August. [Online]. [Accessed 18 December 2010]. Available from: [http://www.frieze.com/issue/review/how\\_latitudes\\_become\\_forms\\_art\\_in\\_a\\_global\\_age/](http://www.frieze.com/issue/review/how_latitudes_become_forms_art_in_a_global_age/)

<sup>25</sup> I see Conceptualism perhaps was the first art form to factor carriage and mobility into material decision-making. Regarding this idea, see Christopher C. 2009. *In & Out of Amsterdam: Travels in Conceptual Art, 1960-1976*. New York: MOMA.

Setting out on this inquiry my intention was to progress my drawings predisposed textural, and (what I believed to be) notational reading, more towards a (maybe hurriedly) schematic representation and a cartographic process. The process started with navigating Google Earth and moving virtually inside the city, *one I had never been to*. While moving and navigating this space both literally and metaphorically I started to collect real time image captures of transport stations, parking spaces, hotels etc., as well as their two-dimensional accompanying topographical and mercantile representations (i.e. maps and associated ephemera), then cut these from Google Earth and pasted them to Photoshop. These images were traced with a magic wand tool - the magic wand tool selects pixels in an image by detecting object edges based on tone and colour - alternating systematically the tolerance to a 10, 20, 30, and 50% between images - and the tolerance option tells Photoshop how different in tone and colour a pixel can be from the area we clicked on for it to be included in the selection.<sup>26</sup> A diagrammatic image of this process was then printed onto acetate, which was projected onto paper via an overhead projector and re-traced by hand as part of an arrangement relying on chance. (fig.11,12,13) Although I had plans to systematise the colours according to cartographic colour schemes and principles, I abandoned this process before I could implement them. Therefore the use of colour up to this point was intuitive.

Quite quickly it became apparent to me (and others) that this process started to confuse my original intentions and research with theoretical implications of new media and mapping technology (i.e. GPS etc.), which I had no interest to take on. Likewise, I recognised that this distinctly cartographical presence motivated the work more by its appearance and orientated it towards a finished end rather than a purposeful doing. In the end, I had to decide to either embrace the idea

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<sup>26</sup> Photoshopessentials.com. 2012. *The Magic Wand Tool - Photoshop Selections*. [Online]. [Accessed 13 September 2013]. Available from: <http://www.photoshopessentials.com/basics/selections/magic-wand-tool/>

of the map and all of its consequences (theoretical implications) or let it go.

### **Conclusion**

The thoughts and sequential background that I have detailed in this chapter are crucial in understanding the incentives behind the submitted work, which I attempt to discuss in the following chapter. Moreover, the notions surveyed previously not only informed the influences elaborated in the remaining chapters of this commentary, they also encouraged, influenced, and intrigued me throughout the creative process, which led to the work here presented. I hope that Bourriaud's ideas conjoined with my hypothetical views introduced in this chapter is useful to the reader, as it certainly is to me, and I am holding to the conviction that in attempting to explain some of its postulations within a specific context of tracing in the following chapters it will reveal some of the complications inherent in holding too close my processes and attitudes; which at times seemed to diminish and undermine the aim of accomplishing something new or radical.

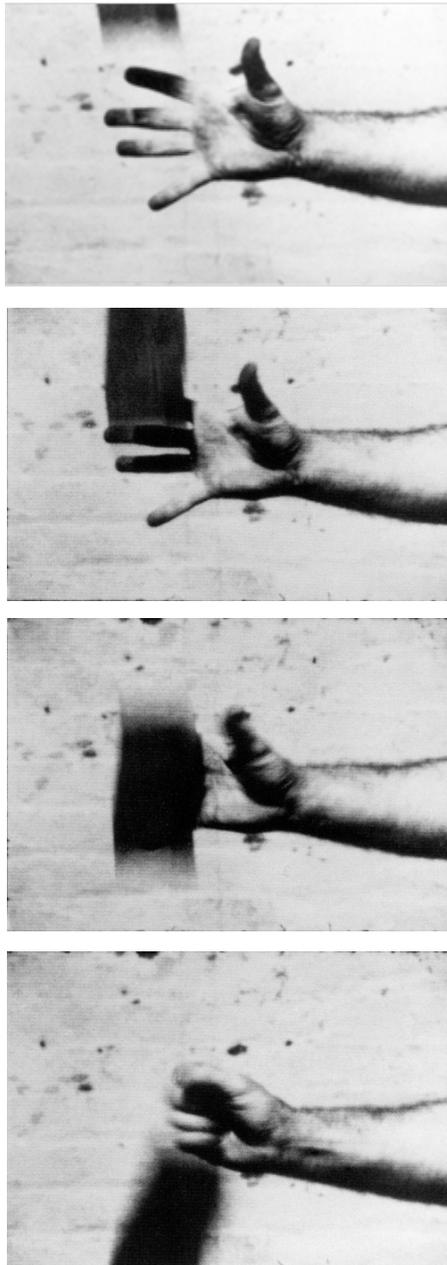
Figure 4



Sol Lewitt. A Wall Divided Vertically into Fifteen Equal Parts, Each with a Different Line Direction and Colour, and All Combinations. 1970.<sup>27</sup>

<sup>27</sup> Tate.org.uk. 2013. 'A Wall Divided Vertically into Fifteen Equal Parts, Each with a Different Line Direction and Colour, and All Combinations', Sol LeWitt | Tate. [Online]. [Accessed: 12 August 2013]. Available from: <https://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/le Witt-a-wall-divided-vertically-into-fifteen-equal-parts-each-with-a-different-line-t01766/text-catalogue-entry>

Figure 5



Richard Serra. *Catching Lead*. 1968. 16 mm b&w film 3 minutes.<sup>28</sup>  
*Opening and closing, grabbing and releasing his hand Serra tries to catch the bits of sheet lead that (echoing the vertical movement of the film) fall into the picture field, Serra's hand, blackened by the lead and shadow-like, comes to resemble a silhouette and for me perhaps, refers the process of drawing back to its origins in the shadow of Butades' daughter.*

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<sup>28</sup> YouTube. 2012. *Richard Serra 'Hand Catching Lead' 1968*. [Online]. [Accessed: 12 August 2013]. Available from: [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=q7SPbc\\_B3Wg](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=q7SPbc_B3Wg)

Figure 6



Francis Alÿs, *Paradox of Praxis 1. (Sometimes Making Something Leads to Nothing)* 1997. Video 4:59 min, Mexico City.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> Francisalys.com. 2013. *Francis Alÿs - Paradox of Praxis 1 (Sometimes Making Something Leads to Nothing)*. [Online]. [Accessed: 16 September 2013]. Available from: <http://www.francisalys.com/public/hielo.html>

Figure 7



Francis Alÿs. *The Leak*, São Paulo. 1995.<sup>30</sup>

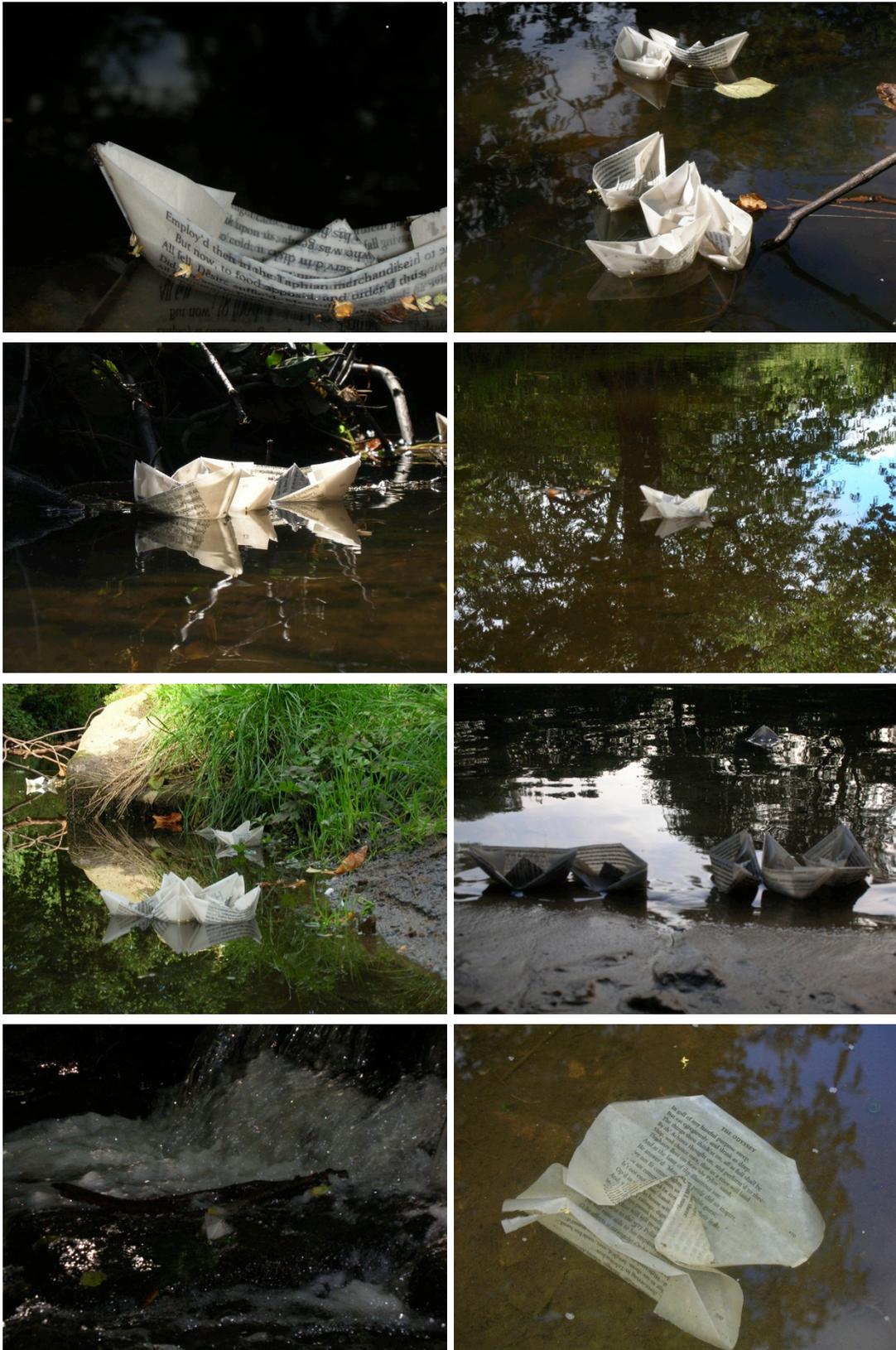
*Cyclical repetition and return inform *The Leak* an action in which Alÿs walked away from the gallery and around the neighbourhood, trailing a dribbled line from an open can of blue paint behind him. The action ended when thanks to the paint marks he found his way back to the gallery and hung the empty tin on the gallery wall.*

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<sup>30</sup> Alÿs, F. 2010. *Cartes postales, Postkaarten*. London: Tate.

Francis Alÿs reprised the *Leak*, in Paris in 2002. Francisalys.com. *Francis Alÿs - The Leak*. [Online]. [Accessed 12 April 2013]. Available from: <http://www.francisalys.com/public/leak.html>

Figure 8



480 pages, 2007.

Figure 9



A daily route. 2007. Preparatory drawing. Photocopy and inlaid colour card. Dim 210 × 297mm.

Figure 10



A daily route. 2007. Green, Yellow, Blue, Orange, Turquoise and Red shredded paper, yellow bin, and black bin bag.

Figure 11



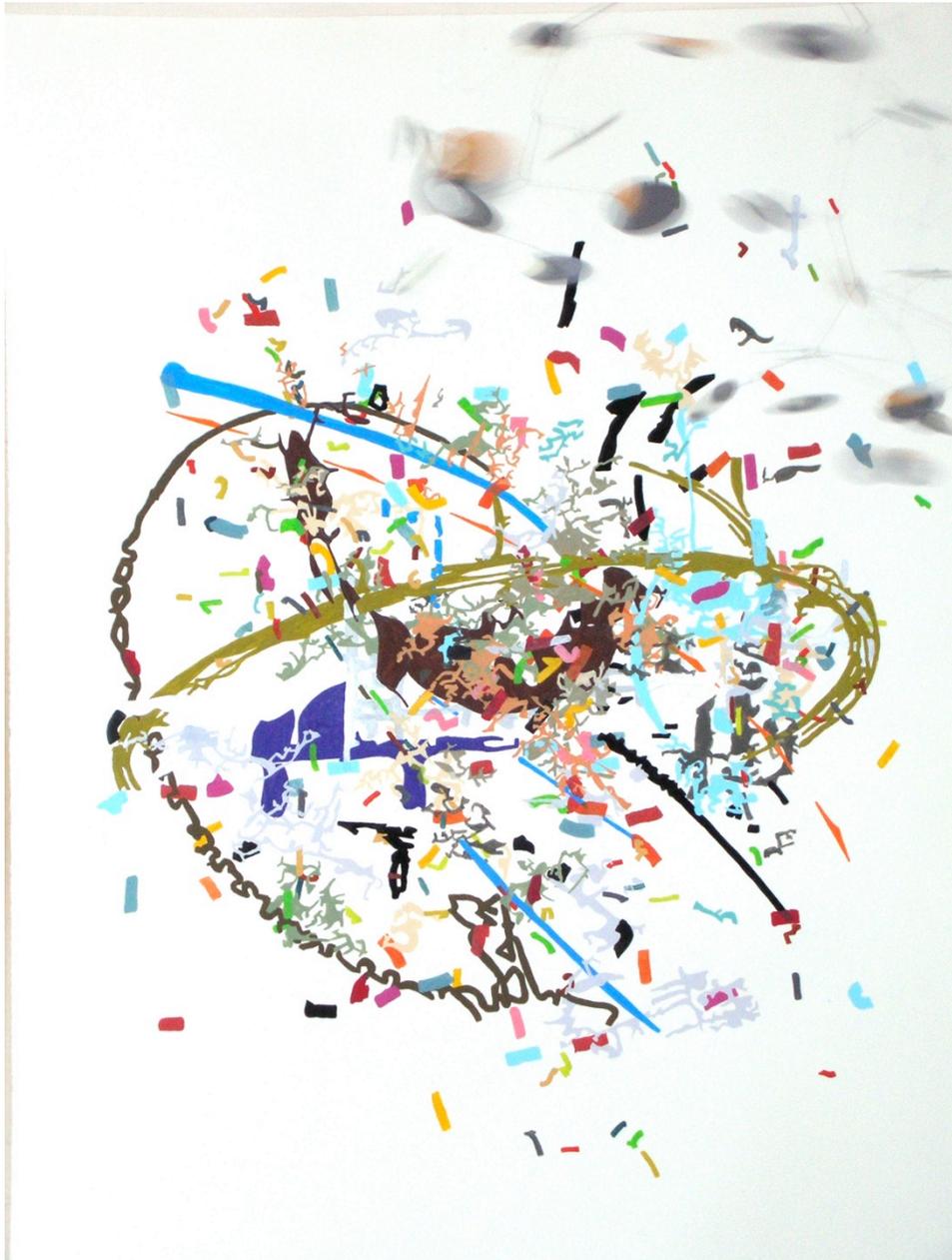
Untitled. 2009. Soft pastel, Colour markers, emulsion paint on paper. Dim 841 x 594 mm

Figure 12



Untitled. 2009. Soft pastel, Colour markers, emulsion paint on paper. Dim 841 x 594 mm

Figure 13



Untitled. 2009. Soft pastel, Colour markers, emulsion paint on paper, wire, colour card. Dim. Variable.

## **Chapter Two.**

### **Tracing: A reflective investigation of my own work and artistic methodology.**

#### **Introduction**

I found the connections that I have made in chapter one helped me to understand that a contemporary recall to conceptual art means and strategies does not necessarily mean embracing an ideology or simply adopting a stylistic choice. This means that whereas idea and process based art in the sixties and early seventies responds to the proliferation of production and mass consumption with a critique intent on relinquishing (*or at least deflating*) production, contemporary art recalls these earlier approaches and appropriates and reuses 'ready-made' materials in order to respond to similar concerns with a critical stance through a use of production (Roberts, 2007:32-35); a volte-face that I perceive as a reactivation shifts appropriation beyond its quotation or pastiche. As a result, this idea of appropriation not as a stylistic choice but as a reactivation, suggested a step back to my earlier models of inscription and purposeful doing and prompted me to rethink my practice in terms of systems and ordering. Following my concerns regarding the works earlier outcomes, (namely its rationally led but subjectively carried out doing, that inevitably abided only to the rationally directed outcomes that its doer could accept), this return to ideational specified procedures and earlier approaches reintroduced a subjective led method executed by an objective mechanical doing. Accordingly, these thoughts readjusted my attention towards the devices of my doing and the process of tracing, which became here both the tool and the construct for this research.

In light of this, in this chapter I will critically examine the evolving role of tracing and the traced that I consider had a significant impact on the course and strategies effected during the creation of the submitted work. Tracing will be discussed for both its technical value in drawing and as a notional and reflexive implication within broader models of contemporary art making.<sup>31</sup> More specifically, I will elucidate the changes and extensions of tracing today, by taking into consideration that its practice has assimilated a wealth of new means of expression and materials. With this, my interest lies in how preconceived notions of what tracing is, and is not, may be redefined through strategies that challenge an idea of dexterity as a fundamental aspect of how we create and experience artwork. Considering the particularities of tracing linked with the causality between action and registered result, I will venture on how tracing brings a number of opportunities to re-imagine the means in which tracing may now be performed and contextualised. With this in mind, my intention is to draw attention to strategies of tracing that have become pivotal and principal in my practice - its instigation, preparation and exploration. On top of this, through critical reading, thinking, and reflection I will attempt to revise, consolidate, and provide access to an idiosyncratic plurality of perspectives, pointing to tracing's propagation as a significant theme or tendency which extends beyond drawing into broader practices and conventions.

## **2.1 The first phase of methodology - Tracing with carbon paper.**

### i. The Point of departure drawings.

From paintings, engravings and postcards, to photography and film, travel and image have had a history of mutual entanglement.

It was a place as blank as a sheet of paper. It was a place I  
had always been looking for (Solnit, 2001:30)

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<sup>31</sup> That is, works that break with art as beguilement and call attention to their own factitiousness as textual constructs.

The more exotic or rarefied the destination and experience, the more potency is imbued in the image/idea of a place. Looking to reintroduce systems and ordering, I saw the travel brochure as an agent of a given system of places, in effect a placeholder and a storage and retrieval space for my geographical desires. I chose the travel brochure for its implicit associations and linkages rather than as a site of geographical authenticity, therefore I used the brochure as pretext to reintroduce a pragmatic step by step procedure back into my drawing process by tracing the pictorial representations of the entire brochure, without deviating from their given order, onto a single page using carbon paper with a technique of remove and transfer.

*Working at my drawing board, in my studio - at my place, in my space - my attention is not in viewing the specific linked points in the brochures destinations setting, it is in the surfacing destination arriving out of the drawings emerging Topographic place,<sup>32</sup>(the arrangement or accurate representation of the physical features of an area) and its evolving relationship to the veiled Chorographic space<sup>33</sup> (the systematic description and mapping of particular regions). (fig.1.) My perspective is a detached outsidersness; an external approach to place that marks a moment by a moment of doing.<sup>34</sup>*

*Doing something the same or similar, step by step, again and again, can make the making itself monotonous, repetitive, meditative, interesting, boring, like an everyday job. It's again doing instead of not doing, and after a while one sees something appearing while the labour itself disappears. The work becomes independent and self-evident, a real thing. (Extract from Helsinki presentation, 2010)*

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<sup>32</sup> Oxforddictionaries.com. 2013. *Topographical: definition of topographical in Oxford dictionary (British & World English)*. [Online]. [Accessed 15 August 2013]. Available from:

[http://oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/topographical?q=topographic#topographical\\_\\_6](http://oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/topographical?q=topographic#topographical__6)

<sup>33</sup> Via Latin from Greek, *khōrographia*, from *khōra* or *khōros* 'region'.

Oxforddictionaries.com. 2013. *chorography: definition of chorography in Oxford dictionary (British & World English)*. [Online]. [Accessed 15 August 2013]. Available from:

[http://oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/chorography?q=chorographic#chorography\\_\\_8](http://oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/chorography?q=chorographic#chorography__8)

<sup>34</sup> Here perhaps I need to state that at this stage drawing for me was often deliberated in my journal as a kind of movement or touch, and within such a background I naturally focussed on how drawings were made, its issues of doing and the appearance of its doing.

*Page after page, after page, after page... the traced chorographical features of the travel brochure are systematically superimposed on top of one another, a finite-but potentially endless-pragmatic procedure of layering and filtering. (fig.14) Tracing on the brochure with my pencil is comparable to marking out a route. (fig.15) Tracing and re-tracing the landscape of the page, (a stand-in for other places and places where I am not) its point of reference remains in place while its trajectory redefines itself on each walk, and while the same raw material remains fixed, the state of the drawer and the drawing is in flux.*

Imaginably here a fluctuating space through a psychological re-experience unfolds the chorographic, and simultaneously rises with the drawings mounting topographic evidence of place.<sup>35</sup> With this in mind, I see a way in which the drawings perhaps return a notion of differing Place and Space argued by Michel de Certeau, (1984) who sites the elements of place have been determined by their stability and rigid adherence to their location, whilst space is composed of intersections of mobile elements.

In short, space is a practiced place. Thus the street geometrically defined by urban planning is transformed into a space by walkers. In the same way, an act of reading is the space produced by the practice of a particular place: a written text, i.e., a place constituted by a system of signs (de Certeau, 1984:117)

Place then is actuated by the ensemble of movements deployed within it, and space occurs as the 'effect produced by the operations that orient it, situate it and temporalize it. Accordingly, an idea of the travel brochure exposed here has been only a partial representation,

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<sup>35</sup> Although philosophically there are different views of what place is and where and how it occurs, in seeing that *'Every sensible body is by its nature somewhere'* (Aristotle, *Physics*, Book 3, 205a: 10) and *'Time is the numeration of continuous movement'* (Aristotle, *Physics*, Book 4, 223b: 1) that effects this body, then arguably place can be understood in two different ways. On the one hand, it can be described geographically (Topos) by longitude, latitude, and altitude; concerned with quantitative rather than with qualitative matters (our experience of a new place often starts with finding its topographical features as we locate it on a map). And on the other it can also be described spatially (Choros) and temporarily by way of experiences and memories that are rooted in a particular locale; concerned with the nature rather than with the magnitude of the setting. Arguably then, place signifies a set of objective, physical coordinates where experience and memory takes place, and this actuates a space which is usually hidden from us until the moment we experience it ourselves or learn of others' experiences in it.

... one that is subject to revision, revocation, and relativism in the same way that a memory of a place might be (Cocker 2007:online).

*It occurs to me that the brochure contours are traced here perhaps as a means of misleading - an anti-guide out of which the mechanism for getting lost appears - a kind of 'Derive'.<sup>36</sup> Whilst on the one hand 'the point of departure' drawings looks to challenge and question the ways in which descriptions of place are packaged and disseminated, on the other they attempt to uncover something more coherent about an idea of place by the act of using a different set of rules to read a terrain.*

*... point of departure in retracing the travel brochure as a form of a found set of instructions purposely misread, calls upon Situationists' ways of using maps of other cities to find their way around Paris. This echoing of the precedents of the Situationists' point of departure can, in a sense, be seen as an attempt to re-create the conditions of détournement<sup>37</sup> which acts as one more supplement... (Excerpt from authors journal)*

*Without choosing its path and following the given, my hand systematically traces around the topographical features of the brochures page. A sheet of carbon paper placed between the brochures page and a blank piece of paper simultaneously registers and transfers my hand's travel and its measure.<sup>38</sup> (fig.15) As opposed to original or spontaneous marks, here the trace extracts found marks that the carbon paper in chorus supplements as corresponding autographic marks. Although the iconic characteristic (representation linked to a*

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<sup>36</sup> Having its origins in the psychogeography theory developed by the Paris based group of artists and theorists the Letterist International (1945-1957), this continued with its schism collective Situationists International (1957-1968). The derive (literally "drift" or "drifting") is a method of rapid aleatory passage through varied ambiances (usually urban) on which the indirect aesthetic delineations of the proximate architecture and geography subliminally guide the traveller, with the intention of encountering a wholly new and authentic experience.

<sup>37</sup> In broad terms a Détournement can be outlined as a reworking of a previous media work, in which the newly fashioned one has an end that is antagonistic or antithetical to the original (advertisements with pornography, street signs with poetry, city maps with landscape paintings). The original work that is Détourned must be somewhat familiar to the audience so that it can grasp the opposition of the new message.

<sup>38</sup> The blank piece of paper perhaps, a premonition of the completeness with which my own information system will replace that of the original source of the brochure.

referent through mimetic similarity) of the photographic image is pivotal to the work, drawing here is not abandoned in favour of such practices as photography itself, nor does it take the path to abstraction, and instead it brings drawing into line with the *modus operandi* of photography; that of mechanical registration. I determine my drawing by the issue of reproduction, even though this is no mimetic reproduction in the sense of a transformation and concentration of a model external to the drawn image. Here, similarity is based on tracing out truthfully with my pencil an already existing representation,<sup>39</sup> and to an extent I can say that such drawing could be termed drawing without perception, meaning that the drawing's relationship to the referent is determined by a tactile frame of physical touch.

