

## CHAPTER 10

### A ‘CLUMSY’ ENCOUNTER

#### INTRODUCTION

This final chapter offers a discussion of a number of significant themes introduced in Chapters 1 and 2, considered in relation to a range of literature in Chapters 3, 4 and 5, together with the narrative case studies. Within this discussion is a specific focus on the following questions:

- How do pupils, with dyspraxia, experience observational drawing practices as part of their secondary art education in the UK?
- Are the concepts of ‘observation’, ‘ideas’ and ‘imagination’ exclusive in the way in which they are defined in relation to art education?
- Does an emphasis on drawing from observation reflect cultural restrictions that may impact on the nature of inclusion in art and design education?
- What contribution can this discussion make to the broader political debate on inclusion, equity and participation in educational practices?

In this book I have examined concepts of inclusion within the context of art and design education and more specifically in relation to drawing from observation. In doing so I have explored this activity as part of a centre of practice defined by skills development, where it is experienced by those who are potentially decentered (Graham and Slee, 2008) from a norm of technical coordination by being defined as dyspraxic. The narrative case studies provide a number of points where drawing from observation and dyspraxic experience meet, touch and in some cases collide. These points of contact offer sites for the exploration of social, educational and aesthetic discussions around the nature of skill, representation, observation and learning, as well as an opportunity to explore those complex systems (Foucault, 1991) that define ‘ability’ and are implicated in educational practices.

The convergence of dyspraxia and drawing from observation demands that hidden discourses, defining and situating both, are given greater visibility by questioning accepted and implicit rituals associated with learning and concepts of ‘the ideal’ learner. The development of education and medical systems of intervention that identify the ‘other’ is significant in this context, since the nature of the research requires the exploration of a ‘medically’ diagnosed learning difficulty, dyspraxia, within the field of art education. The narratives that have emerged can be described as products of these regulatory systems, where discussions of specific aspects of performance and, particularly, assessment and reporting contribute to the pedagogised identity of the learner (Atkinson, 2008).

In the narrative of observational drawing, as a central aspect of art education, the dyspraxic experience might be considered as a breach offering a conscious point of departure from ‘norms’ of practice, based on ‘the skilful hand’. It is possible therefore

to consider the role that observational drawing has in particular processes of normalisation. Breaches in the narrative case studies are drawn on to explore departures from identification with a norm of particular art practices and the norm of the ideal pupil. Here, dyspraxia becomes a lens through which pupil experiences of art education can be viewed, magnifying the role that drawing from observation plays. Participant experiences illustrate some of the limitations of the cultural and educational systems of which they are a part, yet these restrictions could equally have been expressed by any who claim ‘I can’t draw’, regardless of an official recognition or diagnosis of a ‘learning difficulty’, itself a culturally specific, and contested, term. However, the situated nature of experience, significant for the ways in which participants might be defined as dyspraxic, are also relevant to the ways in which they experience drawing from observation.

#### DRAWING FROM OBSERVATION AS A DOMINANT DISCOURSE

In answer to the question ‘how do pupils with dyspraxia experience observational drawing practices as part of their secondary art education in the UK?’ it is possible to consider a range of responses emerging from the narrative case studies. Drawing from observation is experienced as a technology for individualisation and normalisation for Craig, where he referred specifically to this drawing approach as an activity that defined him as ‘different’ from others in his family. For him, it was their exceptional ability to create particular types of representations rather than their ability to draw from observation that marked him out as comparatively less coordinated and, this was associated with the way in which he defined himself as dyspraxic. Drawing from observation was conflated with a particular type of representation. Although a site for participation, representational ideals appeared to signal an exclusion from art practice, since there was space between legitimate participation and ideal representation.

For Matthew observation was distinctly identified as an element on his school reports, explicitly contributing to the way in which his learning in art was assessed. Within such systems, drawing from observation could also be viewed as a technology for his normalisation since he is ‘levelled’ according to national standards of performance. The role that drawing had for Alex and Matthew within the examination system contributes to the way in which it might also be described as being implicated in these processes of normalisation. However, these seemed only to confirm their understanding of their inclusion within a ‘norm’ of frustration with particular forms of representation rather than their exclusion from the ‘norm’ as talented and exceptional.

Drawing from observation, as a dominant discourse in defining concepts of ability, is an activity that makes a very specific contribution to learner identity in art education. This book has focused on the way in which drawing from observation functions for learners within the context of compulsory education and specifically for pupils in the secondary sector. It can be viewed as a pedagogical tool, employed as a central element in classroom practice. It is a way of recording what can be seen, yet the way that we view the world is contingent on our cultural context, dependent on our social status, ethnicity and gender among other things. Our choice of the

way we record what we perceive, and the ways these drawings are received, and assessed, as process or product, are also dependent on these systems. Drawing from observation is one of many different approaches to drawing that might be employed in art education and, for some, it may be difficult to distinguish between the ranges of functions of different types of drawing, particularly where drawing is conceptualised as one activity that is problematic. However, it is the centrality of a belief that drawing from observation involves representing a non-negotiable universal world view which may contribute to those claims of 'I can't draw'. This positioning of observational drawing within absolute concepts of knowledge creates a particular epistemological perspective that is inherently problematic if it is located as a process associated with learning.

