

Drawing (For the Given Value of Drawing)

6 - 30 Oct 2010



Drawing (For the Given Value of Drawing) is the product of a year-long endeavour by seven artists: Akiko Diegel, Gabrielle Amodeo, Jill Sorensen, Nell Nutsford, Ryuzo Nishida, Matt Molloy and Rabdeep Singh. As drawers, non-drawers and occasional drawers, they have come together to converse and collaborate with the shared goal of assessing the possibilities for drawing.

The departure point for this project was the deceptively simple idea of drawing, which comes with all of its attendant conventions, historical baggage and under-appreciated modesty. A knotty bundle of assumptions float behind every undertaking in the show: That drawing is rudimentary, seemingly requiring little more than paper and pencil, hand and eye. That it is immediate and requires finely honed technical skill. That it naturally possesses a close association with observation and the illustrative imitation of appearance. That it has foundational role; more often seen as a form for investigation, a thinking aid, made in preparation for something else, rather than a finished product. The artists involved tackle this rather sizeable and solid mass of expectations with a show that situates drawing as something to react to and against, rather than illustrate.

The language of drawing begins with the line - a translation of a contour formed at the shift between light and dark on the edge of a mass. As an artificial abstraction a line exists only in the mind until it crystallises into an object through the action of mark-making. Drawing is therefore unstable, balanced between abstraction and representation, symbol and illusion. There is an elasticity with the boundary line between drawing and writing; drawing and painting; drawing and action; drawing and thought; a line the artists in this show, bend, stretch and cross.

This show encompasses activity that touches the limits of drawing. The artists demonstrate that drawing can communicate more than representation, opening up into the performative and the speculative. As Derrida attests in his seminal text on drawing, *Memoirs of the Blind*, every drawing is a drawing from memory and is the act of replacing one kind of seeing (direct) with another (mediated). What is communicated through the works in this show is that drawing as a process contributes something to the transmission of an idea. Here liquid and enacted drawings move off the page and into three dimensions; diagrams, rubbings, collage, animations and sculptures hang onto their reference to drawing through the use of traditional drawing artifacts. Encompassing wildly diverse subject matter each artist has brought the concerns of their individual practises to bear on drawing and on each other, in ways that are sometimes obvious, sometimes obtuse.

Like all things, this exhibition has been shaped by the conditions of its birth. Although drawing was the starting point, this project has become equally concerned with the collaborative process of its delivery.

Brought into being at a residency at Rm in Auckland, the artists set about building and reshaping the ingredients of the show at night, when the gallery was closed, completely transforming the components on a weekly basis. The artists involved had no prior working history together, but came together through the network of staff and students of Whitecliffe College of Art and Design in Auckland. Their collaborative approach began as an instrument for investigating ideas and generating works - rather than an end in itself.

Through this process the artists generated an abundance of material and a diversity of intersecting lines of thought. Their works began to slowly reflect their working process; expressing the way that disagreement and difference are just as intrinsic to the collective process as a pooling of resources, skills, interests, knowledge and ideas. Working in a shared space, over a long period of time, with the free floating, cross-pollination of ideas and forms, raised many questions about the nature of authorship, authenticity and ownership as well as responsibility, leadership and equity. These issues around self organisation and the delineation of boundaries became lines that inevitably looped back into the drawings. This exhibition forms a closing of the first chapter of the collaboration between these artists. Where the story will go from here is as unpredictable as the course they have taken to get here.

- ① Akiko Diegel
- ② Gabrielle Amodéo
- ③ Jill Sorensen
- ④ Nell Nutsford
- ⑤ Ryuzo Nishida
- ⑥ Matt Molloy and Rabdeep Singh
- ⑦ Rabdeep Singh

