

Micro Relation Decodes: Movement, Boundaries and Materiality in Drawing

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Abstract

This research explores how drawing and tracing have evolved into critical tools in scientific and political discourse. Tracing, once seen as mere reproduction, now involves transferring conditions, engaging with past events, and addressing urgent issues –particularly within forensic aesthetics. The study questions the epistemological status of traces, framing them as ontologically significant in both artistic and technical production. Drawing is approached as a performative act that reveals unsensed or unconscious micro-events. It extends beyond the body.

The research aims to conceptualize how tracing and drawing converge through the re-visualization of invisible. The political agency of drawing and its dialogical potential between abstraction and grounded realities. Simultaneously, it considers the aesthetic and technical dimensions of drawing as a dynamic, non-standard process. Tracing is redefined as performative –through choreography, erasure and evolving imagery– opening new paths for engaging space, perception and meaning.

Keywords: tracing, micro relation, topography, drawing, performance

Introduction

According to the dictionary, drawing is the art or technique of producing images on a surface, usually paper, by making marks, typically with ink, graphite, chalk, charcoal, or crayon. Drawing involves tracing something [Hutter 2025]. However, as Jacques Derrida discusses in his groundbreaking project, drawing is not only about the physical, sensed world; it also involves a transformative process between the eye and the hand [Derrida 1990]. This transformation represents traces of the mind, which harbor various forms of becoming. Today, drawing extends beyond the body's territory, expanding its scope through scientific roles and contributing to political discourse. Tracing, in this context, changes the way we understand it. It is not merely about copying; it involves transferring something from one state or condition to another. The function of traces provides solutions to critical problems and addresses the questions

raised within epistemological frameworks, particularly those concerning forensic aesthetics. Traces in drawing are not only expanded to include memory but also serve as mechanisms for reflecting and addressing past events. When rereading a drawing, the basic act of tracing extends beyond its initial function, acquiring new layers of meaning. Drawing appears to oscillate between objectivity and instrumentality [Milani, Schoonderbeek 2010]. Tracing ephemeral lines allows us to perceive natural processes, giving material form to what was once immaterial [Bacon 2024]. This mode of understanding introduces a figural approach to drawing, one that enables a deeper engagement with the physical world and aids in navigating the complexities of imagery and interpretation. In this context, tracing becomes akin to a forensic method –functionalizing marks and reproducing them within the