#### ii. Tracing and an iconic relation to a pictorial similarity

Accepting Peirce's semiological theory, I consider that the *point of departure* drawings in effect reduce the iconic relation of a pictorial similarity to an indexed one of direct contact,<sup>40</sup> and what remains of the iconic representation is its trace as the factual covering of a two-dimensional surface. More specifically, Peirce pronounces three types of sign, the index, the symbol and the icon, indicating various relationships between the object and its representation - the signifier and the signified. Contrasting to the symbol, a cypher, which is wholly independent of the physical characteristics of the object (as in linguistic signs), and the icon that alludes to corresponding and purely mimetic types of representation (as in figurative art), the index is typified by an existential relationship to the object, meaning that the index points to the presence of something, which is at the same time absent, a relationship where the signified and the referent at some point come

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<sup>39</sup> Here there is also the issue of copying images rather than making images, with the point of departure drawings appearing to internalise the postmodern idea that all images are copies with no originals; a simulacrum. Baudrillard defines the simulacrum as a 'simulation of a simulation', where the sign is exchanged for another sign without referring to real objects (a model of a model). "Simulation is no longer that of a territory, a referential being or a substance. It is the generation by models of a real without origin or reality: a hyperreal. The territory no longer precedes the map, nor survives it. Henceforth, it is the map that precedes the territory" (Baudrillard 1994). In other words, the representation precedes and determines the real.

<sup>40</sup> James Elkins. 2003. *What does Peirce's sign theory have to say to art history?* Culture, Theory and Critique, Volume 44, Issue April. pp. 5-22.

into contact and then separate. In this sense, this idea of the index constructs a meaning in relation to the world founded on bodily contiguity, on material relationships, and on the trace of touch.

*If we consider the characteristic of the indexical sign being that of a physical causal relationship between representation and object, then the act of drawing in itself perhaps can be thought as an indexical process, where the physical act of drawing contains the trace of the pencil that moves across the paper. (Boukla, 2012. Extract from Drawing Out presentation)*

### iii. Tracing and a practice of under-laying carbon paper.

With this in mind, the practice of under-laying carbon paper that registers my pencils movements in the space of the page and transfers their trace blindly on to the unseen drawing paper conditions the pencil to that of the touch of a blind man's stick.<sup>41</sup>

In his right hand, between his legs, he still holds firmly onto his cane, the cane that - and he is not yet ready to forget it - was his saving eye, his emergency eye, one might even say his optical prosthesis... (Derrida 1993: 9)<sup>42</sup>

I see this kind of vision-through-touch in a way brings a confidence and an assurance to my hands movement, which in turn gives a certitude and authority to the registering trace marks. Furthermore, the use of carbon paper as a carrier of the traced inscriptions brings to mind Freud's 'A Note Upon the Mystic Writing Pad',<sup>43</sup> (1925) in which he hypothesis that all writing takes place in the

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41 Boukla, E. 2012. *Drawing on the condition of not seeing*.

Process.arts.ac.uk. 2013. *DRAWING ON THE CONDITION OF NOT SEEING* / *process.arts*. [Online]. [Accessed 15 August 2013]. Available from: <http://process.arts.ac.uk/content/drawing-condition-not-seeing>

42 Derrida's analogy of vision-through-touch has its root in Simplicius's commentary on Aristotle's *De Anima*, and famously in Descartes *Optics*.

43 A popular children's toy, the mystic writing pad was made from a dark wax/resin base, a layer of thin waxed translucent paper in the middle, and a transparent sheet of celluloid on top. Using a blunt stylus, one wrote upon the celluloid overlay, which pressed into contact the translucent waxed paper underlay and the dark wax covered base card, which then showed through as a mark on the back of the translucent waxed paper underlay. However, breaking the close contact by lifting the layers slightly away from one another and the wax/resin base erased the marks, and as if by magic the surface appeared blank once again.

presence of other writings, precipitating the palimpsest as a model for the function of writing. Freud (1925:208) noted that writing:

...seem(s) imperfect, since our mental apparatus accomplishes precisely what they cannot: it has unlimited receptive capacity for new perceptions, and nevertheless lays down permanent - though not unalterable - memory-traces of them.<sup>44</sup>

In other words, for Freud all means of mechanically supplementing the memory were inadequate. For instance, while on one hand writing on paper could preserve text indefinitely, on the other it was quickly filled up and required replenishment. And similarly, one could erase and renew the chalk-slates surface, but in doing so you would lose its traces. Therefore, the material of writing (the paper and the chalk-slate) provides a deficient version of memory that can either be too finite and fixed (like in the former) or too transient (in the latter). However, the 'Mystic Writing Pad' offered Freud an *almost* perfect metaphor of how the psyche itself records material like the chalk-slate; it can record an infinite amount of material while always remaining 'new'. All the same, although the device seems to erase the inscription (like the chalkboard), on the waxed surface beneath it does leave a faint visible trace, a trace that can be seen through rolling back the sheet of celluloid to examine the wax surface. This, for Freud, (1925) was analogous to the way the psychic system that received sense impression from the outside world remains unmarked by those impressions, which pass through to a deeper layer where they are recorded as unconscious memory. Consequently *'the appearance and disappearance of the writing'* is similar to *'the flickering-up and passing away of consciousness in the process of perception'*. Imagined as a palimpsest, the *point of departure* drawings I notice both resonate with and differ from Freud's *'mystic writing pad'*. It is clear that the shared characteristic of the mystic pad and the palimpsest is that both are dense metaphors of over-writing. However, if Freud brings into play the

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<sup>44</sup> From Freud, General Psychological Theory, Chapter XIII, (1925). Available at: <<http://home.uchicago.edu/~awinter/mystic.pdf>> [Accessed on: 15/08/2013]

pad in order to describe a problem of the *subject* (the relationship among perception and consciousness), I use the palimpsest to emphasise the contingency of the *object* (the ambiguous connections between materiality, ephemerality, and actions).<sup>45</sup> Similarly, there is one main difference between the palimpsest of the *point of departure* drawings and Freud's pad, namely that the visible surface of the mystic pad (which corresponds with Freud's understanding of perception) allows the entire erasure of whatever has been inscribed on it, while by contrast the visible surface of the *point of departure* drawings holds everything drawn on it, even though the legibility of its inscriptions diminishes with more and more over-drawing. (fig.17) However, I am aware that in some ways this is a flawed contrast, as the palimpsest of point of departure resists any hope of total chronological legibility or revival - with previous inscriptions continually rendered illegible even as their traces remain.

#### iv. Palimpsest as a device for erasure.

Originally from the Greek (παλίμψηστος), meaning 'again-scraped,' the word palimpsest referred to writing material or a manuscript on which the original writing has been effaced to make room for a second writing. However, in the *point of departure* drawings the re-drawing (re-writing) brings about the erasure rather than the erasure bringing the re-drawing (re-writing). (fig.18) Paradoxically, a process of addition becomes a process of removal, a new erasure creates a drawing and a new drawing creates erasure, and each stage eradicates the last, yet (its) history is not entirely rubbed out and instead it is reestablished (re-inscribed) in the new writing. Clearly here, the re-writing is taking place at the same time as the erasure. (fig.19)

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45 While I use a notion of the palimpsest here principally within a Situationist psychogeographical understanding, that is, as the "specific effects of the geographical environment, consciously organized or not, on the emotions and behaviour of individuals." (Situationist International 1996: 69), I do so without ignoring the grey areas or the various other views of psychogeography amongst academics and other authority's in the field. In particular, a psychoanalytical slant offered by Howard F. Stein, (1987) who's Freudian take on space does not see psychogeography as a vague or ambiguous response to space but as something that is ever-present in the individual. By considering the inner life of the individual (i.e. their gender, ethnicity, sexuality etc.), this form of psychogeographic study aims to look at what connects someone to place and how geography marks a person and shapes the person to who they are. Howard F. Stein's (1987) Developmental Time, Cultural Space: Studies in Psychogeography.

Given that most practices of erasure cannot erase without leaving some material trace, for example the pencil rubber leaves a blemish, a computer's backspace key or a delete button imprints data of previous writings on to the hard drive, the erasure can be seen here as much as an inscription as any 'positive' piece of writing, and it is able to operate not as a destructive but as a procreative force.

...the authority of the text is provisional, the origin is a trace; contradicting logic, we must learn to use and erase our language at the same time. (Spivak, 1976: xviii)

In order to apprehend this unanticipated erasure in my work, which was happening automatically alongside my tracing process, I looked to find an example of an artist's work that shared similar processes and characteristics. Looking to gain knowledge and understanding from another artist's production and decision-making, my intention was to find a way to distinguish and bring forward a different thought of trace and erasure within the works vocabulary and processes.

#### v. Tracing, erasing and the palimpsestical work of Julie Mehretu.

Connecting her work to ideas of the palimpsest, in an interview with Susan Sollins, Julie Mehretu explains:

...with my work, it's the architecture and the space and the built environment that become a kind of palimpsest, another type of atmosphere. The buildings are so layered; the information can be so layered and disintegrated that it becomes a dust-like atmosphere (Julie Mehretu, 2008)

Mehretu traces maps, architectural features, urban planning grids, and other related photographic material, which she then layers one on top of the other to construct a multi-layered arrangement where abstract gestures and calculated schematic projections comes together. (fig.20) While her tracing methods reference architectural drafting techniques her drawings, liberated from any obligations to be constructed, point not to architecture per se but to its archive. This, from my point of view, augments Peirce's idea of the index (the signifier and the signified

having coexisted in the same place at some time), founded on a one to one trace with a supplemented paradigm of indexicality. This is an idea that brings to mind Rosalind Krauss' (1977) 'notes on the index,' in which she argues that photography challenging its own perceptual and mechanical boundaries through its use in a palimpsest of superimposing and interchanging media, theoretical beginnings, and diverse visual outcomes, established a supplemented paradigm of indexicality.<sup>46</sup> Seeing that art at the time was fundamentally predicated on absence rather than presence, Krauss authors the idea of the index as a presence, seen as the past and concerned as much with means and thing-ness as any existential *having been there-ness*. The index works to:

... substitute the registration of sheer physical presence for the more highly articulated language of aesthetic conventions. (Krauss, 1977:209)

Given that a dematerialised emphasis is placed on the artwork at this time, I see that it is not surprising that Krauss constructs a dematerialised idea of the index. However, what is of significance to me is the idea that conventions of representation and its associations can be, and are, borrowed from other arenas of visual practice as a kind of indexical trace.<sup>47</sup> This suggests that when emphasised in a culture of reproduction this indexical trace inevitably becomes no longer an actual link between the sign and the signified, but only between signifiers.

Olukemi Ilesanmi: Your work often seems to be in conversation across art-historical time, combining the dynamism of the Futurists, geometric abstraction of Malevich, historical impulse of Delacroix or Goya, and enveloping scale of color-field painting... JM: ...the symbolic sampling of visual traditions in art history

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<sup>46</sup> From very early on, early photographers utilised the history of painting to explore and develop a visual language, which both quoted from and transformed genres such as still life and landscape. In a reciprocal fashion, artists began to utilise photographic characteristics into their own work (for example, Edgar Degas) such as radical angles of view and the use of over and under exposed light effects. Later, into the twentieth century as art forms changed, photographers adopted a sense of painterly gesture and abstraction into their photographic works which was influenced by Abstraction and Expressionism.

<sup>47</sup> Images now exist in a broad array of remakes, parodies, and images of nostalgia, and here index gives way to icon.

slipped into the layers of the paintings. Different types of visual language symbolized and referenced various social and political ideas and attitudes...<sup>48</sup>

However although one can find many similarities between Mehretu's work and mine, my main interest rests with her tracing methods of production and her approach to erasure. Using the draughtsman's processes to trace and the painter's gestures to erase, one can say that her approach interestingly merges ideas of drawing and production that arise out of both the artist's studio and the draughtsman's office, a situation that became apparent to me as I was looking at photographs of Mehretu working with her assistants in the studio. Noticeable in this situation is that a drawing production perhaps disrupts the usual draughtsman's office division of labour, which traditionally operates with different draughtsmen working on individual segments of an overall design and at a separate station (drawing board), and shifts it to the vertical of the studios wall and to a performance like doing of drawing which takes place in chorus at one and the same time and on a single object.

*Looking at photographs of Mehretu and assistants working in the studio (Remote Viewing, 2005:52-53), my mind goes to the Hans Namuth images of Jackson Pollock painting. Specifically, the photographs show Mehretu and her assistant in the studio tracing a projected image onto a canvas while simultaneously receiving this image onto themselves, that for me creates an unavoidable overlap that places them (if ambiguously) in the painting. Imaginably echoing Pollock's being in the painting, this juxtaposition adds another layer to the work and perhaps points to an opaque performative relationship to Mehretu's tracing approach' (Excerpt from author's journal)*

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48 Julie Mehretu / MATRIX 211. Interview with Julie Mehretu. Bampfa.berkeley.edu. 2013. *BAM/PFA - BAM Exhibitions*. [online] [Accessed 5 September 2013]. Available from: <http://www.bampfa.berkeley.edu/art/AN0218>

Mehretu, speaking in an interview at the Guggenheim, Berlin,<sup>49</sup> explains that she purposely sands the colours and erases her marks to create scuffs and blemishes which she sees as points of converging that integrate the architectural drawing with the ground, and this at some point decides for her what *'the works direction will be'*.

Many parts of the drawing will also be erased. So the paintings will build up, and then a big portion of them, somehow or another, will disappear. So then, hopefully, the paintings will also just interact, to talk about disintegration. (Julie Mehretu, 2008)<sup>50</sup>

It seems to me that there isn't any systematic plan or a program operating behind Mehretu's erasure. Instead, in my opinion erasure operates for her in the normative of an artist's speculative mark making of addition and subtraction, which as a result judges, accepts, revises or erases, accumulates, and in a sense incidentally contributes to the final figuration (and reading of the work). In view of that, perhaps Mehretu's erasure operates (consciously or unconsciously) more as a trace that links to a particular quality of painting tradition that relies on the judgment of the eye.

With this in mind, I suggest that my methods of trace-erasure, its actions and perspectives, brings forward perhaps an idea of the scriptorium<sup>51</sup> and the inevitable errors and omission of the copyist; the 'scribal vicissitudes' that in effect adds elements of uncertainty to the texts interpretation by complicating its recopying and its reading. In my observation, these scribal vicissitudes in point of departure drawings happens from an isodynamic action of a push and pull relationship, where for every one-to-one trace/transfer action there is an approximate retrieval reaction, meaning that when the drawing

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49 Julie Mehretu, 2009. Grey Area, Guggenheim, Berlin. YouTube. 2013. *Interview with Julie Mehretu*. [Online]. [Accessed 5 September 2013]. Available from: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=k04kA7hJ8x8> [Accessed Online: 5/9/2013].

50 Art21.org. 2013. *QUESTIONS: Julie Mehretu / Art21*. [Online] [Accessed 5 September 2013]. Available from: <http://www.art21.org/texts/julie-mehretu/activity-questions-julie-mehretu>

51 'A place for writing', the scriptorium usually refers to a room in medieval monasteries devoted to the copying of manuscripts by monastic scribes.

becomes overloaded with ink the carbon paper, via the pencils pressure, incidentally reclaims back some ink from the drawing - essentially an un-writing re-writing relationship. Arguably, if Mehretu's erasure comes about from an intuitive speculative gestural action, mine arises un-judged and unrevised from a systematic repetitive tactic which I think can perhaps be comparable to the monastic scribe.

## **2.2 The second phase of methodology - Tracing in situ with Camera**

### **Lucida.**

#### i. Viewing the city in a manner of a palimpsest.

Accepting that an idea of the image of a city is provisional, and almost by definition poly-temporal, a complex assemblage of agents and material substrate cities bear multiple traces of past workings and reworkings that blur spatial and temporal boundaries, likewise the point of departure drawings answer a similar condition. Arising out of the accumulated traces of the travel brochures, I notice the city's referents and destinations here emerge and read almost like archaeology of architecture. (fig.21) In a way, the *point of departure* drawings for me uncover a territory in which structures and landscapes have been built into and upon one another, and where one is faced with the image of the city's 'cosmopolitanism' and 'post-border' geography as in a manner of a palimpsest. (Dear, Leclerc, 2003:1-30)

'The city is a huge monastery', said Erasmus. Perspective vision and prospective vision constitute the two fold projection of an opaque past and an uncertain future onto a surface that can be dealt with. (De Certeau, 1984:93)

Imaginably, the model of the palimpsest in containing the prior, the new, and the amalgamated offers up a way that can survey the manner in which (the city) history is subject to contrasted structures that traverses the city, breaks it down, and rearranges it. Whether as individual buildings or a complex urban fabric, architecture accounts

for a substantial part of the cultural identity of every society, an abstracted image of cities, histories, and geographies becomes a way of signifying social action and suggesting an unravelling of a personal biography that becomes a point of departure in order to chart the presence of our fundamentally urbanised and digitally connected world.

Only in Marco Polo's accounts was Kublai Khan able to discern, through the walls and towers destined to crumble, the tracery of a pattern so subtle it could escape the termites' gnawing. (Calvino, 1997:5)

In *Invisible Cities*, Calvino's Venice exemplifies temporally and geographically the palimpsestical city as a place where the human imagination is not necessarily limited by the laws of physics or the limitations of modern urban theory, but as a potentiality for an alternative approach to thinking about cities: how they are formed and how they can function.

The city is in continuous evolution, obliging social, cultural, and migratory phenomena that by their nature are essentially dynamic and mobile. Heralding the passage to a multicultural and global society, this city (as a place of the foreign and the foreigner) is constituted by the emergence of disparate values and by the integration of the opposites of uprooting and integration and the encounter and collision of different cultures. The city, foreign and yet already familiar through the sway of its globally produced image, highlights the urban as an ever more homogenised, accelerated, and expanded global entity.

Wanting to expand and develop my ideas and research beyond the studio and the resource of the travel brochure whilst retaining the point of departure drawings utilitarian means of trace, and having been offered a residency at The British school in Rome, I saw the Veduta (souvenir view), and the pre-photographic technology (Camera Lucida) of the *Grand Tour* as a potential direct contact with the city's territory. *The British school in Rome*, being a place where present and past

intersects and overlaps synchronically and with a rich source of archival material, offered me access to a visual surface of the city beyond familiar tourist clichés (specifically the Piranesi drawing and print collection which shaped the way his contemporaries and subsequent generations viewed Rome on their Grand Tour). (fig.22)

Rome is a living palimpsest, where the classic meets the ‘modern’ Rome (the *Palazzo della Civiltà del Lavoro*, 1940) and where both overlap with the city’s postmodernity (the recent museum for contemporary art *Maxxi* 2010), a shifting from the pre to the post-industrial era which marks the city’s urban space is increasingly ‘interstitial,’<sup>52</sup> imposing on the traditional places of social and cultural interchange - reminding me (us) that the city is not, and cannot be, a living museum.

Taking up the Camera Lucida, (fig.23) referencing the Grand Tour and the perspective of the Veduta, the aim was to retain the context of the point of departure drawings but put aside for the moment the handouts and restrictions of their given parameters (travel brochure). Reflecting on the Veduta and the given pictorial idea of Rome, my intention was that the ‘Veduta drawings,’ (the registers of my participation - its connection and disconnection) would become a series of encounters and dialogues with Rome’s landscapes of movement and obscure corners of transit and its material expression, (car parks and their neighbourhood associates, underpasses, elevated walkways and bridges and hubs that merge into labyrinth shopping zones) aiming to observe the city’s image from a transient point of view.

*Wandering the city using a portable Camera Lucida I had only one certainty; I must walk through the city without assigning a destination to any of those sites of interest usually recommended in tourists’ brochures/guide books. As if I was a modern day flaneur drifting around*

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<sup>52</sup> The word *interstitial* means "between spaces", and is commonly used to denote "in-betweenness". Interstitial here refers to the transient feeling areas that lie between mainstream sections of cities.

*the city, my walk for a walk's sake is an explicit call for a real and direct exchange with another place (in physical terms), while my drawing routines (the Camera Lucida inevitably attracted interest) blurs with everyday performances and its urban architectural circumscription. I see here a direct human activity conditioned by the city, but also equally imposed on the city, essentially making up the particular terrain of its mental space.*

ii. I Passaporti drawings.

Extremes and contradictions mark the history of the passport, its meaning and function. It was always an obligation for some and a privilege for others, an instrument of control and surveillance and a document of individual freedom. *'I Passaporti'* (drawings) do not have the implication of an official document, and nor is it a certificate to pass. The passport here, as the inscriptive space of the page, operates between ideas of decampment and arrival and hypothesises an alternative - real or fictional - possibility that goes beyond notions of a fixed identity or geography. (fig.24)

*Street, after street, after street, after street ...my attention continually passes from one thing to another as I move from place to place.*

*Fragments and images of a moment that a walk throws up in its wake, a dynamic perception of urban space that my eye at times appropriates as a cinematic and at times as a pre-cinematic zoetrope effect - a kind of a perspective as if I am looking from a train's window. (Excerpt from authors journal)*

With the (monocular) Camera Lucida, the draughtsman looks down (like an aviator) 'one eye on the model, the other on the paper'<sup>53</sup> using a prism to 'see' a 'virtual' image (such as that produced in a mirror), this, reflected by an angled mirror 'virtual' image of the referent, is not actually projected onto the paper, but only exists in the

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<sup>53</sup> Barthes, R. 2000. *Camera Lucida*. London: Vintage. p. 106.

eye seeing through the viewfinder. (fig.25) That is to say, a 'real image' never exists, nor comes into actual contact with the paper or the artists pencil; in essence what the pencil registers is a phantom trace,<sup>54</sup> settled someway between mirage and reality.

Operating within both the actual urban landscape itself and within the formal means of its fugitive image, the passport drawings were defined by a shifting response, incorporating photographic detail and the draughtsman gesture, crossing the gap between the physical world and the image world. The drawings' ambiguous ghostly lines coalescing into blurry colourless flickers of surrounding architectural contours and geographies seemingly create a space with no solid ground, which for me conjures up the image of the city as if by its imminent disappearance.

*...does this blurring stand for the transitory nature of the content, or emphasize the drawing itself? Or is it comparable to a camera shake effect, and perhaps points to a typical example of the medium in the lay-hands of the tourist? (Excerpt from authors journal)*

The phantom city auras that haunt the passport drawings prompt a visual indeterminacy that resists any easy or immediate interpretation

*...where there is no horizon line the effect is at the same time one of looking down on a landscape from above and looking up at the stars from below... (Excerpt from authors journal).*

Maybe like a city map or a celestial chart with all the coherent, systematic, or useful information removed, the passport drawings confound any spatial surety beyond their assigned lot of paper, they perhaps reveal an alternative to our charting and understanding of the

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<sup>54</sup> Here I see a kind of a paradox regarding the *real* direct contact with Rome's territory stated previously.

world, secure in its science of measuring and recording, which is nonetheless only one form of knowledge system.

However, the passport drawings are not strictly representatives of a view or a map, and they do not rest in a single event but in an (hypothetically endless) arrangement of occasions. (fig.26) Taking into account other histories and immersing them with its own, the passport drawings are not the representations of an object but the presentation of a configuration, which in the end arises into being by means of a direct contact, wavering between the figuration of a virtual trace and an abstraction of the actual trace. Imbued with abstract and physical (what is seen and what is known) traces, the passport drawings fashion an uncertain appearance of reality that is as much subjective as it is objective, as much a design of my own-manufacturing as it is of any outer self-determining world effects. Perhaps then, this visual indeterminacy confirms that there isn't any clear differentiation between an outside objective world and an inside subjective experience, nor is there a simple separation between our perception and picturing of the world. Determined in this way, I see the subjective experience becoming part of an objective reality, and imaginably the actual fabric with which it is made.

### **2.3 The third phase of methodology -Tracing via a projector**

#### i. Studio Work (In Rome)

If we can say that the studio holds a productive trait, then this can simultaneously hold a notion of the unproductive being able to move beyond the goals of knowledge and production as such, and perhaps allow for routine-ness and banality as a progressive force. Expressed in a background of routine action, *I see my relationship to the studio is a sort of co-existence of recurring acquaintance and awareness, in which 'being' is synonymous with being 'situated', one that in effect affirms*

*and defines me.* (fig.27) The studio indistinguishably intertwined to the occurrence of a real place is an interstitial space that links an:

... ontological value of being to its situation, to the stable and presentable determination of a locality, the topos of a territory. (Derrida, 1994:82)

*Like a photographer in the dark room scanning between the negative and its contact sheet, determining which image to print, I sifted through the tracings of my city travels and looked to re-read and re-work the passport drawings into something further.*

#### ii. Calco technique.

Feeling a need to broaden the scope of my carbon paper drawing technique, and given my access to the Rome School archival sources, I started tracing the origins and the roots of carbon paper. Basically we can follow an idea of the modern day carbon paper back to around the 1460s and 1470s, (Bambach, 1999) at which time Italian muralists began to unite the traditional method of 'Spolvero' (which involves pricking out the outline of a design and then chalk or a charcoal dust was pounced through the pricked paper transferring the design on to another surface) with a new technique of cartoon transfer to speed up the transfer process of their cartoon designs, Calco. (fig.28) In this process, the artist would smear charcoal or black chalk (sometimes red chalk or graphite would be used), on the back of the design sheet itself. The benefit of the new technique was that it was quicker to produce while allowing the artist to trace directly and fluently. Later, the use of a separate calco sheet underneath the cartoon (like the carbon paper in the point of departure and passport drawings), served to bring a lighter more expressive touch to the trace whilst minimising the damage to the original cartoon, thus prolonging its reuse. By the 1550s;

... this 'carbon paper' procedure became standard for transferring drawings from one sheet to another and

cartoons to both panels and canvases. (Bambach, 1999:12)

With this link to carbon paper I started producing my own calco papers, which at once opened up new possibilities for the drawings surface, scale and colour. My first attempt was to use oil bars (for its waxiness) to cover the papers surface, I found that very stressful, as it was not achieving the density and coverage I was seeking, and also due to hot weather the oil paint was drying very fast (before I could finish the drawing). That led me to start using pigment powder combined with linseed oil and gum Arabic, which I mixed into a paste and laid onto paper sheets (brown parcel paper turned out to be an ideal carrier). This mixture, more consistent and fluid, provided me with a more even and dense layering. This layering had two particular qualities. One was that the viscidness of its surface made it more responsive to the hands pressure, and the other was that it remained workable longer. As a result, this allowed me to enlarge the calco sheet and scale up the drawings. Out of these trials I found that calco introduced to the drawings a bruised (like) surface and a corrupted and frayed line which invested a mechanical performance with an inventive dexterity. (fig.29-1)

### iii. Observations out of operations between an overhead projector and a Camera Lucida.

At the same time, using the projector to resize and retrace the passport images my drawing escaped from its usual layout of a page and out onto the wall. Typically, the use of an overhead projector is to enlarge and display an image. It consists of two mirrors, a lamp and a lens, and from the lamp artificial light travels through the first mirror with an overlaid image to the second mirror, which through the lens receives and leads the image to the end of its trajectory (the wall/screen). Materially and metaphorically, tracing here noticeably differs between the projector and the Camera Lucida as the projector casts an actual image onto a plane, one that ultimately the artist can touch (and be touched by),

while in contrast the Camera Lucida carries out a virtual image that the artist can trace but not touch. Therefore, although the Camera Lucida seems to allow one to trace what one sees, it still requires a free-hand graphic response as the three-dimensional object/scene appears only before the eye, which is endlessly shifting its attention, focus and adjustment to register and weigh every vivid and elusive effect of what it sees. Therefore, a noteworthy advance here of the projected image is that one traces around actual contours of visual facts already gathered, stabilised, and flat. Already *uniform*, performing in effect a key role of the draughtsman's perceptual task and achieving simultaneity which is impossible to the eye.

