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The Illustration of Experience

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The Illustration of Experience

by

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Abstract

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The Illustration of Experience

This thesis documents and describes a research project driven by the creative practice of an illustrator. It examines the proposition that the visual mark can act as a register of experience. The research comprises three bodies of work each of which address a specific issue within the broader context of the research proposition. Knowledge gained through practical exploration is discussed in the context of illustration as well as contemporary systems and models of aesthetic representation.

Overview

Chapter one discusses the origins of this research project and charts the establishment of a methodology. Working under the preliminary title *The Illustration of Conversational Time and Space,* the practice explores how human conversation and physical interaction can be recorded and illustrated. This research results in the title being changed to *The Illustration of Experience* in order to reflect a significant transition in thinking and approach.

Chapter two addresses the question *how can experience be illustrated?* Experiences are first identified and then recorded using an established vocabulary of reflexive gestural marks. These marks are in turn subject to further investigation through a more considered system of reproduction and replication. This pursuit of a mimetic representation, I argue, creates a direct access to the actualities of the experience, as interpreted by the unconscious, and reveals a fundamental connection between phenomenological sensation and learnt aesthetic reasoning. The research proposes that the appearance of an illustration of experience is not directed by the phenomenological interpretation of an event but by the representation process itself.

Chapter three challenges the conclusions of chapter two by asking *how the unconscious transformation of source into experience can be illustrated?* This is achieved by symbolically aligning this metaphysical transformation with the physical movement of an object through space. In doing so, the research attempts to move beyond the conventional codes of aesthetic understanding and questions illustration's traditional associations with referentiality and elucidation. The research concludes that an illustration of experience's epistemological value is heavily dependent upon the interpretation of the viewer.

Chapter four expands upon the hypotheses formulated in chapter three by constructing an illustration of experience that is devoid of all mimetic reference. The research confirms the earlier understanding that mimesis is not an inherent quality in all representational art forms, but is in fact determined by the viewer's independent knowledge and understanding of the subject matter presented. It is concluded that while an illustration of experience's epistemological value is dependent upon the viewer's interpretation, interpretation is not itself contingent upon the presence of an explicit mimetic (visual) vocabulary.

It has been the intention of the research to challenge existing models of illustrative communication by devising original creative structures that support the illustration of experience. Although this research identifies with a range of contemporary and historical models of enquiry, thorough searches have revealed no previous research in this area. It is therefore hoped that this research will provide a solid base from which future investigations can develop. This research project would serve as an introduction to other researchers trained as illustrators to deeply investigate the meaning and functions of their creative processes in order to reflect back on the discipline of illustration and how it might register experience.

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Acknowledgements

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the following for their contribution to this research project.
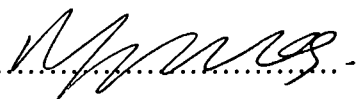
I wish to express my gratitude to my Director of Studies, Stuart Mealing, whose constant guidance and support proved invaluable; to Martin Woolner, whose continuous supervision enabled me to overcome a multiplicity of obstacles; and to Katy Macleod who read and discussed my work in progress.

My deepest gratitude is reserved for my girlfriend, Laura, for her gentle patience and enthusiasm at every turn; and to my parents, whose unfailing kindness and encouragement made this research project possible.

Author's Declaration

At no time during the registration for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy has the author

been registered for any other University award.

Relevant research conferences and workshops were regularly attended at which work was

often presented.

Signed....................

Date......../.. 26 - 4 - 04 ....

Introduction

This research investigates through practice the visual mark as a register of experience. The work is comprised of three projects all of which address specific issues while remaining within the broader context of the research proposition. This thesis documents the development of these projects and seeks to expand upon and contextualise questions and ideas that arose through practical exploration.

The first chapter describes the origins of the research and discusses the principles on which it is founded. Under the initial title of *The Illustration of Conversational Time and Space,* the work begins by investigating how conversations can be visualised by describing the space that is created between people when they converse. An initial dependence on conventional modes of illustrative communication is observed and, in order to reflect a significant conceptual shift in the research as a result of this project the doctoral research title is changed to *The Illustration of Experience.*

Chapter two documents the first main body of work, which uses as its starting point the ideas and the understandings formed during the preliminary stages of the research. The work begins by asking the question *how can experience be illustrated?* By using memory as tool to interpret, order and prioritise perception, and by allowing emotional response to dictate reflexive gesture, the work initially attempts to illustrate experiences from an entirely objective position. The practice soon reveals a deep connection between phenomenological sensation and unconscious aesthetic reasoning. It proposes that it might

be possible to illustrate unmediated experience by defining the exact moment when an experience is formed within the unconscious.[1]

Chapter three charts the development of the second project which expands upon the hypothesis formulated in chapter two by asking *how can the unconscious transformation of source into experience be illustrated?* A symbolic connection is made between the physical movement of an article in space and the transformation of an event into experience. The work subsequently questions illustration's traditional association with referentiality and mimesis and determines that an understanding of the illustration of experience is very much dependant upon the interpretation of the viewer.

Chapter four challenges the theory discussed in chapters two and three by attempting to create an illustration that is free from all mimetic reference. In doing so, the work questions the traditional relationship between an illustration and the viewer.

References and associations made throughout the thesis are intended to position the practice within a broader historical and contemporary context. With one exception all references are drawn from a fine art canon. This is done, not with the intention of placing the research within the fine art sphere, but to reflect the fact that my questions and investigations sought precedents within the world of fine art. Nevertheless I am aware that the work operates within, or close to, territory conventionally assigned to fine art, and as a consequence it might be labelled as such by some people. I am however, reluctant to categorise or pigeonhole the research. It is significant to the research project that it is identified neither as illustration or fine art in the conventional sense. Its categorisation, at

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[1] In the context of the research, I use the word *unconscious to* denote the part of the mind that contains memories, thoughts and feelings of which one is not generally aware but can under certain conditions, become *conscious* of. It is distinct from the *subconscious,* which describes all mental processes that occur outside the personal awareness of the individual such as the tying of shoelaces or riding a bike. The following exploration of the *unconscious* will not take the form of a psychoanalytic investigation, but instead, aims to demonstrate how the *unconscious,* in the form of experiential memories, can be illustrated.

least in other people's eyes, was of little concern when producing the work. The use of the word 'illustration' in the title refers to what the research *does* and not what it *is*. From the outset the research's objective was clear - to explore the physical and emotional characteristics of experience with the principal intention of communicating this to an audience. The project demonstrates how it is possible for a researcher who is trained in illustration to register experience. It is a study of experience through the eyes of an illustrator.

Within an art-critical context, I am aware that the word *illustration* has many uses and senses, any one of which may be appropriate when describing the practice. However, within the specific context of the research, *illustration* is used to define an image or object created with the principal intention of communicating information and is quite distinct from the class of visual art known as 'Illustration'.[2] The Oxford English Dictionary sets out six main senses of the word *illustrate*, the two most appropriate of which define an illustration as an elucidation or a visual explanation of a given subject. To illustrate something, according to the OED, is to support or clarify a description or account using drawings, photographs or other art forms. It is in this sense that I use the word, and so, in accordance with this understanding, an illustration of experience can be readily defined as a visual explanation of an experience.

I will at different times throughout the course of this thesis discuss the changing critical distance between the work and conventional or traditional forms of illustration. Although I recognise that the words *conventional* and *traditional* can be construed to signify many diverse forms of visual description, in the particular framework of this thesis I will use these phrases to indicate normative processes and applications of illustration such as literary or editorial illustration. I will also refer intermittently to what I will term

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[2] For a thorough examination of the many semantic uses of the word, I refer the reader to Lubbock, T. 'Illustration as a term in art criticism,' *Modern Painters*, Vol.7, Autumn1994, pp.62-65.

'conventional illustrative practices'. This expression will be used to denote the practical procedures and processes that necessarily govern the typical application of an illustration. These include, for example, practical and stylistic restrictions on size and shape, colour and content. The phrases 'conventional forms of illustrative description' and 'illustrative communication' in the specific context of this thesis will refer to typical mediums and equipment used to produce illustrations such as pencils, paints and paper.

It became evident as the research developed that I had brought with me to the project a tremendous amount of baggage in the form of my learnt illustrative sensibilities. At the inception of the research I had been studying graphic design and illustration for six years and my aesthetic awareness and working methodology had become well established and my aesthetic sense acute. These ingrained aesthetic sensibilities would come to permeate every aspect of the research and significantly affect the course and nature of the practice. The scale of their influence was first identified towards the end of the first main body of work, when the sudden realisation of their presence made continuing the work virtually impossible.

Although the research is not tied to traditional forms of illustrative communication or media, I was continuously aware of the critical distance between the research and conventional forms of illustration. Because of this changing distance, frictions and conflicts began to emerge between the character and direction of the research and my own creative instincts. It is in these tensions and frictions that the research finds its ground and from which its character is shaped.

These conflicts were fought out and pursued through the pages of over 20 sketchbooks kept throughout the course of the research. The sketchbooks became the foundation on which the research was constructed and they describe with candour the sources and stimuli that formed the basis of the three central projects. All thoughts, ideas and impulses were

channelled through their pages until they formed a single coherent whole. They played a vital role in the process by mediating between concept and reality and by reconciling the work as 'research' and my own desire to communicate thoughts through straightforward two-dimensional mark making. When viewed collectively and in chronological order they reflect better than any considered written evaluation the subtle transformations and adjustments that take place when a tangential thought is manipulated into the form of an original artwork. They did not constitute a compromise or serve as a diversion or means of escapism, but formed an essential bridge between my background as an illustrator and the rigours and demands of the research program.

In many ways the research is characterised through these created tensions and each project individually returns to the question of being suspended between worlds. The sketchbooks operate at the heart of this conflict, resonating between tested illustrative principles and precarious yet insistent intellectual ideas.

It is with this understanding in mind that I have assembled this thesis. Where possible I have positioned relevant images from the sketchbooks alongside photographed illustrations of the three central pieces. I do this not only in order to emphasise their synergy and shared aesthetic, but also to further situate them within a framework of creative practice. For the same reason methodological accounts of two of the three main projects can be found in the appendices. These texts were written either during the making of the projects or soon after. They are intended to reveal how each project was constructed and describe in simple terms both the practical problems encountered while developing the pieces and my changing feelings towards the work.

As I have said, the research was originally entitled *The Illustration of Conversational Time and Space.* Although the change to *The Illustration of Experience* in many respects concentrated the focus of the research by precisely defining the work's subject, the use of

the word *experience* also introduced ambiguity. It is therefore necessary to define in which sense I use the word.

Like *illustration*, the word *experience* has many varied uses and senses, although, with the risk of over-simplification, one could argue that they are all derived from one of two meanings. *Experience* is perhaps most frequently used when referring to knowledge or skills that have been accumulated by a person over time. An example of this use would be '...In my experience...'or '...that is not my experience....' In this instance the speaker need not make reference to a specific event or incident and is referring to experience in the past tense.

The second sense is often used when describing an encounter or event which has affected the speaker in some way. For example one might say, 'That was an experience I would rather forget'. In this sense an *experience* is understood to be a psychological impression of a specific event or moment in time that remains in the mind in the form of a memory. In this instance the word *experience* implies a level of subjectivity, interpretation and (un)consciousness which the first sense does not. It is in this sense that the research uses the word and provides an introductory definition of experience as: a memory of a conscious encounter as perceived by the senses which has been formulated and ordered by the unconscious.

This definition would seem to suggest that an experience, as a memory or impression of an encounter, is quite separate from the event or source which prompted it. This seemingly pedantic distinction later proves to be an important one, having particular relevance to the second body of work discussed in chapter three, which attempts to illustrate the source of an experience before it becomes a memory.

However, this distinction immediately throws up problems concerning the following text because the word experience does not readily distinguish between the source and the source's memory. And, to further confuse matters, there are instances in the text when experience carries a different meaning altogether. Where possible I have endeavoured to signal the meaning and use of the word but, in every other case, the source and the experience should be considered as separate.

It is this disconnection of source from memory which aligns my understanding of experience with the Platonic theory of mimetic representation which bases its philosophy on the principles of similarity and difference. Plato insisted that every object or 'Form' has an 'ideal pattern' or 'ideal reality' which cannot be reproduced or improved. In *The Republic,* Plato lays out his theory using the Form of a simple bed as an example. He states that a carpenter who constructs a bed is creating an imitation or representation of the Form of the ideal bed, as conceived by God. His creation can only be an approximation of the ideal pattern, as determined by his limited knowledge of reality. Plato goes on to argue that a painting of a bed, which uses only material reality as a model, is therefore a mere imitation of an imitation, 'something that resembles real being but is not that'.[3] The painter, who faithfully imitates what he sees, is 'two removes' or grades away from true reality, and his painting always inferior to its subject.[4]

Although it does not possess 'physical' form, the source of an experience has much in common with the Platonic notion of an ideal pattern in that it has an objective reality of its own that cannot be altered, reproduced or repeated. The experience, like the carpenter's impression, is an approximation of the source. It is a formulated vision, again determined by a limited knowledge of reality. An experience can transform and evolve but the source will always remain concrete. An illustration of a memory can be likened to the painting of

[3] Plato, *The Republic.* 597 a.
[4] See appendix A

the bed. It is an interpretation of an interpretation, an echo of an echo, and as such remains two removes from reality.

So, extending the above definition of experience to include the Platonic theory of difference provides us with a more accurate definition. An experience is a memory of a conscious encounter, as perceived by the senses, which has been formulated and ordered by the unconscious. It can transform and alter over time, yet it always remains *true*. It cannot be independently verified; that is, it is a unique impression of an event or moment in time.[5]

Consequently, when the first main project explored the broad question: 'how can experience be illustrated?' I was proposing to investigate how the memory or impression of an event could be recorded, with the principal intention of communicating, by way of reflexive gestural mark making, my subjective response to it.

This spontaneous demonstration of subjectivity would then, in theory, create an objective position from which observations could be made.[6]

My appropriation of the Platonic theory of mimetic difference is very particular and my management and application of its philosophy is focused and precise. It is not an intention of this thesis to explore the wider theoretical implications of Plato's doctrine but, instead, to consider its specific influence on the development of the practice.

Like all references and sources that influenced the course of my thinking, I approached and examined Plato's theories principally from the perspective of a practitioner. This meant

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[5] *Truth* in the context of the research, refers to the ideal pattern or reality of an event, i.e. that which cannot be altered or reproduced; 'it can transform over time yet it always remains *true*'.

[6] It is difficult to find a suitable word that in this context is intended to describe the opposite or the reverse of a subjective response, or at least, one that situates the research at an appropriate distance from the subjective. It is in this context that the word *objective* is applied. Chapter two will describe the development of this part of the research which attempts to explore fully this notion and demonstrates, through reference to practical investigation, the inherent problems associated with it.

that I made no significant practical distinction between a theoretical and a visual or aesthetic concept. By extracting only relevant fragments of an idea instead of contemplating a hypothesis or work of art in its entirety, I considered and digested Plato's theories in much the same way as I gain inspiration from the work of other artists and illustrators. I found that by absorbing what I considered relevant and dismissing what was unhelpful I could assimilate my own understanding of what would otherwise be a virtually impenetrable intellectual construct. To have complete control and authority over the research's influences, I learned, was attempt to be in control of the practice and its potential trajectory.

The project's close alignment with the Platonic theory or mimetic representation immediately creates an interesting condition in which to produce an illustration. The source of an experience, as I have said, is understood to have an immutable reality that cannot either be reproduced or repeated. In practical terms this means that although two people can perceive the same event, they will necessarily form two separate experiences from it. An illustration of an experience therefore, is an interpretation of a unique thing and, as such, cannot corroborate that which cannot be independently verified. The three projects described in this thesis sought to discover original ways of describing and communicating what, in accordance with this principle, is essentially inexpressible.

Although they present three very diverse and distinctive ways of describing experience, the following projects share many underlying characteristics and qualities of which the most significant is their autonomy and freedom from any overt literal description of their essential meaning. It is my belief that there are as many ways of describing an experience as there are experiences, and literal description is merely one of these methods. As illustrations of experiences, the pieces are assembled from a multitude of subjective phenomenological interpretations and to communicate these using familiar forms of

description, I will argue, is misleading and deceptive. The research instead aims to communicate these unconscious, inherently formless conceptions using original and highly personal means of description.

It is possible that the viewer may at first be frustrated by the lack of any overt description that might assist the task of interpretation, and because of this, he or she might challenge whether the practice should be termed illustration at all. It is true that the work in many ways deviates from conventional illustrative forms of expression and in so doing transmits very few or none of the formal characteristics of illustration, however the research's use of the term is, as I have said, exact and precise. An illustration of experience can be readily defined as a visualisation of an experience, created with the principal intention of communicating this to an audience. It could be argued that illustration in its purest form possesses an inherent public function and that the audience's comprehension should be a prevailing concern of the illustrator from the beginning. In this respect, as with others, the practice stands apart from conventional illustration because it doesn't in any way attempt to control or influence the viewer's interpretation or understanding. The research is instead concerned primarily with the accurate expression and communication of complex, subjective information. The viewer's interpretation is therefore necessarily of secondary importance. To produce an illustration that is focused solely on gaining the audience's understanding, I will argue, is to compromise the accuracy and veracity of the image or object. This of course has far-reaching practical and theoretical implications for the development of the research and for its status and classification as illustration. In practice, this meant that I was under no aesthetic obligation to minimalise the loss or distortion of meaning that may occur as the experience moves from the private and solitary world to the public domain. Instead, I was free to construct each illustration using a diverse range of symbols, objects and signs that were identified as being the nearest possible representatives of otherwise indeterminate feelings and emotions.

This is not to say that the practice does not consider the audience at all or that it can

operate successfully without first forming a relationship with the viewer. Despite its unique

status, the work is as reliant on the interpretation of the viewer as any form of traditional

illustration to bring (external) meaning to the presented information. To begin to interpret

the work the viewer is required to suspend all conventional forms and patterns of

expectation. Although the illustrations do not present an explicit literal description of their

meaning, they do not withhold it either. There is no intended deception and they are not

deliberately cryptic. The complete opposite is in fact true; because they do not in any way

manipulate their meaning in order to engage and absorb the viewer, they can communicate

it without overt distortion. Their subjects - meaning the origins of the experiences, are not

hidden from the viewer - the illustrations themselves *are* the subject. They can, on one

level, be interpreted as having no meaning other than their literal selves.

Unlike conventional illustrative compositions, the illustrations of experience cannot be

divided into single, separate elements. To begin to understand them, one must comprehend

them as a whole and also consider the precise context in which they are presented. The

context is revealed to be as important if not more important to their interpretation than their

specific subject. In this way their method of communication can be compared to that of a

road sign which is an essentially meaningless symbol endowed with significance by its

context:

> Its significance is clear only to those who know already the context in
> which it is to be understood, say, a bend in the road. It is efficient because
> it functions without verbal language. It is a diagram in space which
> represents a physical phenomenon.'[7]

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[7] Probyn, Clive T., *English Poetry*. Harlow, U.K: Longman,1984, pp.58-59.

Each of the projects should therefore be interpreted within the specific context of personal experience, not as unusual illustrative devices, but as three unique and highly personal ways of registering the experience of seeing.

Chapter One

The Illustration of Conversational Time and Space evolved out of a project devised in the

final year of my undergraduate degree. The work was concerned with recording

movement, time and speech patterns within a single two-dimensional image. A process

was developed whereby three-dimensional models of actions or simple movements could

be accurately translated onto a two-dimensional plane. Although systematic in approach,

the work retained many conventional illustrative qualities while also employing a newly

formulated vocabulary of technique and expression as a tool to re-evaluate the traditional

methods of presenting information in two-dimensions. In contrast to the research it later

inspired, the undergraduate work was essentially concerned with communication in the

conventional sense, and the development of an aesthetic style and identity. The created

images and models were produced as illustrations for a story, and as such were maintained

by the narrative they served. Their success as illustrations was determined by the accuracy

and believability of their correspondence with the text. It was concluded that in

conversation there is an intimate space created between the speaker and listener. In the

majority of cases it was found that this space is unlikely to be entered into or otherwise

disturbed. This suggested that a conversation has implicit physical boundaries and

therefore implicit physical form.

The research proposed to investigate the construction and illustration of this physical form

and to explore conditions that cause it to alter in weight, size and shape. The illustrations

produced would then be compiled into a directory or catalogue of human conversations

with the view to providing an alternative to the traditional methods of observing people in

conversation.

The research did not intend to study the wider implications of human behaviour, or to

investigate to any depth the linguistic construction of conversation, but instead to

concentrate on the metaphysical product of the combined context - the *conversational space* that is created between two or more people when they converse.

In the beginning the work operated quite naturally within the conventions of traditional illustration. Conversations were at first visualised by representing silhouetted heads with defined mouths and other clear features. The images were often contained within defined drawn boxes or produced as tight vignettes, as if to be inserted into an (absent) supporting text. These first experimental drawings were revealed as reflexive, instinctive solutions to the demands of the research. When faced with a challenging representational problem, it was discovered that my first unconscious response was to fall back on a trusted range of visual devices and media. This initial reliance on a stock vocabulary of learned tools was, I now understand, not a concession to tradition, but instead, an automatic response to a difficult and uncomfortable situation. These drawings proved to be immensely valuable to the research project as they provided a conventional paradigm onto which all subsequent research could be established.

Quite soon after this research had formed a clear direction, the work began to outgrow the essential parameters of the project. It was at this stage that I changed the title of the doctoral research from *The Illustration of Conversational Time and Space* to *The Illustration of Experience.*

This change marked a fundamental transition in my thinking. I had found through working with recorded conversations that much of the potency and energy of a conversation was confined to the moment of the exchange itself. A recording or transcript of a particular dialogue, however clear, seemed to lose its essential vivacity when repeated. Its subsequent translation into the form of an illustration proved to further dilute its energy. In order to reduce this gradual degradation, I attempted to illustrate conversations either while they were taking place or directly afterwards. However I soon found the developed process

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unsuitable for the instant and reactive representation of conversation, as diagrams were not easy to produce quickly in response to the subtle changes in the character and nature of certain dialogues. As a consequence the drawings soon became inaccurate.

I had begun at this stage to feel restricted by the spatial confines of my sketchbook and had started to use larger sheets of paper. This allowed me to record more than one conversation on the same page, and in response I began unconsciously to position the individual illustrations in relation to one another. In doing so, I had inadvertently begun to plot the position of a conversation within its wider environment making the space that surrounded it as important to the composition as the diagram of the conversation itself. Once they were no longer limited by the confines of the sketchbook, the diagrams began literally to fall apart.[8] I started to visually describe more subtle changes in the environment around the conversations using loose gestural marks instead of considered lines. It became clear that the work was now illustrating more than just conversation - I had begun to explore, through reflexive impulse, the wider experience of communication.

This enormous conceptual shift within the research determined that my physical and emotional positions within the illustration would become the central subject of the image's composition. By positioning myself the illustrator at the heart of the image I had strayed beyond the conventional reaches of illustration.

I have said it was not the intention of the research to determine whether an image or object was illustration but to investigate the physical and emotional characteristics of experience. When discussing the research I begin simply by explaining that I investigate ways in which personal experiences can be visualised. The word 'illustrate' pops up quite naturally soon after. In this respect *illustration* serves as a useful handle when discussing the work and

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[8] See figures 2-9 at the end of this chapter.

provides a logical and plausible footing for the research. However at the same time I am fully aware that, as a term, *illustration* can be rich with confusion and this is why I state clearly in the introduction in what sense I use the word.

After the calculated objectification of other's conversations and interactions, the opportunity to explore the self was a thrilling prospect and I momentarily indulged myself and my work in the privacy of experience. By moving away from systematic 'objective' analysis of conversation towards a more 'subjective' examination, and by studying the intimacies of my relationship to the world through the lens of personal experience, I realised that I could create an original and exciting position from which to observe the subtleties of human experience.

Although this new position was in itself a radical step forward for the research, the illustration of the self is by no means a new concept in illustration. It is often the role of an illustrator to express further how a character is feeling in order to foster a connection between the subject and its audience. When an understanding is formed, the viewer can participate more fully in the reading or viewing experience. For this reason, the realistic portrayal of the self is frequently modified to suit the wider context of what is being communicated. In *Mimesis as Make-believe,* Kendal L. Walton uses as an example an illustration of canoeist performing an Eskimo roll:

> The sketches can be taken in part as showing how, fictionally, the canoeist in the picture sees (excluding of course, the portrayal of his own back). The point in this case is not especially to foster "empathy" for or understanding of the pictured canoeist, however, but to give us a feeling of what it is like to execute the manoeuvre so we can do it ourselves. What is important is that we imagine having a certain experience...The effect would be entirely different and not nearly as instructive if the sketches were all right side up, with the water below and the sky above...[in that case] one would have the visual experiences of a spectator watching someone else perform the role rather than those of a roller (fig.1).[9]

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[9] Walton, Kendall L., *Mimesis as Make-Believe.* Cambridge, U.S.A: Harvard University Press, 1990, pp.347-348.
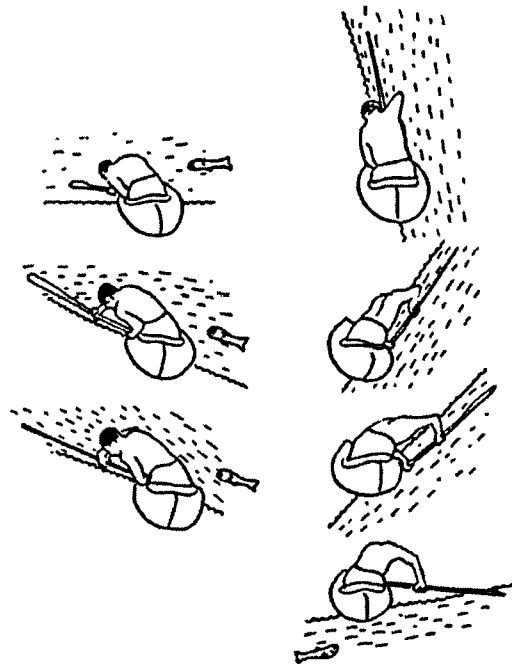
Figure 1: Eskimo roll diagram, from Robert E. Mcnair, *Basic River Canoeing,* 3rd edition (American

Camping Association, 1972).

This is a perfect example of how illustration distorts perspectives in order to stimulate the

viewer's sense of make-believe. What is important in this and other such cases is that the

viewer shares the subject's perspective. The research in contrast does not operate at this

level. It does not draw attention to the self, but makes no attempt to conceal it either. There

was no requirement to foster exterior empathy or understanding, because at this point

communication was not the work's principal aim. The research did not illustrate the self,

but indirectly observed its development through the prism of personal experience.

What implication did this change have on my wider role and position as an illustrator?

Although the research did not consider the work to be illustration in the conventional

sense, I had labelled myself an Illustrator for some years – at least when speaking to people

who are not conversant with art school vernacular. Like the term illustration the title illustrator provides a solid basis for understanding and acceptance.

Looking back through my drawings and notes made at the time, I think that it was at this stage in the research that I first made a deliberate attempt to forget my responsibilities and status as a trained illustrator.

Did I worry that the research wasn't illustration as I had come to understand it? Its uniqueness was a source of enormous anxiety for me at the time of its making. Every reflexive mark executed on the surface of the paper was demanding and difficult. In one sense the marks flowed freely and easily because they were highly gestural and responsive to my thoughts, but in another sense they were tremendously unsettling and dolefully unsatisfying to make. This was due in some measure to my simple desire to produce aesthetically pleasing imagery but, more significantly, because I had developed a personal scale of value for judging the success of an image that was established on the traditional principles of illustration. For example, how long did it take to produce? Does it work – does it look like its source? Do people understand and like it? And did I enjoy making it? The research appeared to go against all these principles and as a consequence defied all reasoned evaluation.

These feelings of uneasiness would continue until the instigation of the first main project, when the work's potential energy equalled my apprehension, and the relentless production of drawings the work demanded suppressed the force of my aesthetic anxieties. The following chapter describes the development of this project that began by asking the question *how can experience be illustrated?* The practice attempts to thwart the traditional scale of value that shadowed the construction of the previous drawings, by refining the use of impulsive and reflexive mark making and by ending the instinctive reliance on conventional media. This shift towards a highly subjective study would allow me to leave

behind, it was anticipated, the influence of my learned illustrative sensibilities and create a

new objective position from which to observe the intimacies of personal experience.

