THE ESTATE OF DRAWING—A PROVISIONAL DOMAIN OR A DOMAIN OF THE PROVISIONAL?

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ABSTRACT

The Provisional Drawing School was established in Oslo (Norway) in 1818. In 2018 the establishment of the school will be commemorated—at the occasion of the bicentennial—at the Oslo National Academy of the Arts. In the historical development that led to the present entity the position of drawing, as an historical estate, has been makeshift and unstable. However, from the 1990s onwards, the development and ubiquity of CAD in Norway arguably shifted the operations of manual drawing to a style of «hand-thinking» in the direction discussed by Petherbridge [1]: "…sociologist Kathryn Henderson claims the importance of sketches for sharing information, in an age of CAD. 'Sketches are at the heart of design work. They serve as thinking tools to capture ideas on paper where they can be better understood, further analysed and refined and negotiated… Once on paper, sketches serve as talking sketches, collaborative tools for working out ideas with other designers as well as with those in production'." By extension, the present paper features drawing as mode of inquiry into design—comparing four different approaches of *using design to reveal design*. By focussing on drawing the paper aims at doing two jobs: a) to compare practices related specifically to identifiable layers (of drawing as a *legacy*); b) to *manifest* the broader tendencies of how research is querying the relations between theory and practice, both in our educational- and third cycle- programs.

Keywords: Drawing, process, reflection, categorisation, history, location, thirdness, institutional change, pragmatism, artistic research, third cycle of education, semiotics, cybernetics.

1 INTRODUCTION

This paper samples from a case-base of four queries into drawing. The case-base came out of a conversation between the four authors on *drawing processes*—based on their professional engagement in teaching, design and artistic research—on the role of drawing in *categorisation*.

While professional conversation is a standard context of drawing, the present aim of co-authoring a paper—featuring the outcomes of this conversation in text—leaves the 'common track': it takes place in the context of institutional change, featuring the ubiquity of advanced equipment and digitisation[1].

The four-way conversation between a designer specialised in drawing (Loly), a furniture designer (Blikstad), a design MA candidate (Wisløff) and an anthropologist (Barth) is *ongoing*—and open-ended—in a context of *institutional change* which therefore requires a few clarifying statements.

These are: 1) in the institutional history of art-schools *drawing* is at the core of a 'subaltern' academic culture resisting text [with its own *oral* history]; 2) drawing is a changing device that has moved from composition to viewing; 3) artistic research today innovates the ratio of drawing/writing/making.

The institutional history of art schools in Oslo has gone through an additive and a subtractive phase: a) *additive*—from the early beginnings of the Provisional Drawing School in 1818 to the full fletched art school in 1903; b) *subtractive*—the Academy in 1909, architecture in 1961, industrial design in 1996.

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[1] The assistance of Trond Mikkelsen in our dForm Lab—3D printing and laser-cutting, scanning and mounting—has allowed us to communicate some aspects of drawing [as hand-thinking] into some other areas of enskilment (cf, section 5).

In the same historical period, drawing as a representation technique was replaced by photography [2] [3] and a) moved towards the arts, crafts and industry. And in the next phase b) drawing at art school started shed its *outer* productive objectives for *introspective* purposes.

The present paper seeks to establish an *hypothesis* of what the latter category of drawing is *about*. Hence it does not deal with drawing as a craft—and the drawer as a professional—but as a reflective vehicle used to develop and share ideas, in a setting where a new variety of disciplines are included.

The constitution of Oslo National Academy of the Arts (KHiO) in 1996, is the result of a new additive thrust linked to the contemporary political agenda for mergers in the educational sector. The first educations to enter the conglomerate, in 2006, were theatre (f.1952), opera (-1964) and dance (1979).

While the Academy, Arts & Crafts and Design (the latter to from the old core) followed suit in 2010. In this new community, *drawing*—in the sense explored—extends unto the performing arts through the hands choreographers, scenographers and costume-designers and theatre directors.

 Our emphasis on line-drawing—linked to a variety of professional vocations and utilities—therefore focuses on processes of communicative interaction in creative education and -practice, as an extremely broad and varied phenomenon in a professional culture, but where only a few claim to be *drawers*.

This testifies to the both pervasive and provisional character of drawing, which we believe can be fruitfully exploited by focussing on research as a vocational training extending to the natural & technical sciences on the one hand, to the arts & humanities to the other. The «common» of drawing.

