

The Gentle Artist: Records of Experience
Collaborative Module Workshops Report

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Planning

I ran two workshops as part of my collaborative module, one introducing body-work and sensational awareness to animators and one introducing mark-making and drawing to BJJ practitioners. Both workshops were designed as a means of sharing my knowledge and experience from different practices which over time have come to inform one another. By presenting these alternate disciplines to workshop participants I hoped that they may find new skills and working methods that would similarly aid in their own practices.

I drew from my experiences as part of the *In Practice(s)* group, as a drawing practitioner, as well as my pedagogical approach to life drawing for animation.

I made ethical considerations of consent when working with each of these groups; ensuring they knew the purpose of my research, that they were comfortable with audio recording and photo documentation of each of the sessions, and that they had approved the transfer of copyright of what was discovered through these sessions for use in my reports and potentially as part of a soundtrack to my animation project, I also got clearance for their responses when used to be uploaded to illustro, IADT's research repository.

In the lead up to the workshops I had some anxieties that participants would not engage well with the subjects. Animators are often quite self-conscious, and I was concerned that they would not feel open to a looser abstract approach or that they wouldn't feel comfortable becoming so conscious of their bodies. I also had concerns that the BJJ participants would have difficulty with the drawing or that they wouldn't find use for the techniques or practices explored in the workshop.

Workshop Classes

Bodywork for Animation

This first workshop took place on 12/02/2025 at 14:00 in QW005. That morning both groups informed me of project meetings and flagged that they would each be missing portions of the workshop. In response I adapted the timing of activities to best suit the groups when they would be present. I ran-through the consent forms with the eight participants and commenced audio recording.

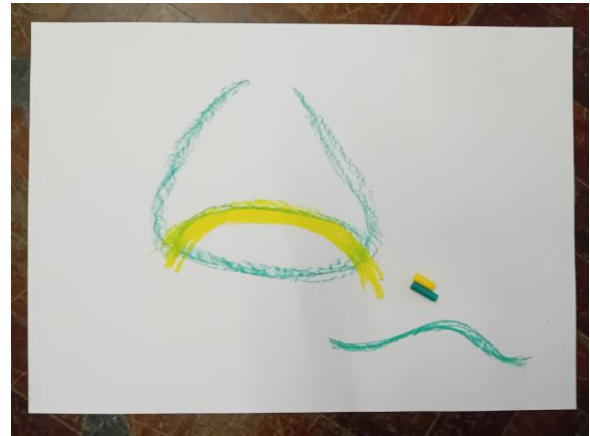
We began with a body-scan check-in, closing our eyes and drawing our attention inwards to our bodily sensations. As we moved upwards from the feet, continuing through the legs, the torso, and arms, and into the neck and head, I asked them to notice their feeling and if finding tension within the body to release it and relax, focussing in on their breath.

I began by guiding them through the speech and drama exercise of being a tree; this exercise fit the theme of the ecology projects with briefs asking to convey a sense of a more than human timescale and experience. Keeping our eyes closed we curled up as small as possible close to the ground, imagining being a seed and what it would feel like to be nestled in the earth. Gradually growing upwards, again I asked them to draw their consciousness inwards becoming aware of their feet rooted to the ground as they stretched up into the light, as we reached our branches upwards allowing our arms to sway in the breeze

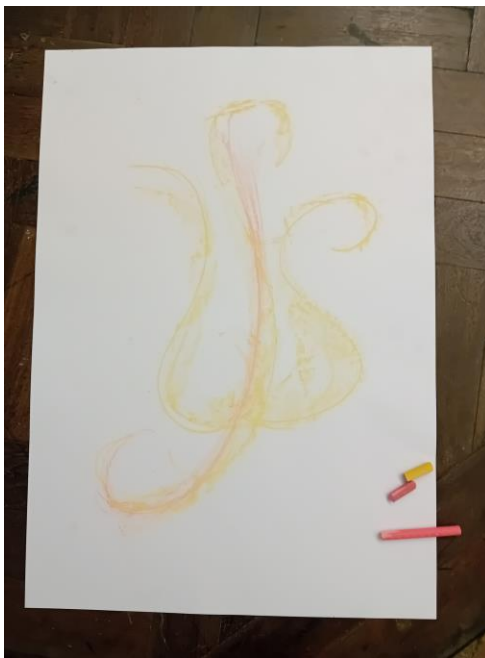
I again drew their attention back to their breath and to consider how might a tree breathe and what could that feel like.

