

Lines of Thought

Tutor Guide



Franz Kline Untitled 1957 Brush drawing in black ink

Contents

Exhibition overview and Introduction

Using this pack

Discussing drawing

Thematic discussion points

Engaging with the exhibition through drawing

Further reading

Booking a group visit

Written by Heidi Wigmore

All images used in this document © The British Museum

Exhibition Overview and Introduction

From **January 3rd to February 28th** 2017, the University of Hull's Gallery is to host an outstanding collection of drawings from The British Museum.

The exhibition, 'Lines of Thought' showcases 70 drawings from the British Museum Prints and Drawings Collection. These are curated thematically rather than chronologically, in order to offer fresh insights into the thought processes of some of the world's greatest artists. Historical drawings are juxtaposed with Modern and Contemporary drawings, to evidence how artists from a wide range of time and place have used drawing so effectively to record, explore and develop their ideas. Its immediacy allows artists to act almost at the speed of thought, their choices legible in every mark.

Using this Pack

This education pack exists to support the exhibitions aims, as follows:

1. To support tutors to engage students in **enthusiastic dialogue** around notions of drawing.
2. To invite **rigorous appraisal** of selected drawings on display.
3. **To inspire** students **to draw** through **investigation** of different ways of **seeing, recording** and **questioning**. (This includes the use of visual journals, or sketchbooks).
4. To encourage an **exploration of personal themes** within students own studies.

In the following pages you will find a series of thought provoking discussion points, drawing activities and further reading to help you make the most of Lines of Thought. This document is designed to help you plan for your visit, support you during your time at the exhibition, to maximize student engagement and as a tool to aid reflection afterwards.

Discussing Drawing

Tutor led discussion points

What is drawing?

Is drawing a meaningful activity, does it have a use beyond being aesthetic/decorative?

Avis Newman describes drawing as the activity that is '**closest to pure thought**', as a set of actions which convey sensations before and beyond language...**a self-conscious act by which an artist distils his/her own thoughts**'.

Drawing includes qualities of '**...spontaneity, experimentation, directness, simplicity, abbreviation, expressiveness, [and] immediacy...**' **Michael Craig-Martin**

The act of drawing is the **primal act** of making a mark, spontaneous as well as considered, it is the relationship between **eye, hand, gesture and mark**.

What motivates children to draw - is drawing a **primary, creative instinct** in everyone? Do children's drawings **communicate** more clearly and directly than adult drawings, if so, why? Almost all very young children are confident in '**making their mark**' - why do we so often lose this confidence to draw as we grow-up, is it schooled out of us?

What is drawing for?

In the face of digital technology, what is drawing's **relevance** in an increasingly **digital age**? What do you think **David Hockney** means when he says:

'The world today is full of images, but they aren't very memorable'

Is he perhaps alluding to the visual bombardment we are subjected to via mass media, mobile phones and computers? How is it that drawings - **cognitive, intuitive, analytical** and based in '**real time**', can still hold our attention in a fast-paced technological world?

