Introverted Explorations

by
Ferdinand Kidd

Thesis presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree
Master of Visual Arts at Stellenbosch University

Supervisor: Dr. Elizabeth Gunter
Department of Visual Arts

March 2012

Declaration

By submitting this thesis/dissertation electronically, I declare that the entirety of the work contained therein is my own, original work, that I am the sole author thereof (save to the extent explicitly otherwise stated), that reproduction and publication thereof by Stellenbosch University will not infringe any third party rights and that I have not previously in its entirety or in part submitted it for obtaining any qualification.

March 2012

Abstract

This thesis investigates a variety of different texts I find interesting, and reveals how these texts provide insight into my artistic practise.

This thesis investigates what the combination of a collection of texts that interest me can reveal about my concerns and artistic practice.

Most of the primary research takes the form of utilising seemingly randomly selected texts, although the selection process is far from arbitrary. The motivation for the initial selection of the specific texts derives from one common source: my personal and artistic interest. These texts all interest me in very specific ways. This implies that there must be something that they all have in common. The central factor that brought these texts together is my own preoccupations. The themes that arise from the comparison and juxtaposition of these texts will thus be themes of my own creation. If these themes are generated by me, then they will inevitably be self-reflexive and reveal as much about me as about their own subject matter.

Because my personal interest is the driving factor behind the research process, the thesis takes the shape of an individuated response to the specific texts, and as such the results are unexpected and dynamic. The nature of the research is closely related to that of my practical work. This is why I use my artistic practice as a central vehicle to bring all the threads and ideas together in the second half of the thesis. The themes that arise from the writing process, when viewed in conjunction with my artistic practice, not only place this practice within a theoretical context, but also clarify (for myself as much as for viewers)

many obscurities. In the end this process helps me to better understand and answer the question that has been with me since I started making art: *When I can do anything, why do I do what I do?*

<u>Opsomming</u>

Hierdie tesis ondersoek die kombinasie van 'n versameling tekste wat my interesseer. Die fokus is op wat hierdie versameling tekste oor my eie spesifieke belangstellings en kunspraktyke uitwys.

Alhoewel die grootste gedeelte van die aanvanklike navorsing blyk na 'n onwillekeurige seleksie van tekste, is hierdie seleksie-proses geensins arbitrêr nie. Die oorspronklike seleksie van tekste vir die tesis het een aspek in gemeen: my belangstelling. Die tekste is vir my op 'n sekere en spesieke manier interessant. Hieruit volg die afleiding dat die tekste 'n kenmerk in gemeen het en as die sentrale faktor wat hierdie tekste byeengebring het, myself is, is die temas wat ontwikkel uit die vergelyking en jukstaponering van die tekste dus temas wat ek geskep het. As ek dus die temas geskep het, is dit noodwendig self-reflektiewe temas wat net soveel oor myself as hul eie onderwerpe onthul.

Aangesien my eie belangstelling die dryfveer agter die navorsingsproses is, is die tesis in wese 'n geïndividualiseerde respons op spesifieke tekste met die gevolg dat die resultate onverwags en dinamies is. Hierdie aard van die navorsing stem ooreen met die aard van my praktiese werk. Gevolglik gebruik ek my eie kunspraktyk as 'n sentrale tema om die verskeidenheid idees en gedagtes byeen te bring in die tweede helfte van die tesis. Met

behulp van die temas wat uit die navorsing- en skryfproses ontstaan en dan binne verband

met my eie kreatiewe praktyk geplaas word, word my kreatiewe praktyk binne 'n teoretiese

konteks geplaas, en terselfdetyd word obskure konsepte sinvol toegelig. Uiteindelik

bewerkstellig hierdie proses 'n antwoord en beter begrip vir die vraag wat sedert die

aanvang van my kunspraktyk ontstaan het: Wanneer ek enigiets kan doen, hoekom doen ek

wat ek doen?

Table of Contents

List of illustrations

Fig1. Ferdinand Kidd, *Ship Graveyard, Vancouver* (2009). 24.2 x 36.2, Charcoal on Fabrianno.

Collection: Private

9

Fig2. Ferdinand Kidd, *Telephone Pole, Cape Town* (2009). 24.2 x 36.2, Charcoal on Fabrianno.

Collection: Private

Fig4. Ferdinand Kidd, *Celi 1, Blauwberg* (2010). 57 x 31, Charcoal on Cartridge.

Collection: Private

Fig5. Ferdinand Kidd, *Fire in the Overberg* (2011). 63 x 37.3, Charcoal on Cartridge.

Collection: Private

Ferdinand Kidd. *Introverted Explorations*. Stellenbosch University. 2011
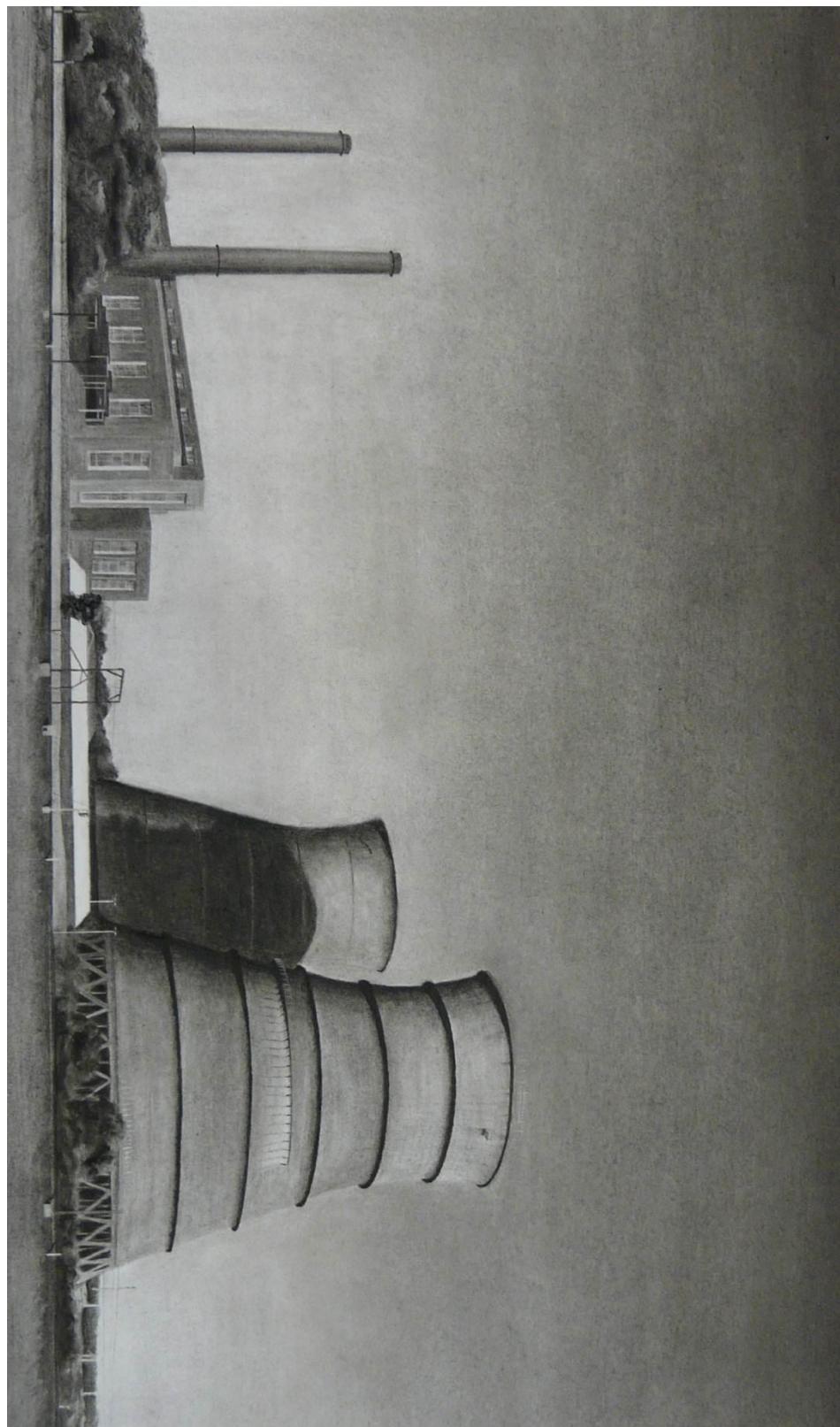
Fig6. Ferdinand Kidd, *Athlone Cooling Towers* (2011). 49.3 x 29.1, Charcoal on Cartridge.

Collection: Private
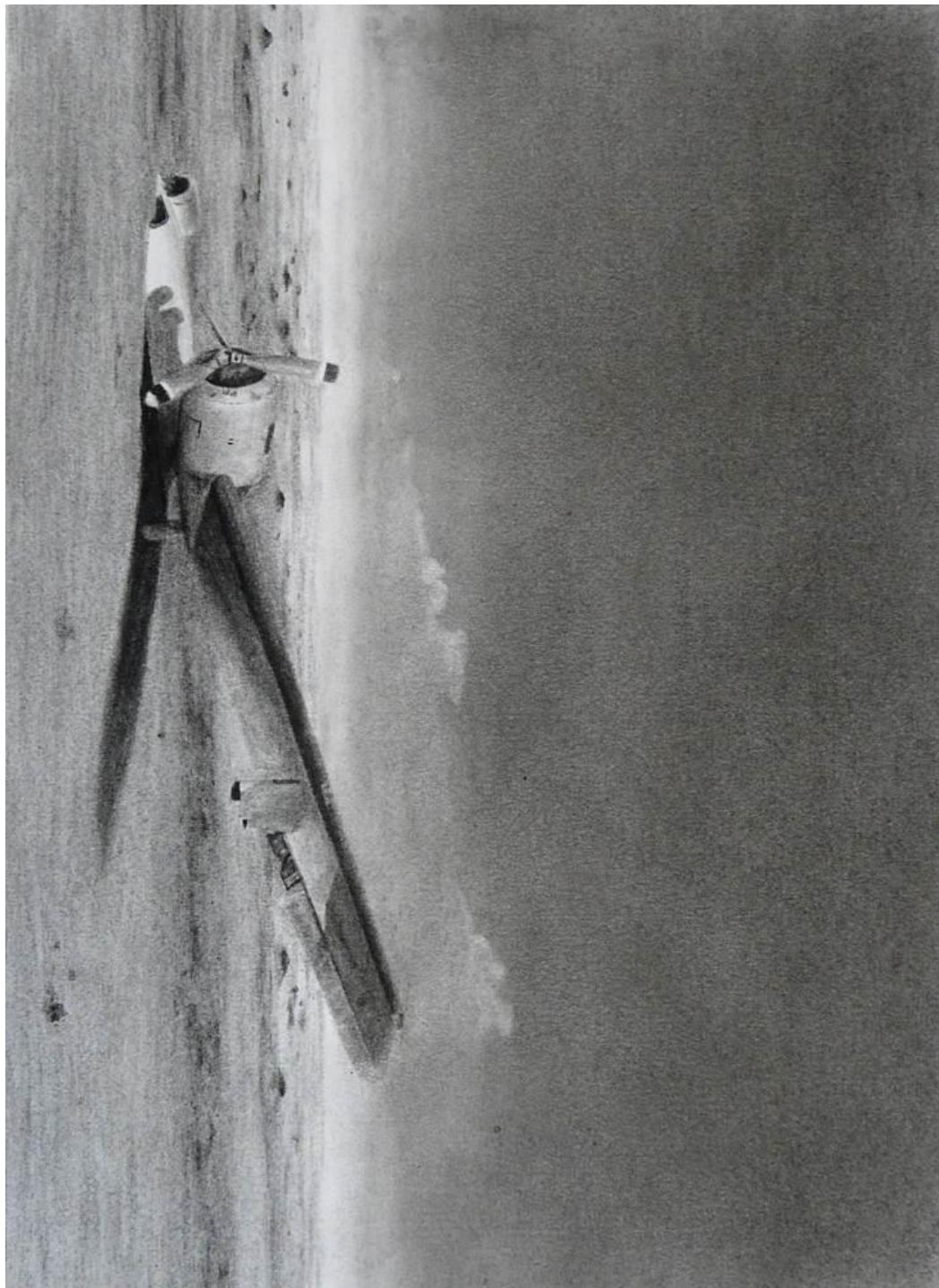
Fig7. Ferdinand Kidd, *Imagined Plane Wreckage* (2011). 26.5 x 19.5, Charcoal on Cartridge.

Collection: Private
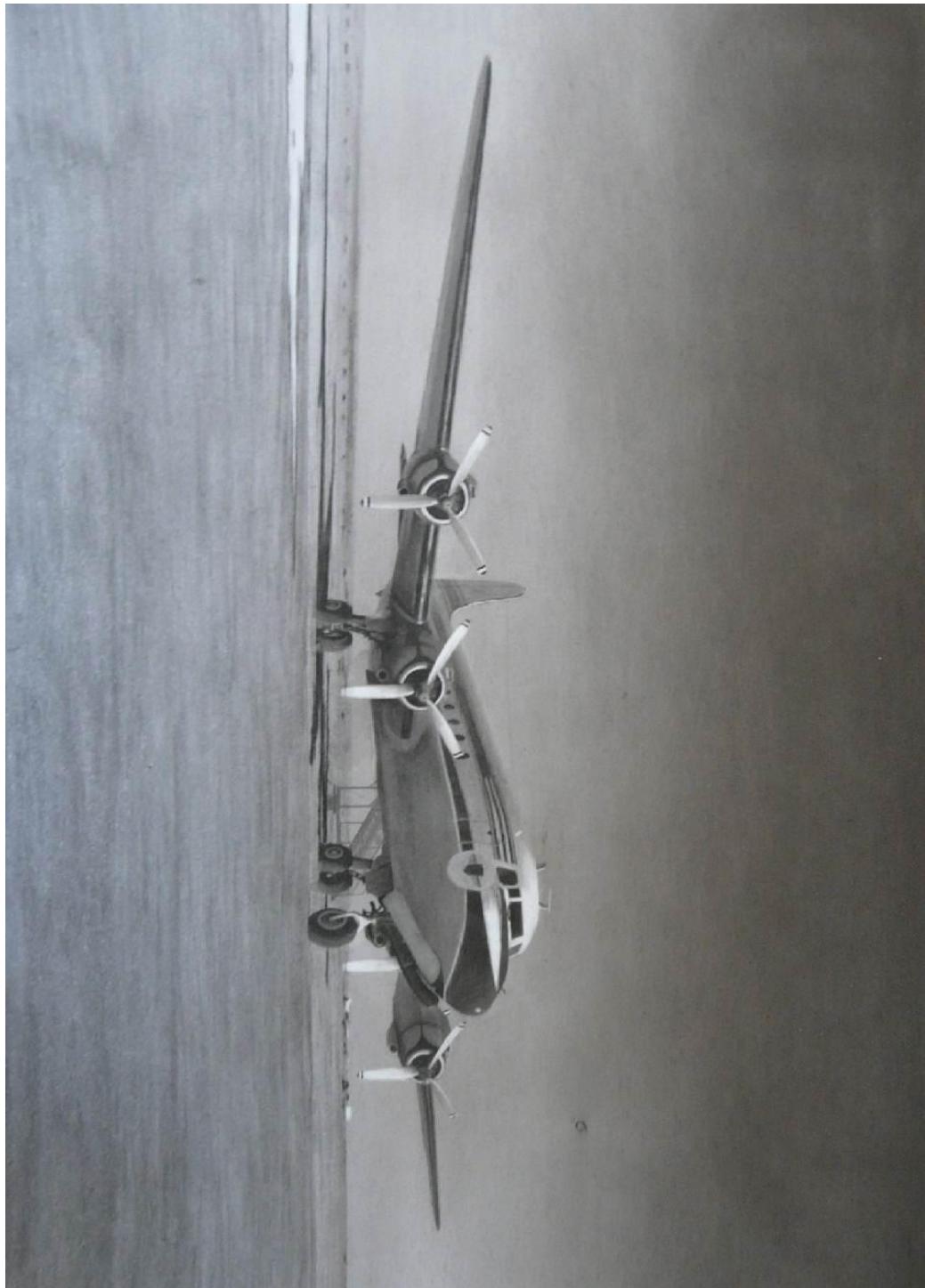
Fig8. Ferdinand Kidd, *DC-4, Namibia* (2011). 45 x 33.5, Charcoal on Cartridge.

Collection: Private

Fig9. Ferdinand Kidd, *Bridge Over the N2 (3)* (2011). 38.9 x 21.3, Charcoal on Cartridge.