Superficially, drawing seems to extend more readily to natural & technical sciences owing to advanced visualisation techniques, and the place of (CAD) drawing in planning. However, drawings— often termed 'diagrams'—are common as based crafts of field-research in archaeology and ethnology.

Generally, any vocation—scientific or artistic—where the use of diary- & log-entries is a common practice will include drawers among their ranks. Hence the question of how such a broad phenomenon, in contemporary knowing-cultures, can come out with such a *weak* public impact/signal.

The reason why we have opted for a hard-nosed *reductive* strategy in this paper is: i) that drawing is a reductive strategy; ii) that the vernacular of more laborious self-reflection in the drawing process readily brings us unto a backdrop ranging from psychoanalytic theory [4] to phenomenology [5].

We are by no means foreign to these queries, but we also realise that they are inadequate to achieve two main objectives: §) to establish drawing in the vocational training of researchers; §§) to develop framework of including drawing at an institutional level, where 3rd cycle education is in the making.

Hence our selection of a *semiotic* framework here—as a pragmatics of inquiry—is to elaborate on aspects of drawing that we think might have a broad trans-disciplinary relevance: i.e., C.S. Peirce's categories of *firstness*, *secondness*, *thirdness* [6], as a minimum variety in the pragmatics of drawing.

We inquire into drawing as a basic style of search and adaptation, which today paradoxically underpins a number of digital practices, while increasingly marginal in the practical awareness of the users. Hence the specifically educational relevance of the hypothesis that we develop in this paper.

The paper is highly selective and does not aim at the representation of the entire field of drawing, but rather to present a *variety* [7] of entries which is sufficient for the reader to generate and output in his/her or other fields. The minimum variety being the equivalent of *Occam's razor*.

After this introduction (1) the paper continues with *perspective* in drawing (2); then follows with *practice* [the discharge of perspective in making] (3) delves into *ideas* (4) then leaves *perspective* (5) and concludes (6). The approach to each contribution (below) is ethnographic and comparative.
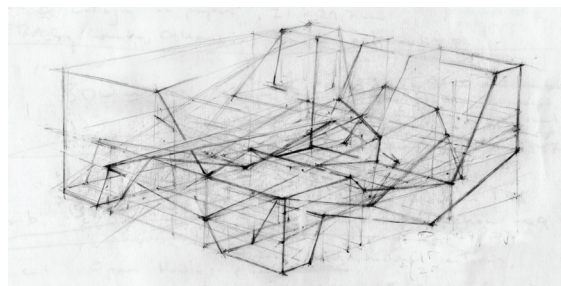
2 PERSPECTIVE IN PERSPECTIVE

Figure 1. Carsten Loly's drawing-sample

The comparative discussion of Carsten Loly's input to our four-way conversation, is taking place on the backdrop of a few sessions of sharing our drawings and discussing them in the context of historical change outlined above. Loly's input will yield a basic understanding of C.S. Peirce's categories.

In his written input he reflects on both *additive* and *subtractive* drawing-techniques. The additive technique works from the core-out—as one draws *objects*—while the subtractive technique moves from the border-space inwards; as when a drawing features an approach that *might end up* in an object. The point with the subtractive approach being that it might also *not* end up in an object, but contribute e.g. to a model of *process*. However, the turning point from where the drawer *ceases* to have the pre-existing object in mind and turns to take interest in the *form* of a process s/he is working is important.

In Loly's intervention this takes on a particular significance as he focuses on the role of *perspective* in both the additive and subtractive drawing. There are clearly differences between the two. In additive drawings the guides are removed, while in subtractive drawing they are the memory.

The subtractive drawing goes digging for the shape, and the guides that are visible in the drawing *above*, constitute the memory of earlier processing stages. Loly distinguishes between drawing used in studying objects and spaces that already exist, and the development of ideas fuelled by imagination.

He states that: "What does not *readily* appear is how unwanted irregularities in the space's organising grid, often are manipulated, removed or hidden to re-establish order and maintain the status of drawing as a transparent *medium*, and a *container* supporting a free circulation and convertibility of *meaning*."

Loly also understands 'transparency' as the output of a reductive intention operating that the semiotic level. The range and scope of transparency is the crux of the matter in his intervention. It connects with a short passage on transparency in a book by Zizek [8] on the role of parallax in viewing.

