

**The Graphic Construct of the
Contemporary Reportage Artist:
Vision, experience and drawing.**

By Louis Netter

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Abstract

The Graphic Construct of the Contemporary Reportage Artist: Vision, experience and drawing.

The focus of this research is to re-locate contemporary reportage drawing. Reportage drawing, as I am defining it here, is the contemporary practice of drawing people and places in-situ from observation, memory, or imagination. Cleaved from its historical function and journalistic orientation, the contemporary practice engages with the dialogic act of drawing and the subjectivities that pervade it, rendering two-fold experience; the experience of the subject in-situ and in the act of drawing. The re-creative experience of the drawing act and the communion with the artist's negotiations in-situ are entered through the graphic construct of the artist. The record of the drawing evokes this complexly layered act, rendering a highly specific experience of the subject.

This view of reportage drawing is distinct from existing research in that it looks at its form and formation using art history, drawing theorists, theory on experience, and space and place. Looking at the role of observation and artistic training from an art historical perspective, the act is seen as emerging from the practice of the sketch and how that aesthetic, and the perception of that aesthetic as spontaneous and responsive, is an exploited property of reportage. Existing research in reportage has looked at its diverse functions and history along with its potential as a political act. The research presented here explores the act as rooted to the specific graphic construct of the artist, the totality of the experience in-situ, and the wider intentions of the artist, bound by the same desire to relay the experience of the subject without artifice.

In the presence of photography and a fluid media landscape, reportage drawing persisted through the 20th and now 21st century not as a competitor, but an alternative, and the graphic construct of reportage drawing has taken ownership of a unique testimony to personal experience and perception.

Through interviews with two contemporary practitioners of reportage and my own reportage practice and reflections, I identify that the work is the composite of concerns, condensed in the graphic construct of the drawing, and shaped by the layered experience of working in-situ. Interviews and a video of artists in-situ highlight the procedural choices made and how the drawings are containers of experience in their form and formation. The successful record of the drawing results in a re-creative experience of the conditions of its making and an insight into the experience of the artist in-situ. Detached from journalistic ideals, contemporary reportage drawing is a diffuse practice, sharing only the singular desire to express personal vision and engage with the potentialities of drawing itself.

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Section 1 – Introduction

This research aims to re-frame the act of reportage drawing as an activity that is defined by a myriad of individual concerns that summate in the Graphic Construct of the artist. Detached from historical functions and the alignment with journalistic practices and standards, the contemporary practice is diverse in approach and aims, acknowledging the inevitable subjectivities in the act and embracing the potentialities of drawing itself. Where the traditional orientation of reportage was on the communicative function of the image as a record of an event, contemporary practitioners, largely detached from commissioning structures of the 19th and 20th century, seek to capture more experiential qualities of place and choose locations which have highly personal and even political significance. Through graphic constructs which cultivate the idiosyncrasies of direct observation and stylistic commentary, contemporary practitioners are seeking to capture a wider range of experience both in-situ and in the act of drawing.

The 19th century saw reportage illustration at its most visible and drawing was the medium for delivering the news image to people in the western world. Because photographic equipment lacked portability, the woodcut engraved reportage image was perceived as an objective view of the significant events of the day and house styles in publications created a homogeneous news image. Further, this image was the result of an elaborate process which involved the subsumption of the original artist's vision due to the re-codification of the image in the preparation for print. The original act of drawing was gone and with it the artist's visual language and idiosyncrasies of the durational sketch.

The reportage drawing in the 20th century is significant because of its survival alongside the ubiquitous and 'un-examined' photograph. The differences between photography and

drawing are significant for highlighting the way in which each functions as a record of our world and how perceptions of the photograph as a greater claimant to truth can be challenged. Contemporary reportage participates in an even more crowded arena, competing with photography and video in a pervasive media atmosphere. Although commissioning opportunities are limited, reportage is thriving in Urban Sketcher chapters (<http://www.urbansketchers.org>) and by artists who are pursuing compelling personal projects which further stretch the traditional subjects sought by artists. Through these projects particularly, drawing asserts itself as a compelling and corporeal medium and actively exploits its properties, distinguishing it further from current media forms.

Through looking at the historical practice of drawing and, in particular the sketch and studies from nature, the aesthetic of reportage is explored as a cultivated derivative of the sketch, the reading of which brings the viewer to the operations of artistic thought and action. The way in which the features of the sketch enable the re-creative act of looking is significant in highlighting the way reportage drawing is both a record of its subject and a record of the durative process of drawing. The terms ‘tenor’ and ‘topic’ are Philip Rawson’s (1969) way of seeing drawing as the subject and the treatment of the subject as separate, but significant, dialogic entities. ‘Tenor’ and ‘topic’ will be defined in detail in due course. (pgs.60-62) For the purpose of this research, ‘tenor’ and ‘topic’ are useful ways for understanding artistic choice when it comes to rendering subjects and what meaning is imbedded in the marks of the drawing. The experience imbedded in the drawing is thus two-fold; the re-creative act of looking at the drawing and enacting the durative unfolding of the drawing and, the engagement with the ‘tenor’ and ‘topic’ of the drawing, the condensation of thought and action that is evocative of the artist’s experience of the subject. Additionally, the role of caricature highlights the way in which reportage practitioners utilise the caricature to apply

emphasis to the observed or, how it emerges from the demands of the act through the reductive line. For most practitioners, the line between caricature and observation is delicate and caricatural indulgence is only desirable if it brings the artist, and viewer, closer to the observed. Schema development is explored as further evidence that reportage drawing is both a product of perception and, reflects the refinement of perception through the schematic language of the artist. That language reflects developed strategies for rendering forms and challenges the contention of many reportage artists that they are actively seeking the denial of convention in their work.

William Hogarth's (1753) treatise on his own approach to making work and his own practice-based insights on aesthetic values, reinforce the contention that reportage is inevitably pervaded by subjectivities and that observational practices are equally guided by a range of personal intentions. The artist's graphic construct is seen to be a proposition on the part of the artist based on a developed strategy to not only render forms but summate a complex orientation to the subject which, in varying degrees, is a purposeful construct with self-imposed limitations, rules and guiding principles.

Experience is a key aspect of reportage drawing. This research aims to establish a new orientation to reportage drawing and a significant part of that is a re-appraisal of the subject of reportage. Through the insights on experience by John Dewey (2005) primarily, experience is seen as a way to see the total act of reportage from its practice to its reception and the re-creative act of looking at drawing. The nature of observation and the way in which the act unfolds both in-situ and later in the viewing and re-creation of the drawing act, reveals that the reportage artist is inherently in-the-moment experiencing the subject and responding through the sketch which itself is a record of the durative experience of drawing and seeing.

Space and place is also explored as it relates to reportage drawing and the way in which the act imbues places with meaning through attentive observation and documentation, and, how our engagement with spaces and places is always charged with social, political and highly personal feelings. While this research is highlighting the subjectivities of the act, it does not contend that those subjectivities take us further from experience or indeed space and place. In fact, they do the opposite, taking us closer to personal vision and experience and thus magnifying those encounters because of their specificity.

Through interviews with two contemporary practitioners and my own practice and commentary on it, I explore the narrative of production and the way in which the graphic construct of the contemporary reportage artist is both highly individual and complex, making consequential choices in-situ and in drawing, and aware of the unique contribution of drawing in rendering one's perceptual world. The narrative of production not only provides insight into artistic practices, it reveals that the graphic construct of the artist is laden with intentions which are wide ranging, concerning the effects of drawing but also exploiting the limitations of the act, both self-imposed and experiential. Ultimately, the individual artist's graphic construct is a proposition to the viewer to engage with the experience of the artist in-situ through the re-creative act of looking at drawing and re-performing the drawing gesture. The success or failure of the drawing is wrapped up in the artist's own orientation to the subject, its perceived capture and intentions for the capture of the subject. Success is more likely based on the way in which the drawing evokes the memory of engaging with the subject and the evocation of the textures of experience. When caricature or stylistic approaches are engaged, they are more often done to emphasize the seen and not to depart from the subject.

My own reportage drawing provides a full picture of the narrative of production and how a range of perceptions, held contentions, observations and desires are wrapped up in the drawing and, how the drawing equally reflects the struggle to load those intentions into the work. Like Hogarth's *The Analysis of Beauty*, my own work reflects the total conflation of observation and comment and almost all observed forms carry with them a summative judgment on the subject, eager to explore larger themes through the specificity of observed individuals. As a testament to contemporary reportage's further departure from its functions as a news image, my own work relishes subjectivity and comment and although anchored to the observed, the drawings, by virtue of their selection and rendering, are highly editorial and frame locations through the filter of my own developed practice and worldview. My own work also reveals the contemporary act to be a larger meditation on both space and place and the modern world, and that the act of drawing itself is an antidote to the advanced technology that abounds.

The work of Gary Embury (see Section 10 and Appendix) provides a window into the methodology of a contemporary practitioner who maintains principles of objective reporting through a spare methodology, imposing limitations on himself to purge both contrivances of style and interruptions to the direct perceptual trace of his drawing. His work exhibits the way in which the contemporary practice is in dialogue with the larger history of reportage drawing and he consciously seeks to test the limits and potential of direct observational drawing and exploit the durational unfolding of drawing and seeing. Because one of Embury's self-imposed limitations is to draw only what he sees directly, he can make some claim to objectivity but he acknowledges that subjectivities are inevitable, particularly in schematic language and the emergence of caricature which is desirable or not depending on the drawing. Embury as a prominent voice in reportage drawing, having recently published a

book on the subject, provides a unique insight into the act, privileging the experience and challenge of drawing in-situ and relishing serendipitous moments when his unique methodology renders the experience as he remembered it.

Jill Gibbon's work (see Section 11 and Appendix) is reflective of experimental practices in contemporary reportage and how the aesthetic of reportage can be exploited to attest to the direct witness of events with complex political intentions. Gibbon's work is concerned with exposing the unknown corners of corporate capitalism such as the arms trade, and surreptitiously captures her subjects in large trade fares, herself disguised as an interested participant. For Gibbon, the contextualisation of her drawing is critical to its potency as a form of commentary and protest but, the drawing itself is independently evocative of people and places, imbedding commentary and observation. Although the work has an overt stylistic orientation, the anchorage to observed people is reflective in her commentary and as noted above about caricature, departures into stylistic commentary through caricature are only effective for Gibbon if they are extracted from observation and perceptions in-situ. Gibbon's work also highlights how reportage drawing has evolved from historical functions but equally, how it plays upon the perception of the authentic witness seen in the exploitation of the aesthetics of the sketch and, how she navigates her subjects, utilising quasi-journalistic methods and intending the drawings to collectively function as an exposé.

This practice-based thesis aims to distinguish the contemporary act from its historical function and analyse the rich dialogue practitioners engage with in their drawing as means of documentation and as a provocative container of a range of personal, perceptual and ideological orientations. The contemporary practice is defined by a hyper awareness of its

own facture and an exploitation of the potentialities and limitations of the sketch and drawing itself.

Section 2 – Methodology

2.1 Introduction

This research is focused on the re-location of contemporary reportage towards the drawing act and how experience, in a multitude of forms, is rendered in the graphic construct of the artist. The aesthetic features of the graphic construct of the reportage artist, namely the impromptu sketch and various effects resulting from hurried production, imbue the work with the impression of a directly recorded subject and capture a range of perceptions which condense in the drawing. The primary interest in the act for artists is the struggle to capture fluid reality in-situ and the qualities of that experience, enabling a vivid recall of the total circumstances of its production. Much contemporary reportage is detached from the historical function of objective reporting and is located at the site of drawing itself and the negotiations in-situ of the reportage artist.

This research method aims to demonstrate how the diverse approaches to the contemporary practice of reportage drawing confirms the detachment from historical functions. Through highlighting individual aesthetic and conceptual intent, and the way complex intentions are rendered in drawing, the locus of reportage drawing will move to the practitioner and his or her personal orientation towards the subject. Video and interviews with practitioners drawing in-situ will enable a more holistic understanding of choices made in fluid environments and provide a document of the rendering of experience in drawing.

My own practice will provide a point of comparison with other practitioners and their methods, and enable a wider narrative of experience and intention through a range of drawing experiences.

2.2 Review of research paradigms

Establishing my role as a qualitative researcher in this thesis, it is important to set out how I established the elements of the methodology, see my role within this research and how my reportage drawing practice enables certain understandings about the contemporary act. I understand the parameters and key elements of the practice of other practitioners because the challenges and essential tensions in the act have emerged from my own reflections on practice and found confirmation and solidity through the use of focus groups and later in interviews. The structure, aims and methods contribute to a holistic view of contemporary reportage drawing as an act both defined and governed by individual intentions and orientations and, extends a critical dialogue with the wider act of reportage drawing, including its historical underpinnings. This research fits within ‘naturalistic inquiry’ in that it is rooted to the observation of subjects in a ‘natural setting,’ and unfolds from insights gained from the practitioner/researcher, exploring the tacit knowledge of the researcher and participants. (Gray & Malins, 2004, p.72, 73) Patton extends this, noting ‘qualitative designs are naturalistic to the extent that the research takes place in real-world settings and the researcher does not attempt to affect, control, or manipulate what is unfolding naturally. Observations take place in a real-world setting, and people are interviewed with open-ended questions in places and under conditions that are comfortable for and familiar to them.’ (Patton, 2015, p.48)

Rose marks out three critical elements to creating a visual methodology which are highly relevant to the design and nature of this thesis. She notes the methodology should ‘take images seriously...and it is necessary to do so because they are not entirely reducible to their context. Visual representations have their own effects.’ Secondly, she notes ‘cultural

practices like visual representations both depend on and produce social inclusions and exclusions, and a critical account needs to address both those practices and their cultural meanings and effects.’ Thirdly, one must ‘consider your own way of looking at images...ways of seeing are historically, geographically, culturally and socially specific.’ (Rose, 2012, p.16-17) Reinforcing the above criteria, Rose also notes the three critical aspects of the image in a visual methodology being the ‘site of production’, the ‘site of the image’ and ‘audiencing’ or, the encounter with viewers. (Rose, 2012, p.19) These ways of engaging with the image and analysing them have greatly informed my own graphic construct design and enabled a more comprehensive look at the act of reportage drawing and the ideological shift in the contemporary practice from its historical orientation. Collins sees visual methodology in similar terms noting a ‘critical reflection on’ ‘self,’ ‘practice,’ and ‘theory’ and, as analysed ‘theory with self,’ ‘self with practice,’ and ‘practice with theory’. (Collins, 2019, p.8)

Qualitative research aims are summarily defined by Ritchie and Lewis as ‘aims which are directed at providing an in-depth and interpreted understanding of the social world of research participants by learning about their social and material circumstances, their experiences, perspectives and histories.’ (Ritchie & Lewis, 2003, p.3) Central to many broad attempts to define qualitative research is the role of observation. Observation in this thesis refers to self-observation, the observation of a participant drawing and the observation and narrative of observation within the act of reportage. The analysis of the data produced from these varying forms of observation is interpreted using subjective methods which, among others, aim to explore individuals’ intentions, thought patterns, attitudes, beliefs, desires, and anticipations of the future. (6 & Bellamy, 2012, p.230) The valuable data and meaning from subjective interpretation is laid out by Kincaid as having several important categories, the

most significant of which for this thesis are ‘perceptual meaning’ or ‘how an actor perceives the world’, ‘intentional meaning’ or ‘what an actor intends or desires to bring about’, and, ‘normative meaning’ or ‘what behavioural expectations, rules and norms an actor’s actions can reflect or embody’. (6 & Bellamy, 2012, p.231) The data collected through interviews presents ‘primary’ interpretations which are then further analysed by myself through ‘secondary’ analysis. (6 & Bellamy, 2012, p.232, 233) In terms of ‘relevance’, the primary data is plugged into a matrix for understanding individuals’ orientation to the practice of reportage (the graphic construct) which was informed by participants in the focus group, by interviews and relevant theory. In this sense, the research has a collaborative element to the design of the methodology which is consistent with many contemporary approaches to qualitative research as a whole (Ritchie & Lewis, 2003, p.9) Aligned with the approach to research as laid out above, this thesis fits within the ‘interpretivism’ paradigm as ‘this conception of the interplay between a conscious, meaning-making subject and the objects that present themselves to our perception is what characterizes interpretivism.’ (Collins, 2019, p.48) Interpretivism privileges the personal and the self-reflexive, exploring identity in relation to meaning-making. This aligns with the goals of this research as practitioners engage with reportage drawing as an extension of a world view and aesthetic aims are bound to conceptual and personal aims. The unfolding of these beliefs and aims constitute an understanding of the practice as a manifestation of a way of seeing or, a testimony to vision and seeing. This research aims to explore the record of drawing as a constellation of concerns and therefore relies on a deep understanding of artistic motivations, ranging from the aesthetic to the personal and political. Patton notes ‘interpretation is an act of composition. The interpreter takes descriptions and makes them more complex, drawing upon a few conceptual relationships...the best interpretations will be logical extensions of the simple

description but also will include contemplative, speculative, even aesthetic extension.’

(Patton, 2015, p.5)

The interviews, analysis of drawing and reflections on drawing are mined for relevant elements to populate the graphic construct as a holistic map of the individual’s practice, a summation of a variety of intentions and orientations to the act. This is consistent with Patton’s contention about holistic analysis noting ‘to support holistic analysis, the qualitative inquirer gathers data on multiple aspects of the setting under study to assemble a comprehensive and complete picture of the social dynamic of the particular situation or program.’ (Patton, 2015, p.67) Patton additionally notes ‘at other times, the variables measured are indicators of a larger construct.’ (ibid)

The graphic construct is designed to address critical elements of the act such as the qualities of the artist’s drawing, their experience drawing, their orientation to their chosen subjects, and their assessment of their drawing, including their own perceptions of their goals and desire for their work. Miles and Huberman note ‘there are no fixed canons for constructing a matrix’ and for this thesis, a new model was necessitated. (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p.240) However, the graphic construct model is informed by ‘triangulation’ analysis as it incorporates data in the form of drawings, participant perspectives, researcher perspectives and perspectives from relevant theories and practices. (Gray & Malins, 2004, p. 143) This is put into a hierarchical format with the main headings of drawing, experience and assessment being further analysed with subheadings which explore specific elements of practice. Ritchie and Lewis note ‘the analytical hierarchy refers to the process through which qualitative ‘findings’ are built from the original raw data. It is described as a form of conceptual scaffolding within which the structure of the analysis is formed. The process is iterative and

thus constant movement up and down the hierarchy is needed.’ (Ritchie & Lewis, 2003, p.217)

Case studies are central to this methodology and aim to explore, in-depth, the differing approaches to reportage drawing which define the contemporary act. Ritchie and Lewis note that ‘the term ‘case study’ is strongly associated with qualitative research’. (Ritchie & Lewis, 2003, p.51) They note ‘they (case studies) used where no single perspective can provide a full account or explanation of the research issue, and where understanding needs to be holistic, comprehensive and contextualised.’ (Ritchie & Lewis, 2003, p.52) Additionally, Miles and Huberman note ‘careful description of the settings, people, and events is one of the main contributions of qualitative research. But such descriptions also have an *analytic, interpretive* purpose: to illuminate the constant, influential, determining factors shaping the course of events.’ (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p.301) In this thesis, the mapping of practice among the two other practitioners and my own, is meant to map the contemporary field of reportage drawing with each practitioner representing a significantly diverse orientation to the act and reflecting essential debates within the practice.

Autoethnography greatly informed how I approached my personal reflections on my own practice and the narrative of the drawing experience and, provided guidance on how best to conduct the interviews. Adams et al. define autoethnography as ‘stories of/about the self told through the lens of culture.’ (Adams et al., 2015, p. 1) The idea of culture is key to ethnographic practice and key to the aims of this research. The culture of contemporary reportage drawing is both a culture of one (the practitioner) and the wider culture of reportage practice, including its historical practice. Patton notes, ‘ethnographic inquiry takes as its central and guiding assumption that any human group of people interacting together for a

period of time will evolve a culture.’ (Patton, 2015, p.100) Ethnography enables an understanding of the culture of practice that arises out of reportage drawing by exploring the thoughts, contentions, beliefs and desires of practitioners. Patton adds, ‘culture is that collection of behaviour patterns and beliefs that constitute “standards for deciding what is, standards for deciding what can be, standards for deciding how one feels about it, standards for deciding what to do about it, and standards for deciding how to go about doing it.’

(Patton, 2015, p.100) (quoting Goodenough, 1971)

Autoethnography as a practice, enabled me to consider non-academic writing as a way to explore my experience of drawing in a way that was more expansive, lateral and personal. Through writing about my experiences drawing, I was able to highlight aspects of my practice, and later in the practice of others, that would have been difficult to uncover through theory alone. Adams et al. note ‘autoethnography also allows researchers to reclaim voice by adding nuanced personal perspectives to and filling experiential “gaps” in existing research.’ (Adams et al., 2015, p.41) Autoethnography and ethnography more broadly accepts other forms of interpretation including artistic outputs and could be a useful application of reportage drawing (see Causey 2017) but for this research, the dialogue around the drawing and not the subject of the drawing specifically is of central importance. Of course, the subject of the drawing is integral to the artists orientation to the act but the drawings do not function as ethnographic data. Ultimately, the dialogue that accompanies the drawings produced by myself and the two other practitioners in this research is meant to explore the textures of experience and gain key insights into the tacit knowledge of the artist. As Gray and Malins note ‘the involvement of practically all of our human senses, as well as other independent sensory instruments, is more likely to give us a comprehensive and ‘rich’ perspective on the research issue being explored.’ (Gray & Malins, 2004, p.121)

In regards to the interviews within this thesis, autoethnographic practice greatly informed my approach. For one, the autoethnographic approach to the interview process is to engage with the experience of others through your own and is a process of sharing as much as elicitation. (Adams et al., 2015, p.55) Collaborative Witnessing was a concept that informed this thesis and establishes a 'relationship' in which researcher and participant are 'co-storytellers'. (Adams et al., 2015, p.56) While I didn't embrace all aspects of this approach as it is commonly associated with the co-witnessing of trauma, it did relate to the way in which my role was not as a detached overseer but rather as a fellow artist with an innate understanding of the processes in discussion and, that the embeddedness of the collaborative witness approach, reflected my desire to live "*with*" but also *in*' the narrative. (Adams et al., 2015, p.56) Lastly, the most compelling aspect of autoethnography which relates to my approach in the interviews and my own reflective process is the notion of story. Adams et al. note 'as I write, I work to hold myself and my imagined reader *in* the experience' and 'here, I attempt to create the best *story* of the experience I can, turning "this happened" and then "this happened" into a meaningful and coherent narrative.' (Adams et al., 2015, p.66) For the purposes of this thesis, the narrative of production relates to this kind of experience and narrative as the order of events is much less important than the circumstances and thoughts which surround such events which, in this thesis, are encapsulated in drawings.

Autoethnography is essential for practice-based research because it values personal insights and enables the intimacy required to uncover valuable tacit knowledge.

2.3 My own practice

My practice sits at the crossroads of two distinct strains of reportage. Those being the highly responsive immediate forms seen in the work of Gary Embury and those practitioners who

maintain some tangible link to objectivity and journalistic practice, and artists like Jill Gibbon whose work is infused with social and political commentary and stylistic departure. While Embury explores the momentary qualities of experience through the engagement with drawing itself and the unfolding circumstances of a fluid environment, Gibbon and myself push observations into drawn commentary, and seek subjects who typify social and political issues.

While I do create the majority of my work along the lines of Jill Gibbon, my work is also equally concerned with the idiosyncrasies of specific people and my own gauge of success is in the merger of accurate rendering of personhood along with what that person symbolises. Because it is the meeting point of these two polarities and orientations, my work and commentary provides a fusion of political, social and stylistic intent that informs wider discussions about contemporary reportage practice and how it encapsulates experience and functions as a media form.

The rationale for my drawing and writing practice is anchored in my contention that reportage drawing is the summation of experience as manifest in the graphic construct. Like experience itself, the drawing reflects a range of perceptions and thoughts that occur in the durative process of drawing and deliver a re-experience of the circumstances encountered by the artist on the ground. All environmental conditions, personal encounters, prior knowledge and discoveries summate in the graphic construct. While these textures and experiences are often self-evident in the drawings themselves, the written accompaniment provides a wider narrative and backdrop to the images, giving insight into the procedural aspects of the drawing and the choices that inform the work. What is revealed is that serendipity plays a significant role but also, that these choices emerge from held interests in people, history and

political and social tensions. What constitutes success here is the conveyance of the textures and layers of experience and, the personal motivations that either inform the choice of subject at the outset or evolve through the process of drawing.

2.4 Purpose of written thesis

The written thesis presents a view of contemporary reportage through the lens of the individual practitioner and distinguishes the contemporary practice from the 19th century, the most prominent time for visual journalism. The three primary sections which are drawing theory, experience and history, establish a view that most contemporary reportage is detached from journalistic notions of objectivity and orient around the individual artist and his or her methodology. What emerges from this re-location is an awareness of the function of contemporary reportage drawing which is to commune with the working methods of the artist themselves and therefore, the drawing act. Three other significant sections map the graphic construct of Embury, Gibbon and my own work. Other smaller sections include a look at Hogarth's *The Analysis of Beauty*, contemporary reportage, and perception and reception.

2.5 Practice based methodology

This research developed around insights that occurred while drawing in-situ. Reportage drawing is a complex act which demands from the practitioner a diverse set of skills to render one's environment. The practice of drawing, in this research, is the primary activity from which the discussion of the artist's graphic construct and range of intentions is located. This research is practice based because drawing constitutes the centre from which all theoretical, historical and practical discussion emerges and, with the commentary of practitioners, we can gain new insights into the aesthetic orientation of contemporary reportage drawing.

The graphic below highlights the contributing elements to the artist’s graphic construct which in this research, is the summation of aesthetic, conceptual and experiential components that cohere in the final drawing.

Drawing	Experience	Assessment
Rawson’s (1969) ‘Tenor’ and ‘Topic’	Experience of drawing	Fidelity to the observed
Drawn effects	Experience in-situ	Assessment of intentions
Aesthetic influences	Experience of place	Graphic qualities
Aims and intentions		
Graphic Construct		

In this research, all practitioners, including myself, act as ‘practitioner researcher’ and this ‘takes central place in seeking to uncover, record, interpret and position, from an insider’s perspective and experience, the processes they use within the context of professional contemporary practices in the field.’(Barrett & Bolt, 2007, p.126)

2.6 Methods

The video interview

The decision to use video to capture the reportage drawing experience was informed by a growing awareness of the limitations of the spoken interview and, the importance of observing how the reportage artist navigates his or her environment. In order to understand the artistic choices made in-situ, video enables a rich comparison between fluid reality and the selections from that environment by the artist in drawing. Heath, Hindmarsh and Luff

note that video enables ‘the fine details of conduct and interaction that are unavailable to more traditional social science methods’ and that video makes a priority of ‘the participants’ perspective(s) in naturalistic research.’ (Heath, Hindmarsh and Luff, 2010, p.2)

The choice of video is primarily to obtain the clearest picture of the artists reportage drawing methodology and their own ‘live’ perception of what they deem salient and compelling in their environment and their drawing. Gary Embury has been videoed but Jill Gibbon, due to the covert nature of her work declined video and preferred to discuss a recent trip while looking at her work.

2.7 Methodological approach

The video or audio interviews was conducted in a setting agreed with the participants. Consideration was made to settings that are of interest to the individual artist and that reflect their reportorial concerns. Because of the nature of Gibbon’s work, she could not be interviewed while producing her work but reflected on a recent reportage trip, and had recently published a book of her arms fair drawings. The insight into her work was not hampered by the absence of video.

The video of Gary Embury was purely supplemental to the interview but provided me with further documentation of his methods and a record of the circumstances in-situ.

The ‘situated knowledge’ or ‘localised knowledge’ (at the site of drawing) was mapped to show the commonalities of practice among practitioners and the significant differences. From this, ‘triangulation’ was used to analyse data from audio and or video, applying critical

analysis informed through theoretical and historical contexts and the prevailing research questions and contentions. (Gray & Malins, 2004, p.143)

2.8 Ethical considerations

Ethical considerations have been made and artists are given clear documentation stating the aims and intentions of the research.

Section 3 – Reportage: History and debates

3.1 Introduction

The history of reportage drawing is long and truncated and is essential for formulating an understanding of its contemporary practice. Of central importance to this research is the shift in the perception of drawing from the 19th century to today. Issues of authenticity and origination were evolving in the 19th century with the constraints and new possibilities of print technology and eventually, the photograph. Drawing in the form of wood block engravings delivered a generic news image to the public that removed the idiosyncratic and expressive hand of the artist. This presents a stark and valuable contrast with the practice today which centres around individualistic vision, experience and the drawing act.

On the level of drawing itself in the 19th century, individual artistic identities were subsumed by the newspaper production line and house styles. Commercial demands pushed artistic expression to the back of concerns and highlighted the purely informational function of the drawing. A distinction was clear, although not identified by the viewing public, between the original act of the reportage drawing and the reproduction. As Ingold notes, ‘art creates; technology can only replicate. Thus was the artist distinguished from the artisan, and the work of art from the artefact.’ (Ingold, 2016, p.130)

Photography played a crucial role in the 19th century as an evidentiary method of capturing what Sontag called ‘pieces of the world’. Early photography was also connected to structures of power and control and it soon became clear that the notion of ‘reality’ and the photographs attestation of it was problematized by various factors (see below). Photography is also anchored to its subject in a way that drawing is not. Berger notes the photograph ‘belongs to its subject’ and because they (photographs) preserve appearances, ‘they do not in themselves

preserve meaning'. Meaning, Berger notes, 'is the result of understanding functions' and the camera separates appearances 'from their function' (Berger, 1991, pp.54, 55)

Drawing, in form and function, contrasts significantly with photography. While drawing may intend some capture or 'slice' of fluid reality, it is a necessary construction and its effects are the consequence of a 'species of lines' as noted by Hogarth, which are descriptive and evocative. (Hogarth, 1997, p.50) As noted previously, drawings share their subject with the subject of drawing itself and the negotiation of the medium. Photography however is 'not a magical 'emanation' but a material product of a material apparatus' and is 'not an alchemy but a history, outside of which the existential essence of photography is empty'. (Tagg, 1995, p.3) The function of drawing compared to photography is of particular interest, with the 19th century providing a unique moment when drawing held the burden and responsibility of journalistic objectivity while simultaneously disappearing individual artistic language.

3.2 Brief history of reportage

The demand for information about a newly connected world through trade, conflict and conquest tended to favour a more realistic, factual and unsentimental artistic reporting. This work was content driven and largely void of fanciful embellishment, relying instead on visual conventions of the time. Artists found work on expeditions to the new world and on Grand Tours with aristocratic clients, documenting their privileged excursions (Hogarth, 1986, p.10) One such example of an artist exploring the new world was John White. White was asked to travel with Sir Walter Raleigh on his trip to North America in 1585 and White, along with his 'observer' Thomas Harriot, were commissioned to draw all variety of plants, animals, and people 'as you shall finde them differing' from the known English varieties. (Hulton, 1984, pp.7, 9). Unlike reportage artists of the 19th century, these early artists were rarely trained for

their specific tasks and were often pulled from the commercial art trade. White himself was likely trained as a limner or miniature portraitist although it is difficult to know for certain. (Hulton, 1984, p.35)

The work is marked by a naivety in representation that was owed to the deficiencies in White's artistic training, most evident in clumsy anatomy and awareness of perspective. Still, in a break from earlier times, Elizabethans demanded a 'visual record' of new worlds instead of collected artefacts and this led to 'gentlemen', often socially connected, self-taught enthusiasts joining expeditions. (Sloan, Chaplin, Feest & Kuhlemann, 2007, p.234)

Academies for artistic training in England, teaching drawing from nudes and learning perspective among other continental innovations, were not to be established until the 18th century. (Hulton, 1984, p.36) However, this drawn documentation was commissioned solely to 'communicate information graphically' and any qualities seen in the work that signify artistic flourish or 'atmosphere' are 'unconscious by-products'. (Hulton, 1984, p.37) This is reportage drawing with a strict mission and tight brief to document and inform. Although notable artists of the time were producing individualistic work, this work is a direct outgrowth of the commercial art trade, with artists functioning more like craftsmen.

Overall, this tension between the limitations of the artist, their orientation towards the depiction of their subject and their intentions for the work carries throughout the history of reportage. Ironically, when reportage drawing has been most visible and consequential, artistic intent is marginalised.

3.3 The nineteenth century: print and syntax

The nineteenth century saw dramatic moves in how drawing featured in everyday life. Through the proliferation of the illustrated press, the role of the reportage artist came to be central to visual media and communication. The reportage artist was an important figure but the primary aim of the work was clearly to serve, inform and entertain an image-hungry public. Drawing was prized for its ability to convey information, and slotted into the machinery of popular print media. Drawing's prominence was in large part due to new and modified technologies for mass production in print. There were technical shifts in print techniques that had previously attempted to replicate the qualities of paintings for expensive reproduction in books and portfolios. This sought to satisfy the ever-increasing demand for accurate representation which was adequately achieved through the mezzotint technique and, later, photomechanical reproduction, which was seen as potentially threatening to artists from sceptics such as John Ruskin. (Jussim, 1974, p.7) While print expanded the reach of drawing, it is questionable whether it elevated its status, flattening its qualities through convention and a production line print process.

The process of wood engraving for the illustrated presses is illuminating and highlights the division of labour and multiple hands that touched the work. In short, the wood block was painted with a thin layer of whitewash (to accentuate the lines to be engraved) and the sketch, which at this point had gone through a significant transformation from the field to accommodate scale, taste, house style and public expectation, was transferred and quickly went to specialists in drapery (called 'tailors'), foliage, (called 'pruners') simple lines (called 'mechanics') and more skilled engravers for facial expressions (called, mockingly, 'butchers'). (Brown, 2006, pp.36, 37) While this description of the process came from a

prominent North American publication called *Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper*, this division of labour was commonplace and each newspaper, of which there were several competing, would have a definitive stylistic approach to their drawing and the depiction of events. A former employee of *Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper* noted 'each sort of line was the orthodox symbol for a certain form' and Leslie's paper quietly removed engravers signatures signifying 'their subordination in the overall process'. (Brown, 2006, p.38) The invisibility of the artist and even the artistry in these prints linked them to their 16th century counterparts in that despite centuries of individualistic, artistic achievement, commercial art was providing a purely informational, albeit occasionally sensational, record of events.

Central to the problem of removing the primary, eyewitness, artist from the print is in the syntactical differences as William Ivins puts it. (Ivins, 1969) Ivins also identified in artistic work that a 'graphic medium possesses its own graphic syntax' and that, like language, 'so too the structure and vocabulary of visual codes impose their own potentialities on visual communication.' (Jussim, 1974, p.14). Simply put, Ivins sees the artist's syntax as synonymous with visual language and the problem rests in 'making a visual statement about a visual statement', which is an inevitability in artist copy prints and, the production line reportage prints. (Ivins, 1969, p.61) Central to his concerns is the way in which the original syntax of the artist's work is lost and copies were not just copies but 'translations' which often contained embellishments that ranged from the artistic, to trends in print techniques and the copyist's own limitations. (Ivins, 1969, p.67) The subsumed visual language of the artist also disconnects us from the durative process of drawing and the raw, denotative marks done in the field. The drawing was not anchored to singular artistic vision as it is today and by virtue of its 'translations', eliminates the original act and the first-hand rendering of

experience.

3.4 Photography

Susan Sontag called photographs ‘pieces of the world’ which she contrasts with writing and all other handmade arts. Other art forms she notes are ‘interpretations’ and photography’s ability to ‘furnish evidence’ unsurprisingly found early use in 1871 by the Paris police to document inmates. Citing photography’s implied veracity, Sontag notes ‘the picture may distort; but there is always a presumption that something exists, or did exist, which is like what’s in the picture.’ (Sontag, 1979, pp.4, 5)

This contrasts clearly with reportage drawing which, even at its most mimetic, cannot attest to a definitive moment other than the experience of the artist producing the work. The photograph however does not attest to moments of production and rather it freezes time and ‘all photographs testify to time’s relentless melt’. (Sontag, 1979, p.15) While the photograph is read as the result of a quick mechanical process, the drawing is seen as an unfolding of the process of its creation and we connect to it as a ‘made’ thing and not a ‘captured’ thing. This is both a problem and an asset for the representational claims in the drawing.

The photograph ‘is both a pseudo-presence and a token of absence’. (Sontag, 1979, p.16)

Unlike the drawing, photographs do not point to the photographer and rather they capture an instant and are ‘incitements to reverie’. (Sontag, 1979, p.16) While drawings are of and about things, they are also, as Rawson and others note, about drawing itself. Photographs are primarily concerned with how the ‘camera makes reality atomic, manageable, and opaque.’ (Sontag, 1979, p.23)

Where the roles overlap can be seen in the practice of the flaneur, roaming the streets at the end of the nineteenth century and seeing the 'picturesque' in the undiscovered street.

Photographers like Paul Martin in London and Atget in Paris documented their respective cities' 'dark and seamy corners'. (Sontag, 1979, p.55) These images relate to reportorial drawings in that they share the same referent but differ greatly in form. While photographs 'don't seem deeply beholden to the intentions of an artist', drawings are the result of such implicit intentions. (Sontag, 1979, p.53) And while the photograph has become a way of experiencing something and recording participation, it is an 'act of non-intervention'.

(Sontag, 1979, pp.10, 11) Although it could be argued that drawing too has an implicit physical distance from the subject, the act itself is an intervention, documenting but also mediating its subject matter(s). Also, the 'non-intervention' referred to is that of creating an 'image world' outside of the real, observed world. (Sontag, 1979, p.11) It is the distance necessary to capture the desired image and this requires the photographer to 'be in complicity with whatever makes a subject interesting' including a person's 'pain and misfortune'.

(Sontag, 1979, p.12) This can be seen in war photography and presents the inherent conflict between fluid reality and 'slices' or 'miniatures of reality' the photograph provides. (Sontag, 1979, p.4)

This conflict is also conflated in the way photographs 'trade simultaneously on the prestige of art and the magic of the real'. (Sontag, 1979, p.69) The photographic conundrum is succinctly described by WJT Mitchell who notes, 'it is praised for its incapacity for abstraction, or condemned for its fatal tendency to produce abstractions from human reality.

It is declared to be independent of language, (as per Ivens) or riddled with language' (Mitchell, 1980, p.274)

3.5 Claims to representation, truth and vision

Umberto Eco saw the two forms of drawing and photography as more related in that they both reproduce perception. He notes 'either a drawing or a photo, shows us that an image possesses none of the properties of the object represented; and the motivation of the iconic sign, which appeared to us as indisputable, opposed to the arbitrariness of the verbal sign, disappears...' (Burgin, 1994, pp.32-38) He then clarifies this saying the 'iconic sign' (drawing or photography) '*reproduces* the conditions of perception, but only some of them'. (Burgin, 1994, pp.32-38) It is clear that the distinction being made by Eco is one that full perception is more than the retinal image of the camera and the drawing. He furthers this claim by stating that '*every image is born of a series of successive transcriptions*' which, according to his larger claim, makes all images, including photographs, correlative constructions comprised of 'codes of recognition' (Burgin, 1994, pp.32-38) Truth for Eco appears to be less self-evident and requires a deeper analysis of the structural veracity of the image.

The photograph has some specific problems with its claims to truthful representation which relate to its fragmentary nature. Sekula notes, 'the photograph is an 'incomplete' utterance, a message that depends on some external matrix of conditions and presuppositions for its readability' and 'is necessarily context-determined' (Burgin, 1994, pp.84-109) This context relates to the specificity of photography in capturing a definitive moment. This burdens photography with the need for a 'discourse', which didn't bother the earliest practitioners like Fox Talbot and Morse who championed the 'unmediated agency of nature'. (Burgin, 1994, pp.84-109) The photograph can then be seen to have a 'primitive core of meaning' from its

early conception, thought to be analogous to nature and, a fluid iconography, heavily dependent on how it is contextualised.

While Tagg notes that the photograph 'as such has no identity' and that 'its history has no unity', this is in part because its identity and history are tied to its 'conditions of existence' and status as a technology. (Tagg, 1995, p.63) While drawings can evocatively convey the experience of a witness, they do not attest and frame an irrefutable 'reality'. Instead they claim the experience of a thing seen, felt or remembered. This makes them durative records of experience and although historical in the sense that they reflect the specificity of an encounter with a subject, the drawing itself is re-created by the viewer and therefore its fulfilment is in the moments of its viewing. The photograph however is always historical. As Tagg notes, 'photographs are never 'evidence' of history; they are themselves historical', they 'encompass' or 'exclude' and therefore, as Berger noted, are separated from their 'functions'. (Tagg, 1995, p.65)

One debate that is essential to the discussion of representational truth and the photograph is about language. Berger and Ivins make the claim that the photograph 'has no language of its own' or, for Ivins, no 'syntax'. However, Eco claims above that the photograph is linked to perception and therefore is singular and has the specificity of the photographer's vision and is 'coded' (Tagg, 1995, p.187) Tagg takes this further and draws upon a similar system of meaning-making applied to drawing language. He notes, 'the meaning of the photographic image is built up by an interaction of such schemas or codes, which vary greatly in their degree of schematisation. The image is therefore to be seen as a composite of signs, more to be compared with a complex sentence than a single word.' (Tagg, 1995, p.187). If, as Eco and Tagg note, that a language is in fact present within the photograph and, as Eco suggests,

is part of the field of perception, then the photograph, like drawing, has a determinate truth only when its respective ‘visual language’ is understood.

The visual language of reportage drawing is not only on the level of codes, description and meaning. The language of drawing is, at the core, a language of invention and this is both a striking distinction from that of photography and a surprising asset in the claim to representational truth. While the artist’s vision is inherently subjective, Gombrich notes, citing the reception of impressionist painters by the public that:

‘Having learned this language, they went into the fields and woods, or looked out of their window onto the Paris boulevards, and found to their delight that the visible world *could* after all be seen in terms of these bright patches and dabs of paint.’

(Gombrich, 1972, p.324)

The ability of the artist to utilise language to not just render reality but to fundamentally change the perception of that reality is key here. Because of the durative process of drawing and its inherent qualities, it does not compete with photography on the level of accuracy in depiction and rather presents artistic vision as a proposition. W.J.T. Mitchell notes, ‘vision is as important as language in mediating social relations, and it is not reducible to language, to the ‘sign’, or to discourse. Pictures want equal rights with language, not to be turned into language...to be seen as complex individuals occupying multiple subject positions and identities.’ (Mitchell, 1980, p.47)

3.6 Summary

The 19th century saw reportage drawing as a prominent part of visual culture and the primary vehicle for the delivery of the news of the day. However, field drawings were subsumed into a production line approach to constructing the news image which eliminated the qualities of their graphic construct. Artistic intent through the responsive line of the artist and the construction of the image was lost to conventions and amplifications which occurred when field drawings were re-worked into wood engravings and idiosyncrasies were flattened. This presents a stark contrast to contemporary reportage drawing as artistic intent through individual graphic constructs is key to the act and distinguishes it from analogical forms like the photograph. In the 19th century, reportage drawing was attempting to fulfil the public desire for the accurate representation of events and consequently, homogenised and disappeared distinctive graphic constructs. Today, the act is almost wholly engaged with the tension between the challenges of the act and the respective strengths and limitations of the artist working in-situ. In near total contrast with the 19th century, today reportage artists are seeking to reveal, through the construction of their images, the durative process of reportage and the inherent subjectivities of drawn notation, seeking images which are expressive of a time, place and experience rather than being purely representational. Developments in print and photography changed public perception of the image in the 19th century and enabled a more expansive approach to representation, ushering in modernism. These developments largely centred around an awareness of the limitations of representation in the photograph and a desire to capture the complexities of modern culture through expressive rather than didactic or mechanical means.

Developments in art from realism towards Impressionism and then total breaks from representation into abstraction, led to a re-examination of what representation is and what can be represented. Speaking of a Manet painting called *In the Conservatory*, Crary identifies two competing strains in late 19th century art which shape how we see art and perception today.

He notes:

'In the Conservatory is a figuration of an essential conflict within the perceptual logic of modernity, in which two powerful tendencies are at work. One is a binding together of vision, an obsessive holding together of perception to maintain the viability of a functional real world. The other, barely contained or sealed over, is a dynamic of psychic and economic exchange, of equivalence and substitution, of flux and dispersal that threatens to unmoor the apparently stable positions and terms that Manet seems to have effortlessly arranged.'

 (Crary, 2001, p.92)

In contemporary reportage, the diversity of approaches, and complex intentions in individual graphic constructs, push our understanding of the observed and observable world toward new realisations, unbound by convention or objectivity and invested in the plasticity and potential of drawing itself.

Section 4 – The ubiquitous image – 20th and 21st century reportage drawing as an alternative vision.

4.1 Introduction

Reportage drawing persisted through the 20th century and now the 21st century as a distinct offering from the photographic image, and even when practised as journalism, it is valued for its highly individual and idiosyncratic lens through which to see our world. Mid 20th century reportage saw a dramatic expanse of graphic constructs and closer links between the aims of caricature and reportage, asserting the voice of the artist and privileging the seductive and provocative over the purely informative. For this thesis, it is significant to chart the evolution of reportage drawing as it slowly detaches from commissioning structures of the second half of the 20th century and evolves as a highly personal practice, engaged with the hyper realities of modern life through individual graphic constructs which exploit the properties of drawing and understand inherent contrasts with competing media forms.

4.2 The 20th century

At the turn of the 20th century, as photography was rapidly becoming more mobile and a less burdensome technology, drawing in the form of reportage and social commentary was flourishing. Publications from around the world such as the *The Daily Graphic/The Graphic* in the UK, *Simplicissimus* in Germany, *The Masses* in the US, *L'Assiette au Beurre* in Paris and numerous radical publications in Russia decrying the violent suppression by the Tsarist regime, tackled contemporary issues such as workers' rights, greed, poverty and episodic violence, that predicted the deep fractures that were to reveal themselves at the onset of World War 1. (Hogarth, 1986, p.84-109) During this period, graphic languages are wildly diverse in approach and traditions of caricature are incorporated into reportorial, observational drawing.

