

That Head That Head

UoA 32 Multi-Component Output with
Contextual Information

2016-2020



Confused Head 22, Mixed media on found book cover, 24 x18cm, 2016

Index of Contents

Introduction	3
Research Questions	4
Methods and Processes 1	5
Methods and Processes 2	8
Methods and Processes 3	13
Methods and Processes 4	18
Methods and Processes 5	22
Insights	23
References	24
Dissemination	25
External Funders and Partners	30
Appendices	31



Confused Head 43, Posca pen and collage on found paper, 25 x 19cm, 2016

Introduction

That Head That Head is a multicomponent practice-based output that represents a body of work comprised of 900 drawings, developed over a period of four years and disseminated through twenty-four exhibitions. Supported by funding from Arts Council England, it has sought to rigorously interrogate drawing's capacity to act as non-verbal form of communication; investigating the immediacy of the drawn mark through consciously imposed restrictions on the artist's materials and motifs. It has created a vocabulary of form that operates at the forefront of the field of contemporary drawing that articulates dimensions of classed and gendered subjectivity hitherto silenced by hierarchies of culture and society.

The discourse on contemporary drawing has argued that it is a medium which can offer powerful tools to challenge ideologically driven conventions of art and culture, enabling artists to navigate and transform difference into new forms of representation (Dexter, 2005; Downs et al., 2011; Meskimmon & Sawdon; 2016). In this regard, this submission's material exploration of social class and sexual difference builds on and develops existing analyses of the impact of gender on drawing (Meskimmon & Sawdon; 2016). Its playful enquiry repurposes historically weighted signifiers of class, such as ignorance and the masses and the division of professional and family life to articulate experiences of cultural displacement, countering that isolation by exploring the social dimension of art making through drawing and curatorial decision making.

This body of work has been disseminated nationally and internationally; in two solo exhibitions, Platform A, Middlesbrough (2017) and the Rabley Drawing Centre, Wiltshire (2016); and toured in numerous group exhibitions including four prestigious national drawing prizes Derwent (2014); Jerwood (2017-18; 2014-15, Award winner: Special Commendation; 2017-18) and Trinity Buoy (2019-20). It was also a catalyst to the ACE project 'Mentoring for Professional Development' supported by Prof Anita Taylor (Dundee) and a peer review article in published the journal *Drawing: Research, Theory, Practice* (2017).



71

SALLY TAYLOR



Confused head 36, 2016
Posca pen and collage on book cover, 42 x 36.5cm

My drawings affirm a desire to understand more about human relationships, specifically my own interaction with others. They are equally about forming a balance between formal concerns in relation to the communication of emotional resonance. Using found materials, specifically old book covers, enables the superimposition of marks in relation to the personal history of the surface. Geometric shapes become 'blockages' or 'openings' and the recurring motif of 'smiling mouths' aim to unravel social constructs surrounding the unsaid and non-verbal interaction.

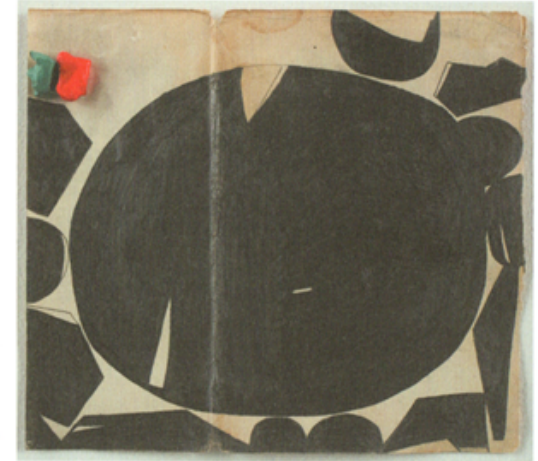
SALLY TAYLOR

Imagined Environment 12, 2019
Graphite and object on found paper, 19 x 20cm

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Sally Taylor (b.1977 Bury, Lancashire, UK) studied BA Fine Art at Lancaster University (1995-98); MA Fine Art at Lancaster University (1998-99). Group exhibitions include: *Fully Awake*, Freelands Foundation, London (2019); *Art Happens Here (AHH Studio Collective)*, Ryedale Folk Museum, North Yorkshire (2019); *SelfScapes*, Dalby Forest, North Yorkshire (2018). Solo exhibitions include: *Some Spaces Left*, Platform A, Middlesbrough (2017); *That Head, That Head*, Rabley Drawing Centre, Wiltshire (2016). Shortlisted for the *Jerwood Drawing Prize* in 2017, 2014, 2011, 2009 and 2004, she received a Special Commendation in *Jerwood Drawing Prize 2014*. She lives and works in North Yorkshire.

114



Jerwood Drawing Prize Catalogue 2017

Trinity Buoy Wharf Drawing Prize 2019

Research Questions

Within the theoretical, historical and practice-based context of contemporary drawing this body of work asks:

How can classed and gendered subjectivity be inscribed through an exploration of visual form through drawing that, to borrow from Robert Rauschenberg, puts its 'trust in materials'? (Hunter: 2016)

How can an exploration of social class through drawing call for and develop curatorial strategies that embody and enhance the work's research imperatives?



Installation view The Prison Drawing Project, (Scarborough Old Jail), 2016)

Methods and Processes 1

This body of work investigates the way in which material choices shape aesthetic decisions to transform and signify differences of class and gender through drawing. Inspired by Rauschenberg's rejection of pre-determined 'ideas' and 'trust in materials', the outcomes of each drawing are indebted to the surface to which they respond (Hunter, 2016). Inspired by Rauschenberg's series of cardboard collages (1970-72), these works reject the uniform, pristine nature of new professional grade paper in favour of ready to hand, reclaimed materials such as old book covers, greetings cards and used jigsaw boxes. These affordable materials are yellowed with age, stained by coffee, tea and grease. Frequently marked by the names, addresses and dedications of previous owners these supports testify to previous use and social exchange. From their very beginning these highly accessible materials underscores the democratic ambition that the work strives to achieve.



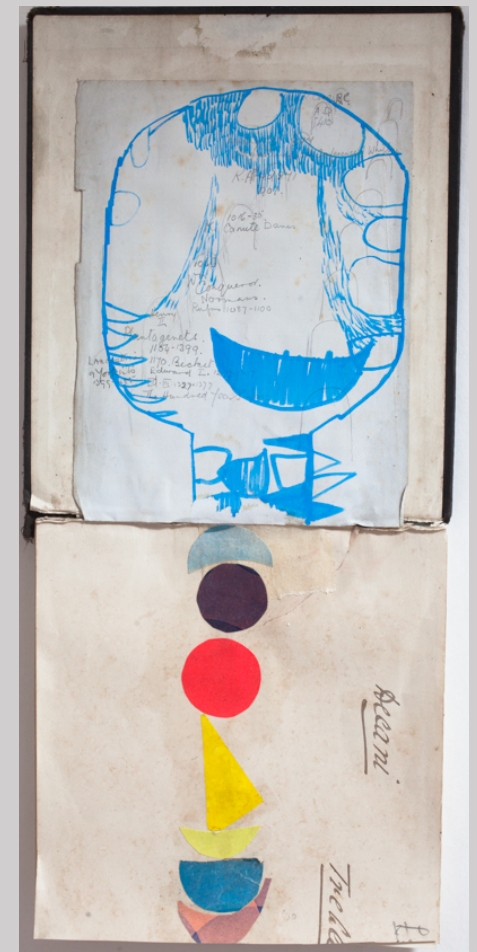
Imagined Environments Jigsaw Box (24x18cm), Graphite, paper collage, 2018



Robert Rauschenberg, *Cardbird Door*, (1970-71), Collage and Pint 203 x 76 x 28 cm



Confused Head 25 (25x19cm), Confused Head 50 (2017) 25x19cm), Confused Head 22 (24x18cm), Posca pen, paper collage, tape and ink on book covers, 2016



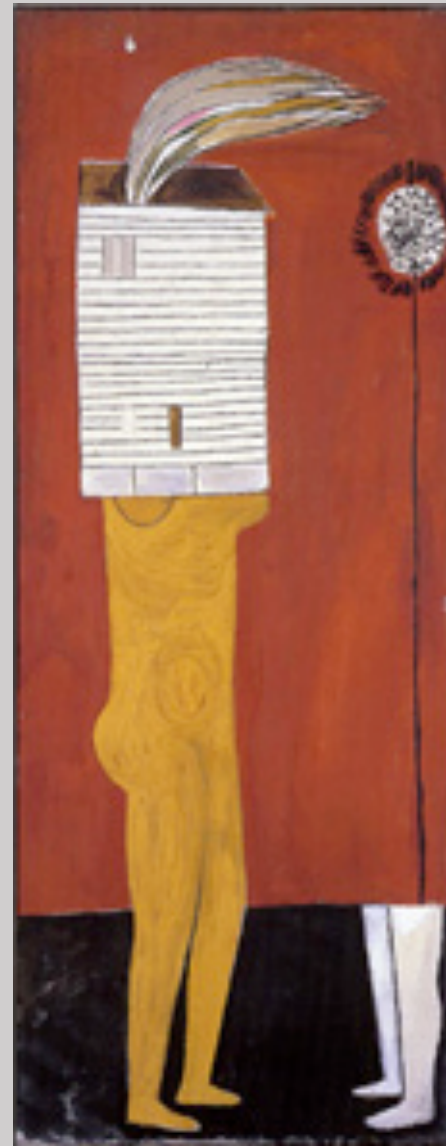
Blue Head 3 (22x14cm), Blue Head 6 (24x16), Blue Head 16 (36x16cm), Posca pen and paper collage on found book covers, 2016

Methods and Processes 2

The imperfect context that each surface provides accentuates the drawing's pursuit of an aesthetics of 'awkwardness', which is informed by a 'dialectic' of materials and composition rather than 'style' (Sillman, Frieze, 2015). Lines and collaged forms jostle with the edges, folds, marks and stains of each support to elicit a tension where elements simultaneously cohere and resist one another. These works are ill at ease, drawing a sense of discomfort out into the open to affirm it through a naive vocabulary of mark making. These drawings take permission from the child-like process and dissonant compositions of artists such as Louise Bourgeois and Tal R, building on their compositional strategies in order to interrogate the interstitial displacement of class and gender by intensely working a head motif.



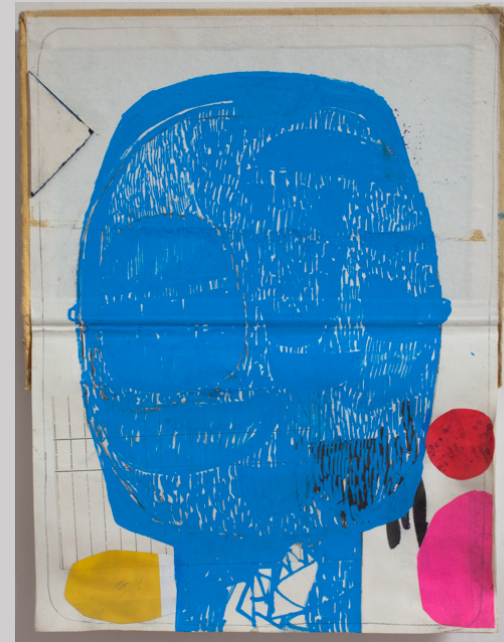
Tal R, *The Somethings*, (2005-2006), oil on canvas, 113.5 x 113.5cm



Louise Bourgeois, *Femme Maison*, 1946-47)



Head Balance 9, 2018 38x19cm 24x19cm, Ink, collage on book covers.



Clockwise from top left Head Blue Head 5, 7, 8, 9, 10, 14, 12, Approx. 24x17cm, Posca pen and collage on book covers, 2016



Fig... Head 1 (35x27cm), Head 2 (30x28cm), Found paper, ink, gaffer tape, 2016



Clockwise from top left Head 9, 4, 10, 7, 3, 8, 5, 6, Approx. 35x32cm, Found paper, ink, gaffer tape, 2016-17



Fig... Head Balance 9, 38x19cm, Head One-sided 24x19cm, Ink, collage on book covers, 2018

Methods and Processes 3

The head motif emerged through a synthesis of raw line and collaged flat colour, following the birth of Taylor's first child. Working simultaneously on multiple drawings in intense bursts, crowds of variously confused, conflicted and menacing heads began to emerge on the walls of the studio. Viewed collectively these clusters of mute yet raucous figures call to one another, visually challenging and re-appropriating historical signifiers of class such as the hoard, ignorance and the primitive (Williams: 1988). Griselda Pollock has argued that the animality that has historically inflected these stereotypes of the working class fused with the maternal in the figure of the wet-nurse (1999). The corporeality of the wet-nurse stood counter to codes of bourgeois femininity and it is the immediacy and physicality of maternal experience that inflects the making of this body of work.

The modular way of working that characterises the Head drawings developed in response to the need to balance professional practice and family life. These spheres, hitherto separated by academic and social convention, collapsed as the studio became a shared, somewhat chaotic intergenerational space full of energy and disruption in order to accommodate childcare. The drawings fed on this energy and became slowly infused with the materials that the children used; emerging through a contestation of direct gestures and forms shaped by the material constraints of dirty found paper and obstinate, sticky and sickly materials such as gaffer tape. Through this exertion and the brute physicality of that environment these works came to embody what Norman Bryson (2003) called drawing's capacity to embody the being and becoming of the artist.

