



Drawing and Visualisation Research

LATERALITY REVIEWED: A COMMENTARY ON A SERIES OF DRAWING AND WRITING EXPERIMENTS IN RELATION TO IAIN MCGILCHRIST'S RESEARCH ON HEMISPHERIC LATERALISATION

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Drawing is a universe - generous, pliable, amenable and able to speak for itself. The author's PhD project, *Design Leads* (2012), addressed how design students conveyed 'supra-rational' modes of practice (intuitive, tacit, material and so forth) through drawing. The research asked: what did experiments in drawing and writing, performed within a group context, reveal about rhythms of design practice? And how might such drawing-designing modes impact on writing practices? This summary describes those rhythms of practice and the correlation with McGilchrist's picture of 'right hemisphere' behaviour. It continues with examples of drawings and writings produced.

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INTRODUCTION

My doctoral study, *Design Leads*, came about through involvement in the Writing Purposefully in Art and Design (PAD) network. Although aware of the rational sphere of design practice, I made a decision to investigate the 'lateral' or 'supra-rational' sphere of designing of contemporary design students' practices (undergraduate and postgraduate) across disciplines. This was motivated in part by a particular conflict: certain strengths across design disciplines (intuitive, tacit, visual, spatial) seemed to run counter to orthodox academic writing strengths (analytical, argument-based, referenced).

In a first phase of research, 38 interviewees - design students, tutors, and designers, armed with objects, photos, screens and sketch books, were asked about their own design thinking and making. This led through narrative review to a loose bundle of 24 main themes of 'lateral leanings', as shown below.



FIGURE 1: LATERAL LEANINGS THEMES DERIVED FROM STAGE ONE: INTERVIEWS

Earlier interests in drawing and kinds of lateral thinking and making had been informed by the likes of Edward de Bono (1967), Arnheim (1969), McKim (1972), Tony Buzan (1974), Betty Edwards (1979), Blakeslee (1980). However, this research appeared superseded by an 80s/90s CAD rise; further research in neuroscience, and then the digital revolution of

the last decade, parallel to the promotion of drawing's role in research (Duff and Davies, 2005; 2008).

I began my own research, nevertheless, with a re-view of laterality manifested in the students' design practices: the inclination or 'Leanings' towards the peripheral, subconscious gaps, leaps, jokes, and surreal juxtapositions. I also considered an expanded view of laterality as 'on the margins' or in other words, tendencies I witnessed in students to follow up oblique angles, focus in on what had been overlooked, and further, to break with the mainstream in speculative and exploratory ways. I carried out this re-evaluation out of personal bias as well as from an understanding that such strengths appeared inimical to academic writing practice strengths: I wanted to interrogate such a difference. Two qualifications are needed: these practice moves did not necessarily give rise to hugely original works, of course, although they formed part of regular creative behaviour, and secondly, they were as much a part of design training as of natural curiosity or desire for the new.

The name of 'Lateral Leanings' for such design moves was formalised during the interview stage with design students and staff, and it has remained the title of that early chapter. However, the title could not fully encompass the total experience of the thinking and making recorded, and at some point in the second stage of research during the experiments, the title of 'Rhythms of Practice' seemed fuller and more appropriate, and therefore superseded 'Lateral Leanings', as will be explained.

In the second stage of research, I made a decision to involve drawing and visualisation as tools for expression and generation across design disciplines. This was an opportunity to push research further, and to adopt a participant-observer role. How might this 'supra-rational' sphere of designing manifest in drawing, and secondly, how might it impact on writing practice, and not the other way around?

