Interarts practices; the roles of drawing; and implications for Art History

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This article is based on the experience of an art historian-theorist working within the context of a tertiary school of fine arts dedicated to the integration of studio practice and art history-theory. Such integration is the cornerstone of postgraduate studies in this context. Master of Fine Arts candidates are, for example, expected to closely align their work for public exhibition with the historical and theoretical analysis and contextualisation contained in their scholarly dissertations. This expectation is in line with current thinking on research in the visual arts, with recent initiatives from within the discipline of Art History-Theory, as well as with tendencies in contemporary arts practices. The article is divided into five sections: 1) an introduction, contextualisation and argument mentioning the author's shift from an interdisciplinarity of content to one of methodology; and which locates this change within reflection on the relationships between "Art History" and "Art Theory", with reference to two texts, respectively published in 1994 – the year in which the author immigrated from South Africa to New Zealand – and in 2006 – the year in which the article below was written; 2) relevant information about particular curriculae which insist on the integration between studio practice and art history-theory and an outline of their alignment with recent thinking, initiatives and arts practices; 3) a brief discussion of the roles of drawing in this alignment; 4) a presentation of a case study as an example of this alignment; and 5) in conclusion, a brief note on "interarts practices" and their implications for Art History-Theory as one, albeit fractious, discipline.

Interkuns praktyke: die rol van die tekening; en implikasies vir die Kunsgeskiedenis:
Hierdie artikel is gebaseer op die ervaring van 'n kunshistorikus-teoretikus binne die konteks van 'n tersiêre kunsskool vir die skone kunste toegewy aan die integrasie tussen ateljeepraktyk en die kunsgeskiedenis-teorie. So `n integrasie vorm die hoeksteen vir nagraadse studie in dié konteks. Daar word byvoorbeeld van meestersgraadkandidate in die skone kunste verwag om hul werk vir publieke tentoonstelling in noue verwantskap te bring met die historiese en teoretiese analise en kontekstualisering binne hul vakkundige verhandelings. Hierdie verwagting is in lyn met eietydse denke met betrekking tot navorsing in die visuele kunste, met onlangse inisiatiewe vanuit die dissipline van die Kunsgeskiedenis-teorie asook met tendense in kontemporêre kunspraktyke. Die artikel bestaan uit vyf afdelings: 1) 'n inleiding, kontekstualisering en argument waarin die outeur se oorskakeling vanaf 'n interdissiplinariteit van inhoud na een van metodologie genoem word en waarin hierdie verandering gelokaliseer word binne oorweging van die verhoudinge tussen die "Kunsgeskiedenis" en die "Kunsteorie", met verwysing na twee tekste, respektiewelik gepubliseer in 1994 – die jaar waarin die outeur geimmigreer het vanaf Suid-Afrika na Nieu-Seeland – en 2006 – die jaar waarin die onderstaande artikel geskryf is; 2) verbandhoudelike inligting oor spesifieke kurrikula toegewy aan die integrasie tussen ateljeepraktyke en die kunsgeskiedenis–teorie; en 'n skets van die verwantskap met onlangse denke, inisiatiewe en kunspraktyke; 3) 'n kort bespreking van die funksies van die tekenkuns in hierdie verwantskap; 4) die aanbieding van 'n gevallestudie as voorbeeld; 5) en as samevatting, 'n kort nota oor die begrip "interkuns-praktyke" en hul implikasies vir die Kunsgeskiedenis-teorie as een, alhoewel, twisterige dissipline.

Introduction, contextualisation, argument

In South Africa, I studied for the BA (Fine Arts) and the MA (Fine Arts) degrees before training as an art historian, completing my doctorate in that discipline and teaching Art History at universities for many years in my first country. At that time – in the 1970's and 80's – undergraduate students and postgraduate candidates were mostly expected to achieve the requirements of each discrete subject (e.g. painting, sculpture, drawing) and discipline (e.g. Art History or Art Theory) they were engaged in, with relatively little attention given to the methodological relationships between those subjects and disciplines. I became involved with multi- and interdisciplinary research when working with colleagues in other disciplines such as Mathematics, Education Science and Philosophy[1], while remaining largely oblivious of the methodological interfaces of the subjects and disciplines closest to my own homeground. In hindsight, I also now realise that my multi- and interdisciplinary work with

colleagues from other disciplines functioned mostly on the level of connectivity between content across spatio-temporal boundaries. I believe that, at the time, our work constituted a courageous search for a reintegration between the "two cultures" (of art and science) so succinctly theorised by C.P Snow[2] in the 1960's. However, after immigrating to New Zealand and starting work as an art historian-theorist within the context of a tertiary art school devoted to the integration between studio practices (e.g. in printmaking, drawing, painting) and art history-theory, I came to realise that the methodological connectivity between subjects and disciplines close to my own research practice could be a terrain for further research potentially useful to those subjects and disciplines and to my own undergraduate teaching and supervision of postgraduate candidates. At this point, I have to acknowledge that the change in my research focus was not so much due to moving from my first to my second country, but rather to a shift in time (to the 1990's and early 21st century), as well as to a change in context (from teaching in an Art History department to teaching Art History- Theory in an art school environment). The shift in time involved a seachange in contemporary visual arts practices; while the shift in context forced me towards a critical reflexivity concerning "Art History" as a discipline and towards an analysis of its relationships with "Art Theory".

This analysis is the subject of another article, but as it is exactly this relationship which has compelled me to change interdisciplinary research focus from content to methodology; and from an outreach to other disciplines to disciplinary reflexivity on my own homeground, some explanation is called for here. This may be provided succinctly with brief reference to mainly two texts, respectively published in the year (1994) when I moved to New Zealand and in this year (2006), shortly before the writing of this article. Between these two points in time, much debate concerning the relationships between "Art History" and "Art Theory" has been published and considered within tertiary institutions. Some departments have retained the title "Art History", others have become known as departments of "Art History & Theory", while many new titles have seen the light of day, for example departments of "Visual Culture", "Visual Studies", "Cultural Studies", "Critical Theory" and so forth, with each choice of nomenclature suggestive of different positions concerning the roles and relationships between adjacent or sub- disciplines.

