

Drawn Together : collaborative performance

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Documentation of performance, Drawn Together, Centre for Drawing Project Space, Wimbledon College of Art, 05/03/09.
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Summary

In the collaborative work of Drawn Together,¹ a group formed by the artists Maryclare Foá, Jane Grisewood, Birgitta Hosea and Carali McCall, diverse practices are collectively materialised through performance drawing. Focusing on the notion of fragmentation has been instructive in identifying how the collaboration binds together a series of fragments and discontinuities that are enacted and reassembled in unpredictable and new ways.

¹ See 'Drawn Together' blog <http://drawntogether.wordpress.com>

Line process echo repeat: collaborative performance

In a complex world that can no longer be explained by grand narratives or mono-theistic solutions, an inter-disciplinary approach to science or technology can advance knowledge with the creation of fresh perspectives and new solutions.² The disciplines of music and theatre also involve long established traditions of interdisciplinary collaboration, for example, many different instruments combine in a band to create one piece of music. In these disciplines, collaboration is more common than solo performance.

Drawn Together was formed during a residency at the Lethaby Gallery as part of practice-based research at the University of the Arts London. The group were attracted to working together because they were each questioning their individual disciplinary positions and investigating interdisciplinary activities: examining sound as drawing, drawing as time-based activity, deconstructing animation as performance and using drawing in performance as a sculptural form that investigates the limits of the body. They identified common lines of interest running through their work – repetition, process, tracing physical presence and linear mark making as well as shared theoretical interests, incorporating a wide range of ideas and concepts including Derridean breaking down of binary thinking; Deleuzian engaging with repetition and interpreting the line; Bachelard's dreaming and place; Merleau-Ponty's relating with physicality and sensory perception; Butler's performativity; and Schechner's performance as ritual.

They began to experiment with different forms of collaboration alongside considering how their individual practices could complement, converge, contradict or contrast with each other's. While continuing to develop their own individual work, they collaborate on joint projects that address relationships between the body and presence, time and space, through performance drawing. Their individual approaches to drawing allow numerous narratives to be played out in a single location, disrupting the continuity of seamless performance and challenging the traditional Romantic notion of the unique vision of the solitary artist in the studio.

Writing on the semantic roots of the concept of drawing, Alan Cholodenko³ argues that the practice of drawing implies not only the tracing of presence, but also drawing *forth* and *withdrawing* delineation. For this group, the work is drawn *together* in the act of performance that traces a dialogue with the line. They each 'frame' these issues in different ways and approach them from different perspectives, which will be discussed in more detail by each of the artists in the next section.

In their performance, *line process echo repeat*, Foá, drawing through sound, developed a drawn score and 'Driftsong' methodology, while Hosea created a performance in which she projected animation onto herself, replacing her own face with that of an animated doll. Led by process and repetitive movement, Grisewood and McCall jointly performed *line dialogue*, a one-hour wall drawing, marking time and challenging endurance.

Their recent performance at the Centre for Drawing in Wimbledon integrated different media and different approaches to drawing: the creation of iterative graphite marks, projected line animation and sound; each form of media tracing the physical presence of the artist's body. The performance concluded with an act of erasure: the sound and animation faded away, the marks were wiped from the walls. *Line process echo repeat* brought the artist's different approaches together and integrated them into one piece: creating a single work that incorporated multiple perspectives on the concept of performance drawing, allowing layers of marking that could repeat and interact through the different media, and a fragmented and oscillating time to emerge where the past and present could conflate and stretch, all the while questioning the accuracy of tracing the present.

² Dewulf, A., G. François, C. Pahl-Wostl, and T. Taillieu. 2007. A framing approach to cross-disciplinary research collaboration: experiences from a large-scale research project on adaptive water management. *Ecology and Society* 12(2): 14. [accessed online 17/07/09] URL: <http://www.ecologyandsociety.org/vol12/iss2/art14/>

³ Cholodenko, A. (2000), *The Illusion of the Beginning: A Theory of Drawing and Animation*, *Afterimage*, vol.28, no.1, July/August.

