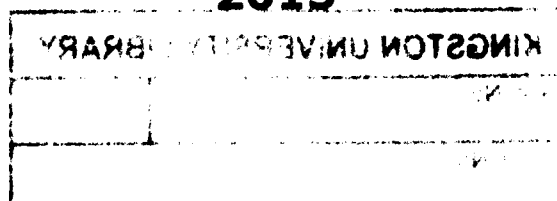


# **DOCUMENTING DAILY LIFE THROUGH REPORTAGE DRAWING**

**MERCY WAIRIMU KAGIA**

**PHD**

**2013**



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# **DOCUMENTING DAILY LIFE THROUGH REPORTAGE DRAWING**

By Mercy Wairimu Kagia

## **Abstract**

This thesis is a practice-based inquiry into contemporary Reportage Drawing in the UK. The role of the practice in present day, its various forms and purposes and how digital media has influenced both the working process and reception of such work, is discussed through comparisons of visual work and theoretical engagement from practitioners. Verbal and visual contributions from current artists about their methods, means and motivations are included to present a clear picture of the varied forms of documentary drawing. This research is structured around questions and issues raised about the process of Reportage Drawing from original reportage drawings made observing everyday life in Kisumu, western Kenya. It begins with a brief historical overview of Reportage Drawing and develops with chapters visually engaging with the drawings from Kisumu and other artist's contributions. The main body of drawings is designed to be viewed as a visual display as specific groups of drawings create a dialogue about the various issues raised.

At the heart of this research is the investigation into observational drawing, the presence of the reportage artist as a documenter of the every day and the question of the importance of this specific field of art. Attention is paid to the practical aspects of making work as this often influences artists' choice in engaging in this form of drawing while reasons behind the commissioning of reportage artists are also elaborated on. This all contributes to the objectives of this thesis, which is to create the start of a database of contemporary reportage artists, present a clear picture of the nature of reportage drawing in present day, including its limitations, and reflect on my own work in the light of others' while championing this practice.

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Finally, a very big thank you to my parents Mr Joseph and Dr Jean Kagia, without whose support this journey would not have been possible and who never told me that being an artist was not a real career. I dedicate this thesis to you both.



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## 1. INTRODUCTION

This project is an investigation into the nature of observational reportage drawing, the role this practice plays in the present day as a specialist field and the factors that have influenced this. Overall, this is a reflection on reportage drawing using practice as a means of drawing out issues and questions related to the same - the use of drawings made on location in a project specifically created for this research, accompanied by historical theoretical material and verbal contributions by contemporary artists.

While it is not the main thrust of the project, it is important to touch on my own background as a Kenyan; my cultural upbringing is highly influential in pointing me in the direction of this research. While the drawings created as the basis of this research are of Kenya and by a Kenyan, it is important to note that this project is not a cultural study into Kenyan art, or for that matter, African art. The decision to develop my own practice into research came as a result of various factors, all related to being back in my home country of Kenya, after spending eight years receiving art education and cutting my teeth as a working artist (as well as teaching drawing) in the UK. It was this return to Kenya - the process of reestablishing myself as an artist with all the western influences in my work that were in such contrast to the other artists around me - that was a catalyst for the recurrent surfacing of key issues. These issues grew out of comments about my work, or more to the point, the absence of a culture of visual documentation in Kenya through the means of drawing. It is for this reason that I have included a brief chapter on my personal history as a means of adding further clarity to the history of this project.

## **PRESERVATION OF CULTURE AND THE CULTURE OF PRESERVATION: A PERSONAL HISTORY AS CONTEXT**

This section is a brief explanation of how my cultural background, which has no traditional visual history, influenced the beginnings of this research project, which sets a backdrop to the work.

### **Early History**

I was born and raised in Nairobi, the capital of Kenya in East Africa.

Drawing featured heavily in my life from an early age and my parents never discouraged my efforts, incorporating them into projects that affirmed my interest and ability. Primary school art education was a basic affair comprising of prescriptive ways of drawing. For example, a stereotypical landscape complete with hut, a path leading away from the door, widening as it hit the bottom of the page to show perspective, and the necessary trees found in an African savannah, cotton-wool clouds and a blazing sun. Pupils unable to create the necessary work were rewarded with low grades or, depending on the teacher's mood, punishment.

High school art class was a more engaging affair. The cheap powder paints that cracked and fell off the paper were upgraded to bottled poster paints. The most significant memory was watching my art teacher make a portrait from a photograph using a grid. Looking back now, I see that it would never have occurred to me that there was any other way to draw a person, and definitely not from life. Life drawing was unheard of. Kenyan culture is very conservative and the art education system was a reflection of this. There was no nude subject matter to be discussed in any way, shape or form.

Coming from this background, Art School in the UK was a big shock to my system. Firstly, having been educated in African History, the western historical reference points such as the World Wars and industrial revolutions were completely alien to me. Secondly, taboo subjects such as sex and sexuality made it very difficult to relate to some work - more out of sheer embarrassment than anything else. The conservative Christian influence of British missionaries in Kenya made it hard to engage with the British system of art education.

A key moment in my early years in art school in UK was a lecture on African Art given by a tutor at the college. It was insulting to have work referred to as 'primitive' but being the only African student on the campus, and having grown up deferring to my elders and educators, meant that I did not protest. However, I had to speak up when slide after slide of examples of African art were displayed- these were just ceremonial or household objects - not art, in my mind. My protestations were overruled. I will never forget wondering why I was being told, against my experience of having grown up with some of these objects, that I was wrong about what they were because an art historian a continent away had classified them as art. The debate rages on as curators and academics from various African countries emerge and claim ownership of what comes out of their own countries.

My interest in drawing grew while studying for my undergraduate degree as I noticed that from all the other students, I was the only one drawing from observation. Since then, observational drawing, the practice and the teaching of it have been central to my work.

## Returning Home

At the start of 2006 I returned to Kenya where my (new) perceptions were challenged at every turn. For example, a member of staff at a creative space berated me for teaching life drawing using a nude model as it was perceived as 'indecent'.<sup>1</sup> In a separate incident, when I enquired at a gallery how I could exhibit my work there I was asked if I painted Maasai's or animals. More often than not, when I showed my drawings the question, 'so are you going to finish it?' followed. A drawing is perceived as a painting waiting to happen. The other frequent question was, 'what does it mean?'

Why record what is going on around me? What is the significance of this process? Is it of cultural significance and if not, can it gain such significance?

Kenyan culture is extremely rich in oral tradition. History and legends are passed down from generation to generation, through stories and songs. Each tribe has its own legends, stories, and myths. Apart from cave paintings in Mfangano Island in Lake Victoria, there is little else that can be termed as historical drawing. Certain tribes are known to have mastered certain crafts such as the Akamba wood carvers, while Maasai beadwork is iconic. Yet today, many of these skills have been channeled into producing curios for the tourist market.

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<sup>1</sup> I ran observational drawing workshops and found that a handful of practising artists could draw from life, but hardly any of the portrait artists. The British Kenyans called Kenyan Cowboys or KC's who are in a separate art clique of their own did have a stronger background in observational and life drawing but sadly do not tend to mix with the black Kenyan artists, who also are divided into various factions.

## **The Changes in the City**

One of the things that has left an impression on me is the nature of history in the UK. History is important, and not just the big events. The careful research on various periods in the past, the records preserved over centuries, only made possible by the past record-keepers' methodical documentation of their time is truly remarkable. Kenya is still a young country, post-independence, and that exuberance and urgency to prove herself and move past colonial confines to defining her position in the world stage has meant that, often, much of significance has been discarded in a bid to catch up with the developed world.

Kenyan conservationists still battle to preserve anything that would be of historical significance. Unfortunately sometimes superstition, religious fervor, ignorance, or the influence of money from a developer gains an upper hand. There are many examples of this. As recently as December 2004 a faction in St Andrew's Presbyterian church in Nairobi, declared that the symbols in their 30 plus stained glass windows, over a century old, were had links to freemasonry (who are seen as satanic by this group) and should be destroyed. The requests by the National Museum of Kenya to the church to allow the museum to acquire these windows and grills to preserve them as historical artifacts were ignored and all these handmade windows with their Scottish heritage were destroyed.

The combination of a rapidly expanding population and the rush to modernise has left Nairobi looking like an enormous construction site as old houses from the colonial era are demolished to make way for multiple



apartment complexes, some no more than a couple of metres apart. There is a sense of doing away with history in a rush to get to the fore in development. The city is eager to be on par with, if not western cities (there is a monumental project underway with the construction of a new city on the outskirts of Nairobi), then at least, economically booming Arab cities, as is evidenced by the malls and glass-fronted office parks springing up at an alarming rate in the already congested capital. It is not just the capital undergoing this change. The other two cities, Mombasa and Kisumu are also caught in between two styles: rural with colonial era buildings and slums (poor to modest) versus modern affluent malls and residential buildings (rapidly constructed and heavily financed).

While there is a place for politically charged artwork or drawings that directly address societal ills and contemporary issues, there is also a place for work that keeps a record of a particular time as a preserved memory. Every year I visit Kenya, it always comes as a shock at how much has changed in so short a time. While many eyes are turned to the future it seems to be at the expense of permanently losing the recent historical past.

### **Cultural ways of looking**

One of the most striking things when I return to Kenya is the way people look at each other. There is more open scrutiny in Kenya than in England. In my experience of living in London, people work hard at not being caught looking at another individual as staring is seen as rude. However, this is not the case in many other cultures, and certainly not in Kenya. In Kenya

staring is commonplace and most people are not shy of making eye contact. There is an element of curiosity about others and people will make an assessment of facial features, dress, body language, hairstyle, et cetera. All these things are crucial in the knowing where to place others socially and will determine the viewer's approach to them. For example, facial features and body shape will often identify an individual's tribe and social status. This can be beneficial in knowing what language to communicate in, and sometimes, how to deal with one in business. Stereotypes of certain tribes being unwilling to part with their money or being hot-tempered go a long way towards this.

This issue of cultural scrutiny came into play when during my formative years in England, when my friends would complain about not recognising me as I changed my hairstyle frequently. In Kenya, women change their hair weekly, and sometimes daily and yet there is no cause for confusion. There must be a different system of 'identification-looking' at play in the UK compared to Kenya. It seems that the kind of staring reserved for artists in the UK is the Norm in Kenya.

### **Political Agenda and the Problem with being African**

Another factor that played into the reflection on observational reportage drawing is the responsibility, real or imagined, placed on my work and myself when I am referred to as an African artist. I use the word African here as whenever there is any reference to work from an artist from the continent in the west, it is categorised as 'African Art' and put in the same

box with all artists from that vast continent. I have attended numerous lectures, exhibitions, seminars, and have found that any time there is an 'African Artist' featured there are certain expectations of this work. There still has been no distinction made between countries and as a result, none between individual artists and what they are trying to say. Unless it is by specialist academics who have studied and have thrown off the lenses of stereotypes, the expectation is that work from an African artist has to be charged with political agenda and meaning, often decrying societal ills such as poverty and injustice, women's rights and such issues. I am often asked what my work is about in such circles and have had numerous identical conversations explaining why my work is not so 'African' (no vibrant colour and no stylised figures with an 'African flavour', as is the preconception).

I gave an interview to the Royal African Society earlier this year and was asked typical questions that I would have expected seeing as it was a society that dealt with African issues – favourite African musicians and art, et cetera. The interview ended with asking what my fears for Africa were. An over-generalised question, certainly, as is typical of such interviews that over-simplify often complicated and varied issues in a continent of 54 countries and over 2000 languages.

The disparity in cultural ways of seeing led me to this project, but the focus became primarily about drawing: the nature of reportage drawing and its relevance today. My background provoked the reflection, but the reflection goes beyond culture – it becomes about looking and recording society, which is an artistic activity. The media and methods vary, but the core act of looking and drawing remains the same.

As much as this project is based on observational reportage drawing in a specific Kenyan urban environment, which itself brings up points on visual interpretation and cultural ways of seeing, the premise of this thesis is the practice of documentary drawing. This visual project is based in a country where visual recording is not inherent culturally and even now, in this decade, the practice of drawing, let alone reportage drawing, is far from common.

## **OUTLINE OF THE PROJECT**

### **What are the gaps in knowledge in this field and what are the reasons for these gaps?**

In the process of researching reportage, it became apparent that while disciplines such as photography and writing had been extensively researched and information was easily accessible, this is not the case with drawing. There are projects, bodies of work, and obviously working artists but not at all collated, and it soon became apparent why.

Often the boundaries between illustration, fine art and reportage drawing are blurred, and despite there being texts on reportage drawing, in many cases they are not categorised by that title. Drawing books on certain artists or bodies of work concerning social commentary or documenting travel experiences or war identified themselves as 'diaries' or 'journals' or 'scrapbooks'. Frequently, it was after describing the nature of the discipline

that relevant work would be pointed out. More often than not progress was hampered by the simple fact that not everyone knew what reportage drawing meant - it is a relatively new term. (Jeanette Barnes, who has recently been documenting the construction of the Olympic park in East London in large-scale charcoal drawings comments that she first heard the term from Julia Midgley, whose work spans a broad range of subject matter – from drawings of life in a hospital to archeological digs. In conversation (22 April 2012), Midgley confirmed that until recently, the term used was documentary drawing). Many artists who work in what would be described as reportage, i.e. documenting or recording from life, would not call themselves reportage artists, and in some cases, were not aware that was what they were doing (such as in the case of Christopher Lambert, who documented his 1000 mile walk from Le Havre to Rome in a sketchbook).

There are limited texts on this field. Paul Hogarth published a chronological overview of reportage drawing, *The Artist as Reporter* where he collated the history of this discipline up to the 80's. Much like this research, his was not an exhaustive study of all aspects and practitioners of reportage. Since this research project began, there has been a greater utilisation of online media to discuss and showcase reportage drawing such as *Reportager* and numerous blogs and sites I have highlighted in the bibliography. The truth of the matter is that publishing online is not only more cost effective, but it allows for an instant international readership and broader contribution that physical paper publication cannot contain. One can argue that in the grand scheme of things this progress is to be applauded and fully utilised. Sadly this also means that as the Internet increasingly becomes the sole source of

much research material, pre-internet work and artists who do not feature their work online 'vanish'.

Until now efforts towards discovering current and even younger reportage artists, has been limited. Once again, due to blurring of boundaries, many artists involved in this practice would never have singled themselves out or been identified as reportage artists. Often many artists will engage in other forms of art alongside reportage drawing. In the historical overview, I will show that reportage or documentary artists grew out of the need for visual depictions of important or newsworthy events for mass consumption and that at that time it was taken for granted that all artists should be able to draw from life, which is not the case today. In present day, advancement of technology and the complete freedom to experiment and cross boundaries has meant that the nature of documentary drawing has changed, as has the reliance on artists who draw as the main source of visual information. There are references to this in the visual component of this thesis.

### **How does this project make an original contribution to the discipline of Reportage Drawing?**

This project begins with an original body of drawings - observational reportage drawings of a community in Kenya that has no contemporary documented drawings made of it, and using these drawings as the basis of this research. The drawings form part of the discourse concerning drawing as a relevant tool in documenting society, and through the process identifies common aspects of people's lives regardless of cultural differences.

They demonstrate the potential of the eye and hand as a reliable and relevant documenting tool, while bringing to the fore the possible limitations of this form of documentation. (This is the start of what will be a larger life-long project of creating drawn records of life in different Kenyan communities that can also be accessible to the communities themselves either through public exhibitions or readily available affordable small books of drawings.) While there have been others that have researched drawing, for example Jill Gibbon and her research into the 'radical witness' through reportage drawing in the peace movement, this study seeks to demonstrate a variety of motivations and situations in which reportage artists work. In addition to this, there is the unique contribution of working reportage artists reflecting on their own work and the discipline as a whole, which goes towards creating a wider picture of contemporary reportage drawing. The thoughts of those working in the field describing their working processes especially with regard to new media and financial considerations is a new set of information on the subject.

Alongside the drawing agenda is the call for a new visual heritage in Kenya, a diversification - the addition of drawing to the current means of preservation of history. There is a place for drawing as reportage, and it is significant for a Kenyan to do this. There needs to be more than the expensive offerings of coffee table books with clichéd photographs of animals or the Maasai tribe that only expatriates or the wealthy can afford. It's crucial that there is a record of normal people living their everyday lives that is not the usual focus on conflict and poverty. It is a small step in self-reflection as a citizen, this observation and preservation of the mundane and everyday. As both the rural and urban landscape is changing so rapidly,

there is a need for a visual archive that employs the hand and eye of an artist.

At the core of this is the process of drawing. What was once regarded as the core of visual art, the process, not just of depiction, but of thinking, planning, problem solving, collating information, communicating and developing one's practice, has changed roles. It is a topic that has been heavily debated but the importance of drawing and its once seeming demise in art education is reflected in the work being produced. Whereas observational drawing in sketchbooks was the primary means of gathering information, advancement in and accessibility to digital media has changed the way artists initially interact with the environment or subject matter, and in their drawing process. This research takes the practice of specific artists and through their drawing processes and resulting drawings addresses this shift in the discipline.

In summary, it is these changes, the shift in emphasis on the reportage artist, the use of drawing, and the making a record of life and society that has formed the basis of the questions I am addressing. My main questions are the following:

- a) What is the role of drawing in reportage- is it becoming redundant?
- b) What are the limitations of drawing in reportage?
- c) How important is objectivity (and can it be achieved) in visual documentation? How does one deal with emotionally sensitive situations, privacies, and personal conflict, presented in the subject?



- d) What role does observation play and how important is it to be on location and experience first-hand, the subject? How have the issues involved with commercial reportage drawing altered the role of direct observation?
- e) How has digital media influenced reportage drawing? Is traditional drawing under threat of being eradicated from the race by digital means of documenting? What does drawing lend to reportage that photography does not?
- f) What are the historical precedents for reportage drawing and how are they relevant today? What forms of reportage drawing have survived throughout society's changes and what factors have aided in this?
- g) Is there a place for recording society using drawing today?

Finally, the objectives of this thesis are as follows:

- a) To present an overview of the current methods, means and motivations of reportage drawing in the UK, citing the influence of new media in the drawing process.
- b) To create the start of a database of contemporary reportage artists in the UK that can be further developed and added to.
- c) To present an argument for the relevance of the documentary drawing and the importance of the artist as a recorder and commentator on life.
- d) To highlight the importance of visually documenting the mundane and everyday as a future source of historical archival material

- e) To kick-start a culture of documentary drawing in Kenya though the drawing project this research is based on.
- f) Finally, this research is a self-reflection, a critical self-analysis of my role as an artist as I seek to remain true to my convictions about the importance of observational drawing, the need to re-examine my responsibility to my vocation, my students and the people who will view my work.

## 2. METHODOLOGY

### INTRODUCTION

Drawing as research is a recurring topic of discussion amongst practitioners, facilitated by forums such as the Drawing Research Network, which connects 'drawers' and thinkers on drawing from around the world. In a time when groups such as the Campaign for Drawing have been championing the return to and integration of drawing into every day life, both as an extracurricular activity and as a means of thinking across disciplines through public projects such The Big Draw, the discourse surrounding drawing and its place and role in research has never been more crucial. Both the process of drawing as thinking in the conception of work, and drawing as a final statement, have found their place as fundamental players in the research environment. In 2003, Kingston University held a conference titled *Drawing- The Process* where the interdisciplinary nature of drawing and the role it plays it plays in practice as thinking and investigative tool was explored. It saw practitioners and theoreticians present papers, exhibit work and exchange ideas about drawing with delegates and each other in panel discussions

The pre-existing boundaries and notions of drawing were extended. The discussions were described as 'allowing (us) new breathing space, clear of any concept that there exists a finite way to draw, or to think about drawing' (Davies, J & Duff, L p.3). Drawing has stepped outside the confines of being an academic task to be achieved before moving on to the next stage of

mastering one's art, to a thinking tool, an investigating tool - a research tool.

## **PRACTICE BASED METHODOLOGY**

Traditionally, a written thesis was the established conclusive form a body of research took. However this format did not comprehensively make allowances for process-based investigation in disciplines such as the visual and performing arts where the physicality of doing or making was the research, and the exclusive use of words a limiting factor. In such cases, where the disparity between the means of investigation and the means of collating and presenting findings was near irreconcilable and academic guidelines more restrictive than encompassing, it became essential to allow for situations where practice could be research.

This is a practice-based research project, a reflection on the practice of present day reportage drawing in which research can most effectively be carried out through the process doing or making. This is key as it is a discipline where the process of drawing (the making) is both the means and result. Whereas there are differing schools of thought with regards to the use of the term 'practice based' as opposed to 'practice led', the term *practice based* has been decided upon as it best epitomises this research project. This is because the issues that are discussed concerning the practice stem from the engagement with in an actual drawing project, and some of this issues are further disseminated through the drawing process as will be seen in later chapters.

In the case of this research project it was key to have a drawing project laid out as the basis on which to investigate reportage drawing. Needless to say, the truest way to make commentary on the experience of making drawn documentaries and contemplate on the practice is through the actual doing of the same. Being on location and producing drawings was key to the successful analysis of this practice. The conditions would be similar to what reportage artist would encounter, albeit not all at the same time. Aside from the commercial aspect where one is paid to produce drawings, conditions such as no prior knowledge of the area, the need to find vantage points, and experiencing physical factors such as weather and terrain, the uncertainty of the artist's reception by the people, the uncertainty of personal safety, the decision-making about media and materials, et cetera, are all situations reportage artists have to face and prepare for in advance. By directly observing, by being on location, by following a set brief and having deadlines, guidelines and awareness of other factors that influence the process and outcome of a drawing such as target audience, one is able to be fully immersed and made aware of pertinent issues and is therefore able to address them in a relevant manner.

It is through the practical making of the drawings that clarity is achieved in the addressing of certain issues. For example, in the section discussing the question, 'what can a drawing do that a photograph cannot?' the drawings in the accompanying presentation will be a visual essay tackling this very issue. It is in the juxtaposition of images representing the two visual processes that the viewer will be able to truly engage with and ascertain the steps taken towards reaching the suggested conclusion, in a way that a verbal description will not effectively succeed in clarifying.

Assessing others' process of a similar experience is an effective way of collating information in a bid to coming up with a more objective overview of a subject. From the onset of this project, it was obvious that it was necessary to include contemporary practicing artists in one way or another as a means of getting a true overview of the practice of reportage drawing from those working in the field.

Could this research be conducted in a purely verbal manner? What does the practice-based methodology achieve that the theory-based not? Firstly, despite having thought through and outlined many of these issues before the project began, others arose during the process of drawing. Some of these emerged while looking at drawings, months after the drawing trip. For example, the issue of time and suitable materials presented itself in certain drawings but only subconsciously, and I was only able to articulate the decision making process after considerable time had passed I was thus able to install them as part of the visual dialogue. It was necessary to be out on location, not only for the making of the drawings, but also for the experience and thought process involved that would require suitable time and distance to be distilled into a coherent point. A verbal thesis would require much descriptive detail that can be garnered by simply visually examining the drawings that accompany a certain issue. There is more effective dissemination of information in having the visual evidence to hand. Secondly, it was to my advantage to have the drawing process as research. There is a greater sense of clarity and focus even when reading around the subject whilst I was living the experience of making the work.

## **Purpose of the Written Thesis**

This written component works alongside the visual in two ways. Firstly, it verbalises the aims and objectives of the research and sets a context that would otherwise be impossible to articulate. It fulfils the requirements of PhD research in stating how the project is an original contribution. The Literature Review and Historical Overview are obvious theoretical research references that can only be communicated verbally. The intellectual perspective and rationale is also written as it presents the context in which the research project was created and communicates the purpose and motive for its being.

Secondly, the writing discusses issues that cannot be conveyed by visual means, for example when discussing the different ways artists are commissioned to make reportage drawings. In these cases, the issue is dealt with in this written document with a supporting relevant image of a drawing made by the artist who has contributed to the section. It is important to be clear that the writing does not explain the drawings. It introduces the practice and then allows the visual presentation to speak for itself. There are chapters where the reader has to engage simultaneously with both the verbal and visual in order to understand fully the particular issue at play.

One of the key exercises that formed part of my reflection was writing short essays. Two of these are included in Appendix I. They are part of a journal kept as part of the research process and include the thoughts and rationale behind the drawing-making process in this project. They are a response to

the drawings trips made to create the drawings, and a reflection on the process of drawing. They are included as they are relevant to the background of the project and would be too long to include in the introduction or body of work.

## **Purpose of the Practice**

I had only visited Kisumu, the city I drew in, once before and I had been there for barely 24 hours. I had been invited to run an art workshop for children at an HIV clinic – I flew in one day and back the next. Kisumu and the tribe that inhabit it could not be more different to how I was brought up and the countryside where my parents grew up. It was appealing to discover a new part of my country that was far removed from what I knew – the capital, Nairobi, and my tribal homeland, Central Province.<sup>2</sup> The language, Dholuo has no common roots with my own mother-tongue, Gikuyu. The tribal attitudes and lifestyle are different to those with which I grew up. The landscape, sounds, and even temperature were different. There was no chance of my being blinded because of familiarity with the environment, which would have been the case had I drawn in Nairobi, or London.

In addition to working from observation, which is key to this research, some time was also spent drawing in the studio. Certain situations called for the re-working of drawings, despite the fact that I hardly rework my observed

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<sup>2</sup> Since the start of this PhD research, the internal borders of Kenya have been re-drawn with the ratification of a new constitution in 2010. Eight Provinces have now become forty-seven Counties.



drawings. In one of the chapters the issue of suitable media is discussed and that called for experimentation with various materials to illustrate this better. The investigation and thinking become the doing and the doing becomes the thinking. There is no way to theorise possible visual results without taking part in the process and analysing it and the results.

## **Purpose of the Visual Presentation**

The presentation is the visual component of the thesis, to be viewed alongside the written thesis on the day of the viva voce. The drawings, mine and those of contributing artists, have been included in the final draft of this thesis as the printed alternative.<sup>3</sup> The drawings are grouped according to the issues they discuss in each chapter and work alongside the written thesis. Some of the drawings represent more than one issue and this is highlighted in the relevant text. As mentioned earlier, the brief set out to depict life on the streets of Kisumu. Out of approximately 700 drawings, those presented were selected to address best the key issues in this project, and are not selected to be the most aesthetically pleasing. In some cases, they are not even the strongest ones. They are part of a dialogue and sometimes that dialogue is reflecting the limitations of a process. The body of work is one half of a thesis, each almost independent on its own yet incomplete without the other.

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<sup>3</sup> Most of the drawings do not have captions, as the artists did not provide any. I have however, indicated the artist in the text.

## **METHODS**

### **Location drawing**

The location drawings were made in two trips to Kisumu over two consecutive years, 2009 and 2010. Most reportage projects do not carry on for months, as the artists are required to convey their impression of a place and often have a set amount of time in which to do it, often quite short, whether under a commission or a self initiated project.

The initial trip did not have much structure to it. The brief was open ended, simply requiring a visual record of Kisumu. I kept a journal logging my thoughts and drawing experiences.<sup>4</sup> On a practical level, having no knowledge of the area, what the weather was going to be like (it was the rainy season but the rains had failed, and Kisumu is known for its intense heat), or even if there would be any good vantage points (pedestrians feature very low on Kenyan town planners' priority despite the majority of the population travelling on foot most of the time), meant that there was no expectation or specific forward planning possible. The serious and bloody political unrest that had finally been contained only two months prior to my arrival was a source of concern, and during the weeks I spent there I encountered a few moments of hostility.<sup>5</sup> The drawings produced were concerned with documenting as varied a selection of aspects of Kisumu life as possible within the time frame.

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<sup>4</sup> A synopsis of this is available in Appendix I

<sup>5</sup> Anyone from my tribe was attacked in Kisumu during the post-election violence. Fortunately I do not possess typical Kikuyu facial features and have a darker skin complexion otherwise it could have gone badly for me in some circumstances. I was often asked outright what tribe I was from especially when surrounded by men watching me draw, and once threatened with violence. (See appendix I)

The experience of the second trip the following year was a marked difference. The brief was more specific – recording life on the streets of Kisumu, especially people at work. The details of how these experiences fed into the research are disseminated in the relevant chapters that follow. There are certain issues concerning reportage drawing that could only be investigated visually and for this reason some drawings were made in the studio away from Kisumu in order to demonstrate a specific point.

### **Conversations and Correspondence**

As stated earlier, reportage drawing is not as exhaustively written about as documentary photography and film-making. Documentary drawing has been an on-going practice, with varied degrees of prevalence for centuries. It seemed pertinent to gather whatever information pertained to this research by contacting artists directly. Initially, the idea of sending out questionnaires structured around the research questions seemed to be a suitable method of inquiry. However, having received a small number of questionnaires back that contained minimum information, it was soon clear that this method would not give the required results. It also became clear that there was a risk of venturing into statistical data compilation by the nature of the questionnaire formulated, a method of research not applicable to the intentions of the project. The result was recorded conversations.

It was possible to find and speak to a number of artists, mainly by personal introductions. Where conversations were not practically possible, email correspondence was employed. This was either as a back-and-forth conversation or, at the individual's request, a list of discussion points and questions was sent and he or she responded to them. This way, information was gathered about the artists' own working processes in reportage drawing, their influences, and their thoughts on the practice as a whole. These conversations added knowledge to the practice, as artists contributed not only their ideas and theories on reportage drawing but were also able to introduce other artists currently working in the field who I had not already encountered. It was also important to receive both affirmation of and contradictions to my own thought and theories. Overall, these verbal contributions are a resource and set a context by exposing the thinking, physical working process and individual approach applied by each artist.

The criteria for selecting the artists were:

- a) They use drawing as a basis of, or more significantly, maintain drawing as their final means of depiction.
- b) They are current and still practice.
- c) They do not have to make a living through reportage but have either undertaken a significant project that uses drawing as a means of documenting.
- d) They were easily accessible during the course of this research, which was mainly conducted in the UK. (Not all responded). As a result, all but one live or are based in Britain. This means that the practice is from a British perspective. As the main focus is the issues surrounding the use of drawing in reportage and not a cultural study,

it was not essential that artists from various countries were contacted. The basis of the research project is a self initiated drawing project and from that stemmed issues to be reflected upon. The artists' contributions are a part of that reflection.

In addition to the artists, there were conversations with two individuals representing the pool of organisations who commission reportage artists. The Imperial War Museum, with its vast archive and historical dependence on artists as reporters have been commissioning artists initially to record, then commentate on, conflicts for centuries. Looking at their current commissioning procedures is a useful reflection on the nature of war commentary, a genre that has been the forte for reportage artists. The second organisation is the Welsh National Opera who commissioned Jane Webster to record their work 'behind the scenes'. This was a very specific commission by an organisation that wanted to promote itself in an effort to widen its audience. The input of the WNO project is key in reflecting why reportage artists are employed in a contemporary setting and what the organisation hoped the drawings would achieve in their marketing strategy.

The artists and commissioners spoken to here are by no means a representative sample. They serve as examples and stand in the midst of a larger pool of individuals and organisations involved in the discipline of reportage drawing, each with their own motivations, perspectives, philosophies, ways of working and financial considerations that may even be at polar ends with what has been conveyed in this research. They are simply part of the necessary reflection in this specific project and assuredly others will take this line of thought further.