Collection: Private
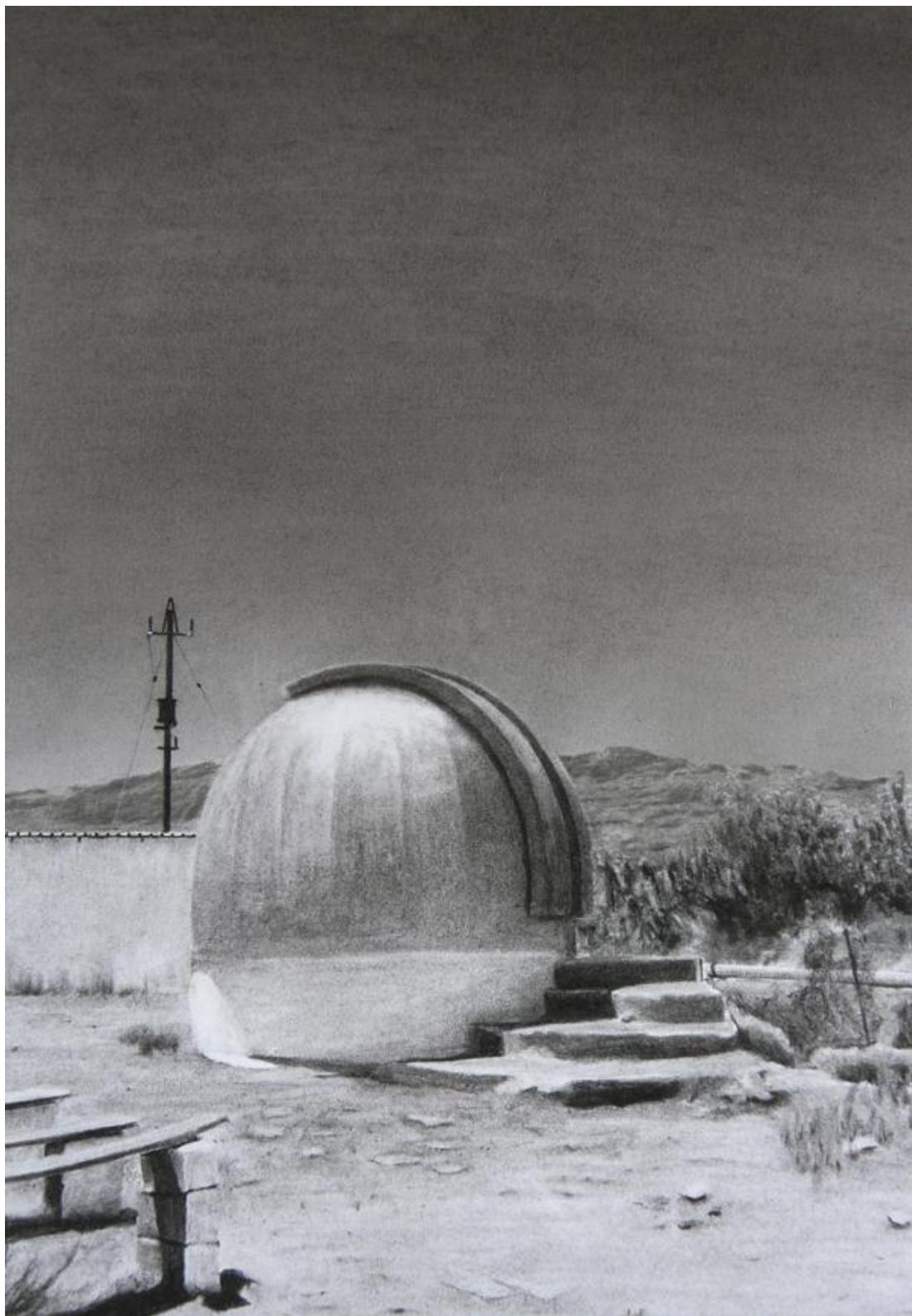
Fig10. Ferdinand Kidd, *Observatory, Cedarberg* (2011). 14 x 20.5, Charcoal on Cartridge.

Collection: Private

__Introduction__

I investigate the generative possibilities of juxtaposing, superimposing or combining a number of texts that interest me. My interest plays a central role in that it necessarily involves self-reflexivity in choice of material, evolvement of discussion and construct formation. At the same time my interest predicts a degree of cohesion in the development of the study, since it relates an individuated synthesising response.

Such cohesion, however, must simultaneously counter the inevitable incorporation of the unexpected, or what, at this point, is unknown to me. I rely on such counter forces to bring about generativity.

The research direction that I am currently involved in began with the discovery of a book in early 2008 called *Heidegger and Wittgenstein. The Poetics of Silence*. It is written by Steven L. Bindeman and explores the role of silence in the works of both Martin Heidegger and Ludwig Wittgenstein. At the time I was not familiar with either Heidegger or Wittgenstein's work, and even less with their philosophies. All I knew was that I found this little book extremely fascinating and that I had to use it in my own work.

Later that year, as part of our theory course at art school, we were required to write an extensive research article on any topic we found interesting, and *Heidegger and Wittgenstein. The Poetics of Silence* as well as various writings by Carl Gustav Jung became the core texts of that research article. Although I am only becoming aware of this now, it was this experience that generated the idea of combining seemingly random, yet intriguing, texts.

The conclusion of such a process itself is a lot more interesting to me now, three years later, than the conclusion proper of the research article mentioned above.

The exact topics of research in this thesis are, at this point, subject to the research methodology. When I start my primary research I simply read a variety of writings that catch my interest. I do not know how I will fit them together or what the conclusion will be; all I know at this point is that I find them intensely interesting and that I want to use them somehow.

I must just note that at the early stages of such research this is very much an intuitive process – I am not entirely aware of what I am doing.[1]

For this thesis however, I am aware of the operation that formed my research in 2008, thus I begin with just that in mind.

I conduct this study in the Visual Arts domain. Drawing in particular forms the central area of interest in this field. The generative dynamics between different drawings is a process parallel to the research idea explained above.

As with all other people I constantly perceive things, be it in my imagination, in dreams, or in the external world. Some of these things, for some reason or another jump out at me, triggering an inexplicable fascination. Fascination provides a subject for a drawing, while its

---

[1] This type of research process has bearing on the unexpected as a concept. Because of the personal nature of this research, it too has to be seen as dynamic and relative, in the same way as the concept of the unexpected: we constantly have to "reposition" (Theodoropoulou 2011: *http://www.artandeducation.net/paper/dealing-with-a-paradox/*) ourselves when presented by the unexpected in everyday life, so the focus of this research must also be open to change as new knowledge and insights are gained.

inexplicability sustains the development of the drawing. A single drawing is never a 'complete expression', as it might only feature one object, or one specific level of fascination. I propose that an entire portfolio or a complete exhibition would reflect expression as something more than the sum of its parts. I believe that there is no easy explanation for the complexity that arises, and it is something that I only vaguely understand at this point. I will try to explain (very) briefly.

When one is presented with more than one drawing, each drawing will start to influence the way in which one sees and understands not only that particular drawing, but all the others around it. To provide an example (see illustrations): when I make a drawing of a beached ship, for instance, I work on it as a singular work. A few days later I then see some smoke rising above the mountains, and later bridges across a highway. Each time it is the object on its own that fascinates me, and when I make a work from it I do not consciously keep every detail from that specific observation in mind. When I then put the drawings together in an exhibition, they are not simply five or six individual drawings of individual objects. They start to talk to one another. They start to, as a group, show things and present themes that reciprocally enrich the individual drawings. Together they begin to reveal something about their origin: namely, me.

This process, then, is the inspiration for my research idea with regards to my theory in general and this thesis specifically. All these interesting texts together will also start to become more than just a collection, just as the drawings do.

In order to understand the generative possibilities between texts, I incorporate a number of them. The emerging 'dialogues' or 'multi-logues' that I perceive between drawings or texts point to *Heidegger and Wittgenstein. The Poetics of Silence*. This text addresses at its core

the question of knowledge. It problematises rationality and logical thought, and highlights the fact that not all knowledge can be gained through epistemological means. Intuition and silent contemplation can be used to gain different types of knowledge.

Robert W. Witkin's book *The Intelligence of Feeling* seems to have very similar objectives to *The Poetics of Silence* and emphasises the use of intuition as a means to understand ourselves. They both agree that rational knowledge is important for our operation in society, but it is intuition that is absolutely fundamental. Through intuition we experience and understand everything. It underlies all thoughts and decisions.

I also explore F. H. Bradley's *Essays on Truth and Reality*. This is a classic epistemological text. Bradley asks the questions: What is real? and What is true? He answers these questions through a discussion of the terms truth and reality. In the course of his book he also presents us with broader, much more human and dynamic working definitions.

The second major philosophical movement that I tap into is phenomenology. "Phenomenology is the study of structures of consciousness as experienced from the first-person point of view" (Smith 2008: http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/phenomenology/). I was introduced to phenomenology through the work of Martin Heidegger in *The Poetics of Silence*. I realise that there are many critiques on phenomenology, and although I do not discuss many different texts on this subject, its insights still form a cornerstone in my discussions. What intrigues me about phenomenology is its acknowledgement of the individual, this "first-person" (Smith 2008: http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/phenomenology/) mentioned in the quote above. It seems to be one of the few philosophical movements that uses as its starting point the fact that all humans are different, and that no human sees the world as any other.

21

The acknowledgement of the individual is also a strong theme in various existentialist texts

that are also incorporated into the discussion.

Juxtaposition

Although much of this research draws on the discipline of philosophy, this is, after all, a thesis in Visual Art and not Philosophy. Hence the key area of my research falls mainly under the umbrella term of Aesthetics.

The text that is most important is Jacques Derrida's *Memoirs of the Blind: The Self-Portrait and Other Ruins*. It is a text that Derrida wrote in 1990 to accompany an exhibition of the same name at the Louvre, Paris. The text is intriguing as it is not about the works that were on display; it is not an exhibition catalogue. It is rather a companion piece, a piece of writing that can stand alone but that is meant to accompany the exhibition. It is a very complex piece of literature, but this is not the place to summarise it. What is important is that because of its complexity, it is easy to relate most of the other texts I use to it. Doing this enables me to relate the philosophy mentioned above to general Aesthetics, which in turn makes it that much easier to discuss it in terms of my work, and vice versa.

Two other key concepts that come to the fore through this listing and juxtaposing of the texts are 'individualisation' and 'intuition'. These ideas both relate to what we can refer to as 'individuated self-reflexivity'. I thus rely strongly on the subjectivity of any interpretation to sustain the 'multi-logues' that form through the juxtaposition of the various texts. By exploring what influences my interpretation and interests, and of course these 'multi-logues' themselves, I can gain access to intuitive/tacit knowledge that is unknown prior to this process.

A few of the texts reference each other. In such a case, the link between two texts is something that is given. It may seem as though not much is known, but one important fact is that all these different texts, books and writings that I have read all interest me in a similar way. This is a truth that I found by *listening* to myself during my research process. Because of the shared interest I find in all of these seemingly unrelated texts, interest that I find within myself in all these seemingly unrelated texts, I contend that there is a link between them that is of my own creation and that is not known until I do it.

The Unknown

What we do not know is what the outcome of this entire project will be: how these various texts will link together and what I will learn from this process.

The purpose behind every research piece I have ever written has always been to learn something new. I find this to be of the most wonderful things. This is why, more often than not, I enjoy researching in a field that I have no expertise in. I therefore choose texts that I either still do not fully comprehend or have not read before. After reading, I can know what each text says. What I cannot know until I write the dissertation is what their juxtapositioning will produce. The difference between learning something new and creating something new is critical. 'Learning something new' implies that what is learnt already exists as knowledge, while 'creating something new' suggests the emergence of new knowledge that has no precedent.

This creation of knowledge lies parallel to the way that an entire portfolio or a complete exhibition of drawings start to *talk* to one another, as mentioned earlier. Themes are discovered that reciprocally enrich individual drawings. Thus the portfolio or exhibition, and hopefully this thesis as well, becomes something more than the sum of its parts.

I aim to have this piece of writing talk *to* (not necessarily *about*) my practical work, and I contend that it helps to unify theory and practice.

Process

The primary focus of this study is a process. Self-reflexivity in the creation of new knowledge forms the core of this focus. Such a process has no precedent. As previously mentioned, this theoretical study parallels a complete portfolio or exhibition of drawings. In that sense it should become more than the sum of its parts. This also means that it is necessarily unique in the sense that no one has chosen and juxtaposed these specific texts before and no one will interpret them in the same way that I do.

What I want to know is not whether I can link these texts. Rather, I want to discover *how* my linking of these texts can be generative, and what their linking can produce.

I find each text interesting, but reading the texts merely reveals their contents. I do not necessarily know why I find these texts interesting, and thus what bearing they might have on me as an artist and human being. By finding the links between these texts I will find something out about myself, and thus be able to answer my research question: *why do I read what I read, draw what I draw, and do what I do*?

In order to discuss how the texts link and what they produce, I pose the following subordinate questions to use as a generative structure for the second chapter:

- How can I juxtapose texts so that they start to overlap in a meaningful way?

- Are there links between these seemingly random texts I have chosen?

- If there are links, what are they?

- Are these links something that I have known or something that I have not known?

- Even if the link is something that I have known, does it, in conjunction with the actual texts that it is derived from, point to something new?

- Do I have to find these links in outside sources or can I find them within myself?

- If I do find the link within myself, what does this say about me?

- If the juxtapositions do link the texts in a meaningful way, does this broaden our knowledge of the texts? I.e. does it create a meaningful unity out of the loose pieces of writing?

- If it creates a meaningful unity, what does this say about, and how will it influence, me as a human being and artist.

As I explained earlier, this is a theoretical study. I review a selection of texts to find theoretical linkages and coherence between them. I must make clear that these texts derive from different fields of study, namely phenomenology, epistemology, absurdism, individualism, existentialism, drawing, etc. Furthermore, they deal with a variety of ideas and issues. Linking these ideas to drawing and to my own art-making process entails a generative process that produces emergent or revelatory material. This process of linking also sustains conceptualisation. In short I substantiate emergent insights by means of a covert process.

As explained, most of my research takes the form of a literary study. This would indicate that it is non-empirical. Yet, because of the experimental way in which I deal with the

literature, one can see this as an emergent study. The main focus of the study is after all not just the literature, but the process, the experiment, that brings everything together.

It would be easy to make arbitrary links between the texts, but that would not be useful to anyone. The links must be meaningful, and it is my responsibility to ensure this.

Revelatory or emergent conceptualisation implies non-conclusiveness or an open-ended outcome to the research.

I substantiate insights by means of a covert process. If a certain insight is well linked to various pieces of information and sections of the discussions, it should affirm itself by providing meaningful insights into other parts of the work. In other words, if an insight can be properly cross-referenced and it easily forms part of the web of ideas, then its substantiality is functional.

28

Chapter Layout

In Chapter One I present the reader with a theoretical framework in the form of a literature review. I present a summary of the various texts and excerpts of information that I have decided to use in this thesis. This is merely an objective description of the information which will allow the reader to understand what he or she will be reading about in the later chapters.

In Chapter Two, which takes the form of a discursive investigation, I start by linking, juxtaposing, superimposing and comparing the most obvious sets of texts together to form small groupings of information. At this point I will merely use my own interest and reflection to bring the texts together. The writing will start to move away from an *objective description,* as in Chapter One, and towards a more personal subjective interpretation.

Chapter Three will be different from Chapters One and Two in the sense that the texts will no longer be the core. At this stage there will be enough information discussed in Chapter Two for me to start relating directly to myself and my own artistic practices. In other words: what is the meaning of all the previous discussions in relation to myself? How does it all relate to my own art practice? As stated earlier, the exact outcomes are not yet known, so a complete outline of this chapter cannot be given at this stage.

In the Conclusion I answer questions such as: what insights were generated? What have I learnt? I know my art practice has influenced this thesis, but has this thesis in turn influenced my art? In short, it will relate the as yet unknown discussions in Chapter Three back to the Introduction and Chapter One.

Chapter 1: A Review of Interesting Texts

In the first chapter of this thesis I discuss various texts that I chose because for some reason I found them interesting. At this stage of the discussion I only mention the information presented in the various texts. I do not yet compare or juxtapose these texts, nor do I discuss how these texts link to each other. I merely present the reader with the information that I found interesting within the text. So although the chapter is a mere 'objective' *telling* (see Introduction), it still consists of carefully selected writings. The purpose of this is for the reader to be introduced to the information that is looked at in more detail in the second and third chapters.

The four main subsections of this chapter are: *Phenomenology*, *Truth and Reality*, *Life in a Meaningless World* and *Silence and Intuition*.

1. Phenomenology

As the heading suggests, this section focuses on the philosophical discipline of phenomenology. At this stage the discussion is generally quite broad, but in the last section, *Silence and Intuition*, I employ the work of Edmund Husserl to focus and conclude the discussion.

2. <u>Truth and Reality</u>

I use F. H. Bradley's book *Essays on Truth and Reality* as a core text. With the assistance of a few auxiliary texts I discuss various definitions of the terms 'truth' and 'reality' and what bearing these have on our ideas of truth, meaning and experience.

3. <u>Life in a Meaningless World</u>

Albert Camus's book, *The Myth of Sisyphus*, is the starting point for this section. I use it to support a discussion on feelings of alienation from the world and various reasons for this. I continue, similarly to *Truth and Reality*, by looking at what bearing this has on myself and my ideas of truth, meaning and experience.