Head A (24x19cm), ink, tape, paper
on found book covers, 2018



Studio, Stonegrave, North Yorkshire, 2018.



Head Shapes 1 (25x18), Head Shapes 2 (25x18), ink and paper on book cover, 2016



Fig...Head Balance 1 (22x19), Head Balance 2 (23x17), Ink and paper collage on found book covers, 2017

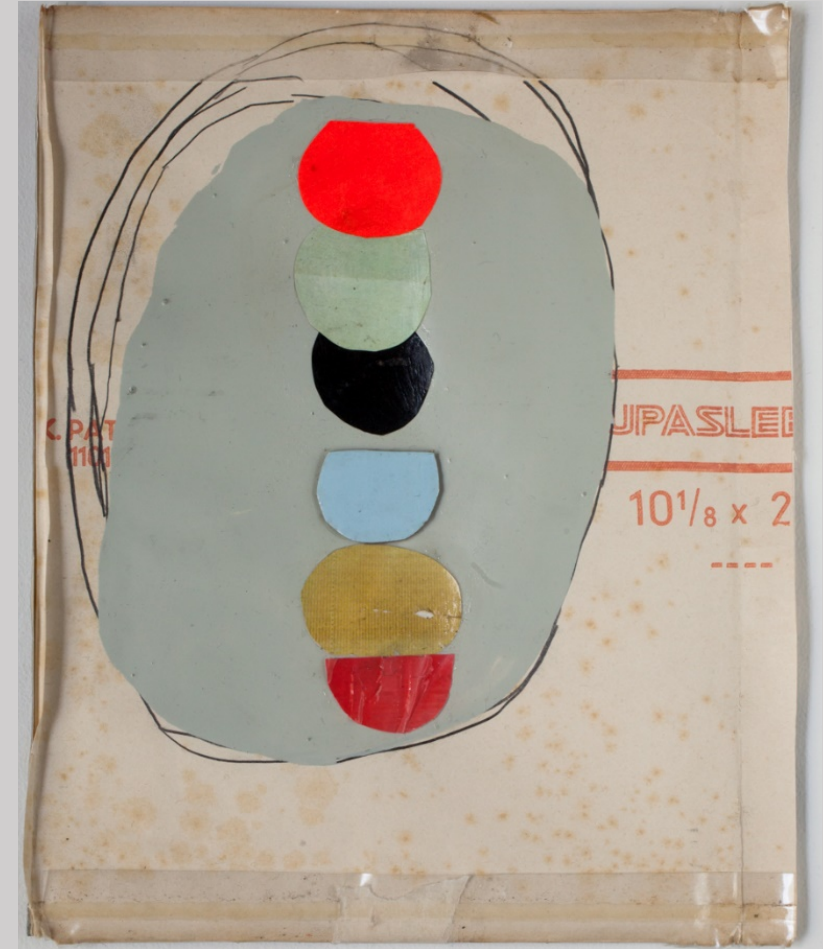
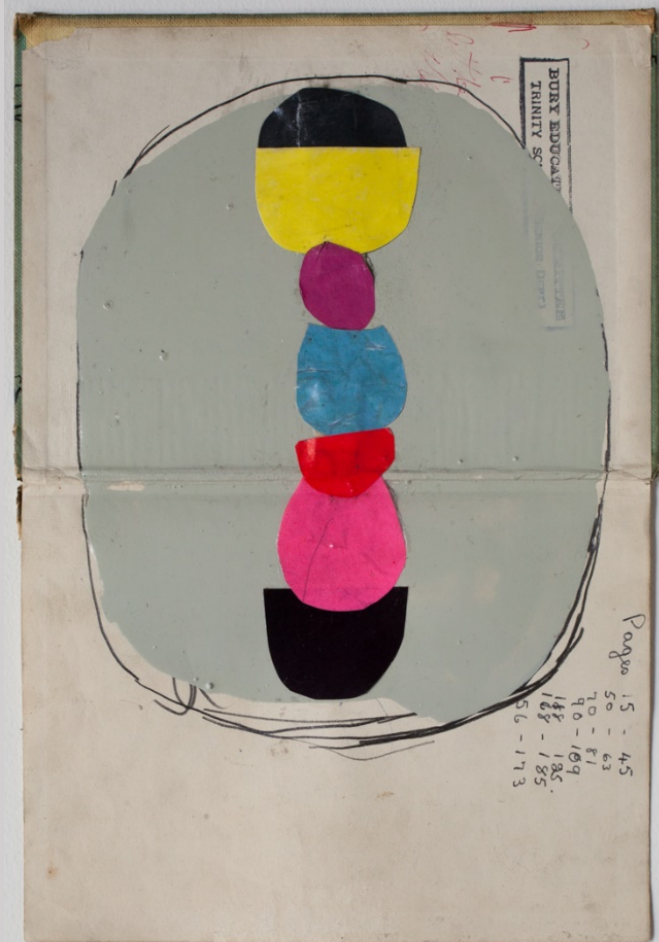
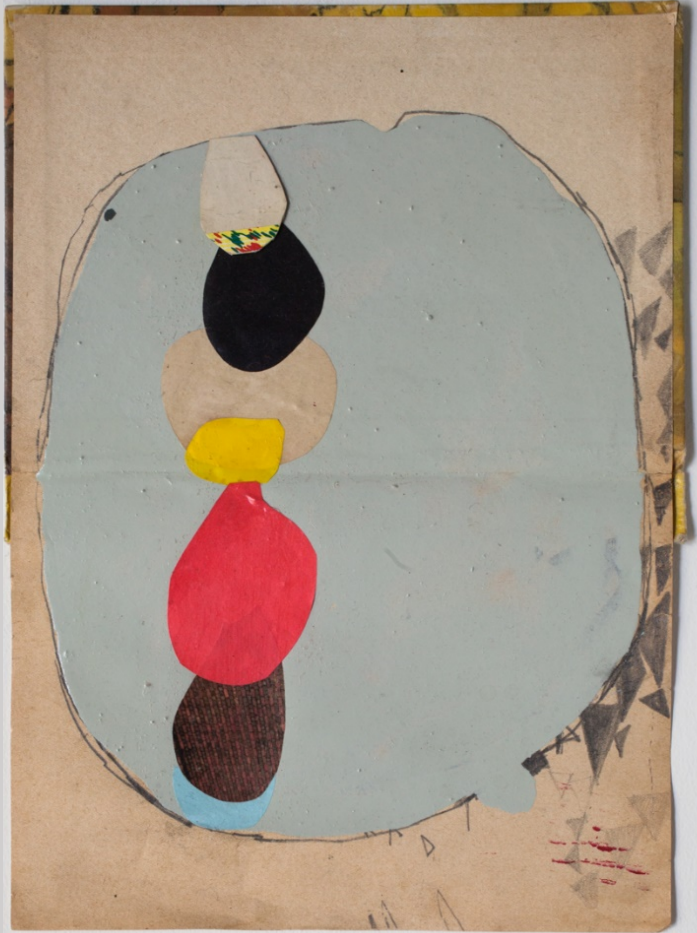


Fig... Mouth Balance 2 (29x21cm), Mouth Balance 1 (27x19cm), Mouth Balance 3 (26x21cm), Graphite, house-hold paint, paper on found book covers, 2018



Head J (25x20cm), Head E (23x18cm), Head D (23 x19cm), ink, tape, paper on found book covers, 2018

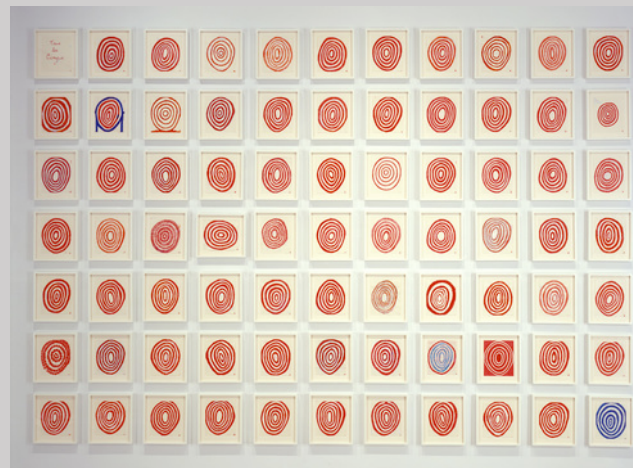
Methods and Processes 4

In the studio one of the most salient features of this body of work was the collective force of the heads as they called to each other and the viewer from their place on the wall. As the work moved from the studio to exhibition, however, it became clear that the awkward and imperfect nature of the work was at odds with the conventional white glass frames in which the drawings were shown. It became apparent in the Rabley Drawing Centre solo show *That Head That Head* (2016) that this form of curation formalised and separated the works from one another in a way that ran counter to the material dialogue and simultaneity that characterised their making.

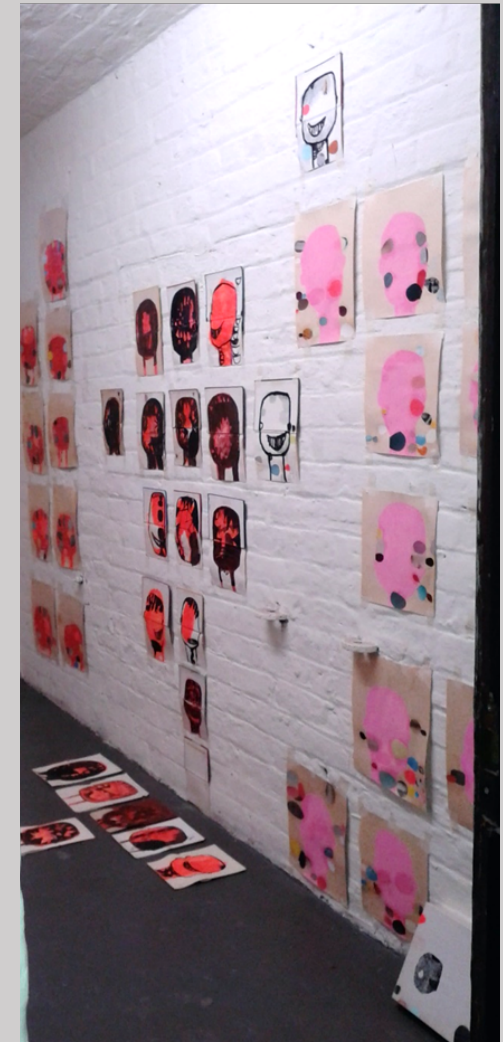
This curatorial dilemma can be seen in the presentation of serial works by artists such as Louise Bourgeois (2004). Overcoming the obstacles presented by the curation of the work thus became part of the practice, rather than a matter of retrospective dissemination. The Arts Council England funded *Prison Drawing Project* (Scarborough 2016) was a pivotal turning point in the presentation of the work. This pop-up exhibition took place over one weekend in February, with limited time to install it and the provision that no walls were to be damaged (drilled etc) during the install. The need to use temporary fixings and work quickly meant that the works were exhibited unframed and presented as they had emerged in the studio. These clusters reclaimed the work from the commercial polish of high art, reconnecting them with their materials and with them aesthetics of the everyday.



That Head, That Head, Solo Show,
Rabley Drawing Centre, Wiltshire (2016)



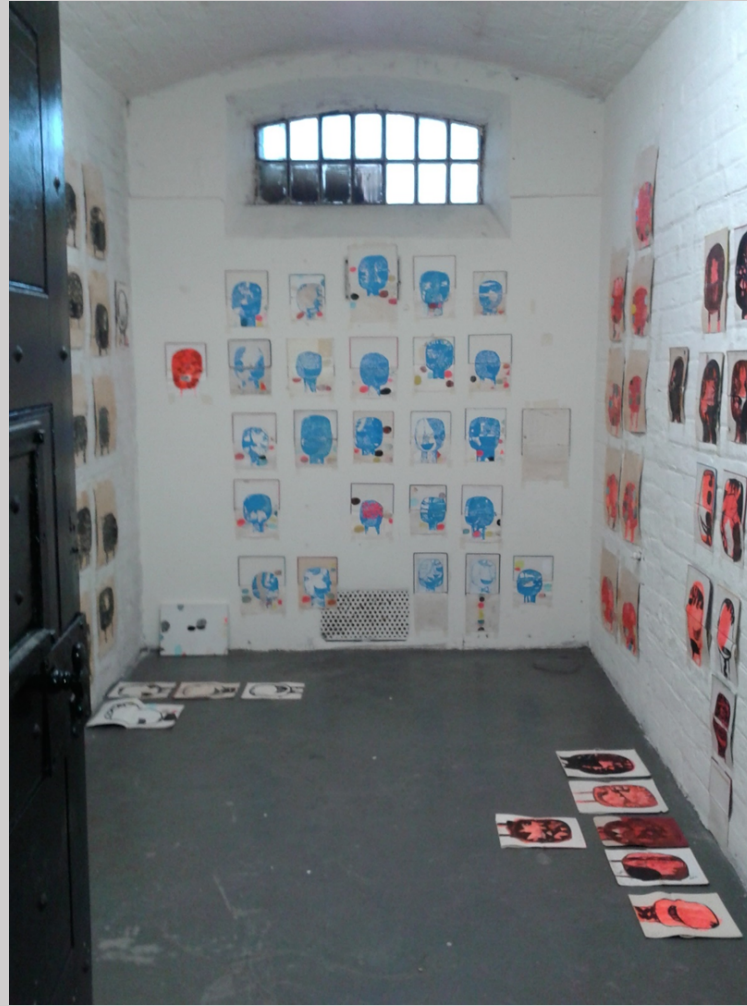
Louise Bourgeois, *Tous les Cinqe II,*
(2004), 76 mixed media drawings,
24.1 x 20.3 cm



The Prison Drawing Project,
Dean Road Prison, Scarborough,
2016



That Head, That Head,
Rabley Drawing Centre, Wiltshire, Sept 2016



The Prison Drawing Project,
Dean Road Prison, Scarborough, 2016



Platform A gallery is dedicated to artistic development in contemporary art through a sharing programme of exhibitions and performances. Located in the railway station of central Middlesbrough it is a cultural and educational hub for the culture team of the North East region of the UK and beyond, and commissions the work of emerging and established artists. Our objectives include nurturing and developing the work of talented artists, curators and writers and providing a space/ground for their careers internationally through introduction to established artists and relevant opportunities.

