

The Ubiquitous Unseen

Exploring Urban Details Through Drawing

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Abstract

1

The Ubiquitous Unseen is a research project that questions if drawing can serve as a tool to better understand and appreciate the unseen in the context of the urban milieu. Electricity poles are quotidian industrial structures that are often overlooked. They are slowly vanishing from our everyday experience and being replaced by underground systems. For this reason I find it essential to document them for posterity. Walking, observation, and documentation have served as the basis of my research. Walking has directed my methodology as subjectively significant poles and wires have guided my paths. I have used historical analytical drawing as a method for exploration, influenced by the aesthetic style and the observation of detail, to fully understand the role of these objects in our everyday. By placing site-specific drawings of electricity poles into public space I am highlighting the beauty, functionality and the metaphors they contain for connection in an otherwise disconnected society.

Research Question

2

Can drawing serve as a tool to better understand and appreciate aspects of our daily lives that often go unnoticed?

Key Words

Drawing

Walking

Electricity Poles

Everyday

Context

3

The Ubiquitous

Electricity poles are everywhere. In some form or another they have been a universal industrial structure in many countries for over a century.¹ The majority of people alive today would have at some point experienced them in their lives. These are quotidian industrial structures which are essential to the lives we lead.

The selection of the electricity pole (utility pole, telegraph pole or post, power pole, etc) for my investigation was strongly based on the idea that this was such a common-place object. Due to its familiarity, I believed that any work based on these structures could be relatively easy to identify and engage with. If things are familiar to us, we find them easier to connect with; we can identify them quickly as our brains are adept at recognising things that are present in our daily lives. However, through this research I am questioning just how familiar we actually are with these structures and if we ever really observe things that are so ever-present.

¹ Association for the History of Electricity. (1996). A Dictionary on Electricity: Australia. In F. Brady (Ed.), CIGRE.

I am questioning if there are things that have become so familiar to us that we simply make them 'part of the scenery' and they blend into the clutter of our urban or suburban existence. The eye and the brain work in unison to filter what we see². The brain can only process so much information at once so a categorising process occurs, the eye focuses on the necessary obstacles to navigate through the world.³

The idea of universality also thoroughly appealed to me, the fact that these structures exist globally, in different forms, is a beautiful point of connection between people of different cultures and races, in a time when any point of connection and familiarity should be highlighted. As Nikos Papastergiadis states in *Spatial Aesthetics*, "Not only are more people living in places which are remote and unfamiliar to them, even those who have not moved are increasingly feeling estranged from their sense of place."⁴ Any feature of urban space which can make people feel a little more connected and familiar with their space and place, I feel, is worthy of our attention and investigation.

² Gehl, J. (2010). *Cities For People*. Washington: Island Press.

³ Markman, A. (2009, July 27). *Tools for Innovation: Sketches and Your Brain*. Retrieved April 14, 2015 from Psychology Today: <https://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/ulterior-motives/200907/tools-innovation-iii-sketches-and-your-brain>

⁴ Papastergiadis, N. (2010). *Spatial Aesthetics, Art, Place, and the Everyday*. Amsterdam: Institute of Network Cultures. Page 26

Melbourne is a city in which street art is ubiquitous. For many of us, it is something which is part of our daily experience. Contextualising my research within contemporary art practice, I identify with street artists and interventionists. Street art has many methods and aesthetic styles, from spray work, paste-ups to interventions or gestures, all of which can be found in the streets and alleys of Melbourne and its surrounding suburbs. Melbourne artists such as Suki and Be Free have been great inspiration to me. Both artists are women who work with pasteups and spray work. Their work tends to be delicate and feminine and can be found throughout Melbourne city and the Northern suburbs.



i.



ii.

Street art has developed over the last several decades from subversive acts of political dissent to murals for communities, interventions, anonymous gifting, decorative pieces and so on. Works can be found all across the city, walls, floors, poles, trains are all plastered with work. “The gestures and statements made by contemporary artists are finding refuge in spaces that were formerly designed for different kinds of economic production.”⁵ Street art now has a legitimacy to it that was not previously recognised. Many artists display their work both surreptitiously and in the gallery context.

⁵ Papastergiadis, N. (2010). *Spatial Aesthetics, Art, Place, and the Everyday*. Amsterdam: Institute of Network Cultures. Page 78

The Unseen

In our daily experience we tend not to really see much of our surroundings. In our current society, the reality is that many of us are constantly looking at screens, computers, Ipads, phones, televisions, and giant advertising displays. These screens act as a barrier between our digital lives and our true physical existence in the world. This obsession with the screen has gone so far as to warrant public service announcements warning of the dangers of not looking when crossing the road, or of being aware when around trains and trams, warning posters about wearing headphones are plastered in every train station. We now have to be reminded to look and to listen to the world we live in. As Merlin Coverley states in *Psychogeography*:

“Amidst the barrage of media imagery to which we are subjected, our emotional response is blunted and we have become unable to engage directly with our surroundings without the mediated images of television and advertising. The result, as the Situationists proclaimed, is the canalization of everyday life, as we struggle to consume our way out of this sensory impasse.”⁶

Aldous Huxley’s premonitory novel, *A Brave New World* (1932) has permanently fixed ideas of a stunted society in my mind from the first time I read it at sixteen. I believe that screens have become our ‘soma’, our drug of choice to help us cope with the harsh realities of our existence. We can escape and actively ignore aspects of our lives and society with which we do not wish to engage with.

⁶ Coverley, M. (2007). *Psychogeography: The Pocket Essential Guide*. Pocket Essentials. Page 116

Yet I feel like this active ignorance has seeped into aspects of our lives that need to remain seen, we have become so accustomed to not seeing that we, as a society, are missing the beauty in our lives.

This research is driven by the need to observe the world we live in. On a personal level, it has been an exercise in my own 'lifting of the head'. I too, have been ensnared by the screen. I would often find myself walking with my head firmly down, eyes on my phone, reading emails, watching inane videos, obsessively messaging friends or family, not ever looking. The awareness of this disengagement bothered me. I have always found comfort and beauty in the observation of my surroundings, finding pure unequivocal joy in spotting something wondrous on my journey. The idea of losing this simple pleasure did not sit well with me. "At the micro level of everyday life, the individual is now compelled to utilize intelligence, cunning and ruse, both in order to survive and to gain pleasure."⁷

This project forced me out of my stupor; it required me to return to my natural state of engagement with place and observation. It became a self-directed exercise in being aware and present in my own life.

"The key advantage of the concept of the everyday was that it highlighted the potential for transformation at the level of the individual's experience. It showed that radical gestures could also be witnessed in the small steps taken by individuals in the course of their everyday lives."⁸

I chose to engage with electricity poles, something that has always been present in my life and always intrigued me yet I had never taken the time to *really* observe.

⁷ Papastergiadis, N. (2010). *Spatial Aesthetics, Art, Place, and the Everyday*. Amsterdam: Institute of Network Cultures. Page 26

⁸ Ibid. Page 28

These objects have literally surrounded my life, they have been present in every country and city I have lived in and I had never taken the time to look at them, and when I did, they revealed their beauty to me. “By representing familiar objects from unexpected positions they [avant-garde artists] not only sought to reveal hidden poetry but also unleash a new revolutionary understanding of reality.”⁹

One could almost pick any arbitrary object to focus on as an exercise in observation, as soon as you set yourself the task of ‘looking’, a trigger occurs in your brain which attunes to observing that object wherever you are. This training can also transmit to other factors of observation as well, opening oneself to being present within a space and then perhaps with people as well. Once the trance is broken, the fog clears and one can see again. In this society of ‘unseeing’ I find it imperative to set these goals for oneself.

