

# See See See- Complimentarity, Continuity and Complicity

**I** The theory of critical complimentarity[1] states that an art object exists in any number of possible interpretations until it is observed. That is to say that any interpretation of an art object is subject to the viewer who is observing it at that given point in time. This is not to say that there are no limits to the possible interpenetrations of an artwork, but that there is a deep complexity to each possible iteration in the mind of the observer. There is of course a logic to each interpretation, but when properly conceived, logic is only, but a vital moment in the process of thought. *moment in the process of thought.*

So how does this logic work? This logic is that of a *gamea gamea* . The observer is aware of their role in this game and so enters into contract with the art object which creates an illusion, thus opening up the pictorial field to the possibility of imaginative complication and to the consequent extension of its area of reference, a basic principal of pictorial representation.

In the drawing 'Sing yourself to where the singing comes from', the observer is faced with a number of illusory devices. The game here is of multiple layers and as each layer is peeled back, each position of observation is the position from which things can change. This drawing becomes the occasion for some critical and self-critical exchange between work and spectator. The illusion evolves and the interpretation expands.

“... the form of “seeing” involved in responding to illusion-bearing surfaces is a socially significant activity; an activity, that is to say, that involves co-operation, exchange, self-criticism, and learning, and that goes to compose a culture of ideological resistance”[2]

**II** For most artists, drawing seems to have been on the periphery of the contemporary debate surrounding picture making – yet drawing is a fundamental part of all picture making. In formal terms and most importantly in the active process of making, drawing has a unique position. So while drawing seems to have slipped under the radar of critical debate, is requisite to all arguments surrounding picture making and therefore is a worrying omission.

There are any number of practical reasons for artists to continue to make drawings, but critically drawings still perform an edifying function. Not least because drawing embodies the process of art making: a “creative summary” of the whole process. Drawing is preparatory yet finite, an ongoing dialectic and a constant processing of thesis/antithesis into synthesis. It is in Hegelian terms “the struggle itself”, it is “fire and water”.

For observers of 'Sing yourself to where the singing comes from', the drawing allow space for disparities in their account to arise in *ex post factox post fact* interpretations of what is seen, not the fundamental visual data. Seeing is not merely *seeing as*.seeing as.

### III

It is important to stress the significance of the continuation of the substantial tradition of drawing as practice. Our imaginative perception – that specialized mode of cognitive behaviour – which attends to these illusory forces of drawing *drawingdra* are reliant on an understanding of “process”. And it is here we see that drawings still perform an edifying function. Drawing is not to be reduced to mere craft or decoration, but has a social function, the illusion-bearing surface initiates inquiry and therefore learning on the part of the observer: we call these moments "relations".

It is in these relations – the talkative and the social – that we negate the end-game idealism that picture making only exists for sentimental or commercial reasons. 'Sing yourself to where the singing comes from' counteracts these notions, existing in part as a collection of off-cuts, themselves remnants of the process of felting, whose recycling transforms them from detritus to ready-made. The focus on process and making and this reproduction of the productive forces in each physical incarnation of the work, initiates a new dialectic with each observation, a new complimentary relationship ad infinitum.

[1] *Treatise On Critical Complimentarity* 'Treatise on Critical Complimentarity', Other Collective, London 2009

[2] Charles Harrison, 'Conceptual Art and Painting' *Conceptual Art and Painting*, p.173,

It is worth noting Harrison's footnote here. It reads: “To be specific: a culture – or rather cultural formation – that can resist instrumentation and pacification and co-option to the interests of end-of-history capitalism, and that is therefore inherently worth pursuing.”