

**Harnessing the Utopian Impulse in Drawing**

**A practice led PhD**

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## Abstract

This research brings together two complimentary enquiries that are discussed alongside one another throughout this thesis. The first enquiry explores drawing as a *generative* as opposed to a *goal oriented* process. The difference between the two processes is considered to be an important catalyst that sheds new light on the history of instrumentality in drawing, which recent exhibition platforms like Richard Deacon's 'Abstract Drawing' at the Drawing Room, London, have also re-assessed. Generative drawing here is understood as an explorative process that determines an outcome (inside or outside the drawing). Goal oriented drawing is critiqued as a process that is driven by an endpoint or goal, suggesting that drawing itself is a means to an end rather than an activity that shapes that end. These differences are explored in relation to a second enquiry into the utopian philosophy of Ernst Bloch, for whom the critical efficacy of utopia lay in its capacity to function as a generative process, as opposed to a goal oriented one. The utopian impulse is explored here as a parallel lens through which to see drawing as a reflexive enquiry (drawing that both generates and critiques its own process) and to therefore re-view its instrumental role.

The thesis begins with a discussion about the generative capacity of *tracing* to mark the beginning of a gradual separation between a drawn line, its traced source and the autonomous drawings that result. This is summarised as a simultaneously destructive and generative act (the drawing is generated by destroying its source), which is supported by Bloch's comparative use of the trace as a critical means of foresight, which is compared and contrasted with the theories of Derrida, Deleuze and Badiou. Finally this destructive form of drawing that gradually distances itself from its source, is explored in reverse to consider its *reconstructive* potential. In this context the writing of Walter Benjamin is brought into the foreground and examined in relation to the joint effects of retrospective temporality and future orientation in this drawing enquiry. This drawing research is viewed primarily as a process that is harnessed and theorised through a series of drawn pictures, which are generated by one another and emerge as the conclusive statements of the project. This hopes to shed light on the relationship between drawing and instrumentality and to re-think the role of pre-figuration in drawing, through what Deanna Petherbridge has called its 'future subjunctive tense' (Garner, 2008). The associative exploration of drawing through the utopian impulse reveals a paradoxical feature of the instrumental agency of both drawing and utopia, as it is understood by Bloch, which shows both to function as destructive and generative processes.

## **Acknowledgements**

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And big thanks to my family for hanging in there.

## **Glossary of research terminology / frequently used words**

### **1) Diagram**

I use the word diagram to describe my own interpretation and manipulation of drawings, mostly after their production (integrating and dismantling ready-made sketches through a live drawing process for instance). As the research develops the term is used to explain the drawing process itself (the effects of a diagram become integral to drawing, rather than separate to it).

### **2) Drawing**

Drawing refers to both the medium (pencil, pen, ink and printed line) and the support (predominantly paper; occasionally a digital interface was used in conjunction, in the production of a stop frame animation for instance) while also acknowledging that these are distinct and variable elements of the drawing process. The support is also treated as a conceptual anchor through which to explore the evolution of the drawings, with special reference to Walter Benjamin's emphasis on the 'background' or 'site' of a drawing, which I discuss in chapter 3 (pages 60-65). This research involved scanning and printing hand-made drawings (my own) in order to see the original through a different lens and make adjustments to it (please also see my note about the term 'mechanical' included in this glossary). Ultimately when the word drawing is used it refers to my hand-drawn process and manipulation of the medium, and the outcome (the product) of that process.

### **3) Generative**

Generative became an important term and can be best described as the result or effect of combining both instrumental and pre-emptive traits of drawing (see relevant headings in this glossary). It does not suggest a one way orientation, which pre-emptive does for instance in referring to a future change. Rather generative describes the effects of working back into a drawing (by erasing and / or adding layers) to reveal an alternative version of the original. The outcome of this process (as a result) informs decisions about what comes next. Generative therefore refers to the live process of drawing *and* the effects of working with (and into) ready-made drawings retrospectively.

### **4) Image / Picture**

Drawing to produce images was not the aim of the research even though the end drawings do contain a pictorial register. The images that launch the research are described as images and not pictures because they are appropriated from architectural design sources and archives. When I discuss images in my drawing I am therefore referring to this appropriated material. I use the word picture when describing how these images have been changed or deconstructed through my drawing process. Pictures and images are therefore treated as distinct elements of this drawing research.

### **5) Instrumentality / Instrumentation**

I use the word instrumental to describe elements of my drawing (my drawing process and *drawings* as readable objects) that are referred to or extended in subsequent drawings. These terms are used to describe the accumulations and alterations that characterise the drawing research. Instrumental is similarly used to describe how an individual drawing may be developed through a series of interconnected works. Instrumentality is also understood in the context of history, when drawing was predominantly used to instruct *other* media, disciplines and processes (across fields of fine art, architecture and engineering for instance).

## **6) Mechanical**

This is used to describe a method of working whereby elements of drawings are reproduced mechanically as opposed to manually. My use of this word in the thesis makes reference to Walter Benjamin's distinction between 'manual reproduction' and 'process reproduction', whereby the latter brings out details in an original that may not otherwise be seen. In other words mechanical reproduction creates an important distance between an original (a drawing in this case) and its mechanical copy, which allows me to see the original through a different lens (Benjamin, 1999, p 214). In the case of this research, drawing happens through a cycle in which an original drawing is mechanically copied, printed and then manually adjusted (and so the process repeats).

## **7) Motif**

I use motif to describe my particular use of building and architectural imagery (rather than another kind) to reflect and support the nature of the research. When the term is used it refers not only to the images of structure-like forms as they appear in specific drawings, but also to the conceptual associations that develop throughout the thesis (the ruin for instance, which is discussed in Chapter 3).

## **8) Narrative**

Narrative refers to the relationships and associations that exist between individual drawings. It does not imply that a particular story or event is created by the imagery for instance, but rather that individual drawings are interconnected and interdependent. The causal relationships between different drawings (the consequence of layering different elements of drawings together for instance) is therefore described as a narrative.

## **9) Pre-emptive**

I initially borrowed this term from Deanna Petherbridge who first used it to illustrate what she refers to as the 'future subjunctive tense' of drawing (Petherbridge, 2007). It describes an orientation towards a future change of direction or form, that is evident within a drawing process (rather than recognised as such because of subsequent unfolding of events). I use pre-emptive in particular to describe my use of drawing to outline and plan subsequent stages within a given drawing. Instrumental on the other hand, refers to causal relationships between separate drawings and so is largely retrospective.

## **10) Reflexive**

This is discussed in detail in chapter 2 of the thesis. Reflexive refers to how I combine previously made drawings to produce reference material for the research. This does not only describe my recycling of my own drawings (as discussed in chapter 2), but it also takes account of how those previous drawings adapt and appropriate lines and marks from external sources. Reflexive therefore takes account of my reflecting upon and editing my own previous mark making decisions, whilst also being sensitive to the sources that informed those first decisions.

## **11) Sketch**

Sketch is used when referring to the individual line drawings that are the scanned, printed and re-drawn pictorial elements of the research. These are primary line drawings that are made from elements of earlier drawings, and in turn are used to generate others. The sketches are repeated over several drawings and appear more or less constant in each (as prints), varying only in scale and where they have been distorted by other elements of the drawing process.

### 13) Symbol

Motif and symbol are related terms but when symbol is used, it refers to the amalgamation of the drawing medium with the images that appear through that medium. Symbol therefore makes reference to how the drawing process claims and alters the appropriated imagery, as it is used in this research.

### 14) Trace

Tracing is a method of outlining a pre-existing image or form using transparent paper. I use the term to describe this drafting process. The word (and my use of the technique) also intersects with Ernst Bloch's conceptual definition of the trace, by which he means the changes that occur to an original form when it is re-situated and re-viewed; and so given a new shape or context.

### 15) Tradition

A habit, practice or routine that originates in the past but is echoed, experienced or felt in the present. Perhaps the most striking feature of this definition of tradition (in the context of this research) is that it suggests that a habit or condition is maintained and repeated in the present time precisely because it represents *a different* point in time, rather than because it is integrally useful or beneficial. This of course was a point of concern in modernist cultural criticism because of the inherent danger that historical values come to dominate or become powerful (in politics for instance) through a human desire to mis-remember the past according to a given agenda (to sift out the negative and embrace the positive). I have used this term only sparingly in the thesis because my research is not equipped to address the broader implications of this. Some of these implications (those described above) are useful however, especially with reference to the key writers I discuss throughout this thesis (particularly Walter Benjamin).

### 16) Utopia

My use of utopia is an extrapolation of Ernst Bloch's theoretical definitions of the word, meaning a social process that ruptures and transforms an environment, system or routine through a gradual and critically generative process. I do not, for instance, use the word to describe my own ideas about a place, a system or an ideal form and I do not use drawing to illustrate such a place or idea. Instead utopia is used to describe the shapes and changes that occur to an existing environment when a predicted (or imposed) momentum is disrupted. The term is therefore understood here as much in relation to time and it is in terms of space. Throughout this thesis the relationship between drawing and utopia is understood and explored in these terms. The only exception to this is where I discuss specific theories offered by Bloch and others, in which case I try to remain true to those interpretations.

## Background and Aims of Research

This research grew out of my drawing practice and questions that began to form about my methods of generating work by editing and re-making previous drawings (my own and others). I came to question the underlying impulse that motivates a practice that is reliant on the graphic image as a means of generating ideas and actions. I began to notice similar traits in others' uses of drawing and I saw my own decision to treat drawing as both an instrument as well as an outcome, being reflected elsewhere. I recall being struck for instance by an event that occurred at a Robert Smithson retrospective at the Whitney Museum of American Art in 2005. A small annotated sketch called *Floating Island* (c1970) became the affecting centre piece for the entire exhibition, when the curators decided to re-create the drawn picture as a *live event* for the exhibition launch. The sketch showed a tree-filled barge being hauled along a river by a tug boat, with the Manhattan skyline sketched in the background. Had he been able to witness it, Smithson himself may have appreciated the confusion this gesture caused to the status of the artwork; was the artwork the drawn sketch or the live actualisation? I questioned the logic of this elaborate act but soon began to reflect on my objections. I objected not because I saw the gesture as an environmental or commercial excess (though arguably it was both these things), but rather because I thought it did something to betray the integrity of the drawing. The Whitney gesture demonstrated the powerful intrigue of that graphic image and how it suspends the promise of a continuation. This also points to a confusion around the stasis of the virtual space of the drawing (implied by this desire to transcend it).

**This research explores the following questions and propositions:**

- There is a difference between *goal oriented* and *generative* drawing, but what is it and how and why is this difference important?
- Drawing operates as a hinge between its own material form and something else that lies beyond, or through it.
- The instrumentality of drawing enables a continuation or an extension, but what effects does this have on the graphic image? What kind of image does this produce?
- How does drawing engage future orientation? How does this manifest in a live drawing act?
- I saw this *in-between* feature of drawing playing an important role in my practice and I wanted to understand its mechanisms.
- This paradox about the unfinished-ness of drawing is a utopian problem, or rather it echoes Ernst Bloch's fundamental characteristic of utopian *impulse*. What role does unfinished-ness play in the agency of drawing? How can utopian agency and impulse contribute to understanding the instrumentality of drawing?

## The Research Structure

### Drawing

This research is formed of two components; A written thesis and a series of drawings. The drawings that informed this thesis are included as images throughout this document. The drawing practice is also documented on a website ([www.eestrangle.wordpress.com](http://www.eestrangle.wordpress.com)) that contains corresponding catalogues and an animation work, which are numbered and titled as they appear in this document. This research has been exhibited in galleries in Manchester and Gateshead.

### Writing

The written thesis discusses the chronology of the drawings as they occurred but it also moves between individual drawings in order to track their development and generative capacity. The 3 thesis chapters thematically address these sequential elements of the methodology so that characteristics of individual drawings are discussed *both* as autonomous works and as individual parts of a broader process. It is hoped that the writing is sympathetic to the underlying conditions of the practice itself, which emerged through a reflexive cycle of making drawings by repeating and altering previous drawings. The writing discusses how drawings were made, reflected upon, edited and re-made. In practice this meant that the chronology and sequence of practice followed a pattern of making and then re-making (drawing and re-drawing), so the written component evolved along a similar path. Ideas continued to emerge as the writing formed and this in turn altered the context of the drawings. The writing of my methodology and the contextual theory are interwoven, so that each chapter predominantly opens with a discussion about features of drawings and follows with the broader contexts or implications of those features. In this regard the research borrows from Deleuze concepts of the diagram and Walter Benjamin's constellation theory, whereby new forms emerge through drawing and are manifested as ideas in writing, which then feed back into the drawing process. The writing also hopefully reflects the research problem and the nature of the drawings, in the sense that Utopianism (by its nature) is an unfixed and fluid process. I therefore follow the thinking of Ernst Bloch and Walter Benjamin in particular, by treating Utopia as a critical continuum rather than a concrete outcome.



## An overview of important relevant research into drawing and drawing practice

- Deanna Petherbridge shows how drawing has evolved since its early incarnation (in fine art) as *disegno* and *primo pensiero*, the first thought of a working process. This is indicative of how drawing was treated as the first step in a process that serves to map out the properties of a *future* space, rather than embodying that space (Petherbridge, 2005, p 118). Her research covers areas of drawing that intersect with my own, particularly the role drawing plays in pre-figuring and instrumentation (Petherbridge, 2007). Discussions about the causal links between drawing and sculpture (how that tradition has evolved) also connect with my explorations into drawing as an impulse towards another form. Petherbridge argues that the pre-figuring function of drawing is not applicable to most artists working today and that 1960s conceptualism aborted the necessity of drawing in this capacity. This thesis is centred on this question by exploring the efficacy of preemptive drawing. Petherbridge's statement that '*drawing today is not goal oriented*' also plays a part in my thesis through an exploration of drawing as self reflexive practice (Petherbridge, 2007, p115). My explorations into duration and temporality in drawing is echoed by Petherbridge when she describes drawing as '*a linear linkage between idea and future states of existence through the movement of line*' (2007, p 191).
- Alberti's 15th century treatise on academic painting must also be mentioned here. Especially significant is the coded recognition of drawing as a spatial mapping tool, and the origins of the term *circumscription* (or outline) to describe drawing as a technical instrument (Alberti, 1956, p 68). My research draws on this heritage of the instrumentality of drawing and the trace as a transitional practice.
- Richard Talbot has recently critiqued the Renaissance notion of drawing as an armature for a perceived reality, through his contemporary drawing practice and by applying perspective as a form of spatial play. He argues that new intersections in his drawings, which he calls '*spatial structures*', can be explored by flouting the perceived rules of perspective, as it was practised and developed by Renaissance scholars like Alberti (Talbot, 2008, p 52). Talbot's research centres on the hinge between drawing and sculpture and the geometry of depth in drawing in relation to functional planning mechanisms (such as maps and engineering tools). Talbot describes the role of drawing in his work as a purely rigid ground plan, which

although playful and fictional (in the sense that his drawings not based on real objects or spaces), adheres to consistent and methodical rules. My drawing practice revolved around a central armature drawing, which served as a ground plan for subsequent drawings and so the methods intersect with areas of Talbot's process. Drawing for Talbot was once employed solely as a technical tool to enable the practical building of a sculptural object, but that same method has now been applied to drawing itself. This reflexive nature of the practice also intersects with my thesis.

- Derek Pigrum's inquiry explores a category of provisional drawing (sketches, working drawings and notation) that he calls '*transitional drawing*'. His research explores the role that the studio plays in generating materials and methods of drawing activity, referencing Heidegger's notion of the 'ready to hand'. The research draws from Winnicott's theory of *potential space* to explore drawing practice as a transition between 'interiority' and the external world, a process he refers to as 'projecting possibility' (Pigrum, 2010, p 4). Despite the possible implications, Pigrum does not connect this mode of drawing with utopian philosophy but during his discussion he does reconcile the idea that drawing engenders 'something coming into existence, an event, a state of actualization, a moment of immanence' (2010, p 8). My thesis explores the possibility a continuum in drawing, focussing on the developmental processes of making, rather than the outcome. Pigrum's ideas also reflect Deleuze's notion of the event (in painting) which is described as '*..eternally that which has just happened and that which is about to happen*' (Deleuze, 2002, p 10). There are several areas of Pigrum's work that relate to this research, most notably the emphasis on placing drawing as a 'passage between' different states, between something known and something not (yet) known (2010, p 5).
- Whereas Talbot's research explores the potential space generated by the technical rules laid down in drawing, Patricia Cain's recent research considers the observed experience of drawing as 'thinking'. Cain applies a linear methodology of copying others drawing (including Talbot's) to generate an engagement with a process that aims to reveal an emergent condition of the artist while she or he is drawing. Referring to cognitive theory, Cain moves her emphasis away from the conceptual or visual implications of the drawing per se, and towards the particularities of 'doing'. Cain's methodology is designed to reveal generative movements in drawing '*as opposed to symbolic representation*' or fixed outcome (Cain, 2009, phd thesis). Cain's research shows how drawing through a linear process is

worked into a methodology. Her recent project from 2011 'Drawing on Riverside', is an example, where the drawing process is used to chart the constructional evolution of a Zaha Hadid building project (Cain, 2011). My research focuses drawing as a retrospective past inquiry and an instrumental future goal, which detracts from the live moment of drawing. This would not be the position that Cain adopts but her research in the extended process of drawing certainly finds parallels with this research.

- Wilson straddles the fields of fine art education and psychology by exploring practices of mimesis in drawing. Wilson applies established concepts of *emergence* and *goal objects* in psychology to enrich pedagogical interests in drawing as a central tool in the history of representation, which intersects with my exploration into drawing as an extended process (Wilson, 2004). Wilson's research also raises questions about the social role of drawing which is relevant for my discussion about drawing as an affective practice. Mimesis in drawing is treated here as a process rather than a goal or endpoint, and so emphasises the shifts and transitions that occur in the *body* (transmitted to the drawing) as the subject draws with the aim of capturing and fixing an image.
- Juliet Macdonald (2010) claims observational drawing as a central methodology to explore knowledge acquisition in drawing and the embodiment of knowledge. The research follows a path of enquiry which emphasises the notion of tracing as a methodological enquiry. Although Macdonald does not discuss the implications of the trace as a foremost concern for her research (with the exception of one or two references to Derrida), her methods of drawing, reviewing and re-drawing, are (in this regard) similar to my own. Macdonald's use of the trace resembles Michael Newman's notion of *marking*, in the sense that the mark is the residue left from another activity (which for Macdonald is observing public gatherings). The trace is the process of reviewing those marks in order to establish knowledge retrospectively. Chapter 1 of this thesis considers how the theoretical utopian trace and physical tracing offer views to future possibilities in the thought of Ernst Bloch and others.
- Eirini Boukla Investigates the trace as a mechanical drawing method and uses it as a means of tackling questions about the source of her drawing research. This research came to my attention towards the end of my own exploration. My research similarly explores the trace as an instrumental tool but in relation to utopian foresight and exposing the origins of a

drawing practice. Through a technique of tracing printed travel brochures Boukla confronts the paradox of seeing and the blindness of drawing as an indexical practice, evoking Derrida's thesis on the subject. Boukla explores the indecipherable matrices of lines that are generated by repeated over drawing, so that the connection to the drawings source is lost (Boukla, 2013).

- Stephen Farthing developed a taxonomy of drawings and researches drawing as a means of communication, marking and recording outside the realm of artistic practice. He distinguishes two realms of drawing, which enter either 'conceptual' or 'pictorial' (or both) categories (Kantrowitz, 2011, p 22). The conceptual realm refers to drawings that do not have a built in narrative (such as diagrams, maps, charts), which helped to illustrate my own use of drawing during various stages of my research. Farthing cites examples such as pre-historic cave drawings that mark out territory or provide an instruction through coded symbols. Exploring the unseen narratives in previous drawings and the disjunction between the drawing and its source, are underlying themes of my research.

## Chapter 1

### Tracing towards a deviant drawing practice

*'tracing the edges of things arises from a mechanistic physical-optical engagement with the world'* (Bailey, 1989, p 90)

The following stages of practice (stages 1 and 2) described below concentrate on 2 drawings (figs 1 and 3). These drawings do not physically exist now as they appear in the figures below. This is because these two drawings were produced through an accumulation of tracing and re-working over a period of time. Many drawings passed over these two paper surfaces in other words, and were subsequently buried throughout the drawing process. The 2 drawings that survived are seen as punctuation marks of this underlying activity. This part of the thesis explores this process as an emerging methodology and discusses how *tracing* played a central role in shaping the methodology behind the drawings.

**Stage 1 of the research:** Drawing surfaces were first prepared using pencil and graphite. A background was produced by pressing graphite powder onto a paper support and then tracing architectural template images into this background. This became a systematic method of making drawings and it informed the development of the research project. Graphite powder is difficult to control and once it is applied to a surface it continues to rub away and disperse at the slightest contact. I wanted to explore the interplay between the controlled, traced outline and the raw graphite with its unstable malleability. My assumption that I would foresee the outcome of tracing pre-existing images, was undermined by the distortions that occurred when graphite flakes are touched and drawn over (see fig 1). In this sense the assumed control of one element of the drawing (the carbon trace) was undermined by my application of the other (the raw graphite).

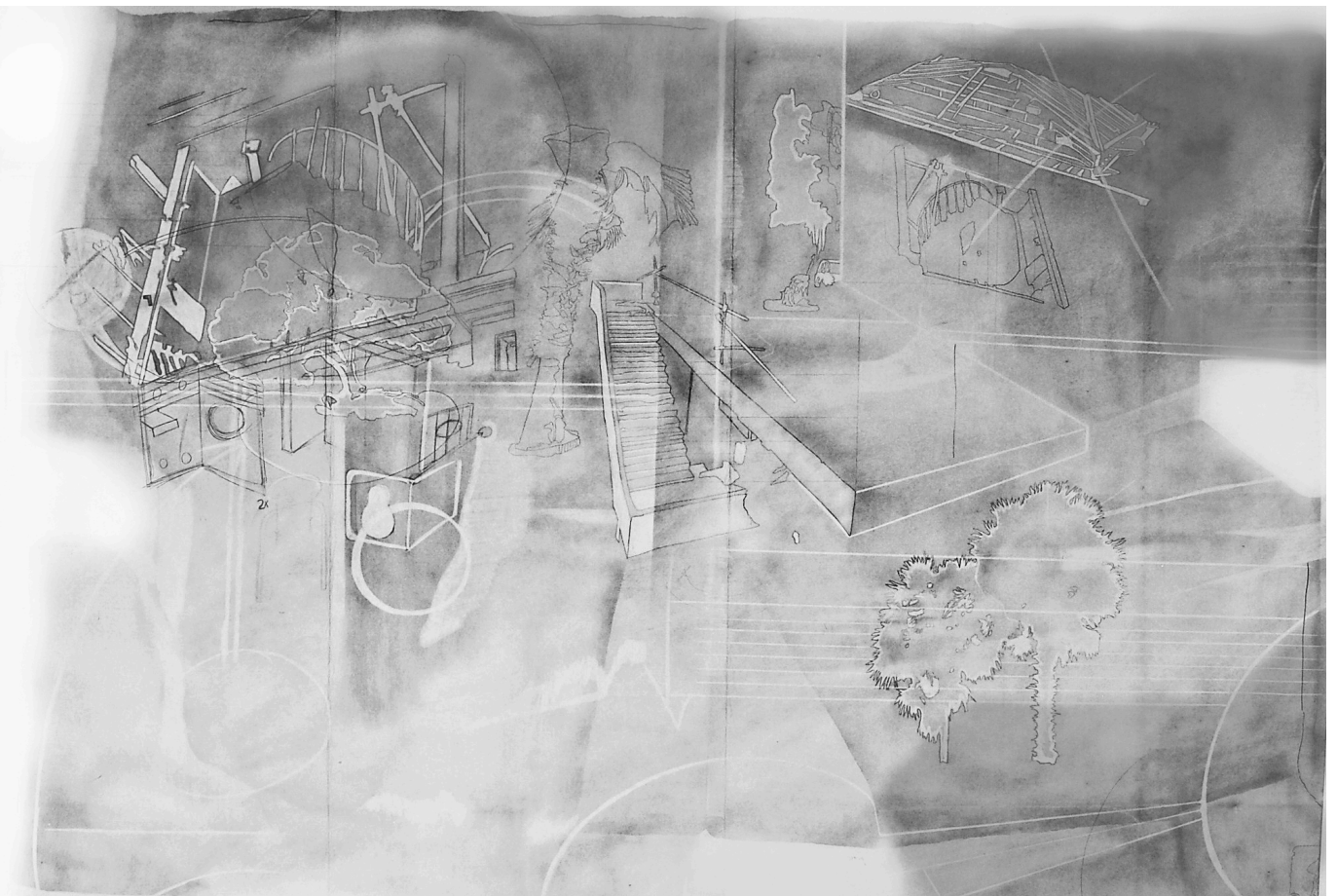


Fig 1: Graphite powder, rubber and carbon copy ink on paper.



Architectural templates (the imagery I chose to trace) are commercially prepared, abbreviated outline drawings. They were traditionally cut into plastic sheets and used by architects to illustrate the background narratives of a proposed building; such as trees, figures and structures that provide environmental context and scale.<sup>1</sup> I selected these source images for their uncomplicated, utilitarian pictorial qualities. I also wanted to harness their provisionality, because they are designed to be worked into a design process and are not themselves goals or products. They suggest an arrested or paused continuation; an incomplete narrative or rather they embody possible narratives that have not materialised. Tracing such images into a background that has no architectural aspirations or narrative, produced a cluttered assortment of seemingly functionless forms. The graphite powder also created *physical* disruptions, so the outlines could not be cleanly transcribed. Instead the graphite left behind a graphic residue of the manual process (the pressure of my hand on the page), which became the dominant feature of the drawings over time. The traced images in my drawings therefore deviated significantly from the functional clarity of the original images. G H Bailey (1989) has argued that tracing is not drawing and the two should not be confused. He defines drawing as '*bringing into being*' non-existent things, whereas tracing follows outlines of pre-existent things and therefore cannot be called drawing. I found rather the opposite to be the case, or at least I discovered that tracing pre-existing images leads to unpredictable and deviant outcomes. My tracing re-shaped those existing forms and in effect, it brought new forms into being and this triggered a new stage of research. Beginning with *pre-made* images allowed me to explore the possibility of *re-figuring*, because I could not set out to re-figure what does not yet exist. So the rules of a pre-made form are changed through a tracing-drawing praxis.

**Stage 2 of the research:** I therefore began to intervene in the tracing process, so that the defects of my imprinted outlines would feature pictorially as defective or broken objects (fig 2).

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<sup>1</sup> The imagery I am referring to was borrowed from architectural design manuals that are several years old. The CAD technology that now renders these images in architectural practice, was therefore not part of this inquiry. Instead I wanted to explore the gradual re-shaping of these familiar generic forms, through drawing. The original borrowed imagery began to disintegrate through the tracing process and this disintegration became a focus of exploration in subsequent drawings.



Fig 2: An example of the trace paper drawing samples used in figs 1 and 3.

