Editorial

Drawing on text

Charlie Gere, Lancaster University

Doris Rohr, Liverpool Hope University

This special guest-edited journal investigates the relationship of drawing to writing, and the idea that drawing forms one of the many possibilities and realizations of text, beyond an exclusively verbal definition (Derrida 1993; Farthing and McKenzie 2014; Rohr 2016). By implication, the word, or the verbal, has a long-standing association with intellect, whereas sense appreciations (aural, haptic, acoustic, olfactory) are associated with the 'base' body. Writing – in print in particular – hastened the departure from the physically experienced to primarily visually apprehended text (Ingold 2016; Ong 1982). The analysis of the separation of the kinaesthetic from the intellect forms part of a wider critique (Jay 1995; Pallasmaa 2005b; Paterson 2007; Pattison 2007). Mark Paterson's concept of *haptic vision* (2007) is of relevance to aid in an understanding of drawing as a mediator between traditional conceptions of text as the written (printed) word and a wider appreciation of (drawn) text as a polyphonic entity.

When text is performed the word becomes pronounced, spoken, sung, enacted and thus embodied and emplaced. Handwritten text and manually rendered drawing are also intimately connected with the originator whose hand performed the word and committed it to paper or some other support, ground or surface. Even if not materialized, the performed word, enacted in drama or speech, retains this unique connection with the originator. (This does not preclude multiple authorship as in performing someone else's script.) The hand-written or

hand-drawn text is indicative of gesture – a frozen remnant or trace according to Tim Ingold (2016), a narrative implying duration. But it appears that even the printed word has the potential for haptic intervention or performance when the handwritten note or comment in the margins adds an additional layer of time and authorship. Such then becomes the consummation of text as material to sculpt or reformulate, more flesh than spirit. Maurice Merleau-Ponty's (1968) concept of the flesh of ideas comes to mind. (This is of relevance to Claire Scanlon's contribution to this 'Drawing on text' themed issue of *Drawing: Research, Theory, Practice*.)

Ingold in *Lines* (2016) investigates the separated domain of drawing and text from an anthropological perspective. This makes apparent that drawing and writing share much commonality, especially if considered within wider ethnic and historical contexts.

> The word *writing* originally referred to incisive trace-making of this kind. In Old English the term *writan* carried the specific meaning 'to incise runic letters in stone' (Howe 1992: 61). Thus one would *write* a line by *drawing* a sharp point over a surface: the relation between drawing and writing is here between the gesture – of pulling or dragging the implement – and the line traced by it, rather than, as it is conventionally understood today, between lines of fundamentally different sense and meaning. (2016: 45–46, original emphasis).

The idea of making traces invokes intaglio processes such as inscribing text or image as illustration, as J. H. Miller explains when referring to the old German use of the word 'reißen' prevalent during Albrecht Dürer's time (1992). The tearing action of 'reißen' implies injury or penetration, rather than adding to surface. Ingold develops the theme of the additive

and incisive line further in *Lines* (2016; McGuirk 2010). Drawing or writing can be of either type (scoring, inscribing or adding pigment to a support). One may add that the hand performing text or drawing is seismographic, as it inhabits the state of mind of its originator. But not all text implies gesture, neither does all drawing: like writing, drawing can be coded, programmed, printed, screened, and thereby becoming divorced from the body as actor. Neither can we reduce drawing or text to line; it is the network, the polyphony of lines that creates texture: the text. Ingold pays reference to threads (rhizomatic) in distinction to the trace, the latter bound up with surface, the former an entanglement in third dimension (2016: 42–43). What we would now call rhizomatic qualities form part of the characteristics of drawing. Such an expanded spatial understanding of drawing has a narrative dimension and necessitates an understanding of drawing as temporal. Furthermore, drawing is sign making, with implicit and explicit meaning, not unlike verbal language. This understanding of drawing as narrative is relevant in pre-literate cultures, evident in the use of drawing and painting in medieval churches to tell stories, to instruct or to inform. Bearing this in mind it may come less as a surprise that in Miller's view John Ruskin's conception of drawing is 'both verbal and pictorial […] any configuration of signs has a temporal and narrative dimension. To trace out a sign is to tell a story' (1992: 75). So far then, qualities of gesture, coded meaning, temporality and narration can be ascribed to both drawing and writing, and it appears that the gap between the two is narrowing.

