

Old House by the Sea: Sketching Personal and Planetary Phenomena through Expanded Drawing Old House

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Just at the edge of the sea in South Bay, Te Waero o te Hiku¹, Kaikōura², Aotearoa³ sits an old, run-down family house. It's a tiny shed-turned-home, clumsily hand-built by my grandfather in 1953. Earthquakes and southerly storms have battered its yellow painted 1950's optimism over the years, and it has become more like flotsam from the sea and reef than a statement of human resistance (Figure 1). The small, collapsing house seems to be in conversation with the vast ocean landscape immediately before it (Figure 2). The ominous potential for seismic rupture, in the immense undersea Kaikōura canyon, seems sketched by tiny ruptures in the fabric of the house - through its fractures, wear, incomplete memories: tiny inclusions in surface, dust, light, air, overgrown gardens, clumsy attempts at repair, Nana's notes in careful cursive ball-point pen, on her old photographs, recording fleeting events (Figure 3). These irresolute marks mirror gestures of weather systems, immense sea, dynamic tectonic plates.

OLD HOUSE'S SKETCH

Old House by the Sea sketches the strange architecture of this multi-scalar conversation. Personal and planetary gestures are caused to play across a seven-metre-long drawing, through fields of 'sketch creatures' (Figure 4). These are handmade sculptural elements, with each recalling an event, such as watching small boats carefully but urgently pick their way through the reef to escape an approaching southerly. They are sketched by composing objects in space—castings of the reef, personal photographs, surface imprints of the house, seismic diagrams, plans drawn by my grandfather—and supporting them on buckled, rusted wire (Figure 5). Each creature is balanced and adjusted, along with tiny mirrors, to encourage the fragments to speak to each other in strange ways. Fissures in a rock talk to eroded edges of paint in a rotted door frame, with fractured pieces of mirror scrutinising them in detail - wires buckled to support these arrangements tracing dynamics of weather, or the unexpectedness of seismic rupture (Figures 6,7). This way of sketching is an attempt to merge the fabric of the old house with the incompleteness of personal memory, and unknowable, imagined dynamics in the vast oceanic context.

The tiny creatures combine as a single sketch installation, where participants are invited to engage with the creatures closely, to read their fragile lines and strange associations, with each an imaginary portal to the oceanic world beyond them. Some creatures are literal portals that link to virtual sketch abstractions of the house and Kaikōura canyon, when viewed through a phone (Figure 8). The large paper sheet curves to enclose the installation, and acts as the ground, or perhaps sea bed, for wiry support lines and sketch creatures to hover free of the drawing surface. Participants in *Old House by the Sea* encounter specific viewpoints as they move within the installation, with arrays of tiny fractured mirrors giving partial glimpses of images, diagrams, and objects, drawing viewers in to the ‘thickened’ surface of the drawing, between creatures and paper (Figure 9). Shadows cast by the creatures during the making of the work in Aotearoa are sketched on the paper, and these converse with light and shadow in the Aarhus installation context. The seven-metre drawing is in some senses by the old house itself, with me as a co-author: its narratives, artefacts, images, and records, sketch its vast oceanic context, and with it, the house’s - and architecture’s - relation to the ‘natural’ world.

QUESTIONS

Old House by the Sea is part of a series of work expanding drawing’s capacity to give knowledge of ungraspable, unfixed characteristics through ‘inhabitable’⁴ drawing installations. The work takes the architectural sketch, with its inherent capacity to remain open, through its “... actions, of attraction, sense, permanent interruption, tension and intensity”⁵, and amplifies it: drawing’s power for indeterminacy and incomplete capture becomes a lens to explore ungraspable aspects of open spatial systems, such as natural phenomena. *Expanded Drawing* research plays with fundamentals of architectural drawing - its authorship, the space of drawing, the space drawing draws, its temporal, gestural, scalar, material dynamics; drawing’s intricate connection to worlds beyond it. Drawing’s relational complexities are intensified in immersive three-dimensional, multi-valent drawing installations. The work burrows into drawing’s inner workings, its architectural and artistic ways of knowing, and seeks to discover what expanded drawing might tell us about our intra-connection with the natural world, what architecture might be if made together in a shared sketch.

Expanded Drawing installations are not traditional architectural representations but open thinking drawings meshing performances of drawing’s subject matter with human drawing gestures and performances of material: “translational processes of constructing meaning by means of all senses”⁶.