It is, however, not only the drawing that contributes to these particular ways of understanding drawing ability, but also the ways in which language is used to construct or produce these ideas (Atkinson, 2002; Steers, 2003). Therefore the production and experience of observational drawing within a formal school system, where work is described, assessed and reported using specific language, is likely to be very different from the production of observational drawings outside this context. Elaine's experience of using observational drawing to develop an installation project outside a formal learning setting is therefore different to the experience of Matthew who produced a number of observed drawings for his art examinations during Key Stage 3. This is not only because of the intrinsic nature of the drawings but also because of the way they come to represent the producer in the words of an exhibition review or an end of Key Stage report. Although the activity is similar, the context in which this takes place appears significant for the type of learning that might occur.

Drawing from observation provided a common experience for participants. Craig, Matthew, Elaine and Alex were all familiar with this particular approach to drawing and associated it with their formal art education. They were able to articulate their experiences, yet the contexts varied and the situated nature of the activity was significant. Elaine describes drawing from observation outside a formal education setting and as a process for finding out, a means of exploration and inquiry, a way of learning how an object is constructed or how her environment and her work might be connected. It provides a means of working directly with objects with an aim at a developed understanding. Matthew's description of the cockerel drawing provided a similar view. As a process, drawing can allow for error, re-working or further investigation. In drawing from observation it is possible to play or, like Elaine, make 'messy' thinking drawings. Positioned as a product for assessment, for Matthew in school, an observational drawing becomes a different object, located within the examination process as well as other less formalised assessment systems as 'ceremonies of power' (Foucault, 1991) that create significance for such artefacts to become components in the ways in which we, and others, formally construct our judgements about learning and learners.

Alex, Craig and Matthew are all aware of what I will describe for now as an 'internal voice' that has determined that they cannot draw, or rather that they cannot draw well enough. Even Elaine is subjected to this via her claims to be a perfectionist and her concerns with accuracy. The object to be drawn stands as a reminder to

them of the space between the ideal, what is to be drawn, and their own drawing, and their perception of relatively 'high' standards, although culturally constructed and potentially developed by external forces, also appear to be self-imposed. Individuals are regulated by their cultural context, yet also appear as agents who regulate themselves, and drawing becomes a marker for comparison both with the object and with the drawings of others. Social norms relating to concepts of representation and ability in respect of art practice become internalised by the reiteration of such discourses relating to the 'quality' of representation (Butler, 1997:16).

Foucault (1980) identifies certain systems of thought as more or less dominant. This hierarchy is derived from 'discursive relations' by which some discourses are validated and others become subjugated as less valuable. Importantly, this is as a result of social processes and power dynamics that evolve between bodies rather than being imposed on one by the other. The narratives suggest that drawing from observation can act as a dominant discourse by the way in which it is employed to determine individuals' concepts of their own ability and others' concepts of individual pupil ability, yet it is not the physical drawing act that creates the dominance, but the ways in which we come to understand the role of the drawing, and this is framed within linguistic structures. Observational drawing as a dominant discourse therefore relates to the way in which the activity is situated within social settings, in this case the educational context, and the language used to define and describe learners is therefore significant.

Observational drawing is embedded within the social definition of knowledge fully sanctioned and authorised by the examination process. Foucault continues with his description of the examination as a means of identifying and authenticating knowledge transmission and providing an archive of documentation that can serve to identify and describe the specific aptitudes of individuals in order to situate their levels and abilities (Foucault, 1991:184). The examination is firmly connected with the process of normalisation as a mode of exploration of difference and a method of documentation of these differences. The school reports provide the official and expert view of the judgements made on individual attainment and secure the connection to observational drawing as an authorised tool for determining artistic ability. This expert view is not owned by an individual, in the role of the teacher, since they must also act within the systemic practices of curriculum and assessment which in itself might offer internal conflicts for them. Matthew's view, that observational drawing seems less artistic because it does not allow for individual response, is also lost, buried and therefore subjugated as naïve knowledge. Individual teacher responses might equally be subjugated within the processes of assessment and moderation of pupil work within a department, local region, or nationally via the systems that confirm standards and regulate practices.

However, as already discussed, the participants also confirm the central role of realistic representation as a determining factor in their concepts of what constitutes artistic activity. Drawing from observation is described as highly individualised with each pupil engaged in producing their own piece of work that may be perceived of as representing them, or at least a particular aspect of their ability. The drawing product provides a point of reference by which the teacher may make decisions

regarding capacity but each pupil might also gain an understanding of their place in a class order of ability. The drawing, within this context, appears to have an unmediated link with the concept of individual pupil ability.