What started out as an unconcerned reiteration and perpetuation of a past transfer process of drawing and its techniques was now giving way to curiosity and the possibilities (specifically their dependency to the wall) that these art-historical affinities could hold for me. Reorienting me in both a physical and mental way, the use of the projector was changing the conditions for drawing, shifting my position from (of what I thought) a situated attitude of the scriptorium to a more dynamic position within the studio's circumstances. Although my aim had initially been to expand the drawings surface, scale and colour objectively, nonetheless it soon became clear to me that it had turned into a subjective process. I realized that by altering my tracing position from its usual downward perspective of the draughtsman's drawing board to that of the vertical perspective of the artist's easel, I not only altered my body's gravity and orientation but also changed the drawings' relationship to the circumstances of the wall, (fig.30) thus imposing an equivalent shift on the drawing material and method, and now inextricably connecting the drawings to their immediate architecture. This change of the body's measure influentially complicated the hand's control and movement, and consequently the pressure of its touch. Tracing the projected image with a stylus over the calco paper, the purpose was to transfer its pigment as a corresponding

trace to a registering surface. However, the calco paper was not as stable as the carbon paper and created dustings of pigment, which consequently scattered (affected by gravity and faults of the wall) and caught in the interstitial furrows and welts on the wall's surface. Likewise, when the registering surface was a paper attached to the wall, then the effect differed in that while the hand registered the traced image, the wall physiognomies simultaneously rejoined the hands trace and collided and merged. Whilst it is not possible to say with accuracy what exactly these residues of imperfections bring to the drawing's deliberation, what I saw and sensed here was that these interminable anomalies thrown up in the tracing's wake perhaps operated as a kind of artistic acuity and dexterity, which somehow aligned the drawing more towards a self-determined action of my hand.

If the carbon and calco trace inevitably casts a blur of historical and theoretical supplements to the recent or distant past, (Conceptualism or Renaissance) at the same time it is a tangible material whose chance affects effect the final drawing, and regardless of any implications they impart (about history or form) their significance appertains not least to the process of their doing and making. Here I see my actions physical acuity changes drawing's conceptual and visual perception, moving away from an intelligible abstract action where a mode of production follows a logical sequence and requires no further decision taking once the process of making is set, where all of the decisions are made beforehand and the execution of the work is an automatic affair. If the *point of departure* presents drawing crucially at the level of ideas rather than that of an object (where *'The idea becomes a machine that makes the art'*), then the *Rome drawings*, while retaining these suppositions yet rendered subjective and expressionistic by an authorial presence, brought together abstract actions and an awareness to a physical contingent and repositioned me as the decision maker from a beginning to an end.

iv. Tracing onto the wall (thinking tools -FAFA gallery Helsinki).

Searching to expedite and simplify the calco process, I started to investigate intuitively with ready-made materials that could substitute the pigment and gum Arabic paste without losing any of its subtle quality. Likewise, unhappy with the dead zones faltering the drawings transfer due to the drying out of the pigment paste when applied to larger sheets, I realised that it was necessary to find a way to extend the drying out time, thereby allowing its feasible use for a wall drawing. Through trial and error, testing between wax crayons, oil, and hard and soft pastels I found that soft pastels, having more pigment and less binder, were easier to apply and cover the paper. (fig.29-2) Also, its application had the quickness and straightforwardness of the oil bar, yet a combined stability similar to carbon paper and the workability and aesthetic quality of the pigment paste. Furthermore, and of no less importance, it extended the calco's expiry date and brought in a potential for using colour.

Having been invited to participate in the '*Thinking Tools*' in Helsinki, my initial approach was to work (wall drawing) in situ and respond to the gallery space, and in some way to its outside architectural surroundings. With the experience of Rome still fresh in my mind, the preparatory drawings for Helsinki introduced a new relationship between the paper edge and its interior, a kind of looking 'at' and a looking 'into'. The broken geometric outline and calco trace purposely looked to recall the patched up lunettes and irregular arching wall segments of Italian renaissance fresco; existing simultaneously as image and object. (fig.31)

Keeping in mind certain aspects of the ephemeral and contingent circumstances of my Rome experience, I saw the opportunity to approach the gallery and the street with the logic of the studio, and as potential workplaces to merge the city's spatial and cultural history as a stock narrative whose encounter (mine) would be resituated and

retraced on the imaginative terrain of a daily drawing taking place directly on the gallery wall.

*Aided by a map and a tourist guide pamphlet of Helsinki's Jugendstil architectural legacy, I navigate the city, photographing its built evidence. A one-to-one physical engagement with the city's interrelated pasts and presents of places and settings. (Excerpt from authors journal)*

As with 'A daily routine', my plan was to follow the map and document the individual destinations I visited around the city, then returning to the studio/gallery I would upload, project, and trace the images on the wall. However, my proposal ended up implicating two stages of realisation. The first was pre-planned, while the second was a response to its failures. The planned stage was to trace the images up to the day prior to the opening night, using a three-toned soft pastel calco (echoing Helsinki's architectural Jugendstil colour), looking to achieve an atmospheric haze like luminosity. (fig.32)

*...slight and evanescent, the faint calco tracings (Helsinki wall drawing) are perhaps imperceptible at first glance and do require the observer to adjust his or her perception to their subtlety. One needs to look closely and examine them, walk up to them and around the room to experience how they respond to the light. (Excerpt from authors journal)*

Following the opening night and reiterating the order and sequence of the first stage, the second stage continued with the (tracing/drawing) established daily routine for the remaining duration of the exhibition. Using only a white calco, the drawing was simultaneously erased while also inscribed. (fig.33)

While in some ways the work fulfilled its intensions, in extending the calco process beyond the dimensions of paper I found that when

relocated to the measurement of the wall the qualities that I valued in the paper drawings began to get lost. For example, the porous quality of the wall's emulsion paint surface absorbed the binding agents of the pastel pigment, transforming the calco's fuliginous mark to that of a colour pencil. The scale of the drawing exaggerated a problem that first appeared with the *Veduta* drawings in Rome, where my hand was unable to sustain an uninterrupted contact with the prolonged trajectories of the projected images, and consequently the trace failed to keep a sense of certitude in its touch with the imprinted variations produced by the hand (pressure, speed, stops and starts... tiredness).

Also, the notion of looking 'at' and looking 'into' introduced by the preparatory drawings was unsuccessful. In attempting to create a dialogue between a flat surface as material (at) and an illusionistic depth (into), the drawing never effectively merged with the wall and appeared separate, like a mural. In hindsight, the drawing needed to be much larger in order to encroach on the wall and complicate its architectural integrity. In the same way, the circumference of the lunette's left side was stopped short too close to its end conclusion, and in effect was inconsequential. (fig.34) *What I thought the drawing necessitated was a lunette, where its incompleteness was perhaps less tasteful and more exaggerated in order to intrude on the viewer's view and undermine the centred symmetry between the drawing and the wall.*

Nevertheless, regardless of any shortcomings of the work itself, this studio like investigation allowed me to identify and combine the connections I had made between my systematic and procedural approach and the orthodoxy of its earlier predecessors, i.e. Sol LeWitt. What I thought was of notice with the wall drawing process was that there is a more permissive width which allows for detours and

departures, in contrast to LeWitt's 'machine' like approach?<sup>55</sup> While Sol LeWitt's '*Walldrawing 811*' (fig.35) method reduces the wall drawing to a set of instructions which no longer necessitate a personal carry out,<sup>56</sup> meaning anyone can follow its instructions and execute the work, mine necessitates the need to execute the drawings myself, not for reasons of originality or ownership as such, but rather as an on-going supplement able to respond (rather than simply accept) to the changes and the unforeseen events in the making of the drawing.

### **2.4 The beginning of Drawing lies in projected light.**

In trying to place a link to the texts I was reading and the work I was making, such as between the mystic pad, the palimpsest, and the projected image, I was inevitably drawn to Derrida's writings on trace and erasure. However, I should stress here that I have no intentions to analyze or to critique Derrida's ideas, nor attempt to extend them philosophically or theoretically. Mine is an intuitive response that accepts them as a suitable tool to simply make sense of what I do. Therefore, my use of Derrida is only a commentary and a potential supplement to my work and its consideration.

Derrida (1967)<sup>57</sup> notes that for Freud the mystic pad was a metaphor to describe the psychological processes of memory and perception. However, he sees the mystic pad as an actual model for the function of writing. Derrida writes that none of us capture the world directly but rather in retrospect, our sense;

... supplements perception before perception even  
appears to itself (Derrida, 1967:224)

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<sup>55</sup> 'When an artist uses a conceptual form of art, it means that all of the planning and decisions are made beforehand and the execution is a perfunctory affair. The idea becomes a machine that makes the art.' Sol LeWitt, Artforum June, 1967 'Paragraphs on Conceptual Art'.

Available at: <<http://radicalart.info/concept/LeWitt/paragraphs.html>> [Accessed Online: 1/9/2013].

<sup>56</sup> See Appendix I, Sol Lewitt, 'Artist Statement (1970-71)'.

<sup>57</sup> Derrida, 1967. '*Freud and the Scene of Writing*' in *Writing and Difference*. Available at: <[http://www.clas.ufl.edu/users/burt/Writing\\_and\\_Difference\\_\\_Routledge\\_Classics\\_.pdf](http://www.clas.ufl.edu/users/burt/Writing_and_Difference__Routledge_Classics_.pdf)> [Accessed Online: 1/9/2012].

Therefore, we can only ever experience the world via the traces and after the fact of earlier experiences and by means of the signifiers, which are a consequence of being. In other words, to reach an understanding of something requires us to understand the way in which it relates to other things, and a capacity to recognise it on other occasions and in different contexts.

In '*Memoirs of the blind*,' Derrida (1993) probes and unravels the interval between the oral and the written, the sign and the trace, and the Platonic understanding of origin and presence. In a detailed reading, (by way of Baudelaire)<sup>58</sup> of the myth of Butades's daughter, the fabled Corinthian Maid who traced her lover's shadow as a mnemonic keepsake, Derrida provides a labyrinthine account of its narrative as it concerns representation and memory;

In this tradition, the origin of drawing and the origin of painting give rise to multiple representations that substitute memory for perception. First, because they are representations, next, because they are drawn most often from an exemplary narrative ...and finally, because the narrative relates the origin of graphic representation to the absence or invisibility of the model. (Derrida, 1993:49)

On first reading, Pliny's mythological 'origin story' of the plastic arts appears to me to underline the established opposition between the sensible and the intelligible. Progressing along these lines, we can see that it hints at another image of a longstanding metaphysical preoccupation with the search for 'origin' (philosophy), the shadows harboured in Plato's 'Cave'. It is here where we first gain a misgiving that we have never seen anything but a cast shadow, a surrogate, (the sensible) the character of which can only bear an imperfect knowledge of the object that projects it (the intelligible); the sphere of ideas that, for Plato, hold the original moulds of all 'stuff'.

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58 Writing on the artist Constantin Guys, Baudelaire uses the term "Mnemonic Art" to describe a technique (Guys) which suggests rather than defines and in which Baudelaire saw a "distillation" of "modernity" and modern life -a transient quality that combined with the permanent. 2010. *The Painter of Modern Life* Trans by P.E.Charvet. London: Penguin Books. pp. 20-24.

As the first embodied action registering a perceptual likeness, Butades's daughter's prosaic line is not one of strict representation. She is not intent on arresting her departing lover's presence, her attention is on the *appearance* of his absence, his shadow on the wall.

From the outset, perception belongs to recollection. Butades writes, and thus already loves in nostalgia. Detached from the present of perception, fallen from the thing itself - which is thus divided - a shadow is a simultaneous memory... (Derrida, 1993:51)

The shadow, already a memory of the absent lover, does not reveal presence, it makes a sign. However, distinct from the 'spoken' or 'written' sign, it does not separate itself from the body. Similarly, what Butades's daughter's tracing draws is not absolutely separate from the lover it represents; her stylus always caresses the shadow it outlines and does not detach itself from her or from the seen image of the (almost present) lover.

One thinks of the sign beginning from its limit, which belongs neither to nature nor to convention. Now this limit - of an impossible sign, of a sign giving the signified, indeed the thing, in person, immediately - is necessarily closer to gesture or glance than to speech. (Derrida, 1997:234)

In other words, Butades's daughter, in writing without the distancing of '*difference or articulation*' (the conventions of the spoken or the written sign), the direct contact and movement of her gesture becomes a substitute for discourse and offers up immediacy to the presence of her love. As both sign and action seem to be without '*difference or articulation*', (of seeing as if instantaneous and without thought) the daughter's trace gives rise to an idea of an '*immediate* (though impossible) *sign*'<sup>59</sup> (Derrida, 1997).

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59 When the signifier purports to give immediate access to the signified, when the sign - which for Derrida cannot be thought without difference and articulation - claims to give immediate access to the thing itself, then Derrida looks to make explicit and unravel its spectre of an original purity or presence. Derrida. 1976. *Of Grammatology*. Baltimore & London: John Hopkins University Press. pp. 48-51, pp. 234-235.

Substituting memory for perception, Butades's daughter's line is not a facsimile of an equivalent existing object, her trace is not tied up in mimesis; there is no imagining of the line as a constructive character and belonging of the object in itself. The abstract line we project onto the edge of concrete things to indicate their dimensional form, yet which is not present or discernible in its self, does not come into sight in Butades's daughter's perceptual experience (the shadow being not wholly or bodily there, does not give to her the imagining line). The bottom line is that with the traced line she empowers the implicit attendance of the line to assume an explicit attendance and show *itself*.

A draughtsman cannot but be attentive to the finger and the eye, especially to the finger and the eye, especially to anything that touches upon the eye, to anything that lays a finger on it in order to let it finally see or let it be seen.  
(Derrida, 1993: 6)

Whereas the shadows in Plato's cave are so compelling to our gaze and blinding, exactly because they do not reveal themselves as shadows, Butades's daughter, in tracing the outline of a shadow, makes the projection itself explicit. Her act of drawing is not a secondary making (in the Platonic sense), a surrogate of something that exists independently in the bodily world, nor is it a projection of a personal invention that exists in her mind alone, (which it casts onto the wall) instead I suggest it is a process of reply to something she *sees visually*; the shadow which shows *itself* to her. If for Plato the visible appearance of things was cast on the eye as a shadow 'unseen', then perhaps Butades's daughter's un-blinkered line no longer impersonates the visible but permits the visual to appear itself as visible.

*Perhaps for me, Pliny's myth of Butades's daughter - irrespective of its paradigmatic connection to the index etc. etc.- simply brings attention to the mechanical and utilitarian side of drawing, (as an exemplification of drawings praxis?) unrestrained by an intellectualism (ironic considering I am looking at Derrida) of the gaze, (through perspective*

*and geometry) and the judgement of the eye over the labour of the hand.* (Excerpt from authors journal)

### **Closure**

In this chapter, I have discussed an approach to tracing within drawing that is driven by technical concerns and creativity without discounting a theoretical and abstract curiosity. To this end, I have explored pragmatic means and unassuming conclusions, through tracing methodologies, to challenge preconceived notions of how we create, perform and experience an artwork. Influenced by Charles Peirce's classification of *signs* into *icons*, *indexes* and *symbols*, and Derrida's writings on trace and erasure, I identified tracings paradigmatic relationship regarding its actual and metaphorical connection to its propagative means and performances. Framing tracing within a material and metaphorical quality of the palimpsest, I used the palimpsest as a model and a device through which my mechanisms for doing contrasts between the contemporaneousness of the ends and the archaism of the means used to achieved them.

### **Observations**

At the conclusion of this period, my work could be discussed by three types or models of tracing, namely:

***Tracing with carbon paper-*** This involves a one to one direct trace of an already existing image, where the carbon paper offsets an unseen corresponding trace to a new surface. The scale of the trace is determined and fixed by the original source.

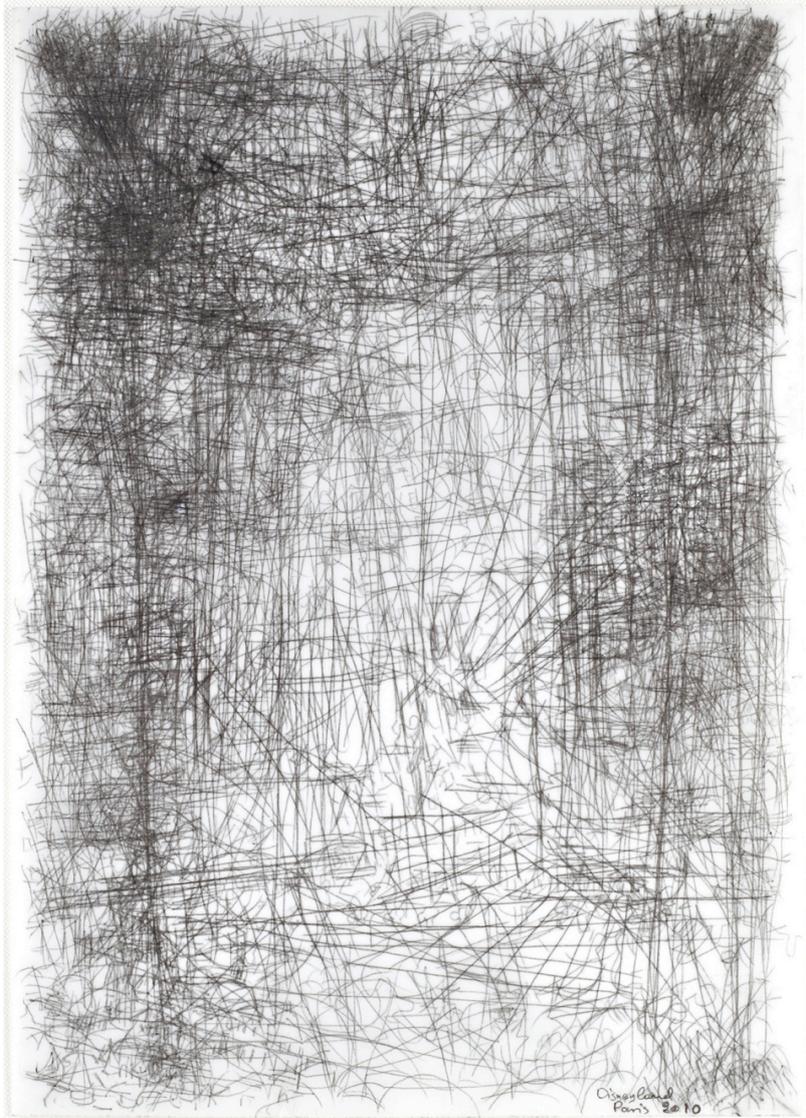
***Tracing in situ with a Camera Lucida-*** This involves tracing with a mirror prism viewfinder, a simulated trace of a virtual image where its referent is not actually projected onto the paper but only exist in the eye seeing through the viewfinder, significantly, this is an image that the artist can trace but cannot touch. In effect, this is a situation where

tracing preserves its actions of remembrance and discloses a relationship to its temporal proximity.

***Tracing via a projector-*** This involves tracing via a lens-based apparatus. With this a projected actual image generates its trace image onto a receiving plane, a trace that ultimately the artist can touch and be touched by. Tracing here, in rethinking my previous methods, in effect expands and complicates my methodology.

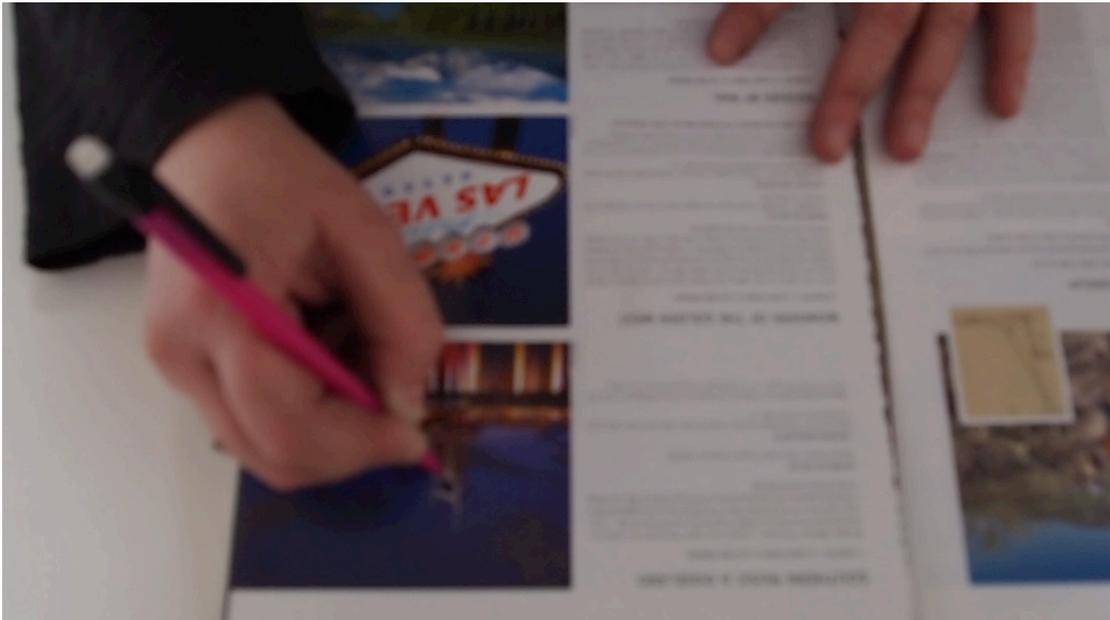
Encompassing the initial detached objectives of my drawing methodology, all three methods explained in this chapter have been the generating forces that led to the submitted work. The thoughts and views of tracing examined here have critically influenced the direction of my creative process and informed my aesthetic decisions and critical choices. In the following chapter, which also stems from the same preoccupations, tracing is looked at from an angle that tries to reconcile the detached objectives of my methodology with an aesthetic subjective predisposition that obstinately reemerged at this point and problematized tracing's earlier undertaking and rigor.

Figure 14



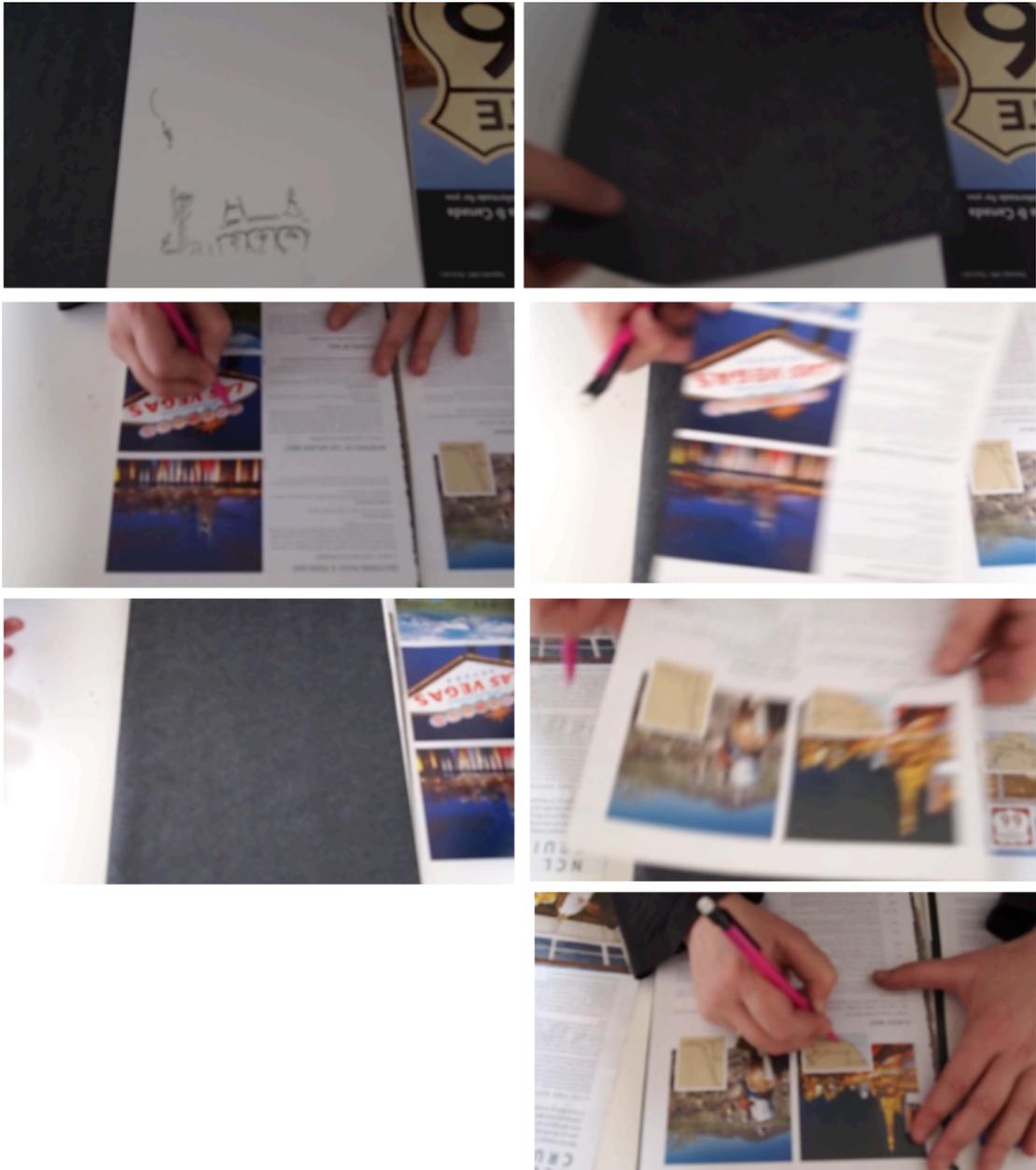
Disneyland Paris. 2010. Carbon transfer (ink) on polydraw film. Dim. 210 × 297 mm.

