

DRAW TO PERFORM – A Performance Presentation by M.Foa & B.Hosea

Part 1 Introduction

Birgitta holds up a signs a la Gillian Wearing / Bob Dylan

Maryclare talks:

During this presentation we will focus on revealing the historical emergence of Performance drawing within the contemporary fine art context. We will examine notions of what performance drawing might be, attempting to expand the parameters of this practical process rather than to constrain and restrict its potential to a narrow range of conformist conventions.

Let’s begin with what drawing is or might be –

In 1972, Artist Carl Plackman wrote his poem titled *Artist’s Notes*

'A drawing is the writing on the wall
A drawing makes sense out of nonsense and nonsense out of sense
A drawing contains more time than it takes to look at it
A drawing is a history of experience and its content is non-visual
A drawing is never non referential, a drawing is a way of thinking
A drawing is a means of searching for identity
A drawing is sometimes the catalysts sometimes assistant and sometimes
the critic
A drawing’s space can be finite and it can be limitless
A drawing’s content is never wholly contained in the drawing
A drawing is always made by somebody'

In 2009 I responded to Carl Plackman – in my text Titled *Drawing; a conversation with Carl Plackman*

A drawing is an intentional evidence of presence,
A drawing leaves, lays down or hovers a mark,
A drawing can be physical, cerebral, sonic or virtual,
A drawing may include the present, the past and the brink of becoming,
A drawing can come and go and show the route it has taken,
A drawing is a thought brought into the world and open to change,
A drawing can be marked, formed, sounded, implied or suggested,
A drawing can be 2d, 3d, timed based or imagined,
A drawing can be seen by the eye, perceived in the minds eye, or heard
by the ear,
A drawing measures practitioner in relation to place and visa versa,
A drawing is a performative action, repeating that which it draws,
A drawing when witnessed is a performance drawing.

Part 2 Maryclare presents– while Birgitta performs a human Powerpoint: holding up books & photos

I'd like to outline the emergence and development of performance drawing, as I have deduced through research.

Starting with the term performative- coined by J. L. Austin, to explain the actions of a word that does what it says, such as I promise, to say "I promise" actions that promise. When applied to the process of drawing - performative explains how drawing repeats or mimics the seen or imagined. Therefore it can be said that all drawing processes are performative. Importantly Performative is not the same as Performance, however I have come to understand that performance drawing has emerged from the Performative in drawing. The term Performance Drawing was first used by writer and curator Catherine de Zegher in her 2001, *Drawing Papers* 20.

We begin with an early example of **the performative gesture in drawing** - Francois Campaux's 1946 film *Matisse*- in which Matisse's hand can be seen (in Matisse's words) "to make a strange journey of its own in the air" before laying down the mark. This performative gesture in drawing is addressed by John Elderfield in his catalogue text to Matisse's MoMA 1992 retrospective, and in conversation between Catherine de Zegher and Avis Newman in their 2003 book *The stage of Drawing Gesture and Act* pages 77-81. **Out of the performative gesture of the hand** – documented and captured with a camera- came Jackson Pollock's **performative body gesture**, the **animated ACTION of his whole body**. Pollock's Actions were documented captured and witnessed by Hans Namuth's camera in both still and moving images.

The term Action Painting was coined in 1952 by critic Harold Rosenberg, the same year that John Cage and fellow collaborating artists at Black Mountain College made the undocumented work titled *Untitled Black Mountain Piece 1952*, Cage and fellow artists read poems installed paintings, played popular music, delivered a lecture with pauses played the piano projected films and slides and danced in the Black Mountain College dining hall. With this seminal performance Cage and Collaborators devised a new creative methodology prefiguring the Allan Kaprow's 1950's **Happenings** of New York- heralding **the evolution of Action into Performance** 49 years before the term Performance Drawing was coined.

In 1954 artist Georges Mathieu's realising the performance potential of Pollock's Action process, staged **the first live action painting**- performing a painting *Battle of the Bouvines*, in front of an audience, at the Salon de Mai in Paris.

Allan Kaprow (who had studied in Cage's *Experimental Composition* course in New York - 1957-59) and as I have already mentioned – he invented the Happenings in New York. In 1958 announced "*instead of painting move your arms instead of music make noise I'm giving up painting and all the arts by doing everything and anything*" – thus calling for a

mass subversion of the conventional art processes of that time. In the 1960's Yve Kline underlined his male position with his Anthropometry works- in the 1970's Carolee Schneeman responded to Pollock and Kline with her work Up to and including her limits – Joan Jonas who has been drawing in film on film and live in performance from the 1970's to the present day – performs documents records dances drawing- Morgan Ohara records the motion of practitioners performing, with her two handed multi penciled performance drawings- to name but a few-

Summing up: I understand that the process of Performance Drawing has grown in the gaze of the cameras recording lens from the performative gesture of the hand, to the performative gesture of the body, into the Action of the body, developing into the performance participation of collaborative multidisciplinary happenings. And today the process of performance drawing includes an ever widening gambit of drawing methodologies. From Walking drawings, such as Richard Long's line made by walking and Francis Aly's Thin Green Line, through Performance interactions that traverse dimensions such as Robin Rhone's physical interactions with his 2 dimensional drawings, collaborative performance drawings employing technology as with Performance Drawing Collective- phenomenological physical drawings including Jordan McKenzie's works.– and so on.

