

Words on Drawing



I've started to identify the drawings as being a part of the whole process of making and they have taken on a developing role for me. I began making line drawings about three years ago and started because I had time in between waiting for paint layers to dry. Also, I wanted to immerse myself in the landscape close to my studio space, and this seemed like a natural step.

I begin by making drawings of what's outside, sometimes, I'm looking out of the window, sometimes I'm out in the landscape. For example, I might pick up on the patterns that appear on top of the water's surface. I enjoy making quite crude marks with pencil or pen on paper.

Taking these initial marks, I introduce some additional lines, forms and shapes. Much the same as with my paintings, I have an idea of what the character and direction of line is, and what I'm trying to represent from what I've seen. Then I select what to rub out, replace or slightly amend. I might go over the same line many times, which I also do in my paintings. There is a process of seeing, recording, refining, going back in, refining once more, and then completing.

But I'm also interested in the essence of something done very quickly, and this build-up is the way to achieve what I set out to perfect. The final gesture, the one on top, is resolved through the process and I'm interested in how I get to this point. What is the importance of gesture? How do I go about creating something that conveys a freshness? I'm after the moment when something looks really easy, simplified and care-free. Using pencil on paper gives me the flexibility to create lots of works and then make a decision about what I keep and what I throw away.

In my paintings, this final gesture is one that is rehearsed. It can be difficult to control the gesture in paint, whereas in the drawings it seems much easier. Some of the drawings represent the final gesture or action that is found in a painting – they are just simple lines or a rhythm of lines on paper.

Sometimes I will refer back to a painting in a drawing, so there's this comfortable play between the two practices. There can be a reference point in a specific drawing that I choose to return to again and again, until I feel that I have finally resolved all the possibilities for that formation. There can also be a more direct connection between the drawings and the paintings. For example, if there are paintings on the studio wall, I might respond to these in a quick drawing because they happen to find their 'way in' on that particular day. I might combine some of the curved lines that I see outside in the landscape with the curved lines I see in my painting. What's uncovered here can help me expand the drawing. There is a natural affinity between the two.

The 'reveal and conceal' aspect in my work is an important part of the process too. I always have an idea of what I want the painting to be like and I go through a method of layering up the canvas, taking away paint, and then layering it back on once again. I have an element of that within my drawing too.

When I start out, I have many soft pencil lines on a piece of paper and I work over these faintly drawn layers with a 2B pencil. I start to sketch out forms and lines and explore the possibilities. Then I might look out the window, or go outside and add some additional forms to that piece of work. I pick up on shapes within the drawing itself and sketch these in. I connect a hint of this and a trace of that and connect them together. I decide whether I reveal a particular form, add some foliage, supplementary lines to create a curve, or a continuous loop, or I see a shape that wants to float on top and I could add a solid line, or create an edge. I also rub away parts of the drawing to make way for a new composition.



Sometimes it's something like seeing a face in an inanimate object – I give significance to some aspects but not others because I don't see a pattern or it just isn't important when thinking of the whole composition. I'm looking for a form that I haven't seen before, an arrangement that comes about through the creative process. Something that I haven't recorded up to now. So, I ask does this exist anywhere else? It probably does exist somewhere else but whilst I'm drawing, it's my singular creation.

Chance is significant as it's what I pick up on, what I am feeling and experiencing on that day, and how I choose to respond to what I observe. My primitive doodles are recording brief observations. Initially, I don't really think too much about how they present themselves on the piece of paper. I might be loosely sketching all over the paper and then see what can I make of this. It may be the case that it doesn't go anywhere on that day. Linked to chance is the discovery, and finding out where I go next or what I can take from what I have recorded in a drawing. The state of unknowing might feel unreliable but it's not, because I remind myself that it's just pencils on paper and I can recycle the pieces that don't work out.

The curved line / gestural brush mark is definitely a characteristic that connects both my drawings and paintings. I am looking at how the lines can come together to fill the space; curved lines exiting the edge and then coming back in again. What is their destination? Where do they arrive? I would also say that the process of refinement and distilling down has an equal unifying function. I think of them all as gestures or actions that act upon each other.

Holding the drawings together are the many lines that exist in the under-drawing, providing an energy that runs through them. These lines are always present in every drawing so this could be an equivalent trait or uniting feature for the drawings. The drawing process, the painting process, they keep me in the moment – I think they are from the same family now. Through my process, things are developing and shifting together; it's part of my thinking and something happening through me and linking to my visual experiences.

It's about having a visual syntax; putting together an arrangement of lines, curves, shapes, to create something that has a new presence. Because I'd gone through a few changes in my practice, it was important to me when I moved into a new studio that I devised a methodology for working that I could sustain for a long period of time. I wanted to develop a mode of making that had a creative connectedness not only with the environment around me, but also how I emotionally respond to this. As a result, some works can be pictorial equivalents for an emotional state.

My mindset is just very disciplined and committed to being immersed in the space that I'm in and wanting to continue to do what I do. The process is pretty structured so I always have a plan; taking a drawing on one step further, developing a painting with an additional layer. It is without ends, but I can see how things are progressing.

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