If one were to follow Ingold, it seems more pertinent to differentiate between spatial network lines and traces than between word, image or annotation. The fundamental differences are more about *what type of gesture* is invoked. Thus, if there is a lesser difference between writing and drawing than anticipated – if such are 'twin adventures' according to Hélène Cixous's conception (2005: 17) – a relationship where one might (almost?) be mistaken for

the other – then why is it so important to distinguish between word and image, drawing and writing?

So the question is at what point did writing and drawing become such separate activities? Perhaps it was with the mechanization of writing with the invention of the printing press, and the standardization of letters as interchangeable elements of a mechanized system of industrial production. Or perhaps it goes far further back with the emergence of the phonetic alphabet around 10,000 BCE, and its concomitant phonocentrism. This is not to fall into the error of believing that other systems of writing were purely image-based or lacked phonetic elements. As is well-known Egyptian hieroglyphs, and Chinese and Japanese ideograms are complex mixtures of image signs and signs for sound. They do, however, make the relation between what is written and what is drawn more complex than is the case with purely phonetic writing. Both hieroglyphs and ideograms can be understood as instances of a more general graphics, susceptible to being understood together through a graphology or grammatology. Phonetic writing reduces language as near as possible to its temporal existence as something vocalized, and occludes as much as it can its own materiality and spatiality. In other words, phonetic writing attempts to disavow its existence as a mark, *graphie*, and thus as a kind of drawing, a placing of marks in space. In one sense drawing is nothing more than the placing of a mark in space. If that is the case, to acknowledge the material spatiality of writing is to acknowledge the degree to which it is a kind of drawing. To do so is to sever or, at least, weaken the link with voice, breath, spirit, *pneuma* and to understand writing/drawing as originary rather than a debased version of speech.

With the work of Stéphane Mallarmé, one of the first blows against the phonocentrism of phonetic writing was struck. In his great poem *Un Coup de Dés Jamais N'Abolira Le Hasard*, Mallarmé (1914) spatializes writing, removing its supposedly innate connection to the voice

and sound, and thus turns it implicitly into a kind of drawing. Marcel Broodthaers made this explicit in his 1969 version of *Un Coup de Dés*, in which he replaces the lines of text with black lines, thus turning the poem into a series of exemplary modernist graphic works. Mallarme is followed by Guillaume Apollinaire, Ezra Pound and the Imagists, the Black Mountain Poets, Oulipo, L=A=N=G=U=A=G=E writing, deconstruction, grammatology, ecriture feminine, conceptual writing, hypertext fiction, flarf and so on. If avant-garde writing tends towards being something like a kind of drawing, then drawing, chiasmatically, becomes something like writing, from the marks of Vincent van Gogh and Paul Cézanne, through to the Cubists, and onto the great postwar experiments in rethinking what it means to make a mark, such as those of artists like Cy Twombly or Jean-Michel Basquiat. The relation between writing and drawing has also been explored in the experiments in radical graphic design by Futurists, DADAists, Fluxus artists, concrete poets, radical postmodern typographers and graphic novelists. All these imbricated histories of radical avant-garde practices questioning the boundaries between writing and drawing suggest the need for a new approach to those practices, one that refuses the disciplinary siloes separating literature from the visual arts. This might take the form of what Jacques Derrida called a 'cultural graphology' (1976; Fleming, 2016).

