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For Ilias

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## Preface

This research is born not only from curiosity, but from necessity. Drawing has accompanied me throughout my life as a form of expression, of finding my own truthfulness, of grounding. It became a way to reconnect with myself when words weren't enough, when the outside world felt overwhelming, and when I had lost touch with my own center. During a period of burnout and emotional exhaustion, returning to drawing and painting was like returning home.

This research project has been a journey of exploration, transformation, and deep listening. It is rooted in my lived experience as a brown queer woman with a migrant background, and shaped by the many crossings of culture, place, and identity that have formed who I am. The questions of belonging, identity, truthfulness, and creative freedom have accompanied me for years quietly, insistently until they became impossible to ignore.

At the heart of this research is a deep belief in the power of community. The presence of others, drawing together, sharing space, and holding one another in silence or conversation has continually shaped my understanding of what it means to create, to learn, and to be. Community is not just a backdrop for this research; it is the fertile ground from which it grows. Whether in the intimacy of small group workshops or in collective rituals around drawing, I have witnessed how artistic expression unfolds differently when it is nurtured in shared, trusting spaces.

I carry with me the wisdom of those who came before me, especially the oral traditions of my Pontian Greek heritage, where knowledge is passed through rituals, shared meals, and storytelling within the strong bonds of our community. This cultural grounding has influenced not only what I research, but how I do it with attention, care, and openness to what unfolds.

To everyone who has drawn with me, whether in silence, in laughter, in vulnerability, or in joy, thank you. You have taught me more than you can imagine. To my inspiring peers from whom I learned the most during MEiA, to educators, to my loving family, friends and my partner who offered reflections, encouragement, and insight throughout this process, I am deeply grateful. I carry your presence in every page of this work.

This research is not a conclusion, but a conversation. A continuous journey. A question that opens more questions. My hope is that what you read here will not only inform, but invite you to draw, to reflect about your own creative process, to slow down, to notice, to feel, to be.

Welcome.



## Introduction

Since the moment my Dad brought a drawing tool home, I was drawn into a world where expression was instinctual, immediate, and deeply connected to something beyond the conscious mind. Over the years, this connection evolved into a fascination with the intuitive creative process, a space where ideas are not planned but emerge, where the act of creating becomes a dialogue with the unknown.

This research is rooted in this lifelong engagement with drawing, artistic expression, and in the workshops I've been facilitating for over six years. These workshops have not only allowed others to access their artistic potential but have served as a mirror for my own learning. I now recognize that I was trying to create environments where presence, attention, and experimentation could emerge, conditions that I believe are essential for unfolding creative potentials of the participants.

Before I began my journey at the Master of Education in Arts (MEiA), I was eager to explore these themes more deeply. I wanted to understand how intuitive creative processes could be studied, defined, and applied in educational settings. But I quickly realized the challenge: how does one research something so personal, so internal, and so fluid? How do we describe a process that is felt more than thought, known more through experience than through language?

For me, intuitive creation is about being in a flow of creating not governed by rational thought, but instinctively guided by something unknown yet deeply true. A space, where the mind quiets and the hand takes over drawing from a well of subconscious inner knowledge. It is a space that welcomes imperfection, cultivates trust, that values presence over outcome, and that thrives in environments where self exploration is prioritized over predetermined goals.



There is also a spiritual connection to intuition and education that I am interested to explore, an inner wisdom and learnings that unfold from inside out rather than from outside in. Ram Dass (born Richard Alpert) a spiritual teacher and former Harvard University professor and researcher of psychology describes in his book *Paths to God—Living the Bhagavad Gita* how children are being educated by getting taught to rely primarily on judgements from outside themselves. He further emphasizes the importance of trusting ones intuition as knowledge from inside out rather than from outside in “When we say, “Trust your intuition,” when we start to encourage that, we’re reversing the process. As we awaken, we begin to act from the inside out rather than from the outside in—and that’s the transformation we’re really looking for. It leads to behavior that is based not on enlightened self-interest, but on the workings of an awakened heart.” (Dass, 2024 p. 27)

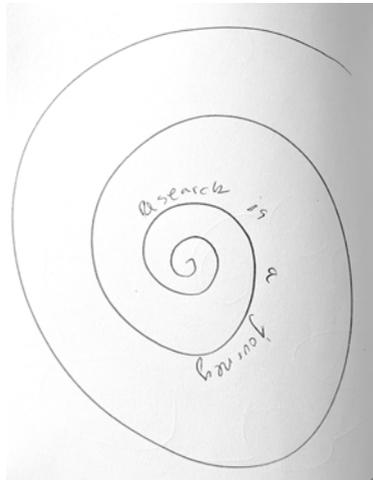
From all these questions and learnings it has led me to the question of my research: How can drawing, as a meditative and intuitive practice, cultivate attention, presence, and experimentation in educational settings?

Throughout my studies and pilot workshops, I began to observe patterns. Students and non students alike consistently responded to drawing exercises that emphasized slowness, repetition, and non-judgment. They reported feeling calmer, more focused, and more connected to their instincts. These observations were not isolated. They were echoed in feedback sessions, in drawings themselves, and in the shifting atmospheres and energies in the space of the workshops I led. What emerged was a clear understanding that drawing could be more than a technical or expressive skill, it could be a tool for awareness, connection, and transformation. I will further elaborate on that in the reflections of the practical experiments.

In our increasingly digital, individual and overstimulated western society, the need for such tools is urgent. Students today face immense pressure to perform, to be productive, to produce and be better in often competitive environments. This pressure often disconnects them from their own intuition and inner voice. Burnout, anxiety, and creative blockages are common. Against this backdrop, I see drawing not as a solution, but as an offering, a practice that can help reconnect people and students to themselves, to each other, to the present moment and the world around them.

My aim was to investigate the pedagogical potential of drawing as a meditative practice. I wanted to explore how attention, presence and experimentation when cultivated through simple yet intentional exercises, can open up new pathways for artistic processes, inspiration and learning. I wanted to understand what happens when experimentation is invited, when outcomes are not predefined, and when the process itself becomes the focus of learning. Additionally I investigated the relationship between those elements of attention, presence and experimentation.

This research is deeply personal, yet it also speaks to broader questions within education: How do we learn and how do we support the whole person/student, not just their intellect, but also their spirit, emotional and creative lives? What role does slowness, ritual, and embodiment play in learning? And how can we as educators create environments that honor the process as much as the product? How can we guide students mindfully with relational principles through rigid curriculums and create spaces inbetween for new inspiration and ideas to arise from within.



To explore these questions, I have designed and facilitated a series of drawing workshops in both formal and informal educational settings. These include an art residency in Tuscany, a classroom-based workshop at ArtEZ, and a final session at the Willem de Kooning Academy. Each of these chosen contexts has offered unique insights into how drawing can function as a relational, reflective, and intuitive practice. I will further explain my choice of the mentioned educational settings in the chapter methods.

The structure of this paper follows the spiral approach (from inside out) of my research process. It shows intuitively different chapters of my journey with its relevant content, fieldbook notes, sketches, and my role and positioning in this research.

This research paper will gradually unfold like a plant unfurling its first leaves, from my personal motivation, research question and methods highlighting the importance of process. As my research is practice-led, I will begin by presenting the case studies and workshop experiments, documenting both participant experiences and my own reflections as a facilitator, and observer. Then followed by the theoretical framework, which serves a supportive and reflective role. The final chapter draws together insights from across the research and considers how this work might contribute to broader educational practices. Inspired by Frida Kahlo's sketchbook diary (Fuentes & Lowe, 1995), I include sketchbook images to create an intimate connection with you. In this spirit, offering a glimpse into the personal process behind the final work.

This research invites you to look at art education and artistic processes through the lens of attention, presence, and experimentation. It explores how to create conditions where learning and ideas can emerge from an inner creative source.

My hope is that this research will be of value to you and everyone involved.

Ultimately, this research is an invitation to slow down, to pay attention, and to consider drawing not only as a means of expression, but as a way of being. To invite you and others to not only read but also experience this research, I will create an additional pedagogical work-sketchbook that encourages active engagement with the themes and practices explored. This sketchbook emphasizes the importance of practice and the act of making as a bodily and creative experience.



Research  
question



---

Intuitive drawing  
creative  
process

the origin

how can

Zoom in!

Small question

) How can  
primal  
instinct  
help  
to create

## Research Question

### Main Question

How can drawing, as a meditative and intuitive practice, cultivate attention, presence, and experimentation in educational environments?

### Sub Questions

What role does attention, presence and experimentation play in drawing practice and the creative process?

How are attention, presence and experimentation related to each other in the artistic process?

How can those elements affect the individuals intuitive artistic process and their well being?

## Personal Motivation

During my first year at MEiA, I became increasingly drawn to themes such as relationship—building, spirituality, attention, and process—based learning. These concepts resonated deeply with me, not only through my artistic and educational practice, but also through my personal learning journey. I experienced firsthand how intimacy, collectivism, and community within our MEiA cohort enriched the overall learning environment.

I remember working on the Glossary project in the first year. Words like “presence” and “attention” stood out to me, signaling the direction my research would eventually take. I strongly believe in organic flow how we are guided by the things we encounter and are drawn to. Over time, these encounters shape our path, often more meaningfully than deliberate planning.

My personal motivation for this research stems from a desire to develop a deeper understanding of my own artistic and pedagogical practice and to support others on their artistic and educational journeys. I am committed to creating safe and welcoming spaces where individuals can explore, unfold their artistic potential through self discovery.

Another strong motivation is the desire to create educational experiences that are rooted in relational principles. In a society increasingly shaped by disconnection, I view drawing as a counter practice: a way to return to the body, to slowness, and to what is real. As bell hooks beautifully quotes Parker Palmer in her book *all about love* “...only as we are in communion with ourselves can we find community with others.” (hooks, 2000). I wonder if drawing could be a spiritual practice, a tool and the act of drawing as a ritual that facilitates this kind of communion with the self and eventually with others.

# Spirituality - Awareness

equality  
inclusivity

Awareness

~~to~~  
Connection  
Relationship

Space in between.

materials  
Haptik

connection  
to self

connection  
to others

origin

Through many years of hosting and facilitating experimental life drawing workshops in Amsterdam, working with different groups of people, many of whom had no formal artistic background, I've observed that a creative force exists within everyone. It takes different forms, but every person is capable of engaging in an artistic process and expressions. I often compare drawing to dancing: everyone can move their body and express themselves through dance. In the same way, drawing is a kind of dance—a movement on paper that captures emotion, thought, and presence.

As a curious artist, designer and educator, I am passionate about investigating what happens during artistic processes: What is really going on when we create? What supports or blocks intuitive expression? How could I as an educator best support and inspire others on this path? These questions fuel my drive to explore drawing as a meditative practice in education.

My research explores what happens when we return to the roots of being and making. What might unfold if the noise of productivity, performance pressure, and results-oriented thinking were quieted? How could this shift impact peoples and students' well-being, artistic force, and connection to their authentic voice?

Ultimately, this research brings together everything I stand for. I am motivated to continue this work because I believe in its transformative potential, for students, educators, and all who engage with artistic processes.

- How can the ~~d.~~ process of drawing become a tool (form) of creating connection & kinship w/it self & others?

- What happens when the drawing process ~~becomes~~ what happens drawingly

- How can workshops & ~~to~~ enter different contexts?

holistic

directed product

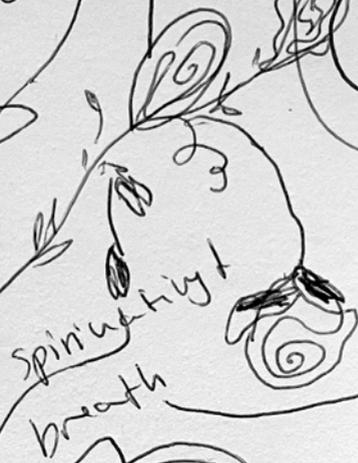
Ignorance

visperings  
Violence

Reject!

informed intuition  
differentiated mind (Gabs)

The space inbetween  
body



breath

breath of joy



harse

meander

transform

Intuition

tool  
(group)  
(catalyst)  
(metaphor)

Growing

transformation

light

Adrian Fisher

(I work by informed intuition)  
(in a continuous)

Conditions

collective

enjoying the process

individuals

ROSS GAT

Rebecca Solmate

Trust

grow up  
imagination



# The 3 Elements - APE Definitions

## Attention

Attention means to put emphasis on someone or something. Being in a state of concentration and focus. To have attention one needs to be present, to see, to listen, to touch, to gift that presence to something or someone. Attention invites us to notice the unnoticed, it means to be observant.

## Presence

To be with all senses in the now. To not think of yesterday or 5 minutes ago and to not think about tomorrow or what will be in 1 hour later. To truly be in the present moment of now with full awareness. It invites a sense of being rather than thinking.

A non judgemental space of observation.

## Experimentation

A path of exploration, improvisation and discovery. Embracing mistakes and imperfections that might appear. To try something differently and to embark on a self discovery. Experimentation is linked to play and curiosity, and with that comes an openness and a certain ambiguity. It is a way of walking into the unknown, exploring new paths without predetermined goals and expectations.

PRESENCE

BEING

AWARENESS

ATTENTION

IN THE NOW

CONSIDERATION

SLOW DOWN

FOCUS-SPACE

EXPERIENCE

TUNE IN

SENSIBILITY

PERCEPTION

## APE Relationship

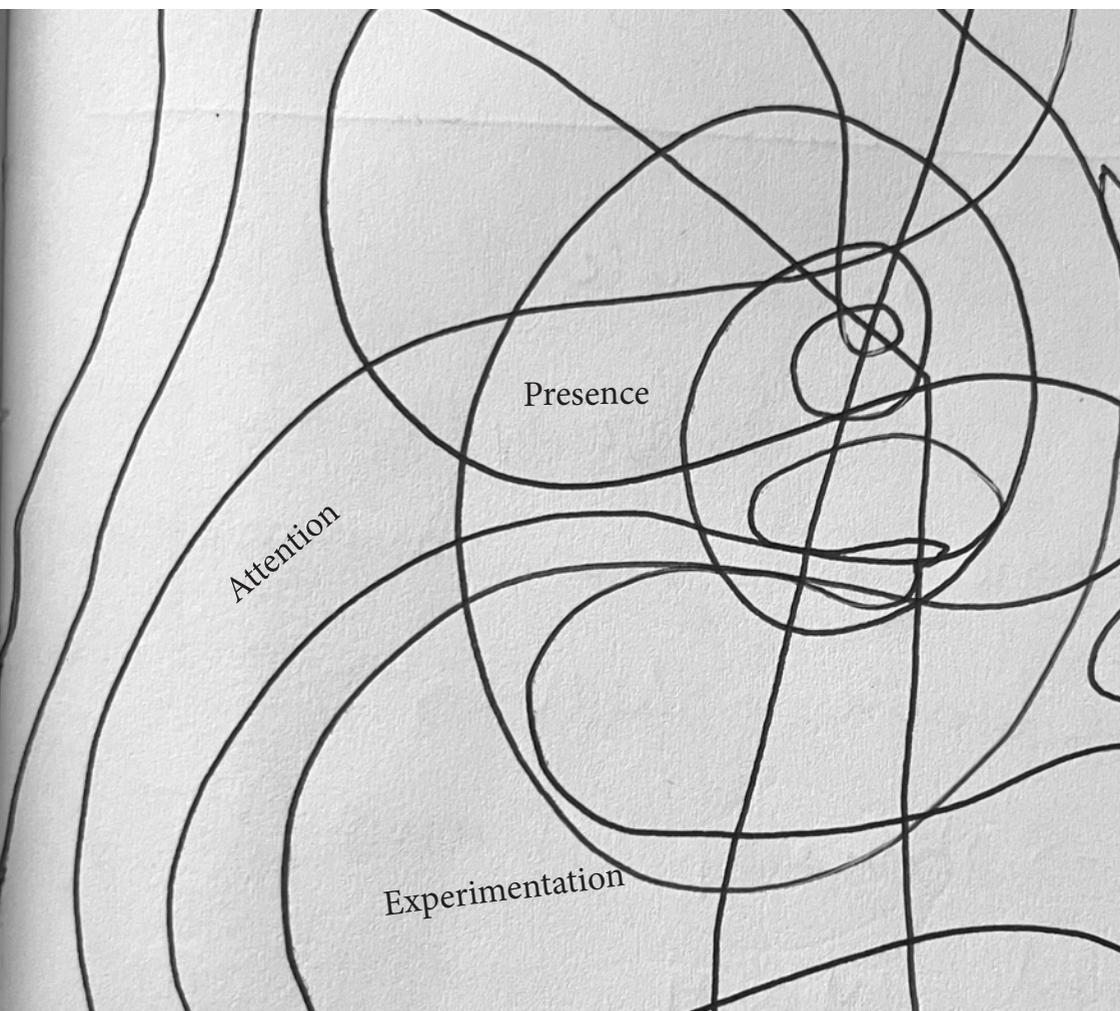
### What is the relationship between Attention, Presence and Experimentation in the drawing process?

