

Draw to Perform 3, Crows Nest Gallery, London, 30–31 July 2016

Reviewed by Peta Lloyd, Oxford Brookes University

The third international symposium of *Draw to Perform* took place in July at the Crows Nest Gallery, West London. Curated by Ram Samocha the two-day event showcased the work of artists from around the world with a full day of performances, followed by a second day of drawing performance workshops.

Arriving early on day one I found a large space set up with various sized paper and canvases on the walls, floor and suspended from the ceiling along the room. In a side room a looped film sequence of drawing performances was already playing. The focus of the symposium was 'collaboration' and my first live encounter was with Robert Luzar and his collaborator Claire Undy's *Four Steps for Lighting Balls and Chords*. Using material from the title the pair silently moved around each other passing chord and lights to create shapes, shadows and lines, stopping occasionally to position a strip of black tape on the wall and leaving the observer wondering how that decision had been made. The work, placed in a small side room and viewed through a window opening, gave the impression of viewing a private act. The paired collaborations continued with Bruno Casanova and Kristian Vuksanovic in *Dead Weight 1*, Kristian lifting the morph-suited Bruno high above his head to be used as a two-handed drawing tool. In contrast to the previous work this was powerful and noisy as the charcoal swept obsessively in curving arcs over the paper. Nearby, Hanna ten Doomkat and Brooke Carlson in the drill drawing *mE/Us* were working at floor level and making obsessive and serialized movements with pencils attached to electric drills. Kneeling with heads bent and immersed in their act, they struggled to control their drawing implements which wanted to skid across the paper. These performances highlighted the diverse and flexible nature of performance drawing. Artists were exploring their unconventional materials and practices using repetitive and serial processes. Methods were labour intensive and actions choreographed. The works felt experimental yet controlled and precise.

Sound played an important role in a number of works. In Nava Waxman and Ram Samocha's *Sonic Encaustic* performance the pair worked together gauging encaustic strips off two canvases. Their strong yet flowing movements appeared spontaneous until they stepped back to reveal two almost identical and complementary drawings. The room then fell silent for Vera Martins and Beatriz Tomaz's *Painting by Deconstruction*. Martin's drawing technique of striking a surface with brush-whips made out of canvas strings contrasted with the plaintive singing of Tomaz as she shrouded herself in similar strings pulled from pieces of raw canvas. The work was haunting as the emotion of the song was disrupted by the sharp whipping on the wall, depositing colour. These paired works



Figure 1: Ram Samocha and Nave Waxman, Sonic Encaustic, 2016. Draw to Perform. Photograph by Manja Williams.

demonstrated contrasting features of the two-person collaboration, one close coupled and the other complimentary. Trust and understanding of a shared concept and goal seemed important.

Audience members were also pulled, sometimes unknowingly, into a range of collaborations. Kimvi Nguyen crouched next to those engrossed in performances and started encircling of their feet with small charcoal lines. Nguyen gradually drew the spectator into her work until the lines between artist and audience began to blur. During the day her 'Islands' started to take over the floor space. The subtlety of this emerging piece was fascinating and it was perhaps my favourite work. The audience as artist continued with Francisco-Fernando Granados *Spatial Profiling*, performed by Ram Samocha in Granados' absence. Samocha tracing the outline of his profile as he moved along the entrance space invited the audience to become co-performers, marking their own profile movements in both time and space. Multiple collaborations were in play here between artists and audience. In contrast Marcus Crandon's *Paint Me* was elusive. What was Crandon drawing as he directed a mirror towards his audience? Was Marega Palser's choreography body drawing interpreting his mark making as she moved around the space? Whether Crandon was working with Palser's movements or with the shadows and shapes created by the audience was unclear but as he observed us observing him the abstract composition emerged.

As the day progressed I started to question the link between the process of making and the drawn products in some works. It was fascinating to watch the developmental journeys to a final image. However, although the process may need to be seen in order to understand how the image is created, through the relationship between bodies and materials, does this infer the resulting product cannot stand alone? The performances crafted a huge and varied range of abstract images, some of the works betraying how they were made, while others giving few clues. Many of these works were beautiful as well as thought provoking, more than just documentation of a performed activity. Midway through the day Samocha invited artists and audience to come together and share their thoughts. The creation of an opportunity to stop and think provided a useful breathing space. The introduction of artists facilitated not only a dialogue in the session but encouraged subsequent informal discussions during the day.

As is commonplace nowadays everyone seemed to be recording the performances on phones or with cameras. However, it was Jemma Dicken's pen and ink composition that captured the vitality of the main space. It is easy to presume that the photograph portrays a true image. But where it might capture a moment in time, Dicken, perched on a stool, recorded the ongoing action over time, adding in new performances as they took place. It was refreshing to see traditional and contemporary approaches to drawing working seamlessly side by side. Unfortunately my visit was too short and I wish I could have seen more of the durational work in completion. I was left with many things to think about and wished there had been an opportunity to spend more time with the resulting drawings which I'm sure could provide another show as stimulating as the first.

Contributor details

Peta Lloyd is a Ph.D. candidate in the School of Arts at Oxford Brookes University. Her research explores the reading of text and image in performance through the creation of *TextActs*, a combination of text, body and action.

Contact: Oxford Brookes University, Headington, Oxford OX3 0BP, UK.

E-mail: plloyd@clara.co.uk