The recordings of the conversations are included with this document as digital audio files on CD and a list of the artists and dates the conversations were had is provided in Appendix II.

### 3. LITERATURE REVIEW

#### INTRODUCTION

Where historical texts are concerned, there are not many volumes dedicated to Reportage Drawing. There are noted texts on the practice, especially in introductions to artists' books on a particular project, or under subjects that refer to reportage drawing but more likely employ different terms such as 'documentary drawing', 'artist reporter', 'travel artist', 'observation', et cetera. Often it requires one to look at particular artists' drawings (especially in older publications) to identify the work as reportage. Artists' diaries and travel journals have long been the prolific yet less public means of recording using drawing. More recently and significantly, papers in drawing specific conferences and journals (such as the aforementioned *Reportager*) have provided a platform for a wider discussion on reportage drawing. There are numerous artists' blogs online. For example, *The Smooth Blog to Travel Drawing* (<http://eduardocortereal.wordpress.com/>) by Eduardo Corte-Real which chronicles his travels, while *Urban Sketchers* (<http://www.urbansketchers.org>) is a community of artists from around the world who document their various cities and post the drawings online. These are virtual spaces specifically dedicated to the collating of information on this practice. *The Melton Prior Institute for Reportage Drawing and Printing Culture* (<http://www.meltonpriorinstitut.org>) is a good example of an online resource of reportage drawing from across the world, providing lectures and publications, some of which are available for free download. It is doubtful that publication of this magnitude would be possible without the

Internet, neither would conversations spanning across continents. Beyond academia, reportage drawing is kept alive by the free interchange of drawings and thoughts on reportage drawing that cross physical boundaries. It is not necessary to fly across the world to attend a conference when one can engage virtually with both the artists themselves and their drawings through these forums.

## **THE PURPOSE OF THE LITERATURE REVIEW**

This chapter will give an overview of the subject of reportage drawing and reportage in general by pointing to relevant texts that illuminate various theories and examples of reportage. These will be presented in two forms; written reviews of existing literature, and reviews of examples of reportage.

The four sections in this chapter are thematic rather than chronological (there is a separate chapter that lays out a narrative on the history and development of reportage drawing). As with any other field, some aspects of reportage drawing follow a trend; it has been influenced by factors outside its own realm such as competing technology and change in consumer demand or lack of, and is strongly linked to a larger discourse – the previous decline of drawing as a general skill or practice and the subsequent call for its revival. The reportage artist has become part of a small niche of documenters, with observed drawing almost a novelty in a field that increasingly relies on the use of digital media as the first port of call in the assembly of visual information.



## **RHYME AND REASON: THINKING ON REPORTAGE AND DOCUMENTATION.**

*'Documentary doesn't fit very tidily into a museum.'* John Grierson.<sup>6</sup>

Ian Jack, former editor of the Independent on Sunday and Granta (a journal of contemporary writing) defines 'good reportage' as 'to describe a situation with honesty, exactness and clarity, to delve into the questions *who, what, when, why* and *how* without losing sight of the narrative.' (The Granta Book of Reportage (2006) p. v ) He suggests that the use of the French word rather than the English 'reporting', adds gravitas and emphasizes the observing of the thing, much like in reportage photography, a French forte. John Carey, in an introduction to The Faber Book of Reportage, takes this definition further and suggests that true reportage is an eyewitness account, which lends legitimacy. 'Eye-witness accounts have the feel of truth because they are quick, subjective and incomplete, unlike 'objective' or reconstituted history, which is laborious but dead.' (Carey (1987) p xxiv). He was referring, of course, to the written word and in a journalistic context, yet some of the thinking can be applied across other disciplines.

The carefully researched and dispassionate reportage that was synonymous with, for example, the Sunday Times, pre-Rupert Murdoch, has been only seen in practice on the pages of very few newspapers today, mainly in broadsheets and rarely tabloids. Murdoch's declaration in 1994 that newspaper prices should be of minor significance to the consumer brought far reaching consequences on the integrity, collection, and reporting of

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<sup>6</sup> Recorded address at the National Film Theatre, August 1959. (BFI, 1931-1950)

information.<sup>7</sup> With media houses finding that they had to lower the price of their papers to be competitive, news providers suddenly entered a race where the most eye-grabbing, emotive headline won the most sales. In addition to this, in order to subsidise the budget deficit, cuts in staff took place, advertising flooded the papers affording less room for well-researched factual writing thus creating less detailed summaries of news articles. The focus shifted from the quality of the content of news and regard for its authenticity through thorough investigation to vying for the consumer's instant attention. As the work of reporting became more about marketing and catching the public's attention than a specialised field with experts in the permanent employ of newspapers, the tone of reportage changed. Or perhaps, a different form of news was born, and reportage was demoted to the less popular section in a few broadsheets.

Why is reportage important? Carey presents an interesting avenue of reasoning concerning the importance of reportage in society. He argues that mass communication represents the greatest change in human consciousness that has taken place in recorded history. (Faber and Faber, 2003, p.xxxiv). The need to know and be kept abreast of the latest happenings in strangers' lives and the world at large – and the assurance it brings to people's daily existence has become the accepted norm.

Counterbalance this with the sense of instability brought about by the lack

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<sup>7</sup> On 23<sup>rd</sup> June 1994, Rupert Murdoch announced that The Times would cost 20p, the same price as The Sun. Various articles at the time reflected public opinion, with many feeling that the price of a quality newspaper should reflect the standard of the journalism. Maggie Brown's article in the independent (Murdoch wields broadsword in broadsheet battle: *NEWSPAPER PRICE WAR: 'Times' surrenders further pounds 15m pursuing target of one million copies a day and profit in five years*, 24 June 1984) is an example of the storm stirred at the declaration as newspapers made a stance on the value of their journalism. (<http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/murdoch-wields-broadsword-in-broadsheet-battle-newspaper-price-war-times-surrenders-further-pounds-15m-pursuing-target-of-one-million-copies-a-day-and-profit-in-five-years-1424695.html>)

of instant information and we can see parallels between the importance of humanity's reliance on religion and how that has been replaced with mass communication today. Carey further asserts that reportage presents to mankind 'release from (his) trivial routines, and a habitual daily illusion of communication with a reality greater than himself,' a Western modern day equivalent of the role that religion played in the past. Whereas religion gave comfort with regards to death, reportage, presenting death in all its forms around the globe; natural disasters, wars, industrial accidents, gives consumers a sense of relief at having escaped such fates and a kind of survival affirmation.

Yet as with other means of reporting, the imagined is more popular with the masses. Fiction writing, film and imagined (conceptual and or non-figurative) art surpasses literal accurate recording in popularity. It can be argued that the imagined is an antidote for reality. Carey suggests that reportage is consumed as if it is fiction far removed from one's present situation, and thus survives and thrives. While the consumer is often confronted with strong emotions towards the subjects either verbally or visually recounted, and often feels powerless to do anything about these situations, great comfort is taken from being further educated, emotionally sensitised and intellectually aware of situations outside of their immediate existence.

The core of reportage and documentary is that it records the present. It is concerned with keeping abreast with current goings-on and presenting it in a suitable accessible format to the desired audience. John Grierson, when addressing an audience at the National Film Theatre in 1959 said, 'In

documentary you are always or mostly trying to say something about the here and now and the urgencies of the moment are liable to change.' He further acknowledged that at the height of documentary making, the thirties, there was so much to be explored, be discovered and presented to the public. The thirties presented the perfect set of circumstances to make documentary such a groundbreaking phenomenon. The internal workings of industry, the living conditions of the poor, war and the threat of war, all made for captivating subject matter to an audience that had little knowledge of what transpired beyond their own personal lives. The social action following such documentaries was proof of the power of reportage.

Where then does reportage stand in present day? What keeps documentary alive, what gives it legitimacy in a post-discovery age? 'Work and discovery have to be brought continually and afresh to documentary to justify documentary's basic intention.' Grierson maintained that the reason documentary grew and maintained credence was because there was a sense of purpose behind the making. Be it political, social commentary of seeking change, life situations were recorded in a variety of styles ranging from clinical and factual to more artistic. In summary, the importance of documentary making in the thirties cannot be discounted yet it is also clear that documentaries have grown since then to being part of mainstream media in present day. Offerings on nature, history, politics are given prime-time slots on television and are recognised in film awards. Contrary to Grierson's belief that documentary is about the present, today documentary spans the past through historical pieces. The confines of subject matter have been expanded to include events and even significant personalities, both historical and contemporary.

## **BEGINNINGS AND DEFINITIONS: THE PARAMETERS OF REPORTAGE DRAWING**

*'Reportage has to have flesh, bones and above all, life in it. One is not illustrating but pushing one's nose into life.'* Ronald Searle, 1977 <sup>8</sup>

In 2003 Matthew Cook, a trained illustrator and professional soldier, was commissioned by David Driver, the Head of Design at the The Times, to go to Iraq as a reportage artist. In his introduction to Matthew Cook's first publication of his drawings of Iraq, Driver touches on the significance of reportage drawing: 'Reportage is the most difficult form of illustration, because it involves everything: observing, being able to draw people, working with moving figures, focusing on particular incidents, having a strong graphic sense, and being able to tell a story.' He refers to Matthew as an "artist-reporter" who "follows a tradition of visual journalism that is particularly strong in British newspapers". (Cook (2005), p. 6)

The role of the artist-reporter was particularly shaped by the illustrated press which, consumed by the middle-classes, kept the public abreast with news via drawings ranging from wars abroad and local events. This demand created the largest audience for reportage artists yet. Paul Hogarth describes these as, 'Artists, pushing their noses into life, or being egged on to do so by editors and art directors, before they grew too wise or too blasé to stop looking, and embrace the so-called fine arts.' (Hogarth, p. 7) In his retrospective look at the role of the artist as a reporter, he spans centuries, starting off with the role of eastern documenters of life and largely

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<sup>8</sup> Quoted by David Driver, Head of Design, The Times, when talking about his decision to send Matthew Cook to Iraq (Cook, 2005, p. 6)

concentrating on the west afterwards, ending up in the 1980's,. He makes it clear that he is by no means presenting an exhaustive study and his work feels like a labour of love and passion, seeing as it is a field he worked in and features some of his work.

Jill Gibbon, an artist whose politically charged work exposes the world of the arms trade, speaks of reportage as having the distinct characteristic of having an artist employing observation in-situ. 'Representations are made at a specific event or location, or soon after being there.' (*Radical Reportage*, Gibbon, 2010). This is true of court artists in the UK who have to leave the courtroom to put their observations down on paper, as they are not allowed to draw in the actual court. Paul Hogarth sets aside distinctions between artists in the case of direct observation: '... the very act of drawing on location focuses your attention on *what* is going on so that you are better equipped to make a judgement. This does not always follow. There are artists who do precisely that and understand nothing. On the other hand, there are artists who look, or experience, but do not always set it all down there and then. They go away and recall it all in the quiet and privacy of a studio.' (Hogarth, p.174). Martin Salisbury emphasises the distinction between simple location drawing and reportage, 'The term reportage, as I see it, means that the artist is reporting, commenting, not just representing.' (Over email correspondence, 17 August 2009) In his opinion, the artist's own interpretation and personal view is key.

Even with the strong historical foundation of documentary drawing, the recurrence of fundamental questions about the practice circulates in forums and conferences. On the Drawing Research Network, 'How and why do we

teach and assess observational drawing?’ was sent out last year to members of this forum, with responses flooding in from various individuals. There are regular requests for drawing exercises to improve drawing classes, and the possibilities for growth, evolution and cross-discipline collaboration are sought and encouraged. Research progress with PhD theses reflecting on various aspects of documentary drawing: William John Hewitt’s research, *True Stores Drawn From The Life: A critical and cultural reflection on courtroom drawings in contemporary English national daily newspapers* (2008) and Jill Gibbon’s *Radical Witness* discuss courtroom drawing and reportage drawing in arms fairs as a political protest respectively.

Meanwhile published yearbooks of Leo Duff’s drawings of scenes in Dublin and Ulster and Steve Mumford’s visual journal of occupied Baghdad, Julia Midgley’s observational drawings while artist in residence in Royal Liverpool hospital, Matthew Cook’s visual memoirs as a soldier in the middle east amongst other books, are evidence of documentary drawing at work and on shelves, readily available to the public. The artist and co-creator of Gorillaz, a virtual animated music band, Jamie Hewlett made a trip to Bangladesh and made a series of drawings highlighting the plight of flood victims he encountered that were published in the Guardian (16<sup>th</sup> October 2009 G2 issue). Often with reportage drawing and projects, the visual work is found published in situ, and stands on its own and not part of a critical analysis.

## DRAWING AND OBSERVATION: THEORIES AND THOUGHT

*'For the artist drawing is discovery.'* John Berger<sup>9</sup>

*'Much as I love writing, it is drawing that demonstrates to me just how much can be said with a single apparently careless mark.'* James Elkins<sup>10</sup>

The practice of drawing has undergone much transformation over the last few decades, as it took its place as a discipline in its own right as opposed to a precursor to a more 'serious' end, such as painting or sculpture. The term *sketch* is used in reference to the preparatory process or information gathering that accompanies thinking or planning out a project. It is also used when referring to the ongoing practice of observational drawing required in keeping an artist's hand in and fluid as he sharpens his skill and develops his hand-eye coordination.

The nature of drawing has evolved profoundly over the centuries, just as its purpose and process has, both in the making and as an intellectual engagement. (Andrew Selby's essay, *Drawing is a way of Reasoning on Paper* (Duff, L and Sawdon, P. p 119), is a treatise on his approach to drawing, where he defines his role as 'to examine, investigate, and seek to interpret, to reposition and recontextualize material for an audience to understand a message, instruction and body of narrative or reference,' (p 121) a responsibility many illustrators, many of whom are engaged in reportage, relate to. Selby's paper is part of a collection of essays in the publication, *Drawing – The Purpose* (Duff, L and Sawdon, P), which features

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<sup>9</sup> Berger (1960), p. 23

<sup>10</sup> Berger (2005) pp. 106-107



various practitioners discussing the numerous purposes of drawing within arenas that range from politics to diagram making (described by Nigel Holmes as the today's cave painters (p. 85)) and archeology (which according to Dr Helen Wickstead features 'the most particular and exacting drawing' (p 13)). Drawing has moved from being a precursor to painting or sculpture to being an end in itself as evidenced by numerous drawing exhibitions that seek to engage with this practice in it's various forms<sup>11</sup>. The current discourse on drawing extends far beyond physical conveyance (line on paper) and into the realm of concept and thought. The paper no longer holds any bounds, as exemplified by three-dimensional drawings by artists such as Eva Hesse. In this context the simple methods of directly observed reportage drawing can be seen as out-moded, more confines than freedom of expression. Is it expression or a skill? According to Wickstead, 'despite working in a profession dominated by drawing, most diggers do not consider their work 'artistic''. (Duff and Sawdon, p 15).

Various discourses in forums such as the Drawing Research Network are indicators that there is always room for innovation and redefinition as practitioners and theorists seek to push boundaries and challenge conventions within drawing. Over the last few years various conversations have been started and contributed to on this forum: 'Drawing as a Research Tool', 'Drawing and Dance', Social Space of Drawing', Drawing Messaging – Digital Drawing Soulless', are just some of the subjects responded to by academics and practitioners from around the world on the Drawing Research Network. Spaces dedicated to the dialogue and public display of

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<sup>11</sup> For example, the annual Jerwood Drawing Prize held in autumn at the Jerwood Space in London serves as a reminder of the versatility of this visual language – drawn installations, videos and interactive sculptural pieces are but a small selection of a larger body of work from various practitioners who have explored and engaged in the possibilities of drawing.

contemporary drawing such as the Centre for Recent Drawing and The Drawing Room further champion this discussion in their commitment to create spaces dedicated to the practice and thinking on drawing.

In his essay, *Drawing*, (Berger (1960)), Berger's description of the process of drawing has at its heart, observation – both the direct observation an object, and the recollection of the same with regards to memory drawing. One applies the same principles of checking and re-checking, thereby putting oneself into the object, regardless of whether this is by looking or recollection. The important thing in all this, is not what has been seen, but 'what it will lead you on to see'. (Berger (1960), p. 23). He subtitles the beginning of this essay as, *The basis of all painting and sculpture is drawing*. This statement carries in it the weight and importance of drawing as a fundamental process across all creative disciplines. In a written correspondence between himself and James Elkins, the latter tries to elaborate on the reasoning behind the fact that despite drawing being a requirement for all students at the establishment he teaches at, it still has not merited having its own department. 'Perhaps that's because instructors can't bring themselves to acknowledge that drawing is still central to what they do, whether it's painting or video. Or maybe they don't want to come to terms with the fact that nothing has taken drawing's place as the foundation of art education.' (*Distance and Drawings (Four letters from a correspondence between James Elkins and John Berger)*, December 2003, Cork, Ireland, Berger (2005) p.106). Elkins further justifies his stance on the importance of drawing by explaining the change its role has undergone since the 16<sup>th</sup> century, when it evolved from a preparatory skill, a 'first thought', to an encounter that could no longer be taught. (He however does

not elaborate on why he thinks it 'escaped forever from the possibility that it could be taught' (p 106)). He rather poetically rounds it up in the sentence, 'Drawing is the place where blindness, touch, and resemblance become visible, and it is the site of the most sensitive of negotiations between the hand, the eye, and the mind.' Berger later continues their discourse by pointing to drawing as being an older form of language than the written word or symbol, referencing cave drawings. (A conversation with Matthew Cook briefly followed a similar thread, the theory that language of drawing may be older than verbal language.) In this context, the mark making that is not limited to symbols that are specific to a region or civilisation, has a farther-reaching ability to be understood than written mark making.

In his essay *Drawing on Paper*, Berger presents yet another definition: 'Drawings are only notes on paper.' (Berger (2005) p. 50). This statement can either be seen as alluding to the preparatory nature of drawing (a sketching tool, used as a precursor to a more finished work), or as a practice that has information gathering, whether from the recollection of memory or observation, or problem solving, at its heart. It however disqualifies the numerous surfaces and media employed by various contemporary artists. What of three-dimensional drawing, or shadow drawings by the collaborative duo, Tim Noble and Sue Webster, or even more poignant for the digital age, drawing on digital tablets? (A method employed and highly championed by David Hockney, making it even more acceptable for digital drawings to be accepted as 'proper art', if the high turnout at his exhibition, *A Bigger Picture*, at the Royal Academy from 29 January to 9 April 2012 is anything to go by.)

Drawing is a form of communication that goes beyond the verbal or written word. Tania Kovats reflects on this, 'When we do not have the words to say something, drawing can define both the real and unreal in visual terms.' (Ed. Kovats, 2007, p. 8)

Practitioners continue to explore and critically analyse their work through projects and text, as evidenced by Patricia Cain's book, *Drawing: The Enactive Evolution of the Practitioner*. Here she reflects on the act of drawing as she makes studies of and reviews others' drawings, includes excerpts from her own journals and makes the distinction of drawing as a process and end in itself.

TRACEY, an online journal from Loughborough University is a champion of drawing research that regularly publishes papers and even provides a facility for practitioners to showcase their sketchbooks and drawings on their online gallery. Their printed publication, *Drawing Now: Between The Lines of Contemporary Art* discusses the potential of drawing, what it could be, what its limitations are and stretches beyond traditional materials. Installations, video stills, inks made of dissolved video tape, are some examples of work by a variety of artists whose work goes beneath the surface of conventional drawing. Weiglosz's volume, *About Drawing Pictures, Architecture and Utopia*, further develops 'The Dictionary of Drawing Signs' visually discusses drawing inspired by cities from traditional hand-drawn to computer rendered plans. The list of books on drawing in of itself or in an interdisciplinary interaction is as endless as the range of topics available for discussion. This is a positive thing. Drawing will continue to develop even as it is disseminated across various disciplines and evolves in its application and purpose.

## PRIMARY EXEMPLARS OF REPORTAGE

This section gives three examples of reportage bodies of work that employ various modes of representation. They are all documenting experiences in every day lives of common people. Two are from the same period, the Documentary Movement in the late thirties, while the third was made in 2000, but not made public in the form of a published sketchbook until 2004. The reason for choosing these three bodies of work is two-fold. One is to present the breadth and versatility within reportage covering audio, visual and verbal reportage. The second is to present an example of how reportage functions outside of large significant public or high profile projects. It can function as a tool in an individual's life, documenting the intimate and personal, which all adds to the pool of societal documentation, as will be seen in the last example of work by Christopher Lambert. These projects will be referred to again later in later chapters.

### **Let Us Now Praise Famous Men: A Visual and Verbal Depiction of a Community**

*'Above all else: in God's name don't think of it as art.'* James Agee<sup>12</sup>

In 1936, James Agee, a writer, and Walker Evans, a photographer, were commissioned by Fortune magazine in New York to produce a visual and written documentary on the daily lives of cotton tenant farmers in the

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<sup>12</sup> Agee & Evans, p. 12

American mid-south. The article was never published by the magazine and in 1938 was worked up into a substantial volume as part of an agreement with a publisher, who later rejected it. It was not until two years later, in 1940, that the book achieved publication, through Houghton, Mifflin and Co.

The pair were to travel and find an average white family, live with them, and in this setting record their every day lives and the environment in which they existed. In the end, Agee and Evans settled on three families who they felt were true representations of what the brief required. Agee asserted that the photographs were not illustrations accompanying the text, but were 'co-equal, mutually independent, and fully collaborative'. (Agee & Evans, p. xix). In the preface he spends time explaining, excusing and re-asserting the project, what it is, what it is not, purposefully including the viewer (here, 'viewer' refers to 'reader' as well as 'viewer of photographs') and thus assigning him/her a sense of entanglement with and responsibility for the subject. The project is a book 'only by necessity'. (Agee & Evans, p. xix) He makes impossible demands on the viewer, declaring that he wrote the text with the intention that it should be read out loud (and in the same breath says that this is not recommended) and continuously, like watching a film.

The viewer begins with Evans' black and white images, which present the abject poverty the families lived in. In the monochrome light, bare wooden boards seem even simpler, dirt and grit stark against the skin it is adhered to, and contrasting shadows accentuate the torn fabric of clothes doubtless worn, re-worn and handed down to a younger body. A simple grave adorned with a pine headstone and a dish resting on the mound's textured soil that contrasts with the smooth hard-packed dirt around (see Figure 1

and 62 (p. 155)), scenes of a street with cars, shop fronts, and more intimate, wooden houses with signs of patchwork repair as well as the human subjects they shelter – the cotton farmers and their families.

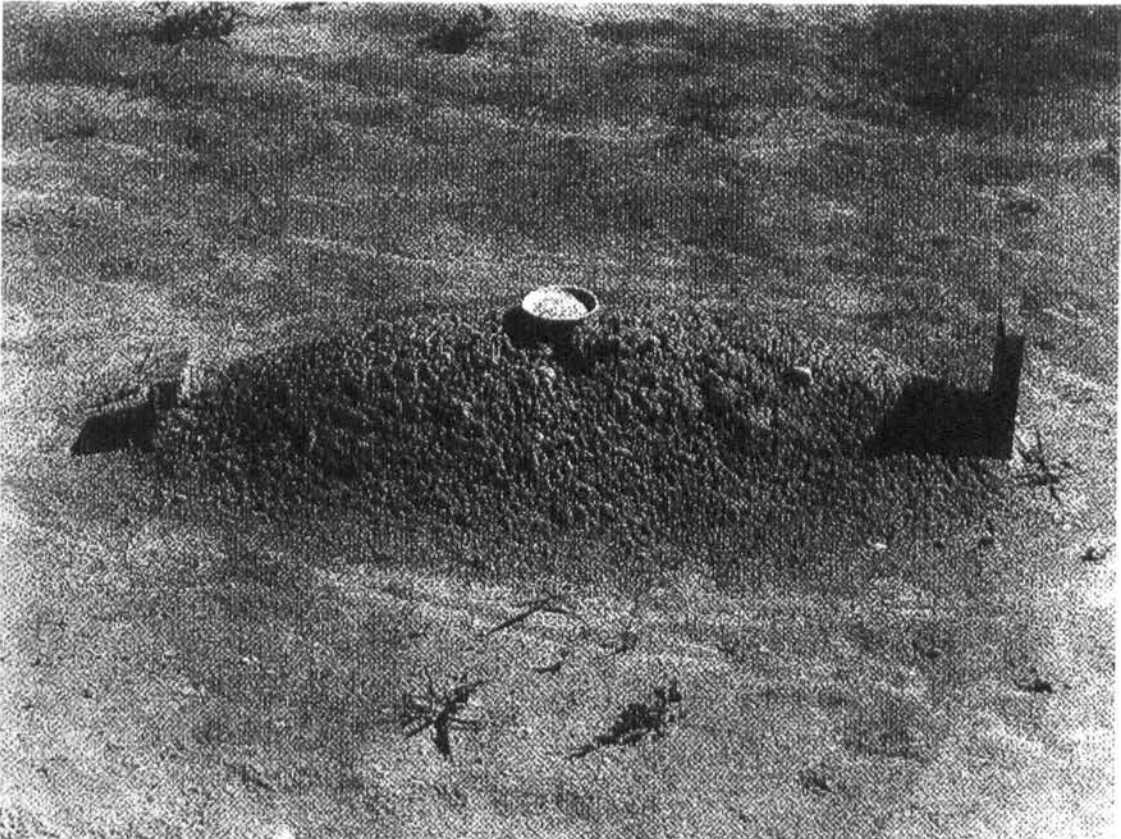


Figure 1

Despite the fact that the photographs and writing are given the same level of importance, there is a sense that Agee has a monopoly on the attention of the viewer. His writing is descriptive, as one would expect, yet he goes beyond the brief. He meanders from the point, over-elaborates on physical descriptions in sentences that are at times page-long, at times two words long. There is poetry interspersed between and within chapters, footnotes, a questionnaire, and as always, his ever-convoluted descriptions of places and people. ‘ – this isn’t how documentary is supposed to behave,’ writes Blake Morrison in his introduction to the book. (Agee & Evans, p. vii ). It is the combination of pure subjectivity and the arbitrary style of writing that

makes his contribution very unlike the serious, dispassionate affair that is the mark of 'good' reportage. On the other hand, this subjective, furiously written (he often went without sleep, writing frantically into the night) account fits the definition given by Carey.

Not only does he give a meticulous physical account of objects in rooms and their placing, but he also delves into his own response to this environment, both physical and emotional, sometimes to a discomfiting degree. He begins, obviously tormented by the state of his existence within the setting of the families he will be observing. He, from a privileged, religious, intellectual background, would be picking apart every detail of the lives of poor individuals and lay bare their misfortunes. Agee's contribution reads like a platform for his own political, moral and social stance.

Of the two commissioned with the piece of reporting, *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men*, Agee was the more obviously verbal about his stance politically, emotionally and even physically - his shiver-inducing description of being ravaged by bedbugs, fleas and lice in a lumpy mattress topped with salvaged flour-sack bedding, down to the smell of the pillowcase - 'acid and new blood', is vivid to the extreme. He took everything personally. He doubted the motives, political, financial, or otherwise of this endeavour.

(There are so many aspects of these photographs that are not unlike the scenes I encountered in Kisumu. There is a sort of uniformity that comes with poverty, whatever country or culture is represented.)



## Night Mail: Film and Poetry in Documentation

'For who can bear to feel himself forgotten?' W H Auden<sup>15</sup>

The 1930's was the era of the British documentary movement with productions being aired in theatres and cinemas before Hollywood blockbusters. None caused such a stir in its success like *Nightmail*. Released in 1936 and directed by Harry Watt (who took over the project from Basil Wright), this film about the London to Glasgow 'Postal Special' incorporated the talents of WH Auden and Benjamin Britten, who composed the original verse and music respectively. Like many documentary films at that time it was government sponsored; in this case by the GPO Film Unit (founded by John Grierson in 1933). Grierson was a visionary in commissioning Auden and Britten in this film, whose contribution broke away from the mould of the usual sombre reeling out of facts that was the informative fare of state-sanctioned documentaries. Watt, in his essay *Don't Look at the Camera* (*Night Mail* DVD insert, BFI, p. 5), tells of how Grierson would insist the cameramen visit the National Gallery to study the way lighting was portrayed by the masters. The filming was plagued with challenges. The equipment was restricting; the lack of a lens turret on the camera slowed down the filming, which 'made fast reportage shooting almost impossible... The microphones were clumsy, non-directional affairs, plagued by wind and extraneous noises. We had no generators and if a mains electrical supply was not available, we relied on photoflood lamps supplied from wet batteries, which were heavy, clumsy, and always ran out at the crucial

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<sup>15</sup> Night Mail, 1939

moment.' In shooting one of the scenes showing the snatching up of the mail pouches in a net suspended on the side of the train, a cameraman volunteered to the dangerous task of hanging out of the window as the train shot by at 100 miles an hour, Watt and another of the crewman holding onto his legs.

Despite all these challenges, *Night Mail* is a fascinating look at the workings of the machinery behind a service that was well used and relied upon but whose inner workings, both the technical and manual, had never before been shown to the public. The first two-thirds of the film is filled with facts and information. Statistics detailing numbers of letters dealt with, times and schedules, tasks performed to ensure the service runs smoothly, all narrated by the classical clipped regional and accent-free voice that is synonymous with the well educated middle class. Here and there snippets of conversation from the postal workers accompany brief scenes of work or pause from work. The narrator lists the towns in industrial England that the train traverses, and scenes of mines, steelworks and various other sites of manufacture flash by in keeping with the story. Shots of workers sorting mail in the carriages gives an idea of the endless activity within the train. (Incidentally, these shots were made in a studio, with mail workers asked to sway in order to mimic the movement of a train. The equipment did not allow for actual reportage shooting in a carriage. A parallel can be drawn between this and an artist or create a drawing from memory)

The camera pans across rolling hills and a rhythm starts up - a rhythm very much like a train's chugging along the tracks. Thus begin the words of W.H. Auden, narrated in time to the music. The drumbeats are joined in by

innovative, almost jazz-like horn and other wind instruments playing off against each other. This sound mimics the improvisation heard in a modern jazz ensemble, but is carefully composed and arranged in such a way that the various instruments do not veer off to form a life of their own. They are still tied in to the poetry, and together add to the language in the storytelling of the mail train journey. There is a touch of childish playfulness brought about by the rhyme and metre of the verse. The descriptive language brings animation to the scenes the train progresses through. Smoke shrouded tower chimneys become 'the furnaces set on the dark plain like gigantic chess men'. The train becomes more than just an engine of industry, she becomes a beacon, a hope: 'All Scotland waits for her' as 'Men long for news'. The music and words gather pace as the focus shifts to the mail on board, the speculation of what news is borne and by whose hand. After a rapid-fire stanza, the pace abruptly slows and gently delivers the viewer into the lives of the people awaiting mail- the sleeping Scots, and the feature ends with the suspense anticipated mail brings:

*And none will hear the postman's knock*

*Without a quickening of the heart*

*For who can bear to feel himself forgotten?*

## Taking A Line For A Walk: A Drawn and Written Travel Journal

'... these small drawings became my footsteps...' Christopher Lambert.<sup>17</sup>

In 2000, just before his 70<sup>th</sup> birthday and having looked at the three most popular pilgrim routes in Europe, Christopher Lambert decided to embark on a journey that would see him walk 1000 miles from Le Havre in France to Rome. He whittled down his personal possessions to the bare minimum necessary on this long trek, obtained a goodwill letter from the Anglican Cathedral in Portsmouth, and finally after satisfying his wife by drawing a straight line between the start and finish of his journey on a map and calling it his plan, Lambert began what would become a solo venture, documented in a small sketchbook. He restricted himself to a page a day. His tools were some watercolour pencils, one black and one brown fine drawing pen.