In this way, causing ready-made pictures to disintegrate by re-drawing onto the graphite, became the focus of practice (fig 3). Tracing mechanically produced template pictures in this way, conversely led to their gradual disappearance. Benjamin Buchloh has called this a '*mechanomorphic*' mutation (Buchloh, 2003, p249). He describes how the matrices that delineate spaces and objects through drawing (such as grids, outlines or lines of perspective) become entangled with the haptic evidence of human activity. In practice this occurred as the coexistence of controlled traced outlines, with the resistant graphite medium that distorted the clarity of the traced images, as I worked on the drawings over a period of time.



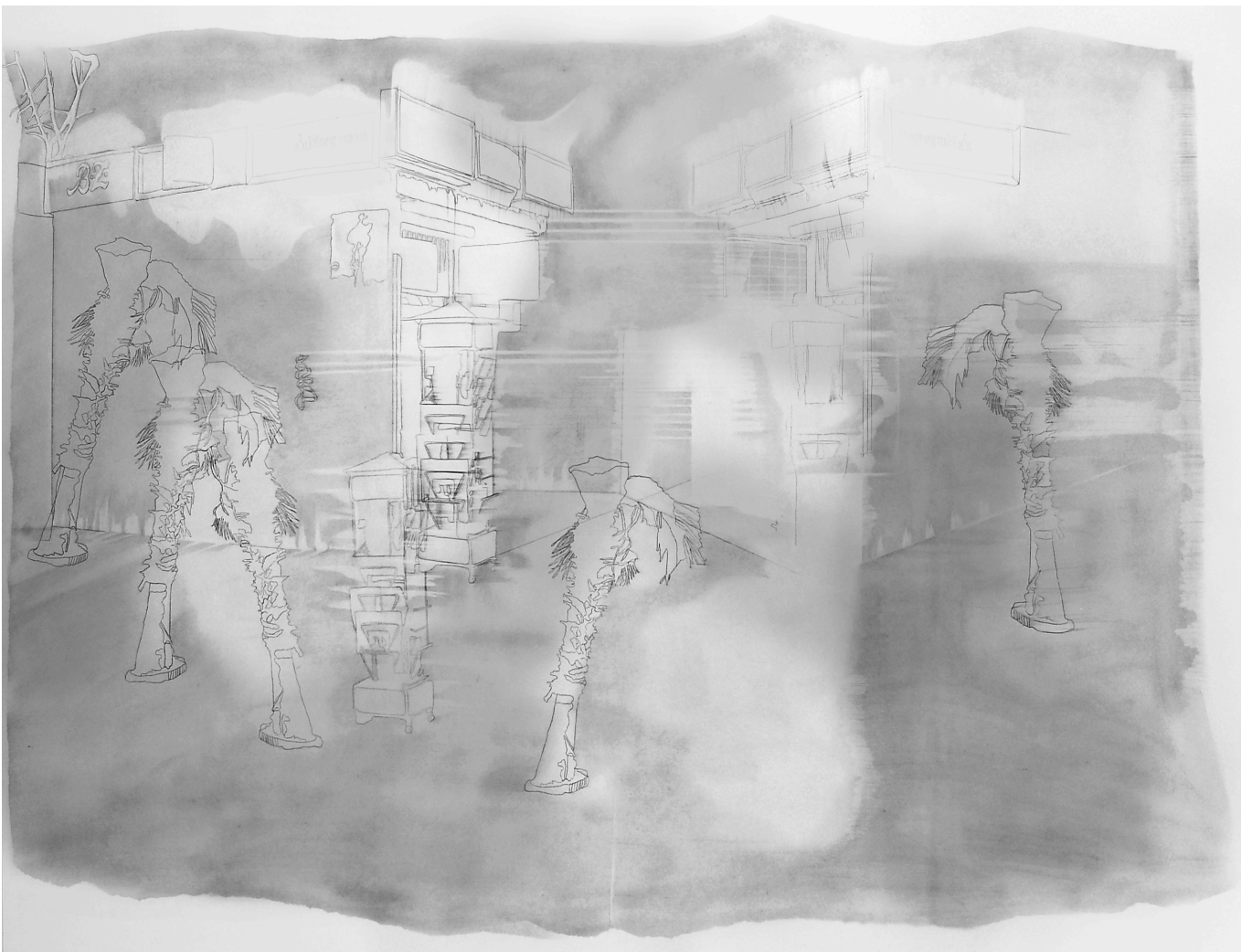


Fig 3: Graphite powder and carbon copy ink on paper.

A summary statement of stages 1 and 2 of the research:

- Tracing existing images over raw graphite causes their *disintegration*, and this becomes part of the pictorial register of the finished drawing. Subsequent drawings uncover elements of those first images, which had been buried in the drawing process.

## The trace in theory and Ernst Bloch's utopia

*'Primarily, everybody lives in the future, because they strive, past things only come later, and as yet genuine present is almost never there at all. The future dimension contains what is feared or what is hoped for...'* (Bloch, 1986, p 4)

Ernst Bloch's 20th Century utopianism might be considered 'quaintly idealistic' by today's standards (Daniel, 1997, p vii). Utopian ideals have long been met with suspicion, not helped by Bloch's association with marxism and its failure to overturn capitalist progress in the mid 20th Century, and the destabilisation of modernist ideals of social renewal (Noble, 2009). As a result of this and despite Bloch's own writings on art and aesthetics and his early alliance with Walter Benjamin and Adorno, utopian theory is given only sparse coverage in art practice and theory today.<sup>2</sup> But despite Bloch's marxist alliance he was himself critical of utopian *practice* because a fundamental characteristic of his utopia defines it as a critical *process* of development and not a destination or an achievement. He emphasised this by calling it the 'not yet' of utopian possibility and his writing consistently defends this underlying rule and claims it to be the fundamental characteristic of utopian agency (Bloch, 1986). As a result Bloch's theory might be well described as an exploration of the affective agency of provisionality and incompleteness, and *tracing* was pivotal in exposing this dimension of utopia. The collection of texts in his appropriately titled 'Traces' (Spuren), explores the unrealised future potential of 'things'; of works of fiction, activities in the pursuit of science, art objects, entertainment and almost everything in between (Berghan, 1997). That is to say Bloch's central claim was that tracing the source of everyday practices reveals them to be incomplete fragments of a continuing narrative. Klaus Berghahn has described Bloch's use of tracing as '*path-finding*', which also emphasises an explorative *future* probing characteristic of Bloch's utopia (Daniel, 1997, p 203). It provides a good indication of how Bloch's trace works by combining two convergent trajectories; the first is a retrospective method of re-viewing history, whereas the second prefigures a future change. This mutation triggers an active process that Bloch

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<sup>2</sup> In recent years there has been a resurgence in interest in the alliance between art and utopia, but it is still a cautious sporadic exploration. Recent exhibitions, books and events include the Whitechapel Gallery 'Spirit of Utopia' (2013) after Bloch's text of the same name, and in 2004 the Museu d'Art Contemporani in Barcelona staged 'Art and Utopia: Action Restricted'. In 2009 Richard Noble edited the Documents of Contemporary Art series; 'Utopias'. Artist Liam Gillick has for several years been engaged in explorations of participatory art platforms, such as his contribution to the 2003 Venice Biennale; 'Utopia Station', which included a text titled 'For a functional utopia' and published in the same year. A series of workshops, platforms and publications are being developed by *The Department of Things to Come* (a collaborative project between Chelsea College of Art and Newcastle University) to address themes that unite the two fields. The first event 'Utopography' (which my drawings featured in) was held at Baltic Contemporary project space in Newcastle in September 2013.

called '*anticipatory illumination*', which describes how an object (for instance) is recognised for what it once was, because of what it later becomes (Bloch, 1986).

This phenomenon illustrated a basic characteristic of the instrumental drawing practice that became a focus for exploration during the early stages of research. The drawn imagery was informed by the traced template images, but the tracings also deviated from their source image, and the drawings severed their associations. This progressive abstraction (whereby an original form is less recognisable the more a drawing develops) became more pronounced as a consequence of this new autonomy in the drawings (see fig 4).

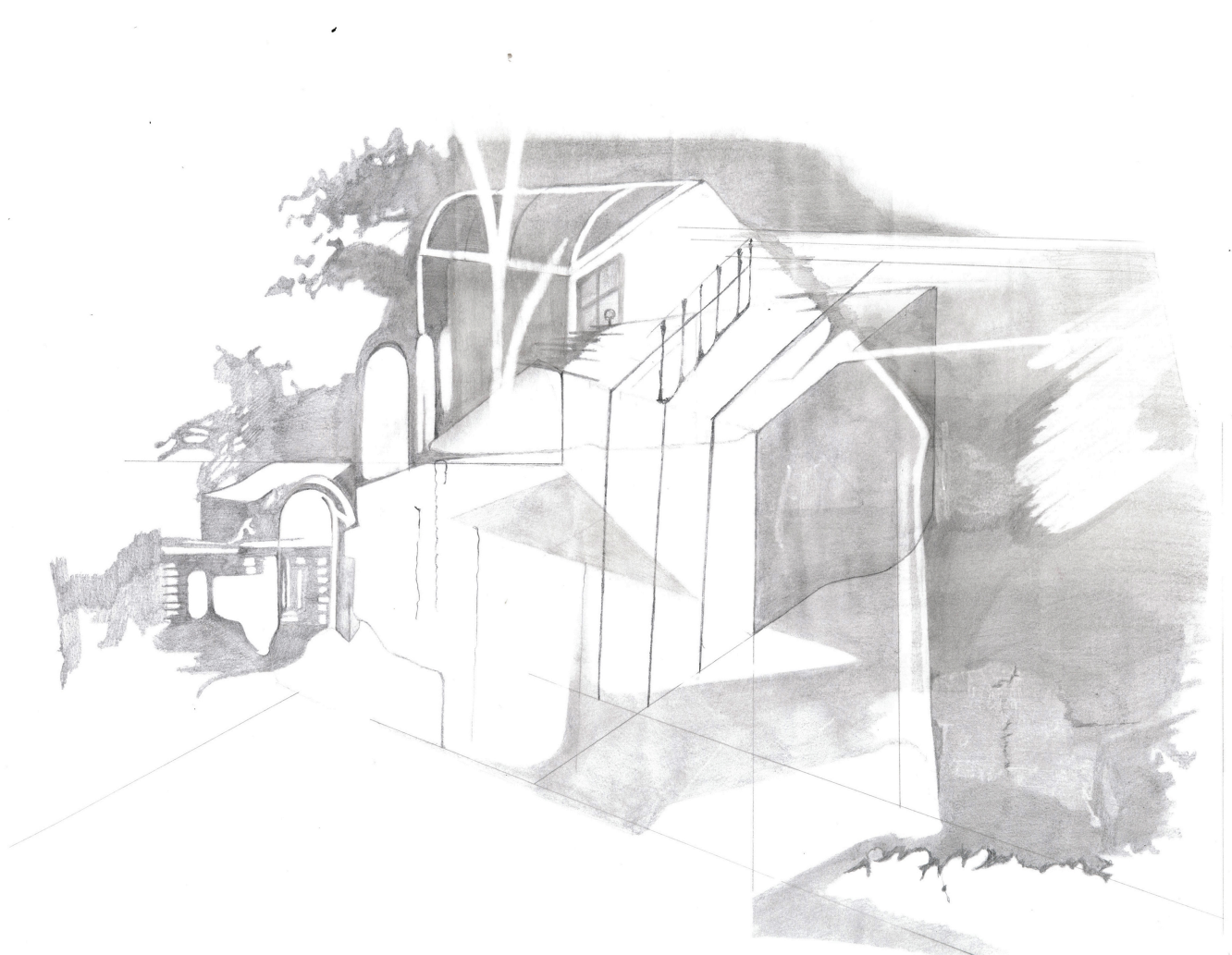


Fig 4: Graphite powder and carbon copy ink on paper

But at the same time Bloch makes a distinction between tracing something and reproducing it. Echoing Walter Benjamin in this regard, reproduction was treated as a form of nostalgia, which closes down the future potential of objects or events by confirming the loss of their original form. To trace an event on the other hand ensures that the original form is critically re-seen through its transformation (Jameson, 2005, p 7). A traced memory for instance is mobilised and steered toward future goals, so what Bloch frequently refers to as an *image trace* is actually intended to be a critical picture of difference rather than a mimetic repeat of the same (Bloch, 2006). Bloch was interested in transitory and fleeting traces, which are driven by an unknown source, rather like an *indexical* trace has a causal relationship with its object, without symbolic or mimetic likeness being employed to connect the two (Peirce, 1955, p 107). The trace is therefore generative and instrumental, and it is implicated as a future development or continuation. This also is a form of critical interpretation because the trace is an extension of the story or event that surrounds an object, so it works through anticipatory as much as reflective channels, or rather it connects the two. *Pre-appearance* and *anticipatory illumination* (or *anticipatory 'consciousness'*) are Blochian terms that describe a reflexive process of reforming origins and using them to pursue future projections or possibilities (Bloch, 1986, p 45).

In this regard Bloch's future preemptive trace is echoed by Derrida, which is to say that Derrida's trace represents an invisible presence and it occurs *before* a statement or an idea comes into being. Derrida's trace, in other words, causes and foregrounds future actions; an agency that Adorno is making reference to when he himself remarked; '*only in traces and ruins is there a hope of ever coming across genuine and just reality*' (Buck-Morss, 1977, p76).

*'The outline or tracing separates and separates itself; it retraces only borderlines, intervals, a spacing grid with no possible appropriation. The experience or experimenting of drawing (and experimenting, as its name indicates, always consists in journeying beyond limits) at once crosses and institutes these borders'* (Derrida, 1993, p 54)

For Derrida the trace is therefore a mobile agent that generates new attitudes (and new forms). It is not however a re-viewing of a past phenomenon to spotlight its future form, as it is for Bloch. Instead it is pure foresight (or *pre-sight*) in the sense that its trajectory is forward facing rather than reflexive. This foresight is also described as a movement towards unknown or uncovered ground, but Derrida describes tracing as a consequential departure from an original source. Consequential because tracing is blind to the object it traces (Derrida, 1993). The role the trace plays for Derrida is

not generally thought of as being utopian in the Blochian sense, but there are similarities worth discussing in relation to drawing.<sup>3</sup>

Derrida explores the *tracé* of drawing (the outline and mark of the activity) by extending the Pliny myth of *Butades*; the potters daughter who sought to capture her sleeping lover by drawing an outline around his shadow. This story is used by Derrida to argue that drawing (portraiture in this case) is an act that *distances* the viewing subject from the object of study and so is closer in kind to blindness than to vision (Derrida, 1993 p 45). Such a hypothesis clashes with Cartesian Western beliefs<sup>4</sup> that were built on the assumption that the eye is superior to the other senses, which presupposes that drawing, as a central tool in the histories of optics and visual representation, would have been similarly complicit in this belief. So Derrida complicates this history by comparing the mechanics of drawing with the effects of a minors lamp. The light is a '*curious and vigilant substitute*' that spotlights an object but in doing so it emphasises the distance between *it* and the viewing subject (1993, p 3). The idea being that the lamp (the point of the pencil) gets carried along in pursuit of the object and in turn it restricts the drawers sight of his or her own progress, as they venture towards it. This is understood here as both a sensory (in terms of touch and sight), and a perceptual problem. Firstly the mechanics of hand drawing are such that the *live* moment of the drawing (a line touching the surface) is hidden behind or beneath the drawing tool and so the moment the mark is made is not witnessed by the author of the drawing.<sup>5</sup> As a consequence drawing is characterised by both future and past temporalities and perspectives (which determine the 'live' moment); the result of a future oriented pursuit combined with retrospective interpretation (looking back after the event). The second restriction Derrida speaks of is the more fundamental problem illustrated by Pliny's story, in that the author of the drawing (the potters daughter who makes the first mark) had turned away from her sleeping lover to concentrate on tracing the outline of his shadow. Of course the reverse of this double hypothesis would infer that the daughter sees nothing of the drawing while her *minds* eye is concentrated on her sleeping lover. The lines of the drawing are lost behind their meaning, just as letters are invisible in language (Derrida, 1993). In other words, drawing and object cannot both be observed simultaneously and as such, this drawing becomes a record of the *memory* of the authors vision rather than direct record. Although using the

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<sup>3</sup> Derrida's theory of difference has been discussed in relation to Bloch's utopianism, in a paper titled '*Specter and Spirit: Derrida's Messianism or Bloch's Utopia as the Future of Marxism*' by Jason Kosnoski (2009)

<sup>4</sup> 'All the management of our lives depends on the senses, and since that of sight is the most comprehensive and the noblest of these, there is no doubt that the inventions which serve to augment its power are among the most useful that there can be' (Descartes quoted in Jay, 1995, p 71)

<sup>5</sup> Drawings made by hand touching a surface. Digital drawings or those made with light, chemical substances (pouring or throwing) etc, would not be effected.

memory as a 'muse'<sup>6</sup> takes nothing away from a drawing, it does (or could) create a problematic relationship between the graphic record and its intention, which in this case is to capture a sleeping figure (Ricoeur, 2006, p 9). Of course as Michael Newman has observed, the paradox in the Pliny story is that the drawing in question is not a record of an observed phenomena at all, but rather an outline of the *index* of the soldier's projected shadow. This act of drawing is therefore a process of mediation (a '*site of departure*' as Newman calls it) in which the drawing is completely severed from its origin (the sleeping figure). This of course leads to the paradox of the story because the drawing subject intends to capture the memory of the figure because she anticipates the soldier's future loss at war (Newman, 2003, p 95). If detachment is the result of this act, then the drawing is indeed paradoxical and might be best understood as a confusion between recollection and anticipation. The immediacy of the live drawing moment is, as a consequence, occupied by both (see figs 5 and 6).

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<sup>6</sup> Plato's observation (through Socrates) that memory is the '*mother of all muses*'.



Fig 5: Pencil and carbon copy ink on paper. This is the result of combining many architectural kit-home designs on a single surface. This drawing is discussed in detail in chapter 2.



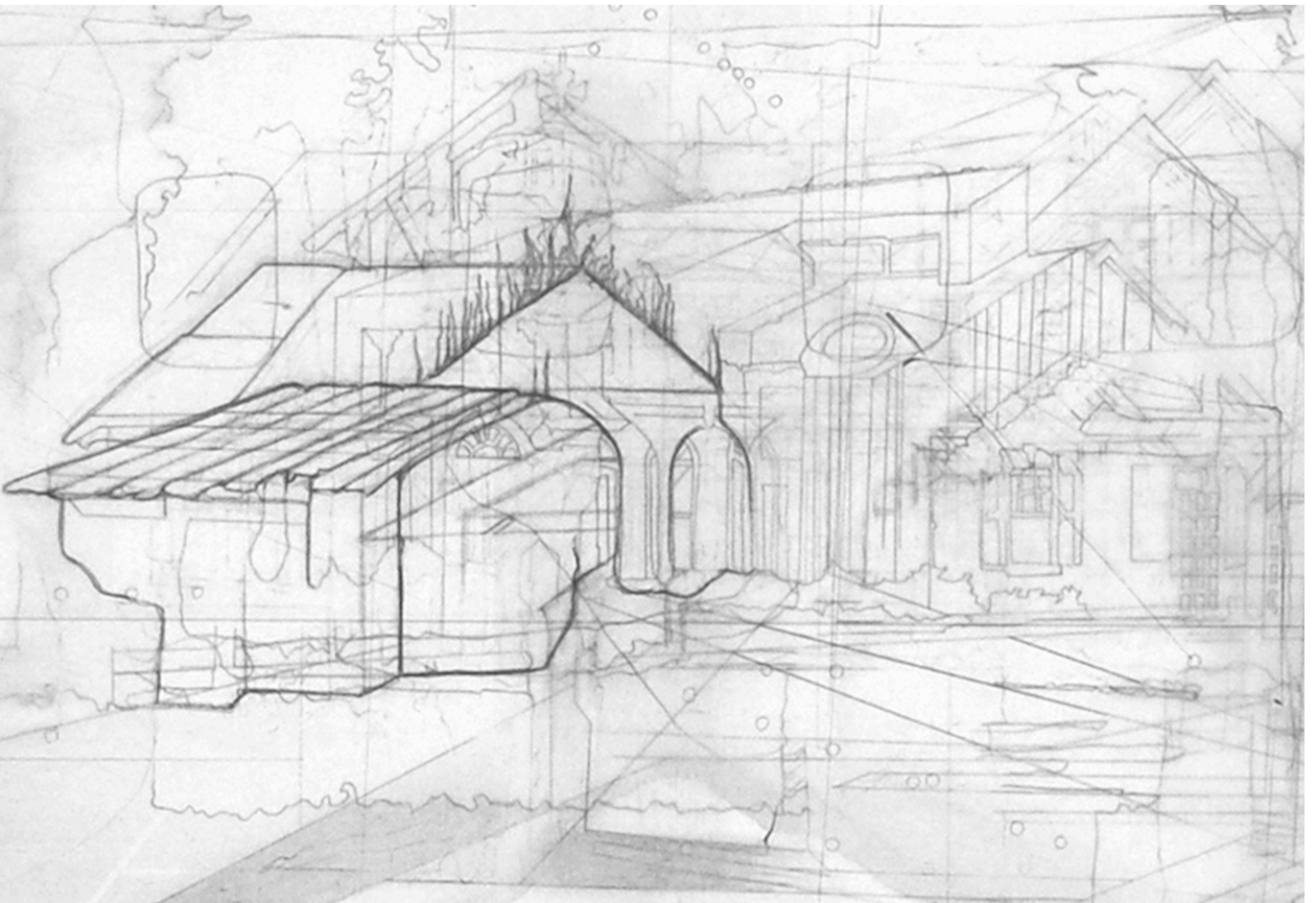




Fig 6 (p 25): Pencil and inkjet print on paper. This drawing is part of a series of reconstruction drawings that are discussed again in the final chapter. This series uses the drawing in fig 5 as a reference and a background on which to work.

A tracing can be seen as retrospective because it implies a relationship to something else that preceded it. The embodied act of drawing on the other hand, is anticipatory because of the impulse that drives it. The Butades drawing is motivated by this duality while the maker follows the outline of a distorted shadow. Futurity plays a part in the myth too because the drawing action pursues an agenda that is not really concerned with the drawing itself (the drawn figure) but rather what happens afterwards (the departure of that figure). So drawing, as Derrida implies, is produced through the anticipation of a future loss (a future memory). A similar paradox played a role in the drawings shown in figs 5 and 6. Their relationship is co-dependent because the tracing process that produced the first (fig 5) was made in anticipation of the second (fig 6). But the second drawing also re-figures an earlier stage in the production of the first, through an attempt to recall one of the many images that were inscribed into the drawing. In this sense, the second drawing also pre-figures the first by re-emphasising the pictorial origins of that first drawing (the shed-like structure and the vague environmental details surrounding it). The outcome produced a paradoxical relationship between the two drawings to the extent that the chronology and causal sequence of the first has been inverted and confused by the second. The drawing in figure 5 can also be seen as a diagrammatic interpretation of figure 6 because it is the result of condensing a large number of images into a single abbreviated drawing.

For Walter Benjamin traces are the echoes of past events, so they cause a suspension or a hiatus to a progressive motion. The trace for Benjamin therefore *slowed down* the causal effects of time, as opposed to Bloch for whom the trace engendered a future development or transformation. Benjamin's tracings represent '*the appearance of a proximity, however distant what it left behind might be*', by bringing a faded object back into focus (Richter, 2002, p 227). Of course Benjamin's concern was that the advance of technological reproduction would damage the *translatability* of objects by eradicating their traces (Benjamin, 1999, p 70). The trace in this case is seen as a protector of originality, which rather opposes the historical account of graphic tracing.

## Transcending outlines: Tracing in the Renaissance workshop

*Tracing* (or *calco*) as an historical method of transferring and translating visual information, is commonly known to have been treated as a mechanical and menial copy technique in Renaissance workshops. The pursuit of originality and unique authorship in art in the 1500s fostered a divisive split between the thinking hand of the artist and the manual labour of the workshop assistants. The copying and tracing processes that underpinned painting production, were therefore treated as marginal workshop practices. The historian Carmen Bambach describes the division of labour in the workshop of Michelangelo for instance, and the tiers of responsibility of the apprentices who predominately worked on *under drawings*, which involved tracing cartoons for frescos and working with ready made drawings, designs and old paintings. Apprentices were expected to hone the craft of 'pouncing', the early tracing technique used to reproduce and transfer outlines of cartoons and designs onto different surfaces. Bambach's research highlights the attitudes towards the 'manual labourers' or workshop assistants of the Renaissance, who were subject to a complex skills hierarchy in which the so called 'cartoon tracers' were considered amongst the lowest ranks. Interestingly Bambach goes on to describe how the under drawing activity, which took place behind closed doors, was an early development of *mechanical* drawing, in which only the most economical and effective tools and processes were adopted in the preparation of a painting (Bambach, 1999, p 9). The pursuit of economical and mechanical production techniques, which were associated with 'manual' labour and production line work, opposed the Renaissance attitude that idealised the role of the artist. So mechanical reproduction, which was at that time a 'manual' process, was an invisible part of an artist's repertoire of techniques. The pursuit of perfection was equated with the eradication of all evidence of human (ie manual) toil, which technological intervention would of course, eventually achieve.<sup>7</sup> The notion that Renaissance drawing represented the origins of painting (*primo pensiero*) takes on new significance, because drawing, seen here as a process of copying and inscribing, is really (as Bambach points out) an early form of mechanical intervention. As Claire Von Cleave has pointed out through a reading of Vasari's journals, Renaissance assistants learned their trade by copying master '*working*' drawings, which were gifted and often exchanged between individual workshops only for this purpose (2007, p 8). The first thoughts represented by *primo pensiero* sketches were, in other words, short lived. They would be re-worked by the artist into working drawings, which were then used in the *pouncing* process described earlier. By the time a painting came into being in other words, that '*first thought*' had been through a

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<sup>7</sup> Vasari has written how Michelangelo burned many of his drawings and cartoons before his death for fear that should they be discovered, they would make him seen 'less than perfect' (Vasari, 1991, p 472)

complex mediation process and had no doubt been *re-thought* several times. Because these first sketches were quickly discarded in preference for subsequent drawings, which were considered more valuable, few would have had much knowledge of the subtleties or details of those first recorded gestures. In this regard the drawing process could be described rather like a temporal phenomenon like *deja vu* (already seen) in the sense that drawing strives to retrieve a past image, but in doing so something else emerges in its place. The drawing used to inscribe the outlines of a painting, was rather a transcription of a second or third draft, rather than a first sketch. The word *pentimenti*, historically used in relation to drawing, itself refers to the *reappearance* of a former image. *Pentimenti* also implicates future changes because the second incarnation of *pentimento* means 'repentance'. In this sense the role of Renaissance drawing can be understood simultaneously as a referral to past images *and* a premonition (or a foreboding) of future corrections, or rather the coexistence of both.

### Summary:

Tracing is a neutral activity. It draws attention away from its source so tracing is a process of disassociation and anticipation. Making drawings by tracing architectural template images was a way of exploring the instrumental affects of the trace but it severed the connection between my drawings and the original forms. Because this process generated *subsequent drawings*, my practice (the live act of drawing) came to be dominated by a pre-occupation with what might follow. As this drawing practice evolved my role shifted from *hijacking* ready-made imagery to *authoring* it, which was a consequence of my disengagement with the neutrality of tracing. Relationships between the traced *copy* and the *original* shifted as a result, and the gradual disintegration of the source images caused by the generative process of drawing. I began to re-consider the role of the source images in that had been lost or re-formed as the practice developed.

