

**Book 1**

**Drawing as experience**

**Lucy Jane Turpin**

# **DRAWING AS EXPERIENCE.**

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Thesis presented in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree MA in Visual  
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## Abstract

Drawing, as a discipline within in the Visual Arts domain of knowledge is the focus of this dissertation. Herein I pose the question: What happens between my mind, body (hand), and the drawing (as product) that appears on paper while I draw?

Drawing as experience is primary to my practice and to my understanding of the varying processes that drawing encompasses. I relate and investigate these processes to understand my art making as a means of research. In the dissertation I reflect on my own drawing and on the work of the American artist Richard Serra, in particular his installation entitled *Black is the drawing* (1977). In my discussions of both my own and Serra's work I focus on the core devices that orchestrate the materiality of drawing, namely 'blankness', automatic flow and the coming together of intention, gesture and act. The theoretical framework in which I investigate these core devices is mainly provided by the Chilean biologist, philosopher, and neuroscientist Francisco Varela and his notions of human perception, productive action, and creativity or invention. These theories of Varela I employ to frame and develop discussion in the dissertation.

Further concepts that come to the fore in my discussions of drawing as experience, as derived from Varela and the French philosopher Jacques Derrida's writings, include signature, individuation, or characteristic mark making. Individuation of the mark in relation to self-reflexive methodology in art making as research practice is primary to the development of my discussions.

Additional concepts that are key to the dissertation and that flow from self-reflexivity, are self-discovery and self-generating productivity and the notion of self-as-being that the drawing process can bring about and affirm.

I argue in the dissertation that the drawings I generate stem from an automatic productivity that is enabled by the simultaneity of intention, gesture and act. I attempt to explain my understanding of the 'blind' aspect of the drawing process, relying in this regard heavily on the thinking of Derrida. I align my interpretation of his expositions on this phenomenon with the thinking of Varela. Varela accordingly provides clarity on the circularity and unifying function of human perception. The unification of antinomies such as body and mind, inside and outside, and self and life-world, I find, lie at the core of my drawing, which functions as unifying interface.

## Abstrak

Teken, as dissipline binne die Visuele Kuns domein van kennis, is die fokus van hierdie dissertasie. Hierin rig ek die volgende vraag: Wat gebeur tussen die verstand, die liggaam (hand), en die tekening (as produk) wat voorkom op die papier wanneer ek teken?

Teken as ervaring is sentraal tot my praktyk en tot my begrip van die verskeie prosesse wat teken behels. Ek herlei en ondersoek hierdie prosesse om my kuns te verstaan as 'n navorsingswyse. In hierdie dissertasie reflekteer ek op my eie tekenwerk en op die werk van die Amerikaanse kunstenaar Richard Serra, in besonder sy installasie getiteld *Black is the drawing* (1977). In my bespreking van beide my eie en van Serra se werk fokus ek op die kernstrategieë wat die materialiteit van tekenwerk orkestreer, naamlik 'blankness', outomatiese vloei en die samekoms van intensie, gebaar en daad. Die teoretiese raamwerk waarbinne ek hierdie kernstrategieë ondersoek word hoofsaaklik voorsien deur die Chileense bioloog, filosoof en neurowetenskaplike Francisco Varela en sy idees van menslike persepsie, produktiewe handeling, en kreatiwiteit of ontwerp. Ek gebruik hierdie teorieë van Varela om my besprekinge in hierdie dissertasie te omraam.

Verdere konsepte wat na vore kom in my besprekinge oor tekening as ervaring, soos ontnem van Varela en die Franse filosoof Jacques Derrida se skryfwerk, sluit in "kenteken[ing]" [*signature*], individuasie, of kenmerkende merkery. Individuasie of die teken in verhouding tot self-refleksiewe metodologie in *art making* as navorsingspraktyk is kern tot die ontwikkeling van my gesprek.

Addisionele konsepte in die dissertasie wat die tekeninge wat ek genereer stam vanuit 'n outomatiese produktiwiteit wat gelyktydigheid van intensie, gebaar, en handeling. Ek poog om my begrip van die "blinde" aspek van die proses te verklaar, deur staat te maak op die denke van Derrida. Ek bring my interpretasie van hierdie eksposisies op hierdie fenomeen in verband met die idees van Varela. Varela belig beutelings die sirkulere en samebindende funksie van menslike persepsie. Die versoening van teenstrydighede soos die liggaam en verstand, die innerlike en uiterlike, die self en die leefwêreld, ervaar ek, lê in die kern van my tekenkuns, wat funksioneer as 'n versoenende koppelvlak.

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## **Drawing as experience**

### **INTRODUCTION**

#### **Background and research idea**

Drawing is my practice; it is my art making process of preference. I experience drawing as an inexplicable phenomenon, a process that I conduct intuitively and effectively, yet I do not seem to know how I do it and where the knowledge and know-how of doing it comes from. This study of drawing is an attempt to understand the varying processes I go through in the act of mark making, and, perhaps to a lesser extent, an attempt to understand what happens in my mind while I draw. The act of drawing is fascinating as it captures the distinct style of each practitioner and could therefore be said to orchestrate individuation. It is possible, therefore, to identify an individual person's drawing as characteristic of that person's way of drawing. This individuation extends beyond mark making to also manifest in aesthetic, style, and in choice of subject matter, amongst some of the dimensions that drawing can make visible. In other words, my mark holds a specific aesthetic, an aesthetic that no one else's mark hold.

When I draw, the marks and all related decisions I make to generate the drawing seem to happen almost automatically. Intention, gesture, and act seem to happen simultaneously to an extent that it is impossible to consciously distinguish between them or experience them as separate and chronological processes. Another fascinating aspect that this experiencing of the drawing act poses is the impression that what appears on paper is totally

different from what I might have thought the drawing should look like before starting to make it. To my mind, this experience suggests a form of blankness in the mind – a moment where everything seems to disappear from my mind – that occurs between thinking, deciding, intending and the mark actually irrupting on paper.

These aspects of my experience of drawing pose three core phenomena that frame the research idea, providing scope and focus, which I explain below.

The three aspects entail firstly the ‘blankness’ I describe above. Secondly, it entails the apparent automatic flow of drawing and thirdly, the coming together of intention, gesture, and act in the making of a mark.

### **Scope of the study**

I conduct the study in the Visual Arts domain of knowledge, and with Drawing a discipline within this domain.

The scope of the study within Drawing as discipline entails, as it emerges from my research idea above, the ‘blankness’ of mind (as I experience it during drawing), an observation and indeed subjective description that in the thesis, I equate to ‘blindness’, blindness being the parallel in visuality to what linguists call in verbal languages the ‘muteness that dwells in language’, as art critic and curator Catherine de Zegher points out (De Zegher 2003:268). I use the words ‘mute’, ‘blind’ and ‘unthinking’ interchangeably in the dissertation.

'Mute' refers to the origin of language and the human desire to communicate either verbally or by gesture, and consequently developing over millennia the ability to speak, construct words and languages, and conducting speech as forms of articulating meaning. In other words, it could be said that language and humans' ability to speak flowed from muteness, which still is usually accompanied by physical gesture in humans' efforts to make themselves clear or to communicate what they know or understand when words fail them. De Zegher refers to the Italian continental philosopher Giorgio Agambem's explanations of gesture (2003: 268, citing Agambem, 1999: 78): "Agambem defines gesture as the muteness that emanates from "the other side of language" ". Gesture, the core act or even tool that drawing utilizes extensively and essentially, and muteness therefore relate strongly.

Such muteness originally gave rise to the development of speech and language. Gesture remains a potent supplement to speech that enhances articulation. Gesture in speech signifies the muteness inherent to the advent of language. He explains gesture as a form of pre-meaning that has "its speechless dwelling in language" (Agambem. 1999: 78, cited in De Zegher. 2003: 268) (Gunter 2012:57).

I position this muteness in language that produces gesture on a par with the notion of 'blindness' in drawing that also produces gesture. French philosopher Jacques Derrida corroborates such a parallel in his book on Drawing titled *Memoirs of the blind: The self-portrait and other ruins* (1993).

Derrida (1993: 45) states firstly, explaining in metaphorical terms what happens in the artist's mind (and body) when he or she executes the act of making a mark:

In its originary, pathbreaking [*frayage*] moment, in the *tracing* potency of the *trait*, at the instant when the point at the point of the hand [of the body proper in general] moves forward upon making contact with the surface, the inscription of the inscribable is not seen.

He also suggests, in the following words, the notions of blindness and 'blankness of mind' (Derrida 1993:3):

A hand of the blind ventures forth alone or disconnected, in a poorly delimited space; it feels its way, it gropes, it caresses as much as it inscribes, trusting in the memory of signs and supplementing sight. It is as if a lidless eye had opened at the tip of the fingers, as if one eye too many had just grown right next to the nail, a single eye, the eye of a cyclops or one-eyed man. This eye guides the tracing or outline [*tracé*]; it is a miner's lamp at the point of writing, a curious and vigilant substitute, the prosthesis of a seer who is himself invisible.

What Derrida poses in metaphorical and poetic terms – blindness – to explain how the drawing artist shifts pre-meaning to meaning through trace or mark making, I describe above as the blankness of my mind during the act of drawing. Thus, the nature of the relationship between drawing gesture, muteness, blindness and the unthinking (my own version of blindness and muteness) in drawing becomes clear.

The second aspect that delineates my study and that will enlighten me on its processes entails the nature of the generativity that drawing facilitates, namely the apparent ‘automatic flow’ I mention above. I see in this an evident autogeny – a flow from within – characteristic of the process that nevertheless yields productivity and that obviously entails action, culminating into what I perceive to be automatic productivity. I associate this apparent automatic flow with the ‘blind’ nothingness that I perceive to exist in my mind when I draw, both being equally inaccessible without the act of drawing. However, the Chilean biologist, philosopher, and neuroscientist Francisco Varela, provides clarity on the phenomena experienced as automatic flow in his book titled *The embodied mind: Cognitive science and human experience* (1992). I discuss his theories regarding this matter below under ‘Theoretical Framework’. In the dissertation, I investigate and question this perception of production in drawing, with a view to expanding my understanding and producing new knowledge on the subject.

The final aspect that delineates the scope of my study entails the notion of simultaneity. I apply the word ‘simultaneity’ in this dissertation to denote the coming together in the act of drawing firstly what I view on the outside, secondly the mark I make on paper to indicate or describe what I observed, and thirdly what I consciously or unconsciously, ‘blindly’ or ‘mutely’ think and understand when I mark my observation. In Chapter 1, I explain the notion of simultaneity in more detail, because the notion underpins the theoretical

framework that I employ to develop discussion and in further chapters I accordingly relate it to my act of drawing.