In 1994, art historian Keith Moxey published his "Introduction: History, Theory, Cultural Politics"[3]. In this chapter, he starts writing as follows: "Art historians have tended to treat the theoretical innovations of poststructuralism with unease and suspicion, considering many of them ahistorical and inimical to history's status as a legitimate form of knowledge. As a consequence, these theoretical initiatives have been ignored as irrelevant or explicitly rejected and disparaged as misguided and wrongheaded…I argue, however, [that poststructuralism] contains an insight of fundamental importance for the historian's conception of what he or she is doing [as an] awareness of how historical narratives are invested with the values of the present serves to historicize the activity of the historian…I propose to use theory to understand history and to use history to understand theory…"[4] Following on from the now famous 1996 issue of the journal *October*[5] in which the relationships between Art History and Visual Culture (also read: "theory") were analysed, Moxey would later (in 1999) add to his argument where he writes (and it is necessary for this article to quote him there at some length):

> The new conception of the status and function of knowledge [as dependent on the subjectivity of the author rather than on a purported objectivity] has had a dramatic impact on the history of art. If history is not regarded as *the* interpretation of the past produced from a universal perspective, but rather as *an* interpretation of the past produced from a particular perspective, then it cannot be pursued for its own sake. The cultural function of historical interpretation can be openly acknowledged rather than masked behind an ideal of objectivity. As a consequence, the shape of the discipline has been decisively altered. Rather than operate according to an ideology of neutrality and disinterest that insists that the author repress his or her subjectivity in the pursuit of the 'facts', rather

than fetishize empirical data by suggesting that they might be relied upon to provide the interpretations that are actually forced on them by particular historians, scholars have begun to foreground their commitment to a specific form of understanding. In substituting an interpretive agenda for the allegedly neutral dedication to description, many art historians now offer us access to the methodological procedures and political goals that inform their particular views. What was once hidden in the interest of providing a common front, one which suggested that human subjectivity was universal in nature, is now placed in the open so as to assert the differing interests of diverse interpretive communities. The consequences of these changes have been profound, if not always beneficial. Art history is now characterized by a variety of voices, each seeking to represent the interests of different sectors of the discipline's population. [6]

Moxey continues by referring to Judith Butler's views on subjectivity where he writes: "If, as Butler suggests, the subjectivity of the historian is conceived of as something both constructed and constructing, as an effect of discursive processes as much as their author, the link between an author and his or her text is relational rather than determined. This point becomes important in attempting to understand the way in which identity might be inscribed in a historical text. The plethora of voices that currently characterizes the history of art cannot be viewed as incommensurable with one another. Rather than fixed and permanent, the identities [or subjectivities] that manifest themselves in politically-inspired forms of interpretation are part of a process of change and transformation." [7]

Still later – in 2006 – most of an issue of the journal entitled *Artlink* [8] has been devoted to discussions about the current status of "Art History" as a discipline. Art historian Anne Marsh has contributed an article entitled "Art History in a Post-Medium Age" and she calls attention to processes of critical change and transformation in the visual arts: "The problem with the idea that art history should maintain the autonomy of its discipline is that it tends to be exclusive and essentialist. [However] much of the art of the 20th century rallied against this [very] notion as artists blurred the distinction between high and popular culture…[challenging and critiquing] the institutions of the artworld, its taste-makers, its traditions." [9] Marsh continues by historicising the debates defending art history and its autonomy as against the theoretical contestation of the canon of Western knowledge since at least the 1960's: "…structuralism, poststructuralism, psychoanalysis, phenomenology, existentialism, feminism, queer and postcolonial theory have influenced several generations of intellectual thought in the Western world and beyond." [10] She later concludes that: "The fear [of art historians] of…theory infecting the visual arts is a misplaced energy. Art is always already infected with life and its philosophies and politics, its religions and beliefs. It is within the very substance of [contemporary] art to be trans-institutional and cross-disciplinary. That we now witness artists working in a post-medium environment, using any tool or discipline to make their art, is all the more reason to embrace a visual culture [theory] approach to what was once called art history." [11]

Marsh's writing reminds me that theorist Michel Serres has argued that we should sense, feel and hear the "[current] noise that is the background of living in the world [now]" as a way of thinking outside the metaphysical categories of unity or autonomy as proposed by the traditional humanities. [12] Partly in contrast, art historian Erwin Panofsky has written in "Art History as a Humanistic Discipline" that: "The humanities…are not faced with the task of arresting what might otherwise slip away [now], but of enlivening what might otherwise remain dead." [13] Such statements seem to admit to a divide between theory and history and to suggest that they are fated to remain mutually exclusive.