“The concept of the everyday was not a retreat or an escape from the social, but a means of rethinking the relationship between the particular and the general, or how attention to the details of daily life can reveal an insight into the broader system.”¹⁰

⁹ Papastergiadis, N. (2010). *Spatial Aesthetics, Art, Place, and the Everyday*. Amsterdam: Institute of Network Cultures. Page 22

¹⁰ Ibid, Page 22

The Everyday

“Let everyday life become a work of art! Let every technical means be employed for the transformation of everyday life!”

Henri Lefebvre¹¹

The term ‘Everyday’ has been applied by many disciplines. Philosophers, such as Karl Marx and Henri Lefebvre, writers like Walter Benjamin and Michel DeCerteau and art historians and theorists such as Nikos Papastergiadis and Nicolas Bourriaud have all embraced this term in their fields with distinct definitions to suit their inquiries. Artists, such as Francis Alÿs and Yoko Ono, have also been exploring this concept for many decades through the use of everyday objects and practices.

The term ‘everyday’ has shifted greatly over the past century through these various disciplines. Originally, ancient Greek philosophers questioned what made ‘the good life’; this was the seed of exploration of the everyday.¹² The term was later explored in various critical models of sociology and cultural theory, and became a “...critical category for not only confronting the materiality and totality of the contemporary culture, but also a means of redefining reality for the purposes of social transformation.”¹³

There seems to be a unified understanding that the term is used, across these disciplines to describe the relationship between hegemony and the subversion of hegemonic belief systems.

¹¹ Goonewardena, K. (2008). *Marxism and Everyday Life: On Henri Lefebvre Guy Debord and some others*. In S. K. Kanishka Goonewardena (Ed.), *Space, Difference and Everyday Life, Reading Henri Lefebvre* (pp. 117-132). NYC: Routledge Press. Page 122

¹² Papastergiadis, N. (2010). *Spatial Aesthetics, Art, Place, and the Everyday*. Amsterdam: Institute of Network Cultures. Page 23

According to Papastergiadis, the discussion of the everyday was delayed in being introduced into critical artistic discourse.¹⁴ He notes that even though artists had long been experimenting with concepts of the everyday, the theoretical exploration of the term was mostly studied in the fields of sociology, philosophy and psychoanalysis.¹⁵ It was only in the 1980s, when the position of understanding art shifted and the divide between 'high art' and popular culture was understood as a new artistic language, that the term 'everyday' was introduced as a critical element of contemporary arts theory.

"There have been ongoing experiments which sought to subvert the conventional use of the everyday objects and associations in modern art. At the centre of these experiments was not just a documentation of the artifacts and customs of the modern world, but also the joining together of artistic practice with new industrial techniques in order to liberate the creative potential in modern life. These artistic collaborations were seen as a vital counter-force against the homogenization of culture and the pacification of subjectivity in modernity."¹⁶

Through my own research I have appropriated elements of several of these definitions to create my own understanding and context for this term. Philosophically, I have found Henri Lefebvre's writing to resound with my own beliefs and ideologies about life and the potential luminosity which can be found in the everyday.

¹⁴ Papastergiadis, N. (2010). *Spatial Aesthetics, Art, Place, and the Everyday*. Amsterdam: Institute of Network Cultures. Page 29

¹⁵ Ibid. Page 22

¹⁶ Ibid. Page 21

“For Lefebvre the significance of the concept of the everyday lies in the way it points to overcoming alienation. Lefebvre was convinced that alienation would not be overcome by political change alone. Lefebvre believed that an imaginative engagement with everyday life could stimulate the desire for social transformation.”¹⁷

My practice has often delved into the everyday in terms of exploring the seemingly banal to expose hidden elements of splendour which can be discovered if imagination is employed. I place great import on the small wonders of life, people and the world. My work seeks to gently stimulate an appreciation of objects which can be found in our everyday experience which may serve as markers or metaphors for deeper philosophical thoughts and practices.

“The concept of the everyday in critical theory was closely linked to the tension between freedom and alienation in modernity. The more pessimistic veins of Marxist theory tended to see the everyday, at best, as complicitous with the coercive forces of modernity...by contrast Henri Lefebvre was among the first to emphasize that the concept of everyday life was a positive supplement to Marx’s concept of alienation.”¹⁸

¹⁷ Papastergiadis, N. (2010). *Spatial Aesthetics, Art, Place, and the Everyday*. Amsterdam: Institute of Network Cultures. Page 24

¹⁸ H. Lefebvre, *Critique of Everyday Life*, J. Moore (trans), Verso, London, 1991 as cited in Papastergiadis, N. (2010). *Spatial Aesthetics, Art, Place, and the Everyday*. Amsterdam: Institute of Network Cultures. Page 24

I am not exploring Marxist cultural theory, however concepts of alienation, not in terms of the worker/work relations but in terms of individuals being alienated from other individuals and their space is more in line with my investigation. How distant we are from each other as a society, how art forms such as relational aesthetics including community engaged practices, have developed out of a necessity to reconnect with each other as a global society. The fact that we are now dealing with a global society is a challenge in itself. The idea of community is no longer simply a handful of people, rather, it is potentially millions we are in contact with. There is an overwhelming amount of information and an entire planet of different cultures, races, religions that we have to understand and conjoin with.

Michel DeCerteau in *The Practice of Everyday Life* describes how we, as individuals, can break away from the 'discipline' instilled upon us by society by the use of simple daily subversive acts of creativity. This book has acted almost as a survival guide for me. Displaying ways in which I can use my existing creativity and daily rituals as a way to introduce a quiet dissidence to my life and perhaps, society.

"Moreover, the question at hand concerns modes of operation or schemata of action, and not directly the subjects (or persons) who are their authors or vehicles. It concerns an operational logic whose models may go as far back as the age-old ruses of fishes and insects that disguise or transform themselves in order to survive, and which has in any case been concealed by the form of rationality currently dominant in Western culture."¹⁹

¹⁹ DeCerteau, M. (1984). *The Practice of Everyday Life*. Berkely: University of California Press. Page 124

The Illusion of Connection

We live in a society that professes to be cosmopolitan and unified by digital bonds. However, I see these bonds as a fallacy, through the mass imposition of digital and social media we are losing touch with each other on a personal, physical level. This is only the illusion of connection. Social media is often used to create a superficial level of connection between individuals; it serves to display an edited, constructed representation of lives. Lives that are already greatly dictated by the larger spectacle of mass media.

“...In its totality, the spectacle is both the outcome and the goal of the dominant mode of production. It is not something added to the real world, not a decorative element, so to speak. On the contrary, it is the very heart of society’s real unreality. In all its specific manifestations, news or propaganda, advertising or the actual consumption of entertainment, the spectacle epitomises the prevailing model of social life.”²⁰

Guy Debord published *The Society of the Spectacle* in 1967, almost half a century ago. Throughout those fifty years, obvious, significant technological developments have occurred; developments that include the introduction and saturation of computers and the Internet into most of our daily lives. The spectacle now not only permeates our public space but our private space also. We are constantly inundated with advertisement and imagery; there is almost no way to avoid it when living in contemporary society. This false and composed imagery is part of our everyday existence, we are forced to engage whether we chose to or not, and in doing so, we lose a grip on reality.