All three the above aspects have their roots in perception, positioning the study in this aspect of human interaction with life-world.

### **Problem statement**

From the above I draw as central problem the mysterious, seemingly inaccessible roles of perception and conceptualization in the act of drawing and the shift that this creative act brings about to turn pre-meaning into meaning, or pre-concept into concept. The problem supplicates my main question: What happens between my mind, body (hand), and the drawing (as product) that appears on paper while I draw? The core question bring to the fore the following secondary questions. How can this process be ‘unthinking’ and self-reflexive? What does the ‘blindness’ in drawing that Derrida claims (1993: 3) mean? Why does this process seem automatic or autogenous<sup>1</sup>, seeming to flow forth from body and mind in spontaneous, artless acts?

### **Theoretical framework**

These questions direct me towards the thinking of Francisco Varela and utilising a cognitivist philosophy as theoretical framework for the study, and

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<sup>1</sup> In this thesis I generally apply the words ‘automatic’ and ‘autogenous’ to denote the understandings ‘self-origination’ and ‘auto-origination’ to be enfolded in these words. Autogenous mark making would therefore logically imply ‘enaction’ from within that presents self as ‘being’, rather than as replication or representation (Gunter 2012 Addendum B, p 1).

specifically towards the notion of enaction<sup>2</sup>, a concept that he formulated and validated in his book *The embodied mind: Cognitive science and human experience* (1992). Additional theories that underpin the notion of enaction and how it relates to the processes of drawing include concepts of self-reflexivity<sup>3</sup>, auto-poiesis<sup>4</sup>, unification between body and mind, notions around Self or Selves, gesture and act, representation, and experiential cognitivism. I will by means of bullet points briefly explain each of the above theories, because they frame all further discussions in the thesis:

- Experiential cognitivism underpins the notion of enaction and I rely heavily on the thinking of Varela and the secondary discussions thereof by Patricia Cain, a world renowned drawing artist, in her thesis titled *Drawing: The Enactive Evolution of the Practitioner* (2010) to define these notions and to generate discussion in relation to drawing in

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<sup>2</sup> To provide a preliminary explanation of this concept at this point in the thesis, I cite Francisco Varela directly (1992: 173): “The enactive approach consists of two points: (1) perception consists in perceptually guided action and (2) cognitive structures emerge from the recurrent sensorimotor patterns that enable action to be perceptually guided”. He makes it clear through these words that the notion of enaction differs considerably from notions such as performativity and embodiment, both being in a representationist domain of thinking, while enaction is essentially non-representationist. See my further discussions on page 21.

<sup>3</sup> According to Sullivan, self-reflexive practice, “...describes an inquiry process that is directed by personal interest and creative insight, yet is informed by discipline knowledge and research expertise. This requires a transparent understanding of the field, which means that an individual can ‘see through’ existing data, texts, and contexts so as to be open to alternative conceptions and imaginative options” (2005: 100 – 101).

<sup>4</sup> ‘Autopoiesis’, according to Humberto Maturana and Varela in their book titled *Autopoiesis and Cognition: The Realization of the Living* (1980: xvii), they derived the concept from firstly, the notion of “...the organization of the living, which is autonomy” – hence ‘auto’ as prefix. Secondly, they derived the word from the notion of action (praxis) “... or the path of letters (poiesis, creation, production). The word therefore, as neologism, denotes automatic creative and productive action, such as drawing would constitute. Gunter explains it as follows in relation to drawing: “Without knowing it consciously, the drafter seeks, through idiosyncratic mark making (trait), to resolve a subliminal tension between an ever-elusive self and the possibility of no self at all. In principle, the notion is based in self-specification.” (2012: Add. B: 2). Also see my explanation regarding this on page 28.

general and in more specific terms in relation to my own work. Cain explains experiential cognitivism in relation to drawing as

...that drawing involves both brain and body and occurs within the activity, I started to ask myself, 'how do I think as I draw?' My account is about how I have investigated what it is that I come to know by drawing, and how I have come to recognise that the experience of drawing can make visible our emergent thinking processes (2010: 17)

- To explain and assimilate the notions of self-reflexivity, the self or selves, and the role these concepts play in the drawing process, I consult the work of Graeme Sullivan (2005), an art theorist, Varela (1992) and that of continental philosopher and sociologist Pierre Bourdieu (1998).

Self-reflexivity opens up this path of enquiry, a process that stems from personal interest as well as from creative insight and working with the transparent nature of a drawing process. Thus I will reflect on my research within the drawing discourse and it opens up other new possibilities of understanding my process. From this new understanding further dialogue around the discourse of drawing within my practice becomes relevant (Sullivan 2005:101). As a result I am able to inquire and question my drawing processes further.

Varela asserts that we are in fact made up of numerous selves. He proposes the ego-self, a lasting self in an emotional sense, and the



everyday-self, or the conventional notion of self. The notion of more than one self that is fluctuating and ever changing is the premise of his thinking (1992:64).

Bourdieu asserts that individuals construct the world around them and these constructs are in fact informed by social structures constituting schemes of both perception and appreciation (Mahar et al: 1990).

- The thinking of Varela encompasses the notion of autopoiesis. To understand and relate this concept, I refer to Cain's discussions of Varela's concept in relation to drawing.

Autopoiesis (see Footnote 4 above) as Maturana and Varela define it is a process of autonomous self- organization that is productive (1980:xvii). Cain discusses the term 'autopoiesis' as literally meaning self-creation and this allows a process of production, which is transformative, and regenerating as well as being recursive (2010:49).

- In recent times, philosophers seem to agree on an irrevocable unification between body and mind; resulting in the notion of body-mind. Varela explains that there is a circulatory link between both body and mind that comes through experience (1992:238). Varela cites Merleau-Ponty from his book titled *Phenomenology of Perception* (1962) who

also reflects on this notion of embodiment. Here, I cite Varela in this regard:

For Merleau-Ponty, as for us, *embodiment* has this double sense: it encompasses both the body as lived, experiential structure and the body as the context or milieu of cognitive mechanisms (1992:xvi).

Cain suggests that the body has knowingness<sup>5</sup> yet that we think through the body: “The notion that thinking might not just involve knowing with the head, but thinking through the body” (2010:27).

Art theorist Norman Bryson suggests that drawing is a unified mechanism, driven by hand and mind as inseparable adjuncts. When active, this machine enables a drawing that drives itself (Bryson in De Zegher 2003:153).

- Notions around gesture and act, as well as around representation appear abundantly in writings on drawing. I will specifically refer to Bryson, Newman and De Zegher.

Bryson (In De Zegher 2003:149 - 152) reflects on the notion of space and time and the roles that these aspects play in the processes of drawing. The blankness of the paper symbolizes for the artist an infinite space in which her act of drawing can be continuous and fluid, always

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<sup>5</sup> ‘Knowingness’ denotes the opposite of ‘unknowing’, it implies conscious thought also being present in drawing.

becoming, always moving forward in time. The continuity of the drawing remains unbroken even once the artist stops working on it, living on in viewing time, when viewed by an audience. The line, its progress through space and time which the artist executes with immediacy and which is completely integrated with temporality and space, is a direct actualization of 'always becoming'. As does becoming, this immediacy involves both perception and thought (Bryson in De Zegher 2003:151).

Gesture in itself is an action, an action of the body completely merged with mind. Newman explains gesture as 'other' in the one who produces the gesture – something to be shed as communicative entity, as internalisation that is being externalised. Gesture (as trace in drawing) emerges from this act, yet it is also something left behind that is discoverable (Newman in De Zegher 2003:103).

The drawing act is the very act of the body, the action of the hand, the gesture and this act evolves from a place where conscious thinking is not necessarily present (Newman in De Zegher 2003).

Representation in cognitivist terms entails representing the world in a specific manner through productive actions. Varela also asserts the notion of a non-representationist aspect that is involved in productive

acts, namely that of acts based on internalised representations involving experiential representation (1992:134, 135).

## **Objectives**

The study encompasses three main objectives. The first objective is to investigate the above-mentioned theories in order to meaningfully relate them and ascribe them to the processes of drawing in general.

A second objective of the study is to relate these notions to my own work and to my own experiences whilst drawing, which is not a purely cognitive process, but encompasses more facets of human experience. The subjectively emotional, psychological, intellectual, social, and physical dimensions also come into play when I draw and I believe that these additional dimensions are aligned to intuitive processes that are triggered as a result.

The third objective of the study to engender more understanding of my drawing process by looking and describing my experience whilst viewing the work of another artist, namely the American artist Richard Serra's drawings from his installation entitled 'Black is the drawing' (1977) at the Axel Vervoordt Gallery in Antwerp in 2013 (Figures 1 - 6). This is necessary because it reveals the different approaches and points of departure other than 'blindness' as generative dynamic that drives the act of drawing. Serra's drawings are distinctive in style, which should steer a dynamic discussion. These drawings

of Serra's are exemplary in terms of the immediacy and durationality of drawing, because they reveal experiencing real time and lived space and awareness of spatiality and my viewing body, a notion that I explain in more detail in Chapter 2.

## **Methodology**

To achieve these three objectives I employ three methodologies. Firstly, I create art by means of drawing. I regard and present my drawings as invention, constituting the notion of new knowledge in equal measure to that which conventional research generates. The drawings become autonomous in nature, revealing in terms of process, placing for the purposes of the dissertation, less emphasis on the artefact as object. The drawings constitute an endless reading of the possibility of a non-specific image.

Secondly, to accomplish and directly demonstrate integration between art making and theory, a close reading on the above-mentioned authors' work is necessary. I review the literature that structures mind-theory, selecting salient texts that throw some light on creative acts such as drawing. The purpose of this methodology is to inform the processes of analyses, comparison, and consolidation that the questions I pose above require. These texts constitute existing theoretical information that explains productive practices, such as drawing would represent.

Thirdly, I created a book form that will demonstrate this generative process. The books will also serve to demonstrate the integration of my art making and theory and the reflexive practices I incorporate into my practice. I present my theoretical research in Book I. Juxtaposed to Book I, I present Book II, titled *Writing as Drawing: Drawing as Writing*. This book demonstrates the relationship between the generativity of drawing and writing. It reflects written text and images. In this way, I pose the intuitive processes that generate both drawing and writing against the more analytical academic discourses of thesis writing. Book III, *The Horizon*, reflects an ideological premise for my work, which emerged as collective document to explain perception, viewing and Self.

