



Flight
Drawing
Interpretations



One must be receptive, receptive to the image at the moment it appears...

—Gaston Bachelard, 1994 : xv

Although it sounds unlikely, the motivation for this project began in 1824. This is because from the very first day that the National Gallery opened its doors to visitors, it was intended as a resource for artists. Over time, however, this role became less significant. By the mid-twentieth century, the history of art had become a serious academic discipline, and the Gallery began to emphasise notions of scholarship and research. Furthermore, the acquisition and display of various iconic paintings, from Leonardo to Van Gogh, saw it become a tourist destination, with visitors ticking off those works they felt obliged to see, if only for a moment.

However, in 1980 those principles behind the original foundation of the Gallery started to re-emerge. The Artist in Residence programme began, which developed into the current Rootstein Hopkins Associate Artist scheme. Living artists, from Paula Rego to Michael Landy, were invited to work from the collection and to make new work in response to what they found there. In 2000, the Gallery invited 24 contemporary artists to make their own personal responses to individual works in the Gallery. The resultant work, by artists such as Bill Viola, Louise Bourgeois and Anselm Kiefer, was exhibited in the memorable exhibition Encounters. And today's students have facilities especially put aside for them, a dedicated space with stools and drawing boards that can be taken into the gallery spaces and used to draw from the pictures.

This specific project, Flight: Drawing Interpretations, has drawn from the collection in an especially imaginative and enjoyable way. Its theme carries notions of the human body in motion, reminding us that the study of the human figure is one of the foundation stones of western art. All the participants have taken part in different activities in the picture galleries, involving discussion, drawing, the exchange of ideas and I am both delighted and amazed at the range of responses. The original founders of the National Gallery would indeed have been more than happy to see this great collection of wonderful paintings continuing to be used in such creative ways.

The aim of the research project Flight: Drawing Interpretations is to bring together a group of practice led researchers from a range of subject disciplines and levels of experience at London College of Fashion (LCF) to consider the theme of Flight within the context of the National Gallery. Over a period of a year, a number of informal 'show and tell' meetings took place both at the National Gallery, in front of the paintings, and at LCF in order to see what new propositions and creative practice might emerge. The sharing of working methodologies, in which drawing formed a key aspect, was central to the research.

The exchange of knowledge gained through this process confirms, I believe, the continuing relevance of reflective research. My initial fear that the theme might prove too simplistic was quickly dispelled as the researchers responded in individual and surprising ways to the proposition. It served as a rich stimulus for intellectual and creative journeys, evidence of which is represented both in the artworks and in the curatorial practice.

The project outcomes are displayed online alongside a Friday Late showcase of performances and temporary installations at the National Gallery (14 June 2013), preceded by a special symposium at LCF (24 May 2013).

Preface

—Colin Wiggins
Special Projects Curator
National Gallery London
&

—Charlotte Hodes
Professor in Fine Art
London College of Fashion

2. Francisque Millet
'Mountain Landscape with Lightning'
Oil on canvas.
© The National Gallery, London



2.

—Notes on Flight Drawing Interpretations Dr. Flavia Loscialpo & Ben Whyman

Flight: Drawing Interpretations is a collaborative project drawing together artists and researchers from London College of Fashion and the National Gallery. Over the past year, practice-led researchers from the College have explored drawing as a methodological creative process in their responses to artworks at the Gallery. A theme was chosen, flight, which offered multiple ways of approaching the project: from diasporas and liminal spaces to Apollo flying across the sky; from Leda and the Swan to angels in Quattrocento paintings; from the stillness of Dutch domestic interiors to the energy of Millet's tempestuous sky. Each artist defined the theme from a personal creative perspective, re-contextualising the original paintings.