SOME SPACES LEFT

Sally Taylor

PLATFORM A
 The Arts Council England Gallery
 100-102 Railway Station, Central Road, Middlesbrough TS1 1BS
 Telephone: 01462 252 200
 Open Tuesday - Friday 10am - 4pm
www.platforma.org.uk

ARTS COUNCIL ENGLAND

9th November - 21st December 2017



Installation shots, *Some Spaces Left*, Solo Show, Platform A, Middlesbrough, Nov 2017- Jan 2018



Platform A gallery is dedicated to innovative developments in contemporary art through a diverse programme of exhibitions and performances. Located in the railway station of central Middlesbrough, it is a catalyst and advocate for the cultural life of the North East region of the UK and beyond, and represents the work of emerging and established artists. Our objectives include nurturing and developing the work of talented artists, curators and writers and providing a springboard for their careers internationally through introduction to established artists and relevant opportunities.

SOME SPACES LEFT

Sally Taylor

9th November – 21st December 2017

PLATFORM-A

Platform A Gallery
Middlesbrough Railway Station, Zetland Road, Middlesbrough, TS1 1EG
Telephone: 01642 252 091
Open: Tuesday - Friday 10am - 4pm
www.platformagallery.net

ARTS COUNCIL ENGLAND

Installation shot *Some Spaces Left*, Solo Show, Platform A, Middlesbrough, Nov 2017- Jan 2018 – work exhibited, publicity material

Methods and Processes 5

By the putting the heads back together for exhibition greater attention had been drawn to the significance of the gaps between drawings; to the unsaid that lies beneath their cacophonous cackle. The solo exhibition *Some Spaces Left* at Platform A, Middlesbrough (2017-18) interrogated the significance of this gap, exploring the compositional and social dynamic of the practice by grouping works in irregular frames and unframed. This curatorial strategy embodied the methods of the artist's Arts Council England funded project *Mentoring for Professional Development* (£9,235) which sought to break the day to day isolation in which the artist worked in rural North Yorkshire. The purpose of the funding was to enable Taylor to build on her existing connections within the drawing community through the Derwent and Jerwood drawing prizes to nurture her practice. Working with artists and curators (including Professor Anita Taylor, Dundee and Kate Brindley, Chief Curator at Chatsworth House) enabled Taylor to interrogate her aesthetic decisions and the art historical and social dialogues that enabled it. As such *Some Spaces Left* is a tangible representation of this project's desire to generate drawings by negotiating creative relationships with others through a non-verbal, inherently human medium (Dexter, 2005).



Drawing Projects UK, Wiltshire
Residency July 2016



Work exhibited, *Some Spaces Left*, Platform A, Middlesbrough,
Nov 2017- Jan 2018

Insights

This body of work transforms the lived experience of class and sexual difference into new forms of representation through drawing. Its insights are indebted to the rigorous interrogation of a single motif, the head, which has extended the reach of the materials utilised by this practice from pens and pencils, paper and collage to curating in the gallery space.

The execution of this motif rejects the trope of idealised 'celibate' artistic and intellectual labour, which has divided knowledge production from family life since the eighteenth century (Rousseau; 2008). By harvesting the energy of a studio shared with children, its awkward and raucous aesthetic reclaims and repurposes the 'instinctual physicality' of being that has been a central trope in the denigration of class and gender (Pollock: 1999). The vocabulary of brute form that marks these drawings, moreover, invokes the historical signifiers of social class; the 'blockheaded' and the unthinking herd of the 'masses' (Williams: 1988). As such it is a body of work that synthesises anxieties around artistic and intellectual legitimacy to affirm the creative and intellectual worth of interstitial difference.

The material decisions that underpin the making and exhibition of these drawings probe the limits of the fundamental proposition that drawing is an inherently social, non-verbal means of communication (Dexter: 2005). The dialogues between these drawings, and the art historical and creative communities that informed them enact a tireless imperative to reach out to others and provide a model with which to challenge cultural displacement born of prejudice.



Blue Head 2, Posca pen and collage on book cover, 25x19cm, 2016

References

Dexter, E., (2005), 'Introduction' in Jordan Kantor and Igor Zabel, *Vitamin D: New Perspectives in Drawing*, London: Phaidon.

Downs, S., et al, (2011). *Drawing Now: Between the Lines of Contemporary Art*, London: I B Tauris.

Bryson, N (2003). 'A Walk for A Walk's Sake.' In *The Stage of Drawing: Gesture and Act*, ed. Catherine de Zegher. New York and London: The Drawing Center, NY and Tate, London.

Hunter, S. (2016). *Robert Rauschenberg: Works, Writings and Interviews*, Barcelona: Ediciones Poligrafa

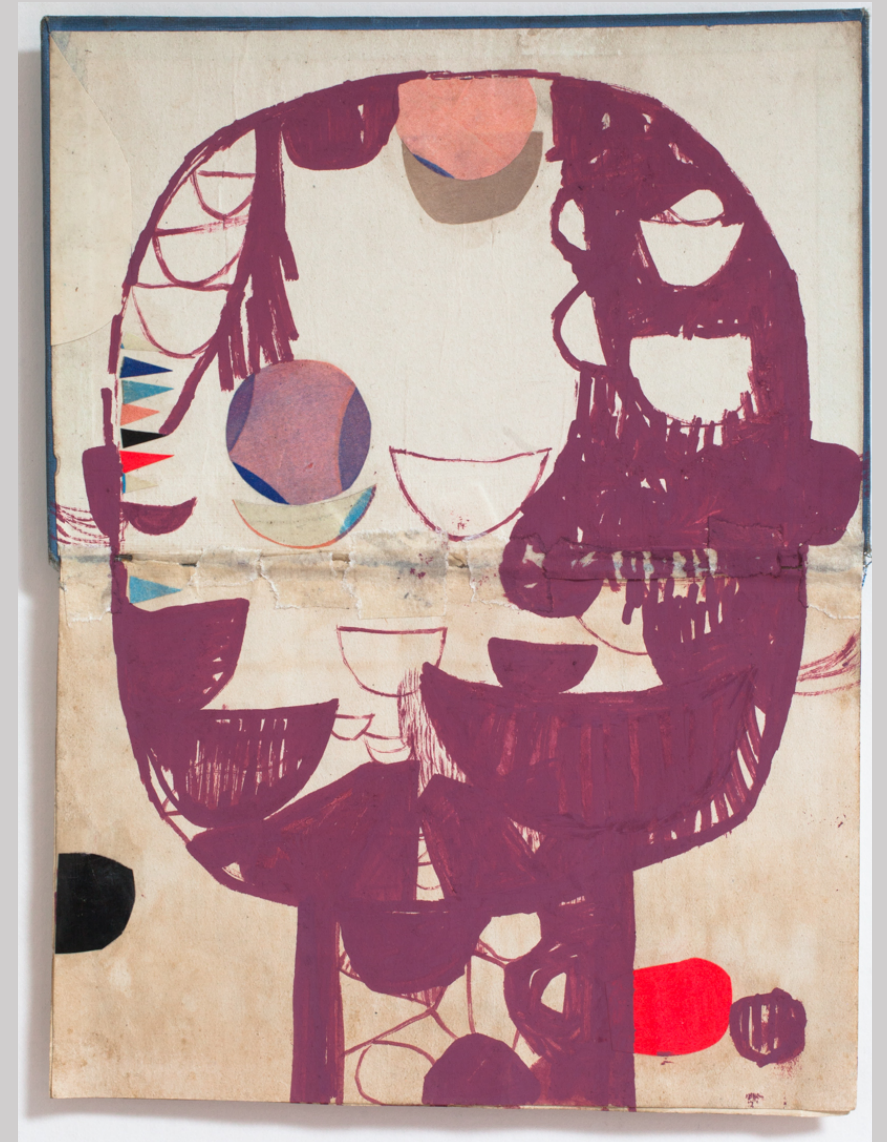
Meskimmon, M., & Sawdon, P., (2016). *Drawing Difference: Connections between Gender and Drawing*, London: I B Tauris.

Pollock, G., (1999). *Differencing the Canon: Feminist Desire and the Writing of Art's Histories*, London: Routledge.

Rousseau, J-J., (2008). *Confessions*, Patrick Coleman ed., trans Angela Scholar, Oxford: Open University Press.

Sillman, A., (2015). 'Shit Happens: Notes on Awkwardness', *Frieze*, November 2015.

Williams, R., (1988). *Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society*, London: Fourth Estate.



Confused Head 43, (24x18cm),
Posca pen, paper collage, tape and ink on book covers, 2016

Dissemination

Solo Exhibitions

- 2017-18 *Some Spaces Left*, Platform A, Middlesbrough, Teesside
2016 *That Head, That Head*, Rabley Contemporary Drawing Centre, Wiltshire

Group Exhibitions

- 2020 *The Far Away Nearby*, Rabley Drawing Centre, Wiltshire
2020 *Art Happens Here*, Crescent Arts, Scarborough, North Yorkshire
2020 *London Art Fair 2020*, Rabley Contemporary, London
2019-20 *Trinity Buoy Wharf Drawing Prize 2019* (and UK tour)
2019 *Fully Awake* (Overview of Contemporary Painting Practice in HE), Freelands Foundation, London
2019 *Art Happens Here (AHH Studio Collective)*, Ryedale Folk Museum, N. Yorkshire
2019 *London Art Fair 2019*, Rabley Contemporary, London
2019 *Original Print Fair 2019*, Royal Academy, London
2018 *Ink Art Fair*, Rabley Contemporary, Miami, USA
2018 *SelfScapes*, Dalby Forest, North Yorkshire
2018 *We are Ten*, The Bowery, Leeds
2017-18 *Jerwood Drawing Prize 2017* (and UK tour): Jerwood Space, London
2017 *State of Line: A Survey of Contemporary Drawing*, Artworks, Halifax, West Yorkshire
2017 *Distant Duo*, Staithes Studios Gallery, Staithes, North Yorkshire
2017 *London Art Fair*, Rabley Contemporary, London
2017 *Ink Art Fair*, Rabley Contemporary, Miami, USA
2017 *Drawing Matters*, York St John University, York



Head (Turquoise) (24x17), Ink,
paper on book cover, 2018

Dissemination

Group Exhibitions (continued)

- 2016 *London Art Fair*, Rabley Contemporary, London
- 2016 *Ink Art Fair*, Rabley Contemporary, Miami, USA
- 2016 *Human Transferral*, School House Gallery, York, North Yorkshire
- 2016 *The Prison Drawing Project*, Scarborough, North Yorkshire
- 2016 *London Art Fair*, Rabley Contemporary, London
- 2016 *Zwart-Wit*, Dutch House, Crayke, North Yorkshire
- 2015 *To Draw is to be Human*, Crescent Arts, Scarborough, North Yorkshire
- 2015 *Platform Open*, Morphets of Harrogate, Harrogate, North Yorkshire
- 2015 *To Draw is to be Human*, South Square Gallery, Bradford
- 2015 *Beyond Perception*, Exhibition and symposium, University of Aberdeen, Scotland
- 2015 *The Sketchbook Today*, Avenue Gallery, University of Northampton
- 2015 *London Art Fair*, Rabley Contemporary, London
- 2014-15 *Jerwood Drawing Prize 2014* (and UK tour): Jerwood Space, London, Prize-winner 'SPECIAL COMMENDATION'
- 2014 *Derwent Art Prize 2014* (and UK tour): Mall Galleries, London
- 2014 *Drawings*, White Room Priestleys, York, North Yorkshire
- 2014 *Paint Like You Mean It*, Interview 11, Edinburgh, Scotland



Head B (25x19cm), ink, paper
on book cover, 2018

Dissemination

Peer Review Articles/Catalogues

- 2020 *SelfScapes (Event 1 and 2)*, Dalby Forest and York St John University (funded by York St John University)
- 2019 *Trinity Buoy Wharf Drawing Prize 2019 Catalogue Short-list*
- 2017a *Sally Taylor – Head Drawings*, Catalogue. Including essay by Professor Anita Taylor – Director Jerwood Drawing Prize, Dean of Bath School of Art, Dr Vanessa Corby, Senior Lecturer York St John University and ‘In Conversation’ with Kate Brindley, Director of Collections and Exhibitions, Chatsworth House, Derbyshire; *Grants for the Arts*, Arts Council England (ISBN: 978-1-5272-1595-5)
- 2017b Corby, V., ‘The Affirmation of Social Class in the Drawings of Sally Taylor’, *Drawing: Research, Theory, History, Practice*, vol.2, no.2, pp. 363-374, DOI: 10.1386/drt.2.2.363_1
- 2017 *Jerwood Drawing Prize 2017 Catalogue*
- 2017 *State of Line: A Survey of Contemporary Drawing*, Artworks, Halifax, West Yorkshire
- 2016 Black, K., & O’Donnell, L et al, *The Prison Drawing Project*, Scarborough, North Yorkshire https://issuu.com/team_prison/docs/the_prison_drawing_project_issuu_op
- 2014 *Jerwood Drawing Prize 2014 Catalogue Short-list*
- 2014 *Derwent Art Prize 2014 Catalogue Short-list*
- 2014 *Paint Like You Mean It*, Interview Room 11, Edinburgh



External funders and partners



ART HAPPENS HERE

ARTISTS' FORUM & EXHIBITION PREVIEW
Tuesday 25 February

Artists' Forum: Woodend at 3.30
Exhibition Preview: Crescent Arts at 5.30

All are welcome and admission is free.