I.e. the importance of interposed objects—such as guides in line-drawing—to what is intercepted from the depth of our fields of perception: here, *transparency*—pace Metzinger—is understood as a special kind of 'darkness' (we see *through* it) connected with the *amnesia* of earlier processing stages.

We will temporarily conclude that two statements on form emerge from Loly's discussion: a) form as an entity that can be unrelated to substance [such as utility] and separate from materiality; b) form as a meta-stable relationship between substance and matter [with a broader reach to users and readers].

If the latter view is adopted—in which usership and readability are included into what is solved in form—then three questions emerge: 1) *when* does the need to draw emerge in a design process? 2) *where* does drawing take the drawer? 3) *what* does drawing do when research meets testing?

These three questions are connected with C.S. Peirce 3 categories: 1) with firstness the need to draw is prompted with certain *qualia* [i.e., feeling]; 2) with secondness the act of drawing is related to the reaction of the media and resistance in the drawer; 3) thirdness relates to the habits/laws of *mediation*.

3   PRACTICE IN PERSPECTIVE

Figure 2. Bjørn Blikstad's Drawing-sample

In Italian, design (It. *disegno*) means at once 'drawing' and 'intention'. Vasari (1511-1574) evokes design as "the animating principle of all creative processes." Blikstad's ideas are of this range and scope. The *perspective* provided by drawing here relates to *practice*. A perspective from *the edge*.

His written input on drawing places it in the context of a wider design-process, in which the task of drawing is to work on moving an idea from the *virtual* [imagination] into the *actual* [the senses]. The processes is one of filtrating the idea through an ever tighter mesh. Grand ideas often prove worthless.

Bjørn Blikstad compares the work of drawing with the operation of the ventilator in his workshop: once the saw-dust has been removed by the filter-device the clean air returned and is recirculated through the hose and its shaft. Blikstad's concept of drawing is clearly *systemic* and *cybernetic* [9].

But in the explication of his way with drawing he goes further in elaborating on the *place of drawing* (comparable to the workshop); an unbearably tight spot, but promises of euphoria whenever it is successful. His drawing process is somehow involved in *making place* for prototyping.

His drawings are therefore never exhaustive: the search and adaptation in drawing come to a halt, at some point, when prototyping takes over; relating the problems at a level of practical detail that can only be worked with in prototyping. Drawing makes place for that which takes place in prototyping.

Accordingly, his drawings are temporary constructs—*placeholders*—in the life-cycle of his design process. Therefore his virtual "drawing cabinet" is a place in which he, as a furniture designer, works to develop the actual place for the try-outs, tests and experiments that belong to *prototyping*.

Where Loly emphasises material aspects of the line-drawing—as a communicative affordance—Blikstad emphasises the importance of drawing in *prompting* and *parsing* the topology of the design-process, moving from old realms of possibility to new ones, and his model of drawing is generative.

Of course, this is a matter of relative emphasis—drawing works both ways for both—but the role of materiality is more salient in the input from Loly, than in Blikstad's intervention, featuring a *generative model* of the design process in which the questions on *form* appear to be rather marginal.

Blikstad writes: "A 'good drawing' is externally meaningful, but the kind *immersive* drawing that absorbs me completely, and is probably not within the range of someone else's experience. It might not even be interesting. But from my perspective it is the meaning of life at that moment."

He observes that the *gap* separating one person from another, may turn into an *abyss* in the life-cycle of creative work. The drawing-process appears as a conversation between drawing and language: a dialogue in soliloquy leading to realms that are normally hidden, and where secrets lay buried.

To draw—in Blikstad's work-process—therefore is a major decision, rather than a need: he enters drawing whenever a critical mass of unfiltered ideas reach a point where they promise to hatch a new repertoire. And the outcomes of drawing are transitive in the affordances created for prototyping.