Maryclare Foá



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Working with Grisewood, Hosea and McCall in the Wimbledon's Centre for Drawing Project Space, my sounding practice seeks to reveal the sweet spot of the environment and then to mimic and echo the sound of Grisewood and McCall making their *line dialogue III* wall drawing.

Sounding 'swish swish' and 'woosh woosh' mimics and echoes the drawing while referencing the bow wow theory of the origins of language. (How speech grew from mimicking natural sounds). Gradually in fragments the repeated rhythm in a back and forth action stimulates a sonic shift, from a single echo into a tonal response. This repetition points to the performative element present in all drawing as coined by philosopher of language, J.L. Austin,⁴ described by performance theorist, Peggy Phelan⁵ and gender theorist, Judith Butler,⁶ a performative repeats the meaning. That is to say, speaking the words, 'I choose you', brings into being that choice. Therefore, it follows that in every mark drawn there is a performative, in that the intended idea or observed object is repeated /drawn into the world.

Jacques Derrida warns us that defined evidence of presence can be interpreted as a rigorous sign: 'The authentic trace disturbs the order of the world it comes superimposed',⁷ or a gesture of something past: 'He will not have been present but he will have left a gift by not disappearing without leaving a trace'.⁸ This collaboration between Grisewood, McCall and myself develops through process from the first directed echoes, into tonal interactions that expand to an improvised melodic sounding. The *line dialogue III* drawing initially having directed the sounding then becomes impacted upon by the soundings tonal flow and so the conversation between myself, Grisewood and McCall becomes reciprocal. The drawing, the practitioners and the sounding all become impacted by each other.

Jane Grisewood



⁴ Austin, J.L. British philosopher of language, invented the word 'performative' as a term to describe speech acts, such as 'I promise' in his 1946 paper *Other Minds*, *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society Supplement* 20. pp.148-87.

⁵ Phelan, P. (1996) *Unmarked: the politics of performance*, New York: Routledge. p.149.

⁶ Butler, J. (2000) *Critically Queer, Identity: A Reader*. eds. du Gay, P., Evans, J. & Redman, P. London: Sage Publications. pp.8-16.

⁷ Derrida, J. (1991) *At this very moment in this work here I am*. In: *Re-reading Levinas*, trans. Berezdivin, R. eds. R. Bernasconi, R & S.Critchley, S. Bloomington & Indianapolis: Indiana University Press. p.37.

⁸ *Ibid*.



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The collaboration, *line process echo repeat*, in the Centre for Drawing with Foá, Hosea and McCall involved a series of exploratory processes, movements and mark making that facilitated my continuing concern with notions of time and transience, and in finding ways of visualising the collapse of time and space.

The 'drawn' line, repeated again and again, has always been critical, and provides a way of exploring the mutability and fragmentation of time itself. The lines represent a liminal space – a 'between' space – always in movement, folding and unfolding, creating disembodied traces to mark the passing of time. The importance of the line is echoed by Gilles Deleuze's belief that lines are the most basic components of things and events, 'we are made up of lines, and these lines are very varied in nature'.⁹ Deleuze also 'privileges discontinuity and fragmentation over continuity,' but he links this fragmentation with becoming 'because it coincides with experimentation as the very force of time'.¹⁰

During the performance, while delineating materiality and bodily presence we were also concerned with discontinuity and fragmentation. The collaborative one-hour wall drawing, *line dialogue III* with McCall, created further layering and disruptions in the space. We were interrogating the dynamics between performance and drawing, interchanging individual interests in challenging endurance and marking time, and as we faced the wall, blindly responding to the sounds and movements of Foá and Hosea, who in turn reacted to our relentless shifting and marking.