4. <u>Silence and Intuition</u>

The greater part of this section is a discussion driven by Steven L. Bindeman's *Heidegger and Wittgenstein. The Poetics of Silence* mentioned in the Introduction. I look mainly at what the various contributors have to say about truth, what we can know and what we cannot know, and the various ways to attain the knowledge in question. I also mention Henri Bergson's idea of concrete and abstract time to advance the discussion.

Phenomenology

I was immediately attracted to the philosophical discipline of phenomenology because of its focus on experience from a "first person view" (Smith 2008: http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/phenomenology/). This is important to me, because one can easily relate such a discipline to the idea of the unique individual; the individual who experiences the world in a way that no other individual does. It also has ties to my method of art making, where I rely heavily on my own (i.e. *first person*) view of the world around me.

In contrast ontology, which is the study of being, and epistemology, the study of knowledge, phenomenology may be very loosely defined as the study of phenomena; the "structures of experience, or consciousness" (Smith 2008: http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/phenomenology/). Phenomena can refer to the "appearance of things, or things as they appear in our experience, or the ways we experience things, and thus to the meanings things have in our experience" (Smith 2008: http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/phenomenology/).

The word *appearance* here is very important, as phenomena refer to the appearances of things as opposed to how they really are (Smith 2008: http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/phenomenology/). One can almost place it in opposition to Plato's Cave Analogy.

> Most of us… are like prisoners chained before a wall in a cave, unable to turn our heads. What we call reality is actually a mere shadow play on the wall, projected from behind our backs by persons carrying statues of humans and animals and carved likenesses of other ordinary objects before a fire that is behind them. Philosophers who achieve knowledge of the form of the good are like prisoners who have broken their chains and have made their way up and out of the cave into the sunlight. There they see just how far removed from reality they previously were (Rice 1998: 79).

Here Plato provides an analogy for the way we gain knowledge and see the world. We should not be fooled by the appearance of things around us; we must strive to pass beyond that and attain true knowledge. Although phenomenology does recognise the fact there is a chasm between what we perceive and what is, it does not ask us to cross this chasm. Part of our human condition is that we can only see the world through our own experience.

By experience I do not mean simply what is gained from sight, sound, taste, touch or hearing. Our "experience is normally much richer in content than mere sensation" (Smith 2008: http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/phenomenology/). Phenomenology merely uses the senses as a starting point to explain its position as opposed to other philosophical movements. It looks at how we experience experiences, the meanings of these experiences, how we find meaning through the experiences. These experiences can range from "perception, thought, memory, imagination, emotion, desire, and volition to bodily awareness, embodied action, and social activity, including linguistic activity" (Smith 2008:

http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/phenomenology/). It includes our entire "life-world"[2] (Smith 2008: http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/phenomenology/).

This experience, however, has what "Husserl called 'intentionality'" (Smith 2008: http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/phenomenology/). This means that the experience is directed at something in the world. It is a property of consciousness that "it is a consciousness of or about something" (Smith 2008: http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/phenomenology/). According to Husserl, this directness or intentionality can only reach the objects in the world "*through* particular concepts, thoughts, ideas, images" (Smith 2008: http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/phenomenology/). Although experience is necessarily removed from *reality,* it is always, if sometimes indirectly, linked to it.

This then links to the one irrefutable fact of conscious experience. "We *experience* them [phenomena]; we live through them or perform them" (Smith 2008: http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/phenomenology/). We may see all the worldly objects around us, and we may interact with them on a daily basis, but we "do not experience them in the sense of living through or performing them" (Smith 2008: http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/phenomenology/).

---

[2] "Accordingly, in the phenomenological tradition, phenomenology is given a much wider range, addressing the meaning things have in our experience, notably, the significance of objects, events, tools, the flow of time, the self, and others, as these things arise and are experienced in our 'life-world'" (Smith 2008: http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/phenomenology/). The term *life-world* stand opposed to something like *physical-world*. *Life-world* incorporates much more than just the world of objects we see around ourselves. It incorporates feelings, ideas, thoughts, emotions, and the entire plethora of intangibilities that we find around ourselves in every moment of our waking (and non-waking) lives.

What I mean by 'experience', is experience in the broadest sense of the word. Not all experience is conscious. Some actions are unconscious and we are only vaguely, if at all, aware of them. Others like, "walking along, or hammering a nail, or speaking our native tongue" (Smith 2008: http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/phenomenology/) are very much conscious actions, but we are seldom explicitly aware of executing them. These are all actions and experiences that we find on the peripheries of our conscious waking mind, but they still form an important part of our *life-world*.

Phenomenology studies phenomena and experience as perceived from a "first-person point of view" (Smith 2008: http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/phenomenology/): 'I feel', 'I think', 'I experience.' This allows for much greater subjectivity than most philosophical movements do. It sees the individual as a unique, singular and sentient being. It recognises the fact that, although all humans think and experience this life-world in a similar manner no two humans are exactly the same.

To gain full access to all the different experiences of our minds for proper study, one must develop various types of awareness. The three types of awareness that are most important in my own artistic practice would be the following: "temporal awareness", "spatial awareness", and "self-consciousness" (Smith 2008: http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/phenomenology/). The first is an awareness of one's own ever-changing non-stop flow of consciousness, a "spatial awareness" (Smith 2008: http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/phenomenology/) is an awareness of the physical world around oneself while "self-consciousness" (Smith 2008: http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/phenomenology/) refers to an awareness of how the

outside world influences one's own consciousness through the constant processing of experiences.

Although we "do reflect on various types of experiences just as we experience them" (Smith 2008: http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/phenomenology/), as previously mentioned, we are not always conscious of our experiences while they are happening to us. And mostly, even if we are conscious of what is happening to us, we do not "characterize an experience at the time we are performing it" (Smith 2008: http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/phenomenology/), but instead "we acquire a background of having lived through a given type of experience, and we look to our familiarity with that type of experience" (Smith 2008: http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/phenomenology/).

Phenomenology is important to me as it seems to be more humanist in its approach towards mankind. It not only recognises the individual as fragmented, but also allows for an acknowledgement that one person might feel fragmented from humanity as a whole. Another important factor that it tolerates in its framework is that of unavoidable subjectivity, i.e. the fact that all humans are influenced by their humanity: their subconscious, their intuitions, their feelings and their previous experience. This is something that we cannot get away from, and therefore it is possible to claim that there is no such thing as pure objectivity.

Truth and Reality

In F. H. Bradley's book *Essays on Truth and Reality*, he asks the question: "When you do not know that an idea is true, or when you even know that it is not true, can you say in such a case that the idea qualifies reality?" (Bradley 1914: 29). If an idea is false, and it is seen as imaginary, it "may be recognised as merely imaginary, and, taken in this character, [ideas] float suspended above the real world?" (Bradley 1914: 29).

This raises an interesting question: What is 'real'? And what is 'true'*?*

There is a common view that there is a break between what is 'real' and what is 'imaginary'. A dream is 'imaginary', while what I see before me while in sober, waking life is 'real'. Any idea that does not fit into the 'real' is a floating idea, as mentioned above. Through this viewpoint, Bradley seems to imply that an imaginary or floating idea cannot constitute the 'real'. This is a way of seeing the world that is very easy to follow, and I find it convincing.

I do, however, feel uneasy about this idea of 'reality'. My own drawings can be seen as realistic drawings, although what is important to me in drawing is not what the object looks like, but the experience of looking at it. The fact that this experience is more important than the observed object itself is not something that troubles me. What does bother me is the fact that I cannot explain *why* it doesn't.

37

Needless to say, this is exactly why I find Bradley's book so interesting, as it finally clears up this predicament.

Bradley states that this misconception that floating ideas exist in "a false assumption as to the limits of the real world. Reality is identified with the world of actual fact, and outside this world floats the insubstantial realm of the imaginary. Actual fact, when we enquire, is in the end the world which is continuous with my body. It is the "construction which in my waking hours I build around this centre" (Bradley 1914: 30). One should realise that this constitutes a lot more than what one can call the 'outside world'. The "construction" mentioned here is very complex and dynamic, and it encompasses the tangible and the intangible. It is, in short: "My body, taken in one with my present feelings and with the context which in space and time I can connect with this basis" (Bradley 1914: 30).

Through this view, one can see dreams and intangible experiences as 'real'. We can also conclude that even a floating idea can be credible. Even if it does not seem plausible at a specific moment in time, it can hold meaning when viewed at a different time with a different viewpoint (Bradley 1914: 30). By reading this, I understand for the first time why Surrealism is called Surrealism. The prefix *sur-* means 'more than', so surrealism means more-than-realism. The surreal 'surpasses' reality. I never understood why it was called surrealism when it dealt with a subject matter that seemed to not be 'real'. If one looks at the broader definition outlined above, then it makes complete sense. It does not merely deal with explicit visual observation as Realism does; it looks towards the outside through the inside and in this way expresses 'reality' as a whole:

> Every man's world, the whole world, I mean, in which his self is also included, is one, and it comes to his mind as one universe. It necessarily does so even when he

maintains that it truly is but plural. But this unity is perhaps for most men no more than an underlying felt whole. There is, we may say, an implicit sense rather than an explicit object, but none the less the unity is experienced as real (Bradley 1914: 31).

The above quote reveals Bradley's recognition that this universe (and thus 'reality') is not just the physical universe that we move around in every day. It is the universe, or 'reality', as experienced by a single sentient human being[3], inclusive of the worlds of things that we can see and touch as well as things that we cannot, like our feelings and emotions. When we are in different moods and/or physical/mental states, all of the objects we see, as well as our emotions, are experienced differently. In short, there are many ways to experience phenomena, and a combination of these various ways, plus all of the different phenomena that exist, all constitute the idea of total 'reality' (Bradley 1914: 32).

What I have explained briefly above is how I understand 'reality' as encompassing both theoretical and existential knowledge.[4] 'Reality' and 'truth' are directly linked to one's dynamic subjectivity, and are not at all universal nor fixed.

---

[3] Notice the two different uses of the word 'reality' in this sentence. The first 'reality' refers to the sum of all the experience that an individual perceives. The second 'reality' refers back to the academic term that I am discussing in this part of the chapter.

[4] "The elements that go to make up the meaning of action for any individual may be divided *for analytical purposes* into two distinct levels of meaning, the '*theoretical*' and the '*existential*'... The 'theoretical level of meaning' is the presuppositions and assumptions, both implicit and explicit, with which the actor constructs the more general and invariant characteristics of both his situation and his functioning in it... The 'existential level of meaning' comprises the actor's immediate experience of events in all their particularity consequent upon his functioning in the environment... Both levels of experience are essential to the actor since in order to act he must both experience the reality of his functioning in the environment and at the same time structure that reality in a coherent and consistent way" (Witkin 1981: iv-v).

I know that my observational works are more than mere copying and it has often been said that my work has a Surrealist undertone. The discussion above explains this link. When I pick an object to draw, it is almost always something potent, something that awakens an emotion inside me, something that creates an experience when observed. This experience has an effect on the process and on the end product. When one looks at the Surrealists from this perspective, it becomes evident that they purposefully and explicitly applied this 'effect'. In my work it is more subtly implicit and definitely not deliberate. And it is only through years of work that this effect, which one could call a quality or characteristic, distils enough to unveil itself.

In the early phases of such drawing one might think that one's ideas or one's styles are floating. Although in such a judgement the idea of reality or truth is not 'total realty'.[5] It is a single viewpoint, an individuated reality, where certain 'truths' and doctrines come into play. A floating idea can therefore be floating when observed from one viewpoint,[6] but it is always connected to another viewpoint in which it might seem more plausible (Bradley 1914: 32).

In other words, if some object or some way of working fascinates you, it is significant because there is a reason for that fascination. This reason is not always immediately clear. Because art is a visual language, it takes time to reach a point where the expression is successful.

---

[5] See end of this section for a explanation of 'total reality'.

[6] It is important to note that 'viewpoints' are important for our operation in the world. I am not saying that we should do away with all the limits on our vision, as this is impossible. We should just be aware that our vision is limited and that at any one point there are more things that we do not know than what we do know.

As Albert Camus states in his book *The Myth of Sisyphus*: "These are facts the heart can feel; yet they call for careful study before they become clear to the intellect" (Camus 2000: 11). The drawing process is the interface between the heart and mind to facilitate 'careful study.'

This interface is ever changing, and the meaning or the truth we find in our works can never be fixed. Because of our own and everyone else's ever-changing subjectivity, we must at all times adapt what we see as meaningful and truthful. As John Elof Boodin states: "We look for a different mood of the soul in every new work of the artist. Here human nature has been able to find a more varied and genuine expression for its complex and varying tendencies, and we who enjoy the art find here a varied supplement for our varying inner attitudes" (Boodin 1911: 7).

If individuated experienced is layered, complex and unique, then our perception of 'reality' is a dynamic diverse construct. Each individual forms this construct durationally as a middle ground between knowledge and the physical world, between the *inside* and the *outside*. My drawing process unifies this dichotomy.

The parallels between this specific discussion (Truth and Reality) and the previous one (Phenomenology) are very noticeable, even at this stage. I do explore these parallels in due course, but first I continue with discussions of other texts and I use the links between these two topics to initiate the discussion in Chapter 2.

Life in a Meaningless World

Albert Camus's best known philosophical text, *The Myth of Sisyphus*, presents a rather desperate theory. Its desperation is not at the cost of skill or relevance; a desperate man needs a desperate philosophy.

> The world itself is not reasonable, that is all that can be said. But what is absurd is the confrontation of the irrational and the wild longing for clarity whose call echoes in the human heart. The absurd depends as much on man as on the world. For at the moment it is all that links them together. It binds them one to the other as only hatred can weld two creatures together (Camus 2000: 26).

> So long as the mind keeps silent in the motionless world of its hopes, everything is reflected and arranged in the unity of its nostalgia. But with the first move this world cracks and tumbles: an infinite number of shimmering fragments is offered to the understanding. We must despair of ever reconstructing the familiar, calm surface that would give us peace of heart (Camus 2000: 24).

In the above quotes one can see that Camus has a very cynical view of ontology and epistemology. This is with good reason. His main aim is to deal with "man torn between his urge toward unity and the clear vision he may have of the wall enclosing him" (Camus 2000: 27). His problem lies in the fact that most of the human race's knowledge is constructed. This constructed knowledge has very little to do with the reason(s) for our being on this planet or the purpose of our lives. "I have returned to my beginning, I realise that if through

42

science I can seize phenomena and enumerate them, I cannot for all that apprehend the world. Were I to trace its entire relief with my finger, I should not know any more" (Camus 2000: 25).

Camus realises that, to achieve his goals, he cannot use his philosophical education. If he wants to study the human soul or poetic imagination, he cannot use the philosophies he is presented with (Bachelard 1994: xv).

To understand the human soul is a very difficult task indeed. He is trying to understand that which, as many people will agree, cannot be understood. His starting point is 'man in the void.' All that is real are those two points. Nothing more, nothing less.

Before I say anything more about Camus's Book *The Myth of Sisyphus* I will have to explain this myth and its significance.

The myth of Sisyphus forms part of the ancient Greek myths. In short, Sisyphus is condemned, as punishment, by the gods to roll a large rock up a mountain, from whence it would roll back down again. He would then have to roll it back up again and it would roll back down, and so on and so forth unto eternity. There are many versions of this myth and each gives a different reason why Sisyphus was punished, but this not important to Camus's argument. The point is that he sees Sisyphus as a type of 'absurd' hero and parallels our lives to that of Sisyphus.

Camus starts with the words: "There is but one truly serious philosophical problem and that is suicide. Judging whether life is or is not worth living amounts to answering the fundamental question of philosophy. All the rest – whether or not the world has three

dimensions, whether the mind has nine or twelve categories – comes afterwards" (Camus 2000: ii).

I strongly appreciate these words. They accurately explain an existential darkness that most people experience at some point in their lives. Although the subject of this quote is not the focus of my thesis at all, it does set the tone for Camus's work rather effectively.

Camus's text takes the form of a very direct search for meaning in this life, to find a reason to remain alive. He totally rejects any type of metaphysical meaning – be it platonic or religious. "I don't know whether this world has meaning that transcends it. But I know that I do not know this meaning and that it is impossible for me just now to know it" (Camus 2000: viii). I find this very comforting, as I see my own art as a similar search.

In some societies throughout the past and in the present day, a person's life is laid out before them by others. They follow their family's, institution's or society's religious views or way of life and they become learned in their (family's, institution's or society's) trade or occupation. Basically they follow directly in other people's footsteps and try to emulate what they have observed throughout their childhood, as this is what they perceive as 'right' or 'successful'.

Fortunately, or unfortunately, I did not grow up like this. From a young age I was taught to make my own decisions regarding way of life, religion and philosophy of meaning. As a young child such freedoms seemed unimportant, and it was not until my late teens and early twenties that the gravity of the choices became apparent to me. For the first time I truly felt that I was not placed here but thrown – in the sense in placing something you treat

it with a specific purpose, while to throw something implies the intention to simply get it away from you. Where it lands and what it does after its landing is not important.