### **Brief outline of chapters**

Here I provide very brief outlines of those different chapters (excluding this Introduction) that appear in Book I. Chapter 1 explains the theories that investigate the nature of drawing as creative production. In Chapter 2, I discuss my own drawing and relate my experiencing of Richard Serra's drawings in order to further my understanding of my own drawing process. The two chapters will be followed by a conclusion.

### **Personal illustrations in Book I**

The intention not to mark, describe or provide inscriptions to my drawings in Book I is deliberate, as the drawings must not be viewed as separate entities, detached from one another, but rather as something that is wholly and

uninterrupted. The decision to omit inscriptions ties in with the aesthetic that I wanted to project in Book I, which supports and underpins the notion that the book can only be viewed in real time and as hard copy.

## **BOOK II**

### **Writing as Drawing: Drawing as Writing**

I intend Book II to be a self-generating book. Book II is never fixed and ever changeable. Some drawings can easily be shifted to different places in the book, new drawings can be inserted at any time, and others can be replaced with new drawings. In addition to the printed pages, the book contains a number of folded pages (enveloping blankness) to serve as receptacles for inserting drawings. The combination of image and text is a dynamic relationship and specific juxtapositioning of drawings and text enhance this dynamic. In this way I deliberately create communicative tensions between different drawings and their visual grapheme, between blankness and drawn areas, between the meanings of words and the images or marks that accompany them. The assembling of such a book was an organic process and driven by impromptu decision-making, supporting the notion of in-phase practicing and experientiality. The text was written over the two years of my practise of drawing during my studies and continues to evolve. The continuity of its evolvment is significant, because it realizes the continuous flow of sight and viewing. It was built up and constructed tangibly and the placement of drawings is curated in a sense within the text. The construction is both

intuitive and impulsive, realizing the concurrency of these two perceptual processes. This is mirrored in my drawing processes. The tension is rife. It is similar to stream of consciousness writing and often repetitive at that, as is drawing. Drawing shapes itself in recursive flow, yet always somehow differently. An image always comes back to you, hence the integration or combination of different marks, images in the same image. Sometimes I use the same image more than once in Book II, but in different positions, compositions, or combinations with other images or text. The images are not to be read or looked at in any specific manner or order, hence the interlacing of images, which can be viewed from any direction. The intention behind the mirrored or doubled images is telling of that very process. Book II is experiential, it is tangible and chaotic and at times non-sensible. The materiality, its tangibility and tactility of the book and its creation are as important as my drawing in the charcoal medium. Book II is also an extension of a gesture and its becoming must necessarily be channelled and achieved through the process. It is both always becoming and is the vehicle of discovery.



## CHAPTER 1

### The theories that underpin creative production in drawing

This chapter serves to frame those theories that underpin my later syntheses regarding the nature of creative production in drawing. I distil the main concepts, define and explain them in order to understand their application in the drawing process. These concepts entail cognitivist theory of mind, which includes the notion of enaction, simultaneity, and autopoiesis. Bourdieu's theories regarding habitus and field relate strongly in the theoretical framework that I establish here, because they explain social and cultural mediation in productive processes such as drawing would represent. More specifically relevant in drawing are the notions of blindness, self-reflexivity, and the notion of self-as-being through self-originitivity and self-creation, which I also relate in this chapter.

Varela's notion of Cognitivism as a philosophy (1992: 42) is interminably linked to durational experience, which involves circularity<sup>6</sup> as perceptual force that merges body and mind as interface between self and life-world. As interface, circularity facilitates a relationship of creative production such as the act of drawing would constitute. Cognitivism explains such circularity as an ever-evolving and transformative dynamic that sustains development (Varela et al. 1992: 42). In this chapter I relate this notion to the processes of drawing

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<sup>6</sup> Circularity according to Merleau-Ponty (2005: x-xi) and Varela is "...the recognition of this circle opened up a space between self and the world, between the inner and outer. This space is not a gulf or divide; it embraced the distinction between self and the world, and yet provided a continuity between them" (1992:3).

in general and in the later chapters I further discuss it, providing illustrative material from my own drawing as corroboration.

Cognitivism, according to Varela, enfolds the biological and the phenomenological<sup>8</sup>, in the sense that we constitute a live physical body that houses the mind<sup>9</sup>. Varela asserts that the biological body cannot be separated from the phenomenological mind, which is made up of both the conscious and unconscious (1992:173). The conscious and unconscious minds function in tandem with each other during the process of drawing.

Varela explains further that the body and mind as unified entities – body-mind – experiences the world through varying sensory experiences (1992: 48).

Body-mind is responsive and interacts with the outer world. The body-mind is tangible, mobile and ever changing, activating and conducting experience of space and life-world. Gesture is one vehicle of such spatial experience and trajectory. In the process of drawing such gesture becomes visible, demonstrating and illustrating its inseparability from mind and body in the circular forces of cognition, the affective, and understanding between self and life-world.

Bourdieu describes such circularity, which oscillates back and forth, as “...the internalisation of the external and the externalization of the internal”

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<sup>8</sup> The biological is that which relates to the physical body and the phenomenological, being the mind that is made up of consciousness and unconsciousness (Varela et al. 1992: 52-56).

<sup>9</sup> As human beings we live and embody a physical body, we inhabit the world and this body has experience, this body is constituted of a mind, the mind being the conscious and the unconscious which is unified and that of experience.

(1977:72), thus as a recursive process that sustains development and learning.

In the process of drawing, production is a yield of such circularity and it incorporates both the conscious and unconscious minds (Varela et al. 1992: 50-52), both of which direct the drawing. That which comes from the unconscious, constitutes the 'blindness' of drawing (Derrida 1993: 3), the gesture carried by act (De Zegher 2003: 149). The draughtsperson is guided by the gesture of the hand which is 'unthinking'. This 'unthinking' process is a sort of 'becoming'<sup>10</sup>. The drawing discovers itself. In the practice of drawing the process of the thinking mind is completely aligned with act in an 'unthinking' mode. To the draughtsperson it seems as though these two, thought and act, inhabit one another. A drawing is not formed or seen as a picture that appears in the mind before drawing it. It appears as complete invention only through the physical act of making marks, which once made are without exception completely different from any preconceived idea of what they were supposed to look like (Derrida 1993:45) (Bourdieu 1996:180). Hence, the artist's familiar frustration expressed as the drawing being completely different from what he or she originally had in mind.

Such experience further challenges a perception of the inside and the outside as dualities. Derrida's notion of a 'blind spot' – *punctum caecum* – explains a point where the inside meets the outside. He refers to *punctum caecum*:

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<sup>10</sup> Varela states that "Grasping automatically sets off reaction toward becoming, toward a formation of a new situation in the future" and furthermore "Becoming initiates the formation of new patterns that carry over into future situations" (1992:114)

...as itself a mere image, an analogical index of vision itself, of vision in general, of that which, seeing itself see, is nevertheless not reflected, cannot be “thought” in the specular or speculative mode (1993:53).

In drawing the imaginary and that of memory when rendered and inscribed becomes visible. The invisible becomes the visible, a shift that drawing makes possible. More specifically, it can be understood that by marking the invisible, gesture, as it is active in drawing, makes both the conscious and unconscious minds visible. Drawing enables the materialisation of our spatial and lived understanding, which appear physically in the tangibility of the drawing matter, the mark, the material, the medium including the space around drawing, where it takes place.

As Varela states, “In other words cognition is mental representation the mind is thought to operate by manipulating symbols that represent features of the world or represent the world in a certain way” (1992:8). This is poignant in terms of the notion of circularity, the reciprocal paths of body-mind, mind-body. In drawing this understanding suggests self-informative, self-originate dimensions to its productivity, enabling a continual and continuous dialogue between inside and outside, between thinking and ‘non-thinking’ modes. To support this understanding, Newman does not exclude the projective functions of drawing (Newman in De Zegher 2003:103). De Zegher states that drawing is a projection – a pre-planned or pre-scripted version – of both the mental and physical, both of which come from body and that, while drawing is perfectly capable of reflecting accuracy and precision, thoughtfulness and

deliberation, it is also ruled by thoughtlessness (2003:81). 'Projective' drawing, however, suggests a preconceived image in the mind that is drawn, an existing script for what is going to appear on paper, while Derrida's notion of 'blindness' as a dimension in drawing, opposes this notion (1993: 3), or at least proposes a more complex and multi-dimensional aspect that does not completely deny the involvement of the unconscious mind in the act of drawing.

Varela's explanations of the notion of 'enaction' propose unification between projectivity and the unthinking in the drawing act, and he centres this unification in action. Such action would for example also constitute the act of drawing. He suggests that experiential cognitivism is activated through an action, or an act and proposes the term 'enaction' to denote the unification of action, cognition and experientiality as one concept (1992). Enaction becomes a form of enactivism, which, being rooted in the notion of action, interweaves concepts of the brain, mind, production, the environment and body, which to my mind would be an apt explanation for drawing. In support of this, Cain states that "Enacted knowledge derives from multiple locations through recurrent patterns of perception and actions. Focusing on the relational ways in which these patterns interact..." (2010:53). Thus the notion of enaction in terms of drawing relates enacted experience, internalised sense or memory, and the durational appearing of gesture in the very act of drawing.

The nuances of body-mind are therefore multi-dimensional. Action, if interpreted as the act of drawing, enables an activation of surface and space, experience that is durational while it incorporates prior experience, learnt experience and self-originativity. The body-mind is core to the act and enables drawing as an autonomous action, an autonomy that moreover can be solely associated with the individual draughtsperson.

The notion of individuality or characteristic drawing implies the involvement of reflexivity or self-reflexivity. These notions are core to the study of drawing, since they suggest subjectivity and self-generativity as integral to the drawing process.

Self-reflexivity entails the understanding that we draw from internalised structures to perceive the world and conceive ideas. Reflexivity therefore also suggests that the mind turns back on itself to understand the self-as-being (versus the self-as-nothing). It contains the structures that construe self-consciousness and self-awareness, thereby unifying a previously conceived duality between introspection and observation. This understanding relates directly to drawing, where self, drawing act, and object becomes indistinguishable from one another, sustaining the simultaneity I mentioned above.

Reflexivity also allows for subjective reflection upon one's practice as a self-generating process. In the making of drawings one comes with a prior

knowledge to the discourses of drawing, both in terms of practice and theory. Such prior knowledge includes existing and learnt knowledge, which become part of durational understanding. This entails subjectivity in terms of insight and the recursive application there-of in the drawing process. This allows what Sullivan terms a 'transparent understanding' of the field, enabling the artist's ability to 'see through' existing or appearing text and context. As a result the draughtsperson becomes more open to alternative hypotheses (Sullivan 2005: 101).