Based on my observations during the various workshop experiments conducted for this research, three elements repeatedly came to the foreground: attention, presence, and experimentation which I short-cut to APE. These are core aspects of my practice and I began to wonder, how are they related? In this chapter, I will reflect on their interconnection, drawing from insights gained through the workshops and my ongoing critical reflections.

I noticed that attention and presence are deeply intertwined. To be in a state of sustained attention requires a degree of presence. I would say that presence is the soil from which attention grows. Each workshop begins with a short meditation, focusing on the in and out-breath. This isn't coincidental, it intentionally creates a centered, grounded state from which the drawing process can begin. Presence prepares the soil, attention is the plant that allows participants to bloom together through the act of making.

The drawing itself deepens that attention. Exercises like creating a continuous line are specifically designed to support a flow state, a rhythm of concentration that links the body, the tool, and the surface. While participants may drift into thought, the act of drawing remains a bodily anchor a way to return to the present moment and regain focus. But how does experimentation relate to attention and presence?

I see their relationship as a kind of complementary contrast. While attention and presence feel rooted, steady, even structured, experimentation introduces freedom, risk, and ambiguity. It invites the unknown. This tension between structure and openness became particularly visible during the final workshop, where I reflected on the interplay between control and freedom in the drawing process. Attention and presence provide the grounding; experimentation disrupts and expands it. Together, in the right balance they form a dynamic field where new insights and expressions can emerge.



## Positioning

As a visual artist, designer, and facilitator with a background in organizing and guiding community-based art projects, I approach this research from a practice-led outsider position. My educational work is free and independent, and I choose to collaborate with different communities, a range of artistic and educational environments. During this research process, I sometimes felt insecure about not being anchored to a single institution as if validation required institutional belonging. Over time, I've come to see the opposite: this outsider position offers openness and freedom. It allows me to explore on my own terms and approach the research from multiple, unconditioned perspectives.

Growing up across different cultures and countries, never feeling a complete belonging to any of those places, consequently questions of identity were a constant presence in my life. These questions became a point of departure, fueling my deep curiosity in intuitive artistic processes and the search for honest, unconditioned ways of being. Who are we beneath the national, cultural and societal conditioning? This inquiry holds an ethical dimension: My intersectional identity as a queer BIPOC person with migration background gives my practice the depth and perspective that challenges western dominant power structures and systems of exclusion based on skin colour, socioeconomic status, or background. My role in this research (as both facilitator and participant) are key to the way how I approached drawing, learning, and pedagogy.

I see artistic practice and particularly drawing as a tool to uncover personal truth, to reconnect with the self, and to create inclusive spaces for others to do the same. Through my life drawing practice, I have worked with diverse groups to make space for marginalized voices and alternative forms of expression. This research emerges from a desire to better understand how to create spaces independent of social or racial conditioning.



I position myself as a practitioner, participant, and observer, writing from within the process rather than outside of it. My work is grounded in values of relational principles, experimentation, embodied learning, and care. I view education as a transformative experience, one that can also act as a form of activism. To create meaningful change in society, I believe we must begin with ourselves: learning from within, moving from the personal to the collective, and from the small to the systemic.

Methaphorically my role as an educator is the role of a weaver, bringing people together from different worlds and disciplines, knowledge from diverse sources and fields to create a tapestry of togetherness and interconnectedness.

“We need to learn ways of being in space together that help us see beyond false constructs of superiority and inferiority without asking us to sacrifice what has shaped us. We need to study being receptive and nonjudgmental with each other, letting the earth and community hold us until we remember we already belong”  
— adrienne maree brown

- play as in education

connection / relation

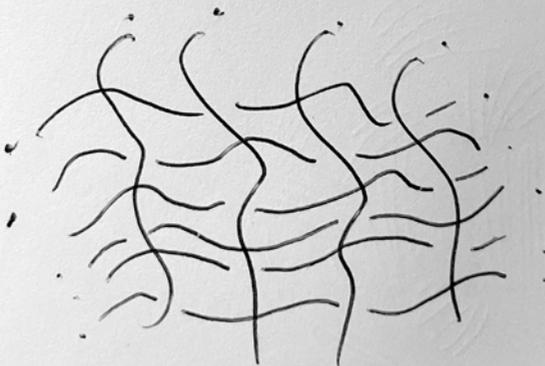
relation  
relating

→ relating

my role as

an art educator is

~~to weave a tapestry~~  
of knowledge, spirituality,  
and to bring people  
together, to create an  
environment where  
weaving can happen



## Method

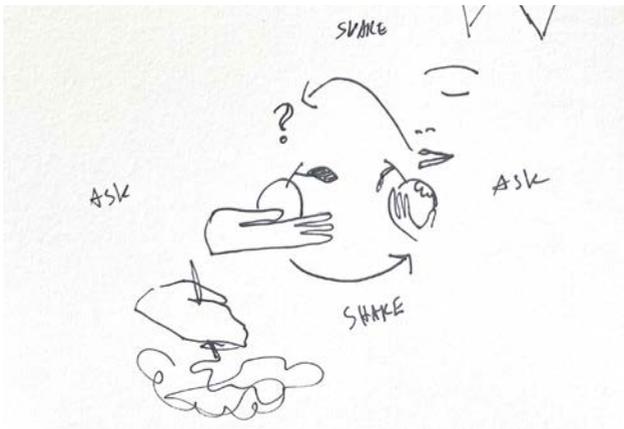
### Introduction

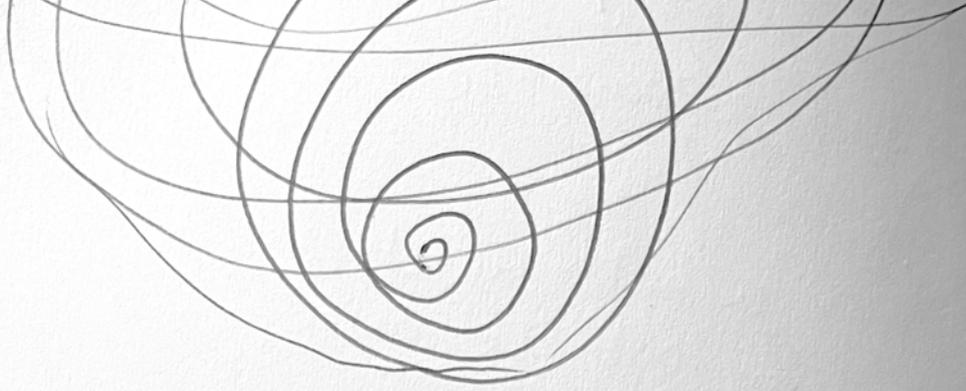
#### Food prepared - Food shared

Rooted in my culture where food, hospitality, and relationships are central I see the research process as preparing a shared meal. Like wandering through a market without a set recipe, I gather ingredients intuitively: lived experiences, drawings, theories, and conversations. Uncertainty is part of it, opening space for discovery and connection.

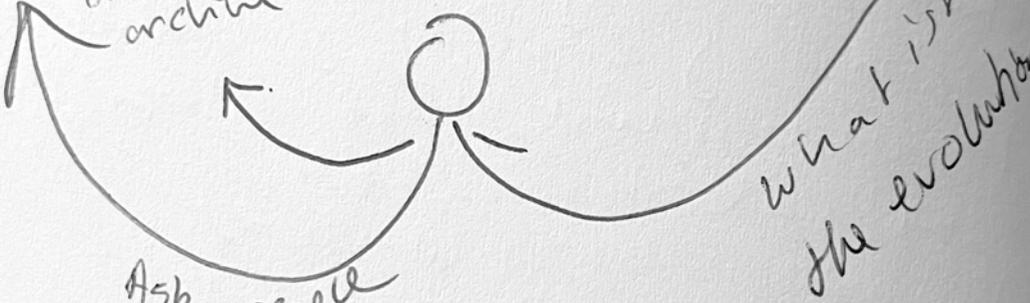
As Shawn Wilson quoting Tafoya (1995), “Part of finding is getting lost, and when you are lost, you start to open up and listen.” (2008 p.6) This sense of openness and uncertainty has guided my research process. I pick elements that may seem unrelated at first, trusting that, like unusual vegetables, they will come together in a meaningful dish.

At home, I lay everything out sorting, combining, and shaping it into a cohesive meal. This research, like a home cooked dish, is meant to be shared. It reflects my values and approach: intuitive, relational, and rooted in care.





Reflection  
document by  
archive



Ask people  
for feedback  
trace

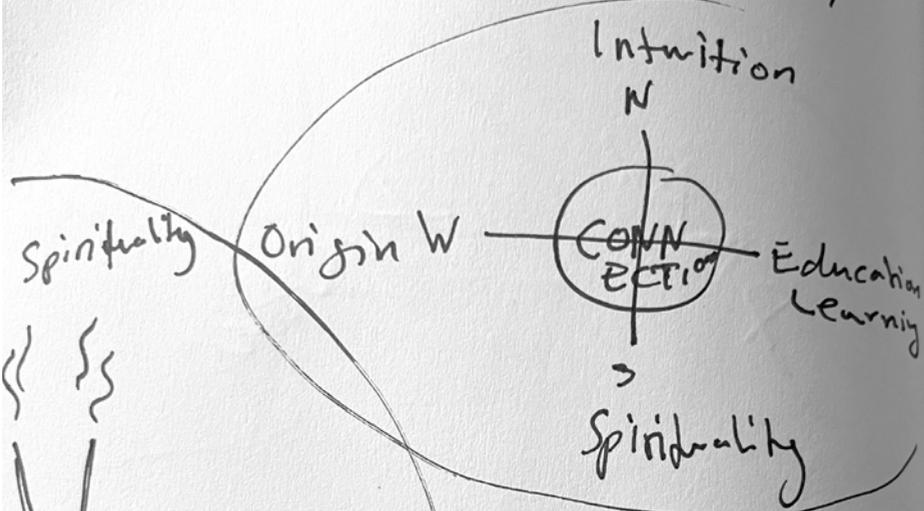
↳ with  
drawings.  
track the

↳ Miksa Method.

↳ look at their  
drawings with  
them

what is next  
the evolution

Compass → orientation



## Artistic Research Method

My research method was practice-based, and included experimental methods, grounded in my lived experience as an artist and facilitator. Inspired by Shawn Wilson's book *Research is Ceremony* (2008), I approach the research through indigenous method. I was also encouraged to look at my own cultural background and values and let the research be informed by it. I used the indigenous research method as a framework for the way I designed and facilitated the different experiments. I applied this for example in the first pilot case study of the art residency which took place in Tuscany in autumn 2024.

I embrace Wilson's alternative scholarly approaches to western dominant academia and aiming to connect personally with the reader by addressing the research to his son. "Standard academic writing may not be able to express these ideas in a way that is respectful of their intent." (Wilson 2008, p.14). Wilson writes about indigenous research as a non extractive method which is often in contrast to the western dominant research method. He writes how the research should serve and be of value to the community which is researched.

Rather than following a fixed linear process, I embrace a spiral shaped research structure, allowing space for reflection, iteration, and organic development. This non linear approach mirrors the intuitive and experimental nature of my artistic practice and is rooted in the idea of knowledge and learning evolving from inside out as a constant change and growth.

The methods I used in this research are primarily practice-based and qualitative. Central to the study are a series of drawing workshops that I designed and facilitated in formal and informal educational settings. These workshops serve as experimental and generative spaces for exploring themes such as attention, presence, and experimentation through drawing.

Pilot Study 1 took place during a co-hosted art residency in collaboration with Sopra Sotto, in Italy in October 2024, involving seven artists from various disciplines.

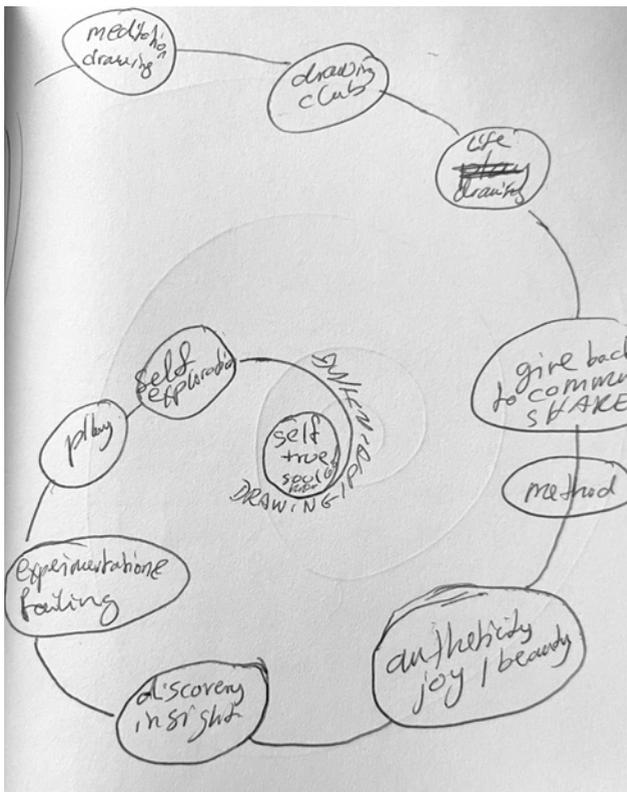
Pilot Study 2 was conducted with first year students of the art education program at ArtEZ in Zwolle in November 2024. I was welcomed as a guest teacher by my fellow peer Rogier Arents.

In April 2025, I facilitated the final workshop experiment at the Drawing Station at the Willem de Kooning Academy, with participants including MEiA classmates, my former teacher Lizzie, and a few students from other programs.

I chose these contexts to challenge my practice in unfamiliar settings and with different audiences. My public workshops are open to all, with no fixed program or regular recurring participants. While I've learned a lot from non-art audiences, I sought deeper feedback and fresh insights from those familiar with artistic processes. These choices of contexts also reflect my aspiration to support other artists and students in their artistic learning journey within educational environments.

I was curious to explore how the themes central to my practice APE could be applied within a fixed educational settings. Working across both formal and informal learning environments offered valuable insights, as I was able to engage with artists and art education students alike and observe how different contexts shaped the creative and learning experience.

Lastly, by placing my research in these contexts, I was able to explore whether the themes I investigate are relevant and valuable for those groups and educational settings. These opportunities emerged through conversations with fellow practitioners I know and have built relationships with over time.



During the workshops I take on multiple roles, as facilitator, participant, and observer, engaging in the exercises alongside others and documenting the process as it unfolds. It was essential for me that the research process does not become extractive but to do the research from the position of being part of the group in service of the people in the group where the research take place.