²⁰ DeBord, G. (1994, orig. 1967). *The Society of the Spectacle*, Preface. In G. DeBord, *The Society of the Spectacle* (D. Nicholson-Smith, Trans.). New York: Zone Books. Page 3

Our minds become warped with information about what we 'should' look like, what we 'should' own, where we 'should' travel to. We are packed into suburbs, shoved into trams, everywhere lights surround us and draw our attentions away from anything true and pure; humanity, empathy, connection, community. As Debord states "Images detached from every aspect of life merge into a common stream, and the former unity of life is lost forever."²¹ To process this constructed illusion and discover truth becomes ever more challenging under the oppressive weight of the spectacle. We are no longer unified with our cores, our communities, our place. The severance of our true selves with our illusionary states of being develops into a sense of alienation and disengagement.

"...for the present age, which prefers the sign to the thing signified, the copy to the original, representation to reality, the appearance to the essence...the illusion only is sacred, the truth profane"²²

Richard Sennett, in his essay *Capitalism in the City*, explores whether it is possible to engage with the self or community in a society which breeds disengagement and alienation through its modes of production, such as globalisation and mass corporations. "Just as flexible production produces more superficial, short-term relations at work, this capitalism creates a regime of superficial and disengaged relations in the city"²³

²¹ Debord, G. (1994). The Society of the Spectacle, Preface. In G. DeBord, *The Society of the Spectacle* (D. Nicholson-Smith, Trans.). New York: Zone Books. Page 4

²² Ibid. Page 4

²³ Sennett, R. (2005). Capitalism in the City, . In S. R. Read, *Future City*. London : Blackwell Press. Page 74

In a way, Sennett is echoing and modernising Marxist attitudes by integrating the contemporary realities of geographic and economic impermanence. “Dialectics of flexibility and indifference pose new dilemmas for cities: a dilemma of citizenship; of arousal in the public realm, since the impermanence/standardization connect leaves people indifferent to public place.”²⁴ Sennett is discussing the fact that because we, as a global society, are in a state of continuous flux, therefore, there can no longer exist a true attachment to place. If we are continuously moving house and changing work place then we no longer have the impetus to become attached to that place. In terms of broader social impact, this creates mass disengagement from place, community and even from our selves.

In contemporary art practices there have been several efforts to dispel this disengagement. In the last several decades we have seen the increase of community-based projects that fit into the realm of relational aesthetics. As Nicolas Bourriaud states: “I think it is illusory to aim at a step-by-step transformation of society, so I think that microscopic attempts, of the community and neighbourhood committee type, play an absolutely crucial role.”²⁵

²⁴ Sennett, R. (2005). *Capitalism in the City*. In S. R. Read, *Future City*. London : Blackwell Press. Page 77

²⁵ Coulter-Smith, G. (2003, March 9). *On Nicolas Bourriaud's Relational Aesthetics*. Retrieved April 17, 2015 from ArtIntelligence: <http://artintelligence.net/review/?p=845>

Mexican artist, Pedro Reyes creates works in collaboration with his local community to alleviate some of the harm and disconnection created by the drug cartels operating in the area. His piece *Palas Por Pistolas (Shovels for Guns)*, 2008, was created by the voluntary donation of firearms, of which 1527 were collected. These weapons were then crushed by a steamroller in a public act; the metal was then founded down and recycled to create 1527 shovels, which were then distributed to schools and community groups to plant 1527 trees.²⁶

Also taking part in the conversation are street artists, like Canadian based iHeart, who created a series of works in Vancouver to make comments on social media and its connection to a generation of children. Or Adelaide based, Peter Drew, who activates urban spaces with philosophical and political paste-ups and stickers. These artists pass comment on social or political topics, which are displayed in the public space. Art plays a crucial role in the counter hegemonic discourse.

“Art may be a precursor of changes not yet fully felt, or a witness to states that are either excluded from the frame of hegemonic discourse, or still a faint murmuring in the heart of everyday life. However, an art which seeks to heighten our senses to the proximity of the marvelous, to find significance in commonplace signs, is a practice which not only fans the embers but also shares the fuel of theory and politics.”²⁷

Through my research project I am questioning if it is possible to create missing connections by the use of art. I want to create connections between people and their relationships to place, to encourage a recognition and appreciation of their surroundings.

²⁶ Reyes, P. (2013). *Palas Por Pistolas*. Retrieved February 23, 2015 from Pedro Reyes: <http://pedroreyes.net/palasporpistolas.php>

²⁷ Papastergiadis, N. (2010). *Spatial Aesthetics, Art, Place, and the Everyday*. Amsterdam: Institute of Network Cultures. Page 38

Early on in my research I discovered the metaphors and realities of connection contained in the structures I was exploring. Electricity poles and wires literally connect us to one another. From houses to businesses, to remote areas of this expansive country, we are all linked together. These structures create a lattice across the country that links our lives.

From my desk I can see a pole with its wires that connect me to my neighbour and every other house on the street. Even though we may be strangers, there exists a physical, tangible connection between us. A line in space which connects us, exponentially, nationwide. Without these objects we would not live as we do, they provide us with light, warmth and the opportunity to connect with others by numerous methods. To explore these objects, was a subjective exercise in reconnecting.

Concepts surrounding the ubiquitous, the unseen, the everyday and the illusion of connection have consolidated into the foundational philosophies behind my research. Writers, philosophers and artists have all influenced my understanding of these subjects and provided me with a context within to situate my current investigations.



iii.



iv.



Method

4

Drawing the Line

For as long as humanity has existed we have been understanding and educating through the use of drawing; from the cave paintings of Cantabria to Leonardo DaVinci, scientific illustrations of the last 300 years or simply sketching a map to show someone the way, drawing has been an essential tool used by humans to understand the world around us. Emma Dexter in her introduction to *Vitamin D*, states:

“Drawing exists on another level in the human psyche – it is a locus for signs by which we map the physical world...a device used for understanding our place within the universe.”²⁸

For centuries drawing has been used by artists as a precursor to the ‘finished’ work, whether those works are paintings, sculptures, or prints, drawings almost always come first. In recent decades we have seen a turn in the artistic community towards holding up drawings as the ‘finished product’. Their importance has been elevated to the same level as paintings or sculptures. Contemporary artists such as William Kentridge, Fiona Hall, Johnnie Dady and Fiona Robinson (to name a few) are all held in high regard by the

²⁸ Dexter, E. (2005). To Draw is to Be Human. In *Vitamin D: New Perspectives in Drawing*. London: Phaidon.

arts community and have risen to this level, in part due to their drawings.

Another level of exploration interwoven into this research is the capacity humans have to learn and understand through the connectivity of the hand and the brain. The act of drawing stimulates a deeper level of understanding of a 'thing' and new ways of seeing the world around us. In *Drawing on the Right Side of The Brain*, Betty Edwards explores these physiological connections, which occur through the act of drawing.

