Drawn Encounters, Complex Identities

A two day conference examining drawing as a means to document, encounter and exchange experiences of place and cultural identity, in the context of travel, diaspora and the colonial and post-colonial histories of Australia and the UK.

Date: Wednesday 17th and Thursday 18th September 2008
Venue: The British School at Rome, Via Gramsci, 61 00197 Rome, Italy

Jordan Baseman (UK); Prof. Andrew Benjamin (Aus); Dr. Tony Birch (Aus); Geraint Evans (UK); Prof. Stephen Farthing (UK); Morgan O'Hara (It / USA) ; Prof. Catherine Elwes (UK); Nuala Gregory (NZ); Melanie Jackson (UK); Dr. Tom Nicholson (Aus); Zara Stanhope (Aus); Jan Svenungsson (Fin); Dr. David Thomas (Aus); Paul Thomas (UK); Prof. Marcus Wood (UK); Prof. John Welchman (USA); Caroline Williams (Aus).

Drawn Encounters, Complex Identities is a jointly hosted conference by The Centre for Drawing UAL, London, and the Faculty of Art & Design, Monash University, Melbourne. The conference brings together a range of international artists, critics and curators to focus on cultural interaction and exchange in fine art, with particular emphasis on the methodology of drawing.

Drawn Encounters, Complex Identities developed organically from a number of residencies, exhibitions, symposia and exchanges between researchers in The Centre for Drawing and their Australian counterparts about the nature and value of drawing as a means to document, encounter and exchange experiences of place, landscape, location and identity. Across the two days, the conference will develop these themes through the examination of the principles, processes and trajectories that might be extracted from traditions of drawing in the particular context of travel, diaspora and colonial and post-colonial histories between, although not exclusively, the UK and Australia.

The conference theme addresses drawing as a form of data collection in several contexts and as a means for artists to record and understand the world as they move through it. Drawing was central to the image production in colonial history, notably the early history of European invasion in Australia, as Europeans used drawings to record their first encounters with unfamiliar cultures and environments. Additionally, drawing as a mnemonic process presents the context of colonial history in which the encounters, conflicts and displacements that occurred through colonialism made memory both more critical but also more complicated. Drawing was a way for Europeans to create visual storehouses of their impressions of new places and also of the European environments they had left behind (John Glover being exemplary of both of these mnemonic functions of drawing). For indigenous Australian artists like William Barak, drawing was a way to record historical events and cultural practices profoundly disturbed by European invasion. Significantly, in both cases, drawing is the function of an encounter: a practice in which memories

and new impressions, but also different visual languages, are brought into relation with one another.

Drawn Encounters, Complex Identities also acknowledges that in the current time, new modalities are emerging in the field of drawing, as well as the visual arts and contemporary culture as a whole, in response to the increasingly complex identities described by Post-Colonialism and Globalisation. Such modalities potentially signify a shift in the artistic languages used, as a consequence of the alteration or realignment of the identity of the author. The conference hopes to trace those emergent structures, through the critical examination and comparison of contemporary cultural production in drawing and the visual arts from both the Northern and Southern hemispheres.

The British School at Rome provides an excellent venue for the conference, and as part of the international network of foreign Academies in Rome, will assist the conference organizers in attracting a high quality group of participants. The event also emphasizes the longstanding principle of drawing connections to the site of the conference, a city in which visiting artists have used drawing precisely for its deep-seated relationship to mobility and the recording of new impressions.

Delegate fee:

Full price: £180 [AUS$380]
Concession: £120 {AUS$210]

The delegate fee includes conference attendance, refreshments and literature. Please note this fee does not include travel, accommodation or lunch.

To register a place for Drawn Encounters, Complex Identities please email thecentrefordrawing@arts.ac.uk with DRAWN ENCOUNTERS, COMPLEX IDENTITIES in the subject heading. You will then be contacted with details of how to progress payment.

Please see below for Conference Schedule.

DRAWN ENCOUNTERS, COMPLEX IDENTITIES

Conference Schedule

Date: Wednesday & Thursday 17 & 18 September 2008
Venue: British School at Rome

WEDNESDAY 17ᵀᴴ SEPTEMBER:

9.00   **Delegate Registration**

9.20   **Welcome: Professor Andrew Wallace-Hadrill, Director, The British School at Rome**

9.30   **Introduction to the Conference Proceedings Day 1: Associate Professor Domenico de Clario, Head of Fine Arts, Monash University**

9.40   **Keynote address: Professor Andrew Benjamin, Professor of Critical Theory and Philosophical Aesthetis, School of Comparative Literature and Cultural Studies, Monash University**

   Drawing, Disegno: Derrida's Artaud

   Artaud's extraordinary drawings provide the field in which Derrida allows for a philosophical encounter with drawing. What distinguishes Derrida's approach is that what sets the measure for his writing are the drawings themselves. Their singularity generates the concepts within which they are to be understood. The aim of this paper will be to investigate the complex relationship between drawing, the singularity of the object and philosophical writing.