However I would promptly discover that my background in illustration would inform every

move I made.
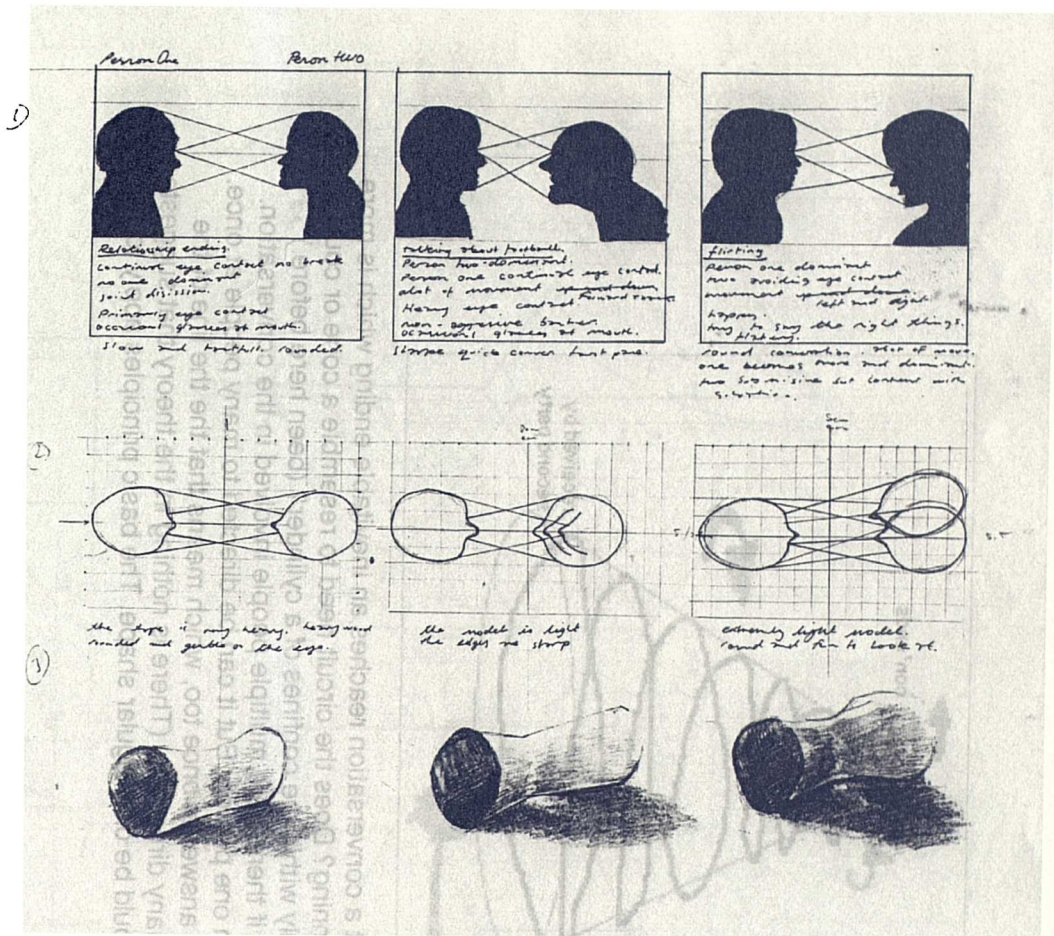
Figure 2: Page taken from Sketchbook, February 2000. Pencil on paper
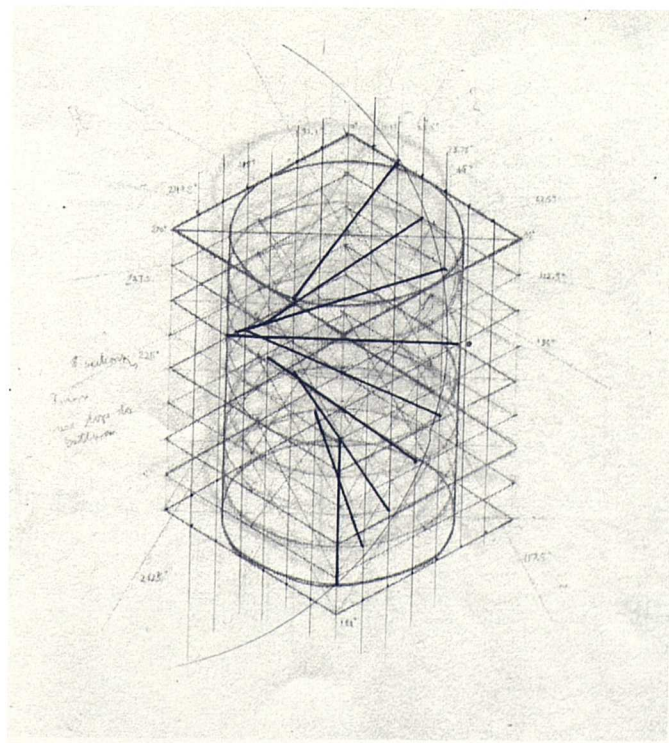
Figure 3: *Untitled (Diagram illustrating the movement of people during conversation)*, 2000. Pencil on paper
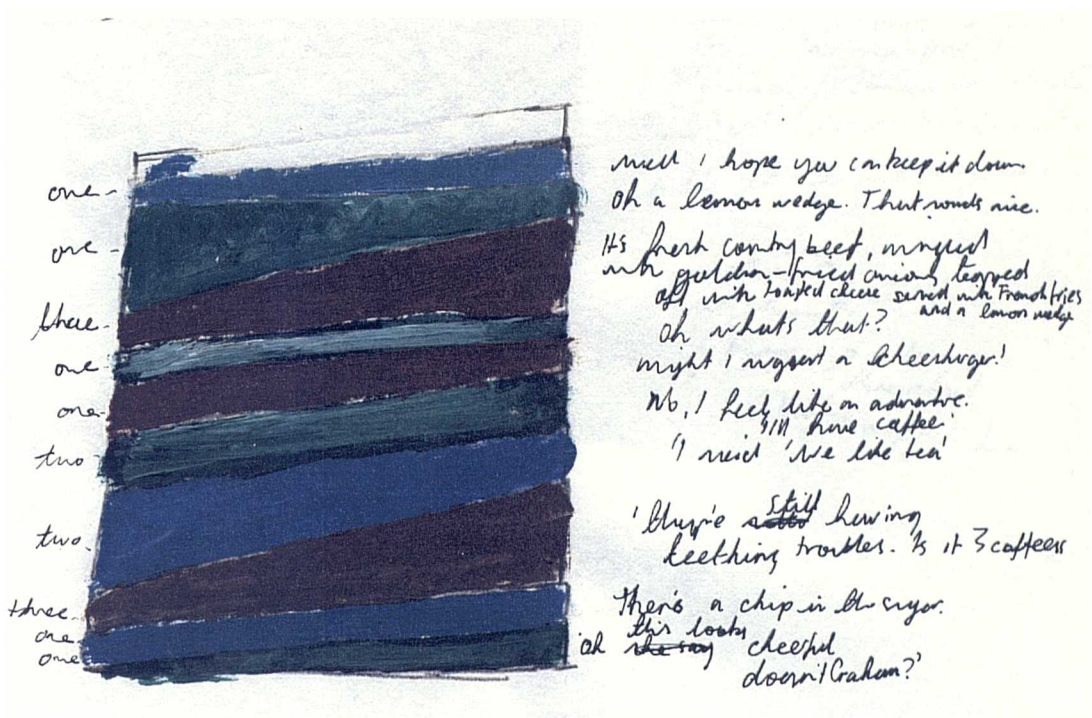
Figure 4: *A Chip in the Sugar,* 2000. Acrylic on paper
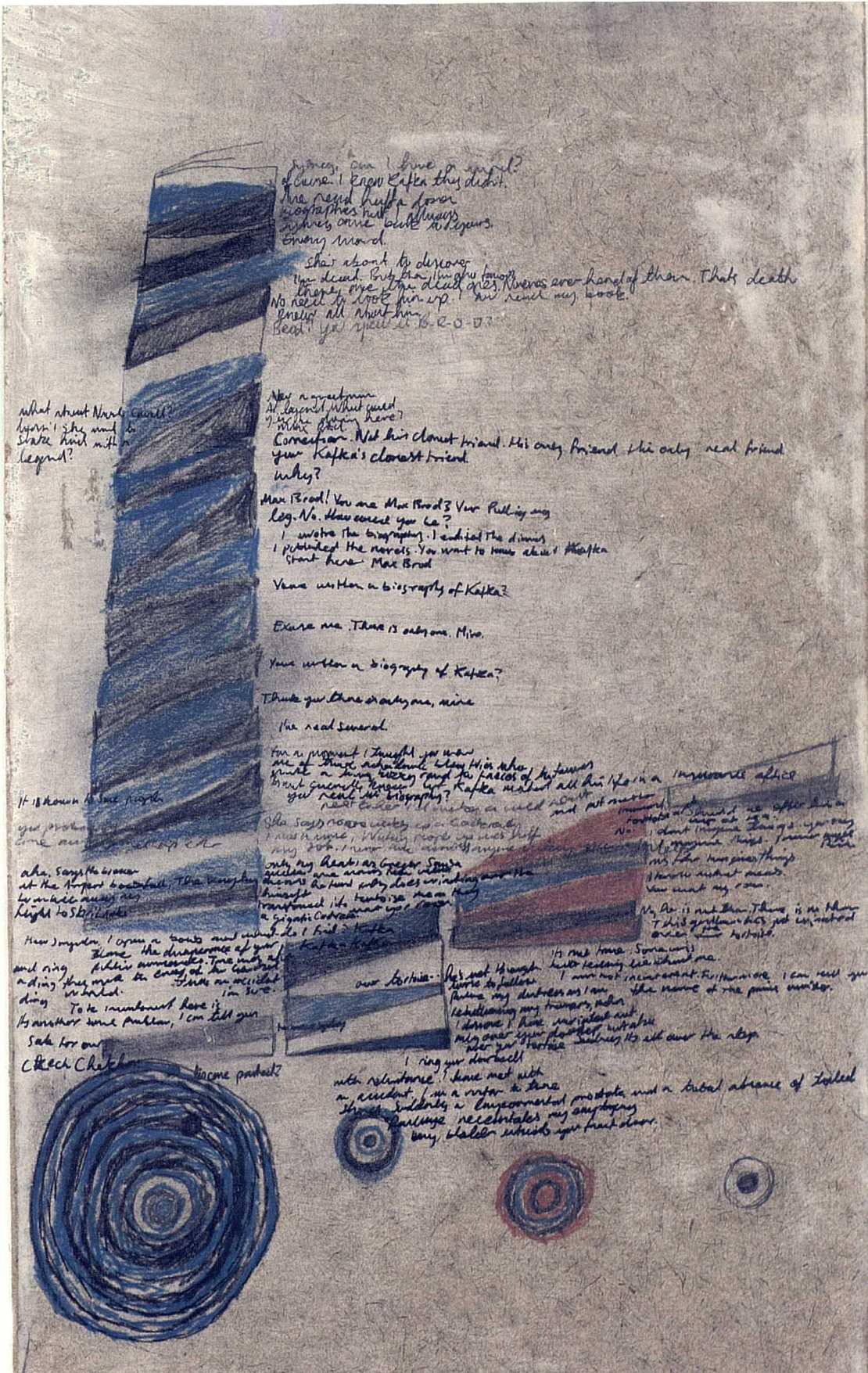
Figure 5: *Kafka's Dick 3,* 2000. Coloured pencil on board
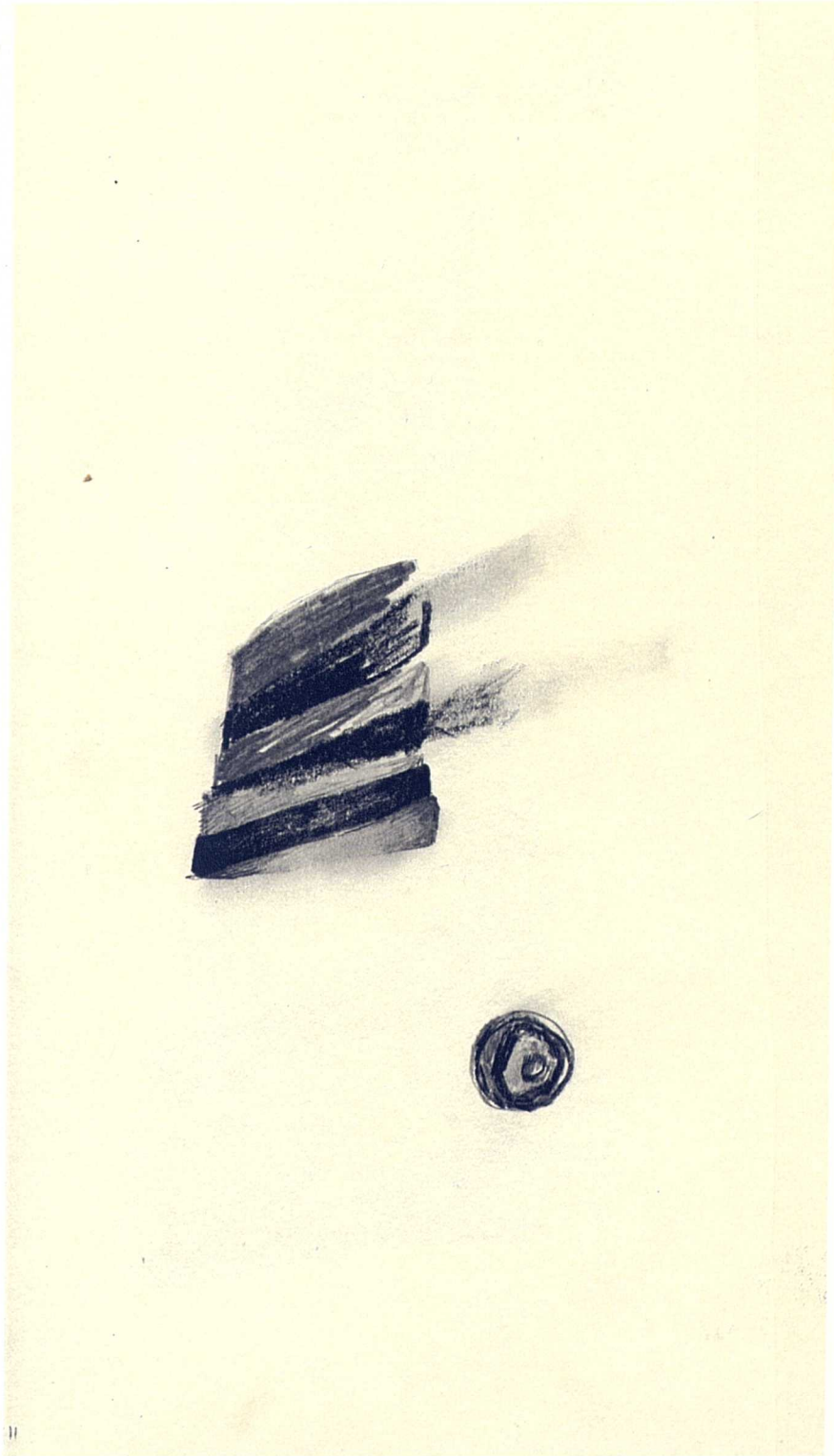
Figure 6: *It Wasn't a Personal Call You Know,* 2000. Pencil on paper

Figure 7: *If You Wanted Some Privacy…*, 2000. Coloured pencil on paper

Figure 8: *Untitled*, 2000. Coloured pencil and ink on paper

Figure 9: *Untitled*, 2000. Coloured pencil on paper

Chapter Two

The Illustration of Conversational Time and Space began by exploring how human interaction and conversation could be recorded and illustrated. To begin with the work took the form of three-dimensional diagrams which attempted to deconstruct the physical and emotional space between a speaker and respondent, placing particular emphasis on the step-by-step formulation of conversational structure. The practice soon began to stretch the original parameters of the research by reflecting in the drawings material changes in the space around the conversation. The new illustrations, executed on large sheets of paper and latterly on wooden boards, developed a vocabulary of formulaic, yet gestural marks, which sought to find a visual equivalent for an emotional response. These first tentative steps towards a more reflexive, instinctive study of experience were found to be unsettling and uncomfortable to make because they operated outside the conventions of illustration and as such were beyond my established scale of value. The illustrations defied any reasoned assessment of their success, as they were defined not by their relationship to other more conventional forms of illustrative communication but by their distance from my learnt aesthetic sense.

Despite significant and dramatic changes in my thinking, my methodological approach to the drawings remained consistent throughout the process. However the use of pencil, paper and coloured crayons during both the diagrammatic and reflexive stages of the research reflects timidity in approach and underlines an instinctive reliance on conventional forms of illustrative description.

The work began after a time to slow down and eventually burn itself out. As is often the case with practical work, there did not appear to be a single significant reason for this change, but rather that a combination of factors influenced its conclusion. It would be

nonsensical to attempt to chart these factors, which were, generally speaking, minute shifts in my reasoning, as they typically took place at the very edge of my consciousness. It is possible, however, to discuss their combined influence on, and implication for, future practice.

Perhaps the single most important outcome of the work was the development of a formulaic vocabulary of gestural marks. This vocabulary was not incontrovertible or complete, but its evolution marked the first significant deviation from conventional systems of illustrative description. This development suggested many possible routes of enquiry, the most exciting of which being to explore the theory that it might be possible to access the actualities of experience by pursuing instinctive, automatic responses to situations.

The practice also revealed that an illustration of an event produced contemporaneously was often more evocative and expressive of its subject than one created retrospectively as the former reflected better the energy and spontaneity of the moment. This finding determined that if I was to pursue this route of enquiry the ground onto which the marks would be made would have to be constructed from a lightweight and durable material, and the medium used to make the marks be uncomplicated, versatile and semi-permanent.

After experiment, canvas proved to be a suitable material and chalk an apposite medium. Other materials such as wood, plastic and glass were considered for their appropriateness, but canvas was judged to be the most suitable of the materials tested. Its low weight meant it could be comfortably and safely carried around, and its strength makes it resilient to even the most abrasive of marks. The canvas was measured and cut into a square, each edge measuring twenty centimetres. In order to allow the canvas to receive the chalk marks, it was primed with two thick layers of blackboard paint.

The decision to use canvas was directed by the practical requirements of the research and was not a deliberate attempt to distance the work from traditional illustrative practice. The choice of canvas over a more conventional medium such as paper was perhaps the first time that a seemingly innocuous decision had both important practical consequences and significant conceptual implications for my developing sequence of thought. My sequence of thought or *research journey* evolved alongside the practice. From the inception of The Illustration of Conversational Time and Space onwards the research process involved, and became reliant upon chance encounters and such seemingly arbitrary decisions. However, these decisions would, in retrospect, prove to be directed and defined by a rigorous process of reflection and evaluation. The idea of using black paint to prime the canvas and create what was in effect a portable blackboard was another example of how a chance encounter would have enormous influence on the conceptual trajectory of the practice. A passage in Jostein Gaarder's *Sophie's World,* which compared John Locke's interpretation of an infant's mind as a *Tabula Rasa* to 'a blackboard before the teacher arrives in the classroom', inspired the initial idea of using a blackboard to record my immediate reactions to an event.

The painted canvas square, later termed the *Primary Blackboard,* could be carried comfortably, once folded into quarters, in the back pocket of my jeans. However, after some uncomfortable and unrewarding tests, the practice of illustrating an event concurrently proved to be difficult and awkward. Producing marks in this way meant that I had to divide my attention between communication or conscious observation and consideration with reflexive mark making thereby constructing for myself, unnatural or simulated experiences – experiences of carrying out the process. I felt more comfortable interpreting the experience when physically and emotionally disconnected from the source.

Although I did not anticipate it at the time, this decision to work retrospectively (and therefore outside the event) consequently proved to be a hugely important one. It directed the trajectory of the subsequent research by introducing mimesis, in the form of interpretation, as a crucial tool in the process. It shifted the focus from automatic response to a given situation, to a considered visual interpretation or replication of the source, as constructed in the unconscious.[10]

It can be established that there are three constituent elements that make up the process of illustrating an experience: the source, the experience, and the illustration - the illustration being a second generation vision of the truth and therefore 'situated on the lowest level of reality.'[11] It may seem surprising that I so readily adopted a theory for the research that dismisses the individualism and autonomy traditionally associated with creative practice. However, this starting point provided an invaluable position from which to work. It is in fact an illustration's distance from the truth that permits the illustrator to objectively examine the object of the illustration and form a working knowledge of it.[12]

Experiences were illustrated on the surface of the Primary Blackboard during the evening in the familiar environment of my bedroom. I would usually begin by working through the day's events in order, but occasionally I would illustrate an experience out of sequence if its memory held particular prominence in my mind or if its subject was of special emotional significance. The bedroom offered an alternative environment or reality to the outside world in which the experiences were formed and in order to maintain the necessary distance between the event and its illustration I kept these realties separate and distinct.

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[10] *Mimesis* (from the Greek meaning imitation) is understood in this context to mean a representation in visual form that is created eschewing individual or personal stylisation.

[11] Verdenius, W.J. *Mimesis – Plato's Doctrine of Artistic Imitation and its Meaning to Us.* Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1949, p. 14.

[12] This notion of self-observation through representation is discussed by Hegel in his *Phenomenology of the Mind.* He introduces the idea that it is not only beneficial for knowledge to 'submerge' itself within its object, but in fact, it is an inherent characteristic. There is, as Hegel puts it; "Pure self-identity in otherness." See: Hegel, G.W.F., *The Phenomenology of the Mind,* Baillie J.B. (trans) London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd, 1931, pp. 111-114.

It was crucial that I could in my mind disengage the source of the experience from its recollection and so consequently the space in which the marks were made needed to be disconnected both physically and emotionally from the outside. In order to preserve this separation I did not illustrate experiences that took place either in the bedroom or in any of the other surrounding rooms.

Once an experience had been recorded on the Primary Blackboard a square of self-adhesive plastic was pressed onto its surface. The plastic was then lifted from the blackboard and applied to a piece of white A4 sized paper. This was done in order to reproduce each phase of marks without disrupting the use of the canvas.

Chalk dust became attached to the plastic along with particles of black paint that had become displaced by the knife's movements. Small pockets of air were formed where the chalk dust had accumulated and reduced the plastic's adhesiveness. These areas were responsive to movement and sensitive to pressure. Their continual shifting and adjusting beneath the plastic seemed to alter the tonal appearance and character of the prints without compromising their identity as a concrete record of transitory emotion.

The prints present to the viewer a negative or reverse translation of the blackboard's surface. When superimposed against the stark white paper incisions and tears appear as dark, fragmented reliefs, while areas of once brilliant white emerge as lifeless areas of patchy grey.

The prints are compiled and presented in chronological order and this form of sequential organisation gives structure and uniformity to the work. However, despite their rigid orderliness, the prints can still be read and understood both individually and out of sequence. Each compilation of prints suggested its own natural conclusion or ending. Occasionally a collection might contain drawings that have been recorded over a specified

period of time, but more often a body of prints reflected the passing of a particular emotional phase.

Using the prints as reference, the marks were in turn transposed onto the surface of a second, larger square of canvas, later called the *Secondary Blackboard*. The Secondary Blackboard became a palimpsest, each layer of marks overlaying the last, forming a mesh of interlaced lines and tones (fig. 10). This network of channels and circuits created an illusion of structure and substance. They resemble detailed maps or astronomical star charts in appearance as their many layers, distances and dimensions are compressed and flattened and presented to the viewer on a single plane.
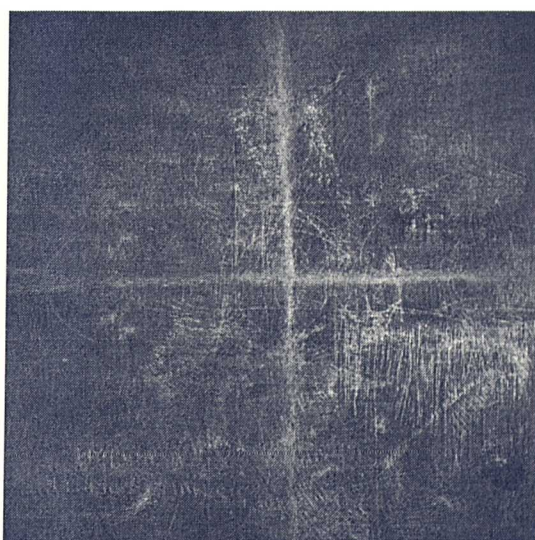
Figure 10: *Untitled (April 2001)*, 2001.Chalk on canvas, 20 x 20 cm

By allowing gestural impulse to determine the meaning of an experience, I could momentarily disconnect my conscious from my unconscious and 'lose myself' within the process. It is this compelling element of the mimetic creative act, this 'trickery', which so concerned Plato:

> Plato rejected the poets in a kind of incantation of that "loss-of-self" that seems like a necessary part of the experience of imaginary doubling, the becoming another. Thus [...] the unexpected, unmotivated and fierce attack that Plato has Socrates direct against the jugging imitator (in *Republic*). We could also note a reminiscence of that in the *Laws,* where the "Athenian stranger" scornfully

rejected low and comic *mimesis,* which was ideally performed only by "slaves and foreign hirelings", i.e. by those who have no "selves" to lose. The juggler was treated with serious scorn by Plato, and the paradoxical reason seems to be the connection with *mimesis,* that contagious imaginary fantasy that always wins over the philosophical world simply because of priority.[13]

Pursuing a mimetic representation of an experience in this way, allowed direct access to the actualities of the experience as interpreted by the unconscious. This again brings us back to the important distinction between the source and the experience or, on this occasion, the identification of myself, the architect of the experience, as the subject of the illustration not the source. In simpler terms, I was illustrating my reaction to the source and not the source as an ideal reality. This distinction was vital for the process, as it made objective observation possible.[14]

It is necessary at this stage to define what exactly I mean when I use the term *gestural* in the context of mark making. The word has of course many meanings and associations but within the specific framework of the research I use the term precisely to describe the instinctive, reflexive generation of marks. In this context *gestural* implies that the aesthetic appearance of the mark is of secondary importance to the process that created it. In contrast, *gestural* is used frequently within illustration to describe an aesthetic style of mark making that is lively and free. It is usually intended to signify spontaneity and flamboyance, but it also implies that the marks have been created with a degree of consideration and conscious control. Quentin Blake's (b.1932) illustrations for example are often described as expressive and gestural because they appear full of energy and

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[13] Melberg, A. *Theories of Mimesis,* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995, pp.24-25.

[14] A similar 'loss of self' with the intention of removing the subjective from the creative process, was attempted by the French Symbolist poet Arthur Rimbaud (1854-1891). In an attempt to free himself from the traditions and conventions of poetry, Rimbaud devised a form of writing he called 'Objective Poetry,' "Poetry that transcended the individual because it was based on scientific principles." There has been much debate as to whether he achieved this or if it was in fact possible at all; "Rimbaud tried something impossible: to write objectively, to see objectively. The result was only a more individually subjective conception, and a kind of synthesis of sounds, odours, colours and images, which is one of the essentials of Symbolism." For a closer examination of Rimbaud's poetry I refer the reader to *Rimbaud, A Season in Hell & Other Poems.* London: Anvil Press Poetry, 1994. For a comprehensive biography of the poet, I recommend Graham Robb's *Rimbaud.* London: Picador, 2000.

movement and possess a unique sense of sincerity and freedom (fig.11). His drawings,

constructed of loose, scratchy black lines drawn against bright washes of colour, appear

spontaneous and boundless, however, as the illustrator himself reveals here, they are

actually the result of a laborious process of drawing and re-drawing which has taken many

years to develop:

> In an attempt to combine planning with an air of spontaneity I've
> employed various techniques of which the one I have found most
> successful, and have used for the last twenty years, makes use of the light
> box. On the light box I put the rough drawing I am going to work from,
> and on top of that a sheet of watercolour paper. [...] Ready to hand is a
> bottle of waterproof black ink and a lot of scruffy-looking dip pens. [...]
> What happens next is not tracing; in fact it's important that I can't see the
> drawing underneath too clearly, because when I draw I try to draw as if
> for the first time; but I can do it with increased concentration, because the
> drawing underneath lets me know all the elements that have to appear and
> exactly where they have to be placed. Normally I begin with the most
> difficult piece of the drawing – some particular facial expression, some
> particular gesture or stance – so that if I get that wrong, I don't have to
> repeat the whole of the drawing.[15]

This explanation reveals a tight, conscientious approach to drawing which is indiscernible

in the final illustrations. Although they are themselves created in minutes, the images are in

effect the product of more than sixty years of planning and preparation. In contrast to

Blake's illustrations, the marks made on the surface of the blackboard canvases are

unprepared and impulsive. Although they adhere to a certain vocabulary of imagery or

range of gesture, this language is defined, not by design as with Blake, but by the practical

limitations of the media used. The marks are expressive and gestural in the sense that their

appearance is not determined before they are created. For Quentin Blake on the other hand,

the visual mark is both gestural *and* considered. This distinction is vital to the

understanding of the practice as it situates the work outside the conventions of illustration

and places it in an intimate territory of its own making.

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[15] Blake, Quentin. *Words and Pictures.* London: Jonathan Cape, 2000, pp. 54-55.

It was the aim of the research to break free from conventional forms of visualisation and create a new form of descriptive communication that could express the intricacies of experience. In order to do this I would have to lose the immediate control and authority over the visual mark that Quentin Blake and other illustrators like him take for granted.

A second fundamental difference between the marks made on the blackboards and those of Quentin Blake, is that each of Blake's marks is a selective component of a wider message, each having a specific character and function within the composition. The marks that litter the surfaces of the blackboard drawings in contrast, are individual and enigmatic and not easily deciphered. In this respect the work has an affinity with the paintings of the American artist Cy Twombly (b.1928), who attempts to convey thoughts and messages through layers of spontaneous associated marks.

Figure 11: Quentin Blake — illustration for *Fantastic Daisy Artichoke,* 1999. Pen and ink on paper

Like the illustrations of Quentin Blake, Cy Twombly's paintings are often described as gestural, although for Twombly, the marks that characterise his paintings, often conceal more than they reveal. In a similar way to the Blackboard Drawings, Twombly uses an expressive vocabulary of signs and marks to describe his emotional responses to a specific subject, however, in contrast to Blake's explanatory use of line, this vocabulary is largely

an hermetic one, providing few visual clues as to the nature and content of the paintings (fig.12).

Figure 12: Cy Twombly — *Bolsena*, 1969.Oil, coloured chalk and pencil on canvas, 200 x 240 cm

It has been suggested that Cy Twombly's painting are 'deliberately meant to represent something unintelligible or inexplicable'.[16] If this is true of Twombly's work, it is certainly not the case with the Blackboard Drawings. Although the practice is at this stage principally concerned with the recording and registration of experience and not its communication, the drawings do not aim to mislead or confuse the viewer. They are the product of reflexive gesture, and as such, their appearance is dictated, not by communicative transparency or lucidity, but by the construction process itself. It is my opinion that this is the same for Twombly. Although the Blackboard Drawings do not reveal the subjects of the experiences they illustrate, they do signal the rough context of the event through the systematic presence of the written word. Text is incorporated in both the figurative and the more abstracted drawings, and serves a different function in each. Drawings of a realistic nature, that is drawings that include shapes and forms that resemble

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[16] Butler, Adam. *The Art Book.* London: Phaidon, 1996, p. 467

actual objects, accompany the text and primarily play an illustrative role, whereas the more non-representational images are in many ways dependent on the texts to suggest their meanings. This does not imply however that in this situation the text becomes the illustration. The text is not autonomous. It is present within the composition as an equal constituent component and is not intended to communicate an alternative or separate message. The placing of the date at the bottom right of the image suggests the work functions as a journal. It also indicates the original orientation of the composition. The use of textual clues was not a conscious concession to intelligibility, but an instinctive element of the recoding process.

Twombly's paintings do not appear deceptive or illusory despite their dependence on a largely protected idiom. The Blackboard Drawings too, endeavour to operate at this level, despite the absence of an explicit representational code. The energetic marks that typify both Twombly's paintings and the canvas blackboards should not be regarded as mysterious or deceptive ciphers, but as genuine signals of emotion and experience. When viewed as a whole the marks describe intimately the physical and psychological presence of their creator. The Blackboard Drawings illustrate experiences: they do not, in fact cannot, corroborate them, because an experience is manifestly unique. That their precise subjects are not revealed should not affect the illustration's status in the eyes of the viewer as reflexive representations of actual moments in time.

I was aware however, when making the work, that the delicate weaving of organic and geometric marks allows ambiguities to exist within the compositions. Occasionally marks appear to represent barriers or lines of demarcation, while at the same time suggesting a definite connection between articles in space. In other areas energetic marks, seemingly created with frenetic urgency, appear to resonate with their own rhythm of activity. They continue to animate the blackboard's surface whilst simultaneously implying immobility

and stasis by appearing tightly netted beneath other more elevated forms. Although often recognisable as such, difficult or distressing experiences did not necessarily generate vigorous mark making. Likewise, calm or gentle experiences did not always provoke marks with subtle and sensitive characteristics. However, the eventual emergence of a uniformity and structural regularity within the drawings would seem to suggest that the material manifestation of the unconscious's immense dimensions is narrowed, not by the mimetic process, but by the visual mark's finite vocabulary. The marks that fill the Secondary Blackboards are, after all, only representations of a second-generation reality and are defined, not by their similarity to the source, but by their difference.

It was occasionally uncomfortable to remember and then relive difficult experiences upon the surface of the Secondary Blackboards. I was torn between the desire to forget and a natural capacity for curiosity and self-observation. The transformation of marks from the Primary to the Secondary Blackboards became one of invocation; only by purging or exorcising upsetting experiences could I begin to be free and in control of them.

The decision early on in the research to illustrate retrospectively, also established in the work a much-welcomed element of control. By formalising when, and under what terms I was able to recount the source, I was able to regulate the amount of exposure it had to the effects of time and objective order and control. This, in some ways, compensated for the 'loss-of-self' or creative autonomy renounced when mimesis became integrated in the process.