The range of approaches from direct reportage to more refined caricature mark a dramatic break from the conventional news images of the 19th century. This is largely due to both a liberalising view of the image in a world that acknowledged (albeit slowly) the radical vision of the Impressionists, and the ability to replicate practically any drawing media through photo-mechanical reproduction. (Hogarth, 1986, p.73) The idiosyncrasies of the artists' hand and their individual graphic constructs, brought to the viewer a visceral account of the psychic world of the artist and an understanding of the turbulent dynamics of their modernising societies. The publications noted above gave a temporary home to artist reporters, but as the invention of the Kodak Box Camera in 1889 and the innovation of faster film in 1905 and therefore greater practicality and utility, the artist reporter began to take on a hybrid role as reporter, commentator and satirist. Artists from across the disciplines of the fine arts also got involved. (Hogarth, 1986, p.74) Functionally, the artist was freed from the conventions of the news image and able to comment on a wider spectrum of issues and formally individual graphic constructs were broadly applicable, imbuing the work with complex graphic vocabularies that reflected expanding visual appetites. Without the 're-codification' of the graphic construct of the artist as was commonplace in the print preparations of the 19th century, publications could now connect viewers to the artist's hand and mind, and reportage drawing and the various hybrid forms were 'read' as drawings with a singularity of vision, enabling the graphic construct and all that entails in the understanding of the image to present itself.

Throughout the first and second world wars, reportage artists found publication and significant exposure for their work. (Hogarth, 1986, p.152) Post war, budgets were tight in Europe and most publications relied on photography. In America, there was more money and an explosion of liberal minded special interest magazines that catered to a growing educated

and affluent population. Many of these reportage projects were attached to ‘polemical essays’ dealing with the fallout after WWII through niche stories tackling exploitation of workers, veterans’ issues, infrastructure development and a variety of visual essays on an array of topics. (Hogarth, 1986, p.152) This move from the constructed, orchestrated, and packaged news image to the freewheeling, emotive and expressive approaches to reportage post war, sees a total liberation from convention and a freedom, taken by artists, to move in their own stylistic direction, detached from any tradition or constraint. Paul Hogarth and Ben Shahn epitomise this move and can be seen respectively as significant in shaping modern reportage. (Embury & Minichiello, 2018, p.8)

Post war in Britain, Ronald Searle came back from Singapore where he was a prisoner of war and in 1946 exhibited his vivid drawings produced in captivity. This work caught the attention of Paul Hogarth and the two would go on drawing excursions in post war Europe. (Searle, 2010, p.13) Searle’s reportage work ran alongside his prolific humorous illustration career and found publication throughout the world in *Punch*, *The News Chronicle*, *Le Canard Enchaîné*, *Jours de France*, *Sddeutscher Rundfunk Fernsehen*, *Holiday* and *Life*. (Searle, 2010, p.6) Searle reflects the side of reportage that is laden with commentary and is unabashed about those intentions. Interviewed in 1977 about his reportage work he noted ‘One is not illustrating but pushing one’s nose into life. On top of that one must have something to say – however crass. Reportage is not reporting, it is opinion and comment that takes it away from journalism into (minor) art.’ (Searle, 2010, p.27)

Paul Hogarth’s book *Graham Greene Country* shows the authorial potential of reportage which was visible in corners of the publishing industry in the second half of the 20th century. This self-initiated journey takes the artist to the various locations of Graham Greene novels

and Hogarth's written accompaniment offers an insight into his thinking and an engagement with his drawing which, is as rooted in traditions of the cartoon as it is reportage. The correspondence between his written entries and his drawing is notable. Writing about residents on a beach in Clacton-on-Sea he notes, 'grotesque beetroot-faced retirees, who look as though they refused to be liberated when the camp closed, stagger by, or absorb the warmth of the midday sun on battered deck chairs.' (Hogarth & Greene, 1986, p.54) Here it is clear that observation and comment are fused in the written description and clearly in the drawing which is both attentive to the structural accuracy of the architecture and solidity of setting and more playful and stylised in the rendering of the beach dwellers.

Although stylistic tastes have shifted away from the approach of Hogarth, the work and its charm and commentary have a durability. As Martin Harrison, former editor for *The Times* notes in relation to the comparison between reportage drawing and other media:

'Good art can feed the senses, teach without lecturing, and heighten the emotions or shock the soul. Photography can do all these things, but I feel with art those initial feelings will last and carry on being fresh, regardless of how far into the future the work is viewed. Film and photography seem to suffer more from association with a particular period and sharpness diminishes as the years go by.' (Embury & Minichiello, 2018, p.158)

While the commissioning structures for the reportage artist are stable but somewhat limited in the second half of the 20th century, the commissioning of a war artist endures, and in the early 1980s, Linda Kitson is chosen for the Falklands War. Commissioned by the Imperial War Museum, her adventures and struggles to even participate and align with the logistics of the

Royal Navy constitute a compelling meta narrative. Kitson's drawing follows on from a tradition of direct observation. Even though subjectivities and inevitable distortions exist, her work does attest to open, objective witnessing and raw unvarnished vision. In the foreword to the book of her drawings produced during her time as a war artist, Frederick Gore notes of her work:

'Linda Kitson's particular gifts as a draughtsman are an ability to capture the essence of people, and even of things, so that they seem alive on the page, which she does by very rapid, simple means; and an extraordinary spatial awareness so that not only does she instinctively place her drawing beautifully on the paper but through the use of white areas and her immaculate sense of perspective she conveys the relationship of ship to sea to helicopter to land magically in two dimensions.' (Gore in Kitson, 1982)

What is striking here is that drawing, as the loser in the battle with photography for prominence, is celebrated for the things it does in spite of its diminished status and, possibly, benefits as a unique piece of media, a compelling oddity. What Gore is identifying in the work of Kitson is the two-fold experience of looking at drawing. As Taussig notes 'history is repeated in slow motion and the clumsiness of the artist actually adds to this *seeing seeing*, by which I mean to include as question the relationship between seeing and witnessing...when an image surfaces at a moment of danger and just as quickly disappears if not seized.'

(Taussig, 2011, p.89)

4.3 Contemporary reportage drawing

The contemporary practice of reportage drawing is diverse in approach, subject and purpose. Because of shrinking budgets in print media across the board, reportage has less of a presence in print and has moved by and large to the web. Reportage approaches still persist in print illustration as seen in the illustration collective *Ink* (now disbanded) whose members Rachel Gannon, Chloe Regan and Fumie Kamijo successfully incorporated reportage illustration and illustrative techniques into their commercial illustration. Rachel Gannon's work is particularly notable as she has produced her highly idiosyncratic reportage in a variety of locations and commissions including her residency at Luton Airport. These kinds of unique commissions persist and attest to the functional change in reportage, providing a different perspective of space and place and capturing the poetics of those places in different ways than photography, through responsive artistic choices in-situ.

Several experimental and experiential approaches to reportage have emerged over the past 10 years and indicate the potential of the practice to grow and adapt in this fluid media environment. Jenny Soep's digital and traditional work at music festivals has enabled her to create work and then sell that work to musical acts. Linda Kitson is using an iPad to create the majority of her work and collectives like *First Hand* bring together different reportage artists to create compelling collaborative work. The *First Hand* collective is well aware of the competition for eyeballs in the current media landscape and has a clear understanding of what they are trying to achieve with reportage drawing. The collective was formed after University by five core members and they engage with reportage through collaboration and seek to capture the unique textures of experience. They note in regards to their interest in drawing 'drawing is a time-based activity, and the illustrator can edit information so that only the parts of the picture that tell the story need to be included. If we understand that drawing is not

trying to do the same job as a camera, we understand that drawn visual journalism is an important method of conveying human stories.’ (Embury & Minichiello, 2018, p.56,57) This forward-looking group sees the immediacy of reportage and the speed of social media communications as presenting an opportunity for the active broadcast of their work. Online publication of their projects in *The Guardian*, *The Times*, *Eye Magazine* and *Varoom* validate their belief. They note about their media strategy that ‘imagery is by far the quickest way to digest a situation and our lives are saturated with visual communication in the form of photographs and short video clips. Now is the perfect time to slice through this noise with an alternative method of communication that offers something more.’ (Embury & Minichiello, 2018, p.59)

Much of the practice of contemporary reportage artists is self-initiated. Melanie Reim’s coverage of election day in New York in 2016 shows the persistent desire of artists to engage with events that are significant and consequential (protests being particularly popular). Reim notes that ‘the raw emotion of the reaction to this historical time is magnified when you take the time to draw it, as opposed to a clicking camera. I feel connected – and empowered, as much as we can be under the circumstances.’ (Brazell, 2017, p.45) Reim’s scratchy and colourful work captures the immediacy and atmospherics of place and her immersion is clear. As Reim notes above, reportage drawing in this way is personally fulfilling in that it enables a deeper understanding of the world, no matter how troubling those realities may be. Here the aesthetic of reportage is closely aligned with its purpose, namely the capture of the energies of a live event and the frenetic chaos of the crowd. Reim’s work represents a total break with the function of the camera and embraces the improvisation and responsiveness of hurried media in the thick of a fluid environment.

One figure in the world of contemporary reportage who deserves mention for his methods as much as his work is Olivier Kugler. Called the ‘contemporary face of reportage illustration’ by *Eye* magazine’s John L. Walters, Kugler is one the most visible practitioners working today, finding publication in *Suddeutsche Zeitung*, *Reader’s Digest*, *The New York Times*, *The New Yorker*, *New York Magazine*, *German GQ*, *Harpers* and commissions from organisations like *Oxfam*, *Medecins Sans Frontières* and *Black Sun Plc* to name a few. (Walters, 2017, p.44,45)

Kugler does not draw on location and rather takes photos from a simple camera and makes audio recordings. He later draws from his laptop using fairly hard lead pencils and his work reflects this with its strong contour line and wealth of detail, no doubt aided by his use of photographic imagery. Kugler’s influences belie his current approach to reportage, citing the American illustrators Alan E. Cober and Robert Weaver as influences, both men who drew from life. (Walters, 2017, p.47) Kugler notes about the inclusion of overlapping action in his drawings and implied movement ‘I only draw what I see. That’s why I want to start again when the subject moves!’. (Walters, 2017, p.48) This remark seems out of place with his working methods which do not involve direct engagement through drawing of subjects.

Kugler professes for his work a desire to tell stories first and foremost and it is perhaps this which dictates his methodology. Instructive for our understanding of Kugler in relationship to contemporary reportage practice is the way in which he uses available technology. What may seem like a cheat by some reportage artists who see drawing on location as fundamental to the act, Kugler offers something of a hybrid approach, acknowledging the value of and quality of drawn lines but bringing in the photograph to provide more information. Does Kugler’s method reflect a change in thinking about the role of photography in reportage

drawing and, in the unspoken desire by commissioners to have their cake and eat it to, to have the qualities of drawing and the capacity for information afforded by the photograph, in one? For the purposes of this research, the contemporary practice is so widely diverse and individual graphic constructs clearly demonstrate a felt freedom to indulge in personal vision and embrace the potential of new technologies. Drawing emerges as still valid because it connects to the maker through facture in ways that put both artist and viewer in the realm of the subject and the experience of the artist.

4.4 Summary

At the core of reportage drawing's stubborn persistence as a medium and practice is our innate connection to the act of drawing and how it reflects something fundamental about human vision and understanding. Ingold reflects on how the sketch and its tremulous, searching and non-straight lines reflect how we understand surfaces. He notes, 'whereas the abstract geometrical line, in the depiction of an edge, represents the junction of two *planes*, an actual edge in the built environment is formed by the junction of two *surfaces*.' He furthers, 'we perceive the environment not from a stationary point, nor from a succession of such points, but in the course of our movement along what Gibson calls "a path of observation".' (Ingold, 2016, p.169, 171) Seen in the context of reportage drawing, the unique properties of drawing as a record of perception relate to how we not only see the world but how we understand its construction. As a depictive media, drawing does not merely mirror the world that we live in, it creates a new perception of the world and as noted previously, aggregates our own perceptions of the subject. The survival of reportage drawing is then less about a defiant posture towards other media and more a recognition that it offers something functionally different. Berger makes the following observation about a figure he is drawing, noting, 'every line I draw reforms the figure on the paper, and at the same time it

redraws the image in my mind. And what is more, the drawn line redraws the model, because it changes my capacity to perceive.’ (Berger & Savage, 2008, p.112) While this is from the perspective of the drawer, this same phenomenon is occurring with the viewer. Contemporary reportage with its myriad of graphic constructs reflects the multiple ways in which we can enter the experience of the artist engaging with the subject and share the range of perceptions that are embedded in the drawing. The continued practice and proliferation of reportage drawing is contingent on the awareness of its unique properties and its connection to multi layered experience. Dewey notes, ‘the doings and sufferings that form experience are, in the degree in which experience is intelligent or changed with meanings, a union of the precarious, novel, irregular with the settled, assured and uniform – a union which also defines the artistic and the esthetic.’ (Dewey, 1929, p.290, 291)

Section 5 – The graphic construct of reportage drawing and the re-creative experience

5.1 Introduction

The currency of contemporary reportage drawing is in its proximity to its subject and how this is conveyed in the graphic construct of the artist. This construction is then a vehicle for a re-creative experience and a communion with both the durative process of drawing and the layered experience of the artist's engagement with the subject. Through the properties of drawing that form the construct, we engage with the total experience of drawing including the negotiations in-situ and, we understand the experience through the filter of the artist's intentions. These are implicit or explicit in the methods and stylistic choices of the artist.

Although reportage drawing is typically identified by a complex range of analogical marks, it is also the summation of aesthetic, conceptual, and procedural concerns at the point of drawing. Being a composite of multiple concerns including a desire for commentary and provocation, the correspondent, analogical record is further complicated, and the association with conventional documentary aims is weakened. What arises is a new understanding of experience in and of the image, one that embraces the personal imprint of the artist but still maintains an essential anchorage to the observation of people and places.

The immediately identifiable aesthetic of the graphic construct of reportage drawing shares the features of the sketch, especially the raw, unclosed forms that convey the urgent, improvisation that connects us to the making of the drawing, and, by extension, the engagement with the subject. The raw forms of a 'first thought' sketch mirror the reportage drawing in approach and the dual concerns of articulating observed forms and departing into imaginative applications. The sketch is more than a way of framing the act of reportage, it is a way of seeing how the larger aesthetic reads as a direct engagement with its subject.

Rawson's terms 'tenor', 'topic' and 'realia', or the visual reality of the artist, are significant to this thesis and enable a closer understanding of the make-up and function of the reportage artist's graphic construct. Although there are myriad stylistic approaches and orientations towards subject matter among reportage artists, the 'tenor', or the purposeful rendering of the drawing, reinforces the engagement with a live subject and aims to draw the viewer into a confrontation with artistic perception, not away from it in stylistic indulgence. The reportage drawing is a record of negotiation between the artist and subject and thus reflects the propositional terms of the artist's graphic construct. This reflects a merger of concerns, inclinations and limitations on the part of the artist and renders, at its fulfilment, a 'half-created' (see Berger) record of collaboration between artist and subject.

Schema and the way in which drawing becomes a schematic language is critical to see how reportage drawing, in contrast to most conceptions, is schematic and therefore relies on conventional visual language. This language however, comprised of refined perception and invented forms, is beyond 'schematic restatement' and reflects developed forms and strategies for the rendering of forms. This schematic language is an identifiable part of the artist's graphic construct and contributes to the artist's aesthetic.

Caricature is an element of reportage drawing and manifests through the desire to render comment or is a result of reductive drawing due to the demands of the act. Elements of caricature are instrumental in seeing how reportage drawing condenses and conflates commentary and observation and how reportage artists balance a delicate line between both, trying to maintain anchorage to the observed and avoiding the indulgences and departures of pure caricature.

In reportage drawing, the constituent forms and the subject unify in a graphic construct that is layered with descriptive, symbolic and metaphoric intent. Analysing these intentions and the effects of the work provides a more complete understanding of the structural relationships between drawn forms, their relation to the individual's experience drawing in situ, and how the graphic construct enables a re-creative experience of the drawing itself.

5.2 First thoughts – the impromptu record of thought and action

The sketch and the freedom of its forms have been useful to artists for clarifying thinking, relying on action over deliberation that is reflected in the manner of its making and the aesthetic impression of unforced honesty. The sketch is also, to an extent beyond the challenges of reportage, an exploited aesthetic property of reportage drawing. Patrick Maynard, citing Rawson's ideas about the procedural nature of drawing and its effects, notes 'productive process and history is not only an important aspect of the appearance of drawings, it is a factor that may be actively exploited by the drafter for drawing purposes, including depictive and representational ones. In these terms, we learn more about the efficiency of drawing as an imagining-seeing technology.' (Maynard, 2005, pp.191,192) Maynard is referring to the way in which the artist controls the perception and re-perception in drawing and how the effects, including stylistic choices, can be manipulated for desired reading. For reportage drawing, the loose gestural quality that pervades the act attests to its production but could equally belie it. The impromptu marks and gestures that are associated with reportage drawing have been conventionalised and the contemporary practitioners included in this research, have distanced themselves from those flattening qualities, seeking, as much as possible, a singular, idiosyncratic language.

From the 15th to the 18th centuries, drawing was largely a developmental practice and a preparatory activity for the realisation of ideas intended in other media. (Rosand, 2002, p.22) Exceptions did occur such as early caricature and print work. Disconnected from the intentions of the act, these historical sketches enable a ‘re-enactment of the drawing gesture’ and ‘our mimic re-creation of the creative acts’.(Rosand, 2002, p.23) This closeness to the durative process of drawing and the artist’s own articulations makes the sketch (and by extension the reportage drawing) a valuable ‘originary act’ (Rosand, 2002, p.23) Taylor breaks down the historical forms of drawing as the sketch, the study and the cartoon, each confirming the place of drawing as almost purely developmental. (Taylor, 1957, p.97)

However, extracted from its historic role as largely preparatory, the sketch and its isolation of the ‘drawing gesture’ is highly valuable to the reportage artist. In contrast to a ‘finished’ drawing, the sketch and reportage drawing derive their potency from an awareness of their construction, not an elimination of it. Equally, the inventive forms that emerge from the quickly executed drawing imbue it with the energy of raw vision and also provide the building blocks for schematic language, mostly through refinement and a building of the ‘storehouse’ of memorised forms.

The sketch has historically provided the artist with everything from the pre-visualisation of a composition, to the specific qualities of a pictorial component (like drapery for example) and, an end in itself, retaining the vitality of rendered thought, un-altered for public consumption. (Rawson, 1969) Reportage drawings share the impromptu gestures of the sketch and closeness to the operations of thought. As David Rosand notes ‘the drawn mark is the record of a gesture, an action in time past now fixed permanently in the present; recalling its origins

in the movement of the draftsman's hand, the mark invites us to participate in the recollection of its creation.' (Rosand, 2002, p.2)

Additionally, and perhaps most importantly, the reportage drawing benefits from its perception as a piece of intimate artistic creation. The uncovering of private sketches of the past has given viewers a privileged look at how the artist constructed forms and conceived their work in the most fundamental ways. Reportage drawing exploits this, not only revealing its construction but relinquishing control, leaving indicative marks, half-finished forms and awkward lines. These idiosyncrasies enable the viewer to engage with the drawing as a wrestle between the experience of the subject and the strengths and limitations of the artist. Berger identifies this struggle as a dialogue and notes 'it is a ferocious and inarticulated dialogue. To sustain it requires faith. It is like a burrowing in the dark, a burrowing under the apparent. The great images occur when the two tunnels meet and join perfectly. Sometimes when the dialogue is swift, almost instantaneous, it is like something thrown and caught.' (Berger & Savage, 2008, p.77)

5.3 Studies after nature – observation and refinement of vision

The history of the sketch is often confused by assumptions made about the nature of the work. Because of the spontaneity of the sketch, they were often mistaken for 'studies after nature' but more often than not these studies preceded, or predetermined compositions that followed and emerged purely from the imagination. (Rawson, 1969, p.295) This is an important distinction for reportage drawing. While it is marked by the brevity of its construction and intimates direct recording, the practice of the act is broad and combines a variety of methods, including working from memory or imagination. However, the rigorous observation from nature develops a confidence in the rendering of forms that after much

practice can be fluidly manipulated and recalled on demand. This was part of the practice of notable artists such as Leonardo, Michelangelo, Rembrandt, Hogarth and Daumier to name a few. For reportage artists, this practice is less a false construct of the observed than a prodigious use of visual memory.

Ruskin focused his drawing tuition on studying nature and noted that drawing strategies emerge to depict natural subjects and when you do 'you must now therefore have recourse to some confused mode of execution, capable of expressing the confusion of Nature'. (Ruskin, 1971, p.70) The confidence of an artist's graphic construct is evident in the sketch and the ability to create reductive, economical forms, developed from rigorous observation. Ruskin, speaking of the sketches of 'great men', emphasises the value of 'economy' in the sketch and notes to judge the sketch 'you must know the beauty and nature of the thing he was drawing. All judgement of art thus finally finds itself on knowledge of Nature'. (Ruskin, 1971, p.82)

Ruskin's orthodoxy was not without some understanding of the limits of human vision and skill. Ruskin's three laws of sketching from nature, 'subordination', 'individuality' and 'incomprehensibility', acknowledge the difficulty of the task but he says of great masters (like Turner) that they are able to create 'a perfect expression of grace and complexity.' (Ruskin, 1971, p.121) Ruskin is aware that the expression of nature is more important than mere depiction, made clear by his contention that 'nothing is ever seen perfectly, but only by fragments'. (Ruskin, 1971, p.120)

Ruskin's observational loophole is well exploited in reportage drawing. The observation present in reportage is almost always fragmentary but the conveyance of the observed subject to the viewer is in the selective detail, the 'individuality' of the seen. As Ruskin implies, it is

not the total capture of nature that is essential but rather an acknowledgement of its complexity and an effort towards some resolution. Ruskin makes this distinction clear noting how one should approach natural subjects. He said:

‘You must invent, according to the character of tree, various modes of execution adapted to express its texture...it is the intention of Nature that the tenderness and transparent infinitude of her foliage should be felt, even at the far distance, in the most distinct opposition to the solid masses and flat surfaces of rocks or buildings.’

(Ruskin, 1971, p.123)

Berger provided a glimpse into his own procedural thinking during a life drawing class and this account confirms the value of study from nature. What is evident here is how the drawing unfolds from an engagement with the subject and how the resolution of the image is tied up with the artist’s own matrix for success, often anchored to a perceived rightness or truth to what was observed. He notes, ‘I had to resist the temptation to make every line over-emphatic’ and ‘yielded to the oncoming forms’. He then notes, ‘I saw and recognized quite ordinary anatomical facts; but I also felt them physically’. Also, echoing Ruskin’s warning about ‘habits’ he wonders ‘which spontaneous gestures had evaded the problem, and which had been instinctively right.’ And finally, he reflects on the final image noting ‘I saw my drawing and the actual man coincide – so that, for a moment, he was no longer a man posing but an inhabitant of my half-created world, a unique expression of my experience.’ (Berger & Savage, 2008, pp.7, 8, 9) This is aligned with Berger’s broader definition of drawing as ‘an autobiographical record of one’s discovery of an event – seen, remembered or imagined’. (Berger & Savage, 2008, p.3) Rawson echoes this noting ‘in creating the image of his world

man creates his image of himself.’ (Rawson, 1969, p.9)

This notion of a ‘half-created’ world is significant here. Because reportage drawing is a formulation of a graphic construct, rendered subjects are imbued with layered referents of individual vision. Additionally, as Berger notes, the engagement with the subject is like a collaboration. The success of this collaboration rests on how the artist perceives the capture of the subject, but also how the multiple aims of their graphic construct are satisfied and that can include personal commentary. The success of the drawing is in the ability of the artist to negotiate the creation of a ‘half-created’ world with the subject and, importantly, convey that negotiation to the viewer in a way that invites the re-creation and re-experience of the act.

5.4 Speed, mastery and performance – the record of quick perception and the capture of fluid reality

Charles Baudelaire famously quoted Delacroix saying ‘if you have not sufficient skill to make a sketch of a man throwing himself out of a window, in the time that it takes him to fall from the fourth floor to the ground, you will never be capable of producing great machines’. (Baudelaire, 2006, p.62) Baudelaire goes on to support the comment and his thoughts on Delacroix’s aims which he notes are ‘to achieve an execution quick and sure enough to prevent the smallest particle of the intensity of action or idea from evaporating.’ (Baudelaire, 2006, p.62) The speed evident in the sketch and reportage drawing is seen here as a demonstration of mastery and ‘genius’ and although this is connected to the legacy and history of the sketch, improvisation and invention characterises the persistent interest in the sketch in scholarship and practice. (Petherbridge, 2010, pp.26, 27)

Speed is noted as not only a critical component in the practice of reportage drawing (whether circumstantially required or self-imposed) it is also a readily observed aesthetic quality. It indicates the rush to capture fluid reality and it is the mark of urgent creation, pushing the artist's capabilities. In line with the historical perception of speed as mastery, reportage trades in the perception that it is an urgent act, that the drawing somehow emerges from the environment, which it often does. The viewer becomes another participant and enables the re-creation of the act and re-experience of the circumstances of its production.

Michael Taussig reflects on his own drawing of a fleeting moment witnessed from a taxi in a tunnel in Colombia. He notes, 'far from splattering perception into a diffuse morass of sensation, the high-velocity speed-up and disappearance of the world into an endless tunnel of night accentuates with a cruel clarity the glimpse of things but for an instant seen...a glimpse can be enough.' (Taussig, 2011, p.125)

5.5 Tenor, Topic and visual reality – understanding how the graphic construct projects meaning and connects us to artistic intent

The attributes of individual graphic constructs vary widely among reportage artists, especially those who avoid some of the more conventional approaches. A surprising diversity of approaches to the act denotes widely varied concerns and differing notions about what constitutes success in the image and how one perceives the conveyance of experience.

Rawson's delineated terms 'tenor' and 'topic' are useful for fleshing out the graphic construct and the relationship between the subject and treatment of the subject. Rawson defines the tenor as promoting 'the extension of forms into space; second is the special meaning enclosed in the topic, which may or not be an obvious direct product of the tenor though it may be

‘hung on’ it’. (Rawson, 1969, p.5) The tenor can be seen as the construction of the drawing and the formal relationship between the graphic symbols. As Rawson notes ‘the meaning lies not in the tenor, but in how it is treated.’ (Rawson, 1969, p.5) He furthers this later noting, ‘no tenor is ever the final resting point of the meaning, its terminus...the artistic tenor is never a single actual thing, nor even a recognizable class of things. It is a fact of the world which is referred to for the sake of the sense of ‘external reality’ or ‘positive truth’ it can give to the image.’ (Rawson, 1969, p.250) This directly relates to the reportage drawing and the way in which the graphic construct attempts the capture of fluid reality and, summates a range of observed and felt impressions. ‘Tenor’ can then be seen most simply as the visual language or aesthetic of the artist and the ‘topic’ as the applied meaning or fulfilment of that language.

These two terms are useful for reportage drawing in that the subject and the treatment of the subject are dialogic. The graphic construct is often a consequence of the demands of the act and relate, in varying degrees depending on the individual practice, to the orientation to the subject. The practice is less shaped by differing contentions about objectivity and more about the way tenor and topic summate experience and what the artist deems salient in that experience. What is striking however, is that this dialogue between language and subject is fundamental to understanding artistic motivations, especially as the outward aesthetic of reportage drawing can belie more subtle intentions about individual perception, commentary and stylistic concerns.

Rawson sees the graphic construct as inseparable from artistic vision and the summation of an artist’s construct resides not solely in ‘notional realities’ depicted, but in the ‘system of relationship’ between graphic forms. This creates a stylistic, graphic structure which relates

to itself and marks, at its total fulfilment, the visual reality of the artist or 'realia'. (Rawson, 1969, pp.32, 33, 35) Rawson also notes, importantly, that graphic constructs or 'drawing styles', create very distinct visual realities and have different 'structural functions' (Rawson, 1969, p.33) These structural functions are multiple and complex and require from the spectator a 'well-stocked mind' to know how the drawing, and drawing itself, shapes meaning. (Rawson, 1969, p.32)

What the artist is creating in a drawing is then, according to Rawson, the proposition of a construct which depends on knowledge of both the terms of the artist's perception and the correspondent language to describe it. Rawson relates the success of this negotiation between artist and spectator as crucial to the success of the drawing. As Rawson notes, the artist 'makes up his drawings out of elements no one can see in any object.' (Rawson, 1969, p.21) Rawson furthers this saying 'drawing is not seeing...On the contrary, works of art are in fact made; they are artistic constructs, based on ingrained scanning procedures...A language of form or structure creates its own kind of reality.' (Rawson, 1969, pp.22,23)

5.6 Notes on visual language

Rawson's 'tenor' and 'topic' are central to this thesis because both terms confirm the larger contention of this research; primarily that visual choices are dialogically bound to conceptual orientations towards the subject. The terms relate to the practice of reportage drawing and the way in which completed drawings reflect a condensation of intentions and, that visual language is only part of the larger graphic construct of the artist. Other significant theorists on semiotics, language and its components will be explored below including M. A. K. Halliday, Michael O'Toole and Theo Van Leeuwen.

M. A. K. Halliday's notion of 'tenor' is not unlike Rawson in that both see the word as affective but also interdependent with other factors to enable as Halliday notes 'an act of meaning'. (Halliday & Webster, 2009, p.16) For Halliday, meaning is the product of several aspects of the system of language such as mode, field and tenor and how the relations between those factors shape meaning. Halliday notes 'The meanings so created are not, of course, isolates; they are integrated systems of meaning potential. It is in this sense that we can say that the meanings are the social system: the social system is itself interpretable as a semiotic system.' (Halliday & Webster, 2009, p.55) To clarify Halliday's notion of what the social system constitutes as it relates to an 'instance' of meaning he notes 'for this purpose we interpret the situation as a semiotic structure; it is an instance, or instantiation, of the meanings that make up the social system.' He furthers 'the social action: that which is "going on", and has recognizable meaning in the social system; typically a complex of acts in some ordered configuration, and in which the text is playing some part; and including "subject-matter" as one special aspect.' (Halliday & Webster, 2009, p.57) Like Rawson, Halliday sees tenor as 'interpersonal' and relating directly to the 'field' ('significant social action') and 'mode' ('symbolic organisation'). (Halliday & Webster, 2009, p.58) However, Rawson's 'tenor' and 'topic' relate directly to how we understand drawing and how meaning is constructed in the choices of the artist. Rawson notes:

And it (drawing) conveys that meaning not by a general similarity of surface but by a structure of symbolic elements which are formulated as method. At certain points the structure rests on foundation of visual analogies between human perceptual experience both of graphic forms and of realities. Therefore the first thing to query in the study of any drawing is: To what features of experience do its basic visual elements ultimately correspond and how do they do so? (Rawson, 1969, p.24)

While Halliday is laying out a structure for understanding written language through a matrix which enables greater understanding of its formal make up and relational logic, Rawson's tenor and topic acknowledges that visual language is idiosyncratic and meaning is highly dependent on, among other things, the capacity of the viewer to analogise with the forms of the artist. Rawson notes 'certain groups of marks will constitute references to everyday objects of use, i.e. will be representational. Others will serve structural functions according to the artist's usual principles.' He continues, 'but the main bulk of the marks will not just refer directly to everyday objects but will 'qualify' them by investing them with analogous forms from quite other fields of experience.' (Rawson, 1969, p.26) For Rawson, the framework for analysing drawings is limited by the essential collaboration between the artist and viewer for fully 'reading' the image through understanding the critical dialogue between tenor and topic. Halliday does acknowledge this essential dialogue although 'topic' for Halliday can best be described as some merger between his terms 'mode' and 'field'. He notes:

In the first place the distinction between style (or "form", or "manner") and content is largely illusory; we cannot really separate what is said from how it is said, and this is just as true of everyday language as it is of myth and poetry. In the second place, the factors of field, mode and tenor operate as a whole, not in isolation from each other; the linguistic reflection of any one of them depends on its combination with the other two. (Halliday & Webster, 2009, p.77)

While there are clear overlaps between Rawson and Halliday, Rawson acknowledges the specific qualities of drawing as a communicative language and that unlike written language broadly, there is not a common vocabulary of forms in drawing that enable such analysis nor,

a sufficient model for analysis that could incorporate all of the intentions of the artist. This is precisely the reasoning behind the development of the graphic construct and mapping of practice of the reportage artist. Without a broader understanding of the orientation to the subject and the experience of the artist, we cannot comprehend the summation of intentions in the drawing which, as Rawson notes ‘summarize and condense the psychological meaning of the graphic forms of which they are composed.’ (Rawson, 1969, p. 247) Halliday notes similar complexity in linguistics in a variety of examples and most notably, in relation to Rawson and drawing as a communicative language, in the ‘voice’ of the text. Halliday notes:

The interpersonal voice provides the interaction: mood, modality, person, polarity, attitude, comment, key. The textual voice provided the organization: thematic and informational prominence; grammatical and lexical cohesion among the parts. The “character” of the text is its pattern of selections in these various voices, and the way they are combined into a single whole. (Halliday & Webster, 2009, p. 373)

The above is perhaps the closest alignment with Rawson in that the drawing, like the ‘voice’ of the text, is playing multiple communicative functions and cohering the structure and meaning. For Rawson, ‘voice’ could be replaced with ‘type’ (here type can be seen as ‘style’ or, a formalised (conventional) approach to form.) He notes:

The types of all kinds must continually appeal to many tenors in actual experience. The subject itself may even be a symbol for the ‘ultimately real’ (as in strictly religious icons). A wide range of types representing all the accepted existential ground needs to be evoked and clad in a large repertory of forms symbolic of the

accepted extent of Being. This adds to the central numinous image a whole current apparatus of visual reality. (Rawson, 1969, p. 258)

For Rawson, and importantly for this thesis, drawing and ‘tenor’ and ‘topic’ broadly, is not seen as applicable to an established and stable language as in linguistics and rather, refers to the multiplicity of artistic approaches to form and both individual artistic inclinations towards form and meaning, and, cultural traditions and understandings which have implications for methods of representation. Halliday’s analysis of linguistics function and structures could be useful in framing the act of drawing and his comprehensive approach is reflected in the approach to the design of the graphic construct in this thesis. However, Rawson’s ‘tenor’ and ‘topic’ relates more specifically to the graphic forms of drawing and his view of the ‘visual reality’ of the artist is a more fitting way to see the way that ‘tenor’ and ‘topic’ constitute the world view of the artist and become an individual symbolic language, dependent on the ‘linked chains of emotive affect they arouse; that is, upon their *content*.’ (Rawson, 1969, p.29)

Michael O’Toole’s approach to the analysis of art builds from Halliday’s semiotic approach and explicitly seeks a dispassionate, accessible and comparable structure to find a common ‘grammar’ in the discussion of works of art. (O’Toole, 2011, p.16) For O’Toole, artworks can be broken down using a structural framework which reveal the meaning of the work through an analysis of the structural intent of its components. O’Toole notes ‘I would want to argue that what is often referred to as the ‘aesthetic’ quality of a work of art is primarily the impact on us of purely formal relations – including colour, line, and volume.’ (O’Toole, 2011, p.27) By seeing the image as a ‘text’, it is liberated from ‘external’ factors which, for O’Toole, have shrouded art history in a realm only accessible to specialists who are overly concerned

with context and lineage. (O'Toole, 2011, p.120, 121) O'Toole notes 'engaging first with the modal function at least involves viewers directly and personally with what they see on the canvas' and 'at least the judgment is based on what everyone can see for themselves in the painting before them.' (O'Toole, 2011, pgs. 126, 129) While this method does provide a clear structure for analysis which allows for close analysis without (or at least before) contextual information, for this thesis, the position and inclinations of the artist was of greater import and the meaning and intentions of the image were framed through the narrative of production. My interest in the image was to frame the contemporary act of reportage from the perspective of its practitioners and through the image, highlight distinct orientations. (both aesthetic and conceptual) Although O'Toole's method on the surface appears to extract aesthetic choice from conceptual intent, he notes 'I am not thereby claiming total 'objectivity', and a kind of spurious 'scientific' status for the analysis; on the contrary, I want to show how a consistency in the method of approach both generates new subjective insights about a work and shows us the boundary between the subjectively perceived and the objectively describable.' (O'Toole, 2011, p. 131)

Both O'Toole and Halliday use a matrix like system for organising their analysis and this most closely relates to the graphic construct model designed in this thesis to map the aesthetic and conceptual concerns of the artist. O'Toole notes 'one starts by grouping meaningful elements into compatible sets and then arranging them in a hierarchy of sets and cover-sets. The rank-scale of Halliday's linguistic model and my semiotic model do this anyway. One can then construct matrix arrays that match potential meanings against a well-defined set of features.' (O'Toole, 2011, p. 164)

David Machin notes that this framework for analysis laid out by O'Toole in particular has problems in that 'the code is conflated with the interpretation based on extensive book knowledge.' Machin points to O'Toole's analysis of Botticelli's *Primavera* in which he invokes art historical critique. Machin notes the difficulties presented to modal analysis noting 'contextual and production knowledge are vital parts of our analyses. But we must be careful to distinguish where we rely on historical and contextual information and where our own system of analysis begins.' (Jewitt, 2017, p.187) For this thesis, the aim is a holistic view of the practice of reportage drawing and the image and its effects are valuable primarily for the way in which they cohere the intentions of the artist and how they reflect the contemporary practice. While the modal and multimodal approach to analysis of the image is useful in understanding the image itself, the path of analysis in this thesis see the image as a record of experience and a sum of a narrative of production. Aesthetic properties and effects are significant in terms of their relation to artistic choice. In almost direct opposition to the dispassionate aims of O'Toole, this thesis privileges personal choice, inclination and orientation over formal elements (although important and seen through the lens of choice, intention and the aesthetic and impression of the sketch).

Theo Van Leeuwen's expanded application of semiotics seeks to explore methods of analysis for a variety of established and emerging forms of media, utilising 'rules' but equally acknowledging that 'rules can never control every detail of what we do. In a sense every instance of sign production and interpretation is new.' (Leeuwen, 2005, p. 50) Leeuwen's approach to social semiotics borrows from the tools of analysis developed by Halliday in linguistics and expands it to all aspects of communication. Leeuwen sees communication as always within a social context and both physiological and technical. He notes 'we can communicate not only with our voice but also with musical instruments; not only with facial

expressions and gestures but also through the clothes we wear and the way we groom our bodies.’ He continues ‘the use of these resources is also socially regulated, for instance through the question of who is given access to them and in what roles – as producer, consumer, or, with today’s more interactive media, something in between...this means that social semiotics is by and large about the *how* of communication. How do we use material resources to produce meaning?’ (Leeuwen, 2005, p. 93) Leeuwen sets out four main areas of investigation for multimodal texts being rhythm, composition, information linking and dialogue but stresses that, like Halliday and O’Toole, they work in conjunction to formulate meaning. (Leeuwen, 2005, p. 179)

5.7 Schema

Schema can be seen as invention, a developed strategy for the depiction of subjects through one’s available means. Viktor Lowenfeld says of schema as it relates to children’s drawings as ‘drawing is essentially an abstraction or schema from a large array of complex stimuli and demonstrates the beginning of an ordered thought process.’ (Lowenfeld & Brittain, 1987, p.223) Ernst Gombrich saw schema as relating to artistic development and refinement. Schema for Gombrich was a part of artistic training and was both an element of rote memorisation through practice and the development of an artist’s own vocabulary of form. Gombrich notes ‘for in a way our very concept of “structure,” the idea of some basic scaffolding or armature that determines the “essence” of things, reflects our need for a schema with which to grasp the infinite variety of this world of change.’ (Gombrich, 1972, p.155) For the reportage artist, schema relates to the strategies and approach to forms which in the act, must be called upon quickly with little deliberation. Schema in reportage drawing is refined perception and relates to a consistency in an artist’s graphic construct (what

outwardly can be called 'style' but in the act of reportage, for some, is less consciously cultivated). An awareness of schema and its formation enables a greater understanding of an artist's graphic construct and how, particularly in the act of reportage drawing, purist claims to objectivity and direct recording are put in question by the condensation of prior perception that resides in schematic forms. Schema does not however preclude the artists own on the spot invention and schema development is very much a continuous and inventive process. What resides as conventional in terms of the approach to form is still, itself, an invention, the result of refined perception and the merger of a constellation of aims.

The balance between capturing the specificity of the observed and applying a schematic, stylistic approach is in the intentions of the artist. Gombrich notes that children 'do not draw what they 'see' but what they 'know'. (Gombrich, 1994, p.8) Schema can be seen as a merger of the two; a developed strategy for the rendering of form based on observation (the seen), and internalised forms (the known), which may be layered with creative intentions. For most contemporary reportage practitioners, stylistic indulgence is undesirable, and the effects of direct observation and recording is the conduit through which we achieve a communion with the experience of the artist. Schema, however, is not always rooted in simplistic convention and can comprise of condensed perceptions and strategies for the depiction of all manner of things in the observable world and, importantly, amplifications applied to them. As Gombrich notes, schema 'stands for' something and that form in drawing can have a wide range of sophistication (Gombrich, 1994, p.19).

5.8 Caricature

Caricature features in reportage drawing as both a conscious amplification of an observed subject in order to direct attention to a concern or render that subject as emblematic, and a result of the demands of the act, exaggerating through a reductive, economical line. Although traditionally a practice of refinement and simplification in order to elicit an emotional response or judgement upon a subject, the caricature and its expressive potential can be seen as a means of drawing us closer to the observed through accentuating salient features. The way in which the caricature can make the particular universal is relevant to reportage drawing as observed figures become symbolic of larger societal issues.

Aligned with the aim of much contemporary reportage and drawing itself, Gombrich and Kris note of caricature 'It is not its proximity to reality that proves its value but its nearness to the artist's psychic life.' (Gombrich & Kris, 1938) In the caricatured line we are drawn to the attentions of the artist in a way that complements observation. Looking at the impact of caricature on the development of art, one can see clear links with the thinking of Ruskin, Berger and Rawson, who privileged observation but also invention. Gombrich and Kris note about the impact on work after the 17th century and the discovery of caricatures by Bernini and others, 'the artist was no longer bound by fixed patterns, as in the Middle Ages; he was not even bound to the imitation of reality...Imagination rather than technical ability, vision and invention, inspiration and genius made the artist, not merely the mastering of the intricacies of handicraft. From an imitator he became a creator.' (Gombrich & Kris, 1938)

The term caricature comes from the root 'caricare' to 'charge' or 'to load'. (Petherbridge, 2010, p. 346) Sharing qualities of the sketch, the caricature finds its ultimate completion in

the mind of the viewer, piecing together the available clues in the economical drawing. (Petherbridge, 2010, p.349) Gombrich notes that this reduction is the synthesis of essential, communicative forms. He notes in reference to the work of Daumier, ‘and condensation, the telescoping of a whole chain of ideas into one pregnant image, is indeed the essence of wit.’ (Gombrich, 1994, p.130) In relation to the work of the reportage artist, these condensed marks reflect quick, summative vision and, like the cartoonist, seek a kind of quick reading, an immediate recognition of form. What is happening in the cartoon as in much reportage drawing is the establishment of a graphic language, part of a larger graphic construct, that marks out an artistic conception of reality. Rawson notes ‘implicit in every drawing style is a visual ontology, i.e. a definition of the real in visual terms.’ (Rawson, 1969, p.19) In this constructed reality, the cartoonist and reportage artist are directing attention towards areas of interest, summative judgements that are manifest in marks and lines.

Gombrich neatly sums up the relationship between reality and artistic reality as ‘all artistic discoveries are discoveries not of likeness but of equivalences which enable us to see reality in terms of an image and an image in terms of reality.’ (Gombrich, 1972, p.345) This reflects the core way in which the graphic construct of the cartoonist and the reportage artist functions through the correlation between what is seen and understood and what is created, which is the new ‘reality’ of the drawing.

The caricaturist, and some inclined reportage artists’ tableau, tend toward the traditions of caricature in ridicule and biting satire and share the darker vision of the world presented to us in the grotesque. Barthes notes that it is not only the artist’s tableau which indicates meaning but the treatment of the tableau in ‘gestures’ or ‘the coordination of gestures’. (Barthes & Heath, 1977, p.76) For the cartoonist and the reportage artist, these gestures tend toward

extremes with the intention of some visual provocation. Central to the grotesque and to caricature is exaggeration. Eduards and Graulund note ‘caricature also relies on a metonymic relationship to its subject, for it takes parts of the whole in order to stand in for the totality.’ (Eduards & Graulund, 2013, p.67) This synthesis is noted above as a necessary element of both caricature and reportage illustration but this synthesis, as it relates to the grotesque and commentary more broadly, is the rendering of symbolic forms which carry ideas. This symbolic form is a fundamental part of the grotesque as the grotesque ‘reflects a specific culture and society. Its symbolic nature enables us to see things we cannot fully grasp, but points to a ‘noble’ truth that is beyond the limits of normative human thought.’ (Eduards & Graulund, 2013, p.21) A sublime truth sought by many caricaturists and reportage artists is achieved in a symbolic rendering of a reality in which specific concerns are highlighted.

5.9 Summary

The graphic construct of the reportage artist is primarily concerned with rendering observed subjects within one’s artistic and circumstantial limitations. The features of the sketch as both an aesthetic and artistic limitation are key to understanding how subjects are captured and conveyed in fluid environments and how the immediacy of the sketch, in form and practice, rids the drawing of undesirable affectations. Although the forward aesthetic of reportage drawing is related to the sketch, this often belies layered intentions and differing methodologies, such as memory drawing, which does not directly respond to a subject in-situ. What emerges is an understanding of the artist’s graphic construct which is propositional and invites participation in the artist’s own experience of the subject through drawing. This mediated experience through drawing is complex and reflects layered referents to a range of observed and felt perceptions in-situ. The graphic construct is then a composite or summation

of a range of concerns and is informed by observational practice and an engagement with the potentialities of one's own drawing.

