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Drawing and Visualisation Research

Published in *TRACEY* | journal

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July 2016

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# THE ARTIST'S HAND

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This article is a discussion of gestures and marks as signs of the presence of the artist in drawing. Although I write as a practitioner, I do not address my own practice directly. I start with a consideration of art historical writing. An example by Huyghe (1962) positions 'the artist's hand' as a conduit for the expression of the individual's inner essence. I briefly trace how such ideas have been subject to critique in the drawing practices of artists since the 1960s, with reference to commentators such as Rose (1976, 1992). While notions of authenticity and authorship have been challenged, and the figure of the hand has been displaced to some extent, I note that within contemporary art practice, the performance of drawing is still read as a declaration of an artist's presence. However, rather than see the mark as the outcome of pure artistic intention, a more performative account, calling on the theories of Butler (1993), would recast the gesture of drawing as constituting an artistic subjectivity in the act itself. In drawing, a configuration of material histories and potentialities come together such that the artist appears 'in the moment' as the figure of the work.

## THE ARTIST'S HAND <sup>1</sup>

### Introduction

In his lengthy volume *Art and the Spirit of Man* (1962), René Huyghe traces the history of art from cave painting to symbolism. It is an example of Modernist writing that presents a sweeping narrative of human progress and increasing self-awareness. Art is described as a language and the artwork as a text to be read. On one level, artworks contain clear intended content, and on another, they reveal signs of the artist's subconscious that lead us to "his deeper, essential nature" (1962, p.28). In Huyghe's characterization of the relationship between artist and artwork, the artist is always referred to using masculine pronouns, as a creative individual whose character is expressed in the art he produces. Of all the art forms, drawing is the most legible because the line acts as a direct register of 'his' unique gesture. The opening chapter 'Drawing and the Hand' describes the individual characteristics that can be read through the "graphology of drawings" (1962, p.60). The drawn line, because of its indexical relation to the hand, gives access to the artist's inner being: "Everything shaped by the artist's hand becomes by the same token one of the faces of his soul" (1962, p.161). Here the artist's hand is seen as a conduit for creative expression, and as a metonym for the artist as a whole. It is the dexterous organ with which raw material is molded into art. Huyghe's description rests on an understanding of the subjectivity of the artist as unchanging, an essential core or 'self' to be contained within or expressed through the work, by virtue of a direct link from the handmade mark to the hand, and so to the soul of the man himself. The characteristic lines found in his drawings constitute a signature, a mark of authorship that matters to the connoisseur. They act as a guarantee of the artist's presence in the making of the work.

The figure of the expressive (male) artist exuding his essence through his mark is one of the legacies of Western art history that has been drawn over by artists and writers of later generations. For example, feminist critiques have highlighted the gendered nature of art historical writing such as this, and challenged the picture of the artist as a special individual whose artwork is indicative of *his* unique insight or greatness. Poststructuralist theory has brought into question the idea of subjectivity as a consistent quality or an essence that remains unchanged regardless of context. Progressive art movements have reworked the traditions of drawing inherited from Renaissance academies, questioning the value of manual skills and destabilizing such notions as authenticity and the reliance on the handmade mark as a sign of authorship.

These upheavals, and their effect in expanding the parameters of drawing, have been well documented by art historians such as Bernice Rose (1976, 1992). The first part of this article

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<sup>1</sup> This paper grew out of a short text that formed part of my PhD thesis (MacDonald, 2010), which was a practice-based study of the manual and visual aspects of drawing that takes into account the values historically attributed to the tropes of 'the hand' and 'the eye'.

is a summary of practices that have been highlighted as significant by Rose and others in shaping the history of drawing since the 1960s, with particular reference to the body part that Huyghe positioned in the foreground, ‘the artist’s hand’.

Despite numerous challenges to the status of the drawing as a hand-made object, it is noted that drawing persists in many forms within contemporary art. One way in which it is deployed is as an affirmation of an artist’s presence. For example, I could express the affirmative potential of drawing as follows: *as I watch a line stretching out across a surface following the movement of my arm, it seems to offer the most immediate sensory feedback of my presence as the author of the mark... But who am I?*