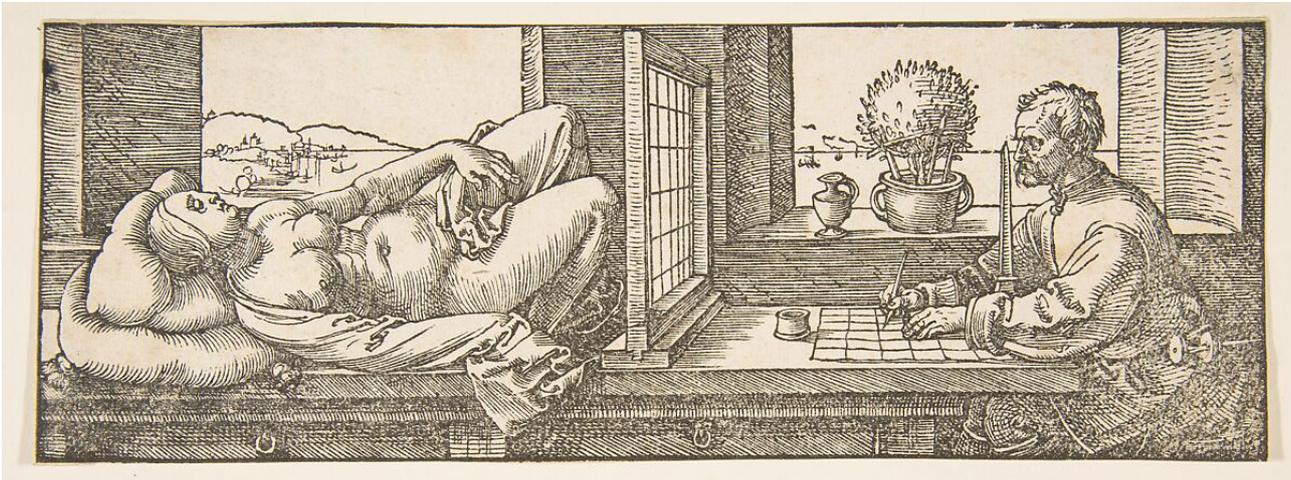


Fig. 1. Albert Durer, *Draftsman drawing a reclining nude*, c. 1527, woodcut. <<https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/366555>> (accessed 26 June 2025).

drawing environment as clues to past events, allowing for the investigation of hidden realities. Tracing, then, emerges as a tactical means of approaching truth.

Drawing serves not just as a medium for art but as a tool in various fields –data visualization, immersive technologies, mapping, scientific charts and more. Drawing can take place on a vast array of surfaces: paper, walls, sand, skin, screens and even in the sky or on water. It occurs in diverse settings, from artist studios to laboratories, archaeological sites and even in the streets and homes [Taylor 2020]. The extreme functioning of drawing amplifies the complexity of the image and the perception of it as a politics of everyday life. This evolving understanding of drawing is becoming not just a representation but an active participant in shaping concepts and benchmarks in both art and society.

Throughout the twentieth century, the core principles of drawing –essentially the trace of an action on a surface– have been tested, expanded and deconstructed, as artists explored new forms of drawing through performance, land art and soundscapes. Dexter identifies today, drawing takes on various forms, such as lines in sand, footprints in snow, or vapor trails in the sky [Dexter 2005]. Drawing serves as a means of perception, making the invisible visible by capturing anthropogenic traces and recording

micro-scale surface changes. It reveals unique continuities, linking seemingly independent transformations. Considering this, tracing/drawing not only runs parallel to traditional practices but also expands the ecological dimension of drawing, redefining the relationship between anthropogenic objects and subjects while broadening the graphic and abstract concept of drawing.

Viewing drawing through the act of tracing is not merely a material process; it also holds the potential to perform chaotic instances and reunite fragmented clues into newly investigated realities. By focusing on micro-relational aspects, this research highlights the continuity of traces, engaging both material and abstract dimensions within the experimental space of installation. This conceptual shift also redefines how tools are selected and used –allowing materials and their symbolic meanings to construct their own mythologies. Through this, the image is completed not solely through technique but through the perceptual rhythm between eye and mind, situated within a spatial framework. Conceptualizes drawing through tracing by making the invisible spatially perceptible and performative. It reconsiders drawing as a medium that captures moments of compression –intense, layered instants– thereby revisiting its role beyond representation. The study explores how tools and equipment become entangled in the production

of alternative realities, where drawing is no longer confined to figures on paper but emerges as a practice, a performance and an installation. It highlights drawing's ability to challenge controlled imagery and authoritative narratives. As a research method, the first part brings together drawing and trace through their shared proximity in reading, positioning them as witnesses to what is narrated. To enable this witnessing, the research constructs a stage that establishes the superstructural correspondences of the underlying meanings emerging from what is narrated. This stage, in turn, becomes a site of witnessing through the unfolding of the topic being discussed. In this context, the stage becomes a setting where, consequently, the ontology of the unique relationship that defines modern drawing practices is revisited and witnessing as a methodology introduces a new dialogic approach to the act of drawing itself.

This paper oscillates between literary interpretation and the act of practice, drawing from multiple perspectives conceptualized within the domains of drawing and tracing. The research initially expands the field of drawing by exploring its integrated relationship with the notion of trace. In the second part, it seeks to establish this perspective as both a methodological and instrumental framework, positioning witnessing as a central theoretical approach. The first section engages with the depth of the relationship between drawing practices and tracing, framing it as a form of witnessing. The second section addresses drawing's technical expansion as a site of compulsory witnessing, proposing a transformation in the conventional understanding of drawing materials and processes. These transformations reconfigure the conception of drawing through spatial and practical outcomes, offering a renewed dialogue between materiality, representation, and practice.