The notion of consciously setting up parameters within which to remember was also explored by the French-born American artist, Louise Bourgeois (b.1911). In her series of images entitled *The Insomnia Drawings* she similarly attempts to secure liberation by confronting and archiving painful memories which, dormant during the day, rise to the surface during periods of intense insomnia.
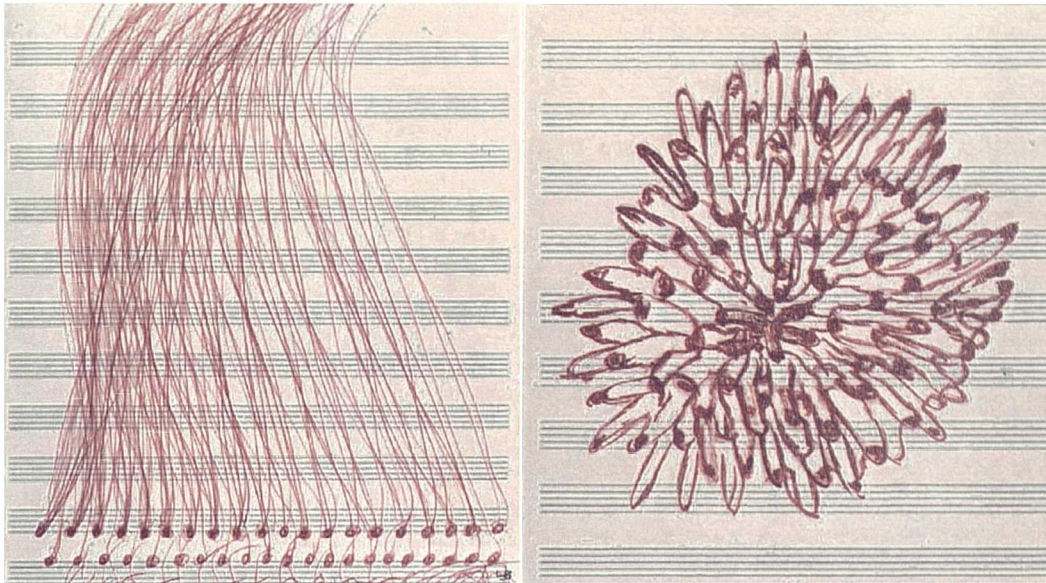
Figures 13 and 14: Louise Bourgeois – *The Insomnia Drawings*, 1994-5.

Red ink on paper, both 21.1 x 29.7 cm

The Insomnia Drawings, like the Blackboard Drawings, attempt to define and order past experiences. The coherent state Bourgeois entered as a result of sleeplessness allowed her unconscious to direct her choice of marks and inform them once made.

The transference of marks from the Primary to the Secondary Blackboards once again introduced mimesis in the form of interpretation. The Secondary Blackboard was, to extend the Platonic theory of distance, now *three* times removed from the source. This three-fold separation created the distance that is necessary for what I argue is objective self-observation.

The physical act of transferring the marks from the Primary to the Secondary Blackboards is less significant at this stage than the progressive re-experiencing of the events captured on the surface of the Primary Blackboard. The transferral process is above all else concerned with the exorcism of previous experience and not with the formulation of new.

The nature of the relationship between the Primary and Secondary Blackboards confuses the traditional (mainly academic) distinction between the finished work and the sketch. In one sense, by using the initial reflexive prints as the basis for the more considered secondary drawings, the process echoes conventional illustrative practice where illustrators construct a finished image around any number of rough sketches. However the distance between the work and traditional illustration is simultaneously widened by the use of unconventional media and materials and by their application directly and irreversibly onto the canvases. I am reluctant however to consider the prints as preparatory drawings in the traditional sense, and do not consider the secondary blackboards as finished pieces. It was my belief that the conversion of the marks from the Primary to the Secondary Blackboards was crucial to the process because it created the distance that is necessary for objective self-observation but it is possible that the process would not have evolved in this way if I did not have a background in illustration. The Secondary Blackboards and the collections of prints they were derived from, should be understood as a single body of work that when viewed together expresses a single emotional phase.

As I have discussed, I kept sketchbooks throughout the course of the research, but at the time of the making of the Blackboard Drawings I used them principally for noting down practical comments and observations. Their function began to change when the practice moved away from the direct physical registration of marks towards more 'mechanical' means of representation. When this happened, during the second and third projects, the sketchbooks formed an essential connection between my leant illustrative sensibilities and the intellectual demands of the research. The sketchbooks would be indispensable and visually more energetic when the pull of the research was at its most acute and my primary desire to communicate using a simple visual language was suppressed.

Whether or not Cy Twombly maintained sketchbooks alongside his painting is unknown, but it is well documented that Abstract Expressionist painter Wassily Kandinsky (1866-1944) produced many sketchbooks throughout his lifetime;

> 'Even Kandinsky, the painter most preoccupied with the need to establish a universal language of abstraction, felt the need to pursue parallel series of work throughout the period of his most revolutionary discoveries: there existed side by side in his production, 'Studies', 'Improvisations' and 'Compositions', these different terms faithfully reflecting the degree of liberty which he has allowed himself, balanced against the need to devote special care and preparatory study to a select group of works'.[17]

At one level this suggests that my innate desire to communicate simply and effectively is by no means unique and confirms my understanding that abstraction is just one of many visual languages. It could be argued that the desire to explore, understand and communicate our empirical experiences is as great, if not greater than the compulsion to discover new forms of expression.

By covering his enormous canvases with intricately drawn details that 'connote the aesthetic of the sketch', Cy Twombly too questions the distinction between the preparatory drawing and the finished work. His use of pencil as his principal medium emphasises this rearrangement of values in a manner similar to the Blackboard Drawings which disrupt convention by making marks without previous deliberation directly onto the canvas. The use of unconventional tools to record marks on the blackboards was not a deliberate attempt to confront traditional illustrative practices but instead, their appropriation was directed by the practical requirements of the project; canvas was used because of its low weight and durability and chalk was considered an ideal medium because it is straightforward to use.

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[17] Joachimides, C.M. (ed) *The Age of Modernism Art in the 20th Century.* Stuttgart: Verlag Gerd Hatje, 1997, p.523

41

I have always associated chalk with blackboards and communication. For me chalk is inoffensive and gentle. A childhood relic. When held, its weight is insignificant, less consequential than the words and shapes that are created by it. As an art medium, its nature is to be docile and compliant. It is chalk that illuminates a blackboard's darkness and it is its presence that confers it with identity and status.

The chalk was typically used to cover large areas of the blackboard or to produce dense white lines. It was not possible to create thin or delicate marks with the chalk. In some instances a reflexive impulse suggested the precise appearance of a specific mark. If the exact character of the mark could not be realised I considered the image to be inaccurate and unsuccessful. It became clear that there should be a second medium available, one that would produce complementary marks and convey emotion to the viewer in a different way. For these marks a scalpel was used.

I understood the knife to be the opposite or negative of the chalk - as an object it was heavier and longer and colder to touch, but it also provoked opposite feelings. For as much as I considered a stick of chalk to be benign, so I thought the knife severe and unsettling. It was perhaps significant then, that the chalk represented by adding to the canvas, the knife by removing from it. This distinction allowed me to formulate a full and diverse vocabulary of marks, the knife being at one end of the scale and chalk at the other.

Unlike Lucio Fontana (1899-1968), who used a knife to slash painted canvases through completely to release their tension and tautness (fig.15), I did not at any point intend to pierce the surface of the canvas with the knife. Although strengthened by the layers of paint, the Primary Blackboard remained delicate and vulnerable throughout the process. The canvas did not have the support of a traditional wooden frame nor were the number and weight of the marks considered before the moment of their execution. The canvas was at the mercy of the experience it represented.
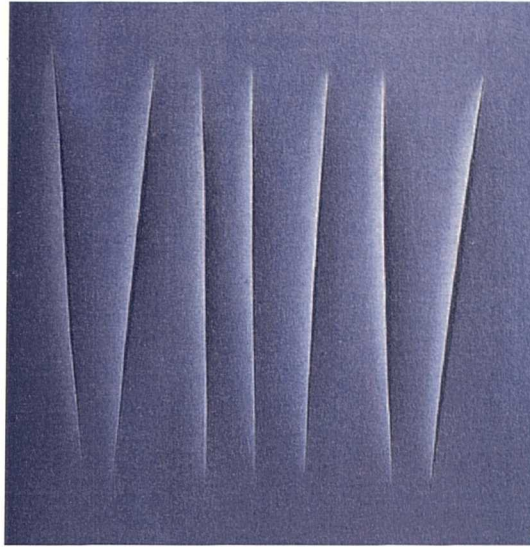
Figure 15: Lucio Fontana - *Spatial Concept,* 1962. Waterpaint on canvas, 52 x 52 cm

All individual lines or blocks of tone possess a distinctive character and serve a unique function within the composition. Each new application therefore required specific and individual consideration. As layer upon layer of marks covered the blackboard's surface, a pictorial structure began to emerge. Hierarchies and differences within the layers began to disappear, as marks informed by significant experiences were juxtapositioned alongside less remarkable forms and structures.

Once completed, the Secondary Blackboard was sealed between two layers of heat-sealed plastic laminate. Beneath the plastic the canvas is presented unfolded, exposed and open to examination. No longer able to modify or transform, all experiences are frozen permanently. The plastic laminate has two functions: it prevents information from leaving the blackboard's surface in the form of dust, and it also protects and insulates it from outside contamination. By rendering the canvas unusable in this way I am denying the blackboard its inherent function and again attempting to assert control over the past.

The intersecting lines that divide the surfaces of both the Primary and Secondary Blackboards were not originally an aesthetic consideration. As time passed the canvas became fragile and worn causing small amounts of paint to form as dust in its folds. This fragmentation appeared on the subsequent prints as an obscure dark cross (fig. 16).

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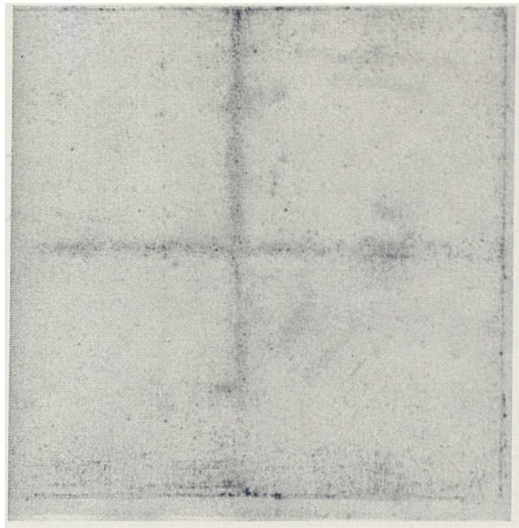
Figure 16: *3rd March 2001*. Plastic print, 20 x 20 cm

The bars of the cross created two clear lines of demarcation, dissecting the face of the canvas into four definite areas. Because of this degradation, and in contrast to its sombre, almost melancholic appearance, the shadow of the cross would be at its most prominent on prints inspired by fervent, highly energetic experiences.

Although mathematically disunited, the quarters do not appear independent of one another. On the contrary, it seems that the hazy arms of the cross are joining the four autonomous squares resolutely together. All ensuing aesthetic modifications to the blackboard's surface took place in relation to the cross.

The cross is neither part of the canvas's fabric nor an element of its surface decoration. It appears as if suspended in its own dimension - distant and passive, and yet all the time maintaining resilient structural form. This perception is emphasised when one observes that all chalk lines and cuts of the knife that journey the length of the blackboard, appear to pass through the central cross never above or beneath it.

The Blackboard Drawings seem to be suspended between two opposing forces, between order and disorder. In each case an experience is subjected to the ordering mechanisms of

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time and of physical and emotional distance. This reflexive process is represented in the drawings by the imposition of the cross over the surface's seemingly disordered markings and also by the rigid dimensions of the canvas square itself. There is a build-up of kinetic energy as the drawings resonate back and forth between the placidity of order and the frantic, destructive energy of chaos.

The cross is the node around which all marks take their position. They swarm around its centre, often orbiting in a single direction (fig. 17). Each mark seems to respect the influence and authority of the cross, and never once do they appear independent of it.
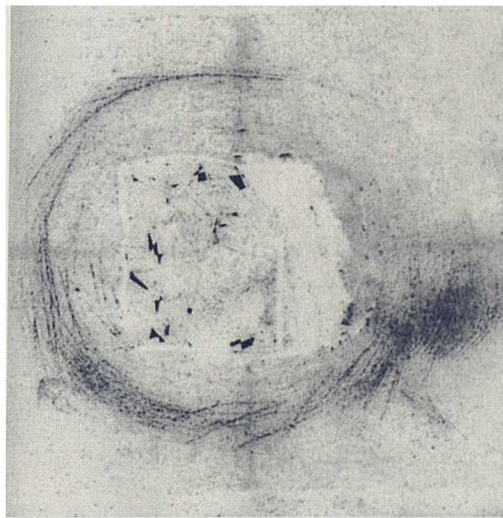
Figure 17: *10th May 2001*. Plastic print, 20 x 20 cm

The first area of the Primary Blackboard to show deterioration and decay was the centre of the cross. A conflict of interest emerged as I was torn between wanting to preserve the canvas and to maintain the integrity of the marks. I resented having to continue, for the sake of the process, and destroy the canvas. My response was to compromise – to become more selective in my recollections and to illustrate them in ways that might minimise the blackboard's deterioration. It is unclear whether this compromise affected only the representation of the experience or if the experience itself became rearranged and reorganised to suit the confines of the blackboard. It is perhaps symbolic then, that the very marks that rely on the cross for their survival contribute to its eventual demise.

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After the deliberate and calculated study of conversational time and space, the opportunity to explore the world of human interaction through the lens of personal experience was at the same time exciting and daunting. The possibility of creating and sustaining a private place from which to view experiences was an enticing prospect, but in order to construct such a position I had to lose the control and authority over the visual mark that had taken me many years to acquire. At first this process of severance was desperately uncomfortable because it meant leaving behind not only my methodological habits but also an armoury of aesthetic values by which I had learned to judge the success of an image. It was found that only once new criterion of judgment had been formulated could the work progress. Instead of assessing the work using conventional illustrative criteria, the new drawings were considered successful in the broadest sense if they accurately captured or imitated the experience they illustrated. In this way the nature of their correspondence with their subject and the manner of their construction was more significant than their ultimate aesthetic appearance.

The most important outcome of the study was the development of a vocabulary of gestural marks. Although not complete in the sense that the marks could be reliably translated into a non-abstracted language or idiom, they did possess a distinctive character that remained consistent throughout the process. By exploiting this vocabulary I could record my immediate responses to experiences on the surface of the Primary Blackboard. This development proved to be enormously important because it gave direction to my thinking and for the first time positioned the research outside the context of traditional illustrative practice and within an (original) territory of its own.[18]

The Blackboard Drawings do more than illustrate the emotional and physical effects of an experience, they refer both to its source in the form of a Platonic ideal pattern and its

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[18] This led me in retrospect to identify my processes of working with art or Fine Art rather than Illustration.

phenomenal interpretation. They demonstrate that mimesis, implemented as a tool in art practice, is the thread that links the unconscious to the conscious. It is also mimesis that negotiates the distance between the source and image which facilitates self-observation. However, leaving the visual realisation of the source to the alchemy of the unconscious also raised unexpected but fundamental problems within the process.

Once a methodology had become established within the work, I found that my learnt sensibilities or skills as an illustrator had begun to dictate how the event or encounter was interpreted and subsequently formed within my unconscious. It was understood from the beginning of the research that an image or form could not be created independently of my aesthetic awareness, and that interpretation would necessarily involve a degree of stylisation, but I was unprepared for such influence and mediation at this stage in the process. It appeared that my recognition and perception of an event had become indistinguishable from my learned sensibilities. My awareness or breadth of reception had become narrower, and the reflexive process finely tuned towards an aesthetic ideal or design. My perception had become focused in such a way that seeing was now congruent with the aesthetic potential of an event. This level of mediation was unexpected and brought into doubt the value of the later drawings as spontaneous, reflexive expressions of reality.

It was concluded that the persistent attendance of my aesthetic reasoning thwarted any attempt at the direct access to the actualities of an experience as interpreted by my unconscious and seemed to suggest that the unmediated illustration of experience might be unattainable. Far from being disheartening, this finding immediately initiated several new routes of enquiry and provoked numerous questions, the most pertinent being whether it might be possible to accurately illustrate the source of an experience by bypassing the influence of all aesthetic mediation. The following two projects will periodically return to

this question as they explore further the relationship between an event and its unconscious perception and search for a better understanding of the visual mark as a register of experience.

The freedom that the project afforded to explore the vast subject of experience was at times overwhelming. As a consequence it is perhaps understandable that when faced with such an enormous undertaking I looked first towards certain tested devices and media. The dependence on paper and pencil, for example, as a means of communication is evident throughout the course of the work, from the first diagrammatic illustrations created during the *Illustration of Conversational Time and Space* to the descriptive texts that are woven into and around the plastic prints. It is difficult from this distance to fathom why I unconsciously chose certain mediums over others and why I pursued particular routes of enquiry, however it could be argued that an investigation into such a immense subject as experience demands the establishment of certain key parameters in which to work and necessitates foundations onto which the work can build. The foundations that support the Blackboard Drawings, I now understand, are based largely on the traditional illustrative principles of aesthetic stylisation and representation in the form of interpretation.

As the work progressed I became increasingly aware of the widening critical distance between the research and conventional forms of illustration. Although this project did not set out to explore the capacity or facility of conventional illustration to support the illustration of experience, frictions and tensions soon began to emerge between the character and direction of the research and my own creative (illustrative) instincts. The work is in many ways energised by these tensions and each subtle move away from more conventional forms of illustrative description had the effect of distancing the practice from my innate aesthetic sense.

The lack of any overt literal description of the experience was undoubtedly the most dramatic shift away from convention. However, at the time, the resolution to omit any form of explicit representational code was not difficult to reconcile as the project's close alignment with the Platonic theory of mimetic representation determined that a created image or object cannot corroborate an experience because a experience in all its reality is unique and therefore defies external authentication. On this principle it was judged unnecessary and counterproductive to otherwise describe the details of the selected moment in time. By dissociating myself from the conventional codes of illustration in this way, I was in effect absolving myself from any professional responsibility to be overtly representative or explicit regarding the presented subject matter and by leaving the origins of the drawings unnamed, I was not only preserving the privacy of experience, but also testing the depth of my relationship with illustration.

To attain any level of understanding, it is vital for the viewer to respect both the individuality and universality of experience and to understand that the abstracted marks that make up the Blackboard Drawings are above all else honest interpretations of real events in time. Despite the absence of any formal descriptive system, the Blackboard Drawings should be seen collectively as genuine representations of intimate realities and the marks that interlace their surfaces should be understood as a bridge connecting a solitary private world with the world at large.

I have said that my learnt aesthetic reasoning was found to pervade every aspect of the Blackboard Drawings' construction and its overwhelming presence made continuing making drawings impossible. The initial representations of experiences were not, I now understand, any less under the influence of this reasoning than the drawings created in the latter stages of the project, but for the majority of the work I was unconscious of the gravity and strength of its mediation. This realisation, together with the almost complete

physical degradation of the Primary Blackboard brought the practice to a sudden but natural end.

The research had concluded that the unmediated illustration of experience might be unattainable. In doing so it had suggested that by disengaging aesthetic reasoning from unconscious perception, it might be possible to illustrate the experience itself and not simply the consequences of it. The following chapter charts the development of the main second body of work which addresses this question by metaphorically allying this unconscious transformation of source into memory with the physical movement of objects in space.

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There are approximately three hundred prints altogether which are bound in chronological order in eleven hardback volumes. For the purposes of this thesis however, a representative selection of prints have been classified out of sequence into three generic groups.

The type of prints represented in group one, *Planar,* are characterised by either horizontal or vertical lines that traverse the length of the blackboard's surface. This pattern was contradictorily used to denote both separation and connection of articles in space, or metaphysical associations made during conversation. These marks were made primarily but not exclusively towards the beginning of the work, perhaps because I was still subconsciously reflecting on previous research which had focussed on the physical structure of human conversation and interaction.

A large number of prints fall into the second category named cyclic or *Vortex* patterns. This group classifies prints that exhibit obvious circular patterns of marks. These prints occur predominantly towards the end of the project when the centre of the Primary Blackboard had become tattered and unworkable leaving little space for marks to cross the geometric plane. In other instances, circular patterns of marks can reflect the reciprocal nature of particular conversations or can literally represent the physical movement of articles through space ad time.

The third category, *Acts of Drawing* encompasses prints that do not fall into the above generic types or seem to follow any other regular pattern or design. These images, perhaps more than the others, confirm the impulsive, reflexive nature of the recording process.

The prints are reproduced in the scale of 95%.

All seven Secondary Blackboards, created between 16 April and 21 May 2001 are presented in chronological order.

Figure 18:*11 March 2001*, Plastic acetate on paper

Figure 19: *14 March 2001*, Plastic acetate on paper

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Figure 20: *10 March 2001*, Plastic acetate on paper

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Figure 21:*1 May 2001,* Plastic acetate on paper

Figure 22: *3 May 2001*, Plastic acetate on paper

Figure 23: *28 April 2001,* Plastic acetate on paper

Figure 24:*4 April 2001,* Plastic acetate on paper

Figure 25: *15 February 2001*, Plastic acetate on paper

Figure 26: *1 May 2001*, Plastic acetate on paper

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Figure 27: *Untitled (April 2001)*, 2001. Chalk on canvas, 90.5 x 91 cm

Figure 28: *Untitled (18 April 2001),* 2001. Chalk on canvas, 83.5 x 79.8 cm

Figure 29: *Untitled (28 April 2001)*, 2001. Chalk on canvas, 90.3 x 90.5 cm

Figure 30: *Untitled (6 May 2001)*, 2001. Chalk on canvas, 90 x 90.7 cm

Figure 31: *Untitled (7 May 2001),* 2001. Chalk on canvas, 93.5 x 87.5 cm

Figure 32: *Untitled (17 May 2001),* 2001. Chalk on canvas, 93.5 x 88.5 cm

Figure 33: *Untitled (21 May 2001),* 2001. Chalk on Canvas, 88 x 94.3 cm

Chapter Three

The Blackboard Drawings demonstrated that, in art and illustrative practice, mimesis is the link between the unconscious and the conscious worlds. It is the bond that both draws the two worlds together and defines a distance between them. The mimetic process demands familiarity and difference in equal measure. It pushes and pulls at reality and truth until a representational compromise is formed. The ambiguities and the uncertainties that are negotiated in the process create a window through which objective interpretations could be made and allowed reflexive impulses to determine the meaning of experiential perceptions.

The Blackboard Drawings offer a rendition of experience and are defined, not by their similarity to their source, but by their difference from it. They reveal that a visual interpretation can never be more than an evocation of its subject. This conclusion underlines the research's close association with the Platonic theory of mimesis which is based on the principles of imitation and truth.

It was found, in the later stages of the project, that my learnt sensibilities - my skills, style, prejudices, and creative reasoning that had developed through formal artistic training - began to dictate not only how experiences were visually described but, more unexpectedly, how an event was initially perceived. It was concluded that it might be possible to reveal and illustrate unmediated experience – experience that has not been mediated by the discipline of illustration – by defining the very moment when a phenomenological impression of an event transforms into an experience.

This chapter documents the second significant section of the research, which explores how this moment of transformation or 'space' between the realities of the source and its subsequent sensory impression can be located and illustrated. The project began by asking the question *how can the transformation of source into experience be illustrated?*

It was not the intention of the second project to produce a visual interpretation of an experience, as was the case with the Blackboard Drawings, but to create instead a condition whereby the experience itself could be considered to be the illustration. This objective was dependent upon the form and location of the *space* or transformation that takes place between the source and the experience. However, the very existence of this alteration seemed to contradict the principles of Plato's theory of artistic imitation that forms the basis of the first project. Indeed, in accordance with the Platonic theory of mimesis there can be no middle ground between an ideal reality or truth and its interpretation. There can be no *moment of transformation* or change. An object is either one or the other – it is real or it is not. There is no room for *space*. The mimetic process, according to Plato, is one of several immutable and contained realities, each being, excluding the ideal reality, a removed interpretation of the last.

So, although compatible with the Platonic principles of mimesis outlined at the beginning of chapter one in that it accepts that an event or encounter possess a truth or reality that cannot be either repeated or improved, the theory questions the step-by-step hierarchical structure of Plato's theory. In this respect, the second project sits more comfortably with Martin Heidegger's concept of mimesis. Heidegger insisted that it is not the *difference* between the 'truth' and the representation that is crucial, but the *distance* between them. In *Theories of Mimesis* Arne Melberg summarises Heidegger's theory;

> Heidegger...when discussing Greek, specially Platonic *mimesis,* insists that the concept is directed towards truth, but based on the *distance* from the truth; imitating "representation" is not what it is about. On the contrary; *mimesis* is based upon the fact that the artist *cannot* reproduce the truth as similarity. It is wrong, according to Heidegger, to associate *mimesis* with "primitive" imitation. It is rather a question of "doing after: production that comes afterwards. That *mimesis* is in its essence situated and defined through distance." [19]

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[19] Melberg, 1995, pp.3-4.

The second project did not set out to produce an imitation of an experience in the manner of the Blackboard Drawings, but instead, by illustrating the space or distance (that is stressed by Heidegger) - the distance between the source and the impression - aimed to capture the precise moment when an experience is formed within the unconscious.

This transformation is not one of physical change. It takes place within the mind of the individual – within the unconscious. The Blackboard Drawings describe the visual *effects* of this process, but the transformation itself remains one of metaphysical calculations and impulses. However, it was discovered that by metaphorically allying these unconscious transformations with a physical process, for example the movement of an object in space, it is possible to demonstrate how and under what conditions this process takes place.

When an object is removed from one place and presented in another, it remains representative of that first location. It becomes a prompt, stimulating in the individual's mind emotional impressions and images of its original position and function within the experience. For example, a flower, picked on a romantic country walk and kept safe, will take its owner back to when and where it was taken, and whom they were with at the time. The flower is physical *proof* of the event and, although it was an essential component of the experience, it cannot remain part of the event because the event, in all its reality, cannot be repeated. The flower is therefore a mimetic object, a stimulus, and, like all mimetic things, is distanced from reality by its similarity to the original - original in this case meaning the *ideal reality* of the flower that was picked and not the form of the flower itself.

In a similar way, I had for some time collected pebbles during long solitary walks with the intention of presenting them, after the event, as tangible evidence of the walking

experience.[20] These collected pebbles are, like the flower, mimetic objects and representative of the experience of walking. Although at the time they were important components of the event, they cannot remain as such, because the event, as a moment in time, has passed and cannot be reconstructed. The selection and appropriation of pebbles and stones as physical proof of experience, was to form the basis of the second project.[21]

It had become clear in the later stages of the practice, that the experiences described in the Blackboard Drawings were largely formed around interactions and exchanges with other people. Although this finding was interesting in itself in that it exposed a previously unidentified uniformity and structure to my social behaviour, it also more importantly revealed an instinctive narrowing of perception. While the impressions of these social interactions remained unique and entirely personal, the events themselves were in many cases shared. In an effort to move away from this self-containment and explore more self-directed, individual experiences, I began to search for emotional and physical conditions which might encourage entirely private and solitary experiences.

The experience of walking alone is necessarily individual and personal and the isolation provides the opportunity for contemplation and brings to the fore reflections that might, in other circumstances, remain suppressed and remote. Walking alone and for long distances provided a direct contrast to the security and assurance of the home and academic environments of which I had become so dependent for the Blackboard Drawing's disciplined and systematic recollection process. The walks were made exclusively along the coast of East Devon between the towns of Exmouth, Budleigh Salterton and Sidmouth. At points in my journey, I would select a pebble as a record of both my emotional condition at the time and of the geographical route of the walk.

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[20] 'Pebble' is a general term used to describe a small, usually round stone, larger than a granule but smaller than a cobble. In Britain a range of between ten and fifty millimetres is used to define a pebble.
[21] See also appendix C

The deceptively simplistic idea of presenting pebbles as physical evidence of a walking experience was in reality the consequence of several weeks of intense consideration and reflection. I have said that it is practically impossible to chart each minute stimulus or influence that motivated an idea or decision because as concepts these were often fleeting and unresolved, however it is possible to examine the principal objective of the practice.

The Blackboard Drawings concluded that it might be possible to illustrate unmediated experience by defining and documenting the changes that take place when a source or moment in time transforms into an experience. The practice consequently set out to explore how this unconscious transformation could be illustrated by associating the process with other physical forms of change.

Initially I examined the processes of change in nature, looking specifically at seeds and the aesthetic characteristics of their transformation and growth. It was my first thought to create an 'artificial seed' that would transform when exposed to certain conditions and explored different synthetic casings or shells that would alter in character and constitution over time. The controlled breakdown of a seed's casing was of particular interest and I made direct comparisons with these physical alterations and the unconscious changes that take place when a source becomes an experience. I became aware of the influence changing environmental conditions have on the final form and appearance of a seed, and again, I made connections with the unconscious gathering of phenomenological sensations, which, as the Blackboard Drawings concluded, are mediated and influenced by a number of exterior forces.

I first recognised that the process need not be one of wholly abstract connections and descriptions while using small pebbles as artificial seeds. The act of selecting and appropriating certain pebbles became integrated with the walking experience and, when

displayed after the walk, were representative of their original location. It was concluded that by documenting their movement through time and space I might be able to document the transformation of the walk into an experience.

I could have theoretically used any selected item as evidence of the walking experience, but the abundance and variety of available stones offered a degree of consistency. There was also a sense that, unlike most other objects of natural origin such as leaves or flowers, a stone is a totally anonymous and neutral substratum upon which I could project value in the manner of a cinema screen or blackboard. A pebble's inherent aptitude to be classified and categorised without further description also fortified my sequence of thought.

The selection and appropriation of a pebble was largely instinctive and certain unconscious judgements were made in order to formulate the criteria for selection. Decisions were based on the appearance and size of one pebble in relation to another. In this way, the impossibility of matching perfectly a pebble to a specific experience or emotional state was overcome by attempting to look beyond obvious associations of form and size. It therefore followed that a difficult or significant emotional experience was not necessarily connected to a large pebble nor was a small stone automatically assigned to a minor emotional response. In a series of lectures entitled *Art, Nature and Mathematics,* the artist and architect Dom Hans van der Laan stated that this unconscious selection of an object such as a pebble by proportional comparison is perceptible to a difference of about 4% of its size; 'We pay attention, not to the concrete size of each stone, but to the size to which each stone belongs.'[22] Each walk produced a collection of four or five pebbles that could be differentiated from other groups by their perceptible size relationship.

