Emma Cocker is a writer and Senior Lecturer in Fine Art at Nottingham Trent University. Recent essays include 'Not Yet There: Endless Searches and Irresolvable Quests', in Telling Stories: Theories and Criticism/ Cinematic Essay/Objects and Narrative (2009); 'Performing Stillness: Community in Waiting', in Stillness in a Mobile World (2011) and 'Over and Over Again', in Failure (2010).

Drawing is often conceived as an activity that is drawn, taking place after the imitable fact, following attentively as an echo of that which it attempts to describe. However, there is another drawing that emerges in the absence of any antecedent stimulus or provocation; which does not follow, but is initiated instead in the hope of manifest that which could not have been conceived of at the outset nor planned for in advance.\(^1\) In doing and being so, this drawing draws rather than is drawn. It no longer draws on - by making a demand on - the observable world nor on the powers of the imaginary, but simply attempts to bring forth, make appear. Striving to be more than an additive project (a drawing of, drawing and, drawing with), drawing performs an abstracted retreat back into itself; it begins firstly by being only. This is not about defining itself as autonomous activity, or establishing the limits of its own specificity. Rather, in withdrawing from the pressures of representing something else, drawing attempts to contemplate the terms of its own coming into being, performed as the infinitely reflexive loop of drawing drawing itself drawing. Drawing is turned back against itself to regard the conditions of its own making, this being analogous to thinking thinking about thinking - a Foucaultian fold.\(^2\) No longer concerned with giving material representation to what has been already conceptualised or is known to exist, the (oblique) aim of such a practice might be to produce germinal conditions wherein something unexpected or unanticipated might arise. It sets something up in order for something else to happen. This is not to conceive of drawing as a preliminary or preparatory sketch that - like the hypothesis - creates the premise for something else to follow or flesh out, but rather as the very site wherein something unknown or unplanned for might occur. It is in this sense that such a practice might be prefixed by the term 'hyper', since its investment is not in the articulation of what is, but in anticipation of what might be over, above and beyond the terms of the existing situation - the potential of what might yet be.

To become more than, drawing must do more than simply being more; the task of exceeding the terms of what is already known or normative must involve an attempt to effect a breach or break. This contrasts perhaps to the intentions of an agonistic form of hyper-production that strives to be always in excess of. The attempt to be more than is always in danger of becoming more normative, of creating only more of the same: where what is conceived as extraordinary turns out to be no more than extra ordinary. Resisting a progressive model of development - the regime of onwards and upwards, of more is better - an attempt is made to exceed expectations by doing or being less, by lacking a sense of deliberate purpose. Here, the process of drawing strives towards stripping things away or paring them down in order to make manifest a gap or space, becoming creatively passive - a touch purposeless or empty at times - so as to remain receptive to possibilities that cannot yet be comprehended or controlled. In these terms, a drawing does not so much imitate nor invent, as invite or call for, coax. What is beyond is invited rather than wilfully reached towards or grasped. Each line is performed as an unlearning, an unknowing, an unmeaning, the ritual reversal of habitual ways of thinking, the gesture of (making a) clearing. Here, clearing does not produce clarity, but simply gives permission for another kind of thinking and knowing without prescribing what is allowed: it simply makes possible.\(^3\)

Refusing to be planned for or prepared in advance, this specific form of drawing resists the pressures of premeditation to become meditative, where it is activated as a live and reflective thinking process taking place only in the present moment. Drawing: the hesitant testimony of a zigzagging line breaking onto the blank page, of a body scoring a path through space, of a life marking time. The moving body performs the drawing in time and space beyond the realm of two dimensions, carving invisible lines across the ground of more expansive terrains. Liberated
from the habitual expectations of both representation and premeditation, the line wanders. Concerned only with the present time of its unfolding existence and the future-possible moment of an encounter with something unknown, drawing becomes restless. It stirs, uneasy. In these terms, Hyperdrawing is conceived as a specific species of hyperactivity — distracted, procrastinating, unwilling to settle, prone to stray. Its restlessness no longer describes only the unfettered meanderings of a nomadic line moving ever forward, but rather a ricochet between various points or positions, an endless performance, oscillating back and forth, to and fro. Unable to identify or name the telos of its endeavour, this is drawing as a ceaselessly backtracking and agitated practice. A restless form of drawing — of hyper-drawing — evolves then, determined not to fall too quickly into form or the pattern of set ways; its attention directed instead towards keeping things open and mutable.