The final part of this article, seeks to avoid a return to traditional notions of authorship by proposing drawing as a performance of artistic subjectivity. *I reaffirm my identity as an artist as I draw.* Such an interpretation is reliant on the theories of performativity put forward by feminist philosopher Judith Butler to describe the production of gender identity and subjectivity (1993). As the gesture of drawing is reiterated, and drawings materialize, artistic identity is confirmed. Even the most basic actions of marking can work in this way, but only if they are performed within a discursive context that allows the action to be seen as meaningful. Hence the need to situate contemporary drawing practices within a historical context in this article. *My act of drawing is reliant on historical precedent and oriented towards future visibility, making it theoretically impossible to isolate the ‘present moment’ in which it takes place. My hand, if I draw by hand, is mobilized in drawing not solely by me as an autonomously acting subject but as part of this wider discursive set up.*

### **Autographic gestures**

Fourteen years after Huyghe’s publication, a major exhibition at The Museum of Modern Art in New York, entitled *Drawing Now* (1976), announced the emergence of drawing as an autonomous mode of art practice that was no longer to be regarded as a subsidiary of painting or sculpture. Reviewing historical discussions of drawing, the curator Bernice Rose identified two ways in which drawing had been regarded as closely linked to the individuality of the artist: the “autographic” and the “conceptual” (1979, p.10). A passage by Laurence Alloway, which Rose quotes, succinctly explains these two senses of drawing:

*There is the notion of drawing as graphological disclosure, the most direct marks that an artist can make and hence, because of their intimacy, authentic evidence of the artist’s presence. Personal touch is highly valued on this basis. There is another notion, which is that drawing represents not genetic freedom but the artist at his most rigorously intellectual. In this sense drawing is the projection of the artist’s intelligence in its least discursive form: line is the gist, the core of art (Alloway, 1975, p.38).*

According to this historical distinction, “presence” is registered through touch in the unique quality of marks, as in an autograph or signature. The artist’s ideas and concepts are also made visible through drawing, but not necessarily through direct contact. Both senses of drawing refer to an autonomous artistic subject – the ‘I’ in drawing. Rose argues that since the advent of Conceptual art of the 1960s these two strands, previously entwined, had become separable. The increasing abstraction and conceptualization in art resulted in a “cooling” of the mark (1976, p.14) and a detachment from its autographic function. The direct link from the handmade mark to the interior being of the artist (that Huyghe had invested so much value in) was irrelevant to conceptually focused art. Drawings became more concerned with format and structure than with the expressive quality of lines. The artist’s hand could play only a minor instrumental role in such production, rather than being a conduit to his soul.

However, in this art historical narrative the hand was to reappear, albeit in a different capacity. Rose argues that the two aspects of drawing merged again when the fundamental *process* of drawing, the action of making a mark, became the subject of the artwork (1976, p.14). The point is reiterated in Rose’s essay for a second major drawing exhibition at MoMA in 1992, entitled *Allegories of Modernism* (1992, p.13). Here, she offers a more radical re-examination of drawing practices in the light of a further sixteen years of changes in the art world of North America and Europe. She revisits her reading of the dual senses of drawing. In the semiautomatic gesture of Jackson Pollock the performing body was rendered almost mechanical in its “ritualistic and depersonalized” movements (1992, p.15); the idea of gesture was emptied out of its association with the hand or the personality of the artist. Following this, in the 1960s and 70s, the line as an abstract element became increasingly important; line as concept, “line as a subject in itself” (1992, p.13). This pure intellectual form of drawing was exemplified in Sol LeWitt’s large site-specific drawings, in which lines were transposed into the three-dimensional space of the gallery according to a set of written instructions that could be carried out by any competent person. The art content of the work was located in the original idea, not the final object; theoretically, the artist’s hand was sidelined. However, from this ground of Conceptual art, the action of drawing began to regain significance, tied to discussions of process. As Richard Serra famously stated in 1977, in an interview with Lizzie Borden: “Anything you can project as expressive in terms of drawing – ideas, metaphors, emotions, language structures – results from the act of doing” (1994, p.53).

Serra’s artwork entitled *Verb List*, 1967-68, was influential in the process art movement. It consisted of a hand-written list of infinitives such as “to roll, to crease, to fold...” emphasizing manual interactions with materials and the temporality of making processes. In a series of black and white films in 1968, Serra centralized the action of his hands as the subject of the work, with titles such as *Hands Catching Lead* and *Hands Scraping*. These gestural acts are concerned with bodily labour and weight of materials rather than individuality, skill or self-expression. Art historian, Cornelia H. Butler (1999) makes this point in describing images in