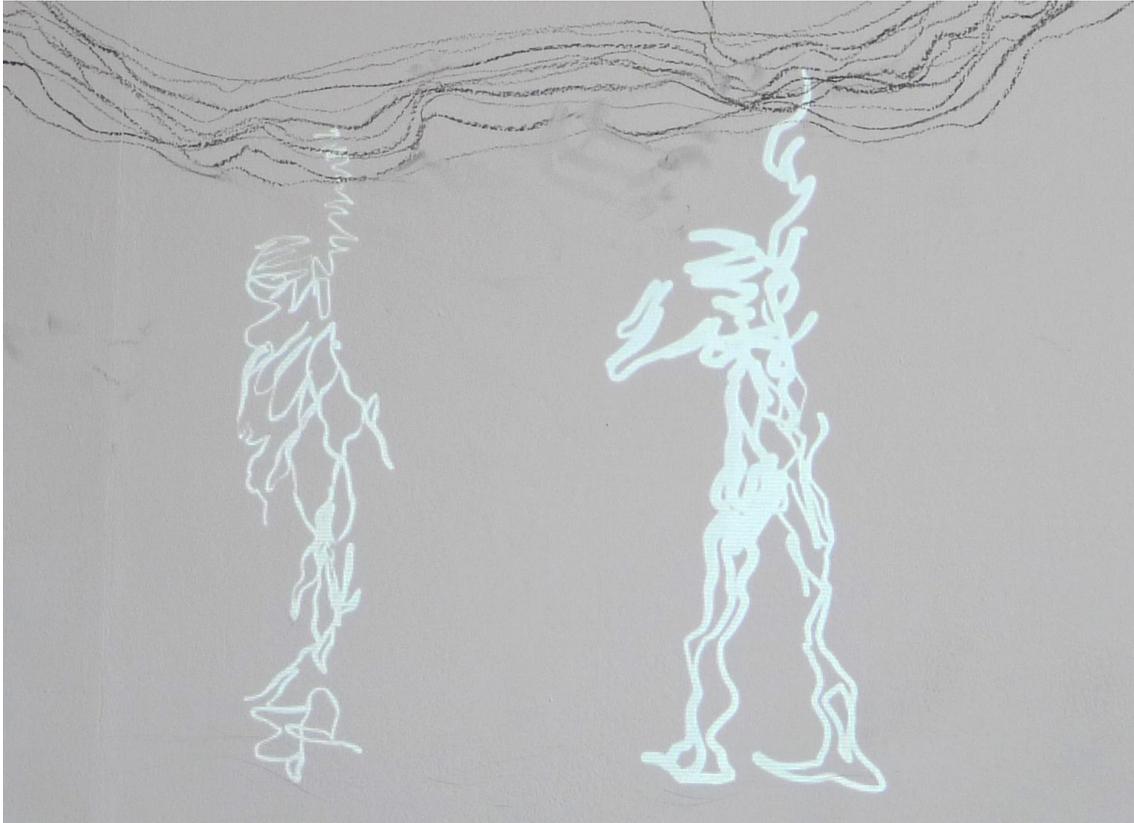
Our repeated movement back and forth through time and space left multiple layers of charcoal and graphite lines as fragments on the wall, physical traces often smudged and transparent, and simultaneously produced invisible lines that traced our passage – up and down, over and under – along the wall. The lines created were transitory, and although recorded in time, they were

⁹ Deleuze, G. in conversation with Parnet, C. (2002) *Dialogues II*, London & New York: Continuum. p.124.

¹⁰ Moulard-Leonard, V. (2008) *Bergson-Deleuze Encounters*, New York: SUNY Press. p.8.

paradoxically erased by time, as what remained visible was wiped away as the final gesture of the performance.

Birgitta Hosea



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In exploring the performativity of drawing, the members of Drawn Together work both individually and collaboratively. Jane Tormey suggests that for a drawing to be performative it 'declares itself in its own doing', performs itself and happens spontaneously.¹¹ It is a compulsive, ritualised activity that affirms the identity of the artist.

Particular animation techniques such as rotoscoping or motion capture highlight the issue of multiple intentionality behind a multi-authored performance. In the process of 'rotoscoping', an animator works with a film or video recording of an actor and uses it as the basis for the animation. The animator's intentions behind the animated performance are shared with those of the performer. Animation that has been created by an artist is combined with images of a previous performance created for the purpose of reference: a presence that once was and is no longer. These different levels of performance are unified in the mind of the spectator.