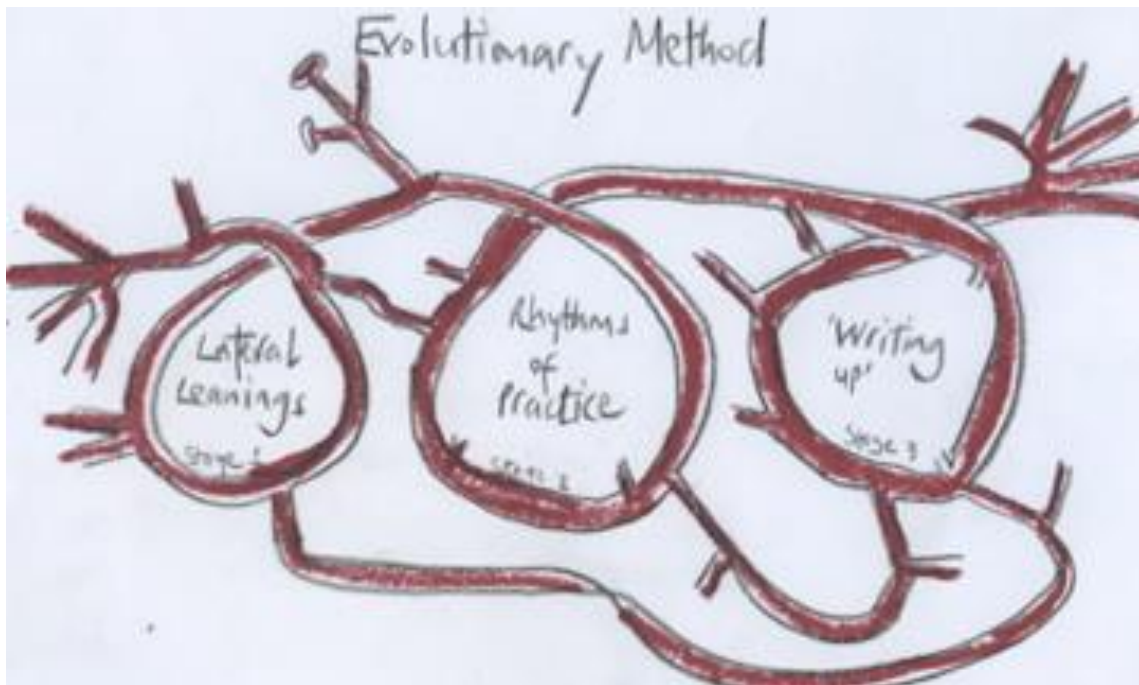


FIGURE 2: THE EVOLUTIONARY RESEARCH PATH WITH MAIN STAGES

This article proceeds with The Rhythms of Practice described; how the above coincides with the picture of the 'right hemisphere' as described by Iain McGilchrist (2009), and finally, some examples of such drawing-designing impacts on writing practice.

1. THE PICTURE OF THE RHYTHMS OF PRACTICE DESCRIBED

Experiments across six *Writing PAD* member institutions involved largely design students (design products, visual communications, fashion and textiles, applied arts) and mostly postgraduates. In the drawing experiments we went for abrupt, raw, first drawing outputs. These were sketches, diagrams, maps, cartoons; records at times that mapped out practice patterns; sometimes ideational or visualisations, and occasionally blanks. Each one centred on a core theme that had been identified through Lateral Leanings (see map above). The individual drawings were followed by informal exchanges around them: what came up? What did it relate to? How was the experience? And so on. Writing followed on. In 2010, after the experiments, I spent another year reflecting back, overviewing research sources and writing up findings. Next, some of the main findings of experiments are recorded, minus the impact of 'Chat' which, although significant within the whole, is omitted due to limits of space.

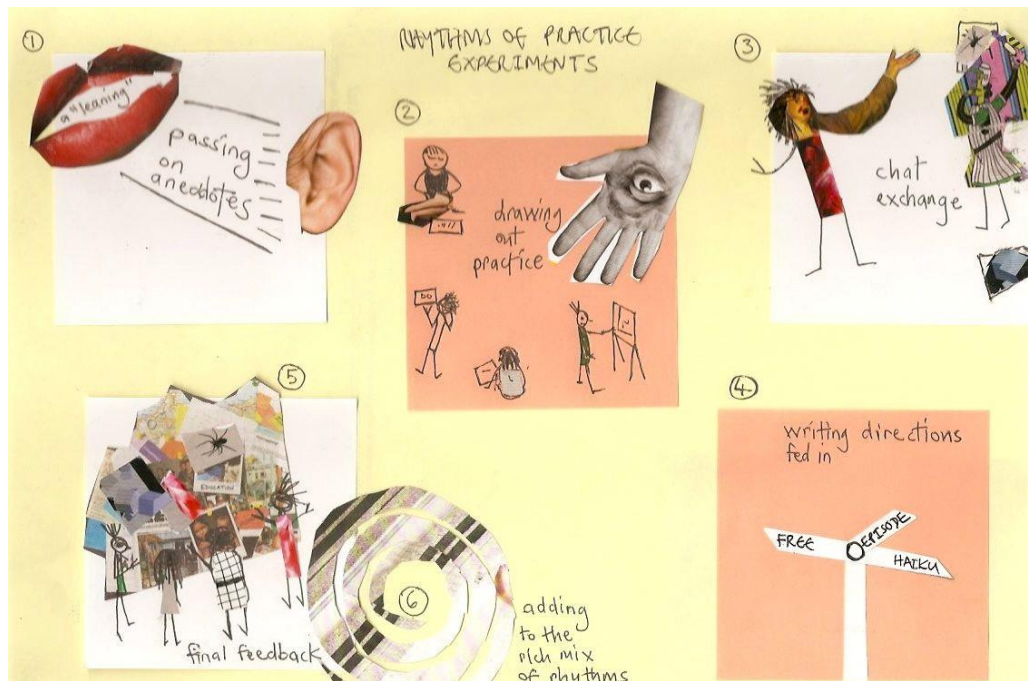


FIGURE 3: A PICTURE OF THE RHYTHMS OF PRACTICE

1.1 SPACE AND AFFECT

First of all, the drawing-centred nature of the experiments appeared inseparable from the effects of the spaces, most possessing the ethos of the studio in the sense of literal marks and tools of practices, a certain looseness, informality and a relaxed mode. There was generally space for participants to spread out and elude a more formal lecture arrangement as well as elude the more private space of an individual studio.

1.2 FREEDOM AND SPONTANEITY

Within the constraints of time and the imposed theme, considerable freedom and spontaneity were exercised. Participants were largely able to move around a space, one that was actual rather than virtual. They worked on the floor, on the wall, on a table, in a corner, with different sizes, scales and shifts of materials and media. They worked fast or slowly or paused.

1.3 DRAWING AND FOUND RESOURCES

Drawing was carried out with all kinds of stuff: the stains that marked the heart of a contour map in Evolutionary Method, and the fold that led the way for a participant in Wild Conjuring. Apart from papers and pencils, graphite, pastels and so forth, there were smudges and marks, stains, as well as paper's own tearability and textile

quality, forming a mountain scape in Intuition; subtlety also as in tracing paper employed as a veil over a sonogram in Emotional Drivers.