Although the physical condition of the pebble remains largely unaffected when removed from its original location, broader changes do occur that have implications beyond the

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[22] Hans van der Laan, D. 'Instruments of Order' in *Art, Nature and Mathematics.*

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form of the pebble itself. The artist Hamish Fulton (b. 1946) explores, amongst other things, the consequence of these implications in relations to man's connection with his environment. Fulton creates massive, usually photographic and text-based artworks that describe, with an almost clinical directness, his experiences of long delineated walks (fig. 34). He proclaims his work to be influenced by nature and, as a symbolic gesture of respect for nature, aims to leave no trace in the landscape through which he walks. It is this longing to appreciate the environment without corrupting it, to take away from it without diminishing it, which differentiates his work from that of so called 'land artists' such as Andy Goldsworthy (b.1956) or Richard Long (b.1945) whose work reconfigures and juxtaposes natural objects to create new forms within the landscape.
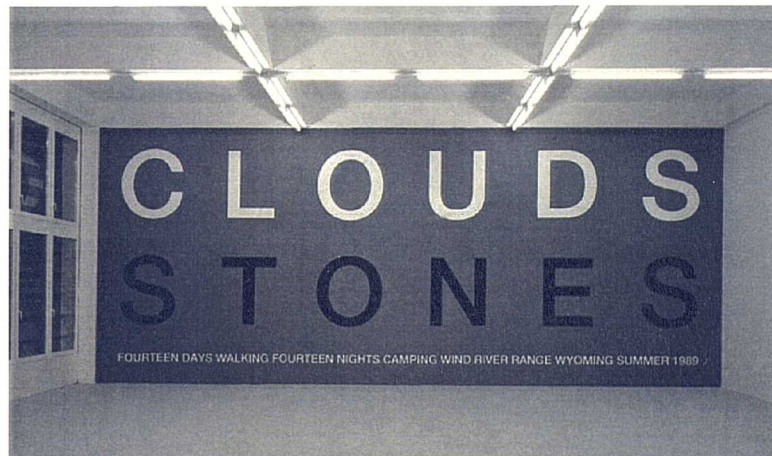
Figure 34: Hamish Fulton – *Clouds Stones,* 1989. Vinyl wall work. Dimensions variable

I became interested in this aspect of Hamish Fulton's work after exploring the effects of erosion on the cliffs around Exmouth and Budleigh Salterton. The forces of the wind and sea coupled with surface water running down from the fields above induce large sections of the cliff face to become detached and to slide down onto the pebbled beaches below. Over time, pebbles and rocks can be seen to gradually emerge through the surface of the mobile earth as it periodically lurches downwards. Often, recently revealed pebbles disappear once more, consumed by the mass of the mudslide, but occasionally certain

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pebbles become loosened from their clamps of dried earth and fall with a crack onto the rocks beneath. Splashes of vivid red mud on the surrounding stones testify to the force of the pebbles' transition from the vertical to the horizontal. This demonstration of the physical consequence of natural movement was to have a significant influence on the form of the following work, which would artificially generate similar marks upon the surface of the collected pebbles in order to both document their physical movement through space and the metaphysical transformation that occurs as a result.[23]

Perfect but negative facsimiles of the absent pebbles are left behind in the hardened mud, confirming a sense of loss and providing a mimetic description of the past (fig. 35).

Figure 35: Author's Photograph - *mud hollow*, 2002

Over time these voids can fill with fresh, liquid mud, creating new mud-pebbles in the cavities. When this occurs, when a duplicate pebble is formed, the past becomes solidified and form is assigned to loss. By employing a method similar to that of a painter who defines the form of an object by describing the space around it, both the replica pebble and Fulton's wall texts provide graphic evidence of past phenomena. As an echo repeats a

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[23] See Appendix D, *The Meaning of Stone.*

sound, so his texts confirm the continuing presence of an absent energy by describing in intimate detail what has been lost.

Traces of the pebble's former location remain visible on its surface. The clay in the mud acts as a dye, temporarily staining areas of the pebble reddish-brown. Because of this the pebble lies conspicuously amongst the other sea-bleached pebbles on the beach. The splashes of clay illustrate and define its disparity and give clues as to its original position. This form of representation by the registration of one substance upon another is suggestive of the 'indexical' nature of the photographic process and is aligned with Heidegger's theory of mimetic distance which states that a representation becomes distanced from the truth through the layering of (progressively more fake) information.

When presented as evidence of the walking experience the pebbles are, like the picked flower, mimetic representations of the events in which they were conceived. However in this state they do not address the original question *'how can the transformation of source into experience be illustrated?'* In order to illustrate this transformation a process was developed that would record the pebble's movement from one location to another using photographic materials. By painting the pebbles with a light-sensitive solution it was possible to capture the precise moment when new light, in a new location, touched their surfaces and the pebbles were transformed from objects of past events into objects of present and future experience. Like the splashes of red mud on the surfaces of the sea-white pebbles, the areas of exposed solution illustrate transformation and change by describing difference.

Once a walk had ended the collection of pebbles was carefully packed into a sealed box and carried back to the domestic/academic environment where they were immediately painted with the light-sensitive solution. In an attempt to prevent arbitrary or unintended contamination of its surface it was necessary to give the pebble a protective covering. A

form of liquid latex was developed that would permit the free, but controlled, passage of light.[24]

Small amounts of copper powder were added to the latex which had the effect of accelerating the rubber's natural ageing process and reducing its elasticity when dry. Dark red acrylic paint was also added. This made the otherwise transparent latex opaque and, like the copper powder, it also weakened the rubber.

Under safe lighting the thickened latex was stretched tightly over the surface of the pebble to form a lightproof covering. Concealed beneath its dense latex skin, the once distinctive pebble was transformed from a thing of purity and beauty into a benign and anonymous object. The stone's identity as an object of strength is challenged, as the pebble appears a delicate little thing, restricted and vulnerable beneath its lurid, rubbery flesh (figs. 36-40).
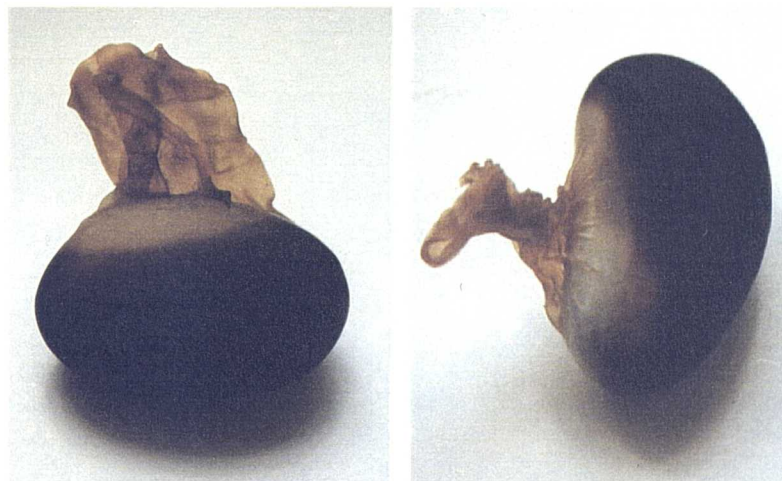
Figures 36 & 37: *Latex covered pebbles,* 2002

There is a gradual build up of tension as the superfluous latex is brought together at the stone's side and repeatedly twisted. The covered pebble was then placed carefully in a light-filled room and allowed to settle or *germinate*. After several hours, the surface

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[24] Other forms of degradable coverings and casings were explored, but rubber was found to be the most suitable of all the materials tested. Its natural elasticity made it possible for the pebbles to be completely covered in one relatively simple movement. This was an advantage as the process took place in the near darkness of safe lighting.

tension and the fluctuations in room temperature induced the latex to weaken and split (figs. 27-29). As pressure is released the pebble is exposed to the light through the aperture of the tear and the pebbles' second transformation can begin.

Figures 38,39 & 40 – *Latex tearing off pebbles,* 2002

It is as if the pebble gathers its dormant strength and frees itself by forcing its mass through its rubber skin. The sudden release of tension seems as much a result of the stone's pent-up internal power as the degradation of the latex.

When covered, the pebbles are uncertain objects. Their purpose is to simultaneously conceal and to present experience. The inevitability of the breaking down of the protective skin points symbolically to the unavoidable transformation of an event into experience. The tears in the rubber make this process possible and the transition visible. It was later discovered that Andy Goldsworthy similarly explored the controlled breakdown of an exterior surface by covering large boulders and river stones with thick layers of clay. Over several days the clay dries and begins to crack revealing the rock inside (fig. 41). He asserts that the cracks allow the viewer to see directly into the 'energy' of the stone; 'A crack in a rock reveals the inner most being of the rock, one can look back in time through it…As a flame makes the energy of fire visible so does a crack make time.'[25] Sections of mud continue to fall from its surface as the stone asserts its latent potency and strength.

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[25] Goldsworthy, A. *Stone.* London: Viking Books, 1994, p. 64.
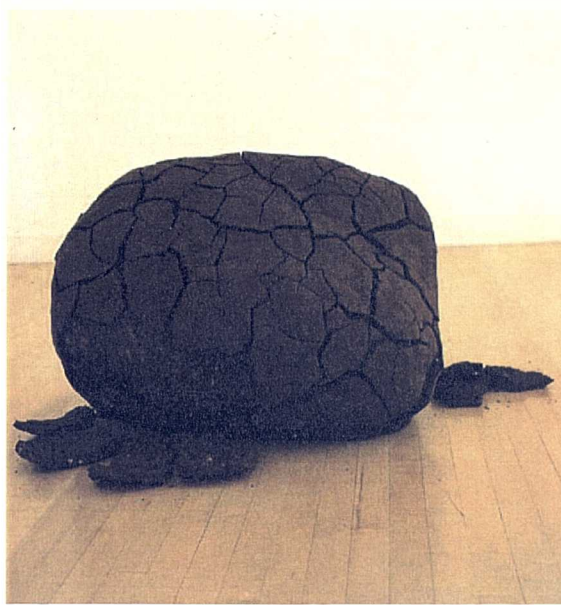
Figure 41: Andy Goldsworthy – *Clay Covered Rocks,* Haines Gallery, San Francisco, 1992

In direct contrast to Goldsworthy's covered rocks, the covered stones, now termed *The Illustrated Pebbles,* do not release dormant time through the fissures in their surfaces but instead, enthusiastically absorb it. When new light touches the surface of the pebble, nature and experience begin a second phase of irreversible symbiosis. The transformation of experience into memory is no longer one of invisible fusions as an experience in all its complexity is reduced to a photochemical trace (fig. 42).

The use of photography is unusual but not extraordinary within the area of illustration. Both disciplines share many common values of composition and design and each necessarily presents their meaning and message to the viewer as a mediated vision of reality. From the perspective of an illustrator, however, the most significant methodological difference between photography and illustration is the speed at which an image can be realised. In contrast to the creation of a pencil drawing for example, which is restricted only, at its most elemental level, by the limits of the imagination and the quickness of the hand, the realisation of a photographic image is at almost every stage mediated by essential procedure. This disparity was not however difficult to reconcile with the requirements of the practice. Indeed this systematic form of mark registration was

found to complement the work's underlying theme of transformation. It also provided a valuable methodological contrast to the previous reflexive generation of marks.

My apprehensions about employing photographic processes were instead founded on practical concerns. Several times I noted in my sketchbooks my unease when using photographic chemicals and the constant threat of unwanted light contamination was also a source of nervousness and anxiety. Such material concerns were perhaps attributable to inexperience, but at the time I found the required caution frustrating and tiring and I looked forward, after each of the pebbles had been processed, to switching on the light and leaving the close confines of the darkroom. It is possible that the practice would have developed differently had I had more experience working in the unfamiliar conditions of safe lighting, however that the individual nature of the practice reflected by unique relationship to photography is unquestionable. The uncomfortable conditions of the darkroom contrasted sharply with the feelings of reassurance and ease that working in my sketchbooks afforded. As the practice progressed the tensions and conflicts between the research and my illustrative instincts reached new levels of intensity and in response my reliance on the supporting sketchbooks deepened. As the work moved further away from conventional illustrative practices, the pages of the sketchbooks became noticeably more designed; technical diagrams and drawings began to incorporate decorative qualities while even simple written notes assumed an aesthetic presence and significance on the page.

The relationship between the sketchbooks and the finished pieces was an entirely reciprocal one. I have said that all thoughts and ideas were filtered through their pages until they formed into a single coherent hypothesis and this was then in turn subject to further (usually) practical exploration before being once again digested and assimilated as illustrations. The pencil drawings of pebbles are not representational depictions of the Illustrated Pebbles themselves, but are instead the material evidence of this circuitous thought process. The aesthetic appearance of the marks was not designed in the sense that

it could be predicted where and how the latex rubber would tear open. However after the surface of the pebbles had become exposed it was necessary to arrest the development process and fix the solution to the pebbles for the final time. Although when cleaning them of residual chemicals, I endeavoured not to change the shape or character of the marks, simply by making contact with them, I now understand, I was subjecting the pebbles, however subtly, to the effect of my aesthetic reasoning.

The sketchbooks fulfilled both the intellectual demands of the project and also satisfied my appetite for simple aesthetic explanation. The drawings within the sketchbooks were almost always produced using conventional forms of media such as coloured pencil crayon and paint and the familiarity that these tools offered provided an established idiom through which I could explore what would otherwise be wholly abstract concepts. This method of formulating and challenging new abstract ideas through the use of simple imagery, for the first time permitted the synchronisation of my aesthetic awareness with the intellectual demands of the research.

In order for me, as the originator of the experiences, to engage fully with the process it became important as the work progressed to formulate a clear understanding of the precise relationship between the Illustrated Pebbles and conventional forms of illustrative communication. Such an understanding was found to be crucial because, without an awareness of the shifting critical distance between the two, it would have been impossible to judge whether or not the Illustrated Pebbles were truly free from aesthetic mediation. It was the aim of the project to illustrate the precise moment when an experience is formed within the unconscious and in so doing create a condition which would eliminate the aesthetic influence of my learnt illustrative sensibilities. It has become gradually apparent however that the practice in reality emulates a fundamental principle of illustrative description – the registration of one substance on another in order to generate an object or

image. It is true that the black marks are fixed to the surface of the pebbles in the same way pencil is conventionally applied to paper, but at no time during the process did I make a distinction in the conventional sense between the pebbles' surfaces and the marks. The marks should not therefore be understood as the illustration and the pebbles are not the equivalent of paper. The marks register the formation of an experience on the surface of the pebbles, but only when they are permanently fixed do the two separate elements combine to become an illustration of an experience.

Figure 42: *The Illustrated Pebbles,* 2002

The shadows of experience are created and defined by the light and the pebble is at once decorated and violated by its contact. This contamination or adulteration of the purity of the pebble's surface is suggestive of, and is comparable to, the slow but inevitable degradation of the veracity of memory.

Until this process is chemically arrested, the pebble is an object in constant transition. It continues to absorb information from its surroundings in the form of light while still presenting itself as an inflexible and resilient object of nature. This duality or simultaneous presentation of polarities is also evident in Anish Kapoor's (b.1954) *Turning The World Inside Out* (fig.43). The large, spherical sculpture is constructed using highly polished stainless steel. It has the appearance of a convex mirror, collecting its surroundings into

itself and at once presenting them back to the viewer, deconstructed and reassembled in the manner of its own distorted mimetic vision of reality. Germano Celant places the sculpture precariously between the two opposing forces of internal absorption and external reflection: 'Turning The World Inside Out defines a whole that is fleeting because it is eternally divided between interior and exterior, between hiding and reflecting, between motion and immobility.'[26]
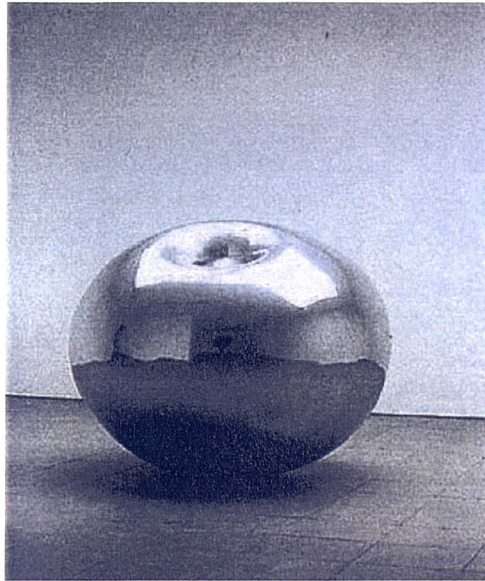
Figure 43: Anish Kapoor – *Turing the World Inside Out*, 1995. Cast aluminium, 148 x 184 x 188 cm

Like Kapoor's mirrored sphere, *The Illustrated Pebbles* are at the same time the container and the contained, the keeper and the captive. The dark smudges that animate and define the stones' surfaces also distort reality and dismiss referentiality in the same way the sculpture bends the light before re-presenting it. This union of opposites is made visible as the pebbles attempt to reconcile the internal and the external, the private and the communicative.

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[26] Celant, G. *Anish Kapoor.* London: Thames and Hudson, 1996, p.36.

Hamish Fulton dismisses the possibility of representing an experience as an absurdity. For him, the walking and the viewing experiences are two diametrically opposed worlds and their differences irreconcilable. 'It is not possible to represent the experience of the walk. Either you made the walk or you didn't...the walk is fact for the walker, fiction for everybody else.'[27] To fully engage with Fulton's wall texts, as with all works of fiction, it is essential for the audience to draw on their own experience to replace absent information and form a personal understanding of the work. Only with the appropriation of one's imagination can the presented evidence be reassembled and built on and a wider meaning developed.

The Illustrated Pebbles are mimetic 'props', intended to communicate my experiences by prompting associations and imagery in the viewer's imagination. However, unlike Fulton's wall texts, the Illustrated Pebbles do not describe even basic descriptive information. The decision to exclude any explicit reference of the illustrated experience from either the process of the finished pieces was consistent with the original intention of the project that was to create an illustration that could document the precise moment when an experience is formed within the unconscious. As I have discussed, the belief that a created image or object cannot corroborate an experience but can only illustrate it, underpinned the research throughout, and on this principle it was judged unnecessary to otherwise describe the conditions of the experience. The opportunity for identification with the experiences they represent seems remote because of this, as even the slightest trace of their creator is omitted from the construction process. The relative size of the pebbles and the formation of surface pattern becomes the only real point of reference. But even this line of reasoning is exposed as deficient when one understands that the development of the marks is, to a degree, arbitrary and serendipitous. The relationship between the viewer and the Illustrated Pebbles therefore becomes not only one of empathy and understanding, but also one of

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[27] *Hamish Fulton, Eyes, Feet, Road.* Video. Illuminations, 2002.

trust. The undisclosed link between fact and fiction, concept and object confuses the very

identity of the pebbles as illustrations of reality.[28]

This ambiguity through abstraction may prove difficult at first for the viewer who will

almost certainly be used to being prompted to the theme of the illustration by the content

and form of the illustration itself. The viewer might, for instance, expect to have free

access to the truths and facts behind the image. This research challenges this idea by

asserting that overtly descriptive information actually thwarts any opportunity for profound

understanding or deep empathetic connection with the illustration's subject matter.

This notion is explored at greater depth in the fourth chapter but in this context this

assertion prompts the question: should the viewer consider the experiences portrayed in the

research as fiction or nonfiction? This question is a hugely important one because the

image's status, in the eyes of the viewer, determines the value of the illustration as a

medium of communication. In *Mimesis as Make-Believe,* Kendall L. Walton theorises that

it is the *function* of a work, meaning what the work is intended to do, that determines its

status. Citing the Ancient Greek myths as an example, Walton asserts that *functions* are

relative to the society in which they are created;

> We often consider it proper or obligatory to do our best to find out how works
> were used or understood in the society in which they were produced, or how
> their makers intended them to be used, and to use them similarly. Our rules for
> determining functions can be understood to require deferring, sometimes, to the
> society of origin; they may decree that a work's function *for us* is whatever it
> was for them, even if we are under severe misapprehensions about what its
> function was for them and even if we actually use it very differently. If the
> Greek myths were non-fiction for the Greeks, perhaps they are nonfiction for
> us also, despite the fact that we use and understand them as fiction.[29]

The Illustrated Pebbles should be considered works of non-fiction because that is their

intended function and reflects the spirit in which they were created. But is this premise

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[28] In this context, I accept *fact* as corresponding to the Platonic understanding of *truth* outlined in
the introduction. It refers to that which cannot be altered or imitated. Fact remains distinct from
fiction, which is used to describe a representation or interpretation (mimetic or otherwise) of a fact.
[29] Walton, 1990, pp.91-92

appropriate in all cases? In stating 'The walk is fact for the walker, fiction for everybody else,' Hamish Fulton would seem to be suggesting that his artworks should be, or can only be, understood by the audience as works of non-fiction. This position is incongruent, not only with Walton's theory, but also with the Platonic notion of truth and reality. It is true that an experience is unique to the individual, but the source of the experience can have only one reality and only one immutable truth. How the audience interprets the visual effects of Fulton's walks does not affect their status as unalterable facts. Similarly, when he (correctly) states 'one can make as much sense from an individual's journey as from a random one,' it can be argued that this is true, but that this does not affect the status of the individual's experience as real evidence of concrete truths.

There are circumstances when one might not accept the labelling of certain evidence as fact. If, for instance, one doubted the integrity of an artist, the veracity of his or her work and its message might also seem unconvincing. There is perhaps an unspoken bond of trust between an illustration and its audience that becomes unbalanced by the mimetic process which necessarily encourages the audience to interpret what they see. Although a mimetic representation has an inherent value in itself, its true mimetic value is dependent upon the audience's interpretation to bring meaning to the presented information. By presenting factual information in coded form, both the Illustrated Pebbles and the Blackboard Drawings simultaneously invite interpretation and deflect it. The Blackboard Drawings thwart interpretation by their oblique abstractedness and, at the same time, encourage the investment of the audience's imagination by interweaving descriptive texts with non-figurative gestural marks. They confirm that there is security and privacy in abstraction that is inherently threatened by interpretation. Susan Sontag discusses this 'assault by interpretation' in her essay 'Against Interpretation':

Interpretation does not, of course, always prevail. In fact, a great deal of today's art may be understood as motivated by a flight from interpretation. To avoid interpretation, art may become parody. Or it may become abstract. Or it may become ('merely') decorative. Or it may become non-art. The flight from interpretation seems particularly a feature of modern painting. Abstract painting is the attempt to have, in the ordinary sense, no content; since there is no content, there can be no interpretation. Pop Art works by the opposite means to the same result; using content so blatant, so 'what it is', it, too, ends by being uninterpretable. [30]

According to Sontag, it is interpretation that determines meaning and value; 'to understand *is* to interpret.'[31] The Illustrated Pebbles are not entirely abstract. They have, to use Sontag's expression, 'content'. They permit a degree of interpretation by displaying upon their surfaces, forms and patterns from which relative comparisons and judgements can be made. Because of this concession to clarity, a contradiction begins to emerge. In order to form an understanding of a mimetic object one needs to interpret it, but a mimetic representation, being only an impression of reality, is necessarily abstract, and abstraction, as indicated by Sontag, can defy interpretation. The Illustrated Pebbles, as mimetic objects, are by definition, abstract visions of reality, and therefore uninterpretable. They deflect the very interpretation that might award them meaning and status, by presenting their 'content' in uninterpretable abstracted form.

This apparent paradox questions the epistemological value of the Illustrated Pebbles as a method of communication and seems to determine that an empathetic understanding of a mimetic object cannot be contingent upon interpretation alone, but may also be dependent upon the audience having an independent knowledge of the experience illustrated.

We can learn very little about bears by looking at the statue of a bear; in fact, if we do not know already what a bear is and something about it, the statue, as a mimetic thing, may be meaningless to us. Mimetic structure has truth and validity only by virtue of the accuracy with which it represents something. We can never know its truth unless we can validate its relationship to the original

[30] Sontag, S. 'Against Interpretation' (1964) in Fernie, E. (ed) *Art History and Its Methods.* London: Phaidon Press, 1995, pp. 214-222.
[31] Sontag, 1995, p. 218

by referring it back to that original, i.e. the truth value of a mimetic representation can never be an inherent quality in the representation itself.[32]

This hypothesis seems to place the pebbles in an apparently impossible position since they are formed from a unique interpretation of an event. In this sense, the audience is prevented from forming a deep understanding of the subject because they cannot have an independent knowledge of it.

The route of this inconsistency could be the use and sense in which the term *abstract* is applied. There are, in this context, at least two senses in which the word may be used. To form an understanding of a mimetic object one needs to interpret its literal appearance. For Susan Sontag, abstraction can prevent this interpretation. An abstract painting, for example, can be said to have no content, and because it has no content it cannot be interpreted. A mimetic representation, on the other hand, necessarily presents its content in abstract form, yet it remains dependent upon interpretation for its true epistemological value. This would suggest that there is a second form of abstraction, mimetic abstraction, which is an inherent quality in all mimetic representation. Mimetic abstraction allows free interpretation of its content despite the viewer not having an independent knowledge of its subject. A good example of mimetic abstraction is (non-lyrical) music. Music was held by the ancient Greeks to be the most mimetic of all art forms and yet, like the Illustrated Pebbles, it describes realities that can arouse unique and individual interpretation, although previously unknown to the listener.

> [Music] is a direct image, a copy of character...the emotion it suggests, the message it conveys, corresponds but little with a reality outside itself, with a world of feeling already known. We cannot test its truth in accordance with any original.[33]

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[32] 'Mimesis' [Online] http://www.propylaean.org/lexmimesis.html [15th January 2003]
[33] Butcher, S.H., *Aristotle's Theory of Poetry and Fine Art*. New York: Denver Publications, 1951, p. 129.

That the Illustrated Pebbles do not offer an explicit literal description of their presented subject matter should not, therefore, prevent the investment of the viewer's interpretation. It is recognised however, that such an omission further distances the practice from conventional forms of illustrative description.

The tensions between the research and normative processes of illustration as evidenced in the sketchbooks intensified as the practice developed. As the work moved away from conventional forms of illustrative communication the role of the sketchbooks within the research evolved from one of retrospective commentary to one of expression and experiment.

The relationship between the drawings in sketchbooks and the pebbles as illustrations in their own right was one of reciprocation. All thoughts and ideas were filtered through the sketchbooks before being subjected to further practical experiment. The results of these investigations were then in turn channelled back through their pages for further aesthetic and intellectual consideration.

The use of conventional forms of media in the recognised confines of the sketchbooks offered an alternative way of thinking to the otherwise procedural production of the pebbles. It is important to understand however, that the two processes do not represent contrasting modes of illustrative description. The methodical, semi-automatic registration of marks on the surface of the pebbles and the explorative drawings within the sketchbooks are two distinct but equal components of the same representational process. The images in the sketchbooks are not faithful depictions of the completed pebbles, but visual estimations of what the pebbles may eventually look like.

It was the intention of the project to devise a process whereby an experience could be illustrated without the influence and control of my learned aesthetic awareness. It became evident however, that by channelling ideas, thoughts and impulses through the pages of the supporting sketchbooks, my illustrative sensibilities were in reality mediating every stage of the process. While the material registration of each experience was free from obvious arbitration, the broader process which facilitated the recording of the transformation was in itself developed in relation to and founded upon the fundamental illustrative principle of representation by means of registering one substance upon another. The relationship between the descriptive black marks and the surface of the pebbles for example, was found to be comparable to that of the traditional application of pencil on paper. However this underlying correlation was found to be unintentional and was considered therefore to be a practical example of the influence of my ever-present aesthetic awareness on the character and nature of the practice. However, it was stated that at no point during the development of the project did I make such a material distinction between the photographic liquid and the surface of the pebbles. Both the black marks and the pebbles themselves were instead considered to be indispensable elements of the final representation. Although, when considered separately, the black marks could be said to register the transformation of a source into memory, and the pebbles as mimetic prompts represent the event, it is not until the two mutual elements are fixed do they finally combine and become a single illustration of experience.

The Illustrated Pebbles are revealed as ambiguous, uncertain objects, one minute inviting interpretation and the next fleeing from it. By describing anonymous events, by fusing the real and the interpreted, they question illustration's traditional association with referentiality and elucidation and reject any form of consideration that is not based on trust. They demonstrate that the true value of a mimetic representation is not solely dependent upon the audience having knowledge of the subject, but that its epistemological value is

minimal without interpretation. The fourth and final chapter documents the development of the third main body of work, which challenges these conclusions by attempting to produce an illustration of experience that is entirely devoid of all traces of mimesis and referentiality.
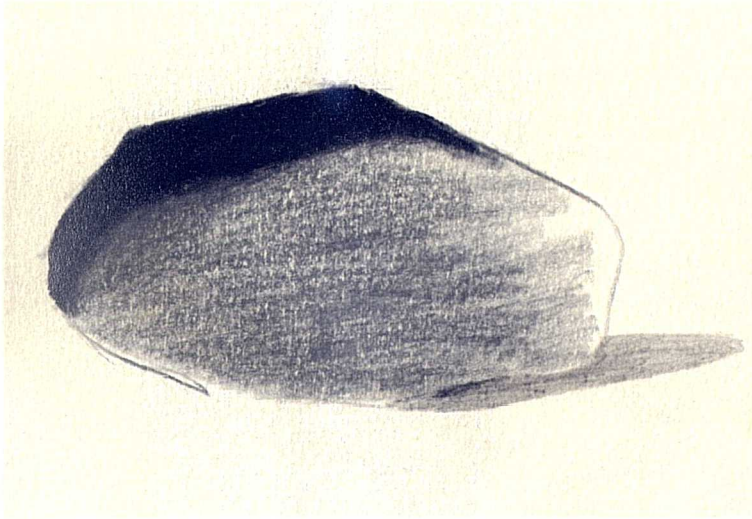
Figure 44: *Drawing from sketchbook,* 2002. Coloured pencil on paper.
Figures 45 & 46: *Untitled (#1),* 2002. Light sensitive solution on pebble, 9cm long.