Each experiment revealed new perspectives and insights that informed the next. A workshop evolution that changes and develops with each new experiment. Alterations were made in response to previous findings, and sometimes spontaneously, based on the group dynamics and energy in the space. Flexibility and responsiveness are central to my method, allowing the process to adapt in service of the group and the learning experience. I made adjustments based on recurring feedback, as well as my own observations during the process.

Every workshop began with a check-in moment and meditation. Feedback and data were gathered through group and individual conversations; sound recordings were made with participants' consent during sessions and discussions. Additional visual documentation, including photographs and the drawings themselves, were also included in the research. I collected participants' reflections during and after the sessions, often using open-ended questions about their experience how it felt, what they noticed, and what emerged. These dialogues are sometimes recorded and later reviewed, allowing me to stay present in the moment and return to the material for deeper evaluation. This process of listening back and revisiting responses gave me the distance I needed for critical reflections, helping me recognize patterns, question assumptions, and refine both my facilitation and research approach.

MY

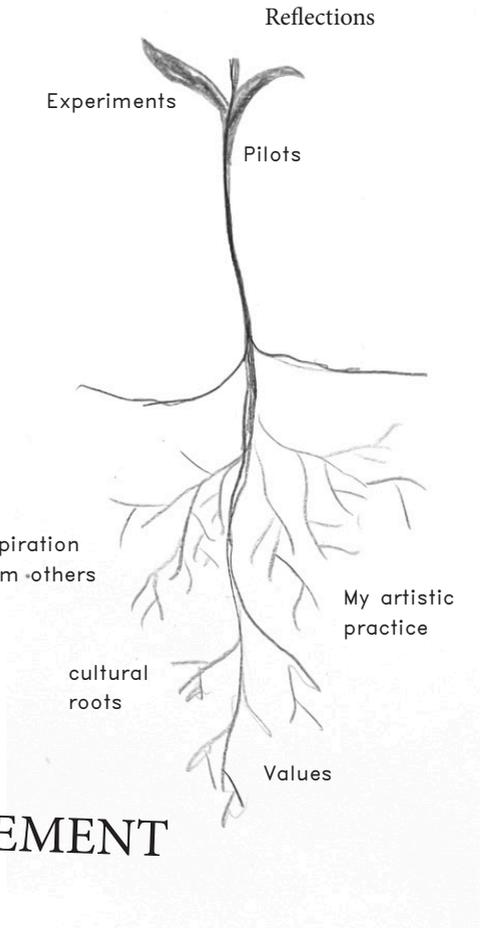
RESEARCH

PROCESS

IS

ORGANIC

MOVEMENT



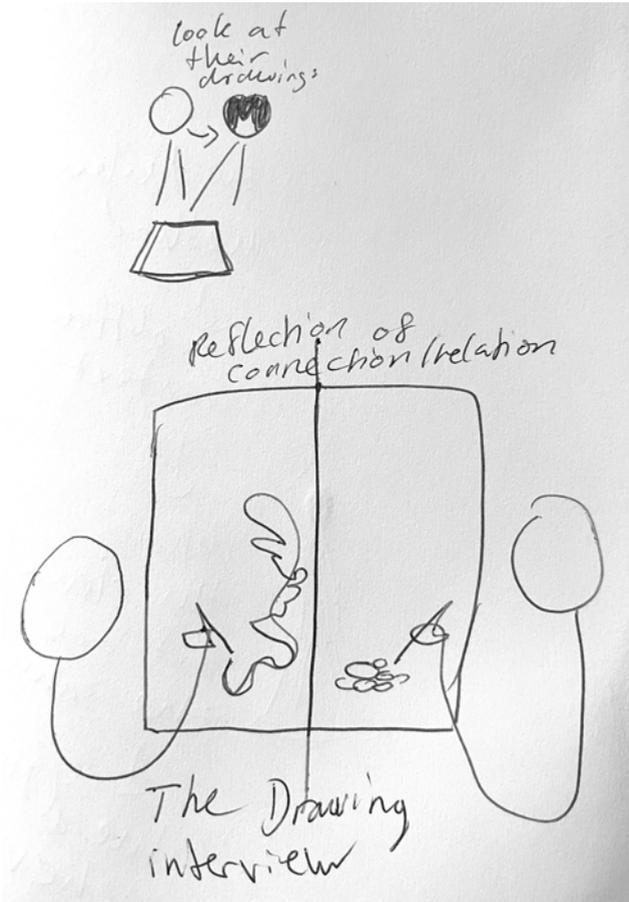
Drawings created during the workshops are treated as research artifacts, not evaluated for aesthetic value but for what they reveal about gesture, presence, attention, and embodied expression, traces of an experience and movement. Alongside this, I maintain a field journal and sketchbook for personal critical reflection, observational notes, sketches and thematic analysis. These become central tools for revisiting, questioning, and making sense of the research as it evolves.

My facilitation method is mainly influenced by the writer, facilitator and activist adrienne maree brown (2021), particularly the invitation mentioned in their book *Holding Change* “Less prep, more presence.” (Brown, 2021 p.15). While I usually outline a very structured workshop plan with intentions, I noticed how crucial it is to remain open and responsive to the needs of the group and the energy in the room. This responsive and sensitive mode of facilitation is critical to maintain a safe and welcoming space, where participants feel seen and listened to.

Through brown’s writing, I became more critically aware of my own position as a facilitator. This became especially clear during the first pilot study at the art residency, where I was confronted with my own assumptions about how the workshops should unfold. Brown writes, “If you are overly convinced that you know the right way, you will not be able to support the group to find the way of the collective” (Brown, 2021 p.18). Reading this during the residency was a turning point it helped me recognize the importance of stepping back and truly listening and trusting others and the process.

Brown emphasizes that a facilitator’s role is not to lead with answers, but to create space for the group to navigate its own path. They suggests speaking rarely and supporting consistently (Brown, 2021). This insight made me reflect on my own behavior and the responsibility I carry in shaping the group dynamic. I began to practice staying open to what emerges, rather than directing the process too forcefully. This shift brought valuable learning: to facilitate from a place of presence, humility, and trust in the group’s collective development.

Lastly, the action of drawing itself becomes both a subject and a method of inquiry. It is through drawing in its immediacy, fluidity, and capacity for non verbal expression that much of the research knowledge is generated. The act of making is a method that invites exploration which has the potential to lead to new creative impulses.



PILOT STUDY No.1

&

PILOT STUDY No.2

REFLECTIONS

# Practical Research Journey - Workshop Experiments

## Introduction

In this chapter I would like to share my journey of conducting two pilot studies and reflect on the insights they offered. These pilots focus on attention, process-based learning, and relationship building through drawing within different educational settings. It explores how drawing can encourage relationality, presence, and emphasize the process over the final outcome.

The first pilot took place in an informal art residency in Italy in October 2024, where seven artists of different disciplines and backgrounds lived and created together. The second pilot was held with first-year art education students at Artez in November 2024. Both settings were new to me: I had never hosted a residency or taught in a classroom at an art academy.

By placing my practice in these contrasting environments, I aimed to refine my work. I wanted to see how these contexts, an artist-driven residency and a formal classroom impacted learning, relationality, and community building. Both settings involved groups of people being together almost daily, allowing connections to form over time.

This exploration helped me recognize the strengths and limitations of my practice. By stepping out of my comfort zone, I learned by doing, experimenting, embracing mistakes, and trusting the process. As I am still trying to find my place in education I found that this experience allowed me to envision where my educational practice could take root in the future.



## Pilot Study No.1

### **Pilot No.1 ART RESIDENCY IN TUSCANY / ITALY**

- September/ October 2024
- Art Residency in Tuscany/ Italy
- 2 week duration
- 7 female artists + female dog (Aya)
- Co-host Constance van Berckel (Sopra Sotto)
- Living together and facilitating 7 artists and Aya (my dog)
- Creating a program and concept for the residency
- Hosting 3 drawing workshops
- Exploring the theme of attention, process based learning and building relationships
- Feedback sessions (group feedback, individual and reflective survey).



## Pilot Study No.2

### **WORKSHOP 1st YEAR STUDENTS ART EDUCATION AT ARTEZ / ZWOLLE**

- November 2024
- One day workshop at Rogier's class which I hijacked at ArtEZ
- First year students of the art education program
- Classroom of first year art education students at Artez Zwolle
- 2 different groups
- Group A in the morning, group B in the afternoon
- 3 hour workshop per group with 15 min break in between
- Hosting one drawing workshop in 3 parts
- Group feedback after every part and at the end of the workshop
- Rogier took the role of the teacher who is participating in the workshop and at the same time being the observer to give peerfeedback
- exploring the theme of attention, process based learning and fostering relationship building through drawing



## Artistic Methods

In both settings, I implemented the same workshops, modifying only the timing and sequence to suit each context. I actively guided participants through each stage, facilitating engagement during the workshops and leading group reflections afterward.

The first pilot, at the art residency, featured three drawing workshops spread over two weeks. I co-developed the residency program with Constance van Berckel from *Sopra Sotto* to ensure a structured progression for the study. Each resident was required to bring a new sketchbook, which served as a fieldbook for the workshops and their broader residency experience. The workshops focused on exploring attention, process-based learning, and relationship-building through diverse drawing exercises and prompts like, “draw without looking at the paper” or “create a one line drawing”. With the meditative drawing exercise to create simple lines on paper and by observing the lines is how attention, focus and presence was practiced. Relationship building happened through asking personal questions and drawing portraits of each other without looking at the paper.

We used a range of materials, including charcoal made on-site by burning wood. My research methods included direct observation, active listening, improvisational drawing techniques, and collaborative exercises like creating a fireplace together. Before each session, I led the participants into a guided meditation to center our focus, align energies on the same level, and I participated alongside to deepen the collaborative environment. I noticed that my method of guiding is very ritual-based and ceremonial. This was especially visible with the charcoal drawing workshop.

# Pilot Study No.1

## Workshop No.1 / Art Residency

### “The Origin” meditative drawing with charcoal



This workshop centered around the communal act of building a fire, sharing stories and food, and using self-made charcoal as an artistic tool. Participants began by creating a fire pit, gathering wood, and preparing a shared meal over the flames. The next day, once the fire had cooled, we used the leftover charcoal in a meditative drawing workshop on a large sheet of paper, a temporary artwork at the end destroyed to emphasize process and impermanence. This gesture was inspired by the sand mandalas of Buddhist monks, which are ritually dismantled to symbolize the transience of life.

The workshop aimed to reconnect participants with the primal roots of human connection through fire, the drawing material, and the act of drawing itself.





Clara reading passages  
in the book that made  
an impact on her



Cooking on open fire  
and sharing  
food & stories



Neeltje mixing  
the local olive oil  
with pulverized  
charcoal



Nathalie grinding  
the charcoal



Charcoal from the fire  
the day before



Mathilda drawing lines

It began with simple lines and material exploration, gradually evolving into patterns and more dynamic movement within the drawing process



Constance and Roos drawing the first line



We rotated positions several times, continuing each other's lines to emphasize collective creation and practice of non-attachment







Collective destroying of the drawing to emphasize the process, as a symbolic act of impermanence and transformation



Each artist chose one fragment to set an intention with, and kept it until we released it into flowing water

**Pilot Study No.2**  
**Workshop No.2 / ArtEZ Zwolle**  
First-Year Students – Art Education Program



At Artez, I condensed the residency's three workshops into a single session that I shared with two different groups during one day, adjusting the structure to fit the classroom format. Although shorter, the core methods like guided meditation, meditative drawing, and portrait drawing with structured prompts remained intact. The students responded surprisingly positively to the meditation, and the workshop included a conversational portrait exercise that promoted active listening and reflection.

I was actually a bit concerned about doing the meditation in the classroom as I did not expect that students would be so open for it because usually Institutions and classrooms are not places where spiritual practices take place. The students mentioned how the meditation gave them a moment of rest, reset. They appreciated how it calmed their minds, as they are under a lot of pressure and had a lot on their mind that morning of all the things they still had to do. One student mentioned that she was still recovering from a burn out. I thought about how society is often reflected in education and was curious to know how many students actually suffer burn out and how drawing could possibly help the students in regards to mental health.

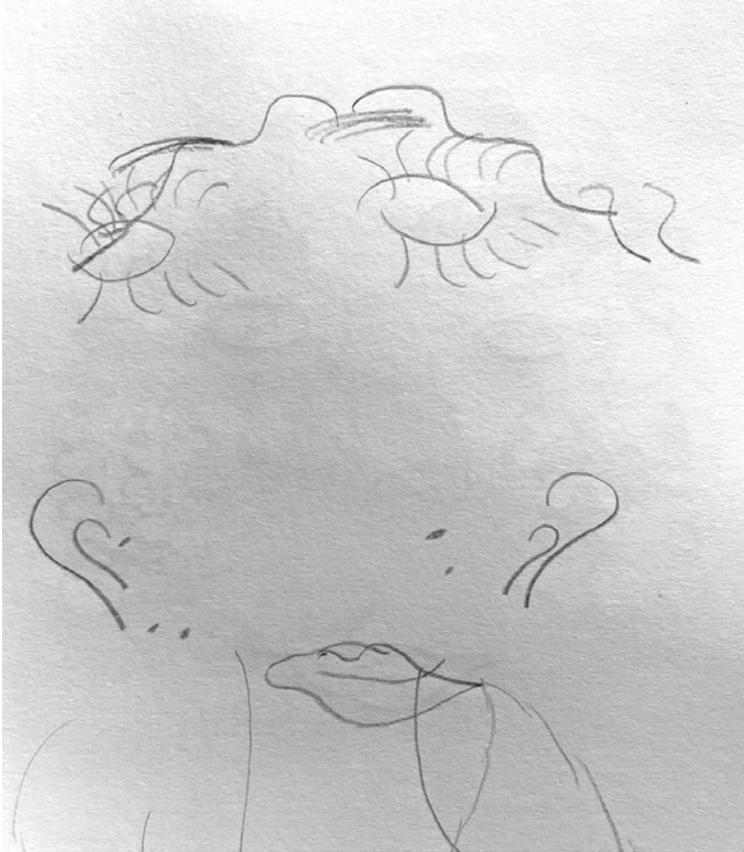
The rituals also took place inside a classroom in the form of a closing ceremony. At the end of the workshop there was a moment of sharing, to give the portrait to the person depicted in the drawing with a positive message.

While the residency emphasized building deeper relationships among artists, the Artez workshop focused on attention and process-based learning. The key tools, drawing materials and paper remained the same, though students at Artez brought their own charcoal, whereas at the residency, we created it ourselves. The residency group had a calm, reflective energy, while the students were more energetic but initially shy. The energies also varied within the different groups at Artez.

## Portrait Drawing Workshop







## Challenges

One challenge across both settings was managing the multitasking required during the conversational portrait drawing session. Participants struggled with listening, observing, and drawing all at once, often becoming exhausted, as Kate and Lara (two of the artists during the residency) mentioned. The residency workshops also ran too long without enough breaks, leading to fatigue and limited time for reflection, which impacted learning.

A more complex issue was whether the workshops forced relationship-building instead of letting it develop naturally. This concern emerged in feedback from Lara, who felt some pressure from the theme of community building, which seemed like a goal rather than something organic. This raised important questions about balancing facilitation with allowing relationships to form naturally.

Logistical challenges included managing the diverse energies and needs of participants in both settings. During a residency workshop, for example, where everything went wrong, music failed, mosquitoes attacked, Aya started barking and had a poop accident, it rained, and the flow was disrupted. I remember being very frustrated and thought was it all too forced and now the universe is teaching me a lesson? This moment taught me the importance of staying flexible, open and responsive to the energy in the room and to how workshops develop.