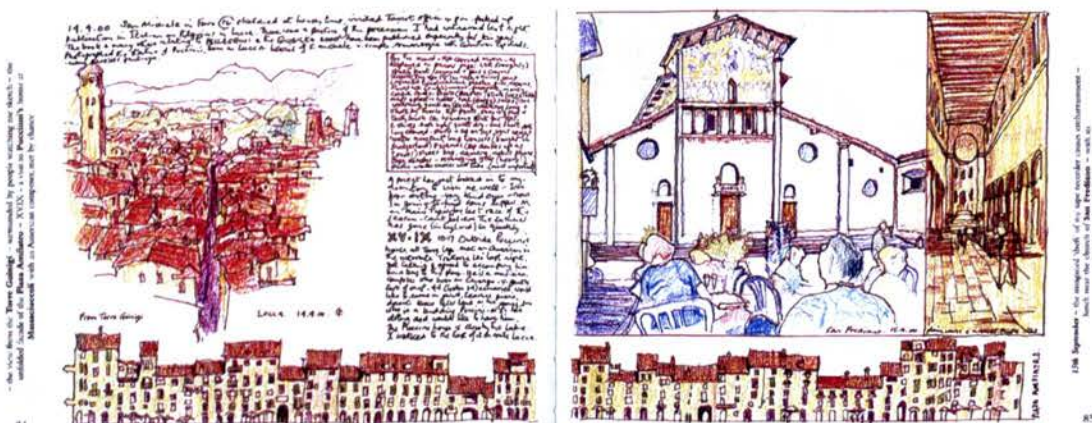


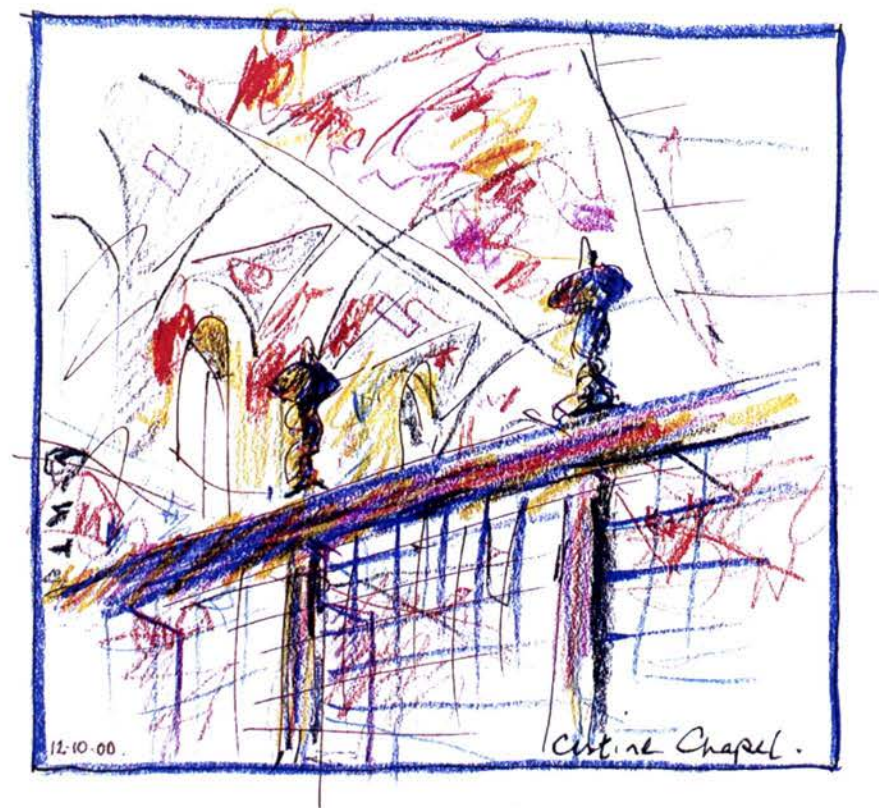
Figure 2

<sup>17</sup> Lambert, pp. 135-136

The final sketchbook is a combination of handwriting and drawings, sometimes neatly arranged in a sort of grid, different scenes individually framed in line, sometimes border free, with his minute handwriting flowing into some of them. His earlier entries are reflective of his architectural background, neat, spare line with some splashes of colour. (See Figure 2) His writing, large enough to be legible at this point, almost seems to dominate with a couple of days offering up no drawings whatsoever. After about a month his use of colour becomes bolder. It sometimes looks like it the colouring in of a line drawing. However, it is clear that as the days go by, his visual language becomes more fluent, and his handwriting becomes less legible. There is energy in the line, an economy in its use, the de-cluttering of a developing editorial eye. It is as if he is only employing crucial marks that say the most while using colour more deliberately. Sometimes using the colour to draw, as opposed to adding it to an already executed line drawing. Where he combines both the pen and colour, there is a minimal use and a sense of holding back that makes the drawing say more, give the essence of the place, rather than try to overstate it. His drawings of Rome are striking in their simplicity and brevity.

It may have something to do with the environment – a busy city square is not as tranquil as a quiet countryside valley where there is no jostling, and one can take one's time with a drawing. The line takes on the tension of movement, the push of the crowd, and as he describes it, the impossibility of drawing as rich a scene as the Sistine Chapel. (See Figure 3). This same sense of urgency and energy is found when time is restricted. Lambert's description of his drawing 'How do you draw the Cistine [sic] Chapel in

three minutes?’ is apt. How indeed does one capture the details of a masterpiece while walking past it while being jostled by others?



– how do you draw the Cistine Chapel in three minutes?

Figure 3

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## **4. A HISTORICAL AND CONTEMPORARY OVERVIEW**

### **A BRIEF HISTORY AND SIGNIFICANT REPORTAGE PROJECTS**

#### **Introduction**

Many of the artists in the past that would today be categorised as reportage artists were not known as such then. In reality, the fact that they drew incessantly from life and as a result produced a body of work that would be referred to as a visual record of the time, was not anything that set them apart as unusual. Artists were expected to draw from life and keep drawing as a daily ritual.

This chapter serves as a brief theoretical overview of reportage drawing in Britain, as the main research will be making references to British contemporary artists. The subheadings in this section serve as significant benchmarks, introducing both significant periods, events and projects that map out the development of the practice. There is more attention paid to the early thirties, as this was the hey-day of documentary-making as we know it. It was also the period that saw a proliferation of reportage due to the wars whose long arms were felt around the world, and as such caused an even greater need for the recording and broadcasting of images back to various countries. Significant projects have been highlighted, to show that while individual artists were still working on the ground, there were still important projects being undertaken.

## **The Illustrated London News**

*'A drawing is an autobiographical record of one's discovery of an event – seen, remembered or imagined.'* John Berger <sup>18</sup>

In 1842, the first edition of the Illustrated London News was published and sold as a fully illustrated weekly newspaper. The early illustrations were provided by artists and reproduced onto woodcuts. These images accompanied the news of the week; everything from funerals, fires and floods, to the Great Exhibition, new fashion, royalty, depictions of scenes from theatre plays and even detailed drawings of paintings on show in museums. This newspaper was where the Victorian public (and increasingly the curious middle class) caught up with the latest news from within the city, the countryside and the world at large. The commissioning of artists died out at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century with the development of photography for reproduction in print.

Paul Hogarth, in his introduction to *The Artist as Reporter* (1986:7) writes, 'The illustrated periodical stood for this outside world, the world of adventure and commitment, and the irresistible need to communicate with an audience.'

The role of artist-reporter now increasingly referred to as reportage artist, became more clearly defined when artists such as William Simpson were employed to travel and document events such as war, and send the drawings back to be published in newspapers like the Illustrated London

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<sup>18</sup> Berger (1960), p24.



News. Simpson, the first war artist<sup>20</sup>, was apprenticed to a lithographer in his youth, where he developed his drawing and painting skills, finely honed by drawing from nature. While under the employ of the Illustrated London News, he would produce illustrations from articles written for the publication. It was the Crimean War that opened up his horizons as an artist-reporter when he suggested to his employers that sending him out to the actual battlefield was more beneficial than his trying to depict foreign objects that he had never seen before but were essential components of the drawings he was expected to produce. Once there, Simpson also found that procuring an accurate narrative of a particular moment in battle from officers present in action provided differing accounts of the same. Outside uninvolved eyes were best suited for this environment. Thus was the role of war artist born, out of a need to be visually accurate through first-hand observation of one's subject.

In Simpson's time, the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, artists were expected to be able to draw from life. It was a requirement necessary to not just succeed in art school, but also to develop one's trade. One learnt to draw plants by looking at plants. The same went for people and buildings. The artist-traveller or artist-reporter went beyond providing images to illustrate text for the largely illiterate public. News from abroad, foreign scenes, and even knowledge was imported in the form of sketches on paper. Yet unknown flora and fauna was introduced in sketchbooks voraciously drawn in by discoverers. Following this war, Simpson was then sent to document various events, ranging from coronations to local uprisings, all for the weekly papers that were consumed by the public. Far and beyond that was the

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<sup>20</sup> Paul Theroux asserts that more is gleaned about the Crimean war from Simpson's drawings than many historical documents on the same (Archer (1986) p. 2).

work he produced while travelling. He spent 3 years covering over 22,000 miles, stretching the length and breadth of India, sketching towards what would be 250 plates for four large volumes on everything from architecture to common life in this vast land. Through the Illustrated London News, the outer world was brought to people had never had the opportunity travel overseas. In 1873 Simpson journeyed around the globe, eventually publishing the drawings of his travels and thereby bringing the exotic and uncharted back home.

The popularity and growth of illustrated news came riding in on a wave of the same with regards to verbal reportage. Stories from wars such as the Crimean were sent via telegraph, meaning the public, ever hungry for news, received events even faster than before. The advent of this trend in sending news back home meant that mass consumption demands were met immediately, causing a two-fold growth in newspaper sales between 1880 and 1900. The camera suddenly took over the pen, and photographs quickly replaced drawings and etchings in the printed spread. A new age of visual reportage had dawned and the documentary artist's future was under threat.

The onset of photography changed the role of the reportage artist. Here was a new tool that captured scenes in a fraction of the time it took an artist to draw. Not only that, it included far more detail than a hastily drawn scene. However, war was one situation in which drawing prevailed as the means of documentation for a long time. The slow shutter speed was not conducive to the fast action scenes that a drawing was able to deliver. Thus drawing remained the mainstay in war art for a while longer. The first and second world wars ensured that.

## The British Documentary Movement

*'...one of the paradoxes of life is that ideas don't get believed in by people until a lot of people have believed in them already.'* John Grierson.<sup>22</sup>

The 1930's is hailed as the era of documentary-making and saw the naissance of the British Documentary Movement, which inspired such significant projects as Mass Observation. It is interesting to note that this era was spearheaded by well-educated middle class figures such whose work championed the reality of working class toil and brought it to the fore. British filmmakers such as John Grierson, Humphrey Jennings and Harry Watt, amongst others, produced documentary films whose themes ranged from industrial labour and housing slums to herring fishermen, all as an illumination on the cogs that turned to keep the middle classes lives running smoothly. The fact that this movement was strongest in the 30's and 40's is noteworthy. The years between the wars were prosperous years, up until the late thirties when rumours of war horrifyingly materialised into the real thing. The impending threat of bombings brought about a need to preserve and record environment and even further, the mood and attitude of the people. Over and above all, the documentary movement was geared towards social change by means of educating and informing the masses, mainly by opening up the eyes of the public to the reality of the working class life, which would result in its improvement. In his 1959 address at The National Film Theatre, Grierson elaborated on the motives and purpose behind this movement, 'It was always, as we saw it, a chance to say something, a chance to teach something, a chance to reveal something, a

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<sup>22</sup> When speaking at the National Film Theatre, August, 1959.

chance possibly to inspire, certainly always an opportunity for influence of one kind or another.'

## **Mass Observation**

Mass Observation came about through rather informal discussions between Humphrey Jennings and his friends Charles Madge, David Gascoyne and Stuart Legg in the later part of 1936. These discussions, spurred on by the news of Edward the VIII's abdication, and a letter in *The New Statesman* by Geoffrey Pyke writing about the British people's response to this event, brought about an opportunity for an anthropological study of this reaction. Later, Madge and Jennings got together with Tom Harrisson, who was himself working on his own anthropological study and chanced upon the couple's letter published next to his poem in the aforementioned magazine. Despite different methods, the two camps had similar aims. What resulted was a national chronicling of everyday life; paid observers recording people's behaviour, conversations and actions in public situations and gatherings, the minutiae in individual doings through daily reports on the 12<sup>th</sup> day of every month, and answering of regular questionnaires sent out to volunteers. Thoughts, actions, feelings with no regard to their significance, were documented in detail. This cataloguing of mundane life in that time now provides an invaluable for sociologists, anthropologists, or anyone with a mild interest in history. (These are now catalogued and accessible at the University of Sussex.)

The various documenting bodies often fed off each other. During the war, Mass Observation's rigorous documenting of the public mood provided the public survey results that confirmed that there was greater preference for uplifting defiance-boosting films made by Grierson and his contemporaries. Later in 1942, Mass Observation called for longer factual films as opposed to the propaganda documentaries produced by the government, after feedback from the public showed that morale-boosting informative documentaries showing the war efforts made more of a positive impact.

## **Recording Britain**

In autumn of 1939, the Ministry of Labour appointed Sir Hubert Llewellyn Smith as chairman of the committee on Employment of Artists in Wartime. Together with the Pilgrim's Trust, Smith launched a scheme to employ artists to record the changing face of Britain. These artists were to go to shipyards, war front munitions factories, dockyards, villages and towns (especially in the countryside), 'thus making a permanent record of life during the war which would be a memorial to the national effort, and of particular value.' (T.E Fennemore, the then Secretary of the Central Institute of Art and design, in a recommendation of the project. (Mellor et al, p. 7) This project was aimed at the unemployed artists who were not concerned with the actual recording of the war). The necessity of this scheme was two-fold: it provided employment for artists in dire times, and created an archive of visual documentation of the British landscape and industry at a time when it was under threat of wartime destruction. This

project, initially called 'Recording the Changing Face of Britain', as finally renamed, 'Recording Britain'.

In the end, there were 1,549 works made by 97 artists, 63 of whom were specially commissioned, the rest being amateurs who nevertheless joined in, adding their contributions to the body of drawings. In the end, 32 English and 4 Welsh counties were documented. The work began in the coastal regions as these were judged to be the first to be hit by the war.

There were other motives behind this project- the fierce protection of the countryside and rural life by the British middle class, and the regulation of development. There was a sense of inevitable loss of much of the land and lifestyle of country living, and the urgent need to have it preserved permanently through drawings and watercolours. There was a keen sense of purpose and intent in the commissioning of these works. Herbert Read said of this scheme:

'We are defending our very possession of these memorials; but when we have secured them from an external enemy, the existence of these drawings may serve to remind us that the real fight – the fight against all commercial vandalism and insensitive neglect - goes on all the time. There will be little point in saving England from the Nazis if we then deliver it over to the jerry-builders and the development corporations.' (Mellor et al, 1990, pg 7).<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> Quoted in *This Land is Our Land: Aspects of Agriculture in English Art* (exhibition catalogue, Mall Galleries, London, 1989). The first part of this statement forms a basis for further discussion of the purpose of reportage drawing in the context of making a record of society, in this case, as a reminder of the importance of preserving and protecting the countryside.

Due to difficulties presented by the onset of war, not all counties were covered. The significance of this project was not lost on those involved. A touring exhibition under the auspices of the then Council for the Encouragement of Music and the Arts (now Arts Council), Arts Exhibition Bureau and the British Institute of Adult Education made sure that this public project remained public and was available for viewing in different parts of the country. (In 1943 the whole collection was housed in the Victoria and Albert Museum, where it can still be viewed in the Prints and Drawings Room).

## **The Second World War and Post War Years**

The onset of war brought about ample opportunity for reportage drawing. Artists were needed on the scenes, both at home and abroad. In London, danger was heightened with widespread bombing and artists like Feliks Topolski, Edward Ardizzone and Henry Moore produced drawings of bombed out London and the underground network in which people took shelter. Henry Moore's teaching eventually fizzled out with the war, as students from Chelsea School of Art were moved out to Northampton. However, as he was expecting to be called away anytime to join the students, he did not embark on a sculpture project but instead worked on drawings. Moore took this time to develop his work until he was invited to become an official war artist by Kenneth Clark, the then chairman of the War Artists Advisory Committee. It was at this time that he made his drawings of Londoners taking shelter in the underground network. Through this, Mass Observation

was still playing role in getting a recording and collecting mass opinion and championed what has been fine tuned into what is today known as polls rating.

Most of the reportage drawings were consumed through the means of printed media. Many artists' experiences of the war were documented, such as Ronald Searle's drawings of the four years he spent as a Japanese prisoner of war. Edgar Ainsworth, who was to become the editor of *Picture Post*<sup>24</sup> and was himself a keen draughtsman, observed the liberation of Bergen-Belsen and documented the horrors acted upon prisoners in concentration camps.

During the war paper rations and the economic situation at the time meant that several publications shut down, and it was impossible for new ones to be started up. There was a limit as to what would be published. The mass availability of photography meant that drawn illustration was sidelined. The war ended, the Left was growing in popularity, and socialism and industry was rapidly expanding. Soon, paper supply was increasing and periodicals experienced a revival. No more so than in the industrial sector. The National Coal Board and Standard Oil are examples of enterprises that launched regular publications that featured commissioned drawings of various aspects of their industry. In the case of mass consumed printed media, editors kept artists who shared similar leftist leanings with them as drawings of the war and its efforts were replaced by scenes of

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<sup>24</sup> A weekly news magazine that was concerned with documenting the mundane domestic, work and leisure lives of the British public. It was noted for its documentary photography but also feature drawings by Ainsworth and Topolski.



reconstruction. Drawn illustrations interspersed politically charged essays and retrospective looks at various countries in liberal socialist papers.

However, a time came when communist sympathy was no longer fashionable amongst the leftist artists (the horrors of Stalin's regime went a long way toward this), and many reportage artists abandoned the printed page and dispersed into other creative genres such as painting, sculpting or teaching.

The sixties was the decade of the advent of mass communication and mass overseas travel, which brought about the illustrated travel book. Artists and writers would collaborate on and publish travel companions to accompany the public who had discovered holiday destinations away from home soil. This was also the dawn of hedonism, the challenging of social norms, the Beatles, and rock and roll. Ralph Steadman's drawings were a humorous commentary on society. Ronald Searle was notably scathing of this generation and the government and produced drawings not unlike George Grosz's harsh criticism of society and its excesses in the 1920's. Despite the free spirit of the 60's, there was still trouble in the world at large providing a source of study for the reportage artist. There was unrest leading to independence for most British colonies. The Berlin Wall was erected, an event represented by Searle, who even more significantly, covered the trial of Adolf Eichmann in 1961. (This trial was held in Jerusalem and the Israelis had declared that only they could take photographs, which they would then distribute to the world. Searle's sharply observed drawings, 'could only be different.' (Ronald Searle, '*Reportage*', Newsletter, January/February 1977, p.7) Artists such as Ralph Steadman covered the Arab-Israeli conflict, while

Gerald Scarfe was sent to Vietnam by the Daily Mail. Unlike his gruesome caricatured drawings of life, Scarfe barely coped with the real horror and violence he had to face, resulting in drawings that Hogarth described as 'uncomfortably non-committal' (Hogarth, p. 165).

The printed sheet was and still remains the mainstay for reportage drawing as artists illustrated reportage articles. What changed, however was a growing emergence of individual and expressive style. Just as mainstream art was being challenged and boundaries being pushed in terms of content, materials and concept, the boundaries of reportage drawing began to blur as disciplines and influences crossed paths. Drawings became more interpretive as young artists invoked avant-garde artists they admired, and experimented with mixed media and incorporated photography or film into their working process. Artists like Sue Coe who described her work as 'gutter realism' (Steven Heller, *Sue Coe: eyewitness*, Eye, Issue 21, Summer 1996) illustrated personal experiences and street life (after being raped she wrote and illustrated an article on the topic). Anne Howeson whose experience of sharing a flat with a prostitute, and subsequent work as a female escort led to a body of work on sex trade created while drawing on location in various cities. These are examples of artists who brought on a new angle to reportage drawing. In the background, war continued, with the notable event of Linda Kitson being commissioned as the first female war artist, and documented the lives of soldiers in the Falklands War.

## **The Domesday Project**

In 1986, the BBC undertook a rather ambitious project, to get the UK to record itself, and create a snapshot of every day life. The idea was to capture what would be of interest 1000 years from now. The population was divided into 23,000 areas and people were asked to document what it was like to live, work and play in their area, and 147,819 pages of written text and 23,225 amateur photographs were submitted by the public.

Unfortunately the technology used to store this information was very limited and unable to transfer onto current technology, and after being initially too expensive for everyone to have access to due to the cost of the hardware, it became altogether impossible to use the outmoded software the work was stored in. After various attempts to rescue this material, there is now an online archive that the public can access and have a glimpse of what their local area looked like 26 years ago.

This 'public commissioning' which involved schoolchildren and adults from all the British Isles, including the Channel Islands and Isle of Man, is a good example of employing the public to create records, which has the doubled advantage of giving them a sense of ownership, if only by getting them to consider their own environment, and the realisation that these records will continue years after they are gone and viewed by future generations.

This recording of the everyday is crucial in a time when people look for the extraordinary. The capturing of place, of the space we occupy in the mundane routine of every day existence gives a sense of appreciation of the relentless structure that underpins our physical being that we become blind

to due to the over use, the persistent wearing down of the same path in our rush to work, and school and other routines that make up our lives. It is these routines that we escape from in our holidays. We passionately record the escapes, these other experiences that help us forget the drudgery of the every day, but rarely do we contemplate documenting the latter. Yet, the mundane will be of interest in years to come. Ones familiar background will become another's history centuries down the line.

The Domesday project and the eventual success that it is now, is also an example of how technology can be both an advantageous tool, when it works well, and also a handicap when it fails in one way or another.

Advanced machinery and software can become obsolete, as popular as it may be at the peak of its utilisation. Despite the time, energy and effort invested in accumulation, archives are only as good as their accessibility.

The material collected by the public and intended for public access was out of reach due to financial constraints (not every school could afford the equipment the records were stored in) and eventually became completely inaccessible due to the obsolescence of the technology employed.

## **The Brill Collection**

Reginald Brill, the head of the then Kingston School of Art, now Kingston University, with the support of Kingston Rotary Club, started a project that saw the commissioning of topographical drawings and watercolour paintings of Kingston-upon-Thames by the Kingston Borough Council. The drawings and paintings were mainly produced by staff at the art school. The project

started in 1955 and lasted up until 1971. In 1997, the project was re-launched with Leo Duff, well known for her documentary drawings of the built environment from the late seventies to early nineties, being commissioned, and since then, the collection has subsequently grown with further commissions or winners from competitions within Kingston University Illustration Department.

## **A BRIEF INTRODUCTION TO CONTEMPORARY REPORTAGE ARTISTS**

*'I try and draw things that kind of intimidate me into drawing.'* George Butler<sup>25</sup>

This section introduces a selection of contemporary reportage artists and addresses the diverse processes and purposes within the discipline through their practices. They were discovered through referral (mainly by each other) and drawing is their main vehicle of depiction. Some are artists that I was able to have conversations with about their work and the practice, in order to get a first hand view on what it was like to be a reportage (drawing) artist today. Their drawings are discussed in further detail in the subsequent chapters, where selected examples are presented in the accompanying document of drawings, illustrating relevant dialogue surrounding a particular aspect of the research. Their subject matter, processes of working, styles, subject matter, media and motivations vary.

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<sup>25</sup> In conversation, 26<sup>th</sup> January 2011

If there is an artist who has drawn over a wide variety of locations, it is Julia Midgley. From the set of Coronation Street through Granada television, to factories, archaeological digs, and even surgical procedures while being an artist in residence at Royal Liverpool and Broadgreen University Hospitals Trust. While drawing at the mounted and dog police units led her to drawing at the Grand National when she asked to accompany a team while they were patrolling the event. She rode in a horsebox and soon after, the Grand National asked her to draw for them. 'Documentary Drawing' as she refers to it, was mainstream while she was an art student, but it is the natural order in art to compartmentalise. Significantly Midgley does not classify herself as a particular kind of artist as she is also a printmaker.

Jane Webster is a commercial reportage artist and educator who mainly works on commissioned projects. Her distinctive style and speed of working has seen her work in advertising and illustration as she employs varied media such as markers, oil bars and pencil. Her working process is discussed in chapters dealing with commissioning of artists, as well as employment of new media as drawing references. A former student of Kingston University, and now Illustration tutor at the same institution, she has been able to note the change in drawing in academia. One observation she has made is that of the new students applying to study illustration last academic year (2012), none had observational drawings in their folders.

Another Kingston alumnus is Matthew Cook who trained as an illustrator before joining the TA as a soldier. His work straddles both illustration and reportage drawing and is probably more publicly recognised for his depictions of the Middle East when he was out on active duty. He mainly

works in sketchbooks but hardly ever shows these, as they are personal to him. 'I would almost say that it's like undressing in public to show some of my sketchbooks' (In conversation (29<sup>th</sup> October 2009), 3:25) Some of his sketchbook drawings have been featured in two of his publications, one on Iraq, the other Afghanistan. His observational drawings are keenly observed line studies with no colour, and have a sense of immediacy as they are quickly drawn. (See Figure 68 (p.161)) While discussing recurring themes or perceived meanings in reportage drawings, Matthew Cook said that while there are visual elements he is always attracted to such as telegraph poles, he is not analytical about his drawings. Unlike many reportage artists who have a purpose behind their work, he is motivated by curiosity and is 'inherently nosey' which leads him on to the next thing he draws - his drawing is about discovery. It is this sense of discovery using drawing that lends him his analytical eye and highly figurative observational work that keeps him in commission for recording projects. He is most well known for being the Times War artist when with a map torn out of the paper and drawing materials and a scanner, he drove round Iraq documenting what he saw.

Tabitha Salmon's journey into reportage began with a trip to Russia sponsored by her local council. She spent days drawing in the bitter cold, unable to verbally communicate with anyone as she didn't speak the language and no one spoke English. The experience of recording all the activity around her, and even more so the realization that drawing transcended verbal language and gave her a new freedom in communication and acceptance in a foreign country caused this artist to explore reportage further. If one didn't need language when one had

drawing, then where were the limits? She could work anywhere, draw anything. Her most notable projects were documenting the construction of the Channel Tunnel and the Tsing Ma Bridge connecting Hong Kong to the mainland.

Another artist working on the theme of construction is Jeanette Barnes. She has a similar background in drawing as Julia Midgley and Leo Duff and is interested in cities and large structures. When I last visited her studio, whose floor was strewn with drawings, and every wall either covered with either a large drawing, or obscured by large framed work leaning against it, she had just come from drawing 'The Shard', the tallest building of London to date. Barnes draws rigorously from observation, and after affixing charcoal to a stick, compiled her visual notes into a large final drawing, often metres tall and wide. (Figures 4 and 5 illustrate her drawing process, with numerous observational studies of the Olympic site and a large final drawing in process). She does take photographs as well in case she comes across a different perspective, but tends to draw from her drawings and will sometimes produce etchings from her photographs. Even though her work is about observing and documenting change, she will admit that she has never called herself a reportage artist as she is from a generation that never saw drawing on location as a separate discipline but an expected activity from artists.





Figure 4



Figure 5

The daily newspapers in the UK are playing their part in keeping reportage drawing alive, whether it is in getting an artist's view of war or other happenings in society. Xavier Pick told of his experiences in Iraq to BBC readers, George Butler's pen and ink and watercolour drawings accompanied by harrowing descriptions of the experiences of his subjects in The Guardian have brought home the reality of the devastation in Syria following the civil war, and Tim Vyner has documented the Olympics and shared his daily observations with the Times readership. Olivier Kugler's interactive drawings, observed then rendered on computer have been featured in the Guardian newspaper. They often have text juxtaposed with the drawing and often have more than one scene in a drawing. John Short's studies of people in different situations capture movement and vitality using line and watercolour and sometimes collage. From dogs to dancers and bathers in the sea, there is a sense of buzz and activity. There would be no end to the variety of work available by artists observing society, both home and abroad for their local audience. As mentioned in the Introduction Chapter, it is a matter of finding those that work as commentators and documenters, but do not necessarily identify themselves as reportage artists, but are identified by their work and working process and referred to by those that work in the same field.

## **5. THE BOUNDARIES OF REPORTAGE DRAWING**

### **INTRODUCTION**

This chapter is addressed mainly through the visual dialogue by the juxtaposition of images, and where necessary, written dialogue where images on their own will not suffice. The issues discussed are introduced and relevant images referred to. Here, the question of what the limitations of reportage drawing are is addressed – gaps in communication between the artist and viewers, the problems with communicating non-visual information while drawing, and the practical problems encountered with materials and media when drawing on location. This chapter concludes with a brief look at reportage drawing that engages with a specific audience off mainstream means of display.

### **CULTURAL DISPARITY AND FOREIGN VISUAL LANGUAGE BETWEEN THE ARTIST AND AUDIENCE**

As artists continue to travel and bring scenes from other cultures, there exists the very real possibility of misunderstanding or misconception of information, whether visual or thematic by the viewer. The accompanying drawings demonstrate this disparity and how simple objects that are clearly known by the people in the culture represented are completely alien to a foreign audience.

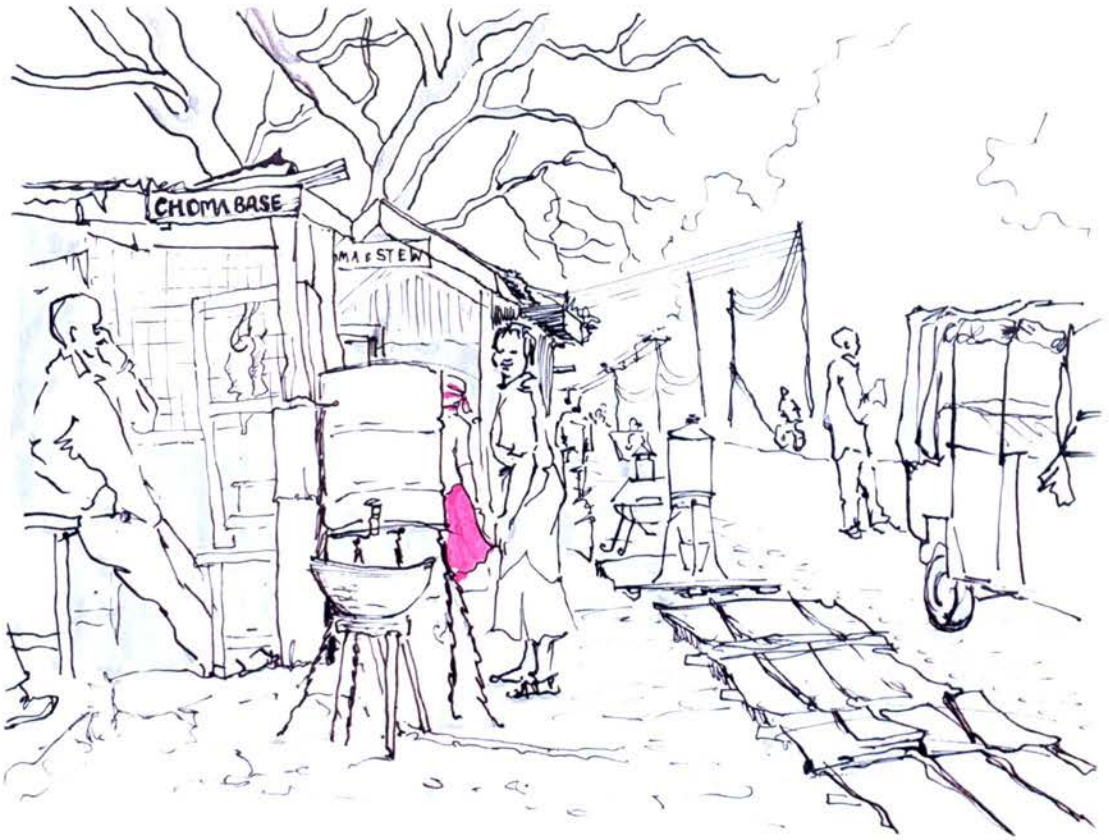


Figure 6



Figure 7

In the foreground of Figure 6 is a metal drum with a tap attached to it where people can wash their hands before eating. Any Kenyan can identify

it, but none of the non-Kenyan people who have looked at this drawing know what it is. Yet it is significant and necessary for local eateries.