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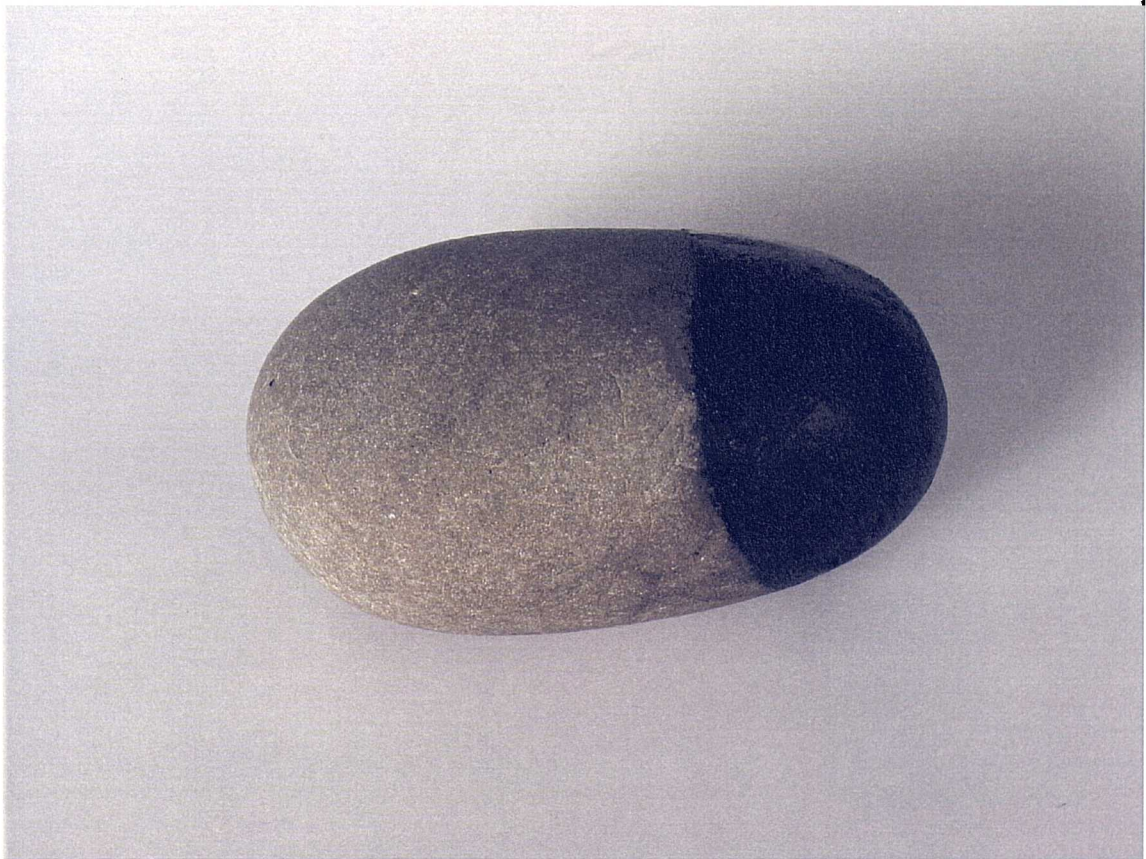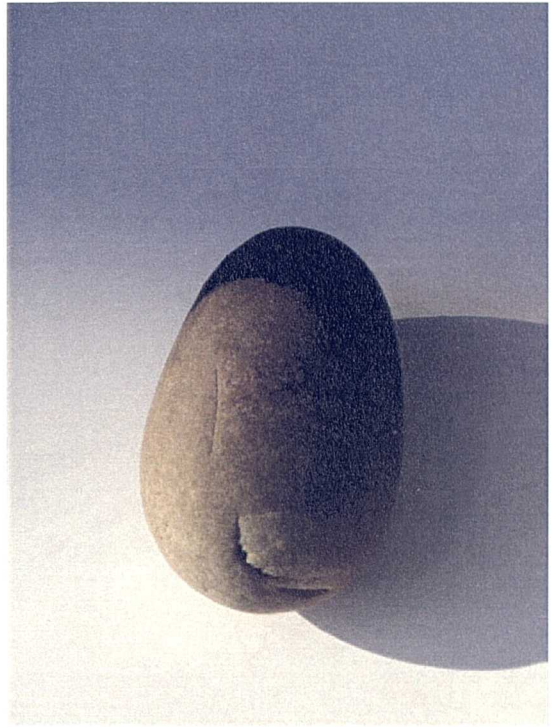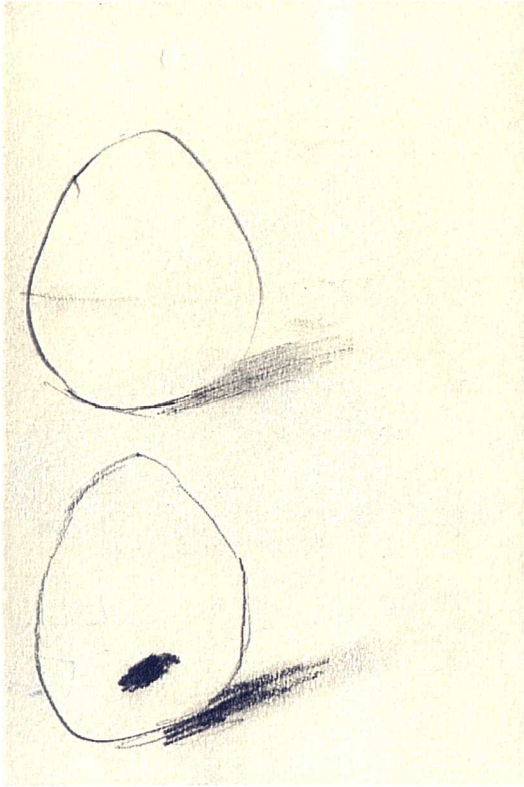
Figure 47: *Drawing from sketchbook,* 2002. Pencil on paper.
Figures 48 & 49: *Untitled (#2),* 2002. Light sensitive solution on pebble, 8 cm

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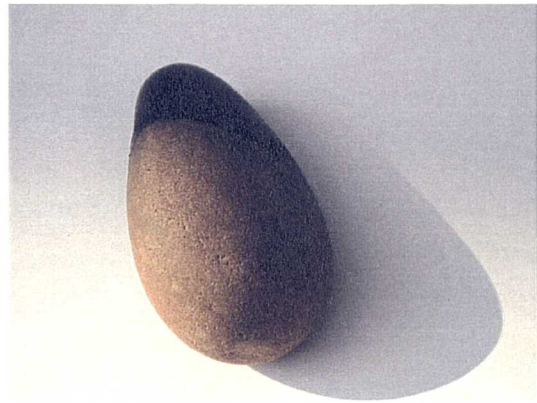
Figure 50: *Drawing from sketchbook,* 2002. Coloured pencil on paper.
Figures 51 & 52: *Untitled (#3),* 2002. Light sensitive solution on pebble, 7 cm

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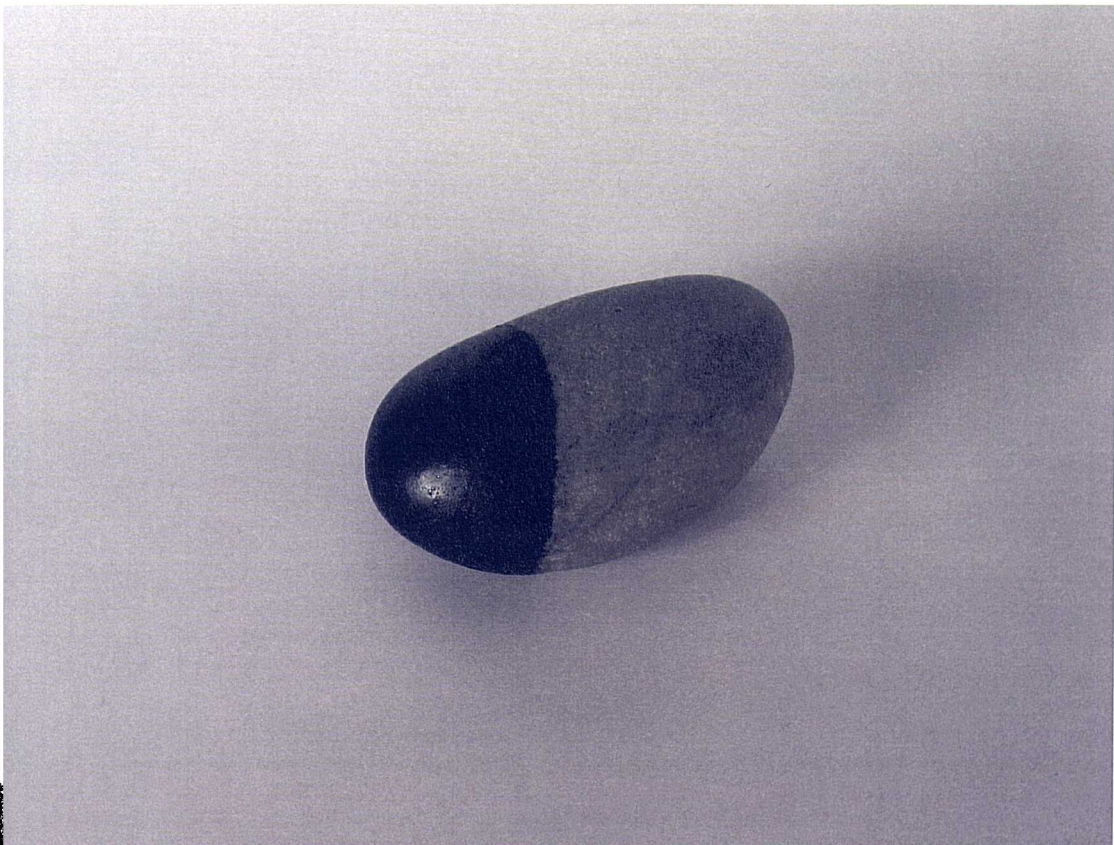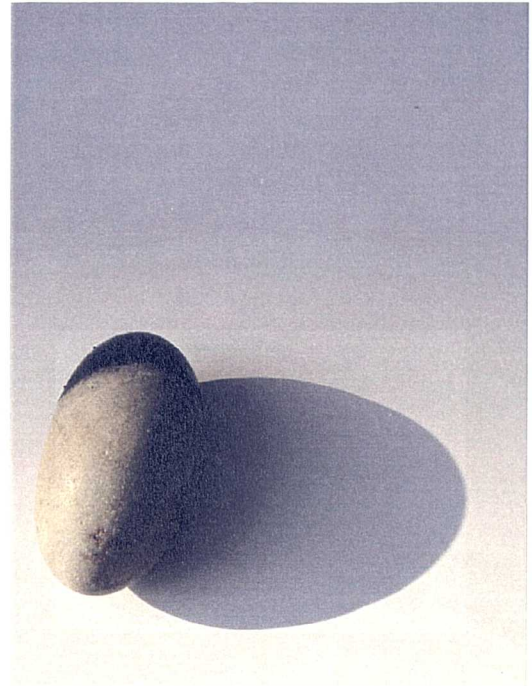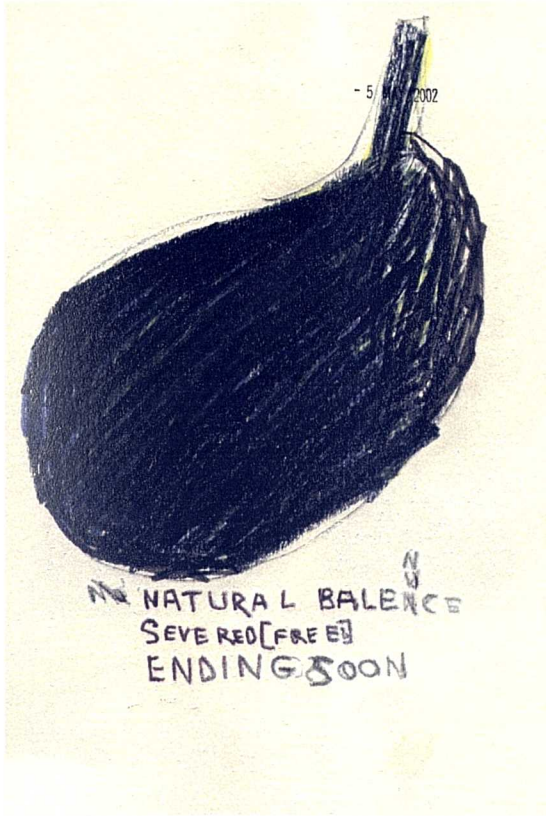
Figure 53: *Drawing from sketchbook,* 2002. Coloured pencil and ink on paper.
Figures 54 & 55: *Untitled (#4),* 2002. Light sensitive solution on pebble, 5.5 cm
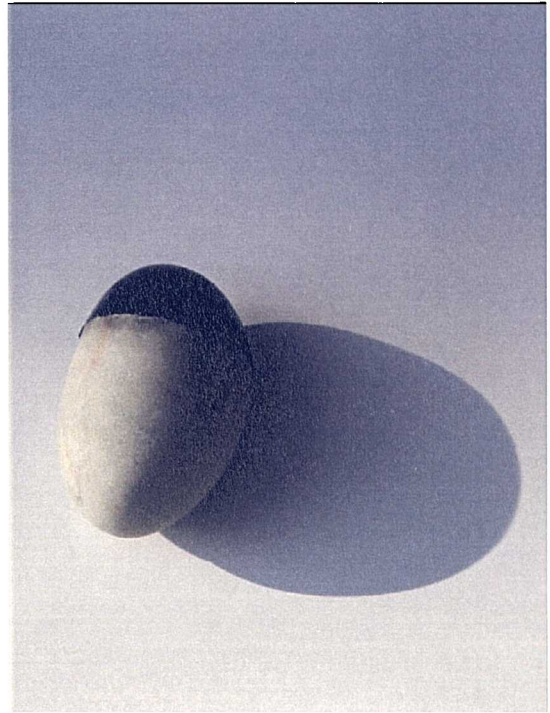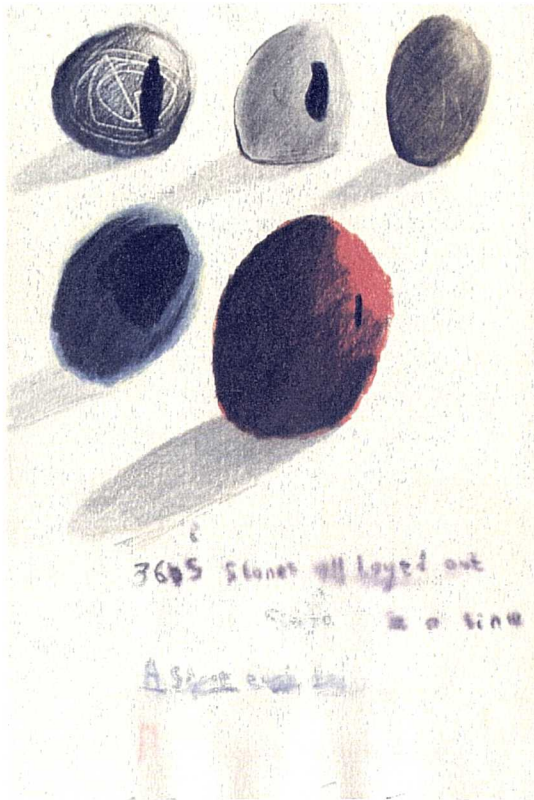
Figure 56: *Drawing from sketchbook*, 2002. Coloured pencil and ink on paper.
Figures 57 & 58: *Untitled (#5)*, 2002. Light sensitive solution on pebble, 4.3 cm
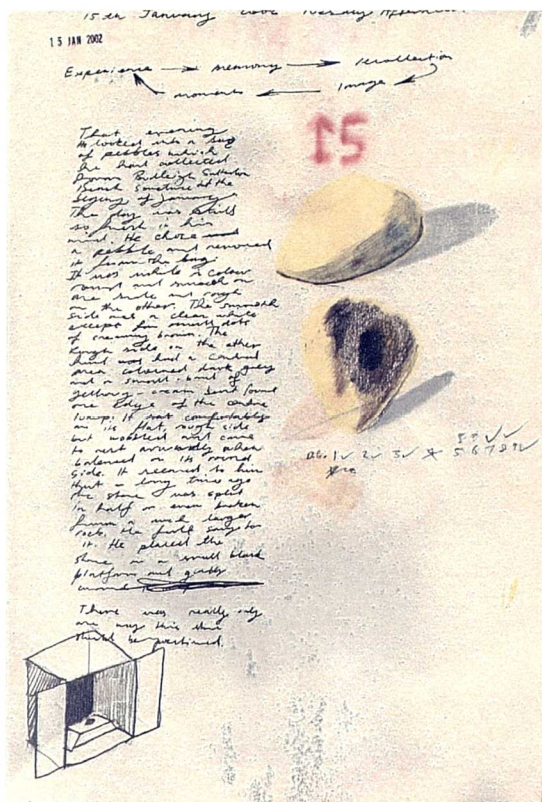
Figures 59: *Drawing from sketchbook,* 2002. Coloured pencil and ink on paper.
Figures 60 & 61: *Untitled (#6),* 2002. Light sensitive solution on pebble, 5 cm

Figure 62: *Drawing from sketchbook,* 2002. Coloured pencil and ink on paper.
Figures 63 & 64: *Untitled (#7),* 2002. Light sensitive solution on pebble, 3.7 cm

Figure 65: *Drawing from sketchbook,* 2002. Coloured pencil and ink on paper.
Figures 66 & 67: *Untitled (#8),* 2002. Light sensitive solution on pebble, 2.7 cm

Figure 68: *Drawing from sketchbook,* 2002. Coloured pencil and ink on paper.
Figures 69 & 70: *Untitled (#9),* 2002. Light sensitive solution on pebble, 3.8 cm

Chapter Four

The Illustrated Pebbles attempted to demonstrate how the transformation of a source into experience could be illustrated by metaphorically allying this personal, unconscious transition with the physical movement of objects in space.

Pebbles, appropriated during long solitary walks, were presented after the event as tangible evidence of the walking experience. By covering their forms in an opaque rubber skin, conditions were created which allowed the capture, using photographic chemicals, of the exact moment when the pebbles were transformed from a component of past events into constituent elements of present and future experience. In doing so, they not only recorded the physical movement of the pebbles, but also symbolically represented the precise moment when a phenomenological impression is transformed into experience.

The term *abstract* was examined and found to be too general when used in the context of the research and a distinction was subsequently made between *abstract* in the sense of having 'no content' and *mimetic abstraction* which is an inherent quality in all mimetic representation. In this respect, the Illustrated Pebbles were compared to music, which can also describe emotional realities that are unknown to the listener, but inspires interpretations all the same.

It was concluded that, although there is an inherent value in all mimetic representation, the true epistemological worth of an illustration of experience is dependent upon interpretation to bring meaning to the presented information. This chapter charts the development of the third research project, which explores this conclusion by aiming to remove all aspects of referentiality from the illustrations.

We know that the reality of an experience cannot be verified or its truth measured against an original because the experience, as an unconscious conception, is unique. The Illustrated Pebbles demonstrated that the question of whether an illustration of an experience is based on fact or fiction, whether it is a creation of the imagination or the senses, is largely irrelevant to how its is understood because the audience cannot have an independent knowledge of the experience that is being illustrated and consequently has no means of discovering the truth behind the image. The relationship is therefore one of mutual dependence and trust.

The audience is dependent upon an illustration for the truth or, at least, the truth as interpreted by the illustrator. Once the facts have been communicated the viewer is free to form a personal understanding of the subject. For example, before constructing a realistic and believable image natural history illustrators often form an understanding of their subject by studying a preserved carcass or *skin* of the animal. The illustrator's collected impressions of the subject are then assembled and presented as factual evidence of the animal's reality. However, by presenting the image of the animal as fact, the illustrator is actually indicating to the audience that it is only an idealised vision, an approximation of the truth, and that the audience should form its own interpretation of the presented information. The illustration's status as a valid approximation is assured as the viewer's interpretation and imagination fill the space between fact and fiction, between truth and the imagined. More concisely, it is the principal role of a natural history illustration to present a generic impression of an animal's reality so that animals of the same species can be more easily identified. The collection of images entitled *The Scenario Drawings* explore this interchange or movement between opposites by describing the intricacies of anonymous events.

Unlike the Blackboard Drawings which document the effects of an event, or the Illustrated Pebbles that record the conception of an experience, the Scenario Drawings declare no

visual connection to the experiences they illustrate. They appear to make no distinction between the illustration and the illustrated and instead create a system whereby an experience can be contained within the confines of an image (figs. 71-72).

Figures 71 & 72: Richard Jones – *Cpl. Joe Frampton on Guard* (left), *Cyril Newton Digging for Victory* (right), 2002. Pencil on paper, each 4 x 7 cm.

The Scenario Drawings began to take form as the second project drew to a natural conclusion. They were conceived originally, together with the other drawings in the sketchbooks, as simple visual notes and diagrams that supported and sustained the development of the three main bodies of research. As I have discussed, I used sketchbooks consistently throughout the course of the practice to explore and channel disparate thoughts into coherent ideas. Unlike the three central projects which have a defined beginning and end, the sketchbooks were not confined to specific projects. Each sketchbook became amalgamated with the next to form a single continuous stream of thought. Although their aesthetic appearance or character remained surprisingly consistent over the three-year period of study, the ideas and thoughts they contained were constantly evolving. This relentless process in turn sustained my developing sequence of thought, and prompted continual changes and minute adjustments to my pattern of thinking. The Scenario Drawings, as visual explorations, were very much a product of this highly personal development process.

At the time of their creation I did not consider the drawings to be any more important or of higher status than the other sketches and notes made at the time. The ideas they express are by no means irrefutable or absolute; they were never meant to be, and as a collection of images, they were thought to be no more or less successful or engaging than the other images generated during the practice's development. However, as I will discuss, the Scenario Drawings in reality had an enormous influence on the developing trajectory of my pattern of thinking.

Like all the drawings that fill the sketchbooks, the Scenario Drawings were the refined consequence of several converging tangential thoughts and inspirations. These were, in some instances, wholly unconscious, and to define their precise origins is therefore difficult, if not impossible, from this distance. However I am able, by working backwards through the sketchbooks, to identify the central source that informed and shaped their ultimate appearance.

The first of the drawings, *Cpl. Joe Frampton on Guard*, was produced in response to an article I had discovered in an old magazine which used a collection of black and white film stills to illustrate its text. Because I had neither seen the film nor recognised the actors, I was intrigued by how I unconsciously began to assimilate the presented imagery in order to interpret the pictures' content. Out of the context and framework of the film, the frozen moments could, I believed, be interpreted and understood in many different, often contradictory ways. The drawings originally attempted to communicate in this manner by simultaneously emulating both the images' sense of mystery and also their overt descriptive realism. The characters that appear in the drawings were thought of as actors and actresses, acting out the actualities of the events that inspired my personal experiences.

The Scenario Drawings present the viewer with a frozen frame in a continuous narrative. The figures, enclosed in white, stand alone and disconnected from their surroundings. It is

unclear at first, whether they are isolated or if their surroundings have been concealed by the encroaching whiteness. Traces of life from another location can still be seen in the drawings; eyes are pinched together as though gazing into sunlight, patches of light decorate and define the textures of clothes, and bodies cast shadows across floors. Although the style of clothing in the drawings is evocative of times past, this is not intended to situate the drawings within a definable period of time. Instead, it intends to assert the drawings' sense of other-worldliness and promote the considered separation of the images from the experiences they illustrate. By describing specific but anonymous events, a connection is forged between the real and the imagined. Free interpretation and the viewer's engagement are encouraged by the absence of specificity in the drawings. This diminution of referentiality is similarly identified by Francesco Bonami in Duane Hanson's 'photo-realist' sculpture *Woman with Dog* (1977); '...It appears as if the process of living has been abandoned in order to represent the meticulous stasis of life...He wants them to look real in order not to look alive.'[34]

The investment of the viewer's imagination and thought is encouraged still further by the recurring form in each drawing of an apparently dead bird. It is unclear whether the same bird is repeated throughout the drawings or if a different bird appears each time. This unusual and extraordinary juxtaposition of imagery points simultaneously towards a specific event and to no event at all. The image of the bird helps to disguise the barrier between fact and fiction. Without the bird the Scenario Drawings would simply be too descriptive and their directness would limit the opportunity for the engagement of the viewer's emotional interpretation.

In the relationship between an illustration of experience and the audience, the illustration is reliant upon interpretation to negotiate an (external) meaning for it. In order to encourage such interpretation and to minimise its natural abstractedness the illustration must, above

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[34] Bonami, Francesco. *Maurizio Cattelan.* London: Phaidon Press Ltd, 2000, p. 83.

all things, aim to be believable. It is the believability of an illustration that encourages

interpretation, and it is through interpretation that the viewer forms an understanding of the

illustration. Once the viewer understands the illustration and its subject, an empathetic

connection with the illustrated experience can be developed.[35]

An empathetic understanding of an illustrated experience is very different to an

understanding formed solely through interpretation. Describing the experience from the

third person perspective[36] for example, positions the audience as a spectator of the event.

This participatory inclusion increases the opportunity for an empathetic connection with

the subject by allowing the viewer to imagine him/herself having the experience. Although

this form of pictorial representation does increase the epistemological value of the

illustration, it necessarily reduces the illustration's worth as a vehicle for self-observation.

There can, after all, be no *loss of self* when the physical position and condition of the self is

the subject of the illustration.

The Scenario Drawings are, to a degree, constructed from this point of view. The

characters in the drawings metaphorically act out the experiences they illustrate and,

although the events themselves remain anonymous, the audience can form an

understanding of them by interpreting the presented evidence. One could argue therefore

that mimesis is still present in the drawings, but that it is camouflaged and re-presented as

fiction. Like the Blackboard Drawings before them, the Scenario Drawings illustrate the

actualities of a phenomenal experience by transposing its unconscious, formless reality into

a coherent, communicable language using metaphorical devices from a mimetic

vocabulary. It became clear that in order to produce an illustration that is free from all

forms of referentiality, such a vocabulary would have to be excluded. In practical terms

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[35] By *believable* I do not necessarily mean *realistic* or of a *realistic nature*. Instead I mean to imply that the illustration must appear convincing and not deliberately misleading or confusing.
[36] 'Third person perspective' is used to denote a pictorial representation that is constructed in such a way as to describe both the person having the experience and the event taking place. This perspective is different from that used in the previous works which describe events and encounters from the point of view of the illustrator.

this determined that the illustration should be free of any distinguishing character, variation or any other form of visual clues from which comparisons or judgements could be made and a mimetic language formulated.[37]

But can an experience be represented, and indeed interpreted, in the absence of such a vocabulary? It was established early on in the research that all forms of illustration that document experience must, by their nature, be mimetic – they must interpret visually what cannot be seen. Although this understanding determined that mimesis must be present in the process of interpretation, it did not dictate that mimesis must necessarily become a visual component of the illustration's appearance. For example, the marks made on the surface of the blackboards did not physically resemble the events they signified, although the process of their construction was intrinsically one of mimetic interpretation. This understanding determined that the appearance of the illustration was not necessarily directed by the interpretation of the event but could also be determined by the construction process itself.

I have said that at the time of their creation, that I did not regard the Scenario Drawings to be more significant than the other visual studies made during the course of the research. I have chosen to discuss them in this detail, however, because they provide a clear example of how the drawings and notes executed in the sketchbooks had a tangible influence on the direction and nature of the evolving practice. Although they do not in themselves represent a complete or resolved idea, their development had massive implications for the conceptual trajectory of my thought, not simply because of their ultimate inference, but because they created and informed a theoretical position from which I observed the world around me.

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[37] It is perhaps important at this stage, to reiterate that it was not the intention of the project to create an illustration that was incomprehensible or deliberately misleading, but instead to determine if an illustration of an experience can be understood and valued by an audience in the absence of all mimetic referentiality.

Working meticulously through ideas in the sketchbooks had the effect of directing or focusing my perception in such a way that I was at all times searching for new and specific forms of stimulation. What might appear outwardly to be chance encounters or seemingly arbitrary decisions were actually informed and directed by a highly personal and intellectually rigorous process of reflection and consideration. My thoughts became tuned in such a precise way, that objects, images and concepts that might at other times have been inconsequential, suddenly became endowed with enormous significance. The following selection and appropriation of two unusual figures discovered in the window of a second hand shop reveals how this process took place.

I had come to think of the Scenario Drawings as two-dimensional representations of actual objects and in an effort to understand and then accurately replicate in the drawings certain difficult three-dimensional qualities, I made numerous studies of model figures and sculpted figurines. I chanced upon the figures in the shop window moments after leaving The Royal Albert Memorial Museum in Exeter where I had been drawing a collection of Roman and Greek statuettes. I noticed them immediately because they were of similar size and shape to the ancient figurines. I made a connection instantly between the figures as anonymous objects and the Scenario Drawings which had in effect become illustrations of unidentified objects.

Made of clay, the two figures are each twelve centimetres tall and are brightly painted (fig. 73). One figure is playing what appears to be a pair of cymbals or a small drum, while the second figure is playing a clarinet. The paint has been applied thickly and with a childlike disregard for accuracy. Where small fragments of paint have chipped away, the underlying clay lies exposed. The figures are rounded and their surfaces are smooth and shiny. Although they appear to be the work of a child there are details, principally on the moulded clothing, which suggests that at some stage an adult helped to make them.

As I have already indicated, the figures are similar in size to typical Ancient Roman and Greek statuettes (figs. 74-75). Both civilisations used durable materials such as stone and metal to depict gods and other divine beings in the form of figurines. These deities were consistently represented throughout the ages and are understood to have had votive or ceremonial significance beyond that of domestic ornamentation or decoration.

Figures 73, 74 & 75: *Clay Figurine*, (left). 2002, *Statuette of Venus* (centre). Bronze, 20 cm high. *Statuette of Mars* (right) Bronze, 25.5 cm high

The consistency of form and the semantic use of familiar imagery - a winged helmet, a club, a shield - established a common cultural awareness and understanding amongst those who possessed them. However, unlike the statuettes, the painted figures carry no such imagery and give no obvious clue to their function. It must be understood that the figures' character and appearance were originally conceived and prepared within the defined parameters of their creator's imagination; parameters that are no longer clear. We find that these considerations are now redefined, in the absence of their maker, by the figures themselves. Although their appearance is suggestive of a western military music tradition, their anonymity and the mystery of their invention might indicate they have no deep cultural significance or bearing outside that of their own form.

Once disconnected from their source it is possible to claim that the figures have no intellectual value other than that which we attribute to them. They remain apart from their own history and consequently resistant to any form of hierarchical assessment. They are comparable to the Scenario Drawings, inasmuch as they present themselves as components of an unidentified narrative and yet, by describing nothing but their own forms, they register the presence of hidden meaning. This form of (reverse) communication arguably negates any mimetic qualities that the figures may have once had and, as a consequence, all forms of interpretation based upon or devised from a mimetic vocabulary are permanently deflected.

A similar correspondence between object and audience is identified by Elizabeth Legge in Francis Picabia's provocatively titled inkblot painting, *La Sainte Vierge* (1920);

> Picabia's inkblot as calligram does not describe its subject, but only,
> irreducibly, itself ...at the same time it represents indefinitely, because, as an
> amorphous shape, it can be *read into*. It represents all the things that could be
> substituted for the image of the Virgin.[38]

For Picabia, the formless blot is free from all mimetic content. By displaying nothing but the evidence of its own construction, the viewer has the freedom to 'see or hallucinate anything at all.'[39] (fig. 76)

Both the clay figures and Picabia's painting demonstrate that it is possible to communicate information without relying upon the syntax and vocabulary of a mimetic language. However, each does so by communicating with the audience on a separate, very different level. The most obvious and fundamental difference between the painting and the figures is their physical dimensionality.

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[38] Legge, E. 'Thirteen ways of looking at a Virgin: Francis Picabia's La Sainte Vierge.' *Word and Image*, Vol.12, No.2, April-June 1996, p. 220.
[39] Legge, 1996, p.240.

