RAW TEXT END
This is an exhibition of drawings by undergraduate and postgraduate students at the University's School of Art. The works were executed between 1986 and 1987, and demonstrate a variety of approaches to the concept of drawing.

In the schedule of subjects offered by the School, drawing is available as a minor elective. That is, any undergraduate at any level may enrol in one of several classes available, and will attend for five hours per week throughout the academic year.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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The artists, the authors and the University of Tasmania

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Drifting on the horizon, our eyes strain to capture the essence of the moment passed, but it remains just a glimpse of the future. The shock of recognition, and certainly nothing of the wearied nostalgia of deja-vu, for this writing itself.

There's a disguise. This handwriting 'hides in the light', and it has always been missed. There's a prohibition, and one which certainly plays against scribble, a game which can be assumed this intention as a kind of contingency against this fate which one is actually and actively constituted by the writing itself. The assumption which leads the author to construct his writing so it appears empty of its own forms results in a writing which leaves itself open to a recolonisation. There is thus a space for the intervention of another writing, for today writing is reappearing at last from its long exile, from its subordination to the Platonic 'mythos in prose' of our western Dysopia.

29(i) ‘Some individuals sing while drawing, others are tense and grit their teeth; each emotional state is transmitted through the work to the observer the same way as speech transmits the speaker’s personality’

(ii) In its pursuit of the ‘onto-theologies’ of Western Platonic thought, the deconstructive approach has hitherto sought a methodological-counterpoint to what it identifies as the founding premise of that tradition. That premise is, of course, this need for every structure to be centered, the principal of logocentrality which is rendered invisible in its very ubiquity. The desire for center holds as its ideal model the condition of speech, and as it is actually seen, writing tends to come off second best in any encounter with this ideality of presence.

The deconstructive counter to this photocentric proceeds from the recuperation of writing as an enabling condition of speech, made possible thanks to a model of signification emphasizing the differential qualities of that process. Just as each and every signification only has a surface value, the paradigm of difference opens the way to a re-evaluation of writing as constitutive rather than merely reductive or expressive.

The simplistic paradoxy of the ‘deconstructive’ approach has at least the value of providing a ground from which Mendelsohn’s writing may be read against the logocentrism which otherwise defines it. ‘Drawing’ here is to be partly read, a process seeking those moments in its text that reveal this drawing as a textual entity, constituted in, and by nothing other than, that text itself. ‘Drawing’, once paroetized, becomes a play of opposition, the product of the careful deployment of figures and processes. So constituted as the play of metaphors, antonymy and deferral ‘Drawing’ may yet escape its subject.

29(ii) ‘...the text has been kept to a minimum to permit the 330 reproductions from the master works of all ages to speak for themselves.’

(iii) ‘Drawing’, unlike potentially at least Drawing, is everywhere shot through with the tyranny of presence of which the reader becomes aware in the calculation of drawing with speech. Drawing, one catalogue here before me states, ‘is a form of non-verbal language, the two-dimensional and more or less linear analogue of a speech act.’ It wouldn’t appear to be much clearer than that.

Yet the ‘more or less linear analogue’ prevails by means of a kind of teleology - this apparently self-evident truth is by reference to the ‘truth’ of evidence of self. And it is this justification for the ‘immaterial’ test that can only further demand explanation.

30(ii) ‘This hesitant tremulous edge has the ring of sincerity, much as a deeply felt inarticulate search for words may convey sincere feeling more effectively than brilliant rhetoric.’

76(i) ‘An almost morbid taste for artifice and formalism produced a certain kind of cold elegance in the work of the mannerists which contrasted sharply with the deep fervour which animated the High Renaissance.’

29(iii) ‘...drawings since they are done for the artist’s personal satisfaction rather than for a client or for public display, tend to provide an intimate contact with the artist and the creative act.’

And so, on this one hand we are presented with the conventional distrust of mastery as empty artefacts, on the other there is that mastery which by means of a teleology is allowed to escape the fate which lies in wait for the former. Such a fate is the consequence of the self-consciousness of artifice itself, it is rhetoric which is always condemned to inhabit the categories of the negative.

Yet it is just this realm of the negative which even while standing for denial, actually provides the very means by which the positive term may be defined. Its not so much a matter of art into life as it is life as art; the unmediated expression of that which is undecidable by any other means than the Other, its negation. Denial becomes affirmation, and it is this structure which would be further countered by the subjugation of writing.