However, this restless — even improvisatory — line should not be confused with a form of automatic drawing, intent on accessing the hidden recesses of the subconscious imaginary or of channelling the secrets of some mystical beyond. Instead, the encounter with something unknown or unexpected is conceived as being within and produced by the event of the drawing itself. Here, what is unknown does not belong to some other place — a distant elsewhere or outside — to which the process of drawing affords temporary access. In contrast, it describes the experience of something unknown produced at the site of and through the process of drawing, materially arising unannounced as if from nowhere, from nothing. These are drawings without any definitive sense of destination or outcome: teleological expectation is wilfully thwarted, stalled. Such a practice is no longer bound to the description of an observed event now already past nor is it concerned with realising a future image that exists — notionally at least — as a mental sketch or projection needing only to be fleshed out. Rather, this is a mode of drawing that attends to nothing more than what is present, giving form only to that which emerges synchronous — contemporaneous — to the very act of its own coming into being. The act of drawing and what is drawn thus remain contingent upon the still uncertain terms of one another.

Certainly, it could be argued that all drawing is somewhat contingent, subject to the influence and affect of innumerable factors that cannot always be known in advance. However, Hyperdrawing makes this contingency central, the subject of the drawing itself. It is a form of drawing which makes visible the event of negotiating the terms of its own emergence, attempting to articulate the unfolding phenomenon encountered at the very site of drawing itself. Drawing is the optimal means through which to communicate the nature of the observable — if somewhat intangible — phenomenon of drawing whilst demonstrating fidelity to its terms. Hyperdrawing, in this sense, emerges simultaneously to what it attempts to draw, where what is drawn could not have existed prior to the event of the drawing. Though bound to and by one another, the relationship between the act of drawing and what is drawn is not incorruptible, monogamic; but rather it remains open to the influence of other affections, unforeseen pressures. The drawing's contingency makes it inherently porous, unprotected to conditions that cannot always be identified at its inception but which will become revealed in time as events unfold. Drawing draws these indiscernible unknowns — bruise-like — to the surface, disclosing like the promissory revelation that which was already there but had hitherto remained unseen, only ever possible.

It could be tempting to view this form of unfolding drawing as one that somehow takes care of itself, which once set in motion is capable of sustaining a trajectory by its own momentum. Not so, for Hyperdrawing is not to be undertaken passively nor without due care, but rather requires constant and continual attention, a certain discipline. To begin a drawing in the absence of the knowledge of what it will become does not involve the artist giving overall responsibility or authorship to unknown forces, of relinquishing their agency or intentionality in the production of the work. Nor is the Hyperdrawing a doodle where a wayward line plots its own course guided only lightly by the blind hand floating the tide swell of drifting thought. Instead, the artist must consciously adopt a medial position, where they become responsible for actively maintaining the conditions that will keep the drawing process mobile, dynamic, on a roll. In this sense, responsibility does not involve taking control but in knowing how best to respond. Here, the artist neither pushes nor pulls the direction of the line, but instead attempts to create the framework wherein the drawing might remain aleatory, playfully open to the potentiality of different and competing forces. Care must be taken to prevent the drawing from simply falling out of control or else falling flat, lethargic.
Counter-intuitively, perhaps, it is often through the introduction of situational limits or constraints that the artist keeps the flight of the drawing buoyant, stops it from becoming stuck or bored. The conceptualisation of a beyond or indeed of something otherwise is dependent upon the presence of limits. To think beyond is to presuppose a line. Within Hyperdrawing practice, limits are thus considered as obstacles or frustrations whose logic becomes worked until they begin to yield, at the same time as functioning as necessary conditions that allow for the possibility of an alternative, of something in excess of or beyond the parameters of what is taken as given. Limits not only establish the terms of a given situation; since, equally, they set up conditions wherein it becomes possible — indeed necessary — to conceive of something existing beyond their bounds. A line has to be drawn in order to initiate the imagining of what might exist beyond it. For the restless line, limits function as the leverage against which to work, for unimpeded restlessness soon dissipates, its energy exhausted. The tighter the limit the more wily or deviate its means of working a way around. Within Hyperdrawing practice, limits activate the process of looking for and producing loopholes, for new lines of flight more often occur only when the situation demands. Limits are only accepted if they offer provocation, reworked once they fail to create tension or have become dull. Consider the traceur who in refusing to stay within the limits of what is considered normative, welcomes the obstacle that forces an arabesque about-turn mid-flight, the vertiginous somersault of a flow folded back over into eloquent coils or perilous free-fall. Here, to actively navigate the limit differently to convention or law necessitates the simultaneous conception of other — less acquiescent — ways of walking the line.