The inclusion-exclusion decision-making is crucial when it comes to observational reportage drawing. There is an abbreviation of the visual information occurring as the hand puts down what the eye sees. It is not humanly possible to draw every minute detail in a scene though some individuals have extraordinarily developed photographic memories coupled with the ability to replicate what has been seen on paper, like the autistic artist Stephen Wiltshire.

Both Figures 6 and 7 are drawings of same scene, the latter drawn immediately after the first. The first drawing took approximately 15 minutes to complete while the second, which was executed immediately after the first, I restricted to no more than 3 minutes to complete. Redrawing the scene within a set time was a deliberate act. The latter illustrates the significance of loss or addition of information to a similar scene, and in a way depicts movement more fluently due to the nature of hurried line.





Figure 8

George Butler’s drawing of a church in Ghana (Figure 8) is a scene that is very familiar to anyone who has visited a charismatic church in an African country. In this instant, Butler has pulled out the most significant visual aids to identify the type of gather, raised arms, a cluster of overlapped figures to convey the crowded atmosphere, and significantly, religious text within the drawing. Christopher Lambert also employed text in his daily drawings to clarify what he was drawing and to include non-visual

information such as 'pleasant sound of the river from my bedroom' (Figure 9)

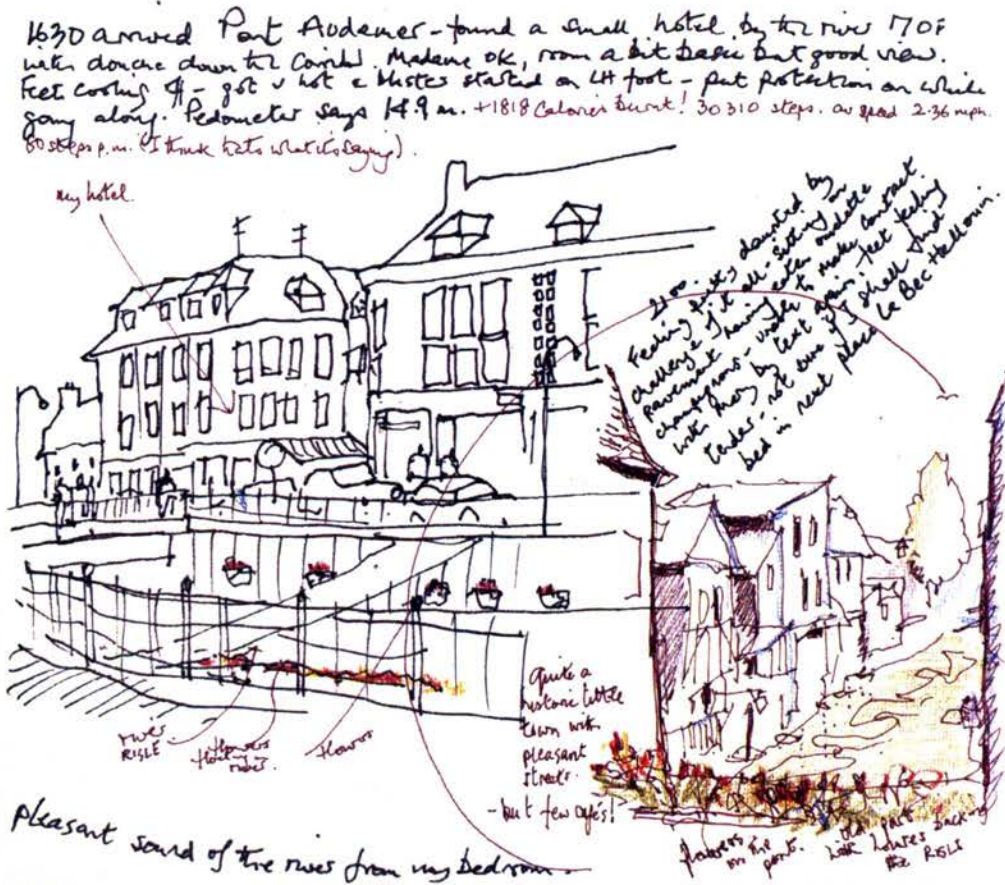


Figure 9

Figure 10 is another demonstration of a cultural activity that needs further clarification through a series of drawings in a diagrammatical style accompanied by text – the local recycling of car tyres into strips of rubber. This manual job is not identifiable in developed countries where used or worn tyres are carries away by garages to be dealt with in closed off factories.





embellishment, and this is the likely reason he depicted this scene as he saw it without attempting to include non-visual information.

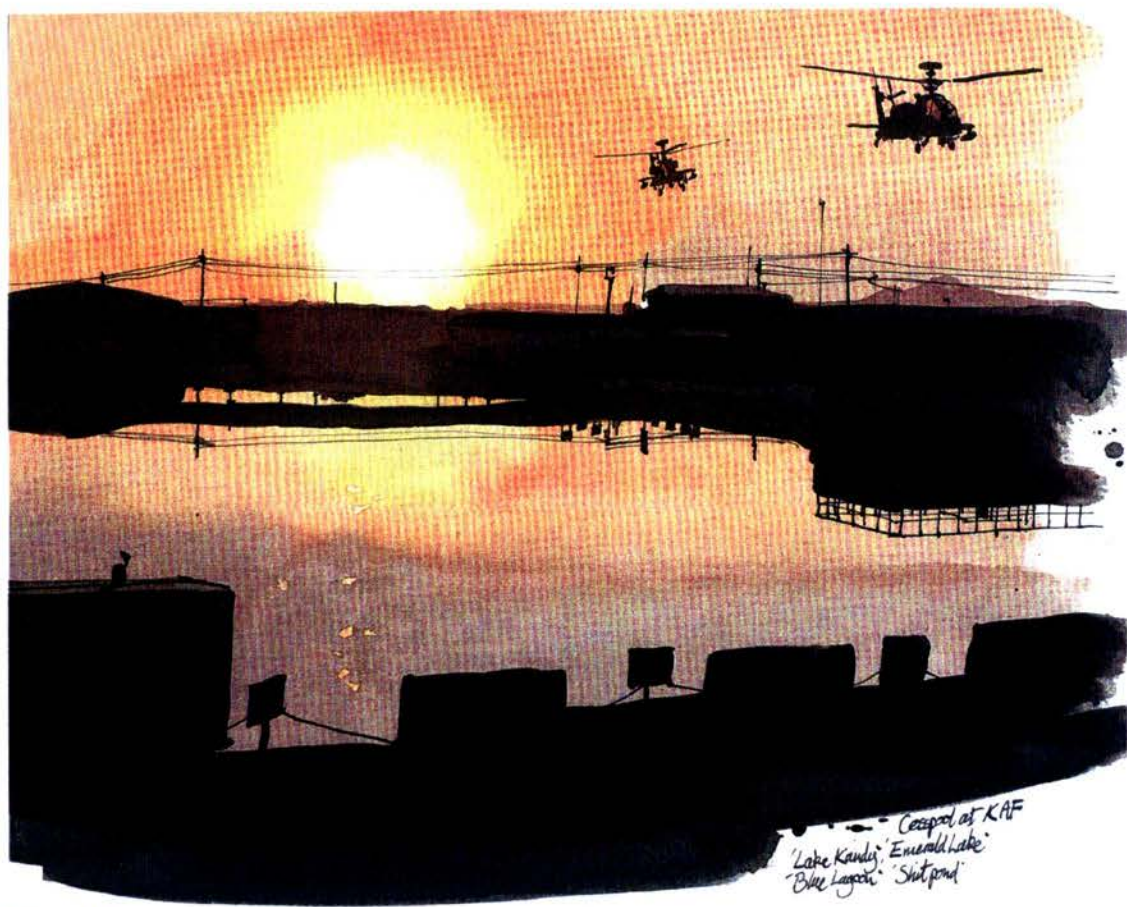


Figure 11

Figure 12 is by Linda Kitson where using one compressed charcoal pencil she is able to convey the dirt and filth in the cloud of dense smoke churning in the background. It is this drawing that inspired me to rework the drawings of a rubbish dump site discussed in the following section.



Figure 12



The following drawing is by Tabitha Salmon and is of the drilling of the Channel Tunnel (Figure 13). Her choice of mark making and colour lends to the hot, noisy, industrial environment underground with the darker tone of the edges adding to the tunnel's depth. The layering of marks speaks of the sense of movement, projecting unrest and the noise of construction.



Figure 13

The final drawings (Figures 14 and 15) in this section discuss the issue of crowds and numbers of people and the challenge of trying to keep to the detail of the situation so that it is identifiable yet find suitable marks to represent large numbers of people. Figure 14 is a study titled *Bd. Montparnasse* in Paris by Felix Topolski and Figure 15 my drawing of a campaign meeting for the then proposed new constitution in Jomo Kenyatta Grounds in Kisumu.





Figure 14



Figure 15

## COMPARISON WITH OTHER MEDIA

When drawing on location there are many factors, both environmental and personal to the artist, that influence the outcome of a drawing. Weather affects the materials and media, not to mention the pace of drawing. Linda Kitson drew in sub-zero temperatures in the Falklands and wrote of having to be bodily carried by soldiers nearby after being out in harsh weather for about 15 minutes rendered her unable to walk. Her choice of compressed charcoal pencil was well suited for the brisk drawing process that did not allow for the luxury to explore different materials. Often water-based media are limiting depending on temperature. Tabitha Salmon found that after drawing in freezing temperatures in Russia, when she got back into the warmth her watercolours had melted and spread around her paper.

Matthew Cook, while drawing in Iraq found his watercolour paint dried before he had finished applying it. While drawing in Kisumu, it was not just the heat but the clouds of dust blowing onto the textured paper that turned the ink into paste on the pen nib, making it nigh on impossible to use.

Physical discomfort, such as the cold in Kitson's case, or extreme heat in Cook's or my case, makes one draw briskly in a bid to escape the discomfort. It also calls for what one would call 'core observation'. Looking out for what is truly essential and necessary to fully represent the scene in the most straightforward way possible. Such drawings tend to have less information can be more visually engaging in their rawness.



Figure 16

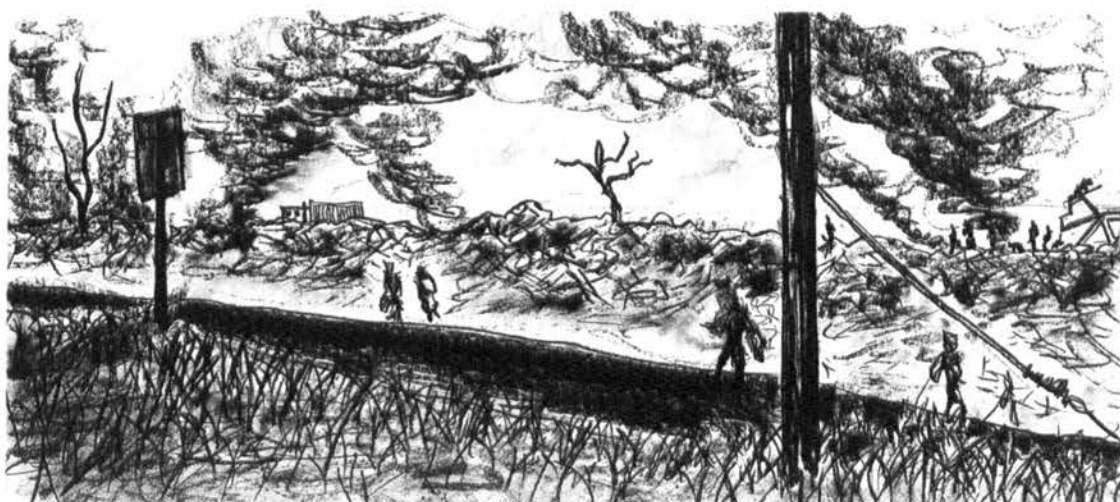


Figure 17

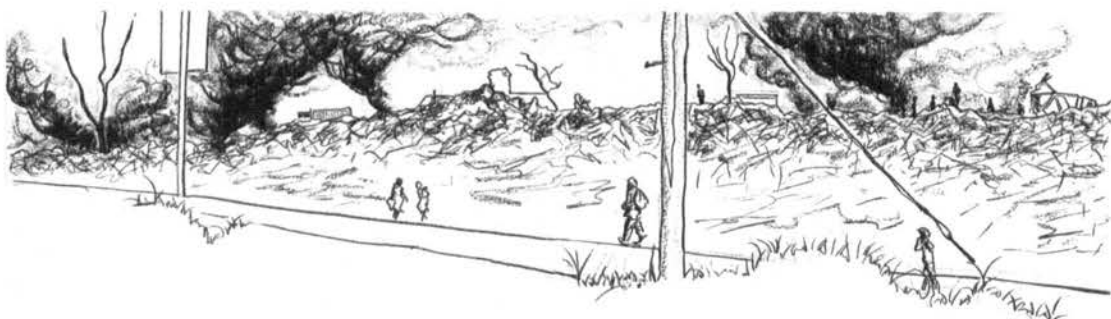


Figure 18

Tabitha Salmon touched on one of the limitations of drawing on location - sometimes the scene calls for a different technique to make the drawing say what you want to say, but there is no time (or patience) on location to experiment. Often this is what leads artists back to their studios to rework

drawings. The accompanying drawings illustrate the use of various media on a scene drawn from observation. Both the original drawings were executed using dip pen and Indian ink. Figure 16 is a study of a rubbish dump literally next door to a mall. It was the most uncomfortable to draw due to the smell of human excrement combined with acrid burning nearby, and clouds of flies landing on me. Figures 17 and 18 were drawn later while recollecting the revulsion I felt using compressed charcoal and normal charcoal respectively. Figure 19 depicts a local eatery I favoured that is one of several that sell fish and are all made of salvaged materials with dirt floors. Figures 20 and 21 are experiments using compressed charcoal and watercolour respectively. (The foreground of the latter featuring the beginnings of sprinkling paint to convey dust).



Figure 19





Figure 20



Figure 21



## REPORTAGE SANS FRONTIER (REPORTAGE WITH NO BOUNDARIES)

### Introduction

This section looks at reportage drawings that work beyond the normal confines of singular images for exhibition or illustration.

### Collective Memories and Storytelling

Peter Howson, a war artist commissioned by the Imperial War Museum and Times Newspapers to go to Bosnia in spring of 1993, produced a painting that caused controversy. *Croatian and Muslim*, depicting a rape scene, was a response to stories Howson heard from various rape victims while in the country. The painting is a violent and graphic depiction of two men raping a naked woman, one in the act, the other obviously subduing her. The argument against this piece is that it is obviously from Howson's imagination and not a 'factual record' of what he observed on his visit.

This brings up an important argument in the practice of reportage that threatens to tighten the confines of what constitutes true 'reporting'. Is it what one sees, what one sees and stores in memory to recall later, or what one perceives from information relayed by others, and creates a reconstituted memory (gives visual life to others' memories)?

One can argue that memory is never like film, a continuous unbroken sequence of recollection; it is patchy, like a series of photographs taken intermittently over a period, but with blind spots. Memory too, can be compromised. One's impression of a situation can be altered as other factors, further events occur in the passage of time. Peter Howson, in an interview with Virginia Boston talked about his drawing process in Bosnia. "I drew mainly at night in Bosnia. I didn't draw much on the spot; I don't really enjoy that and it was too dangerous. Most of my ideas came afterwards. I've got a photographic memory, not so much for details of uniforms but for emotions, things that happen, faces that interest me." ([http://www.peterhowson.net/pages/press/boston\\_DEC98.htm](http://www.peterhowson.net/pages/press/boston_DEC98.htm)). His projection of emotion on a situation and the conjuring of that memory are highly subjective methods of responding to subject matter.

A very popular artist who has made his mark by the collection of others' experiences is the graphic novelist Joe Sacco. His popular publication *Palestine* is an amalgamation of nine issues of a comic book series under the same title created after spending 2 months in the then Occupied Territories in winter 1991-1992. The tales he recounts are often harrowing - of the misfortunes of Palestinians, ranging from difficulties encountered in every day life to torture under Israeli hands. (Figure 22) Unlike the traditional comic book template that calls for triumph and a hero, there is no solution to his characters' woes, no militant call for action. This is about the observations of a (then) young American who walked amongst ordinary Palestinians and listened to their stories, saw their living conditions in a politically charged situation that his own country had not deemed a human catastrophe. Joe Sacco's distinction in this genre is that he not only

recounts the experiences told to him by the various people he meets, but he also includes himself in the drawings. In Figure 23 he shows himself, bespectacled and unassuming, in the centre of a debate with a group of Palestinian men, taking the brunt of accusation for American support of Israel. 'The unhurried pace and the absence of a goal in this wanderings emphasizes that he is neither a journalist in search of a story nor an expert trying to nail down the facts in order to produce a policy,' says Edward Said in an introduction to the combined series. 'Joe is there to find out why things are the way they are and why there seems to have been an impasse for too long.' (Sacco, p. iv ) The political rhetoric is strong, yet it is said through the words and experiences of the people he meets, not his own voice.

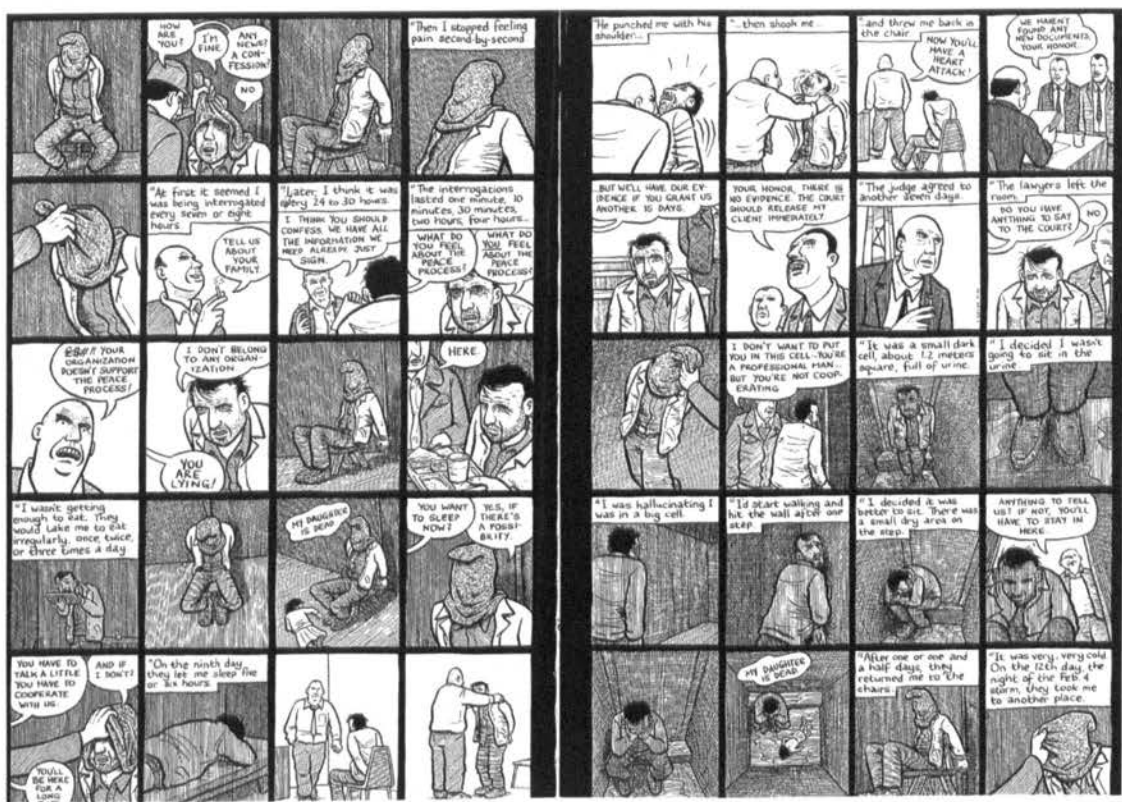


Figure 22



Figure 23

Another offering of graphic novel reportage is Marjane Satrapi's memoir of her youth during the Islamic Revolution in Tehran, *Persepolis*. Charting her life from the age six to fourteen, Satrapi uses bold black and white images and striking composition in a unique way to combine events in her life with her own childhood fantasies and daydreams. Figure 24 is an example of the ability of Satrapi to move from an amusing childish situation where, having the ability to see and hear God, she interrupts Him to eavesdrop on her parents, where the narrative takes a serious turn as the horror of people being burnt alive in the cinema is depicted in strong imagery; flames and the dying and fleeing all flowing across the page in unison. Figure 25 is more

representational in its portrayal of the reality of living under strict Islamic rule. The Satrapi family is stopped in their car by a trigger-happy law-enforcer who claims to smell alcohol on the father, who in response emits an angry outburst against the system. What follows is illustrated here. The fear on Marjane and her mother's face is evident as, having pacified the gunman they hurry to destroy their stock of alcohol that would have landed them in dire punishment.



Figure 24



Figure 25

For these last two artists, their stories would probably reach an audience that may not otherwise make it to exhibition spaces. Graphic novels have a very loyal following and, as in the case of Sacco, have not been the mainstay of reality. There is always an element of fantasy or entertainment. However the last decade or so has seen more in the case of reportage, such as a DC Comics groundbreaking venture – *Unknown Soldier*, a comic book based on a doctor's experience in war-torn northern Uganda.

Off the paper surface, reportage drawing has been taken to usual lengths in order to tell a story to a mass audience. In the mind-numbing world of television talent contests, a surprise emerged on *Ukraine's Got Talent* in 2009, an offshoot of a popular television talent show that has been exported from Britain in various forms across the world. A woman told a story of life in the war using sand drawing, each stroke changing the scene in a continuous narrative. (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Z1JZ9015280>). This story was like Howson's combined tale of many - the war and its effect on a family. The medium of drawing had a profound effect on those watching.

## **6. REPORTAGE DRAWING AND DIGITAL MEDIA: OBSOLESCENCE OR EVOLUTION?**

### **INTRODUCTION**

This chapter discusses the relationship between digital media and reportage drawing. The main discourse takes place visually through the juxtaposition of relevant images. The dialogue examines the current role of digital media as a reportage artist's tool, and discusses drawing and its place in the presence of photography, film and other new media by making comparative studies and reviewing selected drawings.

Digital media have come a long way since the early days of photography. As mentioned earlier in the Historical Overview chapter, photography did not instantly meet all the documentation needs due to limitations in technology. Equipment was bulky and large and required the subject to be absolutely still for a lengthy time. These conditions were not conducive to situations like war reportage where constant and unpredictable movement dominated and there was no opportunity to even stage dramatic scenes, which is what the viewing public expected back home.

Despite leaps in the development of photography that eliminated many of the above restrictions, there were still situations where the decision was made to document using drawing instead of photography, and on a monumental scale. The Recording Britain project was launched in 1939, at a time when photography was not only present but also developed to the



point of being easily accessible, affordable and consumed en masse. This was not the age when artists were the main source of visual material and the only means by which events were visually documented. Why then, were drawings the means of preferred documentation, especially in the depiction of what was crucially a landscape and life that was on the brink of destruction by war? Would a more 'accurate'<sup>26</sup> series of photographs be more suitable to this venture? Herbert Read makes this clear in the aims of the scheme: 'Photography can do much, but it cannot give us the colour and atmosphere of a scene, the intangible *genus loci*. It is this intangible element, which is so easily destroyed by the irresistible encroachment of what we call civilisation... Better than the wordy rhetoric of journalists or politicians, it shows us exactly what we are fighting for – a green and pleasant land, a landscape whose features have been moulded in liberty, whose every winding lane and irregular building is an expression of our national character.' (*This Land is Our Land: Aspects of Agriculture in English Art* (exhibition catalogue, Mall Galleries, London, 1989), (Mellor et al, 1990, p 7). Many of the drawings produced in this project have watercolour washes added to the line, a very British medium. The style of drawing too, is very indicative of the traditional school of British draughtsmanship. In this case, the method of documentation was intentional, as patriotic as the cause – preserving the English landscape by using English techniques of drawing.

In the course of speaking to the many of the artists featured here, it became apparent that photography changed the way artists draw from life,

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<sup>26</sup> Following the thinking that a photograph replicates as exactly as the lens allows, every visible detail of a scene. In contrast a drawing, regardless of how keen the eye of the artist and precise of hand, *represents* textures, surfaces and numbers by employing a variety of mark making techniques and can be argued to be a less accurate mode of documentation.

and as a result the nature of reportage drawing, allowing for more than pure representation and making way for specific commentary. George Butler, a young reportage artist whose latest jaunt took him to Syria to document the havoc wreaked there by the civil war, reflected on this change. '... because someone has already taken a photograph of everywhere you are free to interpret it how you want.' (In conversation (26<sup>th</sup> January 2011), 4:12). The fact that photography has so penetrated all aspects of society, illuminating and exposing even remote tribes and landscapes in far-flung isolated regions of the world inaccessible to most, it is a real possibility that everything known has been photographed. When landmarks, whether natural or manmade are identifiable, this then leaves the artist free to apply any technique, take away or add any information that he or she wants. Photography has taken away the need to be accurate for the reportage artist. Documentation acquires a strong element of commentary and the artist's perspective takes centre stage. 'Artists are asked to record their point of view, as a way of making a unique social record of a time and place. The audience is asking for his/her opinion to be expressed,' says Tim Vyner.<sup>27</sup> Martin Salisbury echoes this sentiment, 'The term reportage, as I see it, means that the artists is reporting, commenting, not just representing.'<sup>28</sup>

According to George Butler, a reportage artist is competing with the format of a camera, which calls for the artist to be selective about what he/she is saying through composition, inclusion and exclusion and emphasis on certain elements. Representation is still key as there has to be a truth about the situation - the physical elements, people present, et cetera. Butler

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<sup>27</sup> Over email correspondence, 26<sup>th</sup> March 2013.

<sup>28</sup> Over email correspondence, 17<sup>th</sup> August 2009.

describes this process as having 'some sort of agreement with yourself or who's looking so that it is accurate to a certain extent because then you are free to do whatever you like.' He further elaborates that this process brings about reportage that is neither good nor bad, just different interpretations of the same thing (by different artists).

Figure 8 (p 81) demonstrates this fluently. This drawing of a church service in Ghana has elements that identify it as a church service in an African church: raised arms, crowds, musicians, and more importantly text with words that place the gathering in context, combined with more precise features that members of that congregation would identify such as the logo and motto that most churches have. Whereas this drawing lacks the finer detail of a recording, it manages to be a *representation* of an atmosphere – noise, crowd, and heat. Without requiring the relying on physical elements like walls, Butler has still shown perspective through composition and relative proportion of figures.

## THE BIRTH OF PHOTOGRAPHY: THE DISINHERTANCE OF DRAWING?

*'A photograph is static because it has stopped time. A drawing or painting is static because it encompasses time.'* John Berger<sup>29</sup>

### The Instant and The Ephemeral

On contrast to the above quote, it can be argued that a drawing is not static for the very same reason given – that passing time is captured and summed up in one image and that lends a feeling of movement to a drawing. Martin Salisbury shared similar sentiments in the comparison of a photograph and a drawing. 'A drawing is a synthesis of things happening over time, distilled into a single moment.' (Over email correspondence, 17<sup>th</sup> August 2009).

Some months ago I tried to describe the act of drawing from observation in words in a short essay.<sup>30</sup> I typed out what I was seeing simultaneously much as I would while drawing– the words replacing the drawn line. The result was a fevered attempt to follow my eyes as they jumped to and fro across the scene in front of me. It became apparent that a large amount of decision-making happens subconsciously and at a very fast rate when drawing. The act of someone obscuring a view and the decision to exclude that person becomes almost a barrier when time is slowed down to writing speed. This led on to a further contemplation on time and the encapsulation of time in a drawing.

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<sup>29</sup> Berger (2005) p.70

<sup>30</sup> See *Reflection on the Process of Drawing*, Appendix I

The depiction of movement is the surest form of illustrating the passing of time. Julia Midgely describes her process, 'I often use one figure many times in a drawing to imply passage of time. Also layering one drawing over the previous one, this gives a sense of movement.' (Over email correspondence, 19<sup>th</sup> October 2009). Martin Salisbury elaborates on the importance of allowing for a flexible composition – a basic underlying structure but allowing for moving things like people to come and go and be selectively included (Over email correspondence, 17<sup>th</sup> August, 2009) - much like Butler's perspective of keeping the basic structure such as buildings and people true to what they are. There has to be something to ground the scene – the core that says what the drawing is about. Eduardo Corte Real, a Portuguese reportage artist, employs similar elements to his drawings, '... sometimes I draw different versions of elements caused by movement (two arms for instance). I can also do a few drawings of the same view.' (Over email correspondence, 6<sup>th</sup> August 2009).

It is this act of encompassing time as it passes that gives reportage drawing its distinctive quality. The artist's wrangling with such factors as movement and unpredictable environmental factors is all part of the process of storytelling that is a far cry from the carefully controlled conditions in studio observation work such as still life or life drawing.

## **COLLABORATION AND INCORPORATION**

### **Drawing from Reference Material**

The camera has become an essential tool to the documentary drawing artist and easily accessible in numerous forms, with most phones featuring both a video and photograph option. The advent of digital cameras has taken the pressure off observational drawing, with many artists having a backup just in case they are unable to complete a drawing, or for example, need a colour reference for later. Reference notes on margins are no longer the norm and whereas some artists maintain the traditional observational method of drawing, many rely on the camera to varied degrees. When discussing his drawing life behind the scenes at the *The Times* over three years in the 90's Matthew Cook found himself in important situations, like 20 minute meetings between the Editor and Prime Minister where he was obliged to take a quick photograph just in case he did not have time to finish the drawing. Invariably he never needed to, but it was as a precautionary measure. Tabitha Salmon on the other hand found herself needing to photograph particular stages of the construction of the Channel Tunnel. With other construction jobs that she drew on, she was escorted in the initial stages until the workers realised she was, in her words, reasonably sensible (and not a safety risk), as this particular project required her getting special permission to work underground. She had to be escorted the whole time, the result being an engineer had to stop their work to accompany her which in turn put more pressure on her to draw very quickly and often take photographs. The circumstances made it impossible for her to sit with a board on her knee, taking her time drawing.

