

Introduction

Drawing, Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu, and Phenomenology are all open systems in that there is no singular perfect formula for any given technique. One may need to be precise in certain aspects of each practice, but it is not a binary of perfection or failure, anything may be adapted for the individual.

Initially the connections between drawn animation practice and BJJ practice were founded on the pedagogical similarities of both practices and processual learning. Through each of these processes one must accept an inability to do something well, to embrace the discomfort of being bad at something and do it and enjoy it anyway.

I am proposing to undertake a study of embodiment in my physical practice of Brazilian Jiu Jitsu through my creative practice of drawn animation. Using practices within animation as a reflexive mode of examining the actions undertaken within the practice of BJJ.

Expanded Drawing

Line may be considered as a record or trace of the journey of the eye over an object. A record of the action of eye and hand. Print acts as a record or trace of the action itself, a record of the body in motion.

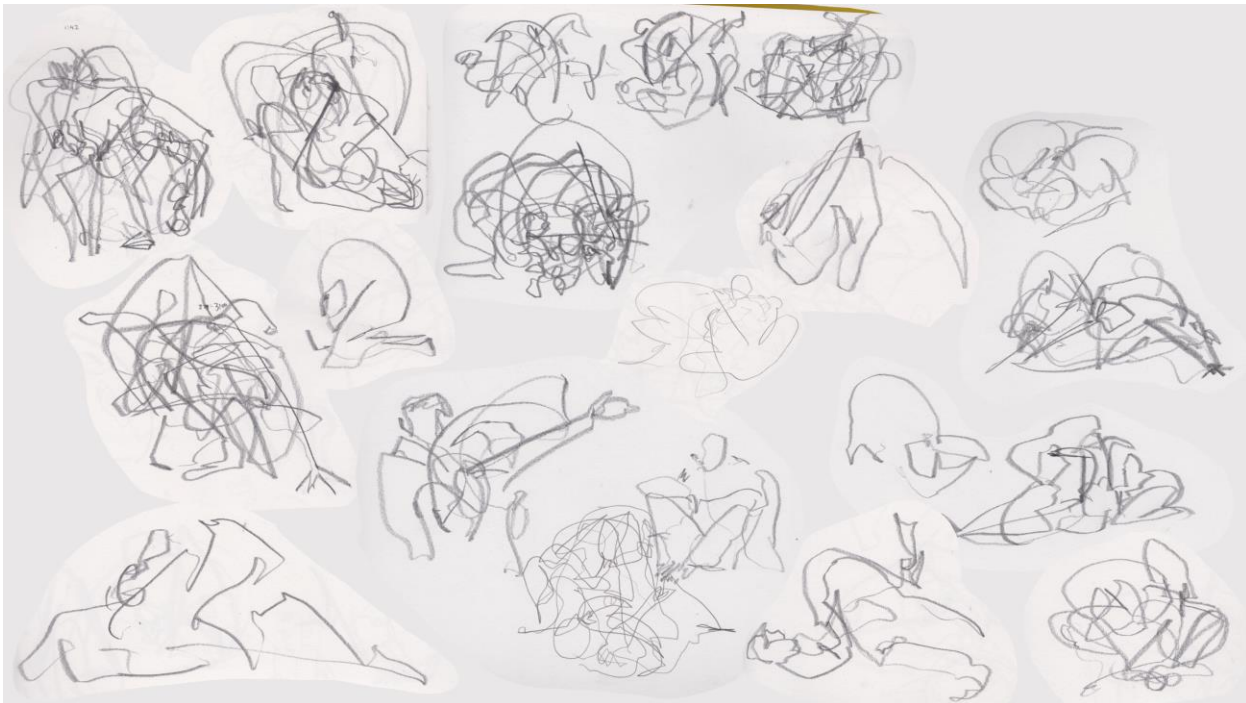


Fig. 1



Fig. 2

Drawing *of* the body (or bodies) in action through line creates a sense of time layering over itself, presenting echoes of present and past together in a single moment image. Drawing *by* the body through print captures a section of time or an event in an image as a single moment as if it had happened all at once, without knowing the movement that created the print it can be difficult to judge the sequence of events that created the image. The line drawings capture the body as an object, describing their experience through movement over time as they appeared to me, the artist/viewer. The print work captures the body as subject, recording the experience of a motion through contact, leaving an impression of the action.

Beyond the linear: mark making for expressivity and use of visual language. Marks on a page carry with them associative sensations or emotions. This is something that I first was introduced to in my life drawing classes as part of my undergraduate studies in Animation, this concept has become integral to how I think about and see the world. Again, the reasoning why a certain mark evokes a certain feeling may be bracketed off – it does not matter it just is, as given. This brings to mind the Bouba-Kiki effect which shows a general tendency towards non-arbitrary mental associations between certain sounds or elements of speech and visual shapes or patterns. This may be extrapolated that visual information in drawing carries with it

associations of not only sound but of concepts, feelings and sensations. Expressive mark making is now where I begin pedagogically with new drawing students regardless of their prior knowledge or level of experience.