After two workshops, I hosted and facilitated a newly developed meditative drawing experience, which ended up being my favorite as it brought more the essence of my practice to the surface. Flexibility allowed for a more natural flow, and I learned that adaptation was key.

At Artez, I adapted my approach between groups, adjusting based on energy levels and time constraints. This taught me the importance of maintaining a balance between structure and flexibility, staying attuned to participants' needs, and managing my own energy to stay fully present. By checking in with participants more often, I ensured a more connected and productive learning experience.

## Reflecting Conclusion

### Insights & Findings

One of my conclusions is that I discovered that drawing indeed can be a relational practice in an Institutional context. The Students mentioned how they enjoyed learning more about each other and their teacher Rogier during the conversational portrait drawing session. Rogier mentioned how he enjoyed participating in the workshops and could create more personal relationships with a few students. The students also mentioned how they already knew each other but that this workshop gave them the opportunity to have deeper conversations and get to know each other even better. This happened mainly through the conversational part and based on the questions which were written down and asked but portrait drawing gave each other an additional attention towards each other. What would be interesting here is to further investigate how the classroom bonds (community) would affect the student's learning experience and outcomes. This is where I faced limitations for the pilot as with a one day workshop this can not be investigated.

It was great to receive so much feedback for both pilots but also quite overwhelming, especially because of the huge amount of information I received. There were individual talks, group reflections, field recordings, and peer feedback, it was a lot to process.

I will try to highlight what felt most significant to me first and gradually incorporate other relevant insights. Both settings were a great testing ground for the different drawing workshops and the applicability of the research theme in those two settings. It allowed me to explore the themes of attention, process based learning and building relationships, while also experimenting with how the workshops were conducted. I noticed how much the learnings from the residency were immediately applicable in my follow-up work with the students at Artez, shaping how I structured the sessions there.

My research topics were applicable in both settings and resonated with artists as well as students even though the building relationship topic was much better to observe at the art residency due to more time.

A key takeaway from the residency and hosting a class at Artez for first year students was realizing the importance of creating space and my role as a facilitator. I found that being fully present and attentive to the needs of the group, and checking in with individuals and the group regularly, greatly impacted the flow of the workshops. I learned to ask questions like, “How are you feeling?” and “Do we need a break?” to facilitate with care and attentiveness the group.



## The Power of Community

“I feel like it is an aspect of humanity that has been slowly disappearing from our society which, in my viewpoint, deepens this loneliness epidemic that has been going on for a while. I really appreciate having the opportunity to experience what it means to live communally and seeing how important it is to connect in simple ways; day to day activities.”

-Neeltje



Another realization, through feedback and self reflection, was the importance of human connection. I understood that while relationships cannot be forced, creating a welcoming, non-judgmental space encourages building trust, interaction and honest communication. Such spaces can be created through listening, attention, presence, mutual respect, and a compassionate, kind approach.

It became clear that during the residency, we all bonded as a group which was the result of the whole experience and the workshops took a supportive role in that development. Many moments outside of the workshops played a big role in cultivating that sense of community like cooking or having walks together.

My conclusion from that experience is that community building is a naturally developing process with many layers and complexities, it cannot be forced by one drawing workshop. But what the different exercises in the workshop did was to create the conditions in which personal interaction could take place. They created space for people, especially those more shy or reserved, to share their stories, listen to others, be heard and create understanding of each other through the tool of drawing.

For example, Mathilda, one of the residents, shared that the communal experience of the residency was the most important aspect for her. She expressed how living together and sharing both emotional and joyful moments created a special atmosphere, one that stayed with her long after the residency ended. Her feedback, also shared by others, highlighted the importance of communal experience and how it affected well-being, inspiration, and learning.

This insight resonates with me on a personal level because I've often felt the lack of community in my own life, and I see many people in my surrounding seeking spaces for meaningful connection. It would be interesting to explore not so much how to build community but perhaps what and how do we learn by being within a group of people we know and trust.



Lara's zine workshop

From an artistic perspective, I learned that the some of the drawing workshops helped participants release stress, the pressure of achieving a perfect end result, allowing them to enjoy the process more freely. Each participant had a unique approach to drawing, but all found a sense of playfulness and experimentation in the workshops.



(from left to right) Lara, Neeltje, Nathalie, Kate



The feedback from both the residency and Artez highlighted this, with participants noticing the importance of having time to work without the weight of expectation.

In both settings, I noticed similar feedback, especially in exercises like portrait drawing without looking at the paper. Participants in both groups mentioned how it relieved the pressure of expectation and allowed for more relaxed, fun and an intimate experiences.



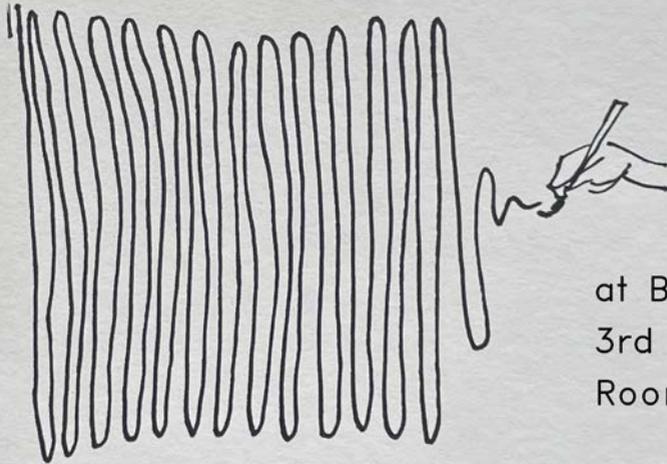
FINAL

WORKSHOP

EXPERIMENT

EXPLORING DRAWING AS A TOOL  
TO PRACTICE ATTENTION

Friday  
11 April  
11:00



at Blaak  
3rd Floor  
Room 3.1

DRAWING WORKSHOP

### Final Workshop Experiment

#### Drawing Station / Willem de Kooning Academy

Exploring Drawing as a tool to practice attention,  
presence and experimentation

### What stands behind this Illustration?

#### Introduction

This drawing shows a hand holding a drawing tool, creating a continuous line that meanders up and down in a rhythmic, almost meditative repetition. Beneath it, the words “drawing workshop” are handwritten, while the title, time, date, and location of the event float loosely around the composition.

In its simplicity, this image reflects a sense of calm and my deep curiosity to return to the very origin of drawing. It all begins with a single line, a journey unfolds with each mark on paper. When I look at this drawing, I feel it illustrates my interest in the primal essence of drawing and being. There is an innocence and purity in this form of expression, untouched by societal or educational dogmas about what art should be. Like a child drawing freely, it embodies joy in the act of creating.

The repetition of the lines, moving up and down, in and out is like the breath: inhale, exhale. It becomes a visual mantra, a meditative state of drawing where one is paradoxically both lost and present.

The recurring sequences in the line work mirror the recurring exercises in my workshops exercises that gradually transform into rituals. The minimal use of color and the simplicity of form give the poster a calmness that feels very present in my sessions and is often described by participants as an emotional outcome of the workshop. This calmness is essential in my practice, it sets the tone for focus and attention to grow. It helps calm the mind and reduce or suspends (self-)judgment.

What happens when we draw with a non-judgmental, curious attitude—without force, but with an organic flow? What might we discover if we step into the unknown? How does it feel to be inside that process?

The meandering line suggests a path of constant change, full of ups and downs moments where something shifts. You can see that change in the slight variations: in the thickness, direction, and form of the lines. It invites the viewer (or the drawer) to step into a state of flow, to explore with openness and curiosity. What discoveries lie within this journey of the line? What small experiments must take place to explore new ways of drawing and spark fresh ideas?

Interestingly, this drawing itself is the result of an experiment, an exercise developed to visualize and practice meditation through drawing. The chosen color is black, some might say it's not a color at all. I chose it for its neutrality, for its ability to remain open

and not influence. It also points to the origins in black as the color of charcoal, possibly one of the first drawing tools humans ever used. A burned piece of wood, transformed by fire into a medium for drawing and other rituals. In that sense, black becomes a sacred color of origin: dense, dark, visible and deeply expressive.

If you look closely at the handwritten text, you'll notice it's not perfect. In fact, there are mistakes, some of which I corrected, and you can still see the traces. These imperfections are important. They speak to the value of visibility, of embracing flaws rather than hiding them. I don't believe in perfection. In my workshops, I encourage participants to welcome mistakes, to find beauty in them, and to see what can be learned from what might otherwise be "wrong."

The hand in the drawing is small compared to the line it creates. It appears confident, steady, and relaxed at the same time. Movement is visible, the hand suggests it, the line reflects it. The body, the arm, the hand—drawing is only possible when movement is present. These lines are the trace, the witness of that movement, and in turn, become movements themselves.

It is an attempt to create a balance between freedom and structure, two opposites that can coexist.

## Plan of action

### Workshop 3

#### Attention, Presence & Experimentation through drawing

Following several pilot sessions and the reflections that emerged from them, I decided to design and facilitate a final workshop with the aim of deepening my inquiry. This session was conceived to explore how presence and experimentation manifest through drawing, how these two elements relate to each other, and what insights can be drawn from the participants' experiences and feedback, as well as from my own observations.

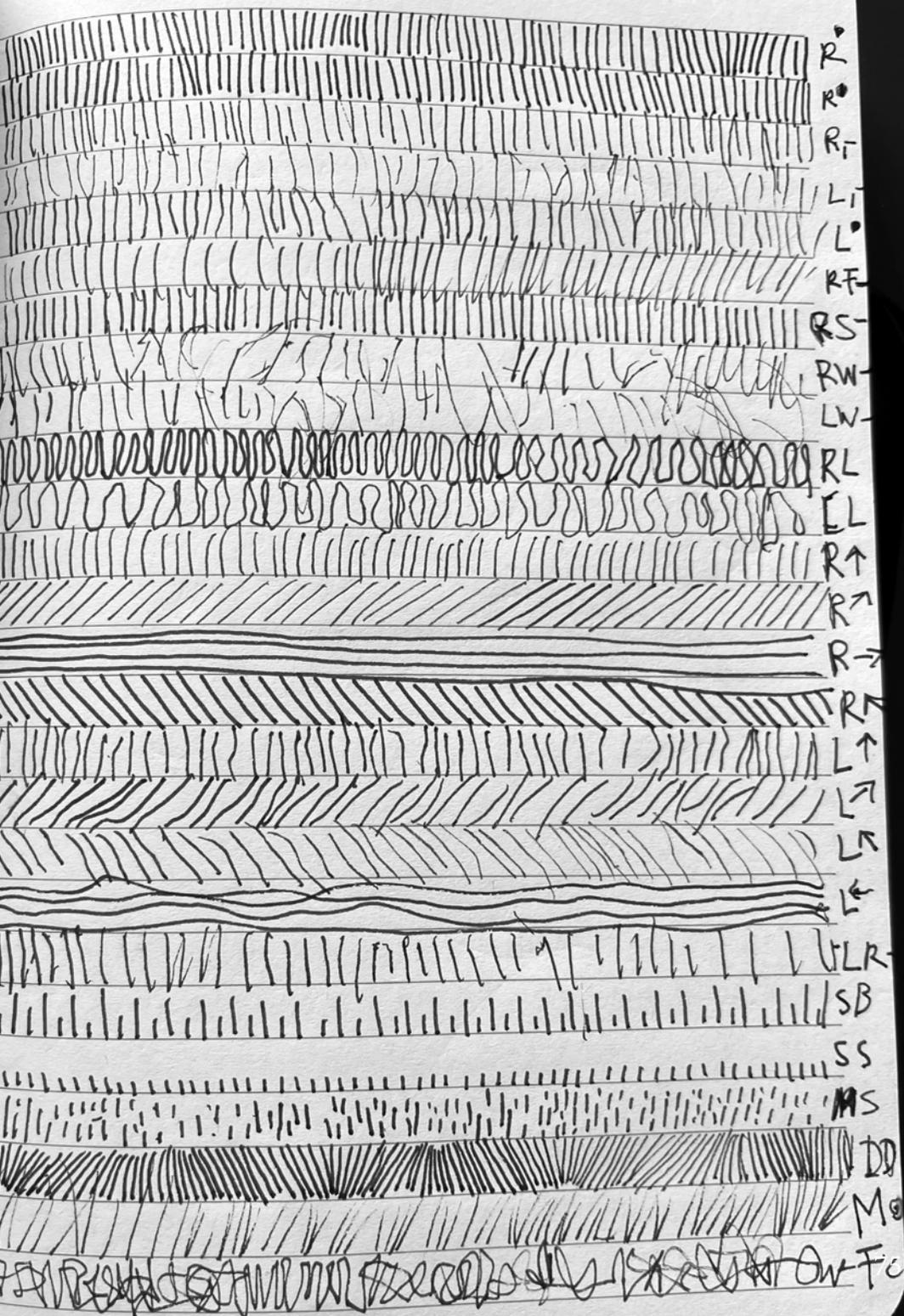
For this workshop, I chose to work exclusively with charcoal as the drawing tool. Charcoal, a material that traces back to prehistoric artistic expression, symbolizes a primal and raw medium transformed from wood into a tool of mark-making. Beyond its historical significance, I also attribute a spiritual quality to the tool, intending it to offer agency to participants and invite them to explore and experiment freely. Charcoal comes in various forms and can be used in multiple ways, and this limitation in material paradoxically serves to open up a wide range of creative possibilities.

The workshop was held at the Willem de Kooning Academy, at the Drawing Station. To invite participants, I designed a simple poster and composed an email which was shared with students across different programs. I am grateful to Mia from the Drawing Station and my tutor Sjoerd, who kindly helped shared the invitation with their student network. I also shared it with my peers from the Master Education in Arts (MEiA). Within a day, students from various programs had already signed up, along with several from my own class.



## **Intention**

With this workshop, I aim to explore how drawing can serve as a tool to cultivate presence and to investigate the relationship between presence and experimentation within the drawing process. I am particularly interested in what this relationship can reveal about the nature of intuitive creative processes. My inquiry focuses on how specific conditions might support such intuitive practices, and how elements like attention, presence, and experimentation can contribute to a deeper understanding of this form of artistic expression.



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## **Inquiry strategies**

My inquiry approach combines observation from a dual perspective, both as a facilitator and as a participant. The workshop included moments of conversation and collective reflection, allowing us to tune into how everyone is feeling throughout the process.

I plan to begin with a check-in and a group conversation with the students before we start drawing, to create a shared sense of presence and openness. After the drawing session, participants will engage in small group discussions about their work and experiences. We will then gather as a full group to share reflections, insights, and learnings collectively.

To support the inquiry process, I will make sound recordings of the conversations (with participants' consent) to listen back and reflect more deeply on what was shared. In addition, the drawings themselves will serve as a key method of inquiry, acting both as artifacts of the process and as expressive responses that can offer further insight into the themes of presence, experimentation, and intuition.

To complement these methods, I will also send out a short survey with reflective questions to the participants after the workshop.

## My Observation

The workshop took place at the room 3.1 3rd floor at the drawing station at WDKA. There were three participants from different programs: one from Game Design, one from Illustration, and another from the Advertising program. Lizzie, our former tutor from the first year of MEiA, also joined, along with many of my classmates. We were 11 in total, including myself. I'll use the word participants rather than students, as the group included a diverse range of people and Lizzie was very much part of the experience.

During the check-in, I noticed how each participant entered the space with a different energy and emotional state—some carried a lightness, others a quiet weight or shyness. Yet everyone arrived with an openness, a willingness to be vulnerable. One participant shared they were going through a breakup and felt a bit sad, another admitted feeling quite stressed. Others were in good spirits.

Before we began the meditation, the room was chatty, with people smiling, laughing a bit, and looking around, not quite sure what was about to happen. But after the meditation, the energy completely shifted. The room became quiet, and there was a calm, introspective atmosphere. People weren't really looking at each other anymore, their focus had turned inward, toward their papers and the table in front of them.