Within Hyperdrawing practice then, the artist might make a drawing by establishing its limits and restrictions, rather than by directly controlling the line. Or else, the drawn line cannot be conceived independently of the critical subject drawing, but is thought synonymous with it. Each becomes a conduit for the other. Both are thus subjected to the same limits. For the line of the drawing, as for the life of the artist, a limit or constraint might be critically activated as a site of negotiation, for restless working with and through. Within each process, different pressures and commitments compete for attention as one force gives way to allow the emergence of another, as the rule created in order for something to begin is superseded by another that allows it to continue to develop. An outcome can only ever be predicted and can easily turn. The impetus or force that initiates a process has the capacity to destroy it also; production can become entropic in the absence of the decision that determines when to stop or change tack. The artist’s role then is to navigate a course of action between these different and competing forces of production, by intuiting when to yield to rule or whim, and when to reassert control. Like a sailing boat unanchored, without the presence of external forces, the momentum of the drawing would lose pace, its temporal process stilled towards object-hood; becoming noun, no longer verb. As the skipper, the artist attempts to steer the drawing into waters and winds most conducive to sustaining the trajectory of its flow. Learning to sail is a process of facilitation or mediation that attempts to make good the turbulence created by the pull of the water and the push of the wind. Between being effortful and effortless — a process of drawing evolves where the effects of individual forces can no longer be discerned nor differentiated from one another, but instead act in dialogue, working together. Divergent rhythms merge in symphonic flow, becoming one. Somewhere between control and letting go, somewhere between affecting and being affected — the event of sailing, of drawing and of being.

To the act of sailing, the water and the wind create the contingent conditions that ensure that the process of steering the boat can never be truly anticipated in advance of it leaving port. The skipper must remain attentive and in readiness for all eventualities and variables, prepared for the unexpected. To be prepared is to anticipate the unforeseen future. Unknown situations, however, demand a speculative approach, for you can never be wholly sure what to expect, what skills will be required. For the skipper, the unknown or unexpected is that which threatens to swerve the boat off course; it needs to be harnessed, its risk curtailed. Within the terms of Hyperdrawing, however, the threat of the unexpected is actively sought and courted, prepared for — or anticipated — in more affirmative terms. It is a practice that sets out in search of the capricious wind or current that will send it sideways, disturb its even keel, for it is in such moments of crisis that new tactics often emerge. New forms of operating are provoked into being through the encounter with a situation unlike what has come before. Hyperdrawing thus emerges as a contingent form of working knowledge, which is not based on knowing how to deal with a situation in advance, where
the future is predicted and prepared for. Instead, it is a form of knowledge born of the moment, from having confidence. Confidence is the knowledge that the right decision will be made when required, it involves trusting that a response will be performed appropriately and with skill at the propitious time. This is not about placing faith in a form of tacit knowledge, however; which describes an already embodied know-how developed intuitively through repeated practice, ingrained into the body through past experience. Instead, what is activated is a model of known-not knowledge capable of working within situations that remain indeterminate or are newly encountered, not already known. Or rather it is a form of knowledge that is activated or emerges simultaneous to the situation it attempts to comprehend, and that alone is adequate to the task of comprehending that situation. This is a way of knowing the world that cannot be transferred or banked, nor accumulated into the knowledge of the encyclopedia. Drawing’s revelations refuse to be translated; and instead remain stubbornly situational, peculiar to the terms of a specific context, always in flux.

It is in these terms that Hyperdrawing might be considered a form of productive knowledge – or techné. Here, techné is not used in its habitual sense, where it is taken to simply mean the skilful art of making and doing, the practical knowledge or technical facility of craftsmanship. Making a return to how the term was used within Ancient Greek culture, techné might be re-conceived as a disruptive – even subversive – species of tactical knowledge. Techné is an insurgent form of knowing which has power to, not power over; it does not attempt to overpower so much as undertake, intervene. It is a way of operating in the world that is capable of responding to situations which are contingent, shifting or unpredictable, in order to effect a change of balance or power: steering the direction of events through wily – even somewhat deviant – means rather than through force. Its knowledge emerges through the navigation of limits, brought into play as and when required, called upon. Techné devises new ways of operating in situations when habitual forms of knowledge no longer suffice. Its interventions and inventions appear pitched against the logic of received wisdoms and hegemonic lines of powers in an attempt to produce moments of porosity or escape. Conceived as a form of techné, Hyperdrawing attempts the transformation of what is into what is possible, by navigating the limits of its own production until they begin to yield, becoming porous. This is not performed through blunt refusal nor through direct force, but rather by attending to the tension of every line, staying vigilant to the fact that any limit is only as strong as its weakest point; it is already full of holes. Techné is thus a practice of mindfulness, which – against the reactions of impulsive habit – holds back, bides it time. It is the art of knowing-when, of attempting to catch the limit off guard.