Drawing may be used to express beyond the visual, to show visually that which is not experienced through primarily visual means.

To draw what is seen from within a position does not allow for a fruitful visual analysis of what that position is or what it is doing; the position and its effect are felt through both transitive and non-transitive bodily sensation, the memory of which can be used to better inform the drawing once one necessarily steps outside of one's self to see.



Fig. 3

Expanded Drawing towards Phenomenology

“Abstractness and simplicity are conditions for a certain ease in seeing effects” (Ihde, 68)

In his description of simple linear diagrams to illustrate multi-stable phenomena Don Ihde notes their sparseness compared to “fully etched representational line drawings by Da Vinci or Michelangelo,” noting that it is their very bareness that “is part of their secret – they are from the outset suggestive in their abstractness.” (1986, 68) Ihde acknowledges the complexity of the plenum present in the full reality

of visual phenomena and that the drawing is an abstraction or simplification which “allows for effects not easily noted in more filled-in configurations.” (68)

As I reflected on my own observational figurative drawings done from life on the mat asking myself in my notebook “can more abstracted be more instructive?”

This abstraction-suggestion is what makes drawings engaging, they are not final, there is space for the viewer to insert themselves and their experience allowing them to interpret what is being seen – people may more readily pair with an abstracted image as they find the human patterns for themselves, projecting their own body into the any-body of the drawing. Thus beginning a hermeneutic tunnel as my perceptions of reality are presented in a piece of drawing work, a new object to be perceived “as a spectacle which is sufficient unto itself” (Merleau-Ponty, 96) by another, this may continue on as they describe the work seen to a friend automatically including their interpretation of the work as it spoke to them, this in turn will be interpreted by that friend through their knowledge of their describing friend, of themselves and of the world etc. etc.

Drawing as Phenomenology

I will not be taking the whole world as my area of study but the bodily phenomena that comprise the world of Brazilian jiu jitsu, specifically looking at the human figure, its movement and experience within this practice through observational animated drawing.

I will be using drawing and animation as a means of “doing phenomenology” as Ihde states without which “it may be practically impossible to understand phenomenology” (14)

Observational drawing can be considered a method of phenomenological reduction, in that the subject (or model) of the drawing becomes the intended object I, the artist am not only perceiving the surface of the model but also the internal bodily presence of them through bodily pairing and analogous transfer.

“Familiarity and strangeness are here bound closely together” (Ihde, 68)

The intended object may be considered through a variety of foci, I may find infinite drawings, variations, or adumbrations of the same body or footage of body with different outcomes dependent on what I was “looking for” within the pose or sequence of poses comprising a movement or action. I do not need to

consider the biomechanical reason why a certain muscle is tensed in a certain pose, this is bracketed off as part of the Epoché, I simply see that it is tensed as given to me visually.

There is again a link between this bracketing off in the experience of BJJ practice and drawing practice naively following instinctual responses and reacting – I do not consider the full list of outcomes resulting from a grip made on the arm, I feel the action and must react just as with drawing.

Rather than describing what I am seeing through a piece of text I instead describe it with a mark on the page. I react, and through this reaction I render phenomenology and my experience visible.

What am I looking for? I am looking for myself “In phenomenology, the “I” appears by means of and through reflection upon the phenomena that in toto are the world.” (Ihde, 50-51) More specifically I am looking for myself, my body, in action, reflecting on the embodied action of BJJ through the action of drawing in animation.

Why draw to learn what is happening when you can never recreate reality as faithfully as it is in front of you, you cannot capture the detail that the camera can? Representation of what is seen through a visual experience as a person is markedly different than the representation seen by a camera. The camera must deal purely with the surface, it is a direct copy of detailed visual reality without any filtration, yet it remains incomplete or empty, the camera cannot see into or relate to the experience or feeling of the other body as it has no experience of its own to inform it. It is an unconscious eye, seeing without any meaning attached.

Representational Technology and Experience of Time

Representational technology can allow us to return to the moment perceived repeatedly, never fully but reasonably full enough to serve as a highly detailed memory aid. It can allow for a new view or zero point of perception, taking us outside of the usual point of view of visual experience from a window or “large hole at the level of the head” (Smith, 171). It can allow us to segment or fracture a motion into manageable series of singular moments that together make up the whole of a motion, thus deconstructing and reconstructing time.