These intimate entanglements create knowledge of ungraspable conditions, with knowledge emerging from “barely perceptible micro-movements at the cusp of awareness [...] where the figure ‘always remains at the edge of its own explicitness’”⁷. *Expanded Drawing* leverages architectural drawing’s open, intimate and complex processes to imagine what architecture might be if ‘sketched together’ by personal and planetary gestures. *Old House by the Sea*, as an *Expanded Drawing* work, asks: how might an old family house sketch vast oceanic atmospheres? What co-created architectures result? How would architectural drawing’s relations become jolted - to time, matter, concept, representation, and affect?

Old House by the Sea, expands drawing’s unruly performances, intersecting agencies of human and non-human participants, and *poiétic* scalar relations. The power of the architectural sketch to be open, a characteristic of drawing described by Jean Luc Nancy as “an essential incompleteness, a non-closure or non-totalizing of form”⁸ is directed to capture open complexities in the oceanic subject matter. The work recognises the sketch’s force - “... the blur and the multivalences of the sketch... the creative vitality of our profession depends on it ... (by deploying) the full utilisation of the sketch and its approximations ...”⁹. It also engages the capacity of the architectural sketch to be a portal, or a projection to another space and time, “which, as the etymology of *project* implies, is something thrown forward, representation awaiting existence, a statement of intention towards some artefact other than itself”¹⁰. So, each mark in a sketch is a portal, made in response to a space, or time, elsewhere.

The poetics of making marks, or lines, through gesture, thought and material, connects marks to poetics in the space they attempt to capture: “Architectural lines are material, spatial, cultural and temporal occurrences of refined multi-sensorial and emotional understandings of architecture”¹¹. In the case of *Old House by the Sea*, marks are made in three-dimensions in response to dynamic planetary subject matter. The first marks in the project were in response to the reef. The seven-metre paper ground was reclined over the reef and its interactions with the rocks rapidly sketched, through arcs of wire brush and black oxide (Figure 10,11). These gestures were in response to imagined movements, pressures and jolts in the submarine canyon landscape, and were reacted to by rocky forms creasing and buckling the paper, and impacting the flows of oxide (Figure 12). This formed a seven-metre smudged ‘line’ to ground the conversation between multiple marks in the sketch. The smudged and temporal intensities in this line, co-created by reef and drawer, seemed to resonate

with open natural systems at both miniature and vast scale, such as in molecular motion or gamma ray records of the milky way (Figure 13). This reef line acts as a ‘horizon’ and host to other gestural lines. Each field of creatures is a sweep, or line, arching across the paper, using a personal narrative and house artefacts to sketch an imagined ‘natural’ dynamic. A cluster of creatures with mirrors giving glimpses of the house washing line, for instance, is composed in space with a flurry of wires sketching dynamics of weather, through the ever-present urgency of drying clothes before a dramatic change in wind or sun (Figure 14). Events like this sweep across the paper, composed of images, rock castings, drawings and house artefacts. They are positioned with their backs towards the viewer, and only seen through fragmentary glimpses in the creatures’ mirrors, prompting viewers to be drawn into a thickened picture plane, between paper and hovering creatures. Each narrative, and series of elements, is a gestural mark or sweep across the paper, and when they encounter one another in the central horizon or reef line, they come into closer conversation with one another; fractures in a small reef rock align with immense geologic faults, curlicues of wire and seaweed resonate with intricate navigations of a small boat through the reef at low tide. The viewer, participant, or reader becomes part of the conversation ‘horizon’ which is generally at eye height.

The seven-metre sketch is part codex, or archive, part field of relations. It marks correspondences in time –with spasms of hand and graphite over paper, or bend of wire, resonating with the suddenness of seismic eruptions, curiously overlapping geologic time with time at human scale: unpredictable natural dynamics align to unplanned, irresolute, imperfect actions of sketching in three-dimensions. The *Old House by the Sea* work gives us a way of interacting human and other-than-human agency, in the drawing of architectural space. Personal gestures and the affordances and resistances of matter combine in the sketch in a poiétic ‘bringing forth’¹². *Poiésis* is linked to *technē*—the art of making –bringing something into being that did not exist before. It is also the etymological origin of poetry. Donna Haraway’s distinction to *poiésis*, which is relevant to our work and the agency of the planetary subject matter -*sympoiésis* - is a way to re-think our relations with other-than-human domains, ‘a way to re-think the entangled relations between human and other-than-human actants’¹³. In the work, we are interested in how matter pushes back, how sketches can be *sympoiétic*, ‘made together’ by human thought and action in concert with other-than human forces. *Old House by the Sea* is one example of how *sympoiétic*, smudged, irresolute capture can act as an imaginative portal, as a way to project an architectural acuity, or ‘sense-making’¹⁴ to other worlds, to intuit what Henri Bergson calls “absolute knowledge” through “entering into the thing that is other”¹⁵.