Conceptualizing drawing

Drawing is not primarily about space; rather, it is about capturing the fleeting nature of time. In Durer's drawing table construction, the grid is positioned perpendicularly to the ground, acting as a filter that captures surrounding movement (fig. 1). This serves as a mechanical system that preserves the traces of 'time' on the surface of the paper. Drawing equipment creates a unique experience of time. Grid is flattening the distance between viewer and viewing. The references and depth between things as defining time in physics is transferred on the grid.

Libeskind's drawing practice creates a constructive grammar by incorporating architectural mechanization, which leads to the formation of a unique language specific to his style (fig. 2). His approach views drawing not only as a way of exploring future possibilities but also as a way to recover and challenge a particular history. For him, a drawing is far more than just lines or the shadow of an object—it disrupts conventional ideas and moves beyond mere representation. "As much a prospective unfolding of future possibilities as it is a recovery of a particular history to whose intentions it testifies and whose limits it always challenges. In any case, a drawing is more than the shadow of an object, more than a pile of lines, more than a resignation to the inertia of convention" [Libeskind 2001, p. 84].

Whether deliberate or unintentional, every crack and scratch that materials exhibit as we interact with objects tells a story [Robbins et al. 2015]. In the 2010 online exhibition, drawing emerged as a space where performances—embodying physical actions reflective of elegant material tensions—were both frozen and transformed into new impressions. Notably, Lucio Fontana's *Spatial Concept* series, developed through environmental traces, demonstrated how a line can act as a trace of trauma and more (fig. 3) [Whitfield, Fontana, Gallery 1999]. This exhibition opens up numerous pathways for rethinking drawing, presenting it as a domain with its own ecology—a physical entity imbued with atmosphere and logic, where all these interrelated elements come together in a harmonious whole.

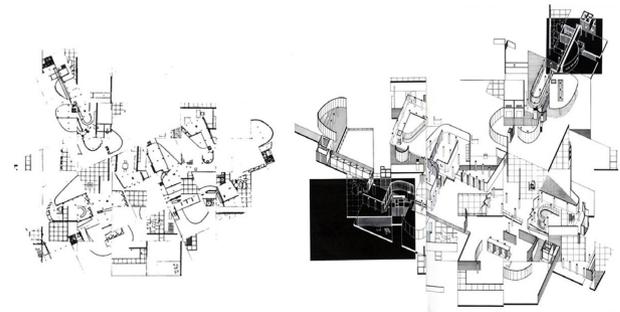


Fig. 2. Daniel Libeskind, *Collage Rebus 3*, 1967, paper. *Fracturing and displacement of forms* [Lucarelli 2015].

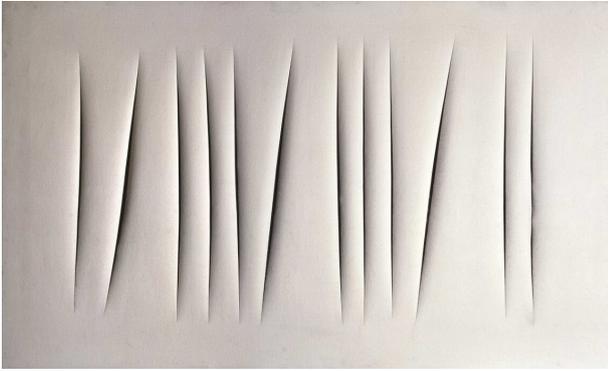


Fig. 3. Lucio Fontana, *Spatial Concept, Waiting A Dive into the infinite*, 1960, canvas and cuts. <<https://www.singulart.com/blog/en/2024/04/02/spatial-concept-waiting-by-lucio-fontana/>> (accessed 2 February 2025).

