

## Extended Drawing<sup>1</sup> Within (Embryonic) Design Processes Robin Schaefferbeke, Sint Lucas, School of Architecture (Belgium)

While we evaluate design through the designed objects the designing process generates, thought processes within design are mainly judged through the production and interpretation of graphical artefacts: drawings, images, models and diagrams.<sup>2</sup> Historically design sketches and poetic models used to dominate embryonic<sup>3</sup> thinking within design. Now, the advent of digital drawing and processing techniques has brought about a shear endless stream of combinatory possibilities to visualize creative thought which changed our designing practice on many levels. Exploring possibilities, combinations and opportunities within new and old media gave rise to a new and certain freedom to approach representations of designerly thought processes and, eventually unprecedented conceptual paths to approach designerly decision making. Nowadays it seems that expressing design has evolved towards a, to some extent, elusive process of intuitively layering, processing, treating and filtering different modes of drawing and image making. Within a few decennia the afore mentioned evolutionary process has constituted a shift in paradigms when considering graphical exploration and thinking processes within design and beyond. The proliferation of digital drawing and editing tools, the emergence of online search engines and the easy availability of digital photography is constantly transforming the way designers and certainly novices perceive preliminary designing processes and is changing the historically established status and value attributed to drawing as a commodity of design.<sup>4</sup>

Within the following we would like to explore and share some of our intentional and conceptual (research) strategies to rephrase (designerly) graphical processes as a hybrid and integral activity within design and more specifically it's education. The following combines research within design and within teaching through the extension of established drawing techniques and processes in order to broaden (graphical) paths leading to design conception. Our project is looking for an adapted approach for graphical explorations within design education and is, ultimately, searching for a "conceptual framework" to redefine the

concept of drawing within design in order to re-approach and re-position the craft within curricular development.

To inquire alternatives within design related drawing and representation we conceptualised *MWM [Messing With Media]*. *MWM* was introduced as a research alter ego which is fuelled by a personal and active trajectory within design, teaching, music and research. As a research project *MWM* messes with media, design, research, teaching, communication and as a practice *MWM* messes with devices, tools, carriers, itself and whatever useful to the concept. *MWM* explores designerly and creative edges from an instrumental point of view in order to inquire the making and doing within creative processes. The intuitive mixing and blending of concepts, practices and approaches is at the core of *MWM*'s research strategy. "Messing" should be read as a pejorative shorthand for artistic expression, improvisation and following one's gut when working towards emerging creative solutions. The "Media" we supposedly mess around "with", consists of a big pile of instruments, tools, carriers, interfaces and what not to enable creative minds to "materialise" embryonic ideas. Research-wise, our "Media" inquires different ways to layer, communicate, visualise and disperse ideas. *MWM* defines "Media", to paraphrase Marshall McLuhan, as "any extension of one's self".<sup>5</sup> From there on *MWM* finds it's main field of inquiry amidst the unlimited combinations of (designerly) extensions to express designerly thought. Since *MWM* is conceptually fuelled thanks to a big variety of people, *MWM* regards itself as a plural entity rather than as a personal venture.



image 01

Thinking about drawing within contemporary design implies questioning its importance, status, value and use within contemporary design practices as well as within our teaching practices in order to position the craft amidst a myriad of graphical possibilities to express designerly thinking. Thinking about drawing within contemporary design education implies reviewing and reconsidering the medium for a predominantly digital generation, raised in an era where analogue thinking and doing has become an oddity, almost alien. It is our contention that there is a need to rejuvenate the craft to keep pace with current evolutions within the medium and maintain its place amidst the apparent constant stream of novelties and possibilities which are being developed to aid designers to explore graphical thinking in one way or another. While software developers are constantly searching for the intuitive freedom of freehand drawing, *MWM* likes to turn things around through exploring combinatory processes of freehand drawing allied with different interfaces, techniques and approaches in order to discover hidden possibilities within design drawing and to see if the process is able to inspire other ways to inspire designerly decision making.