Tracing the development and emergence of the process of Performance Drawing, I have come to understand the significant influence of moving image technology, employed as a means of documenting performance. While visual and sonic recording technology reveals the conjuring of images becoming, the presence of the technology and anticipation of the audience in the recording eye, also impact the actions of the practitioners during their making process. Thus film technology has significantly influenced the emergence of the performance drawing methodology.

Where are we now

This capturing of images becoming, this unfolding of emergence and motion before our eyes has become commonplace in our daily lives. On our phones, TVs, camera, buses, advertising hoardings we expect images to animate. Suspended and Animated Motion, are vital conditions of our societies environment. And just as we are active components in this our animated society – we are also perpetually being recorded by the unblinking gaze of security cameras. So as we are fixed in the gaze of the lens it could be said that all of us, are forever in the process of Performance Drawing our everyday, whether suspended or animated.

Part 3

Birgitta talks on Animation- Maryclare holds up signs a la Gillian Wearing / Bob Dylan
Now Maryclare, I want to talk about animation...

In the act of drawing the gestures and actions of the person who draws are recorded in the residue of media that remains. A drawing can, therefore, be seen as the documentation of an activity and of the time it took. Animation is a specific instance of

drawing, which introduces the dimension of time. The animation historian, Donald Crafton, has proposed that contemporary fine art animation is in itself the recording of a performance – e.g. animators who have used sand or stop frame object manipulation or who have ‘pixelated’ the movements of live actors have created animations which are actually also the documentation of the activity. I like to extend this to drawn and other forms of hand manipulated animation. Both drawing and animation can be seen as the record of a performance and yet they may also have performance as subject matter. Drawing performance is a contradictory idea: how can an inert image capture that which is in movement through space and time? Drawing is static, yet when still drawings are shown rapidly in succession through the animation process they create the appearance of movement. It is a paradox that a sequence of motionless drawings played back in a particular manner can create the illusion of movement and time passing. As in Zeno’s paradox, how can a still image capture the passing of time? How can a single drawn pose from one moment in time reveal the totality of a movement? I sometimes wonder, if a single drawing records the time taken in its inscription, could it be thought of as a still animation: an intra-frame animation with all the activity of the artist/ animator recorded through line onto one frame?

There is a long and complex history of intertwined links between drawing, performance and animation. Some of the earliest pioneers of animation – J. Stuart Blackton, Walter Booth, Winsor McCay, Georges Méliès – had experience of presenting the ‘lightning sketch’ or ‘chalk talk’ act which they performed in music hall and vaudeville. In this act, the artist drew caricatures and drawings which played with the audience’s perception as they evolved over time. Sometimes the lightning sketches were drawn upside down, sometimes they had moving parts which were imperceptible to the audience. The artists would often accompany themselves with witty banter and some were accomplished ventriloquists.

Donald Crafton argues initially animation was shown on film as part of a ‘magical’ performance in which drawings were brought to life. When animation became more familiar, for example the Fleischer Brothers’ *Out of the Inkwell* series, the body of the animator was still marked as present and in control of the process, but reduced down to a cipher: the presence of a hand (Crafton, 1993: 259). Finally, when animation as a process ceased to be a novelty to audiences, the hand that held the pencil was displaced by the ‘living’ drawing personified in the form of increasingly complex and independent animated characters, such as Felix the Cat and Mickey Mouse. Crafton concludes that the body of the animator became invisible and began to be thought of as performing through the character produced by the act of drawing (Crafton, 1993: 298).

Nowadays, it is commonplace for animators to think of themselves as actors, performing by proxy through the marks they make. This was developed in the Disney Studios where animators were given instruction in life drawing and some animators attended acting classes. The characters at the Disney studios were conceived of and performed through pencil, before being transferred to cel, and then inked and coloured. The canonical book on Disney, *The Illusion of Life*, quotes the Disney animator Marc Davis giving the

following advice to junior animators: 'drawing is giving a performance; an artist is an actor who is not limited by his body, only by his ability and, perhaps, his experience' (quoted in Thomas and Johnston, 1981: 66).

Animation combines drawing as performance and performing drawing. Exploring these issues with MF, JG and CM, we have created a series of live, site-specific, mark-making events using a combination of graphite, animation, expanded cinema and sound (Drawn Together, 2010). Our experimentation with the process of live drawing is created as a performance in front of a live audience in real time, reminiscent of the chalk talks or lightning sketch act performed in the Victorian vaudeville or music halls by artists such as Walter Booth or J. Stuart Blackton mentioned earlier. Our performances can be considered as live animations in which a layered moving drawing emerges over time. It reveals its process of being made to others as it is being drawn. Drawn in graphite, white light and sound, the work incorporates the media of traditional drawn animation and is recorded in sequential motion blurred photographs and video documentation.

Blah blah blah
 STOP TALKING
 STOP THINKING
 STOP THEORISING
 START DOING
 START MAKING
 START DRAWING

Part 4

Maryclare sings while Birgitta performs and becomes an animation

" I think there has been a conspiracy an academic theoretical conspiracy to stop makers making, to trap makers into thinking themselves out of doing, and even though I love big white bearded Bachelard, and twinkley eyed deconstructed Derrida and champion of the other Levinas, I'm going barking without making I'm going bonkers without doing."

Part 5

Maryclare and Birgitta speak : We want to conclude with a question - What does all of this matter?

And Finally the audience perform a drawing:

The audience have A4 sheets of paper with circles and lines (referencing the digital environment). Each audience member holds up their A4 sheet of paper to their face. Together they perform a collaborative drawing.