

MA Fine Art: MA Project Proposal

(Working) Title:

How drawing, specifically the line, can explore the shapes, forms, and passages of the human body's breathing apparatus.

The aims and objectives of my project for the duration of my MA will be to continue to accumulate my position and practice in relation to drawing as a mobile and versatile agency. There are always two overarching themes to my practice. Firstly, the activity of drawing, within the act itself, and secondly, towards the line, which stems to and from drawing as practice.

The act of drawing itself is bound up in physical engagement of the senses. How you (I) become involved in a drawing is a spatial and haptic thing. This engagement is key to note because if the way drawing is attended to, its very process, is continued as a matter of extension, then this position could make anything a drawing because you (I) approached it as one. And, in terms of the line, it is borne of self-propulsion. I am always interested in the space it is opening into, its curious look of intent. And within this, the role of 'not knowing', the possibility of the 'not yet' and 'still to be'. But I am especially interested when the line itself can become the object, thickening its presence and activity in space.

I will continue to work from these standpoints with the breath as referent. I expect this exploration to last the duration of my MA. My practice has never had a fixed 'subject' in this way before, so this is a new way of working to me.

By breath/breathing I mean (for now) the processes of breathing, the anatomy of the human respiratory system and its relation to the rest of the body, both in terms of physical relation to the dynamics and conditions of other bodily processes, as well as the cause and effect it has upon these other systems. My current main areas of interest revolve around the following,

- Process of moving in and out (air moving in and out of the lungs)
- Facilitates an exchange from external to internal environment
- Unconscious and automatic, but it can be altered with conscious control up to a point
- Signal sending (brain + body to adjust breathing rate depending on activity)
- The respiratory system is made up of many parts to make this bigger whole, the synergy, coordination and combined efforts
- The movements, of muscles, alterations and changing shapes to allow for pressure changes to draw air in/out

My referent to breathing does not (as yet) have a fixed standpoint, but there is something in the movements and nuances that I want to draw parallels to and echo in the process and activity of drawing.

My practice is process led and my methodology is often based upon thinking through doing/thinking through drawing. I am particularly interested in the curious and ambiguous spaces you can enter, spaces of becoming, when you shift and slip across different mediums. I like to be able to occupy these liminal spaces, the in between not as an indication of place but an actual position.

I expect to make work that will require the following resources, materials, and support,

- Ceramics – find out more about slip casting
- Metal work
- Woodwork
- Video/digital work
- Sound? Recording breath work

Through the combination of these processes, individual parts and pieces made up of these different mediums will be brought together to make a whole. The whole will take the form of an interchangeable installation of sorts that can traverse wall and floor space. Something that a viewer/audience must enter

into and move within, something of a lived experience, a habitable drawing. The forms and objects that I make will flip back and forth between 2 dimensions and 3 dimensions, reoccurring and reappearing across different mediums. It is important to me that there is a material dialogue and exchange apparent in the work.

Ceramics especially will be a new medium to me, and I want to explore the effect that working with ceramics will alter my work – particularly the processual nature of working with clay and the various potential clay has in what it can become. There is something particularly interesting about the fact that ceramics often form a vessel, and the most important thing about a vessel is its capacity of empty space, because that is the space which ‘holds’ something, does something more. This is very interesting in relation to the space of the airways.

I am also very interested in the ways I can add a digital capacity to my work. I like the idea that it can add a sense of kinetic energy to my work, moving image, stop motions and idea of being animated (alive, moving, active, an ability to concern real life movement and characteristics). It is also the juncture at which something can go from a still object in real space, can be flattened, transported, and moved through a digital realm and, in turn, the idea of that spatiality. This idea of spatiality and new visions of something extends into the fact that one of the only ways to make visible internal spaces of the body is via cameras and probes which then provide video footage and recordings, and I find these parallels very intriguing.

Something that interests me is the idea of giving the viewer a heightened awareness, not directly as such but a subtlety to. We live in vessels we hardly pay attention to. I don’t wish to give facts and figures, but I would like to bring about a sense of mindfulness, to turn your gaze inward and draw attention to small sensitivities.