Section 6 – William Hogarth’s *The Analysis of Beauty* (1753)

6.1 Introduction

Hogarth’s writing on his own methodology and his elaborated thoughts regarding artistic choice and his own aesthetic, reinforce this thesis and the contention that an artist’s graphic construct is the summation of both formal artistic intent and a range of other concerns, including commentary. Hogarth makes it clear in *The Analysis of Beauty* that observation and comment overlap and that formal properties have a direct and correspondent effect on the reading and understanding of the image. For Hogarth, like many reportage artists, character and types are the accumulation and sum of keenly observed components which can become actors in deliberate or implied commentary. Although couched in outmoded valuations, Hogarth has managed to tease out several subtle observations on his own approach to form which is instructive to the claims of this thesis, primarily, that the act of drawing is never a neutral act and condenses a range of considerations which amount to an elaborate rationale, or, graphic construct.

6.2 Hogarth’s *The Analysis of Beauty*

Hogarth’s treatise on the making of images and the constituent parts of his own graphic construct marks an early practice-based exploration of how we understand artistic choice. The graphic construct, as identified in this research, is inherently modern in its form and formation. Comparatively, much of Hogarth’s periodised valuations which are evident in his notions of ‘beauty’ and ‘grace’, are comparatively archaic and superficial from a modern sensibility. These valuations reflect the discussion of aesthetics at the time which was still

heavily influenced by Renaissance thinkers attempting to establish the parameters of taste and virtue in art. However, other aspects such as the training from nature, 'fitness' of the image, and distortions are highly relevant.

Hogarth's primary contribution is the 'serpentine line' which, is not only a recommended approach to the construction of forms (and lines) but 'the whole *order of form*' (Hogarth, 1997, p.11). Here Hogarth mirrors the contention of this research seeing the graphic construct as both constituent forms and a coalescing whole, summing a variety of intentions in an aesthetic which unites them.

Hogarth identifies several formal aspects of the image which relate directly to the graphic construct of the artist and how observed forms become drawings. Hogarth briefly touches on many of his ideas in order to cover the wide ground of images and image making. He starts off with his concept of 'fitness'. Here, Hogarth identifies fitness as an awareness of form from the perspective of function and type, and that this is important even when looking at the defining characteristics of like things (Hogarth notes the distinguishing characteristics of the race-horse from the war horse and vice versa) (Hogarth, 1997, p.26). The stress on attentiveness to the function of form is rooted in observation but also in the 'beauty of fitness' and that the defining characteristics of a thing importantly reinforces its purpose and must be observed (Hogarth, 1997, pp.26, 27). This reflects the idea of solidity and temperament in drawing through emphasis and identifying and distinguishing characteristics. Additionally, it relates to Rawson's 'tenor' and 'topic' and how lines are descriptive, purposeful and evocative as they relate to and render the subject. Here Hogarth's primary point is that a true understanding of form and its function equates to a harmony that is seen and felt. (Hogarth, 1997) To extend Ruskin's contention that great artists know where the

subject is going, Hogarth contends it is equally important to know your subject's purpose and articulating that in visual means is essential. This comes with an attentiveness to what visually reinforces the defining purpose of the subject.

Hogarth furthers his look at what he perceives to be the critical concerns of the image maker from 'variety' to 'uniformity, regularity, or symmetry' and 'of simplicity, or distinctness'. Here the focus is on the organisation of the image and aesthetic decisions to achieve the much desired 'grace' and 'beauty'. On 'intricacy', Hogarth reflects a cited principle in the pursuit of reportage drawing. He notes, 'every arising difficulty, that for a while attends and interrupts the pursuit, gives a sort of spring to the mind, enhances the pleasure, and makes what would else be toil and labour, become sport and recreation'. (Hogarth, 1997, p.32)

Hogarth equates intricacy with a kind of hunt or pleasing pursuit in the 'peculiarity in the lines' and elevates intricacy above many of his concerns in contributing to the 'beauty' in the image. (Hogarth, 1997, p.33) Intricacy, as Hogarth notes, is as much about the effects of the image as the attentions of the artist. This relates directly to the effects of reportage drawing: playing on the perception of direct observation, it draws the viewer into the participatory, re-creative act of the drawing. The 'hunt' that Hogarth spoke of is evident in the graphic construct of the reportage drawing in selective detail and the 'intricacy' (and intimacy) of those forms. Hogarth is in fact making little distinction here between the challenge of drawing and the pleasure of looking at the work. He notes this intricacy is even more enjoyable when it is a subject in motion. Noting the pleasure of drawing dancers and the challenge of the act he said, 'this single example might be sufficient to explain what I mean by *the beauty of a composed intricacy of form*; and how it may be said, with propriety, to *lead the eye a kind of chace*.' (Hogarth, 1997, p.34) Hogarth sees this '*chace*' as an imaginative leap, noting that his 'imaginary ray' (his observing and remembering eye) 'was

dancing with her all the time.’ (Hogarth, 1997, p.34) Observed forms in motion inevitably rely on a kind of memory, and this challenge is noted by contemporary practitioners as a motivation and feature of their work. (in differing degrees)

Where Hogarth is concerned with constructions of one form or another, reportage artists seek in visual language and the act itself, a revelation, and an artist’s graphic construct has broader conceptual and experiential qualities. The true crossover lies at the understanding of form through attentiveness, and it is here that Hogarth’s observations are most valuable from the perspective of the reportage practitioner. This is most evident in Hogarth’s comparisons between the way artists summate subjects in drawing and how other disciplines make similar assessments. Hogarth notes:

‘For this reason, no sooner are two boxers stript to fight, but even a butcher, this skill’d, shews himself a considerable critic in proportion; and on this sort of judgment, often gives, or takes the odds, at bare sight only of the combatants.’ (Hogarth, 1997, p.67)

This intuitive understanding of form is essential to reportage practice and marks an internal, pre-drawing assessment that repeats throughout the drawing process as visible forms become recorded forms. Implicit in Hogarth’s contentions, consistent with his artistic aims, is the move from ‘nature’ to the ‘universal’ and this is clearest in his rendering of people as characters. Aligned with the move from rigorous observation towards an individual graphic construct in reportage drawing, the success for Hogarth in the capture of character is in the fidelity to the observed but equally, an awareness of the potential extension towards a type. Hogarth extends his ideas about character as:

‘Yet surely no figure, be it ever so singular, can be perfectly conceived as a character, till we find it connected with some remarkable circumstance or cause, for such particularity of appearance; for instance, a fat blotted person doth not call to mind the character of Silenus, till we have joined the idea of voluptuousness with it; so likewise strength to support, and clumsiness of figure, are united, as well in the character of an Atlas as in a porter.’ (Hogarth, 1997, p.70)

This observation has particular resonance to the approach of Jill Gibbon and myself. When Hogarth says the person is not a character until ‘we have joined the idea of voluptuousness with it’, he speaks to a kind of amplification which, does not draw away from the observed but rather embraces the evident associations inherent in the subject. Hogarth continues his assertions about character as being related almost wholly to ‘fitness’ or purpose (like his observations about different horses (see above)) and acknowledges the proportional and aesthetic need for distortion to these ends. Hogarth notes a ‘super-addition of *greatness*’ required to achieve the masterful ‘*more than human*’ masterpiece. (Hogarth, 1997, p.71) This is a struggle for Hogarth and he identifies a necessary balance between his own concept of ‘fitness’ and the proportional integrity of the human body. He notes ‘character must depend (on our awareness of)...our joint-sensation of bulk and motion.’ (Hogarth, 1997, p.73) Hogarth’s anchorage to the observed subject even in his departure into character is found in reportage practice and the balance is equally delicate.

Hogarth takes his observation of character further by looking at the expressive characteristics of the face. Like his observation about the ‘fitness’ of a subject and purpose as related to character, the face and the extension of the face towards character is a lateral extension of the observed. He notes ‘we can scarce help (if our attention is a little raised) forming some

particular conception of the person's mind whose face we are observing, even before we receive information by any other means.' (Hogarth, 1997, p.95) He furthers, noting we are 'riveted to the aspects of kings and heroes, murderers and saints'. (Hogarth, 1997, p.95) Here and in further writing he maintains that character is physical and a part of the field of observation. Like the amplification or distortion that he deems acceptable to capture the 'fitness' of the subject, so to the face can undergo changes to 'sufficiently distinguish the character of the mind'. (Hogarth, 1997, p.97) The observed and perceived unite in this approach and like reportage drawing, do not seek to fictionalise the observed subject but rather unify two realms of perception.

Hogarth's treatise is most relevant to this research in his reinforcement of the importance of observation and its function in shaping his own artistic vision. One such observation reveals a surprising encounter with a character whose incongruent nature aroused his attention. He notes:

'I remember to have seen a beggar who had clouted up his head very artfully, and whose visage was thin and pale enough to excite pity, but his features were otherwise so unfortunately form'd for his purpose, that what he intended for a grin of pain and misery, was rather a joyous laugh.' (Hogarth, 1997, p.99)

Aligned with the passage above, reportage artists note, and are often drawn to, anachronistic people, places, and episodes and these often find themselves as drawn subjects. The narrative of the street becomes the subject of the drawing and images can evoke the textures of those experiences, whether they intend to extend the moment through exaggeration or amplification or not. Linking the seen and felt as so much reportage drawing does, Hogarth notes that

‘attitude’, like character is visual. Here attitude is an expressive force, it is exerted from the body and thus ‘two or three lines at first are sufficient to shew the intention of an attitude.’ (Hogarth, 1997, p.102) In drawing, gesture, as a line or lines of implied or real action in the body, transmits the attitude of the pose and character and this summation is seen clearly in much contemporary reportage. Action is again of interest to Hogarth as he goes back to the dance and notes that attitude can be seen as ‘a suspended action’ and that the capture of the attitude is a selection from multiple movements, some inevitably appearing ‘somewhat unnatural and ridiculous’. (Hogarth, 1997, p.103)

Reinforcing Hogarth’s attention to the mannerisms of people and the primacy of observation in his work, he speaks of the language of line as both descriptive and expressive as it delineates people. He notes:

‘The peculiar movements of each person, as the gait in walking, are particularised in such lines as each part describes by the habits they have contracted. The nature and power of habit may be fully conceived by the following familiar instance, as the motions of one part of the body may serve to explain those of the whole.’ (Hogarth, 1997, p.105)

Relating clearly to the practice of caricature in the isolation of salient features, the above also identifies a key component of observational practice, namely the identification of forms as they distinguish themselves from others. Overall, Hogarth, having described the considerations he felt were necessary for the construction of fine images, acknowledged that they can easily be ignored or subverted to a satisfactory end. He noted near the end that ‘when the form of the body is divested of its serpentine lines it becomes ridiculous as a

human figure...however, being as was said composed of variety, made consistent with some character, and executed with agility, it nevertheless is very entertaining.' (Hogarth, 1997, p.110)

6.3 Summary

In *The Analysis of Beauty*, Hogarth identifies in his own practice the important function of observation and how it has informed all aspects of his graphic construct. Like the reportage artist, Hogarth identifies in the process of observing that defining characteristics and the formal means to render them are inherently subjective and that such subjective valuations enable a truer depiction. Hogarth calls attention to the way in which our observations conflate both the physical and conceptual, such as his notion of 'fitness' and the relationship between form and function. Although Hogarth's treatise makes many summative declarations on the nature and form of artistic works on the basis of their attainment of 'grace' and 'beauty', for the purposes of reportage drawing, this elaborate autopsy of one's creative intentions and rationale reveals the complexity and tacit knowledge in art making and that form is not a neutral container but is filled with presuppositions, intentions and orientations towards the subject(s).

Section 7 – Experience and place

7.1 Introduction

While the act of reportage is diverse in its approaches, the individualistic witness is at its core and whether pre-meditated or more spontaneous, the nature of experience is key to the artist's engagement with his or her subject. Experience as it relates to reportage drawing is referring to the experience of the subject in-situ and the re-creation of that experience in drawing. This then provides for the viewer a re-experience of the artist's encounters in the field through their rendering of it in drawing. Arnheim sees experience through the lens of expression as 'artistic expression seems to be something more specific. It requires that the communication of the data produce an "experience," the active presence of the forces that make up the perceived pattern.' (Arnheim, 1954, p.425) Here, Arnheim is referring to the generation of experience through an association with understood and internalised physiognomic traits like gesture, facial expression and so forth. For the purposes of this research, experience of place is about the salient aspects of that place that reside in the drawing. Dewey notes, 'events turn into objects, things with meaning. They may be referred to when they do not exist, and thus be operative among things distant in space and time, through vicarious presence in a new medium.' (Dewey, 1929, p.138) For reportage drawing, the experience in-situ is about navigating meaning and making choices which inform a highly synthesised and personal rendering of that experience.

Dewey's larger contention about art as experience is crucial here. His theories about art centre around the notion that the circumstances of its production are the true nature of its aesthetic. As Leddy notes 'art products exist externally and physically, whereas, on his

(Dewey's) view, the work of art is really what the physical object does *within* experience.' (Leddy, 2006) Dewey is concerned with a conception of art that is less defined by the resulting object and is a negotiation with one's environment and medium through attentive action. While the resulting drawing is key to this research, Dewey's examples of aesthetic experience mirror those of the reportage artist in-situ and speak to the motivations of the act. This is further explored below but this democratic notion of experience and its centrality aligns with the aims of this research and how reportage emerges from and reflects experience.

Lastly, how experience relates to space and place will be explored through the work of Yi-Fu Tuan, Doreen Massey and Michel De Certeau. Primarily concerned with architectural spaces, Tuan's thoughts about meaning and response to spaces relate to how experiences are translated into drawings. Massey is concerned with expanding the notion of place to incorporate other fields of experience. De Certeau is briefly cited to provide a contrast with Tuan's notion of mythic space and, De Certeau's call to explore the unexplored.

7.2 Experience

Experience is one layer to reportage drawing but an experience is only understood as such because we have applied sufficient thought and action to render it meaningful. The experience of drawing is equally an experience of thinking and an exploration of the experiential formation of a reportage drawing must also take into consideration the role of thinking, and specifically observational thinking, as it relates to the act. The conversion from experience and thought to its concrete form in drawing, just as space is transformed into place, is an act of meaning making and this summation is also key to understanding the ways

in which artistic intent fuses with other concerns, for example the desire to imbue the work with commentary and negotiate artistic limitations of skill and circumstance.

Dewey's complexly layered ideas about art as experience and experience as art, can be neatly summed up by him as 'constituted by interaction between "subject" and "object," between a self and its world, it is not itself merely physical, nor merely mental, no matter how much one factor or the other predominates.' (Dewey, 2005, p.256) This neatly sets up Dewey's contention that experience, as it relates to art making, is the impetus and the sum of an interaction with the environment. He sees the artist as a 'live creature' and notes a heightened awareness, like that of an animal, with an 'attentive eye', seeking the things that arouse the interest of the artist. (Dewey, 2005, p.3) On the goal of exalting experience in art theory he notes:

'This task is to restore continuity between the refined and intensified forms of experience that are works of art and the everyday events, doings and sufferings that are universally recognised to constitute experience...

We must arrive at the theory of art by means of a detour.' (Dewey, 2005, p.2)

In the above quote Dewey conflates art as experience and experience as art (which he clarifies). This is his sole contention, which he un-picks, in a variety of cogent examples. Dewey observed a distance present between how we engage with the art object through museums and an intellectualistic approach to art. It is not only a problem of the institutionalisation of art but of an un-tethering from the material of art. Dewey notes 'for many persons an aura of mingled awe and unreality encompasses the "spiritual" and the "ideal" while "matter" has become by contrast a term of depreciation, something to be

explained away or apologised for.’ (Dewey, 2005, p.5) Dewey calls for a return of art to its core, to its making but also to its materiality. In doing so he brings it back to the public in relating art to other ‘modes of experiencing.’ (Dewey, 2005, p.9). In contrast, current theoretical orientations are flawed as he notes ‘no amount of ecstatic eulogy of finished works can of itself assist the understanding or the generation of such works.’ (Dewey, 2005, p. 11)

Inherent in this, which is of particular relevance to reportage drawing, is the two-fold nature of artistic experience. Broadly, Dewey sees life as a series of interactions between the ‘live creature’ and his/her environment. The two-fold experience is that of the artist in their environment and the experience of creating the work. Dewey sees these two experiences in very similar ways. An experience, including an artistic experience, is necessarily formed of some negotiation, struggle and overcoming within one’s environment. The direct experience that we are concerned with in reportage drawing summed up by Dewey ‘comes from nature and man interacting with each other. In this interaction, human energy gathers, is released, dammed up, frustrated and victorious. There are rhythmic beats of want and fulfilment, pulses of doing and being withheld from doing.’ (Dewey, 2005, p.15). Dewey sees the artistic experience (or as he calls the esthetic experience) as containing a necessary struggle. Without it there isn’t the sufficient energy to formulate the work and, that the work is a kind of harmonious balance of energies. (Dewey, 2005, p.15). In the act of reportage, the experience that Dewey speaks of relates to both the experience of seeking subjects (the hunt) and the act of drawing as containing the same elements. Relating experience to those most acute animalistic qualities of the savage Dewey notes:

‘As he watches what stirs about him, he, too, is stirred. His observation is both action in preparation and foresight of the future. He is active through his whole being when he looks and listens as when he stalks his quarry or stealthily retreats from a foe. His senses are sentinels of immediate thought and outposts of action, and not, as they so often are with us, mere pathways along which material is gathered to be stored away for a delayed and remote possibility.’ (Dewey, 2005, p.18)

The phrase ‘action in preparation’ is a fitting way to think of the anticipatory gaze in reportage drawing, which surveys the field for subjects. Whether stationary or moving, this surveillance mentally prefigures subjects for suitability in drawing and this act shares qualities of a hunt. Although this quote does not relate to reportage drawing nor an artistic act, it does reflect the heightened sensory awareness and mental preparation and action that exists. As mentioned above, this quote could equally describe the making of a drawing in situ as it does the preliminary stalking of its subject. The nature of reportage drawing merges thought, action and experience in a unified whole although neither is subsumed in the act and instead permeate the drawings and can be recalled, vividly, by the artist post facto. In a complex prefiguration that occurs in the mind, subjects are remembered in varying levels of detail in a kind of temporal storehouse, to be drawn out later. These are often surprisingly convincing and attest to the power of Dewey’s ‘sentinels of immediate thought’. Dewey sees artistic experience as a heightened communion with our senses like those in the animal kingdom but with the advantage of imbuing them with ‘conscious meanings’ and ‘deliberate expression’ (Dewey, 2005, p.23). In reportage, many artists see deliberation as an enemy of spontaneity although the two are not mutually exclusive as noted below.

Dewey lays out several features of having an experience that have informed this thesis. For one, Dewey notes that an experience is a ‘consummation not a cessation’. He goes on to clarify this by noting that life is a ‘thing of histories, each with its own plot, its own inception and movement toward its close, each having its own particular rhythmic movement; each with its own unrepeated quality pervading it throughout.’ (Dewey, 2005, p.37). This fulfilment for Dewey is more layered and has an ‘individualising quality’. (Dewey, 2005, p.37). What emerges here is the singular notion of experience. Dewey takes this further and sees the unity achieved in an experience as being due to a ‘single quality that pervades the entire experience’. (Dewey, 2005, p.38) He notes that in spite of constitutive parts, ‘one property’ above all shapes our conception of the experience (Dewey, 2005, p.38). Teasing out this notion of a singular feature that marks experience, Dewey relates it to a conclusion and notes ‘in fact, in an experience of thinking, premises emerge only as a conclusion becomes manifest. The experience, like that of watching a storm reach its height and gradually subside, is one of continuous movement of subject-matters’. (Dewey, 2005, p.39)

The assessment of subject matters is central to reportage drawing as practitioners often state a desire for the unexpected in their drawings in-situ and survey the field extensively prior to committing to drawing. More importantly however is this notion of a ‘single quality’ that marks the observed and identifies it for suitability in drawing. For reportage drawing, one can look at the totality of experience in situ and the drawings themselves to find this quality. It may reside singularly and distinctively in individual drawings or it may pervade a collection, identifying a thematic or visible connection between them.

The emotional content of a work of reportage is folded into other more obvious concerns at the point of drawing such as the circumstantial challenges on the ground. However, emotions

and the rendering of emotions in drawing show the attentions of the artist and, in terms of the experience of place, assign value to place in the fulfilment of the subject with intent. When we speak of the emotional content of drawing we are speaking of the total impression of the subject and this can be overt or subtle depending on the rendering. The fundamental importance of the emotional content of the image is that it reflects the overriding aim and desire for the drawing and, that an emotional affect is a concluding statement on the subject and therefore the experience of the subject.

Emotional and expressive aims for the image has been a controversial aspect of modern art with many artist denying such explicit intent. Speaking of Stravinsky's contention about music and expression Read notes, 'if music seems to express something, it is an illusion, and not a reality. Expressiveness is simply an additional element which by habit we (the spectators) impose on a work of art – a descriptive label which we then confuse with the essence of the work of art.' Quoting Stravinsky directly Read notes, 'when we suddenly recognize our emotions, they are already cold, like lava.' (Read, 1967, p.64) While this reflects a somewhat extreme denial of explicitness in terms of a work of art, it is important to acknowledge the subjectivity around emotion and the emotional effect of images. For the purposes of this research, we are looking at the emotional content of reportage drawing as representing a determination about the subject and therefore the place and experience of place and, that the rendering of emotion is an extrapolation or amplification of observed subjects.

Emotion is a constituent of experience although Dewey does not see it as distinct but rather 'the moving and cementing force'. (Dewey, 2005, p.44) This unifying force is embedded in experience and is to some extent or another essential. But Dewey also sees emotion in thinking and draws communities of intellectuals (non-artists) and artists together as having a

‘dependence on emotionalised ideas’ that are essential for new insights in all fields and rely on an imaginative and emotional conceit. (Dewey, 2005, pp.76,77)

Dewey does not dwell on the content of experience and rather speaks more broadly about the theoretical underpinnings of what an experience is. He does however note that every experience moves toward ‘a mutual adaptation of the self and the object’ and results in an ‘institution of a felt harmony’. (Dewey, 2005, p.45). This interpenetration of self and object or, artist and subject, is both evident in reportage drawing and the reportage drawing experience. The drawing experience speaks to this as the artist is occupying the same space as their subjects and negotiating, in often dynamic settings, a perch from which to capture them. This hunter and pray dynamic quickly becomes more intimate in drawing as the summative judgment of the artist on the subject becomes realised. As Michael Taussig notes, drawing upon Walter Benjamin, drawing is ‘to become and behave like something else’. (Taussig, 2011, p.23). And, as Taussig notes, ‘drawings acquire their own reality.’ (Taussig, 2011, p.30). A reality in which the subject is sealed in the graphic construct of the artist and a bond is recorded between artist, subject and experience.

For Dewey, the evaluation of a work of art is not in the calibration of its authenticity and rather that these conclusions are largely intuitive. Furthering his notion of the singular pervasive thing that defines an experience, Dewey notes ‘the penetrating quality that runs through all the parts of a work of art and binds them into an individualised whole can only be emotionally ‘intuited.’ (Dewey, 2005, p.200) Dewey sees this quality as individualistic and ‘it is the idiom in which the particular work is composed and expressed, that which stamps it with individuality’. (Dewey, 2005, p.200) He is also citing the artist’s graphic construct here, binding the artist with the expressive qualities of the work. The acknowledgement of the

intuitive, subjective, and individual qualities of a work of art align with his contentions about experience itself. This wider view of art as experience is neatly summed up by Dewey as ‘this sense of the including whole implicit in ordinary experiences is rendered intense within the frame of a painting or poem.’ (Dewey, 2005, p.201)

7.3 Space and place

In reportage drawing, spaces and places are the backdrop or central subject of the artist’s tableau. Yi Fu Tuan sees place as ‘a pause in movement’ and that pause ‘makes it possible for a locality to become a centre of felt value’. (Tuan, 1977, p.138) He cites the human necessity of stopping to care for the injured or eat and the built-up associations we make with those places we assign value to. Tuan also speaks of how humans are capable of metaphoric notions of place and home, even thinking of home as a person. (Tuan, 1977, p.139)

The assigning of value that is self-evident in reportage drawing is reliant on the rest and the pause. In order to draw one must choose a place to stop or ‘perch’, and this vantage point allows one to survey the territory of their subjects. That choice of perch may or may not be imbedded in the area of their subjects (for example the top of a hill looking down) but it does involve a compelling choice. Often, reportage drawing necessitates a perch that is hidden or at least sufficiently distanced from the subject. Still, the pause is key and this moment of reflection enables the artist to survey and assign value and interest to his/her surroundings, thereby preparing for the selection of a subject.

There are also times when the location is significant to the nature of the subjects found there and this context is crucial to the understanding of the work. Jill Gibbon’s work is a good

example. To ‘read’ her drawings without the important knowledge that they were drawn in an arms fair in Paris, is to diminish their meaning and power, just as the knowledge of her surreptitious sketching gives us further entry into her hurried scrawls.

Our engagement with place connects to our collective experiences, thoughts and emotions we bring to them. Doreen Massey sees space as not just external or localised but rather a psychic orientation to the world. She notes:

‘For if experience is not an internalised succession of sensations (pure temporality) but a multiplicity of things and relations, then its *spatiality* is as significant as its temporal dimension. This is to argue for a way of being and thinking otherwise – for the imagination of a more open attitude of being; for the (potential) outwardlookingness of practised subjectivity.’ (Massey, 2005, p.58)

Significant to reportage practice, the above quote highlights the way that reportage drawings condense not just physical and observable features of an object but its psychic make up, a ‘spatiality’ that condenses thought and intention in the concrete form of a drawing, a new space. Massey also calls for a more singular, individual and therefore subjective outlook which aligns with her contention that space is a ‘multiplicity’ and that ‘practised space’ is a ‘relational construction’ through ‘material engagement’. She notes ‘if time unfolds as change then space unfolds as interaction.’ (Massey, 2005, p.61) Massey’s argument is for greater complexity when speaking of place and a move away from the overly vague categories of the global and local to advance more granular, heterogeneous approaches. (Massey, 2005, p.61) Massey’s conception of time, temporality and space are relevant to the practice of reportage drawing as the drawing, like Massey’s notion of space as ‘material’ and time as a ‘product of

human experience', is a fusion of the two. Massey notes that 'time is either past or to come or so minutely instantaneously *now* that it is impossible to grasp. Space, on the other hand, is *there*.' (Massey, 2005, p.117) Reportage drawing as rendered experience is central to this thesis but seeing the two concepts of time and space (broadly), it is equally important to see it occupying a middle ground, a negotiated compromise between the 'now' and the 'there'. A reportage drawing fixes the temporalities of experience in the concrete form of a drawing, thereby making a new space, of the moment and beyond it. Massey paraphrases a remembered passage from the writer Raymond Williams who observed a woman from the window of a train. She notes 'he catches a picture, a woman in her pinny bending over to clear the back drain with a stick. For the passenger on the train she will forever be doing this. She is held in that instant, almost immobilised...From the train she is going nowhere; she is trapped in the timeless instant.' (Massey, 2005, p.119)

Tuan sees place as an object that is a 'concretization of value'. Noting the concept of the pause, it is a place that one dwells as opposed to a space which Tuan implies is associated with movement. (Tuan, 1977, p.12). This value however, needs to be fixed and Tuan notes that as we move through spaces we move 'from inchoate feelings for space and fleeting discernments of it in nature to their public and material reification'. (Tuan, 1977, p.17) Tuan notes that space becomes place when we are 'thoroughly familiar' with it and that we have 'kinaesthetic and perceptual experience' of it along with formed concepts of the space. (Tuan, 1977, p.73) Because Tuan sees experience as holistic and multi-sensory, this transformation of spaces to places involves a complex 'reification' which, in drawing, gives solidity to the layers of experience. It can also be noted that the process of becoming 'thoroughly familiar' and therefore moving from space to place, can occur in the act of drawing itself, in the process of understanding through hyper attention.

Mythical space is a concept Tuan advances as the space that we create with the available knowledge that we have at a given time. Born of necessity or some accumulation of personal understandings, mythical space cannot be 'readily verified, or proven false, by the evidence of the senses' (Tuan, 1977, p.85) Tuan distinguishes two types of mythical space; one is at the edges of known, pragmatic space and the other is a 'spatial component of a world view' and is a 'conception of localised values' that people live within.' (Tuan, 1977, p.86). The second is particularly relevant to reportage drawing. It would be limiting to view the graphic construct of the reportage artist as serving a purely representational purpose as the symbolic language of drawing as a whole necessitates a kind of approximate knowledge, a mythic language. A language of forms that, like those in mythic space, are based on an accumulated understanding of the world which, inevitably, does not have an exact analogue in reality.

As Tuan notes 'mythical space is an intellectual construct. It can be elaborate. Mythical space is also a response of feeling and imagination to fundamental human needs.' (Tuan, 1977, p.99) De Certeau, exploring New York city through walking, makes the claim that the city itself is mythic because it is caught between place as a location and a 'dreamed place'. He notes:

'The moving about that the city multiplies and concentrates makes the city itself an immense social experience of lacking a place...The identity furnished by this place is all the more symbolic (named) because, in spite of the inequality of its citizens' positions and profits, there is only a pullulation of passer-by, a network of residences temporarily appropriated by pedestrian traffic, a shuffling among pretenses of the

proper, a universe of rented spaces haunted by a nowhere or by dreamed-of places.’

(De Certeau, 2011, p.103)

Here, mythic space is less a mental construct based on fragments of experience and needs as Tuan notes, and is rather, a nowhere, a flux of desires stuck between states. For the reportage artist, these spaces are compelling, providing a challenge in rendering the cacophony of human activity and meditating on the meaning of such spaces. As Dewey noted about ‘mastering the unknown’ in observation, such spaces provide an opportunity to engage with place in a profound way through the practice of reportage. Massey encourages this practice based approach to place noting ‘place, in other words does – as many argue – change us, not through some visceral belonging (some barely changing rootedness, as so many would have it) but through the *practising* of place, the negotiation of intersecting trajectories; place as an arena where negotiation is forced upon us.’ (Massey, 2005, p.154) Massey’s call for the ‘practising of place’ reflects what reportage drawing does well in its articulation of complexly layered environments. De Certeau makes a similar call noting ‘to practice space is thus to repeat the joyful and silent experience of childhood; it is, in a place, *to be other and to move toward the other.*’ (De Certeau, 2011, p.110)

7.4 Summary

What distinguishes reportage drawings from other forms of drawing is that it is actively responding to a subject in-situ. The formulation of the drawing is happening either in real time or through a temporal memory of the subject. As such, it reveals its construction and thinking in a manner which often excludes pre-determination and artistic indulgence, revealing a palimpsest of direct perception. As Patrick Maynard notes ‘like depictive

perception itself, it takes special meaning from being something that we are doing: from a present active participation, not just the evocation of something past.’ (Maynard, 2005, p.195)

Experience resides in the reportage drawing in its total construction and attests to the artists understanding and framing of the subject. This reflects the filter of experience through an artistic temperament and therefore, represents a part of the artist’s larger worldview.

Although the drawing is the product of observations made in-situ, the resultant image equally contributes to a story of the experience, isolating a moment and inviting speculation. Taussig notes ‘what we mean by “story” swarms across this boundary – and no wonder, because while that boundary (the boundary between fiction and non-fiction) is one of the most fundamental ways by which we fix and figure reality, it is actually porous and, not to be too cute, a lively piece of fiction itself. This is why style and voice are so important, for it is they that do the heavy lifting of analysis.’ (Taussig, 2011, p.147, 148) For Taussig, the “story” is a framing of reality and he champions the personal, vivid and even poetic responses that come into his fieldwork as an anthropologist. Relating to this thesis, the inevitable translations of experience in the marks of a drawing will be imbued with subjectivities but do not depart from the observed rather, they are invested in the totality of experience and when successful, move the viewer into, not out of, that same confrontation with lived experience.

Section 8 – The perception and reception of drawing

8.1 Introduction

Reportage drawing is an act of rendering one's environment through the graphic construct of the artist. The complex make-up of the graphic construct and its layered intentions and fulfilment in drawing, reflect the merger of conscious and intuitive thought and action. The viewer engages with the drawing on the propositional terms of the construct and comes to integrate his or her own understanding of the subject with the new terms established in the drawing.

The resulting reportage drawing is an invitation to the viewer to engage with the visual world of the artist through his or her tableau. The ability of the viewer to actively participate in the re-creation of the image and commune with the experience of the artist is dependent on a set of factors and the ability to integrate one's conceptions with those of the artist and become a 'co-creator' in the work.

8.2 The perception and reception of drawing

Gombrich identifies a necessary willingness and readiness to collaborate with the artist and 'call up our conceptual image under his guidance'. A constructed experience made of 'hints' intended to evoke the 'external form'. (Gombrich, 1994, p.10) What enables the viewer to engage with a drawing is the 'aesthetic illusion' created through the graphic construct of the artist. This illusion exists in the 'thinly separated' world of artistic creation from the 'real' world. (Kris, 1964, p.42) As Kris notes 'the 'reality of play' can coexist with a certainty that

it is play only.’ (Kris, 1964, p.42) This illusion is more than superficial and extends through experiential modes of understanding form. Arnheim notes:

‘In looking at an object, we reach out for it. With an invisible finger we move through the space around us, go out to the distant places where things are found, touch them, catch them, scan their surfaces, trace their borders, explore their texture. It is an eminently active occupation.’ (Arnheim, 1954, p.33)

The above confirms the re-experience of the image and notes the participation of the viewer in mimicking the process of its creation, like Berger’s ‘half-created’ collaboration with his subject. Gombrich sees the real development in artistic skill not only in representational means but in making sense of ‘representational symbols.’ The ‘interplay between the artist and the beholder’ is an advance of the artist’s refinement of his/her vision and the viewer’s readiness to participate in that vision. (Gombrich, 1994, p.35)

The propositional terms of the artist’s graphic construct invite the viewer to participate in the world created by the artist. When this world departs too far from the comprehensible world of the viewer, there is ‘overdistance’, and the spectator is unable to ‘find a point of identification’. (Kris, 1964, p.47) What the artist ultimately hopes for is some form of integration, some merger between the world presented to the viewer and the viewers own reality. Kris, aligned with Arnheim’s contention that ‘eyesight is insight’, sees this process of integration as separate from meaning making and notes, ‘pictures do not convey a thought or meaning only, they catch reality for the man who is to see them. Seeing contains both elements: that of recognizing what is known, the element of thought, and that of actually holding reality.’ (Kris, 1964, p.50) When the viewer sees a representation of a human figure

in an artwork, (common to the largely figurative nature of reportage drawing) they have a 'bodily' experience and work from recognition to self-identification, one supporting the other. Kris then concludes, 'we started out as part of the world which the artist created; we end as co-creators: We identify ourselves with the artist.' (Kris, 1964, pp.55, 56) The viewer is then the co-creator of the already 'half-created' world of the artist.

It is notable that this integration also occurs at the point of drawing. Echoing Ruskin, Arnheim notes that 'order in nature can be discovered only when the capacity for grasping order is developed in the mind'. (Arnheim, 1954, p.140) This relates to the processes within reportage drawing as fluid reality is reduced quickly into a range of marks that stand in for their real-world referents. The condensed forms of schematic language are shaped by repeated observation and enable their quick application in-situ. The sum total of this immediate and stored observation is an ownership of the subject, a re-imagining and re-creation in drawing. While the drawing reflects a 'reduction of reality', there is no 'simile of nature' and, 'independent of the level of resemblance, nature has been re-created.' (Kris, 1964, p.52) But this integration of the subject is not merely a process of perceptual functions, it is also a process of the imagination and artistic works, like their literary counterparts, extend from the real towards the imagined. As Kris notes, 'the familiar figure of the painter in search of a model, a scene, a tree with specifically shaped branches, can well be compared to that of writers engaged in a similar quest, they scan the world around them for observations or themes which would stimulate their imagination.' (Kris, 1964, pp.53, 54)

Additionally, the process of drawing is one of a multitude of choices and while these may have anchorage in observed people and places as in reportage, they are formed by artistic intent. Arnheim recognises this as inherent in the expressive content of an artwork and notes,

‘in the course of the creative process the work goes through elaborations that require that the artist distinguish, with severe discipline, between what suits the nature of his subject and what is accidental impulse.’ (Arnheim, 1954, p.439)

On the level of drawing, beyond integration which is necessary for an understanding of the image, the aesthetic of the graphic construct elicits a specific engagement with the subject.

Maynard neatly summarises this saying:

‘It is not only of great significance for depiction that our interpretation of depicted scenes is (obviously) strongly influenced by our perception of the properties of the lines generating them, but that our visual experience of these lines – what we notice about them, how we group and orient them – is reciprocally influenced by our imaginative perception of the scene we take them to depict. That this experience feeds back into the interpretation of the scene is an elementary fact of perception with great significance for depiction.’ (Maynard, 2005, p.200)

The summation of the graphic construct and schematic forms of the artist render meaning in the drawing but also emotion. How the emotive intent of the artist connects with the viewer is reliant on a complex extension of the image towards an internalised, mutual experience.

Gombrich quotes Dewey saying, ‘the meaning of an expressive object, on the contrary, is individualised’. He goes on to say, ‘the esthetic portrayal of grief manifests the grief of a particular individual in connection with a particular event. It is *that* state of sorrow which is depicted, not depression unattached. It has *local* habitation.’ (Gombrich, 1994, p.53) The localisation here is specific to the way the drawing is constructed and choices that have been

made about portrayal. Dewey is also making the point that the content of a work of art is our entry into the experience depicted (and our re-experience viewing it).

As Kris notes, referring principally to representational art but using the following as an example, ‘the person who hums verse or melody, who repeats to himself passages and can thus re-experience the original experience, is in a similar position. Do we then refer to a reproductive rather than to a productive activity? Are we entitled to speak of identification with the artist when his work has become part of the inventory of our memory or when we can “recall” or “perform” it?’. (Kris, 1964, p. 58) The moves of the artist in the drawing enable us to imagine its production and ‘perform’ and, by extension, ‘reproduce’ the original act of creation.

8.3 Summary

In the act of reportage drawing in particular, the re-creative, participatory element of the work is enabled by the aesthetic of the sketch and perception (real or not) that the work was done on-the-spot. This is an essential aspect of the reception of the work and shapes the methodology of reportage artists, applying strict limitations on themselves to ensure direct recording, unencumbered by refinement or pre-conceptions about ‘good’ drawing. For many reportage artists, the immediate, refined, economical and even crude line is a testament to the demands of the act and this strict methodology can also, most desirably, render something new, a formal invention or an unexpected observation in-situ. Our understanding of the image is then, as noted above, a two-fold understanding of the properties of line and their schematic approach to form and, the subject itself which is informed by that rendering. (the tenor and topic respectively).

Section 9 –The graphic construct – Mapping my own practice

9.1 Introduction

The graphic construct in reportage drawing reflects a unity of aesthetic and conceptual interests. Fused in the hurried act of drawing in-situ, the two concerns merge in the immediacy of responsive thought and action. Ben Shahn noted ‘form is formulation – the turning of content into a material entity, rendering a content accessible to others, giving it permanence, willing it to the race...form in art is as varied as idea itself.’ (Shahn, 1957, p.53). Rawson, whose use and definition of the term graphic construct is critical to this research, notes that graphic constructs ‘summarize and condense the psychological meaning of the graphic forms of which they are composed.’ (Rawson, 1969, p.247) For Rawson, all forms of the drawing are a construct as they are a rendering of something, observable or imagined, into graphic forms, relating to, as Rawson notes, ‘our experience’ of the subject (ibid). Here, on a most basic level, the graphic construct of the reportage artist is beyond pure objectivity and even observation, and is better understood as a rendering, with distinctly individual concerns, limitations and desires. As Arnheim notes, ‘form must be invented; and since no form invented by someone else will fit an artist’s own experience, he himself has to do the inventing.’ (Arnheim, 1954, p.141)

My own graphic construct, which will be further explored below, bridges the concerns of the purist, observational branch of the practice with the more stylistic, commentary-laden practitioners. Like the history of reportage practice, these two concerns can be seen as complementary in my work as the sustaining interest in the drawing is always anchored to an observed subject, even when it departs into broader thematic commentary. What my graphic

construct contributes to the larger exploration of the contemporary practice of reportage drawing is the wider narrative of production that is possible through my own reflective practice. The narrative of the selection of subjects and the range of intentions for the drawing can more vividly highlight the emergence of the drawing through a constellation of factors including, but not limited to the weather, engagement with subjects through conversation, identification of subjects for their thematic potential, and position of the artist relative to the subject.

Additionally, through seeing the wider narrative of a group of reportage drawings and how they reflect the experience of the artist but equally developments of the artist's thinking, the practice of reportage can be seen more clearly as the manifestation of a world view, relishing subjectivity and engaging the viewer with the unique potentialities of drawing for understanding our world. The feedback the artist can identify in the finished drawing is instructive to understanding how intentions were or were not resolved in the graphic marks and whether this is desirable or not, indicating the serendipity which pervades the act.

9.2 Drawn effects

My own work shares the aesthetic properties of the sketch although is not a first thought necessarily, and through placement and composition, it is a deliberate construction. Because the vast majority of my drawing is done in-situ, the work is hurriedly produced and this is reflected in the look and feel of the work. However, an additional aesthetic exists which is the refined, economic line which has a stylistic intent. Often referred to as a shorthand, this storehouse of graphic marks and strategies find refinement through practice and become, to an extent, conventionalised. Related to Gombrich's ideas about schema and classification, my

own reportage drawing can be seen to combine the ‘universals’ and the ‘particulars’ or, the refined schematic approaches and strategies to form and the on-the-spot inventions, conceived through responsive observation (Gombrich, 1972, p.152). The schematic shorthand can be seen in the approach to forms and more specifically, similarities in certain features such as eyes for example (see Fig.1 below).



(Fig. 1)

These developed forms are part of refined perception and can be called schematic but additionally, they are informed by artistic inspiration from artists such as George Grosz, Toulouse Lautrec, Nicolas DeCrecy and Jacques Tardi. In my reportage drawing, these forms are not purely responsive to features identifiable in the subject but are rather developed strategies to render those forms in a developed language, with intent. What results from this deviation from pure observation is the production of ‘types.’ Rawson’s clarification on what constitutes a ‘graphic type’ is relevant. He notes:

‘The typical and the individual may seem to be inevitably contrasted. However, in my use of the word ‘type’ in an artistic context individuality is not by any means

excluded...But there are also arts of drawing which include into their type-images indications of individuality, symbols which serve to represent the idea of uniqueness...They are permitted by a kind of flexibility in the type, which allows latitude for variation within its construction.’ (Rawson, 1969, p.251)

As Rawson notes above, it is possible for the artist to engage with ‘types’ as an exploration of a creative vision and avoid typical convention, achieved in reportage through some fidelity to the observed (no matter how tenuous).

One such drawing and reflection from Portsmouth in 2016 is indicative of how the experience of the subject can be synthesised in a drawing (see Fig.2).

Walking back towards work I saw a middle-aged woman looking out of a window in a café right before closing. I noted the scene in my head. Taking several long looks I decided to draw it later indoors. Because of the cold and rain, it was near impossible to work on location and necessitated drawing it later. I also drew her on A2 paper which enabled me to re-experience the scene in the spontaneous manner that I typically work. While it would seem likely that drawing sometime after observing subjects would lead to greater deviation, on occasion, the impression of the subject and interest is so acute that the re-experience in drawing is vivid and surprising.



(Fig. 2)

The above reflects a lucky re-communion with the subject in a drawing done sometime afterwards. It is of course difficult to determine whether the drawing bears any close resemblance to the woman at the table but for me, the drawing evokes that moment on a rainy afternoon and her forlorn expression crystalizes something that I perceived on the day. Because of the nature of fluid environments, observation, and the act of drawing, the capture of subjects can occur at different times, even when the subject is no longer in sight.

The conflation of observation and comment in my own reportage can be seen in the following passage. Here, the features of the sketch in the quick, reductive marks are also synchronous with the commentary sought and the way in which the subject relates to other themes and even drawings such as the drawings of George Grosz. This passage relates to a drawing trip to Hamburg in 2017 (see Fig.3 below).

The next drawing was done directly after the butcher shop as this man came around the corner. He was actually just standing there for a little while as I moved my drawing pad out of the way. I noted his features and immediately he reminded me of the Grosz drawings of fat businessmen. The head looked like a single bone and his dark sunglasses at once like skull sockets and long view telescopes. The glasses helped to avoid specifying him and he became, as I had hoped, more symbolic of a German man of a certain age. Overweight and somewhat gormless, he was perfectly formed as a stand in for the well fed, successful German. I drew this on some stairs to a building of flats and I was sufficiently hidden. This drawing was executed quickly and the roving graphite stick managed to apply the right emphasis in the right areas, accentuating the shape of the head, the high trousers and thick arm.



(Fig. 3)

What is also notable in the passage above is the way in which observational details are themselves laden with commentary and guide the image towards the refinement of a thought or comment. Here the ‘half-created’ world of the drawing is clear in the dialogue and musings that occur during its production. Berger’s idea of the ‘half created’ world of the drawing is extended in his claim that ‘any drawn place is both a here and an elsewhere.’ He furthers ‘each drawn place has all the particularity and local knowledge of a here, and, at the

same time, the promise of an elsewhere...Here embodies necessity; elsewhere offers freedom.' (Berger and Savage, 2008, p.143) The negotiation in the drawing that occurs between the subject and the rendering of that subject results in a record of thought and action that manages two spaces; that of the identifiable subject and the inevitable symbolism of drawn marks which point to other potentialities. Additionally, those drawn marks can be, as in the drawing above, laden with commentary which are clearly representative of an 'elsewhere', the interiority of the artist's thoughts and intentions.

In the following written description, the drawing is described as an assemblage of observed people and in this particular case, the challenge of capturing such diverse subjects and action made the process of drawing and the perceived success of the drawing, seem particularly engrossing. This drawing is also from Hamburg in 2017 (see Fig.4 below).