1.4 PARTICIPANTS' OPENNESS TO MATERIAL

I initially underestimated the resource of material itself that 'came to' participants: they were not just imposing their own will on stuff but open to receiving designs from stuff itself. The facility to pick up on and creatively mobilise the incidental (random, serendipitous) also marked the experiments.

1.5 THE PHYSICAL AND KINETIC

To flexibility and variety was added a sense of a 3D shared space, the physical and the kinetic. For instance, one participant worked with her body on the paper while another started to shift from 2D to 3D realisation in a corner of the space.

1.6 FOCUS AND ATTENTION

The experiments gave rise to a peculiar focus and attention. Drawing seemed to attract a special degree of concentration and absorption. This is hard to prove, easier to witness, or record in log accounts of quietness in the room, sounds of paper, marks being made.

1.7 COMMUNITY SENSE

A sense of community was quickly generated through the possibility of work in real time that could be viewed and discussed by all. The space meant participants could interact easily with each other as well as see each other's work.

1.8 CHARGED EXPERIENCE

Experiences were charged at times, perhaps from the immediacy of the activities and affective responses to them as well as the nature of the themes themselves - the novelty impact of drawing modes of practice.

1.9 HUMOUR

In approaches, drawings and accounts of them, there was a strong humorous element, helping participants to overcome awkwardness, look at mistakes, laugh with irony at their own behaviours. The mistakes themselves were examined and brought into play.

At the stage of writing up, I encountered 'The Master and His Emissary: the divided brain and the making of the western world' written by McGilchrist (2009), and discovered a surprisingly strong correlation between the 'supra-rational' of the Rhythms of Practice drawing experiments and key characteristics of the right hemisphere of the brain, as summarised below. First, a few words about Iain McGilchrist's research.

In brief, Iain McGilchrist's research is based on twenty years of investigation and neurological evidence, particularly of split-brain patients. While he acknowledges the functioning of the brain is more complex than thought thirty years ago, and that the left and right hemisphere (LH and RH) inevitably share much experience, he argues that they do have distinct and complementary roles, and that the corpus callosum is there in one sense to see that they do remain independent from each other. He takes the evolutionary need for survival and sees it in two ways, employing the activities of birds in symbolic manner: those that fly far and wide looking for new opportunities or dangers (RH), and those grounded and intent on the nature and potential of the immediate environment (LH). In fact, his book ranges widely over many cultural episodes as well as very specific examples of individual human behaviour but ultimately, it serves to reinforce the older notion that the right hemisphere of the brain is not only the more creative but the primary one. His argument goes on to relate how the RH, at the symbolic level of the historical, cultural and political, has been usurped in the West by the LH, in a reversal of what he considers to be the proper roles of 'master' and 'emissary'.

In this section, I illustrate central connections between 'Rhythms of Practice' and the views of Iain McGilchrist on the RH before turning to a third section that addresses writing practice.

2.1 A PRIMAL AND GLOBAL WAY OF SEEING

The visual is considered primary by McGilchrist and at the heart of the business of the RH. He sees the RH as paying 'attention to the global picture' (the bird in flight, observing far and wide), and argues that the RH's 'wider breadth of attention allows creativity to come through' (2010, p33). This is reminiscent of interview material, and characteristics of design thinking and making manifested in Design Leads: the proliferation of ideas along with the wide range of influences with which students juggled at earlier stages of making, and that linked in turn to the arduous task some spoke of when attempting to select down.

Secondly, in terms of the drawing activities, there is a tendency to portray whole environments – a mountain scape, a cartoon ‘portfolio’ of designs, a set of future time scenes, a street scene, a room full of stuff, as illustrated from the drawings below.

2.2 FREEDOM AND SPONTANEITY

In addition to the primary, global and peripheral, there is the notion of simultaneity, reminiscent of Arnheim’s view (1969). Sight for McGilchrist is associated with the simultaneous (RH) whereas words are associated with the sequential (LH). There is a link here with those images drawn fast in the experiments that convey a totality, some kind of whole, as described above. Part of the strong impact seemed to be the way that things appeared suddenly, with the action of the hand conveying the thinking, before deliberation or reflection.

2.3 EMBRACE OF EXPERIENCE

For Iain McGilchrist, the LH is very much to do with control of our environment a part of which is grasping things and getting to know them very well (as in the bird paying attention to its immediate environment). In contrast, things are continually new for the RH. The novel attraction generated by the experiments comes to mind at this point: the willingness to have a go and the intrigue about what the experiments were about. In addition, whether or not the outcomes of the design thinking and making were actually original, there was a drive for the new (a sense of newness for each participant) in these attempts.

2.4 LATERAL ARRIVAL

The understanding in Design Leads of ‘Lateral Leanings’ that is, the kinds of thinking that seemed to come in ‘at the side’ is analogous, I suggest, to the appearance of the new and how Iain McGilchrist perceives it:

‘...in almost every case, what is new must first be present in the right hemisphere before it can come into focus for the left. For one thing, the right hemisphere alone attends to the peripheral field of vision from which new experience tends to come; only the right hemisphere can direct attention to what comes to us from the edges of our awareness, regardless of side’ (2010: 40).