the catalogue for the *Anti-Illusion* exhibition at the Whitney Museum in 1969, she writes: “The emphasis in these pictures is often on the gesture, isolated arms and hands figure prominently as do the tools of the artists’ labor” (1999, p.84). This implies that the presence of the artist was now to be found in the documentation of their manual work, rather than in the direct record of the mark. The impact of documentary filmmaking in the 1960s (for example in bringing to public attention events in the Vietnam war) influenced the practice of artists in this period. The staging and recording of process-oriented works relied on some form of documentation. In the performances and events of process art, the artist’s hand was back in evidence, and his or her bodily presence foregrounded in the narrative and record of the work, but the traditional associations of artistic autonomy, authorship and skill were subjected to critique. Other works, such as Serra’s *Drawing after Circuit*, 1972 (which consists of 24 sheets of paper containing only a few vertical, hand-drawn lines made in response to his sculpture), show that the concern with process could result in increasingly minimal drawings, which would provide little for the graphologist to read.

In 1968, William Anastasi was making various *Un sighted Drawings* in the pockets of his trousers. This type of furtive automatic drawing denied the artist visual control over the marks that were made; it was a rejection of illusionist and pictorial intentions, and of vision as the basis for art. The resulting crumpled scrawl was partly dictated by the material context of the trouser pocket and its particular relation of proximity to the body. In his *Subway Drawings*, begun in 1977, marks were contingent on the movement of the subway train as he endeavoured to hold both arms in a fixed position. Unlike the gestural movements of Jackson Pollock in which, according to Rose, the machine seemed to inhabit the body, here the body was inside the machine. The resulting involuntary (although not completely unintentional) marks registered the movement of Anastasi’s body in its specific mechanical and urban context. The indexical line was no longer pointing to the artist’s soul or his unique character but to the contingencies of his embodied and mundane experience of the world. Insofar as the drawings were a sign of the artist’s presence, it was his presence in a particular vehicle, juddering along a track for a specific period of time.

The radical reappraisals of drawing from the 1960s onwards changed the parameters of the type of drawings that could qualify as art. Rose explains the relationship with tradition in terms of a palimpsest – the art of the past becoming the ground upon which contemporary art makes its mark, overwriting some aspects and repurposing others. New possibilities for practice were emerging from the remains of Modernism’s “heroic totalizing myth” (Rose, 1992, p.113). Among the ideas to be challenged by a new generation of artists was the idea of the artist’s character as a constant and determining quality of being, and with it the notion of authenticity itself.

*At the critical center of art there is now a scepticism about the validity of the authorial role and the relevance of the signatory gesture. This struggle over self-expression as a still-valid concept strikes at the heart of drawing itself, long the primary medium of the authorial gesture (Rose, 1992, p.11).*

Added to this, the availability of technologies of printing and photographic reproduction, and the prevalence and power of mass-produced images led to a questioning of the relevance of the unique, handmade object. Rose describes a wave of reaction that included artistic strategies such as use of mass-production techniques, appropriation of the styles of popular culture, collaging of images, collaborative working methods, temporary and site-specific artworks, and hybridization across disciplines. Even the hand-drawn line was sometimes enacted in a mechanical way. Rose gives the example of Nancy Spero, who “withholds her hand” using acts of repetition to make drawings that register her feelings of dissociation (1992, p.63). However, despite the various strategies used by artists to dislodge the aura of the unique handmade art object, Rose surprisingly maintains that: “drawing retains an authority over the notion of authenticity and affirms that the artist’s hand still counts in the primary expression of ideas” (1992, p.10).

One reason for reframing (or rather rejecting) the practice of drawing by hand was the advent of feminism as a motivating force in art, and the increasing visibility of artworks by women. For example, many more women artists were featured in the 1992 show at MoMA than had been in 1976. Feminism emphasized the significance of knowledge located in bodily experience, and showed that art practices are always situated in specific social contexts. Drawing, as a performance of the body, could register feelings and experiences that were not normally made visible. Drawing also offers a sense of informality and immediacy. Using economical means, it is well placed to act as a record of personal narrative. Furthermore, as art practices of the past were selectively reworked, women artists appropriated skills that might previously have been seen as masculine (draughtsmanship, for example) and deployed them to their own ends. Artistic attributes such as inventiveness and individual genius, previously described in gendered terms, were critically subverted in practice. Rose gives the example of Sherrie Levine, who appropriated the drawings of male artists, copying from small reproductions “in her own delicate, almost tentative hand”, rendering “originality as a trope” (1992, p.78). As a discipline that was less formalized and seen as a subsidiary to painting or sculpture, drawing offered an entry point for women artists, previously excluded from the art historical canon, to make their mark.