This next drawing was one of the more successful of the day. The man on the right with the brightly coloured vest was actually dealing with his young son when I captured him and his mullet. His drunk and bewildered expression was a draw for me. Again, the speed at which I was working and trying to note down characters was enabling a more accurate and specific kind of depiction that, at this stage, was starting to pay off. The man with the hat attempting to kiss the woman was observed along with the larger woman in the foreground who appears to be walking towards the viewer. These people reflect quick selections from the frenetic environment on the day. Their capture is, I believe successful, and I can remember these figures, and even smell their breath. The piles of spent booze were inescapable. These were the first casualties. The first group of people partied out as they had followed the first Schlagermove buses. Crowds dancing and singing are indicated in the background but

I was conscious not to linger too long on any one drawing and I was desperate to catch the fluid action. It was a somewhat overcast day but bursts of sunshine came in intermittently. Many people were also smoking. The smell of alcohol and tobacco made me think of bad hangovers and I imagined the number of sore heads that would be lumbering around the next day. While there were many episodes of joyous dancing and singing, many quiet and somewhat sombre moments of drunkenness were visible. The figure to the right with the vest and mullet is the anchor of this drawing. He, like me, is a witness. This drawing, by virtue of its production, has a lightness of touch that connects the viewer to my direct vision more readily. I can't be sure that it reads as more or less constructed than others but for me, it feels momentary and raw.



(Fig.4)

In this drawing, the mixture between resolution and half-finished forms heightens the engagement with the drawing as an act of direct observation. While this was a constructed

image, because of the demands on the ground, it was not overly considered and the choices made are quick and intuitive. These spontaneously constructed images have a compelling vitality for the artist and are more rewarding on re-viewing because they lack the logic and premeditation of other images, making them more surprising. Drawings like this that are a composite of several observed moments offer the viewer a greater sense of the totality of the experience, especially considering the complexity and cacophony of this event. The valorisation of the sketch has taken many forms, but as Petherbridge notes, ‘the appearance of spontaneity’ is critical and, she further adds;

‘An engendering sketch has to be accomplished quickly because of the instability, incoherence and fleeting quality of conceptual images, which hover on the edges of consciousness like pale ghosts, floating away if approached too deliberately.’

(Petherbridge, 2010, p.49)

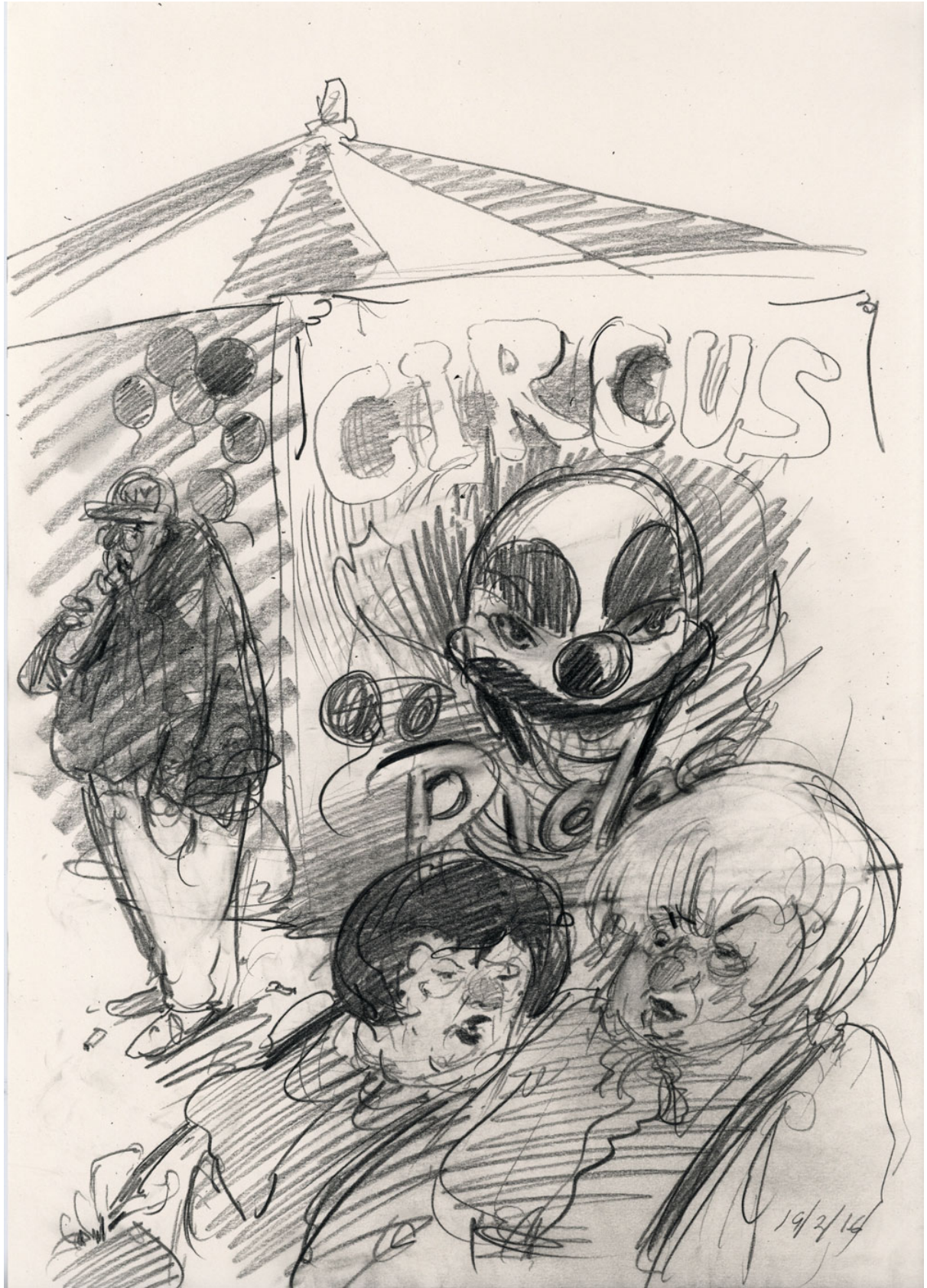
9.3 Tenor and topic

Rawson defines ‘tenor’ and ‘topic’ as, roughly and respectively, the rendering of forms with intent and the subject, which is directly related to the choices made in its rendering. Rawson notes, ‘the artist projects the image-containing forms upon the tenor, and hopes that we, his public, will be able to grasp his meaning from them.’ (Rawson, 1969, p.5) The terms ‘tenor’ and ‘topic’ are instructive ways of seeing reportage drawing (and all drawing) as both a complex construction and a dialogue between the subject and the artist as he or she confronts their own intentions and renders those intentions in the forms of the drawing.

Extending this concept of ‘tenor’ and ‘topic’, it is worth thinking of the act of drawing as an act of thinking. Because of the demands of the act of reportage, this thinking is highly responsive and grounded by the task of rendering the observed but also the constellation of ideas that surround the subject and environment. The artist William Kentridge speaks of the playful and surprising evolution of a drawing and how the artist engages deeply with the essence of his or her subject. He notes about drawing a horse ‘inside, there is a sense of HORSE, of horse-ness, waiting to be triggered. Roscinante, Bucephalus, the Trojan horse, Stubbs, the photo-finish in a horse race, are all there.’ (Kentridge, 2014, p.18) This kind of associative process also occurs within my own drawing and extends ‘tenor’ and ‘topic’ towards an understanding of drawing and drawn choices as the conclusion of thought(s), like Shahn’s contention that form and idea are essentially the same thing. The following passage from a drawing excursion in Portsmouth in 2016 reveals this wider narrative which surrounds the images and my own feelings about the place (see Fig.5 below).

I had no roadmap for this drawing other than to start with the circus sign and populate the drawing from there. I tried to capture the sign but something sinister crept in and it is a wild distortion of the actual sign, which, was brightly coloured, cheery and hideously tacky. Again, this was a struggle with multiple erasures. It is odd that when I am directly observing and drawing I am often too reliant on the subject. When operating from recent memory of an observed thing I often tend to not only be more confident but more accurate in my drawing...These two older ladies struck me as interesting subjects. They seemed like twins. The woman with the white hair had these strange eyebrows that shot right down. They were both dour faced and swiftly walking. I was interested in the way they seemed to walk like they were attached to each other...It is a common occurrence to hear woman talking about the horrendous

behaviour of their partners. Often expletive-laced tirades end with a chuckle and comment like 'cheeky cunt'. These are hard worn faces and more often than not Portsmouth forces you to see this side of itself...I then needed something on the other side of the sign to finish off the composition. I remember walking through the crowd on the other side of the fountain and seeing a middle-aged man with glasses eating a sandwich from a bag. He was also wearing a NY hat. What did that NY really mean? Has the place become a brand? Did this man acquire the hat consciously or was this something that was around, available to him at the time? Although he lacks the detail of the larger figures, I was pleased with his rendering. This drawing overall achieved what I wanted. With a scene like this and a very fluid environment, it is especially hard to make choices. Those choices are consequential as they shape an interpretation of the place. Those two ladies could have been replaced with a myriad of other characters. From what was on offer I can honestly say that this is quite a sympathetic vision of this area.



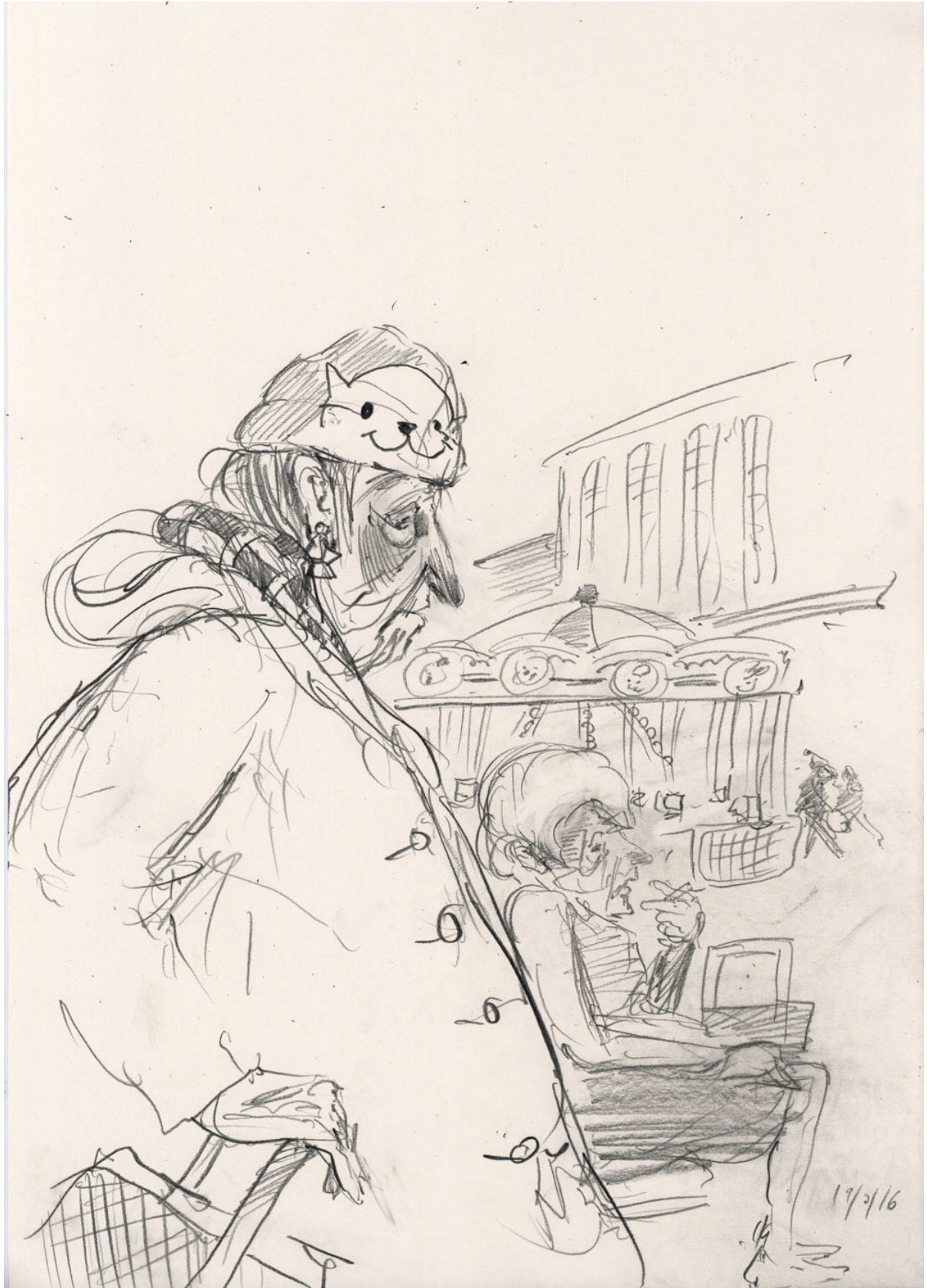
(Fig.5)

In the passage above, 'tenor' and 'topic' are attempting to move the viewer towards a nuanced view of the place, which is sympathetic and unsympathetic in equal measures. The commentary and the image are depictive of the same thing which is a psychic portrait of the Cascades shopping area in Portsmouth, a place of interior and exterior struggle. A drawing such as this reveals how observation is polluted or informed by the subjectivities of thought and ideas which swirl around the drawing process. What Rawson calls the 'numen' or the projected essence of the image, can be seen as the cohesion of thoughts, observation and rendered forms which move the viewer towards the fulfilment of the artist's subjective vision in drawing. (Rawson, 1969, p.7) Like the drawing above, this can imbue the work with an overriding, pervasive sentiment. This sentiment relates to an emotional connection to individuals who reflect some injury as a result of the unfortunate vicissitudes of life.

The commentary below directly followed the previous drawing and continues many of the same thematic concerns. Here the person as symbol is crucial and the 'here' and 'elsewhere' that Berger speaks of is apparent in this drawing and the accompanying dialogue (see Fig.6 below).

The final drawing came from leaving my perch from the last 3 drawings and going beyond the circus ride to a row of benches. I was immediately hit with the line of people on the benches smoking despondently as the foot traffic passed in front of them. Any of these characters would have made good subjects. I kept looking...My hands were very cold as well. Walking around the benches and beyond them I noticed a large, ruddy-faced woman with what looked like a kids hat, decorated with a cute cartoon kitten. She had a pleasant face and was chatting to another older woman. She seemed somewhat eccentric with multiple layers of clothing on (like the NY guy) and

she had the same confounding headwear. This cute kitten hat seemed to be a commentary in itself about both age and culture and the breakdown of fashion that is a consequence of poverty. It was a difficult face to capture, as it was delicate and ruddy but also bold with the strong thrust of the nose downward. I also noted her jangling earrings, which were also oddly out of place. This was an odd case because the addition of the earrings and the hat would imply a conscious decision for wearing them but the items themselves clash so harshly against rational taste. Dashing in the cheap amusement ride in the background and the old woman smoking finished off the drawing. This was one of those drawings which comes together with ease and managed to imbed a range of compelling ideas through the capture of the subject's singularity.



(Fig.6)

What we can see in this commentary and the drawing is a successful conveyance of the textures of the experience of the subject. Although rooted in observation, the success of the image is less about accuracy than it is about the assemblage of character. What my drawing is attempting to hold is the presence of the subject. Berger reflects on this engagement with subject noting ‘in my own very small experience the being or thing, which I’m drawing, never becomes defective, but often the drawing does. The drawing fails to embrace the presence.’ He furthers ‘drawing is about a company which, beyond or outside the drawing, will very quickly or eventually become invisible.’ (Berger & Savage, 2008, p.116) What is implied here is that the drawing and circumstances of its production, including the act(s) of thinking involved, reside in the drawings alone and that ‘drawings offer hospitality to an invisible company which is with us.’ (Berger & Savage, 2008, p.116) Relating this to my larger contention about the graphic construct of the reportage artist, drawing is more than rendered forms, it is rendered thought and therefore it is as idiosyncratic and personal as the machinations of one’s mind. It is also, as Berger has noted, as temporal.

9.4 Experience of drawing, experience of place

As established above, the act of drawing is essentially an act of thinking. What the reportage artist thinks, believes and projects onto his or her subject results in the ultimate shape of form. For my own work, as seen above, my own thoughts, prejudices and on the spot revelations infuse the work with subjectivities that come through in the stylistic flourishes which define the subjects. When I am on a more planned and considered reportage journey, such as my journey to Hamburg in 2017, I engage with my own ideas and preconceptions of place as a way of establishing and confronting what I already know or feel, or, what I think I

know or feel. This passage explores some thoughts I had as I flew over Germany and how this thinking sets the stage for the drawing to come.

When we neared Hamburg, I looked down through the few clouds and saw the fairy tale pitched rooves of the large detached homes. Germany holds a unique fascination for me. I distinctly remember my first trip to Munich when I was a student and a serious fan of the work of George Grosz. Grosz distilled much of the German spirit and character in his work and confirmed my belief in drawing as a record of complex textures and character. I also thought of the German people as shadow dwellers. Under the darkness of their own violent history but also brave in confronting that history and learning from the past. I saw this myself in the museum at Dachau and the Topography of Terror museum in Berlin on the site of the former SS and Stasi headquarters. Both raw and unvarnished historical records were on display with appropriate context. The terror was real and it was a warning to the German people of successive generations and the world. These, I believe, are some of the most important sites in the world.

This very difficult history inevitable frames a view of Germany today but aspects of that shadow can be seen in the pre-war work of Grosz. The atmosphere of pre-Nazi Germany is captured well in Grosz's work and reveals that drawings can capture more than the specificities of people and places, they can capture, what Ruskin noted, where things are going. Where the photograph is historical, the drawing can balance itself between the historical, contextual moment, the universal and thematic and, the future, an implicit forecast of what is to come.

Here I am seeing Germany as I first saw it through the eyes of Grosz but also through the lens of its own history. I am also considering what drawing can do in the communication of place and how I might perceive this ‘shadow’ in my own work. This kind of musing is important to establishing one’s existing prejudices but also in preparing for those feelings and presumptions to be challenged by what occurs in-situ, which is often provocative and surprising, even in subtle ways.

The next drawing and passage from a trip to Gunwharf Quays in Portsmouth in 2017 reveals how the subject, an older woman, and her environment play off each other and form the true content of the image. Considering the lack of context in this particular piece it is near impossible that the wider meanings explored in the reflection could be surmised by a viewer. However, this passage reveals an intimate connection with the environment when drawing and how these musings, for the artist, cement the interest in sustaining a drawing (see Fig.7 below).

This next drawing was done near Spinnaker tower, a strange purposeless monument that looks vaguely like a sail but also, from a certain angle, as noted by several locals, like a man weeing into the Solent. There is a line of wooden benches right by a docking area in which some very nice schooner boats are moored. Behind the benches are the big bars and restaurants with large outdoor seating and beyond that, the retail stores of Gunwharf Quays. This woman on the bench was hunched over in this fashion and it appeared to me a perfect opportunity to draw. I was able to draw her almost directly from observation as she was engrossed in what she was doing and I was in a particularly good perch for anonymous observation. I was able to see and capture this large gesture that went from the top of her head, around her rear and

under her knee. She could have been doing this on her kitchen table but instead she is out here, with the rest of us, being in the sun, being together. Besides her obviously characterful face, she was a wonderful oddity in that she was defying the expectation of the location that was, in some ways, to bask in the glory of the vista. They are little planned moments of observance and reflection. My instincts were sharp today and little observed moments like her raised heel (in concentration perhaps) on her right foot put together this narrative of urban bench sitting.



(Fig.7)

What is notable here is the way in which the central subject is defined by her location and her private activity but also, by other bench dwellers and the act of sitting at a bench as an activity that is itself meaningful. Related to these kind of considerations is caricature and the way in which subjects are categorised and relate to each other through their symbolic function. Gombrich, quoting William Hogarth, noted his intention to “learn the language of objects” and “if possible find a grammar to them.” (Gombrich, 1972, p.349) This relates to the training of the artist to better understand people and forms for the flexible application of them in caricature and it relates closely to my own practice. The classification and assessment of drawn subjects as ‘types’ reflects a wider social categorisation, sharing the method of the caricaturist but with less of the pure fabrication. Additionally, the caricature often contains an impromptu response to the salient features of his or her subject, very much like the reportage artist. Werner Hofmann notes, ‘when the artist, at the invention of caricature, first thought of the fascinating possibility of inventing forms in graphic improvisation and transforming them step by step, he laid the foundation for a process that is now the justification for the artistic act: the drawing that draws itself.’ (Hofmann, 1957, p.55) The ‘drawing that draws itself’ can be seen in multiple ways but for my own reportage practice, it relates to the way in which a gesture (as noted above) unlocks a drawing and how a strong creative impulse (often inspired by an emblematic subject) can make for a quick rendering. The capture of a person in the simplest, most economical and quickest manner is often said to have ‘practically drawn itself’. Beyond my own work, other reportage artists report that their interest in the act is on-the-spot invention and this is clearly related to the methods and approach of the cartoonist, particularly in the exploratory stage.

The passage below was the final drawing done during the Schlagermove festival in Hamburg in 2017 (although was not the last drawing I did in Hamburg). It highlights a cartoonist’s eye

for identifying absurdities and reveals my own interest in subjects as part of a wider narrative that is assembled, in a random way, in-situ (see Fig.8 below).

I walked further up the Reeperbahn and saw more carnage. More exhausted souls who had indulged too much and looked like they were dreaming for their beds. I spotted this couple and was compelled to draw them. Unlike before, with crowds thinning in the closed off centre of the street, I was able to draw with somewhat less crowded interest. I drew this couple practically from direct observation and I feel like it was a success. He looked like a tired clown and his deeply lined face was full of character. Here the quick execution of the drawing enabled some strong abbreviation and his character and face was achieved with great economy. What is striking in such a drawing is how the face takes its essential form in so few lines. His strong cheekbones and deflated balloon cheeks reveal a man who is a heavy smoker and perhaps drinker. The lines of the face are deep and sculptural and the little dark dots for his eyes capture his hollow, drunken stare. She is more simply rendered with a beak nose and her arm seemingly supporting herself on her handbag. They were sitting on a curb like me and behind them the party was still in full swing in the bars. This drawing is an appropriate end to Schlagermove and I realised that although the day held such great visual spectacle and colour, I was, as usual, drawn to the human story. The human story inscribed on the faces in the crowd. Also, it felt like it took me the entire day to find this iconic couple that really captured the day. The absurd clowns, washed up and spent.



(Fig.8)

What this drawing demonstrates, like many previous drawings, is that the tensions within reportage are key to its sustaining interest for the artist and the viewer. The primary tensions are between resolved and unclosed indicative forms and, objective, direct observation and indulgent extension, even fabrication. As noted above, these tensions are also reflected and exploited in the aesthetic of the sketch which, by virtue of its seemingly hurried production, is perceived as a correspondent image. Highly resolved forms (such as those found in my drawings) are often viewed by reportage artists as proof of departure from observation and the prettified forms are less honest because they hide the struggle of direct recording. For my own reportage drawing, the desire to resolve the image is not to depart into pure illustration, divorced of the rigour of direct recording, rather it is a struggle to achieve what I feel I have seen (a subject which has more than likely moved on or that I can't, for logistical reasons,

draw directly). I am therefore more interested in the intangible properties of the subject, the emotive aspects, than the purely objective. For my own work, the reportage drawing is a proposition. It proposes that what I have drawn I have seen and hope to engage the viewer in the textures of that experience. The resolve of the image towards greater completion is a desire to exchange as much of my vision to enable the viewer's full participation in that experience. This experience, as noted above and as seen in the image of the bewildered revellers, is intended to express, above all, a sentiment. It is also a narrative moment. Baudelaire's appreciation of the art of Daumier sums up what I and many reportage artists seek to achieve in their work through a combination of an observational, subjective knowledge of subjects and, applied commentary through stylistic means. Baudelaire noted:

'Look through his works, and you will see parading before your eyes all that a great city contains of living monstrosities, in all their fantastic and thrilling reality. There can be no item of the fearful, the grotesque, the sinister or the farcical in its treasury, by Daumier knows it. The live and starving corpse, the plump and well-filled corpse, the ridiculous troubles of the home, every little stupidity, every little pride, every enthusiasm, every despair of the bourgeois – it is all there.' (Baudelaire & Mayne, 2006, p.177)

For my own work, the selections in-situ tell a narrative which is skewed by my own thematic inclinations. My own reportage drawings could never deliver a holistic impression of a place but they could, quite effectively, capture an aspect and exploit that aspect for deeper consideration. While objective truth is rarely a desire or possibility for reportage drawing, the material of art itself points elsewhere. Dewey notes:

‘The imagination, by means of art, makes a concession to sense in employing its materials, but nevertheless uses sense to suggest underlying ideal truth. Art is thus a way of having the substantial cake of reason while also enjoying the sensuous pleasure of eating it.’ (Dewey, 2005, p.269)

9.5 The graphic construct

My own graphic construct can thus be mapped as below.

Drawing	Experience	Assessment
<p>‘Tenor’ and ‘Topic’</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Observation is laden with commentary and elements of caricature are employed to heighten and transform observed subjects towards symbolic ‘types’. <p>Drawn effects</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The sketch is the prevailing aesthetic but is refined. • Overdrawing pushes the sketch towards greater refinement. <p>Aesthetic influences</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • George Grosz, Lautrec, DeCrecy, Tardi, to name a few. • Artists who are economic in their line and infuse their work with commentary. <p>Aims and intentions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To communicate the sense of place and capture a sentiment. • My aim for the drawing is to render the emotive content of people and places. 	<p>Experience of drawing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A reflective experience which condenses thought and action. • Wide ranging thoughts about people and places occur. • The drawing occurs out of a felt attraction to the subject as a symbolic ‘type’. <p>Experience in-situ</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A desire to keep hidden and be highly selective of subjects who are evocative of place. <p>Experience of place</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Drawn to the downtrodden. • Looking for people and places which challenge perception and confront the viewer with harsh realities. • An interest in people on the fringes but equally, in the banality of everyday life. • Some politically motivated themes emerge. 	<p>Fidelity to the observed</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Observation is key to success however not through direct recording necessarily. • Some drawing is done from memory but the success of the drawing is still anchored to strong impressions and the observed subject. <p>Assessment of intentions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Related to the rendering of what I feel were the most essential qualities of the subject. • Equally desirable if they point to a wider narrative about society itself. <p>Graphic qualities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Looking for drawing that has enough resolution to connect to the specificity of character but equally has the economy and speed in rendering that attest to responsive observation. • The graphic marks should draw the viewer in through the impression (whether entirely real or not) of a directly drawn and experienced subject that reflects a social or political ill.
Graphic Construct		

(Table 1)

9.6 Summary

My own graphic construct reveals that the demands of the act of reportage drawing make construction, fabrication and stylistic indulgence essential to the capture of all the textures of experience that I aim to impart. Because my work is less anchored to the purely responsive observational approach of other contemporary reportage artists like Gary Embury, my work explores more thematic material and the drawing is marshalled to depict provocative ideas as much as it is to attest to its own production. Like all drawing, the reportage drawing cannot be seen in isolation from its maker. As Tania Kovats notes ‘when we look at drawings...we are witnessing something being created at no further than arm’s reach, and can often see the moment passing or thought emerging, right there on the page.’ (Kovats, 2005, p.8)

For my own reportage drawing and orientation to the act, a greater acknowledgement of individual artistic subjectivity is key and a move from the dogma of direct observation towards the merger of intentions and thinking that evolve in the act. As Kovats notes ‘drawing mediates between two states of mind’ and the ‘picture is the portrait of a process.’ In referring to a Rembrandt drawing of a girl sleeping, she notes ‘its subject’s unconsciousness reminds us of Rembrandt’s own unconscious; that what we are seeing played out on paper is a fantasy. In a sense, the subject of *A Girl Sleeping* isn’t the girl at all but Rembrandt’s desire to draw her, with all that implies.’ (Kovats, 2005, p.201)

Section 10 – The graphic construct – Gary Embury

10.1 The graphic construct

Embury's graphic construct can be seen as both a conscious and self-aware move from his more academic approach, and a cultivation of the here and now in his drawing which relates to both an interest in honest imagery and a move aligned with broader trends in drawing practice to challenge notions of 'good drawing'. Petherbridge identifies this trend in contemporary drawing as, in part, a focus on 'process over design.' Petherbridge notes a move from tradition as a 'breakdown of traditional hierarchies of practice. In their place, looser, hybrid and personalised ways of drawings have become the norm, associated with a suspicion of skill and technical considerations and a fear of literalism, and an avoidance of drawing as a study or interrogative practice rather than an expressive medium.'

(Petherbridge, 2010, p.412, 414) Embury would not reject drawing as an 'interrogative practice' but his suspicion of skill or rather stylistic indulgence is clear and his practice reflects a methodological move from the intention and design that marks traditional orientations.

At the core of Embury's work and his own professed struggle to rid his drawing of contrivances, is the notion of expression and honesty. Expression in art has typically been associated with the expressive characteristics of the work through the artist's rendering. Gombrich notes 'the work of art as such, in other words, was valued as symptom of the artist's state of mind, as an 'expression of personality', and this, at once, raised the issue of the genuine *versus* the false expression.' He then notes 'but have we really a right to equate artistic truth with truthful communication?' (Gombrich, 1994, p.25) Here, Embury's claim

for honesty in his approach to direct recording is challenged by the inherent expressive qualities of his work, intended or not, and that his method highlights the graphic mark and therefore the expressive potential of those marks. These graphic marks are however, as Embury has intended, stripped of planning and consideration and stand alone as a reflection of their immediacy. Petherbridge notes of the reappraisal of drawing and appetite for authenticity as, “‘bad’ drawing, *dysgraphia*, in this context becomes a framing semiotic of authenticity that readily signals urban protest or general disaffection, and also acts as the (in) formal envelope that accommodates the multiple material borrowings, mal-juxtapositions and insertions that deliberately flout rules of traditional pictorial organisations.’ (Petherbridge, 2010, p.419) While Embury’s work is not as wildly transgressive as Basquiat, (an artist Petherbridge refers to prior to the above quote) there is a stated intention to alter one’s approach to drawing and present that drawing as authentic, raw vision. Gombrich noted of the Impressionists that their work ‘stands on the watershed between two modes of satisfaction.’ The ‘pictorial symbol’ is ‘matched ever more closely with appearances’ and marks ‘the beginning of an openly regressive art, of primitivism.’ (Gombrich, 1994, p.41) The methodology of Embury, in rejecting the indulgence and stylistic flourishes of more refined representation, (which would also take him further away from the moment and his subject(s)) creates work that, like the Impressionists, testifies to the operations of vision and the material means to render it, absent of expressive flourishes. The ‘regressive pleasure’ of Embury’s work is his conscious desire, as manifest in his drawing, to deny his own capabilities in favour of the limitations of direct observation, resulting in raw, direct forms which guide us through the active process of looking and drawing. Embury notes ‘You’ve got to be prepared for people to see warts and all really. I think as soon as you start worrying about if it’s a good drawing um...and you know there are other people that are so good with

this kind of drawing, so good with it, so slick with it, but sometimes you can be a bit too clever.’

Embury identified several artists who he sees as maintaining this perceived integrity in their work and relishes the way in which those drawings might be deemed as ‘nasty’ by some. He identifies Feliks Topolski’s drawings of the Harlem riots as a good example of difficult drawings that are ‘hard to read’ but are vividly evocative. In terms of fellow reportage artists, Embury also identifies Linda Kitson and Robert Weaver, both artists who have a seemingly immediate, deliberate and economic line that, particularly with Weaver, feel like traced vision. Embury, seeing his work as part of the historical practice of reportage, is interested in what drawing does that the camera does not and yet, he also seeks to retain, as much as possible, some element of objective recording in his work. For Embury, his graphic construct is about the act of drawing in direct engagement with one’s environment. It is about drawing and vision equally and it seeks to explore how vision is mediated through drawing without explicit artistic aims and through that, how we may see the affordances of drawing in the capture of our world.

Embury's graphic construct can thus be mapped as below.

Drawing	Experience	Assessment
<p>'Tenor' and 'Topic'</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Merged through the in-the-moment rendering in-situ. <input type="checkbox"/> 'Tenor' and 'topic' are methodologically bound. <p>Drawn effects</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> The aesthetic of the sketch reflects the immediacy of the approach. <input type="checkbox"/> Highly refined, economical, deliberate, even continuous line pervades the work. <p>Aesthetic influences</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Reportage artists like Topolski, Weaver and Kitson are most evident influences. <input type="checkbox"/> Other influences include London School Painters like Auerbach. <p>Aims and intentions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> To render his environment directly and with little or no premeditation. <input type="checkbox"/> Direct recording and strict observation is key. 	<p>Experience of drawing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> The drawing process is an unfolding of observed action. The sketchbook page is a palimpsest. <p>Experience in-situ</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Typically seeks elevated perch but likes to be a part of the action. <input type="checkbox"/> Seeking to make the seemingly ordinary interesting in drawing. <input type="checkbox"/> Ultimately, open to what crosses his vision. <p>Experience of place</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Place is rendered in the drawing as observed. <input type="checkbox"/> Assessment of the location is through the record of the drawing and how that encapsulates the artists experience on location. 	<p>Fidelity to the observed</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Self-governed. Some elements of caricature develop, largely through necessity. <input type="checkbox"/> While there is no claim to accuracy, truthful recording within the means of immediate drawing is held to. <p>Assessment of intentions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> If the drawing becomes too 'pretty' or if it departs into indulgence it is deemed a departure from aims. <input type="checkbox"/> Drawings are valued for their evocation of place and the experience of the field of the vision by the artist. <p>Graphic qualities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Artist is aware of the qualities of his drawing but is also courting the unexpected marks that occur as a result of his methodology. This relates to inventive forms as a result of the act and do not weaken his broader methodology. <input type="checkbox"/> The graphic qualities are seen as a result of his direct recording process and not a deliberate supplement to his drawing.
Graphic Construct		

(Table 2)

Section 11 – The graphic construct – Jill Gibbon

11.1 The graphic construct

Gibbon's graphic construct can be best described as a total alignment of aims which sees her methodology, aesthetic interests and commentary fused in the responsive act of covert drawing. She notes of the continual struggle to capture what she sees and experiences saying 'the drawings swing between caricature and observational methods, never quite conveying the strangeness of the event. It is a frustrating process.' (Gibbon, 2018) Gibbon, like Embury and other practitioners, are subject to the vagaries of their own self-imposed limitations and this can cause uneven results. However, as noted previously about Embury's work and my own, the value of the work is less about mimetic accuracy, as seen in the wilful and accidental distortions above, and is valued for its closeness to the artists remembered experience. Experience, and the drawings evocation of it, is the one thing that myself, Embury and Gibbon all see as a critical gauge of success in a reportage drawing.

Gibbon's graphic construct is simple yet powerful and it reinforces her desire to challenge capitalism through exploring the vernacular of the bodies which operate on its behalf. Her reportage drawing is motivated by moral shock and deep feelings are threaded into her observation and activate the drawing through the perception that the subjects have been observed or witnessed and, that the artist has something to say about them. Reflecting this seeing and feeling and the shock that motivates many of her drawings Gibbon notes, 'drawing is a 'process of looking' that takes place in the stomach as much as the eyes.' (Gibbon, 2018)

Gibbon’s graphic construct can thus be mapped as below.

Drawing	Experience	Assessment
<p>‘Tenor’ and ‘Topic’</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fused in the act of drawing. • Some stylistic features are present which reflect commentary and have acknowledged features of caricature. <p>Drawn effects</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Both a result of hurried and covert drawing and intentionally cultivated to align with aesthetic aims. <p>Aesthetic influences</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Influenced by George Grosz and Otto Dix. <p>Aims and intentions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The work is intended to bear witness to the sleazy underbelly of global capitalism and to document the way the body can be metaphoric and convey troubling truths about the arms trade for example. 	<p>Experience of drawing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Done covertly and with caution not to be detected. • Looks for certain types and interactions which expose the cracks in the respectable veneer. <p>Experience in-situ</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dressed up in heels and pearls and intended to blend with the crowd. • This element of performance enables her to get closer to her subjects and catch them with their guard down. <p>Experience of place</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The place and the knowledge that the drawings are done in them is critical to their appreciation and their impact. • Although there is little indication of setting other than a few missiles or a gun here and there, the people and their actions provide a compelling window into this hidden world. 	<p>Fidelity to the observed</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is every intention to draw from observation and her own assessment of the success or failure of the drawing is tied to the capture of specific observational details. <p>Assessment of intentions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The drawings are valued for their capture of moments when respectability is shattered and for their evocation of the subject and experience in-situ. • Although the aims are specific and clear, serendipitous moments are welcome and many drawings are motivated by surprise or shock in some way. <p>Graphic qualities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A continuous line contour reflects its quick production and distortions are present which are either a result of hurried drawing or caricature. • The aesthetic of the sketch combines with subtle stylisation. • Exaggerations, whether intentional or not, draw the viewer closer to the aesthetic of the sketch and therefore make them evocative of the moments of their making.
Graphic Construct		

(Table 3)

Section 12 – The currency of reportage drawing

12.1 Introduction

As demonstrated by this thesis, it is difficult to understand the contemporary practice of reportage drawing without an understanding of its historical origins and the ways in which illustration as a whole is practiced and accessed today. The currency of contemporary reportage drawing is best understood through an understanding of it as a distinct part of illustrative practice and the diffusion of approaches that constitute the act. The future practice and relevance of reportage drawing is in three important areas. For one, reportage drawing as an activity which is practiced by professional illustrators/artists and disseminated online, in mass media and in specialist publications. Here the illustrator is acting as a visual journalist. Secondly, commissioned and non-commissioned reportage artists and researchers who are engaging in how reportage drawing can contribute to other fields and disciplines, for example the sciences, historical subjects and contemporary social issues. Lastly, the impact of technology on the future of reportage drawing can be seen with virtual journalism, VR and digital drawing.

12.2 The currency of reportage drawing

Towards the end of the 19th century, through technical innovations and improvements to printing methods, the ability to replicate the effects of drawings and a range of tonalities was possible. Beyond the 19th century and into the early 20th century, illustrators gained greater autonomy through establishing their own visual languages and in some cases, choosing their own subjects as in reportage. The Ashcan School debuted in 1913 and were defined by their

unflinching portrayal of the working class and poor in urban centres like New York. (Doyle et al., 2019, p.231) John Sloan, Robert Henri and Rodrigo Gruger were notable members and had a great impact on fellow illustrators and artists of their day through their deft and expressive draftsmanship and a vivacious approach to painting, which reflected the immediacy of their drawing. Sloan was to become the editor and chief artist of *The Masses*, a socialist magazine in which his expressive, gestural and highly reductive drawing took on powerful issues of the day. (Doyle et al., 2019, p.325) This was dubbed social realism and marks a moment when the aesthetic of reportage drawing is being employed to engage viewers/readers as a witness through the impression of ‘being there’ in the quick, summative marks of the sketch. The liberation of the artist through technical improvements in printing led reportage towards greater editorial freedom which was enabled by a greater capacity for expression. Paul Nash’s artwork, created as a witness during the first world war, was moving towards greater expressiveness and his own rationale for the work was to be ‘a messenger who will bring back word from the men who are fighting to those who want the war to go on forever. Feeble, inarticulate, will be my message, but it will have a bitter truth, and may it burn their lousy souls.’ (Doyle et al., 2019, p.340) The emotional currency of pictorial witnessing was a notable and exploited aspect of reportage practice in the early 20th century and shaped the act in its development.

The development of reportage practice has inevitably been intertwined with both technical advancements in both print and artistic visual language and more philosophical developments such as existentialism. (see the links between existentialism and expressionism) When the commissioning structures and conventions of the 19th century fade and the artist is not limited by technology, artistic progress and conceptual progress go hand in hand and developments in illustration mimic those in the other arts. As John Roberts notes ‘late nineteenth-century

European capitalism does not just provide ‘new modern subjects’ for the artist, but crucially transforms the *affective* space in which artists produce their work – how artists materially constitute the problem of representation – and as such how their works are received, transforming the questions of artistic value itself.’ (Roberts, 2010, p.78) Alan Male notes ‘the practice of expressing ideas rather than verbatim ‘scenes’ or ‘pictures’ has meant that *conceptual* illustration is now the dominant visual language.’ (Male, 2019, p.88) He continues, ‘whatever its genre of stylization...will be interpretive and present the ‘texture’ of a topic and delve deep into its explication.’ (Male, 2019, p.88) Although Male is largely referring to work that utilises metaphor and allegory, the orientation to the subject in contemporary reportage as discussed in this thesis reveals a conceptual approach to both stylistic and subject choices and a wider awareness of the consequences of such choices on the reception and understanding of the work. Male has previously coined this ‘visual intelligence’ and defined this as ‘identifiable maturity, experience, visual sophistication and contextual understanding.’ (Male, 2007, p.52) In contrast, on objective drawing, Male notes three key elements to attain a ‘knowledge-based discourse held within drawing.’ Firstly, ‘*what* it is’ its ‘morphology. Second, ‘*why* it exists’ its ‘ecology.’ Lastly, ‘*how* it works’ its ‘biology.’ (Male, 2019, p.122) This is a conception of drawing that for Male can be ‘a significant strategy for an empirical approach to research.’ (Male, 2019, p.122) Reportage drawing is then referred to as ‘journalistic-style commentary’ and ‘less formal.’ (Male, 2019, p.122) Male is reinforcing a perception that objectivity reflects a heightened engagement with a subject and that drawing that indulges in superficial attentions is lesser. While I disagree with the former, myself and other practitioners would largely agree that indulgence results in departures from the observed and that observation is an intelligence of seeing and is evidenced by specificities in the drawing. Paul Hogarth embraced changes to how reportage drawing was being pursued in the 1980s noting ‘the synthesis of the observed and the

imagined...establishes their work as a viable and an exciting new approach in artist-reporting.' (Hogarth, 1986, p.174) Here Hogarth is referencing the work of Anita Kunz, Anne Howeson and Ian Pollock (to name a few) and acknowledges that 'some artists continue to work wholly or partly on location, whilst others who work from slides or remembered experiences, make a more oblique comment.' (Hogarth, 1986, p.175) The diffuse practice of reportage illustration has always reinforced both the differing conceptions and values around objectivity and subjectivity and the individual justifications that are the result of new approaches.

Contemporary approaches to reportage drawing are diverse in orientation to the subject and practice and yet reflect the same central desire of all reportage practice to transmit the experience in-situ and engender intimate connections. Additionally, some contemporary practitioners are incorporating other media along with reportage drawing to connect to other realms of experience. This can be seen as a desire to provide more context to the work and this was noted by Gary Embury (see Embury) as a desire for his work in the future. Olivier Kugler's work utilises photography to capture rich details on location and he uses an audio recorder to get testimony from drawn subjects. Stacey Clarkson, the editor of *Harper's* magazine noted of Kugler's work 'Olivier has a very strong instinct for stories that will resonate over time and deep compassion. He foregrounds the voices of the refugees as they elucidate their experiences of escape and survival in an empathetic and moving way.' (Walters, 2017, p.46) With written notes on his drawing and the clear help of photographic reference, Kugler is delivering a hybrid form which has made him one of the most recognizable voices in contemporary reportage. The term 'empathetic' used by Clarkson confirms the value of drawing among commissioners for engaging with stories in an intimate way. John Walters notes the 'personal odysseys' of artists like Joe Sacco which heighten our

personal connection to journalism, and in Sacco's case, including depictions of the author/illustrator on location. (Walters, 2017, p.48) Speaking of Sacco's journalism in comparison with Spiegelman's *Maus*, Hillary Chute notes 'both projects hinge on the plenitude of the visual, the ability to present an uncategorizable excess that is outside of the logic of the denotative.' (Chute, 2016, p.222) Seen in terms of the currency of reportage drawing and drawn imagery as a lens on our world, this statement reflects the way in which the inherent abstraction that drawing represents can vividly take us closer to a reality which is both atomised through depiction and exploded, opening the depicted moment to scrutiny and reception of all its effects and meanings. Contemporary reportage drawing has changed with access to technologies and a changing media environment however, the connection to the personal, emotive and idiosyncratic vocabulary of drawing is central to its potency.

Other examples of extended reportage practice can be seen in the project *Reflections* organized by UK reportage artist Harry Morgan as a multimedia approach to capturing the aftermath of the Nepal earthquake in 2015. The project brought together photojournalists, local artists, residents, and reportage artists and resulted in a multimedia installation which was a true collaborative effort. (Brazell, 2016, p.50) Aligned with the commentary on Kugler's work, *Reflections* had the aim of 'foregrounding the impact on the lives of Nepali people.' (Brazell, 2016, p.50) Here, reportage drawing is nested within other media to deliver a wider context to the viewer of the stories of victims and flattened professional hierarchies, with professional and enthusiastic amateur artists and reporters sharing the same space. The work has been featured on the *Reportager* blog and there is a call on the project website to 'submit a story.' (Brazell, 2016, p.52) The emphasis on story with Kugler and Morgan's work indicates the contemporary desire to package reportage drawing into a narrative and extend pure drawing into multimedia platforms to align with trends in media consumption.

French animation artist Loup Blaster used reportage methodologies in the creation of her film about the refugee crisis in Calais. The emphasis on story is clear in her own thoughts about the project but equally she notes ‘storytelling can take any form...we are beyond questions of gender, style, techniques. Our eyes get to understand things really fast.’ (Blaster, 2017, p.23) She adds, ‘we need to ask what keeps the viewer curious, active and enriched from the experience of watching?’ (Blaster, 2017, p.23) She refers to her own approach to documenting Calais as a ‘collage’ of things she saw and she didn’t storyboard her animation. She notes that a viewer described it as ‘impressionism’ and that relates to way reportage drawings function in delivering textures of experience often without a deliberate narrative. (Blaster, 2017, p.23) She notes her final work ‘gives an impression of reality, but using a sensitive approach that gives room for emotions.’ (Blaster, 2017, p.23) It is perhaps this point which connects this work to wider reportage practice and the currency of the act in contemporary terms. In a media environment that is saturated with photo and video, the drawing or the animated drawing connects to new textures of experience and a new portal to understanding, enabled, in part, by the relative novelty of the form and the expansive vernacular of its application. Seeing reportage drawing as visual journalism, it is relevant to consider the context and means of dissemination in the current multimedia environment.