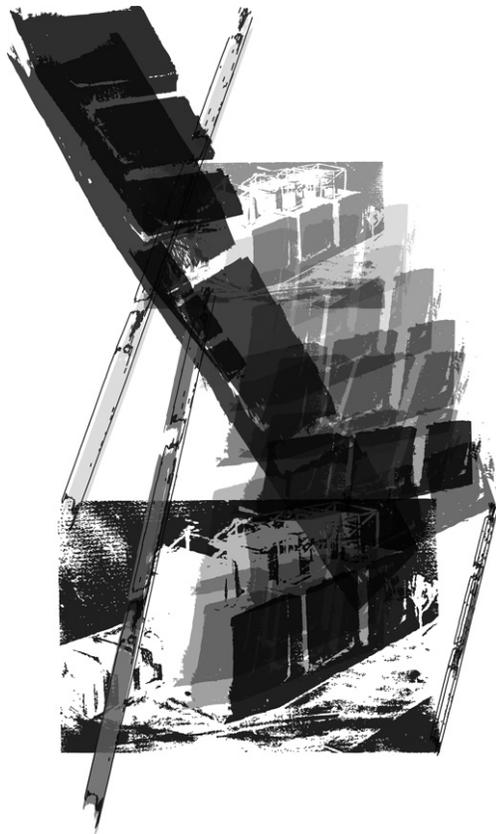


image 02

Within curricular approaches and design-theory there is a strong tendency to consider freehand drawing as an isolated and ascetic activity. We tend to disagree with this view since the tendency to isolate the activity seems to ignore the medium's position within design practices today. Drawing, within contemporary practices, is (still) regarded as a (valuable) design tool amidst a myriad of graphical possibilities enabling designers to communicate designerly thinking. Drawing is an accessible, fast and effective way to explore and visualize spatial and conceptual moves within thinking processes. Nevertheless design curricula still maintain to regard freehand classes as an isolated course. These curricula introduce novices within the craft of drawing through focussing on the development formal and technical (drawing) skills to develop and express spatial thinking within design.<sup>7</sup> But designers do not draw for the sake of drawing, the activity serves a purpose within the process and the produced images and drawings are the only way to communicate the thinking processes within. Designerly drawings serve a purpose outside the drawing and this is what distinguishes designerly drawing from drawing as a artistic expression. In that sense isolating the craft rules out many opportunities to incorporate designerly thinking within learning processes. While it remains clear that developing skill within drawing remains an important asset to examine graphical spatiality we have to start asking ourselves whether developing the ability to draw well, still constitutes the primary base to explore designerly thinking or to develop one's self as a designer.<sup>8</sup> Contemporary designers and novices within design develop their expressive skills through the initiation and exploration of a variety of drawing techniques, Computer Aided Drawing, digital modelling and rendering techniques, model making, image editing and whatever might seem useful to develop a personal way to express designerly imagery. Still, a lot of educational programs seem to fail to adopt an integrated approach towards developing personal media strategies. Mixing, layering and blending media within education implies a change in attitude from students and teachers alike where we will have to deal with differences on many levels. Then again, we have to accept that the designing practice has changed and that it is our responsibility to reflect these changes within our curricular approaches.

*MWM* has introduced *extended drawing* as a concept to investigate the possibilities these changes bring about within designerly drawing. *Extended drawing* is considered as a collective noun to include different ways to



within the act of expressing preliminary thought. Freedom within improvisation, and we have to be clear about this, doesn't imply one does as one pleases. Improvisation is mainly regarded (or misread, depending on one's vantage point) as a quality to creatively deal with unforeseen hazards or the practice is (mis)interpreted to allege in defence that a certain activity is subdued to possible failure. The appearing chaotic and unruly nature of improvised performances (and music), certainly doesn't help here. While it may seem that musicians appear to act within ill defined goals and intentions and have a tendency to break with every possible rule defined within our, dominantly western, musical guidebooks<sup>11</sup> it's precisely this tendency to attack and/or question certain doctrines within practice which is potentially able to offer starting points to question our very own dogma's within designerly drawing and it's teaching. Underneath the seemingly unorthodox character of the practice and it's performances lies a dedicated attitude of *constant preparation*<sup>12</sup> and an ability to deal with changing paradigms within the musical flows. The manipulation of certain artistic rules is achieved through practice within the characteristics of a repertoire of musical figures, through the development of reflexes and skill to instantly deal with (pitfalls attributed to) certain rules and characteristics within performance.<sup>13</sup> Which in turn takes practice, discipline and