Figure 15



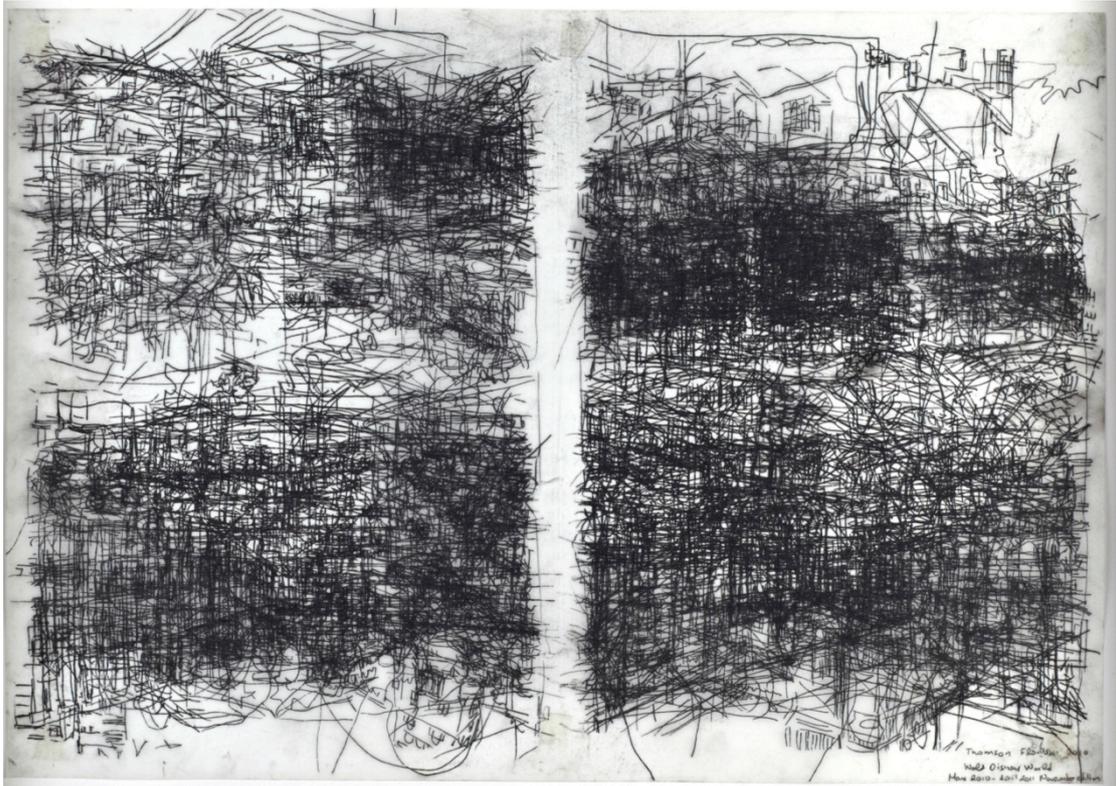
Still from a film documenting the artist tracing a travel brochure (Point of Departure drawing). 2010.

Figure 16



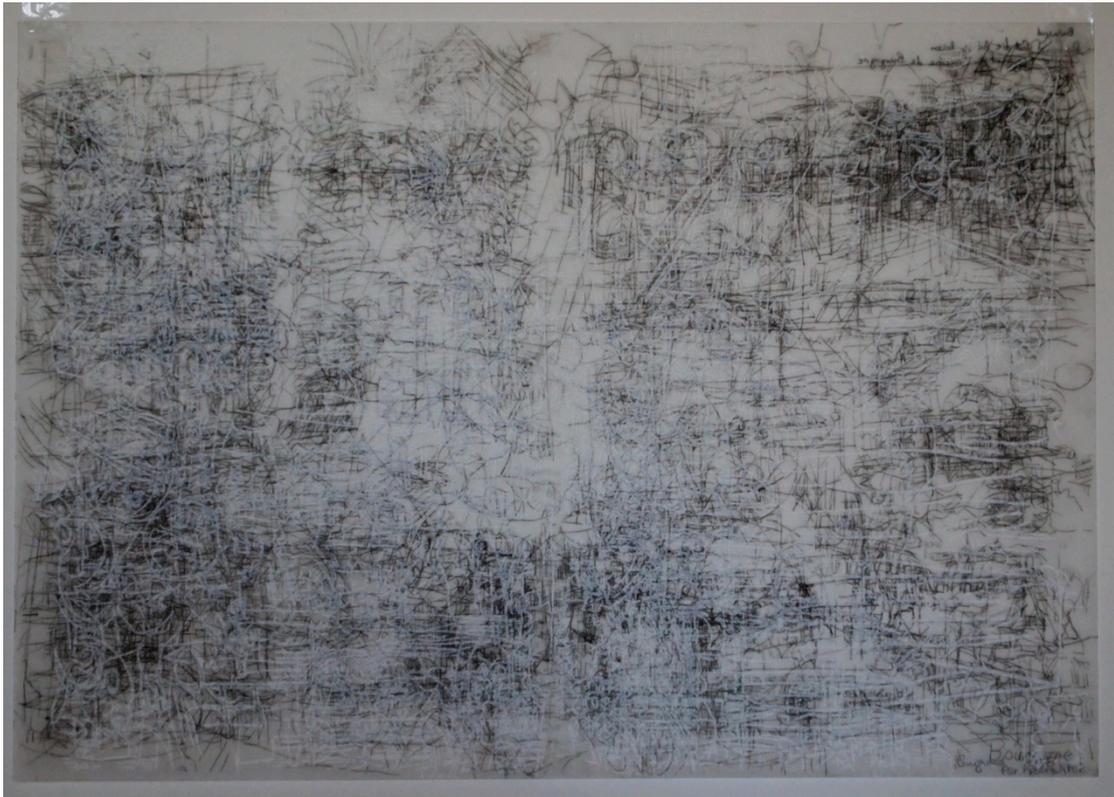
Stills from a film documenting the artist tracing a travel brochure (Point of Departure drawing). 2010.

Figure 17



Walt Disney World. Resort of Florida. Thomson May 2010- April 2011.  
2010. Carbon transfer (ink) on polydraw film. Dim. 297 × 420 mm.

Figure 18



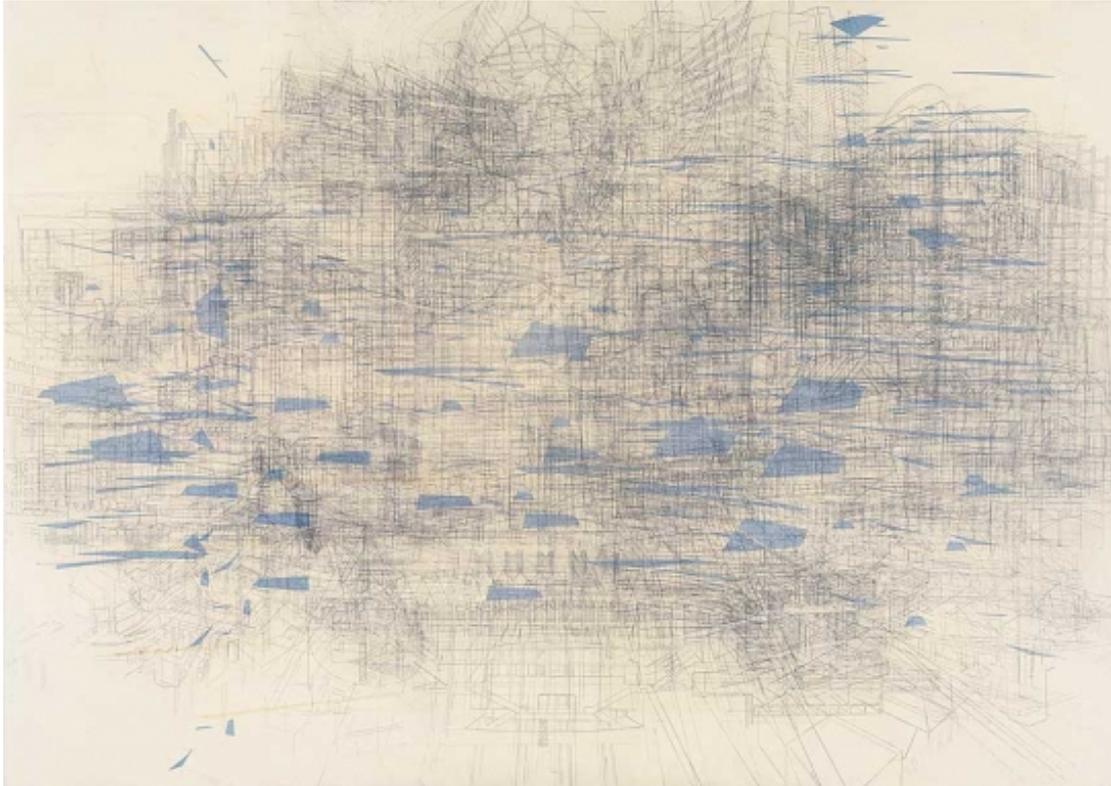
Burgund für Radfahrer. 2010. Carbon transfer (ink) on polydraw film.  
Dim. 297 × 420 mm.

Figure 19



Untitled (detail). 2010. Carbon transfer (ink) on paper. Dim 841 x 594 mm

Figure 20



Julie Mehretu, 'Palimpsest (old gods)' 2006. Ink and acrylic on canvas; 60 x 84 inches. Collection of Mehretu-Rankin.<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>60</sup> Mehretu, J. 2006. Palimpsest (old gods). Art21.org. [online]. [Accessed: 12 July 2013]. Available from: <http://www.art21.org/images/julie-mehretu/palimpsest-old-gods-2006>

Figure 21



Cities: Cresta. 2010. Calco transfer (soft pastel) on paper. Dim. 760x530mm

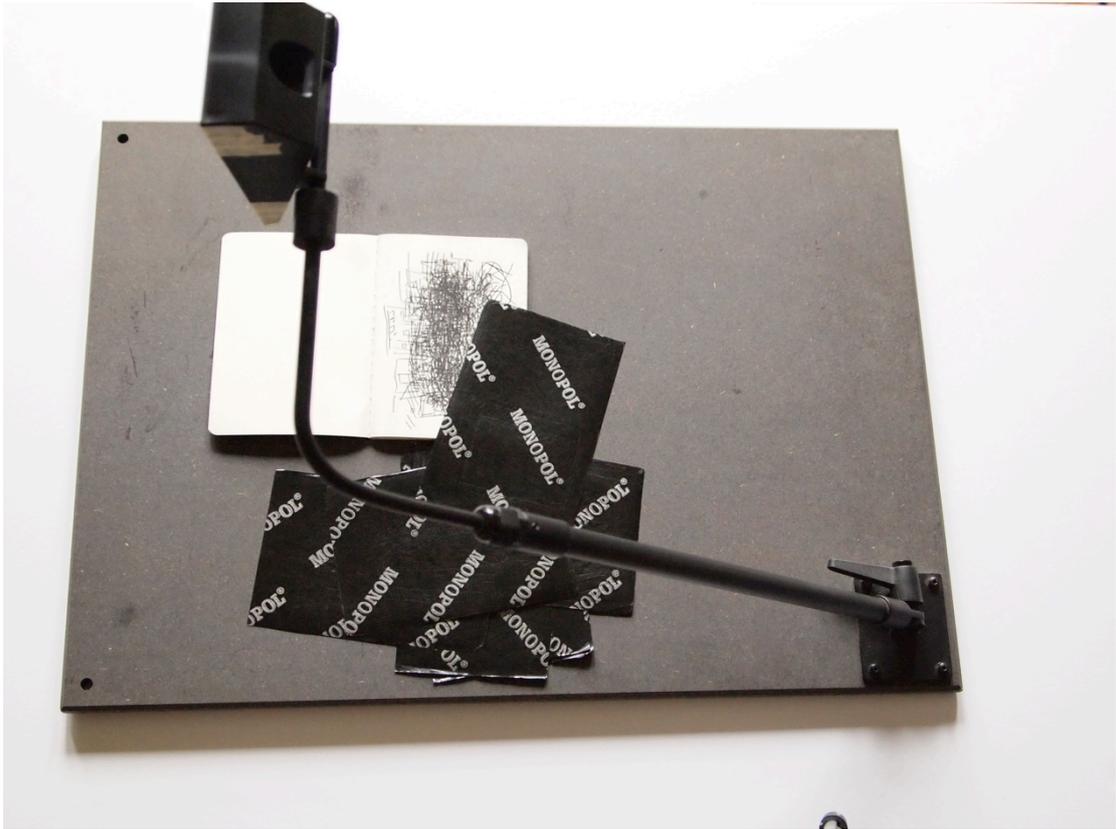
Figure 22



Giovanni Battista Piranesi, 1772. Veduta di Campo Vaccino (Plate 82 of "Views of Rome") Etching. Dim. 18 11/16 x 27 3/4".<sup>61</sup>

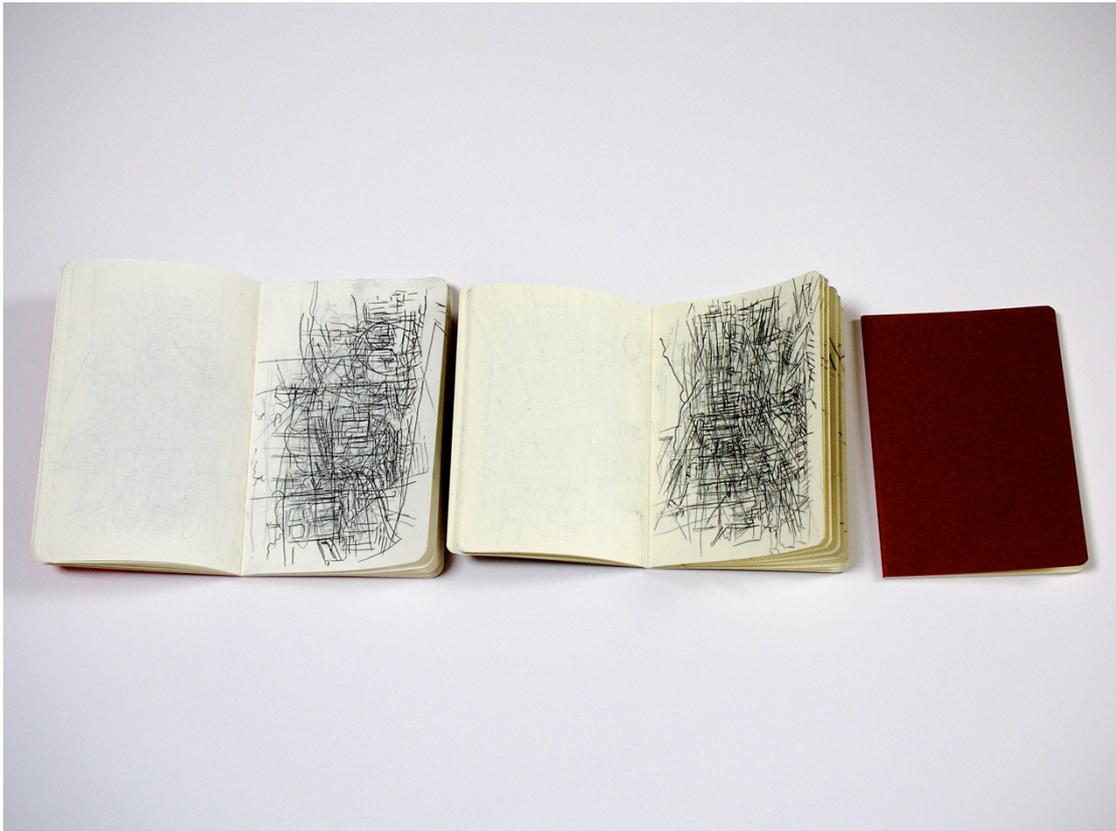
61 Annexgalleries.com. 2013. *Veduta di Campo Vaccino (Plate 82 of "Views of Rome")* by Giovanni Battista Piranesi | Annex Galleries Fine Prints. [Online]. [Accessed Online: 12 August 2013]. Available from: <https://www.annexgalleries.com/inventory/detail/SNKE101/Giovanni-Battista-Piranesi/Veduta-di-Campo-Vaccino-Plate-82-of-Views-of-Rome>

Figure 23



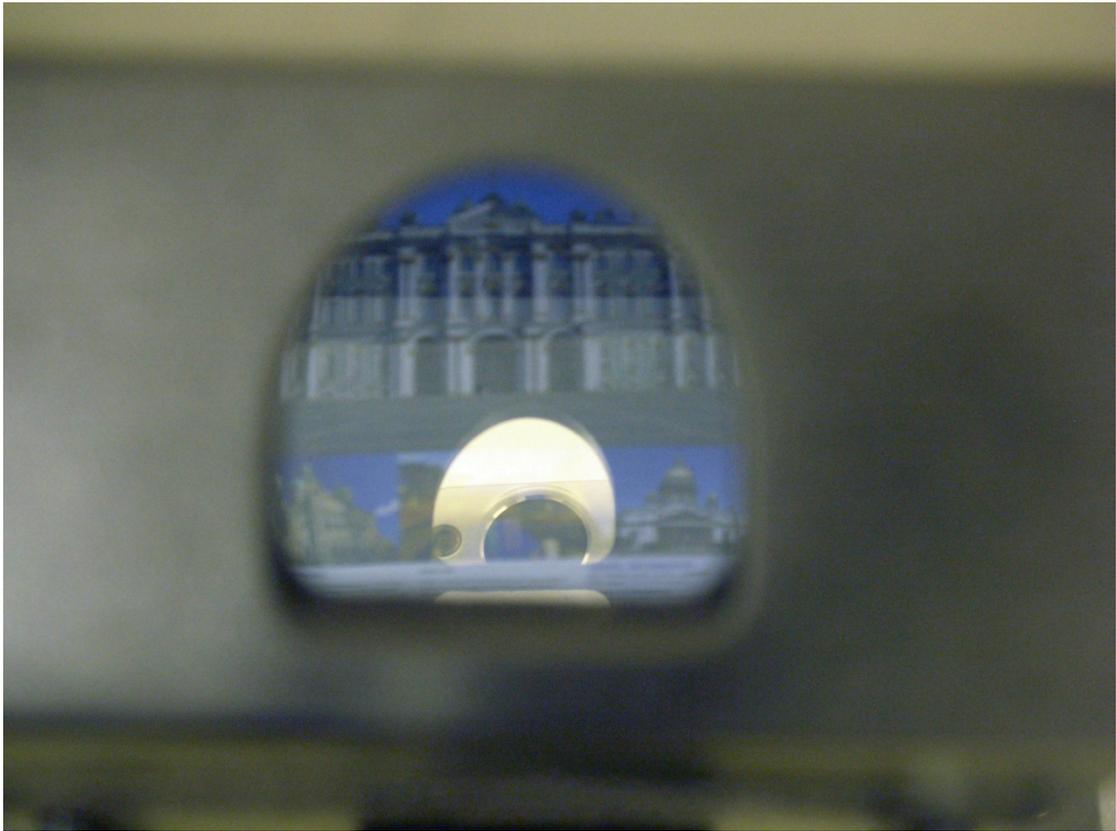
Portable Camera Lucida.

Figure 24



I Passaporti. 2011. Carbon transfer (ink) on passport notebooks. Dim. 12.5 x 8.8cm, 24 pages.

Figure 25



Camera Lucida, View through the viewfinder.

Figure 26



I Passaporti. 2011. Carbon transfer (ink) on passport notebooks. Dim. 12.5 x 8.8cm, 24 pages.

Figure 27



Studio, British School Rome. 2011

Figure 28



Calco drawings, Calco papers. Studio, British School Rome. 2011.

Figure 29



1. Calco papers, Oil, gum Arabic and pigment on parcel paper. 2011.



2. Calco papers. Soft pastel. 2011.

Figure 30



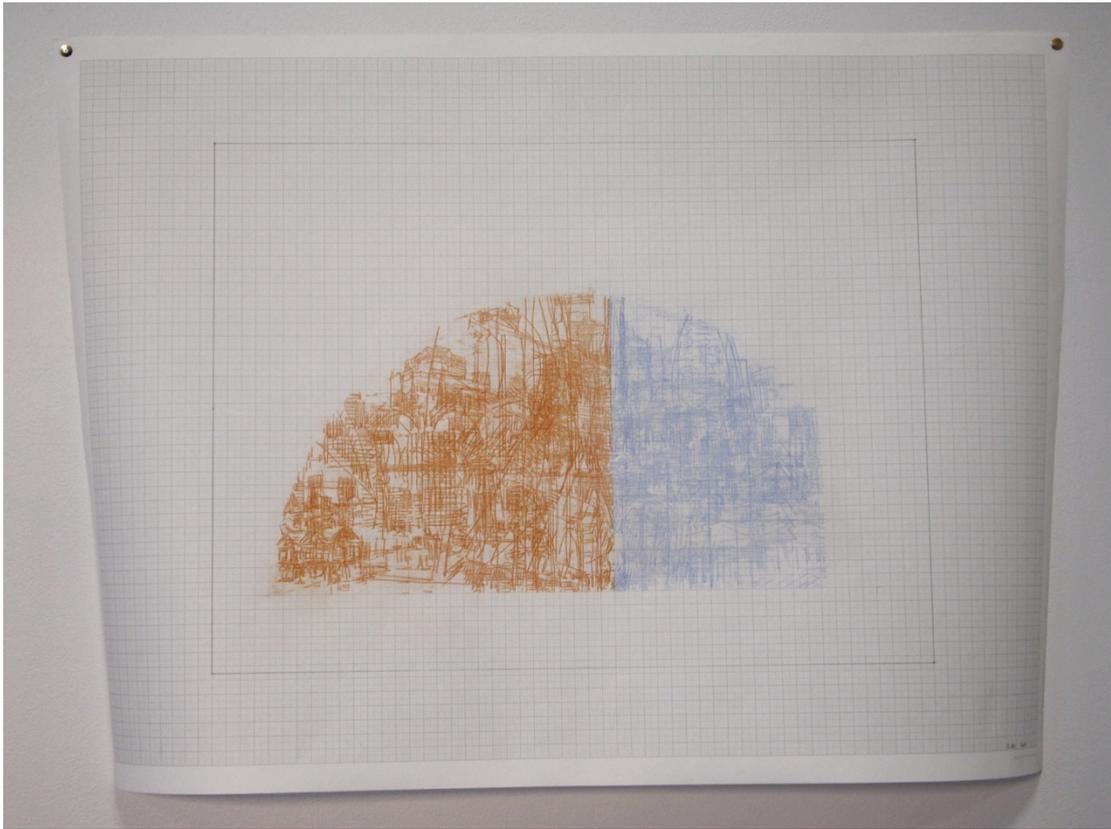
Tracing from an OHP, FAFA gallery, Helsinki. 2011.

