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Kelly Cumberland: Expanded Drawings

Kelly Cumberland graduated from Leeds Metropolitan University in 1998 with an MA in Fine Art having instigated a collaboration between the departments of Microbiology, Radiology and Visual Art. She has exhibited in many group and solo exhibitions, including: *Vestigium [Pulvis] (isw)* at Whitechapel London; *Local Imagination* at San Francisco Art Institute; *The Drawing Shed* at Project Space Leeds; *Multiples & Additions* at Con|temporary Gallery, Berlin and *Protoavisis opt* at the Atrium Galley of St James Hospital, Leeds. She exhibited as part of *La Nit de l'Art (Night of Art)* in Palma de Mallorca, September 2013 and later participated in *Art Palma Brunch* 2015.

Cumberland examines the change and removal, growth and deterioration of the life of a virus. Her installations and objects incorporate drawing which acts as a metaphor for how something seemingly delicate and insubstantial can overwhelm its environment (1).

Cumberland's work responds to contemporary debates around scientific research and how technological innovation is influencing current aesthetics within the realm of drawing. She is currently developing projects combining aspects of exhibition, documentation, publication and dissemination.

It is possible to understand Cumberland's work as an expanded drawing practice; this can be explored by drawing upon examples from her most recent work exhibited in Mallorca (2013). The notion of an expanded practice was first articulated within the essay *Sculpture in the Expanded Field* by Rosalind Krauss (2), where she asked if 'sculpture' was so diverse it no longer functioned as a descriptive category. Cumberland works with a similar mind set; challenging the nature of drawing by presenting the possibilities of what it could be. The works reveal how drawing is expanded through space, place, form, process, materials and meaning.

Expanded in space and place

The exhibited drawings inhabit carefully chosen spaces and in so doing create a visual dialogue with the surrounding surfaces; *drawing* to attention the very particular sense of place where the works have been sited. *Protoavises [opt] Superfluous* (2013) consists of cut paper spore-like fragments, which infiltrate the architecture of the space in a similar way to how ivy penetrates stone or brick. At the same time the age, temperature, texture and shape of the site becomes apparent and human in its scale.



*Protoavises [opt] Superfluous, 2013:
laser-cut vinyl, overall dimensions
variable*



*Protoavises [opt] Cealum, 2013:
laser-cut paper, overall dimensions
variable*

Expanded through form

Drawing for Cumberland includes, but is not confined to, mark-making. Her sequential work is often transposed from two dimensional to three dimensional forms, moving into sculptural drawing. Furthermore, the work known as *Stitched* (2013) is made up of 80 slides which have been sewn with threads that are then projected onto the wall. The stitched lines flicker and move, animated by the airflow of the slide projector, expanding into the fourth dimension; introducing a subtle time-based element to the work. The rhythmic, mechanical sound of the changing slides in conjunction with the spasmodic movement of the thread creates a slightly sinister filmic experience. Deanna Petherbridge has talked about how lines ‘appear’ to write time and contain the history of their own making and narrative structure. (3)



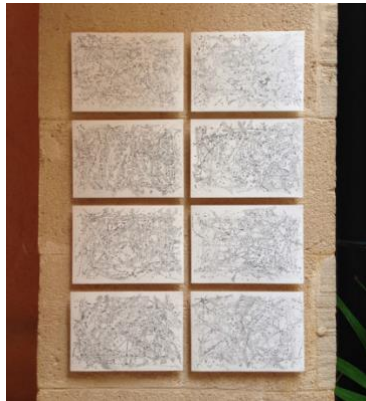
*Stitched, 2006 – 2013: Stills
from analogue projection*



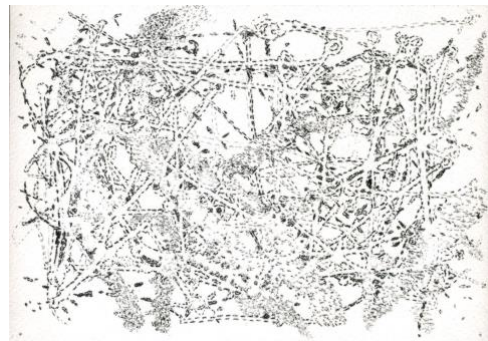
*Stitched [8x10], 2015: Digital
stills from analogue projection*

Expanded through process

Mark-making occurs through the transcription of one form to another through various processes. Continuous addition and removal, (re)production and reduction results in a coherent body of structural variations. Working in sequence the components initially appear identical, however, the process ensures each work is unique, retaining the possibility for expansion and modification (4). This can be clearly seen in *Drawing Stitched 1-8*. Visually the works can look very different; often the repetition of titles or forms suggests a familiar connection between works.



Drawing Stitched [1-8], 2012:
Carbon on paper 14.8 x 21cm each



Drawing Stitched [2/8], 2012:
Carbon on paper 14.8 x 21cm

Expanded through materials

Cumberland does not always use traditional drawing materials and when she does; she uses them in an unexpected way. Forms are translated through a variety of materials; paper, thread, celluloid, vinyl and ink. The materiality of her work and its relationship to place is important and the viewer gains a greater insight into the work by viewing it in situ rather than through reproduction. That said Kelly experiments with the documentation and representation of her drawings, expanding them into the print and publishing field. Thus the boundary between art piece and catalogue are beginning to collapse.

Expanded meaning

The imagery within Cumberland's work is underpinned by its link to the viral and cellular referents she uses as her motifs. The memetic function of drawing remains in Cumberland's pieces. However, her work is not about illustrating a viral life cycle; she uses her drawing processes and transpositions in a more metaphoric way in order to evoke the unrelenting and pernicious viral breach of the body. The corporal nature of artist, viewer and subject is always implicit within Cumberland's drawings.

We use drawings to denote ourselves, our existence within a scene: in the urban context graffiti acts as a form of drawing in the expanded

field. Indeed drawing is part of our interrelation to our physical environment, recording in and on it, the presence of the human. (5)

The drawings discussed here reveal the artist's interaction with a distinct place in Spain within a certain period of time when her practices could be synthesised with those who had originally made the gallery space. Her drawings frame, seep into and celebrate its sun-bleached walls and decoratively-tiled floors.

A new three dimensional drawing, responding to the topography of the Plaça Porta de Santa Catalina, Palma de Mallorca, will be accompanied by a series of drawings at *Aba Art Lab* for *La Nit de l'Art 2015*.

- 1) <http://www.kellycumberland.com/>
- 2) Krauss, R. Sculpture in the Expanded Field. Within Postmodern Culture. ed. Foster, H. London, 1985. pp 31-42.
- 3) Petherbridge, D. The Primacy of Drawing: Histories and Theories of Practice. London, 2010. p 4.
- 4) <http://www.kellycumberland.com/>
- 5) Dexter, E. Vitamin D: New Perspectives in Drawing. London, 2005. p 5.