

Drawing: being present, making present

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Topic being researched/aim of the research

This project focuses on the pivotal value of touch and collaborative processes within two artists' drawing practice. In Bullen's case the drawings explore the relationship between hand, breath and surface, and for Fox, the semi-resisted action of wind between paper and pencil. For Bullen and Fox respectively, drawing can, potentially, bring them into an intense and greatly valued experience of being present and making present. This brings with it a quality of engagement, immediacy and acuity of perception, whilst maintaining and sustaining receptivity as the drawing unfolds. In cultivating attention and awareness of the subtleties they are able to balance agency and surrender.

This experience of presence through drawing emerges from a complex set of conditions and can be difficult to attain, involving a combination of deliberate, judged, experienced actions and decisions. Within the moment of making work an array of interconnected factors are at play, including the precise angle, weight or timing of the touch of, for example, pencil on paper, the breathing of the practitioner, the choice of material, the interaction with surface, the action of environment and elements upon the practitioner and the materials, and the activation of line. Working on the basis that the practitioner is in a partner relationship with materials and with (sometimes specific) contexts, this research seeks to understand philosophically and pragmatically the process of drawing presence.

Methodology – how our approach is developing specifically in relation to this practice-based research

The research emerges from collaborative working between the three researchers, two of whom are visual artists and one who is from a humanities background, with a focus on researching drawing practices in health settings. Together, their epistemology is based upon the notion that both drawing and writing are dialogic and embodied practices and that conscious and guided interaction between these practices, the openness of each practitioner to the practices of the other, can enable new knowledge to emerge.

Methods for researching the topic

At this early stage in the project, the methods are emergent and reciprocal. Each researcher in turn shares or designs a method of discussion. Examples include large visual maps of aims; a moveable wall of sticky-note key ideas and issues, collaboratively produced as a reference point for use throughout the project, and turned into an animated film; a visual and verbal blog in which to share individual thinking, practice and references with the team; and regular dialogue in relation to the developing practice, in which each researcher takes equal responsibility for questioning and discussing the detailed processes of drawing, challenging emergent thinking and articulating observations and theories.