What follows as a result is a reflection on the combination of these two processes and as a draughtsperson one becomes more open to a "plurality of new views" (Sullivan 2005:101). Through drawing, this self-generative process becomes tactile, tangible, always remaining incomplete on its path of self-discovery. Dialogue is thus initiated through this discovery process, a dialogue as to what came before reflecting on it, and to what one is confronted with in terms of new understandings. This directs the artist in how to proceed durationally. Drawing is thus self-informative and the dialogue between artist, drawing, and world becomes continual and ever evolving. Such reflexivity brings forth the notion of a drawing that evolves through discovery, a fruition of both thought and drawing. It is apparent that drawing is incontrovertibly encompassing, but never enclosed – it never finds closure, nor is it ever settled. Durational processes of evaluation and questioning enable a progression forward, which run along the continual problematic that drawing poses in-phase and can point out the problematic of the discourse of drawing.

These processes of constant questioning and investigation allow for a space that Sullivan proposes as the constant potential of change being present in the act of drawing (2005:101).

Varela argues that the physical body encompasses the self. We are made up of many selves. As we live, we change and we build on experience. It is plausible that one is made up of numerous selves. The Buddhist tradition, as explained within Varela's text, examines experience per se, and proposes five aggregates of being, or existence. These aggregates constitute form, feeling/sensation, perception, disposition, and consciousness (1992:64).

The notion of **form** is representative of the body and the physical environment, which is sensory and is coupled with corresponding objects – that which is visible, audible, tangible, and discernable by smell and taste (1992:64) and engage cognition.

The body is pivotal to these cognitions (as perception, the third aggregate) and space comes to the fore as one relates these **perceptions** to the world. The ego-self (as suggested by Varela) is that one has this body, a body that is sensory and experiences through its senses. **Sensation and feeling** in relation to experience is transitory and changing, both in positive and negative senses. The affective (emotional) therefore also comes into play. Impulse, intention, and perception activate recognition, prompting immediate reaction by ego. Ego and the unconscious constitute **dispositional** formations formed



during the course of living, becoming internalised in the unconscious. Dispositional formation entails habitual patterning, preferences or inclinations, which link directly to personality and this yet again is relational to self-as-being, reflexively turning back on itself to direct individuated action. Habitual practices of personality can change over time, always-internalizing development, growth, change, and new understandings. Thus both personality and the unconscious selves experience growth and change indefinitely. Self-as-being is never fully formed, never 'mature'.

Lastly we have **consciousness** and this aggregate constitutes a culmination of all the other aggregates. Varela goes on to say that consciousness "...always refers to the dualistic sense of experience in which there is an experiencer, an object experienced, and a relation (or relations) binding them together" (1992:67). The self or selves are bound to experience and thus the notion of self is queried and it does become transitory and evolving.

I think what comes to the fore from the above discussions is the multi-logue and negotiation in which the multiple selves engage. With reference to drawing it is implicitly reflexive and continually reflective at that. Drawing activates both experience and these many selves through the subjective practice of the draughtsperson and the drawing.

Strongly aligned with Varela's thinking, Bourdieu suggests that the 'individual' is moulded by social structures (Mahar et al 1990:33) and that "...the

individual existed not just as an individual but as a social product and that a generative principle was at work” (Mahar et al 1990:35). The individual human being cannot exist as removed from social environment and at the same time human beings construct and create social structures within which they position themselves. In this regard, Cain points out that “The practitioner’s self awareness of engaging with the drawing as ‘other’ is part of an evolving process in which patterns of behaviour arise. She/he is capable of dually engaging in the process and of observing that process as part of the engagement “ (2010:55). To capture this understanding, Bourdieu formulated the notion of ‘habitus’ in relation to ‘field’.

Habitus constitutes both internality and externality, implying that the individual constructs the world around them through perception, the affective, evaluation and synthesis, all in themselves actions executed by human beings.

In addition to habitus, Bourdieu formulated the notion of ‘field’. Field implies that society is made up of systems of knowledge and such fields, being forces, networks or systems of knowledge are constantly active and omnipotent in life-world or social space, as well as in habitus, internalised in the form of disposition, memory, and the unconscious, as formed during the evolvment of personal history (Mahar et al 1990:36). Habitus engages in and with these fields, the one constantly contributing to the other’s growth and development. Bourdieu explains this interactive relationship as follows, explaining the inseparable role of action between habitus and field:

One of my lectures at the College is about relations between habitus and field, and how action (practice) is a product of the relationship between habitus (which is a product of history) and field, which is a product of history, and at the same time, a product of a field of forces (Mahar et al 1990:36).

I understand action, practice – such as drawing would constitute – to play the role of unifier, integrating habitus and field to always and actively function as inseparables. In this sense, Bourdieu also explains my earlier explanation of drawing as a productive process that unifies self-as-being and life-world to appear durationally as simultaneity.

I propose what I term the ‘discourse’ of drawing as an outer structure that informs practice in conjunction with personal history or habitus, which we see is informed by outer structures such as education, society, culture, history and so forth I relate this understanding to the experience of the self and selves, a bonding formed in, by and during the practice of drawing. These inter-relationships between selves and life-world (including social structures) are evident and inescapable. We are in fact as draughtspersons informed by social and intellectual and experiential structures continuously. Thus we act and respond as an individual to the structure that encircles the experience, which in this study constitutes drawing.

***Self-creation, self-originativity, autopoiesis***

Cain reflects on the notion of self-creation (2010:49), which I perceive to be closely related to Varela's notion of auto-poiesis. Both put forward the idea of a form of self-organization that is productive (1980:xvi). Hence again we are not without the self, yet it is now associated with an activity of production, and as Cain suggests that productivity is transformative, recursive and regenerating, stating the following (2010:49).

Varela's ideas took me further than simply considering 'thinking within the medium' because he looks at the bigger picture of what cognition entails; he characterises human cognition as being about self-referential and self producing processes (2010:49).

Perhaps what Cain is suggesting here, is that drawing starts as a self-generative process, to become a process of sustained action that also self-creates and necessarily self-informs as it progresses, developing a seemingly automatic dimension to the circularity I explain above. This action of drawing allows productivity and that productivity is self-informative, the action then continues and the process continues to generate.

As I understand it, the notions of simultaneity and circularity propose a continuous multi-logue<sup>12</sup> between artist, drawing, and life-world that is

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<sup>12</sup> 'Multi-logue', rather than 'dialogue', which denotes interactive communication between only two participants, while the situation I describe above constitutes more than two participants that interact back and forth, amassing information recursively and thereby creating the impressions that drawing

unremitting and merged. This multi-logue constantly regenerates and re-informs the artist, the drawing and indeed life-world.

### ***Simultaneity***

The notion of simultaneity in drawing stands in contrast (or even opposition) to the propositions of Alexander Cozens, an artist whose work was controversial during the Eighteenth Century (Bryson in De Zegher 2003:152). Cozens developed a manner of drawing in which he aimed to demonstrate that the drawing process leads and the mind follows. “The agent of drawing admits the process leads and the mind follows: first the material signifier, marks on paper; then, afterwards, the signified, the depicted scene, the nominal referent (Bryson in De Zegher 2003:153). Cozens proposed that in this instant the drawing process is the sole generator in a hierarchical arrangement that poses the line and mark as primary, the artist and life-world as secondary, which denies experientiality as much as temporality. The drawing appears with no mediation by the artist’s personal history as being influential in processing recoveries from life-world. His proposition also presupposes the idea that perception entails we receiving representations from the world around us, which we then process. The importance is then placed on the outside, the material and media as external objects removed from perception. I contest this notion to a large extent. The hierarchy that Cozens proposes can be aligned with “...the broad outlines of Merleau-Ponty’s description of the intending consciousness as *always already in the world*, in the thick of

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partly informs itself, artist informs drawing and vice versa, and life-world informs artist, and vice versa.

material existence, and not as standing apart from matter, in some transcendental vacuum” (Bryson in De Zegher 2003:154). I pose what I term simultaneity, a mutuality that conflates inside and outside, and a notion that possibly enters the region of non-representationist theory, as enaction would constitute, as being involved in drawing.

### ***Representation, non-representation, and enaction***

For the purposes of this discussion, I distinguish between representationist and non-representationist theories only to an extent that throws light on the notion of enaction. The difference between representation and non-representation revolves around the notion, on the one hand, that “...the mind works on representations of the things and features of things that we perceive or think about” (Blackburn 2008: 316). Varela explains it as representation having at its centre:

...the notion that cognition is fundamentally representation. Behind this notion stand three fundamental assumptions. The first that we inhabit a world with particular properties, such as length, colour, movement, sound, etc. the second that we pick up or recover these properties by internally representing them. The third is that there is a subjective “we” who does these things (1992:9).

On the other hand, non-representationist theory poses the notion that perception does not recover pre-given properties from the world; rather, perception entails enaction of the perceiver’s understanding of the world. I understand from these explanations a shift from understanding perception as reflections (representations) of the outside world as locus of perception to the artist as the locus of perception and conception or syntheses of that world. Cognition is not representation; rather, it is enaction, implying that our

understanding of perception – also irrevocably part of the drawing act – must shift to Varela’s explanation there-of:

...the reference point for understanding perception is no longer a pre-given, perceiver independent world, but rather the sensorimotor structure of the perceiver (the way in which the nervous system links sensory and motor surfaces) (1992: 173).

Given Varela’s explanation of enaction, it is possible to align the notion with the simultaneity that I propose in the drawing act. Enaction explains complete merging between inside and outside, between artist, act, mark, and world.

### ***Gesture and temporality***

The enactionist theory also relates in a far more convincing way to gesture, which lies at the core of drawing. Gesture suggests the action of making a mark as being an extension of the body, an action through and in experience, an integral part of perception that demonstrates the inside directly while it occurs. In drawing we experience the world through action, which necessarily involves temporality. Drawing reveals itself in-phase, during the action or act of drawing, directed during its own unfolding and being borne by gesture in its immediacy and simultaneity. Bryson supports this understanding with his words “The drawn line in a sense always exists in the present tense, *in the time of its own unfolding*, the on-going time of a present that constantly presses forward” (2003:149).

Bryson goes on to argue that the drawing is never closed, never complete or finished, since it continues living in the act of viewing. Its immediacy leaves it as an open-ended form of communication – interpretable and never enclosed as the ultimate, uncontested truth.

Bryson aligns the notions of drawing as gesture and act that appears only ‘in the time of its own unfolding’ with the notion of ‘always becoming’ (Bryson in De Zegher 2003:151). The artist tracks her becoming through drawing, the drawing becomes itself, but it is a generative self that is ever evolving and ever changing.