## Chapter 2:

### Pre-appearance and recollection: Instrumental motives in drawing

Chapter 1 discussed the consequences of using the trace to generate a drawing practice and the deviations that disconnected the original forms (architectural template images) from the resulting drawings. This practice was considered in relation to Bloch, Derrida and Benjamin's use of the trace as a source of change; to project a utopian future on the one hand, and to slow down the progress of time on the other. Whilst chapter 1 described the disintegration of traced images, *this* chapter explores the effects of recovering covered ground; of generating a drawing practice that pre-figures its own development, through attempts to recall the original forms that had been lost during the drawing process. The term pre-appearance is borrowed from Bloch. It refers to a phenomenon in which recalling a past image or event serves to regenerate that image as an alternative projection. This concept is discussed in this chapter, again referencing Bloch and Benjamin amongst others.

**Stage 3 of the research:** I borrowed pre-fabricated housing designs; the kind that promote a nostalgic appeal for a past era architecture, to begin this stage of practice. These images are still commonplace on commercial housing websites that sell pre-cut buildings, but kit homes were a particular early 20th Century mail order housing phenomenon. A remarkable feature of these illustrations is that they were the preferred means of distributing and selling these unbuilt homes. They behaved as virtual pre-view spaces, the likes of which digital platforms now provide. In his essay '*The social institution of symbolic power*' Pierre Bourdieu makes the connection between the symbolic form of a house (the organisation of interior space and its structural arrangement) and the human structures and power relationships that play out in the exterior world (Bourdieu, 1980, p 274). The house is presented as a microcosm of a society; representing its social systems, relationships and class rules. Bourdieu implies that the production of architectural images can also be treated as a symbolic manifestation of this rule. It has been said <sup>8</sup> that this empowers the visual language of architecture and strengthen the perceived trust in these forms of representation (Henderson, 2008). I was interested in exploring this image context, which is why the motif of architecture was chosen for this exploration. I therefore inscribed the basic details of the kit home images (around 50 in total) onto a page and continued until the images were convoluted and indistinguishable. The resulting drawing (please see fig 5 shown previously) was then used as a

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<sup>8</sup> The architectural historian Alberto Perez Gomez writes extensively about how the tools of architectural representation and image production have direct causal links with the social world, both in terms of how it is structured and perceived.

template to develop a series of drawings that explored this process of making. This chapter therefore discusses this state of flux between making and un-making in drawing, in relation to Bloch's concepts of *pre-appearance* and *reclaiming* as utopian processes.

The following images (fig 7) show different production stages of a central drawing, which I will refer to as a *template* drawing throughout the thesis (fig 5). It exists in material form as a single drawing but it was also divided into distinct frames, using time lapse photography to enable the recovery process that this stage of the research explores.



Fig 7: Pencil on paper. These are different stages of the template drawing shown in figure 5

The template drawing resembles a possible perspective armature or framework. On close inspection however there are no vanishing points and the suggestion of depth is complicated and cancelled or denied by overlapping and converging lines. These lines in other words are not working in harmony with one another, as the Albertian definition of drawing once suggested; '*to give buildings and parts of buildings a suitable layout; an exact proportion; a proper organisation; a harmonious plan, such that the entire form of the construction is borne fully within the drawing itself*' (Garner, 2008, p 35). Rather the lines of this drawing interrupt and contradict one another, rather than working in unison to support the emergence of a pictorial structure. The drawing has the appearance of a pictorial design process in which an architectural form (or forms) could be a possible goal of the drawing. But the architectural reference is not a goal or an intention, but rather a beginning. This drawing picks up where the architectural kit home designs left off in other words. There are two clues in this drawing (what is seen, shown, evidenced) that suggest it is in a partial condition. The first clue is that of the traced line as discussed in chapter 1. The second clue is the evidence of *erasure* (removal), which plays a role in how the lines of the drawing are read. There are clear areas where graphite has been removed and re-drawn, so faint traces of the removed lines are still evident. But the consistency and regularity of the drawn lines suggest it is not a *sketch*, but perhaps more like a homage or a re-presentation of something *already made*. So the drawing is in a partial condition; but does this mean partially *made* (where the positive lines of graphite *lead* the drawing) or partially un-made or *erased* (whereby the *removing and erasing* process is the dominant action)? The first possibility would suggest that the drawing began with an empty, vacant space (the paper support) and marks accumulated over time. The second alternative would suggest that the drawing happened through a reductive process; beginning with an image or ready-made background, and working towards its removal.

**Stage 4 of the research:** The diagram became useful in making this template drawing and exploring its development in later drawings. There were two kinds of diagram that enabled the development of the practice. The first was simply a *retrospective* way of thinking and articulating drawings that were already made; drawings were *fed into* a diagram system after their production, to allow me to conceptualise their structure or to describe relationships (see fig 8).

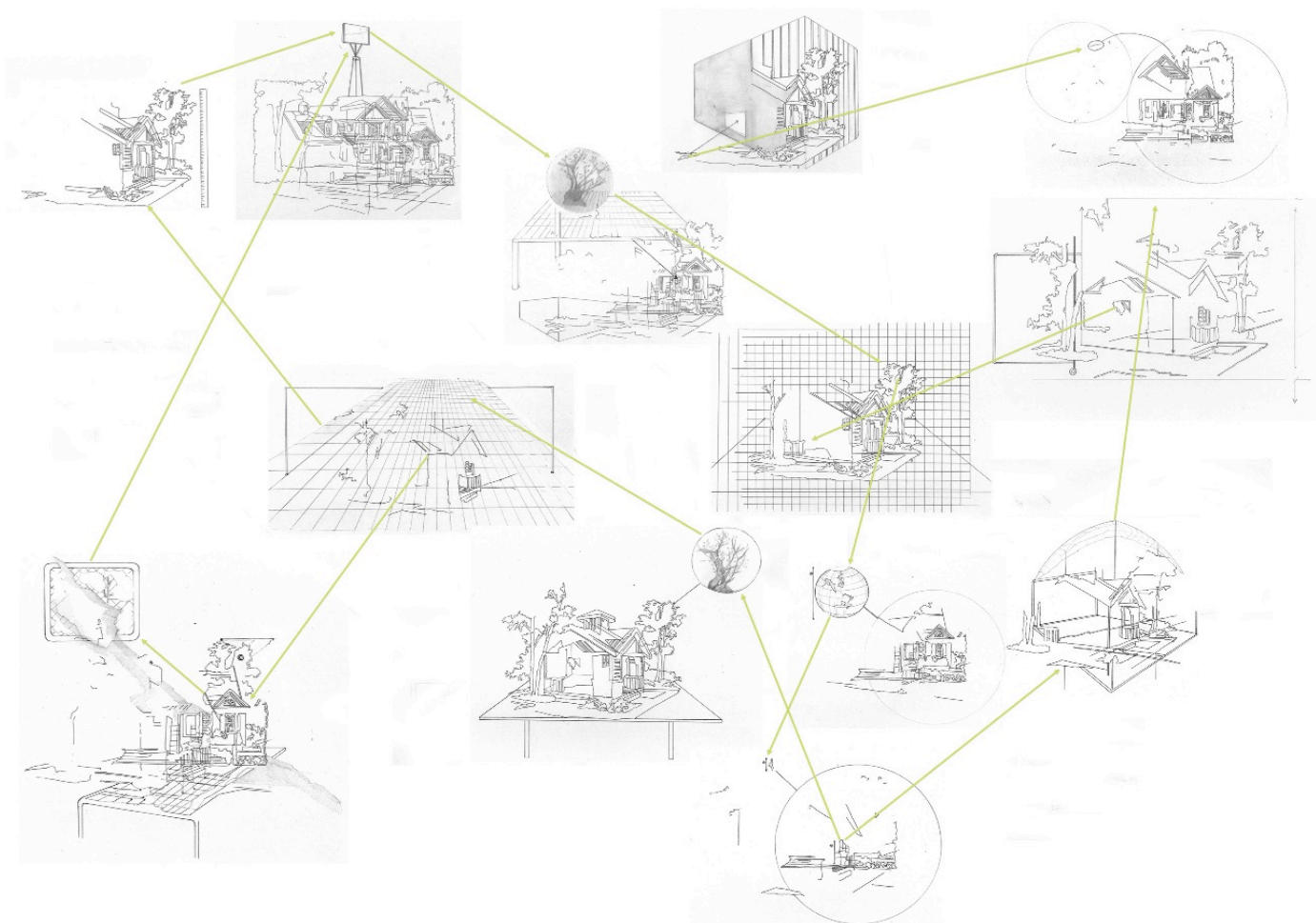


Fig 8: This diagram shows 13 individual drawings that were constructed out of printed time lapse images of the template drawing. These extracted prints then became source material for another series of drawings (those shown here) that behave as individual components *as well as* collectively forming a single whole (the template). The individual drawings were then shuffled into a random order and placed side by side to explore a variety of pairings and associations. This diagram suggests how a different sequence, pairing or association could collapse the unity of the template drawing and ultimately re-form it, even though *these* drawings were built out of it.

The second type of diagram worked *internally*, which is to say it happened *through* the drawing process, particularly in the making of the template drawing and subsequently breaking it apart. This second diagram is perhaps more closely related to the Deleuzian kind; as an invisible rhythm or structure that holds the drawing together or collapses it. The processes discussed in chapter 1 led to the conclusion that drawing was a continuing and associated narrative, rather than a series of individual works. The disintegration that occurred to the template source imagery during the first 2 stages of research, led to this exploration into drawing as a means of recovery and using a



retrospective exploration as a method of production. The images lost through the drawing process were therefore recalled from memory. The *template* drawing process for instance, was recorded as a series of time lapse photographs, which were printed and drawn over, using remembered details of the kit home images to edit the prints (see fig 9).

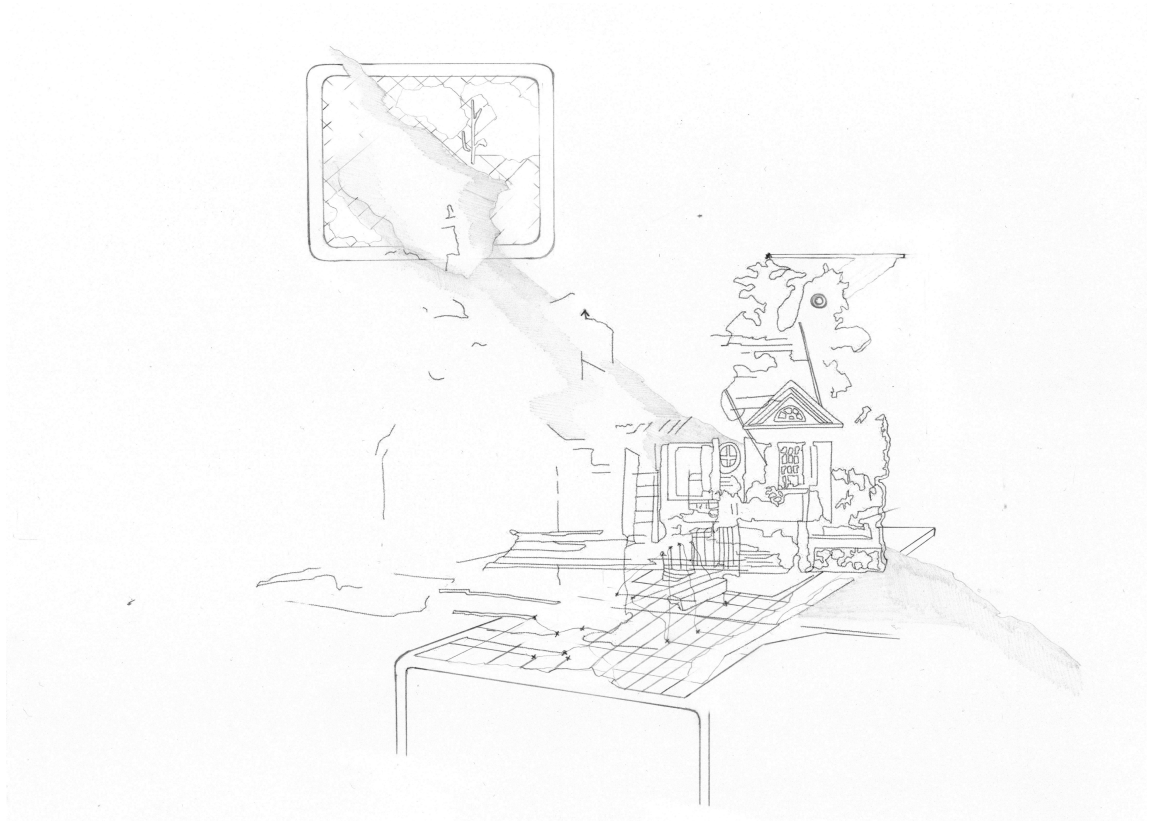


Fig 9: Two inkjet prints on paper with pencil edits. Time lapse photographs recorded the drawing process and I then edited these prints during the recollection process described above

My remembrance of the source images was vague and imprecise however. The final template drawing was not a good memory aid because individual forms had become indistinguishable through the drawing process and had blended together. Tracing of course only captures the abbreviated outlines of forms, and not the surrounding narrative of images so much of the detail was lost. This interplay between partially traced outlines and the remembered narrative details of the source images, caused further fragmentation to their meaning. This was partly due to the diagrammatic descriptions I used as a quick method of recording my recollections. The outcome was a series of diagram-like drawings, which although associated and related, were equally disconnected and fragmented (see fig 10).



Fig 10: Inkjet print and pencil on paper.

This practice transformed a single drawing into a montage of smaller fragmented drawings, which

is how the template drawing was formed in the first instance. This production sequence was also explored as a moving image, which further abstracted the source images into a constellation of lines and marks that behave as disconnected characters moving around an empty space (please see the animation on the disc). The diagram drawings collectively describe the temporality, fluctuations and glitches that occurred during the drawing process, which caused interruptions to that process. The diagrammatic fragmenting of this template drawing (the time lapse photographs, the animation and the individual diagram frames) began as a *recovery* exercise. Exposing the procedural stages of the tracing activity did not resurrect the kit home images because those images had been irretrievably lost as the drawing progressed. Deconstructing a drawing process in this way, was not really about *disclosing* that process however. Instead it was a way of exploring the momentum of drawing, which enabled me to move back and forth between the different stages of the drawing life cycle and make adjustments. Those adjustments, had they been made during the live drawing process, would have produced a different outcome. I also wanted to track the appearance and subsequent loss of the kit home imagery throughout drawing, as an inquiry into how those forms are made. The physical and symbolic destruction of the template contradicted its instrumental value, even though new work was generated out of its collapse.

### **The diagram as a destructive agent**

Kenneth Knoespel who studies the role diagrams play in structuring urban spaces<sup>9</sup> points out that the meaning of the Latin *Diagramma* brings together two oppositional connotations; order and stability alongside destabilization and discovery (Knoespel, 2001 p 147). Deleuze diagram is based on the second element of this dichotomy. He identifies four characteristics (or values) that produce conflicting variations in the process of painting, which he calls the *diagrammatic* order. These values are known through the deconstruction of Francis Bacon paintings, but the affects of the diagram can be seen in relation to my recollection diagrams described above. Of special interest is what Deleuze calls the '*preparatory*' marks; the glitches, alterations and interruptions that happen throughout the course of painting, that affect the identity of the outcome (Deleuze, 2003, p 81). The affects of these preparatory marks is determined by whether *the hand or the eye* has dominance over a given mark or gesture. The '*digital*' value for instance, describes the dominance of the eye over the hand, which produces a so called '*ideal*' optical space in the absence of a physical, tactile encounter (2003, p 124). Without the tactile memory and experience of the hand and its gestural

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<sup>9</sup> His essay *Diagrammatic Transformation of Architectural Space* (Knoespel, J, 2002, Ghent University, V 70, p 11-36) provides an overview of relationships between architectural space and diagrammatic representation. His recent research explores the development of landscapes and cities in the Baltic regions through the affects of diagrams.

signals (pressure variations and haptic marks) the eye produces a purely optical code that has no sense of embodiment, only a pure and virtual visual space. He goes on to emphasise however that the visual elements that constitute this virtual space are still informed by *manual* referents such as contour and relief (2003, p 125). In other words the eye cannot be entirely divorced from the experience of the hand, which (following Deleuze) would presumably offset the 'internalised' perfection produced by the eye and compromise its 'ideal' virtue. This introduces the work of the 'tactile' and the role it plays in engineering space, which is still *virtual* space, but now another sensory tension is introduced that prevents the painting from working on a purely optical register. This second value is crucial it seems in '*relaxing the subordination*' of the hand to the eye, which in turn begins a slow reversal of this order of dominance, which allows the '*manual*' to take control. Manual labour finally merges with the final value, which Deleuze defines as the '*haptic*' condition in which there is no longer any subordination or dominance either way. These values of course are not fixed in this order of description and they fluctuate and intervene at various stages of the painting process. I wanted to outline Deleuze's deconstruction of painting here to consider the emphasis he places on the diagrammatic role these forces play. Deleuze diagram is a disruptive device; it causes the mutations and fluctuations of the figuration in Bacon's paintings and therefore determines the *image* of the figure. WJ Mitchell sees the Greek origins of the word 'image' belonging to; '*a resolutely non – or even anti-pictorial notion*' (Mitchell, 1984, p521). Mitchell is referring here to the difference between 'images' and 'pictures', whereby the first is a memory or a concept and the second is the material manifestation of that idea. Before the Renaissance, the notion of *image* referred to a spiritual '*likeness*', meaning the substance of a thing rather than its visual shape (Mitchell, 1984, p 522). According to the Talmudic scholar Maimonides, this conception of the image in the medieval period was concerned with '*essential reality..(how) a thing is constituted as a substance and becomes what it is*' (ibid). A similar understanding of the image was demonstrated by Walter Benjamin, for whom 'images' were historical forms subject to constant change. Susan Buck Morss for instance examines Benjamin's *thought-image* in terms of the avant garde juxtapositional effects of *montage*. The image becomes a site of conflicting events and records that jostle and compete inside an overarching dialectical movement. Benjamin employed this method to offset representations that present history as a series of synchronised and causally related events, images and narratives. Buck-Morss remarks how such images of history influenced attitudes towards modern design for instance; new innovations take the form of '*historical restitutions*' by '*citing the old ones*' out of circulation and out of memory (Buck-Morss, 1991 p 110). She goes on to quote Benjamin's interpretation of this restorative impulse; '*There is an attempt to master the new experiences of the city in the frame of the old ones*' (1991, p 111). The use of the

word 'frame' to describe this formation of experience (the pictorial associations the word conjures) is quite deliberate on Benjamin's part. It perhaps reveals how, in Benjaminian terms, images are treated as traversable spaces through which the past is recovered (and judged).

So the Deleuzian diagram causes interruptions to the arrival of that image in Bacon's painting. Its positive affect is to constantly unsettle previous gestures and marks that precede the image (in Bacon's case this is a figure) and in doing so it creates alternatives. The experimental drawing practice described above created glitches in the continuity of the template. But these glitches and disruptions occurred after the drawing was completed so the subsequent alterations (the diagram prints) explore the possibility of a parallel, alternative outcome to that template drawing. By attempting to recover the source images that produced the template, the diagrams succeeded in replacing that source with another set of images. For Deleuze, the diagram replaces the role of the '*preparatory sketch*' in Bacon's practice; '*there is thus a preparatory work that...precedes the act of painting*' (2003, p 81). He goes on to say almost as an after thought that '*like many contemporary painters, Bacon does not make sketches*', suggesting that for Bacon, the process of working out, making alterations and developing ideas and forms, is built into the painting process.

In a contributory text titled '*The afterthought of drawing*' (2011) Jane Tormley interprets a series of diagrams given to her by Nicolaus Gansterer, using a method that resonates with Benjamin's *thought image*. She uses the diagrams (the origins and purposes of which were not known to her) to advance Derrida's metaphor about drawing and blindness. She explores the viewpoint that conception, memory and speculation are as important as perception, when it comes to visual representation (Gansterer, 2011, p 241). Her written responses to the diagrams therefore explore how drawing invokes thought, as opposed to a prevailing view that calls drawing the visualisation of thought. In this interpretation diagrammatic drawings are viewed as vehicles for generating ideas, and for Gansterer they are also used to generate subsequent drawings.<sup>10</sup> The diagram here is seen as a form of drawing that mutates into other forms (and other forms are mutated by it). Tormley's text interpretation of Gansterer's diagram drawings is itself described as diagrammatic, because of the transition she makes between drawing and writing to extend the narrative of the original diagram (Gansterer, 2011). This transitional affect of the diagram came to determine my approach to drawing during this stage of research. It generated a retrospective practice through my

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<sup>10</sup> Gansterer invited a group of theorists and artists to contribute to his 2005 residency at the Van Eyck Academy in Amsterdam. He spent 5 years collecting and making drawings of diagrams, which were then distributed to Tormley and others who were asked to respond to them. The project was published in 2011.

interpretive recollections of images that had informed the making of the template drawing. I found myself recalling details of narratives that were not based on complete memories of any single image. Instead they were the result of images having fragmented and blended together through the drawing process. The diagrammatic drawings that resulted therefore each contained fragments of many recalled images and, as a consequence they form a continuation or extension of those images.

The term 'transitional' is also used by David Joselit to describe diagrams as *actions*<sup>11</sup> that accommodate passages from one form to another. The word refers to a constant and gradual change or evolution as opposed to say, a sudden and permanent shift. Unlike Gansterer however, who uses found diagrams to trigger subsequent drawing explorations (which this stage of research similarly explores), Joselit interprets the diagram as being embedded *within* a working process, rather like Deleuze. Benjamin Buchloh too makes similar observations about the internal force of the diagram. For him diagrams are directly connected to the art historical traditions of *drawing*, rather than painting, which is the focus for both Deleuze and Joselit. Buchloh goes so far as to suggest that diagrams are mutations or outcasts of drawing history, because by their very nature they disrupt and contradict conventions of instrumentality, especially in relation to the human figure. He argues for instance that diagrammatic processes were at the heart of the development of modernist abstraction in art, by breaking and unsettling the stability of forms, which echoes Deleuze account of the diagrammatic violence afflicted to the figures in Bacon paintings. So Buchloh's diagram is transitional but it is not necessarily instrumental because it is implicated in what he calls '*the order of the diagrammatic...one of the principal dialectical oppositions in the medium of drawing*' (De Zegher, 2006, p 119).

#### **A summary statement for stages 3 and 4 of the research:**

- Drawing over found images to produce a tool or template for making, is both a preemptive and a destructive act. It preempts a future return whilst destroying its connection to the images that source the drawing. Drawing partially from memory of an image and partially from its graphic trace (the lines of a drawing) does not recover the source images, but rather distances them. Drawing is at once generative and destructive.

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<sup>11</sup> Joselit D, *Painting Beside itself* OCTOBER 130, Fall 2009, p 125–134. October Magazine / Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

### **Intensions towards instrumentality in drawing**

The template drawing was treated as the 'drawing board' phase of this stage of the research and it existed as something like a working drawing or an instrumental, preparatory activity.<sup>12</sup> As a result, the intensions behind this drawing played an important role in shaping it. Most evidently in the way it visibly demonstrates its process of production (fig 11) in contrast to later drawings that do that not reveal their process. Instead the later drawings (discussed in stage 5 of the research practice) describe that process through their imagery (fig 12).

The mechanical and repetitive nature of making this drawing allowed my attention to drift onto the plans intended for it, and what I would do with it. Subsequent drawings would explore the underlying structure of this template by reassembling it, which is what the diagrams set out to do. So this drawing initiated a practice whereby my working process was engaged looking back over previous work, retrospectively remembering the images that had passed, or foreseeing the next stages of practice.<sup>13</sup> My intensions to work with the drawing after its production shaped its form, and my decisions in making it.

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<sup>12</sup> For architects the term 'working drawing' refers to a specific form of visualisation where enough information about a hypothetical structure is shown to enable its construction, most commonly through Computer aided design. See R W Liebing 'Architectural working drawings' (Wiley 1999) and O A Wakita 'The professional practice of Architectural working drawings' (Wiley 2011) for technical description. The behaviour and conceptualisation of these types of working drawing, has therefore been radically changed by the framing of technology. A Pacey 'The maze of Ingenuity' (MIT 1992) provides a thorough discussion of pre and post-technology aided architecture. This terrain has been well covered and it is not within the scope of my research. References are made relating to the imagery I have borrowed in the course of drawing.

<sup>13</sup> Reflexivity as a drawing process is discussed later in the thesis.





Fig 11: Pencil on paper. The template drawing; in the middle and final stages of its progress.

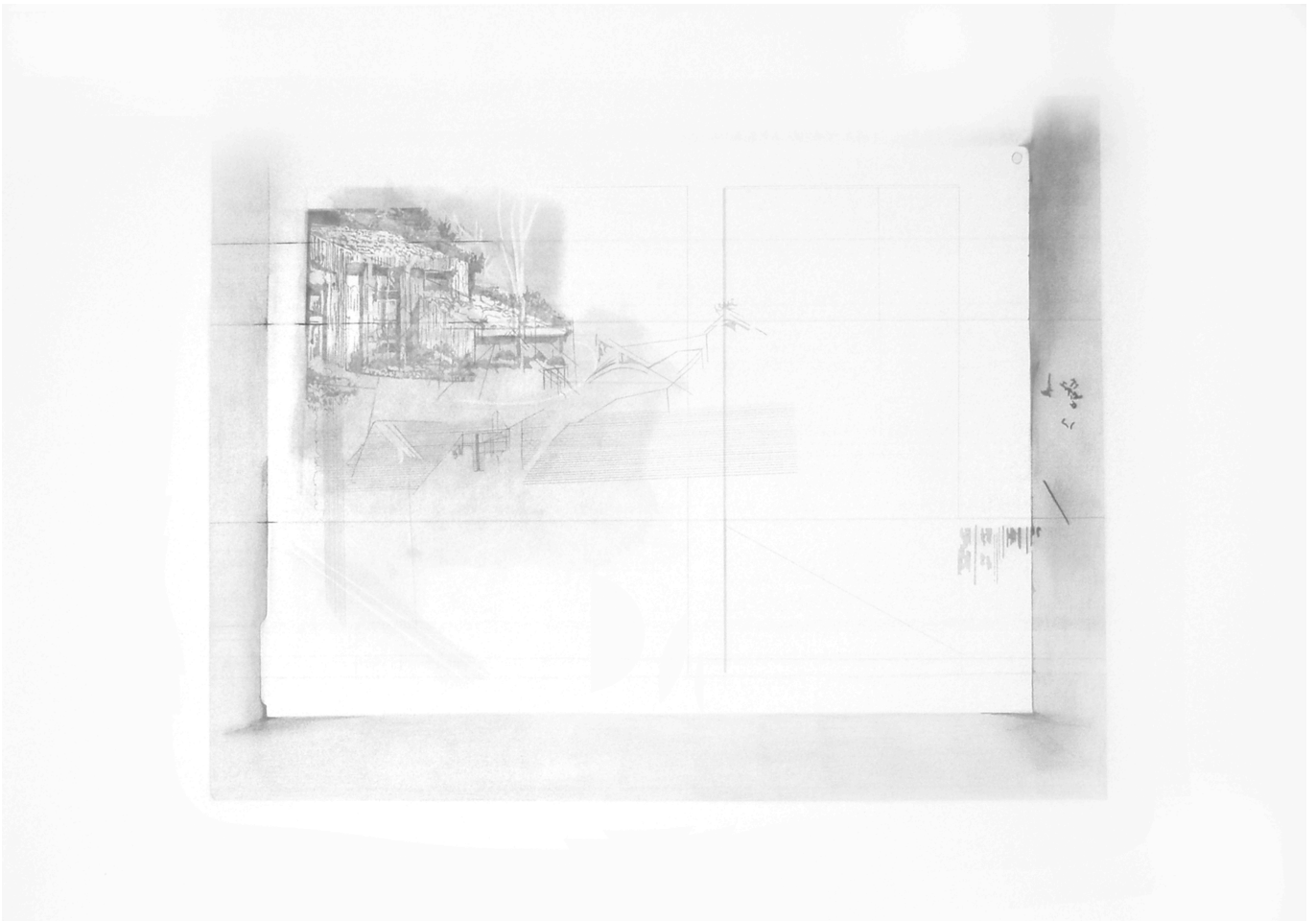


Fig 12: Graphite, pencil and inkjet print on paper. This drawing is from a series that explore 'reconstruction' following on from the diagrammatic drawings discussed earlier. The series is discussed in more detail in chapter 2.

