

Drawing

I remember attending a month-long drawing workshop in Como, Italy in the early 90s and that the most frustrating dilemma facing the participating group of international artists, curators and theorists related to drawing's methodological inclusiveness or otherwise: that is, what constitutes a drawing. I recall discussion regarding a group of grisaille oil on paper works made by Andrea Mantegna. A London gallery featuring only the paintings of this artist claimed these works as paintings, while a New York gallery, simultaneously featuring only the artist's drawings, claimed these same works as drawings. This discussion exemplifies the ambiguous, slippery ground that enables drawing practices to flourish and be revitalised. Certainly, such discussions are passé in 2009. Drawing now claims artistic procedures that years ago would have been deemed outside its scope.

Although most artists draw in the initial stages of creating pictorial images, not all works can be claimed as drawings. I maintain that I am involved in drawing in the initial stages of creating an image, be it on canvas or on paper. I don't work from prepared sketches. The creative impulse is enacted directly on whatever surface I choose. I have a physical aversion to charcoal; it irritates my skin. I can't stand the feel of chalk, or anything chalky, on my hands. I prefer the flow of aqueous mediums: on paper, my preferred ground for drawing, this is either ink, watercolour or acrylic paint. A brush loaded with pigment gliding along a surface suits my expressive means more than the stop start and drag of grit on toothy surfaces. I have recently expanded my materials to include powdered pigments applied with cloth or brush and leaves of gold adhered to a sticky surface. The works completed on paper I regard as drawings, those on canvas I refer to as paintings.

For me, drawing is a way of determining and experimenting with structural ideas concerned with creating spatial ambiguity and accentuating the idiosyncrasies and indeterminable nature of colour relationships.

When painting I usually draw directly on canvas using masking tape. The preparatory work is done on the canvas itself. From this structural component the oil painting evolves. The original drawing is, however, subsumed within the painting. This close relationship between drawing and painting is intrinsic to my arts practice.

Works on paper evolve in the same manner but, unlike my paintings which undergo a multitude of minor colour and compositional adjustments, these works on paper remain unaltered and often the exposed paper itself remains an integral pictorial component of the work. My drawings just are: the initial impulse is either satisfying or deemed a failure. The latter are discarded the former survive.

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