Looking again and re-interpreting within the context of the National Gallery is a privileged opportunity, given the role the museum plays in art and contemporary culture. Museums, as Spalding emphasises, are not 'fixtures but creations; they influence, often subliminally, our whole view of culture', they are in fact 'storytellers' (Spalding, 2002: 7). The project *Flight* engages in a dialogue with the NG collection, by looking at familiar masterpieces in new ways, questioning them again. The experience, and the process, of looking is a central preoccupation and *raison d'être* of the Gallery. As stated by former Director Michael Levey, it is 'really the essence of the Gallery's function and justification of its existence' (Potterton, 1977: 7).

The eleven participants have explored ways in which drawing is used to collate material, develop themes, tease out nuances and structure in their work. Colin Wiggins (Special Projects Curator, National Gallery) and Charlotte Hodes' (Professor of Fine Art, London College of Fashion) belief in drawing as a central component in the artistic practice is key to this project.

In presenting *Flight: Drawing Interpretations*, we have the precious opportunity of articulating the theme through different mediums, including a symposium at College, an online

platform, and a Friday Late event held at the Gallery. In each of these components, the Gallery, its space and identity, resonates within the whole project.

In a similar way, the themes addressed in the selected paintings are present as traces within the artistic responses created for *Flight: Drawing Interpretations*.

Flight, intended as travel, is infused in all the artists' works, and yet at times is just alluded to. On various levels, it is manifest within Simon Thorogood's interpretation, not only because of the artist's personal connection with the experience of flying. Thorogood's *Coruscation* establishes a linear correlation between *Landscape with Lightning* (ca. 1875) by Francisque Millet and a Martin Mariner Seaplane, driven by the 16th squadron of US Army Air Forces, circa 1944. A lightning bolt, a symbol of luck, brings them together and their juxtaposition takes the form of unexpected compositions, of a new 'aircraft landscape'.

From a thematic perspective, the subject 'flight' discloses a constellation of motifs; it is imbued with several associations, myths, Biblical stories, fleeting presences, references to transcendence, historical and legendary subjects, echoes of the forces of nature and the sky above. It also evokes, directly or metaphorically, traditional premises, such as the dichotomy – at the basis of western thought – formed by the concepts 'body' and 'soul'.

As suggested by the myth of Icarus, the body, in its materiality, stands as a symbol for the human finitude: the soul can fly, the human body cannot. And yet, the body cannot be overlooked, for its presence, or absence, is always implied in the visual representation of flight, as well as in creating an illusion of it. In Samuel van Hoogstraten's *A Peepshow with Views of the Interior of a Dutch House* (ca. 1655-60), for instance, the viewer has the impression of almost traveling through the space of the box, beyond the physical constraints of the box.

The removal of the physical body within the artwork is necessary to this illusion. As Caroline Collinge explains, the multiple perspective within the box creates the perception of movement: "The perspective defines the movement, but this is not a physical movement. Rather a movement based on the senses, on our perception". Collinge's *Unfolding the box* resonates with Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology of perception and Deleuze's theory of the fold. Her process of 'deconstructing the box' looks at the perspective itself as a finished piece of work, starting from the absence of the body, and ending with the intersection of body and space, with a performer/cellist wearing a 'costumed space', an invisible room.

The oppositional terms 'absence' and 'presence' are central motifs in questioning and rethinking the traditional duality of body and soul. Agnes Treplin's performance *Body and Soul*, inspired by Guercino's *Dead Christ Mourned by Two Angels* (1617-18), looks at contemporary artists Antony Gormley and Ron Mueck as further and crucial references. In dialogue with Gormley's wire sculptures and Mueck's *Dead Dad* (1996-1997), Treplin's performance explores loss and transformation. Not only does transcendence characterize Treplin's work in thematic terms, but it also defines its methodology. *Body and Soul* indeed extends beyond the dimension of the painting, translating in three-dimensional form the drawings created in response to it.

The theme of loss, the liminal moment between life and death are similarly at the centre of Paul Bevan's (*Up*) *In the Air*, which outlines through the medium of photography a response to *An Experiment on a Bird in the Air Pump* (1768) by Joseph Wright 'of Derby'. Imbued with references to flight, or lack of it, force, gravity, and resistance, Bevan's piece enacts a *mise en scène* suspended in between stasis and movement, frozen in a barely perceptible transition.

