DRAWING ATTENTION TO DRAWING
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Introduction

Artists and designers draw to help them grasp hold of an idea and give it some kind of form in order to work on it. They draw to organise thoughts, to explore a hypothesis, to consider alternatives and shape up possibilities. Drawing allows them to experiment, to develop, refine, test out and modify their thinking, to solve problems and visualise possible outcomes. It enables them to communicate with others.

Students in schools use drawing for similar purposes. TEA (drawing as thinking, expression and action) was one of a number of professional development programmes initiated by The Campaign for Drawing to focus on the role of drawing in general education. It resulted in Eileen Adams creating a collection of online resources based on case studies prepared by art and design teachers to illuminate ways in which students in secondary schools used drawing. < http://t2.nadfas.net/ > the resources explain how drawing can help shape the process of learning as well as result from it. It is not only possible to learn to draw: we can also draw to learn. This paper explores the purposes of drawing, and identifies some issues that emerged in the TEA programme about the use of drawing in schools.

Purposes of drawing

John Ruskin thought that drawing could teach us to see: to notice rather than merely to look. He emphasised connections between drawing, looking, understanding and thinking.

> *To be taught to read-what is the use of that, if you know not whether what you read is false or true? To be taught to write or to speak-but what is the use of speaking, if you have nothing to say? To be taught to think-nay, what is the use of being able to think, if you have nothing to think of? But to be taught to see is to gain word and thought at once, and both true.* (Ruskin).

Words and numbers codify information. They enable us to shape ideas and communicate thoughts. Drawing uses visual codes and conventions to do the same things, a '…*process that, in common with writing and mathematics and other forms of notation, is driven by a need to both construct and reconstruct multi-dimensional events as readable two-dimensional matter'* (Farthing in Kantrowtz et al, 2011). Just like words and numbers, drawing makes thought

visible, accessible and capable of manipulation. In essence, drawing makes you think! Different kinds of drawing develop our capacity for different kinds of thinking. It can be used to generate ideas; it can help us externalize and manipulate ideas to clarify, order, develop and refine thinking; it can enable us to put ideas into effect. Drawing embodies personal expression, cultural understanding and creative responses to our world. It is about experience, ideas and making: making sense, making meaning, making things and making things happen.

> *Drawing (and painting) provides a means to reflect, analyse, interpret and translate information, facilitating new insights and understanding in a range of ways. It informs the creation of meaningful interfaces between the professional worlds and the educational environments*. (Taylor, in Elms, 2013).

To understand drawing, whether in professional practice in art and design, or as a medium for learning in schools, it is more helpful to ask what is the drawing *for*, rather than what is the drawing *of*? It may be for the benefit of the drawer, to understand something; to facilitate interaction or collaboration with others, or for communication designed specifically for a viewer. Just as different kinds of speaking and writing serve different purposes, drawings need to be understood not only as ends in themselves, but as perceptual, conceptual and expressive tools, an aid to understanding, thinking, communicating, inventing and taking action.

Drawing as *perception* is that which assists the ordering of sensations, feelings, ideas and thoughts. The drawing is done primarily for the need, pleasure, interest or benefit of the person doing the drawing. It might enable them to develop observation and interpretative skills to investigate and understand the world.

Drawing as *communication* is that which assists the process of making ideas, thoughts and feelings available to others. Here, the intention is to communicate sensations, feelings or ideas to someone else. It is likely that certain codes or conventions will be used so that the viewer will be helped to understand what is being communicated. It might be for an unknown audience. It might be to support group interaction, discussion or other learning activity. The key thing is that the viewer needs to understand the codes or conventions that are being used.

Drawing as *invention* is that which assists the creative manipulation and development of thought. This is where you cannot think the thought until it is made visible and accessible, capable of change and manipulation. Ideas are at an embryonic stage, unformed or only partly formed at the beginning of the process of drawing. Ideas take shape when the drawer experiences ‘reflexive oscillation’ between impulse, ideas and mark, receiving feedback from the marks appearing on the page, which prompt further thought and mark-making. (Witkin, 1974). Usually the drawing is one of a series, where ideas are explored, repeated, refined, practised, worked over, discarded, combined, where alternatives are sought and alternative possibilities explored.

Drawing as *action* is that which helps to put ideas into effect. These drawings form a bridge between the realm of the imagination and implementation.

Drawing for design can be the conceptual sketch or it can be a detailed specification. It is only at this late stage that technical drawing needs to kick in, when the drawer has to understand how to construct the environment or how to manufacture the product, and perhaps convey that information to someone else – here, accurate measurement and clarity of presentation are important. The intention is not just to focus on the content of ideas and proposals, but also to put them to the test and see how to put them into effect – plans, patterns and templates, for example.