Figure 31



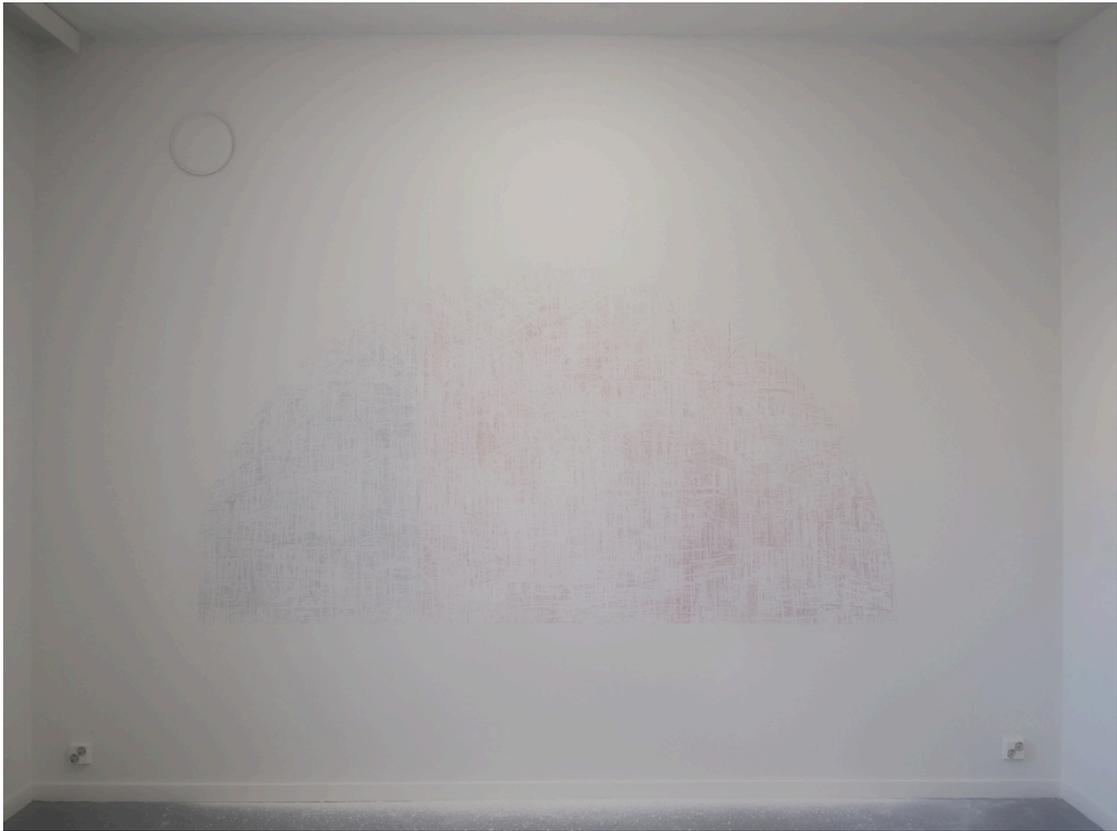
From left. Untitled 1, wall drawing, 2011. Calco transfer (soft pastel) on wall. Untitled 2,3,4,5,6, Calco transfer (soft pastel) on graph paper. FAFA Gallery, Helsinki. (opening night)

Figure 32



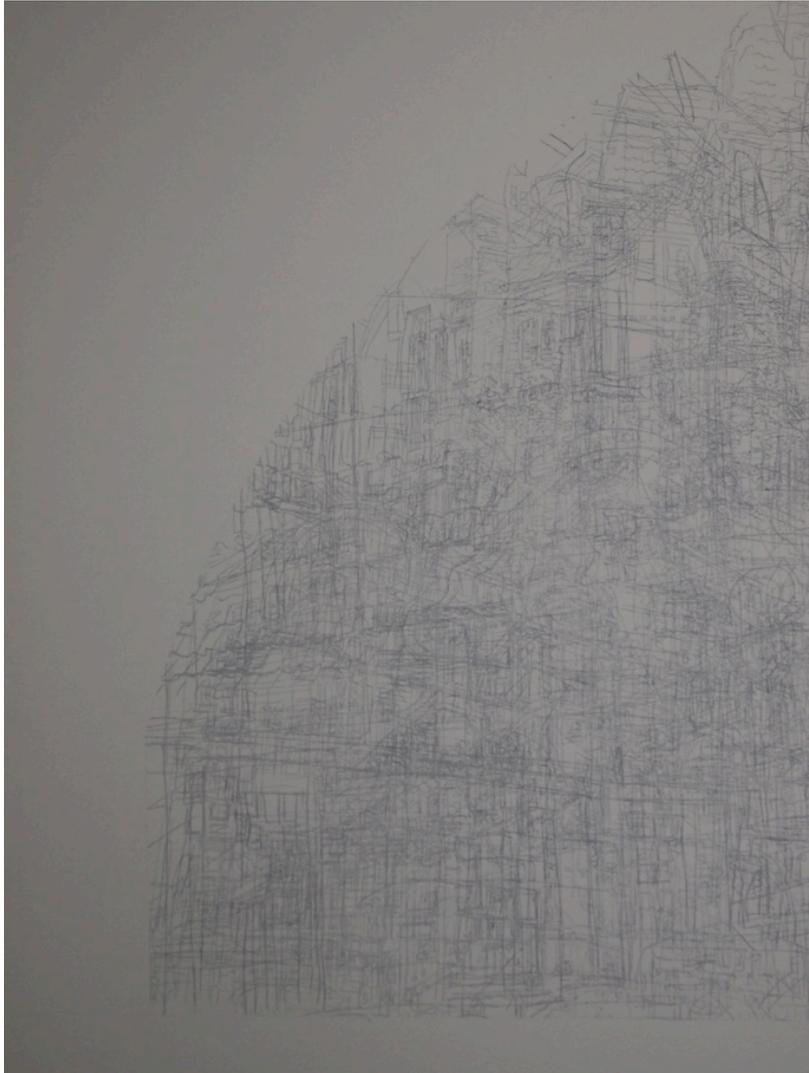
Untitled 4. 2011. Calco transfer (soft pastel) on graph paper. Dim. 760x530mm. FAFA gallery.

Figure 33



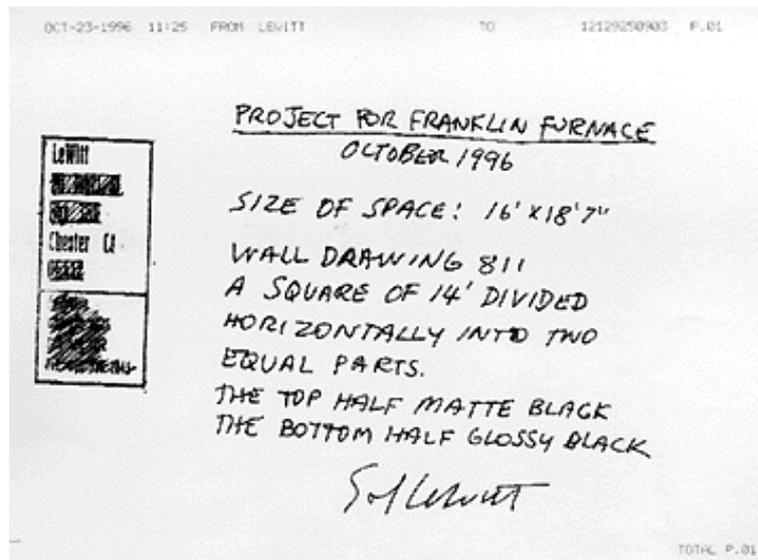
Untitled 1 (wall drawing). 2011. FAFA Gallery Helsinki. Final stage after erasure.

Figure 34



Wall drawing, Detail. 2011.

Figure 35



Instructions faxed by LeWitt to Franklin Furnace for Drafters of Wall Drawing 811.



Sol Lewitt, Wall Drawing 811 as drafted at Franklin Furnace Oct.1996.<sup>62</sup>

<sup>62</sup> Franklinfurnace.org. 2013. *Wall Drawing 811 - Sol LeWitt*. [Online]. [Accessed 1 September 2013]. Available from: <http://www.franklinfurnace.org/research/projects/flow/lewitt/lewitt.html>

## Chapter three.

### The traced: language, inscription and imagery.

#### Introduction

In this chapter I will critically examine and register my works progressive move towards a less rigid approach by rethinking tracing and the traced within an interchange of mutable material means and procedural approach. Here, tracing as an action of language, inscription, and imagery will be discussed, not for their theoretical value but for their implementation in the creation of my work; in this, my interest lies in how set procedures of tracing that rely upon a reciprocated framework of language, inscription, and imagery may be redefined through a doing that calls into question the idea and the appearance of these methods of delivery. I will therefore bring in examples of contemporary artists that noticeably use tracing and textual settings in their practice to venture on tracing's identity, both semantically and materially. Considering the particularities of the role of tracing in my practice alongside the commonalities in their media, methods, and their ratified implication of tracing, the writing lastly pursues avenues of speculation regarding the research question and the appearance of new compositional and material inquiries within my work.

#### **3.1 The inscriptive mechanisms and features of the actionglyph: An action of language, inscription and imagery.**

Feeling side-tracked by the Lunette and dissatisfied with the calco's conclusions in Helsinki, I decided that the processes I was using were unable to deal with anything larger in scale than that of the '*point of departure drawings*' given page, and that I should continue with its

interrupted path. Concerned with a generic visual predictability emerging out of the travel brochure, my objective now was to find something to stimulate the drawings progression. At this time, I was preparing work for 'Pieces of Eight,' an exhibition at Project Space Leeds in 2012. (fig.36) The 'Pieces of Eight' intention was to review the emerging paradigm of the artist as a researcher. Discussing the exhibitions title and its references in the studio with a peer, I incidentally found new source material that changed the course of my work.

*EB: "I'm really not sure what I'm going to do"... "I don't know what the exhibition is looking at or how my work relates to it". MH: "What's the show called?" EB: "Pieces of Eight"... MH: "Oh, Pirates and Treasure Maps... X marks the spot like Long John Silver and young Jim Hawkins in Treasure Island or Jonny Depp's Captain Sparrow in The Pirates of the Caribbean... usually, a treasure trail becomes both a physical and metaphorical journey undertaken by the characters in the story"... EB: "I didn't know that... I have never come across this expression before... another cultural gap". (Notes from a studio conversation with Martyn Hill)*

This was another's association that brought one more supplement to the work, and which would not have come to my mind of its own accord. However, later it became clear that the curators were connecting this phrase more to the idea of research as an international currency of exchange. Nonetheless, the treasure trail adventure pointed me towards a source that had been hidden in plain sight and close to hand all the time, namely an interest I have in reading and collecting comics, particular Franco-Belgian comic books, which has been with me since I was a child. Lying around the studio were some Tintin comics picked up in Berlin when I was reworking the 'point of departure drawings' as prints at Berlins BBK<sup>63</sup> workshop. It was two immediate connections I

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63 Druckwerkstatt des Kulturwerks Berlin.

made between Herge's comic books and the 'point of departure drawings', clearly one was 'travel' and the other was their similarity with the dimensions and the format of the travel brochure. Looking through these comics, I found that two titles resounded with the impression of the pirates treasure map and the phrase 'Pieces of Eight': 'The Secret of the Unicorn' and 'Red Rackham's Treasure'. Approaching these two books with similar intentions like those of the 'point of departure drawings' I decided to isolate and trace only the 'motion lines' (actions and movements) that supplement the comics' characters and objects. I saw these 'motion lines' operating metaphorically as signs of action and doing, that linked to writings 'transitive verb' by indirectly referencing Serra's 'drawing is a verb',<sup>64</sup> which suggests that drawing can be thought of as an act rather than an object.

If we take it that the motion lines have a textual leaning and yet are empty of a direct linguistic content, they still maintain a sense of a writing function. Relying upon a framework of language, inscription, and imagery, both make use of different methods of delivery, one in which the sign as a letter makes up the word (the concept) we read, and one in which the sign is the image (the appearance) we perceive, that is

... writing tells, imagery shows; writing presents, imagery represents; writing creates time, imagery creates space.<sup>65</sup>  
(Morely, 2003:9-10)

*In reply, 'Slubberdegullios', 'RAT TAT TAT' and 'Nouns becomes Verbs' arrogate the graphic means found in Hergé's Adventures of Tintin by deliberating on the merger and discrepancy between image and text. Concentrating specifically on the motion graphics inscription,*

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64 'Drawing is a verb.' Richard Serra, quoted in Lizzie Borden. 1977. 'About drawing: an interview'. in *Richard Serra: writings, interviews*. 1994. Chicago: Chicago University Press. p. 51. Although usually attributed to Serra 'Drawing is a verb' was first voiced by Mel Bochner in his essay *Anyone Can Learn to Draw*. Mel Bochner. 2008. *Solar system & Rest Rooms: Writings and Interviews, 1965-2007*. Cambridge MA: MIT Press p. 61.

65 Similarly, our physiological perception between them separates to the left and right hemispheres of the brain. Reading is a certain action of the left side of the brain operating our handling of the critical-thinking skills. Seeing is a certain action of the right side of the brain, operating our creativity and lateral thinking - our capacity to free-associate.

(speed lines, impact lines, tracking lines...) I see the comics' images requiring a multiplicity of supplementary textual signs in order to make visual their visible action, announcing a would-be verbalisation of the image and a visualisation of the language, in other words the 'textualisation' of the image is at the same time a 'pictorialisation' of the textual elements.<sup>66</sup>

Rivane Neuenschwander, 'the Ze Carioca comics' (fig.37) and Jochen Gerner, 'TNT EN AMERIQUE' (fig.38) are good examples of a system of representation that continually confronts the infinite possible links between text and representation. Neuenschwander adopts the comic book to work with; her strategy of painting is to paint directly onto the original comic book pages by matching her paint to the background colour to block out both characters and narrative. She also cancels out the speech balloons with white paint, erasing the text and dialogues. Consequently, the comic pages keep the given colours and compositions of their original layout, yet aided only by the tone, fixed by the restated Disney colour backgrounds and the varying shapes of the speech balloons, viewers (and abetted by the titles of the works) have to picture the narrative for themselves. Similarly, Jochen Gerner works

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<sup>66</sup> Touching, in a way on my understanding of the comic books organisational layout and my usage of tracing, I bring forward here Kathleen Biddick's perspective of the graphic technologies used in medieval and early modern texts and print sources, where she investigates the early Christians attempts to distinguish themselves from their Jewish neighbours. Extending through the history of text, technology, and book art, she recounts a supersession of an Old Testament past by the presence of a new dispensation; the transition from "scriptural" to "scientific" culture in Europe. While Biddick approaches her subject from a psychoanalytic and postcolonial perspective, what is specifically of interest to me is her description (p 3-14) of how the Christian scribes in the mid-twelfth century began to visualise the written page as a unit of graphic organisation. Where previously the Bible text had been the principal organising route for the ecclesiastical scribes, who wrote the Bible text out first and then organised the *Glossa* around it. *-Glossa refers to the cumulative commentaries of the Church fathers and of recent scholarship immediately available, as a guide to each passage for professional (university or clerical) uses that were clearly separated from the biblical text itself* In the mid-twelfth century scribes began to conceive the page as a unit of graphic organisation and started spacing out the page in agreement to a regular rationalised grid of lines and margins by pricking and ruling (*typically done by hand, however, sometimes a mechanical device, knowing as the 'ruling frame' was used. This was made up of holes drilled in a wooden board in which wires were threaded through in a criss-cross pattern, the blank sheet placed over the 'ruling frame' and rubbed, impressing the ruled lines onto the blank sheet*) parchment from margin to margin, page after page. At this point, the Bible text itself was no longer governed by the scribal variations of the page, but in its place the repetitive mise-en-page, graphically organised the writings of the text *and* commentaries. Radically here, the graphic organisation starts to work as a *visual* as well as a *rhetorical* mode of substitution. In effect, this typology that once was an argument about reference (the told) also became an argument of representation (the shown). Also, the pricked and ruled grid of the pages rationalised the frame and in a sense operated as a kind of typological viewing device, which arguably one can say anticipated the gridded thread drawing frames and perspective machines used by artists, thus enabling them to take accurate measurements of their chosen subject or to trace a scene as it appeared before them in order to create a convincing illusion of the real world. Kathleen Biddick. 2003. *The Typological Imaginary: Circumcision, Technology, History*. University of Pennsylvania Press.

directly on Herge's 'Tintin en Amérique', blacking out the details of the page with thick black ink. A cancelling out that in chorus takes and reduces the speech bubbles to free-floating words and colour to graphic symbols. Gerner, by diminishing Herge's story to floating words and pictographs of flames and smoke, exposes how violent Hergé's stories (TNT, a reduction of Tintin's name and an explosive) really are. What grabs my attention in Neuenschwander's and Gerner's comic book arrogations is that they both have a Dada sense of paradox and ambiguity that links them more to the Jasper Johns's (1958) 'Alley Oop' rather than to Lichtenstein's (1961) 'Look mickey!' and Pop. Although there are obvious shared characteristics between my work and Neuenschwander's and Gerner's work, the way *I arrogate* the comic essentially differs in that that I transfer its utterances mechanically onto another surface, which I see in a way operates as a kind of paperless collage and brings to mind Rauschenberg's 1960s newspaper transfer drawings.

Tintin, with his dog Snowy close at heel, has travelled the world having adventures since 1929. Although Tintin and Snowy end many of their adventures with the capture of the villain or a glowing newspaper headline highlighting their efforts, here the re-drawing of their escapades offers a less clear resolution and a purposeful misappropriation that tries to find new levels of reading to decode what still exists and to discover what doesn't exist. 'Slubberdegullios', (fig.39) 'RAT TAT TAT' (fig.40) and 'Nouns become Verbs' (fig.41) deliberate only on their visual punctuations and accentuation to the narrative and mise en page. The graphic supplements which in a sense exist between the iconic and the cypher, and which I call 'actionglyph': the marks or lines that follow the paths of objects that have passed through (or will pass through) in space, or the psychological space of a character conveyed through beads of sweat forming on a forehead or upper lip. The actionglyph is not properly a typographical character or feature of the represented thing (actually belonging to a thing or its settings and

having a proper existence outside its representation), but it positions itself somewhere between the iconic and cypher. While the actionglyph's lines, inventions, and forms can metamorphose and freely disregard the normal spatial principles of our three dimensional world, letting us see (*that*) what is not there, at the same time it functions as a textual adjective and imports to the static image a flow-through system of time, a moment rather than a single captured instant. These edits and shifts that punctuate between the instant (panel) and the moment (the multiple-panel sequence of the page) bridge the spatial and temporal pauses with a willing suspension of disbelief<sup>67</sup> which supplements to the visual rhythm of the overall comics' action in an unconscious way.

While home-grown to comics, these lines showing action or invisible emotions bring to mind ideas of cinema's 'insert shot',<sup>68</sup> where a seemingly unimportant object is unassumingly placed within the film frame and becomes essential to the action and for an instant the camera gives it its full attention, and as a result it brings to the viewer a meaning that goes beyond the sum of the depicted things; the moment we see the clock when time is of the essence, or the instant we see the telephone when *that* phone call comes through. Emphasised as if suddenly disrupted with an exclamation mark, these objects, previously seen but not noted, in a way become transitive, shifting from being a thing to a taking place - where things become players and nouns become verbs.

When we read a comic we engage with one panel at a time across and down the page, from panel to panel and from page to page.

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67 Samuel Taylor Coleridge coined this term in 1817 with the publication of his *Biographia literaria* or biographical sketches of my literary life and opinions. *We may know very well that we are watching an actor or looking at marks on paper, but we wilfully accept them as real in order to fully experience what the artist is attempting to convey.*

Phrase Finder Is Copyright Gary Martin, I. A. R. R. 2013. Suspension of disbelief. [Online]. [Accessed 14 September 2013]. Available from:

<http://www.phrases.org.uk/meanings/suspension-of-disbelief.html>

68 If not properly textual, the cinema nonetheless retains numerous essential characteristics of a language and does have a well-defined vocabulary of punctuation in the form of camera movements and edits and a codified 'grammar' that imparts specific meaning to particular shot sequences: the *insert shot* is a close shot of some significant detail in a scene that covers a different trait of that action already covered in the master shot, and in the main it is used to reference objects such as a clock, or actions such as putting a key in a car's ignition etc.

Similarly, ‘Slubberdegullios’ and ‘RAT TAT TAT’ follow and impose a rectilinear notion of the comic’s narrative, their ‘hand-written’ superimpositions hold in a single space the unfolding recurrence of compositional or thematic similarities and operate across varying spaces of the page (that can be said to hold the duration of the comic book time beyond just a single instant). Here, interrupting and significantly complicating the panel transitions problematizes the relationship between individual neighbouring panels (on a mutual page), and those scattered throughout the overall anthology, thus complicating the coded language of design inherent in its layout, to make new connections and newfound events that in a sense were already there. This disruption, where the amendment of the usual appearance of a narrative questions our fixed ideas on how a text should perform, is a reflexivity (or self-consciousness) that perhaps can be comparable to what is known in comics, film and TV as ‘Painting the medium’. For example, the comic book speech bubble may have its character talk or think, in an idiosyncratic typeface pointing toward some meaningful aspect of the character’s personality or situation without actually stating it. Here the typeface, usually a self-effacing *transparent* device of the comic’s narrative, is transformed into an active part of the narrative.<sup>69</sup> However, if we can say that in a film there is no pausing, this is not the case for the comic book, where one panel can arrest us for minutes on end before the next one captures us and continues us further into the narrative. As a kind of rhetorical device or trope of substitution, transformation, and succession, the actionglyph marks the interruption of time from image to image, from panel to panel, from page to page, and its relationship to the array of other textual design effects, separates, connects, and emphasises words or

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69 Similarly, Tony Scott uses subtitles like the dialogue in a comic book in his 2004 film ‘*Man on Fire*’, to shadow the main character *Creasy* and to point to his escalating descent into madness. The film begins with the subtitles working in the usual way, appearing at their default position (the bottom of the screen) whenever a character speaks in a non-English language. Yet as the film goes on, the subtitles behave strangely and show up even when a character is speaking English. As *Creasy*’s alienation progresses, the subtitles become more and more eccentric and never appear in the same place, often popping up one word at a time. The subtitles even appropriate a guise of technical error: In one scene the mother of a kidnapped child desperately pleads “**please don’t harm my daughter,**” with the subtitles miss-registering and stuttering, visually echoing the unstable emotion in the actress’s voice. The subtitles only return to conventional use at the end of the film with *Creasy*’s redemption and death.

lines, which in effect operate as punctuation between the world in which it shows and the world of what it shows

If the actionglyph operates between a cypher and a sign, in taking up the role of punctuation it disambiguates the textual and visual, not just simply as a matter of structural and semantic legibility per se, but as an indication of a textual imagining which perhaps moves it back to writing's originating terrain.

To express the idea of a man or of a horse, one represented the form of the one or of the other, and the first attempt at writing was nothing but a simple painting.  
(Derrida 1977:4-5)

In other words, a synchronised alertness balanced between textual reference and visual appearances creates the circumstances for a visual imagining (an inscription as picture) as something to be looked at rather than read. Compared with the immateriality of a textual reference, I see the materiality of a visual appearance requires an indexical understanding from us for following its physical traces. Even supposing a material part is necessary for writing's survival, the writing itself is not identified by that part, and even when a drawing gives an account to other things existing outside of itself, I am always aware that I am looking at the physical materials and the process of its making, all of which prompts me to determine its identity as a drawing. In other words, I see that a drawing is always present in the wake of its trace. This suspicion of a truant idea of drawing operates in the gap between memory and anticipation and exists only in a brittle state of multiple identities, and I find it manifests itself in long standing query lodging in my own thoughts: *Do we draw what we see or do we see what we draw?* In making a mark and seeking its measure, I comprehend that I will involuntarily remember cues of the hand, other imageries, and all of those other recall reports that guide my hand across a receiving plane. What I see at play here is an ever-shifting shadowlike position that revises and amends each aspect and is neither one thing

nor the other, but is instead a simultaneously active and passive deferral existing somewhere in the space between the two. (Derrida, 1993)

Already amended by the referential extension of acts of interpretation, present beyond the frame and the picture surface, and having in itself all kinds of material residues that take benefit of the eye's automatic inclination to interpret marks on flat surfaces as pictorial, the drawings doing inescapably rises up a *pictured* plane which allows picturing to happen, and this becomes an aesthetic object (of perceptual interpretation) that specifies something other than what it is and that, perhaps, can resound in a metaphorical or literal way without necessarily refusing and renouncing either of them. To be clearer, when I am referring to a *pictured* plane I am referring to those visual incidents of doing which, if not necessarily explicitly seen as an object of perceptual interpretation, none the less contribute to our apprehension of the drawings 'picturing'. For example, whereas for the Renaissance artists the material facture of a painting was understood to hold the picture as something standing apart and lying *behind* the picture plane and *inside* the frame, after modernism the picture plane and the frame of the painting have changed, and it is thought to be just as visible and in effect pictorial as the figurations they support and enclose.

Bridging the long-established and the still emerging processes of art making, Wade Guyton's '*Untitled*,' (2007) (fig.42) focusing on the non-representational and non-functional performativity of coding and its infinite possible infractions, uses a computer to produce paintings.<sup>70</sup>

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<sup>70</sup> Wade Guyton (2007). *Untitled*. Epson ultrachrome inkjet on linen 84 x 69 inches/203.2 x 175.3 cm  
 'Made with an Epson large format printer in the same manner as the paintings he has been producing for the last three years, these works are printed on pre-primed linen intended for oil painting and not inkjet printing. As such, the images, marks, and letters Guyton continues to employ are absorbed into the porous material and disperse the ink rather than allowing it, as in his previous works, to "sit on the surface." Upon discovering this difference in the ink's interaction with the surface, the artist began to overprint his own paintings with a Photoshop-drawn rectangle "filled" with the colour black. By repetitively overprinting, an unexpected painterly process developed. As each piece is created they transcribe a visual record of the printer's actions: the trace of movement of the print heads, the varying states of their clogged-ness, the track marks of the wheels on wet ink, all mixed with the scratches and smears on the paintings from being dragged across the floor to be fed back again into the printer'. "Friedrich Petzel Gallery press release. 2007.

He designs his motifs on a computer and then prints them onto canvas. Manipulating the colour supplies and deliberately jolting and pulling the material at the same time as the printer is working, he creates unpredictable blurs, dribbles, scratches, and pops. I see the flatbed scanner and the industrial-size Epson printer become the paintbrush for Guyton. Looking for the glitch<sup>71</sup> in the functionality of a computer's algorithmic system and waiting for new qualities and affects to be generated by the glitch, Guyton's aesthetic of errors emphasises that it is precisely these infractions that give its physical aesthetic value to code/software. (Nune, 2012) Moreover, Guyton's work brings to attention the idea that any intervention in making carries out a margin of error.<sup>72</sup> This brings to mind Katharina Hinsberg's, '*Nulla dies sine Linea,*' (fig.43) where the artist carefully draws a straight centre line to divide the paper with a ruler. On top she lays the second paper, and she carefully traces the line freehand. This gets repeated over and over again and hundreds of times, until the accumulated margin of error drifts the line far from its original path. No matter how mechanical or systematic these works are, they both rely on qualities subjectively determined by an individual tolerance, meaning what the artist will or can allow. Perhaps then what we think of as significant and what we think of as artistic originality lays in a contradictory space somewhere within this margin of error.

*...I see the pragmatic and mechanical nature of my work, perhaps simple, needs to be executed with sensitivity and precision. However, it is to be expected that there will be signs of my touch and significantly individual tolerance, through which nuance and incident will emerge*

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<sup>71</sup> A glitch is generally thought of as a sudden and temporary disruption to electronic equipment. Whereas the term initiated in reference to the behaviour of electronic equipment, it now also refers to the disruption of any system, artificial or natural. Moreover, here, the glitch offers an instance that allows me to elaborate on those parameters that provoke the glitches and are the product of system devices' and operative restrictions within a particular understanding of the *margin of error* that signifies an individual tolerance.