I think of art students and candidates encountered in various contexts where they either have little understanding of the historical genealogy and locatedness of practices and ideas; or where they have little knowledge of the possible theoretical framings through which their own

practices could become clarified and articulated. I ask myself how I can think about the disciplines of "Art History" and of "Art Theory" as mutually inclusive for the sake of my students and candidates within the setting of a contemporary tertiary art school in the year 2006. Through recourse to poststructuralist theory – on which I partly ground my own research – I have approached a tentative answer by thinking through six interrelated registers, which each attempt to find a Derridean "third term" [14] leaping beyond the binaries of "Art History" and "Art Theory" as two separate disciplines:

a) *location:* Art historians place the work of art in a specific spatio-temporal context, often linearly organised; while poststructuralist art theorists argue for attention to the particular situatedness of the art work. Patti Lather and Elizabeth Ellsworth write about the need "to look closely into the dense particularities of concrete situations…rather than more generalised [approaches]." [15]

b) *position*: Whether acknowledging it or not, the art historian writes from a particular point of view and is implicated within a specific political context; poststructuralist art theory insists that this position be understood and declared, albeit implicitly. Where Carole Shepheard argues for self-criticality in arts practice, she points out that it "unveils and reveals those hidden influences that have shaped knowledge and suggests that there is no such thing as a pure, totally objective fact." [16]

c) *voice*: The art historian writes with an own voice unlike any other and the modulations and timbre of this voice add to the meaning of what is written; while poststructuralist art theory seeks a space in which the writer's or artist's voice can be deployed. The notion of "voice" is, for example, connected to the work of filmmaker and critical writer Trinh Minh-ha. Regarding her style as a writer, she asserts: "…one movement is to go forward in an argument; another movement is to constantly come back to oneself; and the third, for example, is to create [voice] with the unintended reflexive communication among words themselves." [17]

d) *performance:* Minha's ideas about writing include the notion of "performative" text. J. L. Austin's speech act theory identifies a performative utterance as one which "performs the action they describe". [18] One could say that the art historian-theorist could also write "like" the art work, not only "about" the art work. Such ideas go hand in hand with a questioning of the so-called "objectivity" and "neutrality" of the art historian. Keith Moxey writes:

> The 'view from nowhere,' the objectivity claimed by foundational epistemology, has come to be seen as suspect because of its identification with Western culture, with the dominance of white races, with masculinist bias, and with middle-class prejudice. The knowledge produced during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, on which the disciplines of the humanities were founded, is now conceived as one way of understanding the world rather than *the* way in which the world can be understood. This new conception of the status and function of knowledge has had a dramatic impact on the history of art. If history is not regarded as *the* interpretation of the past produced from a universal perspective, but rather as *an* interpretation of the past produced from a particular perspective, then it cannot be pursued for its own sake. The cultural function of historical interpretation can be openly acknowledged rather than masked behind an ideal of objectivity. As a consequence, the shape of the discipline has been decisively altered. Rather than operate according to an ideology of neutrality and disinterest that insists that the author repress his or her subjectivity in the pursuit of the 'facts,' rather than fetishize empirical data by suggesting that they might be relied upon to provide the interpretations that are actually forced on them by particular historians, scholars have begun to foreground their commitment to a specific form of understanding. In substituting an interpretive agenda for the allegedly neutral dedication to description, many art historians now offer us access to the methodological procedures and political goals that inform their particular views. What was once hidden in the interest of providing a common front, one which suggested that human subjectivity was universal in nature, is now placed in the open so as to assert the differing interests of diverse interpretive communities. [19]

e) *community:* Much has been published about the fierce competition prevalent within the discipline of "Art History". Craig Owens writes, for example: "Art history is a highly contentious discipline, characterized by internecine debate, competition and personal conflict; the vehemence with which art historians argue amongst themselves is surpassed only by the enthusiasm with which they band together…to shore up the boundaries of art history against a poststructuralist invasion [of theory]." [20] These words were written in 1992 and much has changed since then. One factor in this change has been the growing number of artists and studio lecturers who write about the art which they experience on a daily basis, close-up and immediate. One example will have to suffice here: Zoya Kocur lectures in the Department of Art and Art Professions at New York University and Simon Leung is an artist and assistant professor in the Department of Studio Art at the University of California at Irvine. They co-edited *Theory in Contemporary Art since 1985* (2005) [21] and write as follows in the introduction: "During the early 1980's, when we were students, critical theory came into general art discourse in the United States and soon became part of the everyday currency of the art world…In the area of contemporary art and art history, learning to think from [theoretical] perspectives felt urgent, necessary and exciting…Theory was one of the names of the new territories we claimed in our art education, our place in the world of art; at times, our identity as students, artists, and then teachers…Theory for us…is a tool; a lens through which we see; a proposition; an opening of ourselves and our thinking onto the questions posed by art itself." [22] Theory in their vision is thus not an end in itself, but rather a key which can help to unlock the doors to art. Putting art first and tending towards collaborative work, characterises much of recent writing in which art theory is used pragmatically rather than scorned ideologically. This trend is linked to the growing phenomenon of networked, collaborative communities of artists and art writers as characterised by what could be called a "radical generosity" in the sense in which Emmanual Levinas used the phase, i.e. as "movement of the same unto the other which never returns to the same." [23] Elsewhere, Thomas J. Sergiovanni writes about the need to form communities of learning based on discussion and trust amongst disciplines. [24]

f. *discourse:* A sense of community does not exclude the passionate contention of points of view or the contestatory nature of art and art writing. Michel Foucault has alerted us forever of the existence of discourses, their political nature and our alignment or non-alignment with them. As Australian artist Tracey Clement writes: "I learned to see, as good old Foucault saw, that nothing is neutral; knowledge really is power, and culture cannot be extricated from discourse." [25] Elsewhere we read: "…for Foucault, discourses are coherent, self-referential bodies of statements that produce an account of reality by generating 'knowledge' about particular objects or concepts, and also by shaping the rules of what can be said and known about those entities…These groups of statements and rules exist historically and change as the material conditions for their possibility also change. In this sense the term is similar to one of T. S Kuhn's concepts of 'paradigm'." [26] It is exactly the historical situatedness of discourses which highlights the important role of "Art History" and it is this role which is acknowledged in a cautionary tone by Clement, where she laments the "chronologically unsound" nature of her arts education: "The history of art was seriously fragmented, deconstructed beyond recognition. History wasn't a linear progression of dates, facts and events, it was a process, a discourse, a dynamic cultural construction, and massive quantities of knowledge were glossed over; presumed to be already known." [27] As in the other registers discussed above, it is the interaction between "Art History" & "Art Theory" which can prevent the potential excesses of each on its own