Observational drawing within formal educational settings is experienced as a dominant discourse through the processes of examination as a controlled and controlling technology, within timed, regulated and observable teaching spaces. This has significance for the ways in which participants described their participation as time dependant and reliant on ideal pupil behaviour of concentrated compliance. Alex identified this as a concern for him but also for his brother, whom he described as unable to participate because of the need for this type of concentrated behaviour. Matthew, Alex and Craig all recounted experiences of drawing from observation as clearly connected with processes of examination. This reinforces drawing from observation as having a central role in determining concepts of ability in art education for these participants. In contrast to this are other forms of art activity apparently free from such constraints, such as 'doodles' and drawings from the imagination which appear to have less of a formal role and sit outside of the legitimising spaces of the examination. The experience of observational drawing as a centre for physical control is reinforced by its position within examination processes and this has significance for the way in which it can be considered as a learning process, an aspect of this discussion to which I will return.

It is probable that my reading of the narratives and my focus on this particular activity has contributed to this definition as a dominant discourse and this is not unproblematic. It is also worth noting that, although drawing from observation may be perceived of as a dominant discourse, it may also be considered as a potentially subjugated discipline area within a lexically based curriculum. Art education in the compulsory education system has less formal curriculum time than English, mathematics and science and is an optional subject beyond Key Stage 3. Participants who experienced challenges in other curriculum areas (such as Matthew and Craig) discussed their experiences of drawing from observation as a comparatively minor aspect of their lives in education, evidenced by them talking more about problematic experiences specifically in relation to subjects that required an emphasis on writing. Drawing from observation might also be revealed as comparatively reduced in influence by the way in which the participants conflated drawing from observation with other aspects of drawing. There is a space between the lived experience of the participants in this respect and the research process, where theorising can magnify, distort or potentially conceal issues that participants may have thought much more important. It is possible to deconstruct this text and the narratives and identify other stories that have been occluded by this further production of a dominant discourse.

#### THE DRAWING 'PROBLEM'

Considering the 'drawing problem' as a theme in the narratives provides a means for exploring the potentially exclusive nature of observation, ideas and imagination. Drawing was discussed as a problematic activity, and all participants described perceptions of their own abilities in negative terms specifically in relation to drawing,

although this did not always relate to drawing from observation. It is possible to consider the drawing problem as a particular narrative that emerged from my conversations with the participants. Although there was a range of experiences of drawing from observation, concepts of ideal representation appeared to be a source of dissatisfaction. The direct relationship between drawing from observation and representation appeared to make this particular type of drawing more challenging, where the drawing product could be matched not only against the concept of an ideal image but also against the work of others. Perceptions of the quality of drawings produced appeared to create concrete examples of why individuals were 'no good at art' suggesting that, for some, drawing, drawing from observation and 'doing art' were synonymous. Elaine and Alex, although relatively 'successful' in their art production and with formal qualifications in the subject, both described a 'perfectionist' element which located their own drawings as lacking sufficient qualities of representation. Matthew and Craig also acknowledged a gap between concepts of their own ability and the way in which they were able to 'capture' an image through their drawing.

'The drawing problem' was also expressed in comparative terms, where the drawings of others, identified as those who were 'good at art', were described by the ways in which their work appeared to succeed as a representation. Matthew's description of the drawing of one of his peers identifies this feature of the drawing as a means of recognising its quality. Here he identifies Hannah as someone who could draw well and explains the particular aspects of the representation:

... this girl called Hannah in year 7, when we were drawing the trainer- ...do you know how you get running trainers and you've got a bit of material where it like laps over each other? It's got like two materials on? Well she'd drawn one of them and it looked **really** (Matthew's emphasis) good...

This was not only limited to a comparison of ability within the classroom however, and Craig's definition of his father's and brother's artistic skill was also defined by an ability to represent in a 'realistic' way. Craig identifies the distance between him and art production as based on his experiences of the work of his father and brother and his perceptions of their ability.

Art would have been something that was nothing to do with me really and I suspect that is because I grew up in a household where both my father and my brother are incredibly good at art and I don't mean just good at art I mean ... my father...I've seen my father's...my father doesn't paint very often but he can paint very naturalistic and realistic landscapes and my brother – then he did portraits –

The difficulty here is in gaining an understanding of the origins of these particular beliefs about drawing. Although it is possible to consider that these may have been shaped by formal experiences of art education, there is a range of formal and informal experiences that has created this particular view of the function of drawing and, more generically, the function of art. Formal experiences of secondary education are only one aspect of a total and continually expanding and shifting experience. Both Craig and Matthew appear to be offering these others up as examples of an ideal

and there is a sense that it is Hannah and Craig's father who are exceptional in being able to achieve the type of representation described. The extent to which the 'dyspraxic experience' features in this aspect of the narrative is far less evident and not referred to directly by any of the participants. The narrative, 'I can't draw well because I can't represent the objects well enough' is familiar but the extension of this to 'I can't draw well because dyspraxia affects my ability to represent objects well enough' is never made. Although dyspraxia appears to impact on other aspects of school life quite dramatically it appears subordinate rather than integral to the universal cry of 'I can't draw'.