The above notions lead me to understand that drawing merges dualities, but is driven and guided durationally and solely by the artist, the person making the drawing. In the process, because we can now understand perception as being located in the artist, whose drawing mark will therefore enfold the artist’s personal history and habitus.

### ***Conclusion***

In perception, a core player in the act of drawing, the ‘sensorimotor structure of the perceiver’ (Varela et al 1992: 173) constitutes the generative dynamics that are responsible for the irruption and visible nature of the drawing. It enacts the artist’s understanding in a sphere of blindness and muteness, understandings articulate in wordlessness. Rather, understandings articulate in mark as visible and interpretable meaning.



During the act of drawing, perceptual understanding harnesses gesture, enaction, and habitus, sustaining self-originativity in mark-irruption that conflates selves and life-world in simultaneity, affirming drawing as a perceiver-dependent act.

The question arises to whom does the drawing refer back? In the next chapter I pose my own work in a discussion to examine how simultaneity realizes my drawing.

## CHAPTER 2

### My own drawing practice with reference to the work of Richard Serra

*The vulnerability of not knowing what you are doing is always more rewarding than knowing it. Richard Serra*<sup>13</sup>

In this chapter I attempt to discuss the processes I perceive to be involved when I draw, rather than merely describing my drawings. I frame my discussions within the framework I created in the first chapter, applying those concepts to analyse my work. At the heart of this framework lie the notions of circularity, simultaneity and discovery. In the first section of this chapter I discuss my own drawing process in relation to these concepts. A separate booklet, forming part of Book 1, contains my drawings for visual reference. The second part of this chapter entails reflection on the work of Richard Serra – *Black is the Drawing* – where I relate my experiencing of viewing his work.

Of central interest to me is the aspect of discovery in drawing, the understanding that the act produces ‘blindly’ and happens in ‘unknowingness’ in order to bring about knowing. Although it is possible in drawing to project beforehand what should appear on paper, it is also possible to draw without such projectivity. More often than not, these two spheres of generativity interlink and function in tandem with one another. In non-projective drawing, the act yields unpredictably, ignoring or opposing preconceived idea, norm, or ideal, to rather set the artist on a path of discovery that is based in invention.

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<sup>13</sup> [www.axel-vervoordt.com/en/gallery/exhibitions/richard-serra--black-is-the-drawing](http://www.axel-vervoordt.com/en/gallery/exhibitions/richard-serra--black-is-the-drawing)

Like lived experience, drawing becomes fluid and ever changing, confluent with body-mind, gesture, mark, and act.

In such non-projective drawing, the notion of circularity that I discussed in the previous chapter is pivotal in creating my distinct style and practise of drawing, style and practise that, I believe, is also ever self-renewing. 'Self', in this case, refers to two forms of self: the drawing in itself becomes active in its own development and flow, something that is completely merged with the artist's 'self' or 'I'. Through the action and act of drawing I become self-aware and 'self' remains durationally and actively involved. This 'self', according to cognitivist philosophy (Varela et al 1992), comprises multiple selves, all fully and durationally engaged in a productive process such as drawing would constitute. 'I' occupy different states of 'self' – conscious and unconscious selves, for example, which interact in tandem to produce drawn annotation mediated throughout the making process by the varying experiences and environments in which I find myself at any point in time.

The interactivity of the conscious and unconscious selves plays a central role in the irruption of my drawings on paper. On the one hand, there is conscious thinking, memory, decision-making and evaluation involved when I draw, but these processes are deeply mediated and influenced by the unconscious, by habitus as store and internalisation of personal history and disposition. When I draw, I have no rigid pre-plan or preconceived ideas as to how my drawing will unfold as an image that should conform to aesthetic norm or fashion. My

physical body is in synchronization with prior and current lived experience, which together with or in complete merging with mind enables the development of the drawing. Body-mind durationally sustains change, learnt, sensory and experiential constancy and consistency. Each new drawing differs from the previous one although the distinctiveness in style somehow reigns throughout.

The body as much as the mind is inseparable from the action of drawing, both inform the drawing and allow the act of drawing. Hand, mind, brain are parts of the same body and all participate simultaneously in mark making, thereby driving the drawing forward. Distinct style is shaped by hand, the hand belongs to my body and is as integral to body-mind as is phenomenological mind, all uniquely my own and belonging to no other, The mark that this merged entity creates becomes not only mine, but also me – it is I, speaking in the first-person voice.

Reflection or thinking is not excluded from the simultaneity that I describe above – rather, it is necessarily an integral part there-of. Reflection too continually drives the drawing. In the act of drawing, my reflections become visible to an outer world while I simultaneously absorb that outer world. In this way, my drawing process occurs as circularity between internality and externality, an act that reflects on itself while it visibly appears as marked gesture and act, in accordance with Bourdieu's explanations on circularity (1977: 72).

The notion of blindness as it pertains in the context of the drawing act entails the 'emptiness' of the mind during the simultaneity that I describe above. Such blindness also drives the will and intention to see, to make the invisible visible and as such, blindness is another integral part of my process and practise of drawing. I mark that which is invisible as becoming visible. I do not see per se what I want to draw; it is not physically evident within my mind's eye – the understanding that I want to capture becomes understandable only once I mark it. Although the process of drawing happens in blindness (a mind empty of any picture of what is going to appear on paper, seemingly directing the hand in unthinking fashion), drawing makes sensing and thinking visible by means of action and gesture. I, my drawing act, and my drawings are informed by what I sense and will, what I see and have seen, what I read, what I experience in and during the act, activating both thinking and unthinking in simultaneity. The drawing formulates itself the moment I activate the drawing space/surface. This 'thinking' and 'unthinking' in relation to my drawing activate one other.

My drawing practise comprises an evocation and evolvment of the internal to an external space, while simultaneously internalising the external as 'drawn knowing'. Such oscillation between internality and externality, back and forth in its circularity, continues to inform and re-inform itself upon itself. Drawing happens along a section, a certain part of the circle that extends to both inside and outside, drawing together the internal and external as continuity. From this experience flows the necessary involvement of 'becoming' through the act

of drawing and then in distinct yet ever-changing characteristic manner and style. ' The moment I apply the charcoal to the surface of either wood or paper, I am thinking yet unthinking instantaneously, and the gesture of my body and my hand is seemingly guided by itself - it 'becomes' in the act. Beforehand, I have only a vague notion of what kind of mark I want to make, what I would like to insinuate, the sensation I intend to evoke, yet all these aspects are only discoverable in making the mark which coupled with the influences of the medium, usually materialises as new and quite different from any preconceived idea I had about its appearance. Hence it lives; it is durational in its discoverability. I cannot predict or pre-determine its appearance.

These understandings around the indivisibility of the visible and invisible and inside and outside challenge them as dualities. The notion of the unconscious and conscious as duality is also challenged. In drawing, both are simultaneously compelled to the surface as merged vehicle the moment I act and gesture in mark making.

Drawing enables me to shift my understanding of the blind process from the inside out and these dualities merge to materialize in mark making, continuously and vigorously. I draw in response to that 'unthinking' process yet my drawing becomes a culmination of many thoughts on what I would like to draw. What I would like to draw is what is harboured and housed within my memory and imagination simultaneously, it is never definite in nature or

descriptive, but rather a cacophony of images and non-images, emotive and sensory qualities.

Once I draw, I am able to confront my understanding of lived space, that which is inside becomes external to also draw in and figure the space that surrounds the gesture or mark. The white or unmarked surface of the drawing attains as much 'face' as the marked areas and the relationship between the marked and unmarked evoke as much meaning as the drawn areas. In this way I question the surface and format of the page and the tensions that lie therein and also extends beyond the surface, the space around the four edges of the surface. In this way, an unknowing self generates knowing in productivity, shaping itself as much as myself. In more concrete terms, the process can be described as one mark leading to the next mark in constructive flow. All marks form a coherent (or incoherent) whole to signify and suggest movement, tension, emotion, or form that continues quite beyond the frame that the edges of the paper signify.

Varela's thinking about mental representation and the mind representing the world in a specific way (1992:9) relates to my practises in drawing, even if my images are hardly descriptive. Rather, I experience and intend them to be more symbolic of this world and my experience thereof. An understanding of the mind-body, body-mind processes and the continuities they facilitate are therefore primary yet again to understanding the way I conduct drawing.

Self-originitivity and a partially self-informative dimension in creative production become understandable when viewing drawing as a productive act that merges dualities such as inside and outside. Another dualism is of interest here – that between projective drawing and self-originitive drawing (or what is usually termed process-based drawing). Like Varela, De Zegher speaks of both the mental and physical as depictive in drawing, both coming from body-mind, explaining pre-planned, projective drawing as being more precise and able to reflect accuracy (2003:81). This is so, because in projective drawing the artist allows the norms, formulae, and schemata from outside – composition, perspective, stylisation – to dominate the inner voice, the blind, mute nothingness that draws from the subconscious. Although it is never really possible to completely omit either one of these two dynamics in drawing, it is possible to allow one to dominate the other. In effect, the artist engages both in a battle of constant opposition against each other (Bryson. 1983: 117), a battle that in fact generates the drawing, and in which the artist finds some balance between them. It is this balance that constitutes the artist's 'voice' and authenticity or signature. Projective drawing is in fact construct, rather than preconceived image, it is thought and therefore blind in the sense that it is not image. I draw a parallel between Derrida's blindness and projective drawing since it is impossible to divide projective thinking and enaction in drawing.

Finding the above-mentioned 'balance' between projectivity and Varela's thinking around enaction as a form of autogenous production lies at the core



of my own drawing practices. To my mind, 'finding the balance' constitutes unification between projectivity and enaction, another feat of fusion between my drawing practice and 'I', or between body and mind, as it were. I relate my practise to this notion unequivocally. Varela's concept of unification between production, phenomenological experiencing and action (enaction), (1992) is pivotal to my practise. Cain reiterates such unification through the process of drawing, adding to it notions of durationality and the forming of recurrent patterns and relativity (2010:53). This understanding returns my thoughts to 'becoming' through drawing, which explains drawing as a self-generative process that simultaneously affirms self-as-being, a process the artist enacts on the surface and within space. This is how I experience drawing: I draw as an omnipotent self-as-being, ever-becoming, almost unknowingly shaping recurrent and perhaps suggestive thematic or sensory qualities and patterns within my work - as mysterious as they might seem in the instance of creating them.