Xavier Pick's drawing, *Officer's Mess in Basra* (Figure 26) is an example of the incorporation of photographic images and drawing. Pick draws furiously on location, layering tone and filling the page from edge to edge. His sketchbooks pages are layered with ink and paint, some brightly coloured and always heavy with the atmosphere of the scene. The same energy is transferred to his studio where he will work on Photoshop, carefully merging photographs he took to recreate a scene that speaks clearest of what he needs to say. This photomontage becomes a new surface to which he applies his drawing, referencing his sketchbooks. The layering of tone and line creates an even greater sense of movement and noise, and in this scene the photographic takes on a stark contrast with the drawn line, which creates a vibrant dialogue between the observed and the recalled.



Figure 26

Pick is an avid keeper of sketchbooks and the last time I visited his studio, I was greeted by a scene of sketchbooks piled on every flat surface, piles of black hard-covered books that he has been drawing in for years that he was digitalising and organising chronologically. The first time I visited his studio he repeated the same thing over and over again. 'You have to draw everyday, Mercy, you have to draw every day.'

Jane Webster not only uses photography but film as reference material. She is in a unique position with regard to observational drawing as she only has the use of one eye and therefore doesn't have to deal with the challenge of depth of field as other artists do. Her world has been flattened to two dimensions so that working from film is not much different from working from life. In Figures 27 and 28, she has used film she recorded herself as reference and in so doing been able to study with exactitude the conductor's arms' movement without the rushed instant of being on location. Like many illustrators Jane Webster uses Google Earth as a visual resource, which provides a virtual three-dimensional view of locations. Figure 36 (p. 124) demonstrates such a situation. Webster was commissioned to draw a strip mall in Minneapolis, USA to promote the AT&T tower and the side of the city it stands in. Webster's commission did not include a funded trip to the city so she used Google Earth, which would still allow her to virtually 'travel' around the city and have 360 degree views of the buildings and the strip mall without having to deal with obstructions or weather conditions, thereby creating a composition that suited the brief. This was an especially useful tool as the client wanted specific buildings to feature in the drawing that were not near each other.





Figure 27



Figure 28

## Digital Drawing: Multiple tools at the fingertip

*'Reportage for me is a kind of visual journalism where the voice and opinion of the artist is communicated regardless of the medium.'* Tim Vyner<sup>31</sup>

When The Times approached Tim Vyner to commission him as their official Olympic Artist, they did so because of his 20 years experience making observational drawings, not because of his experience with digital software. The newspaper wanted a 'live' means of broadcasting drawings of the Olympics and the iPad seemed to be the most suitable way to do this as it presented various advantages. 'You can publish in real time. Record the history of each drawing and play back as an animation. You can capture audio from wherever you are and you have a more immersive drawing. A range of Apps means you can capture work in a number of different ways. I used Brushes (2), as it wasn't trying to imitate anything else, it simply recorded a line as you drew it. You choose a brush, scale and opacity and working with 6 layers you create a drawing. I treated each layer like working on a series of plates for litho or screen-printing. I liked the limitations of this App for working on location in stressful, crowded fast moving situations where you need to draw quickly and not worry about the interface of the materials you are using.'

This was groundbreaking. Before the advent of the iPad and its various applications (Apps), it would have been nigh on impossible to have this kind of immediate mass viewing of a drawing. This is drawing as live visual journalism. When Matthew Cook travelled round Iraq for the Times, he had

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<sup>31</sup> Over email correspondence, 26<sup>th</sup> March 2013

a scanner with him, but that would still require a power source, cables and the loss of time associated with stopping to make the traditional drawing on paper and then transferring it to a laptop and then find a good enough internet connection to send the work to the paper. In Vyner's case, he was able to publish his drawings three times a day in the online version of the newspaper.

Drawing on the iPad had two drawbacks. 'Challenges were scale and light. I wanted to try to capture the scale of the Olympic games in such a great city as London while using a piece of technology where the screen size is just 1024 x 768. And while the iPad is great working in low light, outdoors in bright sunshine it is almost impossible to see the screen, so you have to think carefully about where you are drawing from.'

When reflecting on the experience, Vyner noted that these drawings prompted more discussion than others projects he had undertaken in the past. He believes the medium played a large part. The iPad is quickly becoming a household gadget and people realising what can be achieved with something they own is always fascinating. The average person holding the belief that they cannot draw would not spend money on specialist art materials. It can be said that non-artists confronted with paints and drawing paper would respond as non-musicians would in a guitar shop – being overwhelmed, helplessness and a feeling of being in the wrong place. Yet here are drawings published in a national daily being produced by a machine that does not take a specialist to use. There's an even greater resonance with the work because of the accessibility of the Application.

## THE CAMERA AND THE PEN

*'Drawing as a recording medium, can hardly compete with video, or a still camera, in depicting such horrendous events unless – as in the Falklands War – the powers that be place an embargo on photographic coverage. Nonetheless, in individual hands, drawing can provide a moral judgement without parallel.'* Paul Hogarth.<sup>32</sup>

### The Observer and the Observed

One of the issues that formed part of the reflection on drawing in reportage was that of the relationship between the artist and the human subject. It is of constant intrigue watching people's reaction to me drawing them.

Reactions differ between cultures. For a start, drawing in public in Kenya is unheard of. Most of the reactions I have had are people asking what I am doing and why (not to mention standing right in front of me effectively blocking my view to the subject). Drawing and observation is not a mainstream phenomenon. Many of those that can draw do so from memory. Thus phrases such as, 'I can draw buses,' or 'I can draw women' are indicative of one having mastered a formula that allows one to draw a specific thing, but not others. Learning to look, which allows one to draw whatever is in front of one is not taught. If drawing is from memory then surely there is no problem with standing directly in as artist as they draw.

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<sup>32</sup> Hogarth, p. 165

One day while drawing in a market, a man detached himself from a group that was sitting across some stalls from me and came to talk to me. He asked questions about where I was from and trying to pry personal information out of me and I duly informed him that I was drawing at the market. It was not until he saw my drawing that he said, 'We were wondering why you were looking at us so much.' I realised that had I been drawing in London, or Europe where artists sitting in public with sketchbooks is common, anyone observing me would have realised what I was up to and would have come over to look at my drawing or ignored me. However this group was suspicious of me, and sent a member to find out why I was sitting there staring, as they had not made the connection between my gazing and pen scribbling across my sketchbook.

In some instances members of the public were very open and welcomed me to draw, and even thanked me for taking time to draw them. It seemed to be a kind of bestowing of honour. This was not the case everywhere (a well educated man mending shoes in a ditch declined to let me draw him for 'security reasons', but on the whole, initial suspicion gradually turned to curiosity, admiration for the skill, and final forgetting that I existed). All artists drawing from life have one shared observation about drawing in a public place. After a while they fade into the background and cease being an oddity. There is an initial curiosity and interest that slowly dissipates as the artist becomes part of the background by not moving much and proving not to do anything particularly unusual.

Henry Moore's experience of drawing in the mines, though similarly underground, was completely disparate from his time in the underground

tunnels in London. 'I spent two weeks in a coal-mine, and was able to make sketches on the spot because the miners knew what I was there for.'

(Moore (1988) p. 13). Walker Evans expresses a similar encounter when he speaks of Agee's approach to their reportage project. 'The families understood what he was down there to do. He had explained it, in such a way that they were interested in *his* work.' (Agee and Evans, p. xv ).

Matthew Cook's perspective on this was that, 'people are more relaxed when they can see what you are doing.' (In conversation (29<sup>th</sup> October 2009), 30:15). There is a lesser degree of suspicion on the part of the human subject because the end result is visible to them and they encounter the human face making the work directly. Watching an artist work, seeing the line appear under the hand takes away any misgivings.

When a friend suggested to Tabitha Salmon that she should draw Greenham Common in the early 1980's, her mind was filled with trepidation as she was sure she would meet with a highly suspicious, if not hostile response at the camp. On one side of the heavily guarded perimeter fence was a group of women highly opposed to the nuclear base and willing to live there, the other both American and British Military Police. However she found that everyone ignored her and let her get on with her drawing. This led to an epiphany, "I don't even have to work in a country where I speak the language - because drawing is (your) language' (In conversation (27<sup>th</sup> October 2009), 24:49). More importantly, she could work in a place where photographers were not welcome. This led to Salmon travelling to Moscow to draw the life of ordinary Russians at a time when the old communist state was beginning to relinquish its hold on its citizens. Most people were afraid to speak to her on the streets because they didn't know who was

watching and there was the threat of being accused of being spies if they fraternised with a westerner. However, she noticed that after the initial curiosity, they ignored her (in a friendly way). People are sympathetic to artists 'because it's an open and honest thing. People can see what you're doing.' (In conversation (27<sup>th</sup> October 2009), 24:34).

A photographer on the other hand, has his or her face obscured by a camera and while digital cameras help in that a photograph can be viewed immediately, the subject is not aware of what the end result of their being photographed is and where it is going to be displayed. With a drawing, the end result is viewed immediately. There is something intrusive about a camera, something about having a machine pointed at one that sometimes makes the subject less willing to participate.

Jane Webster was approached by her student, who wanted to follow ambulance crews and draw them as they worked. He soon found out that things happened very fast and sometimes the resulting drawings were not very clear. She advised him to film sections but use a tiny flip video camera, which looks like a mobile phone, and shoot from the hip, which would be less intrusive. 'When you hold a camera up people freeze and change their behaviour.' (In conversation (28<sup>th</sup> February 2011), 12:34). It is difficult to have people relax and retain their normal demeanour with a camera pointed at them. Webster's advice to use a small unobtrusive machine that one could pretend was a phone assured that people were unaware of their being filmed and as such the students were able to collect reference material to strengthen their drawings. The fact that the subject has no control over how they are represented later is part of the reason why many people are

hesitant about being photographed. It may have to do with the harsh eye of the camera lens in replicating one's image. Most of the time, people are less self conscious of being drawn than photographed in my opinion.

One of the soldiers (who only identified himself as B.Lovell on his website entry), on board the Canberra when Linda Kitson drew during the Falklands war illustrates the change in attitude with regards to being observed by an artist. 'While on the Canberra we also met the MOD's official war artist Linda Kitson. Although many of the troops, including myself, were initially suspicious of her (in her civilian cloths and spiky hair she did look rather out of place amongst the troops), she was actually ok. On one occasion she dropped in at the hairdressing salon on the Canberra and did some sketches of us working, a couple of which later appeared in her book on the Falklands war. I have to own up to having bought a copy of the book with my picture in it!'

(<http://www.geocities.com/Pentagon/Fort/2839/Barrie/Canberra.html>)

## **The Visual Dialogue**

In this section the drawings form the main discourse through the juxtaposition with photographs of the same scene. With the exception of Figure 34, which was made on location, all the other drawings used photographic reference.

Figures 29 and 30 look at a possible way of interpreting a photograph while using the same minimalist approach used when drawing from life.



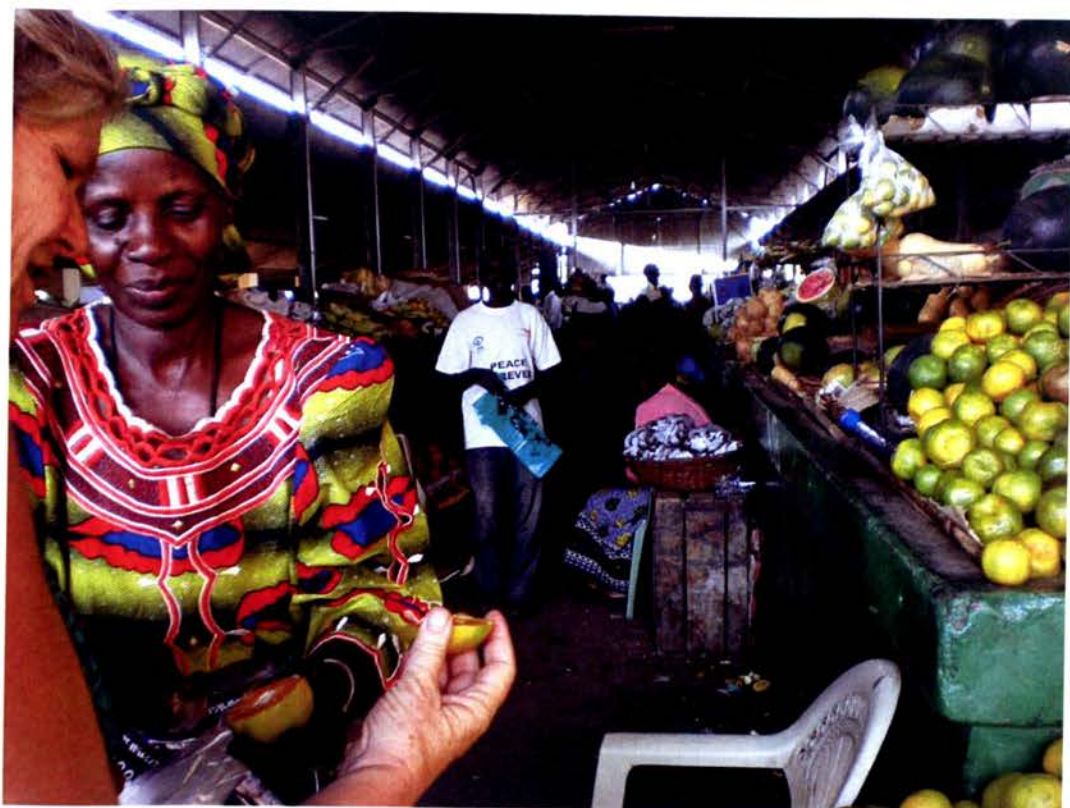


Figure 29



Figure 30

Figures 31 to 33 explore the possibilities of a drawing's potential with the inclusion or exclusion of visual information. The photograph was taken at Kibuye market where I made numerous other drawings, but specifically chose this photograph due to the proliferation of visual information, which allowed for editing of information. (Interestingly when I showed Figure 32 to various British friends they instantly thought it was a beach scene, whereas Kenyan friends instantly knew it was a market as large umbrellas are used in markets and not on the beach. Majority preferred the drawing with more information).



Figure 31





Figure 32



Figure 33

Finally, Figures 34 and 35 visually discuss the isolation of elements from a scene and the use of specific features to represent the whole. As stated earlier, I took the photograph after making the drawing. It's important to note that as I kept drawing, more people joined the fish-dealers but in the end the physical engagement between the two was stronger than when drawing the whole crowd, at that moment.



Figure 34



Figure 35

## CONCLUSION

*'... the camera seems to me, next to unassisted and weaponless consciousness, the central instrument of our time; and is why in turn I feel such a rage at its misuse: which has spread so nearly universal a corruption of sight that I know of less than a dozen alive whose eyes I can trust even so much as my own.'* James Agee<sup>33</sup>

Over the course of this project, various opinions have been given about the reception of drawings and photographs as documentary evidence of an event or place both by practising reportage artists and lay people, the latter often voicing their perspective after inquiring after the nature of the research. Overwhelmingly most were in agreement that a drawing was visually more arresting than a photograph. Why is this? One reason that many practitioners shared is that despite and *because* of the present technological advance, where machines have taken over so much of what used to be specialist hand and eye skills, there is a greater appreciation of the 'hand-made' quality of good draughtsmanship. The 'skill' element of drawing elevates the work much like hand-made goods have become more respected. The mass-production of most things in modern life, from food to clothes and implements, makes for a positive response to anything made by hand. The other response given is that because of the proliferation or advertising, we are bombarded by photographic images at every turn. This saturation makes a drawing stand out and grab the attention of the viewer, causing them to look just a bit longer. Eduardo Corte Real sums it up

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<sup>33</sup> Agee and Walker, p. 9

succinctly, 'Drawings are not instants so there is "more" to see in a drawing.' (Over email correspondence, 6<sup>th</sup> August 2009).

Not all were in favour of reportage drawings. On a coach ride from Oxford to London a couple of years ago, I sat next to a lawyer from Malaysia, studying at Oxford University. He was adamantly against the use of courtroom artists as he believed that their input was biased and that they influenced the viewers/readers minds towards the case. He would prefer that cameras were used during the hearing of cases. Even in a situation where the artist is clearly recording rather than commenting, there was mistrust of the human eye as it was invariably connected to the human mind and its emotional responses.

Over the last 20 years or so, despite the decline of drawing as a specialist taught subject in art schools, the value of reportage drawing as a specific means of documentation remains, and if anything increases. Newspapers in Britain such as The Times and The Guardian still feature reportage artists and while there are opportunities to employ new technology such as Tim Vyner did, then there will always be a place for both traditional and modern methods of drawing. 'As for the traditional drawing in the future, I think illustration will always be explored using a range of different methods and traditional drawing will always be one of them.' (Vyner in email correspondence, 26<sup>th</sup> March 2013). The advance of digital recording technology and the introduction of new media do not spell the end of reportage drawing. For some, this spells a new way of looking, of engaging with the subject matter. Roger Tolson who sits on the Arts Commissions Committee at the Imperial War Museum welcomes new media as artists

have more platforms to engage with, from access to subject matter such as drawing from TV, using iPads, to online galleries which can be viewed by anyone from around the world.

## 7. SOCIAL COMMENTARY AND THE ARTIST

*'The Reporter is a private eye working in a public area and the subject of his report must not be inward or fanciful... That does not mean reportage has to be about 'important' happenings.'* John Carey.<sup>34</sup>

### INTRODUCTION

As the role of reportage artist developed from recording, the importance of his/her voice has become essential in society. As seen in the previous chapter, artists have the ability to engage in society with more ease than photographers and often gain access where normally one would expect to find hostility – and sometimes that hostility is present as will be seen in this chapter.

Apart from the technical elements of reportage drawing – the making, there is the human element – of the artist and the personal agendas, experiences and emotional responses he or she has to their subject. Yes, the viewer wants to see what the artists saw, as Tabitha Salmon said of her exhibition of Russian drawings, but often there is more of a back-story that supports the finished results.

This chapter takes a look at the working of reportage artists documenting every day life, using examples of drawings to illustrate the motives behind the work produced, and engages with the visual presentation to give sample

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<sup>34</sup> Faber Book of Reportage 1987



of drawings that are a representation of a particular society and what they say of that society.

## PURPOSE AND INTENT: PROPAGANDA AND CHANGE IN MEANING

*'... nothing is important – or unimportant – except as it is perceived.'* John Carey<sup>35</sup>



Figure 36

Let us return to Figure 36. In addition to changing the geographical location of significant buildings in Minneapolis, Jane Webster had to fulfill another curious requirement in the illustration brief - that no fat people would be featured in her drawing. This had to be seen as a bright healthy American city. In not-so-subtle ways, advertising is the most widely form of embellishment used to communicate to the masses, and drawing is a quick

<sup>35</sup> Faber and Faber, 2003, p. xxx

and direct means of visual construction in the bid to win over consumers.

Gill Saunders, now the Senior Curator of Prints Within the Word & Image Department at the Victoria and Albert Museum and author of the latest publication of *Recording Britain*, in an introduction to the project described the scheme as a 'middle class endeavour'. (Mellor et al, p. 7). The importance of nature and the aesthetic value of the countryside were deemed as being of far greater value than the economic progress brought about by industrial development.

This rather more privileged class championed the preservation of the green and was responsible for the now lauded vast scale of green belt and listed buildings in England especially in London and its environs. (Not without its drawbacks in present day. In a Special Report on London, the *Economist* newspaper cites that the population in London is growing by 100,000 a year. ('Home is Where the Money Is', *Economist*, Special Report: London, 30<sup>th</sup> June-6<sup>th</sup> July 2012). The enthusiastic 'barbaric' demolition of Victorian houses to make way for the now painful eye-sore that is high-rise blocks of flats of the post-war period, caused a near-stampede in the listing of buildings, which combined with the establishing of the Green Belt makes it near impossible to meet the housing demand of an ever increasing population. There is no available land for the expansion of housing. This high demand in turn pushes house prices even higher, forcing the majority of the workforce to commuting, making life in general very expensive.) While not being the sum of, this is a far reaching consequence of a determined campaign, as highlighted in a later chapter, part of the aims of this project were fuelled by the fiery argument for the preservation of the

English countryside and indignant protest against the encroachment by aesthetically unappealing civilisation. In addition to this, the practice of watercolour painting, which was seen as an 'essential Britishness' (Mellor, David, *Recording Britain: A History and Outline* (Mellor et al, p. 13)) was to be championed in this bid to safeguard a sense of national identity. The Recording Britain project became not just about preserving the British landscape and way of life, but the British artist, and the British skill, 'watercolour drawing', too.

In 1942, the drawings from Recording Britain, over 1500 of them, which were initially viewed as a collective at the National Gallery, were divided into smaller exhibitions according to their geographical origins and showed in their respective 'homes'. These touring exhibitions were featured in different venues within the counties, from schools to libraries, therefore returning to the people that lived in these environments depicted. (However, not without criticism. An exhibition at Slough Library in 1942 produced scathing criticism from a columnist known as 'Sweep'. He denigrated the drawings stating that it would have been better to employ photographers to do the job instead.) Interestingly, the Pilgrim Trust, the main funders of this project were unhappy with the works being viewed and discussed with the ordinary folk that were encouraged to attend the exhibitions. (There were guides to these exhibitions who encouraged viewers, talked them through the drawings and encouraged discussion in a bid to show that modern art was for everyone and could be understood.) The fact that the drawings were on show in accessible public spaces such as canteens (known then as British Restaurants) went a long way towards opening these works to the average worker who did not attend galleries. This was an affront to the

Pilgrim Trust who refused permission for the drawings to be printed out as inexpensive books that the public could afford and enjoy.<sup>36</sup> The Council for the Encouragement of Music and the Arts (CEMA) funded these touring exhibitions, and was in part funded by the Pilgrim Trust. These exhibitions soon became a part of the ongoing propaganda, presented to the public as an alternative to travel and taking holidays off work for the war workers, with the suggestion that there was no need to travel when the holiday destination could be visited by viewing the drawings by local artists from the desired areas.

The use of reportage as propaganda is still alive and well, as illustrated by the experience of the artist, Xavier Pick. With the persistence of wars abroad, governments that send troops over have to justify their expense, both in human and monetary cost to the taxpayers. No situation called for the pacifying of the British populace more so than the invasion of Iraq. Pick travelled to Iraq with the British Forces in 2008 and 2009, and the American Forces in 2011. He recalls the first trip, commissioned by the British Ministry of Defense: '... in Iraq the word that was never said was 'Oil'. My briefing was to announce to the world that we are building a better place for the Iraqis, hopeful times ahead. Unfortunately this has been proven to the contrary by recent history and the foreseeable future. Another word that wasn't mentioned was 'propaganda'. I was embedded as a journalist as they didn't know where to put an 'official war artist'. 'It's called 'Influence' not propaganda, I was told by the officer looking after me. I spent my time either with the Media Operations unit for the British, or the Public Affairs

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<sup>36</sup> It was not until years later that the trustees agreed to consider the publication of the drawings if an appropriate quality would be presented. In a process that took 5 years, a set of four highly quality volumes could be purchased at a considerable cost, obviously unaffordable to the average working class individual at whom the exhibitions were aimed.

Office (PAO) for the US forces. They both worked in very different ways, but their common purpose was to show us 'journalists' a positive story to influence both sides of the conflict. If I had created bad ripples, then I would have been out of the country very very quickly. I felt there was so much to learn here, so I had to tread lightly and smile with a good heart.' (Over email correspondence, 3<sup>rd</sup> April 2013)

Pick was in a very sensitive situation. The controversy of the war back home made it essential for the government to paint their military intervention in a positive light, leaving no room for the artist's personal sentiment. Xavier Pick is clear on his own stance. 'Lets get one thing straight, I have always been totally and utterly against the invasion of Iraq but this wasn't something that I wanted to announce when I was invited out the first time by the British MOD. But as a practicing Buddhist, my stance has always been one of non-violence.' His pacifist sensibilities allowed him to tow the line. 'I didn't really mind about this, I feel my role of an illustrative artist is to spread happiness rather than make controversy. I felt there was so much to learn here, so I had to tread lightly and smile with a good heart.' (Over email correspondence, 3<sup>rd</sup> April 2013). The resulting images were not unlike Linda Kitson's, which portrayed soldiers, engineers, hairdressers carrying out their daily routine, both at work and leisure. (Figure 26 (p. 106) and 37) Of course the outfit doing the commissioning have a clear objective and cannot be counterproductive in their decision-making and choice of artist. When I asked whether the Imperial War Museum would commission an artist who's sentiments were decidedly anti-war, Roger Tolson's response was unsurprisingly diplomatic. 'There is a place for sentiment that asks why we are at war, and what alternatives



there might have been.’ (Over email correspondence, 3<sup>rd</sup> April 2013).



Figure 37

Matthew Cook, when reflecting on his work from Iraq and Afghanistan wars remembered the uncertainty of the reception of his work while setting up the Iraq exhibition in a gallery off Tottenham Court Road. ‘... people are either going to be interested or they are going to lob a brick through the window – I wasn’t sure of the reaction,’ he recalls. (In conversation (29<sup>th</sup> October 2009), 33:00). He thinks that the drawings gave a far more personal view than photographs and for that received a lot more interest than anticipated. Cook’s work was not pro-war and he further explains that it is key for him that he is historically accurate. Iraq now being out of the hand of British troops renders his drawings as an historical record, and for that he sees his drawings as a responsibility, albeit a self-inflicted one. He finally admits that in reality, he is too busy working to get philosophical about his work and is more of a doer than a thinker, drawing whatever he finds curious or interesting.

## THE REPORTAGE ARTIST AND CARICATURE DRAWING

*'Satire and documentation are, after all, merely different sides of the coin.'*

Paul Hogarth<sup>37</sup>

There are reportage artists for whom drawing is a running commentary on society with the intention of invoking a response from the viewer. Across the world, artists have used their work as platforms to raise awareness and rouse the public to act in political or social situations. 'Yet why should an artist's way of looking at the world have any meaning for us? ... a way of looking at the world implies a certain relationship with the world, and every relationship implies action.' (Berger (1960), p 16). Jill Gibbon has long been an activist against the military-industrial complex, the trade network that links governments, arms manufacturers and other organisations that have a stake in wars. Most of her politically charged drawings are made from observation in arms fairs where she managed to gain access, often before being expelled from these events.

In a talk she gave at the annual Drawing Research Network annual conference in 2010, Gibbons spoke of the opulence and lavishness of these fairs; women in low cut tops handing out show catalogues, fashion catwalks set up amidst the latest missiles and body armour. The glossy façade presented a reportage dilemma. How could she apply the purely physical representational approach of observational drawing to reflect on what the

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<sup>37</sup> Hogarth (1986)

lay behind this setting? 'It is a continual challenge – how to represent this, without simply reproducing the veneer.' (*Radical Reportage*, 2010).

Drawing men in sharp suits and slim models in the latest fashion would do nothing to show horror of the reality behind the weapons and those trading in them. To begin with, Gibbon adopts the conventional means of observational drawing to create the actual setting. The non-visual elements of the situation call for a different tact. '... to convey emotional and political aspects of the event, I use parody and exaggeration. And when I notice a slip in the polite façade, I emphasize it.'

Grotesque overweight potbellied characters with ghoulish faces laugh as they pose in front of weapons, obviously invoking the feeling of the enjoyment of wealth created through destruction. 'To evoke the dubious alliances of the military-industrial-complex, I have emphasized this element of flirtation. By exaggerating the tongue, hair and eye make-up, I have attempted to evoke the predation and seduction of arm dealing.' (See Figures 38 and 40) These drawings are juxtaposed with similar offerings from George Grosz (Figure 39 and 41) who was highly critical of the Nazi regime and like Gibbon drew from observation while adding animal faces to his characters in a mockery of the ruling classes (Gibbon's explains that her characters' faces are composites of people walking by as she avoids vilifying individuals). In Figure 38, a lecherous man with an evil grin flirts with a woman with garish make-up, her breasts hanging out of her blouse and in the background, missiles hanging on display, which is a reflection of Grosz's *Pillars of Society*, depicting illicit sexual dealings. (Figure 39). In the following two drawings, a similar theme of debauchery is explored – the



wealthy living off the misery of the poor, and in the case of Gibbon, the unseen dispossessed, ravaged by war. In Figure 41, *Early at 5 o'clock!* Grosz has incorporated two scenes, one of poor workers off to work early in the morning in smoke and dirt, while the masters carouse and get sick in their excesses. The fixtures and objects included further express the wealth and that comes with the exploitation of the poor.



Figure 38



Figure 39: *Pillars of Society*, George Grosz



Figure 40

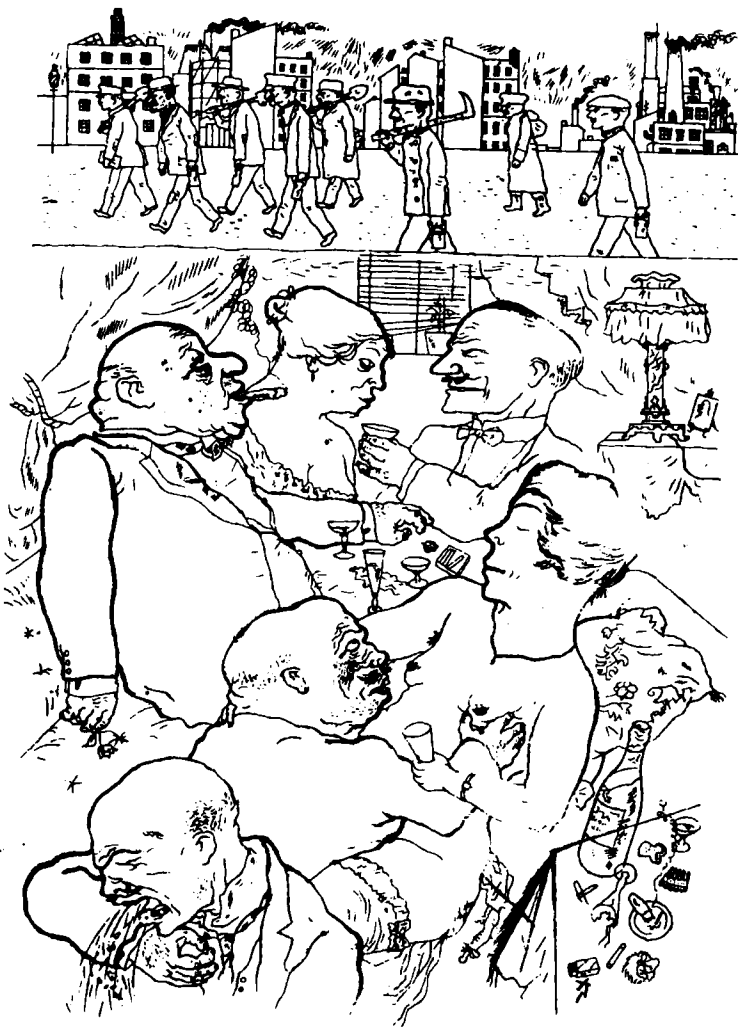


Figure 41: *Early at 5 o'clock!* George Grosz

It is interesting to note the different ways Jill Gibbon and Xavier Pick deal with the subject of war. One manipulates her way into the heart of the system and openly declares it an outrage, displaying the ugliness of the system that benefits from it, often getting herself into trouble for it. The other is a conscientious objector and is willing to play by the rules, choosing to use whatever access he gets to look for the humanity in the characters involved. Both are seeking peace. Jill Gibbon attends protests and gets arrested for it and Xavier Pick builds relationships with the soldiers and seeks a way in to observe the citizens of the countries invaded. Gibbon uses simple stark line, not as neat and angular as Grosz, the briskness of her drawing pace coming through and adding to the tension of her intent. Pick's layered drawings, which are a combination of observation and photomontage, are built up in colour and line and have a feeling of available time to observe and think. His subjects are treated with sensitivity and consideration in line with his aims. These two artists employed the similar instrument of reportage drawing, with a similar intent - peace - but with different means of conveyance.