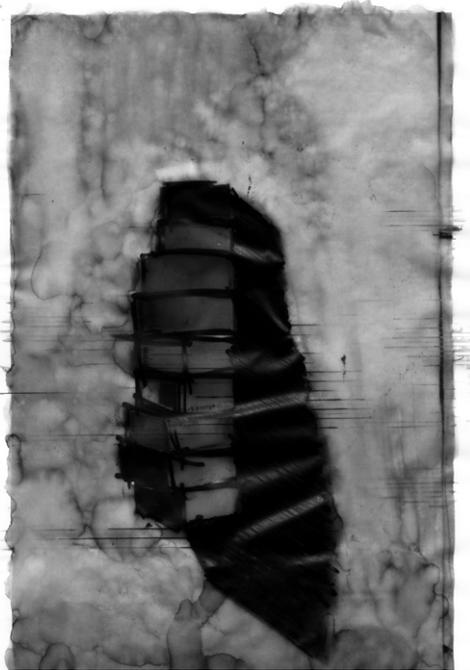


image 04

a dedication to deal with and augment personal preferences, explore and expand boundaries within one's own capabilities as well as within the musical boundaries of a certain musical ideology in order to develop a individuality and expertise within the subject material. This dedication is what *Extended Drawing* is aiming for in order to develop a personal approach within expressing designerly thought. Through exploring improvisation as an attitude within design the project searches for a more critical approach towards the concept of drawing and whether inserting concepts, practice models and intuitive reactions inspired by the practice of musical improvisation is able to open up opportunities for a better understanding of (some of) the intuitive processes within designerly decision making by the use of graphical thinking.

Currently a *MWM-workshop* is being defined and furnished to inquire the the concept of *Extended Drawing* practically.<sup>14</sup> The *workshop* intends to, in time, replace the traditional drawing room while keeping drawing at it's very centre. The *workshop* fuses cutting edge, vintage, mechanical, analogue, digital, experimental and instrumental extensions and intends to instigate and investigate possible instant expressions within design. Through considering the fusion of different media as as an integrated pedagogic approach *MWM* is interested to see what will happen to the teaching of basic designerly drawing and ultimately the effect upon designs within the designing studios. Through conceptually extending the drawing process *MWM* will actively inquire whether the concept is able to open up or change personal (graphical) vocabularies and/ or affect (the development of) drawing and reactive skills towards designerly questions. Our biggest *headbreaker*, here, remains whether the concept is able to have an effect on designerly thinking at all. The *workshop* is set up to inquire and develop the concept of *Extended Drawing* through making, doing and acting within a more or less contained environment, isolated from certain constraints of daily practice such as clients, project deadlines and so on.

Research-wise the *workshop* activities are complemented and fed by the structuring of a conceptual framework. In order to delineate the concept of *MWM* and it's idea of *Extended Drawing* the framework investigates possible and referential practice based and conceptual levels which are communicated within a printed and self-published medium. Our *MWM-zines* are written, illustrated, designed and fabricated to give an account of the project's

proceedings, findings and inspirational aspects.<sup>15</sup> Through adopting a more informal writing style, as opposed to a more academic approach, the *zines* intend to inform and draw a broader, practice oriented, audience consisting of colleagues, teachers, students and practitioners within allied fields. The idea of producing *zines* was developed as a personal strategy to get on with the (research) work and to develop the framework through exploring and communicating concepts, vantage points and whatever may be of interest to the research project and/ or considered worthwhile to share with an audience. The *zines* travel along wherever they can generate value and/or input to the project (conferences, interviews, schools, tutors and promoters) and provides the project with a visual identity to the world outside. Producing *zines* forces us to externalise developments outwardly in order to generate feedback towards developing material and actively broadening the project's interest group. Both the framework and the *workshop* activities are used as tools to investigate alternative approaches and processes to explore, express and think within embryonic design processes. The combination of research and practice searches for a mutual amplification of the concepts and practices governing the project.