FIGURE 5: MOUNTAINSCAPE



FIGURE 6: PORTFOLIO OF DESIGNS

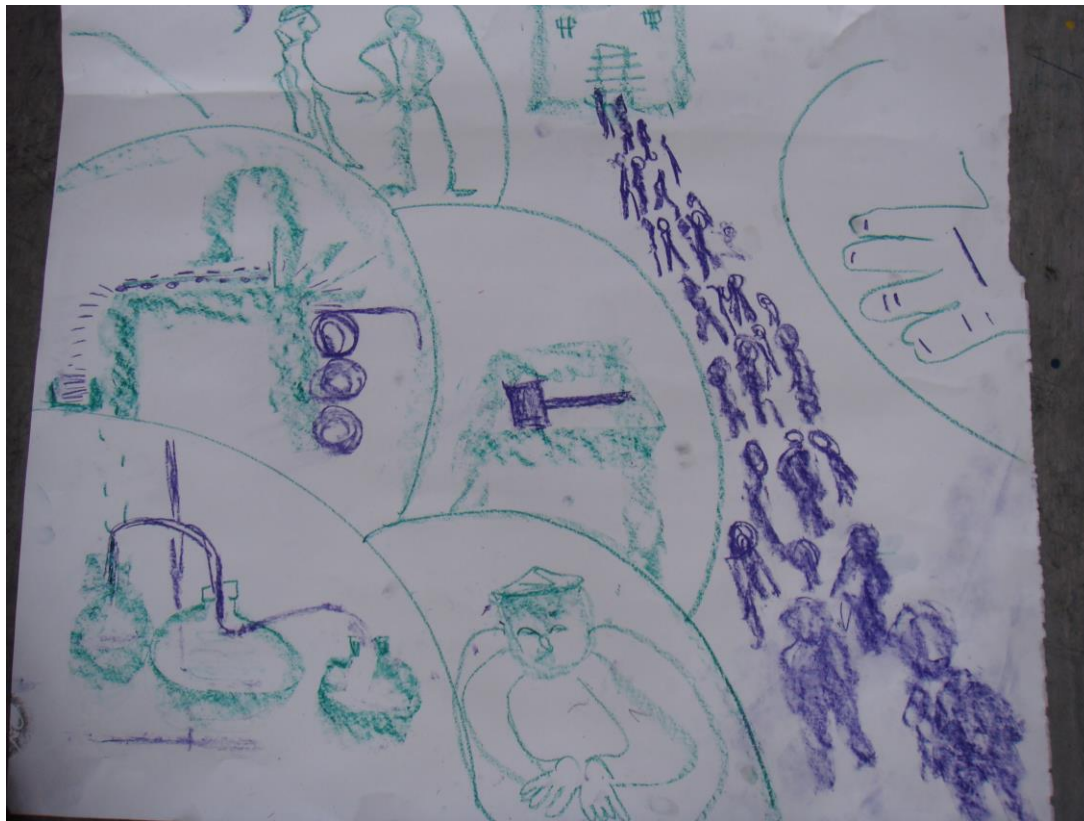


FIGURE 7: FUTURE TIME SCENES

2.5 THE SENSORY AND THE MATERIAL

The Senses and the material also form a strong part of Rhythms of Practice. The experimenters' interaction with them was not intellectual but intelligent: enquiring, multi-modal, multi-dimensional. The earlier 'Lateral Leanings' title could not encompass such breadth; hence the change to Rhythms of Practice. The Wild Conjurings experiment drawings bore witness to a closely related difference in RH and LH: drawings revealed the participants' grip on the present in contrast to my own more conceptual or surreal fantasy of the future. McGilchrist also pointed out such a difference: that between a kind of mental imposing on something (more LH) and that of a contrasting receptivity, permissive of seeing what is actually there before the eyes, or less framed in other words by pre-prepared narratives in the head.



FIGURE 8: SENSORY AND MATERIAL MOVES

2.6 MOVEMENT

In all of these above, the quest for the new, the experiential, the sensory and the relating between, there is a sense of movement. McGilchrist picks up the Heraclitan notion of flow to describe the workings of the RH (2010: 30): 'Experience is forever in motion, ramifying and unpredictable.' It brings to mind the etymology of 'emotion' as moving out. It is reminiscent of the movement of bodies working in the spaces themselves; of the movement of ideas that passed around the groups, and the speed at which the drawing seemed to provide momentum. All of these examples point to rhythms and the dynamism of the experiments that prompted the name of 'Rhythms of Practice'.



FIGURE 9: RHYTHMS AND DYNAMISM

2.7 SHIFTS AND EMBODIMENT

About attempting to move from a sphere of material practice to one of PhD research, one participant said, 'how do you get that [research reading] into a form? ... In a way it's about um a message that's constantly altering and moving.' In experiments, it appeared that affect (frustration and humour, intrigue) went together with searching for an embodiment – loosely, a designing solution. The drawing made by the same experimenter was of a multitude of shoes, ships, transport:

'I drew lots of different forms of transport (laugh). I was thinking of vehicles and movement and ... I did a lorry, a bike, an aeroplane, a steam train, ... a tanker, a container ship (laughter) and then er, a push chair. I don't know, maybe a wheelchair. Em, and shoes. Yea.'

This search for translating and moving was light-hearted but not trivial. The drawing touched on a sustained research problem that went beyond the experiments. It evokes the strain between visual and word: one more concrete, immediate and one more remote; one more holistic and simultaneous, the other more detached and sequential. We might describe this particular drawing-encounter as an emotional tension between RH and LH.