## **SUBJECTIVITY AND THE CALL TO ARMS: MALIGNANT SOCIAL PROBLEMS**

It has been my experience that the more powerful reportage images have been the ones that invite questioning from the viewer about the scene. A seemingly mundane scenario may end up carrying a heavier story that

needs telling.<sup>38</sup> Questioning beyond the surface goes a long way towards understanding what the artist is trying to say. Sometimes the artist is not really trying to say something but by capturing what could be a normal scene on a street brings into discourse a social issue that needs tackling.



Figure 42

Jill Gibbon's drawing (Figure 42) is a simple representation of her feet and a container of food with a spoon lying in it. This is one of a series of drawing she made of her feet and scant else in a police cell after being arrested for protesting at a blockade of Faslane Nuclear Missile Base near Glasgow. Being a peace activist against the arms trade and the British taxpayers' money being spent on wars, Gibbon's cause can be described as just in a

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<sup>38</sup> A good example is a recent project I undertook documenting the last five weeks of the Wandsworth Mounted Police Sables. What on the surface were drawings and horses and their riders and instigated conversations about the demanding work of mounted police officers and government spending cuts and management decisions that led to the closing of that particular unit, which is vital to patrolling of neighbourhoods.

country that claims to have freedom of speech and the right to protest. The sparse detail calls for more information about her surroundings, which invariably leads on to the political controversy behind her incarceration.

As mentioned, I am often asked whether I make drawings of Kenya that speak out against the many political and social ills, as many of my counterparts do. Despite being verbally passionate about what can be done to improve on my country, I maintain that my drawings are not a platform for that. However I welcome any discourse that arises out of the scenes captured in my work. Figure 43 is an example of how the recording of the every day can raise issues about a specific society without intentionally being political. This drawing portrays a scene all too common in the streets of Kisumu. Every few metres, without fail there is a group of men milling around listening to each other heatedly debate about politics or women, two common hot topics. This is a symptom of a serious problem in this area - the high rate of unemployment amongst men.<sup>39</sup> There are too many men gathered under any available shade doing nothing but talking all day. Fig 44 is a typical scene at a popular bus stop on a highway connecting Kisumu and Kakamega. There is a woman roasting maize (partially obscured by the tree) whose children play around her all day. The little girl up the tree is dressed in rags that have long lost their original colour and are a dirty grey. She plays in the tree and pauses to watch children her age heading home from school in their brightly coloured uniforms. Primary school education was declared free yet there are still many children who still cannot afford to attend. There may be no fees but there are other costs such as uniforms

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<sup>39</sup> I wrote an essay, *Reflection on Kisumu*, expanding on this in Appendix I.

and books, skilfully slotted in that keep many poor families away. Free is not free to all.

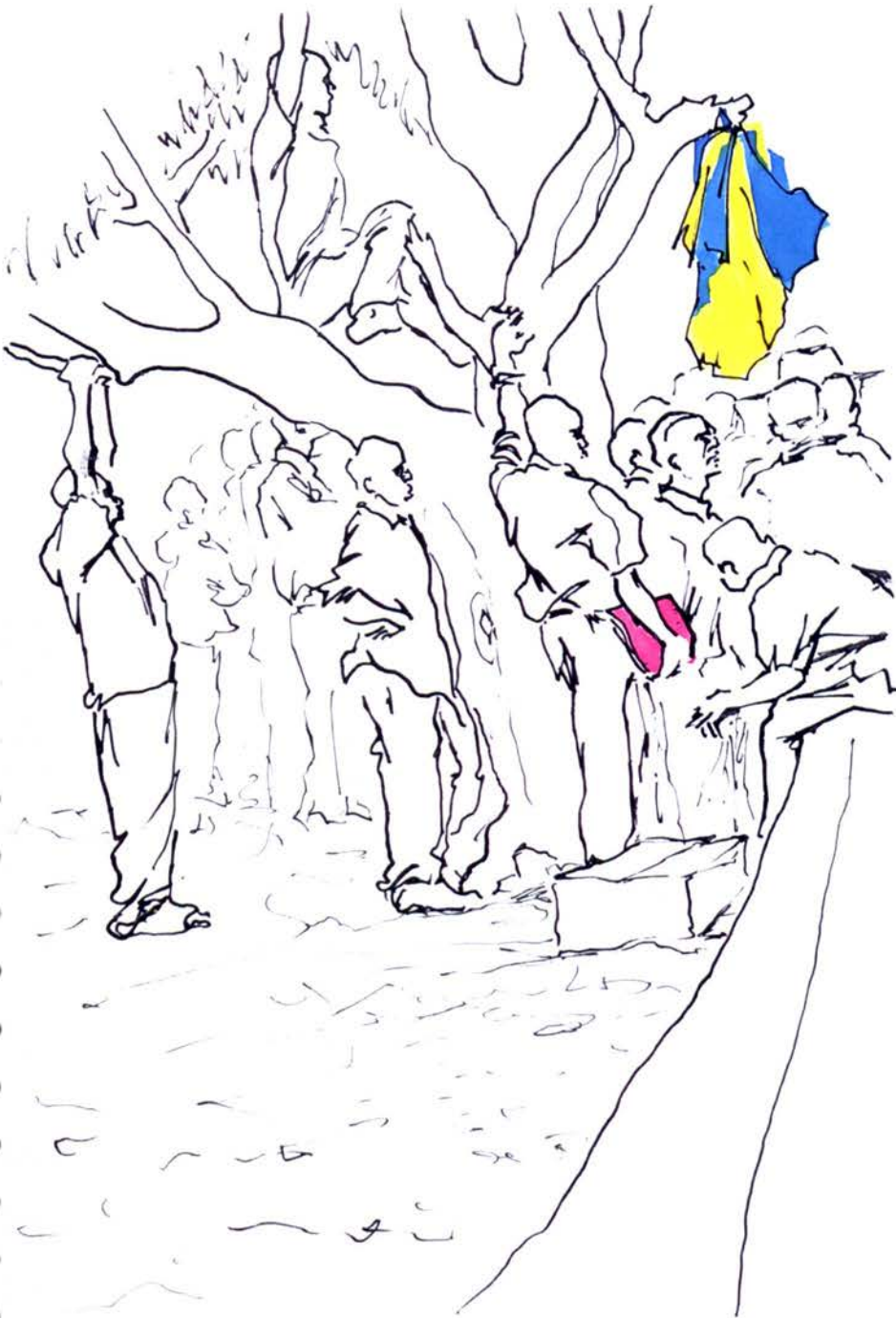


Figure 43



Figure 44

On the flip side there is often meaning attached to work by the audience that the artist did not intend, and it then can become more politically charged than expected. Often this happens if there is particular emphasis about a situation at the time, say for example in Matthew Cook's drawing of a soldier urinating against a wall (see Figure 73 (p.183)). He explains the change in tone due to it being set in war. 'With the conflict, it is a big serious subject. Instead of just – look someone having a piss against a wall – that's not really 'pissing in Afghanistan' – it's just pissing.' There are often

times when I myself am asked about the political meaning behind my drawings, especially if they are set in Kenya. The expectation is that I should be politically motivated and address 'African Issues' that are invariably concerned with gender inequality, threats to the girl-child such as Female Genital Mutilation and lack of education, corrupt government and post-colonial problems. My response remains the same. I draw what I see and if issues arise from the content, then let it be so.

## **SEQUENTIAL AND DIAGRAMMATICAL DRAWING**

When drawing processes, especially processes of making things, often a single image will not suffice. Figure 45 is a sequential study of 10 drawings documenting the activity taking place at Kisumu Airport, between a plane's landing and taking off, from passengers disembarking to when it finally takes off not long after with the new load. Fig 10 also has a place in this section as it also serves as a diagrammatical drawing. It illustrates the process of rendering worn car tyres down to strips of rubber to be re-used for tying goods together and metal to be melted down and recycled.



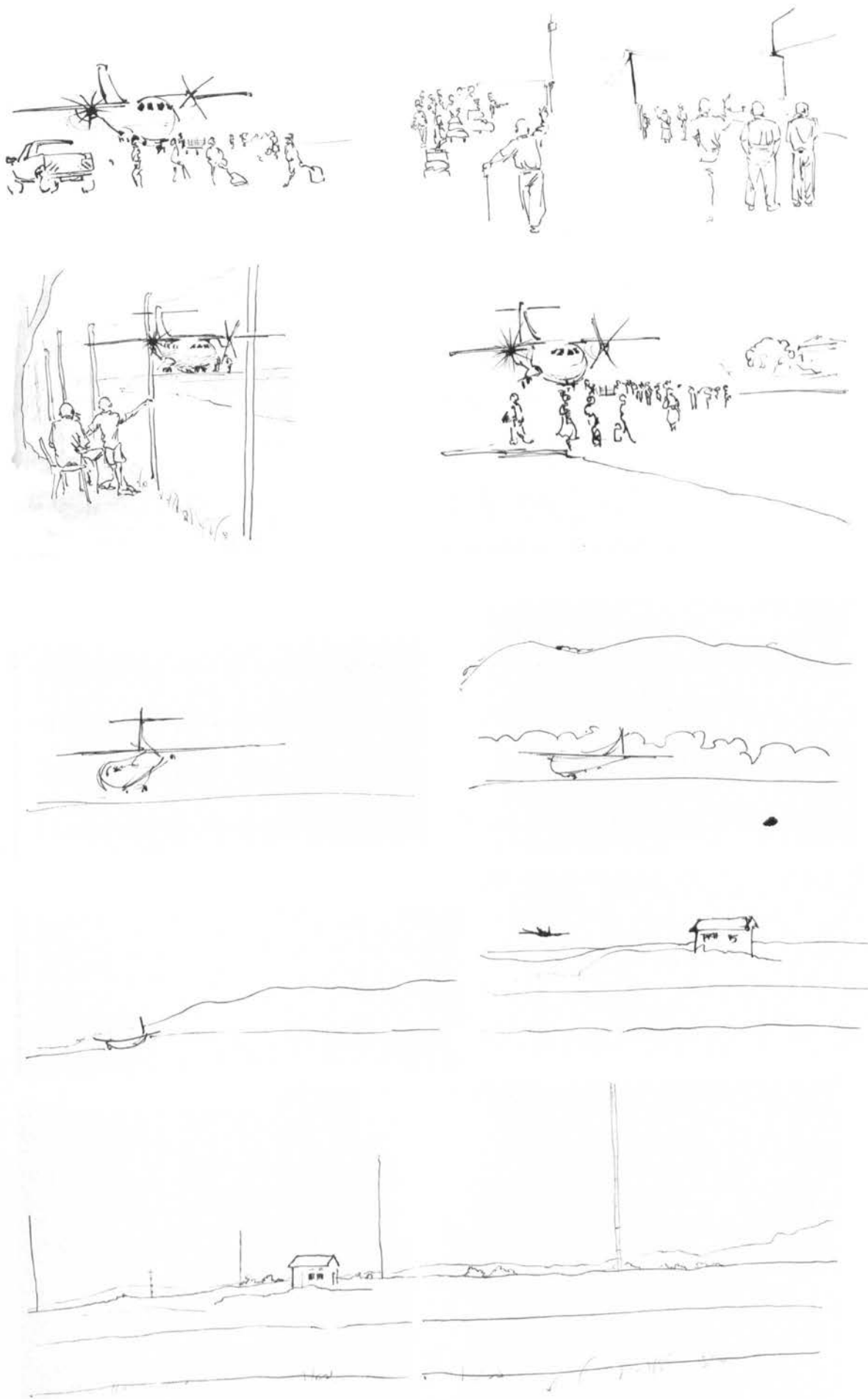


Figure 45

## **SOCIAL IDENTITY AND PLACE**

This is another visual dialogue-based section that looks at common scenes captured by artists that capture the holistic sense of a society through people and place. These range from small-scale industry to social landscape formed by casual gathering spots, and infrastructure such as transports systems and markets. In some cases I have juxtaposed drawings of Kisumu with drawings of similar themes with other artists to illustrate the commonality in communities, regardless of cultural background or even place in time. It also serves to consider the various treatments of a similar scene by different artists and the effectiveness of technique or style.

Figures 46-51 look at this most communal space where news is exchanged and intimate interaction is shared through hands-on grooming – the hairdressers’ shop. Here Linda Kitson’s drawing of soldiers, Felix Topolski’s *Le Grand Maitre de la Coiffure* and four of my own drawings from Kisumu explore this subject matter.



Figure 46



Figure 47



Figure 48



Figure 49



Figure 50



Figure 51

Figures 52 and 53 have a common theme of bicycles, the poor man's car and taxi in Kisumu (here Harun the bicycle mechanic whose business premise is an open air spot by a busy highway works away in the wake of passersby's feet), and a useful backdrop in Topolski's Paris.

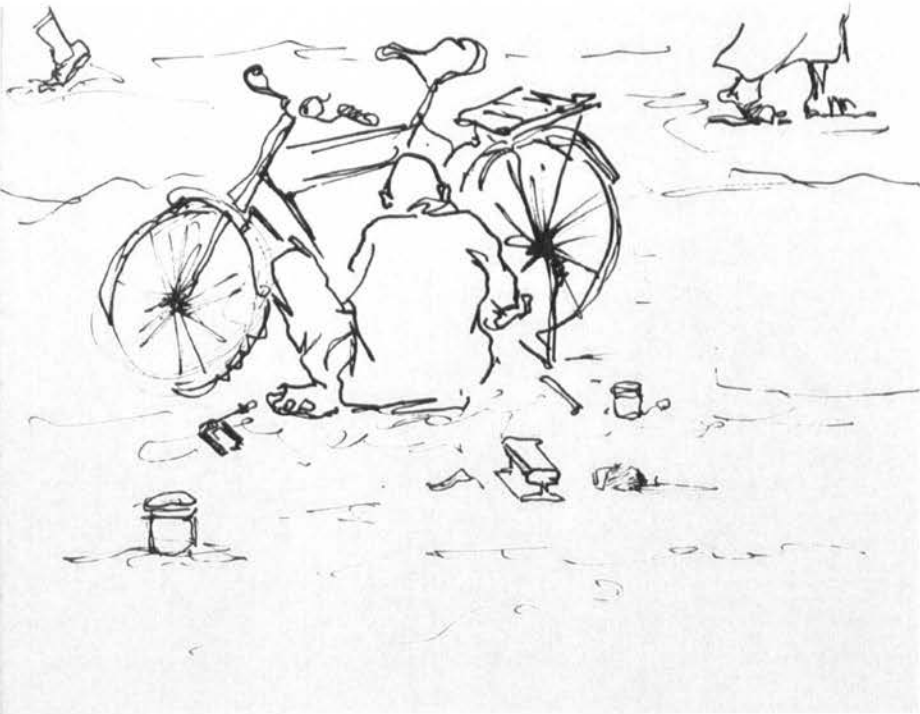


Figure 52



Figure 53



Figure 54 is a scene of a market stall near the noisy Kisumu bus station (Figure 55) where conductors yell their destination in a bid to drum up custom, as drivers (in blue shirts) await their turn once the *matatu* (mini-bus) ahead of them has filled up and departed.



Figure 54



Figure 55

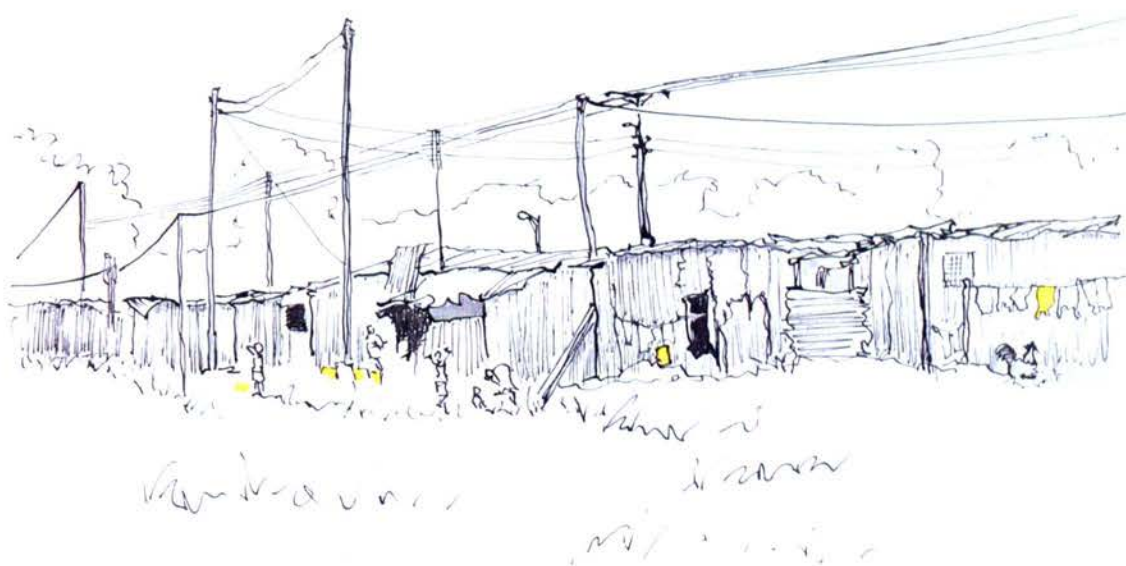


Figure 56



Figure 57

My drawing of the back of shops with overhanging electric and telephone cables lining a busy road (Figure 56) and George Butler's drawing of a stilt village in Lagos (figure 57) echo the common urban landscape found in poor

regions where locals make use of pieces of wood and corrugated iron sheets, building rows of structures for homes and businesses. Another common scene that I documented several times is the morning gathering around the day's newspapers and discussions of the same, seen here in Figure 58.

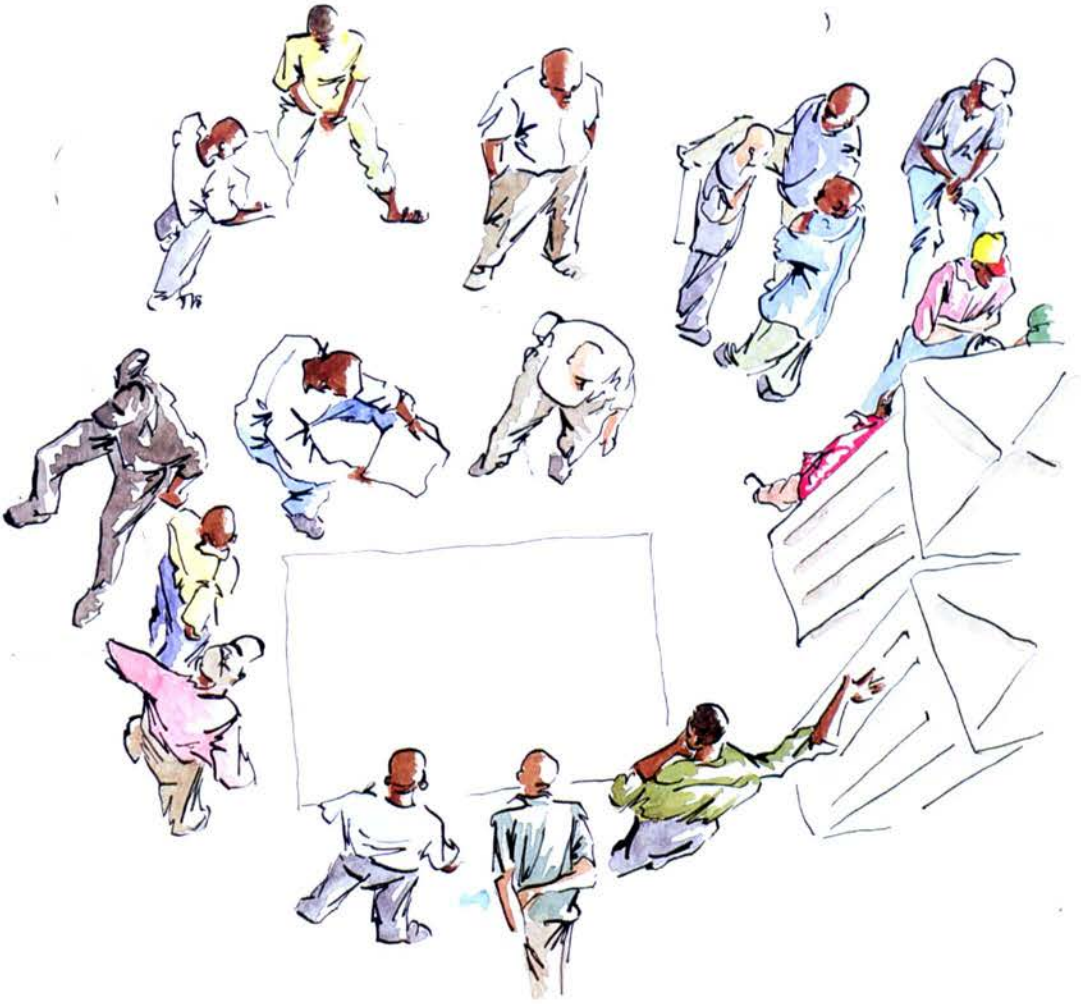


Figure 58

Figure 59 and 60 both look at working outdoors, known as *jua kali* (meaning very hot sun, in reference to the conditions artisans such as the broom makers in the former drawing work in) in Kiswahili, with Xavier Pick's Marsh Arabs building homes with reeds resonating the same theme.





Figure 59



Figure 60

## EMOTIONAL ENTANGLEMENT

*'When we talk about observational drawing we need to be careful not to focus on vision in isolation, as if the eye can be separated from the body. It cannot. We experience places with our entire body, and through our social, cultural and gendered backgrounds.'* Jill Gibbon.<sup>40</sup>

Emotional distress or response to a subject influences how drawings are produced, or even affects whether the drawing is made or not. This is usually due to the subject matter and how emotionally involved the artist is. Some situations call for artists to push themselves beyond their emotional sensibilities in order to produce the work required of them.

Henry Moore did not draw while underground during the London bombings, made it clear that he was more concerned about the people, the subjects of his studies and their sorry situation, than the importance of direct observation for the sake of his drawings. He did not, as expected, draw from direct observation. 'I never made any sketches in the Underground. It just wasn't possible. It would have been like making sketches in the hold of a slave ship. One couldn't be as disinterested as that.' (Moore (1988), pp 11-12). He made an effort not to be observed while making written notes by the people lying side by side in rows along platforms and tunnels. He even went as far as climbing up stairs in order to be out of sight of them while jotting down his observations. Later he would make drawings, at times adding the verbal notes made while underground. (See Figure 61).

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<sup>40</sup> *Radical Reportage*, 2010

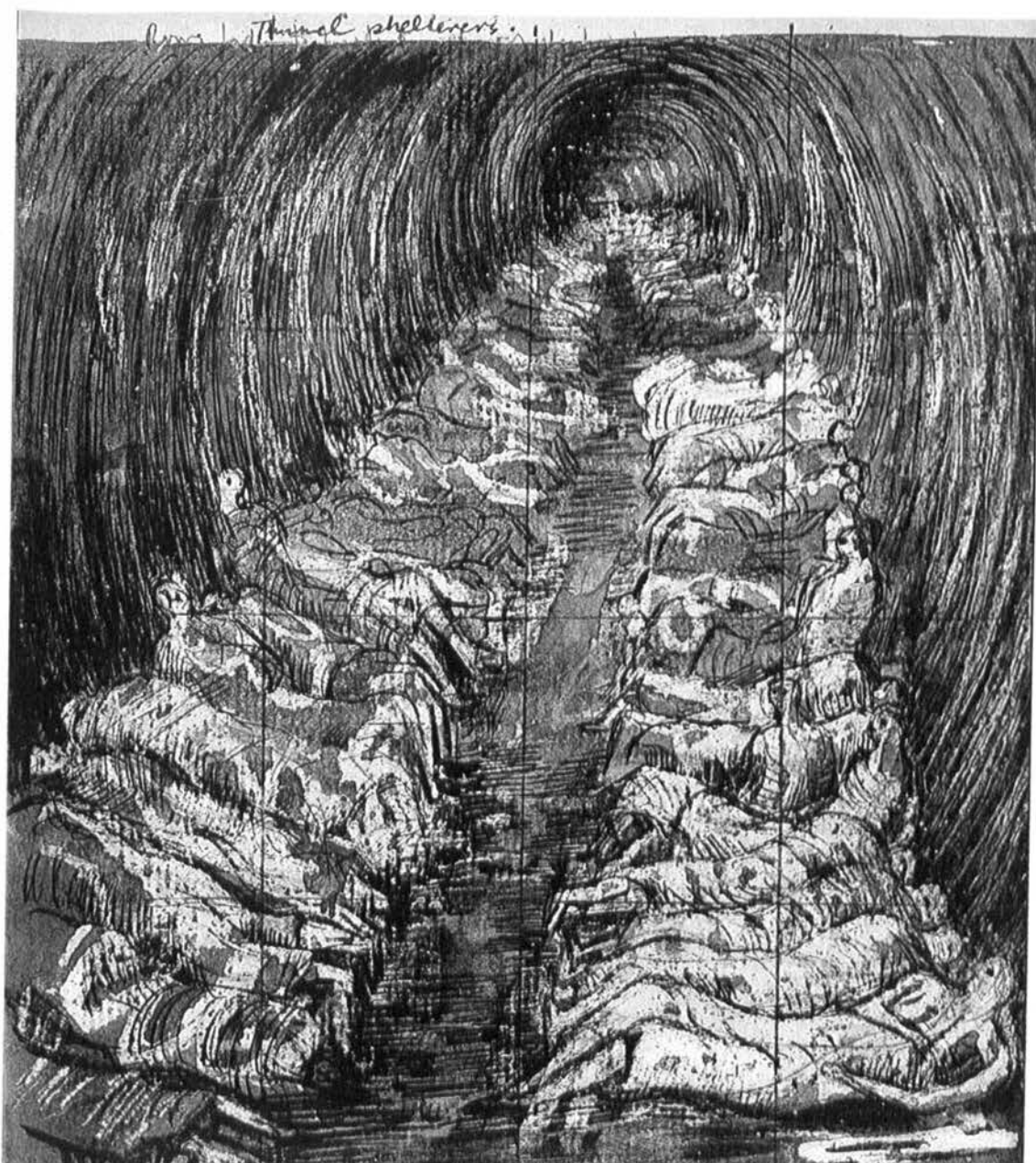


Figure 61

Even in this surreal environment with people living in such extraordinary circumstances – strangers lying side by side as their homes were destroyed above ground – as expected, the oddity eventually became the norm. Sanitation, bunks and canteens were eventually added to this underground setting, normalising the situation and taking away the strangeness that was the initial appeal and inspiration to work. On the recommendation of Herbert Read, Moore went on to draw in the coalmines (this time in situ)

and produced numerous drawings. After he had completed these, he asked not to be commissioned any more by the War Artists' Committee.

Discomfiture associated with drawing subjects who are in a worse off situation than the artist is not unusual. Depending on an individual's sensibilities or sensitivity, one has a feeling that one is exploiting others' misfortune, either by putting it on display and therefore exacerbating further the sense of vulnerability, or even by profiting financially from it.

From the very start James Agee was tormented by the kind of job he had to do, seeing this kind of journalism as exploitation of a poorer class of folk. He saw the project as 'obscene', 'thoroughly terrifying' that one group of human beings (his employees) saw it necessary to 'pry intimately into the lives of an undefended and appallingly damaged group of human beings, an ignorant and helpless rural family, for the purpose of parading the nakedness, disadvantage and humiliation of these lives before another group of human beings, in the name of science, of "honest journalism"...' (Agee and Evans, p. 5). He incorporated his feelings of guilt and revulsion into his writing, seemingly unable to divorce the two. Walker Evans' images are reminiscent of many of the scenes I saw in Kisumu. There is a sort of uniformity that comes with poverty, regardless of what culture or country is represented. Figures 62 (Evans) and 63 (mine of Kisumu) depict poor children, their bleakness evident despite the different visual methods employed.





Figure 62

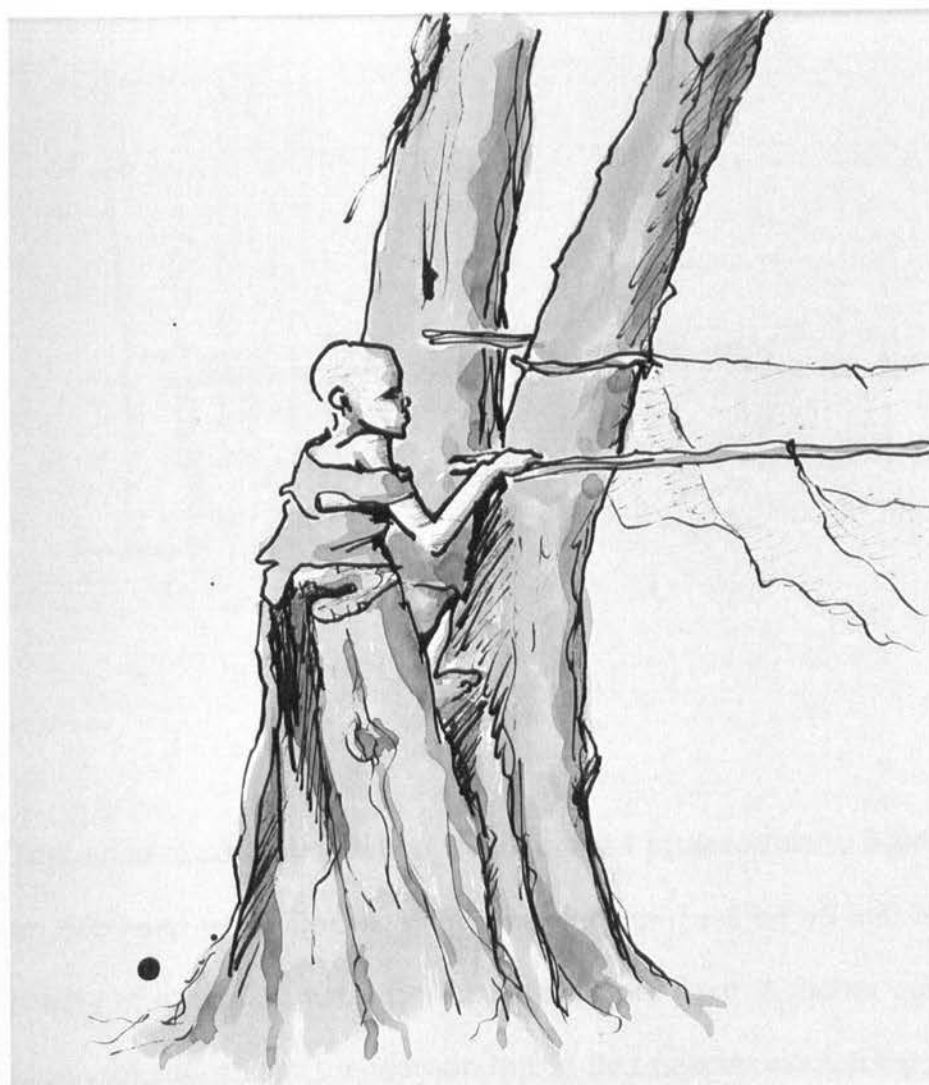


Figure 63



During the first trip to Kisumu, straight from London, I was very aware of the stark difference between my situation and most of the people I was drawing. The truth is that the most arresting images were not those of gleaming supermarkets and malls but of ramshackle shops and abodes made of found sheets of corrugated iron and salvaged pieces of wood. (See fig 64) The little girl in rags in the tree was infinitely more engaging than a clean neatly dressed man in an office. Sitting in slums, intently documenting poverty roused feelings of guilt, of a kind of exploitation in me. After all, I wasn't going to sell them and send the money back to improve these conditions.