*MWM* and its concept of *extended drawing* is not intended as a conclusive study. Rather than that it is intended to gain and produce knowledge through defining on-going investigations within contemporary (designerly) drawing and embryonic graphical thinking, to redefine the process and teaching of designerly drawing. As such the building of the *workshop*, the deliniation of a guiding framework, together with the broadening of the research and interest group has to assure a continuation of the concepts and thoughts developed within the project. The, more or less, personal vantage point and writing direction, inspirational practices and sources intend to add

and expand knowledge to research communities within design, design based drawing as well as to the practice of improvisation and beyond. *MWM* is not looking for a definition, theory or exploration of improvised design; rather than that the project is looking for an understanding within process based thinking where creativity prevails over object-oriented solutions. Through consciously approaching graphic explorations within design as an improvised act the project searches for a better understanding and practical application of the intuitive creative processes which govern personal, meaningful design decisions and improvisations. (designerly) Drawing finds itself in an adaptive and hybrid state of evolution, in order to keep track and maintain the medium's status, value and evolution within design practice (and its education) *MWM* searches for a possible strategy to re-approach activities within exploring embryonic design through the medium of drawing in all its forms.

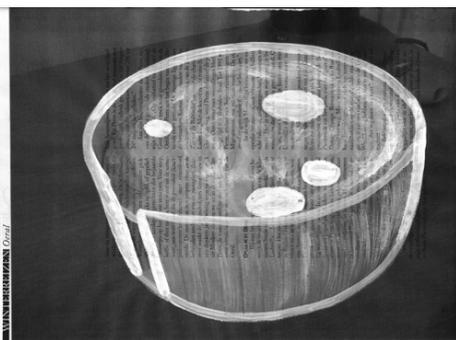


image 05

All images were generated during the course "analogue vs. digital" 2nd bachelor (interior) architecture. The course inquires exchanges between analogue and digital image editing techniques. The drawings combine freehand and/ or digital drawing, printing techniques, coloring techniques and graphics which alter the visual display of raw explorations. Based upon experiences within the course *MWM* now will inquire whether manipulating the drawing process is able to change or influence the way designers perceive the representation and, as such, change decisions within the designerly process. Images by: Daphne Janssens (image 01 and 04), Tim Bastien (image 02), Stijn Jonckheere (image 03), Katleen François (image 05), images courtesy of *MWM*, Sint-Lucas School of Architecture.

(1) The notion of extended drawing is based on the notion of extended techniques within the musical practice: extended techniques are performance techniques used in music to describe unconventional, unorthodox or “improper” techniques of singing or playing musical instruments. [source: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Extended\\_technique](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Extended_technique)]. See also R. Schaeferbeke: *Extending Technique* (MWM-zine#02, 2009) for an exploration of the concept and further references.

(2) Alberto Pérez Gomez/ Louise Pelletier: *Architecture and the Perspective Hinge* [2000, MIT-press]; Bryan Lawson: *What Designers Know* [2004, Elsevier Ltd.], Dalibor Vasely: *Architecture in the Age of Divided Representation* [2004, MIT]

(3) Embryonic is used here as a metaphor to define the early stage of design where the (design) problem is stated and no explicit designerly actions have been undertaken. Within this stage everything is possible and ideas are built upon intuitive concepts. Extended drawing inquires varieties of graphical explorations of designerly ideas within this preliminary stage.