If not desirable, it would certainly be possible to pursue 'individual deficit' through the narratives presented, and some elements of difficulty were recognised by the participants. However, a further exploration of these serves to reinforce the situated nature of the perceived 'problems' that might be identified with dyspraxia. The production of observational drawing is described by Matthew as taking place within a controlled school environment where there is a finite amount of time spent on each activity and where all students need to work at a similar pace. The space and time to draw from observation is regulated and structured by the teacher (who herself is subject to the controls of the timing of the school day, term times and curriculum) and drawing is experienced within this controlled environment. Within an examination, for example, Matthew is required to produce an observational drawing in a set amount of time. All pupils in his class have the same time and the drawing product reflects a normalised concept of what can therefore be achieved. Observational drawing could be described as problematic since Matthew appears to have performed less well than he should because his work is unfinished, yet there may have been others in the group who failed to add detail or who did not complete the drawing and who were not defined as dyspraxic. Although dyspraxia may be offered as a reason why Matthew may not have finished the work as quickly as others, it is the timed dimension to completion that has created a regulative and problematic context for the production of these drawings rather than the specific 'problems' associated with dyspraxia, observation or representation.

Alex and Craig identify problems with understanding perspective. This apparent area of difficulty is referred to in the literature on dyspraxia, particularly in the ways in which three-dimensional forms are represented (Dixon and Addy, 2004). The ability to understand visual, linear perspective systems again appears to be synonymous with an understanding of what a good drawing should include. Alex, although relatively successful in his art production, endorsed by his B grade at Scottish higher level, expressed his frustrations with being unable to draw well enough and related this specifically to the use of perspective, a particular system of drawing, that he suggested he had 'never really mastered':

... my perspective, I know when I've got it down, would be a bit skewed and I was never fantastic with perspective so that was why my drawings always looked a bit too flat or a bit squint – I never really mastered that.

Although his earlier experiences included drawings based on graffiti and street art, the 'higher stakes' work, beyond the equivalent of GCSE demanded that he engage with particular systems of drawing that appear to have defined ability in relation to



his learning of the subject. Although Alex was aware of other means of art production he was also aware of the status of particular forms of representation that were reinforced by the examination systems. He connects his concern with perspective and representation directly with drawing from observation and this becomes a greater 'problem' as his art production is harnessed within processes of assessment at higher levels.

The drawing 'problem' and the mechanical aspects of making the drawing are also worth some discussion. Craig's narrative suggests that drawing from observation might present difficulties since his eyes skipped across the surface of a big blank page, and he indicates that the use of a grid might be useful in providing fixed points within which to locate his drawing. Again Craig draws on a comparison with his father and brother in problematising the way he sees. Here the 'drawing problem' does not relate specifically to methods of representation but to the way in which Craig can manage a particular way of working and is more closely related to the ways in which he has engaged with the drawing process rather than his concept of the drawing product. His description could relate to visual disturbances resulting from dyspraxia (see Chapter 3). Similarly, his description of being heavy-handed and puncturing the page with his pencil, relates to the physical process of drawing rather than the representational product, yet the breach in this drawing narrative results from this being a public act that resulted in him feeling like an 'idiot'. The physical nature of drawing production, however, appears to be less visible in the narratives. Matthew's drawing of a plant form shows a faint image that could not be fully erased and his drawings appear to have been done with a good deal of pressure. Craig's maps were drawn heavily with clear marks carved into the surface of the paper and Craig himself refers to this aspect of his drawing. However, it is the problem of mimetic representation that dominates the heavy handed drawings and the potential for visual disturbance. Any suggestion of individual 'deficit' as a result of dyspraxia appears subordinate to the culturally defined qualities of observed representations.

#### THE PEDAGOGY OF OBSERVATIONAL DRAWING

I have discussed drawing from observation as a constructed activity, involving looking and creating an action and artefact in response to what has been seen. I have also acknowledged that drawing from observation can be employed for a range of different purposes. As an activity related to learning, drawing from observation might offer a means by which pupils might learn about what is being observed by providing opportunities for close and focused looking. The drawing produced however, also functions within the educational process as evidence of pupil learning, yet it is possible to question whether drawing from observation can provide a learning process for pupils as well as a product of learning which becomes an artefact for assessment.