I do not yet know what other work exists in this area. I will broaden my research first by learning the anatomy of the respiratory system to a deeper level of understanding, what different parts do and how, as well as reading into subject specific books (listed in the bibliography below). I also intend on utilising my background as a Pilates instructor and the teachings on breathing around this to support my research as well as looking into medical journals and research papers on breathing. I also want to incorporate, where possible or relevant, the lung function tests, breathing physio and procedures I have undergone myself and the primary resources this sort of footage and results can offer.

I am very interested in the relationship which could be built between my creative practice and science/medical research and the opportunity of multidisciplinary working in this way. I want the science to impact what I communicate and how it can be understood, especially in terms of giving visibility to the invisible, how our sense perception and proprioception can be heightened. I am unfamiliar with any artists who work specifically with/on the breath. But I am very keen to not be too literal. The referent to breathing in my work will not be so direct that it is like an anatomy drawing or science illustration, this precision and accuracy is not an aesthetic I am interested in. It isn’t about replicating; it will be about referencing.

I want to note here that part of my interest in exploring this subject area of breathing stems from my own personal account of living with a respiratory condition and dysfunction. In a sense this project will be a form of working-through, as a way of looking inwards and as a mode of self-knowledge in navigating my lived experience of breathing. But I do not expect my own account and ‘dysfunction’ to be the centre of this project. It is more for me at the periphery.

My research into artists will also continue to be informed by those I feel akin to in terms of physical aesthetics, material dispositions, or the heightened awareness they bring about. Many of these are in relation to my previous research into the conceptual space of drawing and its relationship into sculpture and installation, which include examples such as,

- Avis Newman, conceptual space of drawing, assemblages, interchangeable elements
- Richard Tuttle, material presence suspended on the border between disciplines

- Thea Djordjadze, giving form to negative spaces, no kinetic elements but there is a feeling of transition

Over time, I expect this to include artists working in ceramics and digital work to reflect the material response of working in these new mediums.

Also suggested to look at the work of:

Nina Canell

Nairy Baghramian

Marla Hlady (copper tubing)

Holly Hendry

Salvatore Arancio

French & Mottershead:

<https://www.whitechapelgallery.org/london-open-2018-french-mottershead/>

Visit:

The Wellcome Collection

Hunterian Museum, Royal College of Surgeons – not currently open

(Current) Bibliography

Fisher, E. and Fortnum, R. (2013) *On Not Knowing: How Artists Think*. London: Black Dog.

Lovatt, A. (2012) *Drawing: Sculpture – Drawing Across and Between Media*. Drawing Room, London and Leeds Art Gallery, Leeds.

McKeown, P. (2015) *The Oxygen Advantage*. Piatkus.

McKeown, P. (2021) *The Breathing Cure*. OxyAT Books.

Merleau-Ponty, M. (2002) *Phenomenology of perception* [E-book + book]. London: Routledge Classics.

Nestor, J. (2020) *Breath: The New Science of a Lost Art*. Penguin.

Pallasmaa, J. (2009) *The thinking hand: existential and embodied wisdom in architecture*. Hoboken, N.J.; Chichester: Wiley; John Wiley [distributor]. (AD primers).

Suggested Reading:

- <https://socks-studio.com/2015/01/18/maulwerke-mouth-works-and-other-compositions-graphic-scores-by-dieter-schnebel/>
- <https://socks-studio.com/2012/07/12/lectures-on-ventilation-1869/>
- A Philosophy of Emptiness, Gay Watson, 2014
- Every Day is a Good Day, the art of John Cage, 2010
- Seeing is forgetting the name of the thing one sees: A Life of Contemporary Artist Robert Irwin, 1992
- Making: Anthropology, Archaeology, Art and Architecture, Tim Ingold, 2013

Timetable

I will shift my timetable to maximise the amount of time I can commit towards being in university in order to use the workshop facilities and my studio and depending upon any contact time teaching that is scheduled. This is an indicator of what I intend for my weekly timetable will look like.

Mon	Tues	Weds	Thurs	Fri	Sat	Sun
STUDIO/ WORKSHOP	STUDIO RESEARCH LECTURES	WFH RESEARCH LECTURES	STUDIO/ WORKSHOP	STUDIO/ WORKSHOP	RESEARCH/ STUDIO (as required)	