2.8 METAPHORIC LAYERS AND AMBIGUITY

In addition, Iain McGilchrist says that the RH, in a corollary to keeping options open and not fixing things, insists on the implicit. There is, for instance, a leaning towards Metaphor, with its power to hold various layers of meaning together and sustain ambiguity. Within experiment examples, there is an interesting diversion from this statement by McGilchrist. An object that was drawn might evoke a variety of interpretations of meaning, but the participant who made the specific drawing often supplied a detailed context for it - from memory. And in line with the rationale for the experiments, the memories would then be absorbed into design practices, part of the making. And in design practice, there would be a commitment to an end point, with the vague, apprehended and multi-layered subsumed eventually, perhaps equivalent to the move to an LH sphere.

In retrospect, the drawings - full of *things* – were not categorically Metaphor but rather what 'came to' participants (their language), from the mind's eye or the immediate environment. They were generated through drawing, and then talked around, taken for granted, but not especially analysed because of their metaphoric ability to hold subtle levels of meaning together, as might have taken place in a more academic context.

2.9. LANGUAGE

The RH 'cannot have certainty of knowledge that comes from being able to fix things and isolate them. It does not form abstractions and categories that are based on abstraction that are the strengths of denotative language. [...] the right hemisphere interest in language lies in all the things that help to take it beyond the limiting effects of denotation to connotation: it acknowledges the importance of ambiguity. It therefore is virtually silent, relatively shifting and uncertain, where the left hemisphere by contrast, may be unreasonably, even stubbornly, convinced of its own correctness' (2010: 79-80).

It is impossible to say whether a reluctance of participants to write at times was due to previous negative educational experience; not knowing how to proceed, or to a wish to defer in order to have more time to digest and absorb. Whatever the case, Iain McGilchrist's picture above made considerable sense when applied to the educational context I found myself in, as mentioned in the third section.

2.10 IN SUM

Overall, Rhythms of Practice experiments show many RH tendencies. RH 'global viewing' coincides with the theme or 'lead' of Observation, for some in this study, a calculated practice while for others, an obsession, like an instinct. And in that global viewing, we find an obsession too with The New, both in the attraction to what is novel and seeking out the new. The openness required for perceiving the new is prepared for by a special attention, a readiness to receive; Abundance is the result of readiness, obsession and seeking out.

Closely related to the New is Experimentation, which goes with curiosity, taking a risk, with uncertain outcomes. Hence the relation to Accidents and Mistakes and to Lost, Confused and in a Mess. The latter Rhythms are not always positive; sometimes they remain simply frustrating. Whether or not such Rhythms bring insights, the experimenters' approach was adventurous and the experiment matters were seen as opportunities, difficulties to work through, or material for exploration. And again, the Emotional Drivers pervaded the exploration; not necessarily passionate emotion but connected with intrigue, doubt, some relief, some joy, humour. The experiments exercised the emotions, which exercised the drawings.

In distinction to McGilchrist's much broader sweep of visual culture (amongst related cultures), my small thesis involves the specific 'lead' of Drawing, a valuable design mode

that allows the visual to become tangible on the page. The Visualisation and the Drawing are considered central Design Leads, modes of thinking and making. The activity of drawing appeared, in fact, conducive to two contrasting modes: a mode of absorption or concentration yet in contrast, a mode of rapid performance, with a simultaneity that bypasses slower, more methodical routes or possibly the pre-meditated, the conscious mind. Both appear to bring forth a wealth of raw material.

2.11 AND IAIN MCGILCHRIST'S LEFT HEMISPHERE?

'By contrast, in order to control or manipulate we need to be able to remove ourselves from certain aspects of experience, and in fact to map the world from the vertical axis...' (McGilchrist, 2010)

Here is the LH, a more abstracted, remote, categorising sphere that holds a complementary yet secondary place in the scheme of things, or should do. According to McGilchrist, it has usurped the primary role of the right hemisphere. If the view of the RH has usefully illuminated the supra-rational modes of designing in this study, then the LH would seem to share certain characteristics of a more orthodox academic discourse. The potential impact of the supra-rational modes of design on academic writing culture is in part analogous to the potential RH influence on the LH.

3. SOME EXAMPLES OF SUCH DRAWING-DESIGNING IMPACTS ON WRITING PRACTICE

The findings of the research project went some way to underline the sense I had in my educational role of dual spheres: the 'supra-rational' manifested through

designing-drawing and academic writing. If as proposed by Iain McGilchrist, the RH has a stronger propensity to go for the new and to be interested in that, there may be less of an ability to control and to categorise information that requires the opposite propensity, namely to stay with the familiar, with attendant processing. However, the thesis was not based on the incapacities of design students but rather on strengths. How might 'supra-rational' designing modes impact on writing practices? A few examples follow.

3.1 EXAMPLE ONE



FIGURE 10: THE LOST SEASCAPE

'I started drawing a safe space and I'm kind of getting out of that safe space and wandering, and getting lost so it's actually it's quite literal, it's not conceptual or abstract.'

Visualisation is primary thinking that comes fast and through the fluent execution of an image such as the 'Lost' seascape in which we view everything at once in a joining of simultaneity with complexity. The words without the visual appear meagre, solitary, but with the visual, they become part of the 'supra-linguistic' 'lost'-quest – the words are embodied and integrated into a fuller picture. I could apply my LH analytic skills to the image of the lost-scape and articulate a number of patterns of words-shapes-movement-thoughts. But the drawing was produced in some minutes and without hesitation, conscious planning, measuring, scheming or the like. Drawing can offer a full and immediate portrayal of a whole that is totally distinct from a slower, more deliberate step-by-step approach.