<sup>72</sup> Similarly, in his '*Erasmus is late*' (1996) exhibition at the Schipper & Krome (Berlin), Liam Gillick painted the gallery's walls in different colours, and the paint layer ended slapdash midway down the wall, leaving the viewer with the impression of a ditched paint job. Challenging the industrial paradigm of synchronization, precision, and finish, Gillick reintroduces the unforeseeable, uncertainty, and the unfinished. Here, for me Gillick's intervention, like Guyton's doing, purposely brings to attention a margin of error. That reminds me that we are usually blind to the work of the painter and decorator; as we walk into a newly finished room or building we are only aware of his work through its errors. Ironically, if the work is done well we don't see it.

*and contribute to my understanding of the margin of error as the potential site of the significant and the authentic...* (Extract from Drawing at University today, Oporto 2013 presentation)

Slubberdegullions automated and yet 'hand-written' imprecise corrupted edges and 'margin of error', filtered through the calco's triturate blind registrations, at once both impartial and capricious, perform an act of auto-distortion. (fig.44) Drawing here becomes a kind of interrupted textual recording that watches for errors and malfunctions in the functionality of the graphic system and appropriates its unlimited potential infractions. Awaiting new makings and affects to be generated, Slubberdegullions and Rat Tat Tat register the process of their doing from an ordered inscription towards a tension between the inevitable and the spontaneous.

This degree of distance is most prominently seen in Rat Tat Tat, where an error of measure is amplified and made more pronounced as each re-drawing takes up its preceding drawings, increasing errors (tracing-photocopying-tracing-projecting/enlarging-tracing-industrialising) and moves from being a slight blemish of line to a lumpish pitted silhouette. (fig.45) Playing host to its own systems of entropy and breakdown, the calco registration assumes here a binary property: on the one hand it is a sign of automation, bringing associations of a reification (regarding something abstract as a material thing), and on the other hand it materially embodies an artistic effort, suggesting a physical referent occurrence, and it becomes necessary for drawing to function on a level of visual occurrence, and then after that to conjecture the significance of that occurrence. Accordingly, a thinking-doing project is usurped here by doing-thinking, and this presupposes a problem of how I could draw my way back into the subject matter and at the same time have a picture which is still self-reflexive, one that tells you objectively what it is as a drawing; a

drawing that stresses itself as a material object and yet also engages the metaphor of picture-making.

### **3.2 Revising a drafting practice situated between a pencil and a brush.**

Now the routes available for me were to find a way of taking the inscriptive mechanisms and features of the actionglyph, minus its narratives, and establishing them in a system of discourse reluctant to make a distinction between the concrete (the idea) and the emblematic. Agreeing with the critical input that maybe I was allowing the seductive aesthetic qualities to guide my work (fig.46) and research, I recognised that I needed to disrupt my approach to the comic's template, which was perhaps becoming predictable. However, disruption for disruption's sake seemed superficial for me, and possibly as predictable to the work as its seductive qualities. Therefore, any meaningful disruption needed to have some empathy with my idiosyncratic responsiveness and tolerance. Trading paper for canvas, pigments for paint, and stylus for brush, 'Nouns become Verbs' introduced an interruption to the procedural rigors of the templates utilitarian instructions and its chance arrangements and figure. Contravening its previous models, boundaries of scale, material, and support, 'Nouns become Verbs' moved its predetermined gestures away from the comic's given layout, height, and width to a more spontaneous, less dense, and more open composition that brought forward new ambiguities between figure, field, and depth. Now less compressed, the multiplication and motion of the actionglyphs flashed up a recall to Balla's (1912) 'Dynamism of a Dog on a leash', and specifically its frame by frame chronophotographic<sup>73</sup> type multiplication - the repetition of the dog's scurrying legs, the wagging tale, the oscillating leash, and the woman's hurrying to keep up feet, outlines - which looks to show motion effects and dynamism on a single plane. Without any explicit link to futurism, I see here a shared

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<sup>73</sup> In the 1880s, Etienne-Jules Marey invented the chronophotographic gun: A device able to record successive instantaneous stages of movements onto a single photographic plate.

visual characteristic with the now free playing actionglyphs, which I reflect sparked an interest towards abstraction and opened up another route to my work and research other than the comic's default association to Pop Art.

Not intent on assuming a Pop like appropriation of the comic, which I see tends to take its sequential process away by focusing on the single panel or character (such as Liechtenstein's (1963) 'Whaam!'), my interest instead lay more with Jasper Johns's (1958) 'Alley Oop', (fig.47) which I see relinquishes the figures while maintaining its sequence. More specifically, Johns's blunt filling-in of encaustic paint on the comic strip page leaves only the comic's major design features visible, and although we are unable to recognise any character or follow any dialogue we are still able to follow the compositional changes from panel to panel, a mechanical and pragmatic attitude, which I see is comparable to my approach to the comic's outline. Arguably, Johns abandons the figurative element of the comic imagery in favour of appropriating the procedural mechanisms of the comic page, through which I see he achieves an inscriptive removal of gesture that none the less conjures up an impression of an impulsive, *gestural* application of paint. Noticeably, Johns's use of encaustic as his chief painterly mean stresses a lack of fluidity, which retards the paints overflows and spreading and in effect brings a graphic quality to the glitches and skips registered. More specifically, the encaustic paint stiffens within seconds, and therefore it necessitates the brush to take up a short dab, and consequently it adopts the crosshatch (a traditional graphic method to render depth and volume) and the graphic characteristic of a pencil or pen, a drafting practice which I see reverses the traditional role between painting and drawing. This speculation perhaps echoes Johns's habitually reverse of drawings and paintings traditional relationship, as while artists as a rule explore ideas through preliminary drawings and come (perhaps) to a conclusion through painting, Johns

...distinguishes himself from other artists by almost exclusively drawing after the motif has been rendered in painting or sculpture. (Shapiro, 1984: 23)

Johns's style of distancing his drawing methods away from any familiar code of self-expression, which can perhaps be best characterised by its impeccable sense of craft rather than any bravado or academic pose, is of particular resonance to me as we both share an approach to making work that emphasises a formulate use of already made images and neutral devices (tracing and stencils) that perhaps work to abridge what *'the mind already knows'* with that of a catalogue of actions as possible carriers of potential meanings.

Perhaps I am more confident working with a schematic nature or images that lead themselves to schematisation than with things that have to be established imaginatively... images that can be measured, traced, copied etc. appealed to me, and I often enjoy that my finished work should contain the suggestion that I have used such procedures. (Johns, 1990:70)

Abandoning a one-to-one scale and breaking away from a ready-made given compositional template, Nouns Becomes Verbs (2012) progressed to another system and another medium. That is:

1. I traced every page (of the comic book) one to one onto individual acetate sheets
2. I divided the acetates into equal quarters and retraced each individual quarter, in numerical order, one on top of the other, on to a single acetate. This process resulted in four acetates containing all of the books traced information.
3. Following this, I divided and cut each of the four acetates into a further four sections. (fig.48)
4. Finally, these idiosyncratic systemised acetates were projected (fig.49) on canvas and retraced using gouache and a flat brush, carrying out a simple 1,2,3,4 order of arrangement. I used gouache specifically (anticipating my thoughts on Jasper Johns use of

encaustic) as I thought its accompanying associations could perhaps provide a coherent linkage between my painting process and a graphic approach. A rejoinder to modernism's territorial thinking of medium-specificity that opens up an exchange of ideas between my calco trace with other pigment-based methods of picture making. Gouache paint, also known as designer colour, is valued for its qualities of flatness, opaqueness, and matt finishes that provide a better reproduction of artworks and is most closely associated to the commercial art studio and the designers drawing office, a medium that I see links painting more to the draughtsman and the drawing board rather than the painter and the easel. Reconsidering drawing's identity on a broader material and procedural basis while rethinking its identity, both semantically and materially, my intention was to clarify how I think, how I proceed, and why I moved my drawing into a situation of painting, even though this risks implying that this explanation can account for its meaning.

All the same, what seemed of importance all the way through this period was my insistence on tracing and its devices. Looking for significance and meanings in the processes behind my tracing procedures while taking into consideration my insecurities and doubts regarding my drawing abilities, along with the implications of tracing's incompetence to constitute an idea of originality, the question that still bothered my mind was: **is tracing a method that is able to underwrite a present-day idea of originality and authenticity?**

### **Closure**

In this chapter I have discussed how set procedures of tracing that rely upon a reciprocated framework of language, inscription and imagery can operate actually and metaphorically as a supplement between the textual and the visual. Through this discussion I coined the phrase 'actionglyph', namely the comic strip's drawn 'motion line' punctuations

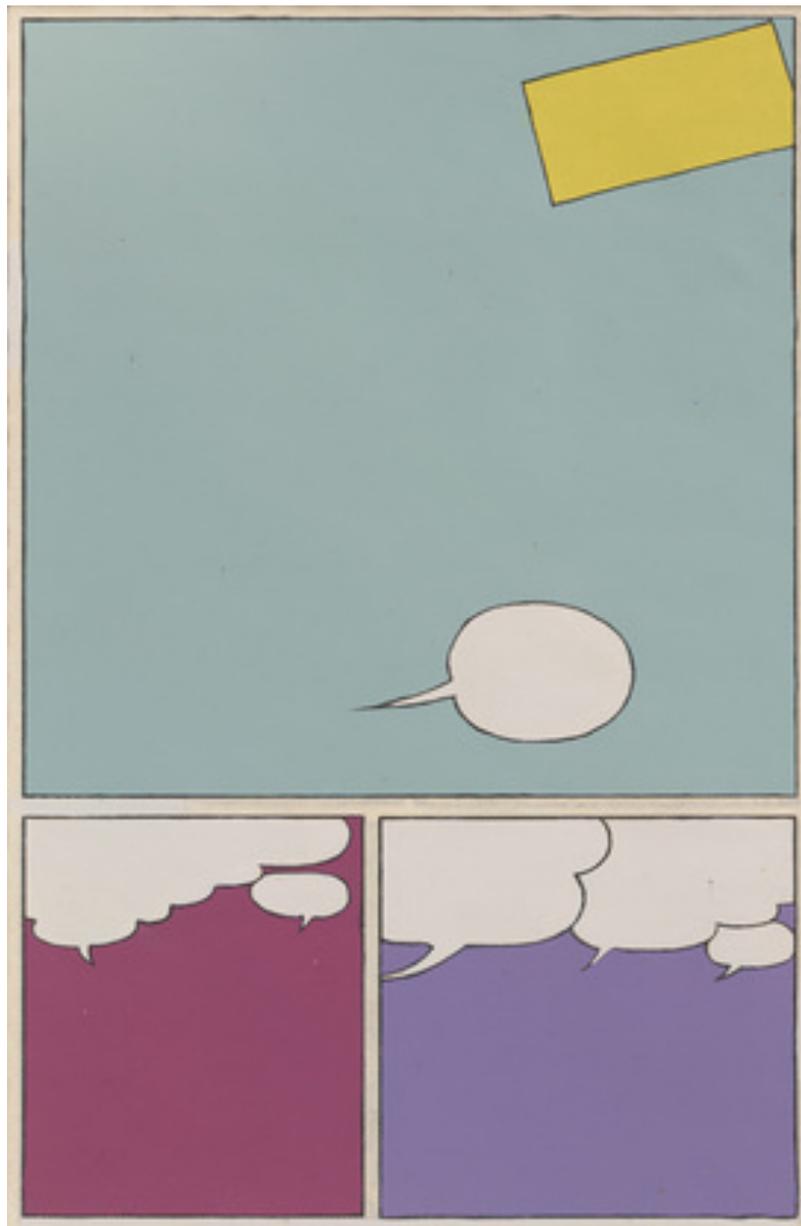
that I understand manoeuvre somewhere between cypher and icon. Moreover, I explain how an idea of a *margin of error* may give emphasis to the performance qualities of tracing, which is no longer obscured in a uniformity of presentation but instead becomes more pronounced in the form of a visual error as it begins to become expressive and pliable to the artist. These visual errors of doing, which depends on the interventions and acceptance of the operator rather than their means, puts forward an idea of error and tolerance, a *margin of error* (the outcome of a *certain* skill and *certain* technical proficiency) that acts '*as a potential site*' for '*the significant and the authentic*'. While none of these issues can be treated in isolation from the others, the material and visual aesthetic outcomes of the procedural errors and the visual characteristic of actionglyphs critically generated an interest in late modernist and early avant-garde abstraction, which offered up another route to link my work and research other than the comic's default association to Pop Art. Closing with a subjective, hypothetical rejoinder to Jasper Johns's (1958) 'Alley Oop,' the chapter reflects on how I conceivably consign to paint and then brush the characteristic of the pencil and the graphic. Seeking to situate the chapter's overall observations in a meaningful and useful way within an understanding of the original question, I will provide a theoretical framework that reimagines and extends tracing's contemporary instances and context in the following chapter.

Figure 36



Leeds Studio. 2011. Preparatory drawings for 'Pieces of Eight'.

Figure 37

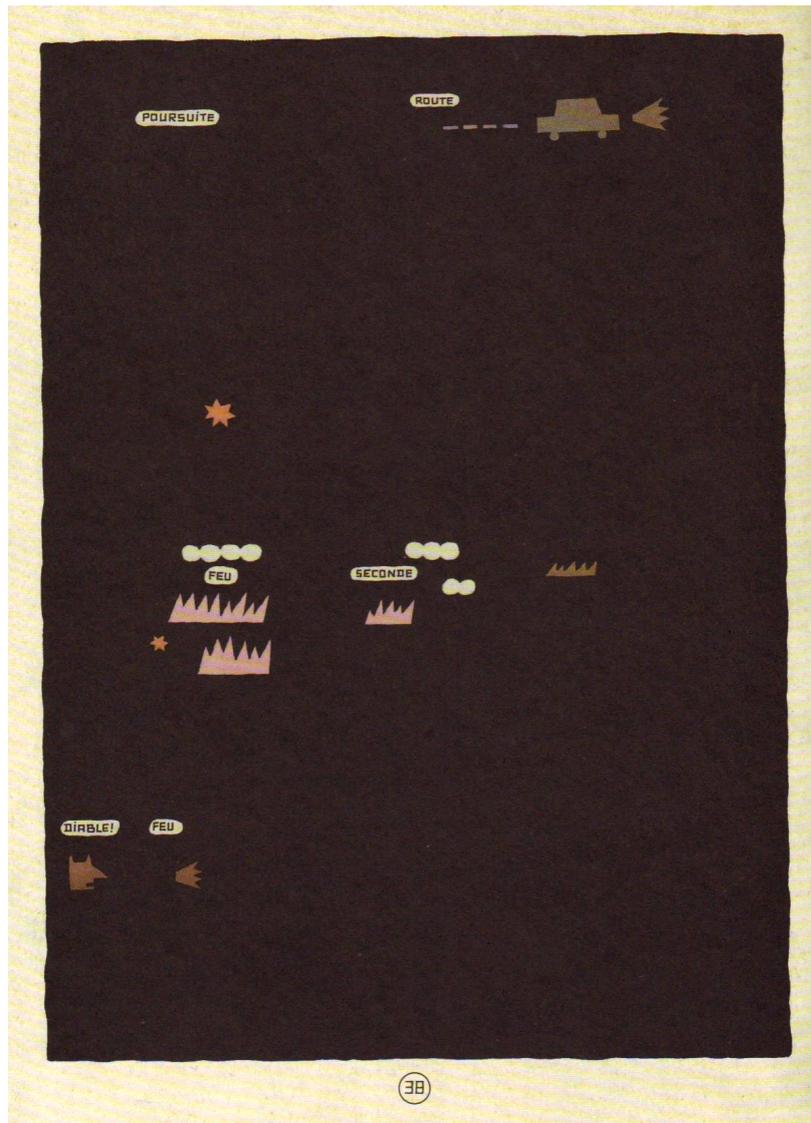


Rivane Neuenschwander. 2004. *Zé Carioca* no. 4, *A Volta de Zé Carioca* (1960). Edição Histórica, Ed. Abril.<sup>74</sup>

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<sup>74</sup> MoMA.org. 2013. Rivane Neuenschwander. *Zé Carioca* no. 4, *A Volta de Zé Carioca* (1960). Edição Histórica, Ed. Abril. (2004). [Online]. [Accessed 12 August 2013]. Available from: [http://www.moma.org/collection/object.php?object\\_id=94491](http://www.moma.org/collection/object.php?object_id=94491)

Figure 38



Jochen Gerner. 2002. Page 38 of TNT EN AMERIQUE book.<sup>75</sup>

<sup>75</sup> Isabelinho, D. and Berlatsky, N. 2013. *Monthly Stumblings # 20: Jochen Gerner « The Hooded Utilitarian*. [Online]. [Accessed 13 Mai 2012]. Available from: <http://www.hoodedutilitarian.com/2013/03/monthly-stumblings-20-jochen-gerner/>

Figure 39



Slubberdegullions! 2012. Calco transfer (soft pastel) on gesso on aluminium dibond. 297 x 210 mm. (24 drawings) Project Space Leeds.

Figure 40



Rat Tat Tat Tat. 2012. Wall drawing. Plotter cut vinyl. Project Space Leeds.

Figure 41



Nouns Becomes Verbs. 2012. Gouache on gesso on canvas, Diptych 915 mm x 915

Figure 42



Wade Guyton, 2007. *Untitled*. Epson ultrachrome inkjet on linen 84 x 69 inches/203.2 x 175.3 cm.<sup>76</sup>

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<sup>76</sup> Petzel.com. 2013. *Petzel Gallery - Wade Guyton*. [Online]. [Accessed 18 September 2013]. Available from: [http://www.petzel.com/exhibitions/2007-11-13\\_wade-guyton/](http://www.petzel.com/exhibitions/2007-11-13_wade-guyton/)

Figure 43



Katharina Hinsberg. *Nulla dies sine linea # 3*, 2001.  
isograph on paper, stacked 932.<sup>77</sup>

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<sup>77</sup> Institut für Auslandsbeziehungen. 2013. *Linie, Line, Linea. Katharina Hinsberg*. [Online]. [Accessed 13 August 2013]. Available from: <http://www.ifa.de/en/visual-arts/exhibitions-abroad/fine-arts/linie-line-linea/katharina-hinsberg.html>

Figure 44



Slubberdegullions! 2012. (Detail).

Figure 45



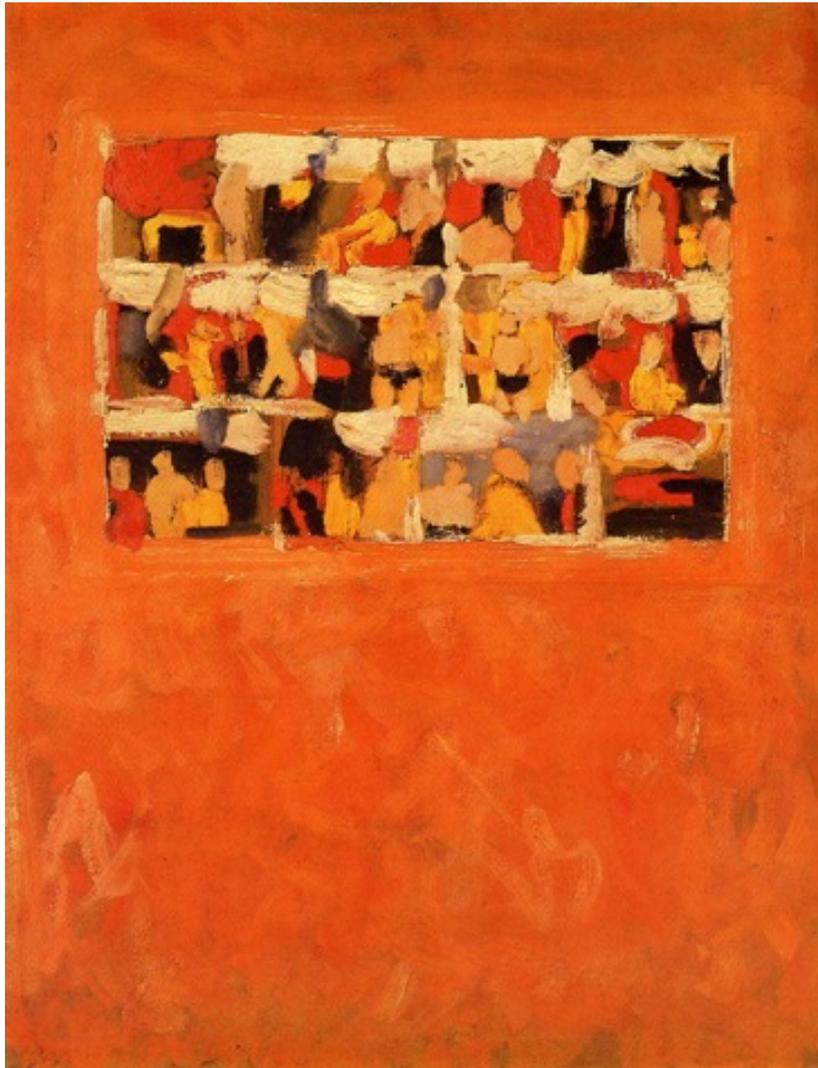
Working with assistants on Rat Tat Tat Tat. 2012.

Figure 46



Preparatory drawings. 2012. Photocopy and acetate.

Figure 47

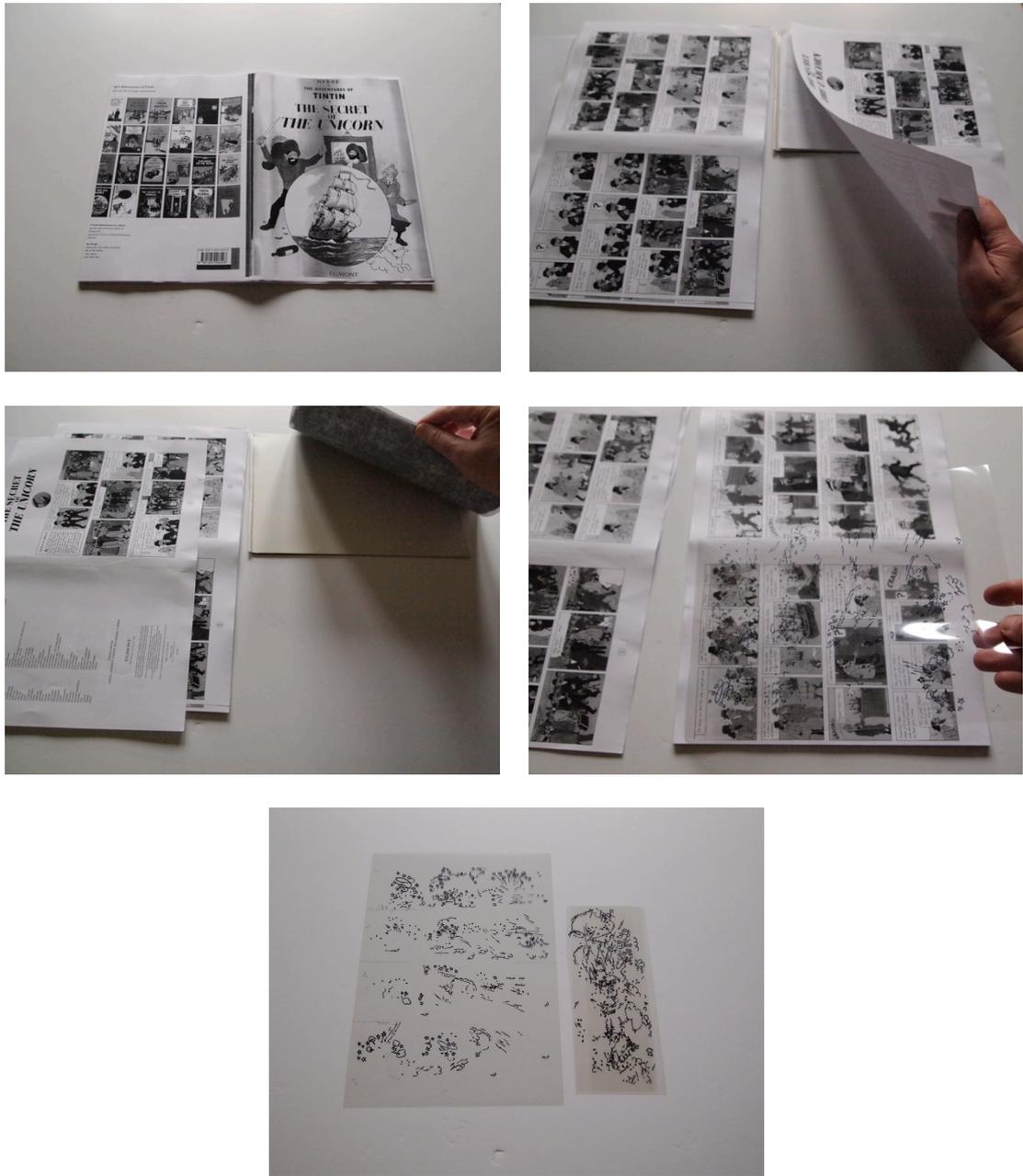


Jasper Johns. *Alley Oop*. 1958. Oil and collage on cardboard. Dim. 58.4 x 45.7 cm.<sup>78</sup>

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<sup>78</sup> Catherinespaeth.com. 2013. *Catherine Spaeth - Blog - Abstract Comics: An interview with Andrei Molotiu*. [Online] [Accessed 12 June 2013]. Available from: <http://www.catherinespaeth.com/blog/2009/10/12/abstract-comics-an-interview-with-andrei-molotiu.html>

Figure 48



Preparatory transparencies for Noun Becomes Verbs. 2012.

Figure 49



Acetates projected on canvas.

## **Chapter four.**

### **Ratifying tracing: a present-day sense of originality and authenticity within an art practice.**

#### **Introduction**

In this chapter, I assemble the overall discussions generated in previous chapters to address the central question of the thesis, namely, is tracing able to underwrite a present-day idea of originality and authenticity within a drawing practice? In particular, given the encumbrance of tracing's lack of standing and its received idea, this chapter looks at the multifarious factors that contributed to this doubt regarding its reputation and its creative authority. More specifically, by speculating that tracing's utilitarian mechanical means are no longer marginal but now central to contemporary drawing, this chapter takes as a point of reference Arturo Herrera's (2005) exhibition at the Max Hetzler gallery, where tracing and a mechanical approach to drawing appears to be emphasised, thereby flagging up a significant divergence in respect to tracing's historical and contemporary regard. Grounding and centering a discussion between tracing's historical and contemporary account, the writing forms a discussion around Herrera's practice which is contextualised within Bourriaud's 'art of postproduction' (2002) and provides a specific framework to re-imagine and extend tracing's contemporary instances along with reviewing its capability to create something new and original.