"In the process of learning to draw, one also learns to control the mode by which one's own brain handles information. The eyes gather visual information by constantly scanning the environment...We tend to see what we expect to see or what we decide we have seen. The brain frequently does the expecting and the deciding, without our conscious awareness, and then alters or rearranges—or even simply disregards—the raw data of vision that hits the retina. Learning perception through drawing seems to change this process and to allow a different, more direct kind of seeing. The brain's editing is somehow put on hold, thereby permitting one to see more fully and perhaps more realistically."²⁹

One of the key aspects, which has always engaged me with drawing so intensely, is that it contains an inherent vulnerability and immediacy to it. The act of drawing is evident in the product, more so than with other mediums. One can witness the force or restraint, the decisiveness or the apprehension of the hand that made the mark. There is a very real and tangible link from the mark made to the human that created it. One of my greatest joys is viewing a drawing and seeing the efforts made by the artists to 'find the line', repeated lines and erasures, I can always imagine the

²⁹ Edwards, B. (1979). *The New Drawing on the Right Side of the Brain*. New York: Penguin. Page XXV

movement of the hand and the arm used to create these marks. Drawing requires a level of engagement that then reveals all of these secrets and hidden efforts. Humans generally have the capacity to engage with drawn images due to an accessibility which is linked to the fact that, most of us, at some point in our lives, whether we are artists or not, have drawn. Even if it was in primary school, or a simple doodle while on the phone, we have all had the experience of mark making. For this reason I felt that the medium of drawing would suit this particular concept.

I was formally trained in fine arts at Adelaide Central School of Art, completing my Bachelor of Visual Arts with Honours, in 2009. My education covered many of the forms of classical art training, from still lifes, life drawing, painting and sculpture. From this foundation my practice has often developed from material play, using materials that suit a particular concept. Through my practice I have previously explored sculpture, painting, printmaking, site-specific installations and drawing.

For this concept I have been inspired to use the format of analytical and observational drawings. Leading up to this investigation I had been examining botanical and scientific illustrations of the 18th and 19th Centuries. This imagery has been ever-present in my life, as both of my parents work in the field of botany. I have always been drawn to this type of aesthetic due, I believe, to the fact that I have been exposed to it from a very young age. Scientists or naturalists would either carry out these illustrations or would work in collaboration with an artist to represent their findings. The images provided educational resources for newly discovered lands and their flora and fauna. The format and technique involved in these illustrations is of great interest to me and is pinned down in a long tradition of understanding the world around us. The observational skills involved in these drawings requires an in depth inquiry into the textures, sizes, environments of the flora and fauna discovered and observed.

My inquiry is investigating whether this style of observation

and documentation can be translated to rediscover our urban surroundings in a new light. Through this research my intent was to explore my own capacity to make new connections between my brain and my hand. To build on the skills I already possessed.

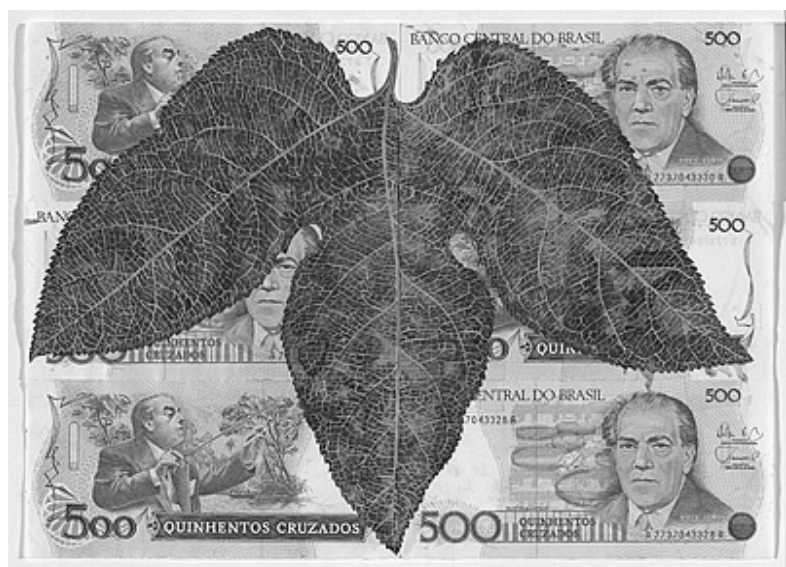
“Like other global skills— reading, driving, and walking— drawing is made up of component skills that become integrated into a whole skill. Once you have learned the components and have integrated them, you can draw—just as once you have learned to read, you know how to read for life... You don't have to go on forever adding additional basic skills. Progress takes the form of practice, refinement of technique...”³⁰

I set out to obsessively draw an object to test the development of my own observational and technical skills. Would I see more? Would I draw more accurately? Would my way of seeing my everyday surroundings shift to a new level of appreciation through the act of drawing and engaging with an object so intimately and repeatedly?

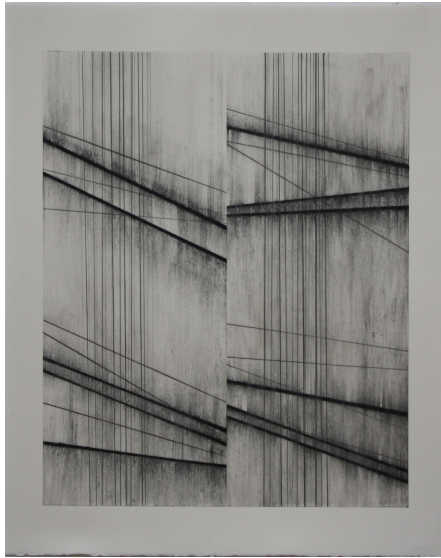
³⁰ Edwards, B. (1979). *The New Drawing on the Right Side of the Brain*. New York: Penguin. Page XIX



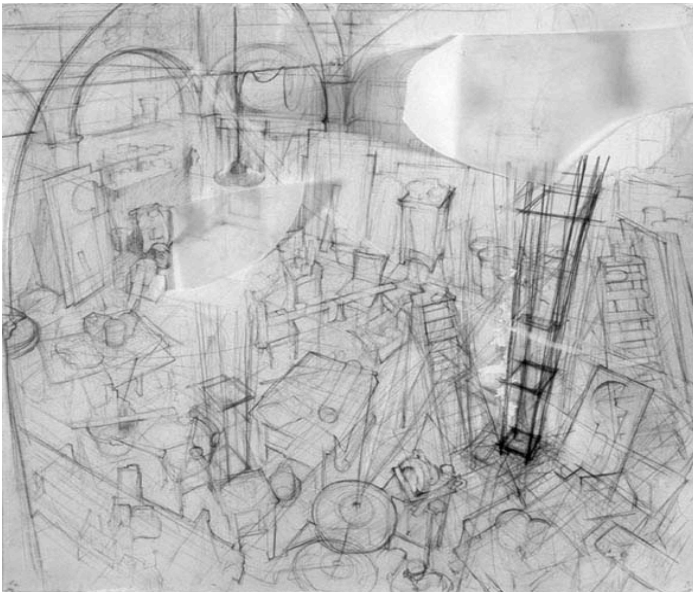
vi.



vii.



viii.



ix



ix.



xi



xii.



No two are the same: Exploration and Discovery

My investigation began quite simply, integrated into my everyday routines. Once I had set the task of observing electricity poles in my environment they became a fixation of my everyday. Whether I was walking or on the train, I began to filter out information which was irrelevant to my investigation in my surroundings and began to obsessively observe these structures and their components. The fascination developed quite dramatically, to the point that I could not longer actively ignore the structures wherever I was, they became my main focus. If I was sitting at a café with friends, my attention would slip upwards and I would begin studying a nearby structure, much to their confusion I would imagine.

When I began to really ‘look’ at these very functional, very industrial objects, they began to reveal their unexpected beauty to me; the carefully crafted ceramic insulators, the glass conductors which caught and reflected the sunlight, the vast variety of fasteners, connectors, pulleys used in these objects all had their purpose, their functionality so potent, so obvious. With their inherent functionality, for me, they transformed into a thing of beauty and marvel.