ART HAPPENS HERE SCARBOROUGH FORUM & EXHIBITION PREVIEW

Tuesday 25 February
Forum: 3.30pm - 5.00pm at Woodend
Exhibition preview: 5.30pm - 7.30pm
at Crescent Arts

How do we nurture emerging artistic talent and support our creative communities?

What ingredients are needed to create the conditions that encourage and enable artists to make, sustain and communicate their work; especially those living and working in rural locations?

New cultural strategies are being developed by local authorities across the region of North Yorkshire, so how can artists make their voices heard and influence strategic thinking?


Have your say at this forum for debate, led by Art Happens Here and Crescent Arts.

All are welcome - admission is free.

Woodend, The Crescent, Scarborough
North Yorkshire YO11 2PW

Crescent Arts, The Crescent, Scarborough,
North Yorkshire YO11 2PW

www.crescentarts.co.uk info@crescentarts.co.uk 01723 351461



Dissemination

Residencies & Public Engagement

- 2020 Organiser and Chair of *Art Happens Here – Artist Forum* for Ryedale / Scarborough Cultural Strategy consultant
- 2020 Residency at Dalby Forest, Forestry Commission (6 months) including exhibition and site-specific works
- 2019 *Fully Awake* (Invited panellist, overview of Contemporary Painting Practice in HE), Freelands Foundation, London
- 2018 Established *AHH Studio Collective* in Malton, North Yorkshire - artist studios (with support of Ryedale District Council)
- 2016 Residency, Drawing Projects UK, Trowbridge, Wiltshire
- 2016 Speaker at 'About Face' Research symposium, Hauser and Wirth, Somerset
- 2015 Selector for 'The Prison Drawing Project' Scarborough funded by Arts Council England
- 2015 Workshop Leader, *Jerwood Drawing Prize*, The Tetley, Leeds, Yorkshire

Websites

<https://sallytayloraceproject.wordpress.com/>

<http://www.sallytaylor.net/>

Social Media Coverage

<https://twitter.com/SalTaylorArtist>

<https://twitter.com/SalTaylorArtist/media>

https://twitter.com/an_artnews/status/512310102909808640

<https://twitter.com/platfmagallery/status/928897831758434304>

<https://twitter.com/RableyGallery/status/1086898603904380933>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A8FBmXtQRME&t=3376s>

https://twitter.com/kenn_taylor/status/569837260453117952/photo/1



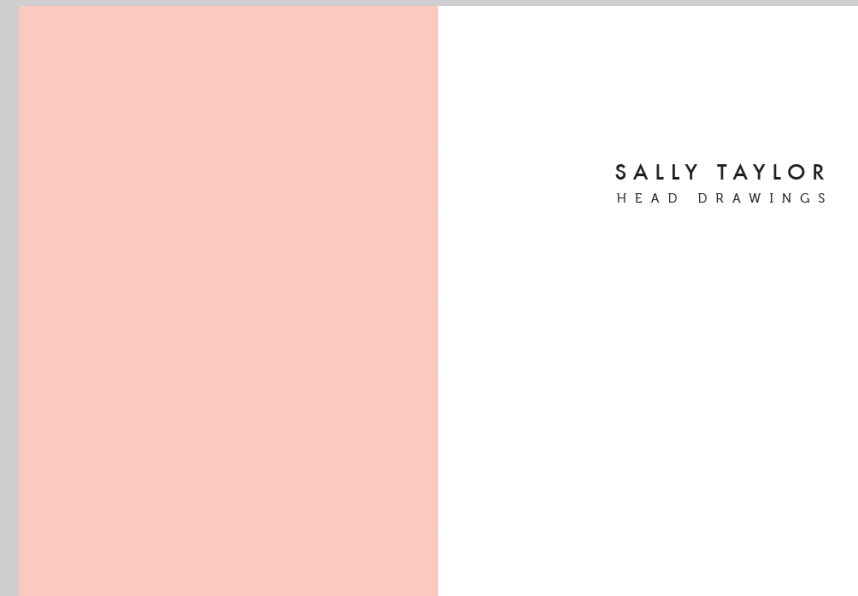
Imagined Environments Colour 1
(23x27cm), Found papers, graphite, 2018

External funders and partners



Appendices

1. Sally Taylor, *Head Drawings*, (2017) Exhibition Catalogue Platform A, Middlesbrough. Published outcome of Arts Council England funded project 'Mentoring for Professional Development' with contributions by Professor Anita Taylor, Bath Spa; Kat Brindley, Chief Curator, Chatsworth House and Vanessa Corby, YSJU.
2. State Of Line Catalogue 2017
3. Fully Awake 5.6: Contemporary Painting across HE, Freelands Foundation London. Curated by Manchester Metropolitan University. 2019
4. Drawing Projects UK, Wiltshire Residency July 2016
5. Corby, V. (2017), 'The affirmation of social class in the drawings of Sally Taylor', *Drawing: Research, Theory, Practice*, 2:2, pp. 363–74, doi: 10.1386/drtp.2.2.363_1





OPEN BOOK: THE DRAWINGS OF SALLY TAYLOR

'What is it to draw? How do we do it?

It is the act of clearing a path for oneself through an invisible iron wall.'

This quote from Van Gogh sits handwritten on Sally Taylor's studio wall, one of a series of prompts for her actions. Reflecting her naturally questioning approach, it provides an incentive for the leap into the unknown, to the commitment of marks on a surface, to finding images, and to seeking resonance through material means to expression and exploration of what it is to be.

An outpouring of activity, made in quick succession, these drawings are firmly set in the present tense and experience. They are both singular and serial in form, the insistent motif of a head imposed and imprinted on found surfaces, often the insides of discarded book covers. The pages of these repositories for knowledge - for fact or fiction - traduced, discarded, emptied out, leaving just a carapace.

This palimpsest of former purpose is key to Sally Taylor's work as she inscribes these faded surfaces. Re-purposed rather than abandoned, the book covers become a precious and rare material, like vellum or parchment, to be over-written. A fine, paradoxical, line is drawn between preciousness and worthlessness as the books reduced to a skeletal form become the 'ground' for her responses through mark-making and collage. As she fills these voids, heads jostling for attention appear as specimens and spectres. Left open, or closed, the covers retain and imply the format of a private communication space for her facts and fictions, dreaming distilled through drawing. Here, text is subordinated to the drawn language, a fundamental means to understand and to re-interpret the world.

Experimental, exploratory, playful and iterative, Sally Taylor's ideas are rehearsed and tested, again and again. Images are revealed to the artist in the solitude of her studio, a place where it is possible to scrawl and utter the most private of thoughts, to find and to think through making without recourse to explanation or question by others. Masking tape, brown paper, marker pen, cardboard, newsprint, scraps of coloured paper, provisional makeshift materials all lend meaning. Posca pen absorbed into worn endpapers; collage interrupting historied

grounds. Momentary glimpses of expression and emotion are diary-like, and the insistent format of the book offers the potential to give permission to disclose or withdraw these fragments of innermost thoughts from view. A material engagement between hand, eye and heart at play.

Coloured blobs, markings, tape, thick painted lines, cut out shapes all amalgamate to suggest head shapes, ears, lumps, and blockages. Denser mark-making has supplanted the more finely drawn, animated lines of the open mouths of earlier works. These were orifices of demand and imposition – seemingly shouting, screaming, grimacing, laughing loudly. The jangling ‘triangles of danger’ have dispersed, retreated, and remnants of empty, hollow smiles, grimaces and kisses now seem to linger on the surface of these clearly identifiable heads. No longer a visual equivalent to the actions of the mouths, conveying and releasing information and expression, the book covers now perpetually promise (or threaten) to fold whole heads in two, to fold them in on themselves, to hide their impudent presences from view. Pitched open, these images of heads are collected and presented together as families. Consequently, a vibrant field of colour – king’s blue or a deep purple-brown – emanates from gallery walls. This head and that head individually set in frames, life-sized yet disembodied, forming a disconnected crowd of mute accomplices. Inviting the viewer to compare each image, each head, to interpret the visual traces and residues of thoughts and anxieties that ultimately expose and affirm a human presence and questioned experience.

A new sequence of works on single sheets of brown paper has recently appeared, perhaps indicating a diminishing necessity for the physical format of the open book. Luminously pink silhouettes stand for individual heads, with the surface of the paper agitated by cut out coloured circles and oval discs. Like opaque speech-bubbles or floating particles, the focus shifts to these interruptions to the surface that agitate and surround the centrally anchored image. Other drawings, with densely black profiles and incised mouths, are brusque and certain in their realisation. Finding an equivalent to the ‘said’ and the ‘unsaid’ underlies these pictorial solutions.

Expanding beyond the scale of the novel and the written word, these images still draw on the graphic language of cartoons, and although narrative device is not a significant element the subjects they also bring to mind the frontal, masked figures of Sidney Nolan’s Ned Kelly, or the serial drawings of objects and figures by Philip Guston. Self-referential and self-contained, they do not aim to ‘relive a past emotion’ like Louise Bourgeois, and there is no weaving of text or other external reference to situate these moments as in the compositions of Rose Wylie. The drawings are direct in their emotional register, from pathos to wry humour. Self-deprecating portraits, they are an unequivocal and autographical record.

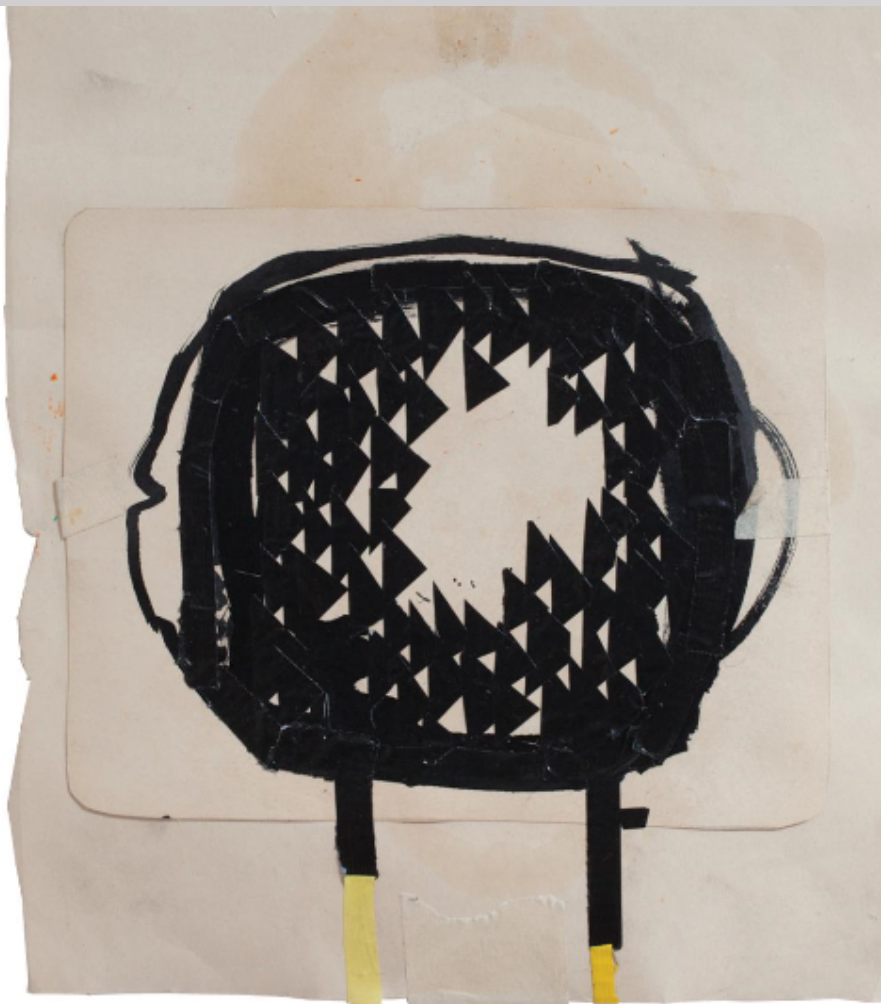
Drawing and making are fundamental means for Sally Taylor to understand and interrogate her world. Inspired by her young children, found objects, painted stones, plasticine, cardboard boxes, elements of furniture, are now incorporated as surfaces and structures. A more fluid set of associations between these elements and forms leading to an expanded scale and spatial field; the containment by frame is now in question.