The mark becomes autonomous in action yet it stems from individuality, a signature that is reminiscent of some reference in each mark, directly producing the core mind-body circularity, which I pose (externalise) and house (internalised) as the maker of my drawings. Thus my individuality and distinct style reveals as self-reflexivity and the questioning that entails this very process. I am constantly able to project into my drawings, holding subjectivity and sensitivity to what I see in the drawing I create, yet at that moment it exists completely independently outside of me. This self-reflexivity activates

both body and mind, my mind is informing my body and the gesture is re-informing my mind. I observe that which I draw, and I concurrently observe my internal response to what I draw. Such self-reflexive response opens up what Sullivan terms a plurality of new views (2005:101). This plurality can then be carried forth in productivity. Such productivity yields discovery through the plurality of new views, and that dialogue is continual and forever on-going. The tactility and tangibility of drawing for me activates thought and recursive drawing. The formulation of my drawing becomes durational in the sense that response and projection happens at the time of drawing and the discoverability unfolds forwardly in time, thus allowing a space for change, as Sullivan suggests.

To integrate and question the presence of the 'self' in my drawing is of utmost importance and I will reflect further on Varela's thinking around the physical body and experience with regards to the Buddhist tradition, on which he reflects and which I find to be quite poignant and relevant to my practise of drawing. I do agree that we are made up of many selves and these varying selves (according to the Buddhist tradition) are made up of five aggregates (as mentioned in the first chapter). We consist of form and that form being sensory, assimilates objects as extensions of sensory experiences, relating indefinitely to the world through perception, bringing us to an understanding of ourselves in space and relative to life-world.

The body in my practise carries this experience. Sight enables touch for instance and relative to drawing the body is indefinitely informative of direct experience with the tangibility of drawing, sensation is then coupled with feeling and feeling I ascribe to the notion of intuition specifically within my practise. Sensation and feeling is too fleeting and ever-changing. Impulse in my drawing process is descriptive of my physical practice as I act on impulse indefinitely and the combination of intuition and impulse is highly significant. The affective, emotional dimensions of the self, navigated ego activate impulse. Ego and the unconscious work together to shape habitual patterning and plurality, which one reveals self reflexively and that is how I relate to the world in a sense. I am, through drawing, able to constantly internalise experience while I at the same time externalise self-reflexively. The drawing that flows from this is ever changing, diverse and always differing from the drawing of others. The processes of drawing enable growth and change in self, a self that does not stagnate. Drawing sustains the notion that the self forms continually, speaking its own language in distinctive yet ever changing style and signature, which develop indefinitely and infinitely.

The last aggregate - that of consciousness - is an absolute apogee of all the above mentioned. I am the experiencer, I experience, and then there is that which binds all together. Self is bound to experience. Drawing is bound to the selves; it is an extension of these selves, never separate from reflexivity and dialogue with selves. Without self (selves) one would not be able to execute drawings. Drawing is too an experience of experience.

Bourdieu proposes that we are moulded by social structures (Mahar et al 1990:33). I certainly know myself to be affected by social and cultural norms, structures, and environments. As artists, we reflect on, inhabit, and align ourselves with or reject certain social norms. As an artist I am able to position myself within these structures. Positioning myself in relation to social structure facilitates my engagement with life-world and a continual acknowledgement of being. Observation is primary in such positioning. It influences one's day-to-day practises as a human being and perhaps more so as an artist.

I find myself encompassing 'habitus', as Bourdieu calls it, as I construct and respond to the world around me through my subjective perception and affective experiencing. However, I do so critically, constantly evaluating and judging my actions also in drawing, thus allowing synthesis to unfold from the productive processes of drawing. Once internalised, the notion of drawing as field emerges as being influenced by complex systems and wide networks of knowledge, which belong to life world, yet already internalised as personal history. Personal history comes into play with temperament, preferences, habit, emotion, the psyche, memory and the unconscious during the act of drawing, all simultaneously involved in what appears on paper and all active participants in continuing to shape personal history (Mahar et al 1990:36). It goes without saying that external structures such as the socio-cultural and knowledge have an active relationship with ways of being. When drawing, I cannot disconnect myself from society, culture, emotion, and the ever-

persistent evolvment of knowledge and understanding. I am unable to deny that I internalise such experience without revelation in drawing. I apply what I know and have learnt unknowingly in the mark I make, as it is responsive to my self/selves and my body, and this is ultimately linked to time. The mere practise of reading and writing is informative and never leaves one, facilitating and shaping the evolvment of knowledge. We embed it in our mind often without even consciously realising that it is happening and being retained in body-mind.

Drawing as productive action never grows stagnant because it shapes the above-mentioned processes of discovery and invention. It is self-transformative, generative and ever evolving. I apply body-mind to paper and what happens when I place a piece of charcoal between my fingers and to the page is 'not knowing' what I intend to draw, just knowing that a force behind my intention to draw exists, the drawing reveals itself as I go along. It is not about what I draw, but more so about letting the process unfold itself and I intuitively allowing it to happen, revealing to me the already internalised aggregates that make up my dispositional selves.

Patricia Cain uses the term self-creation to investigate the processes of drawing and I can call the drawings I draw acts of self-creation (2010:49).

Varela uses the term auto-poiesis to name such processes of self-creation.

Both terms ultimately indicate self-origintivity through production. My drawing occupies this position in its intricacies of generative, transformative drawing.

I am opposed to the ideologies of Cozens where he suggests that the line is the signifier and the mind follows and he poses this hierarchal arrangement (Bryson in De Zegher 2003:153) between the mark, and self in relation to the outer. The notions of enaction and self-creation that I unpacked above explain the inseparability between self/selves, the irruption of line, intent, personal history, life-world, and the complexities involved in productive action such as my drawing would constitute.

In my drawing, gesture is pivotal, its immediacy and temporality crucial to its disclosure. Gesture originates in me, the maker of these drawings, introducing to the drawing my body-mind, personal history, and habitus to initiate in the drawings authenticity and signature. The viewer recognises and interprets, allocating meaning not necessarily intended by me, but nevertheless extending my experiencing beyond the act of drawing.

It was my choice not to conduct a visual analysis of my drawings, but to rather attempt close description of my experiencing of how my drawings come into being. Such close description would, I believed, also throw light on how the knowledge and awareness I obtain and create for myself through drawing come into being. Drawing to me is a way of discovering the world, myself, and my existence in the world. I practice drawing to understand the world and myself in it.

My drawings sit on the cusp of many diverse interpretations and yet at the same time they are often not definable in form and I do not intend for them to be so. I mediate and work discursively, self-reflexively and subjectively. I do not look for resolve in my drawings – they are never complete, never final, and never absolute as truth of any kind. The circularity that cognitivism explains as unifying interface between inside and outside, the notion of enaction involved in such fusion, enables an understanding of the unification between mind and body as body-mind. I understand, therefore, the processes of discovery and invention that drawing facilitates. Once revealed, my drawings continue to exist independently outside me, but they will remain recognisable as mine, because they also carry my distinct style.

### **Richard Serra – *Black is the Drawing***

#### *Experiencing Serra's drawings*

I experienced Serra's Black drawings in Antwerp in 2013 at The Axel Vervoordt gallery. The exhibition consisted of 3 panels installed in the gallery in such a manner as to relate a defined relationship with space and certain architectural features of the gallery. Experiencing, seeing such drawings brought much thought to my own practises. My first hand experiencing of these drawings entailed real time and lived space, a manner of experiencing them that is different from seeing the drawings as reproductions in a book.

What immediately came to mind when I entered the Serra exhibition was the enhanced awareness of spatiality. The space around his drawings, and by extension the space I occupy as a viewing body, became as figured, as weighty, as the drawings themselves. The drawings were completely and autonomously present, all encompassing, and silent. The enormous black fields of mark making drew me in fully and I was silenced and mute while viewing them. Their poetry silenced my mind.

Serra states

What interests me is the opportunity for all of us to become something different from what we are, by constructing spaces that contribute something to the experience of who we are ([www.axel-vervoordt.com/en/gallery/exhibitions/richard-serra--black-is-the-drawing](http://www.axel-vervoordt.com/en/gallery/exhibitions/richard-serra--black-is-the-drawing)).

His words are rather salient as to the direct experience of the work. They open up the notion of autonomous experience. Serra certainly inculcates a drawing and the processes that revealed it immensely, enabling such a strong hold on the viewer. One cannot but act within the space, becoming intensely aware of one's own presence in front of the drawings, literally becoming engulfed by the drawings. I experienced the sense that there was not enough space for these drawings to exist in. This feeling made me completely aware of the act of making marks in drawing, those laborious process that body-mind conducts through hand and eye. Serra also suggests in such labours the presence of an autogenous drawing process:



He just draws, as an act, referring to nothing but itself as a process of seeing and structuring space. The only thing revealed by the material residue of this act is the moment of making the drawing itself ([www.axel-vervoordt.com/en/gallery/exhibitions/richard-serra--black-is-the-drawing](http://www.axel-vervoordt.com/en/gallery/exhibitions/richard-serra--black-is-the-drawing)).

The action of drawing is evident, and the mark is robust, the black is black. Serra's drawings evoked in me reflection on the choices I make in using colour and my affinity for certain colours. As such, I have an affinity for black, because it has such vehemence and is non-referential and yet occupies space. I would like to align my practise with the above quote as I would like to think that viewing my drawing does exactly what I describe here, the revelation being that of the process.

I received a text discussing the black drawings and what came to the forefront is the distinction between mark and gesture. The text states that Serra makes marks not gestures.

Both gestures and marks are the material expression of an idea. The difference however is how this idea comes into being. A gesture is grounded in and always biased by one's personal history and the emotions linked to it. It is an idea that reveals the subjectivity of person. A mark, on the other hand, reveals how a person really thinks. A mark is not an idea filtered by the existing conventions, traditions or frames we use to structure our lives with; it does not follow the logic of language nor of image. Mark making is a way of thinking out of time, only present in experience, here and now. It has its own, unstable logic and allows intuition, the perfect blend between

reason and feeling, to enter in the development of ideas and in the process of making an artistic decision. A mark is made in a dimension between the conscious and the unconscious. It is immediate and direct; it's entirely unpredictable and creates its own, ever-revisable order of things. Marks reveal fragments of the truth hidden in the natural logic of matter and process

([www.axel-vervoordt.com/en/gallery/exhibitions/richard-serra--black-is-the-drawing](http://www.axel-vervoordt.com/en/gallery/exhibitions/richard-serra--black-is-the-drawing)).

In my opinion the text conveys discrepancies in its explanations of how thinking occurs – as separate from gesture and its intimate relationship with body-mind. The mere notion of an idea in its primary form, as contained within mind, and as part of the phenomenological mind, which draws on both the unconscious and conscious, indicate thinking as emanating from body-mind – a unification that dispels distinction or division between body and mind as separate entities and by extension of mark and gesture as being separable from each other. The notion of body-mind also draws together mark and gesture as inseparable. Thinking suggests productive action. I would like to point out that in my opinion thinking in itself comes from a subjective body-mind. As we have seen, the mind informs the body and the body informs the mind in an unbreakable circularity.