10.10   **Zara Stanhope, Deputy Director and Senior Curator, Heide Museum of Modern Art, Melbourne**

   Drawing on the archive: can art escape the hierarchies of knowledge?

   Artists employ various media to learn about/explore the other, and consequently remap or rethink the self. Drawing, mapping and the strategies of the archival repository have proved useful tools in such processes. Drawing on examples of several Australian and New Zealand artists, this paper will address how and/or whether art making is this mode can contribute to cross cultural knowledge and understanding.

10.45 *Morning Coffee*

11.10   **Nuala Gregory, Associate Dean, Department of Fine Arts, University of Auckland**

   Encountering Drawing

   This paper explores tensions within the act of drawing, how it contains an immanent threat to the work of representation and identity formation, and promises to both differ and displace. Beginning with a colonial encounter in 19th century

Ireland, and including recent theories of drawing, it asks what is specific to drawing when encountered on its own (im)proper terrain.

11.45   Geraint Evans, Artist & Pathway Leader in Painting at Wimbledon College of Art, University of The Arts, London

The Big Country: from Thomas Cole to Uncle Walt. The role of drawing in shaping our understanding of landscape as a cultural signifier

In 1979 the 'Big Thunder Mountain Railroad' ride opened in Disneyland's Frontierland. This extraordinary simulated mountain landscape at the heart of the ride, one of several mountains that have been constructed by Disney in its parks throughout the world, formed a potent signifier of the American West. Nature, through landscaping, has been a crucial aspect of Frontierland since its opening in 1955. Disney propagated the idealised notion that the nation itself was defined by its historical connections to nature at a time when its role as a post-war world leader was assured. I am interested in how artists might have shaped this interpretation and understanding of landscape through the practice of drawing, and how this contributed to the development of particular cultural identities. I hope to form cogent links between the Hudson River School and Disney and to explore their role in American colonial ambition. I will also discuss how these ideas have informed my own recent studio practice.

12.20   *Lunch*

2.00   Associate Professor David Thomas, MFA Program Coordinator (Australia and New Zealand), School of Art, RMIT, Melbourne

Locating the contemporary monochrome: The movement of meaning between East and West.

Most analyses of the monochrome have had a European and American focus. This paper will locate the practice and theory of the contemporary monochrome amid a broader global context that includes Northeast Asia and Australia-Pacific.

The paper investigates how the contemporary monochrome is employed through a diversity of media enabling cultural interaction, difference and similarity to be considered.

2.35   Dr. Tom Nicholson, Lecturer in Drawing, Monash University

Posters and Meetings

This paper presents examples of recent poster-based works, focusing on encounters between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal figures in 19th-century Melbourne history, and a discussion of these works in relation to historical images, contemporary Australian politics and principles of drawing.

3.10   Caroline Williams, Artist & Art Writer, Melbourne

Impropaganda 2008: Home to Home

Across the Pinccio Gardens from the British School and via Clerisseau's Room of

Ruins at the Trinita dei Monti a colonial looks at time, maps, markings and why we go around in circles. How drawing functions as an instrument of determination and desire and how a person can live in a multiplicity of places while squatting in one outer suburb of Melbourne.

3.45 *Afternoon Tea*

4.15 **Dr. Tony Birch, School of Culture & Communication, Melbourne University**

The Barbarians Are At The Gates: landscapes of defacement and erasure

This talk will draw on several sites of colonial/postcolonial contest in Australia, from the city to the picturesque and ornamental, from the abandoned to the secret-sacred; sites marked by monuments, graffiti, demolition, and construction, in order to invent tradition, capture land, and of course banish the 'barbarian' Indigenous community.