Curriculae information relevant to the integration of studio practice and Art History & Theory and its alignment with recent thinking, initiatives and arts practices

Working within the context of the tertiary School of Art, Otago Polytechnic, in Dunedin, New Zealand as an art historian-theorist since 1996, I have taught in the 4-year Bachelor of Fine Arts Programme and have supervised projects in the 2-year research Master of Fine Arts Programme, for which I have also been the programme manager and academic leader since 1998. Both of these programmes insist on the integration of studio practice and art history-theory on the one hand, and on the integration of art history-theory into one discipline. With Howard Singerman, the programme insists that: "It is the student's specific task to acknowledge his or her historical situation and to take up the challenge to find an adequate [theoretical] language capable of establishing the work's place within and against tradition."[28] This insistence speaks from assessment criteria (weighted differently for the various levels of study from year one through to postgraduate study) in the School of Art where I work. The following information is quoted from the Otago Master of Fine Arts programme document and its handbook, where assessment criteria and examination are listed (my emphasis through the use of italics):

> **Preamble: Integrated & Completed Project Examined**
> The Master of Fine Arts involves candidates in one integrated research project comprised of two inter-woven threads – *studio and dissertation [art history-theory] research*. These two threads are inseparable elements of one research project supported by documentation and an oral presentation. The *one integrated and completed project* is assessed by an examination panel; while work in progress on this integrated project is reviewed by a review panel at six-monthly intervals.
>
> **Assessment criteria**
>
> Candidates will be required to demonstrate their ability to apply selected research methods effectively to a specific topic; to analyse, evaluate and synthesise information and ideas; and to deliver creative responses to abstract problems and concrete situations that expand or redefine existing knowledge: in the completion and presentation of an [*integrated dissertation and exhibition*].
>
> **Knowledge:** involves locating and identifying material appropriate to the topic of study, whether it is specific information, ideas, skills, methods, processes or theories; and demonstrating an in-depth understanding of what the material means, by using, explaining or summarising it and showing what the consequences may be in an *[integrated exhibition and dissertation]*.
>
> **Application:** using learned material in new and concrete situations; this may include the application of such things as skills, methods, processes, concepts, principles, and theories in the creation of an *[exhibition and related dissertation]*.
>
> **Analysis:** breaking down the material under study; this involves identifying each part and explaining how and why these make a whole; this can be demonstrated by discussing, comparing, and contrasting the relationships between the parts and their relationships to the whole; this process requires an understanding of both the content and the structural form of the material. Analysis should be demonstrated through an *[exhibition and a related dissertation]*.
>
> **Evaluation:** judging the value of the material for a given purpose, for example, judging the value of a skill, method, process, statement, art work, interpretation, argument, theory, or research method; the judgements are to be based on definite criteria, which may be internal criteria (organisation) or external criteria (relevance to the purpose); and the candidate may determine the criteria and/or be given them. Evaluation should be evident in the *[exhibition and related dissertation]*.
>
> **Synthesis:** combining parts to form a new whole or *coherent body of writing and related studio work* that expands or redefines existing knowledge; for example, producing a plan of operations (research proposal), or an effective communication with a sustained argument (dissertation); or

new or redefined structures and understandings in writing and in creative studio work professionally documented, displayed and orally discussed. [29]

Recent thinking about the relationships between Art History-Theory and contemporary visual practices have led to various iniatives aligned to what has come to be known as "post-media" art. In her recent article entitled "Art History in a Post-Medium Age", Marsh discusses the extensive blurring of boundaries[30] between the traditional studio workshop separations inherited from the art academies of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. A website called "PostmediaNet" [31] was established in 1995 and has recently celebrated its first decade of support for artists like William Kentridge who says of his recent project entitled "Black Box – Chambre Noir": "The films in general are drawings in four dimensions. Sometimes a drawing starts as two-dimensional, and then it becomes a painted backdrop as in Black Box for the Deutsche Guggenheim. There are projections on flat surfaces moving through time, where a flat backdrop becomes animated. The logic and way of working has to do with drawing. I extrapolate outwards into filmmaking or theater. I'm interested in how cinema and the further development of photography coincide. Black Box references the black box of the theater, a space for experimenting, the chambre noir – the space between the lens and the camera's eyepiece – and the black box as a recorder of disasters in airplanes. A black box miniature theater is an optical toy that is a forerunner of cinema. Instead of having actors on stage, it's about seeing a child's miniature toy theater and its machinery moving. Formally, the Black Box has something to do with vaudeville, which, in the 1890s, provided one of the transitions to movies." [32] This is a typically post-media statement supported by the complexities of the work itself, which also engaged with political history, art history and postcolonial theory.
(It also suggests the important role of drawing within post-media art, an issue taken up in the next section of this article.)

In 2005, the Art Association of Australia and New Zealand – with members mainly consisting of "art historians" – organised its annual conference at the University of Sydney around the theme of "Situating Theory and Practice in the Visual Arts". The three main divisions for the conference were: "• *From the studio to the study* – the historical relation between ideas of art and its material practice, from antiquity to the present; • *Practitioners as theoreticians* – artists' writings, statements, and pedagogy, including indigenous and non-western arts, and the possibility of theorizing through the artwork; • *Contemporary practices and critical theory* – including new media and film, and the relation between new technologies and their languages of articulation." [33] From this content statement one can deduce a search for connections between art "history", " art theory" and current arts practices.