After the meditation we did a short movement exercise focused on the hands, arms, and shoulders, circling the wrists, moving the fingers, shaking out the hands, stretching the arms, and gently twisting the torso. And then I started guiding the drawing part. The calmness stayed in the space. I could feel that people were really focused and following the instructions. What struck me was how immersed everyone became in their drawings.



No one was speaking. The only sound in the room came from the charcoal moving across paper—each participant creating their own rhythm. Some sounds were soft and smooth, others were creating sharp or scratchy sounds, like dry chalk on a wall. Together, they formed an unexpected composition. It felt like we were playing instruments separately, but somehow still in sync, like a quiet orchestra. The material, charcoal, wasn't only visual and tactile but also had a strong presence through sound. I recorded this moment and included the sound as a link in this chapter so you can listen and get an impression.

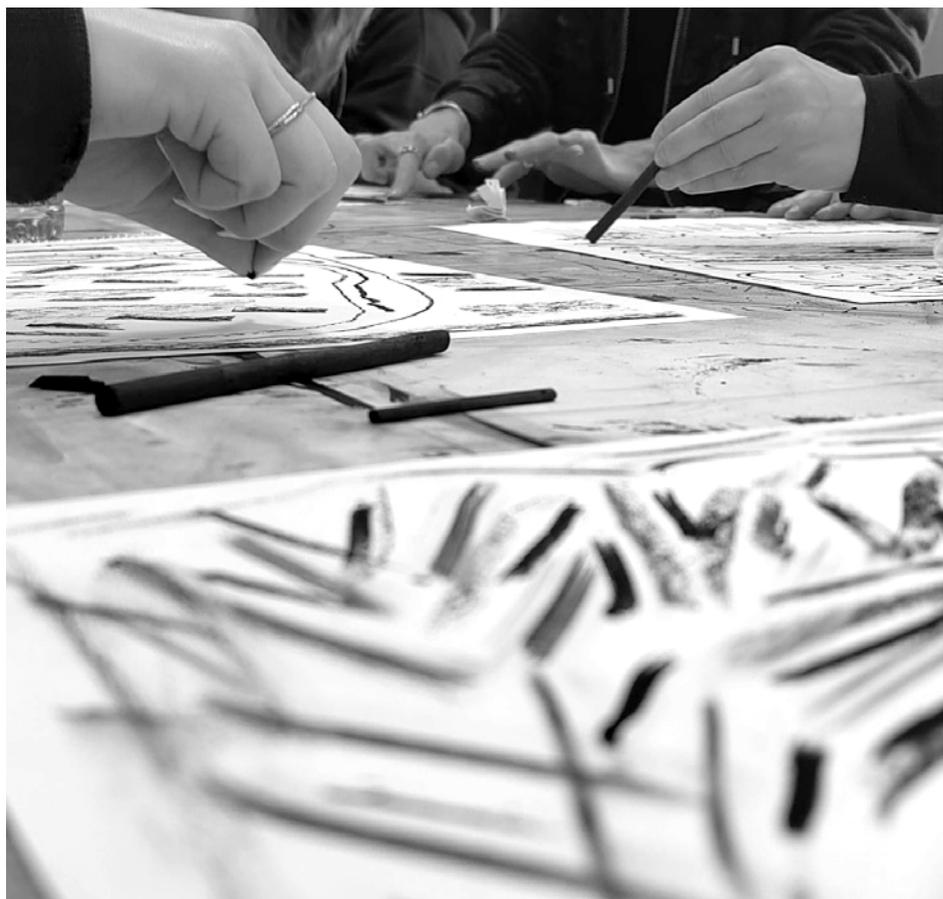
While guiding, I was also participating and drawing myself. I moved between leading and tuning into the room—adjusting the exercises slightly when something felt too long or when the flow needed a shift. Even though I had a clear structure for the workshop, I always find that I make small intuitive changes in the moment, based on how the energy in the room feels. Some of these decisions happen instinctively.

Because I was actively guiding and drawing, I wasn't observing that much during this part, it was more of a shared experience. My more conscious observations came during the free experimentation phase that followed.

In that phase, I saw how differently each person approached the charcoal. Everyone used their own technique, their own rhythm. Some moved to another spot in the room to draw. Constanca, for example, used movement as part of the process, she was drawing while shifting the paper itself. Rogier stood up and used so much pressure while drawing a line that the paper tore in some places. His lines were strong and interrupted, reflecting that force.

During the conversation part, I stepped back from participating and walked around the space to listen in. Participants were paired up and started discussing their drawings. The atmosphere changed again, it became lively and full of energy. People were engaged and curious.





I noticed that speaking about the drawing process required a different kind of attention, more verbal, more analytical. Some pairs dove deep into interesting questions. Madelief and Rogier, for example, were debating whether it's ever really possible to "let go of control," even when someone tells you to. That stayed with me. What does it mean to experiment without control? Are expressive drawings ever truly random, or is there always some kind of intention behind them? What would controlled experimentation even look like?

After the pair talks, we gathered around the groups to look at the drawings and hear a bit about what had come up. Many drawings were expressive and rich in texture. Participants spoke about how they felt at different moments, and what they experienced while drawing. We didn't go very deep into topics like presence or attention, but I asked a few questions here and there and mostly just listened.

We ended with a short check-out where everyone shared something they took from the workshop. I often hear that my drawing workshops feel very relaxing and makes people feel calm. It makes me wonder what does this relaxation mean in an educational context? What kind of space does it open up for learning and creating?

Looking back, especially while listening to the sound recordings, I noticed again how soothing the meditation was. The charcoal sounds from the drawing part are really fascinating to hear, they say something about the person drawing, their mood, their pace, how much pressure they applied. Some sounds are soft, others fast, scratchy, or full of tension. Listening to them now sparks my imagination, it feels like an audio story. These sounds are not just background noise; they're traces of movement and expression.

((([sound recording 1](#))))  
((([sound recording 2](#))))



## Feedback Summary

### Check-in Reflections

Each participant arrived with different moods and intentions. Some felt relaxed and open, while others came in with stress or tension. People joined for various reasons, some were hoping to unwind, others wanted to be creatively distracted, to engage their hands in making, or simply came out of support for me.

### Peer & Participants Feedback

Feedback came from many different angles, some focused on materials and technique, others on how the experience felt physically or emotionally. Several participants spoke about personal challenges that came up during the process, which sparked interesting conversations and reflections.

Rogier, for instance, shared how he discovered the effect of pressure on the charcoal and used his hands alongside the tool to draw. He and Madelief had a deep exchange about control, noticing how their attention kept returning to it. Madelief reflected on how even when she tried to let go of control, it still found its way back in. Their conversation raised an interesting question:

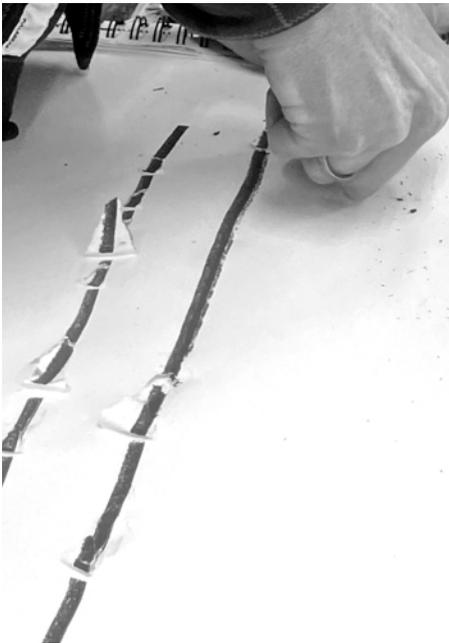
What role does control play in creativity?

And how does it affect the flow of intuitive making? This stood out as a powerful critical insight and sparked a desire in me to explore this tension further in my research.

Rogier also mentioned how placing focused attention (even if it was “forced”) allowed him to enter a space of exploration, precisely because there was no expectation of outcome. Madelief, on the other hand, pointed out the irony of having an “expectation of non-expectation” a subtle tension that stayed with her.



Constança moving the paper instead of the drawing tool



Freedom and limitation also became recurring themes. Manea shared how he felt not challenged enough with the exercises that had too clear boundaries and instructions, like in the first one-line exercise. He initially followed the line carefully but later allowed himself to draw more by feeling, which led to playful experimentation. Fabian had the opposite experience, when the drawing part became completely free, he suddenly felt overwhelmed by too much choice and did not know what he should do with all that freedom, he started constantly changing his drawing, adding new elements.

A few participants, including Lizzie, Aoife, and Manea, noticed how using their non-dominant hand or changing their grip gave them a different bodily awareness. Drawing felt differently, and something shifted physically. As Lizzie shared:

“When I tuned into the connection between my hand and what was possible, I felt more present.”

Still, some participants found it difficult to stay fully present, often drifting towards thoughts about what the drawing might become. Especially in the very limiting exercises some participants shared how they were in their heads, thinking too much about other things.

There were moments described as “getting lost in the drawing” being in a state of flow, where the hand moved freely and everything else faded away. These moments often felt like a release, allowing emotions to pour directly onto the paper.

On a more technical level, Constança gave detailed reflections on how she applied techniques across exercises, experimenting with speed, pressure, and posture. She even changed her drawing setup to sit on the floor and moved the paper rather than her hand.

One of her learnings came through an emotional realization while drawing spirals, she eventually felt frustrated and noticed a strong feeling of anger arise. Her takeaway: simply noticing that emotion.

Another layer of feedback focused on sound. Many noticed how loud the charcoal was in the quiet room. Constanca discovered she could make small dots with pressure, which created a unique sound she hadn't noticed before. She became more aware of how her sounds affected the space and others. Manea reflected:

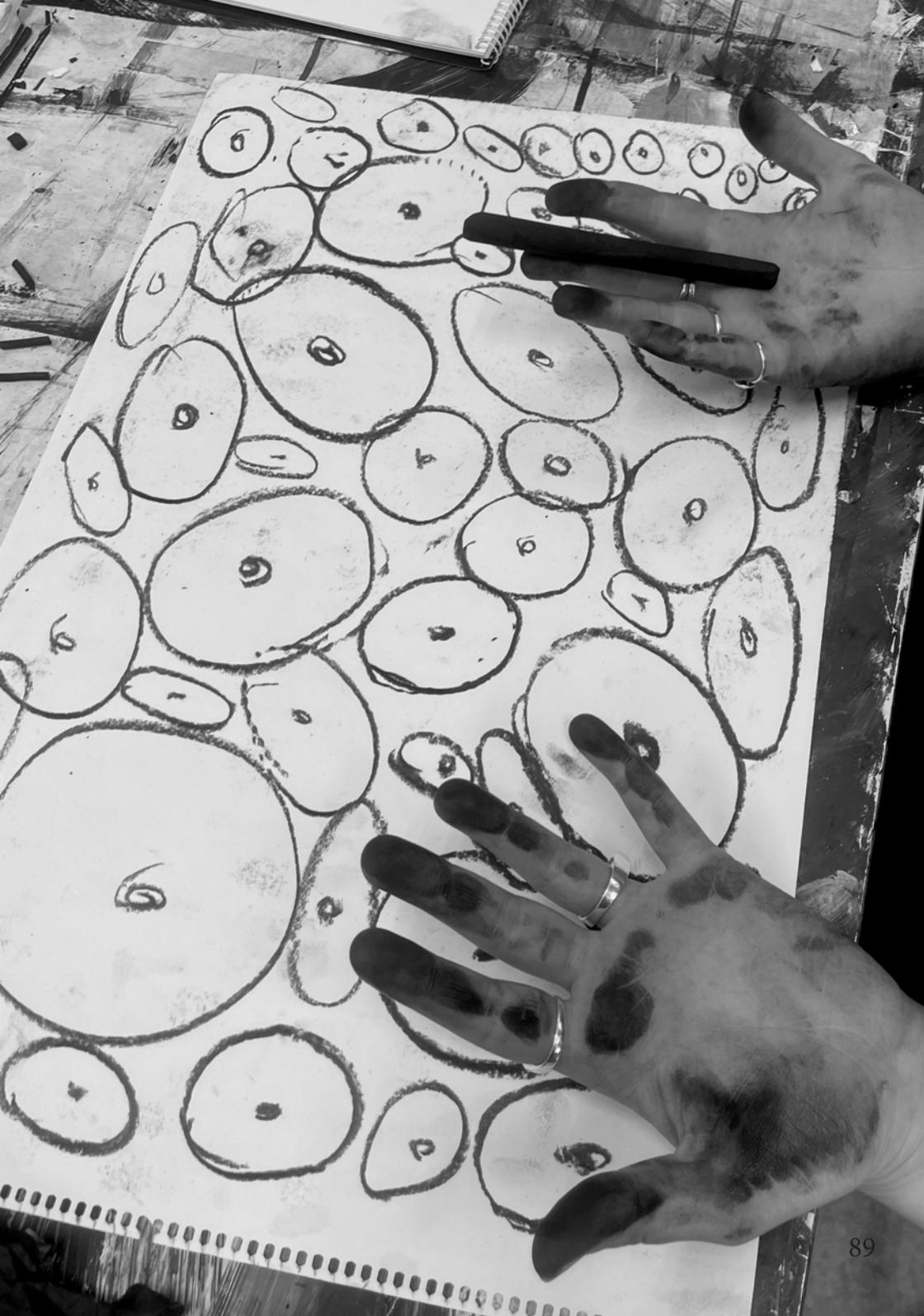
“When you're making the sound, it makes sense to you, but for others it might be too much.”

Aoife shared that listening to the sounds of others drawing was just as satisfying as watching, perhaps even more so:

“Listening felt more interesting than looking, because when you look, you disconnect.”

This awareness of self in relation to others came up in different ways. Some felt like they were in their own bubble, trying to stay introspective and avoid being influenced. Others found that their environment and the group subtly affected their energy or choices.

Some participants struggled with the open-endedness of the process, feeling uncomfortable with not liking what they had drawn. A few tried to mask or edit parts they didn't like, while others attempted to avoid drawing figuratively, focusing instead on expressing a feeling.



Still, many found the experience grounding and calming. Christina, a student from advertising who doesn't usually draw, felt inspired to continue afterwards, a surprising and motivating shift for her.

Ronald had a playful approach. He imagined drawing water that became a carpet. In the one-line exercise, he tried making ultra-thin lines close together as a game:

"At first there's doubt, then suddenly it becomes something—without even noticing." Joy and frustration often came hand in hand, as participants navigated personal thresholds and limitations.

Lizzie added a more reflective note, seeing metaphor in the exercise: the continuous line made her think of life paths, and how being told not to cross lines created interesting barriers:

"What happens if I can't go into that space? I have to reorient, and then I feel stuck."

Many preferred the experimental exercises, finding them more freeing and engaging. By contrast, the structured ones felt easier to follow but kept some participants in their heads, less emotionally or physically connected. Knowing exactly what to do gave them room to drift mentally. The drawings themselves ranged widely, some abstract, with dots, lines, or spirals; others included birds, mountains, or snakes. This sparked conversations around symbolism and interpretation.

