

'A Progressive Work Leading to Enhanced Ignorance'

"Collecting may be a passion or it may be impulsive, but then there's ordering, taxonomy, classification- putting things together in a way that makes sense. Of course we have a scientific way of organizing things- but there are other kinds of taxonomies based on use, folklore, personal tastes, and imaginary hierarchies... Scientific classification is constantly changing as information shifts... At the same time, I'm always suspicious of the way artists use science because science has such tremendous influence and authority in our culture. Whenever you encounter the kind of authority that seems unquestioned and unquestionable you need to find ways to challenge it."

Mark Dion¹

This drawing project has led me through explorations of ordering, classification and artistic expression. Of searching for the hidden, revealing what lies within, as Michael Snelling says about Eugene Carchesio's work; "the essence of things."² Has this been a search for beauty, using the technological advances offered up to me through photography, photocopiers and cliché verre as my tools?

Susan Sontag states: "...many, through photographs, have discovered beauty."³ "It was the beauty of forms in industrial and scientific photography that dazzled the Bauhaus designers,"⁴ I would be one of the many. The beauty of the forms revealed through the magnification and chemical manipulation of my terrain, my original drawings, has inspired and awed me. The pursuance of capturing these images in various media became the challenge and the fascination, and thus the essence of the image changed according to the context in which I placed it.

But this has not been just a search for beauty, it has also been an exploration for more understanding of how we represent things in the world and how the chosen method and media of our representation embodies its own message and language. The artist Cai Cuo-Qiang relates;

"...next to your host's chair there may be a very large ceramic jar that holds many things sticking out of it, and they're actually scrolls rolled up. And as he receives you he will sense what your level of sophistication is and what your interests are and perspectives might be, and then he will select the piece that he may want to show you. If he feels you are worthy of a certain work he might unroll in front of you and then you have a whole world all of a sudden opened up to you... so in that vessel is his museum."⁵

¹ Art 21: Mark Dion, **Drawing for "Aviary (Library for the Birds of Massachusetts)"** 2005 Courtesy Tanya Bonakdar Gallery, New York

² Michael Snelling 'Someone's Universe, the Art of Eugene Carchesio' Queensland Art Gallery, 2009

³ Susan Sontag, 'The Heroism of Vision' in *On Photography*, Picador, NY, 1977, p. 85

⁴ Op cit. P 98

⁵ Cai Cuo-Qiang, *Art:21 Art in the Twenty First Century*, '3' Harry N. Abrams, 2001

'A Progressive Work Leading to Enhanced Ignorance'

I have titled this installation 'A Progressive Work Leading to Enhanced Ignorance'. Progressive used as an adjective is defined:

adjective /prə'gresiv/

- Happening or developing gradually or in stages; proceeding step by step
- Engaging in or constituting forward motion
- Favouring or promoting change or innovation

The process of my drawings began in the first half of this semester with my investigations into the nature of using bleach to draw on shredded black card. I saw these as drawings through erasure, progressive drawings as the nature of the bleach was to continuously change and develop. The subtlety of these pieces seduced me and I made a series of life size drawings in a mimetic fashion using charcoal pencil onto rice paper.

Through my research into photographic models I took one of these drawings and photographed, photocopied and greatly enlarged it, reaching down into the microscopic structure of the charcoal marks on the soft fibre of the rice paper. The enlarged marks were put onto acetate, projected onto the wall and the resulting images drawn onto long scrolls of rice paper with black chalk. These scrolls were the end of the first stage of this investigation.

In order to progress this process further the next step was to make cliché verre images of the enlarged marks, experimenting with the process by dripping developer onto the photographic paper before exposure and placing shredded paper at intervals during the exposure. The aleatorical nature of this process produced a number of drawings, many of which would benefit from further investigation.

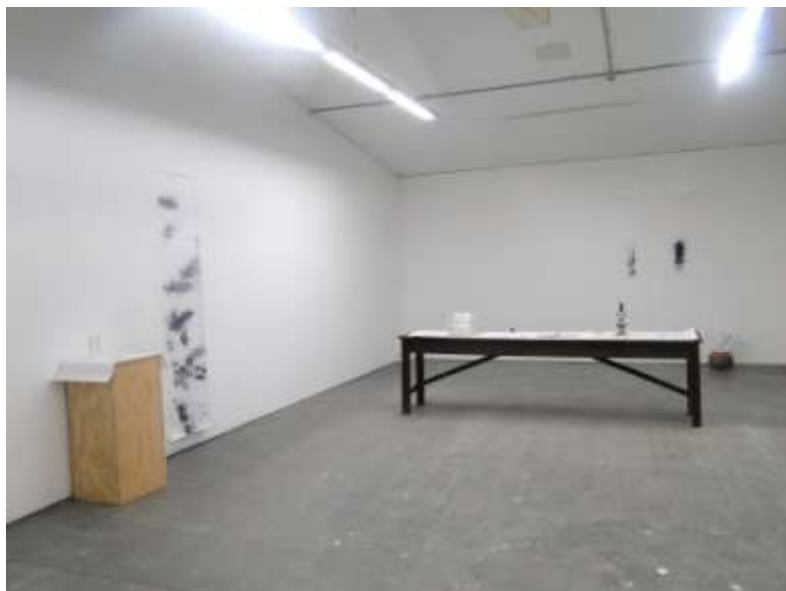
I took one of these cliché verre/photographic drawings and shredded it, the resultant 'specimens' referring back to the original bleach drawings. At this point I began a study of each individual piece, using different media (pen & ink, brush & ink, charcoal, liquid pencil) to record the individual markings as if recording information of a collected specimen.

I realised I was exploring the taxonomy of my drawings, of the progressive nature of these pieces. The scientific character of my investigations led me to explore how different media/methods of documenting an object can result in a very different experience and understanding of the information being recorded. I transferred the images life size onto acetate, put them onto slides and then examined these drawn/photocopied marks under the microscope. I made cliché verre images of each drawing in negative and positive, exploring the difference between using a drawing on acetate and a drawing on paper as the image to be exposed. Finally, I enlarged the images and started a series of drawings onto scrolls of rice paper of each individual piece.

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For the installation of this study I considered the environment in which to place the different elements. The nature of a 'white space', with can suggest both a sacred space as well as having a prison like quality,⁶ seemed appropriate to the considered and meditative nature of the work whilst at the same time referencing the capture and imprisonment of objects to be examined. I have tried to suggest both a laboratory space as well as a more sacred, Zen 'museum' for the scrolls. The whole process has been an investigation and progression through both a 'scientific' and 'artistic' approach, on a micro and macro scale, playing with media and notions of life size and microscopic.

The terrain in this study has continued to be my drawings. It is a terrain that persists in surprising me and defies clear understanding. It is a terrain I continue to walk.



⁶ Stephen Berg. 'The Tales of Hoffman', in leni Hoffman, Beautiful one day, perfect the next, Modo, 2001