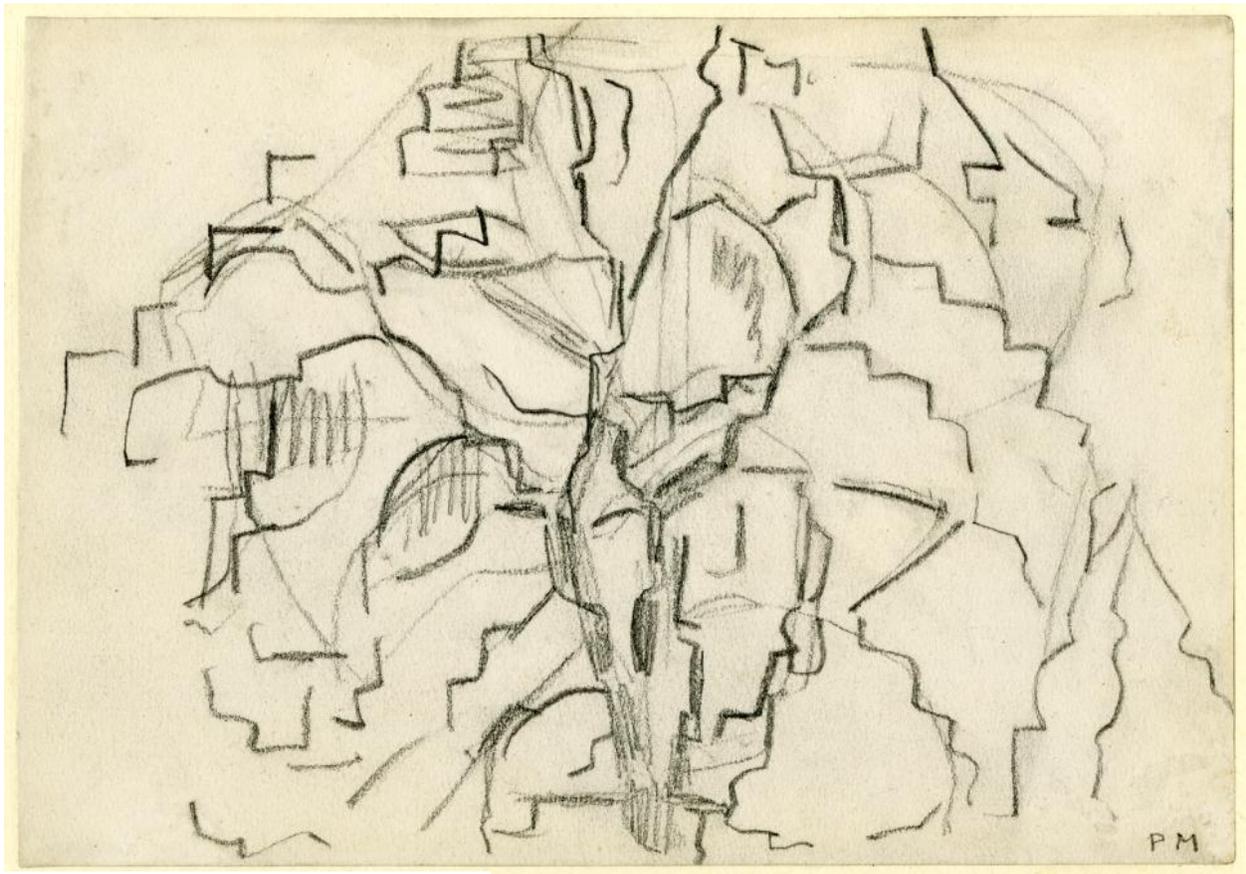
There has been a revival of interest in drawing in recent years, both in art education and in more **convivial, social** contexts evidenced by the growing number of 'salon' and 'live' drawing events e.g. www.urbansketchers.org why do people still want to draw, is it about being closer to our **primary, creative instinct**?

Do even **famous artists** sometimes make **bad** drawings, what makes a drawing good or bad? Who decides? The artist, the viewer, the curator? Is it subjective or are there a set of criteria that good drawing is measured by? What might these criteria include?

Thematic Discussion Points

Lines of Thought is curated into 5 themes, which are presented here as points for Discussion:
The Themes include;

- Likeness of Thought
- Brainstorming
- Experimentation and enquiry
- Insight and association
- Development and Decisions



Piet Mondrian, Tree Study, 1913
Graphite

1. The Likeness of Thought

Drawings on show in this theme include works by: [Franz Kline](#), [Rodin](#) and [Mondrian](#).