Over the last two years, Sally Taylor has been supported by a Grant for the Arts Award from Arts Council England to develop a self-designed programme of mentoring to facilitate both the development of her work and an understanding of how other artists sustain and develop their creative lives within the scope of the art world. Her inquisitive approach has not only led her to meet artists, curators and museum professionals, but has resulted in a number of exploratory collaborative projects, from the Prison Drawing Project in Scarborough to a short, intense residency with five artist colleagues at Drawing Projects UK, entitled ‘To draw is to be human’¹. Through this shared testing of creative endeavour with likeminded artists, she has been able to generate a new open framework for discovery and to find a camaraderie essential to forming a resilient working practice for the future.

¹ Louise Bourgeois cited by Roger Malbert in *Drawing People: The Human Figure in Contemporary Art, 2005* (Thames & Hudson Ltd) p.28

² Emma Deater (2005) ‘To draw is to be human’ in *Vitamins D, 2005* (Haidon: London) pp.6-10

Professor Anita Taylor is the Dean of Bath School of Art and Design at Bath Spa University and the founding Director of the Jerwood Drawing Prize. She has been a mentor to Sally Taylor during 2016 - 2017 in a Grants for the Arts funded project.



'IN CONVERSATION' WITH KATE BRINDLEY

Kate: Your solo project at Platform A seems to mark an important moment for you as it's 6 years since your last solo publication and a lot has happened in your life and practice during that time, not least having two children. How would you say your work has developed in that time and how would you describe the work you have chosen to show?

Yes, it has been a very busy time both professionally and in my personal life. It's required a lot of shifts in priorities from having always worked full time to trying to fit work around children. I feel society expects children to fit around work commitments, often at their and our disadvantage. I have tried to be stoical and take the children with me – hard work, but it's made me happier than leaving them behind. It's unfair that the parents of young children don't have more freedom to involve their children in their working lives. I feel it's a societal problem in not seeing how inter-generational dialogues and interactions can benefit us all. Watching babies play and children draw has reinforced such a lot for me. Watching how they encounter new materials and the freedom and lack of inhibitions has been a constant fascination. I have made lots of work throughout this period – vast amounts of drawing, all quite small scale as opposed to the work before the children arrived. I think the 'modular' nature of this scale and the 'directness' of drawing have been the processes that have been conducive to my environments. The 'head' motif appeared soon after my son was born. It was about a contained anxiety. The head as a vessel and a container for 'stuff'. The solo show I had at Rabley Drawing Centre last year was wonderful for me in terms of building a very large body of work – approximately 80 'head' drawings that I selected from for the exhibition. Also, the Prison Drawing Project in Scarborough was a pivotal moment in terms of reviewing presentation methods and enjoying less formal means of showing work including exhibiting drawings in progress alongside more resolved works.

Kate: We have been working together for this last 2 years through an Arts Council supported development project which I know from our conversations has been important to you as an artist. What were your goals for the project and have you achieved them?

It's been a huge privilege to achieve the Grants for Arts Award. It's been an invaluable process for me in terms of being able to converse with such knowledgeable and generous individuals.

I would really like to thank everyone who has given their time and energy in helping me with the project and to those who have offered me opportunities over these last few years. My goals were both specific and open at the same time. There were definite constraints in terms of working with key mentors and having a pre-determined amount of sessions to meet up or speak on the phone. Ultimately, my aims were to be as receptive to advice and guidance as possible and to be open to whatever opportunities came my way, trusting in the process itself to bring things to my attention. I hoped that by connecting with key individuals (with shared values and interests) it would raise my ambitions and help my confidence to grow in terms of the work I want to make. Being able to realise my ambitions and expectations for my work has been a key aim throughout. It's been a wonderful experience from meeting you at the Arnolfini to discuss our shared aims and objectives to fulfilling a Residency at Drawing Projects UK with Anita Taylor. I have a wealth of experiences and conversations to fall back on for many years to come.

Kate: A key element of the project has been your relationship with other artists, can you describe how that has developed and the impact it has had for you?

This aspect of the project has had a profound impact on me. I have had the privilege to visit studios and talk to like-minded practitioners with shared concerns or links through drawing. I have appreciated the candid way we have spoken about the problems in progressing a career, or the nature of how showing work has changed over the past 20 years with the advance of Art Fairs and globalisation. I have had feedback on my current work and some really useful conversations about new directions. The generosity of artists to visit me in my studio has been unprecedented and this has really helped nurture this new body of work. The open and honest discussions have highlighted my own insecurities alongside pinpointing my own sense of conviction. Ultimately, there has been a generous spirit throughout and I am hoping I have established friendships that will continue far beyond the time constraints of the project.

Kate: During these last 7 years I also know you have relocated and settled in North Yorkshire which has also had a profound effect on you. Developing your new studio has been part of that and has influenced the show at Platform A, can you talk about what that has meant to you?

I am fortunate to have found a wonderful studio space that allows me to work across several bodies of work simultaneously. It's an agricultural building just outside Stonegrave and I love thinking of how Herbert Read lived just over the hill from where I work. This has also had an impact on the writing by Dr Vanessa Corby from York St John University who has equally

enjoyed the geographical links. The agricultural building itself seems to offer something in terms of being more playful with the less formal arrangement of drawings. Also the spaces have allowed for mass outpourings of drawings to be seen and shown side by side and this seriality has had an impact on the work made. The noises and the landscape are a stark contrast to my spaces of ten years down in Portsmouth which were always in the centre of the city.

The body of work I have chosen to exhibit at Platform A contains some drawings which are presented with less formal presentation techniques where I am beginning to enjoy playing with the gaps and spaces in between them. Building larger assemblages that embrace these pauses, gaps and spaces are emerging and here I can allow the blank areas and the empty book covers to hold as much visual significance as the ones that contain intense drawing within them. I am enjoying dealing with the 'said' and the 'unsaid'. I am interested in what I can do with small found objects, painted stones, tiny incidents that happen in the studio as a part of making the more formal, 'finished' works. Conversely, I still feel the formal, white box frame is important to me at times, but 'playing' with the frame and what it can do appears to be one of my next areas for exploration. My attachment to the box frame is a purely visual thing – the aesthetic still excites me and there's nothing gimmicky about it. It offers a very pure aesthetic.

Kate: Teaching remains a central part of your work and you juggle this alongside your studio time and being the mother of two young children - why does that remain important?

Looking after children dominates the vast majority of my time but I see all the advantages of this. Something about prioritizing the children has benefitted my practice. I learn so much from how I see the children engage with materials in such an uninhibited way. Watching them draw with Posca pens (a medium that has been key to the work made over the last few years) enables me to connect back to that childlike encounter. Conversely, it is very frustrating and there have been moments when something important has been lost or destroyed. Having to work differently – sometimes short bursts and with more time constraints has been essential. But it has also offered a great focus – making the most of the ring-fenced studio time and making it count for something.

My teaching (currently at York St John University) also feels crucial in bringing in new experiences and energies. Teaching, for me, is so often about communicating an honesty of how it actually feels to be in the studio making work. I really enjoy being part of a dialogue with students. I never tire of seeing them rediscover what brought them to study art in the first place – more often than not, it's about a freedom to engage with materials and to encounter them with an openness and embrace the uncertainties as to how the work will develop.

Kate: I'm curious having seen how your work has developed in the time I've known you. What is next in your enquiry?

I am enjoying playing with the drawings alongside more sculptural forms – be it found objects, cardboard boxes or simply through fresh approaches to the presentation of the drawings. I am still thinking of the Cy Twombly and Franz West show I saw in Munich back in 2014. Recently, I enjoyed seeing Robert Rauschenberg's Cardboards. I am interested in repeating forms and these forms slowly altering in terms of their form and meaning. Grasping on to a particular motif and repeating it still appears to be my ongoing process. The repetition and careful engagement with one motif really motivates me. I would like to get back to working on a large scale and painting alongside drawing. Opportunities to exhibit large bodies of work would be the right trajectory.

Kate Brindley was a mentor to Sally Taylor during 2016 and 2017 in a Grants for the Arts funded project. Kate is currently Head of Exhibitions and Collections at Chatsworth House, Derbyshire. Her previous roles have included Director, Arnolfini, Bristol and Director, MIMA – Middlesbrough Institute of Modern Art, Middlesbrough.



GOING ALONG TOGETHER: DRAWING AND THE CURATION OF THE WORK OF SALLY TAYLOR

This short essay addresses the tangible relationship between Sally Taylor's Arts Council England Mentoring Project and the artworks and exhibitions that it has enabled. It makes the case that the form her ACE bid took emerged from pressing questionings about how Taylor's drawings come into being and are encountered in the social world. This text draws on the writing of British anarchist, art historian and poet Sir Herbert Read and anthropologist Tim Ingold to argue that the production and curation of Taylor's new work is a performative index of the inherently social apparatus of her Mentoring Project.

Joining with one another in the studio

The starting point of this essay is the shift in Taylor's practice over the course of the 2016-2017 ACE Project. It is a movement through which questions latent in the works' production have come to the foreground via its curation. In 2011 Taylor's practice had been working through what she called the 'mouth motif' which formed the substance of her solo exhibition at the Ryedale Folk Museum. The exhibition catalogue essay, accompanied by an image from Taylor's studio, began by referring to the crowd-like combined effect of these drawings as an assault of silent yet raucous voices. These gobby, mute but articulate drawings mobilised kitsch references and an aggressive, expressive vocabulary of child-like mark making. All of these elements set them up against the discourse of Conceptualism, which had dominated contemporary art since the 1970s. The impetus to that intervention lay in Taylor's working-class background, which made her acutely aware the privilege assigned to intellectualism over materials in the arts. A key motivation for Taylor therefore was the knowledge that specialist language often functions as a barrier between the arts and wider audiences. While the studio posed questions about the 'masses', the presentation of individual drawings for exhibition offered a very different experience however.¹

Thus a tension was beginning to emerge between the collective making and display of Taylor's drawings in the studio and framing them individually for exhibition. As the artist's young son grew into a toddler and she began to work with POSCA pens, the disembodied mouths that filled her drawings gave way to a sustained engagement with Confused Heads. The human nature of her drawings thus became more marked and variations of colour, line, material and

surface began to form communities amongst the crowds of drawings that populated Taylor's studio. When tacked to the wall unframed, Taylor's works sat in conversation with one another; the viewer could wander through the visual jibber-jabber that simultaneously revealed the similarities and differences of the drawings' co-emergent personalities.

Once mounted and framed, however, the uniform gaps and clean straight edges intercede in the dialogue between drawings. The frame does not silence the chatter of the drawings completely but it certainly ruptures their lateral focus, shifting their attention to the viewer who now stands before individual personages rather than a community that exceeds the sum of their parts. The typical movement of the work from studio to gallery was thus transformed into a pressing curatorial dilemma integral to the work's ability to communicate with its audience. The work Taylor curated for the collaborative exhibition 'To Draw is to be Human' at Drawing Projects, Trowbridge and the Platform A exhibition in Middlesbrough, actively resist this separation however, grouping head drawings in large frames on grounds of found paper. The absence of clean white edges open up the lines of communication between Taylor's drawings, but also underpin the significance of the negative spaces between those heads as a key dimension in the work. Rather than simply blanks between drawings they act also as spaces of possibility; room for what is yet to be made, known or encountered or gulfs that will simply remain.