Perhaps what is important here is that the mark reveals durationally, in-phase with thinking and rethinking. The result of Serra's drawing process is materialisation of thinking as action during the act of drawing. Meaning and signification is centred in the result.

What is crucial in what I saw in Serra's drawings was a phenomenological and encompassing experiencing of mark and gesture and for me it opened up a questioning of space and its discovery in drawing and the viewing space as silence and muteness. I had to realign myself with the drawings on different junctures, I had to attune myself to all perceptions, and I had to move around as the light was hitting the drawing. The drawing brought both balance and imbalance to me as the viewer. Serra activated space in duality. Tensions existed and projectivity came the fore. The maker in a sense becomes irrelevant and the drawing is what existed in its absolute monumentality and autonomy.

Serra's drawings open up much complexity and reaction in experiencing it and in the viewing of it. His work reiterates the point at which drawing becomes ever living and ever evolving.

Mark for me carries distinct style; my mark carries the personal history of my body-mind, my subjectivity and sensibilities. Perhaps Serra's marks more so become non-gestural, as the mark becomes an encompassing blackness.

Serra's work in my opinion possesses the power to bring about numerous emotional qualities in response to the work as a viewer. The action of drawing confronts you, as does the sense of space he interrogates and propagates outwards towards the viewer through these dense mass black drawings. His mark is indeed significant and the process of that mark evident. The experience is double edged through both the maker and viewer

Serra's drawings are in a way analogous to the experience of drawing itself. Both viewer and artist constantly try to retrieve their balance in physical and conceptual space...Drawing becomes another way of thinking. It's a non-linguistic, experiential way of structuring perceived space

([www.axel-vervoordt.com/en/gallery/exhibitions/richard-serra--black-is-the-drawing](http://www.axel-vervoordt.com/en/gallery/exhibitions/richard-serra--black-is-the-drawing)).

## ILLUSTRATIONS

Richard Serra

'Black is the drawing'

Axel Vervoordt gallery  
Vlaeykensgang Oude Koornmarkt 16  
2000 Antwerp  
24.10- 01.12.2013

All the drawings below are untitled, variable in size, paint stick on Belgian linen, unless stated as otherwise below the illustration.

<http://www.axel-vervoordt.com/en/gallery/exhibitions/richard-serra--black-is-the-drawing>



Figure 1: *High vertical*. 1977. Paint stick on Belgian linen. 388,5 X 101,5 cm.



Figure 2.



Figure 3



Figure 4



Figure 5





Figure 6 (detail of Figures 4 & 5).

## **CONCLUSION**

In conclusion, I articulate what I have learnt through writing this thesis in an attempt to answer the original research question. I have amassed personal writings and read many theoretical writings to try and underpin that in my drawing processes to which I cannot specifically answer. What is drawing? What happens when I draw? How do my marks appear on the outside? I have gained, through this thesis, much insight through those theories that describe the processes that drawing can encompass. Here, I present my syntheses of all the central concepts that the thesis deals with in relation to my experiences during the act of drawing.

### ***In-phase experience***

The experience, which I am attempting to describe by one tentative approach after another, is very precise and is immediately recognizable. But it exists at a level of perception and feeling which is probably preverbal- hence, very much, the difficulty of writing about it (Berger 1980:193).

Berger's words from his essay in *About looking* titled Field (1980) describe his perception of the shifts between the preverbal to the verbal, or the pre-conceptual to the conceptual. He confronts the reader with the ephemeral nature of that 'very precise' moment, posing a paradox that underpins its ephemerality and that complicates understanding and articulating the processes of drawing in verbal or scientific terms. What is core to his thinking on drawing is in-phase experiencing, which also positions the drawing act as

autogenous, an act that accesses the pre-verbal, or pre-conceptual - the muteness from which language springs (Berger 1980:193). I find his words to be salient and completely applicable to my own drawing practises.

In-phase experience as core generative dynamic in drawing also supports discovery and invention as the outcomes of the practice as research (rather than emergence) (Sullivan 2005:101). Drawing is, as such, a continuous action that relates the flow of experience as it happens, a direct irruption on paper of body-mind. The experience not only extends from the artist to the viewer, but it continues to live on, as an autonomous experience that switches to the viewer during the viewing of the drawing.

### ***Body-mind***

I understand now that the above-mentioned experientialism in drawing necessarily involves both body *and* mind as unified entity, that it cannot relate only by means of the body or only by means of mind. Gesture, as pre-verbality, can appear on the outside through both thinking and physical acting, and both spring from mind and body. The notion of 'body-mind' as source of gesture and act convinces as merged duality that underlies the act of drawing.

### ***Self-originativity and distinctive style***

Body-mind yields gesture and thought, both underscoring trace and the mark of the artist. Trace, then, is self-originative, producing distinctiveness in style, signature, or characteristic manner – a dispositional schemata (*habitus*) for

visualisation as much as for verbalisation. As discussed in previous chapters, by distinctiveness in style I refer to aesthetic paradigm as much as to mark making and unmarking and all the complexities of the schemata that underlie these drawing acts. All these aspects play forming roles in my own drawings and carry the visibility of my way of working. This distinctiveness in style is consistent in my drawings, even though I render it often unknowingly and even though one drawing differs considerably from the next. Gesture as pre-verbality and as autogenous uttering underlies such 'unknowing' and also forms the basis of the generativity, invention, and creativity taken for granted in art making.

***Generativity: circularity and projectivity***

In order to understand and articulate the nature of my own drawing processes, I investigated two phenomena in drawing, both framing the generativity of drawing. On the one hand, artists such as Cozens (Bryson in De Zegher 2003:153) (Derrida 1993:2) pose the primacy of the mark, with the artist and life-world as secondary in the generativity of the drawing act. On the other hand, Varela poses an inclusive and non-hierarchical circularity of perception that draws body, mind and life-world together as merged participants in the generative act of drawing. It is in this second option where I have found myself through this process of reading and writing. In conclusion, I can say that my drawing practice positions itself in line with Varela's theories concerning such circularity between mind, body and life-world, all equally involved in the productivity that the act of drawing upholds.

### ***Discovery and invention***

The notion of discovery pertains in my drawing, an understanding that has unfolded through this reading. Within this framework, I have acknowledged the simultaneity of both the unconscious and conscious and the accompanying responses of my body when I draw. I understand that these components are active in a sphere of unknowingness during the process of drawing – in other words that they become so internalised that one uses them without knowing that one does. The labour of drawing, looking, thinking, and searching carry the unfolding of any one drawing, turning each drawing into a new process of discovery that never knows its outcomes until they happen. Discovery, in this context, comes from an ‘unthinking’ process. It becomes, happens or irrupts through the gestures of a mute body-mind that wishes to communicate meaning. While my hand draws, each unknown mark informing the next, I create a circular multi-logue that continues to oscillate back and forth between outside (life-world) and inside (body-mind). Hence even the thinking mind becomes through an ‘unthinking’ mode, which is uttered through an act – in the case of drawing, the acts of marking as much as unmarking. From this circularity, which is never complete, never resolved or enclosed, a process of learning is integrated into my practise, enabling further development and flow in my drawings. The materialisation of the phenomenological mind being that of both the conscious and unconscious and the biological body is made evident through this ‘act and gesture’ of drawing.

I understand that it is the act of drawing as productive action that not only drives the unfolding of the drawing, but also positions my work as non-projective drawing. Before starting a drawing, its possible outcome or finished appearance never is in absolutely defined form in my head, to then be projected onto the paper. Rather, the drawing evolves from a series of in-phase and impromptu decisions that the actions of drawing propose, create or stimulate durationally. My actions then allow the production of drawing to unfurl, expand, amass and develop. These tandem actions between the mind and the body represent a fascinating process that orchestrate shifting from the invisible to the visible, from muteness to visible articulation and meaning, from the unconscious to the conscious. Drawing allows for such shifts to happen, mediated by emotion, the psyche, memory, imagination, sensory awareness, personal history, learning and knowledge – and the drawing mark is the materialisation of all such mediation.

### ***Inseparability***

Drawing facilitates understanding of life world and my engagement in it, as well as my inseparability from it. Drawing, in other words, interfaces between life-world and me as drawing artist to affirm and exercise our unification.

Drawing interfaces between inside and outside to meld the two as inseparables, spanning real space (outside) and the myriad spaces that the intellect constructs (inside). As such, I find the notion of 'space' in my drawing to be compellingly significant.

## ***Space***

The spatial understanding that develops through drawing leads to understanding the role of self-reflexivity in drawing, and the core role that the self plays in its processes. The continuity that a circular understanding of space upholds is mirrored in understanding the continuity of Self from the inside to the outside and back again in a circularity that turns back on itself. This self-reflexivity is encompassing in drawing and unifies observation, drawing, and the concurrent processes of introspection, as well as internalisation and externalisation there-of in the form of drawing. My mind continues to turn back on itself to further my understanding of what it is I draw and the processes that happens while I draw, sustaining the self-origintivity of drawing.

## ***Self-origintivity and multiple dialogues***

Self-origintivity, with its generative facilities, is core to my practise of drawing, and the multiple dialogues that happen while I draw are persistent. These multiple dialogues between the self, the drawing as object, drawing as act, and life-world involve processes of constant and chaotically occurring evaluation, introspection and projection, observation and a questioning, to name but a few.

## ***Invention***

Added to the above conclusive observations, I must raise the notion of invention. The notion of invention is both profound and pivotal to the practice

of drawing. As the mark begins, when it comes to life on the surface, it is invented at each moment of its irruption; it has a life of its own and is like no other mark prior to its particular probes of discovery, thereby assuring non-projective drawing as a process of constant renewal rather than one of mimesis. It goes without saying that I invent what I draw in this sense. As act of invention, each drawing displays individuation and signature that does not stagnate. The notions of self-generativity and self-originitivity that the thesis begins to probe support the notion of non-representational and inventive processes of direct and autogenous irruption that in productive activities such as drawing would not sustain stagnation.

### ***Tension***

The above understandings lead to understanding the tension that is persistent within my drawings without me deliberately, consciously or intentionally trying to inundate my drawings with such tension. I understand that such tension originates from the 'unbeknownst' in myself, the unconscious and invisible. The physical tension of the hand is also the visible irruption or appearing on paper of deeply internalised and unconscious tension. I think this is pertinent to my practise of drawing, becoming visually evident in the execution of my drawings as a result of the simultaneity that perception brings forth in enaction. My conscious and unconscious are continually aligned through drawing with this tension. The conscious dimension of relating such tension is based in my affinity for instigating it on the surface of the paper through both techniques of applying the charcoal to the surface of the page as well as



working with the mark. The tension that I accomplish as such draws in the space around the drawing.