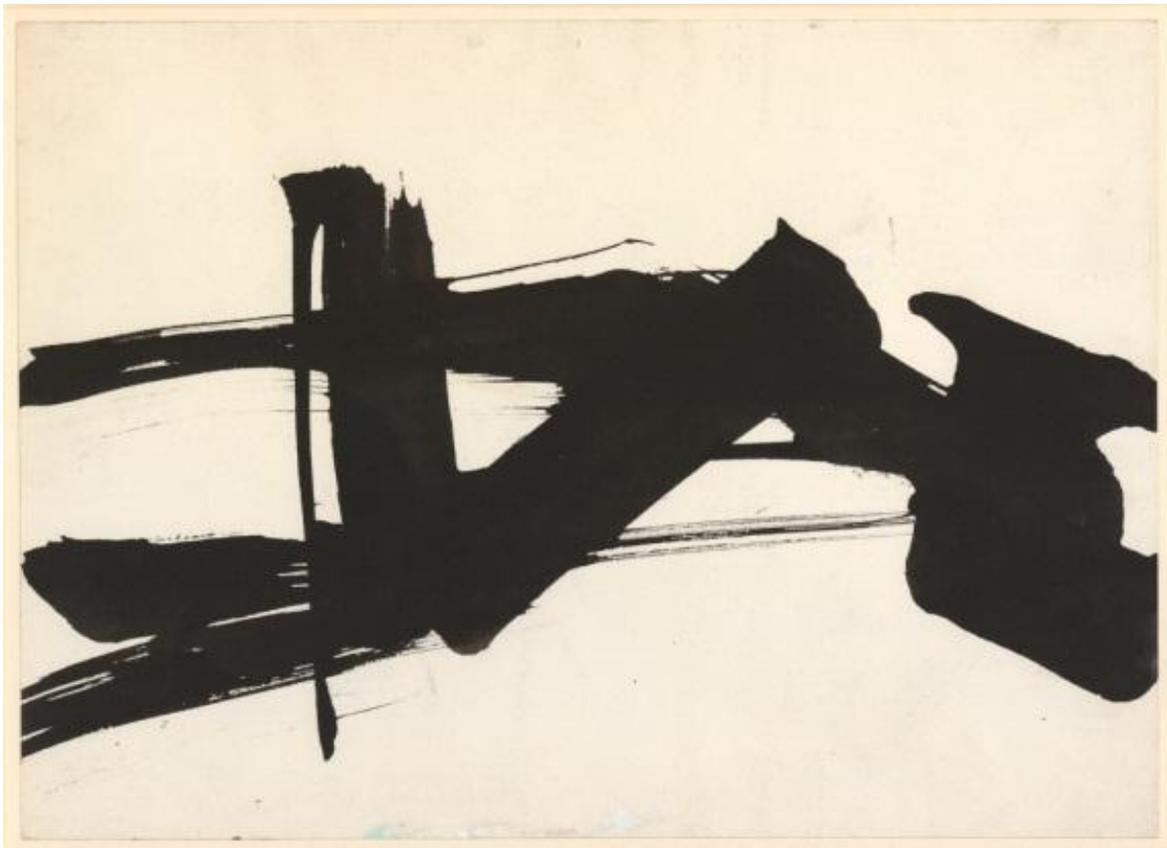
If drawing can be considered the visual equivalent to a thought, how can it help you to think?

The process of drawing may involve accident, loss of control, ambiguity and the characteristics of particular media - all of which affect your thinking.

How is drawing as much a communication with the self as it is communication with the viewer?

Drawing is a fundamental tool for thinking across disciplines, it is used in design as an integral part of the process for conceptualisation and analysis.

When you look a finished drawing, can you tell much about its evolution?
Does a drawing 'copy' the world or 'transform' it?



Franz Kline Untitled 1957 Brush drawing in black ink

2. Brainstorming

Drawings on show in this theme include works by: [Michelangelo](#), [Richard Hamilton](#) and [Andrea del Sarto](#).

When is a drawing better than spoken/written language in your creative work?

Brainstorming is a vital space for the 'breeding' of images, it involves working intuitively and spontaneously, where one idea leads to another. This is often referred to as 'stream of consciousness'.

Why can it be useful to work quickly in generating ideas?

This speed of execution generates often unexpected consequences, unforeseen connections and unpredictable outcomes through **Associative thinking**, the essence of creativity.

'Drawing is a build-up of layers of short term memory' Leo Duff

The more you draw, the more you see and the more you store up visual memories for further creative work.



Andrea del Sarto Nine studies of children 1501-1531 Red chalk

3. Experimentation and Enquiry

Drawings on show in this theme include works by: **Durer, Cezanne, Picasso and Seurat.**

How are drawings that were made in the spirit of experimentation different to those made as a 'finished article' (in and of themselves)?

Can you perceive processes that explore elimination, modification and destruction in any of the drawings on display?

Accident, loss of control and the characteristics of different materials all influence thinking.

It is important to be prepared to make changes during the drawing process, to revise and retract; decisions are as important as all the possibilities the artist may reject. Louise Bourgeois said: 'I do. I undo. I redo'

'If you're told you've to make a drawing using only 10 lines or 100, you've got to be a lot more inventive with 10' David Hockney



Picasso Study for 'Les Demoiselles d'Avignon'
1906-7 Watercolour

4. Insight and Association

Drawings on show in this theme include works by: Henry Moore, Victor Hugo and Julie Mehretu.

Students who regularly practice drawing tend to produce more creative and original design solutions, why do you think that is?

The act of drawing encourages associative thinking: it is a space to dream and imagine.

Is it important to understand an artist's visual language in order to understand their work?