After a lot of floundering I was starting to find that through a cathartic artistic process that feeling of being alone is somehow, if only temporarily, relieved. This started me on a search for meaning and a keen interest in how this meaning works, which is why I find Camus's work not only interesting but strangely comforting as well.

One can compare Camus's problem to a question posed by Melville in his book *Pierre*: "Silence is the only Voice of our God… How can a man get a Voice out of Silence" (Camus 2000: x)? It is this silence, this meaninglessness, this Nietzschian wasteland, this separation between man and his surroundings, the artist and his background (Camus 2000: 13) that drew me to art in the first place. It is the 'absurd', this contradiction between what Camus calls "the human need [for meaning] and the unreasonable silence of the world" (Camus 2000: x) that I find the most fascinating in my artistic practice.

This feeling that Camus calls the 'absurd' can be very elusive. A sure sign of the 'absurd' is when one thinks about nothing yet everything at the same time; when one's mind is aimlessly wondering without thinking about any one thing specifically. In this frame of mind the "void becomes eloquent" and we suddenly find ourselves outside our routine thoughts, but strangely at peace with this new vague sense of unease (Camus 2000: 19). These first signs are very often not understood, if recognised at all. More often than not they first manifest themselves as a series of thoughts. This is not, per se, a feeling like depression or happiness, but rather they are thoughts of 'Why?'. Contemplation about the meaning of it

all then leads to a certain anxiety and "mere 'anxiety', as Heidegger says, is at the source of everything" (Camus 2000: 19).

If I did not care about being alone, about being accepted, about living a comfortable life, about doing the right thing, then I would not be anxious about it and I would not do anything about it. Camus's feeling of the absurd can be explained as an anxiety about the meaninglessness of one's surroundings. It is part of human nature to want to understand the world you find yourself in, to justify one's actions and existence. Every single action is somehow an expression of the actor's deepest desire. According to Camus, this desire we experience when faced with the world takes the shape of a yearning for familiarity. This yearning is an integral part of the human condition. We want to stamp the world with our seal, thereby filtering it, distilling it, to make it easier to understand (Camus 2000: 23).

This stamping of the world with a seal is an important point to Camus. As I have already stated, Camus sees life as inherently meaningless, which is why we must create our own meaning (Camus 2000: x). Camus refers to this as an 'absurd' way of life. The word 'absurd' here means without logic. The 'absurd' person has not necessarily changed his life on the exterior, but he has changed it significantly on the interior. "The absurd person knows the difference between ignorant routine and rebellious routine" (Camus 2000: xiv). From the outside, an absurd life might not look any different to a non-absurd life, but internally they are vastly different (Camus 2000: xiv). A truly absurd person is constantly rejecting what he is presented with; he is constantly dissatisfied and does not hope for something better. But this does not mean that he is not at peace with this conflict (Camus 2000: xiv-xv).

The above statements might at first seem contradictory, although after further inspection they do make sense. Camus does not want to base his theory on anything that he cannot be

46

sure of. And he is sure of this strange world and his own dissatisfaction in it (Camus 2000:

xiv/xv).

As far as both I am, and Camus is, concerned, the only thing that one can be sure of is the

fact that one is now here in this thing called life. I do not understand how I came to be here

(think: 'thrown into the world' as previously stated) but I do comprehend and understand

that I am here now. There is no way to be sure what exactly the 'here' and 'now' are, but as

tautological as this may sound, I can be sure that the 'here' and 'now' are indeed here and

now. Anything more that the 'here' and 'now' is human construction, and Camus does not

want to use that (Camus 2000: 24). Even science that strives to explain the natural world is

merely a way of understanding, it is simply a certain viewpoint. It provides very little in

terms of existential knowledge (Camus 2000: 25).

> A stranger to myself and to the world, armed solely with a thought that
>
> negates itself as soon as it asserts, what is this condition in which I can have
>
> peace only by refusing to know and to live, in which the appetite for
>
> conquest bumps into a wall that defy its assaults? To will is to stir up
>
> paradoxes. Everything is ordered in such a way as to bring that poisoned
>
> peace produced by thoughtlessness, lack of heart or fatal renunciations
>
> (Camus 2000: 25).

The idea of "[production] by thoughtlessness" (Camus 2000: 25) is very interesting. It points

to the fact that even when we are not thinking in words, when we are not trying to

understand something and when our minds seem 'quiet', there is still a lot going on.

Although Camus refers to this as a *poisoned peace*, I have always found this to be the state

of mind that is most comfortable. Maybe it is because this state of mind is one that comes naturally to somebody who is confused or in awe of something.

I take this to such a level that most of my art is based on this frame of mind. After all, "who could hold it against the agnostics if, as votaries of the unknown and mysterious as such, they now worship the question mark itself as God" (Bindeman 1981: i)?

This 'question mark' links back to the Nietzschian Wasteland mentioned earlier. Nietzsche mentions the wasteland when he talks about the 'death of God'. This phrase is very often fundamentally misunderstood. Nietzsche does not literally mean that God is dead, or that God did exist and does not do so now. One can see God in this context as a metaphor for the power of the church, society or any other institution that claims to give meaning to your life or that seeks to simplify the essential meaninglessness of life through the use of myths, stories and traditions. Since the Enlightenment more and more people have found themselves in this 'wasteland'. One of the many causes (or effects) of this is the focus on individuality, the fact that we are forced more and more to make up our own minds and make our own decisions.

In the Middle Ages, for instance, the church was seen as one of most dominant authorities. People were given reasons by the church as to why they were on this earth, what the meaning of their lives was, why bad things happen and why goods things happen. There was no mystery in their spirituality; everything could be explained.

Today it is still so in some circles of society, but the element of choice is stronger than ever before. People can now choose not to believe what is handed down to them. It is because of

this element of choice that God can be seen to be dead. People may choose that God is dead, whether he exists or not. What are the implications?

> ...[T]he light of reason is darkened, and man must redefine himself... 'the wasteland' has grown around him, and the destruction of all his beloved values has taken place. Man is at a crossroads: he must decide whether to resurrect his God out of a need to hold on to and define himself by something 'higher' (than himself), or he can move on into the unthought, and accept the responsibility for the course of his own life. For the first time in history, he is faced with a universe that does not disclose its secrets to him; its unresponsiveness, its silence, he calls: the abyss, the absurd, nothingness (Bindeman 1981: 1).

The fact that 'man must take responsibility for his own life' is more relevant in the Western world today than it has ever been before. The choices we make are our own. People can advise or influence us, but in the end the burden of choice lies with the individual. If some higher power were in control, one could shift blame and responsibility to it. Accountability and responsibility accompany the control we have over our actions and beliefs.

Silence and Intuition

> And this is how it is: if only you do not try to utter what is unutterable, then nothing
>
> gets lost. But the unutterable will be – unutterably – contained in what has been
>
> uttered (Bindeman 1981: 5).

In L. Bindman's book *The Poetics of Silence* there is a paragraph where Nietzsche compares

Truth to a woman. He states how reason alone shall never seduce her and that it is likely

that we shall never possess her. He does warn, however, that she might seduce us into

thinking that she[7], alone, is beautiful (Bindeman 1981: 1).

He goes on to point out the – very important – fact that many things are paradoxical. These

are things we cannot explain but that are still vital to our being, to our existence in the

world. In the words of Wittgenstein: "there are indeed things that cannot be put into words.

They show themselves. They are what is mystical" (Bindeman 1981: 5).

An example of this would be how one cannot always cite the exact cause or source of a new

poetic image, even

> psychologists and psychoanalysts can never really explain the wholly
>
> unexpected nature of the new image, any more than they can explain the

---

[7] Reason or truth.

attraction it holds for a mind that is foreign to the process of its creation. The

poet does not confer the past of his image upon me, and yet his image

immediately takes root in me (Bachelard 1994: xvii).

Wittgenstein wrote in his *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*: "Whereof one cannot speak,

thereof one must keep silent" (Bindeman 1981: 2). This quote points to the fact that

language is but one way of understanding. 'Keeping silent' here means, figuratively, to

listen.

> When a person is presented with silence, he is forced back on himself. He is
>
> placed at the beginning of the way of thinking. Silence sets this thinking into
>
> motion, but only if there is something in the thinker akin to it: the ability to
>
> listen (Bindeman 1981: 1).

Heidegger agrees with Wittgenstein on this point: "Let me give a little hint on how to listen.

The point is not to listen to a series of propositions, but rather to follow the movement of

showing" (Bindeman 1981: 5).

Heidegger agrees with Wittgenstein on this point and suggests that the "point is not to

listen to a series of propositions, but rather to follow the movement of showing" (Bindeman

1981 : 5).

Both philosophers believe that the most "important truths in philosophy cannot be talked

about but can only be shown" (Bindeman 1981: 5).

Many writers realise this 'other' truth that can be perceived by listening to one's self. Boris

Pasternak, for instance, writes about "instinct", which we use to assemble our 'reality'; to

take everything we experience and mould it together to form what we perceive as a unified

'feeling' (Bindeman 1981: 4). And Henri Bergson writes about concrete time and abstract time. The former we use in constructed concepts such as language and mathematics, while the latter is, according to Bergson, the actual nature of time. It takes the shape of a subjective feeling, something that we cannot measure in seconds and minutes. We can recognise this feeling when our minds return to what Bergson refers to as their "natural attitude" (Bindeman 1981: 4).

This *natural attitude* refers to the state of 'unthought'. It would be ineffective to explore either Pasternak's *instinct* or Bergson's *abstract time* by talking or writing about it. Because both these ideas present themselves to us when we are not specifically thinking about them, it would not help us much to take them out of their context and then analyse them. It is not part of their nature to be looked at in that way. We must feel them without words; we must listen.

The move away from logical thought Bindeman proceeds to link to classical theology:

> The Delphic motto 'Know thyself!' has gained a new signification. Positive
> science is a science lost in the world. I must lose the world by epoche, in
> order to retain it by a universal self-examination. 'Nori foras ire,' says
> Augustine, 'in te redi, in teriore homine habitat veritas' (Do not wish to go
> out; go back into yourself. Truth dwells in the inner man) (Bindeman 1981: 4).

Although this statement by Augustine carries a lot of truth, it is extreme. One has to strike a balance between introversion and extroversion. By this I am not referring to a social extrovert or introvert, but merely where one looks for meaning and understanding, inside oneself or outside oneself. If one dwells too much on the inner self there will be a lack of

external input, and if one focuses too much on the 'outer' phenomenological world of external experience, then there will be a lack of internal reflection.

This balance will operate like a game of tennis or ping-pong. In the hermeneutical process of personal understanding, ideas and concepts should not be restricted to one form of understanding.

To explain: a new idea is learnt from the external world. One must then *feel it* and reflect on it internally to gauge one's reaction to it. With that knowledge, or understanding rather, one would then go back to the outside and rationally try to grapple with the idea and bend it to make it useful in your life.

This is slightly off topic, although it does link to an idea that I discuss in much more detail later in the thesis.

Wittgenstein writes in his *Tractatus* that "language exhibits a logical structure which mirrors the world, which in turn is the totality of facts, [it] is governed by certain rules, rules of logical syntax and logical grammar" (Bindeman 1981: 2). One must keep in mind that he does not refer to poetic language here. This is why it would have been more effective if Wittgenstein had said that it is rules of 'logical syntax and logical grammar' and not language in its totality that mirror the logical world. This is because through the use of poetic language one can express "problems of a religious, ethical or aesthetical nature" (Bindeman 1981: 2). What Wittgenstein (or his translator) is saying, however, is that these problems that cause us to constantly bump our heads against the limits of language while trying to express them (Bindeman 1981: 2) can indeed be expressed through poetic language if we represent the mystery we are presented with. What we cannot, and should

not, do is logically try to explain what Wittgenstein refers to as a higher sphere, or as the 'mystical' (Bindeman 1981: 2).

When language is "spoken clearly, [it] present[s] a logical picture of the world" (Bindeman 1981: 2). How can one speak clearly about something that is inherently unclear? Henri Bergson states that our experiences, "perceptions, sensations, emotions and ideas... occur under two aspects: the one clear and precise, but impersonal; the other confused, ever changing, and inexpressible, because language cannot get hold of it without arresting its mobility" (Bindeman 1981: 4). Bergson makes this point with regard to *concrete* and *abstract* time. At first glance it might seem that the statement is rather limited, but if we take into account that our entire consciousness, and therefore life, 'happens' in and through time – "temporality and identity require each other" (Bindeman 1981: 2) – then we can almost equate *concrete* and *abstract* time to *concrete* and *abstract* experience. The former is easy to express and explain since, as previously mentioned, everyday logical language is perfectly suited to it. The latter, however, cannot be explained so readily. We can sometimes easily explain or express our *experience of the experience*, in other words the effects of experience. To try to dissect the experience itself is a different matter entirely. "Bergson believed that it was possible to capture the flux of reality in the very midst of its flight by use of the intellectual sympathy he called 'intuition'" (Bindeman 1981: 4).

The key word here is *intuition*. This is because we must subjectively realise the difference between the two types of experience. We must realise that each type behaves differently, and that they therefore feel differently within ourselves.

We associate reason and thinking with seeing. Plato speaks about the "light of reason" and the "eye of the soul"; "the word 'idea' comes from the Greek '*eidos*', which means to see,

meet, be face-to-face" (Bindeman 1981: 2). This is the type of thinking that has dominated Western thought since the time of the Greeks.

> When Nietzsche recognised that the death of god brought with it the end of metaphysics, he also realised that it brought the rule of reason to an end. Thus Heidegger turns away from seeing – to listening, an analogy for his new kind of thinking better suited to describe our relationship to poetic language. Heidegger's thinking might better be characterized as a kind of listening, a kind of meditation, on poetic language... Wittgenstein too turns away from the seeing way of thinking. Language as a linear construct must be transcended if we wish to speak of meaningful things (Bindeman 1981: 2).

As with any shift in thought, this brings with it many new problems. Husserl's writings, for example, are constantly trying to connect what he calls the *"Lebenswelt*, the life-world" and our consciousness of this "life-world", which is a translation of the original life world (Bindeman 1981: 2-3).

For the first time the gap between the outside and what is experienced inside was linked to the human condition. We experience the world in the way we do, not because we cannot see some other perfect, faraway world properly, but because we cannot see *this* world properly.

Husserl, however, tries to solve this problem through the use of what he calls his 'phenomenological reduction'.

The most important point to keep in mind when investigating something phenomenologically is to try to move away from our usual thought patterns with regard to

the phenomenon in question. This serves to distance us, to allow us to re-asses our reality. An entirely new method of understanding is formed (Bindeman 1981: 2-3).

By distancing ourselves from our own habitual thought, we can reflect on our thought routine. This allows us to investigate what Bindeman refers to as the "transcendental ego" – how an array of mental actions forms the meaning we perceive in our everyday, internal and external experience. At this level of thinking there is no "problem of ontology", as we are looking at that which precedes the ontological (Bindeman 1981: 2).

The first and most important shift that Husserl's phenomenology brings to the philosophy of perception is that it acknowledges the link between what is external and what is *perceived* to be external. This is, after all, Husserl's main problem: to somehow find a union between the *Lebenswelt* and our consciousness of this life world (Bindeman 1981: 2).

In the words of the musician Fiona Apple: "So I can't see what I'm seeing in fact / I only see what I'm looking through" (*Fiona Apple. Extraordinary Machine* 2007: Sv. *Window*).

Conclusion

I have discussed those texts that I use in the rest of this thesis. This will allow me to focus on the main arguments without having to explain each individual theory or the theories before citing them. We have now completed the main building blocks and can continue with a more in-depth and personal discussion of the issues at hand.

Even at this stage the similarities between the four subsections of this chapter have started to become clear. The individualised world view that is made possible by a phenomenological framework has strong associations with Camus's idea of the absurd. Both of these notions can be justified by using *The Poetics of Silence*, which in turn can be enriched by an understanding of the concepts of 'truth' and 'reality' and their ramifications. The main themes of the thesis are also becoming clear: individualism, rationality vs. irrationality, logical thought vs. intuition and 'truth', 'meaning', 'reality' and 'experience'.

Chapter 2: Comparisons, Parallels and Juxtapositions

In this chapter I start to generate discussion through a comparison and juxtaposition those theories presented in Chapter 1. What starts to happen is the emergence of new ideas and concepts. In the next chapter I take all the core ideas from the various discussions in this chapter and compare them, in conjunction with a few other texts, directly to my own artistic practice to try to answer my research question.

This chapter is divided into four subsections: *Understanding*, *Listening*, *Creating* and *Poetic Images*.

1. Understanding

A short discussion on the work of Camus and various texts on 'truth' and 'reality' that I introduced in Chapter 1. Juxtaposing these texts throws light on the notion of 'understanding' and its bearing on notions of 'truth' and 'reality'.

2. Listening

This section compares Henri Bergson's idea of *concrete* and *abstract time* to a *seeing* and *listening* way of thinking. This comparison allows for a more comprehensive understanding of both. I link this back to some of the ideas discussed in *Understanding* and return to floating ideas and the process followed in, as well as the aims of, this thesis.

