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## Drawing of the mind

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DRAWING OF THE MIND

A Thesis

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the  
Louisiana State University and  
Agricultural and Mechanical College  
in partial fulfillment of the  
Requirements for the degree of  
Master of Fine Arts

in

The School of Art

by

Buddy Harper

B.F.A., Allen R. Hite Institute, University of Louisville, 1995

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## ABSTRACT

The rules of drawing I have described are an outline to my method of working. It is to be used like the rules of a game. The thesis paper provides the viewer the basic parameters for looking at my work. The body of work is produced like two people playing a game of chess. I establish the rules and then I develop the work in an investigative manner.

## INTRODUCTION

Drawing is a discipline, defined as a system of rules or methods. Drawing is used as a language because it is used as an expression or it communicates thoughts or feelings. There has to be purpose in what we do as artists, more than recreating what we see. The working method is just as important as the subject matter. The work is established through rules, as a visual linguist to communicate an idea and a philosopher to prove a theory. The structure of the language is using a method of drawing to represent an event, past or present. The discipline aspect of drawing structures the method of conveying the language. The system of rules that make up the discipline can be defined by taking the method of drawing and associate it with an idea intended to communicate. For example, observational drawing, the method, is drawing the present moment, the idea. Understanding the structure gives a comprehension of the ideas that are defined.

Consciously or not, all artists have a system of rules. For the impressionist artist investigating light was an important goal. They established a rule of removing black from the palette. Black, which is the absence of light, is a logical choice to avoid when the goal of the work is to concentrate on light. The abstract expressionist conveyed emotions through color and mark, which became their language. It is only human nature to set parameters on our lives and what we do. Society has rules on conduct in most facets imaginable. Rules create an order that can give comfort, insuring that there is not total chaos. This same idea holds true in the work;

On the other hand, rules are much like that of a game, setting the method of playing. The challenge is in figuring out a way to achieve a goal within the definitions of the rules. Like a game of chess the complexity in achieving the goal of checkmate is what requires the creativity in the player, the greater the challenge the higher the creativity. As the drawing is developed there are numerous methods that can be used at any stage. The choice of which rule to use during the drawing process is the journey. The consistency of rules also leads the observer, the observer begins to see things the way the artist is seeing. Then, the ideas of the artist will appear. *Moses' Mountain* is an image of two figures that are embraced in sex, but the intent is for the first read to be two mountains. Using collage allows the two images to stand separately within the same space. The figures are the present moment of sin and Moses ascending into the mountains to retrieve the judgement of God is the memory of the mind.

## LINE, MARK, AND EDGE

One of the rules adopted as a language in this work is separating the work into the method of line, mark or edge. Making a division between line mark and edge is a system of defining how a three-dimensional world is converted onto a two-dimensional surface. The definitions for line, mark and edge are adopted in this work and can have different meanings to other artists. The definition of line used here is an emphasis on two-dimensionality, meaning that there is little attempt to create an illusion of space and a concern for the line quality, as seen in *Spatial Tension*. Mark is putting an emphasis on the surface quality of the paper and tends to move between creating the illusion of space and the two-dimensional nature of the paper, exemplified by *Split Perceptions*.

Edge is focusing on the planer quality of an object, or fields of color and value, within a three-dimensional space, which is best seen in *Observing Space*. Each of the works is based in drawing, but as a method, the work emphasizes mark making. Moving from the foreground to the middle ground and the background, the marks intertwine each other. The marks, a method of thinking, function as individual moments that create an event. These moments are used in the same way as sounds from instruments of an orchestra, each maintaining its qualities while collectively creating a larger composition. Marks are the sounds and how they are put together is the language. Each work is a record of a segment of time, both past and present. Often what happens, without prior intent, marks will carry from one piece and pick up on the next, tying all the work together as a personal journey.

Memories and present moments are always moving parallel to each other. People incur each passing second of the day with the history of the past that leads up to that moment. What is important of the past at the time of the present is what shapes the next moment. The work is separated into three groups, observational drawing, analytical drawing and a combination of observational and analytical drawing. Each of the groups, a method of drawing, reflects a thought process. Observational drawing is about the present in that to observe something while you are drawing it you are acting in the moment. The observationally driven work is the physical qualities of the subject as well as the psychological or social dynamics unfolding before the observer. Analytical drawing is used for the purpose of drawing the past, which can only be seen through memories. Combining the analytical method of drawing with observational drawing, logically then, depicts the parallel paths of memories and present moments.



## OBSERVATIONAL WORKS

The observational drawings serve two purposes. The first is to examine an object and analyze it to understand the effects of light, color, and line to name a few of many physical attributes. The second goal is to understand psychologically, socially, and in relationship to the external environment the subject that is being drawn. The subject of the observational drawing is people and is done with the intention of suggesting their identity in the world around them.

Each of the observational drawings reflect a moment but the group as a whole creates past by relating one piece to the next. Each moment of a person's life is not the same. By presenting the observational works in chronological order the passage of time is made clearer.

*Nude Figure, New Rouge* is an example of the observational work and is primarily a nude study from life. It relates to the other observational work as being an ongoing study of the same person during different times. This results in being a reflection of the relationship between the artist and the subject. These are about different moments and different dynamics that make up a relationship.