Baldacchino (2008) describes art education as a construct and a paradox. The ways in which art education needs to be reified within the formal structures of education contradicts the specificity of art as a subject. He suggests:

If art conforms it has no use to learning. If it becomes synonymous with learning then it is not art anymore. If there is such a thing as art's pedagogical



objective, it remains that of expressing, sustaining and fulfilling such a double bind, such a paradox. (p. 242)

It is possible therefore to question the extent to which drawing from observation can operate as a tool for learning within the current concept of art education. The artefact used to assess pupil learning does not necessarily reflect an engagement with learning nor may it reflect a connection with the principles of art practice. Drawing and observation have a central role in art education practices, and there may be an implicit assumption that they have a significant role in learning, yet it is possible to contest this assumption since in some cases it may have little to do with learning at all. It is difficult to understand how much learning is happening through and as a result of this activity and what the nature of this learning might be. Pupils produce observed drawings in an educational context but this does not necessarily mean that they learn simply by engaging with the activity. However we might also ask if this is not a 'learning based' activity, then what might it be? What role or function does it perform and why does it appear to occupy such a central role? If we accept that it has a central role in learning, then this might also force us to question our concepts of what constitutes learning and the nature of the relationship between physical control and 'ideal' pupil behaviours.

Alternatively, we may well consider that drawing from observation offers some opportunities for learning to take place. Matthew, in describing his 'cockrel drawing', offers a convincing argument for employing it as a means of being able to find out types of visual information that could not easily be gathered via the use of secondary sources. In this respect, observation provides a context for inquiry and research, both justified as aspects of learning. This differs from his description of the examinations he has undertaken. The aim here appears for him to employ techniques in order to demonstrate what has been learnt, yet the arrangement, choice and production of the drawings may have provided him with the opportunity to learn via the construction and re-working of his drawing in a relatively autonomous way, via the exam, within a managed environment. Craig's brief description of recording his clay tower via the use of drawing however suggests limited opportunities for learning. He appears to have been directed to draw his tower, perhaps to offer an additional piece of work for his examination and as a two dimensional re-working of ideas already realised in clay. Again this may suggest the positioning of observational drawing as evidence of what has been learned rather than what can be learned, largely as a result of this being performed as part of an exam. Elaine's experiences might offer a 'de-schooled' (Baldacchino, 2008) perspective on observational drawing which appears to have intrinsic value for her in enabling her to identify particular features of the environment in which her work will be displayed and this appears to be an 'authentic' informal form of learning.

Cannatella (2004) extols the virtues of working directly from observation connecting the mimetic process with learning, yet the product of observation does not necessarily reflect the full learning experience for the pupil. Drawing from observation is described as an experiential process by Matthew and Elaine and as more than a product related activity. However, the whole experiential nature of working directly happens not only via representation of what can be seen and recorded with

a pencil, and Matthew's amusing description of the sounds of the cockerels he had to draw emphasises the multi-sensory nature of this type of experiential learning. The 'cock a doodle doo' of the cockerel is lost in Matthew's pencil and pencil crayon drawing of the bird. This multi-sensory activity may have generated a number of different types of work, yet the class were directed to represent the cockerel in a particular way. Matthew's assessed drawing was significantly removed from his experience of the event and could be assessed on accuracy, detail, use of colour and whether or not it had sufficient detail, applying some of the language used on previous reports he had received for art. The drawing product is safe, restrictive and peculiarly removed from the excitement of the experience. It also reflects an ocularcentric view of what might be represented from such an experience. Observational drawing does not necessarily result in exclusion from a centre of practice, yet its relationship with assessment may result in some becoming decentered from learning by such ritualistic practice.

If we do accept that aspects of the narratives connect drawing from observation with learning, it is possible to assert that they reflect a very particular form of learning which positions the learner as receptor rather than co-creator of knowledge. In order to provide a context for this argument, I will briefly outline ideas from Poerksen (2005) and Baxter Magolda (1992) both of whom discuss epistemological development as it relates to learning. Atkinson (2006) identifies a similar discussion, drawing on the work of Cattegno who refers to the 'subordination of learning to teaching'.

Poerksen (2005) discusses concepts of 'learning how to learn' within the context of university education, where students and teachers need to engage in a dialogue that is built on mutual uncertainty in order to avoid the problems of the teaching dominating the learning paradigm. Poerksen, referring to the work of Heinz von Foerster, discusses particular epistemological positions and the 'central paradox' (p. 475) of education which at once aims to develop autonomous individuals and needs to employ a set of checks in order to force attendance and punish failures. Poerksen describes the teaching paradigm designed for knowers to transform their students. Here teaching is described as a means of dividing knowledge into digestible chunks and transmitting these portions in the most effective way. He describes the teaching paradigm:

In a game like this, learners are passive recipients; they listen, take notes and try to comprehend what the teachers mean...It is immediately obvious that that knowledge is here understood as some transferable objectified product of thought... (p. 472)

