Networks and Meshworks – topologies for cross-disciplinary teaching in drawing

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Abstract

Our paper would like to look at 2 key themes in design knowledge: ‘is drawing utilized sufficiently as a fundamental tool for thinking across disciplines’, and ‘how is drawing as an experimental approach and attitude distinct from drawing as an outcome and discipline’.

We will provide an academic framework to investigate drawing and use empirical data from our case studies to support our premise that drawing is under-utilised as a cross disciplinary tool for experimentation and critical investigation.

We take drawing in its most fundamental guise of a conscious movement to create a trace, or mark-making in any rudimentary gesture.

We take two theoretical positions to provide the academic infrastructure for our case studies.

We call upon Deleuze and Guatta’ri notion of ‘Intuition in action’ and this partly phenomenological position is counterpointed by the notion of network and meshwork defined in the essay by the archaeologist Carl Knappett: Networks of Objects, Meshworks of Things (2011)

We will look in detail at the idea of how drawing can be interpreted and re–interpreted by a process of ‘zooming in’ and ‘zooming out’ to expose 2 palpable worlds of drawing: Drawing as a network of objects, and a meshwork of things. Within these spheres we will look to explore the ability of drawing to provide the ability to capture thinking and not thought: 'a space where thinking is presenced'.

We will take these notions of object and thing; thinking and thought, into the classroom.

Our University department has created a Drawing Lab to provide a dedicated space for the cross-disciplinary teaching of drawing. We run units and workshops with students from illustration, fine art, and animation; alongside students from marketing—the business school and biological sciences.

The dynamics between network and meshwork are explored between the groups who expect and have a notion of drawing as pedagogical device—alongside those who see drawing as both extra curricular—and a intuitive process.

Our research will show the benefits of Knappett’s notion of zooming-in and zooming out to demonstrate a working methodology for cross-disciplinary teaching in drawing thinking.