Techné is a form of knowledge associated with an attendant form of cunning intelligence (métis) and a mode of time characterised by opportunism, the ‘right time’ (kairos). Writing on the specific subject of métis, Marcel Detienne and Jean-Pierre Vernant describe it as:

[A] type of intelligence and of thought, a way of knowing; it implies a complex but very coherent body of mental attitudes and intellectual behaviour which combine flair, wisdom, forethought, subtlety of mind, deception, resourcefulness, vigilance, opportunism… It is applied to situations which are transient, shifting, disconcerting, and ambiguous, situations which do not lend themselves to precise measurement, exact calculation or rigorous logic.5

Harnessing the properties of dexterity, sureness of eye and sharp-wittedness, métis ‘attempts to reach its desired goal by feeling its way and guessing’; it is a type of cognition which is alien to truth and quite separate from episteme, knowledge.6 Refusing the limitations of seeing things only in black and white, métis emerges within Detienne and Vernant’s writing as a shimmering iridescence like a dappled fawn; a weapon’s glint; a mottled snake – wriggling; a swarm of bees; turning fish – refracting light; a fox’s mind; the many-coloured sheen of liver’s skin, a magician’s illusion.7 In their terms, métis is a form of intelligence or judgement supple enough to work within unstable and shifting conditions; it is capable of seizing the opportunities made momentarily visible as the prevailing logic within a given structure or system yields. It is an art like catching the wind or turn of the tide. It is perhaps no surprise then that the motif of sailing figures highly within their descriptions of métis, the image of a helmsman steering a boat against the turbulent forces of weather and water. And here, too, might the figure of the artist be drawn, sailing a drawing, or as a subject becoming.

In mythical terms, tyché (chance) is goddess of the sea and sister of métis, symbolic of all that is mercurial and ever changing. For scholars of ancient rhetoric, tyché describes the field of indeterminacy which techné, in turn, attempts to exploit, as sailing works with as much as against
the contingencies of wind and wave.⁸ The activation of technē is thus somewhat contingent upon the presence of chance forces; it is a form of knowledge that emerges through the navigation of situations that are unpredictable or precarious, that remains susceptible to unexpected and incalculable change. Detienne and Vernant argue that:

just as the human art of foresight develops against the background of a future that is opaque and unpredictable, the art of the helmsman can only be exercised within the framework of the uncertainty and instability of the sea. The play of the tiller cannot be disassociated from the movement of the waves. Tyché brings the indiscernible future within the bounds of possibility.⁹

Chance always brings with it the promise of the unknown, of possibilities beyond that which can be predicted in advance. In one sense, it might be possible to conceive of chance as that which introduces something unaccountable or random into the terms of the situation, contrary to logical reason, paralogos. Here, chance could be taken as an anomalous event which already carries or harbours within it that which is unknown or unforeseen. Alternatively, chance might describe an unexpected interruption or breach, wherein logical reason is momentarily stalled, sent sideways. In these terms, chance does not so much bring about something new as operate as a temporary glitch in the smooth flow of habitual events, where the challenge becomes one of turning it towards opportunity. The possibility of a new way of operating is thus not dependent on that which is brought by the chance event as what is brought about by it; how its opportunities are seized, where they are

taken. It is not the chance wind that sails the boat, rather the helmsman’s capacity for knowing how to work (with) it. So too works the chance occurrence that unsettles the trajectory of the drawing line.