Linus Abraham notes:

Visual communication skills that were once defined separately, for example graphic illustration and photography are becoming increasingly integrated because of new media technology. The pace towards integration is also accelerated by the demands of the new medium of communication, the Internet, by its very nature characterised by multimedia and integrated modes of communication. (Abraham, 2002, p.178)

While the above quote is referring to visual journalism which is not necessarily reportage drawing, the contemporary reportage artist must acknowledge and respond to new and emerging platforms to stay current, relevant and impactful. Because of the popularity of comics, many artists are taking reportage assignments into the comic form and bringing in new audiences but also, challenging established forms of the comic medium and thereby moving both practices to new places and forms. Phoebe Gloeckner is best known as the artist and author behind *The Diary of a Teenage Girl* graphic novel and is working on a large scale and ongoing project exploring the death of young women in the violent Mexican city of Ciudad Juárez. The project is called *The Return of Maldoror* and is envisioned as an eBook which incorporates ‘drawing, photography, text, sculpture, and animation, mixing narrative forms and genres, such as traditional reporting with the photo novella.’ (Chute, 2016, p.263) This also includes creating a large three-dimensional set of Juárez with anatomically correct figures to re-enact sex crimes. (Chute, 2016, p.263) Gloeckner notes on her blog about the project that ‘my purpose was not to report news, and my work wasn’t intimately bound to factual details as a reporter’s would be. My second impulse was to find the beauty in death, which is, naturally, usually obscured by horror or grief.’ (Charmy) Gloeckner’s hybrid approach to visual reporting and narrative opens up new ways to engage with real places and events through novel aesthetic approaches and a conscious break from expected norms of depictive reality. (see Kirshner, 2008)

Part of the currency of contemporary reportage practice is in its flexibility and its openness to new terrain and new avenues for practice and dissemination. However practised, reportage drawing, in all of its forms, mutations and adaptations, must go back to the central record of the witness and rely on first hand observation. John Carey notes that for reportage ‘eye-

witness accounts have the feel of truth because they are quick, subjective and incomplete, unlike 'objective' or reconstituted history, which is laborious but dead.' (Carey, 1987, p.xxix) Carey is referring to written reportage but this is also central to drawn reportage, even hybrid forms, which engage the viewer through our understanding of the image as witnessed in some form by the artist.

Reportage and observational drawing as a contributing element to research in the sciences is an established practice both formally and informally, both public and private. Julia Midgley is a reader in documentary drawing at the Liverpool School of Art and Design and has had several residencies in which she was tasked with drawing on location for long periods of time to document how medicine and science were being practiced, in particular the human story. She has worked on archaeological sites, in hospitals, at Blackpool's pleasure beach and on construction sites. She notes that drawing 'efficiently conveys the tensions and passions witnessed on location. The drama of surgery, for example, powerfully affects the artist, whose artworks will inevitably reflect emotive responses.' (Midgley, 2010, p.2) Midgley sees her work in these locations as collaborations and notes 'ideas are conceived which would not have been born without the access afforded by such collaborations...To them, the artist is part lay-person, part professional observer, who presents objective, possibly novel, interpretations of their work.' (Midgley, 2010, p.6) Midgley found in all her residencies that the feedback to her drawings, both emotional and quizzical, revealed a surprising understanding of the function of reportage drawings to generate discussion, contemplation and an amplified understanding of an event. Archaeologists she observed working at the Chester Roman Amphitheatre site noted (about her drawings) 'they were emphatic that the drawings "were so familiar" that they recognisably portrayed not the research and academic rigour of excavation but the reality of archaeology.' (Midgley, 2010, p.11) As noted

previously, reportage drawing has the ability to connect human stories to human experience through the imperfect yet indicative forms of drawing and through the re-creative act of looking. Midgley notes of works she produced in her residencies which are of emotional scenes, such as the death of a patient in a hospital or the uncovering of an infant's skull in an archaeological dig, and how the drawing becomes a record of the emotions felt by the artist and then in the viewer, creating a 'cross fertilisation of sensitivities.' (Midgley, 2010, p.14) For Midgely, the currency of reportage practice is in its ability to present and exchange ideas and ultimately reveals our fascination with the human condition, providing a new lens from which we can share 'knowledge, perspectives and skills.' (Midgley, 2010, p.18) My own reportage work produced as part of a research project on lung health in Kenya will be described in the conclusion.

Technology plays a significant role in the development and currency of reportage drawing, particularly when considering dissemination and aesthetics. Inherent in this is a question about the relevance of drawing itself and how, in what some call the de-skilling of art education, reportage drawing can maintain quality with arguably less skilled practitioners. Although another, possibly more convincing argument is that great art, even great drawing is about a conceptual orientation to the act and that rendering great art need not be about technical mastery. John Roberts notes about the shifting nature of skills and art 'reflections *on* skill (as a withdrawal from received skills), as much as the development of new skills become part of the restless, ever-vigilant positioning of art's critical relationship to its own traditions of intellectual and cultural formation and administration.' (Roberts, 2010, p.94) Technology may provide new skills which when learned, may be capable of reflecting what is achieved in reportage drawing, but in a very different way. Roberts additionally notes 'conceptualisation serves to split the judgment of a work's skilfulness from the fetishistic

evaluation of technical skills. The artist may choose to be a master of a given technical process...but this does not determine our judgment of the artist's skill overall.' (Roberts, 2010, p.92)

Mario Minichiello, an established reportage artist who has worked for the BBC and Guardian newspaper, conducted a study exploring the reaction to and reception of reportage drawing in comparison with newspapers, radio, television and internet reporting. This was conducted through questionnaires that were distributed to visitors of his exhibition of drawings done from correspondent reports during the Afghan war in the early 2000's. He noted that '42% of respondents felt that 'reportage' artwork had the greatest credibility' and '84% trusted the artist to be 'fully in control' of their work whereas film and print were seen as the most compromised with only 13% trusting that film had not been subjected to bias or interference.' (Minichiello, 2006, p.145) Minichiello's emotive drawings have the impromptu effects of drawing in-situ from a directly observed subject but push the viewer towards greater abstraction as seen in his images which create impossible compositions, focusing on texture, atmosphere and the macabre aspects of war. The currency of reportage, as evidenced here, is linked to the perceived authority of the artist and the perception that drawn works are a construct of the artist alone and therefore are authentic. This perception is key for reportage drawing to consider as it moves into new forms and opens itself up to the scrutiny and distrust of other forms of digital media.

Virtual reality is a developing field which encompasses a wide range of applications yet is limited by access to specialised hardware. Immersive Journalism is a term which describes attempts to deliver news stories in VR and engage viewers/experiencers in the on-the-ground confrontations of journalists. Donghee Shin and Frank Biocca conducted an experiment

exploring the immersiveness of immersive journalism with 50 people and with two different ways to engage with the content (VR headset and flat screen TV). (Shin & Biocca, 2017) It was notable that immersiveness was not a given for participants and through further questioning it was revealed that ‘immersion depends on the users’ traits and contexts; the function of immersion is strongly dependent upon user sense-making and intention.’ (Shin & Biocca, 2017, p.3) Shin and Biocca further this noting ‘the immersive experience in IJ, where the viewer feels as though they are part of the action, is not directly given by HMD, VR goggles, stereoscopic video, or 360-degree camera...rather, it is reconstructed via user cognition and the stories of VR are reprocessed using user sense-making processes.’ (Shin & Biocca, 2017, p.12) With immersive journalism, as opposed to reportage drawing, the medium or delivery mechanism itself is the barrier for total immersion as is the nature and content of the story which motivates the user to engage. To be clear, the immersive journalism discussed in this study refers to computer generated environments and avatars and there is little indication of the aesthetic look and feel of these environments. The BBC has had a few forays into VR and even offers a free app on their website for content created for the Oculus VR system. One such VR experience which can be considered immersive journalism is the story *We Wait* which takes the viewer/experiencer on a boat ride with a terrified migrant family escaping war in Syria and travelling on the sea. (*We Wait* VR, 2016) The aesthetic of the animation reflects a generic avatar common to VR applications and does not have the aesthetic or urgency of reportage drawing. A project that more closely replicates the qualities of drawing within the immersive environment of VR is the project *Drawing Room*. *Drawing Room* uses the drawings done by Dutch artist Jan Rothuizen of Amsterdam from the high tower of a department store. Working with interactive designer Sara Kolster, they created an immersive, interactive environment that Jan described as ‘drawn reality.’ (*Drawing Room*) The project won the IDFA (International Documentary Film Festival

Amsterdam (2015)) award for digital storytelling and was praised for the inherent contrasts between the poetic drawn environment and the more photo-real environments that are typical of VR. These forays into VR and challenges to its nascent aesthetic are important for the future of drawn reportage as it inevitably evolves with technology.

Jenny Soep is a reportage artist who specialises in drawing alternative music performances and has developed a successful career, drawing Bjork, Patti Smith, Paul Simon and Yo-Yo Ma among many others. (Embury & Minichiello, 2018, p.88) She draws with an iPad Pro and this choice enables her trademark trace of movement and ability to add colour which enables great flexibility, atmosphere and digital effects. In addition to musical performances, Soep has drawn weddings, interviews, music prizes and dance performances. Soep's choice of reportage subject matter is unique and the recognition and interest in her work from musicians and other artists confirms her contribution to capturing those events. Using an iPad is less of a dramatic departure from reportage practice for Soep but does reflect a desire for immediate dissemination and some of the seductive tools that digital drawing provides.

12.3 Summary

The currency of reportage drawing has always been its connection to human stories, rendered by hand and therefore imperfect and connected to individual vision and attentions. Ronald Searle said of his drawings of Paris that they were more 'family snaps' than 'grandiose panoramas' and that he was 'haunted' by the many representations of Paris created previously and preferred to present a vision of what it *feels* like to live in Paris, rather than what one might imagine it is like.' (Searle, 1988, p.8-9) At the centre of the question around the currency and future of reportage drawing is its perception as an article of truth and this

relates as much to the changing perception of the artist and media in general as it does to an evolution in the way we see drawing. Alfredo Cramerotti in his book *Aesthetic Journalism*, notes ‘we no longer consider artists as specialised craftspeople: to produce sense socially and politically one has to abandon the notion of artisanship in favour of innumerable forms of expression, which include film festivals, newspapers, television, internet, radio and magazines.’ (Cramerotti, 2009, p.22) This reflects the diversity of projects mentioned above and supports a vision of reportage drawing which does not hide its subjectivities and, as Cramerotti notes ‘employ(s) fiction as a subversive but meaningful and effective agent of reality.’ (Cramerotti, 2009, p.22) As Jill Gibbon notes, ‘drawing requires a different kind of looking’ and for her this enables an alternative vision to the ‘regime’ of surveillance she witnesses at arms fairs. (Gibbon, 2018) Drawing also benefits from the perception of it as an act of one hand and vision, and although able to be manipulated, there is an assumption that such alterations would be done by the artist. W.J.T. Mitchell notes that the artist and his or her images are seen differently from the digital or photographic image. He notes ‘a painter, firstly, is traditionally seen as an artificer, a patient maker, an urbanized craftsman who transmutes formless raw materials into images. We naturally use the language of personal intention – reference, comment, expression, irony, conviction, truthfulness, and deception – to describe this process.’ (Mitchell, 2001, p.56) Mitchell contrasts this with the digital image economy and notes ‘the currency of the great bank of nature has left the gold standard: images are no longer guaranteed as visual truth – or even as signifiers with stable meaning and value.’ (Mitchell, 2001, p.57) Andrew Hoskins notes a similar crisis of meaning and trust occurring in journalism noting ‘the massively increased pervasiveness and accessibility of digital technologies, devices and media – has ushered in a ‘post-scarcity culture’ and charged a wholesale reappraisal of the nature and the value of journalism.’ (Zelizer & Tenenboim, 2014, p.179) In a media environment inundated with photographic and video content,

drawing asserts itself as a medium that despite inherent subjectivities, through its connection to its maker, moves us toward mutual experiences with the world around us and gives us new ways to construct meaning and understanding in the world.

Section 13 – Conclusion

13.1 Conclusion

The graphic construct for the contemporary reportage artist greatly differs in its form and function from the 19th century. Contemporary practitioners of reportage drawing engage in the act to engage with drawing itself and how the challenges of working in-situ progress their own understanding of people and places and the potentialities of their own drawing. The ultimate question behind all contemporary reportage in the face of pervasive digital media is, ‘what does drawing contribute to this crowded image world?’ The individual graphic construct of the reportage artist attests to a complexly layered media but equally, a fundamentally human one. Reportage drawing does not persist in spite of a fluid environment of photographic imagery, it persists because of it. Reportage drawing provides a highly personal mediation of experience which is not only conscious of its limitations, it revels in them and sees drawing as a unique evocation of lived experience and a vehicle for the summation of a range of textures felt, seen and thought.

With the disappearance of commissioning structures in print media primarily, the act is diffuse and practitioners are exploring highly personal and unique applications of reportage, including terrain not usually within reportage practice. The subject of protests and the act as a form of protest itself, has established the contemporary practice as a unique form of witness. While a range of reportage activity such as the Urban Sketchers movement is primarily concerned with the joy of drawing in-situ and is largely detached from political intent, contemporary practitioners who come from fine art or illustration backgrounds, are pursuing reportorial projects which reveal or expose significant events. These events are often part of

important global dialogues such as the work of Jill Gibbon in arms fairs and the many reportage artists who have documented the jungle in Calais. This is also seen in the work of commissioned artist Olivier Kugler, although he relies on photography to furnish his drawings with relevant details. What drawing provides for these artists is a unique kind of witness and participation, navigating the world of their subjects and rendering fluid reality within the limits of their own skill and observation. As noted in this thesis, the aesthetic of reportage drawing is anchored to our understanding of the act as direct recording and because of this, the viewer is invited to participate in the re-creative act of drawing, therefore communing with the experience of the artist in-situ. It is here that reportage drawing finds its currency as a medium. Through the re-creative act and the aesthetic of the sketch, the viewer seeks closure to the unclosed forms and re-performs the gestures and marks, drawing them further into the experience in-situ. Through this multi layered experience, the forms of the drawing adds to their conception of the subject and the artists graphic construct provides a new lens to see the world.

The insights gathered through my own practice provide a deeper understanding of contemporary reportage and how practitioners approach locations and subjects. The elements of surprise, shock and spontaneity pervade the act. What I noted in my own work and through discussion with other artists is that the true subject of reportage drawing was in fact experience. While there was a motivation behind the selection and depiction of a subject, the discussion around the image involved multiple layers of experience of and around that subject, and, assessment of the image for my participants was largely based on how the drawing evoked all of the textures of experience felt in-situ. The discussion of the drawing was not limited to the aesthetic features of the drawing solely. The discussion ranged from the events leading to the selection of the subject, the experience drawing, the struggle to

capture the essence of the observed, and the wider meaning of the drawing, such as the connection to broader themes, for example social injustice or global capitalism. Rawson sees drawing as the summation of a range of feelings and ideas and sees the vocabulary of drawing as refined sense-making of the external world. In this sense, Rawson's larger conception of drawing aligns with the claims of this thesis. He notes:

'The sum of feelings, images, and ideas in which is embedded our entire subjective experience of what makes us living beings has roots that reach into all sorts of corners of our perceptual and emotional life...Fixed and externalised, they (drawings) are there for us to visit them from time to time, to survey them, taste them, savour the projected quality of our own consummated nature.' (Rawson, 1969, p.316)

My own work reflects more than a middle ground between two distinct orientations. The work of Gary Embury and Jill Gibbon reflect two important strands in reportage drawing which are made evident in their own intentions and desires for the work and how that framework relates to the larger historical and contemporary dialogues about vision, truth and the contribution of reportage drawing. My reportage drawing, like Embury and Gibbon, relies solely on observation and memory and unlike some notable contemporaries, does not use photography to help furnish details. Instead, my work relies on observation and memory alone to create the drawings and because of this, they reflect the subjectivities of the act and my own perception of the subject. Distinguishing my work from that of Embury and Gibbon is my reliance on memory to sometimes conjure up images that I have witnessed without direct sight of my subject. While this may seem to be a deviation from the doctrine of reportage drawing it is, as stated previously, still rooted in observation and the trained eye of the reportage artist is able to remember salient details, providing the original act of looking

was sufficiently bountiful. The drawing is then a matching exercise between mind and hand, between remembered and re-enacted. What is evident in my work is that this re-construction of experience and seeing is both vivid and reflective of a merger between outer and inner vision. My work is hyper-personalised because it is assembling a vision, and the prominent features of that vision are inevitably imbued with subjective and internalised understandings about the subject. While this seems to stretch the established tenets of reportage to the breaking point, it is important to note that the resultant drawings are often powerfully evocative of the observed and even recognisable of specific people and places. One recent and notable example was in Mombasa on a research trip. At the end of the day I was drawing near the beach. I was confronted by a desperate trinket seller who made a plea for me to buy a leather wristband. I had no cash on me and had already paid out on a previous day to his colleagues on some things which if not hassled to the point of submission I would not have purchased. His eyes were red and weary and he told me his name was Abdul. He eventually left and I sat on a lounge and drew his face. An older woman walked by and told me she loved the drawing and struck up a long conversation, telling me her whole life story. Later in the week, the same woman rushed up to me and said she had seen the trinket seller of my drawing and that the resemblance was remarkable. She went on about how she loved the drawing and I decided to give it to her.

The distinction between what is directly observed and what is done after the fact and what constitutes reportage drawing or not is a question perhaps more important to art historians than the artist him or herself. Speaking of the Moscow sketchbook of Diego Rivera, Maria Gough notes:

Should it be understood primarily as a work of reportage, or one of memory? Is it an eyewitness record of Rivera's experience on the ground – as his choice of the reporter's notebook might infer – or a memorial to that experience brought into being after the fact by later recourse to the watercolourists box? (Gough, 2013, p. 73)

How and when the artist connects to their own vision is not limited by proximity and it is equally narrow to see proximity as merely physical, especially when artistic methodologies are diverse and visual memories vary, as in the impressive recall of Daumier and Hogarth, two artists who denied drawing direct from observation. Reportage drawing can then be seen, in a more expansive way, as delivering a vision, whether directly observed or from memory, and that vision is mediated by the orientation to the drawing act by the artist. Steve Mumford noted of his reportage drawing in Iraq, 'making a drawing is more about lingering with a place and editing the scene in a wholly subjective way. It's never comprehensive of the visual facts, which are filtered through one's senses, selected, exaggerated or left out over the hour or so that it takes to make a drawing.' (Mumford, 2005, p.21) What is notable about Mumford's work is that it is clearly informed by photographic reference and yet he invokes the subjectivities of the act. It is also worth noting that this justification of methods is important for the artist and relates to the self-regulation of truth noted previously. My own work, by refusing to utilise photographic reference at all, brings the viewer into a confrontation with my own vision which reflects, to a greater degree than Embury and Gibbon, the filter with which I am seeing and documenting my subjects. This is also due to my own methodology which does produce drawings in-situ but also away from the domain of the subjects, unlike Embury and Gibbon. What Mumford's work reflects is the engagement with place through drawing and the intimacy of drawn forms for relating human subjects. However, with the awareness of a reliance on photography, we get a schism between the

artist's vision and the drawing hand which is not apparent in my own work or in the work of Embury and Gibbon. Mumford's work also aligns more to Alan Male's conception of objective drawing noting, 'the drawings should tell the truth succinctly and clearly about a chosen aspect. Good objective drawings of this nature are selective and single minded.'
(Male, 2007, p.40)

Relating to the wider contention of this thesis, reportage drawing in its contemporary practice has a function which is distinctly different from the photograph and that the contribution of the reportage drawing and drawing as a whole is the reflection of the psychic world of the artist. It is notable that two prominent practitioners of reportage drawing (Kugler and Mumford) utilise photographic reference and that a persistent conception of the value of reportage is in its capacity to be comprehensive. My own work challenges this notion and provides instead a comprehensive vision of my own experience as mediated by drawing and a range of intentions. If drawing is to assert itself as a media with distinct and valuable properties for disseminating information and telling human stories, it needs to part with the photograph in methodology and expectation. Hillary Chute notes of the graphic journalism of Joe Sacco:

Sacco's investment in slowing readers down and asking them to grapple with producing meaning is a deliberate technique positioned against the global news media's propensity to offer quickly consumed visual spectacles and against the restless acceleration of information that is characteristic of so many of today's reporting outlets. (Chute, 2016, p.202)

My own reportage drawing has been part of my research in a large research project called Tupumue (Non-communicable lung disease in Kenya: from burden and early life determinants to participatory inter-disciplinary solutions). Beyond working with a team of creatives to deliver sensitisation activities (awareness building), I will also utilise artistic methods to explore lived experience. In a trial run of these methods last May, I did reportage drawing alongside some older children to explore awareness of one's environment. We are working in Mukuru, a vast informal settlement in Nairobi with myriad environmental and social problems. It was a place that for sensitive reasons was difficult to photograph but I drew freely and with large crowds often gathering around. Looking at my own drawings and sharing them with the research group, it proved a powerful record of my experience and the textures on the ground which are often tragic and uplifting in the same moment. The drawings will be included in a film about the project and will be disseminated more widely in a publication at the end of the project to tell the bigger picture of challenges on the ground for residents. The images can be seen on my blog (see appendix). The power of the drawings is that they are constructed by the artist, from some form of observation or experience and through the skill of the artist and sufficient furnishing of details, the viewer submits to that experience and communes with it. It is my contention that this drawing, divorced from photographic imagery in any way, provides the most direct confrontation with artistic methods employed to deliver artistic vision. Aligned with the contention of this thesis, this is less about objective and subjective orientations to the act and more about drawing and the construction of meaning. W.J.T. Mitchell confirms this subtle shift in perception noting:

Every freely made mark that the artist chooses to execute is the realization of an intention, and the result is usually something that has a strongly personal character. Prestige attaches to skilful and accurate work of this kind: not everybody can do it.

But when an artist traces a form with the assistance of a stencil or physiognotrace, or a scene with the aid of a camera obscura, the process has a much more algorithmic character: there is little prestige to be had through accuracy. (Mitchell, 2001, p.29)

During the 19th century, a proliferation of images from print to painting and eventually to the photograph, aligned with a similarly rapid ‘reorganization of knowledge’ that modified the ‘desiring capacities of the human subject.’ (Crary, 1990, p.3) While the original drawing act disappeared in the elaborate preparations of the wood engraving, drawing was ubiquitous and had a claim to representation of the significant events of the time. This, however, reflected a limited vision of and for drawing. It wasn’t until the later part of the of the century that ‘vision became relocated in the subjectivity of the observer’ and drawing (including reportage drawing) was free from the shackles and expectations of objectivity and the narrow function of the news image. (Crary, 1990, p.150) Reportage drawing grew as a personal act with complex graphic constructs, as vision was challenged and moved forward with artistic movements, changing perceptions and challenging conventional understandings of objective truth. The photograph at the end of the 19th century and beginning of the 20th century fell into what Maynard calls ‘artefacts of the procedures for taking them’ as the technology was not sufficiently mobile or fast enough to capture fluid reality and therefore the photograph highlighted its facture. (Maynard, 1997, p.216) For this reason, painting and to a lesser extent drawing, was making great strides in changing the perception of the world. Crary notes of Cézanne for example, ‘Cézanne’s work in the 1890’s involves a sweeping destabilization of what previously had constituted an “image”. His work is one of numerous contemporary conceptualisations of reality as a dynamic aggregate of sensations...For Cézanne...a stable punctual model of perception is no longer effective or useful.’ (Crary, 2001, p.344) What the drawing or painting does to and for vision is further removed from the offering of the

photograph and therefore reportage drawing should be seen less as a competitor and more as a medium which desires something else entirely.

Key to understanding what the contemporary reportage drawing is and how it sees itself, is understanding that it is not one thing and therefore does not function on any singular defined level. The contemporary practice is heterogeneous and reflects a wide range of approaches, aesthetic interests, inclinations, different orientations towards spaces and places, and a range of other concerns which fuse at the point of drawing. Herbert Read neatly sums up the artist's function as 'he transmits or manifests what comes to him from the depths of his psyche, and in the process of transmission a transformation takes place. He does not convey a unique experience – rather he conveys a common experience and gives to it a definition and precision that did not previously exist.' (Read, 1967, p.63) This definition aligns with contemporary reportage drawing in that the rendering of experience is intended to connect to the wider experience of the viewer and render that subject in a new, precise language which subjectifies and specifies that experience. Paul Carter sees what the artist does in a similar way but emphasises the importance of porosity between the material of the work and the conceptual intentions of the artist. He notes 'the elements (material or psychic) can only be combined to form images if they betray a cryptic likeness, or propensity for recombination. Without this *weakness* for absorbing and being absorbed, materials are merely crushed when they are mixed...To make something new is to recall something lost through a concomitant mode of production.' (Carter, 2004, p.183, 184)

The future of the reportage drawing appears to be stable although there are few people commissioning the work and therefore one must explore innovative ways to disseminate their work. What is clear is that drawing remains an important part of visual culture and through

fine art and the commercial arts including animation, there is a desire to make and consume drawing. Berger notes of the way in which drawing is both a part of the world of human perception and an abstraction, adding to our understanding of forms and their meaning. He notes:

‘To draw is to know by hand – to have the proof that Thomas demanded. Out of the artist’s mind through the point of a pencil or pen comes proof that the world is solid, material. But the proof is never familiar. Every great drawing – even if it is of a hand or the back of a torso, forms perceived thousands of times before – is like the map of a newly discovered island. Only it is far easier to read a drawing than a map; in front a drawing it is the five senses that make a surveyor.’ (Berger & Savage, 2008, p.102)

The future of drawing and the future of reportage drawing rely on a total awareness and exploitation of the form and function of drawing and a championing of the subjectivities inherent in the act. The personal, political, and emotional layers are a strength of drawing and bring us closer to the heterogeneity of lived experience and not away from it. The drawing has a life and vitality of its own and the destiny of the image is wrapped up in the successful re-creation of the experience of the artist. In a world of ubiquitous images which are largely unexamined, the slow reading of the drawing presents a unique confrontation with the image itself and, what the image asserts in the crowded arena. Mitchell notes:

‘The picture wants to hold, to arrest, to mummify an image in silence and slow time. Once it has achieved its desire, however, it is driven to move, to speak, to dissolve, to repeat itself. So the picture is the intersection of two “wants”’: drive (repetition,

proliferation, the “plague” of images) and desire (the fixation, reification, mortification of the life-form).’ (Mitchell, 2005, p.72)

Gibbon notes that drawing ‘brings us powerfully into the present; it grounds us.’ (Gibbon, 2018) Through the imperfect forms of the drawing we find the sum of the artist’s vision and more than that, a snapshot of their psychic world at the time of drawing. Reflecting on my own work and that of the participants in this thesis, the power of drawing is that it contains a plethora of subject matters. Drawing itself is always central but so too is its construction, the planned or unplanned arrangement of the tableau speaks to how the artist makes sense of their vision. This also occurs in the rendering of forms in the drawing, the ‘tenor.’ Ultimately, reportage drawing takes us to the edge of vision through the perceptual trace of the drawing. The element of surprise that often comes in the finished work is a testament to how much can be seen when we are truly looking and how much a trained hand can perform that complex trace. The fast act of reportage drawing provides a slow and rewarding read of the image. In contrast to the algorithmic world of online media, the idiosyncrasies of the drawing and the unclosed forms, take us to the moments of its making but also beyond, and do not anticipate nature, but render it new, in a new language that adds to our conception of the world through the vivid lens of individual graphic constructs.

This research presents a way of seeing and understanding drawing that privileges the personal intentions of the artist and unpicks the constellation of concerns which reside in the graphic construct. Future research can benefit from this granular approach to the analysis of drawing as a medium that is further distinguished from other forms of contemporary media. By understanding the internalised strategies to form and invention that reside in drawing, we can understand how the act reflects human perception and is therefore imbued with subjectivities.

The underlying question within this research is: what is the future of the image? Drawn images, in particular, present compelling challenges to comfortable notions about objectivity, perception and sense-making in our world of largely un-examined images.

Section 14 – Appendices

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14.2 Gary Embury – Interview and analysis

Introduction

The reportage drawing of Gary Embury is identified by its immediate, urgent and honest recording that looks and feels as if it has emerged from the moment or moments of its making. For Embury, his own graphic construct is about the merger of drawing and thought as they occur without premeditation and this results in a construct which actively avoids the prettifying of stylistic aims and intentions. Of course, stylistic concerns exist (more below) but they are marginal to the larger aims of the work, which is the mirrored reflection of direct experience in the responsive marks of the drawing.

The experience in-situ is key to Embury, as he sees the sketchbook page as a palimpsest, a record of the shifting activity on the ground. For this interview, Embury was filmed and interviewed at the protest against US president Donald Trump in London on the 13th of July 2018. Watching the artist work, it was clear that his orientation to the place was as a conduit of experience. Susan Owens quotes the mid 20th century artist Peter Lanyon assessing his work as ‘a re-creation of experience in immediacy, a process of being, made now.’ (Owens, 2013, p.174) This aligns with the aims of Embury who seeks graphic immediacy in his work and distinguishes the practice of reportage drawing from other more refined works in both form and function. For Embury, the desire to ‘make good drawing’ is a dangerous one in reportage as it detracts from momentary observation and response and, his assessment of the success or failure of the drawing is in its evocation of his experience and not some artistic valuation. (although there are some overlapping concerns here and a self-awareness regarding the aesthetic approach)

Embury engages in reportage drawing for the connection to the first thoughts of the sketch and what that reveals of his own experience in-situ. For Embury, there is submission to experience in his work and, inevitably, a submission to the whims of his own drawing. David Rosand notes of the moving inclinations of line as ‘the line itself begins to assert a certain will of its own, to challenge the guiding control of the hand, urging its own agenda. Out of that tension there can arise the most creative conflict, as the drawing hand, which may have become complacent in its purpose, is forced to decision.’ He furthers, ‘the options available to the hand may lie anywhere between enforcing representational responsibility upon its own course and yielding to the momentum of line itself.’ (Rosand, 2002, p.12) This conflict and struggle is appealing to Embury who, while actively resisting the inclination towards artistic resolve and maintaining the rawness of the immediate sketch, is very much interested in the resulting qualities of the economic line in his work. Additionally, for Embury, the energy and rhythm of those lines encapsulate experience more than pure representation. What results in the seemingly representational form of reportage drawing is something abstract, the capture of the dynamics of people, architecture and movement in-situ.

Extending the above, Embury’s work can be seen to be related to ideational drawing, particularly as it is often defined. Rosenberg notes ‘it is in investigating the articulation of knowing and un-knowing, in the way they are jointed and through this jointing consequently speak, that one can begin to develop a critical appreciation of ideational drawing.’ (Garner, 2008, p.112) The work of Embury is related to this ‘knowing and un-knowing’ as he avoids the crux of memory drawing and approaches the task with self-imposed fidelity to the whims of thought and action as one in his drawing. What Dewey calls the ‘inertia of habit’ is what Embury is seeking to avoid and find, as Dewey notes of true artistic development and

originality as being ‘the quickened expansion of experience.’ Dewey concludes ‘art departs from what has been understood and ends in wonder.’ (Dewey, 2005, p.281)

Drawn effects

The sketch as an aesthetic property and as a methodology is key to the work of Embury.

Because of the features of the sketch or first thoughts, the ‘open form’ of the sketch reveals, as Rosand notes the ‘character of the hand, the trait of the artist’. (Rosand, 2002, p.21)

Because Embury’s self-declared intention is to draw without artifice, he approaches his reportage drawing like an athlete, limbering up through practice to settle into more confident responsive drawing. The raw forms are vibrant, economical and even chaotic as they are laid on the paper and Embury works quickly and deliberately. Stephen Farthing notes of the topographic drawings of Turner and his direct drawing method that Turner was ‘set on automatic’ and ‘to draw in this way, the recorder must lock their hand into a perfectly calibrated relationship with their eye, so that as the eye works its way across the landscape, the hand and pencil automatically follow, leaving the pencils trace.’ (Garner, 2008, p.146)

The character of Embury’s hand is a melange of continuous line, short abrupt marks and overlapping action. Like the sketch itself, it involves us in its creation and it is participatory. Rosand notes ‘on a fundamental level, it (drawing) involves us, as viewers, in the kinesthetics of the act of drawing: its qualities of direction, velocity, weight, its rhythm, pace, and inflection stand as permanent trace of the movement of the artist’s hand.’ (Rosand, 2002, p.16) Embury noted that he preferred Pierre Bonnard’s concept of ‘first sight’ to first thoughts and relayed that reportage drawing for him was defined by struggle. The struggle to get what he sees down on paper. Embury noted that the reportage artist has to ‘edit on the fly’ and he notes, ‘you must give into that first sight image’. Here he is talking about the honesty

of the image and, again related to his desire to purge the drawing of contrivances, he is consciously forcing himself to submit to first impressions. What this reveals is a desire to both expose the direct aesthetic of the sketch and eliminate the interference of a doubting, commenting or indulgent mind. This can be seen in Embury's contention that 'the minute you think 'is this a pretty drawing' you are screwed'. For Embury, the struggle and labour of working in situ is manifest in his drawing and he is consciously avoiding 'good' drawing for more direct responsive work. Embury has surrendered in his reportage work to the first thought and the unpredictable results, hence the reference to the athlete preparing for the performance. Embury notes 'I don't like not doing a successful drawing but I am not sure what a successful drawing is anymore.'

The struggle for Embury is a critical aspect of his graphic construct. He notes the distinct separation between his more formal academic training and drawing and his reportage work. He identifies that he is actively resisting the concerns and traditional orientation of the draughtsman even saying he is 'schizo', maintaining two separate working methods. For Embury, the aesthetic of the sketch is not cultivated but more a direct result of the activity of looking and drawing. He notes about the avoidance of refinement 'A good drawing can stop you from moving beyond that aesthetic. It can stop you from believing in the fact that it was done in the moment.' Relating this to my own graphic construct, there is a similar awareness of the impression of immediacy in the sketch and equally, the extent to which that can, through over indulgence, take us further away from the moment.

The extent to which the reportage drawing can, through its facture, transport us to the moments of its making is key for Embury and his own assessment of a successful drawing. Embury notes 'yeah, if I look at a drawing and it leaves me cold in terms of looking at the

original event...it might be successful on one level, an aesthetic, academic drawing level but for me, as I've said before, I really love the work of certain artists who some people might say, 'that's not a great drawing it's a nasty drawing.' I quite like nasty drawings but they are more about the moment... I think a drawing that looks like that person was there, has done it on the front line.' Here the drawing is valued for its rawness, for its testament to lived experience as recorded through drawing. Taussig explores this aspect of evocation in drawing and how the drawing is doing something different than capturing 'reality'. He notes, 'the drawings come across as fragments that are suggestive of a world beyond, a world that does not have to be explicitly recorded and is in fact all the more "complete" because it cannot be completed. In pointing away from the real, they capture something invisible and auratic that makes the thing depicted worth depicting.' (Taussig, 2011, p.13) Embury's 'nasty drawings' can be likened to the abbreviated drawing Taussig speaks of here (his own amateur scrawls) and how we, as viewers, seek closure in the drawing but not 'completeness'. The delicate balance that Embury is trying to achieve is to render what he is seeing in the moment through direct means and get out of the way of his own drawing, avoiding the interruptive desire to refine. Hofmann's statement about how the caricature can be a 'drawing that draws itself' is relevant to Embury's work as the drawing has a kind of autonomy, reflecting the 'time based' nature of the act and the unfolding, unedited, unmediated move towards resolution.

The identification of types and the navigation of the in-situ environment is consistently of-the-moment for Embury, as he is assembling his images from 'first sights.' He notes 'my kids in the past when we were on holiday would always play a game where they try and spot my muse before I spot them. It generally tended to be a fairly large male figure.' Embury doesn't see this as interruptive to an honest rendering of what he is seeing and experiencing and rather sees these types as part of a conscious effort to render something interesting in the

seemingly mundane. Embury notes ‘there is always an element of caricature. It’s just getting a balance of the two. A balance between figurative drawing and exaggerating certain qualities. Sometimes that comes from the figure moving. So, some of it is drawn literally from memory.’ We can see here that even when there is an acknowledged departure into caricature, the methodology is consistent and direct observation is central to it. The elements of caricature can be more accurately described in the work of Embury as a form of condensation, an impromptu mark which through necessity (moving subject) or response, departs from or accentuates what was seen. As Embury notes, ‘I have a terrible memory. Yes, I don’t want to draw it from memory. I want to be in it. To be part of the moment. Otherwise you end up being very good at memory drawing but not being about what it was like at the moment.’ As Rosand notes of a Rembrandt sketch ‘rapidly sketched; rapidly felt.’ (Rosand, 2002, p. 233)

Tenor and topic

As previously defined, the terms ‘tenor’ and ‘topic’ are Rawson’s attempt to explore the duality inherent in drawing, that is, the subject and the rendering of the subject in media. For Embury, the ‘tenor’ and ‘topic’ are enmeshed as his subject and his rendering of the subject testify to one encountering the other, in-the-moment. Embury’s drawing and his orientation to his subject are aligned as he is not seeking anything in the drawing outside of direct observation and recording. This kind of unfolding is well illustrated in the following passage while Gary was drawing, ‘at the moment I am just kind of interested in the rhythms within the crowds and then just...I think when you look at a scene even if you’re not drawing it, you are picking out some things that you remember. I am doing that with drawing so it’s not an

accurate view of the scene for me it's just little cues I take. Like I just spotted a CMG sign and it strikes me as a weird sign in the melange. You have lots of signs and Trump puppets being held up (See Fig.9-12 below). And then this guy here in front of me, I like how he has suddenly got up. Right where you have someone literally blocking your way.' Embury, while encountering the live environment is making on the spot judgments about what comes into the drawing and what piques his interest. As Barthes notes 'the creation of the painter or the dramatist lies not in the choice of a subject but in the choice of the pregnant moment, in the choice of the tableau.' (Barthes & Heath, 1977, p.76) Embury is continually drawing and over drawing so that his tableau is a record of overlapping lines and attests to his own 'sense of excitement' and 'sense of the occasion'. In terms of the 'pregnant moment', Embury likes to anchor his drawings to something to contain the 'spaghetti Bolognese of people'. Still, the drawings and their intent (as expressed by Embury) is to snapshot all of the activity seen. He made a reference to the 19th century French photographer Etienne Jules Marey and his multiple exposure images. Embury saw some affinity with that work and his drawings and noted 'it's not about actual figures but it's about the rhythm of the event.' Here Embury acknowledges that his drawings are, due to the layered surface of his paper, cacophonous and, as a result, abstract to some degree. As Ingold notes, 'indeed the apprehension of movement, and its gestural re-enactment, is fundamental to the practice of drawing.' (Ingold, 2016, p.132)



(Fig.9)



(Fig. 10)



(Fig.11)



(Fig.12)

Ultimately, Embury's work reveals the struggle to capture fluid reality and the way in which marks abbreviate a variety of subjects. As Berger notes 'one tends to forget that the visual is always the result of an unrepeatable, momentary encounter. Appearances, at any given moment, are a construction emerging from the debris of everything which has previously appeared.' (Berger & Savage, 2008, p.67) Relating to Embury's work, the subject in flux and the limitations of direct recording crystalize this view of the visual and make his drawing a vivid trace of in-the-moment perception, inevitably relying on past perceptual knowledge and developed strategies towards the rendering of forms.

Experience of drawing, experience of place

The Trump rally on the 13th of July 2018 was held in central London near Oxford Circus and I first met with Gary Embury at the Photographers gallery just around the corner. For Embury, the demonstration was a chance to capture a 'spectacle' and although I know his political beliefs were aligned with the protest, his interest in the event was to 'allow the situation to develop' and 'being forced into a position you are not familiar with'. Referring to a drawing some years back, Embury noted, 'I was drawing here a couple of years ago at Christmas during the mad Christmas rush. It was only afterwards I looked at the drawing, because I caught a little bit of typography and instead of it saying hello kitty it said hell. And that was subliminal, I didn't realise it was happening. The text was on a bus and it was in fact hell.' The 'hell' that emerges from Embury's drawing relates to Tuan's notion of time and place and how over time we develop a deeper understanding of place (see Fig.13 below). He notes:

‘The visual quality of an environment is quickly tallied if one has the artist’s eye. But the “feel” of a place takes longer to acquire. It is made up of experiences, mostly fleeting and undramatic, repeated day after day and over the span of years. It is a unique blend of sights, sounds, and smells, a unique harmony of natural and artificial rhythms such as times of sunrise and sunset, of work and play. The feel of a place is registered in one’s muscles and bones.’ (Tuan, 1977, p.183,184)

Embury’s work, through his direct method, condenses many of these fleeting impressions and comprises a representation of place which can, when successful, evoke an intimate encounter and understanding of place through the punctuations of responsive lines and marks, themselves momentary and susceptible.

Embury noted that he preferred an elevated vantage point from which to draw and survey but on the day, he enjoyed being within the tangle of people. Quoting Jill Gibbon, he said ‘don’t be a camera. The camera takes in everything. It’s not editing anything apart from the crop.’ While Embury states that his drawings are inevitably subjective, his aim is to project honesty and his self-imposed limitations enforce a fidelity to what he has chosen to record. Through this and through Embury’s dogmatic approach, the drawings speak to the energy, chaos and noise of the event in a way that a more deliberative approach may not. What Embury captures is the direct response to stimuli that has the visual equivalence of jazz improvisation. Taylor, speaking of the Impressionists and how their vision was a challenge to the public, notes ‘there is a vast difference between knowing the form of an object from past experience and extended examination and seeing the object in its momentary environment as if never seen before, affected by the particular light and surrounding shapes and colours. The artists, (the Impressionists) fascinated with this immediate perception, tried to push memory aside in order to see everything with a fresh eye. (Taylor, 1957, p.149)

Embury calls his drawings ‘accessible’ and his aim is for them to be read, as they appear, as a direct response to the environment. He also acknowledged that the roughness or ‘nasty’ quality of his drawn record can challenge notions of ‘good’ drawing and therefore create a barrier for reception and reading by the wider public. Gombrich, quoting Roger Fry notes:

‘The message of a work of art is generally immensely complex, summarising as I believe a whole mass of experience hidden in the artist’s subconscious. And this complexity renders it probable that each receiver only picks up a part of the total message...many people possess only very imperfect receiving instruments,

instruments that can only respond to extremely violent emissions of a crude and elementary kind.’ (Gombrich, 1994, p.56)

Embury’s intention to deny comfort, indulgent artistry, and memory drawing, has resulted in a method which, somewhat ironically, makes for a heightened confrontation with his own aesthetic. His professed desire to purge all prettiness has resulted in a graphic language that presents a greater challenge (albeit a rewarding one) for the viewer and a more abstracted sense of his subjects. Embury acknowledges the positive qualities of his on-the-spot drawings but regularly alludes to the need for greater context and a sense that perhaps the drawing is not enough. In the ‘thoughts from the chair’ section in the Falmouth University publication *Witness* which compiled selected writing from a forum on reportage drawing, Embury noted, ‘however, a purely visual descriptive approach to drawn reportage may not be enough to expose underlying issues inherent in subjects or locations...drawn reportage, documentary illustration, reportorial drawing or visual journalism all describe the practice of ‘artist as reporter’, author, or subject as storyteller and doesn’t just rely on direct ‘on the spot’ observational drawing.’ (Embury, 2014, p.15) Embury furthered this in my interview saying ‘in the future, I am really more interested in researching an event or going with a writer or journalist and producing projects which are maybe multidisciplinary that involve drawing but they really inform people to what the issues are. I think otherwise they are too impenetrable maybe. I think they need context.’ Embury’s use of the term impenetrable may reveal his awareness of the difficulties among some in the reading of his images and the necessary participation required to decode or unfurl the immediacy of his approach. Embury clearly feels a need to further contextualise his work but this is possibly less about the work itself and more about his aims to move towards more journalistic work.

Summary

Embury's graphic construct is the result of his refined methodology which renders his subject(s) through the most direct graphic means. Robert Weaver who taught at the School of Visual Arts in New York City, was a prominent reportage artist and proponent of observation in his artwork and teaching. Former student and now professor of illustration at Kutztown University in Pennsylvania, Kevin McCloskey, remembered Weaver saying 'The artist is the uninvited guest. The kid without a penny and his nose pressed to the glass of the bakery window. Isn't he the only one that really knows the significance of what's inside? Don't you see? You've got to put yourself where you don't belong to have any hope of making art.' ("Illustrationclass", 2017) This directly reflects Embury's own contention that 'it is easy to draw things that are in your comfort zone. I want to fight that. Otherwise you end with all of your drawings the same.' He also notes 'For me, it's an activity for which, like any physical activity, the memory of it comes through having suffered. I quite like the idea of, well, not suffering but the fight and the struggle.' Embury's graphic construct is therefore the expressed desire to seek something new, both graphically and experientially, in a chosen environment and challenge vision and academic training to render something new, honest and evocative.

14.3 Jill Gibbon – Interview and analysis

Introduction

Jill Gibbon's reportage drawing is defined by her belief that the act is a vehicle for a unique kind of political activism. Drawing in events that are largely unknown to the general public such as arms fairs and, more widely publicised events such as political party conferences, she aims to document, through the act of drawing, the small human dramas which are unique to such events and become emblematic of troubling values within wider corporate and political structures.

Gibbon's work is marked by both an urgency which is evident in her quick, abbreviated drawing, done surreptitiously, and the contextual knowledge that these drawings are done in, for example, an arms fair in Paris. What might otherwise be perceived as a group of ordinary business men and women takes on greater meaning and their actions, both subtle and overt, are scrutinised more finely. As Causey notes about the difference between looking and seeing:

'I have come to the understanding that in *looking*, our vision floats across the visual terrain without directed engagement, while *seeing* interpretively illuminates the visible, in many ways bringing it to being...when that active engagement is made manifest by the hand's creation of permanent marks such as drawn lines that document what the eyes are perceiving, the seeing will be more discerning and more attentive to detail. That's because the marks made with the hand become the actual evidence of visual perception, proof that there is some concurrence between

perception and representation.’ (Causey, 2017, p. 13)

For Gibbon, this close trace of perception which is evident in her searching and responsive line draws us close to these intimate moments of human interaction and isolates our focus, aligning our attention with hers.