In this sense, Blikstad's intervention relates to criticality: avalanche-like dynamics [10] [11]. His need to draw [*firstness*] results from a critical mass; the *place* of drawing [*secondness*] is the cusp of unstable equilibrium, and *thirdness* relates to the occasional avalanche from drawing to prototyping.
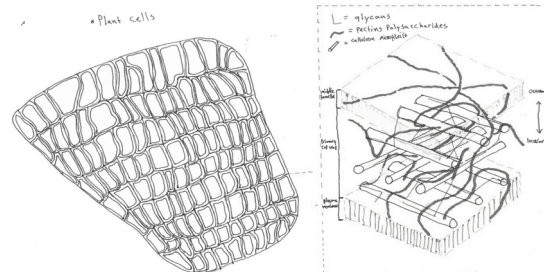
4   IDEAS IN PERSPECTIVE

Figure 3. Isak Wisløff's drawing-sample

Isak Wisløff's take on drawing emphasises the body. Together with Loly's and Blikstad's contribution he defines a triangle between materiality, topology and embodiment in drawing as part of a *compound* design-practice. His drawing is a steering device in the push-and-pull between ideas and experience.

Wisløff is emphatically interested in *form*. And form as the idea behind all the designed items that we have in our world. His point of departure is that we have designed objects that make up our life-worlds. He shares this interest with Loly. But like Blikstad he is interested in the process.

Not in the making *per se*, but in the living pulse of the form that becomes available through analysis and synthesised through the drawing process. In sum, the input from Wisløff directs our attention to *analysis* and *synthesis*, more than description (as in Loly's input) and generation (as in Blikstad's).

And the three approaches, considered up to now, constitute interventions that differ by what they put into *perspective*: while Loly, as a specialised drawer, focuses on the materiality of *perspective*, Blikstad puts his *practice* into perspective, while Wisløff puts the *idea*-process into perspective.

In short, drawing, as discussed here, offers a variety of perspectives, or *perspectivism* as a mode of *reflection* in design, relating differently—in their different *modi*—to another triangle: the triangle of drawing, wording and making. Wisløff champions a non-directional drawing.

He writes: "The non-directional nature of drawing makes it at once the most primitive and complex tool in the development of form." He defines the non-directional as the *neutrality* of drawing with regard to *where it points*: to the *inner* world of its maker, or to the *outer* world of making.

By moving back and forth *between* these makeshift orientations, the drawer develops a *third space*. Like Blikstad he dreads this domain; but different from Blikstad his dread is that he might reject ideas that are fundamental, or end up altering them. He also emphasises space instead of place (Blikstad).

A common denominator between the three is that none of them consider drawing as a technical process that could be taken over by machines (CAD or simply automation). In drawing, personal education—and its journey—is part of what drawing is about. It is part of the heritage from *Goethe*.

This heritage is fundamental to art schools, not at an abstract theoretical level, but at the level of practice involving drawing, form and colour. Locating this issue at the appropriate level, however, is of major importance, since very few members of staff and students would *lecture* about Goethe.

So, we are talking about a different set of practices in *learning* and transmission. In the natural history tradition the contract between the eye and what can be seen in the world, is subject to training and based on experience: no one will say that the education of the eye partakes in acts of light (Goethe).

What Wisløff states is that the *third space*—introduced above—reacts to a response from external world, or space, and one can then opt to turn inwards. The relationship with external reality—he continues—is a *sparring* relationship. In this process the idea will stand to test: as idea or as illusion.

Wisløff's *third space* is neither transparent *nor* opaque, but semi-transparent, semi-opaque; i.e. *translucent*. Where Loly discusses the transparency of the drawing Wisløff discusses a third space in such terms. *Firstness* relates to the idea, *secondness* to the world-response, *thirdness* to the third space.
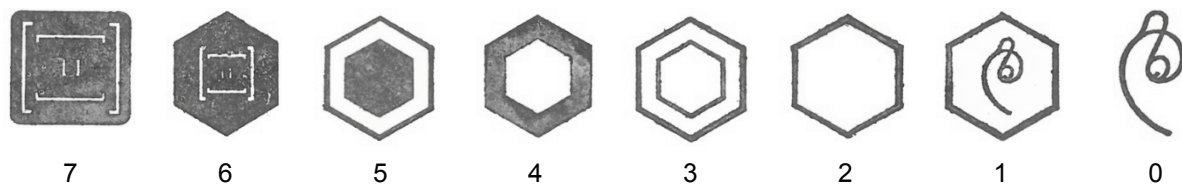
5 BEYOND PERSPECTIVE

Figure 4. Theodor Barth's drawing-sample

Theodor Barth's input also champions *non-directional* approach, in that the working-hypothesis of a 'third space' first translates into the idea of the *para-site* [12]: the para-site being a location in which a conversation may take place *alongside* an exploration of drawing, and translate into a *text*. As here.