Discussing a live drawing act as a *blind* practice (as Derrida does) might therefore be an accurate way of defining this template drawing and the practice that developed from it (the causal links between the two). This can be seen to work in different ways. On the one hand my intentions were focussed elsewhere during the making of that drawing, so what I was 'seeing' was (seemingly) not led by the immediate drawing action but on the images I had outlined and what would follow. On the other hand, that live drawing process was treated as a vehicle through which something else would happen, and this foresight undoubtedly influenced the drawing. This same foresight or projective focus might be described as the narrative that surrounds the drawing (Brentano, 1995). This narrative is also important in the sense that *my* intentions differed to the authorial intentions of the source images I appropriated through drawing. What my drawings were 'for' did not correspond to the original authorship, which as discussed earlier, gradually receded behind my own authorship as the practice developed. The resulting drawings are therefore not *about* architecture in the sense that the originals display a symbolic relationship to architectural development (Perez Gomez,

2000). Although aspects of this source data were transferred from the originals into the copies during the drawing process, it clearly does not follow that the architects intentions were also appropriated by me. Tormley, discussed earlier, tackles a similar problem through her reading of the diagrammatic drawings she inherited from the artist Nicolaus Gansterer. The diagram origins were not known when Tormley began to re-read them. What systems or objects the drawings described, and what they meant in their original contexts became obsolete. Tormley was therefore granted the freedom to '*re-inhabit*' their graphic codes; '*if I enter the drawing and start living in this world, I can describe this other reality as if I were looking at the 'scene' as it unfolds before me*' (Gansterer, 2011, p 243).

Of course the 19th Century psychologist Franz Brentano calls this a paradox of *intentionality* and argues that the agency of thought is in the 'inexistence' of the goal or object that is being pursued;

*'every mental phenomena is characterised by what the Scholastics of the Middle Ages called the intentional (or mental) inexistence of an object and what we might call...direction toward an object'* (Brentano, 1995, p 88)

In making the drawing discussed above, I could not have known the outcome of my drawing process, but I knew what I wanted to achieve through it (the disruption of the original images in order to explore their possible restitution). The template that resulted was always going to appear as it did, because the mechanics of tracing and the preexistent images dictated that outcome, but my intentions were focussed on what lay beyond its physical appearance. In other words, architectural imagery emerged and receded throughout the drawing process, but the goal of the drawing was to produce an armature for future work. In this sense the tracing process was a means to an end. This drawing was also intended to behave as a working space or document, meaning that it was produced in order for it to be extended and re-worked into other forms later (some of which have been discussed already). I therefore made choices about which areas of the source images were useful and which were not, based on predictions about how those elements might feature in *future* drawings, as a consequence of this *current* drawing activity. So, on the one hand the template drawing was intended to be what it is (a multi layered matrix of lines drawn on a sheet of paper) but on the other it was also a working document, which at the time of its making had unknown outcomes because that drawing itself was not, strictly speaking, an intended outcome. In reality this drawing became an object in its own right however, and it did not merely exist as an instrumental document. This is partly because it is judged to be so if viewed in a gallery situation, despite the

fact that drawing as a human practice has deeper roots outside formalised art history, than it does within it. The assumption described here may be a symptom of what Wimsatt and Beardsley famously dubbed '*The Intentional fallacy*'. This text was written a decade before Roland Barthes became known for '*Death of the author*', but it essentially carries similar implications about the role of authorship. Intentional fallacy refers to the idea that knowledge of an authors intent is not (and should not be) a pre-requisite for understanding or judging a work or a text. My own context as an artist (and not an architect for instance) might be influential in framing the meaning of this process of tracing and re-forming images, which is described above. But my intentions did not manifest in this first drawing, in the sense that I knew what the drawing was *for* but the details of what it would or could produce, were not known.

The '*inexistent*' object that Brentano refers to (not an object in the physical sense but rather a mental trajectory) as being essential to a practice or a process, seemed to grow in relevance as the research developed. My explorations seemed to be leading me to the conclusion that an *unrealised goal* was in fact a generative condition of this drawing practice. Namely in the sense that each drawing act was generated by the evidence of a previous drawing, and developed motifs for drawings to follow (please see fig 13).

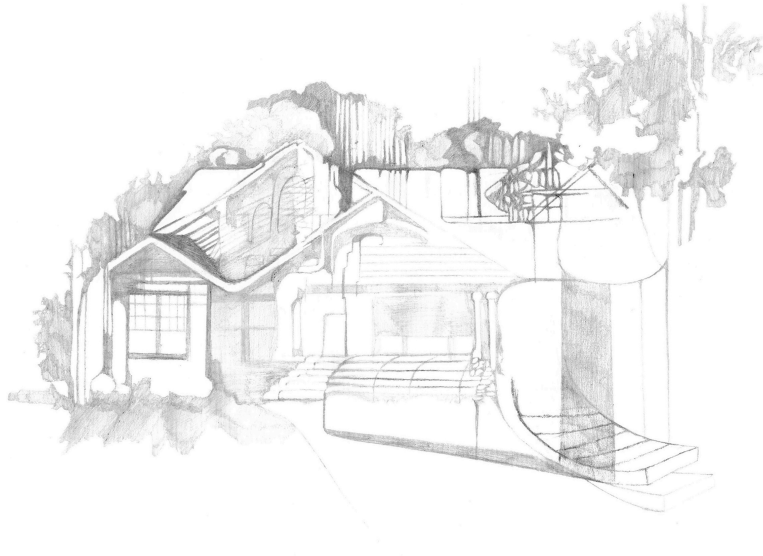


Fig 13: Pencil and graphite on paper. This is one of a series of sketch drawings made during the recollection process described earlier. The form is a combination of remembered image, and graphic elements of the corresponding location of that image in the foundation drawing.

Alain Badiou also makes reference to the importance of this goal or object (or rather the absence of it) but with special reference to drawing, which he calls an *inexistent place* (Badiou, 2006). He suggests that drawing occupies this realm in two ways; firstly the marks and lines of a drawing do not exist by themselves but rather within the *closed totality* of a material support. Secondly, and paradoxically, this support (whatever form it takes) is created as such, by the marks and lines of the drawing. It is this strange reciprocity between the drawing and the space it creates (Badiou cites Deleuze by calling this a *disjunctive synthesis*), which Badiou discusses in terms of *placeless-ness* (Badiou, 2006). Badiou's description of this relationship perhaps echoes Benjamin's discussion about the *background* of a drawing being created by the marks and lines that inhabit it. Deleuze makes a similar point but for him it is the unseen perceptions, memories and narratives that are embedded into a surface *before* a painting (in his example) begins, which are troublesome. The role of painting (or drawing in this context) plays as far as Deleuze is concerned, is to *banish* those pre-made forms from the surface or support, suggesting a process of un-making and removal. My template discussed above is paradoxical in a similar sense. It seemingly provides the structure for an image while simultaneously denying the arrival of form, in a repetitive cycle. In this sense, and bearing in mind Badiou's remarks, the drawing is incomplete and functions in terms of what Deanna Petherbridge refers to as an '*immediate and accumulative statement*'.<sup>14</sup> Although the matrix of lines

<sup>14</sup> In her essay 'On the moving line and the future subjunctive of drawing in a post-Duchampian age' Petherbridge explains the accumulative qualities of 'developmental' drawing as an action that simultaneously incorporates past, present and future (Petherbridge, 2007).

and the displayed evidence of line accumulation gives the work a sense of duration and movement, the drawing maintains the *stasis* of an outline, a note or a provisional draft.

Roland Barthes discusses the agency of a goal or '*object*' from the reverse angle to that of Brentano, through an encounter with the work of Cy Twombly (fig 14). He speaks of Twombly's method of over-drawing (or *over-writing*) as a *destructive* act that gradually determines the essence of the object being described, because it is being simultaneously destroyed. For Barthes this is a crucial act of creation and in Twombly's case, the object concerned has its romantic origins in the poetry that Twombly chooses to transcribe; '*The essence of the object has some relation to its destruction*' (Barthes, 1985, p 158). In the case of my drawing practice described above, the question of intention plays a critical role in the work because it is, in a sense, an unavoidable and visible condition of the drawing. That is to say that the drawing follows a process that both affirms and denies the original architectural images. It is affirmative through the act of transferring visual data into a second drawing (the new background this produces). But this act leads to a denial or rejection of that original material, because it is gradually removed by a process of erasing and re-drawing. The identity of the original images (the prefabricated houses) is depleted even though much of the same structural information about those images is maintained in the resulting drawing, and therefore informed later drawings.





Fig 14: Cy Twombly - *Untitled* 1968-1971

Twombly's work retains the words and some of the actual gestural qualities of antiquarian and romantic poetry, while the meaning and tone of those words are completely reformed. Barthes uses the tradition of palimpsest recording to describe how this works in Twombly's process;

*'..the hand has drawn something like a flower and then has begun 'dawdling' over this line; the flower has been written, then unwritten; but the two movements remain vaguely superimposed; it is a perverse palimpsest'* (1985, p 165)

Twombly's destructive act of writing and over-writing is therefore not so much a process of erasure (although this is the inevitable outcome) but rather of accretion and accumulation, so that over time new layers of meaning (new texts) are gradually being built into the drawing. Of course we (the audience) do not witness the event of a Twombly drawing and we engage only with the outcome. Our impression that somehow another parallel time is at work here, which is distinct to the

durational time that passes while we stand before the object itself, is an illusion. But having said this, and as Barthes suggests, this effect of the drawing is simultaneously a condition of its making so that what we see in the drawing is not the evidence of a time consuming labour (though of course it is this too), but rather it is a staged dialogue. The process of making and accumulating is built into the narrative of the work. It demonstrates its own emergence and preempts its own arrival. In this sense, the agency or affective register of such a practice is precisely in the *anticipation* of its arrival, which is captured and suspended.

The destructive act of making a structure precisely so that it can be dismantled, is reminiscent of Robert Rauschenberg's famous gesture involving the erasure of a De Kooning drawing. But of course this was a non-reflexive, sheer act of obliteration, or rather an *attempted* obliteration in which the labour and manual effort involved in erasing the drawing (a symbolic gesture to the traditions of art history, as well as a physical one), is what gave the work its meaning. Twombly's destructive drawing discussed earlier, worked on a different register and might be seen to be more self-reflexive. That is to say that Twombly *authored* the original structure of the drawings (the first layer of marks and appropriated writings) and then set about the process of discarding and re-writing those traces of texts. So Twombly's drawing is also an example of pre-appearance in this regard. The drawing begins by setting out its terms and the context it aims to critique (in this case this is historical poetry or the context of that poetry). It then progresses through a process of dismantling and re-structuring that context until the work finally emerges as a new statement. In this way the inscribed historical texts provide a glimpse of what will follow, which is realised in the layers of the drawing. This in turn resembles Bloch and Benjamin's discussions of historical traces, bringing to mind Barthes' own suggestion that the merging of two conflicting movements (writing and un-writing) is a critical analogy for the writing and un-writing of history. The meaning of a Twombly drawing is informed by the visibility of the gestural labour (evidence of *time* passing and manual labour), so the audience is invited to engage with the work through different temporal channels; Firstly the layers of the writing are hand drawn so the authors actions (and therefore his presence in a particular space and particular time) are emphasised. On the other hand, the work *thematically* refers to different time periods (not only those contemporaneous to author and audience) through the appropriation of classical literature for instance. These temporal moments are activated through Twombly's use of appropriated words and texts, in the sense that the *words* of the poetry have been partially inscribed, but so too has the *drawn* script (the handwriting) and its



reference to an autobiographical activity.<sup>15</sup> According to Fredric Jameson this activity illustrates a moment when '*existential experience...existential time*' merges with '*historical time*' whereby the latter offers a critique of the future (Jameson, 2005, p 7). This last comment illustrates the conflict that Twombly's drawings employ, whereby drawing, erasing and re-drawing activates a preemptive condition. Namely because the evidence of partially erased marks emphasises the fact that those marks have been replaced, and have replaced others before them; suggesting that this cycle will be repeated.

### **Pre-appearance and utopian foresight**

This preemptive register of drawing described in different terms by Barthes and Badiou, resembles Ernst Bloch's notion of '*pre-appearance*'. The concept describes the phenomenon of catching a glimpse of an image or remembering fragments of experiences that precede an actual manifestation. It is a reflexive phenomenon because although (as the word implies) it is about foresight and projection, it is brought about through recollection and retrospect. Bloch talks about pre-appearance in relation to art for instance, maintaining the position throughout his work that art is not a reflection of the world, but rather a reflection of what the world wants to be. His writing has been criticised for a certain naivete in this regard, but the concept of pre-appearance does offer insight into the drawing practice discussed above. Especially the relationship between recollection and anticipation as a vehicle for developing a drawing practice. Namely because image-tracing is treated by Bloch as an instrumental practice that provides a template for future actions. His notion of pre-appearance is illustrated through a recollection of one of his own personal childhood memories.

*'Eight years old, and the strangest experience was the sewing kit in a shop window on my way to school; on the sewing box something was painted, with colour dots and spots on the smooth surface, as if the image were coagulated. It showed a cabin, lots of snow and a moon high and yellow on a blue winter sky, in the windows of the cabin glowed a red light..i have never forgotten that red window'* (Daniel, 1997, p203)

The focal point in this narrative (the image on a box in a shop window) tells of an innocent childhood wonder, but it also (deliberately) implies the beginnings of a narrative, intimated by the unknown, unseen source of the painted light. The remembered scene is not spectacular but it is

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<sup>15</sup> Twombly quotes verses from Greek antiquity and romantic poetry in his paintings.

precisely its unexceptional quality that leads to the authors treatment of his memory as a vehicle through which to continue that narrative. For Bloch, the attention his younger self pays to the window decoration, triggers a quest for something that cannot yet be known or seen. The recalled image becomes a wishful image. The image is informed by real events or experiences (such as the example provided) but it is gradually re-shaped into a *wish image*, by what Bloch calls the '*image-trace*', discussed in the previous chapter (Bloch, 1986). It is this trace of an image (triggered by the source of the light) that becomes the focal point of the story, and not of course the physical box or the shop that contains it. Bloch's memory is gradually brought into focus in a deliberately slow telescoping narrative, so the object of the boys curiosity begins to extend beyond the physical object that generated it (Bloch, 1986, p 178). Rather, the point of the narrative is that it triggers another series of associated images, that branch of the central image. In this regard Bloch's pre-appearance (which he also calls 'anticipatory illumination') is not unlike Benjamin's constellation theory, in the sense that a central image forms a series of alternative associations. The image that Bloch describes converges at the point where the authors' own interest and curiosity is most animated (the beacon of the window), so that as readers we are left to consider an incomplete, suspended narrative. What holds *our* attention in the text is similarly this focal point of the the painted window, which is precisely what prevents us from fully accessing the story, because it begins and ends with this suspended possibility;

*'Pre-appearance itself is this attainable element..the job of 'driving to an end' occurs in the dialectically ramified and open-space, in which every object can be aesthetically portrayed. Aesthetically, ie in a more successful, more materially genuine, more essential way than in the immediately natural or immediately historical occurrence of this object' (1986, p 809)*

In the quote here Bloch is referring to the perspective images of the 17th Century. The illusion of depth in pictures implied the pre-appearance of a horizon for instance, which for Bloch was an indication of the symbolic *unfinished-ness* of the image (Bloch, 1986, p 800). Bloch's suggestion of a continuation or extension in an image was of course a response to the ideological roots of linear perspective. Its perceived relationship to the real having become widely recognised as a cultural construct by the time Bloch came to write about it in the 1940s.<sup>16</sup> But the notion of a suspended

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<sup>16</sup> Bloch discusses dutch landscape paintings in particular as instances of pre-appearance in his large work *The Principal of Hope* written some 10 years after Panofsky's thesis was first published. Although Renaissance paintings are frequently cited in Bloch's discussions of utopia, it is not within the scope of my research to tackle the implications of perspective image making, which has been widely covered. I mention it here (and again in chapter 3) through Bloch's interpretation and to illustrate his concept of pre-appearance.

continuation is the underlying definition of pre-appearance, and this is something I have grappled with in my practice. This began with the diagram drawings discussed earlier, in attempting to recover the imagery that had been drawn and then replaced throughout the developmental stages of the template. By its nature, pre-appearance is a critical process however, as Bloch intended the concept to be a way of foregrounding an image (of a better world) that critiques the conditions of that image. It is therefore a potentially destructive force, which my explorations with diagrammatic drawings seemed to expose. Deleuze and Joselit's comments about the violence of diagrams have shown that the pre-figurative agency of diagrams causes destabilisation to the context they immediately occupy (which in the case of Deleuze and Joselit, is a painting). The template discussed above was an instrumental, preemptive device, but the drawing itself is simultaneously the result of the obliteration of its own source imagery. In a sense the drawing is also the material evidence of my foresight. My intention in making that drawing was to recover its origins, by working back into it and through other forms (through diagrams and animation), which inevitably led to the collapse of that drawing.<sup>17</sup> So pre-appearance becomes a double edged concept. On the one hand it provides a glimpse of future activity and makes steps towards its realisation, while on the other it detracts from the immediate task in hand.

## Summary

**Reflexive practice:** The artist Anthony Auerbach calls his drawing a *meta-praxis*; a practice that '*reflects on its own conditions of production and reception*' (Auerbach, 2007). Auerbach's research uses drawing as a practice that continuously creates and then critiques (or un makes) itself, in the sense that his drawings explore the conventions and conditions of *drawing* rather than using drawing to interpret other phenomena. My practice evolved through a similarly reflexive process by following a self-made template and then setting out to explore the stages of making it, almost as a 'found object'; a source from which to generate drawings. In this sense my drawing became self-reflexive. The aim of stages 3 and 4 of the practice was to explore the possible recovery of the source images that produced the template, following their graphic traces as they appear. Recovery took form through drawing, partly by recalling those images from memory *and* partly referencing their graphic evidence as it appeared in the central template. I concluded that this was a destructive act, but instrumental through that destruction. The template became a new working document as well as being evidence of its own development and its relationship to its (receded) source. In a sense the subsequent drawings took their cue from this source, because those kit home images

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<sup>17</sup> Physically as well as symbolically. The drawing surface as well as its graphic contents became damaged and worn by my constant handling and over-working, whilst producing the subsequent drawings.

were themselves preemptive of an object that is yet to form, an inexistent object. But having said this the contemporary moment of those architectural designs has *now* passed, and many of the pictured houses have not only *been* built, but are likely to have been subsequently demolished or have decayed over time. The drawings inadvertently reflected the conditions of those original source images, and the extended narratives that they allude to. In this regard this practice did go some way to recovering its source, though my initial summary suggests the opposite to be the case. This relationship between the drawing and its source therefore developed into a new stage of practice. The tenuous distinction between drawing towards the destruction of its source (wiping the slate clean and starting again) and drawing towards its reconstruction (re-claiming it), therefore became a focus of exploration.

## Chapter 3

### Reconstruction: Reclaiming the origins of a drawing practice

*'the authenticity of a thing is the essence of all that is transmissible from its beginning, ranging from its substantive duration to its testimony to the history which it has experienced..'* (Benjamin, 2005, p221)

The previous chapter discussed the disruptive consequences of instrumental drawing, by exploring Bloch's notion of pre-appearance in relation to a reflexive practice of drawing. The instrumental values of drawing were seen to be flawed when seen through a diagrammatic practice. Or rather destabilising images was seen to be a side effect of instrumentality. Barthes discussion of the *inexistent object* in Cy Twombly's use of drawing and over-drawing was also adapted and used as a point of reference to illustrate my practice. The question of an unknown or invisible goal is developed further in this chapter, but with a focus on relationships between origins and reconstruction, as an explorative response to the previous stages of practice. Benjamin's distinction between a source and an origin is applicable in the sense that origin refers to the beginning of a transformation, whereas a source remains unchanged. The origins of my drawing are therefore explored here by looking back through the development of the template. My use of the term *reconstruction* is adapted from Walter Benjamin's meaning of '*restitution*', which defined *progress* as the process of returning to a previous form (Buck-Morss, 1991, p 110). Traces of historical reconstruction and transformation were of special interest to Benjamin, especially in relation to the production of images (and the processes behind images), which is discussed in this chapter to illustrate my practice.<sup>18</sup> The chapter also explores the trajectory of a drawing practice that refers to its own origins as way of generating and accumulating. This is explored in relation to time; the past time of Benjamin and future time of Bloch.

**Stage 5 of the research:** Walter Benjamin's definition of the different values of marks, lines and signs reflects Bloch's notion of pre-appearance, because it offers an alternative reading of the

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<sup>18</sup> Reconstruction also of course refers to the social redevelopment of the United States following the civil war.

provisional and preparatory aspects of painting (which can also be applied here to drawing).<sup>19</sup> What is helpful to my discussion is that Benjamin places his emphasis not on the goal of a practice, but rather what happens beforehand. That is to say that Benjamin's essay explores the *origins* of images, and in order to do that he breaks painting apart into categories of marks, lines and signs.<sup>20</sup> He uses the term *pre-figuration* to describe how images are 'named', which refers to how they come to be recognised and given meaning (Benjamin, 1996, p 84). Of course Benjamin is talking about cultural recognition and expectation, and what he calls 'naming' refers to these formalised systems of acceptance. But this also describes a process of drawing, in terms of distinctions between the image of a drawing and the process that produces it, which this next stage of the practice explores. Benjamin's image theory is echoed by WJT Mitchell who, as mentioned earlier, makes distinctions between an *image*, that is a cultural concept or an idea, and a *picture*, which refers to the physical manifestations of that idea. What Benjamin calls an image, is interestingly ambiguous because on the one hand he is talking about physical marks and material processes, while on the other he refers to historical traditions of image making and consumption. The distinction becomes clearer when it comes to the naming stage however, which describes the outcome of a physical practice. In other words he suggests that provisional and foregrounding marks (which he defines below) come to determine the cultural codes of recognition that images enter into. These elements are implicated as instrumental agents and are therefore worth discussing in relation to this drawing practice. Benjamin pays special attention to the importance of the background of an image. It plays a leading role in defining the different values of marks and lines and it is explored in relation to origins. Resembling Badiou's previously mentioned discussion about drawing as an 'inexistent place', Benjamin's background functions more like an environment or context, which is shaped by drawing. For this reason he makes a distinction between the background of a drawing, which is the origin of a mark, and the paper support, which is unmarked, neutral territory. Building on my conclusions about the destructive effects of attempting to recover images from the template drawing, I began an exploration into the margins of difference between destructive and reconstructive affects of drawing. In order to do this I turned once again to the instrumental role of the template drawing to source my imagery. I wanted to explore the possible effects of working with the template, both as a visual reference for making provisional sketches, and a physical ready-made background on which to work (see fig 15 and 16).

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<sup>19</sup> This discussion is based on Benjamin's short essay 'Painting, or Signs and Marks' published after the authors death and printed in *Selected writings* VI (1996, p 82 - 86). The essay deals with painting but Benjamin makes distinctions between painting and drawing throughout the text, which makes it applicable to my discussion.

<sup>20</sup> Again Benjamin's emphasis is placed on painting, but the theory offers an insight to this idea of pre-appearance and how it manifest in drawing.

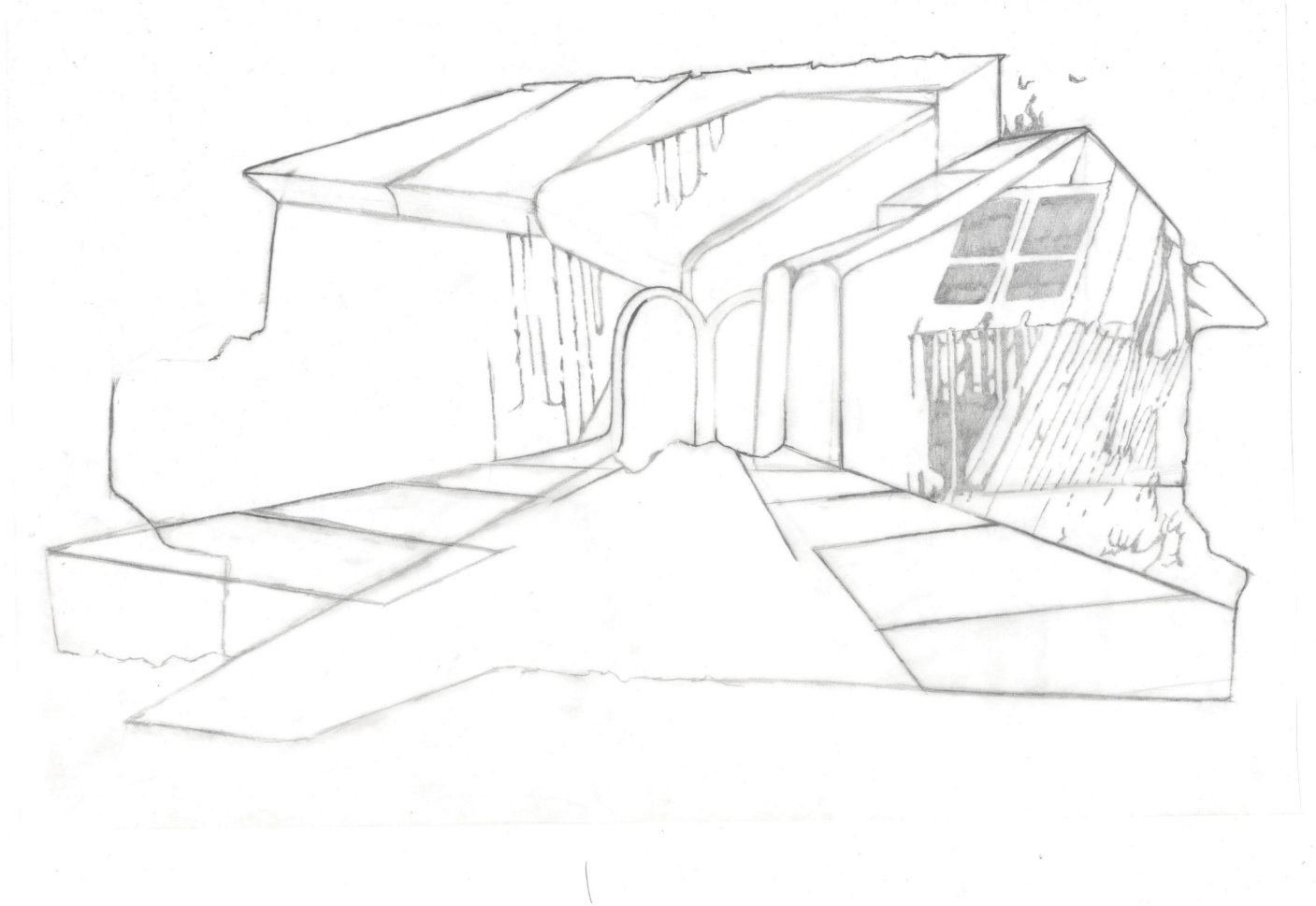


Fig 15: Carbon copy ink and pencil on paper. This is one of a series of sketches that refer back to the template drawing in an attempt to explore a possible reconstruction of the buried images contained inside that drawing.