#### 4.1 The Legitimacy of Tracing

'YOUR MOTHER'S A TRACER!!' (Banky Edwards). In Kevin Smith's (1997) film *'Chasing Amy,'* the films two main characters, Holden McNeil (the pencil artist) and Banky Edwards (the inker) are promoting their comic 'Bluntman and Chronic' at a comic book convention in New York.<sup>79</sup> Banky gets into a heated exchange with a collector who questions his creative input. In this scene, Smith parodies the idea of tracing and its perceived lack of creativity and originality. Kevin Smith's (undeniably funny) dialogue highlights how we continue to give great importance to a perceived idea of skill (or its lack) as a measure of originality, and I think it succinctly illustrates my own anxieties of tracing's limitations vis-à-vis its creativity and originality. During the course of my research on calco and renaissance techniques of drawing transfer, I come across the *Max Hetzler* gallery (2005) press release explaining Arturo Herrera's use of spolvero, a renaissance technique of drawing transfer. Drawing on the disparity between Herrera's candidness and the renaissance artists concealments of spolvero, I sensed that there was an opportunity for me to come to some understanding and conclusion regarding my own approach and attitude towards tracing.

For Galerie Max Hetzler in Holzmarktstraße, Herrera developed a large scale wall drawing made entirely with dry pigment. The complex image was transferred to the existing wall using the traditional method of a perforated paper cartoon...Tiny points, barely hanging to the wall surface, bring forth a monumental drawing of painterly drips suggestive of abstract expressionism, while at the same time evoking images from animated films. The left over pigment at the bottom of the wall reveals the colours and the quantity that was used in the making of the drawing. (Galerie Max Hetzler, 2005)<sup>80</sup>

In drawing attention to the material means and mechanical processes and their earlier histories at the back of Herrera's

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<sup>79</sup> See appendix I. 'The Inker'.

<sup>80</sup> Maxhetzler.com. 2013. *Galerie Max Hetzler: English*. [Online]. [Accessed Online: 9 September 2013]. Available from: <http://www.maxhetzler.com/index.php?id=514&type=4>

'UNTITLED' (2005), (fig.51,52) the press release acts in significant opposition to the Renaissance ideal of 'sprezzatura' or the art of effortless mastery and exposes a tell-tale dissonance between past and present cultural esteems.<sup>81</sup>

... to use possibly a new word, to practise in everything a certain nonchalance (sprezzatura) that shall conceal design and show that what is done and said is done without effort and almost without thought...<sup>82</sup>  
(Castiglione, 1528:67)

In 1563, the founding of the '*Accademia delle Arti del Disegno*' in Florence introduced the institutionalisation and naturalisation of Castiglione's 'aristocratic' disassociation between art and work - a division between thinking and making. Consequently, we see a corresponding shift of the prevailing idea of the artist now moving away from that of a craftsman or manual worker and altering preconceived notions about their practices and their social standing.<sup>83</sup> At the same time as their intellectualising disassociation away from 'menial' crafts sought a new acknowledgment to the epistemic contentions of the 'embodied characteristics' of drawing,<sup>84</sup> the academicians ironically found that this emerging intellectual background also compelled them to distance drawing's manual characteristic away from themselves and their practices

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81 In the Aldrich Museum press release for Arturo Herrera's 2007 wall drawing *Castles, Dwarfs, and Happychaps*. use of "pouncing" for his 2007 *Castles, Dwarfs, and Happychaps*. Jessica Hough's reference to Herrera and the Renaissance and its traditional technique of pouncing in the Aldrich Museum press release not only supposes authority on a canonical model, but in appearing to locate Herrera's revisions and appropriation within this canon, Hough's article implicitly supposes authority on Herrera's work itself. In other words, a canonical model is often ideological in nature, with ideology in turn often being used as a resource to confer authenticity onto itself and to other related objects and discourses. Consequently, once formed it is used to either construct or authenticate its very own manifestations and performances.

82 Baldassare Castiglione coins the concept sprezzatura in *The Book of the Courtier* I.26, (a guide to the proper behaviour of a gentleman at court), first published in 1528 and re-issued since in many translations and editions during the 16th century). Castiglione lets the fictional Count Lodovico da Canossa, the main speaker of the first book, portray his ideal courtier. Here we can see how the renaissance ideal of a divinely inspired 'genius' and effortless creator necessitated the disassociation of the fine arts from the manual crafts, hence the need/practice of the 'covering of ones tracks'.

Employees.oneonta.edu. 2013. *Excerpts from Castiglione's The Courtier*. [Online]. [Accessed 12 July 2013]. Available from: [http://employees.oneonta.edu/farberas/arth/arth200/artist/castiglione\\_courtier.htm](http://employees.oneonta.edu/farberas/arth/arth200/artist/castiglione_courtier.htm)

83 Rather than being divinely inspired, it seems that the concept of genius originated in (the not unfamiliar) market forces and naked ambition

84 An intellectualisation of the gaze (through drawing, perspective and geometry) and a study of the liberal arts, aimed to differentiate the academic artist from the mechanical and technical work of the artisan. What Pierre Bourdieu sees as 'a repression of the material determinations of symbolic practices'. Bourdieu, P. 2000. *Pascalian Meditations*. London and Cambridge: Polity Press. p. 20.

... we can truthfully say that true art is what does not seem to be art; and the most important thing is to conceal it, because if it is revealed this discredits a man completely and ruins his reputation (Castiglione, 1528:67)<sup>85</sup>

Yet beyond this rhetoric, drawing continued to be an inescapably embodied and situated practice, even though this was something that required playing down. Vasari describes how shortly before his death Michelangelo reduced many of his drawings and other preparatory works to ashes:

... as I myself know, because just before his death he burned a large number of his own drawings, sketches and cartoons to prevent anyone from seeing the labours he endured or the ways he tested his genius, for fear that he might seem less than perfect. (Vasari, 1991:472)

If perfectionism was Vasari's devotee's account for the burning,

Michelangelo had such a distinctive and perfect imagination, and the works he envisioned were of such a nature that he found it impossible to express such grandiose and awesome conceptions with his hands, and he often abandoned his works, or rather ruined many of them... (Vasari, 1991:472)

perhaps a less biased view might offer an opposing account, seeing Michelangelo needing to live up to his principle of '*effortless execution*' and playing-down the utilitarian and manual means behind his work;

... if anything, ashamed of his drawings. In his thinking the 'art' stage of creative production, which he identified with the careful procedure of making studies, sketches, and working drawings, was the menial and mundane side of the business, whereas true merit was to him displayed in the rapid and apparently effortless execution of a painting or sculpture (Coleman, 1988:24)

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<sup>85</sup> A customary intellectual perspective, John Dewey outlines as being: "the aristocratic tradition which looked down upon material things and upon the senses and the hands was still mighty" Dewey, J. 1930. *Democracy and Education: an introduction to the philosophy of education*. New York: Macmillan (first published 1916). p. 329.

Notwithstanding a purposefully cultivated reputation of individually inspired self-determining works of genius, it is clear that the Renaissance artist was in fact working from a perspective and tradition (retaining any amount of innate canons, procedural shortcuts, props and devices) in which art was synonymous with skilled work, and in which artists expected to employ any number of skilled workers and collaborators. In a memorandum in which he settles the terms, conditions, and budget of his contract to design and apply a fresco to the Dome of Florence Cathedral, Giorgio Vasari included; <sup>86</sup>

... three competent fresco painters (“maestri pratici a lavorare a fresco”)...three other painters of professional status (“maestri pictori”) to make draperies, skies, backgrounds, and wax and clay models of figures; Two other maestri to paint ornament, backgrounds, and clouds and to transfer cartoons (Bambach, 1999:2)

Bambach, in ‘Drawing and Painting in the Italian Renaissance Workshop’, interestingly picks up on the pecking order of these assistants

Vasari’s prospective ‘cartoon tracers’ were practically at the bottom of his pyramid of labour. (Bambach, 1999:2)

On the face of it, Bambach proposes a tacit view of tracing regarded as base and mechanical, and calling for no other skill than the work of the hand. The practice of transferring cartoons having been delegated to menial assistants, it was essentially held in no more esteem than a basic utilitarian tool.<sup>87</sup> However, Bambach’s research on the mechanical drawing techniques of pouncing (spolvero), tracing (calco) and the development of the cartoon, reconstructs the idea of workshop practice and design theory in the mid 15<sup>th</sup> and early 16<sup>th</sup> century, and argues their often disregarded import and sway;

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<sup>86</sup> Along with the other menial and utilitarian practicalities behind the ‘effortless execution’ of a work such as materials, plasterers and labourers...

<sup>87</sup> See ‘A Bad Reputation’ in Bambach. 1999. *Drawing and Painting in the Italian Renaissance Workshop: Theory and Practice, 1300-1600*. London: Cambridge University Press. p. 127.

... between 1430 and 1600, cartoons - a drawing ostensibly of a utilitarian nature - had not only become common practice, but had moved to the forefront of artistic expression. (Bambach, 1999:xi)

Nonetheless, Bambach sees these utilitarian means, for the most part, still continued to conjecture a lack of creativity and authenticity,

yet on the whole, if all extant preliminary drawings from the Italian Renaissance were to be considered, we could confidently conclude that the vast majority of artists developed their most creative types of preliminary drawings freehand based on their *giudizio dell'occhio*. (Bambach, 1999: 296)

Mechanical drawing's technique pragmatic and utilitarian nature was plainly contrary to the idea of *'sprezzatura'*, conflicting with an understanding of art;

appreciated and commissioned by a class of patron attached to the idea of the genius (Coleman, 1988:25)

and all in all;

techniques of design transfers could hardly substitute for the idea (in the platonic sense of inspiration) in the process of 'invention'. (Bambach, 1999:296)

Still, if the expansion of drawing's practical and mechanical means (argued by Bambach) became the 'ground' for a progressively ever more ordered and categorised sign of spontaneity and invention, then in practice this '*originality*' was plainly not a self-determining fact but was instead a historically specific mode of presentation.

Re-winding 400 years or so back to Herrera's (2005) 'UNTITLED,' we can see how attitudes have changed. Now flagrantly the formal-aesthetical innovations and means of previous Art histories are *remixed, reloaded* and become a kind of 'found-object,' that allows it to

be used as a type of a reflexive tool or template for doing. This recourse to the ‘already produced’ form is one Nicolas Bourriaud<sup>88</sup> sees as a common factor in the work of many of today’s artists, regardless of their formal alliances;

It is no longer a matter of elaborating a form on the basis of a raw material, but working with objects that are already in circulation on the cultural market, which is to say objects already informed by other objects. (Bourriaud, 2002:13)

Gathering images from comic strips, colouring books, cartoons, animation and other popular culture sources, Arturo Herrera’s (‘All I Ask’, 1999) all-over arrangements linger between formal abstract elegance and an out-of-whack surrealism. His interlacing outline superimpositions conjure up drips, trickles, and splatters, and redouble and reprise the expressive brushwork (the supposed sign of the authentic) of lyrical abstraction and earlier histories of the Modernist aesthetic. (Fisher, 2007) Herrera’s ‘UNTITLED,’ in centering the position of ‘mechanical reproduction’, investigates the gap between autograph and copy, between artistic and productive labour, and in effect posits the question: can the *off-the-peg* anonymous outlines and tracings of the Disney Studio production-line<sup>89</sup> be equalled to the *bespoke* curves of a Brancusi sculpture?

The first idea was to recognize in those images of dwarves from ‘Snow White and the Seven Dwarves’ a very strong sense of connection with organic abstraction. It’s like a readymade modernist abstraction. Its round forms recall Brancusi, Arp... (Herrera, Art21. no date)

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88 Nicolas Bourriaud’s ideas on an “interhuman sphere”; the connections and interactions between individuals, groups and communities, and the shifting psychological space opened up by the internet, seemed to shape much of contemporary art discourse following the 1998 publication of his book ‘Relational Aesthetics’

89 Behind Walt Disney’s first animated feature, Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs, and his other 30s and 40s classics—Pinocchio, Fantasia and Bambi — toiled as many as 100 inkers and painters. The Disney Studio was modelled on the medieval-guild, with the training to become an animator involving a 10-year learning programme, with inking requiring about half that time.

Vanity Fair. 2010. *The Women Animators and Inkers Behind Disney’s Golden Age*. [Online]. [Accessed 11 October 2012]. Available from: <http://www.vanityfair.com/culture/features/2010/03/disney-animation-girls-201003>

Herrera's blurring between the celebrated and the nameless underlines a contamination and commandeering of the visual language of high art by popular culture: a rearranging of the borderlines between consumption and production which, according to Bourriaud, is not just a tendency in contemporary art, but to a certain extent is a new circumstance of contemporary life. (Bourriaud, 2002:20)

Made up of the sugary cute mascots of mass consumption, Herrera's sharp-edged palimpsestual and interlacing outline first draws the eye to specific pictorial matter and then to the infinite variability. The associative links between the constituent part circumventing any dependable whole or easy identification leave these tasks to the viewer's own conjuring. The only *just* discernible childhood imagery (a dwarf's cap, the handle of a pickaxe, or the colour particular to Snow White's dress), whose recollecting fills in the gaps made by Herrera's cutting and gluing, *'recalls and at the same time undercuts its origins'*<sup>90</sup> and throws into question the legibility and resonance of forms which have become universal graphic iconography.

How can an image so recognizable, like a dwarf, or a cartoon character's foot or nose, or the red and blue specific to Snow White's dress, have another meaning that I impose onto it? Is it possible? Can I make something so clear ambiguous? Can I uproot it? In which ways is the baggage that we bring to the new image relevant to the vivid recollections within our cultural context? (Arturo Herrera, 2005)

Undoing dialectical distinctions of authentic and inauthentic, representation and original, Herrera's childhood imagery significantly never entirely leaves behind what they once were. Retaining the *'memory of the actual printed matter'*,<sup>91</sup> the 'reproduction' and the 'reproduced,' are centered to give the legitimacy of the real thing. However, in a framework where copies are made of copies and where

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90 Interview. Arturo Herrera by Josiah McElheny. Bomb Magazine 93. Fall 2005. [Online]. [Accessed: 11 August 13]. Available from: BOMB 93/Fall 2005 <http://bombsite.com/issues/93/articles/2755>

91 Interview. Arturo Herrera by Josiah McElheny. Bomb Magazine 93. Fall 2005. [Online]. [Accessed: 11 August 13]. Available from: BOMB 93/Fall 2005 <http://bombsite.com/issues/93/articles/2755>

errors already exist (*I am thinking here for example of reproduction corruption arising out of unauthorised or piracy and counterfeit products*)<sup>92</sup> and new errors occur, Herrera's own re-tracing and self-commissioned prefabrication copy supplements steadily warp any idea of the fidelity of an original text. Similar to the parlour game '*Chinese Whispers*' (pointing to the former stereotype in Europe of the Chinese language, which regarded it as being incomprehensible), cumulative errors occur in translation and reproduction. I see that these errors perhaps act as a metaphor for how our imagination bridges translation mistakes, emanating from similar values, meanings or imagery - information is lost in translation and therefore obtains a new context. In becoming indistinguishable from the original text themselves, these 'transmission' errors become the text and linger provocatively, open-ended and ever more uncertain.

For example, in the collage series 'Keep In Touch,' (2005) Herrera selected extracts from found children's book illustrations, modified them, and then commissioned a professional illustrator to reproduce each of the modified scenes in gouache. The illustrator replicated each of his gouache paintings five times. Herrera then added his own hand-painted, hand-coloured, and hand-drawn collage on top of these images to create 65 distinct works. Herrera's repeated returning to the already existing form as a motive and motivating resource underlines a probability of any perceived inherent aura of authenticity of an original form itself. That may be not eminently be a given manifestation of a state of presence,<sup>93</sup> but an objectification of a process

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<sup>92</sup> The spread of counterfeit goods has become global in recent years. According to the Counterfeiting Intelligence Bureau (CIB) of the International Chamber of Commerce (ICC), counterfeit goods make up 5 to 7% of world trade. GUIDEBOOK ON ENFORCEMENT OF INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY RIGHTS p.8

[Online]. [Accessed 3 Mai 2013]. Available from:

[http://trade.ec.europa.eu/doclib/docs/2005/april/tradoc\\_122641.pdf](http://trade.ec.europa.eu/doclib/docs/2005/april/tradoc_122641.pdf)

Example: Beijing - With its slogan "Disneyland is too far, Beijing's Shijingshan Amusement Park features a replica of Cinderella's Castle, staff dressed like Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs, and other Disney images. None of this is authorised by Disney, but that has not stopped the state-owned park from creating its own counterfeit version of the Magic Kingdom 2007.

Online, I. 2013. *Counterfeit goods part of Chinese economy - World News | IOL News | IOL.co.za*. [Online]. [Accessed 3 Mai 2013]. Available from: <http://www.iol.co.za/news/world/counterfeit-goods-part-of-chinese-economy-1.322437#.UZIQp6KG2j8>

<sup>93</sup> Since it is inherent it cannot be transferable or attainable; unable to be taken away or appropriated, it is or is not authentic.

of representation.<sup>94</sup> I get a sense that for Herrera any contemporary idea of authenticity is to be found in the processes of artistic production and the production of cultural meaning itself. Embracing a breach between the original and the 'reproduction,' (the 'authentic' and the 'inauthentic') Herrera's cut and paste arrangements expand a vocabulary of collage beyond simply formal ideas. Given their ever shifting and to a certain extent anchor-less opacity, I hold that Herrera's '*transmission*' errors extend an underlying understanding of authenticity, suggestively into that of the territory of promise.

Is it possible to create an image that will have any impact now, with the multiplicity of images today, with the Internet and digital cameras and film and video? I think there are still images that people have not seen and that will be powerful enough to be able to send different messages. What kind of images these are, I don't know. I'm trying to get there; I'm trying to find them. I don't know what they look like. So, I come to the studio to dissect them from other fragments. (Arturo Herrera)<sup>95</sup>

In essence, I see Herrera's technique of tracing, amendment, supplement, and recirculation does not particularly ask how one distinguishes the authentic from the inauthentic, the real from the fake, but how an individual authenticity is made meaningful. Situating authenticity in the context of work and aesthetic production, (Guilar, Charman, cited in Vannini, Williams, 2009) I see that Herrera perhaps reinvests its idea more with a kind of *experience* of authenticity; a prospective encounter where what is important is not a question of whether or not something is authentic or inauthentic, but what matters in its place is whether or not one feels that it is authentic. (Turner, Schutte 1981, 4:1-20)<sup>96</sup>

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<sup>94</sup> By way of those agreed qualities that culture at various times and place characterises an ideal or paradigm.

<sup>95</sup> Art21.org. 2013. *Arturo Herrera: Abstraction, Chance, and Collage | Art21*. [Online]. [Accessed 3 September 2013]. Available from: <http://www.art21.org/texts/arturo-herrera/interview-arturo-herrera-abstraction-chance-and-collage>

<sup>96</sup> Turner, R. H. and Schutte, J. 1981. *THE TRUE SELF METHOD FOR STUDYING THE SELF-CONCEPTION*. Symbolic Interaction. Vol. 4, No. 1 (Spring 1981), pp. 1-20

Situating the mechanical means and the already produced, in appropriating the imagery of comics Herrera emphasises a practice which is no longer concerned with beginning with a ‘*tabula rasa*’, nor with fashioning meaning on the foundation of raw materials. In its place, the practice here seeks to find a means of insertion into the immeasurable flows of production, thereby contributing to the growing removal of its long-established dichotomies that exist between the ‘*giudizio dell’occhio*’ and the utilitarian means of the hand. Considering that for Castiglione and Vasari the ideal of ‘*sprezzatura*’ (and the idea of the unique artist and the inimitable work of art) was fundamental to an idea of authenticity and originality, and supposing that art today is unable to produce anything wholly new, (Moss, 2002)<sup>97</sup> then by shifting away from an *ideal* and the invention of forms towards a cultural application of forms (Bourriaud, 2008:20) art now perhaps brings a *sense* of originality and authenticity to the present day. In other words, it is possible that a new philosophy of a continual amendment and recirculation of signs, based on contemporaneous collective ideals of input and sharing (Lessig, 2008)<sup>98</sup>, builds a new hypothesis in which works are continuously revised, revisited, and reformed, and this presupposes a teleological end to the process of the fashioning of an original artwork as previously conceived.

## Closure

In this chapter I have attempted to give the hypothetical and historical reading necessary for elucidating the preoccupations and ideas behind the original question. I have endeavoured to do so by aligning Bourriaud’s writings with Arturo Herrera’s work and practice. Both

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<sup>97</sup> Karen Moss, Director of Exhibitions and Public Programs at the San Francisco Art Institute, in conversation with Nicholas Bourriaud, picks up on Bourriaud post-production idea, “Because of the conundrum of not being able to produce anything new, I find it interesting that your proposal for art is post-production – mining previously made work and recontextualizing it. That is what, if anything, could be considered new, the recontextualization of the already made.

Stretcher. 2002. Feature: Conversations Nicolas Bourriaud and Karen Moss. [Online]. [Accessed 17 August 13]. Available from: [http://www.stretcher.org/features/nicolas\\_bourriaud\\_and\\_karen\\_moss/](http://www.stretcher.org/features/nicolas_bourriaud_and_karen_moss/)

<sup>98</sup> Lawrence Lessig has written at length about the trend he dubs the “Read/Write” culture created around the idea that the people who consume media, access the Internet, and use the Web shouldn’t passively absorb what’s available; rather, they should be active contributors, helping to customize media and technology for their own purposes.

Bourriaud's writing and Herrera's work is taken up as much for their abilities to represent something of the cultural present as it is for their absolute particularity and specificity. Moreover, the notions examined in this chapter not only coalesce the arguments elaborated on in the previous chapters of this commentary, but they also rejoin the main question persuasively and support the argument that I apportioned to tracing and its relationship to ideas of originality and authenticity.

Figure 50



Arturo Herrera. 2005. UNTITLED. Dry pigment on wall, 402 x 838 cm.<sup>99</sup>

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<sup>99</sup> Maxhetzler.com. 2013. *Arturo Herrera, 2005. Untitled. (detail)* [Online]. [Accessed 12 August 2013]. Available from: [http://www.maxhetzler.com/index.php?id=1036&tx\\_hetzlergallery\\_exhibitionlist\[exhibitions\]=10&tx\\_hetzlergallery\\_exhibitionlist\[artwork\]=556&tx\\_hetzlergallery\\_exhibitionlist\[tt\\_modus\]=past&tx\\_hetzlergallery\\_exhibitionlist\[action\]=zoom&tx\\_hetzlergallery\\_exhibitionlist\[controller\]=Exhibitions&cHash=be88342bb6e07ad2a8f583f3ee6ca.192](http://www.maxhetzler.com/index.php?id=1036&tx_hetzlergallery_exhibitionlist[exhibitions]=10&tx_hetzlergallery_exhibitionlist[artwork]=556&tx_hetzlergallery_exhibitionlist[tt_modus]=past&tx_hetzlergallery_exhibitionlist[action]=zoom&tx_hetzlergallery_exhibitionlist[controller]=Exhibitions&cHash=be88342bb6e07ad2a8f583f3ee6ca.192)

## Conclusion

Embracing both artistic practice and theory, this research has attempted to critically re-evaluate and determine an opinion of tracing's position today. More specifically, this is an argument about tracing's apparent prominence within artistic practices today, which is problematised by a long-standing suspicion around its artistic dexterity and competency for originality and invention. To be more precise, this reading brings forward tracing's generative capacity, meaning that interpretations of tracing based on a traditional understanding of its preparatory and ancillary role have been superseded/overtaken by a contemporary interest in using such preparatory methods as the work itself, as an end in itself. With this in mind, by shifting tracing's praxis to a primary artistic method, artists complicate its understanding today and point out that (any) artistic tradition cannot be a fixed situation but is a contingent one that hinges on shifting values and perspectives. Subsequently, rethinking artistic practice (that operates today between an open field of themes, subjects and enquiries) as an issue of application and efficacy is as much as of an inimitable creative skill, and reconsidering tracing's mechanical rote as a skilled dexterity, this practice led research re-contextualises tracing's potentiality for creativeness which is appropriate to its time. (Roberts, 2007: 9-20)

### Research contributions with respect to the field of fine art

**i.** The artworks produced over the course of this research are in simple terms original, since a specific subjectively focused activity is continuously at their centre. Nonetheless, I found it difficult to pinpoint exactly what originality in an artwork is or means, yet if we allow the idea of originality as the result of a new understanding, which is not the result of a search for originality but of an innovative effort, then perhaps we can come closer into view. (Derrida, 2010: 43-44) Not intentionally seeking the original, but rather being open to what emerges from an interaction with the materials and processes of

practice, my intention has been to utilize tracing to produce work that may be considered innovative in its approach and in its intention. This is demonstrated through experiments in scale (RAT TAT TAT, 2012), time (Untitled, Helsinki 2011), place (I Passaporti, 2011), and material (Noun becomes verb, 2012), linking each work to the possibilities of *doing* something which will then allow you to do something the next time that you wouldn't have been able to do last time.

**ii.** This thesis critically discussed and examined three types or models of tracing, namely: Tracing with carbon paper, tracing in situ with a Camera Lucida, and tracing via a projector. Embracing the initial detached objectives of my drawing methodology, all three methods elucidate the outlying procedural forces that led to the submitted work.

**iii.** Deliberating on the merger and discrepancy between image and text, I coined the phrase 'actionglyph', which refers to the comic strip's auxiliary 'motion lines' and explained how they operate and manoeuvre somewhere between cypher and icon.

