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Editorial

iJADE conference 2016: drawing

This year's conference took a fresh look at a fundamental element of art education: drawing. Drawing can be thought of in many different ways, not least as a direct and immediate means of rendering thought itself into form; conceived in this way drawing is a fundamental extension of the thinking process itself. The media of drawing are as varied as its modes of expression, and this is another reason for its enduring fascination for us: its potential is infinite, and although each mark and expression is necessarily culturally specific, there is no limit to its iterations, nor any to its potential for cultural appropriation. Drawing as a recording of movement and gesture can embody, literally, the notion of expression, and is closely related to the performances of dance, music and poetry; at the same time drawing has an extensive history as an applied discipline in the service of fields such as graphics, architecture, sculpture, engineering or fashion, as well its interdisciplinary manifestations such as its engagement with digital technologies, dance, mathematics and music. Its infinite and enduring legacy as a powerful means of creating art is also its main drawback: the intimidation of endless potential, and the seeming impossibility of creating something that has not already been accomplished. Nevertheless, I know from my own work, and my observations as a teacher and as a parent, there are a few more poignant moments than when a person is fully engaged with the world through drawing: the epiphany of comprehending and responding to the richness of an experience, be it as ephemeral as the shape of a sound or the texture of dream, capturing and rendering such things that may otherwise remain beyond the means of words.

'Timelessness' is an overused expression but in this case may be apt, since the historical evidence of drawing's longevity is abundant. A draw trace, residue or an observation is often used historically as evidence of humanity or civilisation, and here drawing is triumphant, since it literally leaves its mark where other forms of expression have not. In other words, drawing manifestly endures, and is therefore as fundamental to education as reading, speaking, singing, counting, writing or dancing.

However, the difficulties of drawing are also much in evidence in education: performance anxiety, the fraught notion of representation, the limitations of cultural expectations, the inappropriateness of standardised assessment and the status of non-textual forms of expression. Nonetheless, drawing remains one of the major human forms of engagement with the world, part of the bedrock of learning, even though it is not always acknowledged as such.

These are some of the issues that we discussed in our two days at the conference at the University of Chester, many of which are represented in the papers in this special conference issue. All of the articles have been developed from presentations that were given at the conference. Most of them were chosen by the conference delegates as examples of research that they felt should be available to a wider audience through publication in our journal. Eileen Adams opened the conference with her keynote presentation 'Thinking Drawing' – reproduced in this issue – in which she reexamined her formative experience of drawing in her family home, where drawing became a kind of thinking aloud, an everyday experience whereby thoughts and meanings were rendered visible and explored. She developed this argument to justify the centrality of drawing in education as an intellectual process.

Ruiz's paper discusses research into the drawings of the Tlicho people in Canada and the ways that their drawings can embody huge quantities of information based on community history and social geography, developed through extensive iterative processes. Calvo reports on her doctoral research where she explores drawing in a variety of design contexts and considers the importance of the designer using drawing as a reflective tool to more fully understand the design process. Riley's paper is a deeply theoretical investigation into drawing as an intelligence of seeing, and the pedagogical potential of this for empowering students. Darling-McQuistan examines how children's drawings, when moved beyond representational imitation through an active teacher/practitioner engagement, can be insightful and informative, revealing the shortcomings of conventional evidence-based research.

Wigglesworth's paper explores the possibilities of students utilising drawing as a means of enhancing scientific investigation, and considers the pedagogic potential across the curriculum of an integration of the drawing process into different disciplines. Hyun-Kyung Lee also looks at drawing in the service of science, in this case a public project in Korea researching the possibilities of reducing pollution in wastewater, where drawing performs a vital function communicating ideas between disciplines with different modes of thinking. Also considering the relationship between

thinking, learning and drawing, Fava discusses research that examines the ways that drawing can enhance cognition.