Drawing, once mastered, is excused the distrust of mastery that it is to be detected in the condemnation of the rhetor. Drawing as ideal, as speech, is everywhere allowed to escape the ‘cold elegance’ of rhetoric by confounding the latter with an analogous 

I’ve read the whole thing several times now, and it remains fascinating despite itself, for it’s one of those occasional books that actually goes some way beyond being a book alone. Daniel M. Mendelsohn’s Drawing achieves a rare status - it’s the very paradigm of conventional writing on drawing. In speaking of form, it supersedes all the particularities of example in its own form. To be more specific, it displays an almost uncanny ability to make its writing disappear, to efface the topographical formations of its text.

But the fortunate curiosity of this state of affairs is the opening of a way to a writing on drawing which escapes this cultural demand for the effacement of one set of figures in favour of another. Mendelsohn’s ‘Drawing’ also offers the possibility of finding within it a different model of drawing, one which is actually actively constituted by the writing itself. The assumption which leads the author to construct his writing so it appears empty of its own forms results in a writing which leaves itself open to a recolonisation. There is thus a space for the intervention of another writing, for today writing is reappearing at last from its long exile, from its subordination to the Platonic ‘mythos in prose’ of our western Dysopia.

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Drawing, once mastered, is excused the distrust of mastery that it is to be detected in the condemnation of the rhetor. Drawing as ideal, as speech, is everywhere allowed to escape the ‘cold elegance’ of rhetoric by confounding the latter with an analogous
Crucially, this 'inconsistency' with the condition of speech signals not the inapplicability of the equation but its actual condition as a figure formed in language. Given the differential quality of signification, it is the fundamental instability in these terms which would be simply opposed that, paradoxically enough, makes such oppositions definition of that 'Drawing' which appears in writing.

309(ii) 'An 'Odalisque' (Figure 10-1) done in pencil and ink has all the airy lightness and fresh charm of a bouquet of spring flowers.'

(iii) If Genet could be said to have ever actually taught anything, then it would surely have been the necessity of writing as theft. More correctly perhaps, what is to be learnt from Genet is the necessity of the thief as an act of retribution upon conventional, implicative metaphors which act, by the relentless convention of continued usage, been lost to the appearance of natural fact. There seems to be a kind of law of adverse possession continually at work here which operates to strip writing of its figures and, in turn, allow it to a constitutive consciousness which would precede it. A certain kind of metaphor of nature seems in particular to be no longer a turn of phrase, having become a figure of speech. The kind of metaphor I have in mind is well exemplified by the description of a Matisse drawing offered by Mendelowitz. Interestingly, it is a description based upon what is actually a quite lengthy chain of associations. The figure of the Odalisque is to begin with hardly an object without considerable associations of its own. Like the metaphor of speech through which its medium is grasped in writing, the Odalisque is itself much more a construct of culture than it is any serendipitous occurrence of nature. Yet it is just this 'nature' which is constantly invoked throughout the text on drawing. It is a double-edged play once again, a rhetoric which is placed against rhetoricicity. The upheaval of the process is a 'Drawing' constituted in and by metaphor, yet these figures are constantly 'impressed' into the surface of that on whose behalf they trope. The 'miracle' of Genet's flowers is thus transformed here by Mendelowitz from something quite extraordinary in language into the ordinary and given quality of what it describes/constitutes. What is in fact happening here is one of those purely metaphorical moves so accurately fingered by the ever-sceptical Nietzsche as a move from 'image to concept'. The metaphor held to be definitive of drawing, that it is 'more or less' a linear analogue of the 'speech act', is finally, and for all its quasi-scientific flavor, no more natural than Mendelowitz's 'spring flowers.'

299) '...because they are sketches or studies, and are not elaborately finished, they contain elements of ambiguity which encourage the viewer to interpret those drawings through his own imagination.'