A last example of such a search has to suffice here: In a recent invitation for conference papers, the "Collision Symposium 2006: Interarts Research and Practices" out of Victoria University in British Columbia, referred to their 2005 conference as follows: "…the Collision Symposium brought together researchers [art historians-theorists], performers and artists to present their work on interarts and interdisciplinary performance and creation. 'Collision', a term that denotes forceful impact of masses moving in different directions, was used as a theme for the kinds of interarts processes often used to create and merge art forms. Often by design, and sometimes by chance, these processes do not result in seamless integration of the arts, but instead create a friction of disciplinarity that promotes [creative activity]…" [34] It is exactly the friction mentioned here that can prevent disciplines from merely becoming subsumed into one another, as Bernard Smith warned in 2000 when he published his "In Defense of Art History". [35] How "Art History", "Art Theory" and arts practice can interact while fulfiling their own roles is obliquely suggested below where a case study is presented in section 3 of this article. But, first, some considerations concerning the roles of drawing – deployed in that case study – within a post-media and interarts environment.

Roles of drawing

Recently, Julia Kristeva has urged us to draw where she argues for drawing as a "possible site for the work of theory", for thinking, as a way of making the invisible, visible. [36] Kristeva is urging us to learn to draw within a context where she is concerned with how theory and history writing can potentially lose their connections with the material world. Drawing becomes a connective tool in her discussion of the relationships between ideas and their groundedness in experiential reality. Robert Wyatt joins a growing number of writer/artists who agrees with this where he states that: "Drawing is an idea in itself; not an illustration of an idea…drawing is a trace of a thought and can become a very powerful instrument." [37] David Rosand talks about the wilfulness of drawing and of its transformative potential as it is a process that reaches out and puts us in active touch with the world. [38]

Possibly because it has always been here, there and everywhere, while never being reified and weighted with the same cultural expectations as, for instance, painting, sculpture and architecture, drawing has been able to work away quietly as process and in the margins. In *Vitamin D: New Perspectives in Drawing* (2005) Emma Dexter writes eloquently about drawing's ubiqitous presence in our lives: "Drawing is everywhere. We are surrounded by it. It is sewn into the warp and weft of our lives: we practice it as one of our earliest experiences as schoolchildren, and as parents we treasure the drawings made by our offspring like nothing else. People draw everywhere in the world; drawing can even be used as a global visual language when verbal communication fails. As adults we use it pragmatically to to sketch our own maps and plans, but we also use it to dream – in doodles and scribbles. We use drawing to denote ourselves, our existence within a scene: in the urban context, for example, graffiti acts as a form of drawing within an expanded field." [39]

I argue that drawing has the potential to be in constant movement. It can map without becoming the terrain it maps; it can suggest without closing on a meaning; it can trace without becoming a master signature; it can explore without needing a final answer; it can connect without stopping at any of the points it connects; it can play between ideas and references without commiting final allegiance to any of them. In many recent arts practices it has offered the freedom of process for artists to experiment and bring together disparate contexts and materials. The recent work of William Kentridge (see section 2 above) is a case in point; and in the case study presented below, Donal Fitzpatrick uses drawing as a notational device in his arts practice in order to play between various art historical references as informed by his own understanding of their theoretical implications, while presenting ideas through material means. The case study presented below is predicated on my own understanding *with* the artist of his movement between drawing and art history-theory.

Case study: integration between arts practice and art history-theory

A recent suite of drawings and drawn paintings entitled "The Empty Ocean" by Australian artist and arts academic, Donal Fitzpatrick, had their point of departure in a found image, a discarded photocopy noticed by the artist on a machine in a University of Otago library in Dunedin. This small university city on the east coast of the South Island of New Zealand is a place where the artist-academic found himself working as an art historian-theorist in our School of Art, while also exhibiting for a protracted period between 2002 and 2005. It is a location known for its changeable, maritime climate; for its dark and gloomy winters and stormy seas; and for its educational role in the history of landscape painting in New Zealand. Picking up that particular scrap of photocopy may have been a random act. However, it was certainly also possible that the artist noticed it in the first instance because it seemed uncannily loaded with chains of signification redolent of his own experiences of, and responses to, a particular place at a particular time. This case study explores some of the links

in this chain in terms of four functions of the artist: as translator; as bricoleur; as *fugeur*; and as art historian-theorist.

Figure 1:
Apparition, **oil on canvas, 2002-4, 114 x 111 cm.   (photograph: Kate Mahoney; copyright: courtesy of the artist)**

Figure 2:
Aftermath, **acrylic on canvas, 2002-4, 114 x 111 cm. (photograph: Kate Mahoney; copyright: courtesy of the artist)**

The discarded photocopy showed the black border on one side so typical of its provenance. Inside that border, the image turned out to be more auspicious. Fitzpatrick writes in an artist statement available at the exhibition: "It was a fragment from a painting of a seascape. I subsequently discovered that the source was a famous and dramatic painting of a giant wave by Gustave Courbet [*Seascape at Etretat*, 1869]. The fragment that had come to me was from the extreme right hand side of the painting and comprised some rocks in the foreground and was dominated by the image of the horizon line…the shift from the drama of the central scene to the apparently insignificant detail appealed to me."   The suite of works that followed translates this image – complete with its original black border on the one side – into notations through which the wave retains its status as referent; while simultaneously giving it up to other considerations.

Firstly, I ask myself: what happens where the status of the referent is retained? This question leads me to draw a trajectory between Courbet's Paris of the nineteenth century and dramatic paintings of the landscape and its waters by nineteenth-century New Zealand artists, with examples hanging a block away from "The Empty Ocean" in the Dunedin Public Art Gallery. Such paintings are on the whole large and sombre and they impress the viewer with their confidence in representation, much as Courbet had expressed a similar confidence in his own context. Fitzpatrick's suite does not lose its necessary reference to the confidence it questions; but secondly, I ask myself what he achieves when the status of the referent is simultaneously given over to other considerations?