For this project, I created line-drawn animations of Grisewood and McCall based on video footage of them in the act of drawing lines across the entire length of the wall. The ghostly, white lines used in the animation were inspired by McCall drawing in white chalk on a white wall. Creating animations of Grisewood and McCall foregrounded the process of drawing as opposed to the marks that they made: the dance-like movements that their bodies made in the act of mark making, the variety in pace and posture, the balletic interchange and negotiation as they passed each other.

The scribbled drawings that constituted the animation used the 'rotoscope' process of tracing frame-by-frame over video reference: each scribbled pose based on 'reality' yet merely a fragment of the total movement, a fragment of the totality of the pose. Drawing movement is a contradictory idea, for how can you capture in a still image that which is moving? Drawing is static, yet when drawings are shown rapidly in succession they create the appearance of movement. It is a paradox that a sequence of still drawings played back in a particular manner can create the illusion of time passing. In this animation, the properties of the actual lines themselves were also animated on the computer in order to make them boil and wiggle, giving them an energy and dynamism beyond the line drawn on each frame. The uncanny act of creating movement from that which is still is described by Alan Cholodenko thus:

Articulating the animate upon the inanimate, animation draws drawing, that is, draws death to life and life to death at the same time, as it simultaneously draws motionlessness into motion and motion into motionless.¹²

In homage to 'expanded cinema', during the performance I projected the drawn animations of Grisewood and McCall back over them during the act of drawing. I wore the projector in a harness so that it became an extension of my body and traced the path of my own movements as I walked around with it. The projector itself became a mobile instrument of drawing, a tool of performance. Thus, I was able to move the projections around the space in collaboration with the movements made by Grisewood and McCall: animating the animations; revealing a haunted echo of actions that were undertaken by them four days before, a ghostly emanation of their past presence.

¹¹ Tormey, J. Editorial for the Performance edition of TRACEY, Contemporary Drawing Research electronic journal, <http://www.lboro.ac.uk/departments/ac/tracey/perf1.html>, accessed online 11/06/09 [2005].

¹² Cholodenko, op.cit.

Carali McCall



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In the Centre for Drawing, we are marking the space to explore both fragments of embodiment and a new drawing process that questions the relationship between performance and drawing. Employing the essential aspects in our individual practice, we simply draw with an awareness of our actions. Influenced by the space and the sounds and movements made during the event, we all continue to test and allow ourselves to become conscious of the different potentials of the act of drawing.

I am fiercely expending energy by moving from one side of the room to the other, continuously being challenged by my own rules; reach as far up the wall as possible, mark as intensively as possible and for as long as possible. Strenuous movements and direct influences allow for a changeable event.

To associate my body as a physical instrument, Merleau-Ponty provides some understanding of embodiment when he states: 'the actual shape and innate capacities of the human body help us to appreciate our body and how it exists in the world'.¹³ In this event, I am identifying limits of my physical body through the process of drawing. I am highlighting the significance of movement and the effects of placing charged energy in my drawing practice. Through notions of embodiment, it emphasizes the role of the body that it plays on shaping the drawing and the event.

The drawn line made during the performance, becomes a series of fragments. Throughout the event the line is broken by crossing over and repetition. These fragments of the line are continuously building to mark time and the body in a space to represent the performance. Each line remains as part of the event while some are lost in time, erased by another. They illustrate a method of working – marking in a space that transmits energy. It influences and stimulates a unique collaboration. Each line becomes a fragment of an artwork and the linking system for everyone's practice – each individual aspect becomes part of the performance in its totality.

I am listening to a rhythm of my breath, Grisewood's movement and Foa's voice. The sounds and feelings make my experience. My consciousness jumps continuously – experiencing pain and relief, solitude and togetherness.



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¹³ Merleau-Ponty. M. (2002) *Phenomenology of Perception*. London: Routledge. p.117.