3. <u>Creating</u>

Here I start with a discussion on the essential differences between human and animal action. This forms a context from which to start a short discussion about Camus's work. This in turn leads me to the idea of the 'poetic image', which will be discussed in the next subsection.

4. <u>Poetic Images</u>

Poetic Images is a discussion that uses the idea of the poetic image as a central theme to relate most of the previous discussions to. It also forms a springboard to start the various discussions that form Chapter 3.

Understanding

Here I will illustrate how my own viewpoint develops, thus leading to a more sound understanding of my life and practice. I do not propose to find a fixed ideal or universal definition for making art, "truth is [after all] at best experimental and nothing can be more fatal than stopping the experiment" (Boodin 1911: 4). Boodin's idea that the "brevity of life and the complex and changing character of our world [should] teach us modesty in [such] ultimate matters" (Boodin 1911: 5) has always been common sense to me.

In the first chapter I mention how the world is unreasonable, that "man [is] torn between his urge toward unity and the clear vision he may have of the wall enclosing him" (Camus 2000: 27). It is because of this exact tear in my own feelings that this specific subject has been chosen for this thesis, and therefore it is a massively important fact for my investigation.

One might be tempted to ask why there is this tear. We seem to be the only species on the planet that has the ability to feel empty and confused when all our physical and even mental needs are met. And we are constantly trying to figure out why we feel the way we do.

I do not think this is something we can figure out. After all, by answering this question we will find what most people refer to as the 'meaning of life'. Yet the search for this answer is ever present, like seeking some spiritual fountain of eternal youth. It is at least in some form or another somewhere in the back of, if not constantly, on our minds. Although the answer might be elusive, the pursuit of an answer may not be futile. We are, after all, on this Earth,

60

and if we do not want to kill ourselves we must somehow live our lives meaningfully. If we can find enough energy in this yearning for meaning to do so, then so be it.

As explained in Chapter 1, it seems that although "through science I can seize phenomena and enumerate them, I [still] cannot for all that apprehend the world. Were I to trace its entire relief with my finger, I should not know any more" (Camus 2000: 25).

What does Camus mean with these words? Does he mean we must return to a state of dumb belief in something that does not make sense? Or does he rather mean that we must return to a state that existed before thought and language?

Either way, does this not mean that we are trying to understand something that cannot be understood? That we are not meant to understand? Or is our concept of understanding flawed?

A useful strategy here might be to link understanding to 'reality' and 'truth'; to show how they go hand in hand in theory and practice. Is reality after all not just an understanding of our surroundings?

A common misconception would be that reality is the world around us; the world of external objects we encounter with our senses. But upon closer inspection this view turns out to be flawed, as the world of external objects excludes all that is internal: dreams, emotions, intuitions, feeling, etc. These are extremely important parts of lived reality. To say that they are not real would be incredibly naive.

One can see realty as "the world which is continuous with my body. It is the construction which in my waking hours I build around this centre. "My body, taken in one with my present feelings and with the context which in space and time I can connect with this

basis..." (Bradley 1914: 30). This definition is a great deal broader and more dynamic than the flawed misconception mentioned in the previous paragraph.

> Every man's world, the whole world, I mean, in which his self is also included, is one, and it comes to his mind as one universe. It necessarily does so even when he maintains that it truly is but plural. But this unity is perhaps for most men no more than an underlying felt whole. There is, we may say, an implicit sense rather than an explicit object, but none the less the unity is experienced as real (Bradley 1914: 31).

Consequently, man cannot be separated from his reality. One can conclude that Being is intimately linked to this 'underlying felt whole'. It might even be plausible to propose that this 'underlying felt whole' is Being. If we then take into account James Elkins's point, we realise that the entire way we see the world has to do with the internal:

> Seeing is […] entangled in the passions – jealousy, violence, possessiveness, and it is soaked in affect – in pleasure and displeasure, and in pain. Ultimately, seeing alters the thing that is seen and transforms the seer. Seeing is metamorphosis, not mechanism (Elkins 1996: 11-12).

We see the world through ourselves, and we are constructed from various fragments. If we see to understand, we can conclude that understanding, and therefore reality, is constructed and inherently subjective. Reality and understanding rely on each other and they both influence each other. This is a very important point that is carried forward into the next chapter.

The above paragraph can be linked to the concept of floating ideas that I mentioned in the first chapter. I stated that a floating idea is an idea that does not constitute any form of reality whatsoever. It is totally disconnected and has no bearing on the real word. When we see reality as "identified with the world of actual fact, and outside this world floats the unsubstantial realm of the imaginary" (Bradley 1914: 30), the concept of a true floating idea might seem plausible. Although, as I have already stated, this concept of reality is flawed, so we will have to reassess the plausibility of floating ideas.

There is the 'underlying felt whole' that I mentioned above, but one must acknowledge that, for most of us at least, this 'whole' is made up of an "indefinite number of worlds, worlds all more or less real but all, so far as appears, more or less independent. There are the facts perceived by the outer senses, and there is the inner realm of ideas and intimate feelings and passing moods" (Bradley 1914: 31-32).

> The diversity and even the division of our various worlds is indefinite and in a sense endless... Because there are many worlds, the idea which floats, suspended above one of them is attached to another. There are in short floating ideas, but not ideas which float absolutely. Every idea on the contrary is an adjective which qualifies a real world, and it is loose only when you take it in relation to another sphere of reality" (Bradley 1914: 31/2).

One must remember that to keep every idea's 'total' reality in mind with every judgement is, in another sense of the word, rather unrealistic. Should it be possible for one to do so, one would in fact be unable to make any kind of judgement.

If we make a judgement about a certain idea, it is always necessary to bear in mind that "a judgement is never reality in its fullest sense. It is reality taken, or meant to be taken, under certain conditions and limits. It is reality, in short, understood in a special sense" (Bradley 1914: 32).

It might seem that I am contradicting myself, but allow me to explain: I state that no idea can float in its 'totality', however, if it is not relevant to a certain temporality, a here and now, it may be disregarded. Although, with every such judgement (and this is especially true for the arts) one must keep in mind the 'reality' in which a certain idea is conceived or engendered and enacted, and whether it is effective or ineffective.

The better option would be to strike a balance between these two seemingly contradictory standpoints - to judge something from our own reality (because we cannot judge it from anywhere else), but to keep in mind that the 'realities' of others may differ from our own.

I conclude that 'reality' and 'understanding' are both constructs and we create constructs subjectively. This means that we have power over them, that we can influence our own reality and understanding. We have power over how we perceive the world and people around us, over their influence on us. I suspect this is what happens in my own artistic practice; I do not change the external world, but I show my subjective understanding of it. The way I see it can influence the way a viewing audience sees the world.

Listening

In the first chapter I highlight the importance of *listening* as opposed to seeing. As with the apparent contradiction in the previous discussion, proper explanation will clarify the subject.

I mentioned the words of Wittgenstein in Chapter 1: "Let me give a little hint on how to listen. The point is not to listen to a series of propositions, but rather to follow the movement of showing" (Bindeman 1981: 5), and to these words I add the following:

[Wittgenstein believed] that the most important truths in philosophy cannot be talked about but can only be shown (Bindeman 1981: 5).

A 'seeing way' of understanding is important, as it is the way we go about understanding our day-to-day activities. When standing alone, a 'seeing way of understanding' can become totally misplaced. The concept of Bergsonian time, for example, is, as a case in point, one such important truth.

As mentioned, Henri Bergson spoke about *concrete* time and *abstract* time. Concrete time we use in "mathematics, physics, common sense and language" (Bindeman 1981: 4), while abstract time "is the *real* nature of time, [and it] cannot be measured; it is a specific, qualitive feeling, recognised when our consciousness gets back to its natural attitude" (Bindeman 1981: 4).

65

Concrete time is something we learn from our parents and teachers. We are taught to read and interpret the arms and digits of the various time-keeping devices around us and to know the days of the week and the months of the year. The reference points for Concrete time are the moon's rotation around the Earth and the Earth's rotation around the sun. It is a universal, external construct or invention that people have used for millennia to govern their lives and communicate various ideas. Concrete time can be compared to a *seeing* way of thinking as presented in Chapter 1.

Abstract time is something altogether different. This "specific, qualitive feeling" (Bindeman 1981: 5) is something that had been felt long before the invention of the first timepiece or even calendar. In Chapter 1 it was mentioned that in order to feel this or to become aware of it, one must be in a state of unthought. It is one of the many things that "language cannot get hold of… without arresting its mobility…" (Bindeman 1981: 4). It is something that we can talk about but cannot explain in its fullest sense. The closest one can get to it is through a *listening* way of thinking.

As with all things balance is important; we must find a middle ground between *seeing* and *listening*. This provides the means to see what is external and, just as importantly, to realise how and what we see. To realise the difference between *vision* and *sight*; *sight* involves the electrical impulses sent through the optic nerve from the eye to the brain, and *vision* is the ability to understand, construct and conceptualise what we see. We do not operate the way a camera would, but as living beings that are constantly interpreting what is being seen.

In the last chapter I discuss the distinction between sight and vision in more detail with reference to my own work.

As mentioned in my Research Methodology, the starting point to my research was to find texts that interest me for common reasons. My response to the texts, rather than their specific subject matter, motivate my choices in using them for this thesis.

At the time of my choosing them these texts were seemingly unrelated and, because of this, we can compare the texts to floating ideas.

Rather ironically, one of the first texts I read in my preliminary research was F. H. Bradley's *Essays on Truth and Reality*. At that point the text that spoke about *floating ideas* was seemingly floating in itself, as I had no idea where it would fit in. All I knew was that it interested me and that I wanted to use it.

In the same way that a seemingly floating idea is linked to some reality, I have to link all the texts to some reality that is of my own creation. Only after reading many other texts that interested me in the same way did a context start to emerge and I was able to link the texts together.

I argue that at this point in my research had I read the text and tried to understand it, and had I tried to understand how it would fit into my thesis, I would have failed to do so. Only by *listening*, by realising that this is a text that makes me feel a certain way, the same way that a few other texts were also making me feel, did I conclude that the text had to be relevant. The text could not float completely, there had to be some connection, and here is that connection; *Essays on Truth and Reality* has become uncannily self-reflexive. Only once I started *listening* to myself did I realise that a particular text was relevant. Keeping the text in the back of my mind while reading all the other texts that interested me in the same way enabled the justification for incorporating the text into my investigation.

There is no way that I would have been able to bring these texts together simply by considering and analysing them in a logical way. This is, however, where the balance that I mentioned earlier becomes important.

As mentioned previously the balance would probably work like a game of ping-pong or tennis; a new idea must be felt and thought about, linked, then felt again, and thought about some more, running it through different thought processes to try to understand it in an emerging context.

Understanding

Here I will illustrate how my own viewpoint develops, thus leading to a more sound understanding of my own life and practice. I do not propose to find a fixed ideal or universal definition for making art. "Truth is [after all] at best experimental and nothing can be more fatal than stopping the experiment" (Boodin 1911: 4). For me it has always been common sense that the "brevity of life and the complex and changing character of our world [should] teach us modesty in [such] ultimate matters" (Boodin 1911: 5).

In the first chapter I mention how the world is unreasonable, that "man [is] torn between his urge toward unity and the clear vision he may have of the wall enclosing him" (Camus 2000: 27). This is a massively important fact for my investigation, as it is from this exact tear in my own feelings that my choosing the specific subject of this thesis resulted.

One might be tempted to ask why there is this tear. We seem to be the only species on the planet that has the ability to feel empty and confused when all our physical and even mental needs are met. And we are constantly trying to figure out why we feel the way we do.

I do not think this is something we can figure out. After all, by answering this question we will find what most people refer to as the 'meaning of life'. Yet the search for this answer is ever present, like seeking some spiritual fountain of eternal youth. If it is not constantly on our minds, it is at least somewhere in the back of it in some form or another. And although the answer might be elusive, the pursuit of an answer might not be futile. We are after all

on this Earth, and if we do not want to kill ourselves, we must somehow live our lives

meaningfully. If we can find enough energy in this yearning for meaning to do so, so be it.

As explained in Chapter 1, it seems I must "[return] to my beginning, I [have realised] that...

[although] through science I can seize phenomena and enumerate them, I [still] cannot for

all that apprehend the world. Were I to trace its entire relief with my finger, I should not

know any more" (Camus 2000: 25).

What does Camus mean with these words? Does he mean we must return to a state of

dumb beliefs in something that does not make sense? Or does he rather mean that we must

return to a state before thought and language?

Either way, does this not mean that we are trying to understand something that cannot be

understood? That we are not meant to understand? Or is our concept of understanding

flawed?

A useful strategy here might be to link understanding to 'reality' and 'truth'; to show how

they go hand in hand in theory and practice. Is reality after all not just our understanding of

our surroundings?

A common misconception would be that reality is the world around us, the world of

external objects we find around us. But upon closer inspection this view turns out to be

flawed, as the world of external objects excludes all that is internal: dreams, emotions,

intuitions, feeling, etc. And these are extremely important parts of lived reality. To say that

they are not real would be incredibly naive.

One can see realty as "the world which is continuous with my body. It is the construction

which in my waking hours I build around this centre. My body, taken in one with my present

feelings and with the context which in space and time I can connect with this basis..."
(Bradley 1914: 30). This definition is a great deal broader and more dynamic than the flawed
misconception mentioned in the previous paragraph.

> Every man's world, the whole world, I mean, in which his self is also included,
>
> is one, and it comes to his mind as one universe. It necessarily does so even
>
> when he maintains that it truly is but plural. But this unity is perhaps for most
>
> men no more than an underlying felt whole. There is, we may say, an implicit
>
> sense rather than an explicit object, but none the less the unity is
>
> experienced as real (Bradley 1914: 31).

Consequently, man cannot be separated from his reality. One can conclude that Being is
intimately linked to this 'underlying felt whole'. It might even be plausible to propose that
this 'underlying felt whole' is being. If we then take into account James Elkins's point, we
realise that the entire way we see the world has to do with the internal:

> Seeing is entangled in the passions, jealousy, violence, possessiveness, and it
>
> is soaked in affect – pleasure and displeasure, and in pain. Ultimately, seeing
>
> alters the thing being seen and transforms the seeing is metamorphosis, not
>
> mechanism (Elkins 1996: 11-12).

We see the world through ourselves. And we ourselves are constructed from various
fragments. If we see to understand, we can conclude that understanding, and therefore
reality is constructed and inherently subjective. Reality and understanding rely on each
other and they both influence each other. This is a very important point that is carried
forward into the next chapter.

The above paragraph can then be linked to the concept of 'floating ideas' mentioned in the first chapter. I stated that a floating idea is an one that does not constitute any form of reality whatsoever; it is totally disconnected and has no bearing on the real word. When we see reality as "identified with the world of actual fact, and outside this world floats the unsubstantial realm of the imaginary" (Bradley 1914: 30), the concept of a true floating idea might seem plausible. Although, as already stated, this concept of reality is flawed, and therefore we will have to reassess the plausibility of floating ideas.

There is the 'underlying felt whole' that I mentioned previously, but one must acknowledge that, for most of us at least, this 'whole' is made up of an "indefinite number of worlds, worlds all more or less real but all, so far as appears, more or less independent. There are the facts perceived by the outer senses, and there is the inner realm of ideas and intimate feelings and passing moods" (Bradley 1914: 31-32).

> The diversity and even the division of our various worlds is indefinite and in a sense endless... Because there are many worlds, the idea which floats, suspended above one of them is attached to another. There are in short floating ideas, but not ideas which float absolutely. Every idea on the contrary is an adjective which qualifies a real world, and it is loose only when you take it in relation to another sphere of reality" (Bradley 1914: 31/2).

One must remember that to keep every idea's 'total' reality in mind with every judgement is, in the other sense of the word, rather unrealistic. It would in fact be impossible to make a judgement if we did so. Thankfully, it is arguably impossible to do so.

If we make a judgement about a certain idea, it is always necessary to bear in mind that "a judgement is never reality in its fullest sense. It is reality taken, or meant to be taken, under certain conditions and limits. It is reality, in short, understood in a special sense" (Bradley 1914: 32).

It might seem that I am contradicting myself, but allow me to explain: I state that no idea can float in its 'totality'; however, if it is not relevant to a certain temporality, a here and now, it may be disregarded. Although, with every such judgement (and this is especially true for the arts) one must keep in mind the 'reality' in which a certain idea is conceived or engendered and enacted, whether it is effective or ineffective.

The better option would be to strike a balance between these two seemingly contradictory standpoints - to judge something from our own reality (because we cannot judge it from anywhere else), but to keep in mind that the 'realities' of others differ from our own.

I conclude that 'reality' and 'understanding' are both constructs. And we create constructs subjectively. This means that we have power over them, that we can influence our own reality and understanding. We have power over how we perceive the world and people around us, over their influence on us. I suspect this is what happens in my own artistic practice. I do not change the external world, but I show my subjective understanding of it. The way I see it can influence the way a viewing audience sees the world.