A few months into my investigation I returned to South Australia to visit my family. On this visit my family and I went on a road trip to the coast, this drive revealed unforeseen discoveries for me. In 1924, South Australian civil engineer, James Cyril Stobie (1895-1953) invented the Stobie Pole. These poles consist of two iron joists, which encase a concrete slab. This type of pole has only been utilized by South Australia and Western Australia, nowhere else in the world uses this form of electricity pole. This is due to the fact that they are more expensive to fabricate and SA and WA were the only states that had reliable and affordable access to iron. The

border between Victoria and South Australia is clearly demarcated by these different poles, within a kilometre the style of pole has changed but the wires continue to connect one state to the other. In the state of Victoria the most commonly used material is treated pine, and the more modern poles are made of galvanised steel.

These observations and discoveries suddenly made me highly aware of the history of these structures. Some of them have been installed for over a hundred years. Which then reveals, that the materials used to make them have existed for over two hundred years, in relation to the wood, and thousands of years for iron. The wooden poles of Victoria have filled me with wonder about the age of the trees themselves. On some poles one can see the knots of the tree, the warping of the wood, the grain exposed by years of weathering, the origin of this natural material so evident. My thoughts on material history were influenced by Smudge Studios Project, *Geologic City: A Field Guide to the Geoarchitecture of New York* (2011). This project investigates the geologic materialism of a city.

“We set out to create a field guide for New York City... to sense the forces of deep time that course throughout the city and give it form, dynamism and material reality. We began to identify geologic materials that make up iconic pieces of New York architecture and infrastructure, trace them to their origins, and place them on a geologic time scale. But we soon realised that the materials and forces we were encountering were not things. They were lively actors.”³¹

³¹ Studio, S. *Geologic City: A field Guide to the GeoArchitecture of New York*. MOMA, NYC. Introduction

With these thoughts in mind I could no longer help thinking about the age of these ‘things’. How many seasons they have seen, how many storms they have withstood. How many people and generations have passed them by. I began to anthropomorphise them in my mind. I developed empathy for them, always being seen as ‘eye-sores’, getting in the way of landscapes, being accused of causing cancer and starting bushfires. Yet without them, I will reiterate, we would not have the capacity to live, as we are accustomed to.

Through this anthropomorphisation I also came to the valuable discovery that no two poles are the same. Literally, I am yet, after almost a year of investigation, to find two identical poles. Each individual is composed of differing numbers of insulators, transmitters, different configurations, weights and numbers of wires. They each have their own features and characteristics that distinguish them from each other. In addition, every pole has been identified and marked by the companies with their own ‘name’ or identification number. In this way, my research unexpectedly developed into a practice akin to portraiture, by the intense observation of individuals.

Another source of intrigue and discovery, which revealed itself through my explorations, was the human engagement with these structures. This seemed to happen on two physical levels; one being at eye level, the other, at wire level.

My awareness of human interaction heightened when I began to note the palimpsests of posters, tags and stickers that had accumulated on many of these poles. I was so drawn to the textures created by these layers of tape and paper, which had been placed by the local community. One particular pole on Wellington St in Collingwood caught my attention due to the amount of posters that had been overlaid; layers of paper encircled it. I did a small archeological investigation by gently peeling back layers of paper and found a poster advertising a gig for 2012, for 3 years this poster had been fossilised under a laminate of paper and tape. On this pole the brief history of local community activity was buried

and preserved. Once again, revealing to me that beauty and marvel can be discovered in the most seemingly banal of spaces.

The tradition of throwing shoes over the electricity wires stems back to almost a century ago. There are many myths and urban legends as to where this practice stemmed from and what meanings the shoes hold. It is said that when soldiers returned from World War II they threw their boots over the wires to announce their return and as a rite of passage for completing their service. A similar tradition exists for school children completing either, the school year or their final exams. Another common theory is that the shoes signify the presence of a drug dealer in the area or is used to demarcate a gang's territory. In contrast, the practice is part of wedding rituals in some cultures, to discard the 'bachelor shoes' as another form of rite of passage. There seems to be no consensus or specific origin of the tradition, yet it is evidently clear that it is a seemingly universal and longstanding tradition.

By ways of investigation throughout the city and the surrounding suburbs I came to the realisation that there are no longer any electricity poles in Melbourne's CBD. The inner grid of the city, from Spring St to Spencer St and from Flinders St to Victoria St, the majority of the electrical structures have been replaced by an underground system. This reinforced the idea that these elements are disappearing from our everyday experience and on a personal level, made my documentation even more pertinent. I termed them an endangered species, one that will inevitably become extinct.

An element of this research, which I did not want to focus on but came across during the investigation, was the obvious environmental connotations that this project may evoke. I feel I need to mention my understanding of this factor, but I do not wish to dwell on it. Victoria's electricity is primarily created by the use of brown coal, which produces a huge amount of emissions compared to other fuel types. The use of sustainable power sources, such as hydro, solar and wind power, is minimal in the state of Victoria. So perhaps, it may be a positive step towards sustainability if these historical structures were replaced with more environmentally conscious energy sources, yet hopefully, not until I have documented as many as possible.



xiv.



xv.



xvi.



xvii.



xviii.



xix.



xx.



xi.

The Wires as Paths

A large part of the methodology for this project is my identification as a pedestrian. I have never had a full drivers license, therefore walking and public transport have been my main modes of transport in my adult life. I believe that due to this pedestrian lifestyle I have had the opportunity to heighten my observational skills. The pace of a walker is obviously slower than that of a driver; this gives rise to the joys of observation; of people, of architecture, of nature, of weather. One is completely exposed to all elements and all senses are triggered when walking. An immersion in your surroundings occurs which cannot be reached when travelling by car. I find great joy and peace in walking. It is a time when I can quietly reflect or observe my surroundings; all of the sites, smells and sounds serve as reminders of my own existence and presence in space.

I have always had a fascination with cities, the architecture, the excitement, and the constant movement of people has always held my attention but almost always I view this as an outsider. Removing myself by either wearing headphones or by slowing my pace. When I first moved to Melbourne four years ago, I spent the first few weeks roaming the city and surrounding suburbs, observing and familiarizing myself with the streets, the rhythms, and the smells of this new city. When I travelling I spend days walking an unknown city to grow familiar with the unfamiliar. Walking, like drawing formalises information in the brain. The observation of a space, which occurs when you are physically present in it, creates a solid sense of knowledge of that space.

“Throughout the modern period, cities have been a constant site of fascination for artists, and the vision of city life provided by artists has in turn inspired architects and urbanists. Artists have not just documented city life, but also embodied the urban spirit of modernity.”³²

Generally I walk with some purpose, to reach a destination, however, I often chose to walk even if another mode of transport is available to me. My paths are often guided by instinct and curiosity, rarely following the same route to the same destination. I discovered the ideas of psychogeography through my research and found they had great relevance to my daily rituals and philosophies.

“Psychogeography seeks to overcome the processes of ‘banalisation’ by which the everyday experience of our surroundings becomes one of drab monotony... a perception of the city as a site of mystery and seek to reveal the true nature that lies beneath the flux of the everyday.”³³

Although I had never thought of my pedestrian actions as being a subversive act, or considered myself as a flâneur, I have discovered that I do in fact fit the description.