The suite performs acts of translation with its smaller formats; its lighter touch; the informality gained through the use of notational drawing; and its insertion of clues to the very history of modernism which would question the representational confidence of earlier landscape painters and, later, their still ponderous presence in public art galleries. Here, it seems important to consider that translation does not necessarily entail the loss of one register in favour of another. Rather, it can function as a compounding process, one through which

registers are stacked and connected without the erasure of any of their layers. Since Walter Benjamin's 1930's notion that translation can only transmit information and thus the "inessential" [40], radical shifts in thinking about translation have occurred, some of which reach back to Friedrich Nietzsche's belief that the "degree of the historical sense of any age may be inferred from the manner in which this age makes translations and tries to absorb former [texts]…" [41]

It seems to me that it is precisely through an act of excessive absorption that Fitzpatrick functions between various contexts. We recognise not only the reference to Courbet via its ignominiously photocopied discard; but also a range of other ghostly presences in the suite of drawings; and each brings a world of ideas and endeavours to the space occupied by the works. We walk into the gallery as if into a library and find ourselves there hours later still, reading from a chapter on one of many contributions to the history of modernism. Reading thus, I remember Jacques Derrida writing that a "text lives only when it lives *on*, and it lives *on* only if it is *at once* translatable and untranslatable". [42] So, which historical texts are living on through translation and its limits in Fitzpatrick's suite?

With deference to its age, the first to mention is the tradition of the oil painting with its often attendant cracked surface, which had long ago become a signifier of tradition, age and value. In 1920, Kasimir Malevich lamented that "in art…the older a work the more it is considered valuable, beautiful, artistic and skilful, just as in the wine trade old wine is the most prized". [43] Ironically, his own attempts at "erasing" the old through a creation of a *tabula rasa* in his black and white squares found its own old-age after a century of obsession with the square, complete with its own cracked surface. Some works in Fitzpatrick's suite reminds us of the contested surfaces of Malevich's squares with lines of noise or frantic movement suggesting the dialectics of modernism; while an exaggeration of the cracks presents early modernism to us in the manner of a romantic ruin.

Alongside the deathly presence of the ruin, other ghostly presences seem to breathe with new life. Quick little movements of the drawing hand cover a surface to indicate in shorthand the ornamental panels in a Pierre Bonnard painting; while the minimal nature of the reference allows us the freedom to wander off into the terrain of argument concerning decoration and the ornamental in late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century debate. Elsewhere, grids of circles, squares and triangles remind the viewer of the ubiquitous presence of the matrix in modernist art, although here it is inserted almost as a footnote waving to Rosalind Krauss; while primary colours in geometric arrangement say hello to Piet Mondrian across a century. We also recognise the agitated handwriting of the abstract expressionists and their provenance in Eastern calligraphy where Fitzpatrick utilises line to animate surfaces. But, in this rich array of references it is paradoxically when modernists Barnett Newman and Mark Rothko are evoked that Fitzpatrick's suite breathes most with its own life.

The black border on the one side of the photocopy becomes a pretext with which to explore the edge in Newman-like fashion. The strip of masking tape, the painting over masking tape, the trace of working close and over the edge are all present through the various ways in which the artist negotiates this border. But it is also more than that. The strip is so prominent in these works that one cannot help but pause and consider it further. In a sense it is this incomplete edge, this uncomfortable and nervous demarcation which is the *leitmotif* in "The Empty Ocean". It speaks of asymmetry and a sense of being slightly off balance. It also creates a frame through which we look at the ocean and its monumentalised wave or downwards to a shoreline far below. It becomes an eye or a viewing device or a door opening on a museum of masterpieces from the history of art. Fitzpatrick the bricoleur roams freely within the walls of this museum and he picks up and uses what comes to hand, but not without discretion as it is always the combination of the sublime and the fragile which finds its way into his drawings. Monumental wave pairs with friable outlines; dramatic landscape

becomes broken surface on closer inspection; windswept trees are upended on a vertical horizon. And then there is a conversation with Rothko.

Figure 3:
Untitled, **pastel and graphite on paper, 2005, 90 x 72 cm (photograph: Kate Mahoney, copyright: courtesy of the artist)**
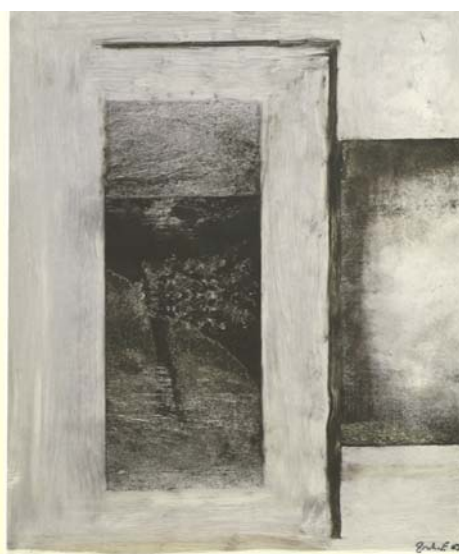

Figure 4:
*Untitled***, water colour, graphite & pastel on paper, 2005, 46 x 36 cm. (photograph: Kate Mahoney, copyright: courtesy of the artist)**