Drawing expresses a visual language: mark-making can convey meaning and evoke emotional states

Is there anything original in drawing or do you think everything is borrowed, consciously or unconsciously?

How do you imagine the relationship between the 'drawer' and the 'drawn'?



Julie Mehretu Untitled 2002 Ink on vellum and mylar

5. Development and Decisions

Drawings on show in this theme include works by: Bridget Riley, William Kentridge and Leonardo da Vinci.

You have to pay close attention, to be alert, in order to discover; drawing involves empathy, it has an intensity and immediacy as well as materiality.

Has Drawing progressed over the centuries, how?

After seeing the Lascaux cave drawings, Picasso said 'we have learnt nothing in 12,000 years' **What do you think he meant by this?**

Do world famous artists sometimes make 'bad' drawings? (Does anyone tell them?)
Is a 'good' drawing simply in the eye of the beholder or are there criteria we can agree on?



Bridget Riley Study for Blaze 1962 Black ink and collage

Engaging with the Exhibition through Drawing

Visual Research:

How does a sketchbook or visual journal aid understanding?

A sketchbook can be seen as a '**visual dialogue with the self**'. It can liberate ideas and encourage speculation and enquiry because it's a place to make **mistakes, to try things out, to take risks, to experiment.**

Edward Hill on how 'loose' sketching can be great for working out ideas: '**...half-resolved forms...in their ambiguous state provoke alternate possibilities...**'

The **regular habit of drawing** in a sketchbook builds visual memory and helps to develop a **personal language**. This does not have to be about being a brilliantly skilled draughts person, but rather just about being able to convey what you want to visually communicate. The more you draw, the more **authentic** your ideas - whatever your subject area.

Artists' sketchbooks offer a 'window' into an **artist's creativity**; a loose sketch as a moment of 'truth' or realisation and their **freedom of thought**.

Can tablets and mobile phones **replace** sketchbooks or do they serve different purposes?

Visual Research

Try using a concertina sketchbook (DIY or available from www.seawhite.co.uk) to make a drawn 'visual journey' through the exhibition:

1. Transcribe a selected area from a drawing in the exhibition that interests you: try to be true to the quality of the mark-making, using any appropriate media.
3. Draw one fragment per page, allowing the mark-making to extend to the folded edge of the page. Use these marks as the starting point for the next drawing, thereby making a 'continuous' drawing.
4. Work quickly but with your full attention. When you have completed at least 12 pages, open up the concertina to view your 'visual journey'.
5. Development: experiment with mixed media to transform the drawn fragments i.e. change the colour, tone or texture of the marks, find 'trapped images' to make new representations or explore 'abstract' pattern-making. Try including collage fragments from photocopies of the original drawings on display.
6. In this way, reconstruct an entirely new inter-connected continuous drawing using the 'found mark-making' from the original drawings on display.

Further reading

Bibliography

TRACEY *Drawing Now: Between the Lines of Contemporary Art I*. (I.B. Tauris 2007)

Dexter E *Vitamin D A Global Survey of Drawing Today* Phaidon Press 2016

Craig-Martin, M. *Drawing the Line, Reappraising Drawing Past and Present* (The South Bank Centre 1995)

de Zegher M. C., Newman A. *The Stage of Drawing: Gesture and Act Selected from the Tate Collection* (Tate 2003)

Gayford M Hockney D *A History of Pictures: From the Cave to the Computer Screen* (Thames and Hudson 2016)

Useful Links

Lines of Thought: Drawing from Michelangelo to now by Isabel Seligman

<https://www.amazon.co.uk/Lines-Thought-Drawing-Michelangelo-now/dp/0500292787>

TRACEY: Drawing and Visualisation Research Loughborough University

<http://www.lboro.ac.uk/microsites/sota/tracey/journal/res.html>

Examples of sketchbooks

<http://www.lboro.ac.uk/microsites/sota/tracey/journal/sketchbook.html>

'Found Drawings' as by-products of other processes, organic forms or discarded materials - images arising by accident rather than from any conscious process.

<http://www.lboro.ac.uk/microsites/sota/tracey/journal/found.html>

A variety of sketchbook approaches to inspire younger students:

<https://www.pinterest.com/explore/sketchbooks/>

Booking a group visit

For group bookings, please contact:

The University of Hull

Marianne Lewsley-Stier

m.lewsleystier@hull.ac.uk

01482 465620