(4) see Bryan Lawson: *What Designers Know* [2004, Elsevier Ltd.]; Marc Treib (editor): *Drawing/Thinking* [2008, Routledge]: *there is a concern amongst researchers, practitioners and tutors within design that the devaluation of the act of thinking through drawing is changing the way designers think within design processes. While authors acknowledge the change, it seems uncertain as to what it implies for the future and the development of graphical thinking within the practice.*

(5) Marshall McLuhan: *Understanding Media/ Media Begrijpen* [1964-2002, Gingko press/Uitgeverij Nieuwezijds]

(6) Since these hybrid approaches are *in se* individual and dependant on different parameters such as: personal approaches within the act and towards design, collective attitudes within a designing team, embodied tools and approaches of the designer(s) involved in the process, possible launches of yet another interface to facilitate our activities amongst other things which may influence the graphical process. The difficulty to pin down an exemplary approach makes the process a complex one to study. Part of the *MWM* strategy is to reveal parameters in order to build a framework to deal with the complexity within teaching.

(7) The statement is based upon personal experiences within our department and several interviews and net searches revealing that introductions within drawing still are regarded as an isolated medium. See: *how to draw a cup of tea within the MWM-zine#02*. Publications such as Francis D.K. Ching: *Design Drawing* [1943-1998, Van Nostrand Reinhold], Koos Eijssen/Roselien Steur: *Sketching* [2007, BIS] also focus on the development drawing skills while other studies and publications are gradually exploring mixed uses. For approaches towards integrating media see: Marc Treib (editor): *Drawing/Thinking* [2008, Routledge], Bennett Neimann: *Be-Bop constructions* [2009, “Communicating (by) Design”]; Sint-Lucas/Chalmers; Brussels/Göteborg, 2009), M. Saleh Uddin: *Hybrid Drawing* (1999, John Wiley and Sons.

(8) Practices such as Greg Lynn’s *Form* or Kas Oosterhuis’s *ONL*

(amongst others) prove that one can generate fascinating architectures by using nothing more than computers and mathematics. Who are we to judge their lack of freehand skills, if any?

(9) Free improvisation or free music is improvised music without any rules beyond the taste or inclination of the musician(s) involved; in many cases the musicians make an active effort to avoid overt references to recognizable musical genres. The term is somewhat paradoxical, since it can be considered both as a technique (employed by any musician who wishes to disregard rigid genres and forms) and as a recognizable genre in its own right (source: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Free\\_improvisation](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Free_improvisation)); Next to free improvisation the project also includes practical and theoretical developments within the practice. Some composers actively search for broader bases through adopting concepts such as game-theory, graphical scores and so on. Within these advanced improvisational concepts musicians and composers search for freedom within agreed boundaries in order to avoid genre-specific traps.

(10) Instant Composing is another way to define the act improvisation. See: Eddie Prevost: *No Sound Is Innocent* [1997, Small Press Distribution], Derek Bailey: *Improvisation (It’s nature and practice within music)* [1993, Da Capo Press]; George E. Lewis: *A Power Stronger Than Itself* [2009, University Of Chicago Press]; John Zorn (editor): *Arcana I, II, III, IV* (musicians on music) [2000, Hips Road/Granary Books, 2007, Hips Road/Tzadik, 2008, Hips Road/Tzadik, 2009, Hips Road/Tzadik]

(11) for instance concepts such as harmony, structure, instrumental techniques, instrumentation, scales, rhythm, pace, composition, style,...

(12) David P. Brown: *Noise Orders: Jazz, Improvisation, and Architecture* [2006 University of Minnesota Press]; our italics

(13) Bailey (1993), Prevost (1997), Zorn et al. (2000, 2007, 2008, 2009)

(14) The workshop will be located within the Brussels campus of Sint Lucas, school of architecture. The development of the workshop is supported by the department in order to inquire new strategies within representation and will be paralleled by a more digitally oriented lab within the Ghent department. The workshop and the lab will closely work together to exchange knowledge from the different media-related research projects within the department.

(15) A *zine* (an abbreviation of the word fanzine, or magazine; pronounced [zi:n], “zeen”) is most commonly a small circulation publication of original or appropriated texts and images. More broadly, the term encompasses any self-published work of minority interest usually reproduced via photocopier on a variety of colored paper stock. [source: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Zine>]