### ***Multiple selves and difference***

The self with regards to circularity as discussed in Chapter 1 extends into the notion of more than one self, of many selves, a notion to which I ascribe. I regard my being as an amalgamation of many selves, and these many selves are made up of many personal imaginings, memories and experiences which change form and develop day to day, and thus being ever-evolving, never static and ever-changing. To expand on the notion of multiple selves, Bourdieu cites George Sands as follows:

Among the numerous variations on the theme of compossible existences, one remembers this passage from a letter from George Sands: ' I do not experience as you do, that sense of a life, that is beginning, the stupefaction of an existence freshly unfurling. It seems to me on the contrary, that I have always existed! And I am possessed with memories that go back to the Pharaohs. I see myself at different moment of history, very clearly in various guises and occupations. My present self is the result of all my vanished selves (Bourdieu 1996:27).

Closely related to the notion of multiple selves is the understanding that experience is different from person to person. We amass experience over time, store it in memory, internalise it in habitus, and constantly build anew on previous experience. We experience and we carry it with us. As such, the self

and many selves are consistently in flux, a phenomenon mirrored in drawing. The Buddhist tradition as discussed by Varela (1992:64) examines this experience per se and in relation to form as representation of the body and the physical environment. What is elementary in terms of form in drawing is the activation of sight - sight not only in what is rendered, but also inclusive of the mind's eye. Drawing also activates touch, relating tactility as much as visibility. In my practice I associate tangibility not only with touch, but also with feeling. This is where intuition and the affective dimension of perception surface, resulting in response and impulse. I perceive impulse and intuition to become operative through touch, flowing from body-mind into the act of drawing

### ***Intuition and impulse***

Efforts to describe the processes of drawing strongly resemble efforts to describe intuition or intuitive response. Claire Petitmengin-Peugot (Varela et al 1999:46) explains that one has to relive an action in order to explore it and one has to 'think-through' an experience to remember it. Only once thought through, it is possible to verbally articulate experience and intuitive understanding. The same is true for drawing and the distinction she draws between experience and action clarifies the nature of each. Both processes unfold in drawing and both give to drawing immediacy in discovery. The above finally convinces of the subjective nature of drawing and of the understanding that "... intuition is a mode of knowledge deeply anchored in the body..." (Claire Petitmengin-Peugot in Varela 1999:47).

I conclude that body-mind, with its facilities of both intuition and intellect, is the primary mainstay of drawing, the place from which its processes and processing flow. Closely placed to intuition and intellect, is impulse. Drawing also utters impulse, which materialises in and through mark making, through gesture in its entire mute unthinking irruption. Impulse also sits on the never-ending paths of circularity, folding back on itself to express a multiple selves. Each mark is an impulsive, unthinking mark, appearing as body-mind guides the drawing and as the drawing talks back to the selves.

### ***Habitus***

The concept of habitus leads me to understand that life-world and the personal history we amass in our inseparability from life-world mediates during creative processes such as drawing. Drawing serves as interface in our internalisation of externalities and externalisation of internalities. I am able to, and do, construct the world around me through my perception, my perceptions being inclusive of the affective and evaluative dimensions of cognition, all of which is uttered in and through drawing. Drawing enables the visualisation of this conflation. I am able to make visible to the viewer those systems within the society or societies of which I am inescapably a part and in which I am active engaged. My personal history constitutes the internalisation of such society and my drawings the externalisation there-of.

These internalisations enable me to create in my drawing different discourses that are also inseparable from my vision and understanding of life. My work is

informed by those structures of knowledge that I have encountered over time, both theoretical systems and systems of practise. These systems feature for example as influences in my drawing, as appropriations or as assimilation of learning, observing, thinking, remembering, knowing, sensing and all possible forms of internalisation. How I orient myself in relation to drawing is an issue that has emerged from this process of writing. I understand now that I am not separate from experience, whether past or present experience of any nature

Drawing allows me to locate, position and orient myself in this life-world. It brings more understanding to how I experience that which is around me, and within me. As a result, I know that I am ever becoming, constantly discoverable and, like my drawing, never static or stagnant. The images I make are not identifiable as any recognisable form true to reality. They do not represent any one thing in their specifics. Rather, through drawing I am able to mark multi-dimensional meaning.

### ***Intimacy***

As such, my drawing allows for an intimacy that draws in body-mind and medium. The self-discoverability involved in such 'drawing in' is unknowing and magical. In my mind intimacy comes coupled with a form of distance and the distance for me is when the drawing continues to live autonomously, as objects in the public domain, to be perused and experienced by a viewing audience. Intimacy and distance is paradoxical, yet both retain presence in drawing. The intimacies that characteristic mark denotes in drawing, trait and

authorship remain evident to the viewer - one is able to recognise a distinct style immediately – but the viewer observes and experiences the drawing from his or her own vantage point and perspective, maintaining the distance that the artist demands.

Distinctiveness in style is ever evolving and go through varying states of transformation during its unfolding. Distinct style continues to develop and change, intoning the presence of multiple selves in the drawing.

The drawings I make in a sense become self-portraits. No single mark on its own can necessarily be ascribed to me, but a culmination or amassment of my marks read as characteristically mine, conveying my particular aesthetic as visible language, and by extension, me. Yet, at the same time, I am able to reflect back on my mark making and know that it carries my signature, my characteristic manner of creating drawings in which both marking and unmarking figure in equal proportions to one another to effect tension and meaning. Although my subject matter can be completely ambiguous, whether the drawings I produce hover between being abstraction, representation or non-specificity, they persist in housing my presence, a portrait of my presence. Embodied in my mark is self-referring temperament as much as traces of memory, sense, and body.

***Presence and absence***

Compared to analytical or projective drawings, my work is subjective and perceptual, conducting itself along unknown paths of discovery. I believe I am present in my drawings; that they do not efface the multiple selves, but rather speak in a first person voice – the ‘I’ irrevocably present. I am inside the drawing, in a sense, as opposed to leaving myself out, as I would have, were my work more analytical, clinical, or merely descriptive of a physical ‘reality’. I believe that to ‘be inside’ one’s own practise and experience of drawing comprise a dynamic that does not exclude analysis – namely that of constant critique and questioning, comparison, confrontational engagement with self, self-evaluation and the critical viewing that one applies when viewing another artist’s work. Part of this dynamic too is the persistence of durational experience, continually provoking similar processes of self-reflexive evaluation, projection and questioning. As such, habitus also carries self and experience into the reading of other drawings, always implying subjectivity in analyses and in judgement. Inversely present and undeniably embedded in the analysis of other drawings, is temporality, simultaneity and experience.

***Serra and space***

The drawings of Serra were especially informative in this regard. At first glance, they seem to stand in stark contrast to the appearance of my own drawings. Yet, my experience of his drawings revealed as being totally engulfing, evoking in me an intense understanding of space and a sense of the unifying functioning of space. The sense of space his work provoked for

me, and the way in which I incorporate that sense into my drawing, underpins my understanding of space as omnipotent, as being everywhere – inside as much as outside. Serra's drawings forced me to question my own production of drawing and the understanding such production activates in and around the action of drawing. I became acutely aware of the magnitude of space, the space that can become activated and the silent space within drawing, that mute and blind space. Serra's drawings offer autonomy and the poetry of instantaneous irruption. The drawings stimulated introspection during viewing and allowed me to perceive space as completely engrossed in the drawings while extending outwards around me. His work revealed other practical devices such as light and sight and the play between the two. I also questioned whether the drawings indefinitely refer back to the artist. While viewing his work, I formed the opinion that his drawings refer back to self to reveal his presence even in his obvious absence. I believe the same is true in my own work, a belief that this thesis underpins.

### ***Writing as drawing; drawing as writing***

The methodology of self-reflexive research that I apply in my art practices as much as in this thesis reveals both these forms of research as inventive, both conducted along paths of discovery by my own presence in its materialisation. In my drawing, I impose very little, if any, control. The body-mind draws, generating new marks upon each new mark. Thus, I hold authorship in my mark making and it cannot be ascribed to any other person.

The notion that drawing can orchestrate the shifts from the unconscious to the conscious urged me to explore the same potential in writing. Both in my drawing and in my writing I strove to create a quality of stillness that emanates from employing stream of consciousness. I see this text and its unfolding as a drawing. When one 'renders' writing it is not always attuned to making sense at the first reading, yet there might be some meaning and poignancy in its naivety or inception. Like the artist, the author might sometimes generate meaning intuitively, bearing fruit that materialises as being far removed from their inception.

Writing too is an action that you do without seeing; you don't see the words in your mind before writing them down. Rather, you ascribe words to meaning, as you ascribe marks to meaning. Words bring about vision or non-vision, for that matter. Hence the poignancy in writing as drawing, or drawing as writing.

### ***The Horizon***

The third document of this thesis investigates the notion of the horizon as ideological premise for my work. We locate ourselves in relation to a line, namely that of the horizon. Conversely, the horizon in a sense allows an orientation of the self in relation to life-world. To explore this idea and to understand the difference between a number of peoples' different ways of understanding themselves in relation to the horizon, I asked a number of people to describe the horizon in three words. What came to the fore is that most people related their perception of horizon as different from one another,



yet all basing their understanding of it in perception. , I got the impression that although we all have perception in common, we apply it as individuals and that we all construct our own reality (of which ourselves in relation to the horizon is a part). It is still originitive from a pre-verbal blindness, and the horizon becomes the line to which we align ourselves to maintain balance and uprightness. The meaning and perception of that the horizon line leads one to many other junctures and thoughts, discoveries and orientation with space, whether inside or outside the self. It is a line that can be extended out into infinity, as does the document. The horizon is something that we can never reach, one can never explain it wholly it is infinite like the open-endedness of drawing, the viewing continuous and infinite, it lives outside of oneself. The document itself becomes a drawing in a sense. A drawing drawn by others.

There is much difficulty in describing the indescribable.

## **Postscript**

Gesture exists before language and continues to be present in language. The body has its own way of gesturing, or of expressing itself, thereby immersing mark making with distinctiveness in style and rendering drawing as a gestural language. As such, drawing can perhaps be seen as another communicative device that, like the spoken languages, springs from gesture, hence its intimacy with the self. For me, as an artist, drawing is infinite in its reach.

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**illustrations**



















