These initial exercises primed the participants for finding and using their bodily awareness and through the meditative relaxation I hoped that they would be more open to the drawing activities to come.

I asked participants to again close their eyes as a method of both tuning into oneself and to negate feelings of self-consciousness that can occur by being observed. Participants spent a few minutes moving through different areas of the body to find a motion to begin repeating continuously for three minutes. As they repeated, I asked them to find what their body was telling them in this motion, was fatigue setting in from the repetition, and described how a motion through repetition may become part of the body or self. For the first drawing, I asked the participants to recall their chosen repeated movement and express this movement in an abstract drawing.



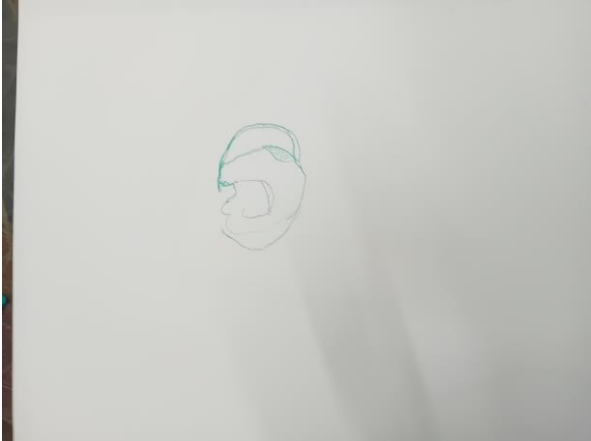
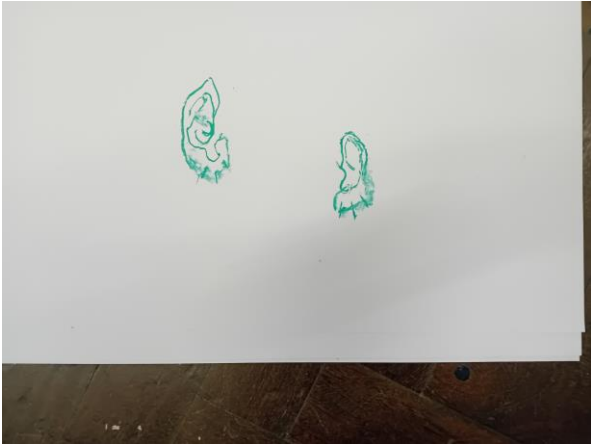
Figs. 01, 02, 03, 04.



Figs. 05, 06, 07, 08.

I was surprised at how well the students took to this exercise and did not revert to representation of the body and did fully abstract their motion or movement. Each participant then moved two drawings over to guess what motion this drawing was expressing. The results were surprisingly accurate, each participant was able to read a movement performed by the drawer but using a different part of the body, the anatomy didn't translate but the motion did. One participant related it to synaesthesia, a point that particularly resonated with me as I have previously described this interpretive practice as synaesthetic thinking.

Next participants were asked to do a blind contour drawing by touching their own ear, syncing the movements of their drawing hand to the movement and sensation of their touching hand. This differs from traditional blind drawing in that it asks the drawer to use non-visual sensory inputs in the creation of a drawing.



09,

10,

11,

12,

13,

14.

Figs.



Figs. 15, 16, 17.

The complex structure of the ear often presents difficulty for those drawing it. By removing the visual sensory inputs and finding different sensory data to work from participants were able to feel those complex forms and changes in plane and create highly accurate drawings of their ears.

We followed this with a chain drawing exercise. At the rear of the queue, I set up an object visible only to the last participant in the line for them to draw by looking while each person in front was drawing only by the sensations felt in their back. This activity is commonly used as a means of demonstrating the importance of clear communication, I encountered this as part of a micro-teaching session on my Teaching and Learning certificate in 2022 where it was done in pairs rather than a chain. For my purposes I was interested in how it would allow people to tune into different sensory information to be conveyed visually.



Figs. 18, 19, 20.

