**Pecha Kucha delivered at the FSA Drawing Forum, Falmouth University, February 2015**

The work I want to show you today is part of an ongoing series of drawings which I started in 2011, the collection now numbers over three hundred and I have chosen 32 to show in this presentation.

The drawings consist of concocted, unreal spaces, populated by people, animals and objects which have emerged from a tangled surface of marks. There are many Paradigm shifts and things are not always as they first appear.

They are all made using a working process which starts by creating a surface of lines, marks and tones which are then studied for hints of figuration and space. Whatever I see, I enhance - tease out and emphasise, I work quite instinctively in the initial stages, going along with the surface, not worrying too much as the first draft is always rubbed out leaving just pentimenti and palimpsest - the traces of what was drawn. The next stage is to add more marks to the surface, this second layer is often more productive than the first, at this point too I will constantly turn the drawing, trying to find it's natural orientation, not yet knowing if it's portrait or landscape. Then it's a case of more erasing and more drawing, until elements of figuration start to become dominant and established, the drawing usually takes on a definite orientation at this point and then decisions have to be made about balance and composition until something hopefully quite resolved emerges. The final stage is to embellish and balance until a point when they sort of 'click'. Most of the drawings retain some evidence of the creative process.

So, I have ended up with a very large collection of experimental drawings and I think that what these drawings expose is the very human desire to make visual sense of the world - as prey animals, it's in our interest to see the eyes lurking in the undergrowth and imagine the sabre-tooth tiger they might belong to - it's a simple matter of survival. I'm sure that everyone here sees faces in the clouds and cities in an open fire - and we've all heard about people who claim to see the image of Elvis on their burnt toast or find a chicken nugget shaped like Mother Theresa. There's even a terraced house in Swansea which, the owners claim, looks like Hitler - it does actually! Hermann Rorschach developed a phycological test to understand human traits by his patients' reading of inkblots. It's a natural part of our brain's processing system to rapidly sift through lines, shapes, colours and surfaces trying to assign meaning to them by matching them to stored images. This tendency is properly called Pareidolia and it's a word that seems to sum up the essence of these drawings.

This working process isn't my invention, artists such as Da Vinci, Max Ernst and Theophillus Bra used similar methodologies, and the Surrealists included it in their list of Drawing Games. On our own Foundation Course at Falmouth, it's the drawing that's always made on the very first day of the course. It's called the Gestalt Drawing on Foundation, a name that refers to Gestalt Psychology, the central principle being that the human mind has self-organising tendencies and a desire to generate whole forms from simpler, sometimes unrelated elements. For example if we see four dots on a page we tend to mentally join them together to make a square. Principles such as proximity of marks, continuation of lines and groups of shapes are all powerfully suggestive to our minds which are programmed to make sense of the visual world.

Practically it is a very engaging working process, and it's actually quite exciting at points because you just don't know what or who is going to turn up in the drawings. A psychologist could probably have a field day with some of these images and they can surprise, which is part of the fun. And, although I'm sure that there's absolutely nothing deep or very meaningful about the content, there are some interesting characters who seem to turn up again and again in drawings which might be made months apart. @ The origins of these characters is probably coincidence or may reflect a tendency to favour certain gestural starting points. But the frequency of other creatures and motifs is simply many years of visual memory enhanced by many years of drawing things which I like looking at. It is a well established fact that drawing helps most people remember things, on the Drawing course we have run some experiments to test this, I think what I'm tapping into with these drawings is a lifetime of making visual records.

I have rules that govern the making of these drawings. One of the rules is that I never add something that didn't appear naturally, there is no actual invention, so everything you see is the result of chance, or perhaps more accurately the result of maximising chance.

The Surrealists described methodologies like this as 'harnessing the inner psyche' and they suggested that there might be something prophetic or visionary embedded in the contents. I don't believe this of course, but sometimes you can't help making connections. For example, members of my family often make appearances and in one drawing my father is clearly recognisable, complete with the wings of an angel and a large fish cradled in his arms. I was never quite sure about the meaning of the fish but i was understandably quite concerned about the wings, especially as soon after making the drawing Dad was taken to hospital. That was three years ago and he turned 90 in December so he hasn't got his wings yet.

Some leading contemporary artists who I know have work in this way are Anita Taylor, Paul Thomas and Phil Naylor - it is Phil who is responsible for it's inclusion in the Falmouth Foundation portfolio.

So, what are the practical aspects of these drawings? Well, I use a variety of paper stock but favourites are bright white, hot pressed drawing or printmaking papers, of high quality and medium weight which will take a certain amount of abuse as I use a lot of reductive techniques with these drawings. I get through a lot of rubbers which I cut and carve up to make edges and points. If I use colour it's either ink during the making of the drawing, or a digital addition afterwards, and again the digital application is a reductive method using fill layers in Photoshop.

The drawings are numbered but not named, except when included in exhibitions which require a name. Then I try to find a name which is as enigmatic as the drawing because I don't want to lead the viewer in any way.

Each drawing takes perhaps eight to ten hours to make, but it is very difficult to calculate as they are rarely, if ever, made in one sitting, most emerge piecemeal over the course of several days, which isn't one of the rules, it just reflects a busy schedule.

These drawings have the capacity to be a rich visual resource and I treat them as research and starting points for another stage in my working process. I have a writing practice alongside my drawing practice, so translating the images into words, by attempting to describe the content has the potential to spark a creative, narrative tangent - as has collecting all the cats, all the female figures, all the horses, fish or mythical beasts and redrawing them - in other words, using the drawings as observational starting points.

This process could arguably be described as self-indulgent and it is very introspective - my focus is on the paper the whole time I'm drawing, whereas when I make an observational drawing I look up as well as looking down. I think you need both ways of working, a drawing practise that relies so heavily on suggestion and imagination needs to be supported by a lively observational drawing practice - one complements the other, drawing the outer world makes drawing the inner world more convincing.

Thank you all for listening, if you want to see some of the drawings, I have about twenty of them in a folder.