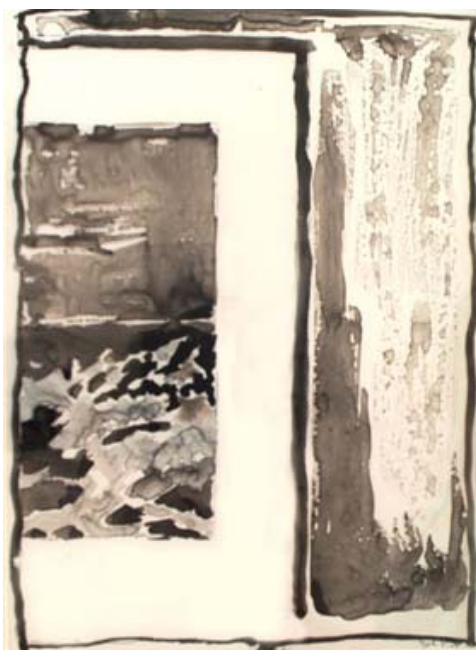

Figure 5:
*Untitled***, water colour on paper, 2005, 42 x 32 cm (photograph: Kate Mahoney; copyright: courtesy of the artist)**
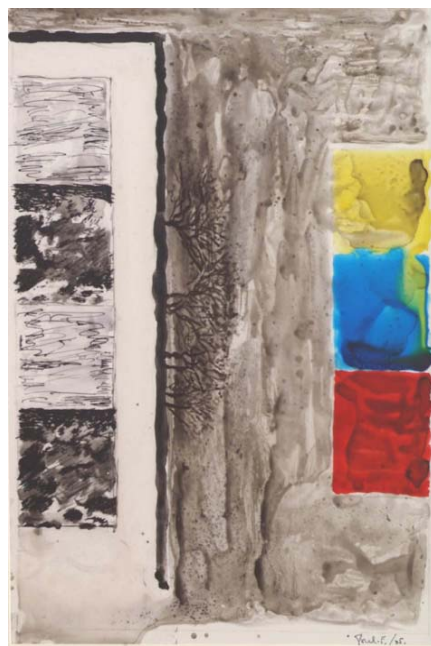

Figure 6:
*Untitled***, inks on mylar, 2005, 32 x 44 cm. (photograph: Kate Mahoney; copyright: courtesy of the artist)**

The black border on one side opens again onto a scene and this time we see the simple black squares which in our age cannot be seen anymore without remembering Rothko. In *Aftermath* (figure 2), the border on one side is reserved for Newman to frame Rothko's legacy inside the opening of the door. The black and grey in there are simultaneously abstract surfaces, dark sea and stormy sky; sublime depths to drown in; and alchemical processes separating elements into discrete units. The whole of the image sets up an uneasy space which invites us into the frame and shuts us out through the opaque grey surface on the right. Thus a constant movement into and a counter-movement outwards take place and – with Fitzpatrick – the viewer becomes a fugitive in the act of looking: always moving, never settled, always uneasy amongst the holy relics of our art history, as they repeat and repeat. Fitzpatrick writes in an artist statement available at his exhibition: "A text on a scrap of paper tacked to the wall of the studio that I saw everyday while working on these paintings was a quote from Gilles Deleuze, 'repetition is the unconscious of representation'." As the artist steps back so that we can enter the museum of art history, we are reminded that a language is being spoken in there despite all romantic claims to the contrary. Fitzpatrick is comfortable and theoretically eloquent in this language and – especially where he speaks to Rothko – his suite of fugues moves us to enter the conversation with art history-theory.

Conclusion: interarts implications for theory of Art History

On a global scale the current visual arts arena is percolating with ideas about post-media art, connections between studio and study, and the possibilities of interarts initiatives. Art History-Theory is being pulled into research projects in which artists and academics are making history by working in and with arts practices, histories and art histories. An energy field is operating in which old estrangements seem almost "ghostly" in their redundancy. There are, of course, many historical precedents for the current situation and – as an example – the productive relationship between eighteenth-century J.J. Winckelmann and A.R. Mengs comes to mind, because of their articulated exploration through contemporary art and writing at that time of historical contexts. They were, 'making and writing' contemporary arts practice and art history through a Neoclassicist 'lens' or theoretical engagement with the history of art.

I conclude by arguing that the current engagement of artists in (art-) history and its theoretical underpinnings (whether overtly acknowledged or not) is providing fertile ground for the old separations between Art History and Art Theory to reconfigure themselves into an integrated (albeit always fractious) Art History-Theory discipline, which can involve itself fully with the invitations towards critical dialogue abounding in visual arts practices today. It may sometimes be as simple as walking from a study to a studio. Where Dexter writes about the critical involvement of contemporary drawing in interarts practices, she suggests the creative delight, enjoyment and play which a loss of essentialism and solipsistic authenticity can entail. She writes about how a slight shift can open new possibilities: "…technology (the photocopier) allowed drawing an easy way to lose its authenticity as a work of art" [44] and "to step down into a [networked] field of operations" [45] as Roland Barthes so famously wrote in 1977. Drawing is showing the way in much of interarts practices. Art History-Theory as another inter-practice has in many instances joined the conversation and established methodologies which can rise to the occasion, making old separations *and* statements about the demise of "Art History" contra-productive in our post-media, post-disciplinary context. There is room for the chronologically sound *and* for the critical problematising of the teleological linearity which has given rise to much of the criticisms lodged against the discipline. Merely arguing for its demise is to deny us some (of many) ways of organising and articulating our experience of the world.

Notes

1. See for example Schmidt, L. et al. 1985. *Kreatiwiteit: struktuur, proses en konteks*. Johannesburg: RAU, B10; and Heidema, J. & Schmidt, L. *Aspekte van ruimte en tyd in die Westerse kuns en wetenskap*. Johannesburg: RAU, B9.

2. Snow, C.P. 1965. *The Two Cultures*. Cambridge: University Press.

3. Moxey, K. 1994. The Practice of Theory; Poststructuralism, Cultural Politics and Art History. Ithaca & London: Cornell University Press.

4. Ibid. pp. 1-2.

5. *October*, 77, Summer, 1996.