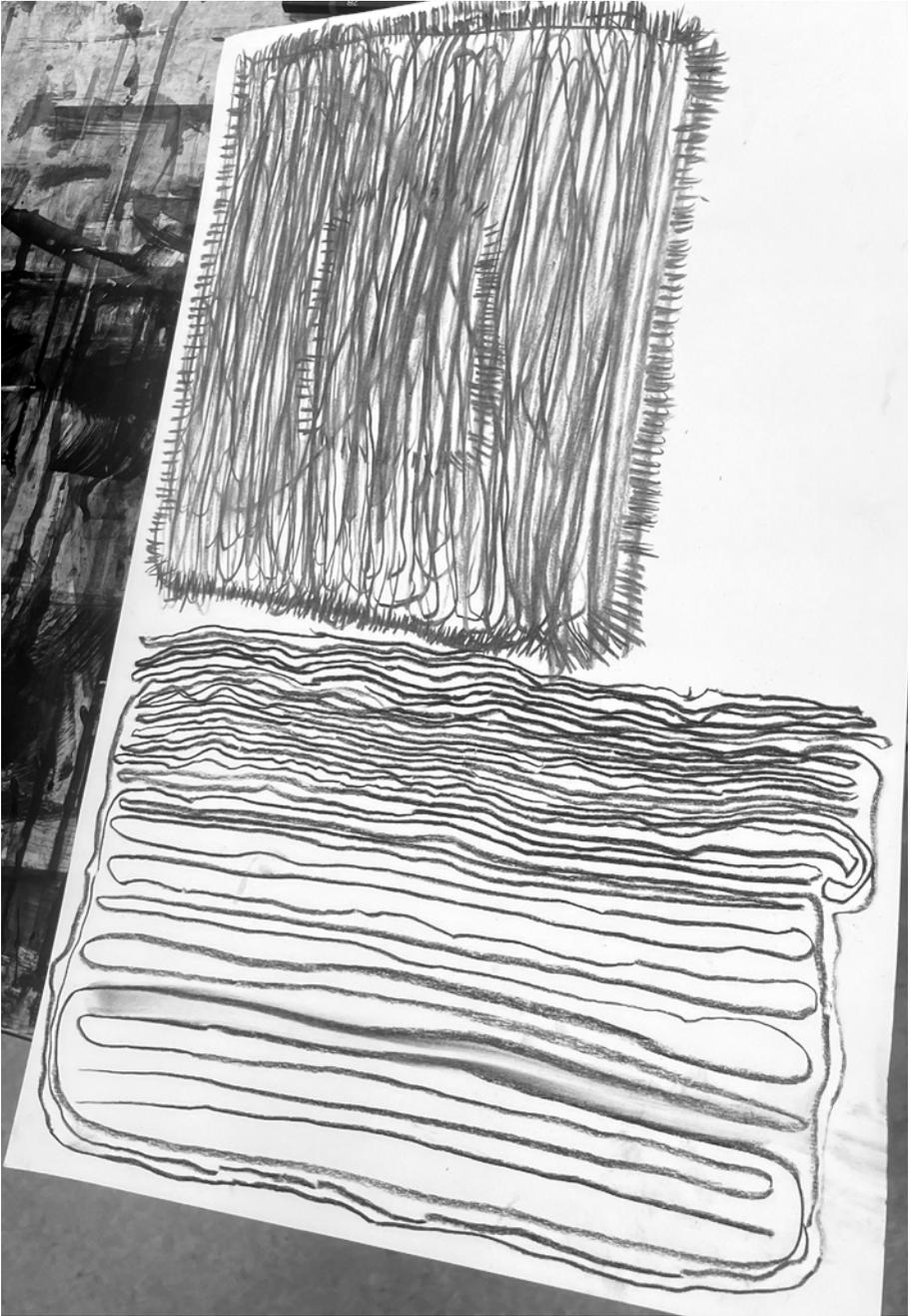


Several people, including Amira, appreciated the grounding meditation. However, she also found it difficult not to think ahead. She experimented with closing her eyes and holding her pencil loosely, which helped her let go of control and focus more on the process.

Aoife also played with her grip and started twirling her tool between her fingers, shifting direction, and tuning into what the material wanted to do. Her attention shifted completely to the material itself.

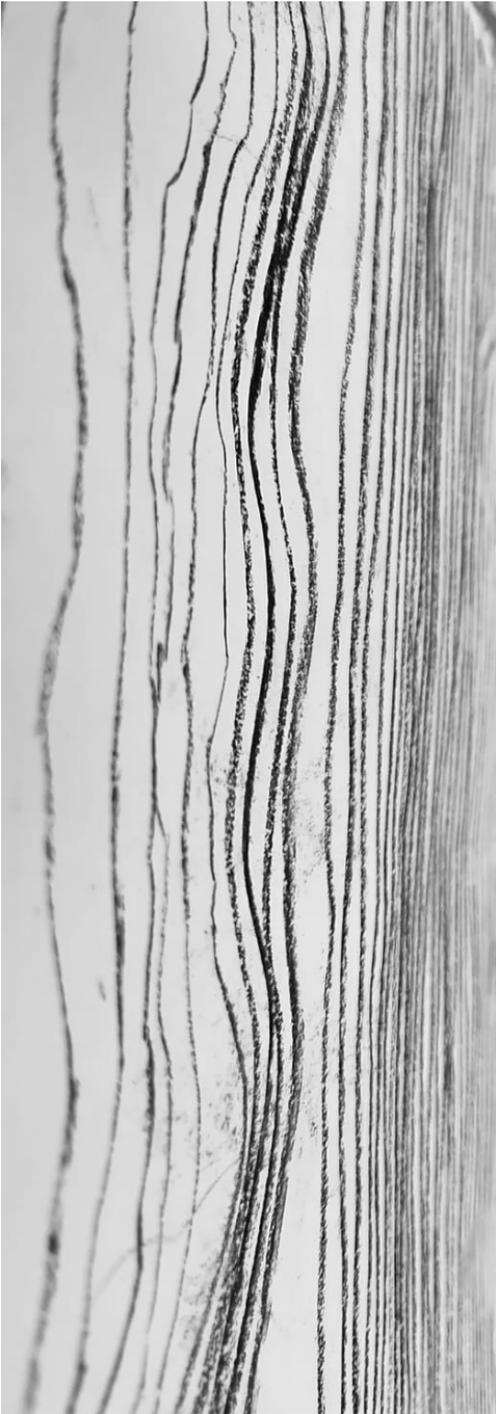




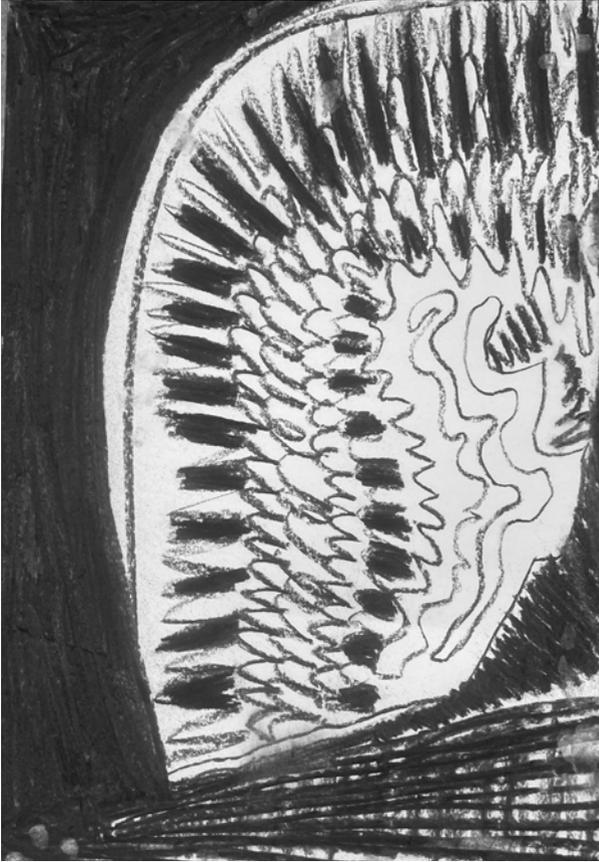


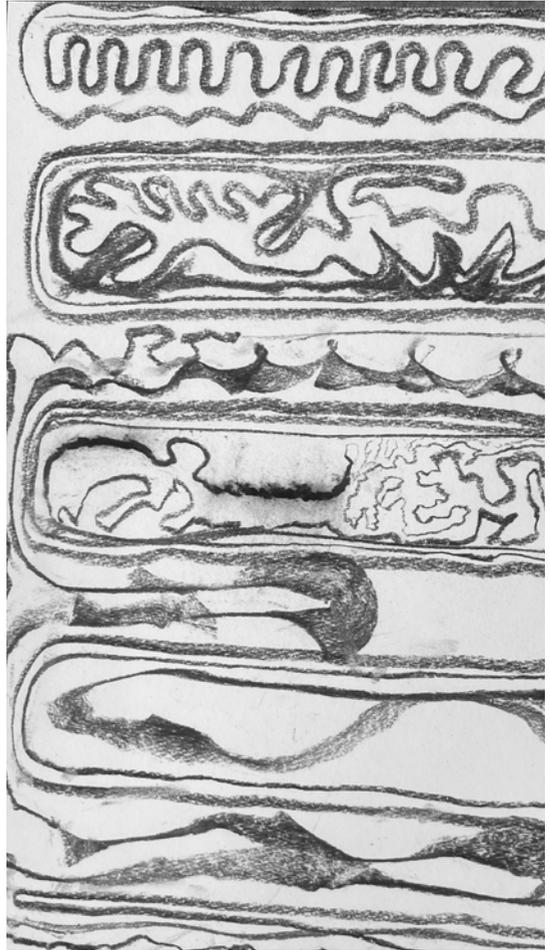
**When the Drawings are Speaking Back**  
What do the drawings try to tell us?











## Challenges

During the workshops, several challenges emerged that made me reflect more deeply on my role as a facilitator and on the drawing process itself. One recurring tension was finding the balance between guidance and openness, how much structure to offer, and how much freedom to leave for participants' own exploration. At times, I questioned whether my guidance was even necessary, or if some exercises were too tightly framed, unintentionally limiting participants' freedom to experiment. When are limitations well balanced and serve the artistic process? I think it is this tension between those opposites and contradictions that I would like to further investigate.

I observed how each person engaged with the tasks in their own way. Based on the feedback, it became clear that drawing is an incredibly personal process, shaped by individual preferences, sensitivities, and levels of comfort. Some participants felt overwhelmed by too much freedom, describing it as disorienting or unclear. Others found structured exercises too controlling, limiting their sense of self-expression. This made me realize that there is no single right approach, and that the workshop space must remain flexible, capable of holding different needs at once.

Another challenge involved managing participants' expectations and moments of resistance. My instinct as an facilitator is often to maintain harmony in the room, but I've learned that this is not always possible or even desirable. Resistance can be a meaningful part of the process. Being confronted, both as facilitator and participant, can open space for reflection, dialogue, and growth. Throughout the different pilot studies and the final workshop, I came to understand that working in a group setting involves relational complexities, each person relates differently to one another, to the space, the subject, the process, and the facilitation.

These moments taught me the importance of staying grounded and present, while allowing imperfections and discomfort to surface without rushing to resolve them. This ties back to adrienne maree brown's advice to let go of control and release expectations about outcomes, creating space for the group to find its own path. As she writes, "Release your way to feel the way" (Brown, 2021).

## Learnings & Findings

This final workshop offered valuable insights, especially around the tension between structure and freedom, a dynamic that has an affect on experimentation and the artistic process. The material and hands-on activation invited attention in to the process. One of the most meaningful aspects was the shared experience of drawing together: the sense of presence, connection, and mutual listening that unfolded in the group.

I was also reminded of how deeply personal and diverse the artistic process is. Each participant brought their own way of approaching the exercises and their own philosophies, resulting in a wide range of expressions and reflections. Witnessing this diversity and listening to how others experienced the process deepened my understanding of the many ways drawing can be engaged with, both as a practice and as a way of being. I observed how experimentation took place from one drawing to another, there was a connection between each drawing. Like a chain reaction of ideas and how to work with the material. This workshop brought valuable critical reflections towards better understand my practice and facilitation methods.

## Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework draws from multiple intersecting fields, including art education, spirituality, anthropology, activism, and embodied creative practices. My inquiry is informed by thinkers such as bell hooks, adrienne maree brown, Shawn Wilson, Tim Ingold, Paul Klee, and more. These voices collectively influenced and support my practice-led approach to research.

The different thinkers and theories I engaged with were companions not only in this research, but also throughout my daily life. Some have been with me long before the research began, while others became more present at different stages of the journey. In this research project, the theoretical framework plays an inspirational and supportive role. Since the practical experiments were central in generating insights, I chose to present the theoretical framework after the practice-based chapters, allowing it to reflect back on and deepen the understanding of what emerged through doing.

## Teaching Community & Spirituality in Education

bell hooks is one of the most important figures who inspired this research. Her book *Teaching Community, Teaching to Transgress* and *all about love* deeply touched me during my studies at MEiA and shaped the way I see education and love. Her emphasis on building community in educational spaces and honoring the spirit of both teachers and learners directly informed the way I design and hold my drawing workshops.

Hooks describes the classroom as a sacred space, and teaching as a calling, something lived in every moment, not just within formal educational walls. In *Teaching Community*, she writes:

“We can’t begin to talk about spirituality in education until we talk about what it means to have a life in the spirit. So we are not just teachers when we enter our classroom, but are teachers in every moment of our lives.” This helped me understand teaching as a continuous ethical and vo-

cational practice, one rooted in presence, care, and responsibility. When I began hosting drawing workshops, I noticed that guiding came naturally to me, almost effortlessly. I had never experienced that feeling before, but I immediately felt comfortable and at ease in the role of the teacher. It felt like a calling, and I remember feeling deeply fulfilled by the thought of inspiring others or helping them find their path. This sense of purpose was one of the key reasons I chose to pursue the MEiA program.

Hooks also writes about her teachers at the black school she went to when she was young, describing how they were committed to nurturing their intellect so they could become scholars and thinkers. Her teachers were enacting a revolutionary pedagogy of resistance that was anticolonial. How did they do that? By deeply knowing their students, their background and situation:

“They knew our parents, our economic status, where we worshipped, what our homes were like, and how we were treated in the family.”

I was so impressed by that political and intimate approach to education and it made me wonder how important are close relationships between teachers and students? How does revolutionary pedagogy look today? What would education look like if we would really know each other?

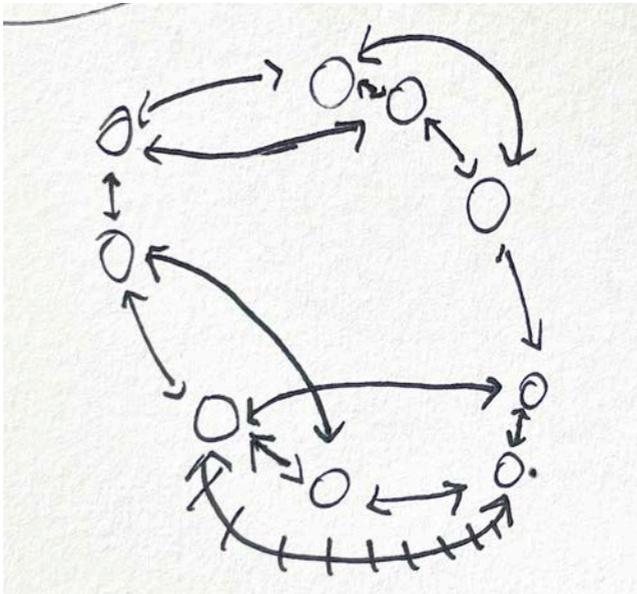
Hooks' lived experience influenced how I shaped my first pedagogical experiment during my first year at MEiA: a workshop in Caglar's class where participants including myself engaged in a sharing food ritual, where we asked each other personal questions in pairs, rotating after 10 min, a bit like speed dating but by skipping the small talk. The intention was to break down social barriers and create a sense of closeness, intimacy, vulnerability and trust. A slightly adapted version of the same workshop, this time including a drawing component was part of Pilot Study 1 at the art residency in Italy, where relationship-building was central to the learning experience. It was an exciting experiment, as the participating artists didn't know each other beforehand, yet the workshop guided them into deeper conversations, shared drawing, and a food ritual. The residents responded with openness and trust, sharing personal and vulnerable stories that broke the ice and enriched the collective experience.