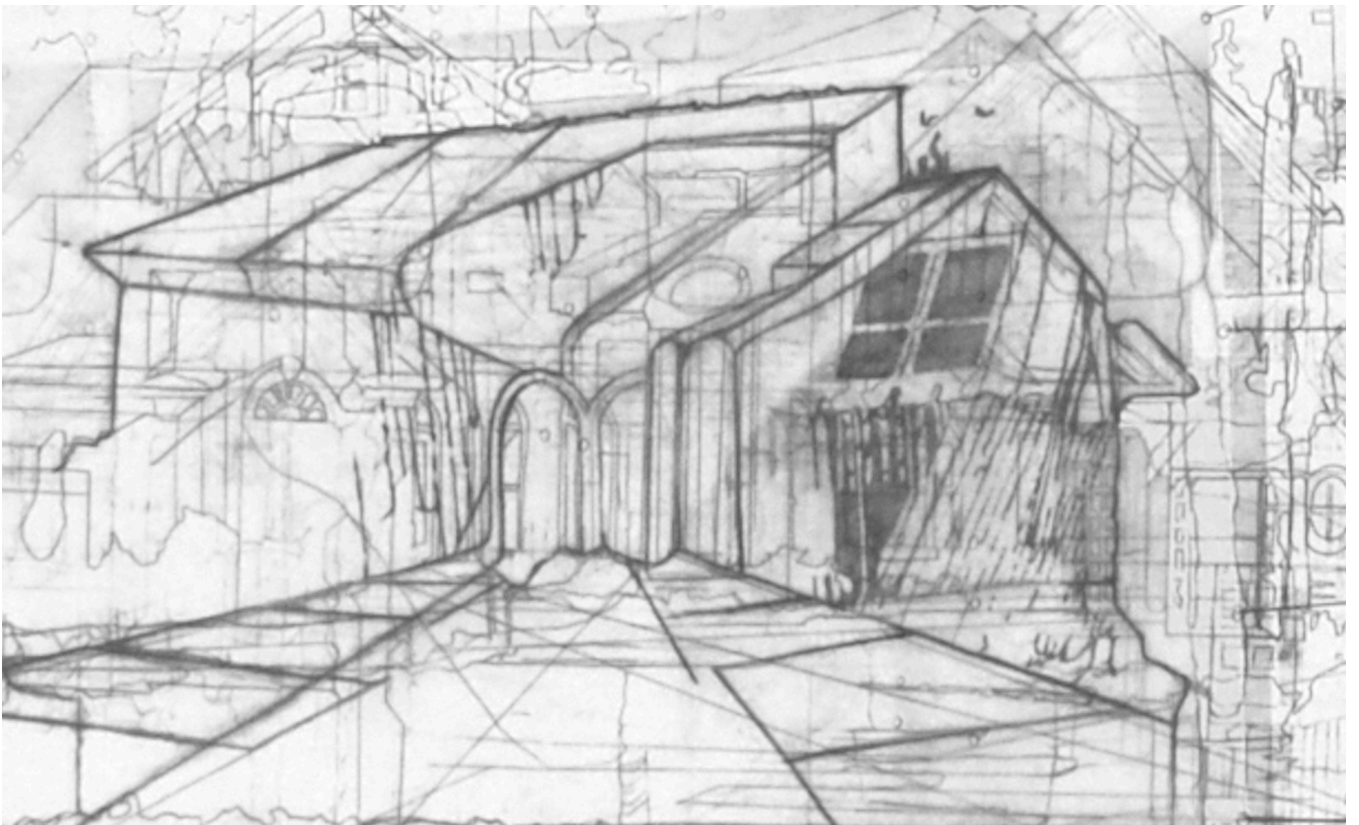
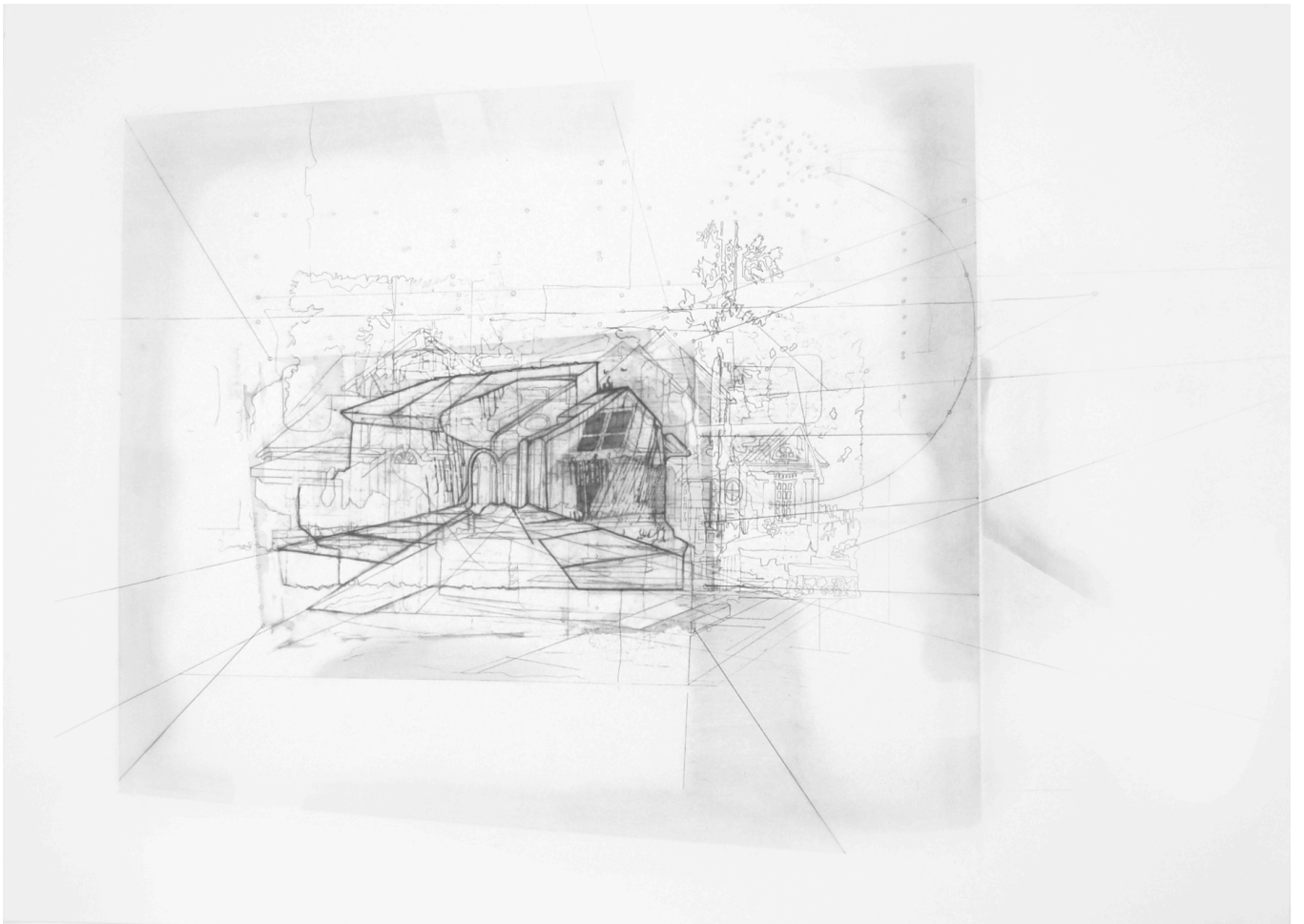


Fig 16: Carbon copy ink, pencil and inkjet print on paper. This is the first of a series of restoration drawings. It tests the effects of using the template drawing as a ready-made background on which to work. It also explores the effects of implanting a picture back into the context of its original source. The implanted structure dominated the original drawing.



I grappled with the association between the two; between the sketch as the first outline of a form, and the ready-made graphic image that served as the background for that form. Following Benjamin's terms, this reverses the order of production because here the sketch became the dominant element of a drawing (see fig 16) and the original drawing receded behind it. In a sense the drawing returns to, or *re-claims* its origins by producing a picture, which in Benjamin's terms is the pattern that defines the naming stage of an image. This perhaps explains why Benjamin stresses the importance of an analysis of the different marks and lines of a picture; *'the 'location' of a given (painting) is determined by the mark and word characteristic of it, and presupposes an elaborate distinction between the different types of mark..'* (Benjamin, 1996, p 86). His claim that the origin of a process is what determines and shapes it, is therefore useful in thinking about the development of the research and I began to explore the role the 'sketch' plays in determining the shapes of the drawings. I also allowed my memory of the original images (discussed in the previous chapter) to inform the sketches, as well as extracting their forms from the armature of the template drawing (see figs 17 and 18).

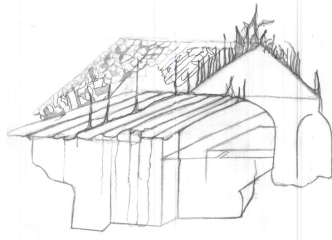


Fig 17 (top): Carbon ink and pencil on paper. Fig 18 (bottom): Carbon ink, pencil, graphite and inkjet print on paper

Benjamin's broader theoretical interests in re-claiming the histories of material culture (to re-activate what has passed) and his emphasis on the importance of origins in translating images are recurring themes. He was of course concerned with the representation of history; or rather how history is mistranslated by the practices of late 19th and 20th Century society and his ideas about drawing are born out of these broader concerns. As a result, he hints at a definition of drawing,<sup>21</sup> which is based on a process of forming (how form arrives) rather than the consolidation or fixing of an end result, which as Nigel Thrift observes, is a non-representational characteristic. This is not to say that Benjamin's theory can explain the process oriented art practices that emerged in the mid 20th Century, and which focussed on the material methods of making.<sup>22</sup> But rather that Benjamin treats the role of drawing as an act of *slowing down* the process of producing an image (naming a form), which opposes the historical association of drawing as an instrument of that goal. He describes this process as the '*simultaneous occurrence of conjuring and manifestation*'<sup>23</sup> '*to comprehend it (translation) as a form one must go back to the original*' (Benjamin, 2009, p 138).

So following Benjamin here, can a static drawing be treated as an evolving space, rather like a book is a vehicle for a changing narrative? If this can be offered as a plausible question it must first be reconciled with the fact that drawings (on paper, as mine predominantly are) are not durational in the way that film for instance is. Film unfolds through time, and that given time is observed and experienced by the audience. Film allows images, narratives and definitions to unravel as an observed phenomenon and passing time is built into the identity and technology of film. I did however want to explore this possibility of a stationary drawing being a transitional space, which in effect is how the drawings shown above materialised. The background of the drawing became a constant, unchanging presence, while the changing sketches suggested a transition or evolution. A reconciliation might therefore be reached by suggesting that drawings achieve mobility and temporality through a built-in reflexive process, or put differently (to borrow a phrase by Deanna

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<sup>21</sup> Benjamin's essay '*Painting, or marks and signs*' was never finished. As mentioned previously I am not suggesting that Benjamin was only thinking about drawing when he wrote that essay or that he sought to establish a definition of drawing, had he completed it. But it provides a helpful way of thinking through my practice.

<sup>22</sup> For example the proliferation of practices that explored material processes and transitions in the 1960s. Eva Hesse would be an example in relation to drawing. An overview of more recent research into process as a theme in drawing practice can be found in Duff and Davies (2005) '*Drawing - The Process*'.

<sup>23</sup> Benjamin made this comment to describe the role of drawing (of the line and mark) in a Kandinsky painting. He does not conflate painting and drawing but rather sees drawing as a distinct process and an affect, whether it occurs inside painting or independently (Benjamin, 1996, p 82).

Petherbridge) it means '*drawing backwards into the future*' (Hetherington, 1996, p 59).<sup>24</sup> If this is possible then it means bringing together two seemingly conflicting actions. This also of course describes Benjamin's messianic time, which describes the continual recurrence of historical possibility. The suggestion that drawing is simultaneously reflective and probing (through a process communicated to an audience), underpins Benjamin's description; '*simultaneous occurrence of conjuring and manifestation*' (2009, p 138). This comment emphasises his underlying claim that progressive future critique and translatability of images is made possible by looking back towards the origins of a form.

### **A theory of origins:**

Benjamin's meaning when he discusses an *original*, is historically situated in referring to; '*that which emerges out of the process of becoming and disappearing*' (Buck-Morss, 1991, p 8). The emphasis here is placed on the *disappearance* or burial of an original, and so the term origin does not strictly refer to beginnings. Rather it is used as an allegory of destruction for Benjamin and it underpins his motifs of the *ruin*, and the *wish-image*; '*allegories are, in the realm of thoughts, what ruins are in the realm of things*' (Benjamin, 1977, p 177). These two emblems, the ruin and the wish-image, are interconnected in the sense that allegorical wish-images are extracted from ruins *and*, as Benjamin's quote implies, they *cause* ruination through their own aesthetic form (Buck-Morss, 1991, p 159). Benjamin's wish-image for instance, which Bloch borrowed to describe a future-directed projection, refers to the '*mythic*' templates of cultural objects (Buck-Morss, 1991, p 159). The 19th Century Paris arcades became a cultural motif that Benjamin famously explored for the collective nostalgia the arcades embodied at the height of their popularity. But these images were significant for Benjamin because of the disintegration of their '*original aura*'; in the sense that they can only be recognised as *wish-images* when they no longer captivate a collective imagination (Buck-Morss, 1991, p 160). So it was the ruination of the Paris arcades that interested Benjamin as much as their own embodiment of history and change. The ruin therefore is evidence of historical transition and it is a visual representative of the destructive effects of time, as well as being an emblem for the relationship between industry and nature (existing as a hybrid of the two). For Benjamin the significance of the ruin therefore lies in its temporality but this treatment delves beyond the aesthetic of the ruin as an object and looks at the destruction of romantic symbolism as a process of reduction. This

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<sup>24</sup> Petherbridge here is making reference to Walter Benjamin's thought image Angelus Novus (a Paul Klee painting) in which the 'new angel' faces backwards as it moves into the future. I discuss this emblem in more detail later on

is evidenced not only through the process of decay, but also because disintegration reveals the construction or template of the original form, whereby the template origins are temporarily resurrected at the moment of its collapse. So Benjamin's definition of origin implies more than the *beginnings* of a process, but rather, how the transformation of something is re-viewed retrospectively.

The notion of origin also underpins Gary Peters' theory of improvisation (Peters, 2009). Peters discusses the significance of the '*beginnings*' of an artwork and '*marking of an unmarked space*', which he describes as a moment of improvisation preserved in the artwork through its agency or affect (Peters, 2009, p 3). In other words the *memory* of this *beginning* is harnessed through a process of '*fixing*' and '*unfixing*' (marking and un-marking a given space), which for Peters is the artwork's political impulse or gesture (Peters, 2009, p 4). Extending many aspects of Benjamin's own theory, Peters stresses the importance of tracing the past to achieve freedom or liberation, rather than situating freedom (as Bloch does) in the not-yet of a Utopian future. This notion of improvisation describes an event that causes a break with tradition and the past, but in order to '*break with discourse*', such an event must first intersect with or remember that past discourse (Peters, 2009, p 5). This is why the notion of origination is important here. In a sense the point of the artwork (as Peters sees it) is as much to *un-mark* a given space (politics or tradition as well as its own origin) as it is to make a mark. So Peters offers a theory of the artwork that defines it as a transitional and un-fixed form, or rather a form that constantly re-fixes itself. Peters ideas about improvisation can be seen to intersect with Benjamin's description of how the background functions as a provisional site in drawing. This same site of drawing is similarly interpreted by Ernst Bloch as an emerging space.

Through my own explorations using the *original site* of my drawings (the template drawing) as background imagery, it emerged that the role of the background was not provisional in the way that Benjamin suggests. Instead it became a stable consistent element of a changing pattern of images. On the other hand, that original drawing is the outcome of a continuously evolving process (discussed in the previous chapter) and so the inclusion of *that* drawing in *yet another* drawing (that explores a different set of concerns), causes a disjuncture.

## An overview of Benjamin's realm of signs

- Benjamin's '*Absolute Sign*' originates as a mythic tradition or narrative and it is understood as mythic through its distribution and function in the form of graphic signs (Benjamin, 1996). He uses the biblical mark of Cain as an example of how the absolute sign becomes a graphic motif, which in this instance plague victims' families were said to have printed on the doors of their homes to ward off death. This order of sign works through memory or story telling so it is described as a metaphysical form, before it takes shape as a picture for instance. This category of sign is one of the ways human beings mark and impress an identity in their environment, because the sign requires a physical *surface* (a door of a house in this case) on which to function. It also works spatially in the sense that it produces *pictorial* space in drawn image, which in turn produces another set of signs. The sign is therefore inscribed onto a surface, transmitting an identity.
- The '*Mark*' (the second category of graphic sign) on the other hand, emerges through material and animal forms and it is the consequence of an action, such as the blush is a mark of shame or guilt. These marks are therefore defined by a temporal register, in the sense that they pass over and through surfaces; they are durational and unfixed. The visual trace of the mark is transitional because what causes it, is measured in *time* (the desire for a blush to pass). Benjamin stresses that this form of graphic mark *is* what it represents, because what it represents (a human emotion for instance) has no other visible shape. The human emotion takes form only through the mark that betrays it. In the example of the blush, the mark has special significance in this sense, as a mark that embodies itself while at the same time behaving as an index to an emotion of guilt or shame (and so also behaving as a sign, but this time a fleeting one).<sup>25</sup>

Re-considering what Benjamin calls the 'realm of signs' in relation to these ideas about transition and origins, might therefore produce a definition of drawing that actually distances itself from *representation*; if, as Nigel Thrift suggests, representation be understood as a process of fixing and defining categories (Thrift, 2008). Indeed one of the key distinctions that Benjamin makes between *painting* (which he associates with the production of images) and drawing (which he sees as something else) is that painting is historically viewed by an observer in a vertical position, on a wall, whereas drawing is not (Benjamin, 1996, p 82). Drawing is *horizontally* viewed according to

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<sup>25</sup> Benjamin's ideas about transitory images were influenced by the historian Aby Warburg. Benjamin's ideas are used here however because of his references to drawing, which are discussed throughout this thesis.

Benjamin, rather like a mosaic is seen from above or how a child produces a drawing by looking *down* at the drawing and not *across* at something else. It is therefore closer in kind to a sign than to a representation; it is a '*cross-section*' rather than a longitude. Drawings are better understood if viewed flat, according to Benjamin; which is more closely connected to navigation and reading, than to observing or looking. Put differently, and to offer an example, this is the difference between referencing a landscape symbolically for instance, (like a map or data chart) and presenting it pictorially. In Benjamin's symbolic axis on the other hand, the idea of a landscape becomes mobile and detached because the landscape code is made out of multiple references, angles and viewpoints (Thrift, 2008, p 5). This landscape is also detached in the sense that no ground or identified space has been provided for it to operate within. Notwithstanding the paper support (or other interface) that holds the landscape code, which Benjamin has shown to be neutral territory, this landscape has a background in the sense that it is un-identified and has not been claimed by a narrative (Benjamin, 1996). The senses of the observer (or reader) of a symbolic landscape must therefore respond differently, hence Benjamin's emphasis on the different viewing / reading positions necessary for a painting and a drawing to be fully understood; '*...there are two sections through the substance of the world..the longitudinal section of painting seems representational: it somehow contains the objects. The cross section of certain pieces of graphic art seems symbolic; it contains signs..*' (Benjamin, 1996, p 82). The gradual destruction of images, which my practice brought about in the previous stages of research, would seem to support this suggestion of a non-representational drawing. But *this* stage of practice proposes the possibility of a coexistence of an image (or a provisional image in the form of a sketch) and a working template, which was used and *read* as an active instrumental document, rather than a representation of something else. This coexistence produced a new form of background, caused by the dominance of the sketch in the new drawings. These sketches were products of the template drawing and were initially shaped by following outlines and routes provided in its matrix of lines. But working over this original drawing caused me to re-think the effect this was having on these new drawings. As mentioned above, I began to allow my memory of the original imagery (those first kit house images) to influence the shape and tone of the drawings. The mapping process I had followed by making sketches out of the armature of the template drawing (following the routes given to me), began to subside and the instrumental role of the template drawing became less apparent. This opened up the space of the background again, and I began to explore how the sketches would play out in vacant space. The aim here was to test whether the same transitional narratives that developed between the first drawings (shown in figs 17 and 18), would be repeated in the absence of the background (see fig 19).

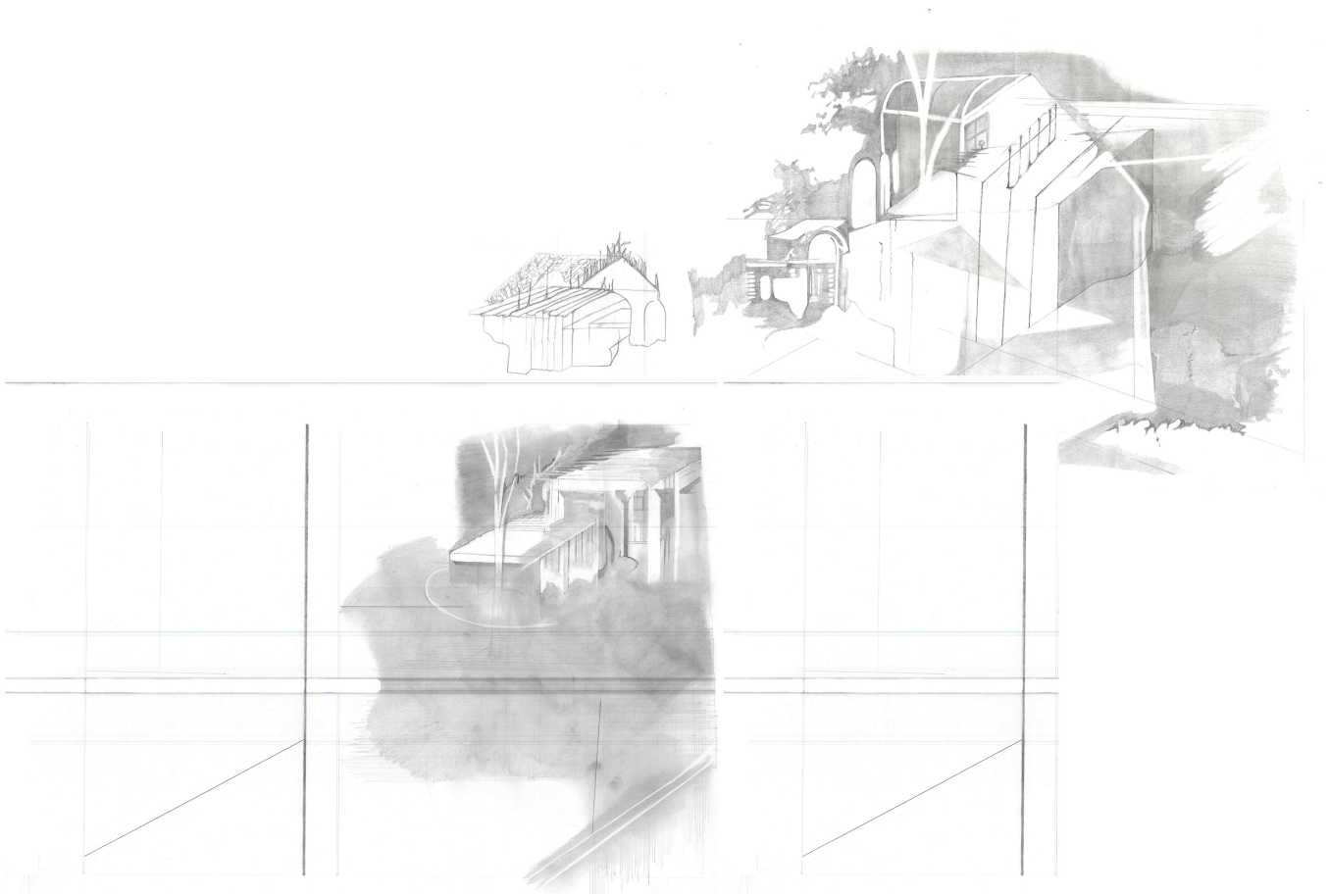


Fig 19: Inkjet print on paper. This series of explorations in the background as a transitional space involved scanning and printing a series of sketches so they became movable, floating characters. This arrangement of the characters reflects their location on the template drawing (the areas the sketches were drawn from). In a sense the template drawing was now an *invisible* background.



Benjamin's comments that hint at the relationship between drawing and navigation, and my own explorations in practice, might suggest that this drawing practice does engage motion. If representation can be seen as arriving at a fixed definition or the establishment of an end-point, following Thrift's thesis, then my drawings would seem to be non-representational, despite their pictorial qualities. This perhaps is brought about by using a prior drawing as a mapping document, which the template drawing became, to generate those pictures.

Benjamin's definitions of the different characters of line and mark (outlined above) focus on how the relationships between them determine their individual identity. The graphic line (the 'mark') and 'the area' or 'background' (the 'space') that contains the mark, are reliant upon each others roles and qualities (1996, p 83). What is interesting about this interpretation of drawing, is that lines are treated as active agents that work inside and through other forms like paintings and human built structures and surfaces, as well as natural ones, such as rock formations. This is not to say that lines are subordinate to those other forms. In fact Benjamin suggests quite the opposite. Drawing is the visible and invisible engine that *drives* those other forms and so it has something of a metaphysical dimension. Following Benjamin's 'realm of signs' and his emphasis on the navigational qualities of drawing, might then suggest that even when drawing takes a pictorial form, it is still working towards something else. In practice this was certainly something I wanted to explore in the drawings. This is where Benjamin's historical materialism comes to be relevant because, in a sense I was drawing a picture by tracing its origins, and so working and thinking in reverse, so to speak. Benjamin's interest in drawing was emblematic of his broader explorations in this regard, because it is discussed as the pre-cursor to '*naming*', which (as shown earlier) is the moment an image gains recognition and its meaning is produced. Benjamin's realm of lines are therefore given an aura of mobility and they are already active when they are used to describe and shape images. In the course of my drawing, the pictures were formed out of an assortment of fragments of images, which had long since disappeared through a reflexive drawing process, as the previous chapter discussed. This resembles a query that Nigel Thrift has raised around an assumption, which he argues is the founding principle of representation. That is, that activities and processes are motivated and maintained by consistently *focussed* goals and endpoints. He calls this a representational fallacy of '*continuous intentionality*' and argues that this assumption does not account for the unfocussed consequences of chasing those goals (Thrift, 2008, p 10). Human exhaustion, mistakes, accidents

and getting lost all play a part in the process of life. This illustrates how my sketch drawings came about and the processes through which they were made. Both the manual (hand drawn) and the technical processes (printed drawings) produced glitches, side effects and accidental marks, which came to inform the pictures. These marks had also been inherited from the template drawing, which in turn had inherited the flaws of the tracing process, which launched the research 3 years ago.