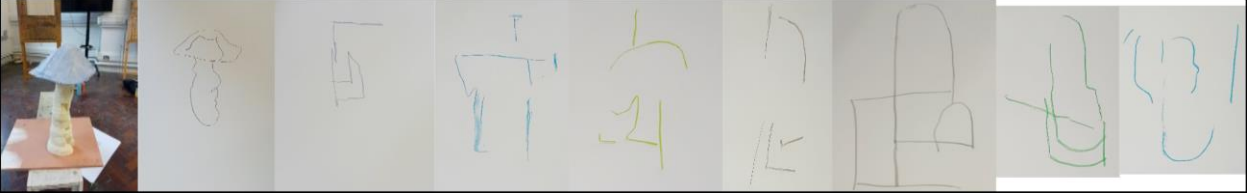


Fig. 21

What I found particularly interesting in the resulting images was that even when early in the chain a curve was translated to a sharp corner further down the chain it would return to a soft curve. It was striking that

despite not having seen that they were drawing a mushroom object further down the chain a symbolic mushroom is visible in the drawing as it becomes more abstract.

It was now approaching 15:00 when one of the groups left for their meeting. With the remaining participants we repeated this exercise. Having identified the heavy knitwear as a potential barrier to sensation students removed their jumpers to aid in the feeling of the drawing in their backs.



Figs. 22, 23



Fig. 24

As in the previous iteration as the image becomes abstracted through the passage from one person to another. Some information is still conveyed by the marks on the page such as the spikey jagged lines originating from the skeleton hand evokes the sharp bony feeling. Or how the number may be picked out within the images without the artist having seen the number.

During this exercise some vocalised an anxiety over not knowing what they were drawing or not knowing if they were getting it “right”, this is common in traditional drawing classes. These were more easily assuaged in this context when told that they were drawing not what it looked like but what it felt like.

At 15:30 and we took a break, and I used the opportunity to jot down some brief notes on how I felt the workshop was progressing. Upon the group’s return I allowed the students to discuss some aspects of their project and their findings from their meeting before we commenced with the final activity of the day.

The mirroring exercise was originally conceived as a pairing activity and again was something that I had been introduced to as part of the original *In Practice(s)* scores in July 2022. With a small group of four I

felt that it might be more cohesive to keep the group together as one unit, standing in a circle. It began simply by looking at one another. I knew that this could be uncomfortable and so reiterated the lack of judgement, advocating for a neutral observational mode. As they got used to the sensation of looking and being looked at, I asked them to gradually begin copying one another, to mimic the unconscious actions that they observed others taking. I reassured them that laughter is acceptable, we did not need to take this activity too seriously it is inherently playful. Gradually they could introduce intentional conscious actions or movements generating a feedback loop of activity where participants would not be sure of a specific action's origin. Over a few minutes the activity drew to a natural conclusion. We discussed what that experience had been like. They acknowledged that drawing out your unconscious actions can be awkward but agreed that this practice could benefit building of empathy as through copying the movements of another they could feel within their own body what the other body was doing. This could be applied to their own animation practices such as in the drawing of animals, not only copying humans but other creatures to help understand their being.

Introduction to Drawing for BJJ

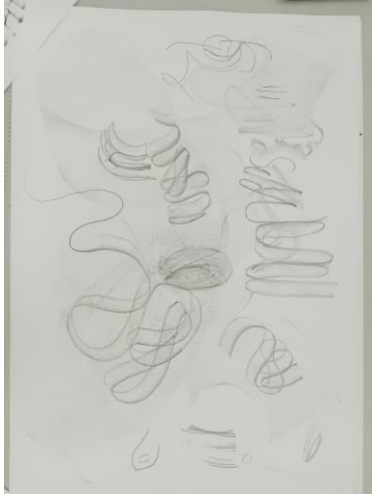
This second workshop took place on 13/02/2025 at JSBJJ HQ, Parnell Street beginning at 13:20. Before beginning one workshop participant showed interest in one of the example images, his inability to read the image was interesting as later in the workshop he expressed a dissatisfaction with his own drawing for similar reasons.

We again began with a run-through of the consent form and its purposes and commenced audio recording.

This workshop was in more familiar territory for me as I ran it as I would any introductory life drawing session, however, this was different as usually I work with people who are already practiced at drawing, but this group of four had varying levels of experience in this area.

Our first exercise was in drawing circles and arcing lines with various parts of the hand/arm, beginning with the fingertips I asked them to be aware of the sensations or quality of feeling this presented. We then moved up into the wrist, again being aware of how this felt and comparing it to the fingertips. We repeated this process up into the elbow and again into the shoulder. When asked how each of these compared the fingertips drawing gave a stronger sense of control and familiarity while as we moved up the joints the marks felt looser and even verged on out of control.