In the years since *Allegories of Modernism*, drawing as a discipline within contemporary art practice has attained greater prominence, and its value has been restated. For example, Emma Dexter, the editor of Phaidon’s substantial publication *Vitamin D*, lists “intimacy, informality, authenticity (or at least with authentic inauthenticity), immediacy, subjectivity, history, memory, narrative” as key attributes of drawing that command curatorial interest (2005, p.6). It is evident from this and other publications that the unique handmade artefact still has persisting value to the art market. Returning explicitly to the autographic function of drawing, Tanya Kovats writes: “Drawing is particularly accessible and affordable to collectors, offering them at the same time the element of the hand made, the exquisiteness of touch, and a sense of intimacy...the uniqueness of a drawing provides evidence of the artist’s hand and the artist’s signature as validation of its originality” (2005, p.16).

Conversely, for some commentators the handmade artefact is a relic of a bygone era. John Roberts (2007) argues that academic drawing skills and craft processes have long been regarded as value-laden and outmoded. He describes an ongoing dialectic of deskilling and reskilling in which the manual operations of art have been subjected to critique by conceptually-oriented art. 'The hand' as the locus of craft skills was displaced in this process but, he argues, new skills and technologies now act as prostheses to extend the reach of artists: "In operating in the space opened up by the crisis of handcraft, the hand is released from expressive mimeticism to find new forms of dexterity and facility" (2007, p.98).

While the autographic and conceptual senses of art making continue to be restated and sometimes opposed in art historical commentary, this distinction is perhaps less important in practice. A description of drawing that is informed by theories of performativity, as I will briefly outline later, offers an alternative to the two notions of drawing that Alloway (1975) identified in the passage quoted at the beginning of this section. Instead of directing all the attention on the artist as an individual, whose presence or ideas are evident in the work as autographic marks or records of thought, it questions the fundamental core of the artist and shifts attention to the broader context of art making.

### **Digital gestures**

The situation has changed since the 1960s and 70s. In the 21st century, digital rather than mechanical technologies are changing the context of art making. Perhaps Roberts (2007) failed to foresee the extent to which the advance of digital technologies would produce a counter interest in the revival of craft processes. Digital drawing tools and software have not so far replaced more basic implements. The 'pressure sensitivity' of graphic pens fails to convey all the inflections of touch. Touch-screens offer the sense of direct contact and response, but the material properties of the screen image can seem limited compared to those of absorbent or textured surfaces. Unlike paper, bitmap images lack the capacity to hold the traces of mistakes and accidents as a stain or indentation that remain even after concerted attempts at erasure. Computer-aided design (CAD) software and vector-based drawing programmes follow the dividers, compasses and precision pens of previous centuries. They operate to smooth out or eliminate any trace of bodily movement. The digital line could be regarded as an abstraction, a procession of noughts and ones, a set of instructions (like those produced by Sol LeWitt) written out in binary for the machine to perform in its intangible spaces. Such software and devices have become part of the scene of artistic production, but not to the exclusion of other means.

Many drawing practices retain a connection to the messiness of materials: soft, dusty and smudgeable; sticky, clingy and viscous; fluid, flowing and bleeding into a variety of surfaces. Practitioners still like to get their hands dirty, or if not hands then any part of the body that can immediately make a mark. Conversely, there are those who draw painstakingly and tidily, even mathematically and diagrammatically, but choose to do so on paper rather than on screen. There is a mixing of strategies. Handmade drawings are scanned and become part



of the expanded digital context. An early example of this was the web-based initiative *Learning to Love You More* (2002-09), which set regular ‘assignments’, sometimes drawing based, for members of the public. In transactions and collaborations such as this, there is an exchange of digits. The line is enacted as a virtual and metaphorical connector between ‘real’ bodies and their material, local drawing acts. The drawn artefact is seen as functioning as a connector from person to person, without an implicit hierarchy, which can be shared digitally. As means of communicating, collaborating, reproducing, recording, documenting, sharing, reworking, editing and exhibiting, computer-based technologies have become essential, but within contemporary art they are an addition to, rather than a replacement for more basic methods of drawing.

### Non-manual gestures

It is worth noting that Rose (1992), Kovats (2005) and Roberts (2007), all quoted above, employ the trope of ‘the hand’ as a singular figure. The hand used in this way, carries historical baggage. Firstly, if the hand is positioned as essential to drawing, it appears to exclude those whose bodies do not conform to ableist ideals. There are many artists without hands who draw with dexterity and skill. Secondly, manual skills are associated with the values and priorities of a Western academic tradition of drawing, which many artists have questioned. Finally, within a humanist discourse, the hand tends to signify exceptional qualities that pertain only to humans. Capacities such as ingenuity and manipulative ability are presented as granting control. Roberts, for example, uses the trope of the hand to assert a distinction between humans and other forms of life: “with the precision and adaptability of the hand come humans’ capacity to think of themselves as separate from the nature they inhabit and transform” (2007, p.93).