**Stage 6 of the research:** As a consequence of these afore mentioned glitches, I adopted the *ruin* as useful emblem and a way of illustrating the effects and consequences of the practice (see fig 20). Through my exploration into the origins of a drawing process, which in this case was the kit home designs discussed in the previous chapter, my drawing imagery began to reflect the template forms and pictures of those original sources. On the one hand ruination represents a gradual process of decay, as industrialisation is re-claimed by natural forces. On the other hand however, the ruin is of course symbolically entangled in the trope of artistic representation in the guise of romanticism, which claimed the ruin as an emblem *because* of the above mentioned associations. So the ruin seemingly sits between two polar positions. It supports Thrifts notion of non-representation (or qualities that are counter-representational), because a ruin is not a stable or fixed form and it embodies a process of change. Its progressive decay contradicts the sequence of experienced time because through the decaying process the origins of a building (the templates of a structure) are gradually exposed, which contradicts the idea that time consistently moves *away from*, not towards, origins. The ruin also transcends boundaries (more evidence for Thrift) in the sense that it provides material evidence of *difference* within the otherwise renewed and developing landscape that surrounds it. The second polar position (that seems to work against this non-representational role), is the above mentioned relationship between ruins and romanticism, which Benjamin has also used to illustrate his notion of the *wish-image*.

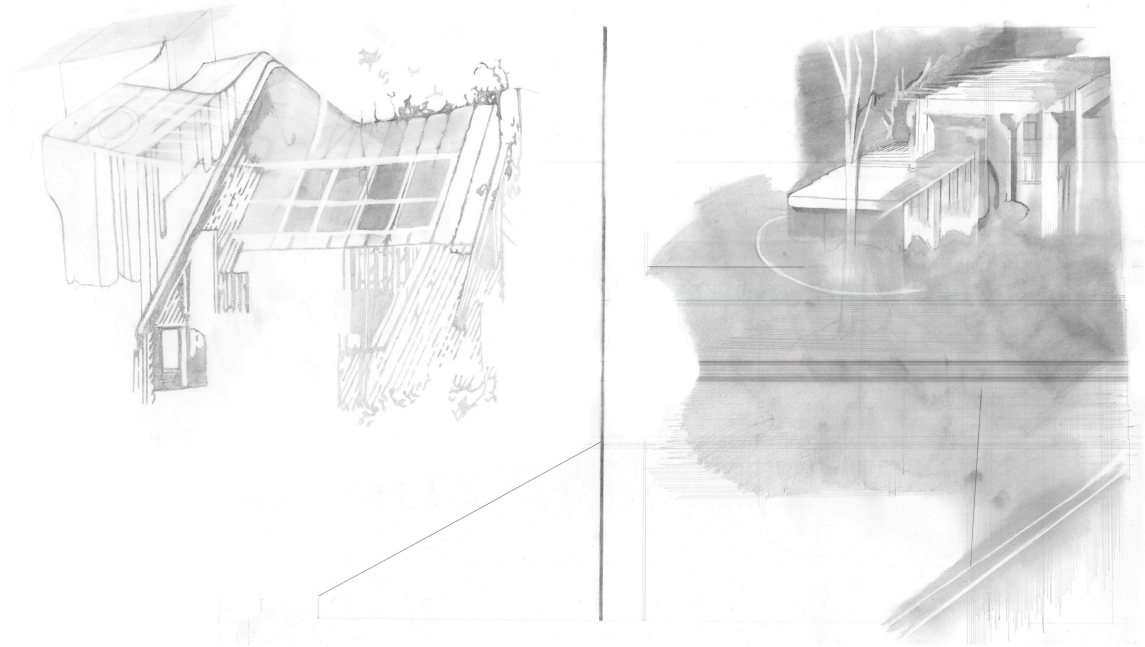


Fig 20: Carbon copy ink and pencil on paper (scanned composition). These two sketches were extracted from the same area of the template drawing. The one on the left is based on the graphic information given by the lines of the template drawing. The one on the right is pieced together from my memory of one of the original drawn images, which roughly occupied that same position. The right hand sketch includes some narrative detail of the recalled image, but this drawing is also visibly influenced by my first graphic interpretation of that image, as well as being a picture from memory.

For Benjamin the ruin is a wish-image because of how it came to be absorbed into traditions of romantic imagery and poetry, which made it susceptible to mis-appropriation. An extreme illustration of this of course would be Albert Speer's architectural missions, based on his own '*Theory of ruin value*' (1934). Picturing the future ruination of fascist architecture became a guiding principle for his architectural design during the Nazi campaign. Speer (incidentally) convinced the Hitler administration to adopt his rationale, through the aid of a drawing, which illustrated plans for the (then unbuilt) Zeppelinfeld Nazi rally ground at Nuremberg; *It (the drawing) showed what the reviewing stand on the Zeppelinfeld would look like after generations of neglect, over-grown with ivy its columns fallen, the walls crumbling..but the outlines still clearly recognisable* (Speer, 2009, p 96 my brackets). It would seem that this drawing did not survive the war, like many of Speer's other architectural projects and designs, which were either never built or short lived.<sup>26</sup>

Stage 5 of the practice began with an exploration into the *reconstruction* potential of drawing, but through practice I began to encounter a number of glitches that complicated the process, or rather influenced it. As I mentioned above, the reflexive nature of the practice throughout this research meant that my drawings inherited the procedural elements of previous drawings (manual and technical side effects of drawing). As the practice developed, these previous processes behind the work became relevant and I wanted to explore the impact this was having on the pictorial elements of the drawing. I therefore produced a series of drawings that engaged with the tracing, copying and recollection methods that foregrounded the practice as a whole. This coincided with the removal of the template as a background element of the drawings, which resulted in the drawing imagery being dominated by these methods of production (see fig 21).

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<sup>26</sup> Those that did survive are discussed in: Krier L (ed) '*Albert Speer: Architecture*' Brussels, Archives d'Architecture Moderne, 1985 and Krier L, '*Forwards, Comrades, We Must Go Back*' *Oppositions* 24, Spring 1981, pp. 27-37. '*Architects in Power: Politics and Ideology in the Work of Ernst May and Albert Speer*'. *Art and Art History: Images and their Meaning*, ed Rotberg R and Rabb T Cambridge, Cambridge University Press; Schäche W, '*Nazi Architecture and its Approach to Antiquity*,' *Architectural Design*, vol 53, no 11/12.

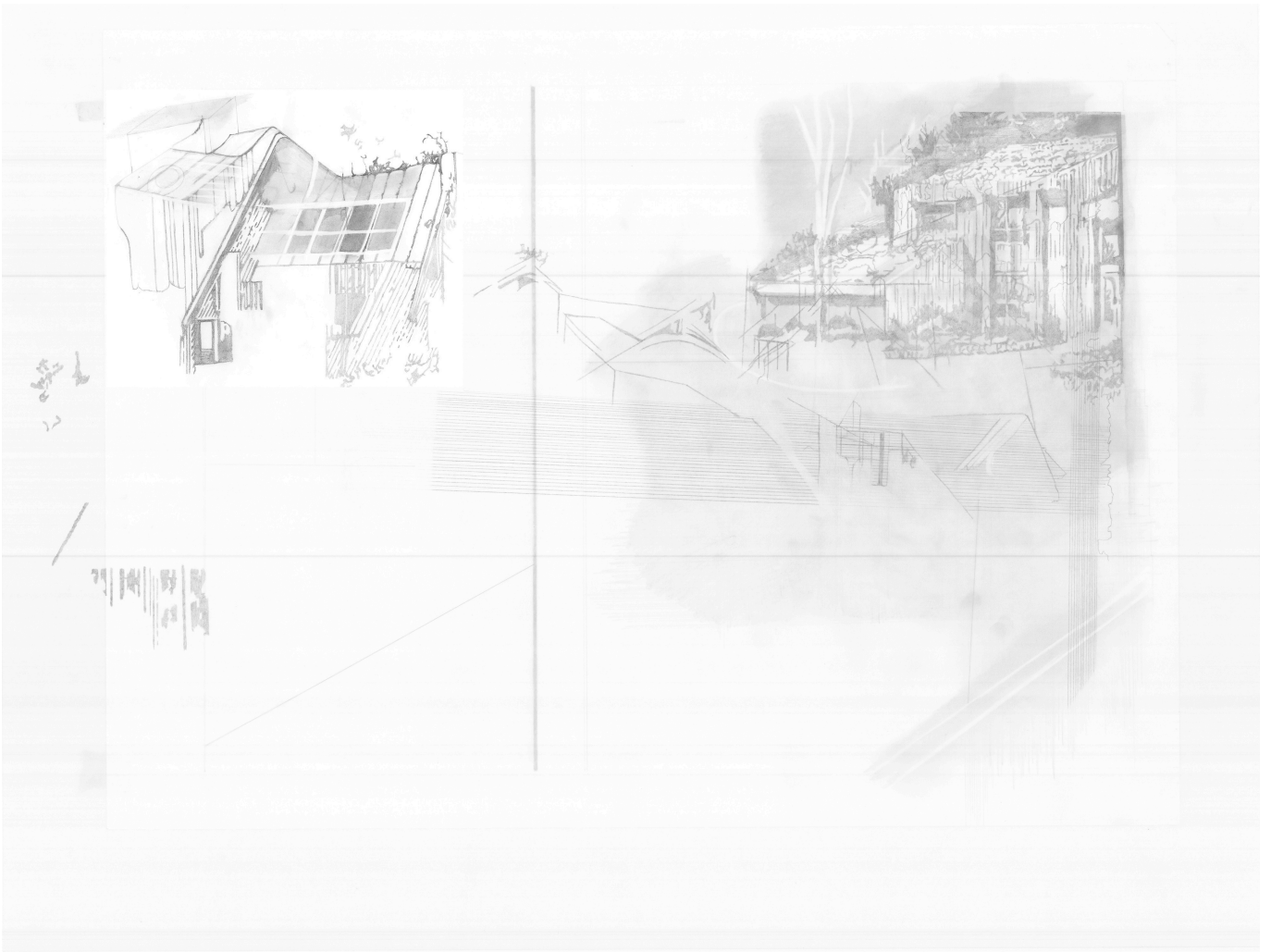


Fig 21: Carbon copy ink, pencil and graphite on trace paper (scanned composition). This is another development of fig 20. This drawing is an exploration into the processes that produced the sketches. It shows evidence of both manual and technical procedural marks, made before and during the making of this drawing.

This adjustment caused by removing the template drawing from its indexical relationship with the sketches, can be illustrated by what Gary Peters' calls '*marking an unmarked space*', which echoes aspects of Benjamin's preoccupation with the origins of marks (Peters, 2009). Peters theory explores the significance of the first mark in a series or sequence of gestures, and how subsequent gestures attempt to reconstruct that first moment. Peters expresses the importance of re-claiming the beginnings of an action, which determines the impact of that action (Peters, 2009). While Peters stresses the significance of the beginnings of gestures, Benjamin highlights a distinction between beginnings *origins*. An origin is not the same as a beginning, because the latter is a moment of a continuum, whereas an origin is the first mark of a gradual transformation. Both Peters and Benjamin offer helpful illustrations of my practice, because the drawing processes leave behind a physical trace and retain elements of the previous drawings. The previous glitches and processes that accumulated throughout the practice therefore become absorbed into yet another series of processes.

### **Drawing and affect**

Stephen Farthings account of drawing I think offers a related contribution to Benjamin's realm of signs, which in itself was a short unfinished text that is not frequently mentioned in commentary about drawing or painting.<sup>27</sup> Farthing for instance unpacks the implications of some of the most fundamental and primary instances of drawing, lines and marks. Those, for instance that have come to exemplify human actions, practices and communications throughout history, and not only in the sense that drawing was used to *record* those events. As a collective of marks, lines and signs, drawings leave traces (as Benjamin and Bloch explored them) that illuminate an event after the facts of that event have passed, like an index is given meaning by an invisible referent. But drawing also induces and activates, as well as records and signifies.<sup>28</sup> An example used by Farthing for instance, is the fabled line that was drawn into the dirt at the time of the Fort Alamo battle for Texas' independence from Mexico, which came to be understood as a territorial gesture. This line of course no longer exists but this is not important for the survival of the allegory. Lines create boundaries and that particular line came to be emblematic of this more general semiotic reading of the line. Lines and marks, in other words, are imbued with meaning before they come to be shaped

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<sup>27</sup> Andrew Benjamin has written about Benjamin's short essay 'Painting, or marks and signs' in an essay called '*Framing pictures, Transcending marks*' in '*Walter Benjamin and the Archaeology of Modernity*' (2009). This provides a good analysis of this area of Benjamin's account of *painting*. But here it is Benjamin's theory of metaphysics that is really under scrutiny and not the implications of this theory for drawing or fine art practice

<sup>28</sup> Perhaps not unlike Benjamin's blush mark, which came to be represented as a biblical allegory and a Rembrandt painting. This refers to the story of Belshazzar's feast in the book of Daniel, which famously became a musical concerto and emblematic of a momentous period of art history and narrative painting, which Benjamin traces back to the blush mark (or implicates it as one of many origins).

into a named space of a picture for instance, as Benjamin has shown. Farthing's taxonomy of drawing gives possible form to Benjamin's treatment of the elements of graphic marks. Namely in the sense that marks exist and are produced through processes that do not belong to artistic practice, but are rather absorbed and inherited into such practices from elsewhere. Of course this primal instance of drawing as an affect (a line drawn in a war zone to determine political sides) has traditionally been transcended through the creative process, which is alluded to in Benjamin's essay; '*..the mark (in the case of blushing)..tends to dissolve the personality into certain of its basic components*' (Benjamin, 1996, p 85). Alfred Gell suggests that drawing is '*constitutive*' as much as it is representative (Gell, 1998, p 191). The ritualistic graphic art of Marquesan society is an example of drawing being used to incite and bring forth (a protective spirit in this instance), rather than represent or record. The graphic motifs used in etua tattoos are not, for example intended to *represent* a spirit so there would be no meaning or benefit to reading them as such (1998, p 191). Instead they constitute that spirit. Gell points out that our western tendency to want to read a picture of say, a turtle, in relation to the turtle object (the animal), is a result of centuries of conditioning rather than a natural response (Gell, 1998). The etua drawings (groupings of marks and lines and occasional animal motifs) are a case in point of a line or series of marks being produced to incite. This intention behind the drawings means they can only be read in relation to themselves (their graphic form) because they are protective emblems and exist as such. Gell also remarks that drawings of 'things' (observed objects for instance) are especially ambiguous because drawing by its nature is not a raw or unprocessed practice. Drawings are generated internally before they take material form, which is merely the product of a '*mysterious muscular alchemy*', whereby hand and eye connect to make a mark. He illustrates this by commenting that a drawing is always '*a drawing of a drawing*', in the sense that it is first rehearsed internally *as a drawing* before it takes material shape (Gell, 1998, p 45). The drawing therefore is far more closely related to that initial process of *composing a drawing*, than it is to the object it intends to represent (see fig 22).

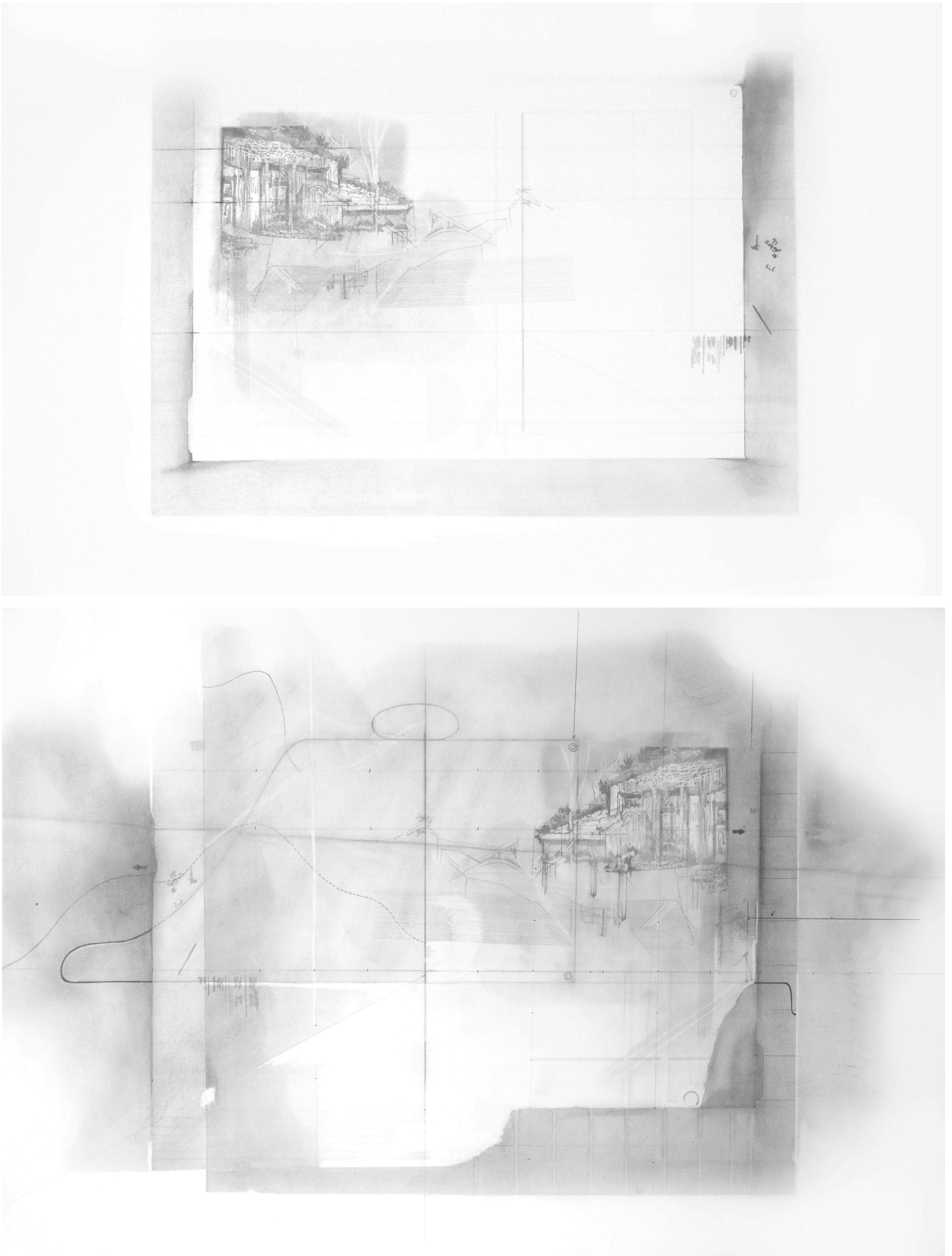


Fig 22: Carbon copy ink, pencil and graphite on paper. This pair of drawings explores a preemptive partnership by altering the backgrounds of a sketch. They both refer to the template and my memory as well referring to one another. Gell calls this 'drawing from a drawing', only these drawings were generated internally *and* from other graphic sources.



For Benjamin the etua tattoo would be an instance of an affective mark that particularly highlights the interrelationship between the line and its background or location. The affective agency of the line is determined by that partnership, whereby the background becomes a territorial space as a consequence of the mark. Benjamin himself does not clarify the role the background plays in this relationship, except to say that it is an active component of *drawing* and not painting (Benjamin, 1996, p 84). He is however clear about what a background *cannot be*. It cannot refer to a pictorial space and it is not the surface of a drawing either; '*the background of a drawing is quite different to the white surface on which it is inscribed*' (Benjamin, 1996, p 84).

So a background is not vacant or neutral but rather it is a space activated or charged by the drawn line, like an environment or habitat. This too might also hint at the temporal register of this relationship between the two. That is to say that in this instance the line generated motion and activity. It produced a border even though the mark itself was a fleeting indentation, which may have physically existed for only a matter of minutes or hours. For Benjamin this would be an instance of the metaphysical agency of the line, because it continues to function long after its physical disappearance, like the Alamo line exists now as an allegory. This is also how a mark imprints an identity onto the background on which it appears, not only as a physical mark but also as a sign. For Benjamin this special reciprocity between the line and the '*surface area*' around it, is what activates drawing and perhaps explains why this background is given emphasis as a condition of drawing (Benjamin, 1996, p 85). Benjamin also reminds us that *naming* only occurs when marks, lines and signs come together to form a picture, which would suggest that non-pictorial drawings occupy an un-fixed, transitional condition, as shown in the Alamo line allegory. Certainly for Benjamin this would seem to be likely. If a composition was '*only a set of marks, it would be quite impossible to name it*' (Benjamin, 1996, p 86). I set out to explore a similar dichotomy between the imagery in the drawings and the procedural evidence of the drawing process. Certainly following Benjamin, the pictorial elements suggest an endpoint or a fixed goal (a naming moment), but the evidence of process also implies that the drawings are not yet fully formed. This was important to allow a narrative to develop between individual drawings and to maintain their transitional character. For this reason I continued to transfer sketches between various backgrounds so that the sketches themselves remain unfixed and unchanged, while the narratives of the drawings continued to develop (see fig 23).

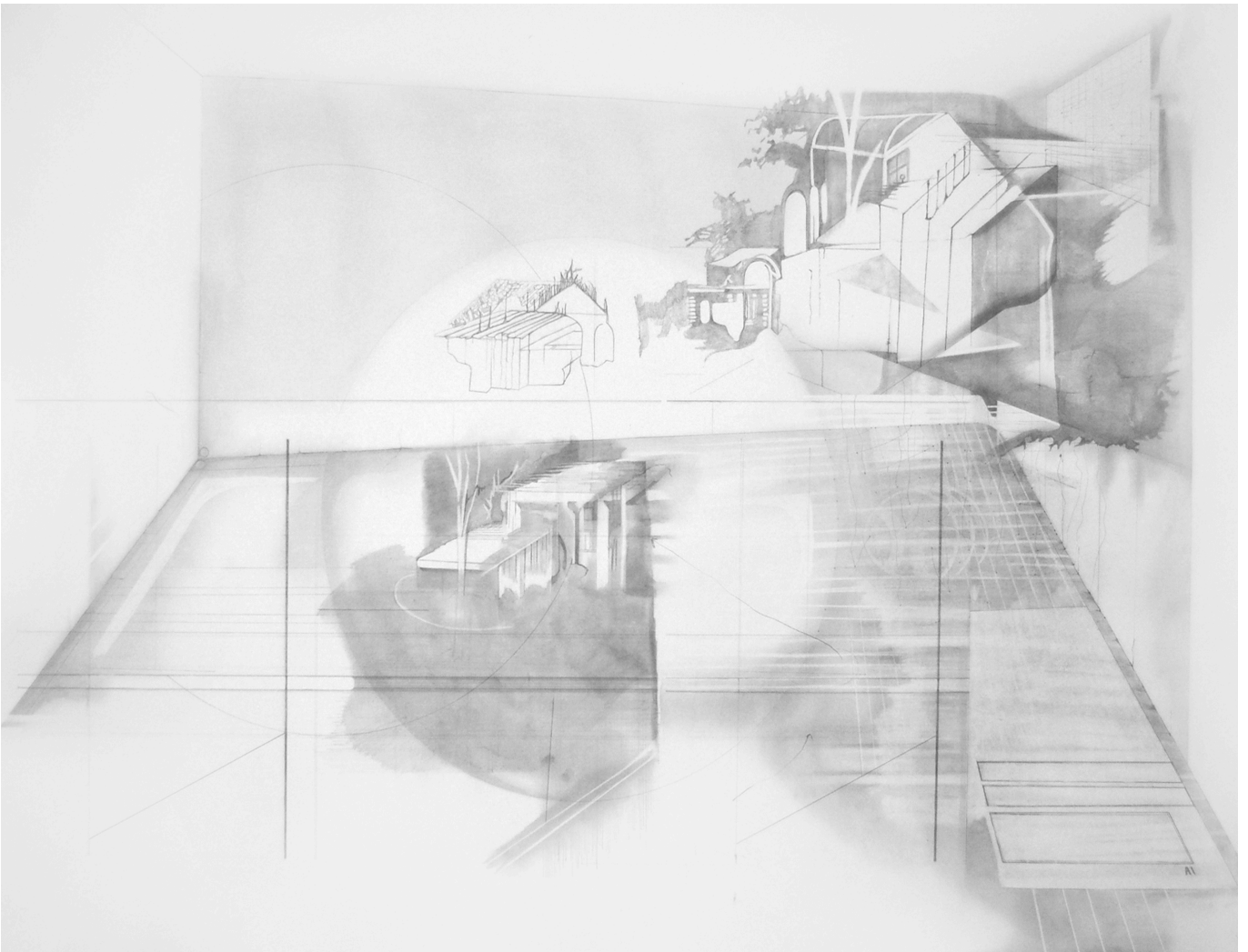


Fig 23: Carbon copy ink, pencil and inkjet print on paper. As a replacement background, this drawing makes reference to the size of the original template drawing. The template scale box imagery shown in this drawing is lifted from architectural transfer paper, which symbolically references the origins of the template drawing.

Benjamin describes the compositional space of drawing (before the marks and lines form a picture) as that which '*signifies the entry of a higher power into the medium of the mark*' (1996, p 86). It is clearer from this that Benjamin's marks and lines are the preemptive elements for naming, but they remain separate to it, like the Alamo line *affected* a response without being descriptive. This role of drawing is paradoxical too. Following Benjamin, when drawing becomes part of a named picture, on the one hand that picture can be accurately described as a set of marks, which outline templates and mark out territory. But on the other hand when a picture is described as '*a set of marks*' it immediately becomes '*something that it is not*' because it is also a *picture* that has been named (Benjamin, 1999, p 72).