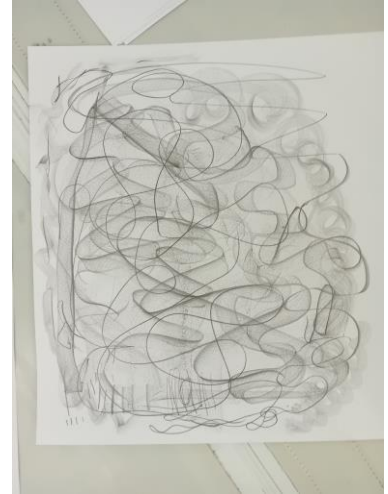
In the mark-making exercise participants were invited to create as many varied marks as possible with their piece of graphite, with guidance that unexpected marks may arise from holding their medium in different ways and by altering the pressure exerted. We looked at each other's work to see if they would identify any feelings, sensations, or meaning in the marks presented.



Figs

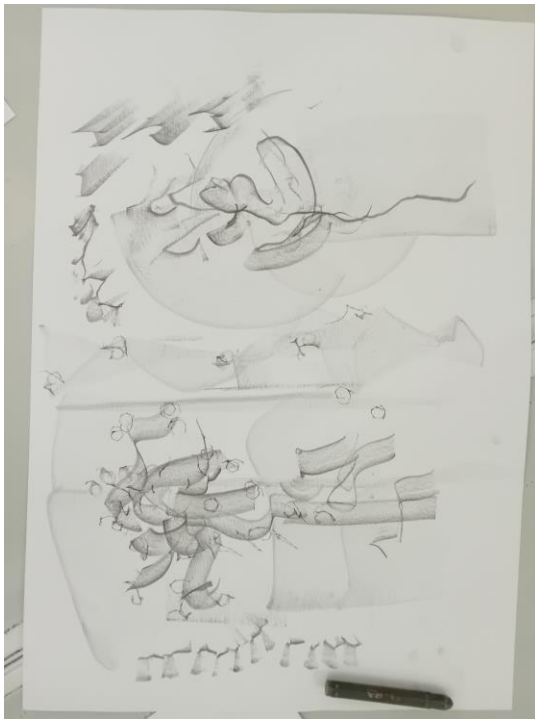


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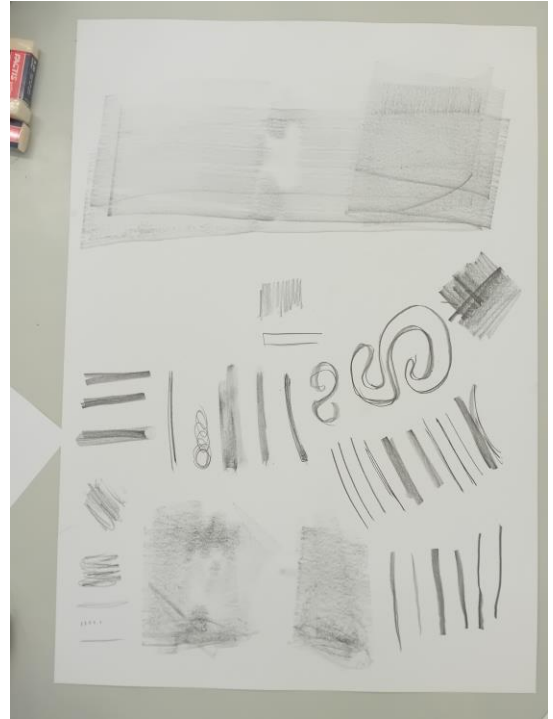


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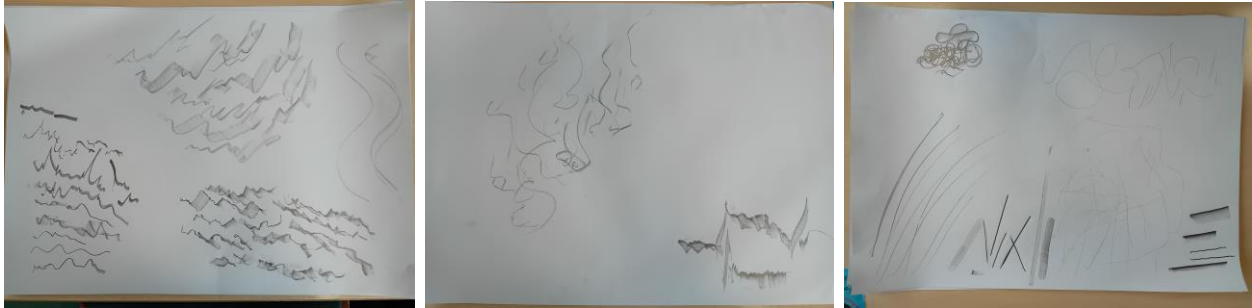


Figs. 28, 29.

