

THINKING THROUGH DRAWING: SITES OF EXCHANGE

BELINDA MITCHELL
PORTSMOUTH UNIVERSITY
BELINDA.MITCHELL@PORT.AC.UK

TRISH BOULD
DRAWINGPLACE.CO.UK
TRISHBOULD@GMAIL.COM

ABSTRACT

Drawing is like note taking it creates an embodied dialogue between thought, hand and paper, it makes explicit the way we think and view the world from our disciplinary perspective and our human experience; it creates an active engagement between ourselves and the world. This work uses drawing as a site of exchange to document a conversation between a visual artist, a spatial interior designer, and archaeologist. The conversation was notated through diagrams, written notes, photography and drawing. The work opens up practice based methods through the to and fro of conversations to reimagine representations of interior space.

DESCRIPTION

The work will be presented as photographs printed on transparent film and fixed onto 2 no sheets of clear picture glass. The 4 mm picture glass will be held in a hardwood ledge. The images will be presented back to back so they can be viewed from either side, there will be a 20 mm gap between the glass. The work will need to sit on a table top to be read from a sitting position. The total size of artwork: width 550, depth 200 mm, height 450 mm. There will be a 20 mm gap between the glass sheets.

The images were taken in response to the conversations and discussions around an artwork, they were taken by a spatial interior designer with a visual arts practice, the installation, *Things of Value*, was originally created by a visual artist with a background in weaving who is now a curator. The archaeologist is now a curator for City Space Gallery, where the artwork was exhibited. The images create an enmeshment with the site, the viewer and makers, creating an on going narrative.

THINKING THROUGH DRAWING SITES OF EXCHANGE

The 'Value of Things' was an exhibition that took place in The City Gallery, Winchester Discovery Centre in June 2011. The project started with an installation created by the artist. It was made up of a collection of

things; objects, threads, maps, elastic, a teapot, books, they were ordered and reordered in relationship to each other. The work was used as a starting point for an archaeologist, interior designer, and the visual artist to have a conversation of, express their disciplinary views and to make drawings with, it acted as a starting point for discussion. The discourse attributed value to interdisciplinary exchange and recognized variations in the way we perceive, look and read things.



Figure 1: Entanglements, 'The Value of Things'.

A glass cabinet held the collection and formed a framework through which the work could be interpreted, it transformed the collection of objects into a material landscape creating distance and offering fixed viewpoints through which to engage. The discourse continued with the spatial interior designer making a drawing from her disciplinary perspective through the language of plan and elevation. The archaeologist drew on top of the plan mapping inclines, angles and defining features with a coded syntax of lines and tapered marks. The archaeologist read the site through the process of stratification, examining the soil, and finds in the reverse order within which they were deposited.

For the artist the 'drawing' was an actual method of working, a way of gathering and testing. Arranging the landscape of objects and in drawing with drawing with pen and pencil, the artist drew together and made relationships between components by seeking out visual links, assessing gaps and content. The connections set

up routes, paths, foot ways across the work, moving in the gaps and spaces between objects across fields within and outside of the work.

Common language emerged from of the site such as, field, space and place, time, object, and find. The language of archaeology of unearthing, cuts, digging, marking, became metaphors for thinking through the artwork and the objects within the cabinet, the personal histories, and the sensory memories they contain. The cabinet acted as a domestic interior with objects filling the space, archaeology operated as a way of digging into the work, to bring forgotten material to the surface to make new histories.

During the drawing and the toing and froing of conversation, the soil, the ground line, the plan, section and elevation became key points in the exchange and discussion, the archaeologist wanting to know where the ground line was, the artist wanting to understand the terminology of soil- what did soil represent? What soil existed beneath the surface? The designer looking to put trial holes into the ground to understand the soil beneath. The books became the soil, the archaeologist drew in plan a circular diagram sliced into quadrants to delineate an area to make a cut.

The dialogue opened up fragments of exchange and visual documentation in relation to practice based research, referencing Ingold and Latour. The soil represents the material discussion, the material the archaeologist works with searching for finds, it represents the actual material for the artist and interior designer. We are interested in the *'the gap between words and the world'* (Latour 1999) and how as Latour in his essay 'Circulating Reference, Sampling the Soil in the Amazon Forest' demonstrates that these are not two separate ontological domains but a new phenomenon, the 'circulating reference' (Latour 1999).



FIG 2, Archaeological process, the Harris Matrix,

The discourse questioned how the interior might be re-imagined using archaeological processes as a model for thinking and metaphor to work with. The Harris matrix, an archaeological tool, emerged through the process as a way of thinking through space and time, the mapping of interlocking events offers an exciting potential when thinking through past, present and future. These layers of information are inputted into the Harris matrix, a tool that enables stratification problems to be unified on site as part of an on going process of discussion and reflection during the excavation.

The toing and froing of conversation, the materiality of the work, the actions of doing and making materialized new practice based methods for engaging with the interior. Art practice brings a dialogue of visual and material experimentation opening out conventional representation and drawing practice in interior design. The artwork enabled the interior to move away from its location within architectural representation to shift to a location within art practice and archaeological process. The conversation materialized a method for working with the interior through a material model. The exchange moved between viewpoints forming knots and entanglements both within and between us forming *'a meshwork of interwoven lines of growth and movement.'* (Ingold 2008) where knots have threads that *'trail beyond, only to become caught with other threads in other knots.'* (Ingold 2008)

Drawing is a process that enables us to draw together, to collect, to draw in, the to and fro of the process, the conversation, notes, diagrams, and photographs make visible how we think and experience the world. The artwork acted as a site of exchange to research and make explicit our disciplinary and human experiences, through the discipline of the other. Practice based research offers the possibility to gather together a new economy, a different set of enactments with which to design, to potentially shift methods of practice, perception and representation of interior space.

REFERENCING

Latour, B (1999) *Pandor's Hope, Essays on the Reality of Science Studies*, Havard.

Tim Ingold, 'Bringing Things to Life: Creative Entanglements in a World of Materials" ESRC National Centre for Research Methods NCRM Working Paper Series, July 2010 working paper series.
http://eprints.ncrm.ac.uk/1306/1/0510_creative_entanglements.pdf, accessed 26 Aug 2011

COLUMNS ON THE FINAL PAGE SHOULD BE OF EQUAL LENGTH