The tension between movement and stasis, suspension and gravity, tangibility and intangibility, runs across several works commissioned for *Flight*. In particular, Charlotte Hodes, through her collage and paper cuts, emphasizes the opposition between materiality and immateriality, physicality and weightlessness. Drawing on Perugino's *The Virgin and Child with an Angel* (1496-1500), Raphael's *The Mond Crucifixion* (1502-03), Sandro Botticelli's *St Francis of Assisi with Angels* (ca.1475-80)

and Simon Marmion's *The Soul of St Bertin Carried up to God* (1459), she focuses on the challenges posed by the angelic figures, which are represented in a solid form yet suspended. In the series *Apparition*, there are traces of presences, and yet the more the material nature of the collage takes over, the more the figures become absent: "the fragments define a shape but at the same time can break out of the shape. This gives a sense of fragility. The contours of the silhouette have the potential to dissipate and be contaminated by the fragments".

In responding to the paintings of the National Gallery collection, the artists progressively unfold layers of meaning and further readings. For instance Carolina Rieckhof, in the installation *Samson's fears*, explores the Biblical story of Samson, as depicted by Rubens in *Samson and Delilah* (ca. 1609-1610). She embraces the psychological interpretations that address Samson's inner conflict resulting from the danger threatened by the erotic involvement with a woman. In exploring a painting of choice within the National Gallery, each artist can unravel the multiple meanings and interpretations it triggers, while other meanings might ultimately escape disclosure.

“The perspective defines the movement, but this is not a physical movement. Rather a movement based on the senses, on our perception”

In reflecting on the artistic works and the never ending process of understanding, Hans-Georg Gadamer points out that the truth of a work of art 'is not constituted simply by its laying bare but rather by the unfathomable depth of its meaning' (1996: 107).

Within the project *Flight*, the responses to the paintings extend their meaning even further, representing a step towards a new or a possibly already paved direction.

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3. After Michelangelo
'Leda and the Swan'
Oil on canvas.
© The National Gallery, London



Jessica Bugg
 'Grey Wave'
 Dancer: Fukiko Takase
 Photographer: Roy Shakespeare
 Director: Tim Keeling, Sound:
 Stephan Packe, Hair: Luca
 Saccuman, Makeup: Bea Sweet



Jessica Bugg
 'Tempest Dress'
 Dancer: Fukiko Takase
 Director: Tim Keeling, Sound:
 Stephan Packe



Natalie Brown
 'Laser cut cotton shape with
 sketch of incomplete lace work'



Caroline Collinge
 'Line of Flight'
 Digital photograph.



Caroline Collinge,
 Dutch perspective box series
 Digital print and hand cut
 paper techniques.



Samuel van Hoogstraten ,
 'A Peepshow with Views of the
 Interior of a Dutch House'
 Oil and egg on wood.
 © The National Gallery, London



Peder Balke,
 'The Tempest'
 Oil on wood panel.
 © The National Gallery, London



Rembrandt
 'Portrait of Philips Lucas'
 © The National Gallery, London



Natalie Brown
 'Lucas neckwear'
 Imitation leather.
 Photographer: Paul Bevan,
 Make-up and Hair :Luka
 Watabe, Model: Suzanne
 Smethurst



Simon Thorogood
 'Flight. Drawing Interpretations'
 Digital drawing.



Francisque Millet
 'Mountain Landscape
 with Lightning'
 Oil on canvas.
 © The National Gallery, London



Xenia Capacete Caballero,
 'Tracing the wall (Detail)'
 Tracing paper, fine liner pen.



Xenia Capacete Caballero
 'Body and location. Drawing V'
 Tracing paper, Fine liner pen.

Thomas Jones
 'A Wall in Naples'
 Oil on paper laid on canvas.
 © The National Gallery, London



Paul Bevan
 'Plan (still) / (up)in the air'
 Sketch.