“Walking is seen as contrary to the spirit of the modern city with its promotion of swift circulation and the street-level gaze that walking requires allows one to challenge the official representation of the city by cutting across established routes and exploring those marginal and forgotten areas often overlooked by the city’s inhabitants.”³⁴

I have always held a slightly rebellious attitude towards driving and cars, very aware of my own carbon footprint and the ancillary need of cars in an overpopulated and congested city. As Jan Gehl explores in *Cities For People* (2010):

³³ Coverley, M. (2007). *Psychogeography: The Pocket Essential Guide*. Pocket Essentials. Page 13

³⁴ Ibid. Page 11

“Cities must urge urban planners and architects to reinforce pedestrianism as an integrated city policy to develop lively, safe, sustainable and healthy cities. It is equally urgent to strengthen the social function of city space as a meeting place that contributes toward the aims of social sustainability and an open and democratic society.”³⁵

My walks began to be guided by intriguing poles or interesting accumulations of wires. My site of investigation became the streets on which these poles exist. The act of walking in and through my site influenced a deeper immersion in my transient space that had not previously existed. The methodology of walking then inspired my thoughts around making site-specific works. Works that would exist on and mark out the paths and poles I had explored.

“Small gestures in specific places—this could be the coda for the time when the place for art is on the move. Today the form of art bends to the circumstance, and the boundary with the everyday blurs. The placement of small gestures in specific places can at first glance be continuous with our daily stride, sight, breath, touch and reach.”³⁶

The idea of creating paths marked by drawings appealed to me, to make drawings which were specific to a particular pole and direct an observant walker to find the next one, as an image directed derive.

³⁵ Gehl, J. (2010). *Cities For People*. Washington: Island Press. Page 27

³⁶ Papastergiadis, N. (2010). *Spatial Aesthetics, Art, Place, and the Everyday*. Amsterdam: Institute of Network Cultures. Page 81

Outcomes

5

The Sketches

I began this investigation by doing a number of preliminary observational sketches*. Artists and scientists have used the practice of field sketches for centuries as a way of gathering information, specimens, if you will of what will be further examined at a later stage. As I have been so influenced by the practices of the naturalists, the mimicking of their acts was also of value to my own practice and rigour. During this initial stage I drew in the street or on the train, catching glimpses of poles and completing them from memory. Intense observation of individual components such as insulators, wires, fasteners and bolts were also examined through sketches (see outcomes page 12) This process was to form a solid psychological connection to the structures I was studying. As Betty Edwards states,

“In drawing, you will delve deeply into a part of your mind too often obscured by endless details of daily life...develop the ability to perceive things freshly in their totality, to see underlying patterns and possibilities for new combinations.”³⁷

* I have differentiated between ‘sketches’ and ‘drawings’ by means of time taken to complete. Sketches are the preliminary observations made from life while drawings are completed works that have been developed from the study of photographic specimens.

³⁷ Edwards, B. (1979). *The New Drawing on the Right Side of the Brain*. New York: Penguin.

The sketches were a part of this new form of seeing. To edit out surrounding details and focus on one aspect of the urban landscape was an essential element of the intellectual process. Sketching also allows an immediacy that more structured drawings often do not. Instinctive mark making traces what the eye sees in an effort to understand and process what it is that we are looking at. The quickness of a sketch forces the brain to intellectualise a form and materialise it on paper. Often the product is not accurate but the act of reviewing these sketches reveals these inaccuracies and a reinterpretation of the information the brain has collected. This process of production, review and reinterpretation cements new connections of understanding in the brain.³⁸

I discovered many inaccuracies in my sketches. For example the height and proportion of the poles themselves were quite challenging to accurately depict (see outcomes page 4) In a strange way these structures were actually quite unfamiliar, in spite of them being so present in our lives, I quickly discovered they were not as formalised in my brain as I had imagined them to be.

The fact that new discoveries revealed themselves to me on almost a daily basis (and still do) remains to be one of the highlights of this project.

Another technical discovery and challenge in the sketching stage was the issues of perspective, as our common mode of viewing these structures is from below, I had to develop a method of interpreting the information I saw to be able to accurately represent it in 2 dimensions.

³⁸ Markman, A. (2009, July 27). *Tools for Innovation: Sketches and Your Brain*. Retrieved April 14, 2015 from Psychology Today: <https://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/ulterior-motives/200907/tools-innovation-iii-sketches-and-your-brain>

The Drawings

I began the drawings in a small sketchbook, which was soon to be filled with detailed drawings of electricity poles. Through these more detailed and completed drawings I experimented with the inclusion and deletion of surrounding structures and trees. (see outcomes page 19) Occasionally superimposing the drawings of poles onto drawings of the surrounding landscape (see outcomes page 28) During the sketching process I had paid a lot of attention to the relationships that occurred between the poles and the surrounding architecture or the trees, with particular interest in the way many city councils carefully and laboriously prune the trees to accommodate the wires. This creates a sort of symbiosis of urban interconnectivity between the natural and the constructed.

Decisions were made for the final series of drawings to exclude much of the surrounding details, only occasionally including some outlines of the surrounds. This decision was made on the premise that I wanted the focus to be solely on the poles and wires themselves. This decision was also made in an effort to align my aesthetics with the naturalist illustrations that had influenced my research. The tradition to compose a work or illustration, which focused solely on the subject in question, was very appealing to me. Naturalists would often include only small details of the habitat of the subject, if any at all. Typically, these images would be concentrated exclusively on the subject being investigated, the composition consisting of a decontextualised creature or plant.

Experiments were carried out with scale and media. A few large-scale and some very small drawings were completed to gauge the effect of scale on the impact of the works (see outcomes pages 21 & 24).

The large drawings were impactful and I considered placing them into public space adjacent to the poles of origin. They had a pleasant sense of engagement as they were almost of human scale. I saw the potential of these drawings to exist in public space. However the smaller drawings had an intimacy and a level of detail that appealed to my aesthetic values. My work has almost always tended to be small in scale and intricately made, so naturally, the smaller images were more interesting to me. The intention of my project was for people to discover the subtle beauties that can be discovered in the everyday. I wanted the works to be discovered by the observant walker.

My work has also often made use of neutral tones, intentionally deleting all aspects of colour. This aesthetic choice has repeatedly been used to allow the viewer to imbue their own impressions or memories onto the works. For this project I decided to continue this neutral theme, using only graphite, pen and ink to draw with. These were intentional constraints I placed on myself to be able to purely focus on the elements I was investigating.

“Her neutrally-toned items are made from and for memory; her own, our own, and those of her distant and dearly loved one’s.”³⁹

³⁹ Waters, S. (2010). *Consumed*. Adelaide Central Gallery. Adelaide: Adelaide Central Gallery.

To begin with I was creating these drawings as an intellectual exercise, unsure of what the end result or method of display would be. I considered converting them into stencils so as to integrate my work into the street art world. While experimenting with stencils I realised that this was not cohesive with my intention for my project. Aligning myself with ideas of analytical drawing, stencil work was not suitable translation of my concept. I knew I had the intention of displaying my works in public space and one of the questions I was investigating through this project was whether an analytic style of drawing could exist and cohabitate with other forms of street art.

In the earlier stages of investigation I explored the ideas of creating memorials to poles of the past, structures that had already been replaced by underground systems. Yet again, this did not align with my core intent. These pieces would become more about the past rather than being in the present, which is what I strongly anchored my project to be about, presence in our everyday.

A few small propositional works were made before I decided to restrict myself to creating a series of site-specific paste-ups to be displayed on the poles of origin.

