

The near space* in an expanded field of drawing: interdisciplinarity, hybridity and contact

Research proposal for Creative Arts, Research
Gesa Helms | #492645
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Research question and rationale

This dissertation proposal seeks to support my Body of Work *drawing/contact* with an investigation into the kinds of relational spaces that are created in an expanded field of drawing. Here it begins with drawing as a performative practice and in turn seeks to understand performance as a drawing practice. If performance is centred on the body of the performer within a specific unfolding time frame - a presence, can we then be curious about the kinds of spaces this is productive of: relationally, sensorially and materially?

That such spaces exist in the present time also indicates that they may be past or anticipated, have a memory, an excess as well as an absence (performance art in art history presents precisely this dilemma). Jones & Heathfield's (2012) edited collection centres on these kinds of presences and absences created, asking also how these by implication draw in a whole range of other media - such as photography, writing, drawing, re-performance, video - to access the live performance positing an important concern regarding interdisciplinarity and shifts in form, register and media.

Centring on the body of the performer and the experiential foregrounds both the material (older and newer materialism) as well as the sensorial (likely accessed through phenomenological means).

The Research dissertation will attend to:

- a. existing practices that engage with this
- b. a set of enquiries/ research questions that are driven through these and animate the dissertation as well as BoW.
 - how do these writers inform my enquiry?
 - how does contemporary performance practice do so?
 - what is there about what constitutes the work: the shifting of medium, register, encounter: how do we make contact within this?
 - who is the audience? subject/object? author?

* Near space is a WIP terminology at the moment. I have not investigated any current uses of the term but would like to have distance as reference in this and not just relate it to the body itself but to a relational construct.

Creative direction of BoW in relation to this proposal

My BoW will set out a series of processes and enquiries relating to drawing/contact. It is interested in modality, site and practice of an expanded field of drawing that sets out with the body as initial drawing tool. In so doing, it situates itself in a relational practice which is less Bourriaud and more feminist in concern and possibly takes both contemporary writers and earlier performance artists as inspiration.

Interested in contact implies a curiosity about the fabric that contributes to our articulations of corporeal selfhood (as author, subject and audience). At once immediate, sensorial, tactile it also asks wider questions concerning relationship and presence. These concerns around agency, voice, autonomy are at once informed by older materialisms (notably: a critical materialism of social praxis) and are curious about new materialisms and the constitution of the human body (also in its potential hybridity, one cyborg form or another).

I seek to pursue this programme in a series of investigations:

- a. a series of drawing/performance enquiries which are mainly focused on the self;
- b. a series of drawing/performance enquiries which are small scale, intimate and perhaps simply 1:1, either scripted and more formal or more spontaneous in nature;
- c. larger public workshops, events or performances.

By focusing on different self/audience parameters I seek to investigate the forms of contact, presence/absence in the kinds of near spaces that are productive and produced in drawing/performance, and, as a second step, explore them in a series of adjacent media and forms, folding forward and onward (Bedford, Schneider, Lepecki, all 2012).

- d. I intent to attend to the recording and further circulation of these in a form that is possibly written, or takes a different form, perhaps as an audio-visual essay, a moving image collage or an artist publication.

The Research module will allow for the contextualisation and conceptualisation of key aspects of this BoW, notably: concerns of near space in an expanded field of drawing[†].

Key texts and resources

Coming to the interest around interdisciplinarity and an expanded field of drawing through the critical review of Drawing 2 and Joan Jonas's (2004) practice, along with work around the TRACEY network of contemporary drawing research, notably, Drawing ambiguity (Sawdon & Marshall eds 2015), marks these as key texts. Discovering Katrina Palmer's (2015) interdisciplinary project further added to this.

[†] At the moment I do not intend for the Research to be involving primary investigations itself, yet, this may change (I guess it depends on the kind of delineation between the two modules).

I would like to build on this with further research. Notably: to take in a series of contemporary writers who write within and across relational human/ non-human narratives in which theory, documentary and fiction mingle (Julianna Spahr, Bhanu Kapil and Chris Kraus). In relation to artists who work visually, the list includes Gordon Matta-Clark, Noemie Goudal and Sophie Calle. While Kapil, Calle and Kraus, notably, centre on intimacy and body space, Matta-Clark and Goudal seem to step back and enquire into the construction of space and matter itself. Goudal's installation (more so than Matta-Clark's architectural events) meet us as audience in the reception of the photograph, less so the installation itself.

It is in Goudal's work (as well as Calle's) that the problem of site, event, audience is most directly posed in relation to performative practices: what constitutes the artwork, in what form did it exist and what remains. It is through these questions that I turned to the edited collection of Jones & Heathfield (2012) on the meeting of performance art and history of art to investigate the nature of the live artwork, its reception and circulation. This book currently proves central in articulating my interest in interdisciplinarity or hybridity as it investigates the multiplicity in which the art existed, currently exists and may exist again: from script to event to photograph to review to re-doing (and so on). This writing meets that of Hilevaara & Orley's (2018) edited collection who explore writing practices explicitly as artistic practices and situate these within contemporary explorations of rhizomatic practice and new materialisms (and in doing so also transgress disciplinary boundaries and practices in ways that may be fruitful for my own investigation).

The geographical concept that I currently utilise as WIP is that of 'near space', it draws on Henri Lefebvre's spatial praxis, Sarah Ahmed's (2006) work on orientation and queer phenomenology, and also takes some inspiration from the collection Site Matters by Burns & Kahn (2005) which investigates the extent and reach of site. There exists a much wider body of work (around relational geographies, body space etc.) but I don't want to draw this in just yet, one that may act as a stand in is Helen Wilson's (2017) article of encounter as concept to understand bodies, borders and difference.

Workplan for Research and Body of Work

I propose the following work plan for Research and Body of Work

Timeline for Research:

A1: end of April
A2: end of June
A3: early September
A4: end of October
A5: end of November

Timeline for Body of Work:

A1 Territory: end of February
A2 Gather and Manifest: end of April
A3 Synthesis: end of July
A4 Core : early October
A5: end of December

Relationship to earlier work and learning

I have reviewed earlier work rather comprehensively at the beginning of this final year programme, and by presenting and reshaping a couple of projects (the Gap and the line) for two conference presentations in Spring and Summer continue to do so. The strengths of the works lie in their curiosity, multi-/and interdisciplinary nature, their playfulness and a conceptual approach that translates effectively into tactile, intriguing and insightful work. There are a series of questions that remain to be focussed on: notably: what constitutes the audience (and my interest in the audience) for some of these works; many of these works are rather quiet and intimate in nature and the question is where this can meet and sustain an interest in engagement. One of the questions that arose as a potential threat was the probing of disciplinary boundaries (and of stepping outside), and where this can be placed within contemporary artistic practice. Attending and reviewing the range of work presented at the Society of Artistic Research in March however showed me a whole range of works which precisely do so and do so very effectively. A question remains however with these works often being done as part of institutional art school projects: how easily do they translate outside an academic context. Yet, my own professional background as academic researcher (in human geography) also relates to this as both a strength and a threat over the kinds of works that interest me and where they (and I) can be placed within the contemporary field of artistic (and possibly academic) practices. For the purpose of the Research module, the latter seems to me to present a strength in the familiarity of conducting academic writing and research; possibly a threat as to wanting to write considerably more than a 5k undergraduate dissertation. A couple of approaches to address this are: - exploring seriously a different format to text (e.g., an audio-visual essay/ moving image piece); - attending rigorously to reducing some of the complexity (possibly even by writing another piece side-by-side), my decision not to include the SAR and Walking Arts Network talks as part of BoW (or Research) is arrived at out of these considerations.

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