The graphic construct of Gibbon is defined by the telescoping of aims in her drawing with her aesthetic inclinations, methodology and conceptual orientation focusing on the singular goal of exposing, through observation of real people, the darkly symbolic realities of players in the shadowy corners of global capitalism. Like the vast majority of reportage practitioners, her vision is validated by our understanding that these people were directly observed and that the drawings, irrespective of stylistic intent or flourishes, are brought to the viewer as the document of a witness and, in the case of Gibbon’s work, are a rare glimpse into a largely unseen world. For Gibbon, our understanding of place is almost entirely void of clues other than the odd missile or gun and instead draws us into human interactions that, with the dual knowledge of their surreptitious capture and location, we formulate a new and distinct vision of these private and secretive events. With Gibbon’s work in particular, that vision is highly personal and draws the viewer’s attention to gestures and drama’s which the artist feels are worthy of our scrutiny. Gibbon seeks to explore in her work not only the decadent nature of corporate capitalism but how we are complicit as people and nation states in tacitly condoning such actions. As Gibbon notes about her wider aims ‘How do you make *it* visible and in what locations is the weirdness of capitalism visible.’ (my own emphasis)

Drawn effects

Gibbon's drawing is economical and direct. It is not only directly related to the sketch in form, it utilises the conceit of the sketch to emphasize the urgency of its creation. Gibbon's line can be seen as a trace of her perception and she notes the frantic hurry to get the drawing down, to capture the moment. She speaks of working in the 'here and now' and notes that there are awkward moments in the drawings which attest to this, identifying, for example, the long forearm of the woman in Fig.21. She does not see these inaccuracies as distracting and rather folds them into a wider understanding of her methodology and notes, 'there is a wildness which extends from that desperation to get it down.' She notes about her initial thoughts when looking at a drawing, 'first is the urgency of 'oh my god I've got to get that'. And almost a feeling of urgent panic. And, how the hell am I going to do justice to this. So, that's very often the feeling I have. The feeling of urgency. The feeling of anger. The drawings are very often driven by anger. Something like 'you creep.'

For Gibbon, the formal qualities of the drawing reinforce her impression of the subjects. The visceral line which has an immediate, bold and charged contour, reflects with urgency her own moral shock at the subjects depicted. As Berger notes of the ultimate aim of drawing practice, to 'draw in order to discover' and 'to find effect and cause.' (Berger & Savage, 2008, p.102) For Gibbon, like many reportage artists, the speed and responsiveness of the sketch merge with conceptual and aesthetic aims and the artist is fusing both observed and rendered reality, presenting a wholly personal and subjective vision to the viewer. Although this process may seem to be a contrivance, by virtue of the demands of the act and the artist's own limitations to draw from the observed, what is rendered is within artistic perception and indulgences that exist are extensions from that vision. As Causey notes 'your act of drawing,

when done seriously and with focus, is evidence that you saw, and manifested it in *your* form: it is simultaneously a souvenir of your experience, a primary document, and interpretive remembrance, a concocted mnemonic.’ (Causey, 2017, p.67) As Gombrich notes ‘if all seeing is interpreting, all modes of interpretation could be argued to be equally valid.’ (Gombrich, 1972, p.298)

The following passage from an interview with Jill Gibbon about her most recent trip to Eurosatory arms fair in Paris highlights clearly how the drawings, through their immediacy and capture, draw attention to specific observations that the artist learns from and begins to organise in a taxonomy of gestures.

This insignificant businessman is able to take on some of that seeing power of the military industrial complex (see Fig.14). But as you were saying, do I re-see or learn about places from the drawings? I think that one gains insight about the importance of gesture and respectability, I got that through the drawing... What I have begun to see is two sets of gestures; the required ones, the corporate ones, the ones that the reps are meant to have and then the ways that those are disrupted. There is always something that rebels in the body. So, like this bloke he is looking rather tense. He does not look like he is really enjoying his job at all (see Fig.15).



(Fig.14)



(Fig.15)

In Gibbons work, we see a conflation of the two prominent uses of the word gesture in drawing; the guiding line of the drawing often brusquely dashed in at the beginning and highly responsive and, human gesture which is a key part of how the drawing communicates in figurative work. Gibbon cites Brecht as an inspiration for her approach to isolating gestures. Benjamin notes about gesture in Brecht's work 'this strict, frame-like, enclosed nature of each moment of an attitude which, after all, is a whole in a state of living flux, is one of the basic dialectical characteristics of the gesture.' (Benjamin, 1998, p.3) This extraction of gesture from 'living flux' is critical to Gibbon and allows the viewer to consider its meaning in isolation. In a further alignment with Brecht, Gibbon's intention for her captured gestures is to provoke questions from viewers about the wider significance of the acts as a metaphor for capitalist mechanisms more broadly. Benjamin notes 'the gesture demonstrates the social significance and applicability of dialectics. It tests relations on men. The production difficulties which the producer meets while rehearsing the play cannot – even if they originate in the search for "effect" – be separated any longer from concrete insights into the life of society.' (Benjamin, 1998, p.24, 25)

Gibbon's working methodology reflects the similar aims and sentiment of one of her artistic heroes George Grosz. Grosz noted of his own practice 'I made careful drawing, but I had no love of the people, either inside or out. I was arrogant enough to consider myself as a natural scientist, not as a painter or satirist. I thought about right and wrong but my conclusions were always unfavourable to all men equally.' (Lambourne, 1983, p.40) In the immediacy of the sketch, which also formed the basis for Grosz's more refined work, Gibbon discovers the gestures and the nuances of gesture through the challenge of depiction and begins to classify them as behaviours which furnish our conception of place.

Gibbon notes:

One of the things I am increasingly interested in is how physical and visceral drawing is. That you are seeing but with your hands. Your hand understands what the body does more than eye. So, it is a hand understanding of the gesture a camera could never give. It is a delicate and complex thing. There is something really magical about a drawing when it is your hand drawing it and not your mind. And you are discovering through doing it and you can see it in a drawing when that has happened. When it is not the head it is the hand that has seen it. And it is very compelling when you see it. It is felt and seen.

The above neatly sums up how Gibbon, like many contemporary reportage artists, submit to the moment of making the drawing and how the formation of the drawing reflects the selection from a crowded field of stimuli and the scramble to get that down. The mind is seen to be an interruptive presence in the submission to the senses, particularly sight and specifically, as Causey notes above, *seeing* rather than merely *looking*. Maynard identifies a type of critical seeing and depiction in caricature and notes that caricature's effects as 'secondary forms' are critical to the full appraisal of the content of the drawing. He notes:

'Caricature, when effective, combines immediate recognisability of the subject and an independently strong sense of wilful marks, lines, and facture...it does seem that typically, in such drawings, all levels – drawn marks, picture primitives such as lines and enclosures, shapes and so forth – are usually not only salient but saliently at work.' He then notes 'often there is a special emphasis on facture, part of the effect being that we seem to see the visage taking form, *being* drawn.' (Maynard, 2005, p.197, 198)

Reflecting what Gibbon has noted about looking at her own drawings and how observation in reportage reflects a different kind of intelligence of seeing, Ruskin notes, ‘how much of all that is round us, in men’s actions or spirits, which we at first think we understand, a closer and more loving watchfulness would show to be full of mystery, never to be either fathomed or withdrawn.’ (Ruskin, 1971, p.120)

Tenor and Topic

As noted previously, the terms ‘tenor’ and ‘topic’ are Rawson’s attempt to explore the duality inherent in drawing, that is, the subject and the rendering of the subject in media. As indicated above, the ‘tenor’ and ‘topic’ for Gibbon’s work are, like Embury, unified in the act of drawing. What distinguishes Gibbon from Embury however is a stated desire to comment upon what she is seeing through the work and present the drawings as an act of political activism.

To understand Gibbon’s ‘tenor’ and ‘topic’ respectively it is important to understand her methodology and the way in which her infiltration of events such as arms fairs is a significant part of the content and activism of the work. For the interview for this thesis, Gibbon talked about a recent trip to Paris for the Eurosatory arms fair. Gibbon has attended many similar events in the past and has done numerous drawings, exhibiting many of them, even being featured twice by the Guardian newspaper. These are often fraught experiences dealing with overwhelmingly vast exhibition centres, multi-sensory distractions in the form of large screens, explosions, excessive alcohol consumption and the constant threat of detection. For the entirety of the events, Gibbon is dressed like a business woman and is imbedded with

salesmen and women, dealers, prospective buyers from around the world and people staffing the event including scantily clad women displaying instruments of war. Gibbon is exploring in these environments the small moments when, as she notes, she can ‘strip back that respectable veneer of capitalism’ and even ‘crack that veneer.’ In the following passage, it is evident in the selection of subject how she isolates gestures through composition to draw our attention to a distinctly sleazy aspect of the arms fair. She notes:

I love this drawing of the legs. This is something that I have learned to do quite recently. The shoe is like a corset (see Fig.16). I’ve started doing this (severe cropping) because I am absolutely limited to tiny sketchbooks. Actually, they are largely informed by graphic novels. You can just get a detail. I think when I started I was always trying to get the whole scene in and to be honest, it was one of those aha moments I had talking to a student when I was looking at a student’s reportage. ‘When you look at this drawing everything is over there. Why don’t you start changing the point of view?’ I went home and saw the same thing in my own work.



(Fig.16)

Gibbon's graphic construct is shaped by her drawing and isolation of seemingly ordinary people and objects which acquire metaphoric intent in the context of their location. The tenor or the treatment of the drawing plays a significant role in shaping the implications of the image. The artist is both limited and liberated by their own representational language and Gibbon plays on this, exposing the construction of her images in the rawness of the sketch and emphasising, at once, the circumstances of production and the nature of her subjects. The deformations allowed in the sketch allude to the deviant nature of her observed subjects. For Gibbon, tenor and topic are synchronous and as Rawson notes, 'the graphic types the visual imagination evolves will always seek in our experience of the outer world for tenors upon which to project themselves.' He then notes 'we will see in nature the images the artist has prepared us to see.' (Rawson, 1969, 248)

In the passage below, Gibbon notes of the unique properties of drawing and how its operative functions are distinctly compelling in the environment of an arms fair and how the small dramas and gestures become the subject. She notes:

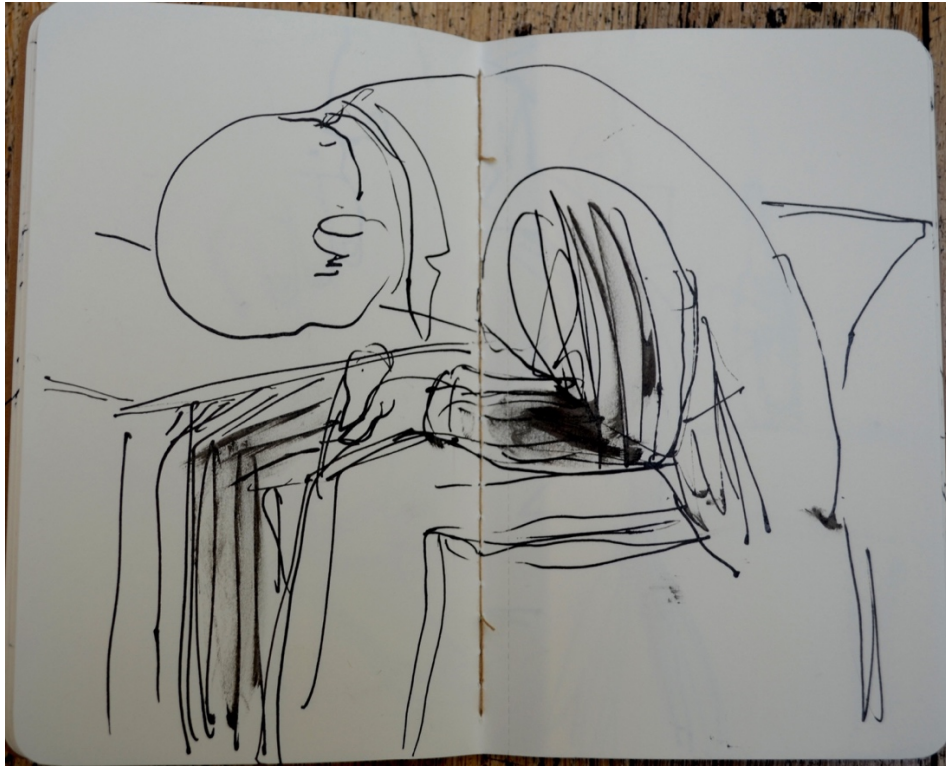
I mentioned earlier about Brecht being influential. Brecht talks about the gesture and Brechtian theatre is quite strange. Brecht will freeze gestures that he feels are particularly redolent in a social situation. Walter Benjamin talks about this, noting that he quotes gestures. And in so doing, in drawing attention to them, you stop their flow. Interrupt them. And so you interrupt their ideological function. You are becoming aware of what's going on. That's what I am trying to do. I am trying to show, like I was saying at the beginning with sales gestures and handshakes, or being poured a drink or the light conversation, the pinstripes...I am using drawings to quote the gestures that give an arms fair the aura of respectability. With the hope that by quoting them, you see how weird they are. I am also looking at all the many moments that the polite veneer is cracked by the vomiting, by the hand on the leg, by a manipulative hug, a snarl, despair, exhaustion. I am very deliberately looking for all of the cracks...A lot of it is outside of language...A lot of it is about bodily communication (see Fig.18-20).



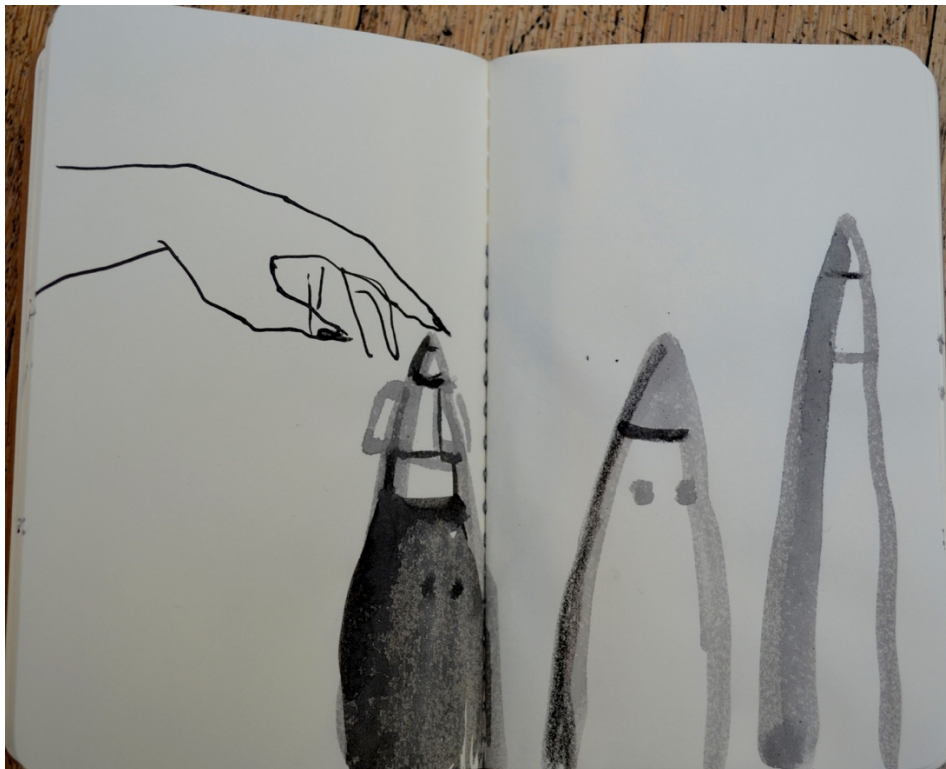
(Fig.17)



(Fig.18)



(Fig.19)



(Fig.20)

The above identifies a critical aspect of Gibbon's graphic construct which is, namely, the isolation and depiction of the vernacular of human interaction in an arms fair for example. In her drawing, she acknowledges the influence of artists like George Grosz and Otto Dix along with drawing conventions and motifs which she intentionally employs to give prominence or amplify what she has observed. What Gibbon witnesses in these arms fairs and attempts to capture in her isolated moments is closely related to Edwards and Graulund's point about the dualities that exist in the push and pull of grotesque things. They note 'the grotesque is disturbing because it incites seemingly incompatible emotions through its representations of abjection and possibility, limitations and becomings, compassion and rejection, attraction and repulsion.' (Edwards & Graulund, 2013, p. 78) Gibbon notes herself that the Eurosatory could be depicted very differently as the glitz and glamour of the event is seductive and the party-like atmosphere could convince one that all is ok. For Gibbon, her identification and isolation of these small but poignant human interactions and dramas enable us to see something unexpected.

It is also important to relate, as above, the observed gesture and the drawing gesture. Ingold notes 'in the lines left upon its surface the handwritten page bears witness to gestures that, in their qualities of attentiveness and feeling, embody an intentionality intrinsic to the movement of their production.' (Ingold, 2016, p.147) In gesture drawing there is a correlative response to the gestures that are being depicted. Like the way in which Gibbon dresses up and infiltrates arms fairs, the drawing itself is a mirrored performance of what is observed. Citing a Tiepolo drawing, Rosand coins the term 'graphic momentum' defining it as 'the creating exploration of the draftsman's pen in dialectic motion, responding to the challenge of its own initial idea.' (Rosand, 2002, p.311) This momentum can be seen as the propulsive force of the drawing but also the way in which the drawing, particularly in reportage drawing,

is working towards completion in a changing environment, often relying on tentative impressions or memory. Ultimately, what Gibbon is seeking to capture in her graphic construct and the ultimate destination of her tenor, the topic, is to depict these gestures and bodies and for them to highlight the observed and show the bizarre pageantry of corporate and political events. Taussig identifies in drawing an important aspect of the work of Gibbon, mainly the dialogue between her, her human subjects and the medium of drawing. He notes, 'what is important to me is what happens in the act of drawing or in the act of looking at a drawing and how that relates to thinking and acting in the world, for if drawing is corporeal, it must be the mediator par excellence between body and image, and looking at drawing must have some of this as well.' (Taussig, 2011, p.80)

The passage below explores a specific drawing which for Gibbon encapsulated several important and worrying aspects of the arms fair. Here we can see the union of 'tenor' and 'topic' in the form and formation of drawing and her explicit intent to capture this sleazy encounter.

This was in a café in Eurosatory. What is motivating the drawing is the challenge of finding little moments that sum up a bigger issue. The bigger issue here being corporate capitalism... So here, I was sat in a café in an arms fair in Eurosatory and at this point it was quite late in the afternoon. I was feeling really exhausted. This bloke I reckon has had a few drinks and was actually starting to feel a bit casual and relaxed. I think he is sat with one of his sales staff. They employ hostesses to stand on the stalls. And he is touching her leg (see Fig.21). So, I just went for it. So, it is a really scribbled drawing. Because what it's got and what I am aiming to get here is the suit, which sums up the corporate element of capitalism... The hostess, the young

woman...that is all about the way that capitalism is sexualised...So, for me, the heels and the short skirt sum up that sexualisation that's there to sell things. To make killing seem acceptable. Desirable. Seductive. It also sums up the seduction of an arms fair. The seduction of capitalism...But then the hand, right in the centre of the page is about exploitation. There is absolutely no respect here...He kept going for her...I deliberately cropped it...I have been playing with it to get a sense of the violence. Well, both to zone in on something but also to get a sense of the dehumanising aspect.



(Fig.21)

This drawing reflects the summation of multiple aims and the violent cropping accentuates the disturbing and audacious abuse of power that was witnessed. Gibbon notes that the compositional strategy to crop as brutally as this, lopping of heads, is in part a result of a

small sketchbook and thus limited room for larger tableaus. Gibbon is constantly pointing to the aim of the work and its political content, the telescoping of her intentions toward political comment and activism reflected in the same narrowed focus on these specific episodes. In terms of drawing, Gibbon displays here, like in her other drawings, a trace-like contour that is bold in some areas and tentative in others, detailing the narrative of its production. She is also identifying here the rituals and types that exist in the arms fair and these are rendered in the drawing as a kind of closed set of symbols, calling upon our own understanding of the presented types. Rawson notes, 'they (visual types) identify his topic for him and provide a vehicle for his structure and invention...but if he is a major master, he will develop substantial modifications of his types and perhaps add substantial type-ideas of his own from his observation and synthesis of forms and meanings.' (Rawson, 1969, p.254)

What Gibbon is ultimately doing in the merger of her tenor and topic is to reveal the grotesque in the seemingly banal. Edwards and Graulund note, 'the grotesque is often intended to disrupt the norm of a particular context, and the 'frame' against which the 'form' of grotesque takes on its bodily manifestation then becomes shapeless.' (Edwards & Graulund, 2013, p. 136) In Gibbon's work the 'norm' is the normalisation of greed and the acceptability of buying, selling, manufacturing and presenting instruments of war like any other product in a capitalist economy. The 'norm' is also in the small-scale performances in a sales convention and the power and consequence that has when the focus of the sale is deadly weaponry. The figures are not always vulgar but the drawings aim to make these small interactions metaphoric and grotesque with the contextual knowledge of their setting. As W.J.T. Mitchell notes:

‘In this New World Order, freedom means the freedom of commodities (but not of human bodies) to circulate freely across borders, and democracy means an infinite proliferation of consumer choices accompanied by an increasingly narrow range of political choices. Before we celebrate the demise of imperialism, then, we had better reflect on the disembodied utopia of the World Wide Web, we had better ask ourselves what things we will have to leave behind, and what the consequences will be for the real bodies and physical objects that remain.’ (Mitchell, 2005, p.150)

Experience of drawing, experience of place

It is impossible to understand the power and implications of Gibbon’s drawing without an understanding of the locations in which she draws. Presenting her work as a form of activism, we see the artist and her covert drawing as a performance, blending into the event disguised as a representative of her employer and using this access to bring to the viewer a largely unseen world. Although she has drawn in arms fairs for several years, she notes that there are always surprises and obvious fractures between the banality of a sales convention and the devastating reality of the goods on offer, imbuing even the smallest gestures with metaphoric subtext. She notes:

What I have really begun to hone down on in the last couple of years, is, given what capitalism does, globalised capitalism...So, what I am focusing on more and more are venues where there are all of those tropes of respectability. It is a continual challenge to find these places but to an extent you can see it when people are coming home from work. If I was to identify an emerging interest, it would be that. The phrase I have been giving it is corporate work, corporate life. And I am interested both in the motifs

and, particularly, a word I got from George Brecht, gesture. I think the gestures have real power in relation to the question how is capitalism made respectable. It is, I think, through gestures and rituals of respectability (see Fig.22).



(Fig.22)

For Gibbon, her drawings are not rendering place from space but rather start off with a place which is the container, the set, setting and critical backdrop which is necessary for the total understanding of the images. Massey explores the notion of globalisation, a term she feels has replaced capitalism in name only, and the way in which it has its own conception of space and spaces which it uses for its own advantage. She notes, ‘the imagination of globalisation in terms of unbounded free space, that powerful rhetoric of neoliberalism

around 'free trade', just as was modernity's view of space, is a pivotal element in an overweening political discourse...it has its institutions and its professionals. It is normative; and it has effects.' (Massey, 2005, p.83) Gibbon's work exploits the impression that globalism, capitalism and our political structures are generally beneficent and finds in this hidden part of capitalistic enterprise a dark banality, a moral failure. Through drawing, Gibbon is able to process these spaces and capture the darkly banal rituals of the sales floor. She notes of her strategies in-situ and the comfort she finds in drawing:

A year or so ago in 2017 I went to Ideks which is an arms fair in Abu Dhabi and I was absolutely terrified of being caught because...to be caught in Abu Dhabi would not be good at all really...and I felt like I was drowning in the place...It is almost like I felt like I was drowning in aggressive technology if that makes sense. So eventually what I did because I felt I wasn't surviving in this place was I found a café and a place like this and I thought, okay, now I am totally safe a tiny book on my lap and I did some rapid drawing and I felt fine and that was such an example to me of how central drawing is to me navigating situations where actually I feel very unsafe. It gives me a way of looking back at this intensely powerful military gaze. It's the slightest tool a pen and paper and yet it's so powerful I think in how it can ground you. It was an aha moment in how much militarised capitalism how much contemporary politics how much the military industrial complex is based on looking. Really violent, phenomenally powerful, surveillance gaze. And that drawing totally subverts it...There is almost like a 'fuck you' in it. You've got all that kit but I can look at you just with this...What is it that drawing enables you to see? That you can't simply with the eye.

The above confirms Gibbon's interest in drawing as a humble but powerful mediator of experience. She notes in her recent book 'so why draw when you can take high quality images, instantly and discreetly, for immediate dissemination?' She furthers 'drawing is a curious process, less accurate than photography, more ambiguous than writing, less substantial than painting. It hovers between seeing and feeling, experience and imagination, movement and image.' (Gibbon, 2018)

Gibbon's methodology guarantees a responsive trace of her perception and she captures, with urgency, unfolding action which is revelatory even for her. As noted above, the comfort that Gibbon experiences through drawing is part of a process of finding meaning and making sense of what she is seeing. Causey notes 'the point of drawing to see is precisely *not* to settle for preconceptions but to allow delineation to act as the window into a lived reality.' (Causey, 2017, p. 54) Gibbon confirms this noting 'we begin with a blank page, mapping our relationship with our surroundings. The process of drawing brings us powerfully into the present; it grounds us.' (Gibbon, 2018) The sense of the present and presence itself are important aspects of Gibbon's work and although character types are identified and reflect a 'schematic restatement', containing elements of caricature, they emerge from the moments of their making and the feelings that charge them. (Nisbet & Lauer, 1993) Gibbon is not rendering objective reality but her claim as a witness and all that implies situates the drawings in the places they are made and are, as Gibbon notes, 'messages from this hidden witness.' (Gibbon, 2018)

Summary

At the core of Gibbon's reportage drawing is the stark contrast between the activity of drawing and the machinery of capitalism. Her subjects are engaged in a dark commerce with lethal consequences and in the drawing, we see how this trade is packaged like any other product and sold using the same crass and seemingly inappropriate tactics. Exploiting the properties of the sketch and isolating gestures and interactions, the viewer is invited to see and feel what Gibbon sees and feels and this closeness to her vision accentuates the illicitness of her activity. Gibbon reflects on the power dynamics between the humble drawing and the seeing machinery of war. Read clearly delineates the two opposing forces and their properties as 'an empire is by definition a power-concept; art is born in intimacy' (Read, 1967, p. 27) Although seemingly contradictory considering the subject of Gibbon's drawing, the work is deeply intimate and a pervasive sadness and psychic trauma marks many of the faces. For Gibbon, capitalism is the invisible enemy in her drawings and the subjects are playing out its disastrous game. She notes 'drawing while feeling nauseous, I realise I am not alone; there is often a disjuncture between arms traders' neat dress, and the uneasy figures within. Their hunched shoulders, tense movements, contorted expressions.' She continues, 'a rep collapses into a chair, a sales assistant recoils from her client, a contractor snarls at a rival.' (Gibbon, 2018) In witnessing the bizarre rituals of the arms trade and building this taxonomy of small acts in drawing, Gibbon's most devastating claim is that this troubling trade is in fact a deeply human one with wider implications for the state of capitalism and the normalisation of such commerce. Referencing Celine's novel *Journey to the End of the Night*, Edwards and Graulund note about Celine's vision of capitalism 'the contemporary body politic is better represented by 'contagion', by the oozing pus, dripping blood and the festering blobs of meat that have been infected by the fluid and grotesque power of the global financial system of a

deterritorialized Empire.’ (Edwards & Graulund, 2013, p. 139) While Gibbon’s drawing does not present a coherent metaphor for capitalism per se, her work subverts both the grotesque and capitalistic enterprise by revealing its banality, and only when we acknowledge the context and implications associated with it do we understand our own complicity in it.

14.4 Practice

Hamburg drawings and commentary (Document can be downloaded at: <https://spaces.hightail.com/space/DP07jRxBbj>)

Hamburg Trip – Reflections

A massive head cold defined the beginning of this trip. In the airport, I suffered but was determined to make this trip a success and do some good drawing. I decided to get myself warmed up. I drew steadily in the airport. In a small sketchbook, I recorded tired passengers reading, drinking coffee and generally staring out into space. It is a good place to draw but since my true subject was awaiting me, I didn't see these drawings as much more than practice. I do feel that they loosened up my hand and sharpened my thinking. In an airport it is easier to find perches. You can draw from above looking down at a concourse or pick a distanced seat and draw passers-by. Overall, I find these environments tedious and I can see why people have a beer to make it more tolerable.

On the plane, I slept mostly, feeling even worse and congested. The ringing in my ears from the altitude was worse with a head cold and the pressure on descent was painful. When we neared Hamburg, I looked down through the few clouds and saw the fairy tale pitched rooves of the large detached homes. Germany holds a unique fascination for me. I distinctly remember my first trip to Munich when I was a student and a serious fan of the work of George Grosz. Grosz distilled much of the German spirit and character in his work and confirmed my belief in drawing as a record of complex textures and character. I also thought of the German people as shadow dwellers. Under the darkness of their own violent history but also brave in confronting that history by applying the same rigour and exactitude in their engineering to confronting and learning from the past. I saw this myself in the museum at Dachau and the Topography of Terror museum in Berlin on the site of the former SS and Stazi headquarters. Both raw and unvarnished historical records were on display with appropriate context. The terror was real and it was a warning to the German people of successive generations and the world. These, I believe, are some of the most important sites in the world.

This very difficult history inevitable frames a view of Germany today but aspects of that shadow can be seen in the pre-war work of Grosz. The atmosphere of pre-Nazi Germany is captured well in Grosz's work and reveals that drawings can capture more than the specificities of people and places, they can capture, what Ruskin noted, where things are going. Where the photograph is historical, the drawing can balance itself between the historical, contextual moment, the universal and thematic and, the future, as an implicit forecast of what is to come.

Feeling dog tired and distracted by my cold, when we landed I was suddenly charged with the excitement of the new. This is the reason I wanted to do these drawings here. New places offer not just new subject matter, they offer a way to frame the entirety of the work in a single quest. My quest here was to draw the very German (and very cheesy) Schlagermove festival which was taking place on the Saturday (I arrived on the Friday). I knew little about Schlagermove and was encouraged by a Hamburg based friend that this would provide great material for drawing. In short, it is an enormous street festival in celebration of Schlager music which is a distinctly German genre of music that was popular in the 70's and 80's. It can be described as a combination of extended samples of existing music of the era with synthetic German polka laid over it with the addition of a few easily chanted chorus's. It is god awful but more of that later.



I arrived at my friend's place off of Osterstrasse, a very nice northern part of the city with plentiful cafés and it seemed to be a destination for affluent young families. After chatting with my friend for some time I headed out to do a bit of drawing before a dinner party in my honour. I am always anxious about the first drawing. It sets the energy for all other drawings and because my methodology leaves little room for 'bad' drawing, the first drawing is an important hinge. What I mean about 'bad' drawing is that my method is one of confident assemblage and I choose subjects that I know, from the outset, that I can capture. It is a bold confidence which does not always work but the focus and enthusiasm that travel can provide often results in such 'good' drawing.



It was a sunny day and the street was being re-paved so many machines and construction material blocked many potential areas to sit. Those benches which were not disrupted or cordoned off were occupied by people enjoying the sunshine. One such pair I passed on my way down Osterstrasse and I was struck by their gestures. They were an older couple of women with deeply lined and tanned faces. The tan faces were to be a distinguishing feature of the Germans. Many had deep luxurious tans which implied, in varying tonalities, access to sunny locales for holidays or outside work. I noted the two old ladies and dashed around a corner to draw them. I had held their image in my head and my drawing of them was a struggle to match my impressions of them. This often results in multiple erasers. I changed the tilt of the woman on the right as this was the defining aspect of her pose, a kind of resting on her hand, supported by her tucked in elbow. There is a sense of the sunshine here in the lightness of the dress and the somewhat hot, bewildered expression, particularly on the woman on the right. The light, indicative marks here describe the whiteness of the woman's hair on the left and overall, the drawing is true to my vision and captures this moment of repose.



The struggle of the previous drawing to recall those older ladies made me think about focusing my subsequent drawings on more direct observation. This was also the result of my head cold which had impaired my thinking and crucially, my usually reliable recall. The next drawing was inspired by the large letters of Karstadt, a big German department store. This was drawn on top of an electric meter and an Amnesty International volunteer quickly came over to see what I was doing. We had a nice talk about drawing and she said that she did her A levels in art and enjoyed it very much. This was the first of many talks I had while drawing. Interestingly, in the UK no one ever talks to me while I am drawing. This seems completely in character with the English nature and the desire to proceed through life with comportsment and engaging only with those who have been validated in some manner. The typography was pleasing to draw and I found, to my surprise that I could capture the letterforms convincingly. I rarely if ever engage with my environments in this way and thought this had great potential in rooting my subjects to specific places. The woman on the left had crossed the street earlier and was coming towards me. She seemed like she might have some mental health issues with the small intense eyes looking wildly, her shaggy hair and the layered clothing, a sign of neglect or at least care. Behind her the bikes lined up outside the shop. There were many bicycles in Hamburg. Contrary to most cities, bicyclists rode on the wide pavements. This too me seemed sensible and certainly safer. Especially as German motorists, like the French, were impatient and prone to speeding and road rage (witnessed several incidents of this). Besides the Karstadt store, bikes and other incidental details, the other figures were assembled from people I had seen. Subjects often select themselves and typically by some strong physical trait. However, they also have an aspect of the place they were drawn. This is a busy area with a large supermarket on the opposite corner of the street and a café and bank directly opposite that. Many people are bustling around this area and I wanted to capture an aspect of the fluid street. I like to create an immersive space in my drawings with figures entering the space of the viewer. That certainly happens here and enables the sense of a busy street. Because I drew the sign first, placing the people in the foreground was a necessity and this gives a sense they are both close and across the street from the store. I considered drawing a car to indicate the street but decided against it. Strong horizontal and strong diagonals between the figures creates a dynamic composition. These considerations are very quick and indicate a reliance on compositional instinct which, like the drawing itself, has been sharpened by practice. Lastly, what strikes me in this drawing is how economic the lines can be when describing faces. The lowest woman with the bags under her eyes on the right is described with limited lines. The lines chosen to describe her however are key to unlocking her character. The deep bags under the eyes, the lines of forehead and deep line along the jowls indicates, with minimal lines, the soft, white, dough like cheek. There is even some implication of powderiness make up. On the level of drawing itself, the success of this drawing is both its additive marks and those areas un marked which can have equal descriptive power indicating everything from the sun, whiteness, colour and volume.



The next drawing was very nearly from direct observation. I found a good perch on a high metal table from a café which was closed. These two were seated directly behind where I was drawing the previous drawing. This character study was not consciously related to the previous drawing of the older women but did reflect a similar interest in people at rest and extending that, a continental way of life which always seemed to me to have its priorities right. Looking and drawing as I was doing here was difficult to do without detection but I have developed many strategies over the years. For example, if a subject makes eye contact with me, I quickly stare intently at another object and pretend to draw. Putting them off the scent so to speak. I don't often draw in this way but found the result to be strong and the subjects to be well captured. As a pairing they were interesting for their unlikeliness. The woman on the right was small and her deeply tanned face seemed to be in anguish at the thought of not deeply inhaling her cigarette. The cigarette seemed like a lifeline. The other subject to the left, seemed like an affable intellectual type, the type that might work in a bookstore. The assessment of the subjects in a drawing such as this (and all of my drawing) occurs as both physical and psychic. Because the act of drawing is so intimate and marks are standing in for physical forms, a kind of questioning continues throughout the process of drawing. Who are these people? What do they want? What are they thinking? What do they represent? These are questions which are often answered by the drawing itself. As Hogarth noted, the true nature and expressive content of the drawing is only really known when it is complete. Like the gesture of the body, faces have their own implied movement and this can enable access to the total fulfilment of character. In this drawing, I think both of those gestures were captured.



The next day I intended to go to the Schlagermove festival but as it did not start until around 3 and I was itching to draw, I went around Osterstrasse again to see what I could find. I had noted the previous day that this butcher shop looked like an interesting subject with a great 50's sign and various bits of hanging meat all over the place. I drew the store directly across from it on a construction fence that was made of hard plastic. I was exposed drawing and it was relatively unique for me to be both exposed and directly drawing the signage and people within. This added rigour in my drawings and was resulting in stronger work so I vowed to continue. Because I was a good distance away and the store was dimly lit with reflective glass, it was difficult to see clearly inside. I could make out the butcher with his white coat and other woman who I showed sweeping, was actually more interesting than what I captured here. She was younger than the butcher but I had some sense they were a couple. She was in her 40's with heavily applied make up and hair pulled back tightly in a ponytail. The black guy was helping out as well. There was an odd tension in the store. Everyone, including the customers seemed to be scowling. However, this is not clear in this drawing and instead the attention given to the signage places this drawing as a German butcher of somewhat typical description. The full features and atmosphere of the brushed steel counters and displays was hard to capture as was the difference between the interior space and the exterior space (as noted by the woman walking by). This was due to my placement of the store sign which was, like the Karstadt drawing, the first consideration. Overall, it captures the store well but does not, as indicated, evoke all that I had intended and could perceive. Whether this could be discerned by an outside observer I am not sure and does not perhaps weaken it as a drawing. The currency of many reportage drawings is in their testimony to the observed and this is not expected to reflect a comprehensive vision. I still like to get in as much as I can.



The next drawing was done directly after the butcher shop as this man came around the corner. He was actually just standing there for a little while as I moved my drawing pad out of the way. I noted his features and immediately he reminded me of the Grosz drawings of fat businessmen. The head looked like a single bone and his dark sunglasses at once like skull sockets and long view telescopes. The glasses helped to avoid specifying him and he became, as I had hoped, more symbolic of a German man of a certain age. Overweight and somewhat gormless, he was perfectly formed as a stand in for the well fed, successful German. I drew this on some stairs to a building of flats and I was sufficiently hidden. This drawing was executed quickly and the roving graphite stick managed to apply the right emphasis in the right areas, accentuating the shape of the head, the high trousers and thick arm.



The next drawing was done near the Karstadt store. An accordion player was playing and his lovely music seemed both wonderfully evocative of old Europe and of my place as an outsider. It also reminded me of the accordion player I drew in Sheffield some months ago. I also realised that reportage drawings are like that. Subjects re-emerge and they clarify our interest in them. This was the case here. This man was also an immigrant (or perhaps refugee) and his sweet face was a particular draw. Like the previous drawings, he was drawn directly from observation. In this case, on a subway railing. I even managed to do an audio recording of his playing as I am still intending to collate all of this material in a film of some sort. He recognised me drawing him and gave a kindly smile. This was reassuring. Because I was drawn to his kind face I drew it larger than expected and did worry I would run out of room to clearly draw and identify his accordion. A certain lightness permeates this drawing and it was drawn quickly. He was captured well here and this is still one of my favourite drawings of the entire trip. While other drawings are capturing a diverse array of experiences, subjects and textures, this drawing's strength is in its tight focus on this man and his instrument. It hinges on the specificity of his character but because it was drawn directly and he gave a tacit nod of agreement to that, I was able to capture him well. The eyes here show a kind of poetic yearning and distance. Direct observation enabled the capture of specifics like his scruffy hair, his glasses and eyes. I put a euro in his cup and with a smile and nod of the head I was off.



The next drawing was inspired by a small but striking figure that I passed as I was walking back towards where I was staying. I moved over to a park bench and started to draw. She was a very short woman with severe make up on and inevitably I thought about her age and the history she witnessed. Interestingly, she also reminded me of the little Jewish ladies I was familiar with from New York. This kind of association is highly personal but also marks the drawing with a layer of commentary which, at the very least, sustains its interest to me. Many erasures mark her face as I struggled to capture her. I got there in the end and decided to include a young mother in the background. This was an easy contrast with the older woman and I am not sure it was the right move. The clock was added to balance out the composition. Clocks like this are littered throughout the city and reinforce this German sense of punctuality and order (something that I found only represented part of the German character). The sense of forward movement and determination is found in this drawing but also a sense of fragility. The pale eyes are almost lost in the heavy makeup but they seem unsure. The dark shadow referred to earlier seems to be deeper and darker amongst the older citizens. However, a defiance also resides. After all, it is foolish for any of us to think that we are immune to the seduction of totalitarian regimes (look at Trump).



The next drawing was done opposite the corner of the butcher shop drawn previously and two houses down from where I was staying. Like the previous drawing of the butcher shop, I was drawn to the signage. The completed word is Wurst on the upper right and the composition, like the other drawing started with the signage, is dictated by the available space upon finishing the lettering. I saw the man riding his bike and he seemed to have his head at a funny tilt. This kind of ruddy face with thick blonde/grey hair was typical of older Germans and they seemed at ease whipping around the city on their bikes. Because of the compositional space left over after the signage was drawn, it appears as if we are walking amongst these characters. Again, this immersive space is desirable but not always planned. It is, as Embury has noted, a kind of editing on the fly. A selection and placement that evolves as we see the drawing evolving. The drawing in a sense, chooses its own dynamic. What occurs to me in this drawing is my interest in a layered space. Foreground, middle and background elements are often brought in to give spatial depth and this occurs with varying starting points. In this case I started with the background but often I start with a foregrounded figure and work to contextualising the character, even minimally. A drawing such as this sets one in my visual, perceptual world. This is a clear assemblage of elements and it speaks to my perception of this place and my choices in depicting it. This is true of much of reportage and challenges notions of space as anything other than an expression of perception and intention. Even the aesthetic desire to complete a drawing or compose it necessitates fabrication and intent. A more interesting question is whether that is less true to the experience of the artist and even, as a stand-alone work, that this fabrication changes its impact as a record of experience.



We now got on a subway towards Schlagermove which started towards the top of the famous Reeperbahn. Upon entering the subway car with my friend, her brother and her 4 month old child, I could smell what would become very familiar to me throughout that day and night; namely the heady mix of schnapps and beer. Young and old revellers on the train were dressed in bright clothes which can only be described as a kind of costume store sixties hippy and all were ignoring the trains alcohol ban. At the next stop more revellers came on, this time there were older adults that had been imbibing for lord knows how long. They smelled so strongly of alcohol it added to a delirious atmosphere that was to mark the day. They shared boisterous exchanges with the other people going to the festival. A jolt of the train sent a drunk reveller almost crashing into my friends child's buggy. We decided to get off on a different stop to avoid the crowds.

We walked down from the slightly further stop and we made the right move. We were at the fringes of the festival and we could see it was just getting going and already a drunken affair. The large fairground area near the football stadium was the staging ground for final celebrations which would happen later that night. At 4pm when we were there, the buses filled with revellers making the loop along the Reeperbahn were only just starting to slowly come into the area. Some revellers were around here which would really just be the tip or the top of festival. Schnapps, prosecco, beer and whisky bottles littered the ground as this was likely the site of pre-partying before revellers hopped on the party buses or walked down towards the Reeperbahn where throngs of people were currently lining the parade route.

I left my friend, her brother and baby to draw one of the party buses as it was coming into the fairground area. Many people milled around but it was not, as I was too soon to learn, anything compared to the crowds further down the parade route. It was a visual feast of drunken Germans in absurd and bright clothes dancing in the street and drinking a variety of alcoholic drinks. I decided to try and draw the people on the party bus. It was hard to choose a part to draw as the buses were heaving with character in varying states of drunkenness. The music was horrible and it was easy to see that this music had a particular draw to suburban communities and beyond. The Schlagermove fest was looked down on by many, more sophisticated, Hamburgians. I tried to capture in this drawing the big wigs and silly costumes and drew quickly and from observation. This group was on the top tier of the bus and the crowd on the whole was middle aged although some young people were peppered in the mix. The absurdity of the whole thing became a clear theme and there were moments when the people wearing the wigs seemed momentarily embarrassed or at least conflicted. I sought those moments and captured it reasonably well on the man on the far left. Like other drawings, light hair was less drawn than indicated and the woman on the far right had an enormous blond wig with a large flower. I found the wealth of subject matter hard to manage so finished this drawing and quickly moved on. I realised that this drawing would be difficult to understand without contextualising it so I sought to attempt a somewhat broader perspective in the next drawings.



I decided to get out my colour as this was a particularly colourful event. It found it a bit hard to manage the colouring with the drawing and the colour seemed to get a bit dingy with the graphite. The woman with the pink wig had a mostly obscured and deeply tanned face with her friend squeezed into her outfit. I was still finding my legs here as I was awash in compelling subjects. The man with the propeller hat was seen and added here to layer the compositional space and emphasize the absurdity of the whole scene. The party truck (one of many) was in the background as busloads of drunk revellers now started to pour in (I had mistakenly thought it was now coming to an end. Not even close).



I went in close on this next drawing, trying to capture a moment of the madness. Necklaces of plastic flowers were all over and the packed buses seemed to be a claustrophobic pit of drunken mayhem. The smell was strong even from the outside (of course plenty of revellers were digging in all around me). This drawing was done from observation and quickly sketched on a rock on the periphery. Plenty of partyers looked over my shoulder and gave me either a warm smile or a suspicious look. I really had to utilise all of my tricks to avoid detection here. Drunk people are unpredictable so I needed to be sly.



At this point the people on the periphery near me started to seem pretty compelling too. Many men were weeing through a nearby fence and an older man in a wheelchair caught my eye eating chips and taking in the scene. This drawing is a kind of compilation of characters and doesn't work perspectively. I am happy however with the rendering of the people and they are true to those specific people that I saw. Again, deep tans were common and the contrast between skin and the bright clothing was something I tried to capture. This drawing is a bit of a hodge podge but this was a challenging scene and required quick drawing (and thinking) to achieve some effective capture. Drawing in this kind of immediate and responsive way was exciting for me and although I was essentially in less control, I felt the drawings were less manufactured and grew out of real moments of visual interest instead of a more deliberate assemblage of elements which is more possible in less frenetic environments.