6. Moxey, K. 1999. "The History of Art after the 'Death of the Death of the Subject'", *Invisible Culture: An Electronic Journal for Visual Studies* at http://www.rochester.edu/in_visible_culture/issue1/moxey/moxey.html, as last visited on 24 April, 2006.

7. Ibid.

8. *Artlink*, 26(1), March, 2006.

9. Marsh, A. 2006. "Art History in a Post-Medium Age", *Artlink*, 26(1), March, 2006: 42.

10. Ibid: 45.

11. Ibid.

12. See Zembylas, M. "Of Troubadours, Angels and Parasites: Reevaluating the Educational Territory in the Arts and Sciences Through the Work of Michel Serres", *International Journal of Education & the Arts*, 3(3), March 17, 2002: 2.

13. Panofsky, E. as quoted in Owens, C. 1992. "Art History as a Humanistic Discipline", in Owens, C. et al. (eds), *Beyond Recognition, Representation, Power and Culture*. Los Angeles & London: University of California Press: 88.

14. See Grosz, E. 1989 for discussion of this notion in *Sexual Subversions*, Sydney: Allen and Unwin: xv.

15. Lather, P. and Ellsworth, E. 1996. "This Issue: Situated Pedagogies – Classroom Practices in Postmodern Times", *Theory into Practice*, 35, 1996: 70.

16. Shepheard, C. 2001. "Creating Dangerous Knowledge: Critically Theorised Practice in Art Education", Adam Art Gallery Forums, see at http://www.vuw.ac.nz/adamartgal/artforums/2001/CaroleShepheard.html as last visited on 24 April, 2006: 2.

17. See Regester, C. 1999. *Review of Trinh T. Minha's "Cinema Interval"*. New York: Routledge: 37. Also see Charlene Regester, 2000. "Interviews and Film Scripts", at http://social.chass.ncsu.edu/Jouvert/v511/regest.htm as last visited on 24 April, 2006.

18. See above; and Austin, J.L. 1962. *How to Do Things with Words*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press; and Childers, J. & Hentzi, G. 1995. *The Columbia Dictionary of Modern Literary and Cultural Criticism*. New York: Columbia University Press: 222.

19. Moxey, K. 1999, see endnote 6 above, p.1-2.

20. Owens, C. 1992, see endnote 13 above, p. 88.

21. London, Malden USA & Melbourne: Blackwell.

22. Kocur, Z. & Leung, S. 2005. "Introduction", in Kocur, Z. & Leung, S. (eds) *Theory in Contemporary Art Since 1985*, London, Malden USA & Melbourne: Blackwell: 1-3.

23. See Derrida, J. 1999. *Adieu to Emmanual Levinas* (Pascale-Anne Brault & Michael Naas trans.), Stanford, California: Stanford University Press: 3, n.2.

24. Sergiovanni, T.J. 1999. *Building Community in Schools*. San Francisco: Jossey Bass.

25. Clement, T. "Chronologically Unsound", *Artlink*, 26(1), March 2006: 75.

26. Childers, J. & Hentzi, G. 1995. *The Columbia Dictionary of Modern Literary and Cultural Criticism*. New York: Columbia University Press: 84.

27. Clement, T. see endnote 25, p. 74.

28. Singerman, H. 1999. "Toward a Theory of the MFA", in *Art Subjects: Making Artists in the American University*. Los Angeles: University of California Press: 213.

29. *Otago Polytechnic Master of Fine Arts Handbook*, 2006, Dunedin, New Zealand: 28-29.

30. Marsh, A. 2006, see endnote 9 above, pp. 41-45.

31. See http://www.postmedia-net/ as last visited on 24 April, 2006.

32. See website above for William Kentridge interviewed by Cheryl Kaplan in "William Kentridge: Inside the Black Box", as last visited on 24 April, 2006.

33. Benjamin, R. & Baily, E. 2005. *Eye-Site: Situating Theory and Practice in the Visual Arts*, Art Association of Australia and New Zealand Annual Conference Abstracts, University of Sydney, s.p.

34. Collision Symposium 2006: Interarts Research and Practices, see

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36. Kristeva, J. 1998. "Institutional Interdisciplinarity", in Coles, A. & Defert, A. (eds), *The Anxiety of   Interdisciplinarity*. London: Black Dog (de, dis, ex, vol.2, 1998): 21.

37. Wyatt, R. 2004, a statement made during an MFA Research Seminar at Otago Polytecnic School of Art, Dunedin, New Zealand on 23 July, 2004. Wyatt teaches at the Glasgow School of Art and participates in its International Drawing Research Institute with the College of Fine Arts, University of New South Wales in Sydney and the China Central Academy of Fine Arts in Beijing. See http://www.cofa.unsw.edu.au/researcg/idri/default.html as lasted visited on 24 April, 2006.

38. Rosand, D. 1999. *Drawing Acts: Studies in Graphic Expression and Representation*. London & New York: Cambridge: 23.

39. Dexter, E. 2005. "To Draw is to be Human", in *Vitamin D: New Perspectives in Drawing*. London & New York: Phaidon: 6.

40. Benjamin, W. 1936/88, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction", in Hannah Arendt, *Illuminations*. New York: Harry Zohn: 217-252..

41. Nietzsche, F. see *Connect; Art, Politics, Theory, Practice: Translation*, Fall 2000, p. 15.

42. Jacques Derrida, Ibid., p. 57.

43. Malevich, K. from "The Question of Imitative Art", 1920/1992, in Harrison, C. & Wood, P. (eds), *Art in   Theory: An Anthology of Changing Ideas,* p. 293.

44. See Dexter as in endnote 39, p. 7.

45. Barthes, R. 1977. "Work and Text", translated and re-issued in Harrison, C. & Wood, P. (eds). *Art in Theory 1900-1990: An Anthology of Changing Ideas*. Oxford & Cambridge USA: Blackwell: 941-946.

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