Listening

In the first chapter I highlight the importance of *listening* as opposed to seeing. As with the apparent contradiction above, proper explanation will clarify the subject.

I mentioned the words of Wittgenstein in Chapter 1: "Let me give a little hint on how to listen. The point is not to listen to a series of propositions, but rather to follow the movement of showing" (Bindeman 1981: 5), and to these words I add the following:

> [Wittgenstein believed] that the most important truths in philosophy cannot be talked about but can only be shown (Bindeman 1981: 5).

A 'seeing way' of understanding is important. It is the way we go about understanding our day-to-day activities. When standing alone, a 'seeing way of understanding' can become totally misplaced. The concept of Bergsonian time, for example, is, as a case in point, one such important truth.

As mentioned, Henri Bergson spoke about *concrete* time and *abstract* time. Concrete time we use in "mathematics, physics, common sense and language" (Bindeman 1981: 4). While abstract time "is the *real* nature of time, [and it] cannot be measured; it is a specific, qualitive feeling, recognised when our consciousness gets back to its natural attitude" (Bindeman 1981: 4).

Concrete time is something we learn from our parents and teachers. We are taught to read and interpret the arms and digits of the various time-keeping devices around us and to

know the days of the week and the months of the year. Its reference points are the moon's rotation around the Earth and the Earth's rotation around the sun. It is a universal, external construct or invention that people have used for millennia to govern their lives and communicate various ideas. Concrete time one can compare to a *seeing* way of thinking as presented in Chapter 1.

Abstract time is something altogether different. This "specific, qualitive feeling" (Bindeman 1981: 5) is something that we felt long before the invention of the first timepiece or even calendar. In Chapter 1 I mentioned that to feel this or to become aware of it, one must be in a state of unthought. It is one of the many things that "language cannot get hold of… without arresting its mobility…" (Bindeman 1981: 4). It is something that we can talk about, but we cannot explain it in its fullest sense. The closest one can get to it is by means of a *listening* way of thinking.

As with all things, balance is important. We must find a middle ground between *seeing* and *listening*. This provides the means to see what is external and, just as importantly, to realise how and what we see. To realise the difference between *vision* and *sight*: *sight* involves the electrical impulses sent through the optic nerve from the eye to the brain, and *vision* is the ability to understand, to construct and to conceptualise what we see. We do not just operate the way a camera would, but as living beings that are constantly interpreting what is being seen.

In the last chapter I discuss the distinction between sight and vision in more detail with reference to my own work.

As mentioned in my Research Methodology, the starting point to my research was to find texts that interest me for common reasons. My response to the texts, rather than their subject matter, motivate my choices.

At the time of my choosing them, these texts were seemingly unrelated and, because of this, we can compare the texts to floating ideas.

Rather ironically, one of the first texts I read in my preliminary research was F. H. Bradley's *Essays on Truth and Reality*. At that point the text that spoke about *floating ideas* was seemingly floating in itself, as I had no idea where it would fit in. All I knew was that it interested me and that I wanted to use it.

In the same way that a seemingly floating idea is linked to some reality, I have to link all the texts to some reality that is of my own creation. Only after reading many other texts that interested me in the same way did a context start to emerge and I was able to link the texts to each other.

I argue that, had I read the text and tried to understand it, and had I tried to understand how it would fit into my thesis, I would have failed to do so. Only by *listening*, by realising that this is a text that makes me feel a certain way, the same way that a few other texts were also making me feel, did I conclude that the text had to be relevant. The text could not float completely. There had to be some connection, and here is that connection: *Essays on Truth and Reality* has become uncannily self-reflexive. Only once I started *listening* to myself did I realise that a particular text was relevant. Keeping the text in the back of my mind while reading all the other texts that interested me in the same way enabled the justification for incorporating the text into my investigation.

There is no way that I would have been able to bring these texts together by just thinking about them in a logical way. This is, however, where the balance that I mentioned earlier becomes important.

I mentioned how the balance would probably work like a game of ping-pong or tennis, how a new idea must be felt and thought about, linked, then felt again, and thought about some more, running it through different thought processes to try to understand it in an emerging context.

Creation

I have concluded how no idea can float absolutely and how, if it does not link to reality, it is because that idea is seen in one light and the reality in question is seen in another. It is always possible to link an idea to a context because no idea can come out of nothing. In the same way that it is impossible for a computer to generate a totally random number, so it seems to be impossible for the human brain to fish an idea or thought out of thin air. Sometimes ideas seem to come out of nowhere, but that is just the point: they came from somewhere, we are just not conscious of it.

The whole purpose of this project is to *create* a reality, a space where these unrelated, 'floating' texts create a context for themselves to fit in.

I did after all mention that "humans must be meaning's providers" (Camus 2000: x). In the same way that I am creating meaning by writing this thesis, so we must create meaning for our own lives. I explore this in the next few paragraphs, beginning with a discussion about human nature.

At the start of this chapter I stated that one might be tempted to ask why there is this break between the "urge toward unity and the clear vision [one] may have of the wall enclosing [one]" (Camus 2000: 27). I noted that we seem to be the only species on the planet that has the ability to feel empty and confused even if all our physical and even mental needs are met, and we seem to be constantly trying to figure out why we feel the way we do.

To begin the discussion, one must realise that because we are the only species that struggles with this phenomenon, we might be able to find out more about it in discerning the differences between humans and the rest of the animal kingdom we find around us.

The text by Karl Marx and Frederick Engels: *Documents on Marxist Aesthetics: Karl Marx, Frederick Engels on Literature and Art*, starts with just this distinction:

> The animal is immediately identical with its life-activity. It does not
>
> distinguish itself from it. It is *its life-activity* (Marx, Engels 1977: 51).

What this means is that animals are not *aware*[8] of what they are doing. Physically and mentally they do what they have evolved to do, and nothing else. That is why, more often than not, a species will become extinct if its habitat is destroyed. This is because it has evolved to perform a very specific role in its habitat, thus ensuring its own (and its habitat's) survival. Because of this type of evolution, an animal does not have to worry about *finding* a suitable action for its survival. This does, however, make them far less adaptable, as the actions that they instinctually carry out are the only ones that they are capable of.

> Man [on the other hand] makes his life-activity itself the object of his will and
>
> of his consciousness. He has conscious life-activity. It is not a determination
>
> with which he directly emerges (Marx, Engels 1977: 51).

Man has evolved to perform a multitude of roles. Although we each have different aptitudes we can train ourselves physically and mentally, to do just about anything. Should one

---

[8] Animals are aware of what they are doing. There is, however, a key difference between animal awareness and human awareness: language. We can talk about what we are doing, which allows for abstract thought and enables us to distance ourselves from our actions. When I speak about awareness, I mean 'abstract' awareness, the awareness that language enables us to achieve.

direction and/or habitat not work, we can change to function in another. For this to be possible we have to be *aware* of what we are doing and why we are doing it. We have to be aware of the fact that we, unlike animals, have a choice of roles to play, and therefore it can be said that "[c]onscious life-activity directly distinguishes man from animal life-activity" (Marx, Engels 1977: 51).

This is why I give Camus's words "humans must be meaning's providers" (Camus 2000: x) so much importance. If we have conscious life-activity, if we are in control of our actions and not given a meaning for our lives, then the conclusion is obvious.

This illustrates exactly what the main theme of this work is: finding meaning.

> The long day-in day-out effort of putting together and constructing [one's] thoughts is ineffectual. One must be receptive, receptive to the image at the moment it appears: if there be a philosophy of poetry, it must appear and re-appear through a significant verse, in total adherence to an isolated image; to be exact, in the very ecstasy of the newness of the image (Bachelard 1994: xv).

The words "receptive to the image at the moment it appears" are the key words in the above quotation: being receptive to certain images is the crux of my art making. When I see an image that speaks to me in some way, I feel I must do something with it, thus stamping my own meaning on it as mentioned in the previous section. By becoming part of it and changing my perception of it, and because my perception of it is the closest I can get to it, I am changing it in itself. Thus I am actively participating in my own reality; "for Minkowski, the essence of life is not 'a feeling of being, of existence,' but a feeling of participation in a

flowing onward, necessarily expressed in terms of time, and secondarily expressed in term of space" (Bachelard 1994: xvi).

> … it is [after all] the dynamism of the sonorous life itself which by engulfing and appropriating everything it finds in its path, fills the slice of space, or better, the slice of the world that assigns itself by its movement, making it reverberate, breathing into it its own life (Bachelard 1994: xvii).

I conclude that through my artistic practice I am changing my 'understanding' of my 'reality' and thereby changing my 'reality' itself. I am actively, and now consciously, taking control of the construction of my Being. This creation happens through a grappling not only with my own poetic images, but also through the influence other people have on my poetic images through their understanding and my influencing other people's poetic images through my understanding.

Before I understood poetic images in this way, the concept did not seem to hold any interest for me. With the slightly more nuanced understanding I have gained through the reading of other texts that have bearing on this idea, I feel that it will enrich my discussions. This is why the following section focuses on poetic images and what we can learn from placing them parallel to the discussions above.

Poetic Images

"Breathing into it its own life" (Bachelard 1994: xvii) is what we do to images and objects when we create something; this is even more so with the creation of a poetic image. We can easily link this idea to a few of the concepts discussed earlier in giving an account of this process of creation.

> … In all psychological research, we can, of course, bear in mind psychoanalytical methods for determining the personality of a poet, and thus find a measure of the pressures – but above all of the oppressions – that a poet has been subjected to in the course of his life. But the poetic act itself, the sudden image, the flare up of being in the imagination, are inaccessible to such investigations (Bachelard 1994: xvii-xviii).

Bachelard distinguishes between two types of understanding. When a psychoanalyst tries to define a poetic image he/she will, as Bachelard states, try to find the residue of the experiences that a poet has had in his life (Bachelard 1994: xvii/i). Through these residues of experiences, he/she will then try to understand why the poet is expressing what he is expressing and why it is important to him. The psychoanalyst can then, with this information, try to explain why a certain poetic image interests someone other than the author.

This is one method of understanding a poetic image, a method that *calculates* and *quantifies*, that *looks* at what is presented *in front of it*. A method that "through science [seizes] phenomena and enumerates them" (Camus 2000: 25).

82

But (as stated) "the poetic act itself, the sudden image, the flare up of being in the imagination, are inaccessible to such investigations" (Bachelard 1994: xvii/i). This "specific, qualitive feeling" (Bindeman 1981: 5) that we experience at the successful understanding of poetic meaning is something that is far too elusive to explain in such a way. It is something that must be *listened* to. Something that links with Wittgenstein's idea of the 'mystical'. We must use Pasternak's 'instinct' to understand.

> The image, in its simplicity, has no need of scholarship. It is the property of a
> naïve consciousness; in its expression, it is youthful language (Bachelard
> 1994: xix).

The idea of a poetic image is not an easy one to discuss in any logical, non-poetic way. In the paragraph above I mentioned Wittgenstein's 'mystical', and Pasternak's 'instinct' as discussed in Chapter 1 in the subsection '*Silence and Intuition*'. I mentioned that it would be ineffective to explore these ideas by talking or writing about them. Because these ideas present themselves to us when we are not thinking about them specifically, it would not help much to take them out of their context and then analyse them. It is not part of their nature to be looked at in that way; we must, without words, feel them; we must listen.

It would, however, be flawed to say that it would not help us much to take a poetic image out of its context and then analyse it. If I had to choose one way of understanding, I would choose 'listening' and not 'looking'. A poetic image is after all created to be 'heard' rather than 'seen'[9].

---

[9] With regards to seeing as opposed to listening in *Heidegger and Wittgenstein. The Poetics of Silence*.

In order to clarify the problem of the poetic image philosophically, we shall
have to recourse to a phenomenology of the imagination. By this should be
understood a study of the phenomenon of the poetic image when it emerges
into the consciousness as a direct product of the heart, soul and being of a
man, apprehended in its actuality" (Bachelard 1994: xviii).

The idea of a 'phenomenology of the imagination' is a very interesting one. It relates well to
the section on phenomenology in Chapter 1 where I mentioned that phenomenology deals
with the appearance of things; how we as sentient subjects experience our various
experiences from a first-person point of view. The various ebbs and flows of our imagination
are, of course, very important experiences as well. That is what interests me about
phenomenology: how it levels the playing field of experiences and how different
experiences can be experienced in different ways and hold different levels of value for
different people.

I conclude that the poetic experience is of much personal importance. The placement of so
much importance on the way I look at certain things in a state of seeming 'unthought' (see
section '*Silence and Intuition*', Chapter 1) and how I find these observations very significant,
is not something I am able to justify or explain.

The term 'phenomenology of the imagination' brings another concept to the table. Earlier in
Chapter 1 I mention how the feeling of the absurd "depends as much on man as on the
world" (Camus 2000: 26). In addition, I emphasised the point that phenomenology creates a
framework that leaves plenty of space for the idea of the individual. If the feeling of the
absurd comes from the individual, then it is from within the individual that we must learn to
overcome it, or at least live with it. This is why a phenomenological approach is effective not

only to look at a poetic images, but to look at possible means that I utilise to live with the feeling of the absurd.

What makes a poetic image so difficult to define is exactly that which makes it so potent; it is the fact that "the poetic image is essentially *variational*, and not, as in the case of the concept, *constitutive*" (Bachelard 1994: xix).

In other words, a concept has a definite, objective, logical meaning that constitutes an objectivity. This does, however, make it impersonal. Contrary to this, a poetic image is more subjective and dynamic. If we understand it, it 'speaks' to us in a deeper, more personal way, even if we cannot always explain its relation to us.

The statements above explain, to a certain extent, why I cannot always put into words why I draw what I draw. They also explain my difficulty in relating my reasons for choosing the texts that I chose for this dissertation. In the early stages of my artistic practice I could not articulate such an understanding, but the fact that my drawings are poetic images has always been clear to me. This could be why I feel comfortable working with things that seem unrelated to one another, but that have a strong relation to me.

One can compare my early readings for this dissertation to the way one would read a poem:

> And yet, independent of all doctrine, this appeal is clear: a reader of poems is
>
> asked to consider an image not as an object and even less as the substitute
>
> for an object, but to seize its specific reality (Bachelard 1994: xix).

The words 'specific reality' here may mean exactly the same as the conclusion I reached in the section '*Meaning and Reality*' and Chapter 1. That is, in short; floating ideas do not exist, every idea, every concept, links to something, and that a *reality* is merely an arbitrary group

of ideas. One can almost *draw* a reality around any group of linked ideas. It might not be a useful reality, it might not have any relevance to one person specifically, but it is a reality none the less. This is exactly what I am doing with this thesis; having taken all the texts, I am creating a reality by drawing them all together into a single context. I am creating *a new reality* that newly contextualises all these texts.

A poem that compares bridges to loneliness may not mean anything to one person. People who have had to travel long distances on their own or who have crossed over and underneath bridges in their travels, share a part of the reality constructed in such a poem, and a part of the realty created by the specific experiences used to create the poem. This notion provides an entry into what the poem is saying. We seem to need to have a fragment of this shared reality, because of the fact that a poem does not disclose everything. It leaves a part of the understanding to us.

To understand a poetic image "we must 'start from the centre, at the very heart of the circle from where the whole thing derives its source and meaning: … that forgotten, outcast word, the soul'" (Bachelard 1994: xx-xxi).

This is why we can conclude that a poetic reality is "a reality that will not necessarily reach its final constitution" (Bachelard 1994: xix). A poetic image needs an audience to be completed. Its reality, and thus its meaning, is a subjective one and will change as its audience changes. It is dynamic in the same way that Bergson's *abstract time* is dynamic; the comparison between poetic images and concepts, is very similar to the comparison between *concrete* and *abstract* time as I presented the notions in Chapter 1.

The power of a poetic image is after all only released once we take it in, once it has had a chance to interact with us:

> The reverberations [that a poetic image causes within us] bring about a change of being. It is as though the poet's being were our own being. The multiplicity of resonances then issues from the reverberations' unity of being. Or, to put it more simply, this is an impression that all impassioned poetry-lovers know well: the poem possesses us entirely (Bachelard 1994: xxii).

The experiences relayed in poems reverberate in our own experiences, and this is why sometimes it feels as if we could have created a poetic image that we strongly relate to. A poem uses building blocks to create meaning. It is a poetic image's relation to the individual that makes it so dynamic, and because it uses our own experience as its building blocks, it also changes that experience. As a poem uses our experience, so we use the experience expressed in the poem to 'update' our understanding of this experience. This is how "expression creates being" (Bachelard 1994: xxiii).

This is once again what makes a shared poetic experience so potent: a poetic image can speak directly to our 'being', it needs 'instinct', a "naïve consciousness", a "flicker of the soul" (Bachelard 1994: xix-xxii) to operate effectively.

When two or more people read a poetic image in a similar way, a type of kinship forms. Although neither party necessarily grasps how they understand a certain poetic image, they might realise that it is speaking to something deeper than conscious knowledge, possibly our subconscious structures and turmoil, the very things that form our conscious way of thinking and understanding; our very being.