Joseph Wright of Derby
 'An Experiment on a Bird
 in the Air Pump'
 Oil on canvas.
 © The National Gallery, London

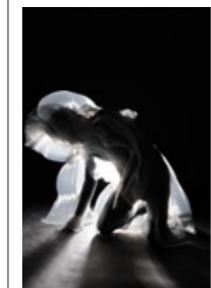
Simon Marmion
 'The Soul of St Bertin
 Carried up to God'
 Oil on oak.
 © The National Gallery, London



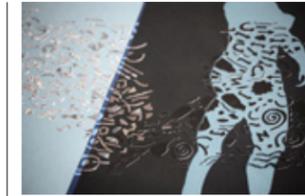
Agnes Treplin
 'Inside lines close up'
 Ink on Paper.



Guercino
 'The Dead Christ mourned by
 Two Angels'
 Oil on copper.
 © The National Gallery, London



Agnes Treplin
 'Flight: Body & Soul I'
 Performer: Andrew Hawkins,
 Photographer: Paul Bevan



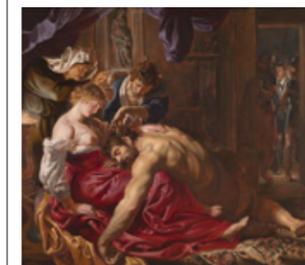
Charlotte Hodes
 'Apparition, blue III'
 Printed and painted
 papers, papercut.

Charlotte Hodes
 'Floating III'
 Drawing pen & pencil.



Carolina Rieckhof
 Pen on paper.

Carolina Rieckhof
 'Samson's Fears'
 Pillows, Scissors, Fabric, Hair
 and Mattress.



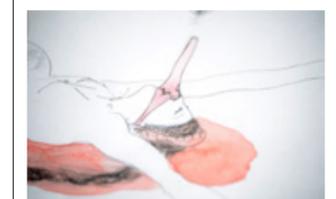
Peter Paul Rubens
 'Samson and Delilah'
 Oil on wood.
 © The National Gallery, London

Lucas Cranach the Elder
 'Portrait of a Woman'
 Oil on beech.
 © The National Gallery, London



Andrew Kenny
 'Study of Colin's Face'
 Ink on Paper.

Andrew Kenny
 'Playboy Centrefold (Detail)'
 Embroidery on quilted Cotton.



Yuliya Krylova
 'Leda's womb'
 Ink pen, charcoal, watercolour.



After Michelangelo
 'Leda and the Swan'
 Oil on canvas.
 © The National Gallery, London



Yuliya Krylova
 'Leda's Womb'
 Felt, tapestry canvas,
 linen, red dye.

In this sense Yuliya Krylova reviews the psychoanalytical readings of Freud, Rank and Kristeva, and draws from Michelangelo's *Leda and the Swan* (after 1530) the image of the phallic mother. The resulting performance piece *Leda's Womb*, reminiscent of the practice of artists such as Cy Twombly, Joseph Beuys, Hokusai and Rebecca Horn, culminates in an original choreography and costume developed through drawing.

The performance medium defines several artistic responses elaborated within *Flight*. Among them, in particular, Jessica Bugg's *Embodied design and communication* is characterised by the centrality of the body. Starting from *A Detail from The Tempest* (ca. 1862) by Peder Balke, Bugg's collaboration with dancer Fukiko Takase organically generates, through the body, a performative clothing design, with the body becoming a design tool.

The participants' responses to *Flight* address the centrality of drawing within the artistic practice: drawing is the point of departure, the process, and often the outcome of the works, where it might even become a three-dimensional object. For instance, *Stitch in the Air* by Natalie Brown explores the representation of *Punto in Aria* ('stitch in the air') and the seventeenth century neckwear as seen in *Portrait of Phillips Lucasz* (1635) and *Portrait of Aechje Claesdr* (1634) by Rembrandt. Brown's initial drawings, made in response to these portraits, are laser cut, manipulated by hand, and then translated into three-dimensional structural surfaces to be worn. A sketch becomes wearable, and a structure embodies an initial linear reaction to the painting.