## ANALYTICAL WORKS

The analytical drawings, created as a stream of consciousness, are used to depict the past, by laying marks freely on the paper. The mark making acts like a rhythm in the work, applied to paper with no image in mind. Like the tempo from the chorus of a Greek tragedy, marks emulate a beat of impending doom to the main story. Sounds that come from below the surface are a constant reminder that there is another story, not yet unfolded.

Memories and thoughts emerge during the process of laying marks in a contemplative manor. Abstractions develop through the way the mark making is used. Abstraction introduces the viewer to a layer that might not otherwise have been considered. Once something is seen, other images are drawn in response to the original image. There is often more than one story going on in the work. Often an image of an object that is meant to read at one level, as realistic becomes something else that is abstracted. For example, *The Churchgoers* has an image of a crowd of people either entering or leaving a temple in the background which is not just a temple but also the parted legs of a woman. The crowd entering the temple becomes a flow that departs from a woman's parted legs. Within the right leg of the woman, is an image of a man ensnared by his obsession, which is a response to the other images within this drawing. The trapped man moves the reading back to a layer of realism. The layers of abstraction and realism move in and out of each other in an interweaving of images and ideas. The interweaving of the Mark making echoes this layered structure and way of handling the images.

## COMBINATION OF OBSERVATIONAL AND ANALYTICAL

The lives people lead is quite complex and when there is more than one person in a situation the story becomes a weaving of both of their individual paths. The ideas of the combined analytical and observational work are fed from numerous aspects of life, which come together to create one composition. The work is about perception, as observed and recorded by the artist. There is more to the images than what lies on the surface. Just as the marks are layered, so is the content. The work of Christopher Brown reflects similar thinking to my work. "In a broad sense, all my paintings are about personal or collective memory. He states that "The ability of painting to combine memories of times into one image, as we do in our minds, is one of the things I am involved in now—not simply what life looks like, but what our memory of life looks like." The result of his approach is a combination of abstraction and realism. It is the challenge of combining the collective memories that is an integral aspect of my work. More like magic realism, there really is no past or present, all moments make up one moment. Moments are separate but at the same time and unified in a timeless state that is a collection of all the moments. Like an onion, the layers are the moment and the onion is the collection of moments, One transparent layer over another. The work that combines the two methods, analytical and observational, starts out with the same method as the analytical drawings. It differs in that it shifts back and forth during the process between the two methods of working, resulting in a collage of the present and the past is the result.

*A part*, an example of the combined work, composed of two figures sitting in front of computers. The space between the computers acts as a path to a doorway. The opening of the doorway reveals a wall blocking the way that is deteriorating from neglect. The tattered darkness of the past contrasts the light of the moment that is coming from the computers. Thus, the path is not the hallway that leads to the past but from the exchange of the two figures. The figure on the left is portrayed as a jester: the fool who is looking for answers in the wrong place. The figure on the right is a combination of someone that is of the moment and a memory of the past. The marks are laid in a rhythmic pattern to separate the different images according to the layer that they belong. The light is one level, the path to the past is another and the figures are a third layer. Each layer is intended to act on its own yet at the same time the images are integrated into the overall composition.

*The dress rehearsal is over* has key images that are separate visually and conceptually yet the goal is to bring the images together in a unified composition without losing their individuality. There are three sets of images of people in this piece. Each set has a pair of people that have a relationship to each other on one level and a different relationship to the other pairs. Like several of the other works, the idea of the chorus sets the rhythm. The marks cross over, behind and through one another. Through the use of mark making a patchwork of color adds another layer and also creates a pattern that works through the whole piece at the same time holding the images together.

## CONCLUSION

The rules are a way of understanding methods of drawing but the final results of the work is open-ended. The choice on what rule to use during the drawing process is the path through a labyrinth. All the ideas conveyed come from the self, even if the idea begins outside the self it is filtered through the self. This work is about a journey, which upon closer inspection are several intertwined journeys. The past and the present have their own paths. There is one path represented by the observational drawing while there is another path not so easily seen, which is the path of the past. There are many factors that make up a moment. The layers are filled with the complexities of the individuals or the individual as part of a greater entity, society. Usually what happens from this process are stories, philosophical ideas, emotions – either personal emotions or interpretation of others’ emotions—and this becomes the core of my decision of what to include in the drawing. What appears is an image that tells a story of the past and present.



Moses' Mountain



Spatial Tension



Split Perceptions



Observing Space





Nude Figure, New Rouge



The Church Goers



Apart



The Dress Rehearsal is over

## VITA

Buddy Harper was born in Louisville, Kentucky, on April 17, 1964. He is a third generation artist receiving his exposure in art from his mother, Michaele Ann Harper and she from her father, Richard T. Harper. Buddy is the son of Michaele Harper and Michael Higgins and the only brother of three sisters, Catherine, Lisa and Laura. His grandmother, Jeanne Harper was also part of his development. Buddy attended Youth Performing Arts School where he studied music and later to Warren Central in Kentucky. He received his Bachelor of Fine Art from the University of Louisville's Allen R. Hite Art Institute, graduating *cum laude* in May 1995. Buddy attended Louisiana State University beginning in 2000 and he is to be awarded his Master of Fine Arts in 2003.