Some artworks have subversively displaced the figure of the hand in drawing. For example, Rebecca Horn’s 1972 work, *Bleistiftmaske* or *Pencil Mask*, combined sculpture, performance and drawing. The mask was a type of bondage for the face that negated manual control. A grid of straps formed a constraining bridle or muzzle, from which an array of short pencils stuck out at angles. The artist could only draw by moving her head rhythmically from side to side as a mute act of self-assertion, denying herself the freedom of dexterity. A later example is Janine Antoni’s *Loving Care*, 1993, which was conducted by dipping her hair in paint and then drawing it along the ground, leaving smears and trails. This could not be further from the skilled manipulations of a traditional academic drawing practice.

Sometimes the whole body is used to enact the gesture of drawing. Famously, Richard Long’s *A Line Made by Walking*, 1967, was a linear path, repeatedly trodden by the artist. In 2004, Francis Alÿs dripped green paint from a leaking can as he walked across Jerusalem, marking out a “radically fluid” boundary (Cotter, 2007). The route of Alÿs walk followed the coordinates of a line drawn on the map to establish the border of Israel after the Arab-Israeli conflict in 1948. Walking through a place enacts a very different relation to territory than making a delineation on a map. The trace of his body was left by a gesture of letting go, but

the trail of green drips, now visible as digital video (Aljys, 2004), acts as a graphic demonstration of the statement 'I was there'.

### Performative gestures

The performance of presence is enacted in the scene of drawing. What better way could there be of making the statement 'I am here' than to draw a line or make a mark on a surface, to see it unfold as a result of your own bodily action, a dynamic manifestation of your own volition? A hand is an easily visible part of the body with which to make such a gesture, but other bodily actions, such as walking or travelling, can also be understood as marks of presence in an artistic sense if the cultural conditions for their authorization as artworks have been established. Aljys's trail of green paint has the status of an artwork because it comes after other works that have expanded the definitions and parameters of the artistic gesture. It follows the action-painting drips of Jackson Pollock and the footsteps of Richard Long.

In this article I have given examples of art historical commentary and art practices since the 1960s in order to set out a discursive context. I would argue that in order for a manual or bodily gesture to be validated as a simple enactment of presence in an artistic sense a whole set of references have to be in place. The 'presence' that is foregrounded in drawing relies on a history of such presentations, given weight and legitimacy by critical, curatorial and art historical recognition. In a Western art historical tradition, the artist's presence was detected, after the event, by the connoisseur, who read unique characteristics in the drawing to reveal certain traits. The name of the artist, inscribed by hand as a signature at the base of the artwork, was a further endorsement of artistic presence and individual identity, ensuring future recognition and value. Since the 1960s, one change that has taken place is the presentation of drawing as performance (whether skilled, unskilled or deskilled), still with a projective idea of future visibility. The assertion 'I am here' is accompanied by 'I am going to leave a mark' or 'I am going to leave a record of my actions'. The video of a drawing in performance (public or private) may now be understood to be a set of marks in itself. All this history and forward planning makes it difficult to isolate the act of drawing purely in the present moment. It can, however, be understood as a *declaration* of presence, documented as occurring in a specified time and place.

Although this article focuses on the *discourse* of drawing, I would stress the materiality of this artistic apparatus (including its galleries, exhibitions, collections, published texts and statements, educational institutions, social networks and financial transactions). The mark appears amid a web of social conditions, economic imperatives and histories of practice, all of which are material in nature. Not only is drawing traditionally a matter of physical interactions – the friction between marking substances and resisting surfaces – its performance of presentness depends on the specifics and contingencies of highly developed technologies. From charcoal on paper to touch-screens on computer tablets, the substrates of drawing have their own productive histories and material characteristics.

The agency of those who draw, their embodied histories and autobiographical narratives, are materially implicated in this context too. But rather than see the mark as the outcome of pure artistic intention, a more performative account, in the sense that cultural theorists use the term, would recast the event of drawing as constituting an artistic subjectivity in the act itself. In drawing, a whole cluster of material histories and possibilities come together such that the artist appears 'in the moment' as the figure of the work.