These aesthetic decisions embody the debt to and inextricable relationship with the other that makes us human. They register the support but also the strife that brings artistic practices into being in communities for communities. In the words of social anthropologist Tim Ingold they reveal the process of 'interstitial differentiation' through which 'difference continually arises from within the midst of joining with in the ongoing sympathy of going along together'.²

Mentoring beyond the network

Ingold's vision of the social in which the lives of humans and non-humans are 'joined with one another' enables this essay to not only argue what is embodied in the emergence and display of Taylor's head drawings, but also how we might think differently about the operations of her ACE Project as a 'networking' activity.³

The basic premise of Taylor's ACE application was a simple one; she had worked for a number of years and established a strong reputation for her practice through numerous appearances in the Jerwood Drawing Prize and solo exhibitions at prestigious venues such as the Rabley Drawing Centre (2016). She came to know, support and be supported by artists engaged with drawing in the Yorkshire region and beyond through participation in group exhibitions such

as *To Draw is to be Human* (2016), 20-21 Visual Arts Centre (2016) and Scarborough Prison Drawing Project (2016) with Andy Black, Kate Black, Tracy Himsforth and Lucy O'Donnell. On a day to day basis, however, Taylor works in isolation. In great part this was due to the location of her studio in rural North Yorkshire. Apart from students who would occasionally come over from York St John University twenty miles away, visitors were few and far between; unless that is you count the chickens that wander about outside or the swallows known to fly about the studio's rafters in summer. For many the picture I am painting is that of an artistic idyll but the lack of heating in winter, demands made by the motherhood of two small children and lack of peer support is a harsh reality that would test even the most resilient practitioners. As Taylor therefore lacked a consistent exchange with an immediate community her ACE Mentoring Project endeavoured to create and bring such a community to her and, crucially take her to it. The lynch pin of that community would be Professor Anita Taylor, also an essayist in this publication, Executive Dean of Bath Spa School of Art & Design and Director of the Jerwood Drawing Prize. The artist has known Anita Taylor for the past 18 years and together with Kate Brindley, now Director of Collections and Exhibitions at Chatsworth, they worked to set goals and create opportunities through introductions that would enable Taylor's practice to flourish. While the ACE bid articulated those activities under the banner of networking, I hesitate to describe it in those terms. That reluctance stems in great part from Lawrence Alloway's influential essay 'Network: The Art World Described as a System' (1973, 1984). In that text Alloway describes the art world as a 'communication network' which packaged art from the studio for distribution to the public in galleries and museums and critique by art historians or critics. Success in this scenario depended on the artist's participation within the network, which in turn relied upon the ability to participate in the exchange of 'information.'¹⁴ For Alloway art was made up of two types of information, 'special characteristics' which are 'unique' and bespoke the style and name of the artist, and those that are 'repeatable', that is which are 'transmissible to other artists'.¹⁵ Participation in the network is dependent on the strategic assimilation of what is 'of the moment' and the production of nominally different outcomes that can be readily identified by the market.¹⁶ Within this economy our relationship with art and others is therefore instrumentalized and driven by self-interest.

It is my contention that this framework commits a kind of violence to Taylor's project, whose rationale can be better approached via Herbert Read's reminiscences of Unit 1. In the essay 'A Nest of Gentle Artists', (1962) Read described the coming together of Hepworth, Nash, Nicholson, Moore and others in the 1930s as 'a spontaneous association of men and women drawn together by common sympathies, shared seriousness and some kind of group criticism. There were no polemics and no programme.'¹⁷ Of particular note is Read's recollection of Nash's letter to the Times that stated:

The peculiar distinction of Unit 1 is that it is not composed of, let us say, three individuals and eight imitators, but of eleven individuals. And yet there is still a quality of mind, of spirit perhaps, which unites the work of these artists, a relevance apparent enough to any intelligent perception.¹⁸

As Read concluded; 'there was a prevailing good temper [in Unit 1], an atmosphere in which art could grow.'¹⁹

Read's generosity leads me back to the writings of Ingold, for he too has described the way art 'grows' by the 'joining' of lives 'with' materials.²⁰ In his lecture *On Human Correspondence* (2014), Ingold makes clear that 'concrete form does not issue from ideas' or information.²¹ He questions the notion of a world comprised of discrete individuals, or 'blobs' as he terms them, whose relationships are governed by self-interest and modelled on the operations of the market. In the market, Ingold asks the audience 'it is what changes hands that matters not the hands themselves. The handshake seals the contract but is the contract not a binding of lives in itself?'²² As he points out the etymological root of the term 'contract' unites 'con' meaning together and 'trahere' meaning 'to draw or pull.'²³

It is therefore in the spirit of Ingold and Read that I situate Sally Taylor's ACE Mentoring Project. It recognises the way in which art is drawn from the fabric of the social: grown via the joining of lives and materials. The performance of that relational process by the work's aesthetic and material operations, which are underscored by the artist's latest curatorial decisions is to bring their debt to others to the foreground of Taylor's practice.

¹⁴ Corby, V., 'Say What You See: The Drawings of Sally Taylor', in *Sally Taylor Drawings*, (Byedale Folk Museum, 2011), p.5.

¹⁵ For a further consideration of Taylor's work and the question of the masses see Corby, V., 'The Affirmation of Social Class in the Drawings of Sally Taylor', *Drawing: Research, Theory, Practice*, Vol.2, No. 2, pp.377-388.

¹⁶ Ingold, T., 'On human correspondences', *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*, 2006, 23, 13.

¹⁷ Ingold, T., *Making: Anthropology, Archaeology, Art and Architecture*, (London, 2013), pp.20-22.

¹⁸ Alloway, L., *Network Art and the complex present*, (Michigan, 1984), p.3.

¹⁹ Alloway, L., p.8.

²⁰ Alloway, L., pp.8-9.

²¹ Alloway, L., pp.8-9.

²² Read, H., *A Nest of Gentle Artists* (1962) in Read, H., and Thistlewood, D., eds., *Herbert Read: A British Voice of World Art*, (London, 1993), p.61.

²³ Nash, P. quoted in Read, p.61.

²⁴ Read, p.61.

²⁵ Ingold, T., *Making: Anthropology, Archaeology, Art and Architecture*, (London, 2013), pp.20-22.

¹⁰⁰ Ingold, T. 'On human correspondences,' Husley Memorial Lecture, Royal Anthropological Institute, (2014) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1vq5a04wBU> (Accessed 01/02/2016).

¹⁰¹ Tim Ingold, (2014).

¹⁰² Tim Ingold, (2014).

Dr. Vanessa Corby trained as a painter in the early 1990s before undertaking a PhD in the feminist history and criticism of the visual arts at Leeds (2002). Her research mobilises the material operations of art practice to rethink its discourses and histories. She has written extensively on the work of Eva Hesse (Prestel, 2006, I B Tauris, 2010) and is currently working on a new book entitled *Making and the Social Animal* (2020). She is Senior Lecturer in the Theory, History and Practice of Fine Art at York St John University.



Images

- P4** Studio, 2017
- P8** Confused Head 50, Posca pen and collage on book cover, 2017
- P9** Confused Head 43, Posca pen and collage on book cover, 2016
- P10** Confused Head 42, Posca pen and collage on book cover, 2016
- P11** Confused Head 36, Posca pen and collage on book cover, 2016, Jerwood Drawing Prize 2017
- P12** Confused Head 46, 39, 37, 38, Posca pen and collage on book cover, 2016
- P13** Confused Head 34, 24, 22, 32, Posca pen and collage on book cover, 2016
- P14** Head 8, Ink and gaffer tape on found paper, 2016
- P18** Blue Heads, State of Line: A Survey of Contemporary Drawing, Artworks, Halifax, 2017
- P21** Head 7, 1, 10, 2, 6, 9, 3, 4, 5, Ink and gaffer tape on found paper, 2016
- P22** Blue Head 1 & 4, Posca pen and collage on book cover, 2016
- P23** Blue Head 12 & 10, Posca pen and collage on book cover, 2016
- P24** Blue Head 3, Posca pen and collage on book cover, 2016
- P25** Head Shapes 1, Ink and collage on book cover, 2016 and Blank Book Cover, 2017
- P31** Paper Collage, 2017
- P32** Studio, 2017
- P33** Studio, 2017

I would like to thank all who contributed to the project and offered their support including:

Arts Council England, Professor Anita Taylor, Kate Brindley, Yvette Turnbull at Ryedale District Council, Dr Vanessa Corby, Tony Charles at Platform A, Meryl Ainslie at Rabley Drawing Centre, Daphne Wright, Richard Forster, William Tillyer, Matt Watkins at Parafin, Kate Black, Lucy O'Donnell, Andy Black, Tracy Himsworth, Rebekka Kill and York St John University, Serena Partridge, Lyn Wait, Sally Coulthard, Rachel Renwick, Victoria Harley, Phil Grundon, Patrick at In Print Malton and all my family.

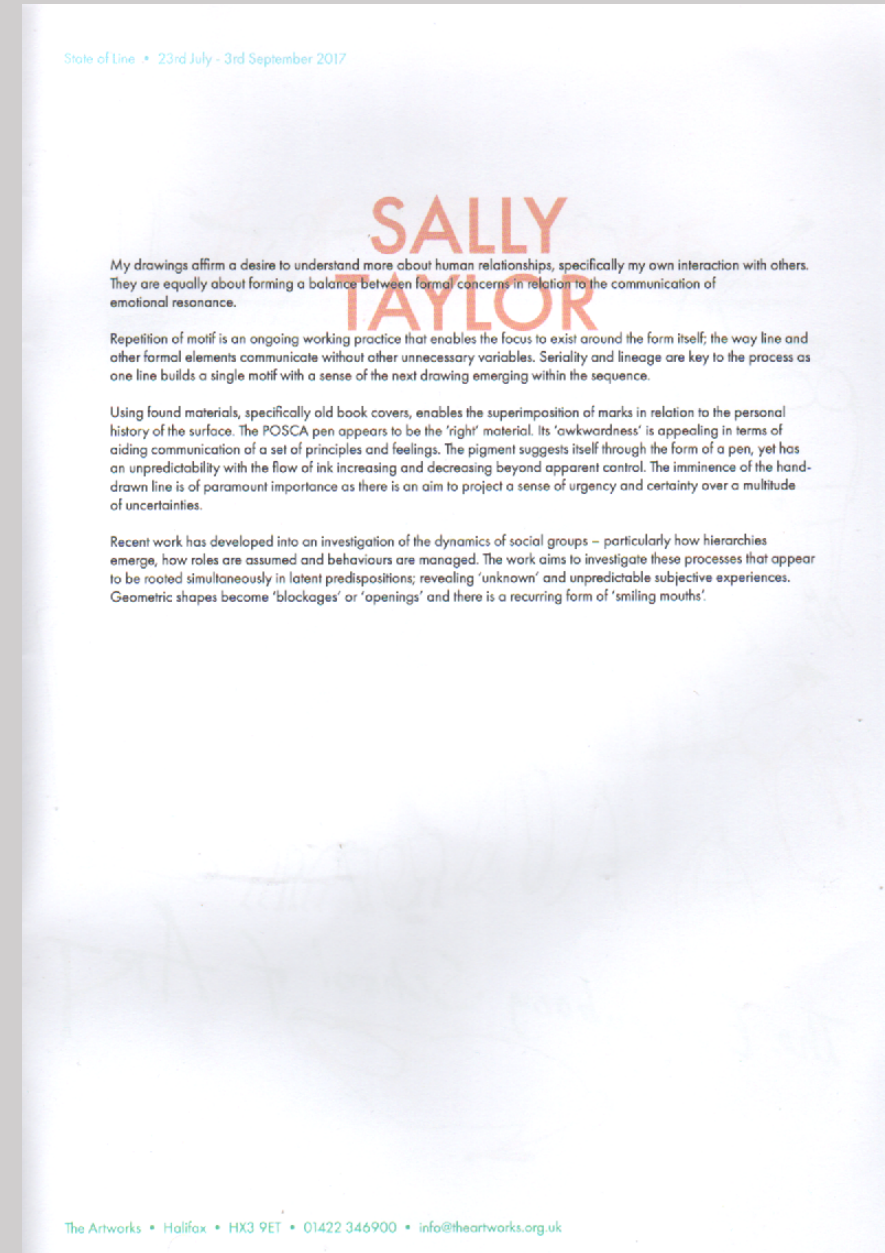
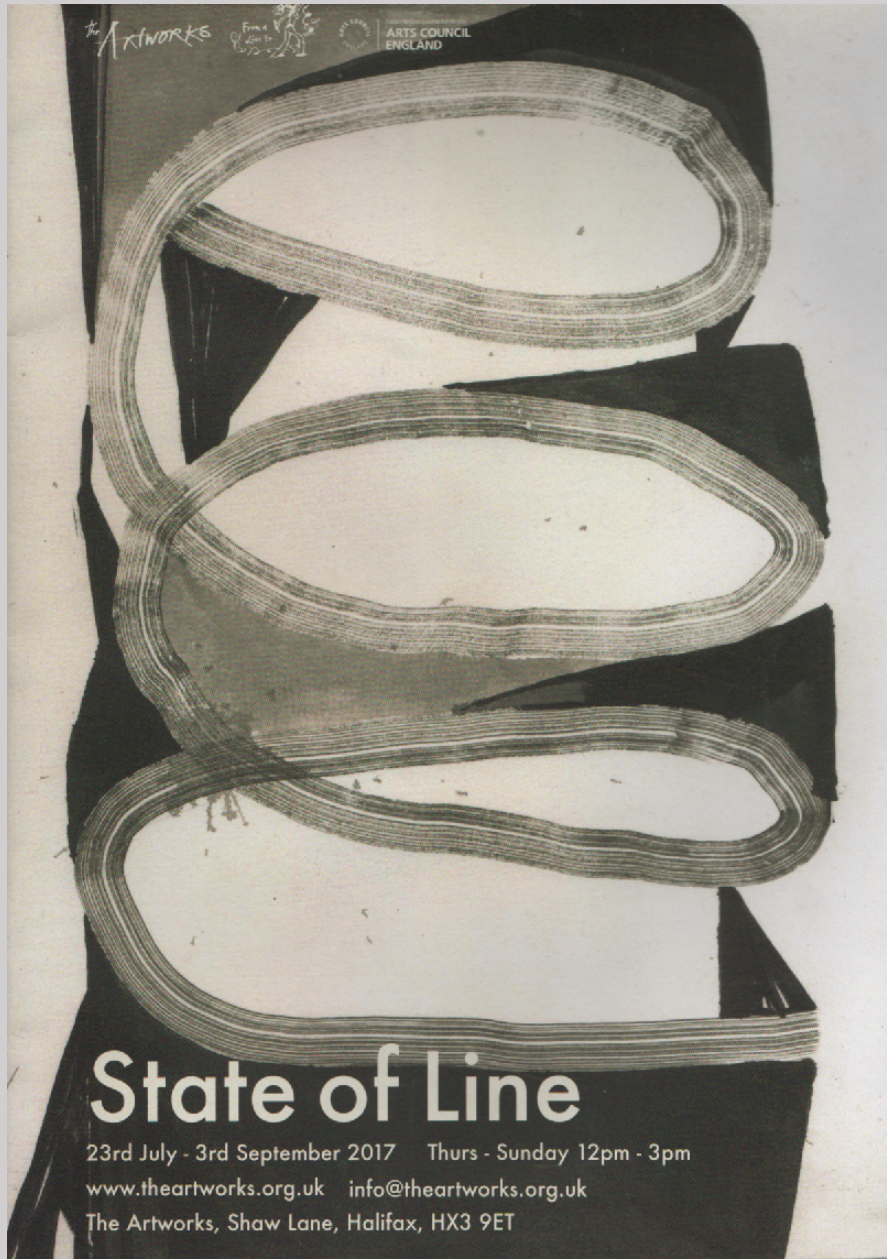
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ISBN: 978-1-5272-1595-5