Unlike the Scenario Drawings which are constructed to resemble three-dimensional objects,[40] Picabia's inkblot conveys no structural framework. Any form or depth that is perceived within the painting is not the property of the painting itself but a conception of the viewer's senses. The clay figures by contrast, are very much in command of the viewing experience. As three-dimensional objects they dictate how the audience perceives them, and their essential form or reality - their weight, shape and size - remains unaffected by interpretation.[41]
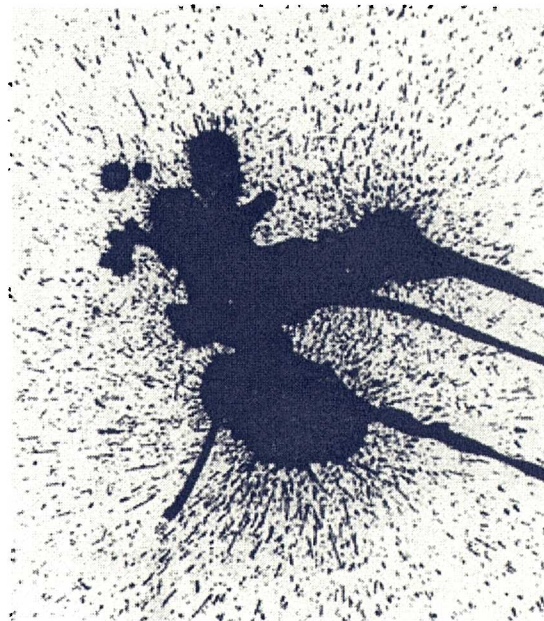
Figure 76: Francis Picabia - *La Sainte Vierge, 1920*. Ink, dimensions unknown

Both the clay figures and, to a lesser extent, Picabia's painting, reiterate a clear but crucial point that mimesis is not an inherent quality in the object itself but is determined by the audience's understanding of it. Or, put more simply, 'mimesis is not the property of the

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[40] In each of the *Scenario Drawings* shadows extend away from the subject and anchor the figure to the ground. Occasionally the shadow is arrested at its most far-reaching point, generating a curve of darkness and defining an area around the figure similar in appearance to the base of a toy soldier. This illusion of form is intended to both distance the drawings from the specifics of the experiences they illustrate and to suggest the continuing presence of their original reality.
[41] This understanding is formed largely around John Locke's (1632-1704) theories of form and perception outlined in *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (1690). Locke made the distinction between an object's *primary* qualities (such as its weight and shape) and *secondary* qualities (such as colour or taste). He argued that an object's primary qualities are predetermined and permanent, while its secondary qualities are entirely subjective, and reveal nothing of the objects true nature.

object but the property of our consciousness'.[42] The figures' three-dimensionality reduces the distance between the viewer and the object, as any missing information or mimetic referentiality is replaced with, or compensated by, the objective, tactile sensation of the viewing experience.

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The figures are, in effect, empty of content; they are hollow, waiting to be filled with interpreted meaning. In the absence of all mimetic substance, the figures, like Picabia's inkblot, can 'stand for' anything at all. By presenting the figures as objective evidence of my own experience in the manner of the Illustrated Pebbles, this emptiness, this anonymity, could be replaced. All mimetic reference could then be excluded from the figures' appearance by presenting not the figures themselves, but precise copies of them. This process would further distance the figures from their source and would ensure that mimesis is present only in their manufacture and not in the objects themselves.

The figure's shape was not difficult to duplicate.[43] Silicon rubber was used to make a two-piece mould into which a liquid resin was poured. By casting the original in this way I could reproduce any number of duplicate figures without influencing or altering its essential physical character. The mimetic nature of the casting process permits the accurate replication of form better than any other method of visual reproduction, because it necessarily circumvents the mediating presence of all influential aesthetic sensibilities. Producing a straightforward drawing or painting of the figure, for instance, would have subjected the figure's representation to the full unconscious influence of my stylistic awareness.

The newly cast figures, now termed the Illustrated Figures, attempt to occupy the middle ground between the actual and the idealised, the real and the imaginary, 'between event

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[42] Originally 'appearance is not the property of the object but the property of our consciousness.' Woodford, D. 'Artist's Eye,' *Art Review,* Vol. 51, June 1999, p.28.
[43] I made the decision at this stage to work only with the figure holding the clarinet.

and ornamentation'.[44] The figures proclaim references to actual experiences while all the time engaging systems that distort and reorganise representation at the expense of referentiality. By employing objects that proclaim anonymity but also provoke associations of a kind, I am implementing unfamiliarity as familiarity and fiction as truth. The figures illustrate the most intimate of personal sensations while asserting the right to the privacy of experience.

Once cast and presented as illustrations of experiences, the figures should not be regarded as object trouvé or 'found objects' in the conventional art-critical sense. Instead, one could argue that the Illustrated Figures can be understood as the exact polar opposite of found objects because they are presented in the specific context of personal experience as highly unique, meticulously crafted visions of intimate realties. They are as measured and as considered as any form of illustration that uses the visual appearance of an existing object as its subject.

There is a danger when considering this project, as with both the Blackboard Drawings and to a lesser extent the Illustrated Pebbles, that existing art-critical terms such as *object trouvé* become central to the work's wider understanding beyond that of their immediate interpretation as illustrations of experience. Because of this I am reluctant to make even casual associations with certain frames of reference if they did not have a specific influence on the course of practice, as I believe this is not only misleading, but also because it formalises what was, as I have discussed, an inherently unpredictable and fluid conception process.

The practice's superficial connection to object trouvé is one example of how in the course of its development, the work brushed against a number of diverse forms of expression and understanding without implementing or accepting in full their established conceptual

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[44] Riese Hubert, R. *Surrealism and the Book*. Oxford: University of California Press, 1992, p. 4.

principles and aesthetic values. This was possible because the work followed a largely independent, capricious system of development which absorbed and cultivated only small, appropriate fragments of substantial ideas and concepts in order to construct its own distinct standpoint and range of practical objectives. The project's selection and appropriation of an existing object and its subsequent presentation as an illustration has, for example, on the surface at least, much in common with the concept of the artist's 'readymade'. However, the figures apply only certain fragments of this established theory. Despite this tenuous connection, I feel it is constructive to discuss the relationship between the practice and the concept of the readymade in order to both identify certain fundamental conceptual differences and also to further define the receptive yet highly selective nature of evolving my sequence of thought.

As with a readymade, the context in which the Illustrated Figures are presented is key to their interpreted status and position. When viewed out of context both a readymade and the Illustrated Figures as objects assume different, if not contradictory, meanings. The essential hypothesis of a readymade is that an ordinary, everyday object becomes imbued with a higher status and significance simply by its classification and exhibition as a work of art. The first significant conceptual difference between the practice and a readymade artwork lies in how the object is presented by its 'creator' and perceived by the viewer. From the perspective of the viewer, it is essential that the presented readymade is perceived to be a genuine object. Although it is true that Marcel Duchamp (1887-1968), the recognised author of the concept, commissioned several reproductions of his original readymades, both the original and the copy are always presented as originals in their own right. The Illustrated Figures by contrast, are presented as reproductions or copies of the original figure and as such should be regarded as individual, measured studies of the original's form.

The unique process by which the original figure was selected serves to further distance the practice from the so called 'readymade philosophy'. In later years, Duchamp insisted that there was 'no beauty, no ugliness, nothing particularly aesthetic' about the objects he appropriated. The choice of the readymades was not 'dictated by aesthetic delectation. The choice was based on a reaction of visual indifference with at the same time a total absence of good or bad taste. In fact a complete anaesthesia'.[45] For the practice the reverse is true. The original figure was appropriated not because I was indifferent to it, but because it satisfied exactly the criteria for selection that had developed slowly over several months of constant reflection and consideration. My thinking was so focussed at this stage that the practice could not have developed in any other direction. My breadth of reception had become so finely tuned and my sequence of thought so delicately balanced, that the course and nature of the developing practice was, in an intellectual sense, predetermined. The figure's selection was the inevitable consequence of a rigorous process of selection and evaluation that began long before I entered the shop to buy it.

Figures 77 & 78: *Photograph of found figure* (left), *Drawing in sketchbook* (right), 2002. Pencil on paper.

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[45] http://www.artlex.com [8th March 2004]

When seen through the lens of the research, the original figure appeared as an ideal object for appropriation, not only because it related closely to my pattern of thinking, but also, as an anonymous object I could claim that it was free from all forms of meaning beyond that of its physical form. This determined that by reproducing its shape exactly, I could communicate my experiences through its creator's language and vocabulary of expression.

Unlike the Blackboard Drawings which generated a spontaneous representation of an experience with a reflexive gestural mark, or the Illustrated Pebbles which instantaneously recorded the transformations that take place when a phenomenological encounter is transfigured into the form of experience, there was not single defining moment when the anonymous, vacant form of the replica figure was transformed into an illustration of experience. For the Illustrated Figures, the creation process was instead one of accumulation and addition, as meaning was metaphorically grafted onto their forms when paint was applied to their surfaces. The predetermined, prescribed replication of the original figure's form permitted a heightened awareness of the experience the figure would ultimately illustrate. The care and concentration that was necessary for the accurate replication of each of the original brushstrokes, negated the innovative or inventive element of the creation process and determined that all thoughts could instead be directed towards the experience itself.

The registration of the visual mark once again reveals close affinities with conventional forms of illustrative communication which record and communicate information by registering one substance upon another. Despite their apparent distance from tradition, the Illustrated Figures apply the visual mark in a very conventional way. The relationship between the austere, colourless resin and the brilliant intensity of the paint, for example, is in many ways equal to that of paper or canvas to pencil or paint and the reliance on a paintbrush as a means of applying the colour was, although largely determined by process, unquestionably traditional.

For the Illustrated Figures, the registration of the visual mark is literal. It relies heavily on the personality and expression of the brush, and also on my skills and control as a painter. At no stage in their construction, either during the selection and casting processes or during their final painting, was the practice out of my control. The research had, by this time, become extremely refined and very tightly disciplined. My sequence of thought had developed under such precise terms, that the process was contained within defined parameters. In practical terms this meant that, rather than being overly preoccupied or enveloped by method and process, the experience itself was at all times central to my thinking. Because of this dislocation of invention from the creative process and despite not proclaiming any overt metonymic description or visual connection to the experiences they illustrate, the Illustrated Figures could be considered to be accurate and unadulterated illustrations of experience.

As I have already discussed, each of the three central projects approached the issue of the non-presentation of informative description in different ways. Although neither the Blackboard Drawings nor the Illustrated Pebbles presented any clear visual depiction of the experiences they illustrate, both projects portray some visual connection to their subject which differentiates one illustration from the next. Each of the Blackboard Drawings are, for example, dated and numbered, revealing a specific time scale in which the experiences took place. For the viewer, this gives an indication of the passing of time and the development of descriptive, mimetic vocabulary. For me, their creator, it places the drawings within the context of a specific emotional phase and prompts me to remember where I was and what I was doing when the drawing was made. It is then possible, from this position, to identify which marks illustrate which experiences. Although, like the Blackboard Drawings, the Illustrated Pebbles do not describe in literal terms their precise details of their subjects, they can be interpreted by comparing their perceptible size relationships and also by considering the individuality and configuration of the black

marks. Although the viewer will be unable to make direct connections between the pebbles and the experiences that they illustrate, it is possible to interpret and form an understanding of them, by differentiating and comparing one stone to another. When viewed together, the Illustrated Figures, are in contrast, virtually indistinguishable. The specific, recognisable connection that existed between the figures and the experiences they illustrate was lost soon after their completion. It is impossible from this distance to recall which figure is representative of which experience, so from this point of view, I am in the same position of ignorance as the viewer. However, this should not affect how the figures are interpreted because they do not attempt to communicate on a literal level. For me, as for the viewer, the nine Illustrated Figures represent nine different experiences. The lack of any literal connection between the objects and their subject matter does not affect their status as intimate and honest illustrations of nine separate experiences.

This project set out to challenge the theory formulated in chapter three, that the epistemological value of an illustration of experience is very much determined by interpretation and that interpretation is, in return, largely dependent upon an illustration's mimetic referentiality to form an understanding of its content. In order to test this theory, the work aimed to construct an illustration that was entirely devoid of all referentiality and mimesis. Such an illustration, would, in accordance with the theory, be uninterpretable. The Illustrated Figures demonstrate that, by casting an anonymous object, mimesis could be restricted to the construction process alone and that referentiality need not be an inherent aesthetic component of the object itself.

Each illustrated figure is presented as objective evidence of an (undisclosed) experience and is consequently free from all instructive mimetic devices. This anonymity is intended to encourage the viewer to form an independent understanding of their content, not by assembling presented representational forms, but by replacing absent information with new

narrative descriptions and by substituting fresh association for hidden meaning. By presenting the experiences in three-dimensional form, the necessity for interpretation is reduced but not eliminated from the viewing experience. Despite this apparent freedom from the restrictions and limitations of mimesis, the Illustrated Figures, as illustrations of experience, remain interpretable. It can therefore be concluded that an illustration of experience can be interpreted and valued by the viewer without the direction and instruction of an explicit mimetic vocabulary.

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The eleven Scenario Drawings were created in the summer of 2002.
They are reproduced at 100%.

Figure 79: *Cpl. Joe Frampton on Guard*, 8 July 2002. Pencil on paper

Figure 80: *Cyril Newton Digging for Victory*, 8 July 2002. Pencil on paper

Figure 81: *An Italian P.O.W Integrating*, 9 July 2002. Pencil on paper

Figure 82: *John Bastone Parading the Bird*, 10 July 2002. Pencil on paper

Figure 83: *Alderman Fred Studley Receives the Bird*, 10 July 2002. Pencil on paper

Figure 84: *Mr and Mrs Finnemore*, 10 July 2002. Pencil on paper

Figure 85: *Edith Self Collecting Waste*, 21 July 2002. Pencil on paper

Figure 86: *A Specially Trained Worker*, 21 July 2002. Pencil on paper

Figure 87: *Violet Blackmore and Dorothy Bending 'Doing Their Bit'*, 23 July 2002. Pencil on paper

Figure 88: *Tom Gapper with his Famous Gift Horse*, 23 July 2002. Pencil on paper

Figure 89: *A Proud Francis Larcombe*, 20 July 2002. Pencil on paper

Figure 79

Figure 80

Figure 81

Figure 82

Figure 83

Figure 84

Figure 85

Figure 86

Figure 87
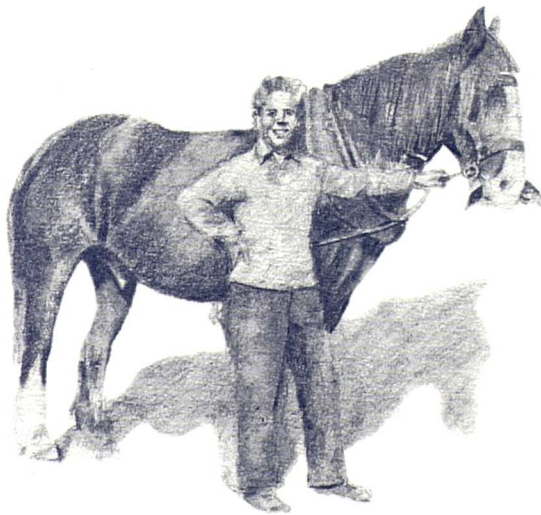
Figure 88

Figure 89

Figure 90: *Drawing from sketchbook,* 2002. pencil on paper.
Figure 91: *Illustrated Figure (#1),* 2002. Painted resin. 11.5 cm tall

- 8 AUG 2002   Hercules 4 in
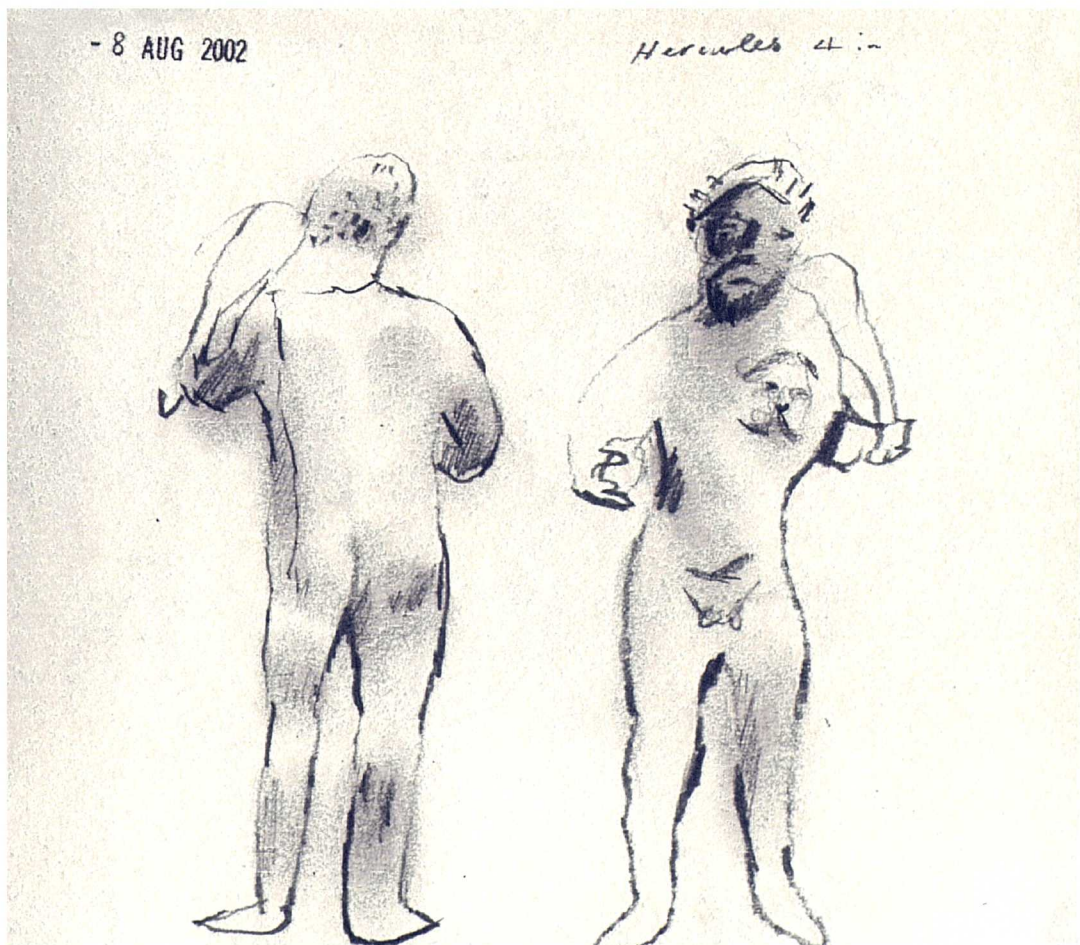
Figures 92 & 93: *Illustrated Figure (#2)*, 2002. Painted resin. 11.9 cm tall
Figure 94: *Drawing from sketchbook*, 2002. pencil on paper.

Figures 95, 96 & 97: *Illustrated Figure (#3)*, 2002. Painted resin. 11.8 cm tall

Conclusion

> This paper is in no way a collection of dogmas or even of
> principles of procedure which I have accepted. It is also no
> programme for the future – according to which I might proceed
> in my future works. It has merely been a fragmentary chronicle
> of my activity as a composer, describing the thoughts which have
> accompanied my work during the last few years. Will these
> thoughts retain their currant significance for long? Will they be
> the subject of revision or to changes, or shall I one day dismiss
> them completely? This does not concern me. I take good heed
> only to ensure that none of these ideas comes to dominate me,
> even to the slightest extent, and that none of them restricts my
> freedom in attempting to attain everything which in the future my
> imagination might give rise to.[1]

The purpose of this research has been to examine the visual mark as a register of

experience and, in that context, as a tool of illustration. The following is a summary of the

objectives and findings of all four projects including the first collection of exploratory

drawings entitled *The Illustration of Conversational Time and Space*. Whilst remaining

within the overall context of the research proposition, each project was guided and

informed by knowledge and understanding gained through practical investigation.

The material relationship between the visual mark as a physical entity and the surface onto

which it was applied was consistent throughout the course of the research. Although each

of the three central projects addressed the question of its application from differing

conceptual and methodological positions, the practice retained throughout a fundamental

connection to the illustrative principle of the representation of meaning by way of

registering one (usually proactive) substance upon a second (usually receptive or passive)

surface.

Although this tight association with conventional methods of visual representation was not

a condition of their development, it was not the explicit intention of the practice to sever or

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[1] Lutoslawski,Witold. 'About the Element of Chance in Music' (1968) in *Three Aspects of New Music*. Stockholm: Nordiska Musikforlaget, 1968, p 53.

dissolve links with existing forms of illustrative communication either. Neither did I knowingly at any stage avoid using the conventional materials or techniques of illustration. Instead my sequence of thought was encouraged to evolve naturally and to define its own course and direction. To proscribe certain practices, would, it was believed, inhibit the development of ideas, and possibly close the door to valuable lateral or tangential thoughts.

I have said that the three central projects can be understood as 'unique and highly personal ways of registering the experience of seeing.' The illustrations of course do more than simply represent what I found in front of my eyes; they are an intimate testimony of feeling, emotion, perception and frame of mind. I believe an experience is a memory of a conscious encounter, as perceived by the senses, which has been filtered through and organised by the unconscious. I have learned that an experience can transform over time and regardless of how it is represented, it will always remain true.

I have endeavoured to describe at different stages of this thesis several possible explanations why each of the three projects developed in precisely the form they did. However, there is an important distinction to be made between the development of projects as ideas and the act of creating the illustrations themselves. Only once the overarching concept and working methodology behind each of the three projects had been established could the illustration process begin. In each case an experience was broken down within the unconscious before being rearranged and restructured in the form of an illustration. How the experience would be restructured depended upon the conceptual distance between the experience and its resulting visual mark. The conceptual distance – the distance between impulse and reaction, between idea and realisation - varied enormously between projects. For the Blackboard Drawings the distance was short. Marks were generated on the surfaces of the canvases with spontaneity and quickness. They were in effect recorded as soon as they were assembled in my conscious. For the Illustrated Pebbles the distance between the experience and the illustration was more extended. In contrast to the previous

way of working and because of the technical requirements of the procedure, the illustrative

process felt remote and calculated. In the case of the Illustrated Figures the conceptual

distance was once more lengthened, as the painting of the figures was necessarily

contemplative and deliberate.

The research proposed to investigate the visual mark as a register of experience. Because

the outcomes and conclusions of one project in turn directed the course of the next, each of

the three central projects consequently approached the visual mark from different

perspectives.

The Blackboard Drawings applied the visual mark as a tool to both record and present

information. In this context the visual mark is the material realisation of unconscious

thought and was realised by touching either the chalk or knife onto the surface of the

prepared canvas. The physical application of the visual mark within the Blackboard

Drawings is perhaps the clearest and most literal example of how the practice applied the

discussed principle of visual representation by registering one material upon another.

However, the dual application of the visual mark not only to the surface of the canvas but

also directly into its mass, could be said to also distance the drawings from any

conventional illustrative association with surface decoration.

The marks generated by the movement of the knife and, to a lesser extent, the application

of the chalk, were unquestionably the most physically invasive of all four projects and

unlike previous expressive marks which remained largely on the surface of the paper or

board. The marks which were created on the Primary Blackboard were understood to

register experience by affecting the essential substance of the ground which sustained

them. By penetrating its outer surface and channelling information deep into its mass, the

visual mark inadvertently challenges both the sovereignty and status of the canvas as a

deferential but respected receptacle of external meaning. I use the word 'inadvertently'

when describing the process because it was not an intention to deliberately and irreparably

violate the 'sacred' surface of the canvas. The marks were instead applied in reflexive response to emotional impulse and their material realisation and character was determined, not by conscious design, but by the recollection process.

The chalk and the knife were understood to communicate in contrasting ways and were applied to the canvas accordingly. Although the two mediums were used consistently to illustrate certain recurrent emotional themes, the choice of medium was not always prescribed before the experience was illustrated. The relationship between the two mediums was, although well established by the end of the project, not always comprehensive or incontrovertible and the two forms of expression could be interchanged in response to subtle transformations in emotional attitude. In this way the integrity of an experience was not compromised to satisfy the recording method. The flexible nature and malleability of the process meant that each mark could establish a unique correspondence with the experience it represented. By each time adapting the visual mark to suit its subject matter, the two mediums could either together or independently illustrate a myriad of different emotional responses and feelings. In this way the integrity of an experience was not compromised to satisfy the recording method. The flexible nature and malleability of the process meant that each mark could establish a unique correspondence with the experience it represented. By each time adapting the visual mark to suit its subject matter, the two mediums could either together or independently illustrate a myriad of different emotional responses and feelings. It is possible for the viewer to form an understanding of the presented information, not only by examining the lines and tones individually, but also by recognising the contrasting appearance and character of the marks as they evolve and develop throughout the series of nine Blackboard Drawings.

Together the Blackboard Drawings represent a massive step forward for the practice, both conceptually and methodologically. As a body of work they define the stage when the research gathered momentum and when the first definite insights and understanding of the subject began to form. The vigorous, sometimes destructive method by which the chalk

and the knife were used to register experience reflects this growing energy and as my confidence in the developed systems grew, the marks became stronger, bolder, and more dynamic both in appearance and in application. The aesthetic character of the marks very much reflect the speed at which the project progressed both in terms of the concept and process. My working relationship with the canvas surfaces evolved over time. Any unease that I had felt at the beginning of the project either about the idea or the process was slowly placated by the periodic and in a sense, ritualistic preparation of their surfaces.[2] The attention that was necessary when preparing the blackboards for use compelled me to treat the canvases with the same degree of reverence I would ordinarily show a blank sheet of paper or new page in a sketchbook.

For the Illustrated Pebbles the visual mark appears when light sensitive chemicals automatically register a moment in a pebble's transformation through time and space. In contrast to the marks which form the basis of the Blackboard Drawings, the black marks that emerge when a pebble is exposed to light remain fixed to its surface. Unlike the marks that both animate the surfaces of the blackboards and cut information deep into their fibres, the light sensitive paint that is used to register experience does not in any significant way affect the physical constitution of the pebble. While the Primary Blackboard was gradually worn down and eventually destroyed by the process of mark registration, the pebbles themselves remained resilient and resolute to external change.

As records of experience, the photographic marks are almost as fragile and as vulnerable to the inevitable wearing effects of time and change as the chalk marks on the surfaces of the painted blackboards. The fragility and sensitivity of the developed marks contrasts sharply to the strength and unchanging nature of the stone ground that sustains them and for this reason the relationship between the two was also considered to be transitory and changing. It is an inevitability that the black marks will eventually lose their metaphysical connection

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[2] See appendix B *The Blackboard Drawings – A Methodological Account*

to the moment in time that they illustrate. When this happens, when there is no trace of the photographic paint on its surface, the pebble will lose its status and significance as an illustration of experience and the pebble will once again return to its natural status and condition as an anonymous object of nature. The marks that register experiences on the surface of the pebbles represent only tiny, almost insignificant moments in their individual histories. It is a certainty that the pebbles will continue to subsist long after the experiences they represent are dissolved and forgotten.

When viewed separately, the Blackboard Drawings and the Illustrated Pebbles appear to have little in common. There are no obvious similarities in form and the sudden shift in scale is, I am told, at first bewildering. And yet, from my point of view the pebbles were a clear and natural step forward. The outwardly massive conceptual and practical leap from the blackboards to the pebbles was in fact taken over a period of many months and I believe this slow evolution of ideas served to diffuse and diminish the enormity and relentless complexity of the change in direction.

It is impossible to identify with complete certainty a single source or inspiration behind the work. At the time of its conception, I understood the idea to record experience on the surface of a stone was inspired by disparate but interconnected web of separate thoughts and stimuli. I still believe this to be the true, but I also think that each project was conceived as an unconscious reaction to the last. This is evident in my *choice* of surface or ground onto which to record my experiences; after the blackboard canvases ultimately proved to be delicate and vulnerable I chose to work with stone. The anonymous permanence of the stones then gave way to the unique and synthetic form of the found figures. Looking back over the research and examining the incremental steps between one thought and another, I believe I am in no better position now to understand why certain unconscious decisions and judgements were made than I was at the time of their

conception. However, for the purposes of this conclusion, I will attempt to examine in what frame of mind I found myself in the wake of the Blackboard Drawings completion.

The erosion and subsequent destruction of the Primary Canvas was, I have said, not an original aim of the work but I did not make any significant attempts to arrest the process once it had begun. However, the eventual obliteration of the surface of the canvas affected my learnt illustrative sensibility deeply. By the end of the work I had not only destroyed the very object I had spent time preparing and carrying around, but I had shown disregard for the working surface – the surface that would sustain my future illustrations. This evolutionary move from the straightforward and familiar decoration of the canvas's surface to its structural modification and eventual destruction felt fundamentally uncomfortable and dishonest. It is conceivable, though it cannot of course be proven, that my subsequent decision to work with pebbles was unconsciously directed by the lingering feelings of culpability at the destruction of the canvas. Stone, the antithesis of the delicate and vulnerable canvas, offered a comparatively impregnable and resilient ground onto which to project my experiences.

It became clear from the first few experiments that the photosensitive paint would not corrode the stones or even stay attached to the pebble for any great length of time. I think now that I was happy for the relationship between the stone and the photographic paint to be a temporary one and it is quite possible that this realisation provided an unconscious release from the restrictions of the traditional visual mark – surface relationship where the mark remains fixed to the page until both are destroyed. The unique relationship between the pebble and paint provided an incentive to explore a difficult and uncomfortable idea further while all the time supplying the handy excuse of temporality.

The visual mark is central to the success of the third project, although again it is applied in a different sense. The physical act of painting the figures was an essential part of the

registering of experience onto their otherwise anonymous forms. For the Illustrated Figures the visual mark is a method of transmitting experience from the unconscious to surface of the object and the paint itself is the vehicle or instrument of expression. Although the visual mark is two-dimensional, when completed the illustration itself presents information in three dimensions.

A more conventionally illustrative relationship between surface and mark was to a large extent restored during the development of the third and final major project. Aside from the initial mould making and subsequent casting of the figure, I used the traditional tools of an illustrator –paint, palette and brush – to apply detail directly to the figure's undercoated surface. Unexpectedly I found the three-dimensionality of the figure irrelevant when painting. There was no significant methodological difference, I discovered, between illustrating my experiences on the surface of the figure and drawing or painting in the conventional sense on paper or card. Factors such as a figure's weight or shape went largely unnoticed as my concentration and awareness was focussed almost exclusively at the very tip of the paintbrush. Despite the unusual circumstances I remained confident of my skills and ability as a painter throughout the process and I was, I believed, in full control of the microscopic connection between the brush and the figure's surface. In contrast to the delicate and tense processes involved in the production of the Illustrated Pebbles, the appliance of the paint to the surface of the figures was uncomplicated and enjoyable.

My developing sequence of thought was revealed on a number of occasions during the course of the practice to be at the same time precarious and yet utterly determined and strong. It was sometimes hard to reconcile that the conceptual direction and pace of the practice was largely directed by what were in effect ephemeral thoughts and ideas. As a working methodology, I found this serendipitous approach both exhilarating and nerve-racking because it stood out in marked contrast to the conventional system of illustrative

practice that I had exploited for many years, where the subject of the illustration – whether it be the character on the cover of a book, or the issue within a newspaper article – is defined before the media and approach are closely considered. For the practice, the eventual appearance of the finished projects and application of media was directed almost entirely by process. It is now clear, but perhaps not surprising, that when faced with such an unpredictable and capricious system of creation, I relied instinctively on tried and tested illustrative materials and processes to work through and manoeuvre ideas into perceptible form. Although from the outside the extent of my initial reliance on traditional illustrative procedures may be clear, it is significant that I was not at any point during the process conscious of this dependence.

My sequence of thought dictated every move I made, both conceptually and methodologically. The process reached its zenith or highest pitch during the final project, when my vision became so focussed that the practice progressed within extremely tight, defined parameters.

It was found that my sequence of thought, although extremely focussed, was constantly evolving and the course and character of the practice was influenced from all directions. The chance finding of the original clay figure in the second hand shop is the clearest example of how the practice was seemingly founded on precarious, sometimes unconscious decisions. In reality however, these decisions were revealed to be defined and orchestrated by a rigorous process of reflection and consideration that was played out among the pages of the many supporting sketchbooks.