Drawing in schools

Although it has particular significance in art, craft and design education, drawing has wider relevance (Petherbridge, 2010). Drawing in schools needs to be seen less as a practical skill and more as a learning strategy that can be used across the curriculum. It offers ways of knowing, thinking and doing that link cognitive, affective and practical modes of study: not only does it nurture intellectual curiosity and visual intelligence, but it also contributes to emotional intelligence.

> *From architecture to zoology and from heart surgery to structural engineering, the doodle, diagram, map, sketch, outline, draft, 3D model and intricate rendering, all contribute to a long and complex process combining the eye, the mind, the imagination and the hand.* (Phipps, 2006).

Just as English teachers take the lead in developing verbal literacy across the curriculum, there is a case for art and design teachers to promote drawing as a means of learning. However, a number of issues have emerged in the *TEA* programme, which reveal some of the difficulties teachers face in attempting this.

Model

Drawing in schools continues to be seen primarily as an art activity. Students in schools are continually encouraged to study the work of artists as stimulus for their own work, to model their work on artists and to see themselves as artists. Copying artworks has been a technique through which apprentices have learned their trade for hundreds of years. In general education, students may rely too heavily on appearance, style and technique and the manipulation of expressive media, but not necessarily understand how the artist thinks. They may emphasise expressive qualities and emotional content, while neglecting other ways of drawing. They may fail to bring into play interpretation skills, and lack understanding of what the artist is trying to communicate, so that their efforts result in pastiche.

> *All means of generating drawing are valid, as long as the conceptual and philosophical meanings are understood – what is important is that the notion of drawing is never purely technical.* (Thomas and Taylor, 2003).

Students and teachers see drawing as a means of self-expression. However being so reliant on artists' work as inspiration for their own, there is the danger that students' voices might not be given expression. Projects are generally in response to a theme that teachers have identified and ways of working teachers have selected. The dominance of the artist as a model for art and design education means that the relevance of drawing in other curriculum areas is neglected.

Modelling

Perhaps a change in emphasis from the artist as *model* to drawing as *modelling* would help refocus attention on drawing's usefulness across the curriculum. Central to drawing is the idea of modelling, symbolic representation using visual, spatial, kinaesthetic and haptic modes of study.

> *The term 'model' is commonly used by scientists, mathematicians, technologists and designers to mean: something that stands for something else. In general, models are powerful because they isolate aspects of reality and allow us to represent, interpret, manipulate or control it. Models have predictive power because, to use computing language, they can be 'run' (played with) to simulate what will happen if proposed changes are carried out. They are indispensable for design activity because they allow designers to develop their designs and understand their likely effect before they are put into practice*. (Baynes, 2013).

Key activities in drawing here are translation, formation, transformation, adaptation and invention, when drawing links the inner world of memory and imagination with the outer world of lived experience and objects: it enables us to respond to what exists and allows us to think about what might be. Drawing makes use of previous knowledge and current experience, but can also anticipate change, alternative or future possibilities. However, teachers report that they do not spend enough time using drawing to nurture students' powers of imagination and invention.

> *I have been mindful of the impact of drawing. I have used it as a playful tool, an imaginative introduction, an artist response and a design tool. I have seen through this drawing, designing and making process that each of these elements has equal weighting. In the past I may have bypassed the importance of drawing to spend more time making. However I now realise that this element is in fact the thinking time. It is the opportunity for students to develop ideas and to use their imagination and new contextual knowledge, something that cannot be rushed.* (Mizon, 2013).

Visualisation and ideation

Drawing in schools is still primarily viewed as image-making, and valued by both teachers and students as a technical skill. In many instances, the teacher has worked out not only the direction of study, but also what the result should look like. A current challenge in art and design education for teachers and students is to work with uncertainty and ambiguity, and the notion of unexpected outcomes (Cruise et al, 2013).

> *The most exciting outcomes came from unexpected directions and from activities I had not planned. I found that it is very important to allow this to happen and encourage individual responses.*
> (Raymond, 2013).

Teachers acknowledge that they find it difficult to teach students how to develop their capacity for imaginative and inventive thought, to hypothesise and speculate, to visualise alternative possibilities. This is the situation that confronted Marion Richardson nearly 100 years ago, which prompted her to develop her teaching on a different basis from that of producing a likeness of something, and to place greater emphasis on 'seeing in the mind's eye' to develop her students' 'inner vision', pictures that were independent of objective reality (Campbell, 1978). It is helpful to think of ideational drawing as thinking in progress:

> *... a 'denkraum' - a space where the individual thinks. It can be ...drawing processes, where one thinks with and through drawing to make discoveries, find new possibilities that give course to ideas and help fashion their eventual form... Ideational drawing (as process and as artefact) is a thinking space – not a space in which thought is re-presented but rather a space where thinking is presenced. In its effectiveness, its period of efficacy, ideational drawing is 'thinking' not 'thought'* (Rosenberg in Garner, 2008.)