Another key influence from hooks is her awareness of the political potential of education. She sees teaching as a form of activism, a way to confront systems of oppression and reimagine how we relate to one another. I carry this into my own work by trying to create spaces where people not only feel safe and seen, but are also gently invited to confront deeper layers of their being. My workshops aim to peel back social conditioning and spark reflection on what connects us beyond our external identities, cultivating a shared presence and sense of oneness.

I explored this idea through an exercise used both during the Pilot 1 at the art residency and Pilot 2 in the classroom at ArtEZ: drawing a portrait without looking at the paper. In this activity, participants rotate through multiple pairings and were invited to observe one another in silence. This often leads to a moment of eye gazing and observation, encouraging a non verbal connection and communication between them. The exercise raises important questions: How do we relate to one another simply through eye contact? What do we see or feel in the presence of another person without words, assumptions and judgements? How do we connect on a purely human level, beyond roles, expectations, or identity? Many participants mentioned how intimate this moment was by just looking at each other for 2 minutes. Some experience it as a deeply vulnerable space, one where it's difficult to hide behind behavior patterns or wear a mask.

## Thinking Through Making

Tim Ingold's book *Making* (2013) offers a powerful rethinking of how we come to know the world not through abstract thought, but through the act of making itself. With his work Ingold is challenging the idea of traditional separation between the mind and hand, theory and practice in higher education. "ways of thinking through making, as opposed to the making through thinking that, in institutions of higher education, has tended to place theorists and practitioners on opposite sides of the academic fence." (Ingold, 2013 p. preface) Reading his work



you need  
others  
& each other

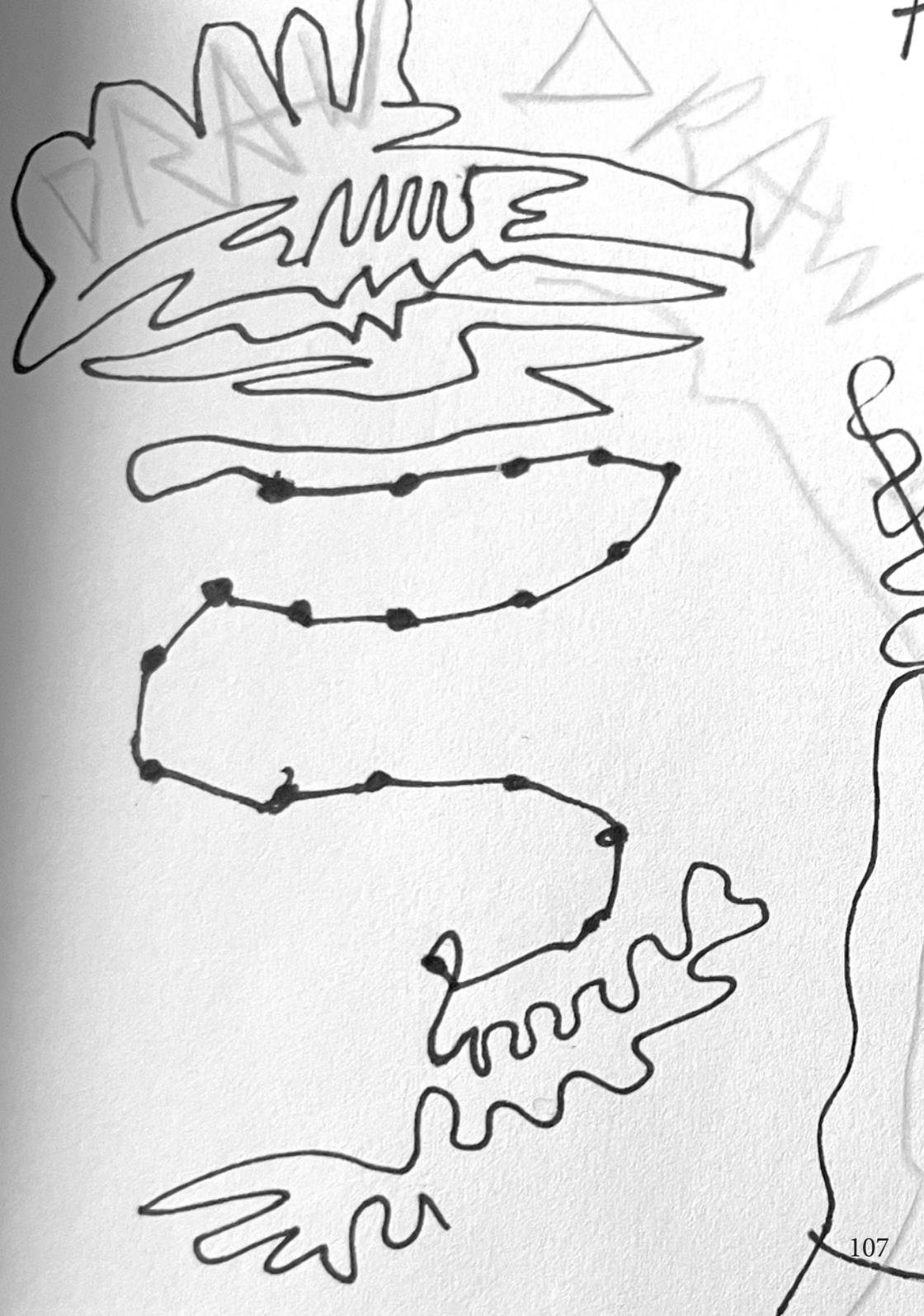
A hand-drawn sketch of a hand holding a pen, positioned as if writing. Below the sketch, the text "you need others & each other" is written in a cursive, handwritten style. A small circle is drawn around the word "others".

made me reflect on my own artistic process—how new ideas and inspiration often emerged while I was drawing or painting, thinking already about the next one. In my workshop practice, knowledge is also emerges in the making process while drawing, moving, touching, experimenting, not before. There is a constant communication happening between the drawer, the drawing tool, and the lines created on paper in the present moment and some special energy is present during the act of creating.

Central to this is self-discovery. Ingold writes: “The only way you can really know things that is, from the very inside of one’s being—is through a process of self-discovery.” (Ingold, 2013 p.1) This speaks to the heart of my research and artistic practice: how drawing, when approached meditatively and openly, becomes a tool for exploration. I never went to art school, drawing and painting was a process of self-discovery through practice, exploration and experimentation. In my workshops, the goal is not to teach drawing skills, but to cultivate sensitivities and encourage self-discovery. I ask: what happens when the focus is not on representation, but on relationship—with the self, with the other, with the material or with the present moment?

In this way, artistic process in my workshops is not about invention, but about being in process, a slow unfolding of self-discovered knowing. The drawing is not a product; it’s a trace of an experience, encounter, a reflection of the evolving relationship between human, the self, material, and environment. Ingold’s thinking supports the idea that making is not something we do to the world, but something we do with it, an act of becoming and learning.

A funny culinary example Ingold gives in his lecture *Making Growing Learning* (2011) with the preparation of a Moray sauce. He explains that a written recipe is not yet knowledge, it only becomes real when someone cooks it: tasting, adjusting, sensing, and responding through action.



This directly connects to my own lived experience of learning how to cook not by watching my mother. She would never let me help her cook and say “watch and learn”. Well guess what, I didn’t learn how to cook until I moved out of the family house. I learned how to cook by actually trying it myself, failing, calling my mother, repeating, improvising and adjusting. Similarly, in learning how to draw will not happen by someone only telling you, you need to do it yourself. The hand moves, the material resists, the body responds and something new comes into being. This is learning through enactment. Participants mentioned in the last workshop how they adjusted their drawings along the way, everyone discovered different insights but they all came up during the process of making.

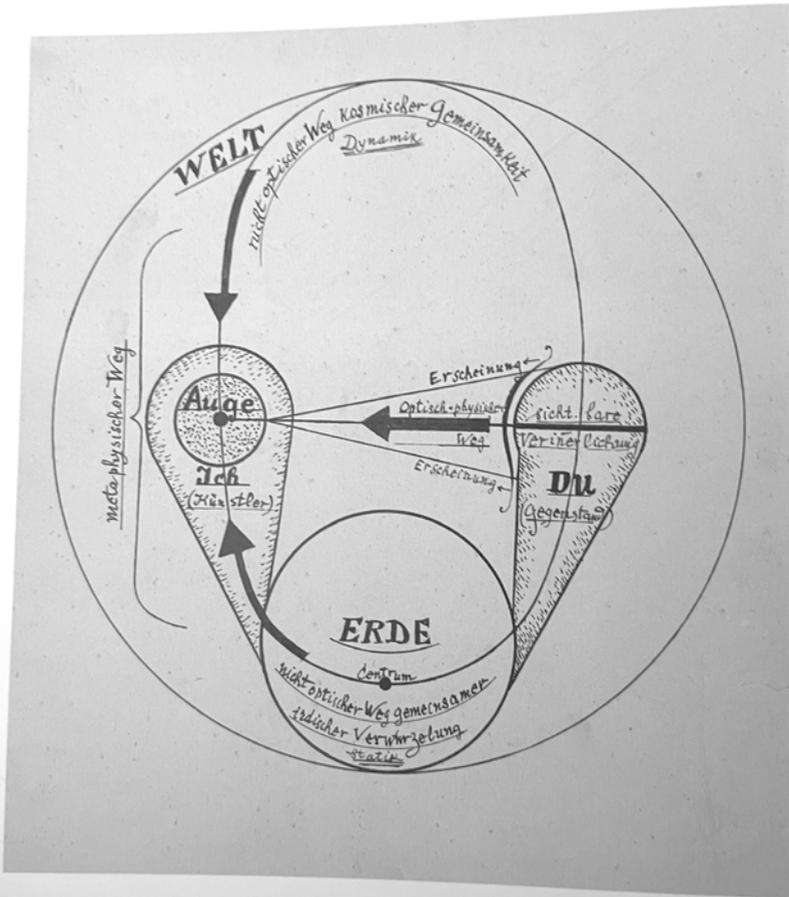
By grounding my workshops in these ideas, I aimed to support a kind of learning that is felt, lived, and discovered, an approach that mirrors Ingold’s notion that making is not about imposing form on matter, but about joining with the world in a process of becoming.

## Paul Klee & The Spirit of The Bauhaus

The spiritual dimension of Paul Klee’s work and the early Bauhaus teachings came as a somewhat unexpected discovery during my research. Klee viewed drawing not as a technique to depict reality, but as a way to make the invisible visible to reveal movement, rhythm, energy, and the internal forces shaping the world. (Thames & Hudson, 2018) His approach is how I understand drawing: not just as a visual outcome, but as a means to access something deeper, an intuitive, energetic expression of being.

What particularly struck me was the Bauhaus emphasis on inner alignment before creation. Practices such as meditation, breathwork, and movement exercises were integrated into their teaching to help students connect with themselves before engaging with material and with creating. (Thames & Hudson, 2018)

This pedagogical attention to the inner state of the student closely mirrors the ritual based structure of my own workshops.



30

Paul Klee  
 Illustration from Ways  
 of Nature Study, 1923  
 Pen on paper on card

Zentrum Paul Klee,  
 Berne

Before each session, I begin with a short guided meditation, inviting participants to shift from thinking into feeling centering themselves and becoming present. This moment helps regulate the nervous system and the different energy levels that people bring into the space. It creates a shared atmosphere of calm and attentiveness. I've observed that even a few minutes of stillness before drawing allows participants to enter the creative process more openly, with greater sensitivity and focus. These moments set the tone for drawing as a meditative act.

In my practice, I often move quietly through the space, speaking to participants in a soft, mantra-like voice. Rather than giving direct instruction, I aim to gently guide them away from overthinking and into a non-judgmental state where trust can lead the creative process. It's about helping them shift from self-doubt to presence, supporting a state of being rather than teaching technique. At times, I feel like a monk, walking in a meditative trance. Participants often mention the calming effect of my voice. One shared how they were caught in self-criticism until I passed by and reminded them, "You're drawing only for yourself," or "Embrace the imperfections, lean into the uncertainty."

Reflecting on the Bauhaus practices also led me to question the absence of spirituality in much of today's Western higher art education. Why did this spiritual approach so central in the early 20th century fade from institutional settings after World War II? What would it mean for contemporary education if we treated the student's inner life not as a distraction, but as a vital part of the artistic and learning process?

## On Facilitation

adrienne maree brown's work, particularly in *Holding Change*, has been a significant influence on how I approach facilitation, relational space holding, and educational responsibility. They write about creating spaces that are responsive, inclusive, and rooted in

collective care, encourages me to trust my intuition and adapt in real time to the needs and energy of a group (Brown, 2021). Their work made me understand the complexities of people, relationships and group dynamics. Brown's writing inspired me to revisit my own facilitation methods and approach. It made me critically reflect on my on role, behavior and how I could become a better facilitator. It motivated me to know that I can create meaningful change on a micro level and contribute to social justice.

Brown emphasizes that facilitators are not directors, but stewards of collective experience. (2021) This has helped me reframe my role, not as someone who leads from the front, but as someone who listens, observes, and supports what wants to emerge in the space. During the art residency in Italy (Pilot Study 1), I experienced this in practice: I noticed how important it was to sense the group's energy and adapt intuitively, sometimes shifting the rhythm, changing the exercise, or holding space for a moment of silence. These micro adjustments, guided by presence rather than planning, made a real difference in how the group connected and opened up. I also experienced during that time that it is not about me or what I want to achieve but more about the needs of the group and people I live and work with. This made it also easier to be okay if something doesn't go the way I envisioned it to be.

Brown's facilitation principles are rooted in radical hospitality, the act of creating spaces where everyone feels welcome, seen, and safe. This is especially important in my own practice, where I aim to include and uplift underrepresented voices. Her activist approach to education has affirmed for me that pedagogy can and should be a political act: not in the sense of ideology, but in how we choose to relate to others, how we build trust, and how we create spaces where vulnerability and expression are not only allowed but supported.

Their work has shown me that creating space is not a neutral act, it is a deeply intentional practice that holds the potential to transform how we learn, create, and relate. It reinforces my belief that drawing workshops are not only artistic experiences, but also opportunities to practice presence, empathy, and communal care.

## Indigenous Research Methods

Shawn Wilson's book *Research is Ceremony* introduced a radically different way of understanding research, one that shifted the foundation of how I relate to knowledge making. His Indigenous research methods centers on relational accountability: the idea that research is not about extracting knowledge, but about honoring relationships with people, with land, with spirit, and with the topic itself. (2008) This approach challenged my assumptions about what research should be and affirmed many things I intuitively felt but had not seen reflected in dominant academic models.

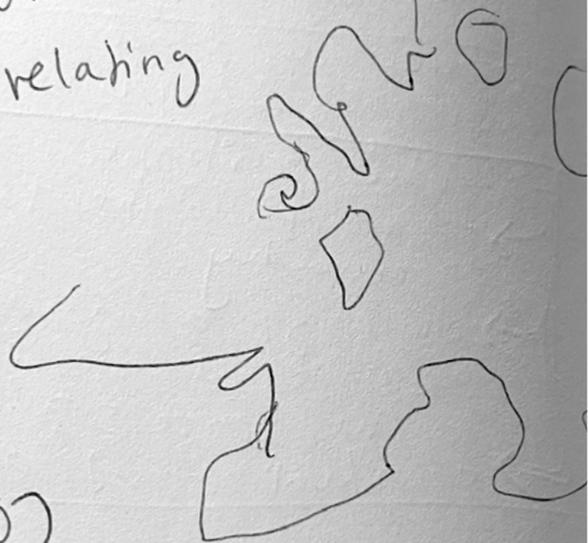
His invitation to view research as ceremony validated the intuitive, embodied, and relational methods I use in my drawing workshops, where the focus is not on analysis, but on being with the process, with others, and with oneself.