Considered as a form of opportunity needing to be actively grasped or else lost, chance operates in analogous terms to kairos, the mode of time associated with technē. Kairos signa’s a qualitatively different mode of time to that of linear or chronological time (chronos). It is not an abstract measure of time passing but of time ready to be seized: timeliness, the critical time of opportunity where something could happen. Yet within the logic of technē, opportunities or chances are produced rather than simply awaited. Technē is a tactical practice deemed capable of actually setting up the conditions wherein kairos (the time of opportunity) might arise and in knowing (through a form of mētis or intuitive intelligence) how and when to act in response. Here, it becomes possible to conceive of how drawing might operate as technē; in turn, how something unknown or unexpected might be produced therein. Rather than referring to drawing solely in spatial terms, where the attempt to go beyond is conceived as one of giving shape to new forms, or of making – and leaving – a space wherein something unexpected might materialise; drawing can also be understood temporally, as the act of making time and of deciding how to act. Here, drawing firstly attempts to create the conditions of kairos, the experience of a temporal gap or breach opening up within the logic of chronos. However, true opportunity is rarely acknowledged consciously, for to do so would be to stall and thus miss its call. Drawing must thus respond swiftly and with intent (with mētis),

where in the moment of decision it must summon a new way of working – a new direction for the line – that could not have been conceived had kairos not arisen.

It is only in such moments, perhaps, that drawing has the capacity to go beyond what could have been predicted in advance, to become truly ‘hyper’. This involves drawing performing the dual function of advancing and retreating at one and the same time. Hyperdrawing requires an attempt to create working conditions that are receptive (temporally and spatially open) to something unexpected or beyond the terms of what could have been predicted therein; whilst simultaneously taking a decision to actively move into this kairotic space–time in the hope of actually producing that very something. It is the kairotic event of creating an adequate form of articulation simultaneous to the experience it attempts to describe, the restless instant where naming (drawing) and the thing named (drawn) attain co-existence (in time).¹⁰ Yet, such a practice demands the presence of a critical subject attending to those evental moments when opportunity arises or is produced, ready and able to act when the time is right.¹¹ By responding to the call of the situation at hand, the subject initiates or steers a new line of enquiry, in turn transforming that very situation (of which they are also a part). Herein, a sense of the critical potential of such a practice might be gleaned – for Hyperdrawing aspires not only towards the possibility of producing what is unknown or beyond the habitual expectations of a given frame, but also emerges as a tactical mode of productive knowledge or technē capable of negotiating the changing conditions of its own production. By way of extension, it is also capable of operating productively within
other lived situations that might appear contingent or unpredictable, changeable or in flux. The process of Hyperdrawing thus emerges as inseparable from the subject it enables, in turn redefining that subject, increasing what it is capable of. Here, (art) practice does not produce a subject as such, rather they occur simultaneously; it is through one that the subject is.

Endnotes

1 I would like to thank Layla Curtis, Steve Dutton and Steve Swindells, Nikolaus Gansterer, Tim Knowles, Brigid McLeer, Hester Reeve, Lee Trimming and colleagues from the Nottingham Trent University research group, Still Unresolved, whose insightful conversations and the provocation provided by their work have helped shape this essay.

2 Gilles Deleuze conceptualises Michel Foucault's 'fold' of thinking in 'Foldings, or the Inside of Thought (Subjectivation)', in Foucault, trans. S. Hand, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1988.

3 This might be considered in Keats' terms as drawing's 'negative capability', its capacity for 'being in uncertainty'. See Ducan Wu (ed.), Romanticism: An Anthology, Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2005, p. 1351.

4 Janet M. Atwill provides insightful analysis of techné as productive knowledge in Rhetoric Reclaimed, New York: Cornell University, 1998.


6 Ibid., p. 4.

7 The shimmering properties of mētis are specifically explored in Détienne and Vernant, Cunning Intelligence, pp. 18-19.

8 Atwill, Rhetoric Reclaimed, p. 94.

9 Détienne and Vernant, Cunning Intelligence, p. 223.

10 Philosopher-antagonist Negri designates the term kairós to the 'restless' instant of such an occurrence, where naming and the thing named attain existence (in time), stating, 'Kairós is the modality of time through which being opens itself, attracted by the void at the limit of time, and it thus decides to fill that void.' See Negri, Antonio, Time for Revolution, New York and London: Continuum, 2003, p. 152. He likens the simultaneous process of naming and the emergence of the thing named to the way that the poet, 'vacillating, fixes the verse', p. 153.

11 For Negri, the possibility of an imminent and antagonistic form of subjectivity is arrived at through the event of creating an adequate epistemology simultaneously to the knowledge being it attempts to describe (through the simultaneity of naming and the thing named). An authentic form of being is only produced if the subject recognises a limit and is willing to call into existence the new being through the finding of a name that is adequate to the new being called forth.