Michael Bigg's essay, 'Graphetics: When mark-making becomes writing', tackles a highly contemporary issue. 'Graphetics' is a term of art in linguistics, and is, in effect, the visual equivalent of phonetics, concerning the recognition of the physical shapes of properties in writing. Bigg's concern is with the question of how we recognize the difference between a linguistic mark and nonlinguistic content when interpreting manuscripts. Biggs takes Wittgenstein's manuscripts as exemplary test cases in this regard, because of his experimentation with imaginary letter forms and other ciphers. Biggs shows not just that

distinguishing between linguistic and nonlinguistic content is far less straightforward than it might at first appear, but the distinction is itself problematic. This in turn demonstrates the complexity of the process of reading and of the shifting between seeing shapes on a page, and reading them as text. Biggs shows how this complexity also enters into our experience of nonlinguistic artefacts such as narrative paintings, or hybrid combinations of text and graphics such as company logos.

Lucy O'Donnell's playful essay, 'The magnified glass of liberation: A review of fictional drawing', recounts the process of making 'fictional drawings' for Phil Sawdon's 'Fictional museum of drawing', published in *Fukt Magazine for Contemporary Drawing*. O'Donnell draws on Alain Badiou's understanding of drawing as 'constructive deconstruction' in order to explore its philosophical potential, and its fictionality. She recounts the process by which he or she attempted to not produce, or 'harvest', these fictional drawings, and his or her procrastinations during that process. As she proceeds she begins increasingly to blur the boundaries between writing and drawing.

Cameron McEwan's paper, 'Drawing the city: The analogue as a linguistic form', brings drawing and writing together with architecture and urban form to explore the idea of the city as a kind of text that can be drawn, written and read. He takes this idea from the architect Aldo Rossi, who was also known for his drawing practice. Rossi used collage and drawing as a way of thinking about, and designing for the city, employing textual/graphic operations of substitution, combination and replacement in his visualizations to produce a kind of writing/drawing of the urban environment. McEwan brings together, collages even, Rossi's visualizations with those of Piranesi and Le Corbusier to offer a model of the city as a linguistic form.

Gary Barker's 'Drawing and the street texts of Chapeltown' takes a different view of the city as a space that can be read, concentrating on the graffiti found in the Chapeltown area of Leeds. For Barker these graffitied texts take on an almost psychic dimension, as if the very streets were vocalizing. The words and phrases are variously threatening, bizarre or enigmatic, and at times seem to verge on the occult. Barker's own description manages to perform an act of ekphrasis, describing not just the graffiti themselves but the process of encountering and reading them. This in turn enables Barker to produce an 'Allegorical map of Chapeltown', a drawing/map that expresses the effect of the graffiti on the artist while walking and drawing, and which has now been etched into his or her subconscious.

Philip Tyler's project returns the verbal into the visual – instead of investing the letter with surplus meaning, it becomes emptied from its original form and intention to be legible. Words, deconstructed into letters, become the material to sculpt drawing with. The temporality of these drawings offer new meanings, temporal in the sense that layers of letters are assimilated, a *humus* of words. Tyler refers to *trace* when examining his method and process, including the use of carbon copy. Retracing pages from the sketchbook is an act of gathering, or a kind of collage process; the tracings then become felted and networked – an illustration of Ingold's notion of trace can be turned into thread or rhizome, even if confined to two-dimensional surface. Devoid of obvious meaning or direction these collages of disembowelled words not only speak of a 'sense of not knowing' (Tyler 2018), but beyond of uncertainty and a state of becoming. The notion of figuration, how redundant shapes then reformulate potential recognition of form or presence no longer verbal, is of further interest here: a reciprocity of turning words back into images.

Ram Samocha has a completely different starting point, even though resultant images may superficially share commonalities with Tyler's contribution above. When reading about the gestation process for his drawings, it becomes apparent that Samocha neither deconstructs, nor collages; he invents writing|drawing that appears to look similar in character to the handwritten letter, yet does not conform to any commonly known language. Instead this is a highly personal language, a text only understood in its entirety by its originator, and although a communication, it is one that transcends material thinking. This reminds of spiritual prophetic text or speech, and the long-standing human need to speak to those who passed away and to remain in communication with them. The drawings|writings describe a sense of not understanding, not comprehending, and yet attempt to make meaning out of a situation through inventing a new relationship where drawn text becomes a way of reconnecting with loss. Writing is the transaction that mediates loss. We know this from Roland Barthes (*Camera Lucida*, 1993) and Derrida (2003) who wrote to mourn and commemorate his departed friends (Rohr 2017). The almost hallucinogenic mode of working Ramocha describes when carrying out these drawings brings to mind also Henri Michaux's mescaline drawings. Such drawings are letters, writing, scores and maps simultaneously, synthetic in character and resisting translation.