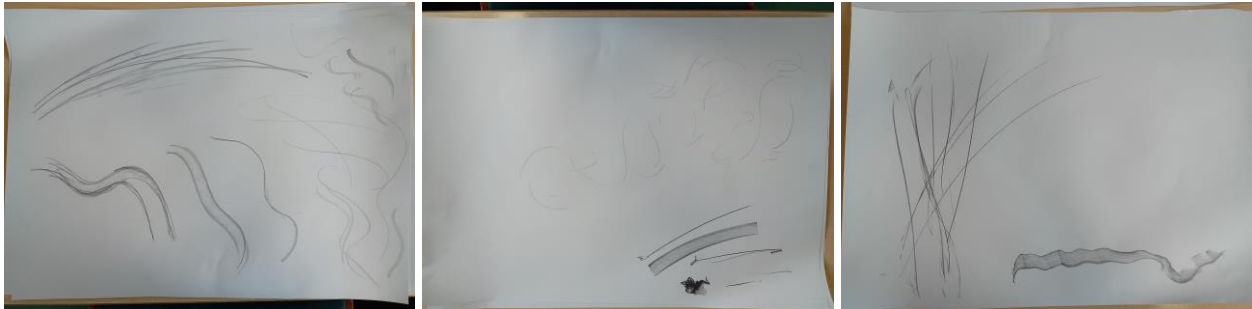


Having identified that marks may be considered as an alphabet of expression conveying certain feeling or information, I now asked participants to make marks responding to specific prompts. Fast/Slow, Loose/Tense, Painful/Joyful.

Again, participants were able to identify some of the prompts through the marks made by the others. They collectively found that Fast/Slow lines were easiest to identify and that there was a significant overlap in the expressions of Tension and Pain, perhaps not necessarily because of the marks made being undifferentiated but that tension and pain are sensationally linked or associative.



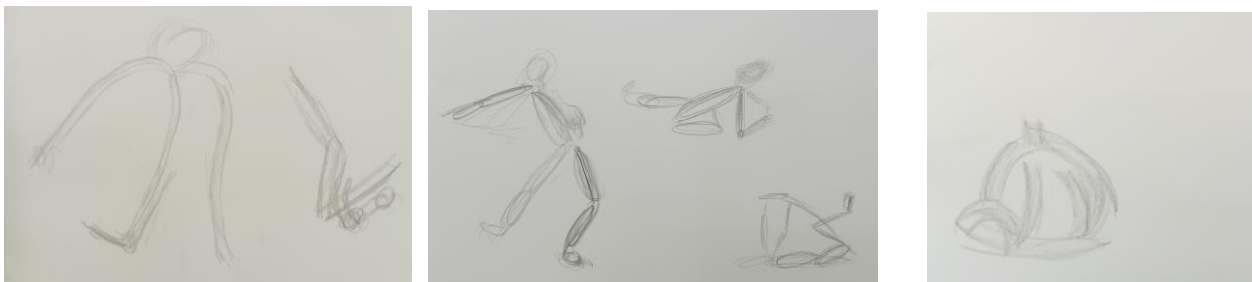
Figs. 30, 31, 32.



Figs. 33, 34, 35.

At this point I brought attention to the examples of life drawing from animation, asking what information was presented about the poses in these drawings? And how was the mark making conveying that information? I introduced the concept of the line of action and related it to how it could be useful in BJJ to identify line of action when a technique is being demonstrated. I also noted how much can be left out of a drawing to further accentuate the meaning within the marks by contrasting not only quality of the marks themselves but additionally their presence or absence.