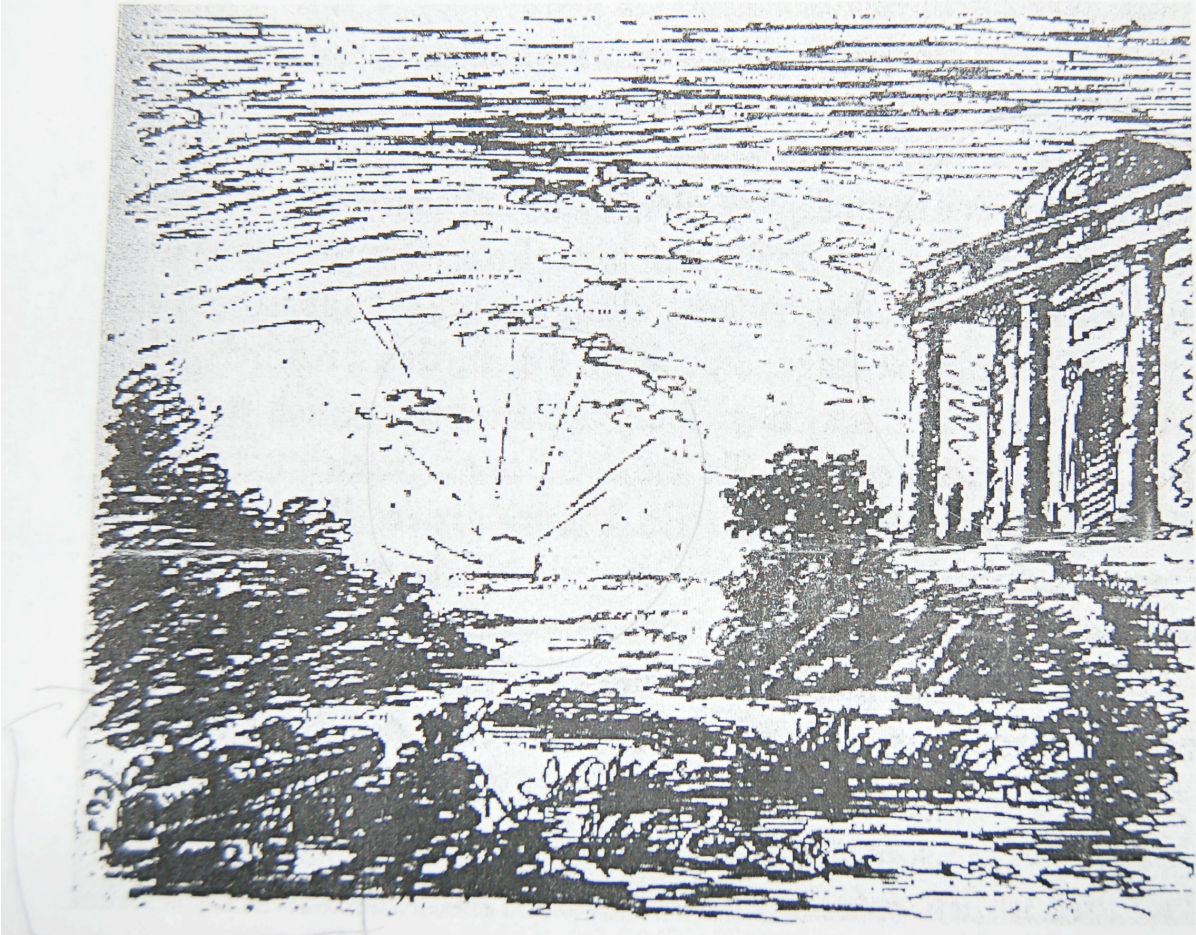


Fig 24: Ink on paper - Goethe (c1780)

Ernst Bloch illustrates a similar paradox by treating linear perspective as a symbolic continuation in what he calls the *distance* caused by the illusion of depth; suggesting that pictorial space is traversable and contains momentum (as discussed in the previous chapter). Bloch makes a clear distinction between a *picture* and the provisional marks that collectively produce a pictorial space, which is shown in his critique of a particular sketch by Goethe. *The ideal landscape* (c1780 see fig 24) as Bloch calls it, was produced during Goethe's study of 17th Century romantic landscape painting, and for Bloch it is the unstable, hurried quality of the marks that activates the resulting picture. Bloch acknowledges that this drawing contains a picture of a landscape (as his title confirms) but it is really the sketchy quality of the marks (betraying the authors manual engagement with the picture) that Bloch treats as evidence of this. In other words Bloch considers this drawing to be evidence of Goethe's encounter with a landscape rather than a picture of one. The drawing displays its production process through the pace and weight of the drawn lines and marks, so that the manual procedural duration of the drawing is built into the resulting picture; '*This page affects the body; only someone broad chested could have set this down on paper*' (Bloch, 1998, p 474).

Bloch uses this evidence of physical labour in the drawing to discuss the picture in terms of its authorship, which becomes a conceptual point of reference and the material for Bloch's critique. As he explains; '*The strokes of his (Goethe's) handwriting are recognisable in the details, in the grasses, the fallen tree...the picture is not only drawn but written*' (Ibid). These remarks might suggest that drawing is comparable to a written document, which is after all, a traversable space. Reading, by its nature is a rhythmic durational act in which *another* time is evidenced (whether reversed, accelerated or suspended) inside the authors narrative, alongside the *live* time of the viewer (or reader). Bloch's exploration of this drawing as a series of *inscribed* marks (rather like letters and words) brings back into focus what Benjamin has shown to be the 'magical' character of line drawing (the different characteristics of line that occur in a drawing), which I outlined earlier. By 'magical' Benjamin refers to a type of sign that is defined according to what this line *is, in itself*; which reverses the perhaps more dominant idea that lines are defined by what they represent (Benjamin, 1996, p 83). In this sense there is no simple oscillation between an *inside* and *outside* of a drawing (the physical marks and the external referent of a picture) because both are interdependent and read in relation to one another. What Goethe produces with this drawing (as Bloch shows) is perhaps not so much a drawn landscape, but rather testimony of a written memoir. Considering this in Benjaminian terms may reveal something about Bloch's own treatment of this work, in the sense that Bloch's discussion of the gesture of hand writing, also draws attention to the *surface* on which the drawing appears. As Benjamin has shown, this relationship between the surface and the inscription made upon it, is key to determining the identity of the background (the bigger context in which the drawing is made, so to speak). The landscape narrative of the Goethe drawing is named through this process. Benjamin therefore proposes a theory of line and surface in which the line moves back and forth between the different (afore mentioned) characters of drawing, which is particularly clear in this line drawing (Benjamin, 1996, p 85). For both Bloch and Benjamin drawing appears to represent something of an unarticulated space, which presents opportunities for *reading* the narrative rather than merely *looking* at it.<sup>29</sup> And so Bloch's account of the Goethe drawing is informed by the sketchy quality of its line, which he discusses as a key feature of the narrative. A remark such as '*the drawing improves as its parts become lighter*' for instance, appears at first glance to be addressing the drawing's formal characteristics (Bloch, 1998, p 473). But we soon realise that this also describes the relationship between the dark land mass at the base of the picture and the bright sunlit horizon at the top, which is clearly attending to the pictorial narrative. This I think illustrates Benjamin's account of marks and signs particularly well.

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<sup>29</sup> I explore this idea in more detail later on with a discussion of Benjamin's *thought image* narrative of Paul Klee's drawing.



The provisionality of the sketched marks hold the picture in stasis, because they represent the *emergence* of a named territory and not its arrival. But at the same time this drawn space has clearly (and simultaneously) been named because we identify a picture through it. Making distinctions therefore between areas of the Goethe drawing that are claimed by the picture, and those that are not, becomes a built-in condition of reading this drawing. Bloch's utopian philosophy of *becoming* (as opposed to having arrived) is perhaps particularly well illustrated by this drawing. There are areas of the drawing where no pictorial statement is made at all, and yet because of the status of these drawn marks inside a pictorial space, they imply that something (not yet disclosed) is forming. At the same time however, and on the other hand, this drawing is simultaneously a composed picture; one that represents the transcendental shift that Benjamin calls the 'naming' process.

The way in which the processes of production come to determine the reception of an object, was of course a key concern for Benjamin more generally.<sup>30</sup> Benjamin's described elements of a drawing cannot therefore be fixed chronologically or placed in an order of dominance. Within the landscape element of Goethe's sketch, there is evidence of those other provisional marks, but these two components are interrelated and are shown to be inseparable when it comes to deciphering and translating the drawing.<sup>31</sup> These line and mark categories (seen and unseen) that launch a process, are what defines the artwork and for Benjamin this procedural space comes to occupy the overarching statement of the work. This is to suggest that drawing does not so much *sketch out* a picture, but rather a picture enters the site of drawing (see figs 25 and 26). So perhaps it is this coexistence of mark and transcended mark, which is particularly apparent in the Goethe sketch for the reasons mentioned above, that produces a temporal flux in the artwork.

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<sup>30</sup> Benjamin's suggestion that film and photography have contributed to the destruction of the *aura* that surrounds objects (their historical traces and their lineage), is also important to mention. Paradoxically in this regard, my drawing process was strongly informed by reproduction processes (photography, carbon tracing and scanning), which enabled an exploration of the development of the drawings, post-production. Because of the reflexive nature of this practice, each individual drawing therefore inherited elements of those previous processes, which came to be absorbed into the pictorial elements of the drawings, as I have discussed. Hiding or denying this influence in the practice would have produced an entirely different focus in the thesis.

<sup>31</sup> This may be what Bloch is referring to when he describes the 'improvement' that occurs in the drawing, as the viewpoint of the picture recedes and it becomes more '*landscape-like*'; '*No longer in the deleterious space of the foreground in which everything is too close to the observer.*' (Bloch, 1998, p 474).

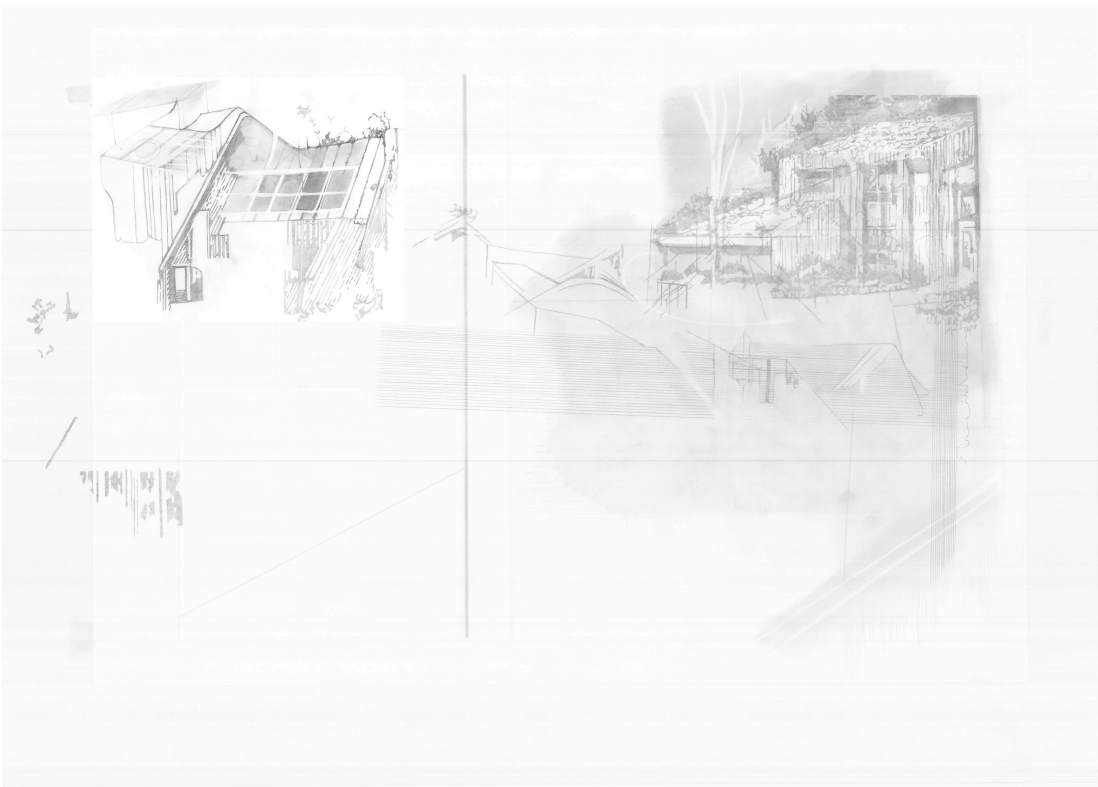


Fig 25: Carbon copy ink, pencil and graphite on trace paper (scanned compositions). The scanning processes and the graphite drawing were strangely difficult to separate in this series, but here I wanted to explore the disjunction between the transience of the pre-made sketches (the pictured structures) and the stability of the background. Other drawings attempt the reverse that relationship - a changing background with a constant sketch (see fig 26 on page 80). The background imagery of the lower drawing in figure 26 references the origins of the sketch pictured above it.

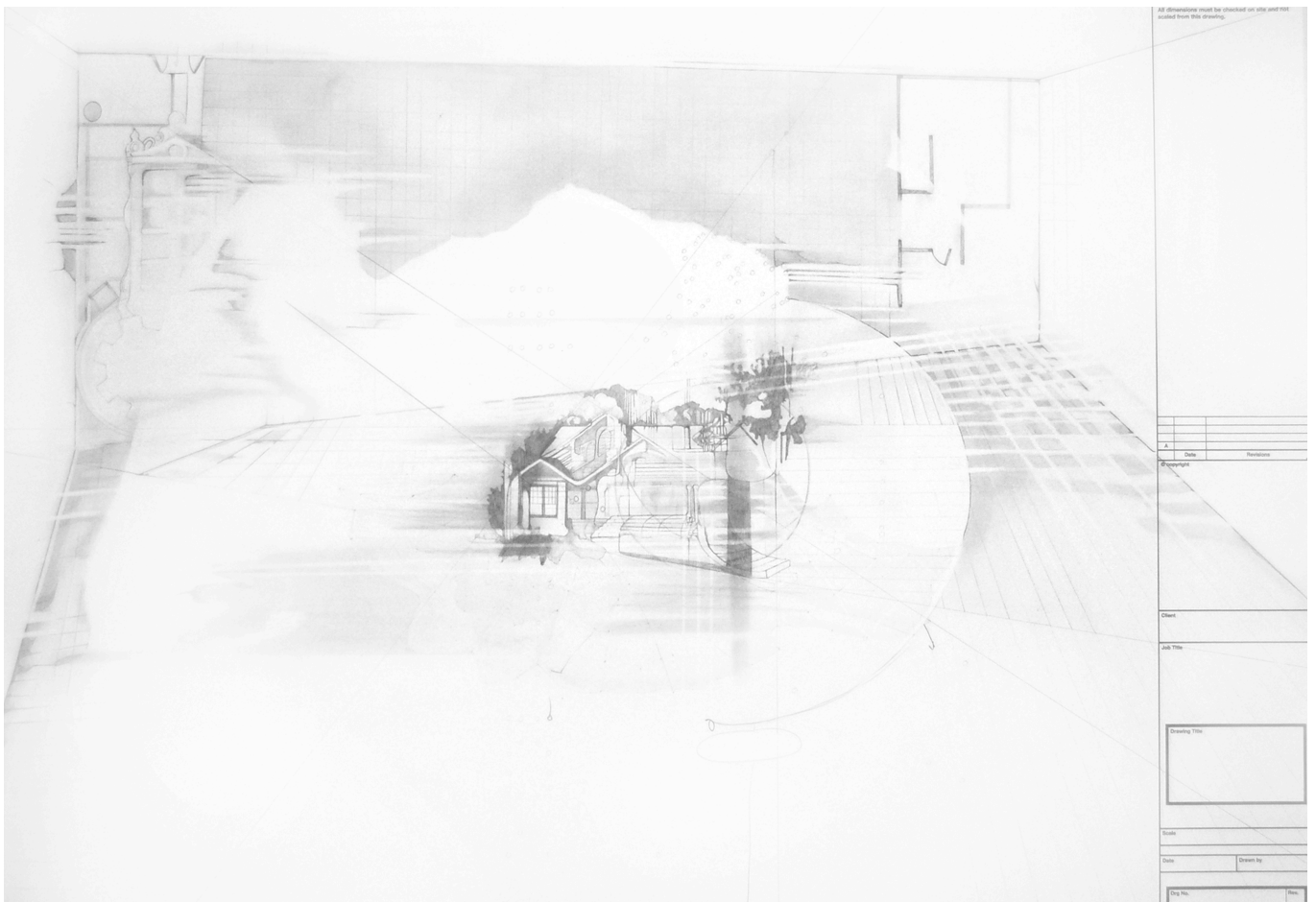


Fig 26: top - Pencil and carbon copy ink on paper. bottom - Pencil, graphite and inkjet print on paper.

## Drawing as a future tense

If drawing can be described as a combination of these components (the lines of marks and signs), as Benjamin implies, then an identity of drawing seems to be emerging that defines it in terms of *motion* and transition, following his comments about a '*magical fusion*'; '*this temporal magic appears (in the mark and the sign) in the sense that the resistance of the present, between the past and the future, is eliminated*' (1996, p 86). So there are two distinct characteristics of drawing that are being proposed here; the first (the sign), broadly speaking has a spatial register because it is imprinted *onto* surfaces whereas the second (the mark) is temporal and represents the passage of *other* forces *over* a surface. In both cases those surfaces seem to involve human bodies, natural geological formations or human built constructions, in equal measure. Benjamin is describing drawing as the coexistence of space and time; as an imprint on given a surface (which is spatial) *and* a movement or transition (suggesting that either the surface is mobile or the drawing is). If this can be read in relation to Henri Bergson's comment that *time* occurs when '*movement and change*' takes place over a given space or surface, then it might be fair to say that drawing has a temporal character (Bergson, 1992, p 11). Or at least Benjamin's theory of drawing seems to employ this duality of time and space. Nigel Thrift also reminds us (in a quote that echoes the concerns of Benjamin over half a century earlier) that; '*time is understood as the domain of dynamism and progress, the spatial is relegated to the realm of stasis*' (Thrift et al, 2001, p 2). This last quote describes a conflict I grappled with in practice. The *background* elements of my drawings became retrospective scenes in the sense that they evidenced previous versions of the sketches that subsequently morphed into different forms (see fig 23). This caused a glitch in the sequence and chronology of the sketch pictures. This use of imagery also suspended the background in a particular moment in time *before* the sketch picture was formed. So including different developmental stages and incarnations of a single sketch within a single background, emphasises this glitch in the development of the drawing as a whole. Time and space are therefore seen to be at apparent odds with one another. But Bergson shows us too, that they are interconnected and coexistent; that time cannot be experienced (or conceptually known) *without* space. Like Thrift, Bergson's *time* is also explored as a living process rather than an abstract idea. Time and space are therefore inseparable in the sense that human time is measured according to how we perceive, *move through* and mark space. He has shown that *time* is produced and experienced when *movement* and space coincide, or put differently (via Deleuze) *movement* is the '*act of covering*' a given ground or space (Deleuze, 1986, p1). *Movement* is therefore always situated in the *present* (or rather it *is* the present) and the surface or space it covers, is consequently always either past (having been covered) or future (about to be); '*time is what is happening and what causes everything to happen*' (Bergson,



1992, p 12). Unlike Benjamin however for whom progressive time is retrospective or '*backwards facing*', Bergson understands human consciousness to be *presently* durational (Benjamin, 1999, p 249). By which he means that our perception of the present (our actions and interpretation of actions) is informed by what comes next (anticipation) and what has *immediately* passed; '*consider the direction of your mind at any moment..you find that it is occupied with what is now, but always and especially with regard to what is about to be*' (Bergson, 1995, p 227). Benjamin's elements of drawing are defined according to how they interact with their respective backgrounds; the spaces that drawings appear on, pass over and move through. Perhaps the same can be said of many definitions of drawing in which it is described as an act of marking that provides an *identity* to what might otherwise be a neutral space. Whether it is the incidental trace of another activity or the cultivated composition of a picture. But Benjamin's description I think implies something more fundamental than this. It suggests that drawing (a combination of elements) creates a *space* by passing across and moving through it. The line or mark itself is transitory in other words, it comes and goes and changes direction, which in Bergson's account describes the temporal movement of change that occurs when a surface is passed over and marked by that action (see fig 27).

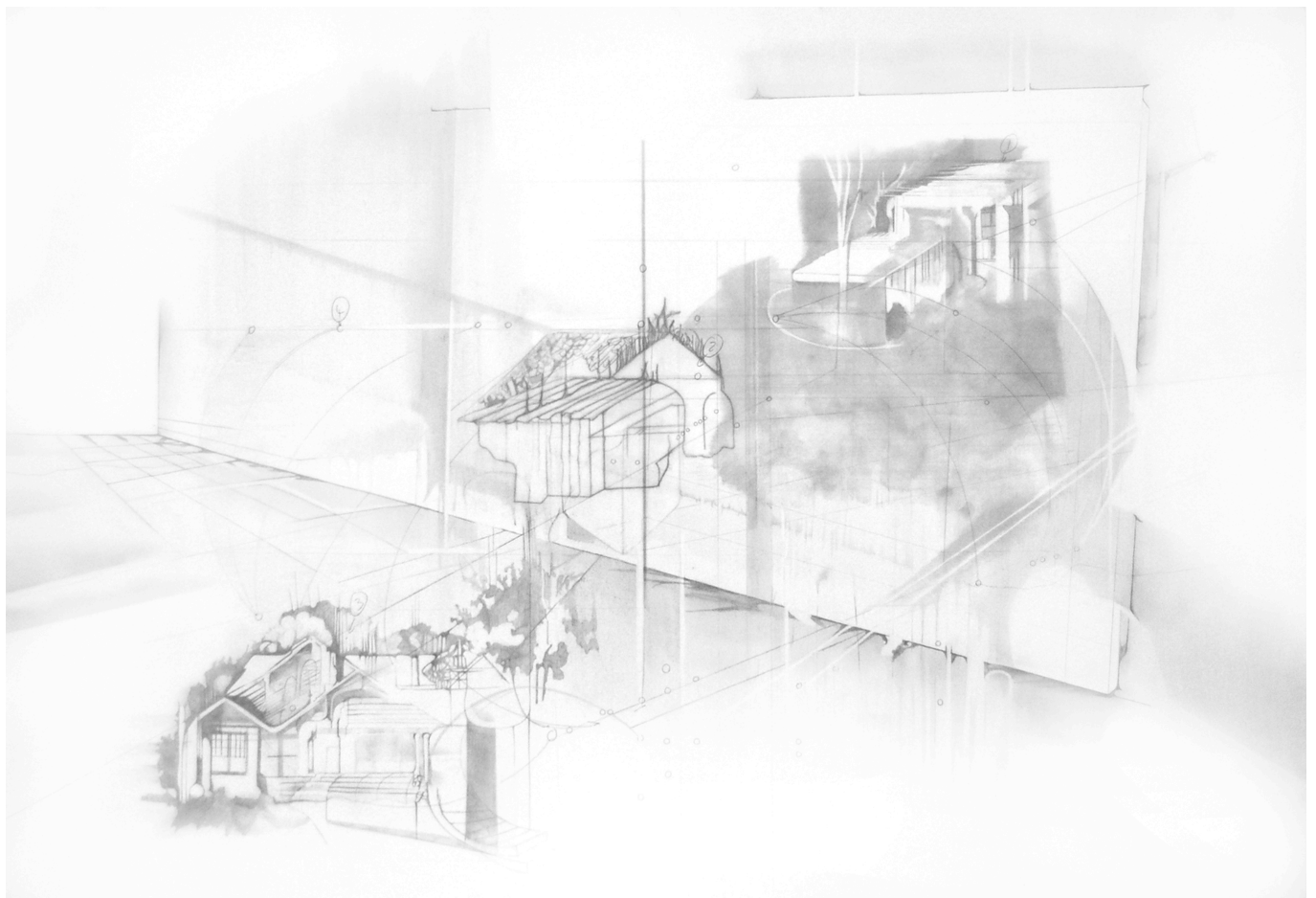
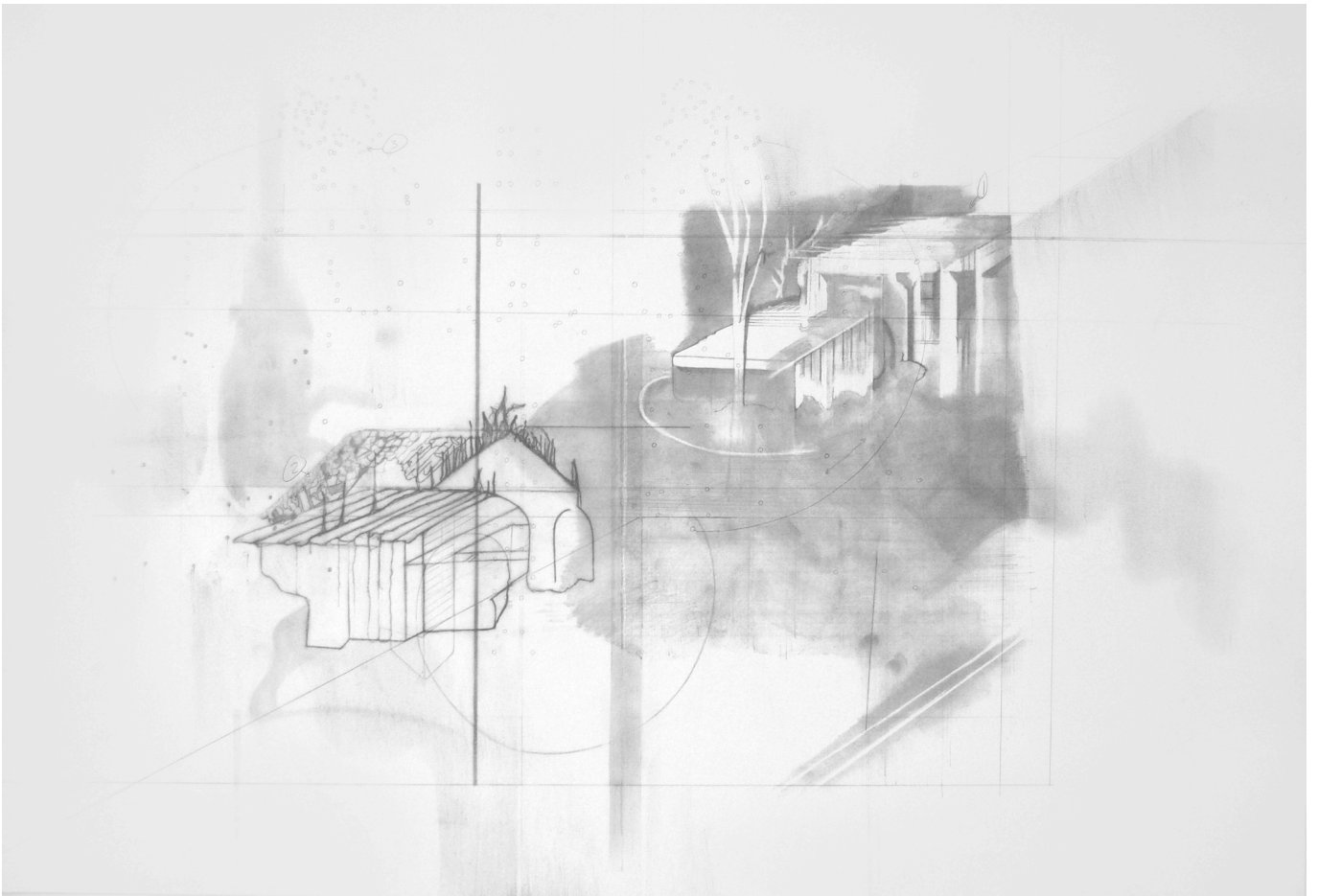


Fig 27: Carbon copy ink, pencil and graphite on paper (top) and inkjet print and pencil on paper (bottom) <sup>32</sup>

To make the series of drawings pictured in figs 26 and 27 I re-used imagery from earlier drawings as discussed previously, but here I also combined this imagery with my situated view of the studio in which I worked. I wanted to combine the (previously used) sketches with my observed view of the space in which those sketches were themselves constructed (my studio), to consider how a contrived sense of time and space might complicate the drawing. Bloch himself identified the use of linear perspective in 17th Century painting, as a particular manifestation of the utopian impulse. Panofsky and later Samuel Edgerton, and many others since, have of course revealed how perspective representation did not facilitate an analytical view of the world, but rather a constructed one. Bloch used a similar interpretation to explore the impulse behind paintings by Rembrandt and Van Eyck for instance, though of course neither of these artists acknowledged utopian intentions or meaning in their work. It is far more likely that Bloch is referring to a tacit anticipation and he focusses his analysis on the evidence of the processes involved in constructing the painted image. The image arrives through praxis and for Bloch this is where the utopian impulse is found (such a process cannot not be misconstrued as a method of illustrating ideas about utopia, for instance). In this sense Bloch identifies an underlying condition that is built-in to the characteristics and aesthetics of painting, because he reads a painting as an entire embodied act rather than a disembodied image or object. The painted image is discussed as a suspended moment in the unfolding event of a painting, which the perspective vanishing point seems to be especially important in producing. Perspective pictures therefore behave like montages for Bloch, whereby their spatial elements are navigated as though they were distinct areas or zones, each describing a different moment in a process. When discussing the *'Madonna of Chancellor Rolin'* by Van Eyck (1425) for instance, he makes special reference to the constructed view through the window behind the central figures pictured in the painting. This suggested landscape acts as a contextual marker for the narrative, through which *'a city becomes visible'* (Bloch, 1986). Bloch's use of the verb *'becomes'* is interesting bearing in mind his emphasis on the importance of *pre-figuration* as a key aspect of figuration (becoming rather than being) (Ibid); *'To recognise reality as a totality full of contradictions, as a totality which..is constantly developing, means to incorporate in that knowledge all the developmental possibilities of that totality..'* (Mandel, 2002, p 249). So the use of the verb implies a possible continuation, but as Ernest Mandel's comment might suggest, when Bloch writes about such paintings he is not really (or not only) referring to the picture as it is presented to us. Rather he is considering its development (the pursuit or ambition of the author), suggesting that the *picture* (and the world around it) is essentially unfinished. In this interpretation, linear perspective behaves as a temporal as well as a spatial agent because it is seen as an ongoing generative process that extends beyond the limits of the resulting pictorial space, which itself makes that extension possible. As a result, the picture we see is understood as a small part of a continuing narrative, which is suggested by the evidence of the authors' use of perspective.

