

31 March - 2 April

PV: 30 March, 6-9pm

Eye to Pencil Studio

26 Exmouth Market, EC1R 4QE

Draw-ers... work from the weeds outwards, building up from particulars, inductively, scratching and pawing at their paper with tools the scale of their hands. OR maybe they never get to a bigger picture at all, but move sideways, abductively, from particular to particular. This made drawing itself seem like an activity not founded on logic but made up of contingencies, overflow, stray parts- a process that might be described as working blind, like a mole, or like a beaver building a thatch, rather than someone with an overarching worldview.

Amy Sillman, *Further Notes on Shape*

I suppose we have to start with these kinds of bare bones. We pick up the pencil, stick of charcoal, rusty nail or prodding device and start to make a thatch roof of lines. A roof and then the foundations, or the other way round, always turning the paper and fixing the mind into it. Inscription, taxation, hard-thinking, no-thinking, a little bit of reflection and/or autobiographical unload. These are all fine; they are all the things we pile up onto the page to see what is left behind. I'm often scribbling and sticking into the night, and the next morning I peel back the sketchbook cover to discover some sorts of twilight fortunes and/or landmines that have been left behind on the page. We build up like a beaver and work from the roots up, Silman writes, borrowing from Manny Farber's seminal essay on film: *White Elephant Art vs Termite Art*.

But how to put a line around anything? This was a question raised by Timothy Hyman (no.35) in his talk with us in the studio last year. How to put anything *around* the void? The realm of possibility is vast with pencil and paper; it may represent the most accessible of tools, and provide enormous potential. For this show at least we'll stick to what we think is *useful* about drawings. Not putting a line *around* something, but a necessity to put a line down somewhere, at least, to fasten it to reality, to ask of it something utilitarian, please! We then have to ask ourselves what kind of drawing we are looking at? There isn't just art-drawing, or architecture-drawing, or a nice study-drawing, but scribbles, doodles, thinking drawings and working drawings; these might all be *useful* drawings and we're very glad to be putting them all next to one another.

Useful; a large and heavy word perhaps. What could possibly be useful about a drawing? Well, an awful lot, especially to the drawer, but it certainly won't waterproof a shed. We've had a submission from Mandy Prowse (no.25), whose lines on lines of doodles she conspired with while on the phone, having a *deep* chat with a friend, left a remarkable imprint on a scrap piece of paper underneath her angsty scrawl. A beautiful kind of concentric form emerges from the page, with printed black text seeping through, its own kind of landmark Spiral Jetty emerging: memory-time spilling into the drawing (although really what's shown is the imprint *of* a drawing). It was useful to get something down, meanwhile deep chat ensued; It is something *you just do*, Sarah Pickstone (no.83) remarked in her talk 'Transforming



Images' in the studio last Autumn. Alison Hui (no.18) gave us a drawing that records a historic pawn shop in Hong Kong built in the 1950s, moments before it was demolished, while Thomas Kemball (no.30) dreams up, in technicolour, a fashion show that he has never been to. We've had hangover declarations and cycle-route maps next to fairytale recollections and peeks into Weltlandschafts. The range is rather dizzying, what we here call drawing, and whilst it might sound hasty, thank goodness it is and can be just something we *do*.

Useful drawings don't seem to be symphonies, or highly sophisticated constructions, they are more rambling, more disparate, with a kind of scrappy curiosity about them. They splutter onto the page, softly pose a question, map a ballroom dance, remember a lost place, remind you to unclog the sink, or not? What is important is that they must remain quick, fugitive and a reminder, a scratcher of daily surface. We keep "Art" in big quotation marks for something larger and stranger, but drawing can remain an underbelly, something more scurrying, more obtuse, quieter. 'Useful' asks a lot from us. We've had studies for paintings, drawings poached from pictionary boxes in pubs, an architectural plan for a flat in Islington furnished with blue biro scribbles, and lots of severed hands, some hairy, some dissected and one prodding a cat. All in the post and from far away; New York to Plymouth to Oxford to Newcastle. Slicing open envelopes from our groaning pile revealed all sorts of mini revelations, perhaps most revealing only to the drawer, but the contours of daily existence nevertheless remapped and recharged into lines and marks on paper rare and strange.



Laura Fox, Test Page - Accidental Drawing