Claire Scanlon's *Lines of Thought: Diagramming in the Margins of Philosophy* is also about trying to make sense of the (initially) incomprehensible. Yet differently again, here drawing as annotation indicates an interactive reading mode that helps making sense of the verbal printed authoritative text. Underlining and other gestural traces directed by the reader add a secondary level to the primary text. Here again we have a kind of collage, in the sense of simultaneous layering, but the consumed text is appropriated rather than reformulated. The intention is to bring to the dense philosophical script a layer of non-verbal sense-making, and

this is haptic and gestural (following the lines, responding to their graphic layout, a proforma to *contain* or *frame* the interventions); it is also embodying mental processes by finding a visual *and* physical way of understanding through the production of 'intra text' (Scanlon 2018). It would be interesting to see how this vital stage of sense-making is dealt with in digital interfaces as one suspects that haptic interaction is of importance (the touch of the paper, the smell of a book) and that the space of the material book margins invite less-directional responses than the margins or virtual yellow stickers used in more prescriptive graphic formats for online editing. With Scanlon the marginalia morph into maps ('diagrams') of minute beauty, fragile and searching, non-assertive: a quiet disruptive voice.

Francis Blore examines false hierarchies of what is art-worthy, initially through Mel Borchner (conceptual and process art allowed for presentation of what was not considered finished or presentable as art). 'Cross-pollination' of drawing to text is another approach to break down the divide between cerebral verbal and embodied visual practices. Referring to Cixous's 'twin adventures' (2005) of drawing and writing, the common ground with other contributions is that of creating or searching for meaning, yet not expecting to find such, as yet at least. Much drawing and writing are processes of making sense, but frequently they do not offer solutions or answers. This 'endless gaucherie of seeking' has to be thought of as a process of fragmentation (Blore 2018) – 'seeking' can only (re)produce further fragments, Blore concludes. Blore asserts that drawing is material, more materialized than the printed word, at least the type of drawing that adds pigment to a surface and builds it into a visual presence (with reference to Vija Celmins). Visual presence requires grasping the image in its totality differently to the delay of comprehension in a verbal presentation of text. Even if text is presented within the 'frame', drawn text disrupts narrative and blurs meaning, whereas constructed verbal text intents to create meanings (albeit often fictional and at times equally

disruptive like a virus undermining its own given structures – editor's note). Unlike many other contributors to this special issue, Blore asserts that the seam between writing and drawing needs to remain intact, a tidal seam nevertheless, permeable and changing.

Adriana Ionascu's paper, 'Making / drawing with words: How form becomes text, how text becomes form', is subtitled 'un-writing and re-writing of form'. Embodied drawing has been a shared denominator amongst many contributors here, and the exploration of language as a code another. Digital code becomes deconstructed and transformed, re-entering the physical body as an originator. The list of 'performative word-acts' she describes as 'rolling, folding, bending, twisting, splitting, wrapping, binding, joining, bonding, stretching' in contradistinction to a list of programming commands, 'rotate, curve, arrange, expand, cut, multiply' (Ionascu 2018). Notable here is the use of the 'ing' suffix to denote active performed gesture (duration).