As the practice came to rely more heavily on chance encounters and delicate changes in thinking, my use of the sketchbooks became more prominent. The role that they played in the research's development is significant. They were used as a filter through which I passed all ideas and thoughts and I worked in them instinctually and without anxiety or concern. Their function as a tool of communication was also invaluable. When discussing

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the work in progress, I demonstrated my ideas through drawings in the sketchbooks. They provided something for the viewer to grasp, both metaphorically and literally, while the work's theories and concepts pitched and rolled in and out of intelligible form.

The images that are contained in them, I have been told, are more readily accessible than the projects that surround them. This does not concern me and should have no influence on how the projects are themselves interpreted. If anything, it affirms their equality, both in an intellectual and in a personal sense, with the finished pieces. The sketchbooks bridge the gap between the private world of intimate thought, and the shared world of concepts and ideas. They function also as note books and as diaries, containing telephone numbers and shopping lists. These additions are considered to be of equal importance to the practice and, in a circuitous way, had an equal influence on the shaping of my thoughts. Nothing, from the casually written remark or tea stain to the resolved drawing, was irrelevant at this stage. Everything that found its way into the pages of the sketchbooks was of equal significance and importance.

The sketchbooks helped span the ever changing distance between my twin responsibilities (and instincts) as researcher and illustrator. I felt able to make massive conceptual leaps within the pages of the sketchbooks without the threat of or need for intellectual justification. Such rationalisation of a concept would come later, I insisted, when a thought had been refined and transposed through practical exploration into a clear and independent idea. By working through the sketchbooks one can trace the gestation of an idea or concept from its source to its natural conclusion. It is clear to see now, that whilst concepts and ideas were fluid in the sense that they could transform massively in no time at all, the essential germ of a concept throughout its development remained largely unchanged. In the case of the Illustrated Pebbles for example, the underlying notion of projecting experience onto the surface of a found object was conceived at the very beginning. The practice subsequently followed many different intellectual and practical paths but ultimately it

remained true to the original principle. It is more difficult, however, to identify what inspired the initial theory or concept. It is my understanding that while conceived for the most part through calculated and considered thought, each of the three projects was driven not only by the findings of the previous investigations but, as I have already discussed, by my subconscious reaction to preceding work.

I have said that the drawings and notes made in the sketchbooks helped to convey the developing ideas of the practice to my peers. However there is an important distinction to be made between the conveyance of the research's hypotheses and the clear description of the subjects of the illustrated experiences. I have established at different stages in this thesis that although the projects do not describe in literal terms the actualities of the experiences they illustrate, they do not aim to hide them either. Because they do not fit any recognised outline or structure of illustrative communication, they present their subjects with little mediation and arbitration. As representations of personal realities they are intimate. As expressions of undisclosed feeling they are honest.

Despite not expressing in explicitly literal terms the specific nature of the experiences they illustrate, as instruments of communication the pieces do not deceive the viewer. By not presenting information in conventional forms the pieces do not coerce or tell the viewer how to think or how to see. The authority and power to determine external meaning is instead transferred from the illustration to the viewer.

The serendipitous approach to the development process was, as I have discussed, at the same time challenging and effective. The practice to a large extent defined its own course and pace and this meant that although I was always conscious of its sequential reasoning and direction, I was unable to harness or be in complete control over every aspect of its developing conception. I recognise that this fortuitous form of approach and pattern of thinking was only possible because the research was not in any way commercially orientated - meaning that the end product was not defined before the creative processes

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began. In practice this meant that the research was free from certain practical restrictions and limitations that direct the course and final appearance of more conventional illustration. Because the work was permitted to evolve entirely within its own conceptual framework and because it adhered to a precise definition of the term, I did not feel I had to, at any stage, dilute or thin out my ideas and concepts to suit illustrative tradition.

It became increasingly obvious as the research progressed, that everyone has an understanding or definition of what illustration is and what its role should be both within the sphere of the visual arts and as an instrument of communication. There is, I have found, a common perception that illustration should in some way have a public function. Although the research doesn't subscribe unequivocally to this reasoning, neither does it actively dispute it. By not describing the literal detail of the illustrated experiences the practice is not attempting to deflect the viewer's attention or interpretation. The practice instead aimed to develop new, less mediated forms of illustrative communication that facilitated the documentation of what is, in essence, an ephemeral subject. To consider the practice to be 'anti-illustration' because it doesn't declare an explicit connection to its subject matter is therefore misunderstanding the research. It should not be considered anti-illustration in the art-critical context of anti-art because there is no intrinsic disagreement or incongruity with the recognised conventions of illustration. There is no intended deception and the projects are created and presented without irony or cynicism – the recognised currency and idiom of anti-art. The work is, as I have said, fundamentally honest and sincere. To fully engage with the projects the viewer is obliged to first suspend certain established expectations.

The research's conceptual and methodological detachment from certain illustrative conventions meant that on different occasions it was as difficult for me as for the viewer to measure the success of the practice because as ideas, the work often fell outside my developed scope of understanding and experience. The developing practice necessitated

that I construct a new, insular criteria of value and the initial study entitled The Illustration

of Conversational Time and Space established a benchmark to which the following work

could be compared. In this way the success of the work could be defined not by the

connection or association to existing forms of illustrative communication but by success in

relation to my developing aesthetic sense. They were not, to put it plainly, measurable

against traditional illustration, but compared and judged against each other.

It is often difficult for a practitioner of any discipline or craft to measure in simple terms

what he or she has learned through their work or how far it has taken them away from their

training and beyond their original objectives and imaginings. One can relay what new

techniques one has discovered or how one's methodology has evolved, but when asked

how the work has changed one's attitude or perspective it becomes more complex. The

step-by-step assembly and recognition of new ideas and concepts shapes future judgments

and decisions in a multitude of anonymous ways. Sometimes these can be subtle and

delicate while at other times they reveal themselves with ruthless timing. One cannot

predict, I have learnt, where, how or by what one will be influenced, one can only deal

with its effect once it has taken hold.

One measure of the growing distance between the developing practice and my illustrative

background was my mounting reluctance to discuss the work in progress. This hesitation

was not born of self-doubt or due to a lack of confidence in the work or my ability, but

more that I lacked the tools of expression and articulation that would help me to

communicate my ideas with the clarity and urgency that they occurred in my mind. I am

not suggesting by this that my vocabulary was too narrow or restricting, I mean simply that

the work demanded a new and unfamiliar abstract manner and attitude. This proved on

occasion to be uncomfortable because, I believe, I had been trained to communicate both

verbally and through my illustration, in simple, concentrated tones. Concepts and

observations must, I had learnt, be economical, refined and unambiguous. For this reason I

have said the practice operates within an 'intimate territory of its own making'. By this I mean that the work was the product of a unique combination of influences and impulses that determined that the work remain outside conventional boundaries and labels. One could argue that an inherently subjective concept such as experience could have been illustrated in an infinite number of ways and therefore one might ask why the practice manifested itself in precisely the way it did. The answer to this question is clear; the work could not have developed in any other way. It is the unique consequence of my position as a researcher who is trained in illustration.

It was revealed that my aesthetic sense pervaded every aspect of the research's development, from the first tentative diagrammatic studies of conversations to the selection and appropriation of the clay figure in the final project. I was unaware at first of the depth and weight of its influence and, for a period of the research, believed that it was possible to operate in its absence by tapping into the unconscious and recording reflexive responses to experiences using gestural impulse. It was soon revealed however, that in the context of the research, the unconscious was as influenced and as mediated by my aesthetic awareness as my conscious decision making. Moreover, it seemed that my illustrative sensibilities, formed over several years of art school training, combined with my developing understanding to determine not only how I see, but also *what* I see.

This conclusion is of huge significance for the research because it reveals that the whole of the practice, from a note or drawing in the sketchbooks to the conception of the finished pieces, was informed and shaped by my illustrative sensibilities. It is likely that I will never again be able to observe the world around me in the absence of this learnt sensibility or be able to understand something either conceptually or in purely aesthetic terms without first filtering its impression through my informed unconscious.

The later projects aimed, among other things, to test this understanding by attempting to disengage this pervasive aesthetic reasoning from the creative process. It was concluded

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that any attempt to uncouple the influence of the unconscious only revealed a more heightened awareness of it and the resulting conception was found to be a more individual synthesis of learnt subjectivity. For this reason I have concluded that the work has successfully managed to illustrate only what is *real* at the moment of representation - the effects or remaining impressions of an experience.

If in the future it is found to be possible, by somehow disengaging how ones sees, to create an image or object that is entirely free from all forms of mimetic reference both in its construction and in appearance, then the result could only be a dead object or image, devoid entirely of meaning and significance. As a means of illustrating experience, such a conception would be ineffective and worthless. For an illustration of experience to function successfully, both as a medium of expression and as a way of documenting a moment in time, it must embrace and celebrate the personal, subjective way of seeing. Only by representing with honesty and sincerity what one sees and feels, can an illustration of experience have any consequence or value beyond its status as a decorative conception.

This research has explored the idea that it might be possible to illustrate experience. In the course of this research I have set up three rigorous experiments which have taken the learnt capacities of an illustrator to the edge of his professional craft in order to prove that it is possible. In this process, the research has thus demonstrated how difficult it is to even attempt to register experience.

Thorough searches have revealed no other research in this area and this research will therefore be of value to other ambitious researchers / illustrators who wish to go to the edge of their discipline. The work reveals how difficult it is to think outside the discipline parameters and to engage with that which is so readily taken for granted, that is, precisely *what* is being represented.

This thesis, assembled over a three year period of study, charts the development of three independent, yet symbiotic bodies of work which represent three original models of practical, conceptual and methodological enquiry. This research also informs the broader context of illustration by developing and testing new systems and strategies that explore the visual mark as a register of experience.

Appendices

Appendix A

The following is a transcription of the relevant dialogue from Plato's the *Republic*. The first Speaker is Socrates, representing Plato's beliefs, and the respondent is Glaucon. This extract is taken from Plato, *The Republic,* Book X, 595b-598d5, in Jowett, B. (trans) *The Dialogues of Plato,* London: Sphere Books Limited, 1970, pp.388-392.

Speaking in confidence, for you will not denounce me to the tragedians and the rest of the imitative tribe, all poetical imitations are ruinous to the understanding of the hearers, unless as an antidote they possess the knowledge of the true nature of the originals.

Explain the purport of your remark.

Well, I will tell you, although I have always from my earliest youth had an awe and love of Homer which even now makes the words falter on my lips, for he seems to be the great captain and teacher of the whole of that noble tragic company; but a man is not to be reverenced more than the truth, and therefore I will speak out.

Very good, he said.

Listen to me then, or rather answer me.

Put your question.

Can you give me a general definition of imitation? For I really do not myself understand what it professes to be.

A likely thing, then, that to should know.

There would be nothing strange in that, for the duller eye may often see a thing sooner than the keener,

Very true, he said; but in your presence, even if I had any faint notion, I could not muster courage to utter it. Will you inquire yourself?

Well them, shall we begin the inquiry at this point, following our usual method: Whenever a number of individuals have a common name, we assume that there is one corresponding idea or from – do you understand me?

I do.

Let us take, for our present purpose, any instance of such a group; there are beds and tables in the world – many of each, are there not?

Yes.

But there are only two ideas or forms of such furniture – one the idea of the bed, the other of a table.

True.

And the maker of either of them makes a bed or he makes a table for our use, in accordance with the idea – that this our way of speaking in this and similar instances – but no artificer makes the idea itself: how could he?

Impossible.

And there is another artificer, - I should like to know what you say of him.

Who is he?

One who is the maker of all the works of all other workmen.

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What an extraordinary idea!

Wait a little, and there will be more reason for your saying so. For this is the craftsman who is able to make not only furniture of every kind, but all that grows out of the earth, and all living creatures, himself included; and besides these he can make earth and sky and the gods, and all the things which are in heaven or in the realm of Hades under the earth.

He must be a wizard and no mistake.

Oh! You are incredulous, are you? Do you mean that there is no such maker or creator, or that in one sense there might be a maker of all things but in another not? Do you see that there is a way in which you could make them all yourself?

And what way is this? He asked.

An easy way enough; or rather, there are many ways in which the feat might be quickly and easily accomplished, none quicker than that of turning a mirror round and round – you would soon enough make the sun and the heavens, and the earth and yourself, and other animals and plants, and furniture and all the other things of which we were just now speaking, in the mirror.

Yes, he said; but they would be appearance only.

Very Good, I said, you are coming to the point now. And the painter too is, as I conceive, just such another – a creator of appearances, is he not?

Of course.

But then I suppose you will say that what he creates is untrue. And yet there is a sense in which the painter also creates a bed? Is there not?

Yes, he said, but here again, an appearance only.

And what of the maker of the bed? Were you not saying that he too makes, not the idea which according to our view is the real object denoted by the word bed, but only a particular bed?

Yes, I did.

Then if he does not make a real object he cannot make what is, but only some semblance of existence; and if any one were to say that the work of the maker of the bed, or any other workman, has real existence, he could hardly be supposed to be speaking the truth.

Not, at least, he replied, in the view of those who make a business of these discussions.

No wonder, then, that his work too is an indistinct expression of truth.

No wonder.

Suppose now that by the light of the examples just offered we inquire who this imitator is?

If you please.

Well then, here we find three beds: one existing in nature, which is made by God, as I think that we may say – for no one else can be the maker?

No one, I think.

There is another which is the work of the carpenter?

Yes.

And the work of the painter is a third?

Yes.

Beds, then, are of three kinds, and there are three artists who superintend them: God, the maker of the bed, and the painter?

Yes, there are three of them.

God, whether from choice or from necessity, made one bed in nature and one only; two or more such beds neither ever have been nor ever will be made by God.

Why is that?

Because even if He had made but two, a third would still appear behind them of which they both possessed the form, and that would be the real bed and not the two others.

Very true, he said.

God knew this, I suppose, and He desired to be the real maker of a real bed, not a kind of maker of a kind of bed, and therefore He created a bed which is essentially and by nature one only.

So it seems.

Shall we, then, speak of Him as the natural process of creation He is the author of this and of all other things.

And what shall we say of the carpenter – is not he also the maker of a bed?

Yes.

But would you call the painter an artificer and a maker?

Certainly not.

Yet if he is not the maker, what is he in relation to the bed?

I think, he said, that we may fairly designate him as the imitator of that which the others make.

Good, I said; then you call him whose product is the third in the descent from nature, an imitator?

Certainly, he said.

And so if the tragic poet is an imitator, he too is thrice removed from the king and from the truth; and so are all other imitators.

That appears to be so.

Then about the imitator we are agreed. And what about the painter? – Do you think he tries to imitate in each case that which originally exists in nature, or only the creations of artifices?

The latter.

As they are or as they appear? You have still to determine this.

What do you mean?

I mean to ask whether a bed really becomes different when it is seen from different points of view, obliquely or directly or from any other point of view? Or does it simply appear different, without being really so? And the same of all things.

Yes, he said, the difference is only apparent.

Now let me ask you another question: Which is the art of painting designed to be – an imitation of things as they are, or as they appear – of appearance or of reality?

Of appearance, he said.

Then the imitator is a long way off the truth, and can reproduce all things because he lightly touches on a small part of them, and that part an image. For example: A painter will paint a cobbler, carpenter, or any other artisan, though he knows nothing of their arts; and, if he is a good painter, he may deceive children or simple persons when he shows them his picture of a carpenter from a distance, and they will fancy that they are looking at a real carpenter.

Certainly.

And surely, my friend, this is how we should regard all such claims: whenever one informs us that he has found a man who knows all the arts, and all the things else that anybody knows, and every single thing with a higher degree of accuracy than any other man – whoever tells us this, I think that we can only retort that the is a simple creature who seems to have been deceived by some wizard or imitator whom he met, and whom he thought all-knowing, because he himself was unable to analyse the nature of knowledge and ignorance and imitation.

Appendix B

The Blackboard Drawings – A Methodological Account

The Blackboard Drawings – a methodological account, June 2001

Buying the Canvas

When asked how much canvas I needed I was unsure. Admitting I hadn't considered it, I hurriedly decided on an amount based on the span from the fingertip of my left out stretched arm to the tip of my right and then squared. When this amount was measured and cut from the roll I was surprised by its actual size: roughly two metres, the approximate width of the roll itself. I took the cream coloured canvas in both hands and automatically folded it into rough quarters using a similar throwing, dropping, folding and smoothing technique I use to fold sheets and blankets when there isn't anyone around to help.

I held the canvas by two opposite corners about seventy centimetres from my body and about five centimetres from the floor. I then adjusted my arms and held the canvas against the upper part of my chest. Balancing on my left leg, I first pushed my right knee and then my shin into what I now considered the reverse side of the material. This allowed me to inspect the full length of the canvas as it curved around the contours of my chest and outstretched leg. I released my right hand and took the weight of the canvas in my left, allowing the material to rest against my body. I ran the palm of my hand across its surface, smoothing out the larger creases while only momentarily flattening the smaller, more rigid ones. Once the pressure of my hand was released the creases seemed to re-emerge from within the fabric of the canvas. Once again holding the top two opposite corners in either hand, I brought my right hand over and took both corners in my left. Raising my left arm and adjusting my body slightly I compressed, with my thumb and index finger, the edge that had naturally formed a crease. I then took the entire weight of the canvas in my left hand repositioning it from the corner to the top of the fold. Working my way down the remaining crease I pressed the canvas firmly together by tightening and releasing my finger and thumb. After each new compression I allowed my fingers to glide to their next position, pressing the material and warming their tips with the friction it caused. The canvas rocked back and forth at each compression, pivoting where my fingers gripped. After rotating the now folded canvas ninety degrees in a clockwise direction, I repeated the process.

I noticed that two of the canvas's edges had already begun to fray. This was, I presumed, a result of the surprisingly crude method by which it was removed from the roll. To begin with the roll was positioned vertically against a wall. A cut of about ten centimetres was made into its top edge using a pair of scissors. The canvas was then torn in the direction of the cut, its path remaining consistently straight as it followed the course of the

material's weave. At regular intervals it was necessary, to aid accuracy and to concentrate the tearing energy, to remove the hands from their initial grip and reposition them closer to the widening V of the tear. As the split neared the bottom edge, the canvas began to slump away from the body of the roll which had until then supported its weight. This change in canvas's posture required the person doing the tearing to alter their position and step into the space newly created by the torn canvas.

Preparing the Canvas

Having cleared a space, I unfolded the canvas and spread it out on the floor of my bedroom. The edges of the canvas were now so frayed that loose threads became detached at the slightest amount of friction and there were several strands, each about twenty centimetres long, looping the edges of the fabric. Where the canvas had been folded into quarters, there remained three faint indented channels running from the middle of the square's outside edge to its centre. The fourth channel was an inverted version of the other three. I treated this channel as the top of the canvas.

Using a setsquare and pencil I measured a corner square of approximately thirty centimetres. As the pencil crossed its surface, I watched the material gently lift and fall before and behind it as if it were taking fluttering, winded breaths. Although the straightedge held the canvas firmly down, its surface shifted fractionally beneath it, making each pencil line slightly separate and independent from the last. The rough texture of the canvas soon made the tip of the pencil frustratingly blunt.

I was advised it would be necessary to prime the canvas with a mixture of PVA glue and water before it was painted. This would, I was assured, prevent its surface from becoming coarse and uneven when paint was applied. It would also prevent the edges from becoming completely frayed. I used a section of the small square to experiment with possible ratios and thickness of the glue and water. The canvas was not only required to be strong and robust enough to be carried around in my pocket, but also to be light weight and versatile enough not to be considered a burden. The glue and water were mixed together in a plastic bowl using a metal spoon. The glue was poured slowly into the spoon out of a larger plastic container and then dripped into the bowl once it reached the lip of the spoon's measure. The water was added using the same measuring technique. After experimentation, a ratio of one part glue to five parts water was judged sufficient when applied to both sides. Pressing firmly into the fabric of the canvas, the solution was applied using a thick brush. The application of the priming mixture seemed to accentuate the already pungent smell of the canvas and only once had the canvas completely dried

did the intensity of the smell lessen. The solution was first applied to one side and then pegged out to dry on the washing line. The same process was repeated for the reverse side. The application of the solution had not only made the surface of the canvas smoother, but it had also made it more rigid and slightly darker in tone. Two coats of matt black paint were then applied to the surface of the dry canvas, again using the same broad paintbrush.

The first coat was applied along the bottom of the square, working slowly from left to right. Despite the canvas having been primed, the material was still extremely absorbent and a full brush of paint barely covered five centimetres of canvas. The width of each stroke measured approximately four centimetres with each fresh brushstroke surrounded by a haze of thinner, instantly dryer paint. Taking care not to let it brush against my skin or clothes, I once again pegged the canvas onto the washing line to dry. It would be an hour before the canvas could be handled.

Unlike the PVA and water solution, the painting process required special preparation and consideration. The paint had to be applied with my bedroom window fully open. The smell was extremely pungent and remained in the air for hours afterwards.

The Primary Blackboard

The Primary Blackboard was measured and cut into a square, each edge measuring twenty centimetres. Once primed and painted the canvas was one and a half millimetres thick. I folded the square into quarters so it would fit comfortably in the back pocket of my jeans. When drawing on it, it was positioned at the middle of my desk facing my bedroom window. The size of the desk was such that it allowed me to work directly over the canvas giving me complete freedom and control over its surface.

The Chalk

I held the stick of chalk like a pencil. Taking the weight of the chalk in my right hand I manoeuvred it into position using my thumb and second finger. My thumb was then pressed against its left side while my second finger was positioned on its right. My forefinger was then placed on the top roughly three centimetres from the tip. The remaining two fingers were pressed together to form a curve which, depending on the required accuracy or character of the mark, supported the second finger or rested at the base of the thumb. The reverse end of the chalk sat in the fleshy part of my hand that joins the thumb to the palm. Chalk dust began to collect in this area first, highlighting the raised ridges of my skin and accentuating the darker indentations and folds. If my

thumbnail grew too far from my thumb it wore at the side of the chalk creating a hollow O shape. When picking up the same piece of chalk for the second or third time, my thumb naturally searched its surface for this comfortable indentation.

The Knife

Why did I use a knife? I began using the knife to score the Primary Blackboard after the third or fourth print had been made. I had noticed that the chalk dust generated from the previous drawings had come to settle in the countless cuts and scratches that covered the surface of my desk and had created what looked at first glance like detailed schematic diagrams or maps. I experimented making marks on a spare piece of canvas before using it on the Primary Blackboard itself. Although I eventually became comfortable using the knife, I was naturally respectful of its destructive potential and the marks were at first tentative.

The knife used was a surgical scalpel manufactured by Swann Morton. The handle is made of stainless steel and had an area specifically designed for the thumb. It is one hundred and thirty eight millimetres long and three millimetres thick. It weighs thirty grams. If excessive pressure was applied, the blade was liable to break. When this happened, the rear half the blade usually remained wedged in the handle while the front half was propelled dangerously into the air. Although the blade was prone to break at any time, I unconsciously made a note of the vocabulary of marks that encouraged the blade to snap and I executed them with care. The transformation from a straight line into a curve, for example, placed particular stress on the blade's tip.

The front half of the blade became blunt extremely quickly while the rear portion remained comparatively sharp. When working on the Primary Blackboard, I replaced the blade after every eight drawings. On average, it would take between twenty and thirty cuts of about five centimetres before the blade became difficult to use.

Making Marks

Holding the material in position with the fingers of my left hand, I pressed the knife into the canvas and brought the blade slowly towards my body, allowing the displaced paint to form dusty black ridges along the edges of the cut. Once the mark was made or the knife had reached the edge of the canvas, the blade was lifted from the surface and repositioned to begin the action again. The tip of the blade occasionally slid into an existing incision and momentarily followed its previous course. The blade would continue to follow the existing mark until a conscious movement of the hand lifted it from its path.

When this happened, I felt that for a split second the recollection was no longer obedient to the deliberate movement of the knife and its integrity and honesty had become compromised. The canvas's surface was also prematurely weakened as a result of this over-cutting. The same knife was used to cut the clear adhesive plastic.

Plastic Prints

Why did I make prints? I wanted to record or freeze each phase of drawing while still being able to continue to use the canvas. I had used self-adhesive plastic before to lift chalk dust from the palms of peoples' hands in an attempt to record the delicate lines and contours of the skin. In this case, I experimented by sticking the printed plastic onto clear acetate films and also white Perspex, but in the end I decided to use plain white A4 paper principally because its universal size made cataloguing and presentation straightforward. In contrast to the chalky grey blackboard the white paper was, I felt, sterile and ordering and I looked forward to washing the chalk off my hands and pulling a fresh piece of paper out of its clean packaging. I also enjoyed the opportunity to dismiss what I at the time considered an established hierarchy of artistic media. A blackboard, chalk, a knife, emulsion paint and the white A4 printer paper, were I considered primitive tools of creation on the bottom rung of the artistic evolutionary ladder.

The clear self-adhesive plastic used to make the prints is intended to cover books. The plastic was first unrolled over the reverse side of an old black sketchbook. To prevent the roll from suddenly recoiling, I anchored it behind the book's thick binding. The Primary Blackboard was then placed on top of the plastic at the sketchbook's centre. A larger square of twenty-three centimetres was then cut around the canvas using the knife and a metal ruler. Sixteen large squares could be cut from one two metre roll leaving a four centimetre strip of unused plastic on the right hand side and a larger piece measuring sixteen centimetres at the rolls end.

Once the larger square had been measured, the plastic was wound back into a tight roll and placed on the floor beneath the desk. Holding the corner of the plastic square between my left thumb and index finger, I used the tip of my right thumbnail to fold a small amount of the plastic over to form a triangle. Doing this loosened the bond between the layer of plastic and the backing paper. Dragging my thumb back across the triangle separated the two surfaces enough to allow my thumbnail to press away the backing paper and expose the adhesive side of the plastic. Holding the corner of the backing paper in my right hand and the corner of the plastic in my left, I slowly divided the two by spreading my arms apart. The paper was quickly discarded on the floor and the plastic left

suspended between both hands. If at this point, The Primary Blackboard is not lying squarely at the centre of the sketchbook, I used my elbows to manoeuvre it into position. Care was taken to ensure the suspended plastic did not come into contact with my clothes. I then lowered the plastic onto the canvas's surface allowing the near side of the square to make contact with first the sketchbook and then the canvas itself. Once the bottom two thirds of the plastic had been squarely laid over the blackboard, I removed my hands and allowed the final third to fall into position. The plastic was removed and the process repeated if the plastic was not completely aligned with the canvas. Alternating between the tips of my fingers and the palm of my right hand I pressed the plastic firmly into the texture of the canvas. Once again friction warmed the skin of my hands. Small pockets of air were usually formed under the plastic when pressure was applied. The plastic was then compressed into each indentation and line, momentarily altering their appearance by transforming them from a brilliant white (if they were filled with chalk) to a light grey. The plastic was also pressed around the edges of the blackboard enclosing the marks within a dark, shadowy boundary. Finally, a piece of dry toilet paper was used to press out any remaining air pockets and to remove any grease or chalk which has become attached to the plastic's outer surface. The plastic was then lifted from the blackboard in one even movement and reapplied to the surface of a piece of white A4 paper.

The Secondary Blackboards

Although they were intended to be exact replicas of the Primary Blackboard, the Secondary Blackboards are less regular in shape and vary in size from one to the next. I think this is again a result of the movement of the canvas beneath the knife and ruler. Occasionally the ruled lines were so out that I ignored them altogether and attempted to cut a straight line using only rough pencil guides.

The preparation process of the secondary canvas differed slightly from that of the primary canvas. A large piece of MDF was used to cover the floor. The un-primed canvas was unrolled on top. When measuring and cutting the canvas instead of moving around it, I crawled across it. The sound of the pencil moving across the fabric was soon grating and I replaced the hard pencil with a felt tip pen. Once painted, I folded and unfolded the canvas into quarters to replicate the Primary Blackboard's central cross.

Throughout the transposition process, the Secondary Blackboard was nailed to my bedroom wall using small carpet tacks. Visitors to the room often remarked how its grey tone "goes well with the colour of the walls". I agreed.

Although the same knife and chalk were used on both the primary and secondary blackboards, the change in the canvas' position necessitated that I altered the way I used them. In the case of the knife, my hand was placed further back along the handle with my index finger extending the full length of the knife. In this position, it was my wrist that controlled the movement of the knife, not my fingers as before. Likewise for the chalk, my hand was positioned further back along its shaft to allow for looser movement.

An exact circle was practically impossible to achieve using the knife. A circle was therefore necessarily made up of a number of small straight lines. These individual lines are extremely noticeable on the Primary Blackboard but become less defined when transposed onto the surface of the Secondary Blackboard.

The Plastic Laminate Covering

The plastic laminate used to cover the completed Secondary Blackboards is not as clear as the adhesive plastic used to make the prints. Two layers of laminate were placed over each side of the canvas before being heat-sealed together.

Appendix C

The Illustrated Pebbles – A Methodological Account

The Illustrated Pebbles – a methodological account, January 2002

Why did I choose particular pebbles?

I had no strict criteria for choosing the pebbles except for the requirement that they should be no longer than five centimetres – the recognised length of a pebble. I had noticed that pear shaped pebbles seemed to break free of their latex covering more quickly, usually around the pointed end, and I suppose that influenced my choices to some degree. In hindsight, I was perhaps compromising the integrity of the experience by looking for pebbles that might in the end produce more aesthetically pleasing objects, but this only strengthened my conviction that the process was, despite its irregular nature, a creative act. An entry in my diary on 10th January 2002 describes one particular incident that took place while out walking:

> 'When transferring some pebbles from one pocket to another I dropped the plastic bag they were in and they fell onto the beach and scattered. In despair I stared at the floor searching for the lost pebbles. One or two were obvious and easy to find. Others blended back into the masses and vanished. I left those where they had fallen, wondering why I had chosen them in the first place. Later, this event thrilled me because it meant that my original choices were inspired – I hadn't chosen them simply because I liked the way they looked or felt in my hand. Their appeal was, like the moment of their choosing, inextricably connected to a lost instant in time'

Where did the idea come from to mark the pebbles' surfaces?

The idea came after watching pebbles and stones travel slowly down a muddy cliff face in Exmouth. As they lurched downwards, the pebbles gradually became covered in bright red mud. Once they reached the bottom of the cliff they sat conspicuously amongst the other sea-bleached pebbles on the beach. The photographic material on the surface of the pebbles, like the staining red mud, describes a minute fraction of the pebbles history that is neither brutally destructive nor permanent, and in the broader timescale of the pebble's existence is to a great extent insignificant.

Why did I choose latex to cover the pebbles?

I had the idea of using latex whilst on a train to Exmouth one afternoon. Initially I had spent time investigating different air-sensitive chemicals that could be painted onto the pebbles. These would react when they came into contact with the air resulting in the pebble temporarily changing colour. Latex rubber would be used to cover the pebbles and create an airtight, transparent barrier around the stone. These experiments proved fruitless, however, firstly because in each case the chemical reaction could not be arrested once it had begun, and secondly and more significantly, all the chemicals were dangerously corrosive.