Similarly, Baxter Magolda (1992) proposes a continuum of learning where the initial stages of knowing relate to absolute forms of knowledge similar to those described by Poerksen. Here students identify knowledge from a dualistic position of right or wrong, a characteristic of the nature of empirical 'observational objectivity' associated with drawing from observation (Riley, 2008). Although this work is proposed in a very different context, that of higher education, the emphasis on drawing as an activity that can be 'right' or 'wrong' positions the school learner as one with an absolute concept of knowledge. The narratives that have emerged from the

participants' stories is one of 'getting it right', where drawing from observation is directly connected with a concept of achieving a correct answer. Although this is connected with the representation of an ideal reality (Atkinson, 2002), it also potentially identifies a particular epistemological position on the part of pupil and teacher. If drawing from observation has a pedagogic role, then this adherence to concepts of right and wrong suggest that these learners are positioned within an 'absolute stage of knowing' (Moon, 2006).

Within this absolute concept of knowledge, learners are reflecting a transmissive experience where individuals, directed to draw an object, do so within the concept of re-producing a 'correct' image rather than producing a mimetic piece of work, and Matthew's comment 'it isn't really your work' is telling of this type of directed non-dialogic experience. There does not seem to be room for him in this activity, and this leads Matthew to suggest that this type of work 'isn't really art' since it does not allow for individual response but instead the re-presentation of objects in a way that others have determined. He appears to prioritise the role of autonomy as central to his view of what constitutes art production, suggesting that Matthew considers that there needs to be a degree of agency for his work to become defined as 'art'.

Drawing from observation could be a tool for purposeful learning, yet may also exist within a closed definition of a learning activity. The representation of an object through looking and drawing suggests the representation of an image in a particular and prescribed way. The arguments proposed for drawing from observation as an essential aspect of art practice may locate this within a particular domain as a pedagogical tool. The location of the external referent by which we may check our drawing might suggest that we can modify our drawing in response to an answer. Certainly the narratives here reflect a very strong sense of getting the drawing right and the suggestion here is that there are not multiple, differing answers but a definitive version of knowledge captured in the form of an accurate drawing.

The positioning of observational drawing within this absolute concept of knowledge is also confirmed by the way in which individuals attempted to subvert the observational process and 'cheat' in order to produce a better drawing. Matthew described 'making up' an aspect of his drawing, and he was aware that this moved the activity away from the one that the teacher had designed. This story of drawing, removed from what could be directly observed, could only be framed within the realms of cheating because the drawing activity had been established as one which demanded a correct and, by implication incorrect, response. Similarly, Craig's description of himself as devious in the creation of his clay tower allows for him to build mistakes into the making process. The presence of mistakes in the ruined tower is only possible because Craig has subverted the making process to include mistakes. This suggests that mistake-making has no valid presence in the making process and is only included as a result of Craig's devious act. In contrast his description of drawing the tower and slowly and carefully trying to 'get the image of it' shuts down the potential for exploration and devious trickery. Craig appears less subversive in his description of drawing from observation.

'Mistake-making', 'playing' via doodles (as unstructured and unauthorised drawing) and the 'erasure' of work can all be discussed from this epistemological

positioning of drawing from observation as approaches that might offer opportunities to move away from the transmissive and absolute. Concepts of mistake-making suggests that there is a right and wrong way of making a drawing, yet the legitimised place of mistake-making can offer 'low risk' learning activities where pupils may readily make mistakes as part of their learning, with few consequences. Those who draw with confidence are not those who do not make mistakes but those who realise the role that error can have and have the confidence to work with it. Matthews (2003) argues that the role of mistake making is essential as part of learning. Within high risk learning activities, those that might directly contribute to formal summative assessment however, mistakes may be framed differently as evidence that the learner has not learnt effectively. For Craig, an initial mistake made him feel 'like an idiot' and required him to start again. Those who are confident with drawing are not unlikely to make mistakes but may work more confidently with the mistakes that they may have made. Elaine's discussion of the space she has created for messy work as a means of thinking through ideas is removed from the gaze of others who may have found it incomprehensible yet it appears to work for her as a means of using observation to think through ideas. However, she has created a private space for this learning.

The work of John Holt (1982) is useful here. His discussion of the place that fear has in producing particular types of learners is apposite. Holt defines intelligence as knowing how to behave when we don't know what to do (also a key concept in 'learning to learn' developed by Claxton, 2004), but he suggests that the education system encourages fear and compliance and learners less likely to take this kind of responsibility for their own learning. Like Poerksen, he identifies the teaching paradigm as one characterised by positivistic concepts of knowledge, where uncertainty is unwelcome, feared and seldom modelled by teachers. The role of fear is acknowledged here by Holt as a method of control related to a concept of correct and incorrect which can be employed most effectively if the teacher can convey a sense of the omniscient expert as one who owns the correct answers. Concepts of knowledge and learning are therefore connected here with certain types of learning and teaching behaviour. Within this paradigm mistakes are feared rather than being perceived of as an acceptable and vital source for learning. The ways that we negotiate and demonstrate mistake-making and the way in which we convey our understanding of the role and value of mistakes can be a key way in which we can encourage pupils to engage with this aspect of their learning. The narratives, with their strong emphasis on correct representation and 'getting it right', appeared to reflect compliance, certainty and a positivistic approach to knowledge.