Supported using public funding by
**ARTS COUNCIL
ENGLAND**







Confused Head 46
Sally Taylor, 2018
acrylic paint, found objects
and paper collage on book cover
24 x 18cm

Sally Taylor with Gerry Davies and Kirsty Boutle

I met Gerry Davies in my first year of study as he was my studio tutor on the BA course at Lancaster University. At this early stage I felt out of my depth with very little experience, confidence in making or knowledge compared to many of my peers who had passed through Foundation years. I can remember catalogues thrown in my direction from Amanda Faulkner, Susan Rothenberg, Philip Guston and Tony Bevan. We talked about making drawings and paintings that were 'convincing'; works that had 'conviction'. I found this empowering and found my confidence to make work about my own struggles to make sense of the world around me; to communicate direct, lived experience without feeling it was irrelevant to others. He helped me to make the distinctions between my own experience and wider, universal concerns.

Kirsty Boutle was a student keen to make the most of opportunities. She had an instinctive feeling about what seemed relevant for the development of her practice. Wholly committed and prolific, she stood out as someone who would sustain a practice in the long-term. She spent several days with me at my studio as part of work-based learning – this happened to coincide with a significant period in my own life – I had just found out I was pregnant with my first child. She didn't seem daunted by my unruly scrawlings all over the studio walls. I have nominated her to be part of this exhibition several years after we worked together in my studio, but just as she has given birth to her baby daughter.

Sally Taylor

Gerry Davies
Born: Pontypool, South
Wales, 1957. Lives and
works: Lancaster.
Studied: Foundation,
Wolverhampton Polytechnic,
1976-77; BA, Wolverhampton
Polytechnic, 1977-80;
MA, Royal College of
Art, 1981-84; Fulbright
Fellow, Purdue University,
USA, 1990-91. Taught:
Bournemouth School of Art
and Design, 1984-1986;
Maidstone School of Art,
1986-1988; Sunderland
School of Art, 1989-1990;
Lancaster University 1995-
present.

Sally Taylor
Born: Bury, Lancashire,
1977. Lives and works:
Ryedale, North Yorkshire.
Studied: BA, Lancaster
University, 1995-1988;
MA, Lancaster University,
1998-1989.
Taught: Lancaster
University, 1998-2000;
Oxfordshire School of
Art and Design, 2000-
2004; Chichester College,
2004-2007; York St John
University, 2010-present.

Kirsty Boutle
Born: Leeds, 1979. Lives
and works: Edinburgh,
Scotland. Studied: BA,
York St John University,
2008-2011; MFA, Edinburgh
College of Art, 2011-2013.

DRAWING PROJECTS UK

INVITATION

Drawing Projects UK is a centre for research, development, production and promotion of exhibitions, events and workshops in drawing and contemporary art. Formed in 2009 by Professor Anita Taylor to develop and promote research initiatives in drawing, the new centre at Bridge House in Trowbridge opened in 2015 with an expanded remit and houses a project space, exhibition space, and workspaces for artists, designers and creative enterprises. Bridge House is adjacent to Trowbridge Railway Station with excellent transport links, a small car park for permit and disabled parking and with plentiful public parking nearby.

Curators & Educators Event – Open to Draw Thursday 28 July 2016 – 3-5pm

Open to Draw is a scheme that invites open applications to develop and undertake a project with Drawing Projects UK in The Drawing Centre at Bridge House in Trowbridge, Wiltshire. Proposals for projects and workshops that test and develop new approaches to drawing and the exploration of drawing within a wide range of creative practices are welcomed. The programme aims to enable the development of new work and to foster dialogue through interpersonal and public interface with research and development of drawing within the context of The Drawing Centre project space as a site for the testing of ideas in and through drawing. During 2016, projects include two Australian artists - Wendy Sharpe during her *Theatre of Dreams* exhibition in June 2016 and Sophie Cape in August 2016. Eleanor Bartlett will present works made during a residency earlier in 2016 in the autumn.

The *Open to Draw* project in the last week of July 2016 brings together five artists from Yorkshire who use drawing at the centre of their practice. Andy Black, Kate Black, Tracy Himsforth, Lucy O'Donnell and Sally Taylor, have previously worked on a number of successful projects and exhibitions including the *'Prison Drawing Project'*, Dean Road Prison, Scarborough, North Yorkshire (2016) and *'To Draw is to be Human'*, shown at 20:21, Scunthorpe; Crescent Arts, Scarborough; South Square Gallery, Bradford (2015-16). Further information on the artists is attached.

During this short residency in July, the artists will explore collective ideas and processes within their own individual drawing practices. Bringing a range of materials, 'work in progress', collections of images and relevant words, the artists will reflect on the work they have achieved so far while forging new opportunities for exchange and dialogue through the process of making. During the week, a rich dialogue will emerge when the five artists will come together to test their ideas through drawing in The Drawing Centre project space.

You are cordially invited to our special event for Curators and Educators to meet the artists and to view the outcomes of this *Open to Draw* project from 3-5pm on Thursday 28 July 2016 at Drawing Projects UK, Bridge House, Trowbridge BA14 9AE. Refreshments will be provided and you will also be able to view the *Theatre of Dreams* exhibition by Wendy Sharpe. Please RSVP to drawing-projectsuk@btconnect.com or 01225 767993.

We look forward to welcoming you.



Professor Anita Taylor

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Drawing: Research, Theory, Practice

Volume 2 Number 2

© 2017 Intellect Ltd Essays. English language. doi: 10.1386/drtp.2.2.363_1

VANESSA CORBY

York St. John University

The affirmation of social class in the drawings of Sally Taylor

Keywords

drawing
social class
affirmation
Brexit
displacement
academy
material

Abstract

The drawings of British artist Sally Taylor (1977) are composed of heads of various descriptions; blockheads, confused heads, hysterical heads, heads with mouths and heads without, heads full of menace and heads full of glee. The pressure of these recurring motifs, which emerge from as many as 200 drawings a day, mark out Taylor's practice as an active negotiation of repetition and difference. Norman Bryson famously characterized drawing as an act that resists the finality of the image to instead suspend a moment of 'becoming' (Bryson 2010: 150). The nuanced consistency of Taylor's prolific output exemplifies Bryson's understanding of the medium. What interests me here, however, are the performative aesthetic and material operations that make these drawings call to one another and their audience. The aim of this article is to consider the inextricable relationship between form and content in the works Taylor exhibited in That Head That Head at the Rabley Drawing Centre, Wiltshire (26 September – 29 October 2016). To do so, I argue, is to situate their aesthetic as a negotiation and transformation of the social politics of making art in the Great Britain at the beginning in the twenty-first century.

This analysis has emerged from the collaboration between myself and the artist, which dates back to the artist's solo exhibition *All Say the Same* at the Ryedale Folk Museum (2011). Our cooperation has emerged from our shared positions as makers, mothers, thinkers and educators from working-class backgrounds. To acknowledge this article's debt to this collaboration is to position its understanding of 'class' in the lineage of E. P. Thompson's classic book *The Making of the English Working Class* ([1963] 1982). For Thompson, class was not a 'thing': a homogenous group whose specificity could be determined by economic circumstance or defined by a string of working-class credentials. Rather, he argued that it is a 'process' through which 'social relationships' and 'roles' come to be lived as complex, 'historically' indebted 'phenomenon' (Thompson [1963] 1982: 8–9). It is through the interaction of differing social groups that a lacking subjectivity is conferred on the working class; a narrow world view indicative of a lack of understanding, an inadequate vocabulary or the wrong vocabulary, the absence of etiquette and grace. It is in this setting that the objective tone prized by academic writing becomes problematic. Scholarly distance may be able to articulate modes of alterity up to a point, but to admit only one mode of speech into the academy is to deny the impact of that difference as a lived experience. The appeal to intellectual rigour occludes the potential of writing as a practice with which to contest legitimized and delegitimized means of knowledge production.

The autobiographical voice that marks this article first of all therefore registers what Nancy LaPaglia called her 'unresolved stance' between her modes of being in the academy and from the working class (LaPaglia 1995: 183). To borrow from Shoshana Felman's writing on sexual difference, this article's tone is indebted to the 'bond of reading' through which the politics of difference are 'engendered' by reading art and theory with our 'own lives' (Felman 1993: 12–13). That bond emerged through the interviews conducted for the Ryedale exhibition catalogue. It argued that the raw materiality of drawings such as *Wide Mouth with Triangles* (2011, Figure 1) consisted of a 'mute articulation' whose fragmented uncouth utterances actively worked the legacies of classed experience for the artist and her audience thereby questioning the exclusivity of much conceptually based contemporary art. The years have only affirmed many of the arguments made in the Ryedale essay and in many respects Taylor's work is still 'saying' the same thing. What has changed, however, is the socio-political landscape in which her practice can be articulated. This short article's reading of her work stands, therefore, as a provocation to the vilification of the working classes in the run up to and after the EU referendum and in so doing testifies to the necessity for Taylor's project.

From the ground up

Confused Head 43 (2016, Figure 2) is a drawing that employs POSCA pen on found paper. Like many works that predate this series the ground is formed from the endpapers of discarded books that the artist has sourced from car boot sales in and around North Yorkshire. These lowly beginnings embed

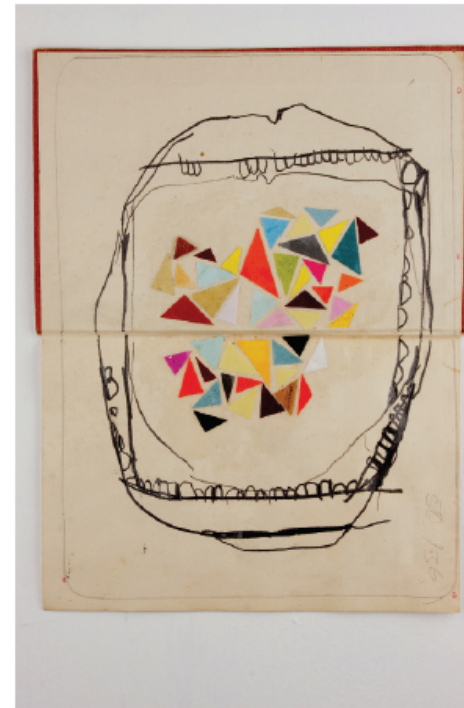


Figure 1: Sally Taylor, *Wide Mouth with Triangles*, 2011 (Graphite, collage on book cover, 25 x 20cm) Private Collection. Photo courtesy of the artist.



Figure 2: Sally Taylor, *Confused Head 43*, 2016 (POSCA Pen, collage on book cover, 25 x 19cm), Private Collection, Photographer Victoria Harley.

Taylor's drawings within the opening and closure of a now absented text. The book's spine is now a rift, crudely patched with masking tape. The deblures, in this case made from paper, are embossed by the binding and cloth beneath their surface, offering a readymade frame to which Taylor's composition must respond. The paper itself is off-white, worn with use and grease stained: evidence of its age and prior use. The book's content, hitherto protected by this cover, remains unknown to the viewer. Whether fiction or non-fiction, the information contained therein is no longer the subject of the book's being. Rather the act of appropriation has emptied out its extant material and assigned to it, like Taylor's *Heads*, a kind of blankness that speaks volumes.

This ground and its image embody the artist's preoccupation with drawing as a paradoxically immediate yet recalcitrant, non-textual, non-digital mode of communication. From the mid-1960s onwards the post-structuralists argued that cultural texts possessed a labyrinthine character. Text was not, as had been supposed, merely a transparent vehicle for the ready consumption of 'knowledge'. This offered artists one way to approach the enigmatic communication between artist, artwork and viewer. Conceptualism revelled in this play of language; a play that was extended to the semiotics of the image. While 'the meaning' of the image may have been unobtainable a multifarious play of meaning has been nonetheless legible. The privilege given to images, representation and text throughout the era of critical and cultural theory sought to redress modernism's bifurcation of art and life under the stewardship of critic Clement Greenberg (1909–94); what Pierre Bourdieu censured in *Distinction* ([1979] 2006) as the aesthetic of the 'pure gaze' versus the 'barbarous taste' of 'common people' (Bourdieu [1979] 2006: 30–32). Greenberg's bifurcation of culture, between kitsch 'fit' for the 'peasants', and 'true art' for the intellectual elite, became a primary target for critical and cultural theorists working through the legacies of the Frankfurt School (Greenberg 1988: 12). Their interrogation of the place and production of art within and for society employed a language and gave birth to a set of practices whose impenetrability largely exceeded the codes of true art that they hoped to destabilize.