A personal moment that brought Wilson's insights to life occurred at a panel talk at the Stedelijk Museum, where Moluccan Dutch speakers including my bro Markus Sacharias were invited to present. The format microphones, spotlights, and a rigid stage setup felt ill suited and not respectful to the gentle, culturally grounded presence of some of the speakers. Their discomfort made something very clear to me: why must diverse voices adapt to Western dominant formats, rather than the format adapting to the voices? This experience echoed Wilson's critique of extractive, colonial research practices and deepened my commitment to challenging dominant structures within my own work.

~~Hand~~

What is  
connection? ~~to~~

What is relation  
relating

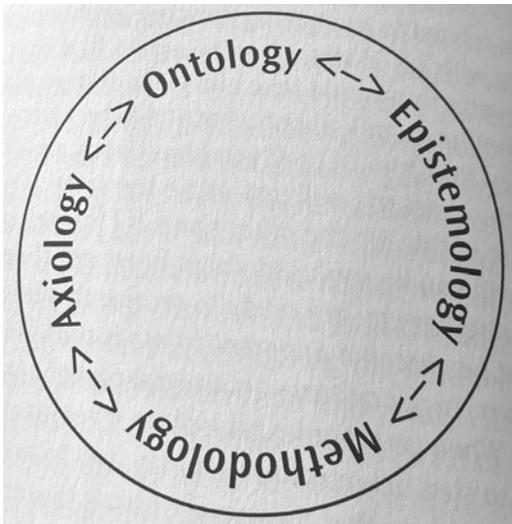


Drawing  
as a form of  
teaching

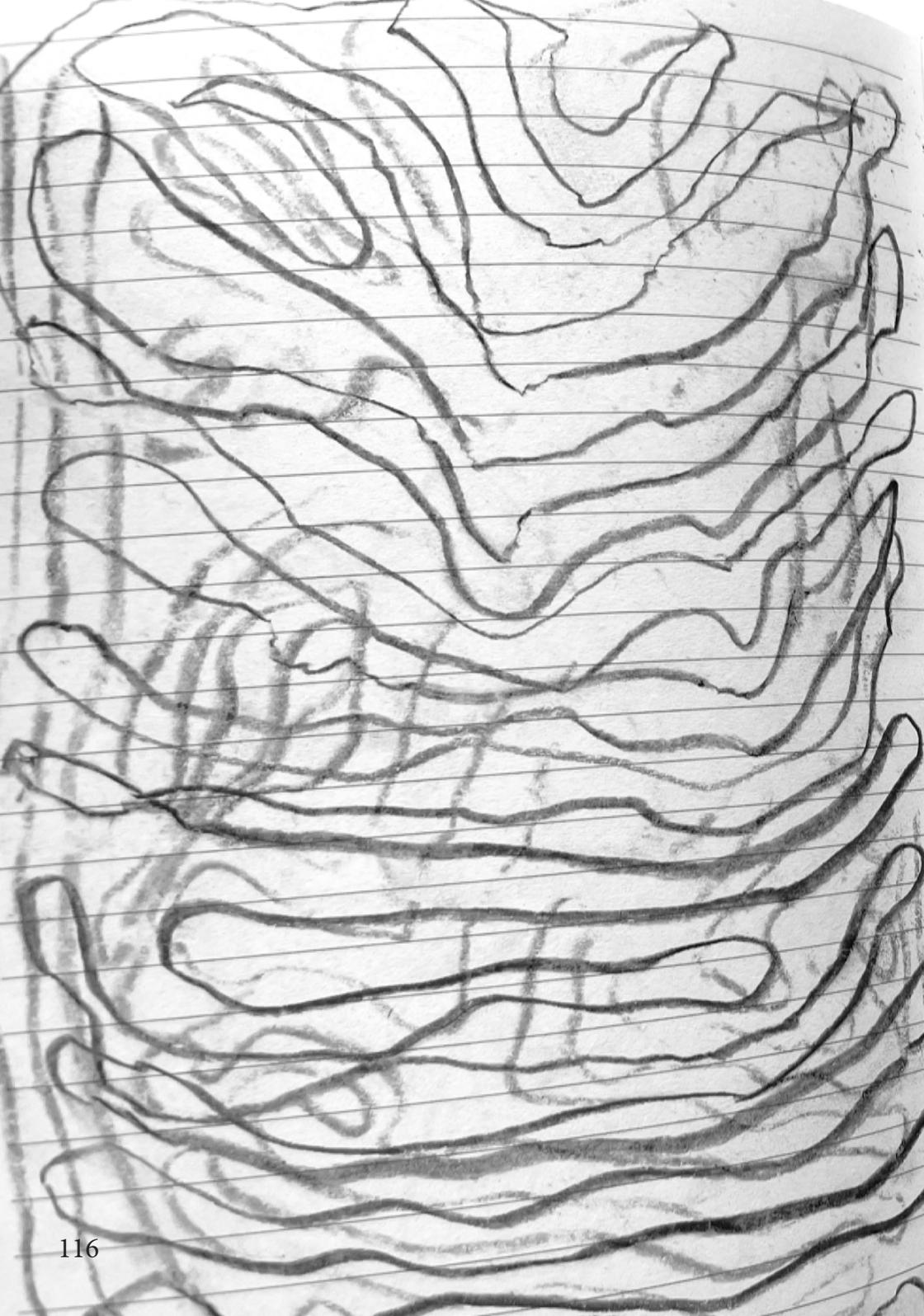
What is  
my role?

Instead of forcing participants into formal evaluation or performance, I tried to hold space in ways that reflected care, presence, and mutual respect. Through Wilson I began to honor relational ways of knowing through drawing, listening, and sharing. By framing the workshop as a living, co-created space, I move closer to what Wilson describes as a ceremonial approach to research: one that is deeply situated, accountable, and alive with meaning (2008).

These thinkers shaped my theoretical framework and became companions throughout my research journey. I was naturally drawn to those with whom I felt a connection, yet their work challenged me to look deeper and more attentively. Their perspectives informed several workshop experiments and supported a view of drawing not just as an artistic act, but as a relational, intuitive, spiritual, and embodied way of knowing.









## **There is no end only transformation** (Conclusive thoughts and new chapters)

This research has been an exciting and deeply meaningful journey, one that feels less like an ending and more like an unfolding. Along the way, I touched the core of my practice and dove deeper into the guiding questions: How can drawing become a space for attention, presence, and experimentation? What conditions allow intuitive processes to emerge, both individually and collectively?

Based on the pilot studies and workshops I conducted, I observed that attention and presence have the potential to be cultivated through drawing, but this depends on many factors, especially the personal approach, inner state, and openness of each participant. The meditative entry, the embodied act of making, and the tactile engagement with material invited participants into deeper states of concentration and awareness. Drawing became a tool for tuning into the now, encouraging inward attentiveness.

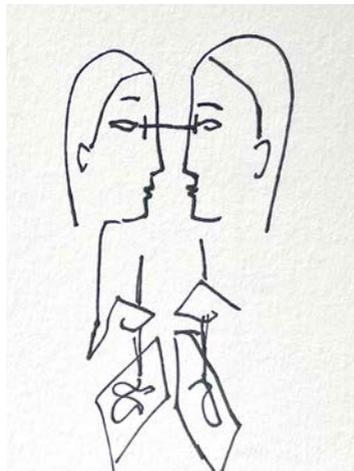
Experimentation was visible throughout all three workshops. It appeared in unexpected outcomes, shifts in method, and moments of artistic risk. This reflects Tim Ingold's (2013) idea that thinking and learning emerge through making. Knowledge, he argues, is not transferred but enacted, formed through the body in motion and in direct relationship with material. I witnessed this firsthand: participants often shared that new ideas or perspectives arose during the drawing process, rather than beforehand. This supports Ingold's view that artistic expression is not planned, but discovered in the unfolding of the moment.

I also observed how community can arise organically when care, openness, and shared experience are present. During the art residency in particular, I learned that community cannot be forced but it can be invited. Through the creation of relational spaces, rooted in mutual respect and vulnerability participants began to relate more openly to themselves and to one another. Group dynamics, energy in the space, and small gestures such as drawing or eating together allowed moments of communion to emerge naturally.

Each workshop, each drawing, and each conversation offered valuable insights. I learned through doing, through being with others, with materials, and with uncertainty. The participants' trust and openness played a vital role in shaping this process. What emerged was not a singular answer, but a constellation of understandings about what it takes for intuitive, embodied, and relational learning to unfold.

At the same time, I recognize the limitations of this research. The findings are not conclusive, and a more in depth, long-term engagement would be needed to fully understand the impact of this approach, particularly in relation to well being and artistic development. However, I can say with certainty that the conditions created during these workshops allowed something meaningful to emerge.

Rather than closing a question, this research has opened many more which are directions for future exploration. It has shown me that attention, presence, and experimentation are not fixed or guaranteed, they are emergent, relational, and dependent on context. They arise when we listen deeply, stay flexible, and create space for what wants to unfold. In this way, the conclusion is not an end, but an invitation to continue. This is just one chapter of a much larger, ongoing inquiry into drawing, into artistic processes, into education, and into what it means to come into presence together.



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# Appendix

## Glossary

ACTIVISM	DANCING	GIVING
AGENCY	DARING	GLOW
AMBIGUITY	DECOLONIAL	GRIP
ANTIRACISM	DEPTH	GROUP
ARCHIVE	DEVELOPMENT	GROUNDING
ATTENTION	DIFFERENT	GROWTH
ATTUNED	DISCOVERY	GUEST
AWARENESS	DISCUSSION	HEALING
BEING	DRAWING	HESITATION
BELIEVE	DREAMING	HOLLISTIC
BODY	DYNAMICS	HOME
BOLDNESS	ENACTMENT	HOMO SAPIENS
BOREDOM	ENGAGEMENT	HONORING
BOUNDARIES	ENERGY	HOSPITALITY
BREATH	EQUALITY	HUMAN
BUSINESS	EMPOWERMENT	IDENTITY
CALMNESS	ETHICAL	IGNORANCE
CARE	EVERYWHERE	INDIVIDUAL
CAPITALISM	EXPRESSION	INFINITE
CENTERED	EXPECTATION	INFORMED
CHANGE	EXPERIENCE	INWARDS
CHARCOAL	EXPERIMENTATION	INTENTION
COLLABORATION	EVALUATING	INTERCONNECTEDNESS
COLLECTIVE	FAMILY	INTIMACY
COMPASS	FALLING	INTUITION
COMMUNITY	FEELING	INSIGHTS
CONDITIONS	FINDING	IMPERFECTION
CONNECTION	FIRE	IMPROVISATION
CONTRAST	FLOW	IMSOMNIA
CONSIDERATION	FOCUS	IN THE NOW
CONVERSATION	FREEDOM	JOY
COPING	GATHERING	JOURNEY
CREATING	GENERATIONAL	JUXTAPOSITION
CULTURE	GESTURE	KEEPING
	GIFT	LAYERS

LAUGHTER  
LEVELS  
LIBERATION  
LIGTHNESS  
LIMITATION  
LSITENING  
LOVE  
MAKING  
MANIFESTATION  
MATERIAL  
MEANINGFUL  
MEANDARING  
MEDITATION  
MORALS  
MOMENT  
MOVEMENT  
MYSTERY  
NARRATIVE  
NATURAL  
NAVIGATING  
NEST  
NOW  
NON HUMAN  
NURTURING  
NOWHERE  
ONENESS  
OPENNESS  
ORGANIC  
OTHERNESS  
OVERCOME  
PAPER  
PATH  
PENCIL  
PERCEPTION  
PROCESS

POWER  
PRESENCE  
QUESTIONS  
READING  
REFLECTION  
RELATIONALITY  
RELATIONSHIPS  
REPETITION  
RESOURCES  
REST  
RESISTANCE  
RITUAL  
ROOM  
ROUNDNESS  
TALKING  
TESTING  
TOGETHERNESS  
TOOL  
TOUCH  
TRANSCENDING  
TRANSFORMATION  
TRAVELLING  
TUNE IN  
SALT  
SEEING  
SELF INQUIRY  
SENSIBILITY  
SENSORY  
SHARING  
SLOWNESS  
SOLITUDE  
SPACE  
SPIRIT  
SPIRITUALITY  
STIMULATION

STORY TELLING  
SUPPORT  
SYNERGY  
UNFOLDING  
UNMANIFEST  
VULNERABILITY  
VASTNESS  
WANDERER  
WELCOME  
WHY  
WONDERING  
XENOPHILIA  
ZOOM IN

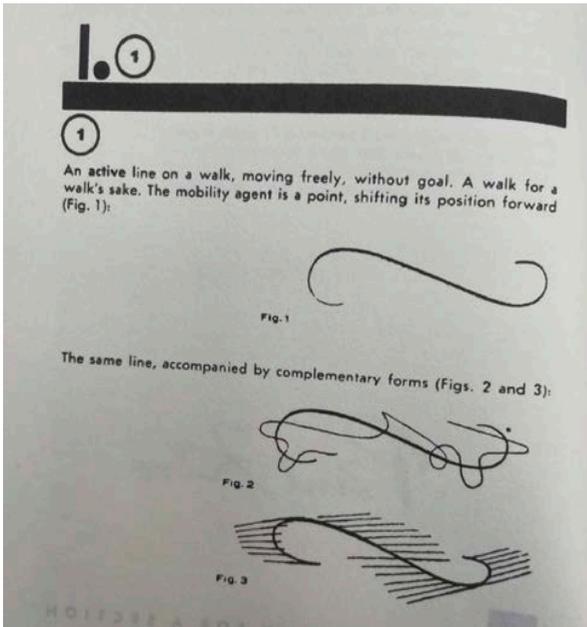
## What is drawing?

I recently watched a documentary about the origins of writing and was struck by how ancient scripts evolved from drawings visual symbols gradually simplified into letters. The very alphabet we use today is rooted in images. It reminded me that drawing may be our earliest form of expression, a visual language that came before words. Could this form of artistic expression be deeply ingrained in our human culture?

Paul Klee's poetic description of the line, taken from his Pedagogical Sketchbook, has always stayed with me. It speaks of movement, transformation, and the energy that flows through making. This quote inspired me early on as an artist to explore the line not just as form, but as an extension of the body, a trace of inner movement. In my studio, I experimented for years with different ways of drawing lines, observing their quality, the rhythm of my gestures, and the state I was in while creating them. Through this, I gradually came to understand that drawing is more than just a technical skill — it is a form of self-inquiry and a way to make the invisible visible. It offers a means of getting to know oneself, others, and the world around us.

Across the many workshops I've facilitated over the years, I've never seen two drawings alike. Each time, something new surfaced. I've come to see drawing as a deeply personal expression, shaped by the drawer's body, mind, and subconscious. It's more than what the eyes can see; it's a filter of lived experience, an imprint of presence.

Drawing invites us to enter a space of curiosity, play, and surrender. It can be joyful, but also challenging, much like life. And yet, in those moments when we're fully immersed, when time slips away and we're simply in the act of creating, there is a sense of freedom. A space to wander, to wonder, and to just be.



## Drawing as a Pedagogical Tool

Through conversations and self-observation, I've come to understand that drawing can be a form of dialogue, a quiet exchange between the subject and the self or between the self and the self. Whether it's an object, a landscape, or a person, what is being drawn seems to speak back. In this way, drawing becomes a method of communication, a way of relating to the world, while also discovering something within ourselves.

Beyond the personal, drawing also holds potential as a pedagogical tool, creating space for both self-reflection and interpersonal connection. In educational settings, drawing exercises can cultivate deeper relationships between students and teachers, allowing them to meet each other beyond academic roles. In one workshop at ArtEZ, first-year art students engaged in portrait drawing, where the focus was not just on technique, but on presence and mutual observation, getting to know each other in an embodied way.