Within formal, compulsory education attention is paid to the ways in which marks are made (and handwriting produced) and this may be reflected in an assessment of the learning that has/has not taken place. It is not only what is signified by the pictorial representations of the drawing (Atkinson, 2002) but what is communicated by the physical properties of the drawing or the handwriting. Just as we might misunderstand the symbolic signification of a drawing, we might also misconstrue the physical properties of the mark and this misunderstanding is framed within our ways of thinking about what might constitute good or bad drawing and, by implication, good

or bad learning. A comparatively uncoordinated mark might be read as the product of a careless or apathetic learner.

Drawing on some of the language used on art subject reports for Matthew, we could devise a linguistic framework reminiscent of Bourdieu's antagonistic adjectives (Bourdieu, 1984:468) to identify desirable attributes in pupils work and therefore in the pupils themselves, where speed, focus, depth, detail, care, thought and consistency are seen as desirable qualities and areas in which these pupils could make improvements. The slow and laborious identified by Bourdieu are undesirable qualities in relation to the development of the art skills outlined and are equally undesirable learner attributes. An element such as time becomes a significant feature that may prevent work from appearing detailed or make marks seem careless and therefore lacking in thought, and this has implications for the ways in which learners are created.

Mistakes may not always be perceived as intrinsic to learning however. In terms of the 'heavy handed' marks made by Craig and Matthew, these are marks, drawings etched into the surface, make it difficult to remove completely. The errors, defined by the will to erase, cannot fully be removed and are evident in the finished work. The distinction between the light and heavy allows some to mask the stages of the work, erasing to conceal the mistake, providing a façade of unpractised expertise. Where the marks are heavy, thick and laborious, the learner is exposed and the errors are visible, betraying an uncertainty that may be better left concealed. The evidence of error in marks that cannot be removed situate process too heavily within a product assessed as the representation of a skilled hand.

#### LEARNING 'DIFFICULTY'

Difficulty does not necessarily present a problem. To be 'difficult' does not suggest that the activity should be avoided, and working with concepts, ideas or practical experience that provides some challenge is accepted as a significant element of learning. Consider Vygotsky (2002) and the Zone of Proximal Development, which proposes scaffolded support for the ways in which we learn, recognising that difficulty, and movement from unfamiliar to familiar, is part of the learning process. However, the idea that a particular group might be presented with quite specific difficulties has further implications. If we consider a group identified as such by a learning difficulty (dyspraxia or dyslexia), and suggest that *they* have particular difficulties with their learning, we are suggesting that it is *their* ability to learn that creates the difficulty. The activity or learning object is not perceived as problematic since it is the learner who *has* a 'problem'. The learner is identified as defective or pathologised, and particular or 'special' interventions are put in place to support those learners. Teaching seemingly remains the constant as does the curriculum, as a rigid national and regulatory structure (Atkinson, 2002, 2008) which determines a centre from which individual learners can be identified as removed.

It can be argued that drawing directly from objects offers specific difficulties for all who engage with it. There are difficulties that are inherent with this type of activity, such as the demands of converting 3D objects to 2D, occlusion, foreshortening of objects, capturing movement in subjects that are not still, proportion, use of

perspective. Yet, thinking about those difficulties in representation, I am automatically perceiving this activity within the Western tradition and thinking about the challenges of particular types of representation. Drawing by looking and recording may be perceived as inherently difficult, yet I argue here that it is the context for the activity that shapes these particular difficulties within an educational setting. The concept of individual difficulty, not inherently problematic, becomes problematised within the normalising structures of formal education that prioritises the finding of answers above the posing of questions (Holt, 1982; Poerksen, 2005).

With Bourdieu's (1984) exploration of 'disgust at the facile', difficulty is viewed as desirable since it renders certain activities as less accessible to the majority, thus preserving the privileged position of the few. The predominance of difficulty within a discipline can contribute to the preservation of an elite group and offers a rationale for the rejection of moves towards inclusion as a 'diluting' and democratising principle. Bourdieu (*ibid*: 469) discusses the opposition between the elite of the dominant and the mass of the dominated. Within this context, 'levelling' 'trivialisation' or 'massification' are all undesirable since they relate to cultural decline via homogeneity. The 'facile', connected with ease of production or lack of challenge in understanding ('a child could do it'), becomes synonymous with a lack of worth since, in becoming achievable, the object is at once devalued. Bourdieu's (1993:8) discussion of habitus is also worth revisiting since difficulty appears to be a central aspect of becoming 'legitimate' within certain social organisations. Simple participation in activities is not enough in itself, since Bourdieu argues that entrance to a field or becoming 'legitimate' means some degree of gain. The possibility that a majority might have the knowledge, skill or talent to become legitimate would, by implication, make this less desirable. Concepts of difficulty and realization of the ideal are therefore a necessity in maintaining an elite practice.