The question mark remains therefore over the possible visualisation of time that has *not yet* passed; *anticipated* time or future time. If a space has not yet been *covered* as Delueze might say in describing a *future* space, then time can only be judged according to how it works or looks *now*, as an extension of now. But perhaps a more useful way to consider this would be to interpret future or futurity, as Martinon (2007) does by using the French word *a-venir* meaning 'to come' rather than *le futur*, which is associated with wishfulness and prophecy. The difference between the two terms is not unlike the distinction Bloch makes between the *concrete* Utopia and the *abstract* Utopia; the first belonging to the realm of human agency and action, whereas the second is a dream that is content to *remain* as such (Levitas, 1990, p 85). *le futur* therefore concentrates on describing the *content* of a possible future as though it were a distant autonomous space, distinct or severed from the present. Such a treatment of the future isolates it from present discourse, or looking at it from a more *individual* human perspective, it means the future is inaccessible, and is subject to laws that are beyond our personal control. The translation of *a venir* as 'to come' on the other hand refers to a closer and more imminent possibility by focussing on what *we do now* to influence the turn of future events (rather like the concept of 'not yet', which is central to Bloch's Utopian impulse) (Martinon, 2007, p 2). The difference between treating the future as a *separate* space, and treating it as an untraversed part of a present space, comes to be important when considering how it might influence a drawing process. In Blochian philosophy this interpretation famously came to be known as '*reclaiming the future*' (a departure from Benjamin's historical focus) because the future is treated as a possible resource that influences *current* space in a reflexive movement (Levitas, 1990). At least this sense of possibility can be used to shape a contemporary space. Martinon for instance stresses that this reading of the future as 'to come' *should not be* confused with or interpreted as a continuation of current events. The importance (and most useful way) of thinking in terms of the future in other words, is that the future is precisely *not* now, while being close enough to affect it. This brings the question of movement and time back into focus here because according to this interpretation, the very purpose of this analysis of futurity is to cause a *disruption* to the movement and chronology of present time;

*'a-venir is what disjoints or unhinges the movement in question. It is what provokes understanding, what allows the movement or the event to take another direction, another juncture, growth, or proportion...(a-venir) is the movement in which principles of order, finality, origin, destination and duration collapse into each other'* (Martinon, 2007, p 2).

In practice this quote comes to represent many of the paradoxes I encountered in my practice and

the processes that produced it. The sketches on the one hand, explore a *retrospective* process, because they reconstruct elements of a pre-made template. But they are simultaneously *not-yet* fully formed as sketches and remain in a transitional state, moving from one background narrative into the totality of another. This exploration into the origins of my drawings conversely revealed a disjuncture in the progression and evolution of the practice. On the one hand my drawings were developing, moving forward and accumulating, whilst on the other they were progressing backwards; re-tracing steps taken in an earlier drawing process. This raised the question as to whether the sketch images (and the resulting drawings) would be symbolically read as not-yet formed and incomplete, *or* whether they indicate a process of decay.

### **Retrospect as a future tense in drawing**

*'every instant, every image virtually anticipates its future development and remembers its former gestures..'* (Agambon, 2011, p 61)

Bloch's claim that humanity is unconsciously motivated towards the future through impulses that are informed by past events, supposes that the present moment is missing something and needs to be reconstructed or re-thought. Following Bloch, Vincent Geoghegan has more recently proposed that our perceptions of the present are the products of combining past and future tenses. He calls this 'remembering the future' (Daniel, 1997 p 15) and argues that it is the conscious and unconscious 'massaging' of events through remembrance, that informs our future perceptions by invoking a desire to re-claim something lost. Geoghegan is referring here to Bloch's method of philosophy that retrospectively observes culture to illuminate what Bloch referred to as an 'ideological surplus'; the inherent potential of objects and images to transcend or override their time and place and so reveal a future orientation (Bloch utopian function p 49 get bib ref). Unlike Bloch however, Geoghegan pays special attention to how the act of recollection itself has a peculiarly Utopian function in that our personal *sense* of the future is shaped by this backwards glance. The Blochian kind of retrospective 'illumination' differs because it describes an unconscious intention toward the future that can *only* be recognised retrospectively. In Bloch's account, this desire for the future is framed by and rooted in the *present moment* as a 'not yet' conscious or 'pre' conscious focus (Bloch, 1969 page ref). This distinction I think is worth exploring, where one interpretation conceives the future as the result of our conscious or subconscious rearrangement of remembered things, and the other shows it to be already embedded in such things, but can only be identified or seen clearly in the filter of time. Geoghegan looks to Proust to discuss how memory and

retrospective analysis provides us with *plans* or blueprints for the future, plans that are designed and shaped according to how our recollections are manipulated by our personal desires and losses.

Bloch's notion of the 'not yet conscious' therefore functions differently because it shows the unfinished and unresolved nature of objects and events and explores the potential of this inherent condition. Bloch's own re-telling of his fascination with the window of a small cabin in a miniature painted scene inside a shop window, perhaps illustrates this. His narrative (discussed in chapter 1) reveals how innocuous material can be transformed in storytelling and fiction and it is the process of seeing it through this filter that reveals its hidden future orientation.

Benjamin summarised Bloch's retroactive method of thinking the future through a '*thought image*' interpretation of a drawing he once owned by Paul Klee, which Benjamin re-names in his narrative the '*The Angel of History*' (see fig 28).





Fig 28: Paul Klee - Angelus Novus, c1920 - India Ink, chalk and wash on paper

Klee's drawing<sup>33</sup> shows the character of an angel suspended in the centre of a featureless space, facing out of the picture plane and drawn with a simple continuous unbroken line. Despite the important relationship between the line of the drawing (the angel) and the space in which it sits, the desperate and loaded narrative that Benjamin attaches to this simple object locates it and 'us' (the

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This work is also described as an intaglio print or a painting from different sources but I have used the archive description given by the museum which owns the work in Jerusalem. I also refer to it as a drawing for the sake of my discussion.

observers of the picture) not in terms of space, but in relation to *time*;

*'This is how one pictures the angel of history. His face is turned toward the past. Where a chain of events appears before us, he sees one single catastrophe which keeps piling wreckage upon wreckage and hurls it at his feet. The angel would like to stay, awaken the dead and make whole what has been smashed. But a storm is blowing from paradise; it has got caught in his wings with such violence he can no longer close them. The storm irresistibly propels him into the future to which his back is turned...this storm is called progress'* (Benjamin, 1999, p 249)

The neutral space around and behind the line on the page seems to have prominence in the narrative that Benjamin lends to it. It is perhaps this space around the line that serves as the catalyst for the narrative by implying the progression of time; the coexistence of a *future* and a *past* and in providing a role for 'us', the audience that looks beyond and through the central character of the angel. Benjamin's suggestion being that this audience is implicated in, or indeed *is*, the driving force behind the catastrophe the angel faces. The *backwards* facing angel also means of course that we have our own backs turned to the past as we face the horizon of a *future*, which Klee had no interest in attempting to represent pictorially but which is implied by the position of the Angel on the page. Benjamin's reading of this particular image is more a sharp criticism of the linearity of interpretations of history as 'progress', than it is a critique of Klee's art in general or this drawing in particular (Benjamin, 1999, p 249). But I think Benjamin's journey around this drawing in what Sigrid Weigel calls a '*dialectical textual movement*'; where image and text come together to form a single multiplicity in which we find both temporal and spatial perspectives, also says something about the linear condition of Klee's drawing (Weigel, 1996, p50). A similar textual reading of a painted or photographed image for instance might not be possible, or at least it would not produce the same motion. For Benjamin these 'meditative' images, which is how he once described Klee's work, were used as conduits for his more general preoccupation with '*thought images*'; the process of translating objects into words, and images that are set in motion by thought.<sup>34</sup> The situation of the drawing lends itself to Benjamin's text in this sense because the text does not end in synthesis like the drawing does not, but it creates many subsequent meanings and generates a constellation of new images. Weigel argues that this process of translating the image is at the heart of Benjamin's

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<sup>34</sup> 'Art stands in need of philosophy that interprets it in order to say that which it cannot say. Art is only able to say what it says without saying it' Adorno describing the genre of the 'thought image' in ed Tiederman R, Aesthetic theory, Continuum International publishing, 2004, p 94



notion of the 'dialectical image', which explains this transformation in which the 'petrified' motion of an idea becomes fluid again and is restored by writing (Weigel, 1996, p 53).

Of course this notion of *suspended motion* was also an inherent concern for Klee in bringing together ideas and images, and he saw drawing (as point and line) to be a fundamental tool with which to engage it. By the time he wrote *The Angel of History* Benjamin would have been aware of Klee's work with the Bauhaus and the artist's explorations of drawing as a mobile force and a tool for bringing (pictures) '*into being*' (Klee, 1961, p 23). For Klee line represented the beginnings of things, both in terms of the status of drawing as a primary social tool and its service in what Klee called the '*genesis of form*'; the sequences of movements and relationships that play out on the surface of a page in the production and communication of an image (Klee, 1961). Klee's interest in line was of course in the process of exploring the *possibility* of a form rather than its existence as a pictorial image. In her introduction to Klee's *Pedagogical Sketchbook*, Sibyl Moholy-Nagy writes how Klee's preoccupation with drawing was led by his fascination with zones and schemes in which painting recognisable things (birds, doors, people) served only as diagrammatic 'points of reference' in a painting, much like symbols on a map are designed to be 'read' (Moholy-Nagy, 1968, p 8). Coded symbols and arrows were also often embedded into the painting or drawing to suggest a direction the image ought to be navigated through, and in the Sketchbook itself Klee describes the first and simplest order of line as a 'mobility agent' (Moholy-Nagy, 1968 p 16). It might be possible therefore to imagine that Benjamin's exploration through Klee's drawing was not a mere testing ground for his own 'thought image' methodology, and I would like to speculate that his reading could be connected to the drawing medium more specifically, by paying attention to Klee's use of line. In the first pages of the *Pedagogical Sketchbook* there is a key that shows several different evolutionary stages of Klee's analysis of line. The different line categories are carefully distinguished one from the another; the first figure for instance is a simple drawn curve which is titled, '*An active line, moving freely without a goal*'. This line category is repeated and extended throughout the key, showing the line in ever more complex and restless constellations eventually emerging as a series of complex diagrammatic notations in which it is described as '*an active line, limited in its movement by fixed points*' (Klee, 1968, p 18). This deceptively simple key that is consistently worked and applied throughout the sketchbook, combines scientific analysis with fictional speculation, and line as the hinge that bridges these often distinct methods of exploration. Line is seen and used by Klee not as a means to an end but rather a '*coordinator for the path of motion*', which implicates line as a navigational agent or a zone in which objects and narratives can be found (Klee, 1968, p 18-60). The way Klee used line in drawing as a specific tool in his

explorations of movement in images, might therefore be seen to lend itself to the conception of Benjamin's image of the *Angel of History*; an idea which clearly transcends the motif of the angel pictured in Klee's painting. Benjamin's image is presented as an allegory of messianic restitution. But in this case the Angel character is prevented from its quest to return and redeem history because of the opposing image of the storm (the '*storm of progress*'), which prevents its reconstruction (Benjamin, 1999, p 249). So Benjamin was not offering an image of a future form through his textual drawing, in so far as the angel (the figure) is facing the past while being propelled in the opposite direction, in a blind trajectory. If anything this image can be well interpreted as a critique of history from the point of view of the present, rather than a *future* projection. But David Couzens Hoy shows that Benjamin's image is unavoidably implicated in questions of futurity and universal theories of *time* (Hoy, 2009, p 152). Hoy follows Heidegger by suggesting that there can be no *sense* (as in a human experience) or understanding of history from a live present moment, *without* implicating the future (Hoy, 2009). For Benjamin this idea translates through the allegory of the angel, in re-claiming future time by returning it back to its origins. So Benjamin's image combines opposing trajectories. His treatment of images seems therefore to be connected to a concept of time and movement in which the past, the present and future are coextensive. The thought image is precisely such a '*movement of thought*' which is based on a rhythmic process (Buck-Morss, 1991, p 219). As a result Benjamin's approach explores the image (through Klee's line) as a '*readable*' site of passage and an evolving narrative. Baring in mind what Benjamin says about drawing however (as I discussed earlier), it seems that the existence of a 'background' in Klee's image, which the line constructs and makes visible, had some influence on Benjamin's treatment of the narrative. The unclaimed but important site of the background is coincidentally where his metaphorical image of the future is projected. In this regard and following Benjamin's own definition, this might suggest that he treated the Klee image specifically *as a drawing*, rather than a painting. For Benjamin the background is created by line, but the line does not *occupy* the background; '*the identity of the background of a drawing is quite different from that of the white surface on which it is inscribed*' (Benjamin, 1991, p 84). The distinction made here between the background and the surface of the paper, is quite revealing because it is the background that provides opportunity for Benjamin's '*multiplicity of perspectives*' (Weigel, 1996, p 51). This is quite a diagrammatic treatment of images and it is something that Paul Klee also championed through his use of drawing as a structural support for abstraction. We have seen that for Klee drawing served as just such a deconstructive and transitional agent *inside* the narrative of painting. It provided a means of harnessing motion and testing the temporal possibilities of static pictures. Exploring the connections between line, duration and temporality was an going concern for Klee, which he expressed in his Bauhaus lectures around

the time 'Angelus Novus' was produced. A preoccupation that Benjamin himself would most likely have been aware of when he wrote 'The Angel of History'; perhaps his most notorious thought-image.

Of course Benjamin's response to Klee's work was not an image at all, but rather an interpretation recorded in writing. Adorno once described Benjamin's thought-image as a '*scribbled picture puzzle*', referring to a process in which many unresolved image sequences jostle together inside a short paragraph of prose (Richter, 2007, pX). Benjamin himself calls this effect a constellation, which describes how ideas branch off one another and sub-divide to create a procession of new forms. Deanna Petherbridge made a similar observation about the drawing process when she related it to an '*unending chain of associations and serial possibilities*' (Garner, 2008, p39).

#### **A summary statement for the final stages (reconstruction drawings)**

- Attempting to trace the origins of a drawing process exposes a disjuncture in the trajectory of the new drawings. The partially exposed pictures that result are at once unformed and unfinished despite following a previously made template. The drawings that follow a retrospective process, reflect and critique the technical and handmade marks accumulated by previous drawings. This means that drawing is not anchored by the time in which it was made (the live act) but rather it reflects backwards, and projects forwards through that reflection. The live act of drawing at any given time is therefore an embodiment of that duality, which shapes the meaning and the outcome of the act itself.

**Summary:**

The end of chapter 1 exposed the tenuous difference between the *destructive* and *reconstructive* capacity of drawing, through explorations into the instrumentality of the template drawing. This chapter revealed that the two are connected by a duality in the trajectory of drawing. On the one hand drawing is reflective and accumulates imagery through a retrospective process. But at the same time it critiques and alters the origins of the images it accumulates, and by doing so it suggests a new beginning for them. This emerged through an exploration of Benjamin's treatment of an 'origin' as the beginning of a gradual transformation, which led to a subsequent discussion about the affective capacity of drawing. The possible relationship between the origins of a form in a drawing (in this case a reconstructed picture) and the consequences of that drawing (what it generates) was finally explored as a temporal glitch or tension. This implicated drawing as a possible hinge that joins two opposing trajectories of time; the past and the future.

## Conclusions

The union of drawing and utopia through this research both confirmed and contradicted my suspicions about the behaviour of both. The research began as an enquiry into the behaviour of *drawing* when it is seen through a utopian lens, but perhaps it is equally fair to say that the research became a critique of *utopia* when viewed through drawing practice. I set out to explore the benefits of treating drawing as an open ended process rather than the pursuit of a goal, so I needed to identify the differences between a goal oriented and a generative process. It was not until the latter stages however that this difference revealed itself to be a decisive point in the research. This came with confirmation that the outcome of a generative drawing process is crucially determined and shaped *by that process*, which means it cannot be known in advance. A goal oriented process on the other hand, is forever chasing a projection that has been previously established. The important difference in terms of this research, is that a projection exists beyond the capacity and scope of the drawing to shape, question or change it. For me, this distinction is interesting because it particularly highlights the value of drawing as a process of discovery and venturing into the unknown, rather than merely visualising a pre-determined form. When using drawing to pursue a goal in this sense, the opportunity to explore and question the nature and purpose of that form is reduced and drawing loses its critical potential.

I see my use of drawing now to be a way of establishing the shape of things through a gradual and self-determining momentum. There were times throughout the research when this momentum turned back on itself so that drawing became a means of ‘over-writing’ its previous gestures, as Roland Barthes describes it. This was a defining point of the research because it became clear that drawing is not a one way process. It moves forwards and backwards retracing and re-constructing previous actions, and in doing so it changes its own landscape; the landscape of the drawing (and therefore the goal of the drawing). Although they share similar traits, I do not think that utopia (and the significance of this momentum of drawing) can be fully illustrated by Barthes palimpsest however. To equate one with the other would be to describe utopia as a process of building over a landscape that was once occupied by something else (whose traces are still evident). Such a clean definition of utopia does not take account of its reflective potential, and to focus only on its ambition to replace one system with another, might even implicate it as a form of totalitarianism. I suspect that if utopia became its own fixed and determined entity it could no longer be called a critical process that has the capacity to reflect upon and alter the circumstances of a failing system or environment. Reaching this understanding of utopia revealed for me the important distinction

between goal oriented and generative drawing, and the critical benefits of not fixing the outcome of a drawing process.

Ernst Bloch and Walter Benjamin helped to illustrate how my use of *tracing* forces a synchronicity between three tempo's of time (past, present and future) and that this produces a critical engagement with a sense of live, present time. Synchronising the past and the future in this way was treated by both thinkers as a critique of perceptions that might accept present time as an endless repeat of what has just passed (Jameson, 1991, p 10). Bloch's reading of the utopian impulse was therefore intended to produce an interruption or a glitch to a sense of an inevitable continuum (which goal-oriented and target driven social systems, tend to produce). So it is divergence from a seemingly predictable momentum (rather than the goal of that momentum) that generates utopian possibility. Similarly, I found tracing to be instrumental in creating differences between my image source and the drawings that followed, which opposes any assumption that tracing is a procedural copy or repeat of a previous occurrence, shape or form.

The use and reception of drawing as an instrumental support for other practices was ruptured in the wake of modernist practices that rejected previous conventions of representation in painting and sculpture. As a result of this the role of drawing must also have faltered because those practices that drawing once supported (and was instrumental to) were being re-invented and radically reformed.<sup>35</sup> My exploration of drawing in this context revealed a paradoxical force in the instrumentality of drawing, which is to say that this drawing research had a divergent and unpredictable character. My drawing process supported the production of new forms by re-shaping the traces of previous drawing actions, and ultimately destroying those former gestures. What I interpreted as a disruptive feature of the research was (in the end) a key factor in recognising the potential of drawing as a generative process and not one that follows a path that has been decided in advance.

The relationship between the source of drawing and the graphic trace was also influential in discovering that drawing straddles two opposing trajectories of time. The past is referenced in drawing as a retrospective accumulation of previous marks; both the technical and manual traces of

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<sup>35</sup> Benjamin Buchloh discusses this re-evaluation in attitudes to drawing alluding to the diagrammatic practices that developed in the 1940s and 50s as a way of offsetting those representational traditions for which drawing was instrumental. See chapter 1 for an expanded context. Deanna Petherbridge also discusses how this decline in the support role of drawing prevents it now being associated with sculptural or other multi-dimensional practices and disciplines, as it once was. She has suggested that the identity of drawing has suffered as a result, and that the once confident presence and use of drawing as a skill set in art education (leading to professional practice), has subsequently also declined (Petherbridge, 2005).

past activity, processes and recollections. A future change is also conceptually activated when reconstructing the origins of a previous drawing process (the trace). This implicates drawing as a meeting point between these two active but oppositional trajectories. Rather than being a device for recording or reproducing, drawing is seen to be a hinge through which those records and reproductions can be questioned, re-viewed and transformed. The final drawings essentially reconstruct the research project stage by stage and are testimony to an interrogation of Bloch's method of tracing the past to preempt a future change, as a formal characteristic of drawing.

Bloch's process oriented definitions of utopia highlight its functional role, and exploring this through drawing revealed for me the critical benefits of understanding drawing as an accumulation or momentum rather than a fixed outcome. I began this project believing that utopia would remain a largely theoretical tool that would not itself be changed or altered by my drawing objectives. Instead I came to see and question how Bloch's ideas about a generative utopian process might actually function as a practice rather than an ideology, which was after all Bloch's ambition for his philosophy.

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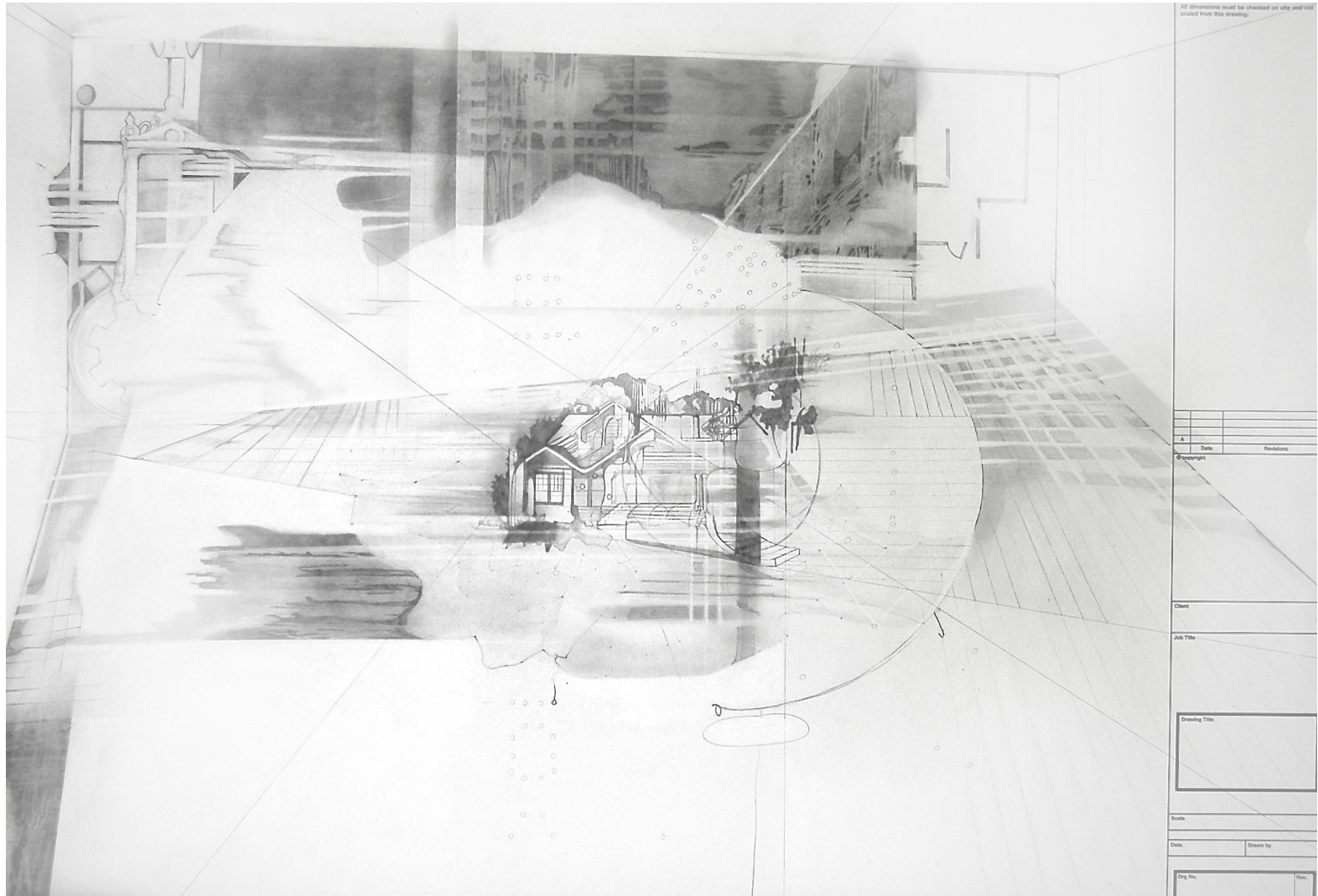
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## **Appendices (Reconstruction drawings)**





All dimensions must be checked on site and not scaled from this drawing.

A		Date	Revisions
Copyright			

Client

Job Title

Drawing Title

Scale

Date

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Proj. No.