Figure 64

This unease continued when I was invited to accompany a group of doctors on two road trips. One was to Suba hospital (see fig 65 and 66) where the reality of Kenyan government hospitals hits hard. A rather callous doctor loudly explains that the woman in the bed nearby wouldn't go home, as it's easier for her to be in hospital as her husband beats her. (This is a situation

they see all the time – women reluctant to be discharged, the disease-ridden atmosphere of the hospital a relief compared to what was waiting at home). Many of the patients suffer from preventable diseases. The noise of my conte pencils scratching loudly on my paper as patients lay unmoving with worried relatives watching them, all poor beyond imagination made it even more uncomfortable for me.<sup>41</sup>



Figure 65

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<sup>41</sup> The last straw was the same callous doctor enthusiastically asking me if I wanted to draw a 'screaming woman' giving birth. That was beyond my endurance. His resentment at being posted in the outback echoed with his insensitivity towards his patients.



Figure 66

Sometimes well-meaning individuals make the drawing scenario untenable. On one occasion I went out into the remote countryside with HIV/AIDS doctors. The idea was to draw life in the village, and especially at the mobile clinic being held at a local primary school. (There are no hospitals nearby so the HIV Clinic periodically makes the long bumpy ride on muddy roads to the village.) A good plan, until the pharmacist accompanying us decided to be 'helpful'. In the crowded waiting room he made an announcement in Luo, which I didn't understand, pointing me out to the patients, gesturing widely. He asked something and some mumbled back,

to which he repeated the same phrase again and they all responded.<sup>42</sup> I was taken aback, as suddenly the people I had planned to draw unobtrusively all turned and proceeded to stare unblinking at me. The pharmacist had declared I was there to draw them all, and that I would provide them with copies afterwards. Unsurprisingly, the atmosphere changed. HIV positive people already suffer from stigma and marginalisation enough as it is but to declare they were to be stared at by a stranger, scribbling mysteriously on a pad was beyond insensitive. Needless to say, it became too uncomfortable and I left after ten minutes.

The ability to withstand or be overwhelmed by human situations while drawing is part of commentary. Some artists work their way around it (Moore) while others incorporate it into their work (Agee), whether or not that strengthens the work is another issue altogether. This experience I had accompanying doctors may have had an altogether different outcome had it not been right at the start of my drawing trip. Had it been in the second, when I was clearer in intent, more focused and more confident, there might have been different drawings to show.

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<sup>42</sup> When I asked what he said he said he made them agree to my drawing them. To add even more discomfort, he made an elderly man stand up so that I could sit despite my protestations. The rural poor look up to doctors and would never disagree and no matter what I said the old man would not return to the three-legged chair (there were no other chairs available as the patients lucky enough squeezed onto a few benches lining the makeshift waiting room after queuing out in the corridors.)

## PERSONAL SAFETY AND RISK

*'Unlike the photographer who can click and run, the artist is stuck sharpening his pencils whilst the bullets fly.'* Ronald Searle.<sup>43</sup>

This section of the visual presentation demonstrates situations that may turn for the worse for an artist drawing a scene. Fig 67 shows a suspect being bundled into a car, a crowd protesting. Knowing how these situations can suddenly turn into violent riots in Kenya, I was aware that I might have had to make a dash for it.<sup>44</sup> Fig 68 is a drawing made by Matthew Cook while he and his companion took shelter in a ditch as they were being shot at in Afghanistan. When I asked what made him think to stop and draw when their lives were clearly in danger, his response was, 'Well I was stuck in a ditch, I couldn't go anywhere.' (In conversation (29<sup>th</sup> October 2009), 34:58)

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<sup>43</sup> Hogarth (1986), p. 165

<sup>44</sup> In Kenya it is safer to be as far away from any protest as it will more likely erupt into violence with the special anti-riot police, the indiscriminating GSU (General Service Unit) who apply their special brand of rioter dispersal – teargas, batons, and sometimes live bullets to protestors and bystanders alike.





Figure 67



Figure 68

The Imperial War Museum's Arts Commissions Committee are very careful when considering artist's safety in relation to a project, as Roger Tolson explains, 'We risk assess commissions and if entering a conflict zone, will work with the military to prepare artists.' (By email correspondence, 2<sup>nd</sup> November 2012).

## **OBJECTIVITY IN REPORTAGE DRAWING**

'For all that we may aspire to objectivity when drawing, it is only relative.'  
Jill Gibbon<sup>45</sup>

The initial proposal of this research project included the subject of objectivity. It is a concern that grew out of the contemplation of the recording nature of drawing - that there is an aspect of drawing that served the need to simply record the visible, the observed subject with no desire to embellish or draw any particular attention to a particular feature on the part of the artist. In conversation with me, Deanna Petherbridge was very clear on the issue of objectivity - all reportage leads into commentary. She stated that the issue of objectivity is resolved in the fact that the artist, by even the selection of what to include in the drawing, has made a subjective decision.

Yet there seems to be a place for the resetting of boundaries of objectivity and subjectivity within drawing. Perhaps the two can be represented as a sliding rule, objectivity on one end and subjectivity on the other. John

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<sup>45</sup> *Radical Reportage*, presented at the Drawing Research Network annual conference (2010)

Berger drew his father soon after he had died. Looking at the drawing at the end, he was perhaps more detached from the emotion he felt while drawing. He tries to explain this. 'Nobody could draw a sleeping man with such objectivity... Objectivity is what is left when something is finished.' (Berger (2005) p.68). He returns to the finished drawings on and sets a distinction between the drawing when viewed by himself (his father's being poured into them) and by stranger (a death mask). This 'change which has taken place is subjective. Yet, in a more general sense, is such a subjective process did not exist, neither would drawings.' (Berger (2005) p.69).

Jill Gibbon suggests that the act of observational drawing – the 'dispassionate eye' translating form as contour line and the use of a fixed perspective (which is contrary to the natural roaming human gaze) implies objectivity. (*Radical Reportage* (2010) talk). There is a detachment from the subject when one deals with the pure physicality of the form in order to get it down on paper.

Linda Kitson became the first official woman war artist when she was commissioned to record the Falkland's War in 1982. Apart from being exposed to atrocious climate conditions (in one instance she describes being lifted and carried back, unable to move, after sitting for about 15 minutes drawing in the bitter windy chill), Kitson was faced with the now iconic scenes of war, and had to make a crucial decision about her work. 'At Goose Green, I had to make a decision about what aspects of war I should record. My brief was to record the sights that might be recognised as common experiences. I decided then that the horrifying sight of parts of human bodies, a helmet with a head still in it – pictorially sensational and relevant



though they were – were not part of my brief; neither were the war graves, which were recorded on news film and in photographs... I still question that decision. Would it have been a stronger, cautionary record if I had used such shock tactics?’ (Kitson, p. 65).

In conversation George Butler considered the issue of aesthetic appeal and the importance of this in reportage drawing. He said that drawing has the ability to deal with the most horrific scenes but still retain beauty. His drawing of a young Syrian boy with one leg an adult oxygen mask strapped to his face in hospital after being hit by a bomb deals with a profoundly tragic subject. Yet where a photograph may have communicated horror in depicting his maimed boy and grief of his father, the way Butler has skilfully dealt with his media and composition evokes beauty and admiration in his artistic ability while communicating tragedy. The visual language found within drawing has the ability to muffle harshness, which can also detract from the reality of a situation.

It can therefore be decided that artists who are more interested in the recording aspect of reportage and concerned with being more accurate than lending voice to a cause edge a little closer to objectivity on the sliding rule, even though there are many other decisions being made in their minds while observing. However, there are artists whose style of drawing may be regarded as highly subjective for example, due to its loose or minimalist nature. They may have less emotional or philosophical response to their subject matter but due to their conveyance may be seen to be making a statement. It is indeed all relative.

## **8. THE ECONOMICS OF REPORTAGE DRAWING**

### **INTRODUCTION**

The premise of this project is to research the nature and role and relevance of reportage drawing through its practitioners and drawings specifically produced for this. It is obvious to anyone observing the trend in popular art today, that conceptual work has taken over and figurative, and in this context, literal representational documentary drawing can be argued as unfashionable. With this in mind, how is reportage drawing commercially viable for an artist who lives off their work? And who is willing to invest in it? How has it survived or adapted to the change in trend that visual art has succumbed to?

This chapter examines the systems in commissioned work that keep reportage drawing running by engaging with the narrative of various artists' experiences and using examples of organisations that have commissioned them. There is one common denominator: a brief from a client, and a choice made based on the style of an artist.

## **COMMISSIONED REPORTAGE DRAWING**

### **War Artists at Work**

During the Second World War, being an official war artist offered a measure of security, especially at a time when resources and finances were limited. Being officially commissioned as a war artist was a means of not only being part of recording a hugely significant event in history, but also having an income. Henry Moore was in such a position. He had a fuel allowance, and having moved out of his studio accommodation due to bomb damage, he had the means to travel back and forth on the underground, where two days a week he spent the nights in the tunnels watching people and making discreet notes. He was also provided with a permit, which allowed him access to any tube station whenever he wanted.

Major conflicts in the last few years have been covered by various artists; Matthew Cook in Iraq and Afghanistan, Xavier Pick in Iraq, and more recently George Butler in Syria amongst others. While bringing the reality of war to the public using drawing can be argued as noble and necessary, it is not an easy feat and comes with complications. War zones are dangerous places and many artists are unable to cover the financial cost of travelling and maintaining their stay in what are usually far-off countries. Having the (usually partial) financial backing of a commission goes along way towards securing such a project. Working under an established or authoritative name such as the Imperial War Museum or the Ministry of Defense gives not just credence to such an artist, but physical protection too. Depending on the circumstances, this can also lead to unexpected hindrances, as

discussed earlier in the case of Xavier Pick who could only access areas he was allowed to observe in order to engineer a specific message through his drawings. Namely, that the war in Iraq really was for the good of the people.

In 1972, The Artistic Records Committee replaced The War Artists Advisory Committee that played a key role in commissioning artists to document life during the Second World War. Its role was designed 'specifically to fulfill a perceived need for records of contemporary conflicts in which British forces were engaged.' (*The Art Commissions Committee (previously Artistic Records Committee) Of The Imperial War Museum*, sent as email attachment: ACC\_info\_AUG07.doc ) on 19<sup>th</sup> March 2009, from Imperial War Museum). Ken Howard was the first artist to be commissioned and was sent to Ireland in 1973. The 1990's saw the ARC concentrating on current conflicts with turbulence in the Gulf, Bosnia and Kosovo holding both local and international attention. In 1995 the terms of reference of the ARC expanded to include all aspects of British and Commonwealth Forces, not just in conflict but also in civilian and humanitarian efforts.

In 2001 the Artistic Record Committee was changed to The Art Commissions Committee to reflect that the commissions were not just about visual records but artist responses. This meant a turn-around in the kind of work that was produced.

Over email correspondence, Roger Tolson (former Head, Department of Art at the Imperial War Museum) discussed the commissioning process. 'In particular, we look for projects that can create work that would not otherwise be possible, either through our contacts or our name.' (Email

dated 2<sup>nd</sup> November 2012). The first step is to 'define the subject area. The committee then submits names and ideas and we shortlist from this and invite proposals in response to a v [sic] open-ended brief.' The ACC is very careful not to be prescriptive about the outcome in the brief. 'We want the best work possible.' This has led to responses that are unlike the traditional offerings of Charles W Cain and Edward Ardizzone, who produced figurative drawings of scenes of war in foreign lands, studies of the daily realities of soldiers and portraits of individuals involved. To this day many such drawings remain the only visual records of certain conflicts and are carefully stored as archival material. Tolson admits that film and photography has dominated in visual recording, which leads to one conclusion; if the camera has the documentation covered, this leaves the artist free to react in any way he or she sees fit.

The Imperial War Museum has a very impressive collection in their prints and drawings room. When browsing through the drawings, one does indeed get the impression that there is a representation of every war the British have been involved in. With the focus turning from visual records to artist responses, where then does that leave reportage drawing as far as the Museum's commissioning is concerned? Tolson explains: 'It remains a vital part of our collection and we still acquire drawings from contemporary collections. We have talked about commissioning someone who would draw but we are not prescriptive about media.'

## **Welsh National Opera and The Nexus Project**

When Penny Simpson took up the position of Head of Media at the Welsh National Opera, she came with no experience or knowledge of Opera. It was when she observed the monumental scale of background work that went into the final performance – from specialist cutters in wardrobe, crew moving sets, to the logistics on the road (14 trucks carrying everything from washing powder and washing machines to keep costumes clean) that she decided it would be good to document this process. It was in her opinion, important to make people more aware of the work that goes into an opera production, that it relies on a wide range of skills and is more than just the elitist criticized expensive show it is perceived to be. This system that revolves around the work of carpenters, milliners and other skilled craftsmen is 'a sort of ecosystem' (In conversation (16<sup>th</sup> September 2009), 2:13) that the public is not aware of.

Just before she took on the position at the opera, two visual art students had received permission to draw during the final dress rehearsal. Simpson, being from a visual arts background with a great appreciation of Goya, Grosz and documentary drawing as well as documentary photography, saw this as an opportunity to bring a different kind of visual reflection to business of opera, which was not the expected 'samey' (her words) photographic study. Jane Webster was approached and undertook the one year project. Simpson reflected on the curiosity towards the drawing once the project began - it was unusual because apart from streets artist or specialist commissions, which are rare, the average person hardly gets an opportunity to be drawn. It was a way to get the company used to the

different new things happening and also gave the Opera a whole range of visual material that documented the work behind the scenes.

What of the response from the public? There was interest in purchasing the drawings. 'There is more visual awareness. I think people are more able to relate to pictures. Another thing is the breaking down of the impression that this (opera) is an elitist art form, but we're saying this is about these sumptuous costumes or there's make-up going on, "or hey, look at this scene here, this is what life's like back stage." It's not all glamour.' (In conversation (16<sup>th</sup> September 2009), 5:45). The thinking behind this is that by using a visual format that people relate to – drawings that unveil the process of putting a show together by ordinary people - Simpson reasoned that it would lead people to consider seeing a production for themselves. 'Maybe it is that curiosity that people have about something that is drawn that they find familiar... and the curiosity of how it is done – it just draws people in a different way.' (In conversation (16<sup>th</sup> September 2009), 7:22). In addition to reaching out to the public that does not consume opera, the WNO also included the drawings in their Opera Life magazine, juxtaposing them with documentary photographs from a commission. They received positive feedback on the 'refreshing' take on a format that was dominated by photographs. In addition to using the drawings on their website, in print and other materials, they had an exhibition which they could use as a reference point during talks, and of course was further exposure for the artist. It worked both ways because when Jane Webster had an exhibition in London that included some of the opera drawings, it opened the WNO to a much wider audience.

## **Drawings as archival material**

Some situations are ideally suited for reportage drawing that photographs would not do justice to. These are usually scenes that are in reality visually unexciting and need to be brought to life by the application of various techniques or mark making of an artist. Matthew Cook's style of drawing is much more figurative and literal and is ideal for many of the commissioned he has received from organizations that have archival material in mind. When the Rothschild Bank were moving office buildings, they commissioned Cook to draw work going on within of their offices and in them as part of a historical record for their archives. It is frustrating to draw around neat offices with people sitting upright at their computers, let alone photograph, but there is something more engaging about a drawn line that adds intrigue to the finished visual, and this is a niche market for reportage artists. Jane Webster, who like Cook also drew at The Times building before they moved maintains that an artist who can draw in corporate settings will not want for work. Here, an artist's job is to 'make really complicated things simpler, really boring things more interesting, or really mundane things look more glamorous and romantic.' (In conversation (28<sup>th</sup> February 2011), 8:34). A boring office setting depicted in a drawing suddenly acquires a romantic feel making it so much more interesting than it actually is. (Figure 69, a drawing by Matthew Cook made at The Times demonstrates this.)





Figure 69

Cook has noticed that increasingly, he would be commissioned alongside a photographer. This raises the question about the artist's role as a documenter and the expectation of the work produced in light of the photographer's presence. In Matthew Cook's words there seems to be a situation that presents two bodies of work at the end: 'This is really what it looked like and this is an artist's impression' (In conversation(29<sup>th</sup> October 2009), 21:14). There seems to be less expectation of record making from the artist.

That being said there are organisations that commission artists to record on their behalf *because* of tradition. The Clothworkers' Company has had continuous records since the 1600's and after seeing Matthew Cook's drawings in the Times they commissioned him to draw for their archival

collection. Unlike many reportage drawings that have a very public purpose and intent, this and many similar commissions are private and go straight into storage as records much like historical financial records that will never be on public display.

## **COMMERCIAL REPORTAGE DRAWING**

*'... your job is to make shit sparkle.'* Jane Webster<sup>46</sup>

Jane Webster, at the start of a conversation about reportage drawing is unabashedly candid about her motivations. She is a commercial artist and her reportage drawing is a means to a financial end. She has no political ideals or social commentary to discuss in her work. Her drawing puts bread on the table and pays the bills. After speaking to artists who have their personal interests, passions and philosophies expressed in their work, it is a refreshing change to listen to an artist who is not only a skilled draughtswoman, but sees her talent and abilities as the way to make money.

When the Welsh National Opera commissioned her to record the work that goes on behind the scenes, she was paid to work as an artist for a year drawing all the operations. They got the benefit of having the resulting unique images on their website as part of their promotion, and Webster got to sell the original work and keep the proceeds. However not all commissions are as straightforward or financially rewarding.

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<sup>46</sup> In conversation (28<sup>th</sup> February 2011), 8:30

Unlike many of the artists discussed in this project, Jane Webster has an agent. She doesn't have to look for work because that is what an agent is for. She does not even have a website or blog, now part of most artist's lives. Interestingly, the recent financial crisis has fallen in favour of the reportage artist. According to Webster, she has had more work in the last few years, as the cost of commissioning an artist is lower than that of hiring a photographer. The artist does not have expensive equipment that needs shipping, or require perfect conditions for the ideal image.

Commercial reportage artists often find themselves having to 'embellish the truth' of a situation. In a previous brief chat with Webster she alluded to a past commission where she was to provide illustrations of St Petersburg in the winter. (Figure 70) She travelled to Russia and was out for 10 days in a city that was flooded, cloudy and dull with absolutely nowhere to sit. The work produced was expected to attract tourism to the city, and there was nothing in that time to lure even the most hardy. Here, according to the artist, is the perfect situation to have commissioned drawings rather than photographs. An artist can rework the drawings, create light and add the picturesque snow that would have proven problematic for a photographer. An artist's materials can be simple, and if loss or damage to them occurs, improvising is easier.



Figure 70

## **KNOCKING ON DOORS**

*'Don't ask a company for money because that makes them nervous.'*

Tabitha Salmon<sup>52</sup>

In her experience, Julia Midgley found that most of her work came from knocking on doors. Apart from a few projects that landed on her lap, the majority of work came from her starting a project at a venue, offering to work for free, while showing the drawings to the people in the place. That generated interest - evidence that she produced good work, the suggestion that they could use the drawings and that they could have an archive. In her opinion, reportage drawing is about getting people on board. Allowing

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<sup>52</sup> In conversation (27<sup>th</sup> October 2009), 31:31

them to see that it is not only a good idea but to their benefit to have drawn records.

Tabitha Salmon echoed these sentiments when discussing her own experience as a reportage artist. After her first reportage trip, which took her to Russia, she began to look for opportunities to observe and document. She was interested in the process of construction and decided to focus on that as it put her in the unique position of being the only person in possession of moments that will never be re-captured.

'If you're trying to get a commission from a company, you want to approach them when they've got something to celebrate.' (In conversation (27<sup>th</sup> October 2009), 30:04). This advice proved invaluable to Salmon. If a company was either posting good profits, a special anniversary or some other significant event, this was a prime time to present them with the opportunity to have drawings marking this event (not to mention they would be more likely to be financially generous too). Her formula: *Don't ask for money. Get permission. Show the drawings afterwards*. This proved to be a reliable formula, once one was able to speak to someone willing to grant access.

In 1985 Tabitha Salmon was walking out of Bank tube station when she noticed a sticker saying *Bovis 1885-1985* (Bovis Lend Lease, now known as Lend Lease is a major construction company). On returning home, she phoned the company's headquarters in London and spoke to the receptionist, introducing herself and asked, in light of it being their centenary year, to be granted permission to draw at a couple of their most

prestigious construction projects. She added that she would show her resulting drawing and if they were interested they would 'pursue it' and if not she would keep the drawings. She was put on hold and transferred about three or four times, each time perfecting as she repeated her request until she was put through to a woman ('lucky it was a woman,' Salmon says of the person who later turned out to be head of PR (In conversation (27<sup>th</sup> October 2009), 32:20)) who invited Salmon to bring in her work to show her. It just so happened that at that time Bovis had two major construction projects underway – the Lloyd's building of London which was causing a stir and mysteriously shrouded in scaffolding and netting, and the Queen Elizabeth II Conference Centre in Westminster. Tabitha Salmon was granted the permission she needed and had access to both sites where she produced drawings that she duly showed to the company.

In addition to buying a selection of drawings the company sponsored an exhibition of the work at the Barbican. This was the launch pad for other access to another significant project - the construction of the Channel Tunnel. Unfortunately this project was fraught with contention between the various companies involved and the man who allowed her in left only to be replaced with someone who was not interested in her process drawings that showed mud and scaffolding instead of a gleaming finished tunnel. This meant that she would get no support from an exhibition, but managed to sell some drawings to a few interested individuals.

When still drawing the tunnel, she got an article published about her work in a civil engineering magazine which led her to meeting Jeremy Beeton, the head of the company manufacturing the suspension cable to be used on



the Tsing Ma bridge. (This is the same Jeremy Beeton who went on to be the Director General of the Government Olympic Executive) This meeting led to what Salmon describes as the only proper commission she ever had. Mr Beeton needed tokens of gratitude for the companies he worked with on the project, and Salmon provided the 'solution to his shopping problem' (In conversation (27<sup>th</sup> October 2009), 48:04) in the 20 images he commissioned from her. (Figure 71 is an example of one of the drawings. In order to draw this series, Tabitha Salmon was harnessed to the bridge in windy conditions.) He not only paid her upfront for the work but flew her out to Hong Kong about five times. According to Salmon, one of the frustrations of chasing commissions was that companies were not willing to pay for the work upfront.



Figure 71

Tabitha Salmon no longer works in reportage drawing. She maintains that her appetite and interest hasn't changed but she is still trying to find the best way to and express her ideas. Tim Vyner continues in his pursuit and leaves a parting thought, 'Good reportage works in the present but also provides a lasting image of a time and place and that is why it is important to seek out interesting commissions and to convince editors to make sure projects are commissioned and continue to contribute to the cultural landscape of our time.' (Over email correspondence, 26<sup>th</sup> March 2013).

## **CONCLUSION**

There is an obvious distinction between the two kinds of reportage drawing work situations. As a reportage artist one has to create opportunities to create and sell work. Jane Webster, like Matthew Cook, made drawings on The Times' old premises before they made a monumental move, and while it was not a commission, she sold all the work to the archive.

(Unsurprisingly, she also received had lot more work off that.) At the onset, Webster said that her reportage work might not bring half as much money as what she gets from commissions. The self initiated project is all about the artist's own perception - 'your twist, your take on a story.' (In conversation (28<sup>th</sup> February 2011), 8:54).

However, when it comes to reportage drawing in publication, especially in advertising, the artist has to work with the art director's perception. 'You're basically a hand. They can't do it. They can't make those marks. It's not your idea. You get really clear instructions. They don't pay you to think...



you have to be willing to do it again and again and again...' (Jane Webster in conversation (28<sup>th</sup> February 2011), 9:05). In this commercial world an artist is selected for a job based on the style of work, and sometimes something as simple as having illustrated a similar thing before. This is really the world of the client.

## **9. CONCLUSION**

### **INTRODUCTION**

The purpose of this thesis is to reflect on reportage drawing as a contemporary practice, its role in present day society and factors that have influenced its development or relevance. Additionally, this research discussed this practice in the light of other documentary media. This chapter sums up the arguments and findings, detailing out the conclusion of certain issues, both for the practice as a whole and its implications on my own work and why I continue in this particular genre of drawing.

### **WHAT IS THE SIGNIFICANCE OF DRAWING WITHIN REPORTAGE?**

One of the key questions considered in this thesis was the importance of the drawing as a means of documentation. What it is able to do and what its limitations are. This has been explored both theoretically and practically, via the words and experiences of others and using my own drawings of Kisumu to illustrate this. There are arguments for photographs due to the speed and ease of capturing an image, and the possibilities of enhancement. Yet there is even more enhancement and embellishment possible with a drawing, as evidenced by the contributions of reportage illustrators like Jane Webster. A drawing may take longer to create than a photograph, yet it holds the attention of the viewer longer.

Why do people value drawings? As long as there is the saturation of photographic images, there will always be a call for something different to bring a change to visual landscape in mass media and other platforms - corporate scenes that need depicting in a way that makes them more interesting, well worn destinations that have been over-photographed that need a fresh look, et cetera. There is admiration of the hand-made skill, the ability to create or recreate a scene in a world where one can get lucky and capture the perfect photograph, yet one cannot get lucky with the perfect drawing - one needs to know how to draw to begin with. It takes hard work and years of practice to be able to combine all the elements necessary to keenly observe and retell using appropriate marks. While for some, including certain aspects of art education, observational drawing is outmoded, artists who can 'draw properly' will never lack work, as echoed by an illustrator I met recently who shared his publisher's dismay at the lack of drawing skills in emerging artists approaching him for work.

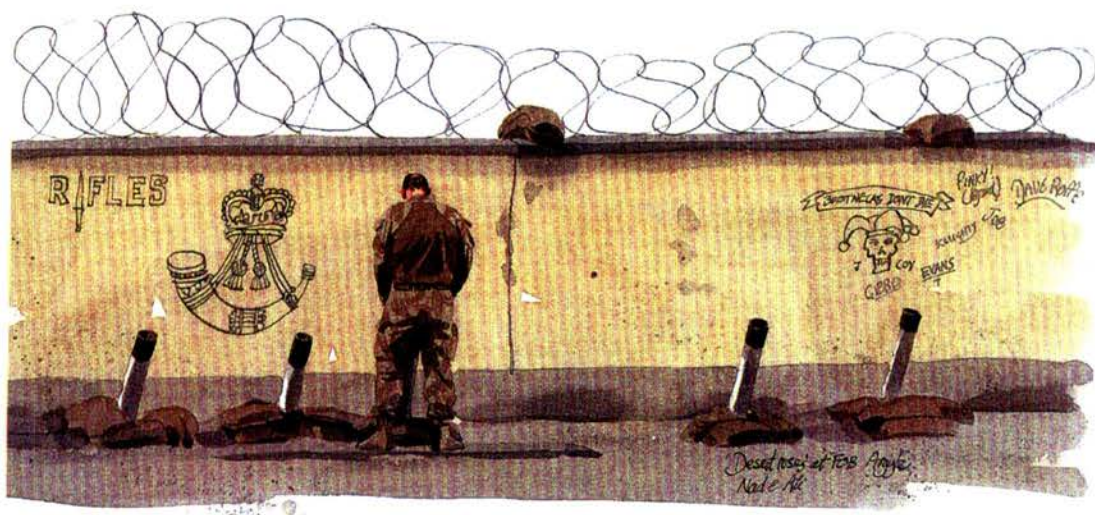


Figure 72

Matthew Cook's drawing of a soldier urinating against a wall (Figure 72) became a shared memory, and even more poignantly than he expected

when he received a call from a woman who said her son had been killed a month before he was there, and she could see his name scratched into the wall in his drawing. I had the privilege of having an exhibition of some of the drawings I made as part of this PhD research in November 2013. During the private view, an elderly Indian man in a turban approached me. He proceeded to tell me that he was born in Kisumu but had not been back in forty-six years. He was very emotional about seeing the area he grew up in and it was a very special moment for me to see his memories revived through my observations.

A simple act of observation and depiction moves from being an artist's memoir to being the memoir of others either because they are in some way connected, whether or not they were present during the making of the drawing. Line and mark making hold the viewers' gaze causing them to look longer, as they identify more with the scene, placing themselves in the artists' place. In a way society takes ownership of a piece of reportage drawing. The eyes of one become the eyes of all.

## **OBSERVATIONAL DRAWING AND BEING ON LOCATION**

As with everything in life, drawing is and will continue to evolve. The tools, aids and methods of disseminating these drawings will develop as the technologies that support and enhance life do. First hand observational drawing too, is not a relic of the past. Young artists such as George Butler are evidence that the tradition of observational reportage drawing will not be lost in years to come, just as the showcasing of their drawings in some

of the national papers in Britain such as The Times and Guardian continues. There are certain fields that heavily rely on documentary drawing such as archeology, where drawing as recording is taken further, with exact depictions of digs. Here various people work on the same drawings of various layers, as a dig progresses bringing an element of communal reportage. Reportage Drawing will also remain a respected vocation in the printed press as long as cameras are not allowed in British court rooms and Court Room Artists are relied upon to visually record hearings of high profile cases.<sup>56</sup>

Documentary drawing is not antiquated, and while new media has changed the way people view documentation – mobile phones having high resolution cameras what capture any event to hand have allowed for anyone to be an eye-witness – the reportage artist still has a unique voice. There is a special power a drawing has in its ability to capture attention, and there are places an artist will gain easier access to than a camera-wielding journalist. However, with there are still obstacles in the way of artists – corporate sponsored events and many venues present conditions and formalities that did not previously exist. Tim Vyner describes this change, 'The world has become a more cautious and sometimes more cynical place when it comes to reportage. You need permission, (accreditation) to get access to some of the places I try to record; Olympic Games / World Cups etc. I miss the

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<sup>56</sup> Since the writing of this thesis, the ban on cameras in British courts has been partially lifted, ushering in the first recording of proceedings on 31<sup>st</sup> October 2013. Until now the public relied solely on court room artists and their drawings to provide images from hearings during high profile cases, through printed media. The implications of this change in law are not without serious impact on the artist's métier within documentation in this specific scenario.

anonymity I used to have as someone who drew on location without any accreditation.’ (Over email correspondence, 26<sup>th</sup> March 2013)

Tim Vyner also serves as an example of a reportage artist fully embracing the digital age. Over the years as I have spent time in life rooms, I have seen more and more artists – both professional and students – drawing directly onto computer tablets. One begins to fear the demise of traditional drawing methods. However much ease these digital tools add to the drawing sphere, it is the presence of the human face engaging openly with the human subject that allows for more trust than with the camera. It is this openness as the work is being made, that has allowed artists like George Butler (and myself) to gain access to African regions where drawing is seen as a money-generating skill where hand drawn and painted signage still exists and is necessary for small businesses, however rural.