Nurturing design capability means developing a facility for being able to do quick sketches to generate ideas, to create conceptual sketches in order to make thought visible and capable of manipulation. It is likely that a series or sequence of drawings will support this process, though the outcome might not take the form of a drawing.

Sharing ideas with others through drawing extends opportunities for testing and critique. Designers typically work with others, so they use drawing to communicate a tentative idea so that colleagues can work on it too, share ideas and collaborate, and invite critical comment. Students are not always confident to do this. Many students view drawing as a solitary and private activity. They do not want others to see them draw or to view the finished drawings, fearing that they are not good enough or that they have made mistakes.

In response, many schools have embraced drawing activities familiar in *The Big Draw* to remove the fear and anxiety many students feel about drawing, to encourage collaborative work, and sometimes, just to re-introduce an element

of fun into an activity that should be pleasurable and satisfying. Drawing makes ideas visible and accessible, capable of being shared and manipulated. In collaborative drawing, students are freed up to take risks, but also encouraged to be sensitive and responsive to the marks that others make.

Talent and skills

There is a common belief that some people can draw while others cannot, and students in schools who demonstrate high levels of technical skill are labeled as 'gifted and talented', while others are given less encouragement.

> *Nought for Design. Nought for Life Drawing. Nought for Fashion Illustration. Nought for Individual Flair. When I asked my teacher why, she said, "Let's face it ducks, some of us have got it and some of us haven't. And you just haven't."* (Emin, 2009).

It is more accurate to think of drawing as an innate capacity we all have that can be nurtured and developed through experience, learning and practice. We learn to walk, and some of us become runners or dancers. We learn to talk, and some of us become chatterboxes or linguists. In much the same way as we learn a verbal language through experiment, trial and error, we learn to draw. Drawing is experience and action based: the ability to draw can be developed only through drawing. However, to develop both verbal and visual literacy, sensitive tuition ensures a greater understanding of how to use our knowledge and skills. The challenge for the teacher is to help students address key questions about purpose (why draw), content (what to draw) and technique (how to draw).

Process and product

Drawing can be a means to an end, as well as an end in itself, a process and a product. Art in schools is often viewed in terms of making and representing, and students' abilities are gauged in terms of performance, based on the evidence of finished products. However, art should also be seen as searching, knowing and doubting (White, 2011). This is important in students' work, where drawing provides both a tool for and evidence of enquiry, where drawing is as much about *how* they learn as *what* they know.

Language is not only about communication: it is also about shaping thought. The physicist Erich Harth believes that speech and visualization both evolved not as communication skills, but as thinking skills (Steinhart, 2004). In this sense, drawing is not a performance or merely the exercise of a discrete set of skills and techniques to communicate. It is a way of knowing, or more accurately, *a coming to know – the gesture of my thinking* (Mey in Cain, 2010). Its prime value in schools is as a medium for learning.

The tension between process and product is evident in observational drawing. This is a firm favourite with teachers, aiming to develop students' skills of observation, investigation, analysis, reflection and interpretation. The prime

purpose is to enable the drawer to understand experience, to perceive relationships not evident from a casual glance or from a photograph. The constant viewing and reviewing, identifying elements, measuring, establishing relationships and making connections involving a number of approximations, modifications and refinements. However, the drawing should not be seen as an illustration or even a description: it is primarily a record of the student's struggle to understand. Drawing can be considered a form of mediation, looking at the world without judgement and allowing what is in front of us to become understandable.

> *... I'm fascinated by the fact that current neurobiology study suggests that there may not be any reality out there until the brain creates it. What is most compelling to me about the act of drawing is that you become aware or conscious of what you're looking at only through the mechanism of trying to draw it. When I look at something, I do not see it unless I make an internal decision to draw it. Drawing it in a state of humility provides a way for truth to emerge.* (Glaser, 2008.)

Conclusions

There are increasing applications for drawing. Artists, illustrators, animators, designers and data modellers use drawings in fields from advertising to zoology, and new materials and technologies offer a wider range of ways of drawing.

> *Makers, thinkers and dreamers now explore time based media, sound and space as materials to draw with and through; and this process is no longer confined to fine arts but occurs throughout all types of disciplines* (Palomar, 2011).

Although drawing in schools is most often associated with art and design, in life outside school, we are drowning in drawings related to commerce, geography, economics, science – on banknotes, road markings, traffic signs, computer-generated maps and graphs, instructions for flat-pack furniture, cartoons and caricatures, animations. However, it is not enough to ask *…what are drawings of today* (Marr 2013). We need to ask what are drawings *for*? Students need to know that drawing is important in a wide range of subjects, and that there are different kinds of drawing for different purposes. In schools, we need to draw attention to drawing outside the studio and to reappraise the importance of the pencil case.

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