The Drawings in Public Space

It was essential for my intention to adhere the drawings onto the poles of origin, transforming them into site-specific works. The photographic specimens I had collected and then completed drawings from were then going to be returned to their natural habitat. This was of great import to me, as I wanted the viewer to be present in their space and aware of their surroundings. By making the drawings site specific this encourages the viewer to see the work, look at the structure and appreciate its beauty. To connect the drawing to the pole itself was essential to this investigation. Initially I considered pasting any drawing onto any pole; this way I could have multiples and a large amount of works displayed. Yet this option did not hold enough rigour for my practice. An arbitrary drawing on an arbitrary pole does not have the same impact as a site-specific drawing on a very specific pole. By placing this constraint on myself I had to accept that there would be less works displayed publicly, the drawings are time consuming and laborious, yet this option aligned with my practice more comfortably than making an enmasse.

I experimented briefly with small mailing stickers to display my works in space. (see outcomes pages 33 to 37) This process was not only expensive, but immediately I observed that the scale was not appropriate. Though I wanted the works to be small in scale, the mailing stickers were too small, and also very susceptible to weather conditions, some stickers only lasting a day or two in the city's notorious downpours. I acknowledged that these works would very likely be temporal and even ephemeral. There was a poetry to this that I enjoyed, the disappearance of the works holding a metaphor for the disappearance of the poles themselves. A comment on the idea that if you don't look now, soon they will be gone. However, in saying this, I did want the works to last more than a day or two.

The next stage of investigation moved towards finding a more adequate scale and fixing method for my works. I attempted an A4 paste-up, as this is the ideal scale for the human brain to process⁴⁰ yet this did not look intentional or polished enough. A5 seemed to be a more suitable scale, as this is the scale I tended to make the original drawings in and there was a lovely tangibleness to them, a sense that one could hold these structures in ones hands.

⁴⁰ Edwards, B. (1979). *The New Drawing on the Right Side of the Brain*. New York: Penguin.

After the failed attempts of using stickers to adhere the drawings to the poles, I researched methods used to create paste-ups by street artists. The most common methods include using a homemade wheat paste or using wallpaper glue, or a combination of the two. Wallpaper glues have a lot of chemicals in them and I was not prepared to use this toxic method when I was aware that they would probably be rained on and the risk of chemicals leaking into the drains was high. I opted for the wheat paste option and began concocting my first batches. This took a few attempts to perfect the consistency and durability of the mixture but once perfected, the wheat paste was a very suitable and easy fixing method to work with.

Previous to this project my work has always been gallery or community based. This was my first foray into street art, aside from some very small interventions with stickers and sharpies. I researched other street artists' methods for avoiding trouble with the authorities and found that usually, in this city, one can avoid any kind of difficulties. We are extremely lucky to live in a city where street art is such an integrated and essential part of our urban culture.

However I still carried out most of the installation of works at night and developed a system to fix the drawings as quickly and efficiently as possible. Carrying a paintbrush and container of wheat paste surreptitiously hidden in my bag for easy access.

I found great pleasure in adhering the drawings to the poles, the paper often picking up some beautiful textures of the wood or the drawing integrating with palimpsests of past engagements with the poles, lost pet posters, old sticky tape and its residue, tags and others paste ups. The drawings became inlaid into this area of human activity. (see outcomes page 50) I pasted all the drawings at eye level to give them the highest chance of engagement from the public.

An unexpected challenge of installation was actually re-finding the poles I had drawn. On my walks and wanders I would often take a photographic specimen because it caught my eye and then later explore it further through drawing in the studio. On reflection, it would have served me well to note down the exact location of the poles I was documenting. On some of the nights of installation I found myself wandering for hours trying to find a specific pole in a sea of poles. Almost like playing a game of memory, holding the drawing up and trying to match the amount of fasteners, insulators or wires that were presenting themselves to me along the dark streets. I must admit, some I have never been able to re-find, lost in the matrix of wires and poles, these will plague me and I will continue to search for them until they present themselves to me.

This challenge brought up some interesting reflections for me. I had the opportunity to return to my previous sites and in doing so rediscover things I had not previously encountered. Throughout this journey of observation and discovery I found that only after months of carrying out this exploration I was truly attuned to the elements of the structures. Insulators that I had previously assumed were the same, were actually quite different.

For example, there are three main types of ceramic insulators which I have identified, one where the wires cross the top and generally have three ceramic tiers, another where the wires cross through the middle of the insulator and have five tiers and the third where the wires wrap around the insulator itself and can have up to nine tiers. Previously my eye had identified all of these as 'insulators', not separating them into individual groupings. It amazed me that it took so long for my brain to process this information and differentiate these details. As far as I knew I had been taking in as much information as possible and not assuming anything about these objects but truly observing them.

It has since become profoundly obvious to me that the brain often assumes and generalises, one has to force it to accurately observe. This lesson was extremely useful to my research as it helped me understand the process it takes to fully quantify an observed thing and that through drawing this is where the physiological process can actually happen.

Travelling Lines, PS50

In December of 2014 I developed an exhibition for the PS50 space in Carlton with Ainslie McCauley. The space consists of two separate sections of light boxes, one set of nine that faces Orr St and another which faces the alley. McCauley and I developed a proposal entitled *Travelling Lines*, to produce separate works in each of the areas present at PS50. The title alludes to the concept that both of us were exploring through our work, looking at movement through space and the lines which connect us, both physical or metaphorical.

The work I contributed to this show was titled *Orr St* and was a site specific drawing installation utilising the street facing light boxes. For this work I set to composing a line of interconnected drawings based on the electricity poles and fixtures that exist on Orr St in Carlton (see chapter ‘PS50, Travelling Lines’, in outcomes). This exhibition gave me the opportunity to develop a more thorough investigation of a specific site through drawing while working in the same environment.

I chose to work with graphite on tracing paper as the works were to be installed onto light boxes and I wanted to light to emanate from the drawings. The intention of this work was for it to be as subtle as possible while still holding enough intrigue to draw people closer to fully inspect and engage with the drawings.

I wanted to create a gentle 'hook' for the public. For example, if someone was walking on the opposite side of the street, it may appear that the boxes were simply hazed over, yet a slightly darker line may catch their attention and direct them across the street for curiosities sake. The subtlety was important to me, as I did not want to overtly dictate a response. *Orr St* was simply asking people to observe their space and to be present within it, to be aware of the seemingly insignificant objects within that space which may provide a new outlook.

As the work was displayed day and night for the duration of the show, the light boxes provided a beautiful platform of display for the night viewing. I believe the works were much more successful at night than during the day. The works were a little too subtle in the daylight and were somewhat lost, whereas at night the soft glow of light exuding from the boxes provided a warm invitation to explore the works. The drawings were more evident with the light glowing behind them; they also seemed to integrate with the surrounding site more cohesively in terms of the tones of the street lamps.

My methodology was somewhat similar to previous works; I was still using photographic specimens to gather information about the site and the structures. However, because I was working in close proximity to the site, I had the opportunity to physically observe the structures at a more intimate level and at more frequent intervals. I found that this slight change in methodology made for much more detailed drawings and more intense observation. I also discovered that through the use of photographic specimens I was losing a lot of detail. These drawings were developed with a precision of observation that was previously not as evident. I would often be drawing in the studio from my specimens and find that I was missing information; this led me to venture into the street and spend time fixating over the weights of wires, the thickness of fasteners or the bolts used to secure objects to the walls of buildings.