4.40 **Professor Marcus Wood, Artist & Professor of Diaspora Studies, University of Sussex**

Unbearable lightness, unspeakable darkness: the sketch as a tool for the representation of the slave body

This paper considers the aesthetic and formal advantages of drawing as a method for responding to the trauma of Atlantic slavery. Pencil and water-colour drawings made on the spot and recording the life and suffering of slaves are very rare. Those that have survived suggest that drawing may offer aesthetic and formal solutions to the representation of extreme human suffering which other forms of visual representation do not. The analysis will be focused on a variety of works, from the refined sketchbooks of Jean Baptiste Debret, in Rio in the 1820s, to the untutored but infinitely powerful water-colours with which British sailors responded to the experience of seeing the hold of a slave ship. Wood will end by looking at his own drawings in tar, and the work of other contemporary draftsmen and draftswomen who have drawn the slave body, and will speculate on the extent to which drawing may still offer a useful formal vocabulary for the continued exploration of the cultural memory of slavery.

5.15 **Plenary discussion chaired by Dr. Tom Nicholson, Lecturer in Drawing, Monash University**

THURSDAY 18th SEPTEMBER:

9.30 **Introduction th the Conference Proceedings Day 2: Professor Anita Taylor. The Centre for drawing UAL**

9.40 **Keynote Address: Professor John Welchman, Professor of Modern and Contemporary Art History/Theory, University of California**

Face, Media and the Drawing Out of Social Flatness: Tony Oursler and "the veiled clarity of the substances called for by the closed switch"

My main contention here is that, for Tony Oursler, drawing is not a category reserved for mark-making on a two dimensional support. It is instead a particular mode of appearance of the seemingly flat.

Few artists have worked as insistently as Oursler across the spaces that define the technological moves from TV to monitor, low lines of resolution to hi-def, or tube to LCD. Mediated by a longstanding commitment to drawing, the shift from the sets and surfaces of his single channel pieces of the mid-1970s to the breakthrough projection of body- and speech-bearing video onto dummies and objects, beginning around 1995, turned the old order dichotomy between two and three dimensions inside out. It bears witness to a palpable dissolution of the genres of painting, drawing, sculpture and installation, which converge and separate according to a new performative logic distributed by an endless roster of virtual bodies conjured up by combing speech and gesture as affective virtualities. In this process, depth and reduction become allies in the project of recalibrating the surfaces and run-offs of bodies—whose 'skin,' real and imagined, operates as a media membrane to trap and filter the corporeal encounter. I will argue, further, that the central arena for the artist's ceaseless relay between flatness and depth, surface and overlay, metaphor and hallucination, projection and introversion, even art and science, is the face itself. It is here, in the spaces between the superfices and depths of the face, between its drawings in (of breaths, diagrams and other tie-ups) and its drawing out (its strata of inferences) that we encounter the central adjudication of Oursler's work to date.

10.10   Professor Stephen Farthing, Rootstein Hopkins Research Chair of Drawing at the University of Arts London

Drawing Australia, from Hughes to Eyre: recording and the question of accuracy

Until the birth of modern art there were just two types of drawing: those that came out of draftsman's desire to make "a picture", and the others that were the result of someone taking the shortest route to mapping out a set of facts or ideas on paper. The first group were usually made with an audience in mind; the second, very often, with no sense of rhetoric. This paper starts with the gold prospector John Mills Hughes b.1839) and the totally untutored drawings he made in his diaries between 1867- 1891, and ends with John Eyre's finished drawings of Norfolk Island. Eyre (b.1771) was a convict who prior to his transportation had studied drawing in Coventry with the artist Joseph Barnes.

10.55   *Morning Coffee*

11.25   Paul Thomas, Artist & Jerwood Drawing Prize Coordinator, London

Myths Down Under, from Homer to Nicole Kidman…

Paul Thomas is an artist from the UK who spent ten years working with images and narratives from *The Iliad* and *The Odyssey* to form a drawn interpretation of these European narratives. Following a Residency in Drawing (National Art School Sydney/ NSW National Parks & Wildlife Service) in 2004, he has spent a substantial period of time each year visiting Australia which has allowed him to develop a series of new drawn narratives that explore similarities across cultures and yet maintain a rich diversity of experience.

Thomas will initially look at how visual artists have dealt with the reinterpretation of classical texts and using the example of Homer's narrative will track his way through European history to modern day Australia. He will discuss the way in which we are able to reinvigorate classical European mythologies with contemporary issues, and necessarily develop visual languages that are capable of both embracing continuity and tradition whilst also accommodating changing values.