Feminist thinker, Judith Butler, has developed theories of performativity concerning gender identity that offer a means to understand the formation of subjectivity itself. In *Bodies that Matter* (1993), she writes: "In the first instance, performativity must be understood not as a singular or deliberate 'act,' but, rather, as the reiterative and citational practice by which discourse produces the effects that it names" (1993, p.2). Here, she is referring to the effect of labeling a child 'girl' or 'boy' before they are even able to speak, and to the iterative process by which a given gender is repeatedly performed to meet the expectations of feminine or masculine comportment. She argues that ways of being feminine or masculine prefigure the subject who enacts and thereby perpetuates them. Crucially, the 'expression' of gender identity is also its mode of production. The performance is "citational" because it is conditioned by previous examples of reiterable statements or acts. Here, Butler is referring to Jacques Derrida's work on presence. She summarizes his argument as follows: "...an act is itself a repetition, a sedimentation, and congealment of the past ... every act is itself a recitation, the citing of a prior chain of acts which are implied in a present act and which perpetually drain any 'present' act of its presentness" (Butler, 1993, p.245).

To consider these theories in relation to artistic identity and drawing, it could be said that somebody assumes the identity of artist in the act or gesture of drawing. The more often and convincingly the actions are performed, the more consistently an artistic identity is produced. The performance is not the same each time but develops through an iterative process. The 'self-expression' in drawing would then be understood as the process by which an identity, a self, is repeatedly and graphically reaffirmed. This would of course hold for other artistic activities, not only drawing. The individualized aspects of a successful artistic identity require a range of statements and gestures – differentiating acts that distinguish one artist from another.

To say that the drawing produces the artist is not to deny that the artist produces the drawing, because performativity works in both directions. Nor does it deny the effect of bodily experience and personal narratives in the production of both drawings and artists. But the question of how embodied histories, knowledges and senses become part of the specific formation of artistic subjectivities is only worked out in the doing of it.

And there are constraints on what it is possible to do. Drawing is "citational" in the sense that it re-enacts prior artistic gestures, although not explicitly. There is a congealing of the past in the type of gestures and marks that come to appear as meaningful statements within the context of contemporary art. However, each iteration of a gesture must be different from

those that went before in order to be seen as novel and original, and therefore the boundaries of practice come to shift in subtle ways. Such acts are a productive and generative part of histories of drawing, which continue to constrain and make possible a variety of emerging practices. This dynamic, discursive context of art-making reaches out in many directions, from the domestic and local to the institutional, social, political, economic and environmental. It is not free from wider inequalities of power.

Gender is one of the structuring forces that has excluded some drawings from becoming visible as art. The intersections between artistic subjectivity and gender are complex, and a large amount of work has been done by feminist art historians in the last forty years to unpick this, starting for example with the publication *Old Mistresses* (Parker & Pollock, 1981), which set out to fill the gaps in art history. In practice, in the twentieth century there were significant incursions into the artistic sphere that skewed the gendering of established art disciplines, as noted earlier. Artistic subjectivities clearly offer more room for maneuver than feminine norms, and the subversive nature of some practices enabled an expansion in the terms of both art and gender.

Returning to the example of Rebecca Horn's *Pencil Mask*, 1972, I see it as a work that twists the meaning of drawing by refusing the capacities of draughtsmanship and manual control. It shows that the performance of drawing can alter the conditions for drawings that follow. As Jane Tormey has pointed out, "a 'performative' drawing... can be seen as changing its own terms, as it performs itself. In doing drawing, a drawing is seen to constitute itself – it creates as it describes" (2005).

There is much more to be said about the performativity of drawing. For example, I have not discussed drawings produced through collaborative and participatory practices. Here, I have concentrated on the way in which the action of drawing is productive of the individualized subject who performs it. If drawing is an embodied act, then somebody is there to perform it, but the subjectivity of the artist is a provisional matter, changing as the drawing materializes. The artist is constituted and reaffirmed in the gestures of drawing and the histories they mobilize.

## Conclusion

The title of this paper, 'The artist's hand', indicates an absence rather than a presence. I have suggested that the hand is a value-laden term that is no longer as significant as it once was, and I have asked, who is the artist anyway? If a consistent, essential identity for the artist is not found, and the hand (singular) as a figure is displaced, then there is a gap in the scene of drawing. But all is not lost. The variously skilled operations and techniques of drawing (manual or otherwise) are deployed in multiple, diverse and vibrant ways. Hands may still appear at the focal point of drawings, but any drawing is enmeshed in a much larger configuration, and the artist is only a provisional performer in its midst.

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