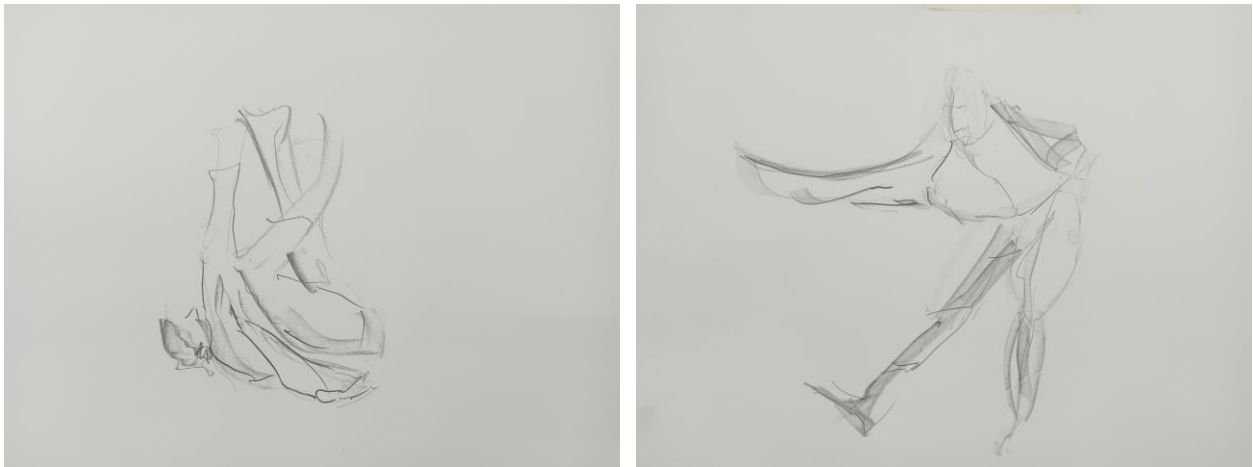
I had initially planned for volunteers to demonstrate some techniques that we could draw from sequentially however, I was unable to secure volunteers for this activity, so I instead modelled for the participants, using the kimono as a prop to demonstrate some of the visual cues we had looked at previously.



Figs. 36, 37, 38.



Fig. 39.



Figs. 40, 41.

The resulting observational drawings exceeded my expectations and had more movement and expression than anticipated. Participants could clearly see the actions present in each other's drawings and one found the different viewpoint presented in one pose to be particularly of interest in how they had captured the foreshortening. One of the drawings that I considered most expressive of the forces within the pose (far right image Fig. 39) was done by a participant who did not share that view of their own work. It was interesting that they were clearly able to see these forces and represent them visually in a drawing yet were unable to read that same seeing within the drawing itself.



Fig. 42.

Workshops Feedback and Reflection

I've noticed a common thread through these workshops with my own creative practice and proposed activities of an innate desire to share experience. My original motivation was centred around how my experiences could benefit others in their own practices. On a metaphorical level each of these groups presented two different aspects of my personal practices externalised and discrete. It was of immense value to find that the blending or cross-application of these practices was not unique to me.

There is more to be explored with bringing martial artists and visual artists together, both groups would have benefitted from more time in the sessions allowing for potentially deeper engagement with the activities. Neither group got the opportunity to engage with sequential drawings due to time constraints. Through these workshops I acted as a ferry bringing one practice area to another and I would be eager to join the groups to find what kind of bridging would happen as they meet collectively.

These workshops informed how I will approach my own drawing for animation in my future project work. It allowed me to see more fully how instructive the abstract can be, it no longer is a merely intuitive supposition but a demonstrable occurrence and has given me confidence to lean into this in my animation.

Through my post workshop surveys I found that animators prior to participating in the workshop considered drawing to be an entirely observational visual practice, the BJJ practitioner stated that had only prior experience with abstract drawing, so the observational drawing was entirely new for them. Through the participation in these workshops animators reported feeling a new freedom in what their drawing practice could be, that it expanded their view of drawing beyond the visual and into a multi-sensory mode of expression. They found a deeper connection between movement, experience, and art. One noted an intensification of sensation through by having their eyes closed in the repeated motion exercise, this exaggeration of feeling they found was much stronger than had they been looking at another performing the same action and that this new awareness could be channelled into the drawing. Likewise, the BJJ participant identified how they could construct a drawing with feeling put into each line or mark. All participants who responded expressed an interest in continuing with the practices encountered in these workshops and in doing additional related workshops in future, additionally reporting a desire for more time with each of these practices which I share.

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