A Story of Drawing Narrators opening words

The very brilliant idea that a simple outline might have the ability to evoke an object or event in its absence , emerges relatively late in the history of drawing .

When we put pencil to paper we are more likely to be modeling our thoughts than to be mindlessly reproducing what is before us , even if we set out to draw only what we see , we will throughout the time we engage with our subject , be struggling to render our thoughts about what we see , not thoughtlessly copying.

I suspect the first drawings were gestures, made to assist, in one way or another with the communication of thought .

Somewhere around the centre of drawings time line there are the dots, that are actually stars …… that we learned to join with cerebrally generated lines , to make images of , for example , of the Big Dipper in the night sky .

Towards the end the line there is the outline drawing of the world that each of us carries ( however badly remembered) in our head ……………….. And at the very end of the time line there is writing.

Our starting point is the straight’ ish line that was drawn into the parade ground dust of the besieged Spanish mission at Alamo, on Saturday March 5th 1836 by William Barrett Travis, a twenty six year old Texan colonel.

Realizing he was fighting a lost cause the commander of the garrison called together the few remaining men to outline three possible plans of action; to surrender to the Mexican Army and be executed, to try against the odds to fight their way out , or die in defense of the fort , while selling their lives as dearly as possible.

In concluding his address Travis drew his sword , stuck the tip in the dirt and slowly drew a line that divided him from his men as he did it he said "I now ask every man who is willing to stay here and die with me to step across this line.".

The line wasn’t simply a gesture designed to underscore his words , the line turned one place into two and provided an opportunity for his company to silently locate themselves in one or other place. It was in short a very elegant line , that once its oral introduction was in place , eloquently “ spoke for itself”

We live with lines whose sole purpose is the delivery of order . These lines often function in conjunction with rule books , signage and in Travis’s case , with the spoken word.

They are lines that don’t necessarily speak for themselves. They are however, like gestures , an important component of our literacy and there to be “ read”, not in the same way as books , but still to be made sense of.

There are the lines on maps drawn, mostly by politicians not cartographers, that establish the boundaries between countries . There are the lines that boarder agencies draw onto the linoleum floors at ports and checkpoints that we stand behind, with our passports open at the picture page , waiting to be invited to cross.

There are the lines that we draw onto roads to facilitate the safe flow of traffic . There are the lines that we draw on grass, clay, wooden and ice that give structure to the games we play . They seldom change because they are embedded in the rules of the game , they are however, redrawn as the grass grows and surfaces wear.

**These** drawings lift drawing out of the art room and into our literacy .

Literacy was once understood as simply the ability to read and write , today it is more than that .

Literacy is a life long intellectual engagement that helps us gain meaning from the critical interpretation of two dimensionally rendered information .

So numeracy , writing , notation and **drawing** are all a part of a package that we have designed with a view towards enabling us in our quest to model and share thought .

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