(ii) Such are the imagined pleasures of drawing conceived, and here written, as metonymic fragment, where the very incompleteness of the preparatory fragment comes to stand for some ever-elusive whole. By virtue of this fragmentation, it is here suggested, a pleasure may be indulged - a pleasure which is not simply that of a deferred gratification, a sacrifice of this moment in favour of another. By contrast, the deferral of the deferred moment works carried out in such a way as to produce a pleasure in presence, in the present instance, which is the antithesis of any such temporal deferral. In fact the preparatory sketch, the study of a moment, has a quality of its own and is not dependent for the effect upon the existence of another. There is, in short, a open-endedness which would seem to allow the play of multiplicity, of differentiation. Yet as we have seen, there is a crucial and enabling paradox at work here in the same moment. The very presence which is conventionally ascribed to the closure of the whole is not usually ascribed to such fragments. It is in this moment of metonymy, of the connection of the figure, that the act of reading drawing as an entity which is written comes quite explicitly into play. The metonymic drawing, which appears in relation to such deferred and ungraspable whole, is very much a 'Drawing' constituted as writing. It actively partakes in the process of signification which is dependent upon differentiation. It is this differentiation which, as noted above, is crucial in constituting drawing as an ideal form and one which would surpass any such medianation. Yet it is this sort of differentiation/deferral which is inadmissible if drawing is to be maintained as a transcendental signifier of pure presence. Mendelowitz's writing seeks in this momentary inversion to the metonymic figure to evade the differentiation in time. To evade this is all the more high, time itself has been deferred. The magic of these fragmented moments, Mendelowitz everywhere tells us, is that presence which would apparently defeat the passage of time. It is upon this deferral of time itself that is established a presence which comes across all the centuries and decades to us today when we contemplate such fragments. And it is in just this that Mendelowitz's writing, in its subjugation of the structure of writing, falls finally into the fatality which has been awaiting just this inevitable moment. The flaw is simple: the constant deferrals which enable signification cannot be so simply disposed of - for his immediacy of presence is in fact valued only in direct proportion to the time that would be so deferred. The 'apparent' term always returns once again to actually enable the definition which would attempt to efface its own means.

302(i) 'The precise lapel caught Degas' attention and he defined it neatly with a single stroke of the pencil'

(ii) ...just as though Degas himself had done it in front of us. The magical touch is held to be definitive of drawing, that it is 'more or less' a linear analogue of the 'speech act', is finally, and for all its quasi-scientific flavor, no more natural than Mendelowitz's 'spring flowers.'

96-7(ii) 'Much of the charm of 'The Visit' (Figure 4-18) results from the way in which the handwriting on the back of the page works with the animated texture of the drawing to create a shimmering totality.'

(ii) The piece has sought to find a way of writing upon drawing in the conviction that to do so is no different from writing on drawing as though it were some subject external to that process. To treat drawing as some Other to be addressed in writing is, as has become apparent, a project doomed to difficulty for the very reason that drawing is conventionally defined by its capacity to actually escape such writing. Mendelowitz's text seeks to overcome that one by accepting the terms that would be imposed upon writing by drawing-as-speech, with the result that his figures may be reinscribed with 'Drawing', understood as a textual construct. So approached the text may be examined for those moments when it inadvertently gives itself away, when it indirectly admits the 'nature' of the writing which would appear otherwise to be so transparently differential. I want to conclude with one of the best of these - the illustration reproduced here. It is with a gluttonous flourish that I here introduce Mendelowitz's Figure 4-18, 'The Visit', attributable to the proper name 'Francesco Guardi'. As reproduced here, it has probably lost quite a bit of that alleged 'shimmering totality', but it's not important, you don't always need the original to make the point.

To metaphorically constitute the chance encounter of writing and drawing within a simultaneity of surface as a 'shimmering totality' is to give the game away. It's an instance of that Barthesian 'stupidity' which is as revealing as it is 'touching'. Quite inadvertently, Mendelowitz grants us here an 'image' of drawing in addition to the drawing itself. It is an image that is quite literally constituted as a pure metaphor, a veritable visual analogue for that 'Drawing' which we find everywhere to be constituted in and by his text.

340(ii) '...and each artist's style had its textual character.'

(ii) I.M. Atherton

Winter 1987
JULIE MAY Associate Diploma Painting
PERRY FOWLER B.F.A. Painting
ANNA BERGER B.F.A. Painting
CATHERINE McCARTHEY B.F.A. Printmaking
CHARLES WATKINS M.F.A.
A commitment to drawing is, of course, not new in the history of art, or far that matter, in the history of Australian art but the current commitment to it as an important and expressive vehicle in its own right has never been surpassed.

Drawing has been seen to have taken over the world, not just among the arts in recent years. Having emancipated itself from merely serving other artistic disciplines it has won an autonomous and leading position. Imre Pittrans writes:

The notion of the artist as transcendental, a concept which developed in the arts, it seems that disegno. 11 Vasari and his contemporaries saw the artist as representative of free and genius, epitomised the sharp contrast in intellectual and spiritual feeling, the intellectual and spiritual processes, and disegno exterupted the practical fulfillment of the idea. Giorgio Vasari, a major art historian of the sixteenth century, continued the tradition started in the early Renaissance that drawing was the basis of the three arts, architecture, sculpture and painting. It was already Baldassare Castiglione who first wrote in his Book for the Courtier of 1527, that both painting and sculpture derive from disegno. 10 Vasari and his contemporaries saw disegno (drawing) as central to the achievements of their century (e.g., Michelangelo, Leonardo, Raphael, Titian, Tintoretto, Tizian etc.) and elevated the notion of drawing conceptually, Frederico Zuccaro, in his Book for the Courtier of 1567, furthered, evoked a divine connection for disegno with his suggested etymology of the word: segno di Dio, or Sign of God. 9 Indeed, the awareness of the individual, a vital pre-condition of abstract expressionism, the expression of the true self, the self, etymological, of the self. The Renaissance artist came to be idealised as representative of free and truly expressive activity because of the sharp contrast initially between the conditions of artistic work and other types of work in an increasingly industrialised and capitalist society. Hence the introduction of one of the great myths of western culture: the divine nature of the artist-as-genius. Drawing was central to the process leading to works of such genius. The human agent, endowed with special manipulative technique, was elevated by a guiding spirit [genius] that enabled him to translate, transform, visualize...

"We are all draughtsmen in the eyes of the Lord... all of us have an inner idea in whatever art or science we are concerned with, but a transposition of interior design, into externalized form is the special gift of the artist." 12

The notion of the artist as transcendental, athenaeum of genius is reinforced. Although the sixteenth century saw drawing as the conceptual and practical basis of the arts, it seems also to have seen it as an activity requiring painting, sculpture, and architecture, as a means to an end rather than an end in itself, despite recognition of its immediate aesthetic value. Copies were made from antiquity and from nature, and sketches were used to develop ideas and compositions for 'more finished' works (even paintings). Examples of these drawings valued explicitly for themselves are rare...

The drawing, the king's, supreme secret, is forbidden to present itself as that source and as deserving of autonomous praise.

Drawing was seen as preliminary, as a trial run to perfect one's ideas before undertaking the final project. It seems that Michelangelo's sixteenth century drawings were seen as the final project, not as a means of arriving at the finished product in his case. He regarded them as preliminary, transient steps and, according to Vasari, destroyed many of them because his involvement was with the finished product. He was reluctant to draw attention to the steps, the stress and possibly the stasis involved in making art. 13

In the seventeenth century drawing was apparently important and abundant. However few of the era's greatest artists left unfinished drawings which suggests to me that, as in the previous century, drawing was seen as important yet preliminary and therefore not autonomous. For example, Poussin's drawings were small-scale and deliberately tentative and would never be considered finished substitutes for the ever-monumental paintings. 14

The notion of the artist as creator and genius was strengthened during the romantic era, and special attention was devoted to drawing as evidence of the creative genius. Kaspar David Friedrich, for example, always signed his studies of reality in nature, but never his paintings. 15

Drawing again becomes important for the artist at the beginning of the modern period with the example, Seurat, Cezanne, van Gogh, Toulouse-Lautrec and Redon. Nonetheless, Robert Herbert 16 notes that although Seurat was acknowledged as one of the greatest masters of black and white, his drawings have never been given a full study. Drawing's status, at this time, seems based on apparent contradictions. It became known as an essential and critical activity, and an increasing number of artists reared in the drawing-related classes were simply too good at drawing to be considered in any way amateurish.

Interest in drawing has had to trace its value. Hans Liubke writes... they have survived from the early 1920's, that both painting and drawing was with the finished product. He was

...simplifying the concept of disegno into an essentially code-like tradition whereas in the history of drawing figurative treatments are more common. Art historians in the 1920's perceived drawing as the shroud of traditional painting. 17

A autonomous and leading position has never been surpassed. In the history of Australian art but the current commitment to it as an important and expressive vehicle in its own right has never been surpassed. In the history of Australian art but the current commitment to it as an important and expressive vehicle in its own right has never been surpassed...
The rise of the notion of spontaneity in art gained ground from the post war period. This is often characterized as the 1960's and 1970's. Jenny Watson suggests a return to a formalist mode of mark-making, amongst others, 'took the art within art arguments to the nth degree'. It was in approximately the 1970's that the notion of spontaneity in art gained ground from the post war period. This is often characterized as the 1960's and 1970's. Jenny Watson suggests a return to a formalist mode of mark-making, amongst others, 'took the art within art arguments to the nth degree'. It was in approximately the 1970's that the notion of spontaneity in art gained ground from the post war period.

Dr. Jenny Watson presents a pictorial event of events that she claims took their toll on Australian art prior to the late seventies. These were formalism which she describes as a spiritually bereft American import, Conceptual art which was intellectually mind-bending and 'took art within art arguments to the nth degree', and Conceptualism, historically inevitable following Conceptualism, since it gave value for money and things to look at. Paper as an immediate support was set for a comeback, she suggests, with the re-emergence of imagery and awareness of social conditions such as feminism, provincialism, economic depression and the simple need to return to humanism and self-analysis.

