

### Drawing Texts

EDITED BY JAMES SAVAGE

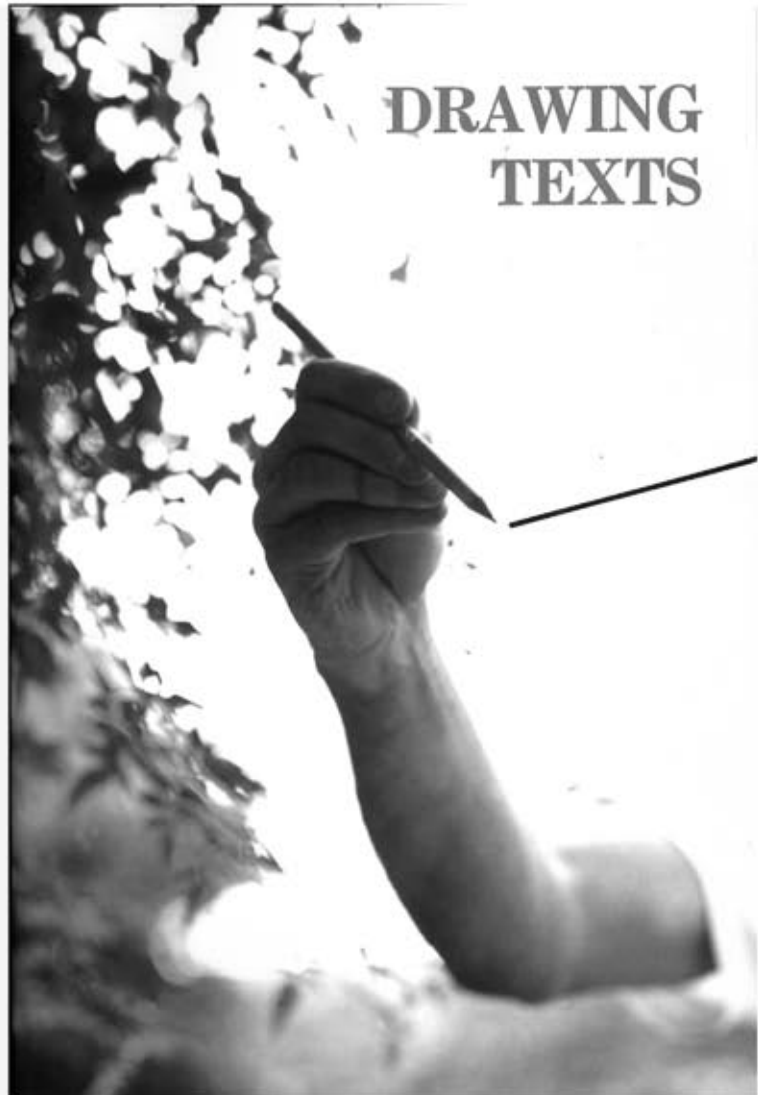
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Bernadette Madden

A glimpse into an artist's sketchbook is often a glimpse into a very private world. Most artists use sketch/note books of some kind; thoughts and ideas are jotted down in the form of drawings, coloured sketches, words, and photographs. Martin Gale notes in *Drawing Texts*: 'Most artists I know seem to be surprisingly secretive about their drawings. Or at least reluctant to show them, either publicly or to each other.' Perhaps this is because a drawing is an artist's handwriting, thus a sketchbook is a diary and often very personal. However, this kind of drawing – as a memory aid or record-taker – is just one type and in *Drawing Texts*, the editor, Jim Savage, has gathered together fifty-one contributors, ranging from those who actually make drawings to those who curate and comment. The importance of drawing for all of these practitioners is interesting (I wonder if any artist refused to participate on the basis that they had no use for drawing?). There are those who draw all the time; those like Charles Tyrrell who slide in and out of active involvement with drawing and who says 'at the moment I am not at it, just shooting from the hip with paint. Yet I do not regard myself as having stopped, it's just that drawing is active at a different level.' Jim Sheehy loves the 'primitive feeling when one drags a pencil, a piece of charcoal or a brush loaded with ink across a sheet of paper', and argues that this 'most basic human urge – the desire to feel and to touch and to leave a mark – will never be replaced by computer-manipulated imagery. And indeed how could a computer replace the 'drawn line, (which) with its capacity to cavort and pirouette, is inherently seminal.' ('Taking a Lion for a Walk', Michael Kane.)

For many artists drawing is a prelude to painting; for others drawing is the only way to get where they want to go. Bernadette Kiely charts her 'Growth by Drawing' from the days when as a child she sat drawing at the kitchen table, through her college days, work days, still drawing, until she reached the point where she is today – a highly sophisticated artist.



Before 1960, in Ireland, artists (and there were only two kinds – painters and sculptors) were trained in drawing before they were allowed to paint; first at the antique casts, then progressing to life drawing, and finally to 'real' art. In 'Drawing and Design', John Turpin charts the rise and fall of drawing from Renaissance days where it was 'the clearest indicator of the intellectual character of fine art, distinguishing it from an artisan craft activity' to today when it has become 'one of the many possible visual languages to be evaluated in its own terms.' Drawing for reproduction was an important skill up to the middle of the last century; book illustrations, theatre posters, fashion plates all needed good clear draughtsmanship as did map making, textile design, and lace

making. The barriers between drawing and painting now no longer exist where the making of art is concerned.

There are over 60 illustrations in this text which are often too small and unclear to make the transition, in reproduction, from colour to black and white. Line (pencil/ink) drawings such as Nick Miller's and Barrie Cooke's worked best in this respect. Some notable draughtsmen such as Carey Clarke, Ciaran Lennon, and James Hanly are omitted but as there is no indication in the book as to how the contributors were chosen, there may be a reason for this. Overall, this is a fascinating anthology, which gives a rare insight into the working practices of artists.

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