**iv.** Emphasising the performative act of tracing and the visual errors coming out of its doing, I put forward the notion that an idea of error and tolerance allows a '*margin of error*' to operate '*as a potential site*' for '*the significant and the authentic*'; depending as much on the acceptance of the operator as the interventions of her means.

**v.** With an idiosyncratic and imaginative reading of Bourriaud's ideas of '*Postproduction*' crisscrossed with Bambach's historical reference to '*spolvero*' and '*calco*', and placed alongside the work of Arturo Herrera, through a distinctive linking the writing unfolds the tell tale implications and interpretations of tracing's creative legitimacy today.

**vi.** Through a reciprocal artistic practice and critical writing, this research has brought to attention tracing's prominence and currency as a mode of invention, and within this context has established an artistic adroitness which is applicable to a present-day idea of originality and authenticity.

**vii.** A noticeable observation is that the fundamental shift that *tracing* as a method of drawing has recently undergone (in its contemporary position and function) has hatched very little debate (unlike drawing per say).

**viii.** The artwork created throughout this period has been presented at various exhibitions, including: 'Contemporary Flânerie: Reconfiguring Cities' (2009) Oakland University Art Gallery, Rochester, Michigan, USA 'Adaptive Actions', (2010) Madrid, 'Thinking tools' (2011) FAFA gallery in Helsinki, Pieces of Eight, (2012) Project Space Leeds, Leeds, 'Limerick/Berlin' (2013), Limerick printmakers gallery, Ireland. Additionally, the concluding practical outcomes of this research were presented in the exhibition 'Wanderings (*in*) Palimpsests' (2013) at Wellington place, Leeds as part of my viva examination. (fig.51, 52, 53) The exhibition gave an overview of the creative work done during the four-year period from 2009 to 2013. Of equal importance are my writings, published in numerous publications and delivered at various conferences, both at home and abroad, which have encouraged and augmented my practice and participation in the visual arts community and have helped to establish my credentials and long-term ambitions within it.

It has ultimately been the intention of this thesis to demonstrate that the processes associated with tracing were informed by and would continue to inform its artistic tradition. Moreover, this thesis has contributed to the upturn of tracing's agency by relocating what has previously been cast as a marginal activity to a central position, thus providing a critical framework through which further studies about the nature and purpose of tracing today could be pursued.

Figure 51



(Left) Tulkfoop, 'GNOB'. 2013. Gouache on gesso on canvas. 1900 x 1500mm.

(Right) Treacherous. 2012. Gouache on gesso on canvas. 1500 x 1200mm.

Figure 52



(From left) "Huh? Wow!". 2013. Gouache on gesso on canvas, 1500 x 1200mm.

'Monkeys cough'. 2012. Gouache on gesso on canvas, 1500 x 1200mm.

'I'll huff, and I'll puff'. 2012. Gouache on gesso on canvas, 1500 x 1200mm.

'Uh huh, Okay'. 2012. Gouache on gesso on canvas, 1500 x 1200mm.

Figure 53



Preparatory drawings. 2012-13. Gouache on paper.

## **Epilogue**

Throughout this research, various supplements have been gathered in order to relate specific ideas emerging from the works. I see that each supplement functions as a conditional answer towards understanding my works meanings as a condensed central core of ideas, rather than as a singular research material or commentary. In reviewing the methods and writings during the course of this writing, I see that my thoughts and processes were coming together in the way of a supplement. Using the palimpsest as a model of a non-linear account, which I think connects and properly reflects my way of working and its reasoning, I recognised that what I say about what I do unavoidably arrogates and alters each layers implications, all the way down. It is of note that in this context even Derrida's writings on supplement, which have been influential to my thoughts all along this journey, for the most part are guided through the understandings of others (even the original texts I read are always a translation), meaning they are processed and reorganised through the words and interpretations of others. A perspective that echoes (in my understanding of Derrida) that a meaning of a text (idea) is not self-contained within the word, as meaning is not in the signifier itself but only exists within a network and in relation to an endless chain of other ideas. (Derrida, 1976:114-5) In other words, the way we grasp an idea is always within an understanding of its link to other ideas. With this in mind, any understanding of an idea is always open to doubt and to the possibility that something else can be introduced to it which will alter and re-determine it. In conclusion, this leads me to believe that the processes involved in making my work are of greater certainty than any reference trait the work may have.

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## Appendices

### Appendix I

#### **Sol Lewitt**

Artists Statement (1970-71)

The draftsman and the wall enter a dialogue. The draftsman becomes bored but later through this meaningless activity finds peace or misery. The lines on the wall are the residue of this process. Each line is as important as each other line. All of the lines have become one thing. The viewer of the lines can only see lines on a wall. They are meaningless. That is art. (From Pasadena catalogue.)

The artist conceives and plan the wall drawing. It is realized by draftsmen. (The artist can act as his own draftsman.) The plan, written, spoken or a drawing, is interpreted by the draftsman.

There are decisions which the draftsman makes, within the plan, as part of the plan. Each individual, being unique, given the same instructions would carry them out differently. He would understand them differently. The artist must allow various interpretations of his plan. The draftsman perceives the artist's plan, then reorders it to his own experience and understanding.

The draftsman's contributions are unforeseen by the artist, even if he, the artist, is the draftsman. Even if the same draftsman followed the same plan twice, there would be two different works of art. No one can do the same thing twice.

The artist and the draftsman become collaborators in making the art.

Each person draws a line differently and each person understands words differently.

Neither lines nor words are ideas. They are the means by which ideas are conveyed.

The wall drawing is the artist's art, as long as the plan is not violated. If it is, then the draftsman becomes the artist and the drawing would be his work of art, but that art is a parody of the original concept.

The draftsman may make errors in following the plan without compromising the plan. All wall drawings contain errors. They are part of the work.

The plan exists as an idea but needs to be put into its optimum form. Ideas of wall drawings alone are contradictions of the idea of wall drawings.

The explicit plans should accompany the finished wall drawing. They are of importance. (From *Art Now*, vol. 3, no. 2, 1971.)

Available at: <<http://www.docstoc.com/docs/5259501/Sol-Lewitt-Artist-s-statement-The-draftsman-and-the>> [Accessed on 1/9/2013].

Appendix II**'The Inker'**

*The films two main characters, Holden McNeil and Banky Edwards are promoting their comic Bluntman and Chronic at a comic book convention in New York:*

*COLLECTOR*

*So you draw this!*

*BANKY*

*(signing the comic)*

*I ink it and I'm also the colorist.*

*The guy next to me draws it.*

*But we both came up with the characters,*

*COLLECTOR*

*What's that mean - you .ink it'!*

*BANKY*

*Well.*

*It means that Holden draws the pictures in pencil, and then he gives it to me to go over in ink*

*COLLECTOR*

*So you just trace!*

*Banky freezes up.*

*He composes himself and continues signing.*

*BANKY*

*It's not tracing. I add depth and shading to give the image more definition. Only then does the drawing really take shape.*

*COLLECTOR*

*You go over what he draws with a pen - that's tracing.*

*BANKY (hands book back to Collector)*

*Not really.*

*(calling out)*

*Next!*

*A LITTLE KID steps up but the Collector lingers.*

*COLLECTOR*

*Hey man. If somebody draws something and then you draw the same thing right on top of it, not going out-side the designated original art what do you call that!*

*LITTLE KID (shrugs)*

*I don't know. Tracing?*

*COLLECTOR (to Banky)  
See?*

*BANKY  
It's not tracing.*

*COLLECTOR  
Oh, but it is.*

*BANKY (to Little Kid)  
Do you want your book signed or what?*

*COLLECTOR  
Hey - don't get all testy with him just because you have a problem with your station in life.*

*BANKY  
I'm secure with what I do.*

*COLLECTOR  
Then say it - you're a tracer.*

*BANKY (grabbing Little Kid's book)  
How should I sign this?*

*LITTLE KID (grabs book back)  
I don't want you to sign it, I want the guy that draws Bluntman and Chronic to sign it. You're just a tracer.*

*COLLECTOR  
Tell him, Little Shaver.  
Holden accepts a comic from another Fan.*

*HOLDEN (off comic)  
Who do I sign it to!*

*Before Holden can finish, a loud crash is heard. He looks to his left and freaks. Banky is throttling the Collector from across the table.*

*The Collector attempts to fight him off. SECURITY GUARDS pull them apart. Holden grabs Banky.*

*COLLECTOR  
Jesus! All I did was call him a tracer!*

*BANKY (to Collector)  
I'LL TRACE A CHALK LINE AROUND YOUR  
DEAD FUCKING BODY, YOU FUCK?!*

*HOLDEN (to Security Guard)*  
*Could you get him out of here!*  
*The Security Guards drag the collector away.*

*COLLECTOR*  
*Hey, wait a sec! He jumped me! And you're dragging me away!!*  
*(exiting)*

*Fucking tracer!*

*BANKY (calling OC)*  
*YOUR MOTHER'S A TRACER!!'*

Appendix III**THE CONTEMPORARY END***Eirini Boukla*

Founded on the judgment of the eye (*giudizio dell'occhio*), freehand drawing presupposes ideas of originality and authenticity, whereas the practice of tracing inhabits a minor place in the margins of drawing's history and is usually perceived as deficient in originality. If we can say that drawing's concepts and models are indisputably connected with the ways in which culture has shaped them over time, then it follows that any ideas of drawing's originality and authenticity cannot be a fixed and self-determined fact, but rather as a product of negotiation within a practice significantly constrained by the contextual uses of its tradition. Speculating that both tracing and drawing's utilitarian mechanical means are no longer marginal but now central to contemporary drawing, this paper takes as a point of reference the anecdotal commentary of the 2007 Aldrich Museum 'press release'<sup>100</sup> for Arturo Herrera's exhibition *Castles, Dwarfs, and Happychaps* in which a utilitarian approach to drawing is emphasised, flagging up significant divergences in respect it's historical and contemporary regard.

*Keywords:* Drawing, tracing, originality, spolvero, sprezzatura.

*“Venezuelan-born artist Arturo Herrera will be “pouncing” at The Aldrich in preparation for his upcoming exhibition, Castles, Dwarfs, and Happychaps.” (Aldrich Contemporary Art Museum 2013) It goes on to say, “Herrera, with the help of his assistants, will use a Renaissance technique called pouncing to transfer a design from paper to the gallery wall. Working from a giant paper sketch called a cartoon, Herrera and*

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<sup>100</sup> The press release a part of the *paratext* surrounding a work (all the peripheral and anecdotal material that isn't a part of the *work* itself, yet comes with it): the invitation card, poster, reviews or more ephemeral processes of interviews or conversation. The paratext, already a plurality of other texts, potentially opens the work up to on-going commentaries, and 'intertextual' flow; an interplay between reading and seeing that navigates between a work, its creator and viewer. See Genette, G. *Paratexts. Thresholds of interpretation*. Genette originally accorded the term paratext to the marginal elements of literary culture however its theory of intertextuality is now often applied to the converging spheres of contemporary art and the creative industries.

*his team will punch holes through the paper against the wall. Next they will pat the cartoon with small fabric sacks filled with dry colored pigments, leaving a series of dots on the wall's surface. Aldrich curatorial director Jessica Hough explains, "The result will be a complex drawing of knotted dwarfs, complete with pick axes and gemstones, composed of dots of several colors." Hough also points out that "in the Renaissance a pounce drawing would be the starting point for an oil painting or fresco, but here Herrera uses the traditional technique to achieve a contemporary end".* But what exactly is the 'contemporary end' that Jessica Hough is quoted as pointing out?

In drawing attention to the mechanical processes and their previous histories behind Herrera's "Castles, Dwarfs, and Happychaps", the press release acts in significant opposition to the Renaissance ideal of "sprezzatura" or the art of effortless mastery, and exposes a tell-tale dissonance between past and present cultural esteems " *...to use possibly a new word, to practise in everything a certain nonchalance (sprezzatura) that shall conceal design and show that what is done and said is done without effort and almost without thought...*"<sup>101</sup> (Castiglione 1528 p.67). In 1563 the founding of the 'Accademia delle Arti del Disegno' in Florence introduces the institutionalisation and naturalisation of Castiglione's 'aristocratic' disassociation between art and work- a division between thinking and making. Consequently we see a corresponding shift of the prevailing idea of the artist now moving away from that of a craftsman or manual worker and altering preconceived notions about their practices and their social standing<sup>102</sup>. At the same time as their intellectualising disassociation away from 'menial' crafts sought a new acknowledgment to the epistemic contentions of the 'embodied characteristics' of drawing <sup>103</sup>, the

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<sup>101</sup> Baldassare Castiglione coins the concept sprezzatura in *The Book of the Courtier* 1.26, (a guide to the proper behaviour of a gentleman at court), first published in 1528 and re-issued since in many translations and editions during the 16th century). Castiglione lets the fictional Count Lodovico da Canossa, the main speaker of the first book, portray his ideal courtier. Here we can see how the renaissance ideal of a divinely inspired 'genius' and effortless creator necessitated the disassociation of the fine arts from the manual crafts hence the need/practice of the 'covering of ones tracks'. "*The Book of the Courtier*" by Baldesar Castiglione. (1.26).

<sup>102</sup> Rather than been divinely inspired, it seems that the concept of genius originated in (the not unfamiliar) market forces and naked ambition

<sup>103</sup> An intellectualisation of the gaze (through drawing, perspective and geometry) and a study of the liberal arts, aimed to differentiate the academic artist from the mechanical and technical work of the artisan. What

academicians, ironically, found that this emerging intellectual background also compelled them to distance drawings manual characteristic away from themselves and their practices “*we can truthfully say that true art is what does not seem to be art; and the most important thing is to conceal it, because if it is revealed this discredits a man completely and ruins his reputation*” (Castiglione 1528 p.67).<sup>104</sup> Yet beyond this rhetoric, drawing continued to be an inescapably embodied and situated practice even though this was something that required playing down. Vasari describes how Michelangelo shortly before his death reduced to ashes many of his drawings and other preparatory works “*... as I myself know, because just before his death he burned a large number of his own drawings, sketches and cartoons to prevent anyone from seeing the labours he endured or the ways he tested his genius, for fear that he might seem less than perfect*” (Vasari 1991 p.472). If perfectionism was Vasari’s devotee’s account for the burning - “*Michelangelo had such a distinctive and perfect imagination and the works he envisioned were such a nature that he found it impossible to express such grandiose and awesome conceptions with his hands, and he often abandoned his works, or rather ruined many of them, ...*” (Vasari 1991 p.472) - a less partisan view might offer an opposing account, seeing Michelangelo needing to live up to his principle of ‘*effortless execution*’, and playing-down the utilitarian and manual means behind his work “*if anything, ashamed of his drawings. In his thinking the ‘art’ stage of creative production, which he identified with the careful procedure of making studies, sketches and working drawings, was the menial and mundane side of the business, whereas true merit was to him displayed in the rapid and apparently effortless execution of a painting or sculpture*” (Coleman 1988 p.24). Notwithstanding a purposefully cultivated reputation of individual inspired self-determining works of genius, it is clear that the

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Pierre Bourdieu sees as “a repression of the material determinations of symbolic practices” Bourdieu, P. (2000) *Pascalian Meditations*, London and Cambridge: Polity Press (p.20)

<sup>104</sup> A customary intellectual perspective John Dewey outlines as being: “the aristocratic tradition which looked down upon material things and upon the senses and the hands was still mighty” (Dewey 1930 p329). Dewey, J. (1930) *Democracy and Education: an introduction to the philosophy of education*, New York: Macmillan (first published 1916).

Renaissance artist was in fact working from a perspective and tradition (retaining any amount of innate canons, procedural shortcuts, props and devices) in which art was synonymous with skilled work and in which artists expected to employ any number of skilled workers and collaborators. In a memorandum in which he settles the terms, conditions and budget of his contract to design and apply fresco to the Dome of Florence Cathedral, Giorgio Vasari included <sup>105</sup> *“three competent fresco painters (“maestri pratici a lavorare a fresco”)...three other painters of professional status (“maestri pictori”) to make draperies, skies, backgrounds, and wax and clay models of figures; Two other maestri to paint ornament, backgrounds, and clouds and to transfer cartoons”* (Bambach 1999 p.2).

Bambach in ‘Drawing and Painting in the Italian Renaissance Workshop’, interestingly picks up on the pecking order of these assistants *“Vasari’s prospective “cartoon tracers” were practically at the bottom of his pyramid of labour”* (Bambach 1999 p.2). On the face of it Bambach proposes a tacit view of tracing regarded as base and mechanical and calling for no other skill than the work of the hand. The practice of transferring cartoons having been delegated to menial assistants was essentially held in no more esteem than a basic utilitarian tool.<sup>106</sup> However, Bambach’s research on the mechanical drawing techniques of pouncing (spolvero), tracing (calco) and the development of the cartoon, reconstructs the idea of workshop practice and design theory in the mid-15<sup>th</sup> and early 16<sup>th</sup> century and argues their often disregarded import and sway *“between 1430 and 1600, cartoons – a drawing ostensibly of a utilitarian nature – had not only become common practice, but had moved to the forefront of artistic expression”* (Bambach 1999 p.xi). Nonetheless Bambach sees these utilitarian means, for the most part, still continued to conjectured a lack of creativity and authenticity, *“Yet on the whole, if all extant preliminary drawings from the Italian Renaissance were to be*

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<sup>105</sup> Along with the other menial and utilitarian practicalities behind the ‘effortless execution’ of a work such as materials, plasterers and labourers...

<sup>106</sup> See ‘A Bad Reputation’ in (Bambach. 1999 p, 127)

*considered, we could confidently conclude that the vast majority of artists developed their most creative types of preliminary drawings freehand, based on their *giudizio dell'occhio**" (Bambach 1999 p.296). Mechanical drawing techniques' pragmatic and utilitarian nature was plainly contrary to the idea of *'sprezzatura'*, conflicting with an understanding of art "*appreciated and commissioned by a class of patron attached to the idea of the genius*" (Coleman 1988 p.25) and all in all "*techniques of design transfers could hardly substitute for the idea (in the platonic sense of inspiration) in the process of 'inventione'*" (Bambach 1999 p.296). Still, if the expansion of drawings' practical and mechanical means (argued by Bambach) became the 'ground' for a progressively ever more ordered and categorised sign of spontaneity and invention, then in practice this *'originality'* was plainly not a self-determining fact but an historically specific mode of presentation.

Re-winding 400 years or so back to *'Castles, Dwarfs, and Happychaps'* we can see how attitudes have changed. Now flagrantly the formal-aesthetical innovations and means of previous Art histories are *remixed, reloaded* and become a kind of 'found-object' that allows it to be used as a type of tool or template for doing. This recourse to the 'already produced' form is one Nicolas Bourriaud<sup>107</sup> sees as a common factor in the work of many of his generation of artists, regardless of their formal alliances "*It is no longer a matter of elaborating a form on the basis of a raw material but working with objects that are already in circulation on the cultural market, which is to say, objects already informed by other objects*" (Bourriaud 2002 p.13). Gathering images from comic strips, colouring books, cartoons, animation and other popular culture sources, Arturo Herrera's all-over arrangements linger between Formal Abstract elegance and an out-of-whack Surrealism. Herrera's interlacing *détourage*<sup>108</sup> superimpositions that conjure up drips, trickles and splatters redouble and reprise the expressive brushwork (the supposed sign of the authentic) of Lyrical Abstraction and earlier histories of the

<sup>107</sup> Nicolas Bourriaud's ideas on an "interhuman sphere"; the connections and interactions between individuals, groups and communities, and the shifting psychological space opened up by the internet, seemed to shape much of contemporary art discourse following the 1998 publication of his book 'Relational Aesthetics'

<sup>108</sup> *Détourage* or photo clipping is an operation to retain only a portion of an image. This requires separating the object and background, thus delineating the contour of the object.

Modernist aesthetic. Herreras ‘*Castles, Dwarfs, and Happychaps*’ in centring the position of ‘mechanical reproduction’ quizzes the gap between autograph and copy, between artistic and productive labour, and in effect posits the question: can the *off-the-peg* anonymous outlines and tracings of the Disney Studio production-line<sup>109</sup> be equalled to the *bespoke* curves of a Brancusi sculpture? “*The first idea was to recognize in those images of dwarves from ‘Snow White and the Seven Dwarves’ a very strong sense of connection with organic abstraction. It’s like a readymade modernist abstraction. Its round forms recall Brancusi, Arp...*” (Art21 no date). Herrera’s blurring between the celebrated and the nameless underlines a contamination and commandeering of the visual language of high art by popular culture: a rearranging of the borderlines between consumption and production which according to Bourriaud is not just a tendency in contemporary art, but to a certain extent is a new circumstance of contemporary life. Perhaps art now is “*no longer an endpoint but a simple moment in an infinite chain of contributions*” (Bourriaud 2002 p.20) that, in a way, parallels the software algorithms for the Wiki, where a page is continuously changed by a collaborative effort (for better or worse) under the ministry of on-going modification and redistribution.

Explicitly responding to these ideas in ‘*Slubberdegullios*’ (Fig.1 Slubberdegullios 2012) and *RAT TAT TAT*’, (Fig.2 RAT TAT TAT 2012) the already existing compositional layout (grid), the in-story motion lines, the impact lines and the nonverbal emotions lines of a single Tintin Adventure (24 Adventures/Drawings in all) are copied and compressed into the same drawing. First traced directly on to acetate, the narrative drive of the graphic outlines of actions are broken down into a *gravity free* pictorial space, and then further obfuscated through a layering process. Every single *traced* page was photocopied maintaining its already given size (or ratio in the case of ‘*RAT TAT TAT*’),<sup>110</sup> then re-

<sup>109</sup> Behind Walt Disney’s first animated feature, Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs, and his other 30s and 40s classics—Pinocchio, Fantasia and Bambi—toiled as many as 100 young women, the inkers and painters, a golden age of Disney was based on a medieval-guild model, the training involved in becoming an animator was placed on a 10-year learning curve, with inking requiring about half that time.

<http://www.vanityfair.com/culture/features/2010/03/disney-animation-girls-201003>

<sup>110</sup> *Rat tat tat* transferred to vinyl via computer.

traced and simultaneously transferred through a 'calco' technique (carbon-paper like offset copying) page by page on top of each other on a gesso panel (Fig.3 *detail* Slubberdegullios 2012). Tintin with his dog, Snowy, close at heel, have travelled the world having adventures since 1929. Although Tintin and Snowy end many of their adventures with the capture of the villain, or a glowing newspaper headline highlighting their efforts, here the re-drawing of their escapades offers a less clear resolution. '*Slubberdegullios*' and '*RAT TAT TAT*' do not deconstruct the embedded cultural apparatus that inhabit Hergé's Adventures of Tintin, but deliberate on the idea of the graphic supplements to their narrative and *mise en scène* - the insert graphic that show action or invisible emotions and state of mind. Those lines which follow the paths objects have passed through (or will pass through) in space, or psychological space, conveyed through beads of sweat forming on a forehead or upper lip, bring to the static image a flow-through system of time rather than a single captured instant.<sup>111</sup> But if the highlighted or bracketed *insert graphic* is freed from the restraints of its account by its having been pulled out of the in-story context, does its now set adrift actions become merely scribbles without any resolve; or does its trace, re-framed by way of another *at one remove*,<sup>112</sup> retain some suggestion of its previous existence and purpose, albeit with a new resolution? The existing *insert graphic* image of the comic book offers an established compositional template, where marks can be extracted or translated into the idea of the artist's gesture. Rather than the original mark itself, this removal of the immediate, direct gesture of the artist, simultaneously inserts (ironically) a corresponding autographic gesture into an artistic landscape that already exists. In a framework where copies are made of copies where errors already exist, and new errors occur, thus steadily warping any idea of the fidelity of an original text. These "transmission" errors (in becoming indistinguishable from the original text themselves)

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<sup>111</sup> A model for this idea of an *insert graphic* exists in the cinema *insert shot*; where a seemingly unimportant object essential to the action is discreetly placed within the frame: when time is of the essence and we see the clock; when that call comes through and we see the phone. These objects that have been seen, but not noted, become featured, emphasised as if they were suddenly disrupted with an exclamation point - Things become players; nouns become verbs.

<sup>112</sup> The phrase '*At One Remove*' is the use of 'remove' as a noun, meaning "a degree of remoteness or separation". (Perhaps) art is always about translation, and about the breach between the original and the 'reproduction'.

become the text, lingering provocatively open-ended and ever more uncertain.

Situating drawings mechanical means and the already produced, ‘*Slubberdegullios*’ and *RAT TAT TAT*’ (in appropriating the insert graphic of the comic book), emphasise a drawing practice no longer concerned with beginning with a ‘*tabula rasa*’, nor with fashioning meaning on the foundation of raw materials. In its place a drawing practice here looks to find means of insertion into the immeasurable flows of production, contributing to the growing remove of its long-established dichotomies that exist between the ‘*giudizio dell’occhio*’ and the utilitarian means of the hand. If for Castiglione and Vasari the ideal of “*sprezzatura*” (and the idea of the unique artist and the inimitable work of art) was fundamental to an idea of authenticity, then given the possibility that art today is unable to produce anything wholly new,<sup>113</sup> any idea of originality perhaps necessitates art’s shifting towards a culture of the application of forms. It is possible that a new philosophy of a continual amendment and recirculation of signs, based on contemporaneous collective ideals of input and sharing, will presuppose a teleological end to the process of fashioning an original artwork as previously conceived, and build a new hypothesis in which works are continuously revised, revisited and reformed.

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<sup>113</sup> Karen Moss Director of Exhibitions and Public Programs at the San Francisco Art Institute in conversation with Nicholas Bourriaud picks up on Bourriaud *post-production* idea “Because of the conundrum of not being able to produce anything new, I find it interesting that your proposal for art is post-production — mining previously made work and recontextualizing it. That is what, if anything could be considered new, the recontextualization of the already made.” [http://www.stretcher.org/features/nicolas\\_bourriaud\\_and\\_karen\\_moss/](http://www.stretcher.org/features/nicolas_bourriaud_and_karen_moss/)

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