The narrative responses to the National Gallery paintings hold particular centrality within Andrew Kenny's *Ode to Colin Wiggins*, dedicated to the Gallery's Special Projects Curator. Inspired by *Portrait of a Woman* (ca. 1525) by Lucas Cranach the Elder and *A Nymph by a Stream* (1869-70) by Pierre-Auguste Renoir, Kenny's embroidery brings together drawings based on a series of interviews conducted by the artist, and investigates the relationship between drawing and storytelling. A stitch holds them together, marking their ineludible proximity.

Drawing is often a point of departure for the artist's journey, and accompanies it to its next destination. Xenia Capacete Caballero's *Weaving Nests. Tracing the Invisible* revolves around the notions of stasis and migration, decontextualising an arbitrary mix of marks in *A Wall in Naples* (1782) by Thomas Jones. These are interpreted as geographical coordinates and connected by the artist in an unexpected pattern, mapping a new narrative.

“This process of coruscation nurtures and nourishes my understanding of drawing, as a method of ‘travelling’, of being familiar and unfamiliar with something or somewhere”

In drawing together the artistic responses created for *Flight*, what emerges is that, beyond the obvious thematic associations, the real ‘flight’ in the end is the trajectory of the artist: a layered journey punctuated by turns and manifestations, where drawing is an essential component disclosing unexpected possibilities. As stated by Simon Thorogood, the element of chance is fundamental within the artistic work, where spontaneous combinations open up: “This process of coruscation nurtures and nourishes my understanding of drawing, as a method of ‘travelling’, of being familiar and unfamiliar with something or somewhere”.

From a curatorial perspective, drawing is, for many curators or exhibition makers, a core process of developing thoughts, unpicking issues and creating a space to think through ideas. For Judith Clark, exhibition maker, author and Professor of



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4. Yuliya Krylova
‘Leda’s Womb’.
Felt, tapestry canvas, linen, red dye.
Model - Britta Von Basedow
5. Lucas Cranach the Elder
‘Portrait of a Woman’
Oil on beech.
© The National Gallery, London

Fashion and Museology at LCF, the drawings are pregnant with possibilities. Sometimes a sketch might capture the essence of a project more than any other of its components. In the first stages, Clark populates the sketch, 'thinking through' the lines and the page.

In this sense, drawing has been a way for us to shape our curatorial stance. One Saturday afternoon we walked through the National Gallery, exploring our responses to the theme of flight. We scribbled in our notebooks names of artists, titles of paintings, initial thoughts. Back in our own space, we paired these notes with small black and white images of paintings that inspired us. From these associations, ideas spun, segued, disappeared, and were remembered again. Drawing triggered remembering. As Clark suggests, curating is 'accumulative juxtaposition', of ideas, objects, images and concepts.

'By the swiftness of its actions, the imagination separates us from the past as well as from reality; it faces the future... If we cannot imagine, we cannot foresee.'
(Bachelard, 1994: xxxiv)

The hypermodern era is characterized by constant 'movement, fluidity, and flexibility' (Lipovetsky, 2005: 11). Within the hyper-technological age, it is possible to experience a broadening of the contours of memory: 'we have moved from the real of the finite to that of the infinite, from the limited to the ubiquitous, from memory to the hypermemorial' (Lipovetsky, 2005: 58). These changes have significant implications for the display of artifacts within and, even more so, beyond the context of the museum.

Clark suggests that galleries are like 'quick-acting barometers, as opposed to the reflective retrospective museum exhibition' (Statement VI:6).

Even the institution of the museum is likely to be subject to transformation. Hans-Ulrich Obrist, curator and author, argues that museums could be more than homogenous spaces.