A great challenge with this work was to draw the continuous wires. As strange as this may sound, I had not accounted for the difficulties that I would encounter with this exercise. Some of the wires stretched the whole distance of the work (approximately 5 meters long) to draw a continuous and precise line of this length was surprisingly challenging. I was aware that these lines would not be 'perfect' and part of what engages me with drawing is that exact point, the imperfections, the evidence of the hand. Yet I still struggled to accomplish a level of finesse that I was comfortable with. However, I did find that by the time I was creating the works for *Orr St* my hand to brain connection had already strengthened considerably. I believe this to be obvious when reflecting back to the initial sketches and comparing them to the completed works for *Travelling Lines*. In terms of my research, these observations were fascinating; my hand was now significantly trained to translate aspects of proportion, perspective and finer details.

Even more interesting to me was the drawings completed after the *Orr St* works demonstrated a different level of 'training' which was not present in the previous drawings. I believe this to be due to the intense observation that was carried out in the research for this work. By the time I had completed these drawings, my brain had reached a new level of familiarity and knowledge of these objects.

A few months after the exhibition had finished I returned to the site and observed that a modern fixture had replaced one of the fixtures I had documented through drawing. The concept of these industrial elements being replaced and or removed completely is such a large part of this investigation I was surprised to find that changes were already occurring during the time of my exploration. For this reason I decided to extend the original work by creating paste-ups from the original drawings, to highlight the fact that changes occur suddenly in our urban landscape. The paste-ups have been adhered around the site and are currently being displayed on Orr St. I enjoyed extending the work into a semi-permanent element of the site, and also creating a kind of memorial for the replaced fixture.

Reflections and the Future

When I began this investigation I was not only interested in electricity poles and their ubiquitous presence in our daily life but also the impact which drawing something repeatedly would have on my own skills of observation and drawing. Through this project I have learnt some very interesting points about my own psychology and how drawing impacts the brain. I was fascinated to discover the level of development that occurred in my drawing skills. Drawing has served as a tool for me to better understand and appreciate this particular aspect of our urban landscape.

One of the aspects, which I have thoroughly enjoyed about this project, is speaking to people about it. I have received very interesting feedback about the project and have often received people's own reflections on the concept. Some individuals have expressed that after speaking to me, they have begun to notice electricity poles in their own wanderings and daily lives. For me this has been extremely rewarding, the clear impact of the project on people's lives. This result is all I could have asked for and a direct reflection of my intention. Other people have shared their memories of specific electricity poles in their childhoods. One man I spoke to shared his memory of going on road trips as a child and playing a game with his family of spotting all the different types of poles they could find. I loved this anecdote, as it was a reflection of my own recent discoveries, yet this had been a part of this man's life for decades. Often when telling people about my project I have felt slightly mad, obsessing over such arbitrary objects, yet people have seemed genuinely interested and engaged with my concept.

I have also been faced with less positive reactions that have been valuable to my own reflections. One woman said, “Why would you want to draw something so hideous!?” Which is a completely valid reaction and even one of the reasons I was interested in exploring these structures. To contrast the popular opinion that they are ‘hideous’ and to portray them in a new and more positive light.

An extension of the project has occurred recently while carrying out the final paste-ups, I began to include a hash tag (#ubiquitousunseen) to the very bottom of the works to link the series to Instagram. This decision took much thought and deliberation. I wanted to be able to trace the works’ impact and I found that this might be the most effective way of extending the work further into the public sphere. I am aware that this is somewhat paradoxical with some of the elements of the philosophical foundations of this project. Yet this disparity is something of interest to me, as evidently, I have not been able to rid myself of the screen through this project. Drawing from photographs that I have taken, usually on my phone, then using my computer screen to manipulate them so as to have clearer information. This is the age we live in and I think it is important to learn to balance between the screen and reality. If we can use this technology to reconnect on a genuine level, then perhaps we will discover new means of social and global empathy and awareness.

One of the most fascinating revelations of this work has been the discovery that things have already begun to change in the time I have been exploring this concept. For example, the electricity poles of Hotham St, in Collingwood, all had original lamp fittings attached to the poles. (see outcomes pages 43 & 44) I was drawn to this street on my wanderings because of these fixtures. They were a beautiful heritage green with flaking paint and delicately curved wrought iron supports.

They had a sense of nostalgia to them, evidence of local history. When I returned to the same street to paste-up my drawings, perhaps no more than three weeks later, I discovered that modern aluminium lamps had replaced all of these superb, original lamp fittings. I was, honestly, quite confounded by these changes, the fittings were so lovely, and seemed to function just fine, to me there seemed to be no reason to replace them. After my sadness subsided I soon realised that in terms of my project this was extremely relevant. I was just so shocked to witness these changes happening within the span of my investigation. This discovery illuminated the worthiness of my exploration, if we do not pay attention to these structures now, they will soon be replaced and will no longer be a part of our daily experience.

This investigation has not come to a stage of completion for me. I feel as though this series of works is the foundation for a larger body of work that will incorporate larger rural structures that connect cities, towns and even countries. Also to be explored is the method of display, I have enjoyed my foray into the street art world and would like to continue this method of public art. I see the potential to play with scale and different materials, even drawing directly onto poles or walls adjacent to structures or electricity plants. This project may also lend itself to be exhibited in a gallery setting as a collection of individual drawings.

Another extension of this exploration is the investigation of train and tram wires and systems as they have a very similar industrial aesthetic and also hold very strong metaphors for connection. This project has the potential to develop much further conceptually and developmentally in terms of my own practice and skills. I hope to continue this investigation over the coming years.

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Image List

- i. Be Free, *Untitled Paste-up*, Scotchmer St, Fitzroy North
- ii. Suki, *Untitled Sticker*, Easey St, Collingwood
- iii. Pedro Reyes *Palas Por Pistolas*, 2010.
Repurposed firearms, dimensions variable
- iv. iHeart, *Untitled*, 2012, Stencil Work
dimensions unknown
- v. Peter Drew, *Cats n Stuff*, 2010, Paste-up, London,
dimensions unknown.
- vi. William Kentridge, *Weighing...and Wanting*, 1997-98,
Charcoal and pastel on paper
- vii. Fiona Hall, *Passiflora edulis (Brazilian Currency)*,
2002, Gouache on currency, 30 x 22cm
- viii. Fiona Robinson, *Discords II*, 2012, Charcoal, pencil,
chalk and wax, on Arches HP, 56 x 56 cm
- ix. Johnnie Dady, *My Florence Studio (propositional)*,
2005, Aquarelle pencil and tea on paper, 108 x 110 cm
- x. Ernst Haeckel, *Desmonema annasethe*, 1879,
Graphite on paper
- xi. Ernest Thomas Seton, *Young Buck*, 1909,
Graphite on paper, 15.35 x 21.25cm
- xii. Carolina Facelli, *Flora Constellation (detail)*, 2014,
digitally manipulated Graphite on tracing paper
0 x 0 cm

The Ubiquitous Unseen

- xiii. Carolina Facelli, *Cleanse*, 2014, Charcoal on fabric,
67 x 115 cm
- xiv. Burnt wood pole, Keele St, Collingwood
- xv. Stapled textured pole, Brunswick St, Fitzroy
- xvi. Pole 'name', Keele st, Collingwood
- xvii. Pole 'name', Rose St, Fitzroy
- xviii. Tagged and stickered Pole, Sackville St, Collingwood
- xix. Poster wrapped pole, Wellington St, Collingwood
- xx. Shoes on a wire, Johnston st, Collingwood
- xxi. Shoes on a wire, Hosier Lane, Melbourne