Observational drawing appears to be framed as a difficult activity where 'success' via the creation of a suitably realistic drawing is unachievable for the majority. Other types of activity, Matthew's 'doodles', Alex's graffiti drawings and Craig's maps are all valued by them and, in their explanations, comparatively easily produced. However, they also appear to have less value, sitting outside of formal recognition systems. For Matthew, these drawings are not visible on his subject reports and it may therefore be argued that they lack the 'official recognition' of his teacher, but he also, in discussing the ability of others, discriminates against this type of drawing when he suggests that drawing from the imagination is not enough to secure the title of being 'good' at art. Similarly, Alex describes the success of his graffiti based work for GCSE equivalent, yet he is constant in his belief that it is the representational aspects of the subject that equate with high quality, and this is confirmed by the focus on observational drawing at higher level. His explanation of his wish to study the Dutch masters for his degree confirms the centrality of depiction of the 'real' within his concept of what art should be. For Alex, the representation of reality removes him from art production and situates him as a student who no longer engages with the difficulty of physical engagement through drawing.

Within the discussion of observational drawing practice the 'difficulty' inherent in representation appears to be accepted and acceptable as a common experience.

This appears to be less readily associated with learner pathology than an acceptance that 'talent' should only lie with a few (Eisner, 1972). However, handwriting 'problems' have very different implications, resulting in the identification of 'specific learning difficulties' and the potential exclusion from learning opportunities in the cases of Matthew and Craig.

The clumsy encounter between the dyspraxic ideal and drawing from observation opens other spaces for discussion of inclusive learning environments. Matthew, Craig, Alex and Elaine all described levels of participation with their art and design education, and their narratives can be described as being plotted by the ways in which they recounted experiences that signalled shifts to and from a centre of participation in art practice. For Matthew and Craig there were particular breaches in their stories of participation in education signalled not by their experiences of observational drawing but by their experiences of writing which provided an exclusionary context for their apparent lack of coordination. Their dyspraxic experience connects with observational drawing in a way that emphasises the marginal nature of art and design as a curriculum subject. In exploring the dyspraxic experience of inclusion in art education there is a twist in the tale, where it is evident that drawing from observation is a minor concern. There is a paradox here in discussing the centrality of drawing from observation. In considering the ways in which participants have experienced drawing from observation, it is possible that they may have engaged with it as a comparatively minor activity free from the high risk focus of the literacy based curriculum. Art activity for Craig and Matthew, although identified as something that they were not particularly good at, provided a comparatively safe place and a space for a more meaningful participation than could have been achieved via other curriculum areas based on the need to write legibly.

#### CONCLUSION

I have interrogated the complexity of observational drawing as a specific practice not within a closed community of art education but within the social and cultural domain of other critical debates within education, specifically those related to inclusion. The aim has been to explore the complexity of these sites and disrupt approaches that might seek to rationalise and compartmentalise educational experiences.

In considering the narratives it is possible to suggest that drawing from observation does function as an 'official' discourse in that it has a significant role in the orthodoxy of art education, a central and defined role that extends to its use as an assessment activity. It is official because it is part of legitimised activity organised and planned by the teacher within a set of systems that are regulated for teacher and pupil and which come to define the nature of art education and concepts of ability. Arguably it may also exist as a non-dialogic process closing down the opportunities for learning where the pupil is cowed by the experience of aiming to represent a concept of reality that remains elusive. However, I would argue that this is as much defined by the human experience as it is by the dyspraxic.

This book offers a reappraisal of observational drawing as a technology for learning, placing a particular emphasis on participants' experiences. It offers a



## CHAPTER 10

contribution to the broader discussion regarding inclusion and participation by interrogating implicit and accepted practices. It acknowledges the need to develop forms of professional practice in art education that become resilient by being informed and in so being offer a form of 'academic assertiveness' (Moon, 2009) in the ways in which art education can be reconceptualised. This assertiveness can emerge from reflection and the development of research that seeks to question assumptions about traditional practices.

It is necessary to revisit observational drawing and to question and enhance the role it has in learning for all pupils, not only those who appear to display particular 'talent'. The aim is not to undermine the role that observational drawing might play in art education but to reflect on the ways in which it is positioned as a technology for learning and the ways in which it is perceived by participants in this book to be central to assessment. There is a place for understanding the context and role of drawing from observation and for making this explicit to teachers and learners in order for it to be more usefully employed by both. There is also space to contest the connections between art education and concepts of physical skill. The meeting of the dyspraxic ideal and drawing from observation is a clumsy encounter yet, in creating a disruption, it provides a rich context for further learning.