In other words, we might not know exactly what a poetic image is 'saying' or why it makes us feel the way we do, but when it is shared it realises a common 'humanity' in all of us.

> A consciousness associated with the soul is more relaxed, less intentionalized than a consciousness associated with phenomena of the mind. Forces are manifested in poems that do not pass through the circuits of knowledge. The dialectics of inspiration and talent become clear if we consider their two poles: the soul and the mind (Bachelard 1994: xxi).

What becomes increasingly clear now is that there are strong dualisms being formed in this piece of writing. One can compare the dualism of the "soul and the mind" (Bachelard 1994: xxi) to Bergson's 'concrete' and 'abstract time', which are discussed in Chapter 1.

When comparing these two sets of concepts, the similarities are clear. The mind here means the conscious mind, where the ideas that form concrete time originate, and it is this part of thought that is used to understand it. Abstract time is a feeling; it does not involve language and comes to us from a deeper part of our mind that we cannot directly 'know'.

This then, in turn, one can easily compare to Camus's texts that I discussed in *Life In a Meaningless World* in Chapter 1.

The crux of Camus's problem was 'man in the void': to somehow bring together man's "appetite for clarity" (Camus 2000: 23) in the face of a "world [which] itself … is not reasonable" (Camus 2000: 23).

Camus' conflict is something that happens in a few different ways between these two levels of thought[10].

In my own experience, this conflict arises from my being a human being that thinks and acts comfortably in a certain way, while I have been taught to understand the word in another, more conflicting way. The first realisation of this conflict came to me as a feeling most people have felt at one stage or another: a feeling of unease, of an unwillingness to accept what was said to you or required of you. At first I did not understand this, or rather, I understood it, but I could not explain it in language before reading Camus's *Myth of Sisyphus*.

It was only after reading this and realising that it links to the above dualism that I can say that my own fascination with this dualism stems from my own conflict in creating a union between me and the world; between what I feel and think.

Almost all of my education thus far has been about thinking. Even my tertiary education, with its focus on art history and art theory, hardly touched on ideas of emotion, feeling, the soul and the subconscious. Everything we have studied has inclined towards rational thought and investigative methods. Even an in-depth study of Western art theory, psychoanalysis and, in general, a rational way of understanding art has not enabled me to find a deeper understanding of my own practice at all. This must be why I found the ideas of 'unthought', 'silence', 'abstract time', 'instinct', 'floating ideas' and 'subjective reality' so interesting and why I chose them for this dissertation.

---

[10] Abstract and concrete time being a metaphor for rational and intuitive thinking.

Conclusions

Through listening I gathered various sources that are used to construct a reality. As mentioned under *Understanding*, there is a close relationship between reality and understanding. If I am using these ideas to create a new reality, then a new understanding emerges as well. This would make sense, as one of the key factors that influence this thesis as stated in the introduction, is the fact that I do not understand how my artistic practice operates. Through the creation of new knowledge, and thereby a new understanding and a new reality concerning my artistic practice, I will be more at peace with the various issues that I do not understand. By the end of this thesis I will either understand them or realise that they cannot be understood, but I will also understand the reasons behind their incomprehensibility.

In Chapter 1, in the subsection 'Silence and Intuition', I presented the following quote:

> The Delphic motto 'Know thyself!' has gained a new signification. Positive science is a science lost in the world. I must lose the world by epoche, in order to retain it by a universal self-examination. 'Nori foras ire,' says Augustine, 'in te redi, in teriore homine habitat veritas' (Do not wish to go out; go back into yourself. Truth dwells in the inner man.) (Bindeman 1981: 4).

The understanding that I have gained in the discussions so far leads me to think that the quotation expresses a rather extreme and one-sided view, and that one should strike a

balance between introverted and extroverted thinking. Yet, in retrospect, I have to point out that this entire piece of writing so far has also been rather one sided.

This entire dissertation, it seems, is pointing towards a yearning for balance within myself. What I am starting to realise is that my 'theoretical' art education was going in one direction, a direction chosen by other people. A syllabus had to be followed and such a syllabus needs to be meaningful to a wide range of people. It needs to be universal before it needs to be dynamic. My 'practical' art education, on the other hand, had a much stronger focus on individuality. The direction that took was much more personal and intuitive.

The problem this created was that I did not find the 'theory' as enriching as the 'practical', as it had very little personal meaning to me. It was interesting, but if I could have chosen from the start I would probably have chosen something different. One can even compare this comparison between 'practical' and 'theory' to the dualisms I discussed earlier in this chapter, with 'theory' being rational looking towards the outside, and 'practical' being intuitive listening towards the inside.

The texts that I chose for this dissertation, then, all seem to be texts that either explain why I could not bring these two fields together, or texts that are currently helping me to do so.

Chapter 3: Drawing from myself

In this final chapter I will aim to bring as many elements of the previous discussions together as possible. As stated in the introduction, the current direction of my research is a result of my not being able to unite the practical work I was doing with the various theories being taught at art school at the time. This is why I need to start with a discussion of my own work. The discussion will not only create a central idea to relate all the subsequent discussions to, but because my drawing is so incredibly personal it will make it a lot easier to relate the discussions to myself which was, after all, one of my aims from the beginning.

As with the previous two chapters, this chapter is divided into a few subsections.

1. <u>Capturing Phenomena</u>

The first section deals with how I gather information for my drawing practice. I discuss the difference between how a camera and a person acquires and processes information, and will use this distinction to highlight the ideas that I find important. I also discuss this in terms of phenomenology and the difference between what I see as 'object' and as 'phenomenon'.

2. <u>Working With Phenomena</u>

Working with phenomena is a short section that explains a change in my practice that was a watershed moment for me as an artist. Up to now I have not been able to explain this change successfully. This explanation provides me with a much more comprehensive

understanding of myself as an artist: what modes I work well in, what modes I do not work so well in, and what I need for motivation.

3. <u>Seeing Phenomena</u>

In this section I divert the discussion back to the dualism that I discussed in the previous chapter. I employ the thinking of Jacques Derrida to examine the relationship between my drawing and such dualisms.

4. <u>Drawing Phenomena</u>

I broaden the discussion that I introduced under 'Working With Phenomena' in conjunction with those under 'Seeing Phenomena' in an attempt to address my research question.

Capturing Phenomena

As one can see from the illustrations, my work is realistic. In other words, the work is true to a perceived 'reality'. The drawings resemble photographs in the sense that the images do not seem to be distorted in any way. They might be realistic, but they are definitely not photorealistic. On the contrary, my primary aim is to do exactly what a camera cannot do. The first hint at this is the monochromatic rendering, the absence of colour. I have always found a monochromatic image easier to manipulate and I find it easier to achieve total control.

Admittedly, one certainly does have a fair amount of control over the image with a camera, which is mainly realised in how the camera, development process and various other editing techniques translate the chosen phenomenon into a two-dimensional image.

This control, however, does not come close to the amount of control that a piece of sharpened charcoal gives one. I am not always conscious of how I change a certain image, but it is this change that sets me apart from what a camera does, and my drawing apart from a photograph. Typically, however, I employ photographic source material. I digitally alter the photographs to correct the composition and/or perspective and/or lens distortion. Already at this stage of my process a fairly significant difference appears between what I see and what I end up with.

94

The 'object'[11] that I select and observe in world-reality fills me with emotion, it fascinates me to such an extent that I cannot keep my eyes off it. Such fascination triggers my choice of subject matter for an artwork. Thus the object becomes a phenomenon, it becomes something more than just an object; It is an object that has some potency for me as an individual. It seems to have some form of power, some force that makes my thoughts change when I see it. I then photograph the object because I need to capture it; I want to be able to carry that fascination with me.

A photograph of the object merely alludes to the memory of experiencing the 'phenomenon'. It is not fascinating in its own right. If I then want to communicate this fascination, or that feeling, I need to create something that calls up the same emotions in a viewer. Something that is fascinating in its own right. I cannot just show the photograph. I need to *re*present the 'phenomenon' in the form of a new 'phenomenon'.

This is why I then draw from the photograph, and it is also why I almost always draw from a photograph that I took myself. The photograph is a mere record of the visual aspect of the phenomenon. Anyone can take such a record. But there is another recording that is even more important: the psychic recording. This takes the shape of the memory of the interaction between the 'phenomenon' and my self.

---

[11] What is important at this stage is the distinction I make between object and phenomenon. 'Object' is fairly straight forward. It is any external *thing* in the world that we can touch, see, feel, taste or hear. But the minute an object is experienced, it becomes a 'phenomenon.' A 'phenomenon' is an experienced 'object', an 'object' with all of its baggage. All of the feelings and ideas that it evokes in an individual. All 'objects' are 'phenomena' when experienced by human beings. For the purpose of this argument I shift the definitions slightly: an 'object' being an *average* 'phenomenon', and a 'phenomenon' being a 'phenomenon' that evokes or is made to evoke an above average amount of feelings and ideas. An artwork, for instance.

It is the combination of these two recordings that assist in the translation from photograph to drawing, and it is this that sets me apart from a camera.

The first translation is an obvious technological shift from an object in the world to a digital image. This shift is not vital, as it is possible to draw these objects from life, although due to factors such as safety, weather and time, it is not always easy. This translation is not my focus; the translation from object/photograph to drawing is much more interesting. It is in this translation that the object becomes a phenomenon in its own right.

These two ways of gathering information relate, rather uncannily, directly to *looking* and *listening* as discussed in the previous chapter.

When taking a picture with a camera I am (literally and figuratively) *looking* at the 'object'. Although a photograph taken by me of something is necessarily subjective, it is not as subjective as *listening* to myself with regards to the 'phenomenon'. What this entails is firstly realising that the 'phenomenon' fascinates me and that I can use this fascination to drive me in some artistic project. This is the first and most crucial step. To me it seems that many people live their daily lives without being sensitive to how they feel about 'objects' around them. They seem to be slightly muted, numb, but this is not important to the argument.

Once I have realised this fascination, which I cannot explain at this point of the artistic investigation, I proceed to somehow use it in a project of some kind. The portfolio that I look at in this thesis is one of drawings, so what I do with the 'phenomenon' in this argument is draw it. I use external references simply to remind myself of what the 'object' looks like.

As stated, while drawing the said phenomenon, certain changes take place. This is also a form of listening, as I do not always logically know what I want to leave out, or what I want to add or exaggerate. Only through being open to these changes, to realise that they might still be important even if I cannot explain them, can I accept and work with them to create a drawing that is a 'phenomenon' in itself. This phenomenon of the drawing is a product of the fascination with the other phenomenon of the object. The new phenomenon aims to be a successful expression of this fascination, as the final product, the drawing, links directly to the original object. It does after all look similar to the object in that the drawing shows a *looking at* the 'object' in the same way as the camera looked at it. The final product, however, goes much further than this.

Although it is a drawing from a photograph, it is also a drawing of an 'object' that *I,* personally, have seen. I draw with the memory of the experience of this 'phenomenon' in mind, and keep the drawing open to the changes that present themselves during the drawing process. Thus, during the act of drawing, I am *drawing*[12] not only from the photograph, but from myself as well. The viewpoint the drawing presents is therefore is a viewpoint *through* me as the primary *viewer*.

This is why I am attracted to the theory of phenomenology, as my drawings are experiments, or exercises, in phenomenology. My drawings are, as in phenomenology, a looking at 'phenomena'; i.e. things as they appear to me as an individual.

---

[12] Drawing in the sense of 'pulling', to draw something from something else. To draw a card out of a deck.

Working with Phenomena

At one stage in my undergraduate years my drawings began to lose their potency. Up until now I have not been able to explain what that specific change was, and why the drawings were less successful than their predecessors. These changes started to present themselves at a time when I was shifting my focus from imaginary objects to external 'real' objects. After reading about phenomenology, and reaching the conclusions that I discuss in the previous section of this chapter, the differences become frighteningly obvious.

During the time that the drawings started going downhill, I stopped 'listening'. I started to draw by pure external observation, either totally ignoring what I felt about my subjects, or quite simply choosing subjects that I felt nothing or very little about. These drawings were not cathartic, and were very inexpressive, which caused me to lose interest in them. This loss of interest in turn caused the technique of the drawing itself to become very poor. My goal was to finish the drawing and to have something to hand in as part of my course at art school. What I should have been doing is to make drawings that inspire some kind of feeling in myself and others. I realised that I should have been creating drawings that meant something. I should have been drawing with my own fulfilment in mind, and not the fulfilment of some external structure.

The drawings that mean the most to me are the ones that express my own way of seeing. With some of the previous connections in mind, it is possible to say that my own way of

seeing is directly proportional to my own way of 'understanding'. 'Understanding' is linked to 'reality', and 'reality' is linked to Being.

I can then say that my more successful drawings express not only my feelings but my Being; who I am. This being (no pun intended) something, a state that is very difficult to explain in simple terms, is what makes these expressions so potent.

From this explanation I can draw a few conclusions.

Before I started working with external subjects I was working with imaginary subjects. Most of my drawings were of things from my imagination. These drawing were successful and I thoroughly enjoyed the process. Because the subjects were imaginary, they necessarily expressed something of myself, although at that stage I was unaware of this expression.

As mentioned, this change to working with external subjects was to the great detriment of my work. These subjects were based in the 'real world'. At this stage I felt I had to drastically change my approach, as my previous works were, for want of a better word, juvenile.

What happened when I began working with external subjects is very important; because of the shift from internal to external reference my work lost much of it's expressiveness. At that stage I could not attribute my loss of motivation to that particular change, but after reviewing this situation with all of the texts discussed in this thesis, it is now quite clear.

I only managed to recoup my motivation after learning that I could express myself not only through the objects that I choose to draw, but also through the way that I draw them.

I seem to be expressing who I am, and when someone else reads the expression in a similar way, then it confirms the fact that there are similarities between my 'understanding' of the

world and that of the viewer's. This in turn confirms the fact that there are other people with similar Beings to mine. A person who understands the world in a similar way to me will necessarily have had similar experiences in the past. This points to a common history, and this common history is why we would both read the drawings in a similar way. Refer to the section on 'poetic images' in Chapter 2. A common history between two or more people makes them feel less alone and more at home in the world. But before I continue in this direction, I must take a step back and expand my discussion on how I *draw* a 'phenomenon'.

Seeing Phenomena

When I mentioned the scenario with my undergraduate drawings losing their potency, the Bergsonian dualism between intuition (abstract time) and intellect (concrete time) came to mind. What I did in the mentioned situation was ignore my intuition. When it comes to drawing, intuition is all we have that sets us apart from a computer or a camera. This becomes much clearer with regards to the explanation on blindness in drawing that follows.

There are references in the work of Jacques Derrida to the dualism between intellect and intuition that link far more directly to drawing as a process. In Derrida's book, *Memoirs of the Blind*, he presents us with the following two hypotheses:

> …the drawing is blind, if not the draftsman or draftswoman. As such, and in the moment proper to it, the operation of drawing would have something to do with blindness, would in some way regard blindness (Derrida 1993: 2).

> …an eye graft, the grafting of one point of view into the other: a drawing of the *blind* is a drawing *of* the blind. Double genitive. There is no tautology here, only a destiny of the self-portrait. Every time a draftsman lets himself be fascinated by the blind, every time he makes the blind a *theme* of his drawing, he projects, dreams of hallucinates a figure of a draftsman, or sometimes, more precisely, some draftswoman. Or more precisely still, he begins to *represent* a drawing potency at work, the very act of drawing (Derrida 1993: 2).

At first this might seem like a terrible contradiction, a "tautology" in the words of Derrida (Derrida 1993: 2). How can one state that drawing is blind? How can the act of *looking* at something and then representing be removed from sight, if that is the very sense it relies on?

A hint might lie in the French definition of 'drawing': it "does not mean 'to draw' and definitely does not mean 'to trace'; rather, it implies a direct creation and transcription of the mental plane to the material – a mark being made a creative vector" (Downs *et al*. 2007: vii).

This links with another paragraph by Derrida where he discusses what happens when he writes without looking at what he is writing:

> "[While writing, not] with my eyes closed, to be sure, but open and
> disorientated in the night; or else during the day, my eyes fixed on *something*
> *else*, while looking elsewhere [the marks I make] these notations –
> unreadable graffiti – are for memory; one would later think them to be
> ciphered writing" (Derrida 1993: 3).

If something is *ciphered,* it means that it is written in code. It would be meaningless to someone who does not know the code and is unable to translate it. If these *ciphered* writings are *for memory*, it means that Derrida himself can still understand his *unreadable graffiti*, but someone else emay not be able to. If these marks still hold meaning, though Derrida was not even looking while he was making them, it means that the starting point for such mark making is in the mind and not in the eye.

Thus what I suppose he means when he says that *drawing is blind* is that there is no direct link between the eye and the hand. We are not blind, the trait of drawing is blind. If there was a direct link, it would not be possible for one to make a meaningful mark while not looking at the page or medium, and we would be able to objectively 'copy' what we see in front of us without influencing the copy in any way.