By comparison, Serra's *Verb List* (1967–68) uses infinitives. Samantha Friedman concludes that 'Serra described the list as a series of "actions to relate to oneself, material, place, and process," and employed it as a kind of guide for his subsequent practice in multiple mediums' (2011). The pairing of concept art with process advances another closure of pairings – the habitual, embodied, performed is compatible with the coded. Taking this into processes of craft, the digital offers different potentials for gesture to perform a role besides authorial code. Besides, digital programming and making redefines ceramics as contemporary and innovative (formerly considered unsophisticated, traditional, earthy), and in turn the conception of craft has become redefined through digital forming. This connects with the thought processes of theoreticians like Richard Sennett (2008), Malcolm McCullough (1996) and Lars Spuybroek (2011). These design and craft theoreticians have promoted digital

making as a contemporary craft process that can be applied mindful of wider social considerations.

Ionascu's discussion of word, sound, image, text as a sensory *and* cerebral context for making brings to mind the introductory remarks initiated by Ingold. Her journey takes the reader from Proust's sensual evocation of memory (Walter Benjamin's essay 'The image of proust' in *Illuminations* [1969] has to be a complimentary reading to Ionascu's text) via poetry as performed word/sound/art, to words' rootedness in sensory experience, as they act as transcriptions of visceral haptic memories: 'words acquire sense' (Ionascu 2018). Terminology in digital context frequently has traditional association, one might consider nostalgic, but more likely transitional and habitual, to enable the consumer to bridge the gap between analogue memories and digital futures.

Nevertheless, haptic qualities are by no means confined to the analogue. There has been a tendency to split the analogue from the digital, something in need of address. Switching from analogue to digital and vice versa is common, not only in the studio or workshop, but also in everyday life. Re-investing the disembodied digital with sensual complexity surely must be one of the tasks for our period in time. Drawing can perform a distinctive role here in connecting memory with making and crafting, and the imagined and non-material with the materialized embodied and emplaced being.

These papers can perhaps be seen as contributions to a potential new discipline, that of 'cultural graphology', mentioned earlier. As such they offer an opportunity to restore the severed connection between writing and drawing, and, in doing so, act as a reminder of the embodied nature of mark making. This is especially important at a time when digital media

seem to make the processes of writing and drawing ever more abstract, opaque and dematerialized. The irony is that the word ‘digital’ derives from ‘digit’, ‘finger’, meaning that even the most apparently immaterial processes of mark making remain bound up with the hand and handicraft.

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Contributor details

Dr Doris Rohr's research and practice involves drawing, writing and the spaces in between. Writing is situated alongside drawing and mark making, at times merging, but also asserting a separate existence from drawing. The practice of drawing is primarily paper-based, and frequently involves outdoor research into landscape. Fieldwork consists of walking, haptic

interaction with site and notebook activities of plein air drawing and writing, underpinned through phenomenological encounter. Her drawings have been shown in Ireland, Britain, Germany, the United States, Thailand and Taiwan. She has published articles on drawing and memory, teaching drawing and community engagement. Doris Rohr is Senior Lecturer in Fine Art Drawing at Liverpool Hope University. She is editorial board member of *Drawing: Research, Theory, Practice*. She recently completed a Ph.D. on the contemporary relevance of John Ruskin's teaching and writing on drawing and nature.

Contact: Liverpool Hope University, Creative Campus, Room 211, Shaw Street, Liverpool, L6 1HP, UK E-mail: rohrd@hope.ac.uk

Charlie Gere is Professor of Media Theory and History in the Lancaster Institute for Contemporary Arts, Lancaster University. He is the author of *Digital Culture* (2002), *Art, Time and Technology* (2006), and *Community without Community in Digital Culture* (2012), as well as co-editor of *White Heat Cold Technology* (2009), *Art Practice in a Digital Culture* (2010), as well as many book chapters and journal papers. He has co-curated exhibitions both in Britain and abroad. His latest monograph, is *Unnatural Theology: Religion, Art, and Media after the Death of God* (Bloomsbury, forthcoming). He is currently writing two books, one tentatively entitled *I Hate the Lake District*, and the other, *Living at the World's End*.

Contact: Lancaster Institute for the Contemporary Arts, Lancaster University, Bailrigg, LA1 4YW, UK