Feminism, for example, encouraged a new receptivity to paper and thus drawing as an acceptable mode and medium for artists and was an inevitable response to the denseness of the institutionalized male icons of abstraction expressionism. The primacy of oil and canvas is, for example, abstraction expressionism, was questioned as a distinctly male-oriented medium for mark-makings. Examples of the move away from these modes of mark-making are, amongst others, Elizabeth Gower's paper constructs of the late seventies, Lesley Dumbrell's pastel drawings exhibited in 1979 and Davida Allen's self-exploatory drawings in the late seventies, early eighties. It is claimed that an increased variety and availability of papers, from the late seventies, encouraged artists to experiment more widely with the medium, which in turn encouraged the import market. Diana Mogensen confirms this when she states that it was very difficult to be an artist who worked only on paper until the late seventies. As well, the return to a central importance of drawing has been encouraged by an apparent change of attitude of many art school teachers and students and a new 'post-modernist' restructuring of curricula. Peter Booth, for example, is quoted as saying:

"Drawing is the only art that you can do in your garden"...

After a decade in which drawing departments in art schools in Melbourne, dwindled and then folded, Pam Holland in the mid-seventies, helped initiate a return to looking at drawing as a mode of mark-making applicable to all styles and genres at the Phalan College of Advanced Education. By 1975, the College introduced Melbourne's first degree permitting students to specialise in drawing and in doing so it confirmed the discipline's equal status with painting and sculpture. So it seems that a shift in mainstream interests has led to a changed appreciation of drawing. However, claims that finding reasons for drawing's recent revival, requires looking beyond a mere reaction to trends in related disciplines. The origins of the enhanced status of drawing are due rather to the dynamic force underlying this development. He points to an increased role of the viewer and a changed understanding of the artist as the main consumer of an artist's work, or as the initiator of processes (or discourse), which mobilize our consciousness and our sensibilities as well as our intellect. To communicate such a conception, drawing could not be a more appropriate medium.

Current sociological analysis of art-dealing, amongst other things, with the demystification of myths such as that mentioned earlier of the transcendental, ahistorical 'artist-as-genius' also serves to enhance the status of drawing, and that of the viewer/reader. For example, drawings when viewed as preliminary and or source material alongside the culminating art work(s), can be viewed in a demystifying role, breaking down the transcendent authority of the final work. They enable the viewer to grasp how the final art work has been constructed, not from a given, natural, genius, but through a process of steps. These 'draw' from numerous historical sources and even a variety of learned skills and an art of intellectually informed effort.

Lou Klepac similarly notes that a drawing makes more obvious the subjective and personal elements which are the source of the artist's activity and which are later eliminated in a finished work. Whetler's statement that "a picture is finished when all traces of the means used to bring about the end has disappeared" backs to Michelangelo's reluctance to reveal the steps, the stress and the strain indicated by his preliminary drawings to his paintings, a reluctance in keeping with Renaissance thinking which sought to promote the idea of the artist as transcendent, ahistorical genius. On the contrary, such drawings can be seen, today, as helping to reveal the myth of this idea and act rather as a kind of internal documentation, as a supplementary disclosure to the final art work, removing the distance between the producer and the viewer.

Although, no doubt, the dialogue between drawing as preliminary and as autonomous art work continues, there has, in recent years, been an expansion in the understanding of the function of drawing. Drawing has increasingly come to be seen as a way of operating a visual discourse in its own right. Rather than being seen as merely subordinated to some notion of 'art work', it can be seen as a direct medium for developing imagery for a complex visual language. By its nature, being technically simple and most accessible to the realm of ideas, drawing has lent itself to the expression of the wide range of attitudes and ideas current in art practice. Paul Broad, for example, states that:"Paper keeps up with the movement of your mind. You can use it as a way of clarifying what is just vaguely in focus. With painting you have to have such a resolved idea. Paper allows you to make major shifts, to be daring and exploratory."

As a succinct and concluding summary of the advantages for the use of the drawing medium I refer to Wieland Schmid who states: "...It is pliable and flexible; it is suitable for giving even gentle impulses; it is reserved and sparing; it demands attention and promotes concentration; it is least bound with regard to its material; and it runs the smallest risk of becoming everlasting, outmoded and threadbare." The exhibition by students of the Tasmanian School of Art is a convincing example of the new recognition of the depth and the breadth, as well as the potential and power of information that can be expressed through the drawing medium.