3.3 EXAMPLE THREE

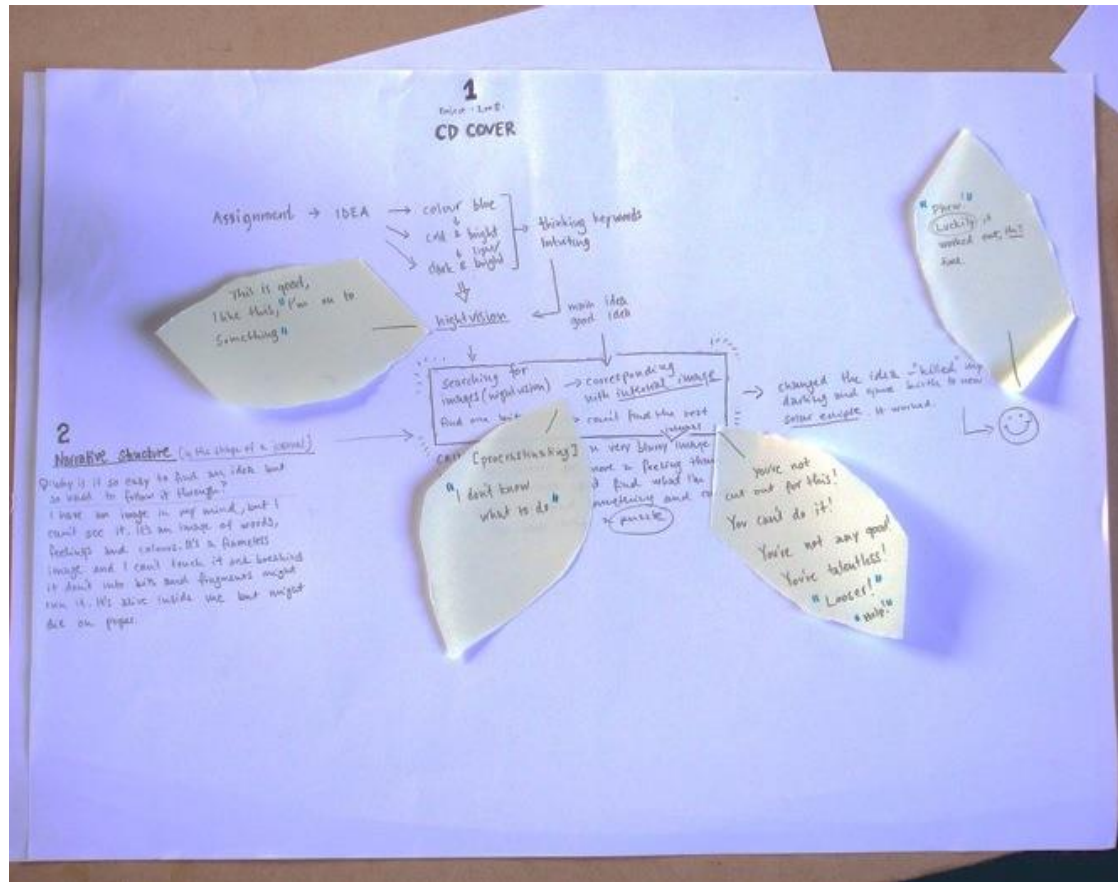


FIGURE 12: CD-COVER AND MISTAKE

Evolutionary Methods, the CD cover, writing after drawing: 'Why is it so easy to have an idea but so hard to follow through? I have an image in my mind, but I can't see it. It's an image of words, feelings and colours. It's a frameless image and I can't touch it and breaking it down into bits and fragments might ruin it. It's alive inside me but might die on paper.'

These comments were written after drawing a process of a previous design that had not been completely successful. Ironically, the writing stage proved a very poetic articulation of the nature of design visualisation pre-words. In terms of the RH and LH relationship, the protected first thoughts are definitely RH, or primary thinking. I imagine such thinking gradually moving to LH for digestion and designing/making; when it passes to writing, it is twice removed from the primary. In contrast to some approaches to academic writing, this implies that vagueness can be a key to the start of a new venture and that an initial fixed position or a rush to be explicit, to plan ahead too much, may be detrimental to this impetus with a more gradual unfolding. How to allow for a space and distance in time and

perspective is crucial but extremely difficult when everybody's diary is crammed full and the pressure is on.

A second point: this writing post drawing, apposite for a reflective journal, does not present a transparent solution for the previous CD-design: a solution was reached through the drawing without a conscious explanation. A writing-up cannot always provide a logical reason; on the other hand, it can reference and signpost back to what is primary, I suggest. If this designing example had been placed in a portfolio of writing, there could have been no rational explanation; instead, a record of a drawing, chatting, writing mix that gave rise, somehow, to insight.