Use of representational media is nothing new to the realm of martial arts. From Uyenishi’s *The Text-Book of Ju-Jutsu as Practiced in Japan* originally published in 1907, it contains sequential stills from live

action footage reproduced next to the text which serve to illustrate live demonstration of techniques, to Yves Klein's 1953 film documentation *Scènes de Judo*, to the extensive contemporary online library of instructional video content in all manner of martial arts. And much more eg. Almost every martial arts book contains photographic plates of techniques demonstrated, or artist Tony Mullins' instructive illustration series *Take Down Notes*, or in narrative media such as manga series *Teppu* by Moare Ohta.

When mediated by a screen, the experience of drawing from unmediated reality or direct experience may be used to inform drawing when working from reference footage on screen. This ties in with previous work with bodily pairing and ability to pair through the screen or mirror as part of the *In Practice(s)* group. One carries their experience with them wherever they go, the self cannot be separated from the events or perceptions that have formed it – the context of those events may change, the self's relationship to those events may change as the self is constantly being reformed and growing through process but prior experience does inform how we engage with present experience and into the future. The self's past is not fixed but it is always there. The memory of previous experience informs the approach to future experience.

Why moving-image or animation for phenomenology? The 4D nature of animation mirrors the 4D nature of being as there is an unfolding of a movement or experience over time. "Animations think especially hard about movement, time and, unsurprisingly, animation: what motivates something to move." (Cubitt, 103) Combined with the practice of the animateur, described by Voci as those "seek[ing] an alliance between the human body and the technological (analogue and digital) in order to perceive, re-imagine and *reconnect with* the world by creating a state of wonder in the everyday." This situates the practice of doing phenomenology through animation as part of post-digital practice as described by Hosea.

The animator presents a warped sense of time whereby a second is both very long and very short. Very short in the moment experienced but very long in the amount of time and labour required to create a second on screen. Animators are not alone in their malleable perception of time, this affects all people. The time warp of the flow state and the time warp of new heightened experience – the flying/floating moment of being hip tossed the for the first time or the slow-motion perception of a car crash.

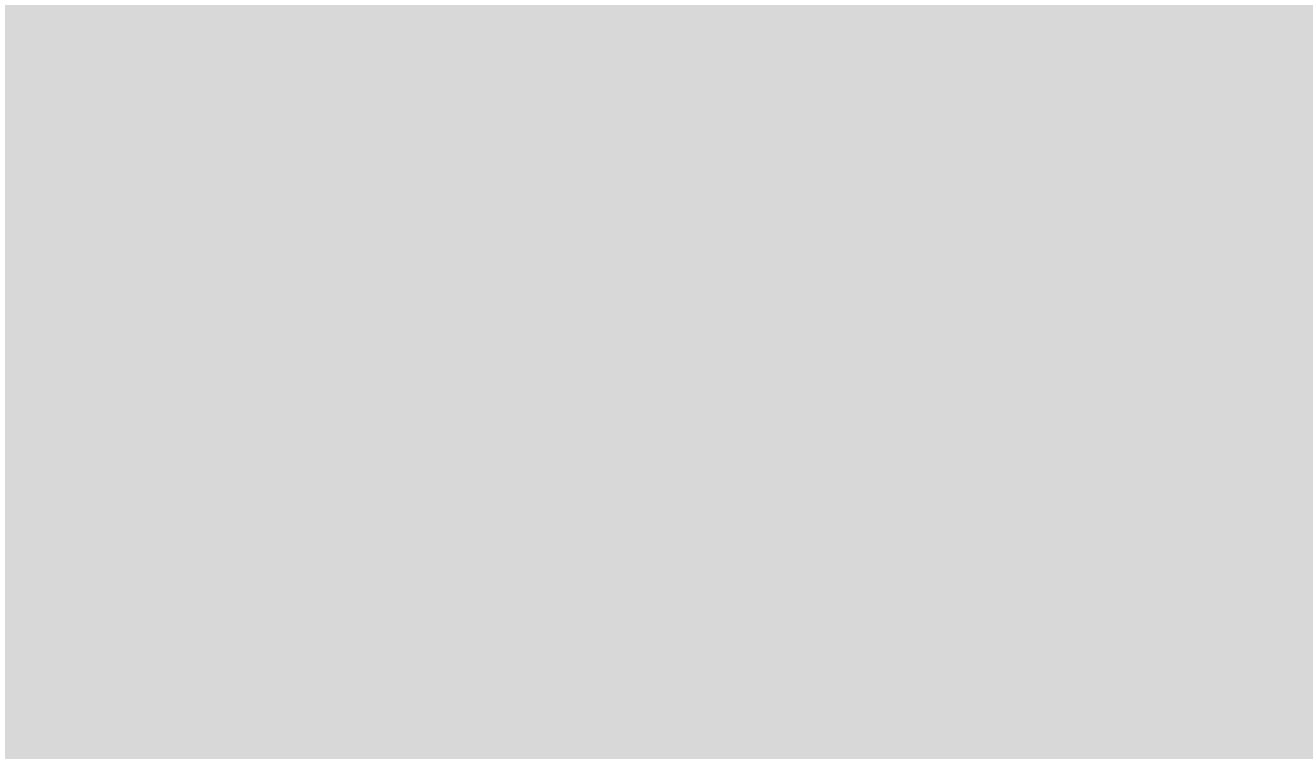
An animator in practice readily inhabits the specious present. However dubious the claims of James may be in that his theory may imply a perception of "non-existent things" (Smith, 95) as an animator