The text adds materials to the para-site as a forum for *living* knowledge, and features a *conversation pieces* alongside other materials that the participants may choose to add—such as ideas and prototypes—gathered around the *core* of drawing. The para-site differs from a workshop/seminar.

The para-site does not focus on single perspectives—that unfold in solitary or in dialogue—but on how the multiplication of perspectives, originates from people's activities in different commons, convey the impact of *third party*-interest, and project it into the space of conversation in the *para-site*.

In the para-site featuring the inputs from Loly, Blikstad, Wisløff and Barth what is projected is the *working*- and *learning environments* at KHiO and AHO: the school environments in which we do our daily chores in researching, teaching and publicising (in various forms and formats).

Barth is interested in these as *timescapes*: that is, environments that do not manifest spatial properties such as perspective, but can manifest other—*time*-related—properties such as speed, movement, momentum and weight. Paul Klee [13] invented a style of drawing for this.

However, Barth wanted to bring the reflection on post-perspectival drawing one step further, by emphasising the momentary impact of *stamping* drawn shapes, conveying the idea to an interested third party, that what prompts attention in a *single moment* can parse multiple layers in time.

Loly's interest in industrial products, Wisløff's in the designs that make up our life-world, and Blikstad's crossroads of multiple potential outcomes, are facets of those *factitious* materials that are the resources of the para-site; it works to process drawing by conversation in the context of making.

To have the stamps do this job, Barth developed drawings that would enfold time differently, so that a third party could see them as different *landmarks* of a timescape. Drawing (0) features the *present moment* as composite in terms of past and future, compounded into a single shape [*swirl*].

The present is here conceived as a 'third space', which is non-directional in terms of *past* and *future*. Drawing (7) is another take on the present moment in which the past, future and present—'third space'—are permutable [*gate*]. The 2nd-7th drawings are clustering shapes—hexagons.

These are used to indicate the *virtual*. Featuring virtual projections of both the *swirl* (1) and the *gate* (6). There are three instances in which a second virtual shift is operated on the virtual (3-5), to indicate somatic modes of awareness such as spectatorship, concerned citizenship and pragmatic usership.

The drawings on the stamps are therefore conceived as *signage for way-finding in timescapes*. The proposition is that we should draw up an agenda both for new ways of categorising—*parsing* third party interest in the para-site—but also for *prompting* what we have learned when back in our jobs.

As a third space, the para-site conceals a dual function: the *para-site* proper parsing third party interests, and the *green-room* [14] prompting the *lessons learned* from the 'para-site' when in our daily work. *Firstness*: conversation; *secondness*: third party; *thirdness*: signage.

6   CONCLUSION

It is easy 1) to describe a drawing in (empirical) detail. But in spending time on this one should be prepared for the fact that the description often will miss out on 2) what was on the drawer's mind. And it is really difficult to account for what a third party concludes based on a piecemeal account of both.

A different take on the subject matter of drawing is that it in itself constitutes a manner of theory [15]. Not abstract theory, but something closer to *model-thinking* (that operates in the context of making). The credo of the art school is that if we accept that anyone can draw, then anyone can think.

Drawing constitutes a realm of free-thinking redeemed of the obligations of the text-based academia. The art-based academia, in this regard, is a heir to the educational traditions of the *guilds*, while the text-based academia—in the same aspect—is a heir to the educational tradition from *theology*.

These two traditions have been competing in the West for centuries, and their actuality up into the present is also underscored by theoreticians such as Walter Benjamin, Hannah Arendt [16] and Giorgio Agamben [17]. Peirce's (*ibid.*) writings would appear to *tilt* the balance towards the guilds.

Namely, that it seems to be impossible to reduce the content of consciousness to *unity* (whether unity features in perspective, practice or purpose) "without the introduction of it". Hence the question: how do we learn about *unity*? Do we learn it through dogma, or through training, practice and skill?

Our approach is *pragmatic* [17]—rather than locked to semiotics—with the notion that it is the place of drawing to create assemblages from non-same elements in real, imagined or symbolic joineries that are tested against empirical reality, human experience or symbolic efficiency—and further explored.

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