3.4 EXAMPLE FOUR

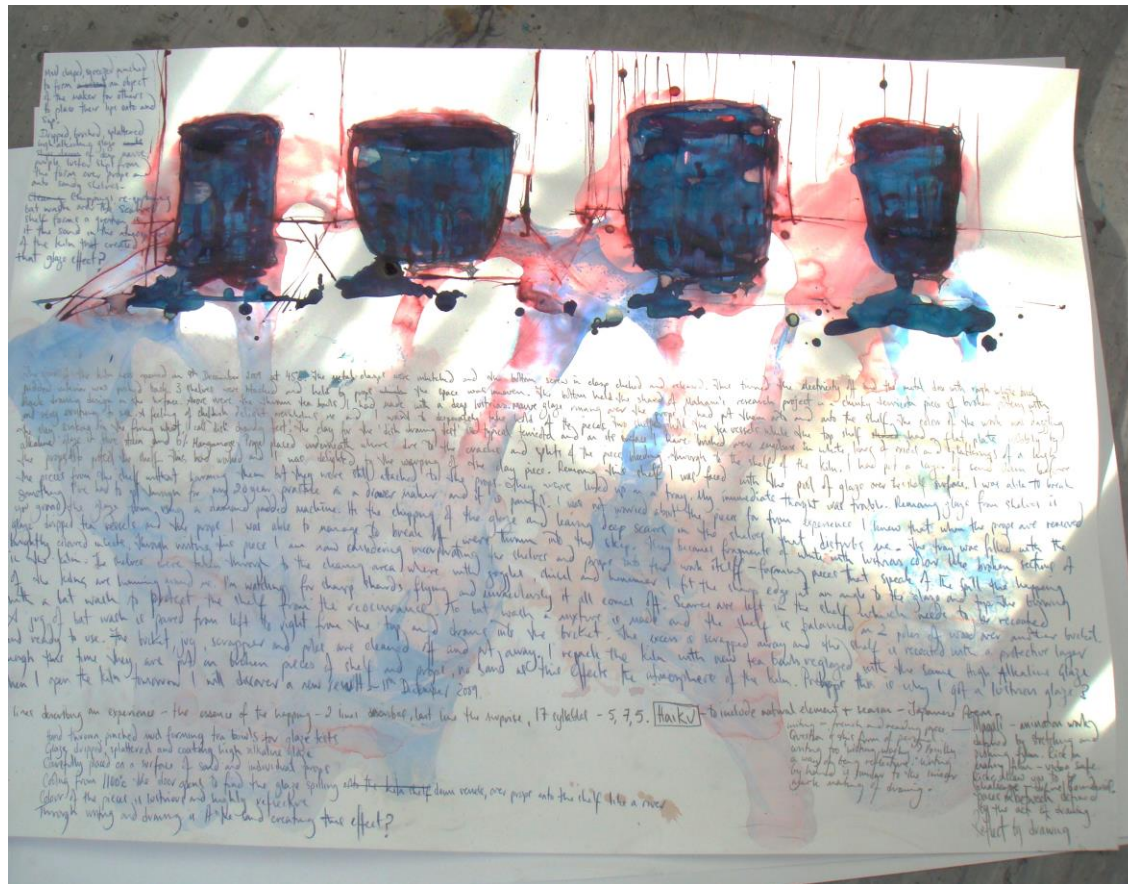


FIGURE 13: CERAMIC ACCIDENT AND REVELATION

Spoken extract: A '...but I understand it this time [...] which I wouldn't have picked up on if I hadn't done this. Because it's actually the drawing out and having to remember, you know, every single part of that accident of putting it together, to opening it up.

B: To have a mental observation?

A: Yea, and that small part of the sand – I'd completely forgotten about until I'd done this exercise...it's fantastic! (laugh) I want to run downstairs and say, 'look at that!'

Again, the act of drawing-visualisation can bring dynamic insights into previous practice mistakes or accidents, such as in this case of the Ceramics accident, in part a material re-enacting. The reason why is, as above, not completely clear. Partly the allowing of time, space and the non-cerebral approach of drawing that brings up stuff from the sub-conscious? Some of the writing that came from such visualisation shows acute observation of what could otherwise be overlooked. Whether a review of something old or a view of something new, these writing outcomes are valuable in feeding into practice. Visualisation is not rational but extremely valuable in contributing new insights; it is a world apart from an approach that begins with a search for relevant literature (texts, words, linearity) and proceeds to finding a gap in that published material.

3.5 A SENSIBILITY

In the survey of micro-elements of writings after drawing experiments, a sensibility manifested through the concrete, in action, in the direct first person, in lists and changes of focus, explorations of concepts and dynamic opposites. In these ways, the writing characteristics resemble those of the RH of McGilchrist's research, and the opposite of certain LH characteristics – abstract, impersonal, consistent, more fixed, goal-oriented and argument-based, categorising, objective – that in turn bear a strong resemblance to qualities of orthodox, academic writing. The metaphors of hand held out and hand tightly grasping (RH and LH, I would suggest), as articulated by Terry Rosenberg's writing on ideational drawing practice (2008).

3.6 CONDITIONS OF WRITING – AN ECOLOGY

I include a map of what might be called the conditions of writing from drawing experiments, with some debt here more generally to phenomenology and the experiential, and more specifically, to Graeme Harper looking at the conditions for creative writing practices in 'On Creative Writing' (2010).



FIGURE 14: AN ECOLOGY OF WRITING

3.7 A RANGE OF RESPONSES

The experiments specifically constructed to allow a ‘supra-rational’ emphasis produced the following range of responses to writing:

- The first response might be not to write at all for numerous reasons: everything in the image, all in the chat, no relevance, a sense of shame, a block, a need for private space or an incubation period.
- The second main response was to write words down but to hide them and employ them as memos, notes to self, for the future, taken up in chat feedback or in performances.
- Then there were words integrated with drawing - in dialogue, cartoon, blurring with shape, space, colour, underlining concepts and emotions; words taken up in experimentation, as well as a variety of other expressive writings that were episodic, observational, poetic, recording insight. Although some of the latter were fed in (maps, recipes, haiku, slow writing or observational) many occurred as a spontaneous and non-mediated response to the theme and the drawing effects.
- There was also some revelatory writing that acted either as a conduit for insight after drawing or simply as a record of the insight that had occurred through drawing.