In *Enriching Britain: Culture, Creativity and Growth* (2015) the Warwick Commission made clear that participation in the arts is on the decline. Cultural activities remain the province of middle class aesthetes and intellectuals who already possess the necessary wherewithal to decode their encounters. What this stream of highly technical intellectual consciousness has obscured, as Coole and Frost have recently argued, is attention to questions of materiality (Coole and Frost 2010: 3). Therefore, the privilege given to intellectual, representational encounters with art has ensured that culture comes from the top down rather than, to borrow from the British art critic, anarchist and poet Herbert Read (1893–1968) 'from the bottom upwards' (Read 1941: 54).

In his classic essay *To Hell with Culture* (1941), penned only two years after Greenberg's divisive and much more well-known 1939 essay 'Avant-garde and kitsch' (1988), Read argued that there is a 'common assumption' that it is the responsibility of the individual to learn the 'language of that

strange country' called art and so 'gradually lift himself on to the cultured level [but] such an assumption is fundamentally wrong, and fundamentally undemocratic' (Read 1941: 44–45). Authorities on art, he continues

Are right to assume that an impenetrable barrier exists between their culture and the worker: they are wrong to imagine that the worker has no cultural sensibility. The worker has as much latent sensibility as any human being, but that sensibility can only be awakened when meaning is restored to his daily work, and he is allowed to create his own culture

(Read 1941: 46)

New York's rise to prominence as the centre of the art world, and critical and cultural theory's battle with Greenberg, set his form of modernism as *the* only form. As Michael Paraskos has argued what became marginalized and what Taylor's always immanent, but never realised, communication affirms is Read's more democratic brand of modernism (Paraskos 2008).

Material sensibility, difference and containment

Since its earliest beginnings Taylor's practice has rejected the 'clever' conceptualism and push towards representation that sanitized art of its material sensibility. Taylor's unruly practice resonates with what John Sumser identifies as the gap between the 'labor' and 'exchange' theories of work. The working class, including working-class intellectuals, see work 'in terms of 'labor theory': that is the 'energy required to transform raw materials' (Sumser 1995: 299). In the age of ideas heralded by postmodernism, non-working-class people, he argues, see the world in increasingly less 'concrete terms' because often their work often does not entail the transformation of raw materials (Sumser 1995). In this sense it could be said that via a bricolage of discipline specific action, aesthetic decision making, and representation, Taylor's works on paper mouth-off about the privileged status given to 'cognitive' encounters with art. Common to her work and Read's is a fundamental commitment to retain our sensitivity to the physicality of being that characterizes our childhood. In *To Hell with Culture*, Read draws on the writing of John Dewey and Jean Jacques Rousseau to argue that a good education cannot rely on 'book learning' alone but must be grounded in 'sensibility' (Read 1941: 54–55).

Elementary education should teach children how to use their senses – how to see, to touch, to listen – it is far from easy to learn the full and exact use of these faculties. Then having learned how to use the senses, separately and conjointly, the child should learn how to apply knowledge: how to judge and compare the true reports which are rendered by the senses; how to

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Figure 3: Sally Taylor, *Head 10*, 2015 (Ink, gaffer tape on found paper, paper, 36 x 32cm) Private Collection, Photographer Victoria Harley.



Figure 4: Taylor's Studio, Stonegrave, North Yorkshire, July 2016. Courtesy of the artist.

construct things which give a true sensuous response and, finally, how to construct things which express his growing awareness of the world and its potentialities.

(Read 1941: 55–56)

Taylor's working practice aims 'to avoid pre-meditation and ideology that could jeopardise the creative process', preferring instead to seek the kind of physical sensuous engagement with the world and human experience that Read describes (Taylor 2011: 29). Taylor is thus part of a trend that has been identified in *Drawing Now*, constituting a shift towards the 'subjective nature of drawing' that possesses a 'characteristic awkwardness and a stubborn resistance to "conventional" subject matter and academic style – a leaning towards a conscious naivety, perhaps, and a denial of the signs of "good drawing"' (Tormey and Selby 2007: ix). Rather her practice enlists what Emma Dexter has named drawing's capacity to act as a space of 'alterity' from which to articulate 'dissent, desire, fear and disorder' (Dexter 2005: 9).

Taylor's wilful embrace of the wrong materials affect a vocabulary of line and surface that resists the autonomy and polish of 'high art' to articulate dimensions of classed and gendered experience. The sensibility that infuses her heads and use of POSCA pens underscore a feminist politics that resolutely refuses to disavow the impact of motherhood on her work. Studio days may be ring-fenced out of necessity, but the day-to-day handling of materials in the company of children cannot help but impact upon an artist's practice. One such impact is Taylor's use of Uni POSCA pens that began when her first child was a toddler. Through the awkward inconsistent flow of the pen the images stutter into existence on the page.

Confused Head 43 has been drawn with a red pigment pen that Uni POSCA named 'Red Wine'. Rather than the deep luscious red of a full glass, it resembles the residue of a glass now empty and is consequently of a flatter mauve hue. What characterises this and many other heads, such as *Head 10* (2015, Figure 3), is a fragile yet urgent sense of containment. In *Confused Head 43* the crown and left ear formed by the heavy mauve outline are placed adjacent to the impression of the binding. The right ear, however, traverses this impression, stopping short of the blue cloth in which the book is bound. Delineated within its skull are crowds of open, empty mouths: mouths made full by a succession of downward strokes of the pen and four 'troublesome' triangles (Taylor 2011: 9). Each element clamours for the viewer's attention, jostling or talking over its neighbours, straddling the blank chasm of the ground. What this and other drawings reveal is a state of internal variance; a lack of cohesion or connection between these voices that frame an otherwise vacant subject. This cacophonous assemblage of mauve voices appear poised on the point of speeches that are never delivered; an effect which is amplified ten-fold when the drawings are viewed as they were produced, together in Taylor's studio (Figure 4). Nevertheless, this tumult is resolutely confined by the lines from which the heads are formed.

I like to think that *Confused Head 43* is mulling over nothing other than the pronunciation of the word 'mauve'. In the United Kingdom one of the most readily identifiable markers of class is speech: received pronunciation, characterized by round vowel sounds, is synonymous with the educated, formal speech of the middle classes while regional accents earmarked by flat vowels and dropped 'h's are indicative of the working-class and often the economic divide between the poorer north and more prosperous south of England. As Simon Garfield notes, in the south of England it is 'moave' but in the North it is commonly 'morv' (Garfield 2001) or 'moarve'; is one way right and the other wrong? Taylor, she tells me, would say 'morv.' I on the other hand, hear 'moave' every time I re-read this text, having watched *Withnail and I* (1985) too many times in my youth. Try as I might, I cannot expunge the image of a menacing Richard Griffiths whispering to Richard E. Grant in hushed tones 'he's so mauve we don't know what he's planning'. This cultural reference has been in and out of this article like a yo-yo. Its playfulness feels inappropriate. It does not accord with the kind seriousness demanded by exhibition text whose job it is to advocate an artist's practice and assure the reader that the author knows what she is talking about. If this article is to hold good to its purpose and the rationale of Taylor's practice, however, such acts of self-censorship should be revealed. For they act as a performative index of the class-born fear of saying, as Taylor puts it, the 'wrong thing'.

It hardly seems credible that an analysis of art practice in 2016 remains indebted to arguments made twenty years ago, which sought to reveal the hitherto marginalized experience of working class subjects in the academy. That is exactly the case, however. In 1996 the journal *Feminism and Psychoanalysis* featured a special issue about social class edited by Valerie Walkerdine. In the article 'Masks of middle-class belonging: Speaking of the silent, working-class past', American scholar Jane M. Ussher tells the reader that most working-class intellectuals 'feel silenced' by the sense of displacement that casts them as 'outsiders' in the academy where 'middle class values, status and privilege are taken for granted norms' (Ussher 1996: 463). Ussher argues that those scholars who have always known such 'privilege', whose belonging in the academic environment is signified by their speech, modes of address, 'dress and codes of conduct' do not need to acknowledge it (Ussher 1996: 463). Instead their experience has become a universally accepted, although unacknowledged, norm to which others must conform. As Ussher states

Those in transit, who have left working class roots and destinies behind, yet who can never feel completely at home in the comfortable middle class world they have been educated into, wear a mask. To speak of what is behind the mask – the shame, guilt, anger, anxiety; the agony of being frozen in a never-ending limbo between one class and another; the knowledge of never belonging of always being an impostor – would be to risk all.

(Ussher 1996: 463)

I think that 'risking all' is precisely what Taylor's practice does. It repeatedly affirms the difference of social class by unveiling the daily containment of an anxiety of ignorance. It is here that the work is at once mute and articulate, proffering a kind of simultaneously raucous yet silent babble that refuses assimilation and bespeaks something of the uncertainty of belonging, (not) knowing, (un)thinking and saying that, to both of us, is an inexorable part of being working-class in cultural environments.

'Blockheadism' and 'balderdash'

Over the past five years Taylor and I have often and bemoaned the way that social class seemed to have slipped off the radar of the artistic and *museal* contexts in which we worked. That was until the spring of 2016 when the question of class, or more particularly working-class culture, re-entered public discourse in a way I have not seen since the miners' strike of 1984–85. The catalyst for this debate had been the EU referendum. The working class were once again grouped into the contemptible 'masses' characterized throughout 'English thought', as Raymond Williams observed, by "blockheadism, gullibility, bribeability, amenability to beer and balderdash" (Williams [1958] 1985: 95). The reason for this recent wave of criticism had been their support for the 'Vote Leave' campaign. As Lisa McKenzie, research fellow at the London School of Economics, argued in *The Guardian* on 15 June 'in the last few weeks of the campaign the rhetoric has ramped up and the blame game started' (McKenzie 2016). She continued,

If we leave the EU it will be the fault of the 'stupid', 'ignorant', and 'racist' working class. Whenever working-class people have tried to talk about the effects of immigration on their lives, shouting 'backward' and 'racist' has become a middle-class pastime.

(McKenzie 2016)

It now feels, therefore, that to acknowledge working-class beginnings (in my case in Barnsley, South Yorkshire where 83,958 ballots cast out of 122,909 voted 'Leave') is to take a greater risk (The Electoral Commission 2016). Taken in this light, the sense of containment exhibited by Taylor's work may well function not as a preservation of the subject against the judgements of the merciless world but the other way around. In some minds, but hopefully not all, it raises the possibility that the absence of a sense of belonging is indicative of working class isolationism and that saying the wrong thing, or nothing at all, truly is a symptom of ignorance. Taylor's practice and this text think differently, however. For in continuing to articulate our practices as makers, thinkers and crucially educators as an on-going negotiation of working-class subjectivity, we direct our energy to the 'chasm of inequality in the UK and the monsters of a deeply divided and unfair society' that the referendum result revealed (McKenzie 2016).

Responsibility: Drawing the human and social class together

In 1998 sociologist Zygmunt Bauman observed that the proliferation of the term 'underclass', which cast the non-working poor of post-industrialism as layabouts sponging off the welfare state, had linked 'poverty with criminality'. This strategy, he argued, 'banished the poor from the universe of moral obligations'. He goes on to say:

The substance of morality is the impulse of responsibility for the integrity and well-being of other people who are weak, unfortunate and suffering; criminalization of poverty tends to extinguish and argue away that impulse.

(Bauman 1998: 77)

As Bauman argues public policy has been more engaged in 'defending the right and proper lives of decent people' from the 'assaults plotted in the mean streets, ghettos and no-go areas' rather than 'defending the poor against the cruelty of their fate' (Bauman 1998: 78). In 2016 it has been the issues surrounding immigration that compounded the lack of empathy and moral responsibility felt towards the working classes; adding racism to the charges of criminality and general dunderheadness. That racism exists is not in question. What should be in question are the means by which the fears and privations of some of society's most vulnerable people are ideologically instrumentalized to achieve economic and political ends.

Since its resurgence in the early 1990s, drawing has come to inhabit a central rather than a peripheral role within contemporary art. In many respects the strength of that position is an affirmation of what Christian Rattemeyer described in 2013 as the 'ubiquity' of the medium (Rattemeyer 2013: 10) or, as Emma Dexter put it in 2005, that 'to draw is to be human' (Dexter 2005: 8). Drawing has been credited with a sensuous materiality that has the capacity to tap and articulate the shared nature of human experience, rendering it a powerful tool for social engagement in the arts. Taylor's repeated affirmation of this potentiality, its 'life force', through her choice of subject matter is a call to responsibility. Her heads ask the viewer to think both in and beyond the gallery, about how drawing might intervene in the dehumanization of this particular cultural other. Taylor's heads *are* speaking, are you listening?

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