Interestingly, I found that on leaving, say a hair salon, the people in there would thank me for drawing. I felt there was a certain respect given to drawing as a vocation amongst a poorer section of society that relies on manual labour to make a living.

One has to accept too, that technological advances are here to stay and that drawing as reportage calls for even more cross-disciplinary collaboration. As Matthew Cook said earlier, an artist will often be engaged simultaneously with a photographer on the same project. As with the development in courtroom drawing, it may be expected that less and less situations will call exclusively for documentary drawing. Yet this does not spell the death of the practice. It just provides more opportunity for those artists who have the ability to draw as a niche creative skill and ability.

It is heartening to think that economic downturns can favor reportage artists. History has provided us with examples of how drawing has been championed (for example through Mass Observation – Leo Duff has talked of how she has contributed her drawings towards that end – and the Recording Britain project) and will continue to be championed through movements such as Campaign For Drawing and their counterparts. As long as there are Masters Degree programs on drawing (Wimbledon, Oxford Brookes and others still offer such), institutes such as The Prince's Drawing School, and various interactive and exhibition spaces dedicated to drawing (Centre for Recent Drawing, The Drawing Room, et cetera), online forums and resources, there always will be dialogue as educators and thinkers cheer on this visual language, and in turn, the practice of reportage drawing. The versatility of the making, as evidenced by artists such as Jane Webster who is adept at utilizing whatever materials are at hand, and create drawings to suit specific briefs make this a marketable skill in the creation of drawings for commercial use.

## **THE REPORTAGE ARTIST IN SOCIETY**

In all this, society is still in need of artists with the ability to keenly observe and convey the ordinary in fluent visual language. 'In the same way, Matthew Cook's pictures are more like a letter home or a diary entry than a volume of carefully crafted memoirs: they tell us just how it was at the time, not what it seemed like when events had passed into memory. It is this freshness and immediacy, this ability to convey a wholly distinctive sense of

people and places, that I find so compelling.’ (Professor of Military and Security Studies, Cranfield University, Cook (2005) p. 5)). This statement sums up reportage drawing’s role in society. The sustained sense of place and experience of a time as it is before it becomes history that will be treasured and referred to time and again.

One does not need to be an anthropologist to acknowledge the importance of documenting ordinary everyday life. It is the preservation of and reflection on this that contributes towards self-awareness and knowledge as a society, and holds up the crucial mirror so that we as human beings can be educated, challenged, criticized and commended for the way we live our lives. Artists that document the realities of ethical and moral controversies such as Jill Gibbon are just as important as those that document personal walks, like Christopher Lambert. Every year for the last four I have been running a short Reportage Drawing Course at Kingston University and each group contains ordinary people who enroll because they would like to be able to make records of their lives – their holidays and everyday experiences. Even amongst the non-artistic public there is an interest in documentary drawing, the one form of documentation that requires full engagement of hand and eye skills. It is a personal grappling with one’s abilities and environment. People performing routine mundane tasks, working and travelling form the foundation of our existence on this planet.

Of course, the bigger issues need to be addressed. The likes of Cook, Pick and Butler and their depiction of areas of conflict are crucial. After all, war zones are the everyday reality of others, and we who are fortunate enough to be spared such disaster need to be educated and reminded of not just



our responsibility but reminded of the delicate balance in society that keeps us all from descending into chaos. Drawing makes tragedy palatable due to the combination of skill and aesthetic of mark making. The delicate balance between the beauty in line and horror of war combined in a drawing is a reflection of the nature of humanity – polar opposites at work in the everyday. Reportage drawing employs the human eye and observation at its most basic level while lending the artist a clear distinct voice.

## **MY PERSONAL REFLECTION**

Regardless of how straightforward and simple my intentions are in terms of leaning towards the recording aspect of reportage in my drawings, there will always be an under current of societal issues waiting to be discussed. There is always commentary as long as there is observation. At the end of the private view of my exhibition of the Kisumu drawings, I got onto a train with a group of visitors to the show and we discussed some of the scenes depicted. I told various stories attached to the drawings, especially one that was of a huge impact on me. In one of my sketchbooks I have a line drawing in sepia ink of an elderly European man who was in a restaurant I was eating in one hot afternoon. His companion was a Kenyan man who came up to see what I was doing. When he saw my drawing of the elderly man, he sat down to tell me about him. When he was fifteen years old, this elderly man was one of Hitler's bodyguards. Out in rural western Kenya. I was stunned. This was a piece of history that most people would not believe. . This man had the misfortune of being extremely bright in school and was thus singled out to be one of Hitler's special guards. When the Nazi

regime crumbled, his father petitioned on his behalf, pleading that he not be sentenced to life in jail as he was a youngster and did not fully understand what he had been drafted into. The courts conceded on the condition that he would never seek to gain employment in any government office. The young man went on to become a physicist, and via a long journey ended up living in rural Kenya at the age of eighty-three with a twenty-five year old girlfriend to tend to him. With no university willing to employ a brilliant mind in a too elderly body, this man lives a simple quiet life making videos, returning home to Germany every year for a few months to give talks from which he earns enough money to sustain him for the rest of the year in the countryside.

While drawing on the streets of Kisumu various people came up to me and told me their incredible life stories, from a young man hiding twelve strangers in his two-bedroomed house with nothing to eat but leaves when the post-election violence happened two months prior to my arrival, to a young girl in a remote village desperately wanting me to visit her hut where, despite having no art taught in her rural primary school, she had been making drawings all by herself.<sup>57</sup> Drawing in public has created meetings with people that I would not normally have interaction with. Their stories live on in the drawings, and maybe even more so if, as one of my companions on the train back from the exhibition suggested, the drawings form part of a bigger public engagement that includes storytelling.

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<sup>57</sup> To my eternal regret, the team of doctors I had ridden with to the mobile clinic started to leave and I could not accompany her to her home. What would have transpired out of our meeting? I have a drawing I made of her and can only hope that her having watched me draw for that brief time inspired her enough to keep at it.

As exciting and inspiring as it has been to meet and talk to well known 'drawers' in reportage and otherwise, it has been just as fascinating to come across unknown work online, or come across a book such as Christopher Lambert's journal of his long walk, and see strong, thought provoking, and even moving work produced in quietness, out of the limelight. It has been heartening to see many people get great satisfaction out of making their own visual memories and devote time to drawing various aspects of their lives or events. Not all good artists have been lucky enough to have found large public acclaim for their work, or even manage to make a living off it, yet they continue to find fascination in the processes around them and respond to them using drawing. Often too, with such simplicity. As Jeanette Barnes said to me, 'It's amazing what one can do with a burnt stick and paper!' This has been such an affirmation of both my personal journey as I find projects to work on, and as I teach reportage drawing.

I look forward to adding other locations in Kenya to this current body of work, and return to run workshops for young artists who otherwise would not have the opportunity to attend formal art courses. Reportage drawing is important, its means of conveyance will continue to be as diverse as the artists than engage in it, and there will always be a place for observation. How else would it have survived all these centuries?

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<http://www.eyemagazine.com/feature/article/sue-coe-eyewitness> (Steven Heller, *Sue Coe: Eyewitness*, Eye, Issue 21, Summer 1996)

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## **DRAWING BLOGS**

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<http://twitter.com/drawdrawdraw>

## **VIDEO AND FILM**

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Berger, John, *Ways of Seeing*, BBC, 1972

Scruton, Roger, *Why Beauty Matters* , BBC, 2009

*The Art Of War* (feature on war artists Xavier Pick, Arabella Doorman and Nick Bashall), BBC, 2009

([http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/programmes/world\\_news\\_america/8295943.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/programmes/world_news_america/8295943.stm))

*A life in Art*, Lewis, Barry & Charlaff, Emil, Tabitha Salmon, (short film:  
<http://vimeo.com/6445380>)

*Night Mail*, dir. by Watt, Harry & Wright, Basil, (BFI, 1936)

*Land of Promise: The British Documentary Movement 1930-1950*, (BFI,  
1931-1950)

A Record of an address by John Grierson at the National Film Theatre,  
August 1959

# APPENDICES

## INTRODUCTION

The Appendices are divided into two sections. The first contains two essays while the second is the audio files of conversations with some of the artists featured in this research. They are reference material, the essays being an accompanying reflection during the drawing process and formed a basis for the rationale, while the audio recordings are evidence of the verbal conversations with artists that have been referenced to in the written thesis. The quotes in the thesis have been time-marked where the artists have been quoted.

## I. ESSAYS

### Synopsis of Location Drawing Process

My preparation for this drawing trip began in London, with frantic collecting of materials, trying to fit it all into the two pieces of luggage I believed I was allowed to check in ('make sure scalpel doesn't make it into the hand luggage'), giving instructions to anyone coming to visit to bring me extra paper, all the while carrying a niggling worry at the back of my mind. Last year, the area I was going to draw in was the scene of horrific violence, mainly aimed at anyone from my tribe. Contested election results, fuelled by hostilities stoked by politicians reviving unresolved issues the government had continually swept under the carpet resulted in the deaths of over 700 people across Rift Valley Province, Nyanza Province (of which Kisumu is centre), and various slums in Nairobi, and over 260,000 displaced individuals. Various people assured me that it was fine now and I had nothing to fear, but I know how deep prejudices can run. This was awkward timing.

*I confess I spent a small fortune on 'proper' materials. I splurged on aquarelle pencils (I never use colour pencils) charcoal and chalk and*



*sketchbooks galore. I decided to buy the soft cover variety for a change. Being thinner, they are easier to fill and don't feel as 'precious' as the hardback ones. With the latter, the price alone places an expectation of careful drawing that inhibits experimentation and playfulness. The soft cover books feel more disposable and as a result, easier to rip apart e.g. take the staples out to experiment with the page layout.*

I considered colour, which I would normally add in the form of watercolour, but knowing that Kisumu was going to be hot, and knowing that Kenya is notorious for not having suitable pavements that I could sit on and draw, I decided on aquarelle pencils.

My first hurdle was at Heathrow when I found that I was only allowed 20 kilos of luggage in one bag, which meant leaving most of my things back in London. At least I had most of my paper. I had decided to split my drawing trip in two, allowing for a time of reflection and allowing for what I hoped would be a more productive second round.

### **1<sup>st</sup> Trip**

On the onset of drawing, many things struck me about Kisumu. The light was very bright, and typical of African setting, clothes, building and vegetation were brilliantly coloured. I started off quite tentatively with pen and ink and aquarelle pencils, but when I settled down to draw for instance, scenes from hair salons, I worked in black and white. In my journal I wrote, *'Lots of movement so no time for colour. Just wash. I felt discontent with the lack of colour. It is like I am giving in to the (dare I say, uninformed) masses that deem a monochromatic drawing unfinished. I thought that, held up to a coloured drawing, some of the quick black and white ones I drew paled in comparison.'*

Many things were going on in my head at the same time. I was aware of what a large part colour plays in Kenya, and that was distracting me. I was also aware that I was producing drawings that would be mainly viewed by people who had never seen Kisumu before, and as a result, I was drawing full scenes, in contrast to 'collecting information', which is how I often draw.

I was taking longer on my drawings and being oddly unsatisfied and increasingly discontent. A week into my stay in Kisumu I wrote the following in my journal:

*I am thinking too much towards the end result than the process. I am finding myself doing that too often. I pre-think my drawing and concern myself more with the end result than the process of observing, of looking of running the situation before my eyes, rather than through my mind. I think about what I will be taking back to London with me. Should it be a uniform body of work, with one style, a dominant medium, a clearly defined set of drawings?*

*Or what should the connecting thread be? That I drew them. That I was the one looking. That it was my eye, and maybe the style, media etc should take second place. I almost wish I had not looked at the other artists' work because I feel I can identify a 'Kitson', a 'Cook'... is one supposed to be able to identify a 'Kagia'? Almost every set of drawings I produced is different in style. There are those that I prefer to others. Some I find I have a discomfort about. I should have done this or that or the other. The burden of being a reportage artist and the ensuing pressure to come back with 'a body of work' is weighing on me and causing me to worry about just what I will bring back to London.*

*When I went to Korea I was just excited to be there and keen to see what there was to be seen. I knew that I would show my work when I got back but was certain of the fact that I would show the sketchbooks, as that was what I worked in. I didn't have the pressure to have to discuss and critique my work and add an academic angle to it.*

*Now that I am in an academic position I feel I am producing work 'that will be torn apart' I am producing work that will be dissected and questioned and the joy of discovering and drawing what caught my eye is gone. I find myself looking for a scene, rather than just looking. I am looking for the extraordinary to record. This was the enemy of my ethos, my process, which is drawing the ordinary, and causing others to reconsider the mundane.*

Writing down and therefore giving form to my apprehensions, was quite a relief, and sharing them with Leo and David and getting back positive results somehow unburdened me. I was able to draw more enthusiastically without thinking about the outcome. I was still drawing 'scenes', and still often considered colour. I found the aquarelle pencils awkward to use, being more at home with watercolour paints.

One of the more significant events that influenced my attitude was drawing in the early hours of the morning at Dunga Beach. Every morning night fishermen would bring in their catch for the local women to buy. I spent a few hours drawing all the activity, fascinated and overwhelmed by the busy scene. This was the only place in Kisumu that I felt hostility. I had both the fishermen and women being rude, intrusive and at some points threatening. (As I learnt from a loyal girl sitting next to me who seemed to find it important to translate all the threats later, my being from a different tribe was not a welcome trait). I found that my assurance and confidence of no longer being marginalised on the basis of my tribe was shattered. I felt insecure and alien. On a positive note, the little girl had very intelligent responses to the 'photography vs. drawing discussion)

I was getting a sense of the atmosphere of Kisumu, still primarily concerned with colour as with capturing the sense of movement in every day life. Looking back at the drawings I made then, they seem more pictorial, less as working drawings and more of a statement that is not looking to be added to.

## 2<sup>nd</sup> Trip

The minute I set foot in Kisumu for the second time, I knew the work I would produce would be different. I felt like I had already charted the way before and now needed to make concrete marks. I worked faster, was less concerned with end results and more with the process. My marks were looser and more gestural, more telling than before.

I returned to the fishing beach I had drawn before. This time round I quick studies, bits of information I found important, which were all stronger than the larger scenes from the year before. I also found that people were not as concerned with me as they were before. Looking over both sets of drawings, the earlier more panoramic drawings complimented the more linear and looser ones I produced the second time round.

I also abandoned colour, finding it not only time consuming, but also detracting from the clarity of the subject being drawn. I found this much more satisfactory.

Back in the studio, I have been able to categorise the drawings into themes that represent Kisumu for me, and out of them selected drawings that further represent these themes. There are many smaller studies that I feel are important but do not constitute 'a scene' that I have selected to experiment with in the next stage. I plan to experiment further with these and either work with them as a montage or play with the idea of scale. (I find the debate on the purpose of reportage drawing comes into these smaller studies. How they are to be viewed determines what I am to do with them. As small fragments they seem fit to accompany text but in an exhibition space they seem too small and 'separate'.

The themes I have categorised the drawings into are:

- Fishing
- Town and street activity (including trade)
- Lwang'ni (large fish eating row of shack-like restaurants)
- Airport (this is meant to be replaced in the next few years but is a great source of pride for the city)
- Markets

## **II. Reflection on Kisumu**

Numerous conversations and observation give rise to the expectation that an 'African artist' drawing from life in an African country should produce work that its riddled with the issues that the west generally associate Africa

with, and that it should be executed in an 'African style'. Kisumu is not spared many of the problems that other African cities or indeed countries seem to be struck by. Bad governance and its resulting problems: poor infrastructure, a high unemployment rate, poverty, et cetera. As far as health goes, Kisumu is home to a very high HIV infection and mortality rate, malaria, and for the period I had been residing there drawing, outbreaks of cholera that poor sanitation and lack of infrastructure (bad governance) propagate, amongst others.

There are other problems that I found incredibly alien from a cultural point of view, as my tribal culture is very different from the Luo tribal culture in this region in Kenya. While polygamy is recognized as a legitimate form of marriage with its roots in African culture, it is still inexplicable to my mind in the way I was brought up in Nairobi. I am aware of various friends whose fathers have 'another wife', whether legitimately formalised in customary marriage, or used as a means of explaining away 'the other woman' accompanied by surprise brothers and sisters.<sup>60</sup> In Kisumu, polygamy is rife, with co-wives accompanied by the odd girlfriend, often decades younger. Unlike my traditional trial home in Central Province which has a high drop out rate in education, Kisumu has a higher number of well educated people, especially men. In Kenya education is very valuable. In the past, children inherited family land from their parents, which ensured them security, a home and food, from the crops grown on it. Nowadays having land does not guarantee any of the above and money replacing barter trading with rains failing often, one is not guaranteed a bountiful harvest. Money is needed to buy food. One can only get money if one has a good job, and that is only obtained through an education. Education has become the new inheritance. Parents work hard and sacrifice even more to ensure their children get as far as they can academically and have what they themselves didn't have.

In the Kikuyu tribe, business acumen is often seen as being more valuable than having a university degree, which is why so many school dropouts get

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<sup>60</sup> For years this system has rendered many families in dire straits as bread-earners have abandoned all responsibility and walked off and 'married' a younger model. Tradition holds firm and the new constitution has a provision for this – a couple have to sign a prenuptial agreement concerning this issue.

ahead and run small businesses, which in turn, grow.<sup>61</sup> The stark difference I encountered in Kisumu, which is traditionally inhabited by the Luo tribe, is that there are many well-educated people there. Little bookstalls in supermarkets stock volumes published by locals - I met more people with undergraduate and post-graduate degrees than I would find in the town where both my grandmothers come from. I encountered several professors who had contributed significantly to their field, and many, many men who had Masters degrees. And this is where this ties in to the drawing and cultural visual reference.

Through conversations with locals, and after a few days of observation while drawing, I was able to ascertain that Kisumu has a problem with idle, unemployed, yet highly educated men. The problem goes beyond the economical problem that faces the rest of Kenya. In a nutshell, a traditional Luo man with a masters degree will have been unemployed for years because he expects, with his qualifications, a high paying job with a big office and if possible a car. Starting from a junior position and working up the ladder is incomprehensible. That is lowering oneself - especially when one holds such qualifications. As Ken, a friend I made out there described it; a Luo man would never take the job of a farm manager with six figures because he thinks he is too good for it. An office job with visible signs of wealth and acknowledgement of one's achievements is what counts. Ken is passionately vocal about the failings of his fellow male counterparts and unguarded with his scorn. He is a businessman with his fingers in many pies who learnt about business from the misfortune of being penniless and having no family support. He slept in the street and started carrying sacks of tomatoes to market-women in the Rift Valley, and then saved enough to buy a *mkokoteni*, a hand-held cart that hauled even more tomatoes. He worked his way up to being a supplier at markets and the rest is history.

I recall sitting with Ken while escaping the midday sun on a break from drawing. He brazenly with a raised voice, pointed at nearby clusters of men sitting outside talking, which is more than a common sight in the Kisumu landscape. "These men have women at home who wash their clothes (by hand, as is common in Kenya where washing machines are beyond the

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<sup>61</sup> The lack of jobs for graduates perpetuates this kind of thinking.

reach of most people). They leave their houses with clean shirts, smart, like they are going to the office. Then they sit under a tree in groups talking, talking, talking all day. They do nothing but when they get home they expect to find food ready and a beating to the woman if they don't." I asked how they can maintain such a lifestyle, and received various answers from various people. Their families feed them, they have more than one woman to go to, et cetera.

After a while I began to tire of drawing these groups of men who occupied every available (and hard to find) shade in the streets. It seemed to me that I was amassing a collection of drawings of men sitting under trees, under parasols, under awnings of shops. I look back now and see what a symbol it is of that particular society, though I have had similar complaints in other regions in the country. I noticed a recurring image – many women were busy selling tomatoes, fish, and roast maize in order to feed their children and husbands or partners. Men milled about debating politics or listening to anyone who happened to have started a conversation loudly and suddenly found himself having an audience surrounding him. It is surprisingly easy to have a crowd gather about one in Kisumu, as I found out while looking up from my drawing. Without a doubt all of the approximately 10 to 15 people standing around me for over an hour at each time, were men. An without a doubt there was always one who wanted to start a debate on one subject or another, with the absurdity of women claiming to be equal to men proving to be a favoured topic.

Now, the point of all this is not to point out the failings of society, but to hopefully show by example, that by looking at the physical elements recorded in my drawings, one can draw out socio-economical or political issues that need addressing. Why are there so many men sitting about? Inequality in the genders, lack of employment, a worrying mindset amongst many men as to their role in society, are quick reasons that spring to mind. (not that I claim there has to be the traditional male-provider position for every man, but anything is better than doing nothing and one must contribute to society.) Similarly, I drew at Jomo Kenyatta Grounds, a field used for leisure or holding of large events, and observed a campaign rally set up to convince people to vote 'yes' in the referendum. It was significant

that on a weekday afternoon when most people should be busy working, the field was heaving with humanity, most of who were men.

I must hasten to add that it is not all bad in Kisumu. One of the reasons I decided to use it as my study area is because it is relatively safe, compared to my traditional (then<sup>62</sup>) homeground – Central Province. I did not feel that I would be able to walk around as safely as it has a higher crime rate. The inhabitants of Kisumu do not shy from enjoying their leisure time and there is a feeling of relaxation and ease that comes with a hot climate.

These and all the other issues mentioned before, make for a rich palette of subjects to address visually. Over the years Africa has been collectively thought of as one country and received nothing but bad press. Whatever reporting that does not feature either a crazed dictator, famine, starving children or bloody wars, is replaced by cliché images of wildlife and, in the case of Kenya, bare-breasted Maasai warriors to lure in the tourists. Browsing through the shelves of the few bookshops in Nairobi is a testament to this. Any books on Kenya focus on animals, or any tribes-people left who still dress in traditional garb. None of these publications are by Kenyans- they are all by western photojournalists, resulting in the re-enforcement of the afore-mentioned clichés. This project is a sort of personal cry counter rebellion against that.

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<sup>62</sup> The internal borders have since changed with the new constitution.



### **III. Reflection on The Process of Drawing**

Drawing is the process of searching, prying, interrogating and investigating in a bid to understand the workings of the subject being observed. The eye not only gazes, but is constantly roaming, gliding over surfaces, burrowing into crevices and folds, rolling over textures, trying to transmit this visual information into messages that the brain will send to the hand as it moves in synchronization (with the movement of the eye) in a bid to translate the observed into two-dimensional object to be observed by a different sets of eyes. When one is drawing, one is not just trying to make a copy of what is being observed. It is as though one were trying to discover and instantly grasp with the invisible hands of sight, and thrust with that equal energy of observation, onto a flat surface. It is one saying, 'Look, this is what I saw! Look now! Look here!'

The observing of humanity, of life proceeding along the conveyor belt of time, sometimes eloquently and gracefully, sometimes barely making it intact, is all consuming in the moment. It is a kind of visual commentary that can only be compared to a passerby having to describe a scene instantly over the phone of any street anywhere, while trying to include the background, the details of buildings, the people, which direction they are travelling in, each one as fast as possible, their physical attributes and demeanour, the general atmosphere, the weather, the noise, the 'vibe' et cetera. Instantly one is confronted with the subjectivity of this task. Even as I type this in a café in Wimbledon, overlooking Wimbledon train station I am struck by the immensity of the task of describing, retelling, relaying a scene, as it changes. The station, with its weather-worn exterior complete with what looks like moss yellowing in the roof, a curious metal installation of people leaning over a fence staring back at me, the three entrances, each with an overhanging sign informing the public that there are self service machines (already I am editing information- to stating word for word what the sign says), the two lamp posts on either side of the building, back to the building and its red, yellow and white sign with 'Wimbledon' emblazoned on it. People walk across the square in front of the station, which has recently been pedestrianised. To my right, partly hidden by the torso of a man in the café sitting on a high stool by the glass frontage of the

café, is a sign advertising Nut Tree and next to it, a florist with his wares on display.

Suddenly a woman stands right in front of me blocking off my view outside. This is irritating, but it also gives me a chance to breathe and take stock of what I am doing. But not for long. I am aware that the scene before me is changing all the time and I have a limited time to capture it. A man in a suitcase, he has a moustache, a red bus, too big to include if this description were a drawing, a man pushing his bike with that alien head look that helmets give cyclists, an oriental woman with a push chair. Immediately I move into the café because an interesting form has emerged that visually enhances the scene. A middle-aged woman dragging her suitcase behind her, balancing her coffee in her hand, looking for a table cuts an interesting silhouette. Two chattering Somali women with bright headscarves stir their coffees at the condiments counter and move to sit outside. A little closer to me, two men, one with a prominent roman nose, talk, and closer still, an old woman reads a magazine with a fat man on the cover.

As I write the above description, I am distinctly aware of two things. As I progressed I found myself yearning for a pen and sketchbook, which I felt would be a much easier way to describe my surrounding. Words were not sufficient, I could not type fast enough. I found myself touching on seemingly inconsequential details (such as the roman nose) that are key to me as I draw as they determine what I will include. I include what grabs my eye. Secondly, I find my description somewhat erratic. I tried to be systematic to begin with, starting with the background, but my eye would be darting from left to right, seeking to encompass everything at the same time. A drawing eye. It is that roaming eye that seeks to clarify points such as relative distance and perspective. When one draws, one is constantly aware of everything at the same time. Pouring ones energy into one point, followed by another can often result in a lack of general perspective and scene composition. As I draw, I am aware that everything is constantly changing and that I have to get as much of what is in front of me as I can in the shortest time. If, in the middle of working on the background, an interesting looking person walks into the foreground, then I will quickly dart

there and draw that person in as fast as I can before they disappear. What happens as a result of this is that every part of the drawing is being worked on at the same time, my hand following my eye as I seek to encapsulate the entirety of the moment before my eyes.

Of course one can never totally draw absolutely everything in a scene. One does not seek to 'copy' or do what a camera does. One interprets what one has processed. And in so doing, through the mark making, frantic as it sometimes can be, one causes the viewer of the drawing to stop and take stock and visually interrogate the drawing in the same way. It is a sort of transference of energy- of seeking-out energy. The artist has made another look the way an artist would by causing them to lean in and look closer at the marks, understanding how together, every stroke, squiggle or brush mark creates a feeling of what was observed, yet separately and individually, can be ridiculous, even full of rage as they are dug into the paper or playfully and lightly whispered onto the surface. A mark in of itself can seem inconsequential, but collectively the observed subject emerges out of the chaos and comes to life.

John Berger describes this process succinctly: 'To draw is to look, examining the structure of appearances. A drawing of a tree shows, not a tree, but a tree-being-looked-at. Whereas the sight of a tree is registered almost instantaneously, the examination of the sight of a tree (a tree-being-looked-at) not only takes minutes or hours instead of a fraction of a second, it also involves, derives from, and refers back to, much previous experience of looking.'" (Berger (2005) p71).

What is it about a drawing that causes the viewer to lean in and take a longer look than if it were a photograph? One can argue that the viewer is walking in the steps of the artist, recreating the searching gaze, following the tracks made by the drawing implement, and in that way placing themselves in the place of the artist- looking as he/she did. I find myself deriving great pleasure from standing nose to nose with a drawing that has caught my eye and breaking down its various elements to see how the artist made it. Isolating each pencil stroke, imagining what it would be if that stroke were not there and acknowledging the role-played by each mark.

I try and recreate the whole process- did the wash get laid first before the line? I imagine the artist making the very same decisions I make when dealing with light- as the sun moves, when to make the final decision on the shadows and place them where they are meant to be.



The above drawing is the second I made of the same scene, the first being



quite heavy in detail and taking a much longer time than I would on a drawing. I gave myself about a couple of minutes on this drawing. The idea was to simply be as brief as possible, capturing a sense of the bustle rather than the physical detail of the scene.

When looked at critically, this is

actually a congregation of squiggles. Isolating one area, say the washbowl and midriff of the woman in the left-hand-side of the drawing, as shown on the left, presents a different aspect to the drawing. Here we have a series of lines, not all of them actually intersecting. There is a sense of movement in the top of this new drawing (I shall refer to the section as a drawing in of itself), and that is mainly due to the directionality of the diagonal lines, and the clashing that occurs, as they seem to walk upwards and out of the edge

of the drawing. Does this section (now back to it being a part of a whole drawing) convey the same sense of urgency and speed as the drawing as a whole? What if I picked out a different, busier section of the drawing? (See below) Here the sense of bustle is emphasized by the physical qualities of the line. The marks are closer together, varied thicknesses, tapering as the pen leaves the surface of the pen.



I remember visiting the Tate Britain years ago and looking at some of Turners sketchbooks and feeling like I could gaze on each drawing for a day at least and still not have enough. There is something about joining an artist in searching out a scene as one analyses 'a study'. How did he come to the conclusion he did concerning the light? Did he just wait for the perfect moment and then, 'there!' capture that shaft at that time in the day, or did he revisit the scene time and again? Even if I could not describe every feature accurately, I still carry with me that awe and sense of being drawn into that study, half worked in colour, lines confidently drawing out trees, sky, and other countryside props. I remember instantly wanting to dash outside with my sketchbook and start drawing. Such was the power of suggestion in the remnants of his hand- that I too, can and should be looking at my surroundings and making a record of them! Why was I indoors looking at his work, when I could be outside, creating my own! I too, could be wrestling with perspective and light, but before I go, here is a look, a tantalizing taste of beauty captured by another hand and eye.

The act of drawing and looking is an addictive activity. So much so that studying a drawing creates the urge to go out and draw. There is a distinction, however, and in this context I mean drawing from observation. Reportage. Putting down in line what activity is going on around me. The unconscious act of a hand following an eye without conscious contemplation on why certain elements are included or not. That split-second assessment of a bustling scene and charging into it without fear or misgiving, knowing that there is a natural curiosity, an ability to see, and the experience of years of drawing to ensure a drawing of the scene unfolding. This is the rush and adrenaline pumping process of drawing for me.

## **II. AUDIO CONVERSATIONS WITH ARTISTS**

Below is a list of the audio file recordings of the featured artists, and Penny Simpson, Head of Media at the Welsh National Opera, who were contacted for a conversation on reportage drawing.

1. Jeanette Barnes (interview\_j\_barnes) – 18<sup>th</sup> November 2011
2. Penny Simpson (interview\_p\_simpson\_16sep09mp3) – 16<sup>th</sup> September 2009
3. Tabitha Salmon (interview\_t\_salmon) – 27<sup>th</sup> October 2009
4. Matthew Cook (interview\_m\_cook) – 29<sup>th</sup> October 2009
5. Jane Webster (interview\_j\_webster) – 28<sup>th</sup> February 2011
6. George Butler (interview\_g\_butler) – 26<sup>th</sup> January 2011