This next drawing was one of the more successful of the day. The man on the right with the brightly coloured vest was actually dealing with his young son when I captured him with his mullet and drunk, bewildered expression. Again, as noted above, the speed at which I was working and trying to note down characters was enabling a more accurate and specific kind of depiction that, at this stage, was starting to pay off. The man with the hat attempting to kiss the woman was also seen as well as the larger woman who appears to be about to walk by the viewer were all directly observed. Their capture is, I believe successful, and I can remember these figures, and even smell their breath. The piles of booze were very noticeable here. These were the first casualties. The first group of people partied out as they had followed the first buses. For some this was a day they had been looking forward to for some time. Crowds dancing and singing are indicated in the background but I was conscious not to linger too long on any one drawing as I was desperate to catch the fluid action. It was a somewhat overcast day but bursts of sunshine came in intermittently. Many people were also smoking. The smell of alcohol and tobacco made me think of bad hangovers and I imagined the number of sore heads that would be lumbering around tomorrow. While there were many episodes of joyous dancing and singing, many quiet and somewhat sombre moments of drunkenness were visible. The figure to the right with the vest and mullet is the anchor of this drawing. He, like me, is a witness. This drawing, by virtue of its production, has a lightness of touch that connects the viewer to my direct vision more readily. I can't be sure that it reads as more or less constructed than others but for me, it feels momentary and raw.



I took a slight break after the previous drawing feeling it was fairly successful and I reunited with my friend. She told me she had been confronted by a man that she perceived was Muslim who thought she should not have brought a child to the festival. Being on the fringes as we were and not in the full on madness of the Reeperbahn, my friend was happy to tell him to mind his own business. While we were chatting near the fairground and eating some food, another man of seemingly similar religious beliefs came up to my friend and said the same thing about the inappropriateness and potential danger of having a child in such a place. Again, my friend told them to mind their own and that this was the extent of her Schlagermove movements. According to my friend, Germans are forthright in expressing their indignation on a variety of subjects and that this was not terribly surprising. She also conceded that this was not an appropriate environment for a child but that we were on the fringe of the real festival and real mayhem. I could later confirm this. I walked my friend back to the subway and upon walking back I could see the buses lining up outside of the fairground area. I found a seat on a large rock. I was careful to find a perch as people were peeing everywhere and it was hard to find a clear area. As it was, I needed to clear some bottles just to put my feet and bag down. Broken glass was all around and the small schnapps bottles littered street.

The next drawing I did was a collection of impressions I had of people as I found my spot to draw. The middle-aged woman with the short hot pants stumbled as she drunkenly left the party bus and the older man was equally frazzled. The somewhat younger woman stood around looking partied out. The building in the background placed them on the long road to the side the fairground. The fairground was in between the fence indicated and the large building. The fairground was filled with food and beer stands along with a big cordoned off stage area for the after party. It was now about 5:30pm and about 4 buses had been parked for good and people stumbled off the buses. Like the previous drawing, this drawing reflects specific people but is not constructed and does not cohere into a single scene. That was not the intent and instead I sought to capture people who encapsulated that moment. This was a difficult process of selection as so many of the people milling about were equally worthy of capture.



The next drawing is a specific moment of when two women exited the bus and revealed their drunkenness. The woman in the background had a small plastic wine glass which was most likely (at one point) filled with sparkling wine of some sort and the woman on the right was drinking a beer. It was a crazy scene in general with middle eastern men (possibly refugees) with large bags or shopping carts, soliciting the revellers for their beer cans and bottles. The bottles and some cans have a deposit which can be collected and many roamed the streets collecting the many empty bottles and cans. These two epitomise the end of Schlagermove (although it was far from over) and I hoped I caught a lighter side of the drunken mayhem in this image. The small and quickly drawn man with the sideburns in the background simply gives some depth to this image.



I decided to move on now as I had only really seen the top of the festival and wanted to move further towards the Reeperbahn to see the heart of the festival. The music was blaring from every bus. The different songs from the different buses mixed up and this bad music became like a nauseous funhouse melange. It made for an even more bizarre atmosphere. Walking down beyond the fairground the crowds swelled in size and the madness took on an epic scale. The crowds were now inescapable and people partied on the sides of the street as the buses were still coming through. People were in near copulation at the side of the roads and on the grass near a small park. A giant inflatable bird was at the top of one bus and I wanted to capture it but it was too crowded and hectic. I grabbed my video camera and got it. I walked further down trying to find a place to draw. It was total madness and I was a little uncomfortable with the number of people. I wasn't quite prepared for it. Drunk people were kissing and groping and I even witnessed a man with two girls in what appeared to be a group snog. I eventually found a spot opposite a hotel with a pleasing sign attached to the roof.

This drawing was initially chosen as I wanted to capture some kind of landmark to situate it. I was towards the top of the Reeperbahn and I was drawing with my back against a building and surrounded by people walking by and seated next to me taking a break. Many people looked at me as I drew which was somewhat uncomfortable although this had been happening all day. I later found out that the Keese hotel was a real Hamburg landmark and had a traditional turn of the century dance hall with tables that had phones of them which you could use to call other tables and invite them to dance. Before I finished this drawing I was interrupted by two young girls who were interested in what I was doing and wanted me to draw them. These two young girls, clearly practiced in beaming smiles for selfies, waited for me to draw them and then asked me how much I would charge them for the drawing. I said a fiver and it was a deal. I continued the drawing and eventually included the couple who had just walked by. Again, this couple was typical of many but so many other characters could have been equally suitable. The bus in the background was making its way towards the fairground and crowds filled the streets in a kind of density that I have never seen in my life. Walking through the crowd was an assault on all senses. Drunken people swayed in and out and perfume, cologne, booze and cigarettes filled the air. Along with this a kind of electric sexual energy was noticeable. Scantly clad women abound and many people were embracing and kissing. It was a very hard scene to capture and I felt a bit overwhelmed by the hordes of people. I used my recently acquired 5 euros to buy a beer and get off of the main strip.



Shortly after I brought a beer from a vendor on the street, I saw this drunk man veer towards me. Because Hamburg has a large down and out population, many drunks fill the Reeperbahn on a normal day. On a day like this, they mixed in to the population and their usual charity of small change came in the form of free drinks supplied by both the beer stand people and visitors. This led to many of these characters being probably more drunk than usual although, equally, somewhat invisible in the sea of wider drunkenness. This drawing was done very shortly after encountering this character and it captures him well. I like the quickly executed hair and indication of his sun hardened face and bushy eyebrows. He was a joyous character but clearly broken and he seemed at the verge of falling over as his cocked head pushed him diagonally across the pavement. This is a good indication of the way in which drawing can capture the textures of experience and character in the emphatic lines which accumulate in areas of expressive intent like eyes and in this case his jutting neck. Here too the shape of the paper and the placement of the figure accentuates his slender figure and his hand appears to break the plane of the image and invite a kind of cheers with the viewer. These are very desirable outcomes although not always conscious. It is as if the drawing not only captures an observed character but the position of the artist when that encounter occurred. In this case, the drawing does a surprisingly good job of capturing the physical encounter as I had experienced it, in my own field of vision and proximity to my body in motion as he walked towards me and then past me to my right. Few drawings capture these layered aspects of experience as well as this drawing and with such immediacy. Perhaps the immediacy and lack of construction enabled this raw and rare capture.



The next drawing came about after a much-needed break from the heaving chaos of the Reeperbahn towards a leafy neighbourhood and small park at the very end of the thoroughfare. I initially stopped on a step at the front of a block of flats but the biker characters at the front of a corner bar seemed threatening and were clearly not enjoying the Schlagermove crowd that dispersed into their turf from the main road. I passed them and then saw a group of older revellers drunkenly congregating near a darkened entrance to another building of flats. I witnessed this particular couple as I turned the corner. It was a dark entranceway and the deeply tanned man was pulling the woman close to him. She didn't seem as interested as she had her hand against the wall. There was some aggressive sexual manoeuvring that I witnessed throughout the day. Many drunk men had seemingly advanced on women without their consent and there were some notable and ugly incidents witnessed. Fortunately, the women seemed to be able to take care of themselves but also, perhaps even more unfortunately, they seemed all too used to it. Of course, a mix of ingredients such as Schlagermove is bound to create a weird and somewhat hazardous atmosphere. This drawing was executed quickly and I thought captured the scene well. The woman's wig was dark pink and the man had a ridiculous wig on. I did wonder many times that day about how, like Halloween, these wigs and costumes changed people's behaviour and enabled a kind of indulgence that wouldn't be possible in normal dress. It is like playing a character and being outside of yourself. There is also, and particularly with this older couple, the potential for rekindling or re-experiencing joyous times of youth. The fact that this horrible music was that soundtrack was perplexing to me but culture takes many forms and continental popular music, even in supposed cultural powerhouses like France, is notoriously dire. This is a drawing whose strength is in its urgency and both the desperation of the man and the reluctance or at least ambivalence of the woman is clear. Looking at the man's face particularly I see a Toulouse Lautrec face of the older man kissing the younger woman in the *Reine de Joie* lithograph. The same pressed nose is there and the same kind of sleaziness. I noticed this directly after finishing the drawing but was not conscious of it making the drawing. It is possible that this unfamiliar subject for me necessitated some referent. The fact that it was another drawing makes perfect sense and the limitations of time and visual vocabulary result in a reductive, economic line, much like that of Lautrec (who himself was a keen observer and incorporated many observed people in his lithographic work). This is an urgent drawing and captures the release at the end of the festival that was erupting everywhere.



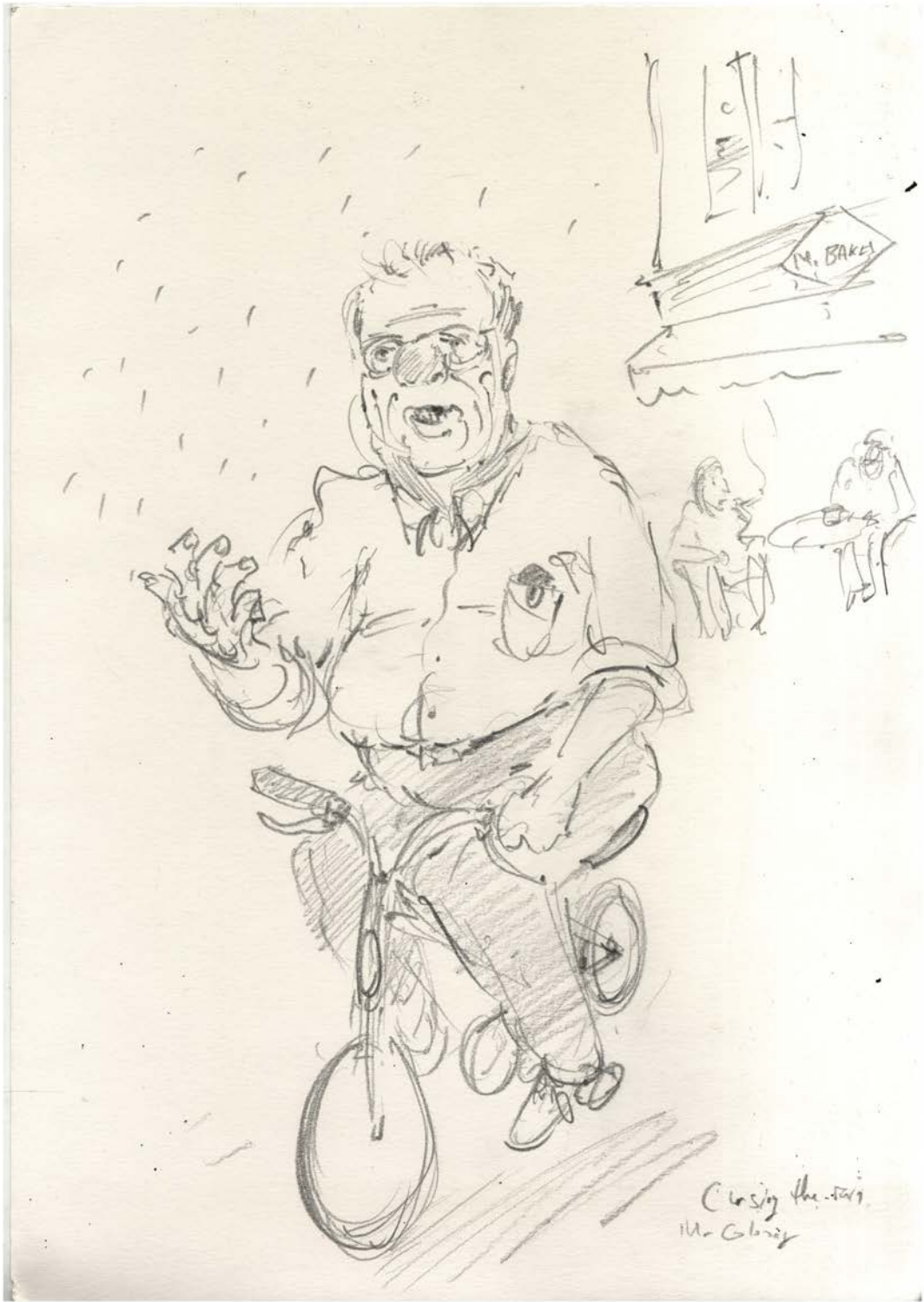
After doing this drawing I decided to take a break and get a beer from an outside vendor and sit on a small wood fence and take a breather. Although I hadn't drawn a tremendous amount, I was still suffering a bit from a head cold and the entire scene was overwhelming. From this point I could see the police presence at the end of the Reeperbahn and the occasional ambulance attempting to snake through the crowd. The crowd had thinned by this time (approximately 8pm) but was still significant. I was at the edge of a small park and people and litter were scattered everywhere. Couples staggered past and one man who was part of a group tapped me on the shoulder and said something which seemed to be something like 'Why so grumpy?'. I probably did seem a bit grumpy as I scanned the crowd and looked intense, a contrast to the joyous drunkenness around. In retrospect, I should have drawn the police as they were remarkably calm, even sporting some Schlagermove flower garland and badges. I was particularly exposed however and not particularly eager to engage with the drunken hordes who were loud and expressing that last gasp that marks the closing of any festival. It is a kind of animal hooting and hollering that attempts to defy the nearing end of fun. However, this was just the edge of the festival. There was much mayhem still going on along the Reeperbahn. I decided to make way why back in.

Fortunately for me it was a much less hectic vibe. The crowds had thinned a bit and a divide had begun between the Schlagermove crowd and locals who now deemed it safe to come out and take a look at the carnage. I had explored quite a bit without drawing as it was somewhat more of the same and I had intended to come back to the area when it was less crowded and capture the sex shops, local drunks and tacky storefronts. I took refuge in a pub which was packed outside but quiet (minus the blaring music) inside. I took a little video to show the throngs of people passing but mostly took stock of the drawings that I had done.

After multiple conversations with several onlookers and young people curious about the sketchpad tucked underneath my arm, I started to walk up along the Reeperbahn towards the fairground and eventually back to the subway. Even though it was only around 9pm and still light, the street had the vibe of late night even early morning. People had been drinking heavily throughout the day and a mixture of exhaustion and even embarrassment seemed to mark the Schlagermovers. Drunk, middle aged and partied out, many people made their way back towards the fairground in a procession that resembled the unsteady shuffle of zombies. I captured one couple and they seemed to typify at least one kind of group. A good looking middle aged couple walked slowly up towards the fairground and I thought the drawing, done quickly on a curb, captured them well. This was a drawing of the end and a certain resignation marks their faces. Here a few features seemed notable and tried to capture them in my drawing. I had noticed a kind of female nose throughout the day with the visible nostril and the full, peachy and even glittery lipstick that was also common. It was not unattractive but still a kind of commonality amongst the faces I had seen. The man was beer bellied but handsome and I imagined this couple to be somewhat of an anomaly. They seemed good looking and even middle classed and this festival, and Schlager music in general, may have been a guilty pleasure. The bars behind them were still completely packed and the party showed no signs of really letting up. The older crowd however did seem to be making their way back to somewhere.



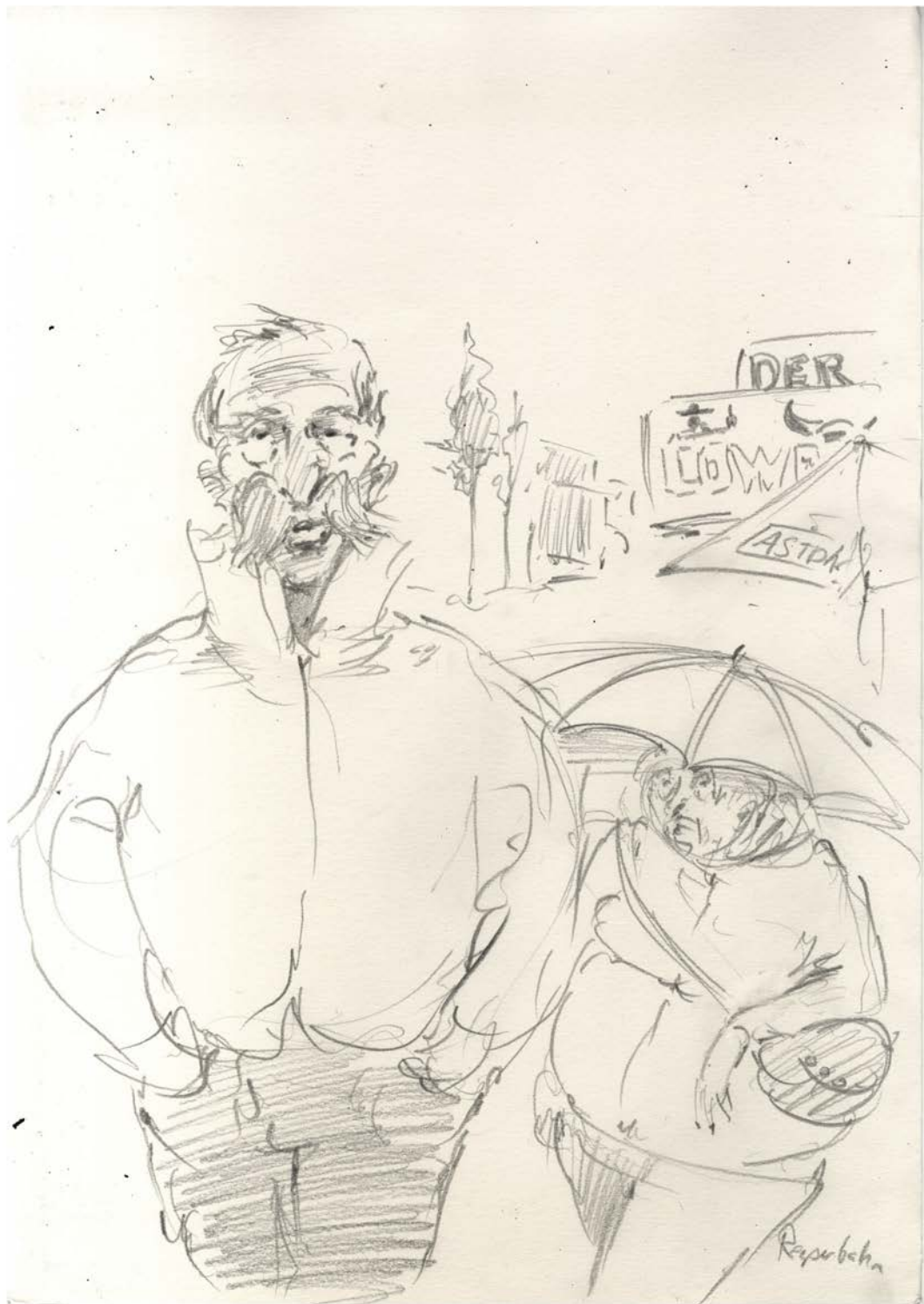
I walked further up the Reeperbahn and saw more carnage. More exhausted souls who had indulged too much and looked like they were dreaming for their beds. This couple I spotted and was compelled to draw them. Like the last drawing I sat on a curb and got settled. Unlike before, with crowds thinning in the closed off centre of the street, I was able to draw with somewhat less crowded interest. I drew this couple practically from direct observation and I feel like it was a success. They both had absurd wigs on and his face in particular was a real draw. He looked like a tired clown and his deeply lined face was full of character. Here the quick execution of the drawing enabled some strong abbreviation and his character and face was achieved with great economy. What is striking in such a drawing is how the face takes its essential form in so few lines. His strong cheekbones and deflated balloon cheeks reveal a man who is a heavy smoker and perhaps drinker. The lines of the face are deep and sculptural and the little dark dots for his eyes capture his hollow, drunken stare. She is more simply rendered with a beak nose and her arm seemingly supporting herself on her handbag. They were sitting on a curb like me and behind them the party was still in full swing in the bars. Being that this was the last drawing I did on the night, I felt it was fitting. I had hit the saturation point for drunks and it was getting late. With my head cold only slowly abating and a long day of drawing and walking, I made my way back to the subway. I did make a few audio and video recordings of the fairground and noticed that the after party was somewhat quiet. I suspected that many, especially the significantly large older population, was partied out. This drawing is an appropriate end to Schlagermove and I realised that although the day held such great visual spectacle and colour, I was, as usual, drawn to the human story. The human story inscribed on the faces in the crowd. Also, it felt like it took me the entire day to find this iconic couple that really captured the day. The absurd clowns, washed up and spent.



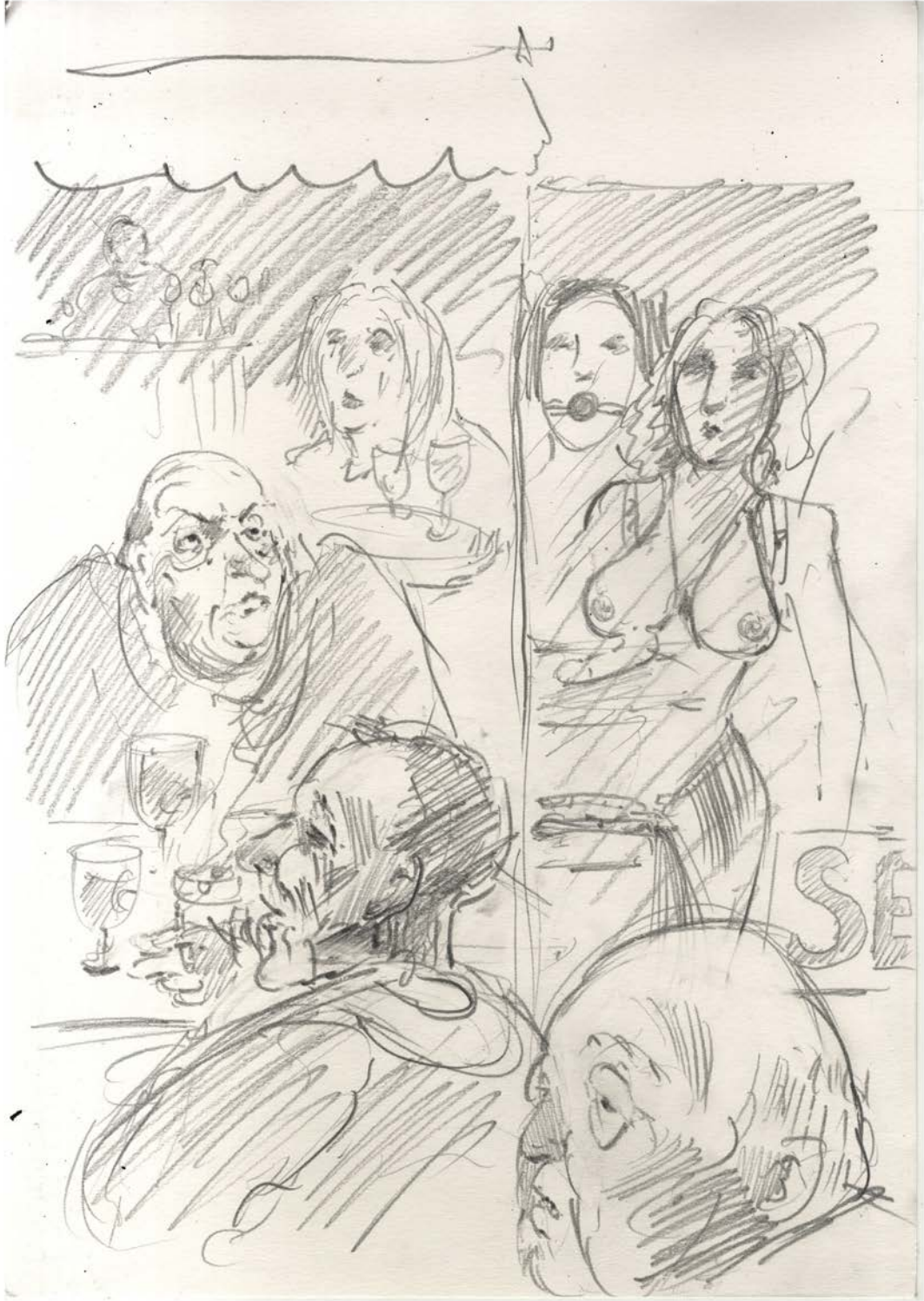
The next day was Sunday and I got out of the house fairly early to get down to the Reeperbahn to catch the scene the day after. I decided to take the slightly longer walk down to the Osterstrasse subway and it had just started to rain when I encountered this man coming towards me on a small, possibly foldable bike, and audibly cursing the rain. He was clearly unprepared but he startled me and a couple at a café depicted behind him. This was a strange start to the day and a strange incident. I tucked myself quickly onto some steps up to a block of flats and drew him. I had witnessed many angry outbursts throughout the two days and it reinforced how we perceive German anger as so particularly toxic because of the history. German is a hard language and while I witnessed much angry expression while I was there, it seemed, like New Yorkers, that much of this was the result of an exasperated loss of patience. I heard a lot of beeping car horns and even some road rage. Some fists were also pounded on bar tables but this could be understood as emphatic declarations. It is difficult to tell. Either way, this first drawing worked out well and this grumpiness, whether real or imagined, was a part of my perception of the German character. His body squeezed onto the small bike also made for an interesting drawing and the few dashes of rain make this drawing a small condensed narrative of sorts. His nose was a notable feature as it, like a cartoon, fit the entire space between his glasses. It was red and bulbous and his glasses case also marked him as a man of a certain age.



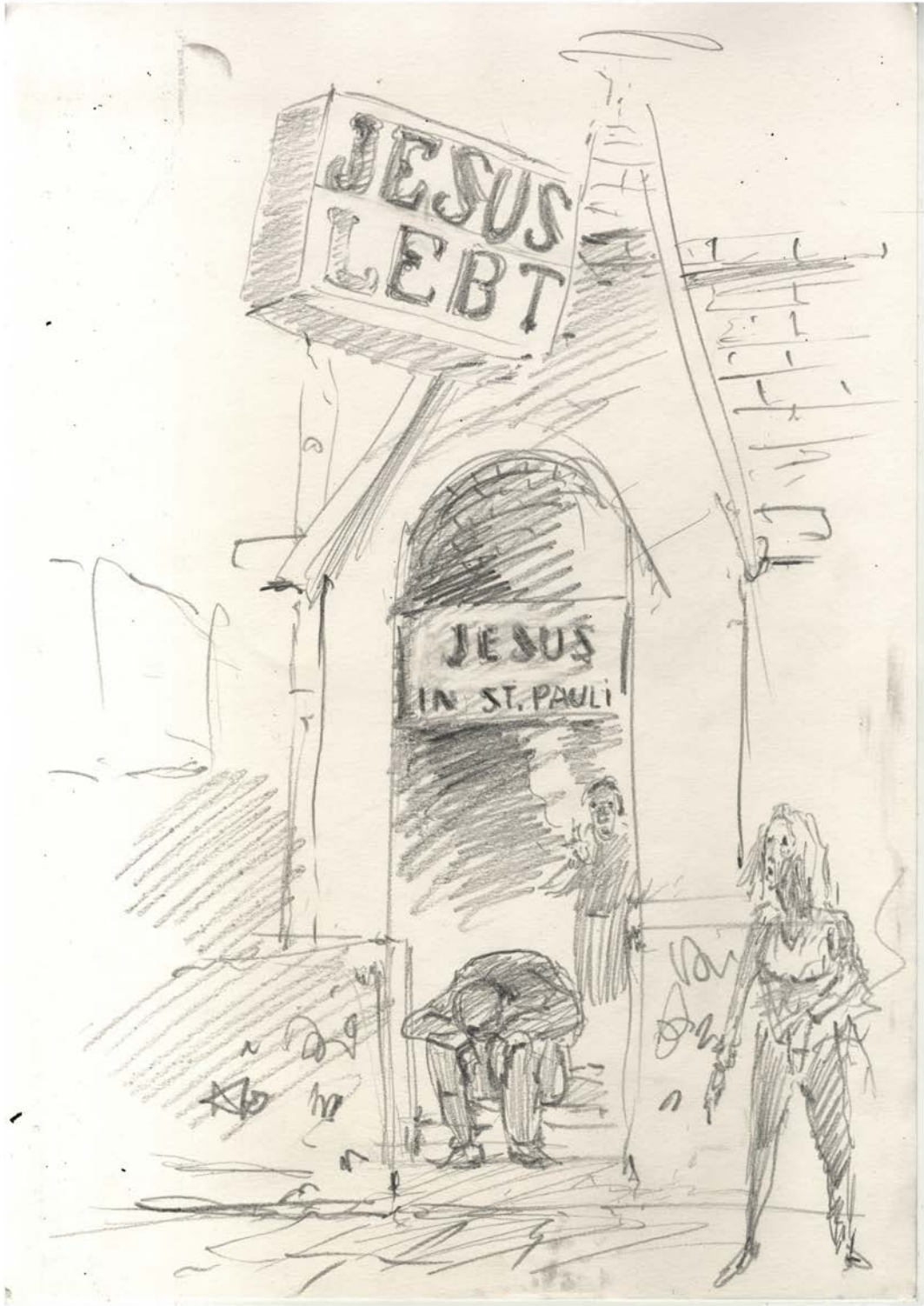
I took the subway to the same stop as the previous day and walked down from there. Walking for me is a chance to mentally prepare myself for drawing but also to see if there might be some potential subjects that may arise on my way to my ultimate destination. It was raining moderately and I saw this couple making their way somewhere with luggage in tow. I couldn't be positive but I felt it was likely that they were Schalagermove revellers and they looked washed out and weary. I could only really see the man's nose sticking out of his rain coat hood. The rain was doing strange things to the paper and the graphite was getting a little bit splotchy and stuck on the paper. I drew this quickly on a covered bar table of a bar that was not yet open. Some bars were open and covered outdoor seating seemed desirable. Perhaps the fresh air was good for the hangovers. The beer certainly seemed to be flowing. A drawing like this hangs on the gesture of the dipped shoulder and arm stretched to pull the luggage which seems like a punishing chore when hungover. I imagined I might have a day of such drawings but it was not.



From where I was I noted a man walking down the street with a traditional moustache followed by a gaggle of older ladies. I quickly dashed him down and attempted to put in some details of the bar signs along that part of the road to situate him. Here, like the other quickly executed drawings, I found that I had found an essential rhythm. That my mind and hand were working well together and that the held image in my head was being delivered to the paper with little interference and little need for alteration. This drawing, like many done on this trip, has no erasures and seems to have come, through some kind of fluid conjuration, upon the page. An attempt at some distillation of the German character is happening here and the specificity of this face is a testament to the confidence I was feeling at this point about my ability to render the specific qualities of a person. While the Schlagermove festival was about the event and its alteration of behaviour, this days drawing was about Hamburg in repose or at least back to normal (somewhat). It was a Sunday and that would imply a quieter vibe. This was true although much of its character was still present in the darkened corners.



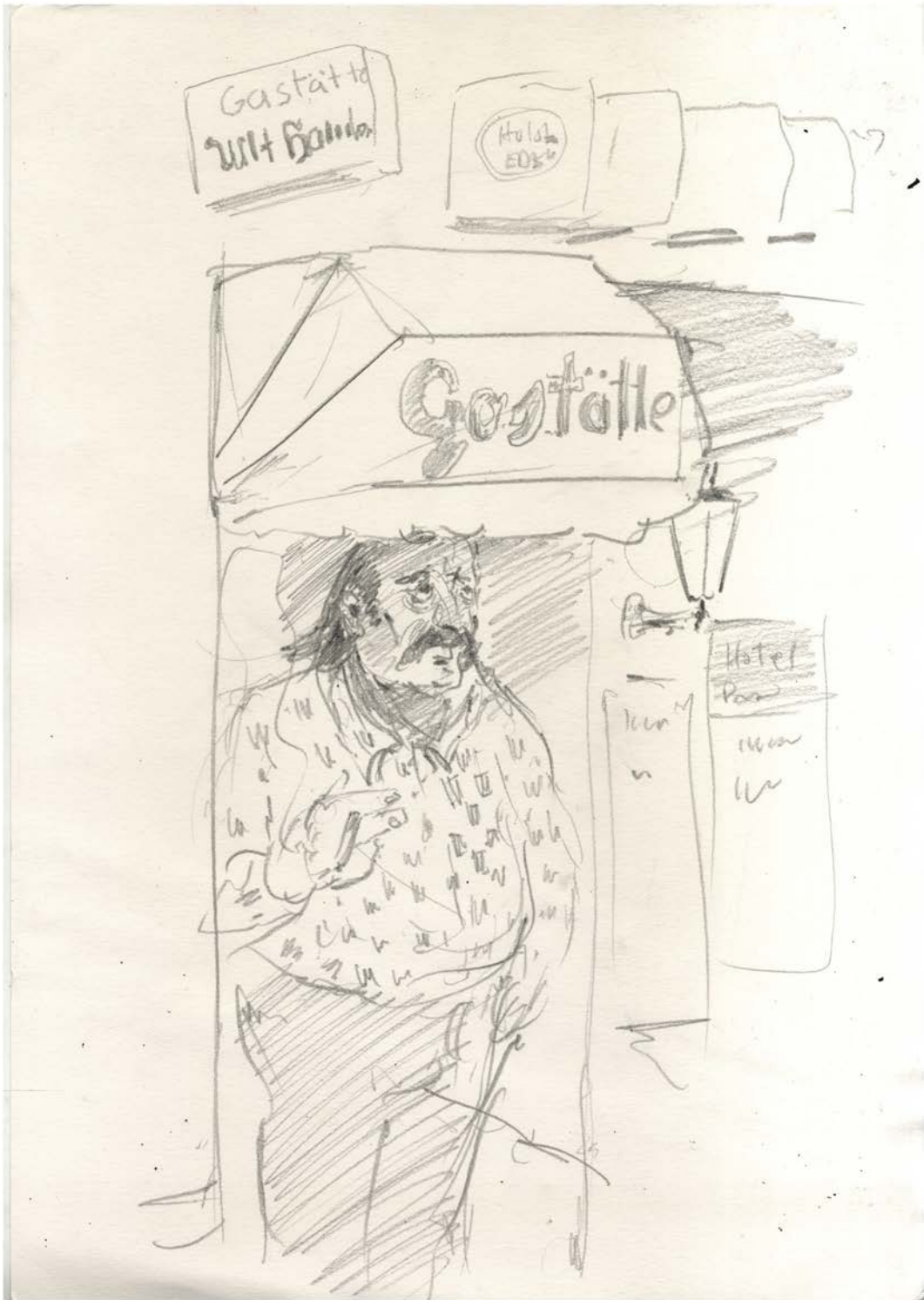
Walking further down the Reeperbahn I was able to see much more than I could yesterday with the throngs of people about. The large sex shops were open and bars were surprisingly packed out, probably by Schlagermovers nursing their hangovers. This next drawing was done much like the previous one on an empty table in front of a closed bar. The edge of the bar was near a sex shop and I tried to capture the scene. This is more of an assemblage than from direct observation although the people are directly observed. Here the inclusion of the man in the lower right hand corner was an addition to balance out the composition and give that desired depth that I am often seeking. This drawing is an effort to encapsulate the Reeperbahn area which is, in short, alcohol and sex. It is also an effort to explore the topography of faces that I was seeing. Like the man and woman on the curb at the end of Schlagermove, these faces seemed like totems of archetypal Germaness. Some evocation of a spirit which, from my own perspective, felt little changed from those amazing, reductive drawings of George Grosz. I was seeking in this drawing, like others, to find the people who carry on that decadent vision of Grosz but are also the sum of their lifestyles. The faces marking a life lived and I wanted to explore that in these depictions. Although these seem commentary laden, in many ways I am seeking the faces that guide me towards some conclusion, not the other way around. This is key in this kind of approach to reportage. The work would be essentially pointless if it didn't discover something about its subjects and if discovery wasn't the driving motivation behind the work. This is why travel or at least newness is important for the reportage artist. New contexts and new cultures provide new insights and divergences. For me these new insights often come from captured expressions on faces and the utterances or whispers that they speak to me.



I walked further down the street and walked down a side street to find the 'Jesus Lebt' sign and an assortment of vagrants milling about. I sat almost directly across it on a grubby step and set about drawing it. I started with the sign but was quickly interrupted by a girl who asked me what I was doing. I replied I was drawing and she asked what. Then she asked why I was here and I said I had come to Hamburg to draw. She was fascinated by this and it transpired that she was a journalism student and asked if she could interview me. I said yes and she interviewed me as I drew this drawing. It was clearly a church of some sort but she told me that 'Jesus Lebt' meant Jesus Saves and it was clear that there was a lot of drug use going on around the building. The man with his head between his knees was having little heroin naps as his head slowly sunk down and then jerked up. The woman was skittish and quickly left. A group of middle eastern looking men lingered and I could see at least one of them free basing. This is a successful drawing for me because, like others, it only requires essential detail and its reduction is its strength. I don't often tackle such a comprehensive scene with a totally identifiable place. Here it was not so much the fact that this place was culturally distinct but rather its link to other such refuges in other cities (even in Bath). The interviewer remarked on how I was able to remember people who had moved on. I explained it was the impressions that they left. These are often powerful clues to tapping into their personhood. There can be a distinguishing feature or gesture or an implicit energy as in the woman depicted in this drawing. Working more directly from observation enabled a greater connection to the people and places I was drawing. Sitting on a dirty curb set me literally within the atmosphere of the street, complete with the smell of stale beer and cooking sausages.

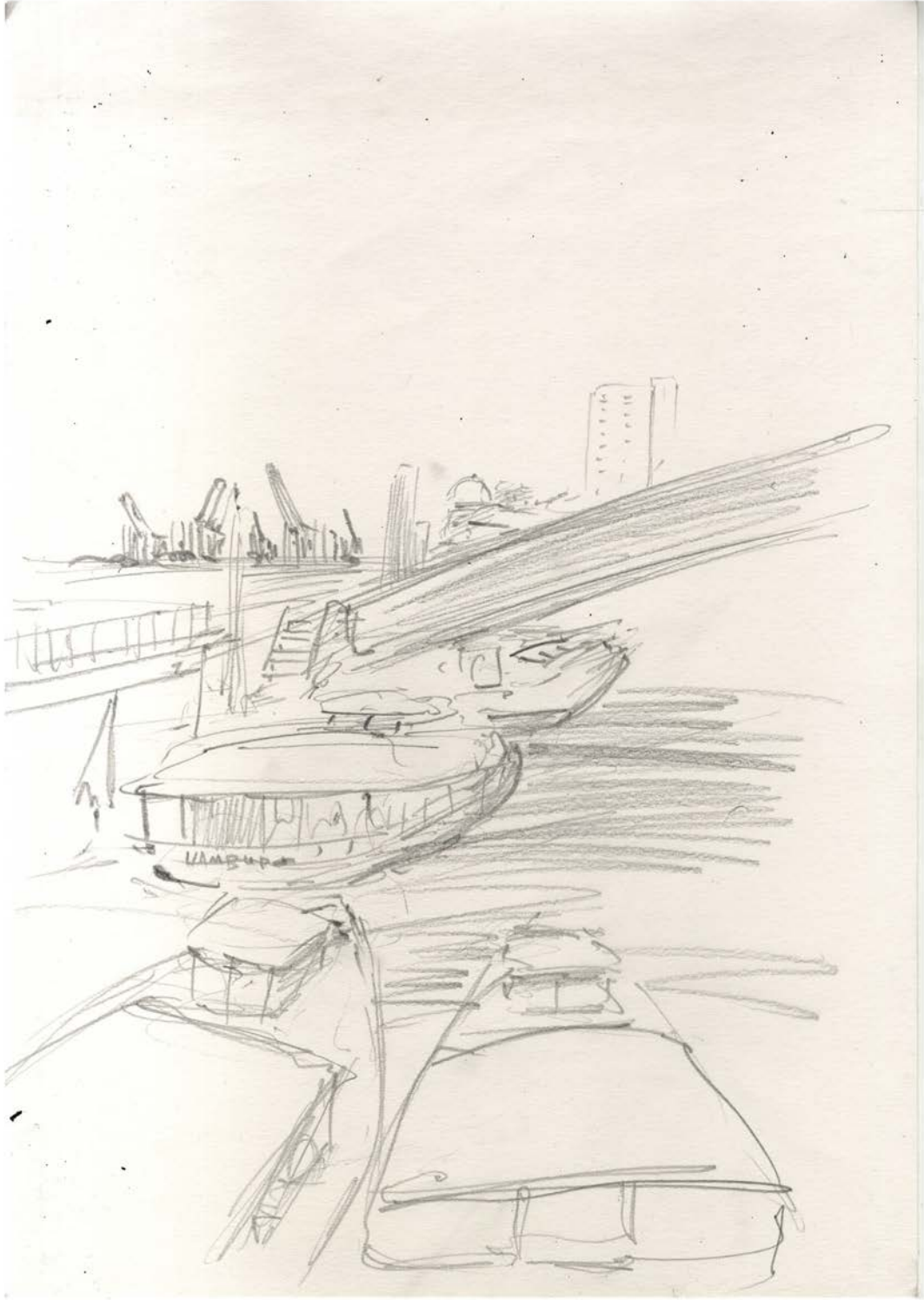


I continued the interview in a perfect little restaurant and saving money, had only a side dish of potatoes and bacon. It was authentic and perfect and the discussion was interesting and actually very helpful for me in framing my own methodology. The next drawing was across the street from this restaurant as my interviewer (Lena) wanted to observe me drawing. I saw a large man in a leather vest walking by with a beer and a clearly upset woman following him and yelling at him. I drew him quickly and was happy with his capture. His sunglasses on the top of his head and his big beard were captured with minimal lines. She was less successful although she was difficult to capture as her face was partially shrouded by her raincoat hood and she was moving around him berating him. His position on the page emphasises his immense size and the inclusion of the sign situates the drawing towards the end of the Reeperbahn near the sex clubs. While a quick and less significant drawing, the speed of execution here highlights the salient features and results in a strong drawing, at least of the large man. The face is beleaguered but strong and does enable a vivid recall of the man. Whether a viewer can read the quick indicative marks as I do I am not sure but this quick summative drawing is highly evocative for me and the mark making on this drawing is fresh and surprisingly descriptive. A drawing like this confirms the large role that instinct plays in the intimate process of seeing and translating. That language of marks finds greater clarity and summation when speedily recorded and confirms a kind of knowledge that is imbedded in the marks. A knowledge that is much more than two-dimensional vision and records, like the sad couple at the end of Schlagermove, a sculptural, topographic knowledge. I also think the woman's hand is a particularly forceful part of the drawing that draws us back to the man with a fierce urgency.



The student was still with me and we talked about the possibility of drawing in one of the sex shows. She said she would ask on my behalf. We went to one and the woman at the front immediately said no. The next one we went in through heavy red velvet curtains and could see a couple sitting at a table and a woman shacking her naked arse in front of them. I looked on as my friend asked the female owner. The small woman suddenly changed expression and she quickly ushered us out. I got enough to eventually make a drawing but could not at that current time. It would seem that drawing was forbidden. Perhaps if I had a smaller sketchbook I could have managed to get something down. I will perhaps try again another day.

The journalism student was still with me as I went to an as yet undiscovered area off the Reeperbahn near the red-light district. It was a great area with older streets and architecture and many seedy bars and night clubs. I passed this guy on a small side street. He was having a cigarette outside of his hotel and his mullet and generally old fashioned attire was appealing. He seemed like a particularly continental figure stuck out of time and yet seemingly timeless. Like a bird in a cuckoo clock coming out briefly and then back indoors, this man was out but then soon back into the hotel and by the time I had set up on a bunch of folded chairs in front of a closed pub, he was long gone so I had to conjure him up. I am used to such conjurations and feel this was a successful one. Here the indication of the signage and the few details around the door situate the man and his face captures the weather which was dismal and cold. This strong face and pose seemed less specifically German and more broadly 'European'. The world of Brexit in which one nation feels threatened by their association with multiple cultures is absurd when you are in continental Europe. Cultures are so strongly individual and yet the strength in the collective is about a broader understanding of shared values. Many of those values are a product of hard lessons and forward thinking plans for a cooperative future. Even simple moments like this one captured which feel old fashioned are endearing and show that old Europe can very easily co-exist with the collective Europe in the EU. These are difficult subjects as I see Brexit as such a cultural wound for the UK.



I decided to walk beyond this area and for the first time see the harbour area. As noted, it was a pretty dismal day and I did this drawing under a small bridge towards the docking for tourists boats around Hamburg. A bird that I had not noticed very nearly pooped on my sketchbook. While this is a competent drawing, I realised that it contained none of the commentary that I like to imbed in my drawings. It had no subject. It was an interesting challenge but I am not sure that I am formulating a greater contribution to my own understanding of Hamburg or disseminating anything other than a row of sightseeing boats. The large cranes in the background could have provided some interesting subject matter but the weather had put a bit of a damper on things.



I walked back up to the edge of the quarter with wild bars and the red-light district. I went to a rock and roll pub and ordered a coffee. I got down to drawing the scene in the sex show and felt I was able to bring up a tremendous amount of detail. The woman in the corner was the owner and she is well captured with her sour face. The couple at the table were clearly enjoying themselves and the odd, almost baboon like thrusting of the woman's arse in the air was perplexing and absurd. This scene is heavily constructed by necessity but does fit with my vision of the scene. The small somewhat claustrophobic room was likely designed to give everyone a good view of the action and I did wonder who would be interested in going to see such sport at 2pm on a Sunday afternoon. Still, it also made me question my own Anglo-American prudity and admire the Germans for their openness to sexual expression and desire. I would really love to explore such places but this experience has shown this to be a difficult proposition. This drawing has more illustrative properties but I embrace the things that come to the fore when remembering and trust in my impressions. Such impressions are best recorded immediately but in this particular case that wasn't possible.