- Finally various participants declared an interest in pursuing expressive modes of writing and on the basis of experimental outputs, I believe they could do so in all kinds of interesting ways. The major obstruction would be the dearth of time to commit to another practice.

Ultimately, the contributions to writing practices in the thesis were offered as augmentation of what already exists rather than an alternative so I will finish with a map of design writing culture that places some of the experiment writing types in a larger perspective. This includes a proliferation of professional practice writings that merge with postgraduate design studio practices inside and outside institutions. Two reflections on these: firstly, many of the writings have emerged with or because of digital technology, which is surely a 'naissance' when things happen so fast they cannot be pinned down or established, and when writings tend to be both short in length and towards speech. Secondly, they tend to be in a multi-modal context. So, while neglecting the impact of the last ten years of the digital here, I can still point to a flux and output of experiments that appear complementary to 'digital' opportunities including writings. I suggest this direction pulls further away from the 'LH' of orthodox academic writings in an expanding sphere.

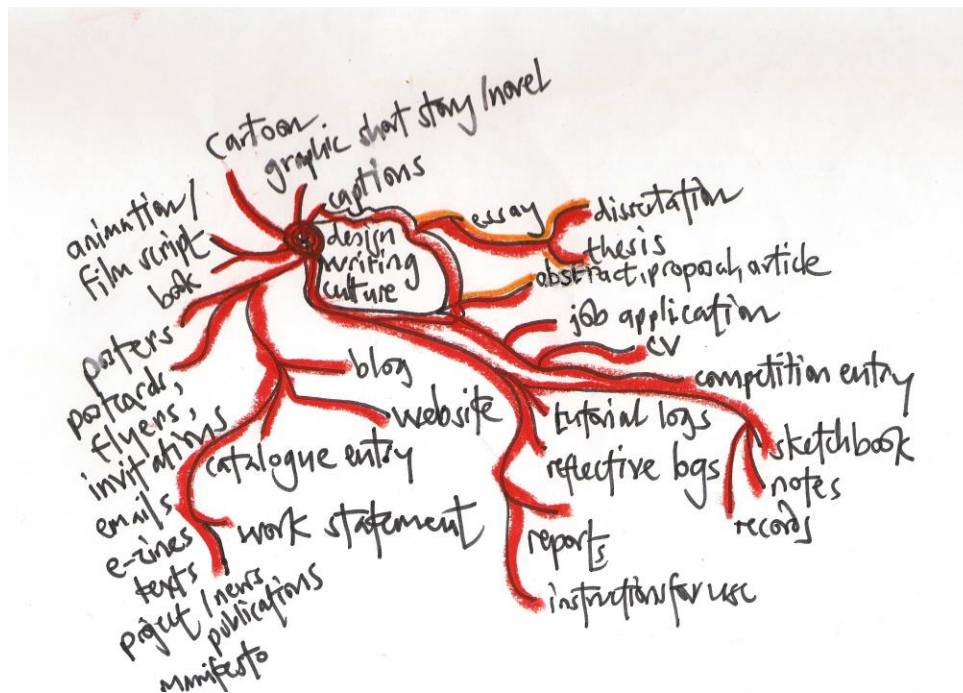


FIGURE 15: WRITING IN DESIGN

CONCLUSION

When comparing the characteristics of the experiment to those of RH/LH in *The Master and His Emissary*, some clear ‘misfits’ emerge: the publication speaks of invention and design as being LH, which I would see as an omission of the RH kinds of activity and thinking recorded in the experiments. There is a whole passage on the dominance of LH conceptual art that is derogatory and seems not to take account of the diversity of art and design in UK practices, inside and outside institutions. Further, there are passages on time that do not appear to coincide with experiment findings. What is more, there is a huge generalisation in Iain McGilchrist’s thesis that the western world is divided; that the LH sphere has dominated since the Enlightenment, and that this is to the detriment of the RH, and ultimately to us all.

At the end of his book, Iain McGilchrist suggests his RH and LH duality might just come down to a metaphoric split in the way we think and behave: this I find useful, but what is alarming is that I now seem to see the duality everywhere.

Finally, while there is significant correlation between the picture presented by Iain McGilchrist and the outcomes of drawing and the Rhythms of Practice summarised here, there is no neat fit – that would be glib and superficial. It would also be a triumph of ‘LH’ thinking, imposing a framework and professing a certainty when in fact, there are many questions left and reasons, maybe, to leave some unanswered.

Questions for discussion

1. Is the picture of the Rhythms of Practice derived from experiments recognisable to others in design practices? To research students and tutors?
2. Does the coincidence with the ‘RH’ and ‘LH’ make sense in some ways, or is it too much of an over-generalising framework? Does the polarisation emphasised by Iain McGilchrist resonate in other ways in the institution, or in society?
3. Does crossing from a practice such as drawing to one of writing take place seamlessly or is it a difficult crossing? Do the two spheres complement each other? Is collaboration between one who draws and one who writes a good route to take? Can drawing provide us with insights and raw material that words cannot?

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