12.00   Jordan Baseman, Artist & Reader in Time Based Media at Wimbledon College of Art, University of the Arts, London

Research in the field

My presentation will discuss some of my recent experiences and film projects, including: working with behavior geneticist Professor Terrie Moffitt on the Arts Humanities Research Council and Wellcome Trust Funded trilogy of films titled Nature's Great Experiment, coma survivor and librarian, Wendy Hindley on the European Union Development funded film titled, *Perfume Disco Coma*; and ex-heavy metal DJ Steve KRUSHER Joule on the self-financed film, *Jump*! All of these projects combine working in the field to research, generate, and gather materials, with studio-based editing processes, towards the production of single screen narrative films. I will address the idea of the exotic other through the discussion of these projects.

12.35   Morgan O' Hara, Artist, based in New York and Japan

Morgan O'Hara will show a drawing and performance process she has   developed called *LIVE TRANSMISSION: attention and drawing as time-based performance.*

LIVE TRANSMISSIONS render visible normally invisible or fleeting movement patterns through seismograph-like drawing done in real time. The pursuit of vitality carefully observed through human activity is drawn simultaneously with both hands and transmitted to paper. Following closely the intensity of each segment of an activity, the direction of the line as well as the quality of its intensity is transmitted. If a person makes a gentle movement, a delicate line is drawn. If the action followed is forceful or violent, a correspondingly vigorous line is made. This is done simultaneously and as much as possible without "thinking." The dialectic between observer and participant, control versus relaxed participation, coalesces to form the conceptual base for LIVE TRANSMISSIONS. Scale and physical limitations are determined by real-life expediency. In 2008 there exist approximately 3000 LIVE TRANSMISSION drawings done both privately and publicly on five continents. LIVE TRANSMISSIONS communicate beyond the specificity of language.

1.10   *Lunch*

2.30   Professor Jan Svenungsson, Professor for Artistic Research, Finnish Academy of Fine Arts

Tracking A Place on Earth

In my Psycho-Mapping drawing projects I set up a controlled process for producing virtual geopolitical reality through failure. As point of departure I use a map of an area I know well. The resulting new reality will always be surprising, but it can easily be traced back to its familiar origin over gradual steps. For a project in Melbourne last year, my aim was to visit in person a major site in the development of Australian painting. When this attempt failed, I happened to take a look at the destination from above — and found that it already was an image. Whether virtual or not, I have not yet been able to establish. I made a huge painting of this place I could not touch or visit, and performed a tracking ceremony in the reality that was mine. In my talk I will try to make sense of it all.

3.05 **Melanie Jackson, Artist & Pathway Leader in Printed & Digital Media, Wimbledon College of Art, University of the Arts London**

From Field to FedEx

Melanie Jackson will discuss strategies of engaging with international issues in her work: whether through first hand experience, media publications, network technologies, or seeking collaborators to document the places she cannot visit. Recent works include *A Global Positioning System*, *The Undesirables* and *From The Bank Of Hell*. She utilises a combination of drawing, animation and paper structures to explore issues of work and movement in relation to industry and technological innovation, with a focus on the networks emanating from industrial growth in China. She is particularly interested in the notion of using drawing as reportage, and exploring the dynamic between the graphic and photographic.

She is embarking on a new body of work based on Goethe's theory of *The Urpflanze*, extending her research into the politics and aesthetics of technological innovation. Beginning with the two trees that have taken his name 'Goethe's Palm' in the Botanical Gardens of Padova, and 'Goethe's Oak' in the grounds of the former Prison Camp at Buchenwald, she will explore technologies of looking to understand the contextual links between the two sites.

3.40 **Catherine Elwes, Professor of Moving Image Art, Camberwell College of Art**

Real Time Travel

Where artists once took a line for a walk, travelling with pencil and sketchbook, they are as likely now to journey with a moving image camera – some to gather data to be used in the creation of paintings or sculptures, but increasingly to form the basis of video projects, both single-screen and installed works for the gallery. The time-base of 'raw' video footage is co-extensive with the 'real time' of travel and offers a third eye onto a parallel universe of digital representation, linked to but not reducible to the experience of motion through the landscape. The resulting encounters with the landscapes of Australia and the UK form the basis of the international screening project *Figuring Landscapes*, currently in production at UAL.

Catherine Elwes will discuss key works to be shown in the exhibition and air some of the issues that have been raised with collaborators and colleagues in the UK and Australia during the process of selecting and writing about the work for the catalogue.

4.15 *Afternoon Tea*

5.00 **Plenary discussion chaired by Professor Anita Taylor, Director of The Centre for Drawing UAL**

5.40 **Conclusion of proceedings**