The museum should be 'a site that satisfies a diversity of conditions so that, let's say, the white cube, a laboratory and a space for intimate conversation can coexist' (Obrist, Rehberg and Boeri, 2003: 150). The conversations regularly held at the Gallery were a fundamental component of *Flight*, a privileged opportunity to share initial steps and progress through the project. These symposia, documented on the blog, put emphasis on the transitional nature of the project, on the inherent element of 'journey' within it.

The traditional museum exhibition and display, according to Obrist, can move beyond traditional notions of order and structure, and allow for transience, transitional, momentary responses and interpretations (Obrist, Rehberg and Boeri, 2003: 150). Fluctuation, instability, unpredictability, incertitude could intentionally be invited into the museological space. Even the display itself is a fluctuating one, and just one possibility among many alternative arrangements. 'Instead of certitude, the exhibition expresses connective possibilities' (Obrist, Rehberg and Boeri, 2003: 150-1).

With *Flight*, the invitation is to reconsider how we perceive objects in a museum/gallery space, and how we interpret objects in the online space, the hyper-real place of 2-D still and moving image. *Flight: Drawing Interpretations* aims to experiment with display, presenting ideas and objects in four different contexts: an event at the National Gallery, where the artists' responses are exhibited within a performative framework; a symposium held at LCF; an online blog documenting the process, and an online exhibition (the *Flight* website). These four outputs offer multiple perspectives, a map of sorts, suggesting directions and ways to explore the textures and energies of drawing.

The online space is where not only information and research outcomes are archived, but where audiences can return, re-investigate, re-consider their interactions with this project. Having a space to 'remember remembering', re-engage with, and debate these outcomes is essential for critical thinking. As philosopher Gaston Bachelard describes it, the space is an integration of 'thoughts, memories and dreams of mankind' (1994: 6).

And yet, we should note that the power of museum display might be lost on a webpage. Mary Anne Staniszewski refers to the act of viewing a virtual exhibition almost as a disembodiment from the self – the physical interaction with an object is absent, we are only given visual clues as to the shape, dimensions and colour of that object. Future technological advances may reduce this 'digital transcendence of the body' (2000: 15), but for now the act of viewing is removed from the real object, in a way that echoes Plato's allegory of the shadows reflecting reality on the walls of the cave (*The Republic*). Sociologist Mike Featherstone highlights the increasing demand for and volume of information uploaded onto websites, to the point that 'life increasingly becomes lived in the shadow of the archive' (2006: 591). We are aware that fixing this project online is creating, in effect, an archive for posterity and this comes with responsibilities. In respect to archiving data online, Staniszewski notes

'Our current 'age of information' – with our so-called 'new technologies revolution' and its most dramatic manifestation, the Internet – can also be seen, in a contradictory way, as an age of the archive. We have the enhancement of both ends of the spectrum for 'information conditions'. There is an increased instability, fluidity and ephemerality associated with net culture and simultaneously an increased production, display, and storage of information' (Staniszewski, 2000: 13)

This 'instability, fluidity, and ephemerality' is of particular interest to this project. In the process of an ongoing investigation, we invite chance, openness to other opportunities, and lightness, urging the audience to consider and question what has been created, in whatever form. The responsibility of creating debate, offering a platform for criticism and engagement with future research, we believe, is a healthy, invigorating opportunity.

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7. **Andrew Kenny**
'Vogue Cover Girl' (Detail)
Ink on paper.

8. **Jessica Bugg**
'Tempest Dress 2013'
Dancer: Fukiko Takase, Photographer:
Roy Shakespeare, Director: Tim
Keeling, Sound: Stephan Packe, Hair:
Luca Saccuman, Makeup: Bea Sweet

6. **Charlotte Hodas**
'Floating III'
Drawing pen & pencil.



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Natalie Brown
'Lucasz neckwear'
Imitation leather.
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...my step is heavy
but I can fly like an angel
and so like a hawk am I now
my elbows flap like wings
—Patti Smith, 'Amelia Earhart', 1972.

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ual: university
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