This ‘making together’ of space resonates with commentary on and critiques of the Anthropocene. Part of what emerges from the work is a sense that human intentionality and exceptionalism is deflected by the agency of things that are other-than-human. In making *Old House by the Sea* the unpredictable, irresolute, diverse aesthetics of the oceanic, planetary environment continuously impact human motivations. The sketches become vested with a shared pathos, between personal stories and those of the ocean, “haunted by the planetary effects of catastrophic change”¹⁶. This haunting infuses the work. The tiny old house seems to be returning to the environment, and in doing so, seems to prompt questions about our, and architecture’s, relation to it.

TRACES

*One must not lose sight of the invisible extremity of the mark [trait], the point by which the line advances and loses itself beyond itself in its own desire.*¹⁷

The tiny world of the old house, with its equally tiny personal dynamics, is a sketch of planetary and personal intra-relation, with its microclimate of memory, fracture and entropy prompting imaginary projection into the vast seismic atmosphere of the Kaikōura Canyon. Wiry lines sketched in space become influenced by rock fractures, tangled seaweed, intricate navigations of a small boat through the reef, and conflate with imagined seismic latency, oceanic immensity – combining with the house’s fragility, its sense of being ‘held together with wire’. *Old House by the Sea* researches open potentials in the sketch, the connectedness of architectural drawing to space beyond it, and our complex intra-connection to open natural systems. The work speculates on drawing’s potential to destabilise relations between us and the worlds being drawn, and with it, shift art and architecture towards new understandings.



Figure 1. Grandad Twose and old house, when new, South Bay, Kaikoura. 35mm slide by Nana Twose. (Photograph by author.)



Figure 2. Reef in front of old house, South Bay, Kaikoura. (Photograph by author.)

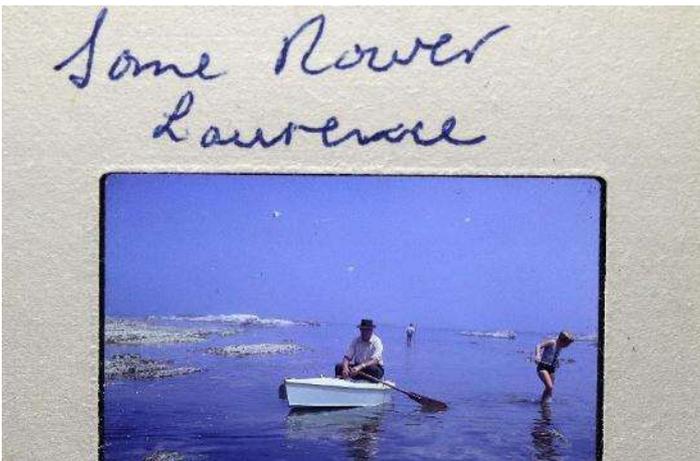


Figure 3. "Some Rower" (Laurence), South Bay, Kaikoura. 35mm slide by Nana Twose. (Photograph by author.)



Figure 4. 'Sketch creatures' (cluster of images, mirrors, shadows, drawings). (Photograph by author.)



Figure 5. 'Sketch creatures' (detail of buckled, rusted wire lines). (Photograph by author.)



Figure 6. 'Sketch creatures' (detail). (Photograph by author.)



Figure 7. 'Sketch creatures' (detail). (Photograph by author.)



Figure 8. Virtual Reality sketch environment of the old house. (Screen grab of VR by authors.)



Figure 9. 'Thickened' surface of the drawing. (Photograph by author.)



Figure 10. Sketching the line in response to reef. (Photograph by author.)



Figure 11. Sketched reef line installed in the studio, awaiting creatures. (360 Photograph by author.)

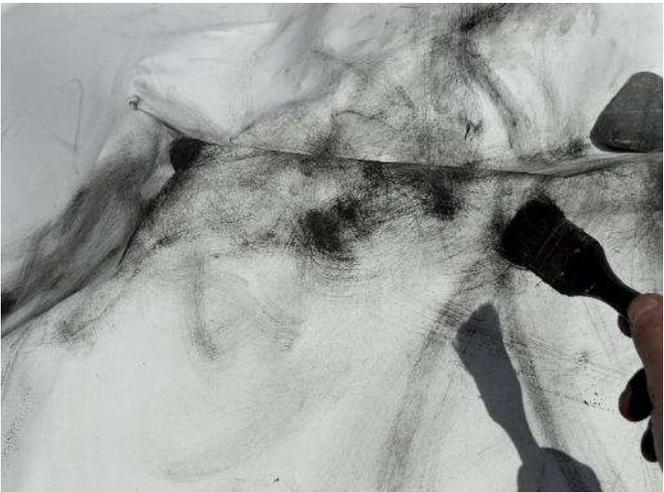


Figure 12. Flows of oxide and the hand in response to reef (Photograph by author.)