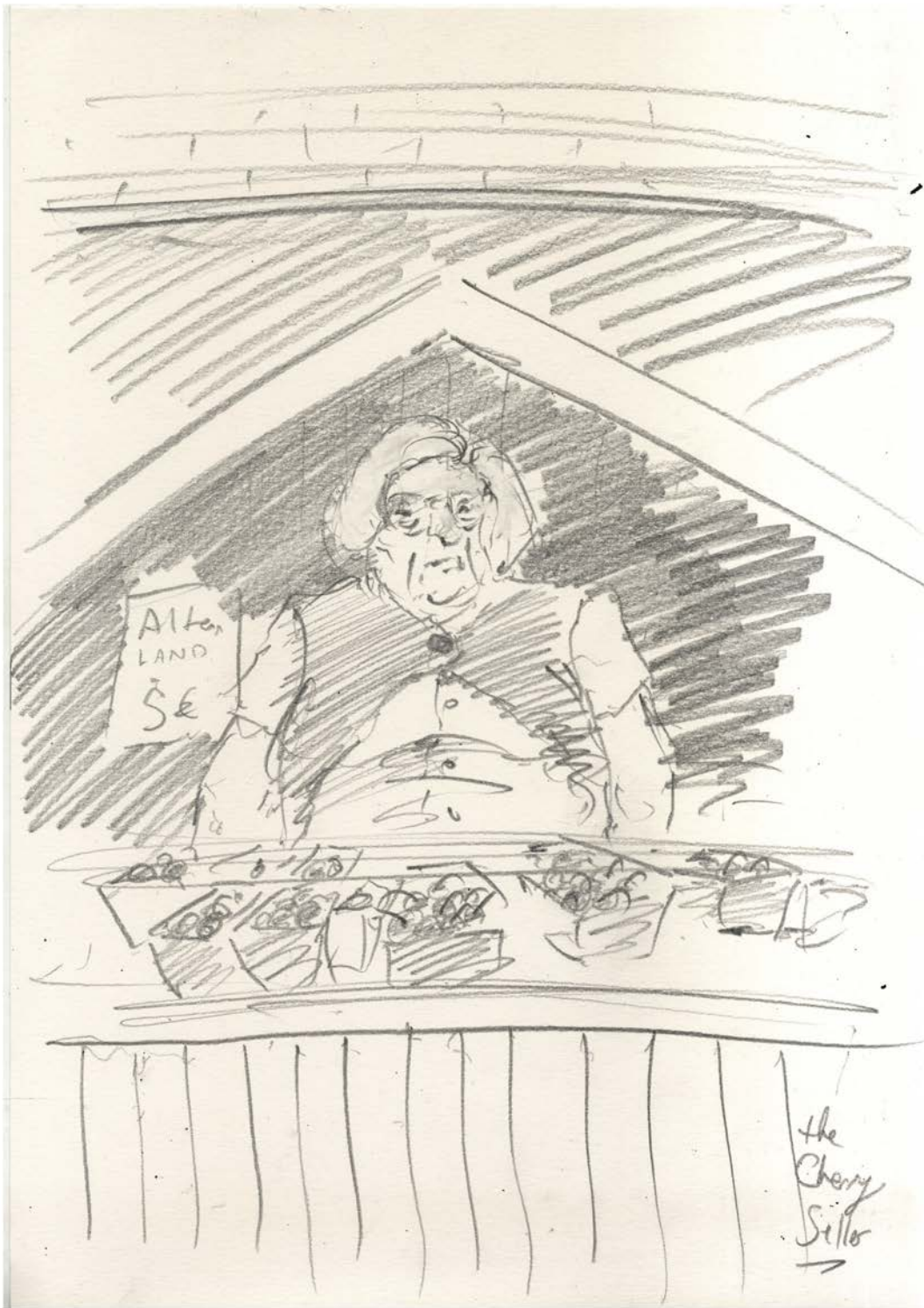
The next drawing was done in the rock and roll pub and was directly drawn from observation. It was a bust of a woman that had been drawn on and was surrounded by bottles of booze on the shelf. It looked a little bit like Marlene Dietrich but I imagined it was another famous German star that I was not familiar with. It seemed too easy that it was the only star that I had known. Oddly, while this is a fairly successful drawing, the bust does not look inanimate and this is somewhat strange. Still, as a piece of ambiance and décor of the pub it works. Few if any erasures mark this drawing and I was feeling very confident drawing at this stage. These days of hyper and exclusive focus on drawing had sharpened my skills. It shows that my real interest in reportage is not as much in the departure from the real as it is a magnification of it. While other reportage artists are interested in the distortions that occur in the process of looking and drawing, I am interested in an accurate representation of my own perception. That is often a desire to match the vivid image in my head with what is seen. A pairing of the observed and the distilled. The seen and the essence of the seen. While many reportage artists consciously construct based on a desired stylistic outcome which may or may not be informed by process, my work is less consciously about how than it is why. So, while my work may be perceived as commentary laden, the primary aim is in fact some level of realism or matching up with what I have actually seen. Like Embury in particular, my work is not overtly clouded by a stylistic filter and is marked more by a striving to capture and retain the complexities of vision and experience.



I left the rock and roll and pub and walked back towards the red-light district and assortment of wild drinking establishments. I walked through the red-light area but saw very little as few lights were on. It was an odd place as these things are. A kind of Hollywood set of curtains and odd homely touches to make these booths look desirable. They reminded me of a haunted house set or a wax museum with impossibly strange figures staring out with heavy orange tans and lacy lingerie. I think of all of the windows there was only one occupied on this rainy Sunday at nearly 4pm. I walked by a dingy and very narrow pub in the night life area beyond the red-light district. Looking in I saw a large man grab a shorter woman with black hair by the head and pull her towards him. Like the scene yesterday with the man, this was a disturbing aggressive action and I looked back a few times to see that they were both quite drunk. I decided to get out my graphite powder which I used in the past but have never done in-situ. It was a total mess but I was happy with the drawing. If I had more guts I would have gone into the pub but since I was drawing I didn't want to drink and I imagine in such a small space my drawing would not be welcome. These small places reminded me of Barcelona pubs which were lively spots and equally difficult to draw in. Here the little light sculpted the faces and a Francis Baconesque effect was produced by erasures on the face. I was working under another canopy over tables outside of a bar that was closed. A homeless man was drifting into his hands a few tables to my right. A man suddenly appeared with a beer and put it in front of the man and opened it for him. It seemed to be a form of charity and slowly the man seemed revived. My hands were completely black now from the graphite so I washed them in a nearby public loo. They were remarkably clean. Like nothing you would ever see in the UK.



The last drawing was on an unused bar table like the ones I had earlier occupied and was from direct observation of a man at an outside table some 50 meters away. He was passionately talking to a younger man with a baseball hat. A sad broken drunk who I had seen several times throughout the day came wandering by as I was drawing him. He had deep scars on his face and seemed completely devastated by a life on the streets and addiction (which seemed to include more than just alcohol). He was a young man of probably less than thirty but he was a damaged and broken wreck of a man. I had seen him several times but he was so tragic I struggled to think of a way that I could sensitively capture him. There are these considerations that occur and a desire, just like that of a photojournalist, to avoid exploitation. On the level of drawing, such things can be easily avoided but in the case of this man, his circumstances seemed too raw and the attention required to render him in a drawing felt inappropriate. Drawing him as I did here smaller and with much less detail fulfilled my desire to at least document him although this hardly captures his crumbling existence. The central character was pounding his fist in excited conversation and seemed to typify that German expressiveness that I mentioned previously. It was the last drawing I did this day and with the cold, light rain, and exploits of the previous day, I was ready to head back to my friends and call it a day. Like other drawings done on this day, it captures well the features and character of the subjects in minimal marks.



The next day I decided to walk down to the Reeperbahn area and explore the area in between, hoping to uncover new subjects and areas. I had a map and my phone as I guide but it was still a somewhat confusing journey as the Reeperbahn is not a North South road and aligns oddly with my own direction of travel. I ended up travelling some distance but was happy to see some interesting parts of the city and the extended area of the St. Pauli district which was very bohemian.

The first part of my walk was down Osterstrasse again but much further than I had previously walked. Beyond the subway entrance I saw a little wood hut on the pavement that had a small sign saying 'Alten Land' and a price. I walked by the front of the hut and noticed a woman with multiple cherries in baskets in front of her. The hut was clearly meant to look like a traditional farm stand of some sort with a few German country ornaments. A quick google of Alten Land indicates it is likely a farming area to the south of the city that is known for its cherries and strawberries. The woman and her hut seemed a bit out of place in her urban setting but it was consistent with an urbanite desire to connect with local delicacies. She was wearing a traditional garb of some description and I discretely walked back to get another glimpse of her. She seemed somewhat big for the small hut and had a stern look, possibly unhappy that she was spending the day in the city (if in fact she was from the Alten Land). The drawing was done quickly after seeing the woman and I feel it captured her well. The scene seems slightly absurd although with little contextualisation and indication of her location on the pavement, it is perhaps less anachronistic. Still, her broad stance and stern look, achieved with minimal marks, makes here a strong and defiant presence behind the baskets of fruit. Doing some very unscientific measuring I noticed that the woman's head is almost exactly in the centre of the page. As noted previously, it is interesting how composition is led by instinct and even the total desire of the drawing from the outset which, in this case, was to show her imposing presence. That is advanced by this composition.



Walking a little bit further down the street, I noticed this man glide past me on his bicycle. Sporting what seemed to be a traditional moustache and beard, I sought to capture him in drawing. Like other drawings done over these past few days, this drawing came together and is a testament to the kind of fluidity one can achieve when warmed up and the synchronicity was achieved between eye, mind, and hand. Confidence is key here and going with one's instinctive sense of the character and gesture of the body. I added in the signage to place him on this wide pavement in a mostly residential area. I was happy with the lightness of touch in this drawing and the directness of the graphite on the page. Strong impressions combined with quick rendering often result in successful drawings. Typical reportage drawings for me that are done in a less planned manner, evolving out of some observed character of interest but not part of a drawing trip such as this, are often more heavily rendered, pushed further towards a desired resolution. Drawings like this that are part of a body of work and are made when many have preceded it and skills are at a particularly high acuity, flow quickly and are both more accurate renderings of their subjects and more engaging drawings, purged of the ornamentation that marks less complete visions.



The next drawing occurred much later after a long ramble through the city. I was eager to not just draw everything that I came upon and wait for subjects to present themselves. This woman was on a park bench in a leafy area on the edge of the St. Pauli district. I saw her and drew her in a burger restaurant as I was starving by this point on my travels. She had an interesting mix of exhaustion, exasperation and grumpiness. She was panting and sweating but still puffing on her cigarette. A large tree loomed behind her and it was clear that the warm weather was getting the best of her. I also noted that she had been shopping. It was unclear if she was in work clothes although it certainly appeared that way and it was late morning on a Monday. I was very happy with the way I rendered her shirt and jacket and the way her bulk shifted in her clothes, emphasising a kind of discomfort that was writ large over her face. She seemed to have pulled up her skirt to get some cool air over her knees and legs. This is a picture of a person but it also of feeling or a sensation. It is an urban picture of a break from the demands of life. Her face was well captured here and the striking impression was a kind of pout which was in the catching one's breath and the inhale or exhale of a cigarette. Like the older lady in the Karstadt drawing, the lightness of touch on the face implies a kind of doughy, powdery look and the white or blonde hair.



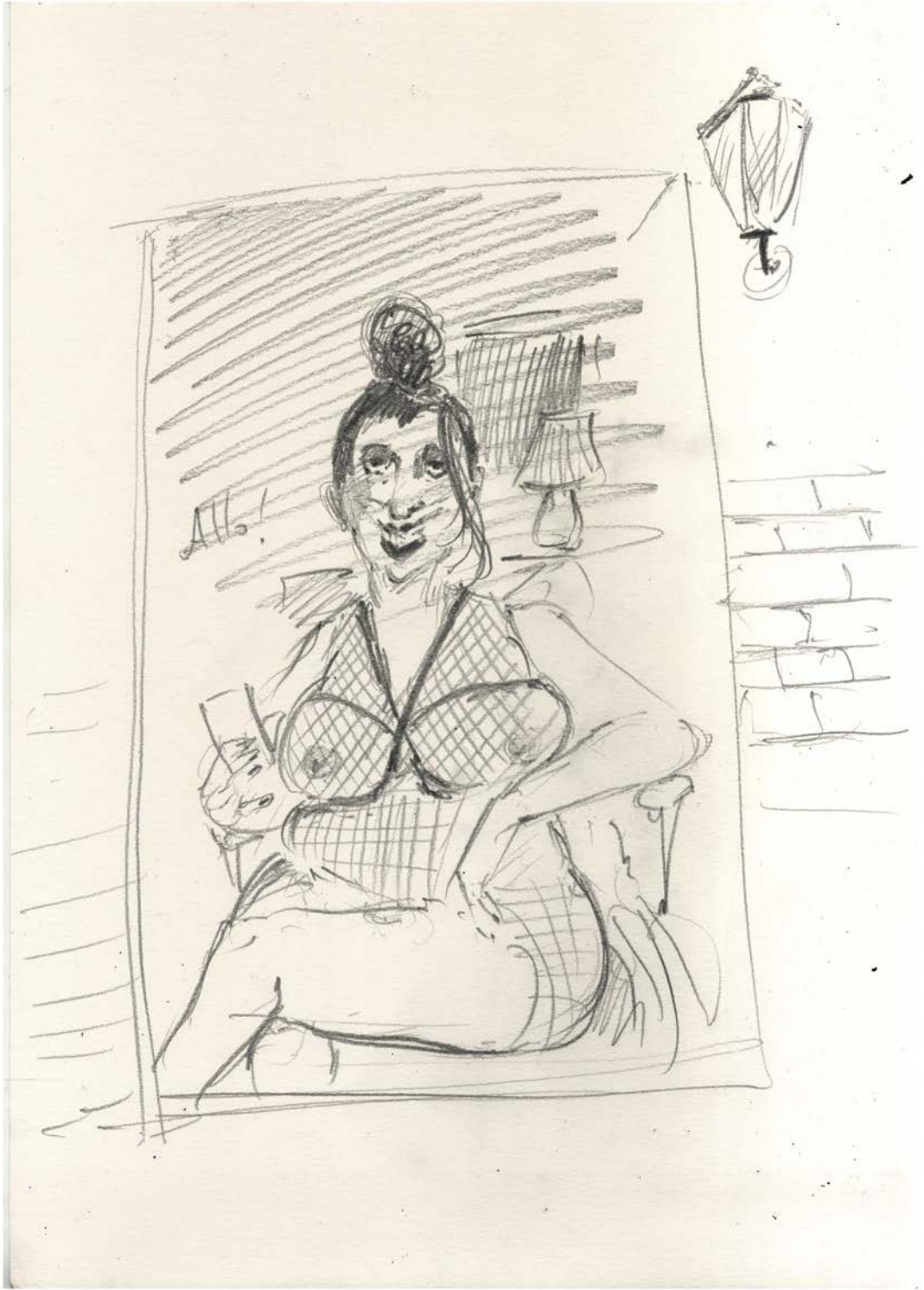
I walked further down through the very bohemian and colourful parts of the St. Pauli district and looking up I saw a very skinny woman on her balcony smoking. I can't say for sure what drew me to her but she was somewhat androgynous with a stoop and seemed fragile and haggard. I got in the umbrella and plant on the balcony and through light and tone tried to indicate the warm sun that was starting to beat down. I drew this on a rock around the corner of this balcony. She took notice of my interest in her and my multiple looks up. Like other drawings I have done, there is something of the ordinary and every day in this drawing. Also of the ritual. The cigarette break that is also a reflective moment. Who she is and what she desires becomes a challenge for the viewer. My selection of her as a subject presents questions about my intentions and impressions of the place. Because drawings are rarely presented with commentary, these questions are half answered by viewers and a total conception of place as presented by the artist is best understood when such drawings are folded into the other drawings done in the same location. The drawing can then be plotted and situated in a thematic grouping that stabilises its meaning as a part of the artist's wider perception of the location. This drawing is then no less significant even though it marks a moment of banal everydayness.



Walking much further on past the Reeperbahn, past the party district and red light area and near the dock, I noticed a man sunbathing in a small grassy island around which cars would circle towards either the dockyard area or up the hill towards further apartments or the centre of the city. A bearded man sitting on a rock was talking to the seemingly well fed, handsome older man. He was jolly and deeply tanned. The scene had a natural absurdity to it but also seemed to me a very urban image in which greenery is at a premium. In fact, just across from where I was sitting on the steps of a block of flats was a small park, mostly occupied by heavily tattooed drunks basking in the sun with their shirts off. It seemed to me this man chose this little plot of land as his own little oasis and his jolly demeanour seemed to challenge my own perception of this as somewhat bizarre. His bearded companion was smoking a cigar and the strong smell mixed with the hot weather made for a pungent mix. This drawing has the look and feel of an illustration with a tightly constructed composition and expressive and minimal line work. It was however, done in much the same manner of the rest although my starting point was the modern apartment building behind as I wanted to situate the little island in relation to that building. Like a few other drawings done over the four days in Hamburg, this has few erasures and my compositional instinct seems to be sufficiently sharp to create a balanced image. In terms of tone, this image feels quite a bit lighter than most with the subject being largely appealing with humorous and absurd aspects of the scene.



This next drawing was actually from a grouping witnessed on the way towards the waterfront. I drew it directly after the sun tanning man and it flowed because the impression of the stoop dwellers was vivid. I started with the dog which I realised after the image was complete could be missed. Everything in this drawing flowed well and the striking impression of the woman sitting on the step with her mouth slightly agape, cigarette in hand, wild hair and hard, yet fleshy, face. The man was a bit younger and looked like an addict of some sort. This down and out picture was typical of this area of Hamburg which was packed with corner stores selling very cheap beer and bars galore. The success of this drawing for me is its street level orientation. It puts the viewer into the realm of these characters and we can almost smell the overpowering wafts of cigarette smoke, beer and even mangy dog. Smell, as noted earlier, was a strong atmospheric presence in many of these images. Hamburg has a notorious problem with people urinating everywhere (even mentioned in UK news in regards to 'pee proof' paint that is meant to splash back at people peeing). A life of hand to mouth existence and base pleasures seems to mark this part of the city. As noted earlier, although there is clearly some imbedded commentary in the selection of this subject and its rendering, the aim of the drawing is a kind of realism which attempts to capture the idiosyncrasies of the seen and not some fictionalised amplification of it. The attestation of truth here is in the conveyance of what I have seen and my investment in this image is my visual, perceptual record of what I witnessed. In fact, my aim in the selection of a subject is to accurately render their personhood and this, if achieved, negates a requirement to seek further commentary. Subjects are selected precisely because they have within them all of the imbedded commentary I would ever want to seek and their specificity, elevates that commentary through a confrontation with their realness, their referent truth. When the drawing loses the feel and impression of the observed subjects they descend into pure caricature and schematic formulations, likely repeating character types previously drawn.



I walked down towards the fish market which I had heard about but it was completely closed. I had a coke in a bar that was playing terrible German sailor songs and although scenic, there were few people about that moved me to draw. It was a bright sunny day and I was enjoying for a moment being a tourist. I watched a group of young men drinking and smoking and they reminded me very much of American university students. They had the same preppy look and were boisterous and physical in that way English students are not. I left feeling a bit refreshed and made my way back towards the Reeperbahn.

I went back through the red-light district one last time and noticed that on this sunny Monday, it was much more lively. Some customers milled about sheepishly and more girls filled the windows with their lights on beckoning customers. I felt a bit embarrassed with a sketchbook tucked under my arm and hearing 'Allo! Allo!' from the windows which were open to reveal the near naked women. I looked over at one woman and noted her down to draw later. I imagined that the security would not allow me to draw right there although I would consider at another time, possibly with a German translator, seeking access and doing some more intimate drawings. I did find the faux interiors of the booths very intriguing and bizarre. The kind of airless quality of a David Lynch film seemed to permeate the little booths with their odd homely touches. I moved on to a location that I could draw and ended up on a curb drawing the prostitute. I think it captured her well but if I am honest, an overwhelming sense of embarrassment, perhaps even Anglo-American prudishness, inhibited me from giving my usual hungry, comprehensive gaze. Still, it captured her heavily made up face and the see-through netting that emphasised her large breasts and full figure. She had her phone in her hand and this was noted with several of the girls. It is, after all, a boring slog waiting for customers. I imagine it is a different scene late at night. Overall this drawing represents a kind of half vision and therefore does not coalesce or radiate the confidence that a fully observed subject would. There is not the sufficient mental image to traverse the threshold of the mind to the paper in drawing. Still, in its timidity, it does enable a recall of the girl and I would have liked to have seen this area at a livelier time of the night.



The final drawing of the day occurred in an area off of the Reeperbahn that I had visited during Schlagermove but was too crowded to document. It is filled with bars and nightclubs that promise either gender bending extravagance, rock music, or down and out dive bars. It had the feel of a tired Vegas or Atlantic City side street about it but its European touches gave it a unique charm. One such place was this Kunshotel which had these strange figureheads at the side of the door. It was around 3pm so it was quiet in this area with the exception of tour groups and other tourists. I was sat on a curb opposite the hotel and drew the figureheads from direct observation. I felt like the drawing was flowing well and I like the kitsch that I captured in this door frame and the gawping tourists below. On my next visit to Hamburg I would like to see a show in one of these places as they seem to offer a middle ground between the 'live sex' of the Reeperbahn and the more typical and flamboyant transvestite fare. This drawing represents a slice of a flamboyant street and intended its close focus to give a flavour of the tackiness around. As it was the last day and my last drawing, I wanted it to capture the mood of this closed up section of town. Next time I would like to explore this area at night time to witness it at its most colourful.

Barcelona drawings, 2016



























Barcelonetta









Portsmouth Drawings

November 19th 2015

I had decided to sneak out with my sketchbook during my lunch break with the intention of drawing at Gunwharf Quays. Gunwharf is a large, indoor/outdoor shopping area that juts out of the harbour area like a plastic bag stuck in low tide muck. It is anachronistic and obscene. IT is textbook gentrification and yet, with all of its obvious nods to seafaring of time long gone and aspirational shopping and eating, it manages to survive and thrive precisely because of this artificial indulgence. No one seems to care that their culture, a rich one at that, has been cheaply packaged and sold back to them at retail prices. But I digress. Before I got to Gunwharf, I had to walk there.

On my way to Gunwharf I walked through Guildhall square. This square is the site of the beautiful Guildhall which is mirrored, quite literally, by a reflective, dark glass building just opposite. This dark council building could be seen as a clever submission to the beauty and elegance of the Guildhall in its offertory bow in reflecting its beauty back to it. It could also be a cop out of course and the square is an odd mish mash of architectural styles (the library is fiercely Brutalist). On top of that, two statues duel for the public's attention. On one side near the reflective council building is Queen Elizabeth striking a powerful pose with a sceptre and looking appropriately stern and stalwart. The other side, at the corner of the Guildhall is a new and poorly conceived sculpture of Charles Dickens. The sculpture, which was unveiled in 2015 shows Dickens (a native of Portsmouth probably in the unhappiest times of his life with his gambling, debtor father) relaxing on a pile of books. The sculptural form of Dickens himself is okay but the tarpaulin over the pile of books seems cack-handed and an afterthought. The square is less a spot for sitting and taking in the sites as it is a cut through

for people coming off the train or going to the train. It is also right at the apex of the rough pubs and clubs so this area transforms dramatically after dark into what can only be described as a calamitous and sad parade of drunken brawling and screamed, red faced epithets. The few occasions I have witnessed this seemed almost surreal in the level of absurd violence.

As I walked down the steep steps I noticed a large man sitting on a metal bench facing the square. He was in a dark grey sweat suit and was smoking. I was initially struck by two things; for one, he had the large formless body that intrigued me in its genderless tragedy and, his nose which seemed to jut out of his face, oddly alert and pert considering he was, by his own making, broken and inert. I studied him and then sat behind him, still with him in my sites, with the Dickens sculpture to my left. Because this was the first drawing it is often a kind of pace setter. It tells you immediately if you are at the height of your powers or if you need some warming up. The billowing belly and the kind of over stressed knees and legs came together in this drawing and the expectant inhale of the cigarette feels cruel as if I am actively killing the man. I often feel this when drawing characters such as this. The kind of energy I am conjuring in the drawing is often negative. It is sympathetic in the sense that it does not wilfully distort in mockery but the climate the drawings inhabit is that of vaporous doom brought on by the tragic choices made by the subjects. This makes me wonder also about the role of the subject in such drawings. I find myself aligned with Taussig's contention that drawing is a kind of witnessing that is simultaneously a conjuring. A kind of magic. A drawing like this brings us into the sphere of this man and we read every fold and mark to draw together a conclusive idea about the man on the bench. But his specificity, although key in anchoring the drawing with observed form and detail, is only as important as the illusion of believability. He is both real and he is a fiction. His fiction is less compelling in this setting as our connection to the drawing is in our faith that the artist has observed him.

If he is a stand in for every overweight, chain-smoking man in Portsmouth he becomes a symbol and only a symbol. The observed man, as a person seen and recorded in drawing, becomes a kind of tangible tragedy and although clearly a symbol as well, his suffering is specific as well as universal. He goes back home, he struggles to go up the stairs and he falls asleep in front of the TV. This tragedy of a man has a home, maybe a wife, maybe kids. He might even be happy.

I moved on in my mile walk to Gunwharf feeling quite pleased with the last drawing. It was a very sunny, bright and cool day. Perfect weather for drawing outside. After passing the naval rugby fields and other parts of the university campus I came to the hallowed entrance of Gunwharf. The faux cobblestone is mixed with some original work and the lipstick tower (named because it truly looks like a large, slightly pushed out lipstick) and a Tesco flank me on either side. Out in front of me is a kind of water feature with an old abandoned piece of naval engineering (the authentic), a few new pubs with old names, and a sea of retail shopping that take you into what looks like menacing shade in the covered part of the shopping mall. It is hell. Immediately on entering Gunwharf I saw two people come up from the Tesco express munching on sweets. There was a kind of thoughtless grazing that struck me as very fitting with the gross retail chapels that lined the walkways. She was kind of frumpy and a bit chubby and he seemed a bit more youthful but shabby. They both had a kind of placid switched off look in their faces. They were blissed out on junk food, primed for the shopping experience, susceptible to the bright colours and beckoning slogans of advertisers. She struck me initially as an interesting subject with the flesh kind of lazily hanging off of her face. It was as if her very being had given up. She had given up consciousness for a kind of cruise control consumer program. She also looked older than she probably was. Like the previous man on the steel bench, she had the unhealthy aura of a formless, doughy lump of

clay. Although with her, her white flesh and formlessness did not make her seem heavy. Instead, she seemed spectral and the contrast between the dark under her eyes and the smooth white of her face was startling, even ghoulish. She was perhaps close to what she may become. Like the man trapped in his over large body on a steel bench (soon to be a steel gurney), she was a kind of ghost of herself. Her present and future self. My thoughts did wander during this drawing. I lamented about the way in which many are seemingly sleep walking through a wondrous world that they are either too distracted to notice or consumed with the consumer program set forth for them. Her hand dipping into the Maltesers bag seems decadent, dirty, and even a little dangerous. It could be the forbidden fruit but of course it is just the opposite. Far from forbidden, this entire place (Gunwharf that is) is pumping messages of indulgence, pleasure and little guilt. I am also interested in the faces that people pull when they eat. I remember the wonderful scene in the animated *Fantastic Mr. Fox* when the main character, Mr. Fox, is sitting down to dinner. Up until that point we have a walking, talking and joking anthropomorphic fox so we are assuming human behaviour. However, when he digs into his meal he is mad with animal ferocity and relish. This dumb looking guy to the left has that kind of animal expression although he is also distracted. Consuming not because he is hungry but because it is something to do. That simple. With her walking in front of him and her at an angle, we engage with these two as if we too passed them while walking somewhere. I realise that this drawing could be done anywhere but it is interesting how the subjects are very much a part of the larger meaning of the place. The people are a kind of architecture. A topography of place. In a place like Gunwharf, they are certainly much more interesting than the surrounding area. At least to my eyes.

This next drawing was done near Spinnaker tower (a strange purposeless monument that looks vaguely like a sail but also, from a certain angle (as noted by several locals) it looks

like a man weeing into the Solent. There is a line of wooden benches lined up right by a docking area in which some very nice schooner type boats are moored. Behind the benches are the big bars and restaurants with large outdoor seating (all familiar chains). This is the big face of Gunwharf. The wave ripple top of the second floor in shiny metal and the outdoor indoor design of the shopping area which would suit a much warmer climate. This woman on the bench was hunched over in this fashion and it appeared to me a perfect opportunity to draw. I was able to draw her almost directly from observation as she was engrossed in what she was doing and I was in a particularly good perch for anonymous observation. Working A3 has been a positive move for me. I was able to see and capture this large gesture that went from the top of her head, around her rear and under her knee. These are the moments of capturing someone in public spaces that fascinates me. She could have been doing this on her kitchen table but instead she is out here, with the rest of us, being in the sun, being together. Besides her obviously characterful face, she was a wonderful oddity in that she was defying the expectation of the location that was, in some ways, to bask in the glory of the vista. You could see what Gunwharf sees, through Gunwharf's eyes. It is strange when you see how benches in these modern districts are arranged. They are little planned moments of observance and reflection. She looks to be doing a crossword and I did speculate whether or not she left her glasses at home because of the manner with which she was smashed up against the magazine. I got a positive vibe from this woman. There was a quiet rebellion in her ignorance of the rules of the bench. Everyone else was following them. She refused. Or at least, she didn't care enough to pay attention. This drawing came fast and it came together well. Like the auspicious first drawing of the overweight man, my instincts were sharp today and little observed moments like her raised heel (in concentration perhaps) on her right foot put together this narrative of urban bench sitting.

The next drawing was done in the same location just two benches up from the crossword lady. Now these ladies were following the rules. They basked in the afterglow of a morning shopping and they all had varying degrees of self-satisfaction on their faces. Looking at them, there were subtle clues about class amongst the women who seemed to be about the same age. Their shopping was also a clue. Certain retailers, certain expectations. Of course it goes much deeper than that and little clues in the drawing only allude to such things. The closest one to us who is messaging on her phone is the most stylish and the most fit of the bunch. She also had a kind of quiet austerity about her. The middle woman was ruddy faced and well-dressed but she seemed to be trying very hard which made me wonder. She also seemed the most uncomfortable but that could have been my imagination. The woman on the far right was laughing quite a bit. A nervous laugh maybe but she seemed the oldest and had deep-set eyes and a skinny, red nose departing from a powder white face.

Time was running out on my lunch break. I needed to get back. I started heading back on my journey. I was struck by the thought that I had only done a few drawings although they each felt quite substantial. In some ways this was the most poignant trip yet. I was crossing Guildhall and going up the steep steps and I nearly ran into the next subject. She was hurriedly walking with her cigarette in hand and she looked very stressed. Because I was close to my office and it had started to get quite cold, I decided to get indoors and quickly get her down. Although a drawing totally done from memory, it very much captures her, right down to her freckles and sunken eyes. Her face, like others captured that day, seemed older and bloodless than it should. The ghostly white complexion appears again here as this poor girl frantically rushes to or from some desperate situation. Her clear grey blue eyes were haunting and her hair clung to her cheek as if they attached to tears or rain. The union jack on her shirt was a fitting touch although instead of it immediately drawing a connection to her as

a symbol, I instantly thought about how funny it was that flag shirts and patriotic shirts in general are typically found in cheap retailers, even street vendors. It was a cheap shirt and it was severely washed out. An American slogan goes ‘these colours don’t run’ on American flag merchandise. As ubiquitous as that flag is along with the union jack, I’m not sure it projects a tremendous amount of meaning. Unless, that is, the cheapness of the shirt and the lack of discernment on the part of the owner.











Nov. 27, 2015

I walked to old Portsmouth near the hot walls with the intention of fishing, like a previous subject, in hope that I might get some bites. It was a cold day but bright. I was ready to get into some drawing but found little on my journey that was speaking to me until I went up the steps to the high top of the walls overlooking, across the Solent, the corner of Gosport and in the distance, the Isle of Wight. I noticed an older couple sitting on a bench taking in the view and seeming very pleased with themselves. He was in full tweed and she was well dressed with a hat that seemed more Australian outback than Pompey posh. This was the other half of Portsmouth. The ones you didn't see anywhere else in the city. It wasn't a city of two halves as much as it was an 80 20 with the 80 decidedly less affluent and certainly less likely to conceive of staring out onto the Solent with an air of contented privilege. They struck me as compelling subjects as well because they seemed like pillars, like the statue of Nelson some 20 meters away from where they were seated. They had the hardy confidence that money can often provide one with. And both of them looked well preserved (her more than him, although she may have been younger). This kind of preservation is rare in Portsmouth where many wear heavy, laden faces which bear the marks of excess, stress and terminal sadness. I was happy with what the drawing captured although I was hoping for the kind of compositional dynamic which I sometimes get. The friction between foreground, middle and background. Instead, these two seem to occupy the same space in the middle, which for me is less engaging. The ways in which I occasional make a drawing which creates a space for the viewer to enter is a consistent aim of mine but not one that I regularly achieve. Like other drawings, one detail is the very hinge that the drawing rests upon. It is the slightly raised pointer finger with the depressed middle on the cane. To me this implies a kind of inner world of the man, perhaps a tapped out tune in his head or a delicate gesture that alludes to

whimsy. The sketchy indications in the background work rather well here to set the scene. Working larger, these little nods to the background are easier to make and they have more visual weight by virtue of their being drawn on a bigger scale. I walked on.

The next drawing came to be after a good walk around the inner harbour towards Gunwharf through the back channels of the fishing docs. This is a favourite area for drawing as it is occasionally busy with fishermen and generally compelling for its fishing gear and boats. This large seagull was happily perched on this wood post and I decided to give it a shot. This was a technical challenge and the boats and ramp in the background presented a challenging and layered environment with much complexity. It took a while to get the bird right and the background came together reasonably well, however the scale is off on the boat in the background and the drawing as a whole feels less confident. It is possible that I didn't connect enough to something in the drawing. For my most successful drawings (those which are evocative. They are both singular and point to new, wider understandings) are anchored in visual and conceptual interest. When only one is present, the drawing folds like a cheap suit.

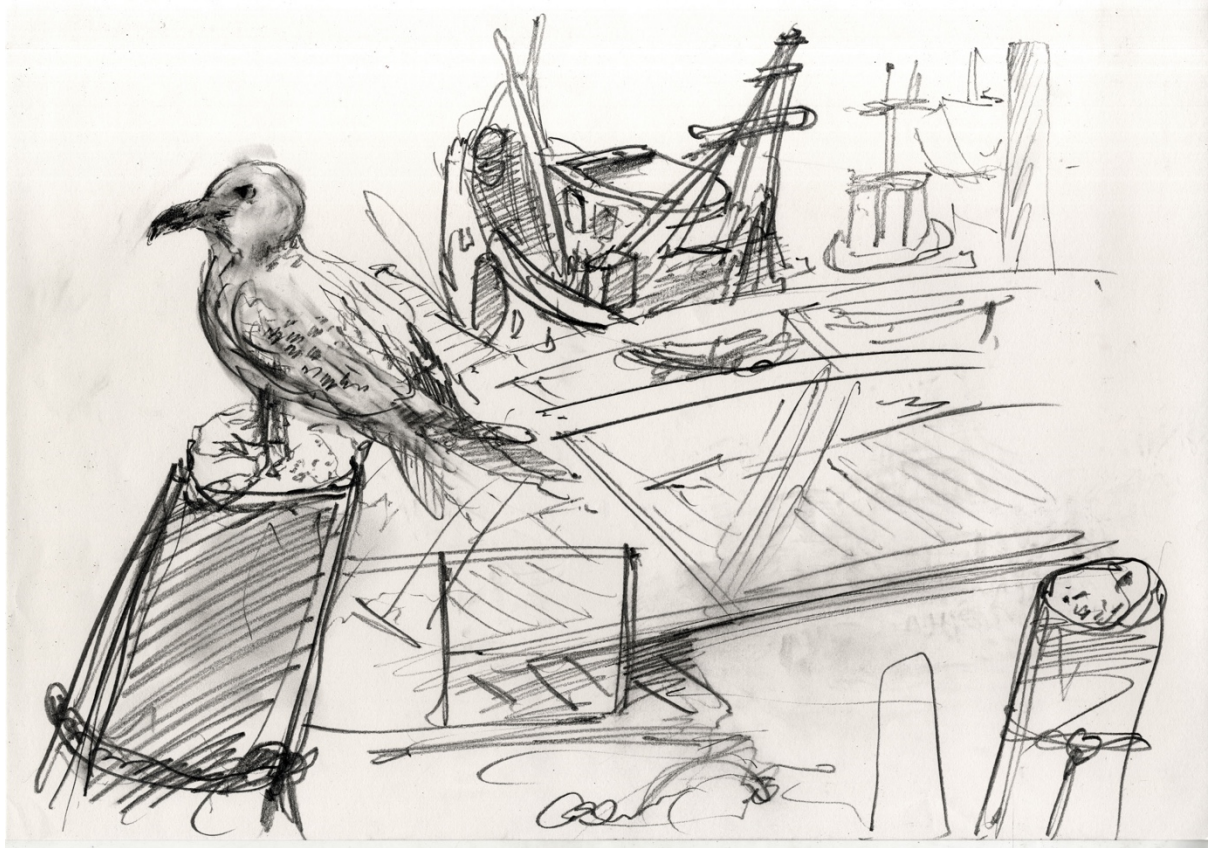
The next drawing (and location) is a favourite particularly because it seems to be a magnet for compelling characters. Haggard fish shop workers (who likely work the odd hours of the fishermen themselves) are outside loading or unloading or smoking and talking to each other. Something about this location also feels historical. Especially the people. Like the fishmongers of the past, like generations spanning hundreds of years. It is cliché to say Dickensian and possibly even inappropriate in this case. This feels older than that. This woman was outside taking a break and holding onto her cigarette for dear life. It was a bit windier by now and her very white hair was flailing about as she focused on the task and

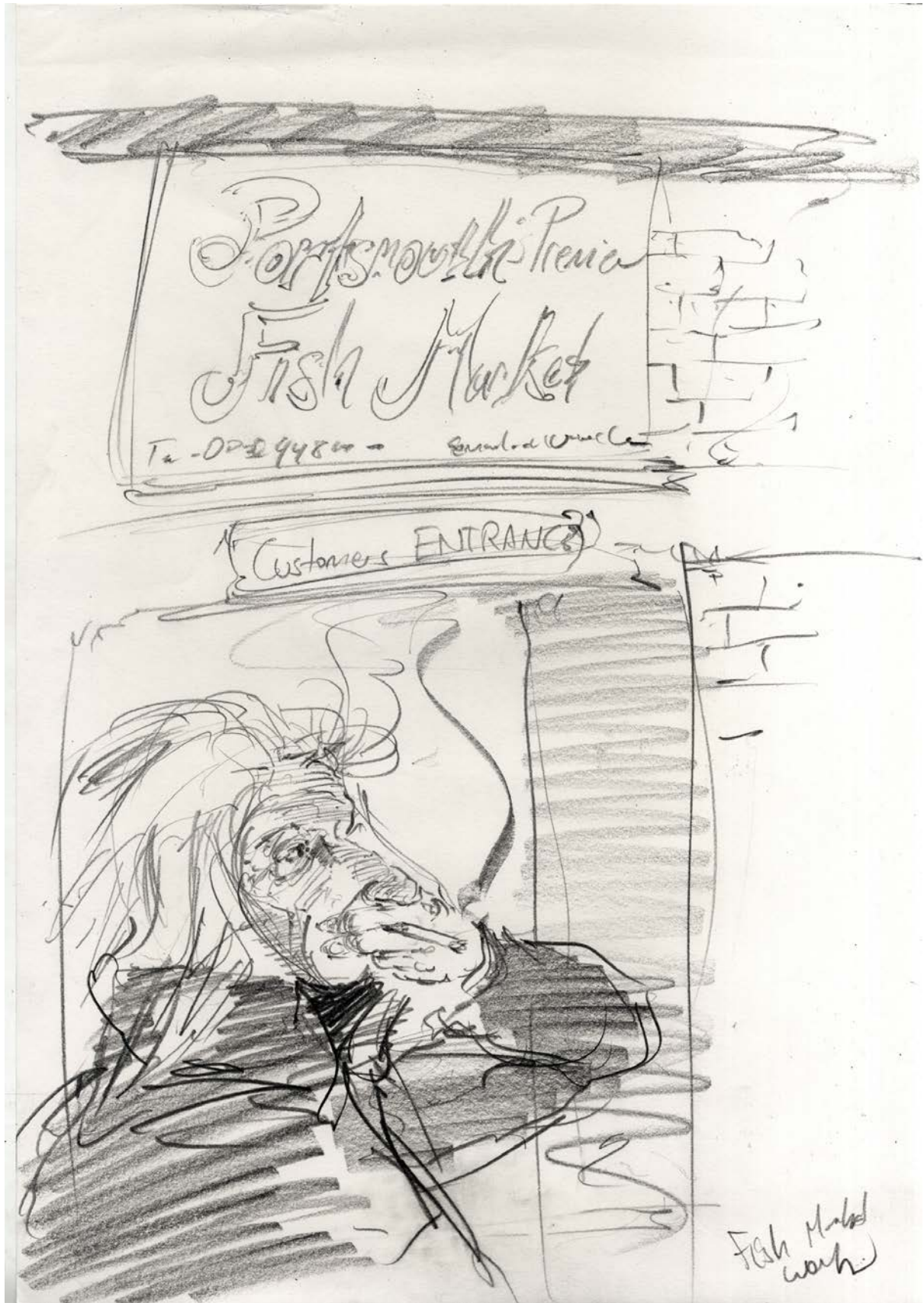
stared a distant stare. Her facial topography was interesting to me. The way in which her hand slid under her long nose and how her eyes, like many smokers, was set behind these seemingly hard, dry eyelids. Drawing someone smoking has been a fascination of mine for some time. It is a mixture of the beautiful plume of smoke that also creates an interesting opaque and or translucent shape against the face and the gaze that inevitably accompanies it. Being a smoker at one time myself, I can appreciate the enjoyment there in feeling the rush and having that internal moment. What that internal moment says in this image feels essential as this woman, like many of the other people I have drawn seems checked out. This one indulgent moment smoking, possibly her happiest of the day, is also the thing that will mercifully kill her. With these drawings I often feel that if I can capture the feel of the smoke in the lungs than I have succeeded. The textures of experience here are crucial and they are in the drawing. It is clear that the bright white hair, the over large coat and that rough, almost wood carved face jutting into space is the fundamental prompt of the drawing. It is both observation and comment rolled into one. I would have liked to have imbedded her more in a believable environment. Like the rough and quick strokes on her jacket, I feel I need to do this more with the environment. More responsive and bolder. She would have worked better if she was emerging (tonally) out of the background).

This scene was noticed shortly after drawing the smoking woman. Although this man's face appears dark here, it was in fact dark red, even purple. It was not a healthy look. He appeared to have some power and was ordering a skinny young man who was underdressed to put crates of fish in a specific location. I think here the indications of the background work better and this action is fairly clear with the tray of fish being evident. This strange man was difficult to capture because he was almost unreal. He was ruddier troll then man and I realise that the man's hood gives the impression that he has an 18th century wig on. The drawing

does capture the kind of puffy eyes of the man and his pained expression. A man in his health seemed burdened by simple movement and perhaps a life of back breaking labour has caught up with him. The man also has the somewhat sexless form which some other drawings share. And this face, although masculine in nature could be equally seen as that of an older woman. Overall, the drawing was spawned by an interest in this man but also of the exchange and the ability to capture this moment in action.









Poland drawings 2014









Bad Polish
Disco in
the Park









14.5 Blog

Reportage blog. I have been posting reportage drawings on my blog since 2009 and have a total of 54 posts (and counting) with drawings and commentary. Much of the commentary, although informal in nature, has informed the ideas in this thesis. Many drawings were also done throughout my PhD and represent, along with the commentary, a development of my thinking and practice. Most recent reportage work showcases work done in Africa as part of research projects.

<https://lifestooshortfornuance.com>

14.6 Video resources

The following is a link to an interview conducted by Gary Embury about my reportage practice. This was also the basis of my case study in the book *Reportage Illustration: Visual journalism*. (see bibliography)

<https://vimeo.com/196271902>

The following video is an interview recorded at the book launch of *Reportage Illustration: Visual journalism*.

<https://vimeo.com/295146918>

The following video is a long excerpt from the interview that I did with Gary Embury at the Anti-Trump rally in July, 2018.

<https://vimeo.com/373396388>

The video requires a password. That password is: Embury

14.7 Internet resources

Article and drawings published in IAFOR's academic platform THINK. The article sketches out ideas which are contained in this thesis. Theoreticians are quoted and the discussion is situated alongside drawings done in Barcelona. These reportage drawings represent some of the strongest and most vivid explorations of place that I have done. This is partially due to the fact that I was formalising many of the central themes in the PhD and contemplating my own practice in a deeper way.

<https://think.iafor.org/serendipitous-city-reportage-drawing-visual-language-discovery/>

Gary Embury's *Reportager* website which showcases the best of contemporary reportage and the many compelling projects going on around the world.

<http://reportager.uwe.ac.uk/index.htm>

Gary Embury's website

<http://www.embury.co.uk>

Jill Gibbon's website

<https://www.jillgibbon.co.uk>

Guardian article about Jill Gibbon's work

<https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2018/apr/11/the-art-of-war-the-artist-who-sketches-under-cover-at-arms-fairs>

Urban Sketchers website

<http://www.urbansketchers.org>