anticipating the end of an action it is often as if I can see, albeit only a very minute distance, into the future. This is informed by the process of having seen where the action came from. This effect is present in the animators' "seeing" through the mind's eye three frames previous and three frames ahead as well as literally in the onion-skinning feature of many animation softwares. Similarly in the practice of BJJ as a game, frequently likened to physical chess, it would be common for practitioners to be thinking several moves ahead and in response to their opponent's movements it may be as if you know what is about to happen.

Drawing + Time = Animation

A movement unfolds over time; by drawing that movement it becomes fixed in a single image or, a series of drawings of a movement broken into a sequence of single images and reconstructed to again form a movement over time.

[Reconstructed Time Animation Test \(https://youtu.be/xcTd9AO2IY4\)](https://youtu.be/xcTd9AO2IY4) Fig. 4



As I make a drawing, I am aware of its unfolding over time, when I return to the drawing I recall the experience of drawing, following the line(s) to trace back over the path my eye took in the creation of

that drawing. Its quality of marks tells me what I was seeing within the subject of the drawing – where there was weight, what motion preceded the falling into that pose etc. When another views that drawing, they may be able to follow the map of my eye’s journey, but they may not follow it as I would follow it, it takes their eye on a journey of its own. Additionally, one may further guide the audience by sharing the unfolding of a drawing over time through recording. This brings their eye precisely on the journey of that line as it was being made.

Technology can be used to engage with reality in a different way. Due to the experience of time, as well as the fullness of sensory perception it can be difficult to capture movement through drawing in the moment as the drawing itself takes time and by the time one has “completed” a drawing of an instant as part of a motion the subject of observation or what is being drawn has changed in the never-ending flux, additionally the bombardment of sensory data from full reality can make it difficult to filter out what is being looked for - the noema.

Animating the figure from reference allows engagement with a thing (or the body) in motion which Merleau-Ponty states “must be perceived in its temporal progression by embracing its particular rhythm” while this particular passage is in relation to a novel it may equally apply to the 4D artform as it more literally “leaves in the memory not a set of ideas but the emblem...of those ideas.” (101) and enables the artist to filter or reduce the information through drawing, to draw from memory of experience triggered by the footage as prompt as well as to gain new insight through re-viewing the action taken from a new perspective.

Animating the human form in action, in this case in the action of BJJ, sits into the legacy of dance animation. The capture of the practice with video may be experimented with to draw out new outcomes and additionally layered with the reduced drawn animation, abstracting the human form in order to better examine the movement it enacts, such as in the works of Erica Russell. Her animation has a particularly embodied quality in her avoidance of squash and stretch style traditional animation in favour of graphic abstractions that are particularly evocative of the earthed sense of the African dance forms she is describing. (Russell (Wells), 38) This contrasts to other production approaches in films such as Denis Poulin and Martine Époque’s *CODA* (2014) which utilises digital particle systems mapped onto motion-captured dancing figures giving a more ethereal weightless form of abstraction.

Quantitative results of the effects of representational technology use upon our perception generally are immaterial to my study. However interesting the questions raised by this consideration are, they lie beyond the remit of my proposed artistic research at this time.

Conclusion

The practice of animation, when considered in its expanded and eclectic experimental forms, may be shifted from its usual position of being a production method for traditionally narrative filmmaking and move into a realm of expressive cinematic art. The process itself becoming a mode of thought, where each frame contains something that is examined, reflected upon, and translated into an image the making of which enables the artist to find new information and understanding of the experience perceived and additionally instructs the audience, enabling them to see and share the perceived experience. Through this process animation becomes a means for phenomenological investigation.

List of Figures

Fig. 1: A selection of semi-blind, linear, observational drawings done of BJJ sparring practice at professionals' class at JSBJHQ, Parnell Street, Dublin, 17th September 2024.

Fig. 2: Three mono-prints made by performing a back breakfall and standup technique (left), a forward roll (right top), and a backward roll (right bottom) at QW005, IADT, 5th December 2024.

Fig. 3: Three documentation photographs with corresponding drawings of what is present in the visual field from certain BJJ positions [bow and arrow choke (left), armbar (right top), straight ankle lock (right bottom)] made at open mat at JSBJ Kylemore, Dublin, 28th December 2024.

Fig. 4: Video of test animation reconstructing time from life drawings of Fig. 1, made 25th November 2024.

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