Figure 13. Gamma Ray image of galactic centre of Milky Way (MeerKAT radio telescope image, SARA0 South African Radio Astronomy Observatory. Credit: I. Heywood, SARA0 <https://www.sarao.ac.za/>)



Figure 14. Sketch creature in response to dynamics of weather. (Photograph by author.)

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Bios

Simon Twose is an architect and academic at Te Kura Waihanga School of Architecture, Te Herenga Waka, Victoria University of Wellington. He is interested in the open possibilities of architectural drawing, which he explores through spatio-temporal drawing installations. The most recent series, *Expanded Drawing*, explores space sketched by multiple entities: humans, matter, planetary phenomena, and digital intelligences. Twose has published and exhibited widely, including the Adam Art Gallery Te Pataka Toi, and invited contributions to five Venice Architecture Biennales.

Anastasia Globa is an academic working in the field of architecture, with strong research interests in algorithmic design, interactive systems and simulations. She researches computation, algorithmic form-making and integration of parametric modelling in architectural design. Her research focuses on innovative design methods for architecture that are enabled by computation and cutting-edge Virtual and Augmented Reality (AR/VR) technologies. She leads applied research involving physical and digital prototyping, advancing towards the creation of multi-sensory interactive VR and AR environments.

Notes

¹ Māori translate Te Waero o te Hiku as: ‘The fluke of a whale’, Michael Trotter, “Archaeology at South Bay, Kaikoura.” *Archaeology in New Zealand* 51 no. 1 (2009): (17-31).

² Kaikōura translates as: ‘eat crayfish’. “From Tama ki te Rangi’s feast on crayfish, the area was named, Te Ahi Kaikōura a Tama ki te Rangi – the fires where Tama ki te Rangi ate crayfish”, Te Rūnanga o Ngai Tahu, accessed 09 January 2026, <https://ngaitahu.iwi.nz/ngai-tahu/papatipu-runanga/kaikoura/ngati-kuringai-tahu-relationship-whales>.

³ Aotearoa is the official Māori name for New Zealand. It is commonly translated as: ‘land of the long white cloud’, ‘long bright world’ or ‘land of abiding day’. Jock Phillips, “Light - Experiencing New Zealand light” Te Ara - the Encyclopedia of New Zealand, accessed 09 January 2026, <http://www.TeAra.govt.nz/en/light/page-1>.

⁴ Fred Sandback quoted in Yves Bois, “A Drawing that is Habitable,” in *Fred Sandback*, ed. F Malsch, C Meyer-Stoll, (Hatje Cantz Verlag, 2005), 28.

⁵ Sara Clift, in Jean Luc Nancy, *The Pleasure in Drawing*, trans. Philip Armstrong (Fordham University Press, 2013), cover.

⁶ Jeanette Pacher in Nikolaus Gansterer, *Drawing as Thinking in Action*. (Drawing Lab, 2019), 1.

⁷ Alex Arteaga, “Researching Aesthetically the Roots of Aesthetics,” in *Choreo-Graphic Figures Deviations from the Line*, ed. Nikolaus Gansterer, Emma Cocker, Mariella Greil, (De Gruyter, 2017), 259.

⁸ Jean Luc Nancy, *The Pleasure in Drawing*, trans. Philip Armstrong (New York: Fordham University Press, 2013), 1.

⁹ Neil Spiller, “In Praise of the Blur,” *Architectural Design* 78 no.2 (2008): 133.

¹⁰ Ross Jenner, “Perplexity and Questioning: Design as a Mode of Thinking,” in *Perspectives on Architectural Design Research: What Matters, Who Cares, How*, ed. Jules Moloney Simon Twose and Jan Smitheram. (ADDR press, 2015), 21.

¹¹ Marco Frascari, “Lines as Architectural Thinking,” *Architectural Theory Review*, 14 no.3 (2009): 200–212.

¹² Martin Heidegger, *The Question Concerning Technology*, trans. William Lovitt (Harper & Row, 1977), 5.

¹³ Donna Haraway, *Staying with the Trouble* (Duke University Press, 2016), 4.

¹⁴ Nikolaus Gansterer, *Drawing as Thinking in Action* (Paris: Drawing Lab, 2019), 1.

¹⁵ Henri Bergson, *The Creative Mind*, trans. Mabelle Andison (The Citadel Press), 187.

¹⁶ Susan Ballard, *Art and Nature in the Anthropocene: Planetary Aesthetics* (Routledge, 2021), 21.

¹⁷ Jean Luc Nancy, *The Pleasure in Drawing*, trans. Philip Armstrong (New York: Fordham University Press, 2013), xiii