There is only one thing that can break the link between eye and hand and that is the brain. This recalls a quote used earlier in this thesis:

> Seeing is entangled in the passions, jealousy, violence, possessiveness, and it is soaked in affect – pleasure and displeasure, and in pain. Ultimately, seeing alters the thing being seen and transforms the seeing is metamorphosis, not mechanism" (Elkins 1996: 11-12).

I am not suggesting that we *see* things differently when we are overwhelmed with passion, violence or jealousy. What I am suggesting is that, although the light that emanates from the sun bounces off an object and enters our eyes, it is the same light and thus the object *looks* the same, but our *perception* of the object (as a phenomenon) can be vastly different.

Sight is a product of the eye, but *perception* is a product of the brain. We have the same amount of control over how we perceive things as we have over how our brains operate – that is, very little In other words, even when we try our best to look at and understand something objectively, we are still using our brain, and it is just this that sets us as individuals apart from other people. It is impossible to use a unique tool to try to understand something in a way that everybody else does.

Although when one's understanding of a drawing, for instance, is similar to another person's understanding, then a type of kinship is felt, as discussed in the previous chapter. This kinship stems from the fact that understanding is subjective and unique, so if two people's understanding is similar to each other's, then a bond, stemming from common experience, forms. I continue this discussion in a few paragraphs.

If vision is necessarily subjective, because it is a product of the brain, then drawing must also be.

And this is why we can say that "'Blindness' articulates the impossibility of imitation – blind to the world, drawing what is seen and not seen, with and without seeing" (Downs *et al*. 2007: xii).

Drawing Phenomena

Drawing might be blind in the sense that a camera is not, but this is not a weakness; on the contrary, it is thanks to this blindness that we can see drawing "as a primary means of parallel thinking"(Downs *et al*. 2007: xi). Although the *trait* of drawing might be blind, drawing itself still relies heavily on sight and vision. This means that it "mediates between the metaphysical and the physical, or relating thought and perception. But since drawing refers to both what is seen and what is thought, the distinction between the objective and the subjective can be conflated and confused" (Downs *et al*. 2007: xi)

This confusion, however, is natural. Because drawing is a product of our own psyche, we can see this confusion in drawing as a reflection of our own confusion between the objective and the subjective, the inside and the outside. Although drawing does bridge the gap between the dualisms I discussed in the previous section, it does not necessarily do so clearly or explicitly.

This is especially interesting when one looks at it in terms of my own work. My drawing can be considered very *objective*, in the sense that it is realistic. The phenomenon that is drawn is recognisable, it is true to life, and anybody will recognise it.

But if drawing is blind, if it is so influenced by our subconscious, then it cannot only be objective. If one starts to notice the subtle differences brought into the image through the drawing process, it becomes evident that a feeling is conveyed, a subjectivity is coming though. This is exactly why my drawings can be seen as truly Surrealist (see section on Truth

and Reality) in the academic sense. They are not just presenting outside reality as a camera does; they are doing much more than that – they are *re*presenting a very specific reality as experienced by a very specific individual.

This is why drawing:

> …is said to demonstrate the relationship between reason and intuition, between sensory perception, interpretation and the process of understanding. Its position near to the conception of ideas, and before the refinement of methods, means it can retain a freshness, an idiosyncrasy and a transcendence of historical postures (Downs *et al*. 2007: xi-x).

This gap between reason and intuition that drawing is said to bridge, links to the work of Camus discussed in the Chapter 1 and 2.

The gap that Camus is concerned with in his work is, as mentioned already, one between an unreasonable world and man's "appetite for clarity" (Camus 2000: 23). Although I do not agree with Camus's idea of a "rebellious routine" (Camus 2000: xiv) as a solution to the feeling of the absurd, I do agree that "human beings must be meaning's providers" (Camus 2000: x).

I have already stated twice that drawing can create a kinship between people, and this kinship can also relieve the feeling of the absurd.

Drawing does not explain this *void* we find ourselves in; this I think is impossible to do, as the feeling of the absurd, that 'disconnection', seems to me more and more a critical part of the human condition.

When I make art I deal with the *void*. I work with "that odd state of soul in which the void becomes eloquent" (Camus 2000: 19). How then does my artistic practice assist me in addressing this feeling of the absurd, if it does not bridge the gap between the unreasonable world and man's "appetite for clarity" (Camus 2000: 23)?

By working with the *void* one gets to know it; you do not necessarily understand it in the sense that you can explain it through logic, but you start to feel more at home in it. You start to feel at home in it because, through the forming a kinship, as mentioned above, you realise that there are other people who feel the same way about the *void* as you do. They do not understand it either, but in the same way that it fascinates you, it fascinates them as well.

Thus, through art, I find a place amongst other people. My routine is not rebellious in the sense of Camus's rebellious routine; but it is rebellious in the sense that I do not see any sense in doing anything that does not make me feel more at home. One can say it is more humanistic, or even more hedonistic, than Camus's routine.

I say hedonistic, as I judge everything I do by how I feel about it. It is important to note though, that it is hedonistic, not selfish.

Because my aim is to feel a connection with others, and since people are essentially herd animals, I feel most at home amongst fellow human beings who are also at home. Thus this whole routine seems to tap into some ancient herd archetype, where your own wellbeing is coupled to the wellbeing of the herd.

What gives my drawings their cathartic effect, then, seems not only to be that every now and again I seem to successfully express (not necessarily explain) something that fascinates

107

me, but also that the final product speaks to someone other than myself. This makes me realise that I am not the only one who notices the particular things that catch my attention and motivate me to create artworks, and this in turn allows me to 'participate' in the Minkowskian 'flow' mentioned above.

As I have mentioned, it is the void that fascinates me: the unreasonable world that does not disclose its secrets. My 'participation' in the 'flow' (Bachelard 1994: xvi) then seems to point to the fact that I am working with the void, "stamping it with [my] seal" (Camus 2000: 23) and thus "reducing it to the human" (Camus 2000: 23). It seems that, somehow, I am creating some sort of meaning in my dealings that is accessible to other people.

This meaning, however, does not explain the void, for instance.

As stated in the section on phenomenology in Chapter 1, there is a chasm between what we perceive and what is. We do not see things, we see phenomena, and 'phenomena' refers to the appearances of things as they appear to us, as opposed to how the object looks externally (Smith 2008: http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/phenomenology/).

If the only thing that I am experiencing is my own experience of the void, then the meaning that I am conveying can only be of that personal experience. I am, necessarily, expressing my feelings about the reality that I created for myself to live in.

When I say here that I created this reality, it does not mean that I consciously created a reality that seems fitting to me. It means that my brain is constantly, subconsciously, assimilating everything that I perceive and all experiences that I go though, and this influences they way in which I experience and perceive everything in the future.

If someone else then finds my work meaningful, it seems that they experienced something in the same way that I did. Through this common understanding of whatever phenomenon we are dealing with, we find some kinship, some form of shared humanity, that makes us realise that we are not alone.

Why does not being alone make us feel better? I can only speculate, but possibly it also has to do with the ancient herd instinct, the archetype mentioned above.

We can call this expression of some phenomenon a poetic image, as it is not an explanation; it is subjective and dynamic. Because our understanding of these kinds of phenomena, like the void for instance, is constantly changing, so the poetic image must also be dynamic and constantly change with us.

This is what makes it so significant when we come across a poetic image that speaks to us. It means that somewhere in place and time, there is someone else who understands something in the same way that we do: "When I receive a new poetic image, I experience its quality of inter-subjectivity" (Bachelard 1994: xxiv). It is this inter-subjectivity that has always taken some of the loneliness and confusion away, that makes you feel part of the 'flow'.

However, a "world that can be explained even with bad reasons is a familiar world" (Camus 2000: 13). Is this perhaps why I have such a fascination with the objects that I draw, and why I cannot stop drawing them? To gain a certain familiarity with the world around me. To explain it in my own terms. To be human and not to search for meaning, but to create it; to be my own provider. "Perhaps we shall overtake that elusive feeling of absurdity in the

different but closely related works of intelligence, of the art of living, or of art itself" (Camus 2000: 18).

The outcome of my drawing then is twofold. First, it is to understand the world around me. Even if I only understand it on my own terms, it is an understanding none the less. Second: to share this understanding. I have concluded already that there is no way of knowing that my understanding is 'correct'. I can only judge it by its effectiveness and by how other people judge it. If I judge it is effective and this is shared by many other people who can relate to my world view, then I know that I am not alone in my current condition. If someone else then finds something that helps them in their day-to-day survival, chances are it will help me as well, and vice versa.

Conclusion

The three chapters of this thesis each perform the following function:

Chapter 1 introduces the reader to a seemingly random selection of texts. In Chapter 2 I start to relate the texts to each other to see what emerges. In the Chapter 3 I relate the emergent knowledge back to the texts, my research process and each other to see what meaning it holds.

Chapter 1

In the first chapter, I find the first-person world view that the philosophical discipline of phenomenology employs particularly interesting. Under *Truth and Reality* I discuss the terms 'truth' and 'reality' and I investigate what bearing these concepts have on our ideas of truth, meaning and experience. In *Life in a Meaningless World* I discuss similar concepts to *Truth and Reality.* I find that the starting point, however, is man's feelings of alienation from the world and not an epistemological investigation. The final section, *Silence and Intuition*, is a discussion that focuses mainly on Steven L. Bindeman's *Heidegger and Wittgenstein. The Poetics of Silence.* As with *Truth and Reality* I investigate concepts such as 'truth' and the various ways to obtain this 'truth', as well as the idea of what we can and cannot know.

At this stage of the thesis I do not yet relate the subsections together, although some of the links begin to become apparent. It is these links that I use to initiate the discussion Chapter 2

<u>Chapter 2</u>

In Chapter 2 I take the subsections from Chapter 1 and start to weave them together to form the following subsections: *Understanding*, *Listening*, *Creating* and *Poetic Images*.

Understanding takes the shape of a short discussion where I bring together *Truth and Reality* and *Life in a Meaningless World* from Chapter 1. This provides a more sound view of the concept of 'understanding' and its bearing on notions of 'truth' and 'reality'. *Listening* compares Henri Bergson's idea of *Concrete-* and *Abstract Time* to that of a *seeing-* and *listening* way of thinking discussed in *Silence and Intuition*, Chapter 1. I link this back to *Understanding* and the concept of 'floating ideas' discussed in *Truth and Reality*, Chapter 1. In *Creation* I look at the idea of human creation with regards to the essential difference between animal and human actions and the texts discussed in *Life in a Meaningless World*. This discussion relates to the idea of the 'poetic image' which forms the last subsection *Poetic Images*. In this section I relate much of the previous discussion to the idea of the 'poetic image', and use it to begin the discussion that forms the start of Chapter 3.

The conclusion I reach in this chapter is that this thesis leans toward a yearning for balance. The texts that I read balance my one sided education in art theory, which allow me to more fully understand my own practical work. Before writing this chapter I did not even know this imbalance existed between my practical and theoretical work. By finding a balance between the two I am effectively 'catching up' with regards to my theoretical practice. I am teaching myself how to investigate not only myself but also the world I live in. I have always been able to do this through drawing, but have never felt comfortable attempting it with a

theoretical approach. I am essentially attempting to close the gap between my practical and theoretical practices.

Chapter 3

In this chapter I use my own artistic practice as a starting point, and as with the previous two chapters, this chapter is divided into subsections: *Capturing Phenomena*, *Working with Phenomena*, *Seeing Phenomena*, and *Drawing Phenomena*.

Capturing Phenomena deals with how I gather information. I discuss the essential difference between a camera and myself with reference to phenomenology. *Working with Phenomena* is an in-depth look at how I deal with external phenomena in my artistic practice with reference to a few specific examples. Various dualisms arise from *Seeing Phenomena*. I relate them to my own practice to fully explain their personal significance. The final section, *Drawing Phenomena,* combines the discussions *Working with Phenomena* and *Seeing Phenomena* to conclude the chapter.

Any specific conclusion that I reach in this thesis is fundamentally linked to temporality. At this point in my career it carries a lot of 'truth' and 'meaning'; at some other point in time or to someone else it might not be as meaningful.

If drawing is blind then the strongest influence is not sight but vision, not the eyes but the mind. The drawings bring together "reason and intuition" (Downs (ed.), et al. 2007; xi x).

I was attracted to phenomenology because of its acknowledgement of a first-person world view. The fact that I am fiercely individual is something that I have always been aware of. The fact that my drawings represent a single subjective viewpoint is, however, something

that I have not been able to put into words until now. This newfound awareness of my own work also explains why I found the writing of Albert Camus so interesting; my work is representative of my own struggle to make peace with the reality that I perceive.

In the section *Truth and reality* I concluded that there can be many truths, and thus many realities. By drawing the phenomena around me I change the way I look at them, the way I understand them, and the way I perceive my own reality. The only reality we know is, after all, a perceived reality. It is possible to change ourselves and therefore our own realities as well.

It is exactly this interaction with my reality that makes my art so cathartic. Not only is a successful expression pleasing to me as the artist; it is pleasing to the viewers as well. This establishes some kind of kinship between viewer and artist. A successful expression not only shows a single perceived reality, it shows a *changed* reality as well. This is how art functions to uplift people other than the artist. If the 'way of seeing' of an artist successfully challenges the 'way of seeing' of a viewer, then the viewer will be presented with a new way of looking at the world

I must just at this stage mention that there are many types of art that operate in very different ways. The discussion above refers to my own work. There are artists who work in a similar way to the way that I do and the discussion can be applied to them, although there are many art forms (visual and otherwise) that operate differently. These art forms are not the focus of this thesis.

Drawing is the perfect tool to manipulate a 'way of seeing'. It has been mentioned that just as drawing bridges the gap between reason and intuition, so it also bridges the gap between

thinking logically about how you see the world, and how you intuitively, truly, see the world. It links these two domains of thought in a way that we can, to a certain degree, control, or at least be aware of how the one influences the other and vice versa.

This is why I never stopped drawing. No other art form that was presented to me in art school had such a strong link to my intuition. This then explains why Camus's work interested me to such a degree. Camus, through his writing, was trying to accomplish exactly that which I am trying to accomplish through my drawing: the attainment of a world view or way of living that is both sustainable to the world and pleasing to oneself at the same time. The question that both Camus and I are trying to answer is: How do I live my life in accordance with the external and internal worlds?

I do not contend that I have found an answer to the above question. As there is no single truth, so there will not be one answer to this question. This question will occupy me until the day I die, and I am strangely grateful for that. Should I, hypothetically, answer this question, I will then lose my will to create. The will to create is the will to change.

But that is not my research question. It is: *Why do I read what I read, draw what I draw, and do what I do?*

In retrospect, as with the previous question, I think the answer will be ever changing and as dynamic as we ourselves are. At this stage I feel that I have, to a certain degree, answered this question. I do what I do to live. I am not happy with mere survival; I make art to feel part of something, to connect me not only with the external world but to some of the other people within it. I am also not happy with a purely logical, reasonable link. I want this link to be mysterious and inexplicable, I want this link to go deeper that just shallow engagement.

There is so much we cannot explain or understand, and I don't see why we should ignore the inexplicable just because it is foreign to us. What we know and understand is, after all, just a small part of what makes us human.

<u>Bibliography</u>

- Theodoropoulou, L. 2011. *Dealing With a Paradox* [Online]. Available:

  http://www.artandeducation.net/paper/dealing-with-a-paradox/ [2011, April 4th]

- Smith, DW. 2008. *Phenomenology* [Online]. Available:

  http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/phenomenology/ [2010, December 12th]

- Rice, DH. 1998. *A Guide to Plato's Republic*. Oxford University Press: New York

  London.

- Bradley, FH. 1914. *Essays on Truth and Reality*. Oxford University Press: London

- Witkin, RW. 1981. *The Intelligence of Feeling*. Heinemann Educational Books:

  London.

- Camus, A. O'Brien, J (trans.). 2000. *The Myth of Sisyphus*. Penguin Books: London

- Boodin, JE. 1911. *Truth and Reality*. The Macmillan Company: New York.

- Bachelard, G. Jolas, M (trans.). 1994. The Poetics of Space. Beacon Press: Boston.

- Bindeman, SL. 1981. *Heidegger and Wittgenstein. The Poetics of Silence*. University Press of America: Lenham.

- *Fiona Apple. Extraordinary Machine* [CD-ROM]. 2005. Available: Sony Music Entertainment Inc, New York. Sy '*Window*'

- Elkins, J. 1996. *The Object Stares Back: On the Nature of Seeing*. Simon and Schuster: New York.

- Marx, C. Engels, F. Braxendal, L (ed.). 1977. *Documents on Marxist Aesthetics: Karl Marks, Frederick Engels on Literature and Art*. I.G. Editions Inc: New York.

- Derrida, J. Brault, PA (trans.). Naas, M (trans.). 1993. *Memoirs of the Blind. The Self Portrait and Other Ruins*. The University of Chicago Press: Chicago, London.

- Downs, IB. (ed.), et al. 2007. *Drawing Now, Between the Lines of Contemporary Art*. Taurus: London.