I then investigated chemicals that were sensitive to minute changes in light. Now needing the rubber to be opaque, I asked a number of people how I could colour the latex. Their advice was to use acrylic paint, but not to use too much else the rubber will weaken. This solved the problem of how to make the rubber deteriorate and reveal the stone. The idea of using copper powder came when I read a book about latex mask making. The chapter about mask decoration had a warning at the bottom of the page stating 'don't use copper paint when painting your mask as this will rot the rubber'. Copper paint didn't seem to rot the rubber as I expected but copper pigment did. Too much and the rubber became gooey and liquid but just the right amount made the latex brittle.

How were they covered?

Under safelight, the pebbles were manipulated gently into their rubber skins. The latex was then twisted around their forms until its dark red colour became cerise at its tightest points. The covered pebbles were then left to 'germinate'. They usually took a day or so to break out from their rubber skin. It was clear when and where they were about to pop because the latex became transparent and small blisters began to appear. Even the faintest of movements would cause these to spread and the aperture widen.

How was the chemical reaction arrested?

Once their skin had torn and the pebbles had been exposed, they were carried back into the darkroom. The rubber that had remained attached to the stone was removed and the whole pebble was immersed in developer and fix, before being gently washed in warm water. Any remaining unexposed solution was removed using a damp cloth and toothbrush.

Appendix D

The Meaning of Stone

The following piece of writing was produced during the research for the second project with the intention of discovering how stones and particularly pebbles, are understood throughout the World and through the ages. All texts, with the exception of the headings, are taken from existing sources.

Where to find pebbles

For most people collecting pebbles is a family activity, with Dad, Mum, the children and even the family dog joining in.[1] Almost everyone, at some *time or another*, has picked up a pebble on the beach and *wished they could preserve the attractive colour* which it was when wet. Some people *collect rocks from different places as souvenirs of their visits or as geological specimens.*[2] *Detailed knowledge of geology is not essential to* make pebble collecting *worthwhile. Knowing a few simple rules - and what not to collect -* is all that is required.[3]

The rules

Size.

Always collect small pebbles. Look for pebbles between the size of your smallest fingernail and the top joint of your thumb. Beginners usually make the mistake of collecting either all near perfectly round pebbles or only those which look like the work of an adventurous modern sculptor.[4]

Amount.

The temptation to collect too many pebbles is often hard to resist - especially when you are on a stretch of shingle with an abundant supply of colourful material - but you must learn to discipline yourself. Bear in mind the length of time until your next visit to the coast and the problems of storage at home.[5]

Safety.

There is nothing dangerous about pebble collecting.[6]

Searching for stones

Try making your own collection of stones. You could collect stones on holiday. They will help you remember your visit. You may collect pebbles just because they look pretty.[7]

Budleigh Salterton

If we look at a geological map of Devon, it will be seen that from Petit Tor, near Babbacombe Bay, to a little way beyond Sidmouth, the coast exhibits cliffs of the New Red Sandstone formation. These rocks present us with variously modified features. At about a quarter of a mile west of Budleigh Salterton, and for about a mile further on in the same direction, is a bed containing pebbles in large quantities, varying from a small size to that of a man's head. These are known in the neighbourhood as Budleigh pebbles or "popples". [8]The pebbles of this beach have something of a local reputation. Many of them are very beautifully coloured, a malachite blue and amber-like brown being the richest tints. When dry they attract little notice, but moisture at once brings out their latent beauty, and, when held against the sun, some of them appear almost transparent. Good specimens take a high polish, and make handsome brooches and other ornaments. They are plentiful at many spots between Budleigh Salterton and Sidmouth - I have picked up some particularly fine specimens in Ladram Bay. Those at Budleigh Salterton have fallen from a bed in the cliffs. They are quartzite, and, though some are Devonian, many are Silurian.[9]

Budleigh Salterton lies in a small valley cut along a fault line marking the eastern limit of the Pebble Bed outcrop. The beds are well exposed in the cliffs near the promenade. The first exposures reached are marked at the top by a bright yellowish band and a thin layer of blackened pebbles. The blackened pebbles are evidence that wind action followed the deposition of the pebble beds. These black pebbles are dreikanter, wind faceted and polished stones. Good ones have a triangular appearance with three facets on the top. The black colour is only a desert varnish - split open they are ordinary quartzites like the Pebble Beds below.[10]

Pebble beds

Although the Pebble beds are mainly quartzites there are pieces of dark red and grey sandstones. A very small percentage of these sandstones contain fossils. Careful selection of hard pieces with good bedding in them and visible shell fragments is needed but even then the chances of finding *Orthis budleighensis* or *Lingula leseuri* are small. Both fossils are of Ordovician age and the next nearest sites where they can be found now are in Brittany. This seems to prove that the Pebble Beds were deposited by a river flowing into the arid area from the south-west, long before there was an English Channel. A river from Brittany would have needed to be very powerful though and have a good gradient to carry the stones as far as East Devon.[11]

Beaches

That stadium of roaring stones/ The suffering. O they are not dumb things/ Though bleached and worn, when water/ strikes at them. Stones will be the last ones/ they are earth's bones, no easy prey/ for breakers. And they are not broken/ but diminish only, under the pestle/ under protest. They shift through centuries/ grinding their way towards silence.[12]

The size of pebbles

When I was a small boy, before the First World War, my father built an estate of workers' dwellings, and I enjoyed visiting the site. There I watched the workmen using two sieves to sift the gravel to be used for the concrete foundations. One sieve was large meshed the other small. Only the gravel that passed the first sieve but was caught in the second would be used. I still recall vividly the question that sprang up in my mind, a childish question but one which has taken me a lifetime to answer: Stones that are smaller than the mesh pass through, those that are larger are trapped; but where is the stone that is exactly the same size? My first reaction was that no stone exists, because the size of the meshes is determined by human beings, the size of the stone by nature. The lack of stones equal in size to the meshes could be attributed to the essential difference between measures determined by a limited, created intelligence and by an unlimited, creating one. When gravel is sieved, it is not a matter of the size of the stone, but of stones 'of a certain size', a size that we can hold in our mind by determining its limits.[13]

A pebble

A general term for a small, roundish, esp. water worn stone; specif. a rock larger than a granule and smaller than a cobble, having a diameter in the range of 4-64 mm

(1/6 to 2.5 inches or -2 to -6 phi units, or a size between that of a small pea and that of a tennis ball), being somewhat rounded or otherwise modified by abrasion in the course of transport. In Great Britain, the range of 10-50 mm is used. The term has been formerly used to include fragments of cobble size; it is frequently used in the plural as a syn. of gravel.[14]

Pebbles

In the nineteen thirties, where the garden now lies behind our monastery, there used to be a gravel pit. A few metres below ground level lies a thick stratum of gravel, which geologists say is the former bed of the Meuse which now flows past Maastricht. This is why in the paths of our garden one finds beautifully coloured smooth shaped pebbles, varying in size from two to eight centimetres. I cannot resist picking up these unusual stones, and little by little I have built up quite a collection of them, which lies on the windowsill of my workroom. Unconsciously I began to sort these out by size. By rejecting those pebbles whose difference in size was too small to be perceptible, I reduced my collection to a series of thirty-six whose size-difference just began to be noticeable; according to psychologists this difference amounts to about 4% of the size of the stones. It at once became apparent, however, that if the pebbles were spread out at random, they could be seen to belong to clearly different groups. One could start by picking out the largest ones, until a point came when none were left that belonged to that size. A smaller group, again of the same type of size, then revealed itself. In saying that the difference between that largest and the smallest in each group just failed to count in relation to the size of the stones. In this method of sorting, we pay attention, not to the concrete size of each stone, but to the size to which each stone belongs. Although this size is derived from the size of the available stones, it is nonetheless clearly of an intellectual nature.[15]

Self

Stones are a frequent images of the self.[16] Perhaps crystals and stones are especially apt symbols of the Self because of the "just-so-ness" of their nature. Many people cannot refrain from picking up stones of a slightly unusual colour or shape and keeping them, without knowing why they do this. It is as if the stones held a living mystery that fascinates them. Men have collected stones since the beginning of time and have apparently assumed that certain ones were the containers of the life-force with all its mystery. The ancient Germans, for instance, believed that the spirits of the dead continued to live in their tombstones. The custom of placing stones on graves may spring partly from the symbolic idea that something eternal of the dead person remains, which can be most fittingly represented by a stone. For while the human being is as different as possible from a stone, yet man's innermost centre is in a strange and special way akin to it (perhaps because the stone symbolises mere existence at the farthest remove from the emotions, feelings, fantasies and discursive thinking of ego-consciousness). In this sense the stone symbolises what is perhaps the simplest and deepest experience - the experience of something eternal that man can have in those moments when he feels immortal and unalterable.

The urge that we find in practically all civilisations to erect stone monuments to famous men or on the site of important events probably also stems from this symbolic meaning of the stone. The stone that Jacob placed on the spot where he had his famous dream, or certain stones left by simple people on the tombs of local saints or heroes, show the original nature of the human urge to express an otherwise inexpressible experience by the stone-symbol.[17]

Monument

In Pangbourne many people brought stones which will be built into a small stone monument. The commander of the South Atlantic task force in 1982, Admiral Sir Sandy Woodward explained that the "stone from home" project updated an old Celtic custom. He said "all the warriors brought a stone from home and put it in a pile before they went off to their battle. "And then the warriors came back and they would take their stones away, leaving the stones to act as a memorial for those who had fallen."[18]

Alchemical stone

The alchemical stone (the lapis) symbolises something that can never be lost or dissolved, something eternal that some alchemists compared to the mystical experience of God within one's own soul. It usually takes prolonged suffering to burn away all the superfluous psychic elements concealing the stone. Everything separated must be united again in the production of the stone, so that the original state of unity shall be restored. The union of opposites in the stone is possible only when the adept has become One himself. The unity of the stone is the equivalent of individuation, by which man is made one; we would say that the stone is the projection of the unified self.

The fact that this highest and most frequent symbol of the Self is an object of lifeless matter points to yet another field of inquiry and speculation: that is, the still unknown relationship between what we call the unconscious psyche and what we call "matter" - a mystery with which psychosomatic medicine endeavours to grapple.[19]

We know that the lapis is not just a "stone" since it is expressly stated to be composed "de re animali, vegetabili et minerali," and to consist of body, soul and spirit; moreover, it grows from flesh and blood. The philosopher (Hermes in the "Tabula") says: "The wind hath carried it in his belly." The stone is that thing midway between perfect and imperfect bodies, and that which nature herself begins is brought to perfection through her art. The stone, like the grail, is itself the creative vessel, the elixir vitae.[20]

Sacred

Rubbing and polishing stones is a well-known, exceedingly ancient activity of man. In Europe "holy" stones, wrapped in bark and hidden in caves, have been found in many place; as containers of divine powers they were probably kept there by men of the Stone Age. At the present time some of the Australian aborigines believe that their dead ancestors continue to exists in stones as virtuous and divine powers, and that if they rub these stones, the power increases (like charging them with electricity) for the benefit of both the living and the dead.[21]

Paraphernalia

All sorts of landforms, large and small, stand as tangible proofs of the world creating activities of the Dreaming beings. They and the paraphernalia associated with the religious life are alike because both are physical referents - the one fixed, the other portable - of spiritual presence, power, and potential. A timeless quality is accorded the multitude of the landscape features, but they are not lifeless, being imbued with spiritual significance by myths, songs, and the fact that human and animal life alike spring from the limitless qualities of life-essence that lie scatters throughout the land.[22]

The most sacred and dangerous objects are stones, varying in size and shape, some naturally formed and others obviously at one time shaped and smoothed and perhaps incised with designs. These stones are revered as metamorphosed parts of the bodies of ancestral beings or as objects owned and carried by them. Such collectively owned objects are replete with power and thus kept well hidden. Although most of them play no prominent role in collective ritual performances, they are often displayed, to be gazed at, stroked, rubbed against the body, and talked about by those initiated men senior enough to be exposed to them. Certain of them may be passed from group to group, together with an account of their origin and totemic association, perhaps in company with a ritual that centres on the being (s) from which they derive. As gifts, they symbolise the ultimate in generosity and help ensure the continuance of close and harmonious inter group relationships since the recipients must eventually make a reciprocal gift of objects of similar significance.[23] Some Hindus pass from father to son stones believed to have magical powers.[24]

Every initiated male has his personal paraphernalia, kept carefully wrapped in a small bark, fur, or hair-twine bundle that usually accompanies its owner on his yearly round of movement. They may be objects useful for magic, such as polished stones and possibly love-magic charms. The number and variety of such items differ from individual to individual, and those having specific ritual use may be left hidden at a particular spot and retrieved only when they are likely to be needed. Women, too, possess personal objects having similar significance, some of which may be kept hidden from men and children.

Since men frequently discover new items and receive others through exchange, one of their favourite activities whenever other bands are encountered is to display, contemplate, and talk about the objects that each possess.[25]

'In the old days,' she explained to a grandchild bred in England/ 'in the old days in Persia, it was the custom to have a stone/ a stone of your own to talk to, to tell your troubles to/ a stone we called as they now call me, a stone of patience.'[26]

Intelligent pebble?

British scientists claim to have created what they believe is the world's first intelligent pebble. The smart stone has been developed to help researchers understand more precisely the processes which can lead to coastal erosion or river flooding. One of the big obstacles to studying sediment transport is obtaining reliable measurements of precisely how individual particles are moved during flood or tide. To tackle the problem the researchers have developed an artificial pebble, the same size, shape and density of its natural counterpart. The pebble is made of a tough resin and contains a tiny microchip. A grid of wires will be dug into the ground at the location being studied - a riverbed or beach. Smart pebbles will then be placed in the water and electronic signals sent down the wires sequentially. "Each wire has a prescribed time for its signal, which can be detected by the receiver in the pebble," says Dr Sear. " The time at which the signal is received will be recorded by the pebble's microchip, so we will know which wire it came from. The strength of the signal varies depending on the distance from the wire, so with a two-dimensional grid of wires we should be able to pin-point the position of the pebble.[27]

Discovery

The discovery of sacred objects is not hailed as an individual accomplishment, since it too is revealed or hinted at through signs that prompt an individual to respond. Men

tell of encountering spirit-beings during dreams, who tell them to go and look in some spot where they will find something important left by Dreaming beings. Again, the resulting revelation of this find to other initiated men, with a description of where and under what circumstances it was found, transfers the matter from an individual to a collective context. There, consensus is sought, and the "true" religious meaning of the find is assessed on the basis of available mythological knowledge of the discovery's location and the characteristics of the object - shape, size, colour, and so forth.[28]

Finding

There went three children down to the shore/ down to the shore and back/ there was skipping Susan and bright-eyed Sam/ and little scowling Jack/ Susan found a white cockle-shell/ the prettiest ever seen/ and Sam picked up a piece of glass/ rounded and smooth and green/ but Jack found only a plain black pebble/ that lay by the rolling sea/ and that was all that ever he found/ so back they went all three/ The cockle-shell they put on the table/ the green glass on the shelf/ but the little black pebble that Jack had found/ he kept it for himself.[29]

Meaning

Picking up pebbles predicts a period of lonely depression due to a lost friend or broken relationship, but try not to mope, the forging of new links will soon fill the void. Tossing pebbles in a dream is a warning that indiscriminate gossip could make wider waves than you suspect, so restrain your chin-wagging, or be prepared to side-step the boomerang. Sitting or walking on pebbles signifies that you will have an unexpected chance to repay (in kind) someone who took unfair advantage of you; before you react, remember that while revenge may give you a sweet moment of satisfaction, forbearance carries the seeds of lasting self-respect.[30]

Amulets

Certain objects found in graves of the early Anglo-Saxons were credited by them with magical powers.[31] Curing stones were kept and used by a cunning man or woman in a curing ritual: for example, dipping it into water which is then given to the patient to drink. Those who believe strongly in the powers of their own amulet might well wish to keep it for themselves, but be quite agreeable to sharing its merits with a friend, or for a price. Or, if a stubborn malady were to be combated, more than one method of tapping the power of the 'stone' might be tried. Unlike a medicine, a curing stone is not consumed; and presumably its virtues are believed to be self renewing.

Although presumably not in itself instinctive, the employment of amulets seems to be based upon, fostered and perpetuated, by reason of certain deep-seated human instincts, that were mankind by some sudden stroke deprived both of all amulets and of all memory of their former existence.[32] In Scotland nineteen small rounded beach pebbles (painted with simple but carefully executed, often curvilinear, designs in a dye which is now dark brown in colour) have been found on Pictish settlement sites in the northern islands and in Caithness. With two somewhat earlier exceptions, they are to be dated to between A.D. 200 and 800. They are believed to have been 'charm stones.'

All this appears to establish that quartz pebbles had a magico-religious significance for the early inhabitants of the British Isles.

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Magic

There is a great deal of evidence that transparent crystalline quartz and translucent milky quartz were regarded as possessing magic qualities; unfortunately, it is often vague and inconclusive. Rock-crystals have been regarded until recently as thunderstones, which are supposed to have fallen to earth in a storm, in Sweden, Carinthia, Portugal and Switzerland. Presumably they were carried or worn for protection, since it was believed in folklore that lightning never struck in the same place twice.[33]

Witchcraft

Naturally holed stones were hung in stables, cow-sheds and houses to repel witches, and were believed to protect horses and cattle from being ridden at night to the sabbats, after which they were found sweating and weary in their stables next morning. The use of a holed stones, hung by the manger to prevent a horse from being hag-ridden, is mentioned in John Aubrey's *Miscellanies,* first published in 1696.[34]

Evil eyes

In Scotland similar beliefs attached themselves to natural pebbles selected for their aesthetic shape and colouration. Water into which such a pebble had been dipped was believed to have healing powers when given to sick cattle to drink; the pebble acted as an omen as well, for if it dried quickly the animal would recover swiftly, and if it dried slowly the animal would make only a slow recovery. One such stone preserved in the national Museum of Antiquities of Scotland belonged to a farmer in Angus in the 1870s; it is an oval light brown pebble, 42 by 63 mm, which the farmer kept in a small leather bag suspended round his neck.

Barren

To cure sterility, in Shetland in the nineteenth century, a woman washed her feet in running water in which an egg-shaped pebble was placed. A similar stone was placed over the lintel of a byre door in Perthshire to protect cattle from disease.[35]

Biblical

He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes, I will give some of the hidden manna. I will also give him a white stone with a new name written on it, known only to him who receives it. The 'white stone' represents psephos 'a pebble' and that the reference which has been variously interpreted, is best explained as 'an amulet ... engraved with a name; a relic of the mystery cults which became transformed into a Christian symbol.'[36] Certainly 'white stones' appear to have maintained their magic qualities among Christians, and one example of this is the 'Curing Stone of St Columba.' This was a white pebble which the saint took to the River Ness, and which could float on water. After which it was kept among the king's treasures, and water in which it was miraculously suspended effected many cures. But when the patients time to die had come, the stone could never be found, and so was never put to the supreme test.

The virtues of the 'white stone' were that it protected against a switch, flying

venom and all strange diseases; that, scraped into water with red earth, it was good to drink against all unknown things; that fire struck from it was good against lightning, thunder and delusion of any kind; and that if a man were lost, a spark struck in front of him would put him right immediately.[37]

Piles

The deliberate emplacement of stones clearly took a variety of forms and presumably meanings. One can suggest that the different emplacements may have held certain significance imbuing the act with a particular meaning. Why place a single slingstone under a sherd of pottery? Could the stones be imbued with the identity of other objects - occasionally stones have been noted to have a distinct resemblance to a head or skull.[38]

On the table/ under the lamp/ are three pebbles/ I brought from Dieppe/ often I eat/ drink coffee or talk/ they interrupt/ the trains of my thought/ One is green coloured/ long and thick/ and it lunges on the cloth/ like a fish/ The second is brown/ and open with a tongue/ when I first saw it/ I thought of a muzzle/ The third is oval/ dark grey in a net of white/ regular and haphazard/ it reminds me of nothing/ When the stones interrupt/ I put out my hand/ to touch/ what I find in them/ I adjust the fish/ so that I can see/ its eye/ and the thrust of its tail/ I place/ my little finger/ between the jaws/ of the brown animal/ the third pebble I pick up/ hold deliberately/ and place back on the table/ so that/ it looks to me like itself.[39]

Sling

The sling is one of the oldest and most widely distributed weapons, and its construction and use are practically the same everywhere. It is merely a strip of some flexible material with a pocket at or near the middle. The object to be thrown is placed in the pocket and the ends taken in the hand, one being wrapped securely around it, and the other held loosely. The sling is whirled round the head and, when it has acquired sufficient momentum, the loose end is released and the missile flies forward. It is still a common weapon in many savage countries and numerous travellers have testified to its accuracy. "I have seen a native (of New Britain) knock a bird off a tree at about a hundred yards distance; they seldom pitch a stone further from the object aimed at than three or four yards."[40]

War

'The Celts', said the Greek geographer Strabo, 'were war mad, high spirited and quick to battle but otherwise straightforward and not of evil character.' Our hill forts are, to a large extent, the archaeological manifestation of this statement. When attacking a hill fort, the Gauls and the Belgae use the same method of attack. They surround the whole circuit of the walls with large number of men and shower it with stones from all sides, so that the defences are denuded of men. Then they form *testudo*, set fire to the gates and undermine the walls.[41] A flanking earthwork formed at the entrance to the hill fort. This was an excellent position for a party of slingers to occupy in any attack because no part of the entrance was more than 60m (200 ft) away, and 60m is the approximate range within which a competent slinger could expect to pick off a victim with ease. Enemies attacking the entrance had first to get through the hail of fire from the top of the outer hornworks and then batter their way through the outer gate.[42]

The most widely used missiles were sling stones - round water worn pebbles 2-3 cm (1 in) across. They were collected in great numbers from pebbles beds, and stored in conveniently sited ammunition dumps usually close to the ramparts and gates. One pit, near the east gate, produced 11,000 and very considerable quantities were found all along the entrance passage where they had either fallen from the dumps on the hornworks or had been hurled by the defenders. Various techniques could be used to dispatch the stones: a swing in a vertical plane, overarm, was best suited to lobbing missiles high in the air so that they rained down on opponents. A continuous volley of this kind put up by massed slingers would have been devastating to an approaching army, but for closer fighting one or two circuits in a horizontal plane over the head would have been sufficient to send the stone level and fast direct to the target. The problem with this method was that the timing of the release of one arm of the sling: it was crucial, otherwise the stone would fly in totally the wrong direction; but with practice deadly accuracy could be attained.[43]

Game

It had previously been suggested that small slingshots may have been used for hunting birds or small game, whilst larger ones were used in warfare. However, if the larger slingshots are compared with flint pebbles, generally interoperated as slingstones a considerable difference in size and weight found, the slingstones weighing between 50 and 250 gm with a high proportion averaging 150 gm. This suggests the stones were more likely used in warfare, whilst clay slingshots were used for hunting game.[44]

Weapon

Beginning in December 1987, the "children of the stones," the younger generation of Palestinians raised under occupation, brought the struggle to a new level in the Intifadar, the uprising. The very stones so steeped in history for the Israelis were carefully gathered and cached as weapons of resistance. The struggle over stones is part of a wider rhetorical battle about the meaning of land, home, and place.[45]

Suha Sanduqa, a school student from Jerusalem. Age 14 when arrested on the 16 June 1989. Taken to the Qishlah police station in Jerusalem, released later that day. Charged with insulting a policeman. Given a five months' suspended prison sentence and a suspended fine of NIS 500. Arrested again on 26 February 1990, now aged 15. Taken to the Russian Compound. Interrogated for one day. Did not confess. Charged with throwing a stone at a bus. Sentenced to eight months' imprisonment.[46]

Home

Palestinian poet Mahmud Darwish reflected on the meaning of home in a book of essays published in the early 1970s, shortly after he left Israel for a life in exile. In one passage, he addressed the following words to Israelis:

The true homeland is not that which is known or proved. The land which emerges as if from a chemical equation or an institute of theory is not a homeland. Your insistent need to demonstrate the history of stones and your ability to invent proofs does not give you prior membership over him who knows the time of the rain from the smell of the stone. That stone for you is an intellectual effort. For its owner it is a roof and walls.

For Darwish, the encounter between Palestinian and Israeli perceptions of

homeland cuts to the core of what he calls "a struggle between two memories." The significance of stones weaves through this struggle. For Zionists, the history of the Land of Israel was written in its stones, and archaeology became not just a national passion but a means to construct a link between contemporary Jews and an ancient tribal territory, in order to rebuild Jewish identity as Israeli identity. For Darwish, stones encompass the very substance of Palestinian life, the roof and walls which form an unspoken, existential bond between people and place. The Israelis reduced the roof and walls of Darwish's childhood home to rubble and refused to let its inhabitants return to their former lands.[47]

Stoning

Palestine being a very rocky country, the abundance of stones made it natural to use them as missiles. If you want to throw a stone, every lane will furnish one.[48] Stone throwing might be merely a mark of hatred and contempt, or a means of carrying out murderous intentions against which provision had to be made in the Law. Stoning to death which was at first an expression of popular fury analogous to "lynching", later came a natural and legally recognised method of execution. It was regulated by law as an appointed means of capital punishment. Death by stoning is prescribed in the Pentateuch as the penalty for eighteen different crimes including Sabbath breaking, but for the one crime only - murder - is it the penalty prescribed in all the codes. The execution of the criminal usually took place outside the city walls.[49]

Punishment within the community directly expressed the wrath of one 'who will by no means clear the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children.' It was executed, on those occasions when the earth did not actually open and swallow the offender up, as an act of worship in which the whole congregation brought him outside the camp and 'stoned him with stones.'

In such a context it was natural that the penalty should be used more widely that for the crime of murder alone.[50]

Bring forth the blasphemer without the campe, and let al that heard him, put their handes upon his head, and let al the people stone him. And to the children of Israel thou shalt speake: and he that blasphemeth the name of the Lord, dying let him dye: al the multitude of the people shal stone him, whether he be a natural, or stranger. He that blasphemeth the name of the Lord, dying let him dye.[51]

Stoned

A Nigerian woman stands accused of adultery and could be sentenced to death by stoning unless a Sharia court grants a decree of clemency. The story of Safiya has touched the world. 35 years old, illiterate, the mother of five children, she was forced into an arranged marriage at the age of 12. Her crime was to have a daughter by her ex-husband after they were divorced. The penalty, death by stoning.

Safiya Hussaini Tungar-Tudu was sentenced to death by stoning by a Sharia (Islamic Law) court in October, 1991, for adultery. The Sharia was reintroduced in 2000 in the northern state of Sokoto and it is vigorously imposed in eleven other states in northern Nigeria. Along with castration, flagellation and multination for other crimes, stoning to death is still practised on women who have committed adultery.[52]

The condemned are wrapped head to foot in white shrouds and buried up to their waists. Then the stoning begins. The stones are specifically chosen so they are large enough to cause pain, but not so large as to kill the condemned immediately. They are guaranteed a slow, torturous death. Sometimes their children are forced to watch.[53]

God

We know that El, the God of Israel, was a stone pillar, which Jacob erected and made into a living, hearing god by pouring oil upon it.[54]

Satan

Hundreds of thousands of Muslim pilgrims from around the world have carried out the symbolic 'Stoning of Satan' ritual in western Saudi Arabia, before heading home from their annual Hajj pilgrimage. Crying "God is Greatest," the pilgrims stoned three pillars representing the devil.[55]

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Appendix E

An illustration indicating the varying scales of three projects

1   Blackboard Drawings   Drawing indicating

2   Illustrated Pebbles   **S c a l e** of work

3. Illustrated figures
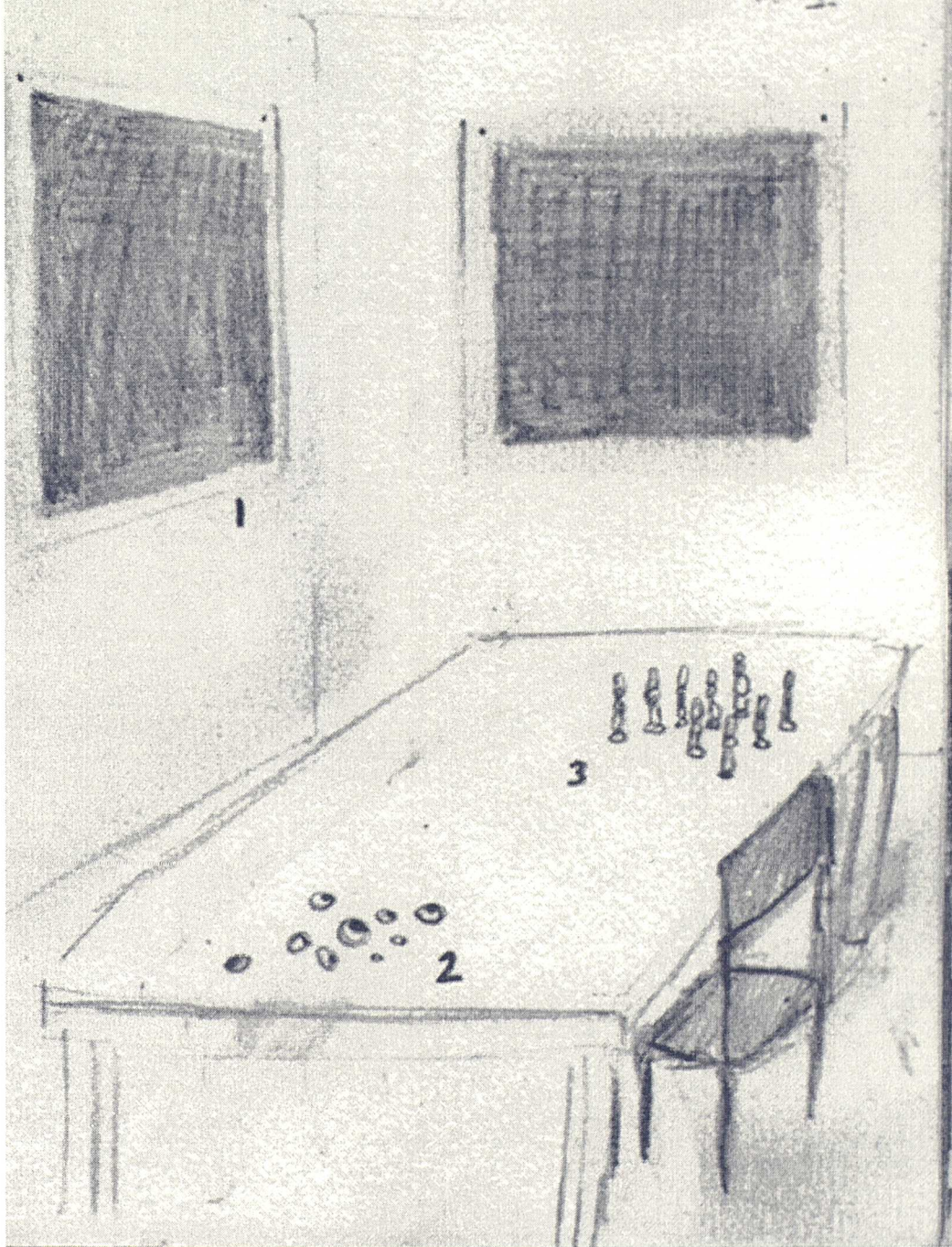
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