Expandable territory of conventional drawing which is investigated by the traces play a role in continuously reproducing the image in each new perspective. Similarly, the seismograph, by moving away from conventional spatial awareness, produces psychograms emerging from a hallucinatory void (fig. 4). These psychograms evoke André Breton's concepts of "psychic automatism" or "pictorial emanations" –spontaneous images that are freely released from the unconscious [Einstein 2019, p. 216] [1]. The incredible power of unconscious drawing, or psychograms, lies in their endless capacity for expression. This type of drawing transcends conceptual frameworks of space, venturing beyond the boundaries of architecturally crafted environments. It explores areas defined by accident and the uncanny –those spaces not shaped within the design of modern architecture.

In these spaces, traces and the body act as unique recorders of sensory experiences and atmospheres –often those marked by danger, excitement and uncanny elements. The trace transforms into a body, automating itself through the random imagery that arises. Micro-relational cartographies in drawing reconsider trauma and violence in the context of both the aesthetic nature of drawing and its role as a political witness, capturing the immaterialized concepts and imagery of the physical environment that emerges under the evolving image regimes of the post-war era. The developed aesthetic is not solely concerned

with the image itself; these cartographies of traces focus more on the ideas, events and identities that lie behind them. The Metzger creation of public demonstration's set up is acid and plastic membrane, based on the process of tracing on the surface of plastic and its presence on the public area. It changes the way of interpretation of border and limits (fig. 5).

The role of tracing as more than just a representational tool, positioning it as an active agent in both understanding and shaping reality. Rather than being a mere recollection of a moment, these traces also reflect the tensions experienced through the compression of space and time, as shaped by destructive events. These traces hold the potential to expand, offering a free and fair-minded



Fig. 4. Oscar Dominguez, *Untitled*, 1936, gouache on paper (Khan Academy) [Cramer, Grant 2025].

ground for engagement. This is reflected in the Surrealists' techniques always developing the pressure force onto the canvas and creating accidental traces by using the form of material and tool. Max Earnest's *paysages* mostly occurred the tracing technique which is called *decalcomania* and developing a very unique meaning (fig. 6).

Drawing involves activities like tracing, layering and cutting etc. where the mark left on the surface often hides the process behind it. It has been referred to as a 'trace fossil' by Halperin [McKenzie 2015; Sawdon, Marshall 2012]. These accidental, overexposed traces give rise to new particles, turning the act of witnessing into an anonymous and unpredictable investigation. Drawing here is not simply a protocol designed for universal contexts; instead, it creates its own language, one shaped by micro-responsive relationships and an open structure that challenges traditional assumptions.

Staging event as tracing

In this section research paper presents the process between drawing and tracing in the stage. This part of the research consists of multiple media. These are stage real presentation spatial and planimetric development of area, other superimposed representation in order to reflect the atmosphere of the process, the video production for movement and changing contour for following the traces. The process of this experience is creating the research witnessing and these all practice is transformed into as for setting witnessing to previous narration about the relation. Traces are kind and organize the writing about things and this new experience of the environment over the hazardous micro event is more about the new appearances creating a journey inside a flatten surface. In this respect, flattening is inside harboring also a technical tool, a way of observing is referencing each other. Then the figures are although a certain object or *paysage* this flattening form as distance paved the way constructing this in between eye and mind. Below this research thinking about this event and micro relation through practice in order to restructure conceptually drawing the environment over several steps. At this stage, the motion of materials and matter at a micro-scale presence on the surface fosters both an investigative eye and an investigative drawing practice. The materialized drawing/tracing exercise involves the transformation of a liquefied material as it shifts between dry and wet states, facilitated by a brush and the material filling



Fig. 5. Gustav Metzger, *Re-creation of the First Public Demonstration of Auto-Destructive Art, 1960*. Presented by the Artist in 2006. Image credit © Gustav Metzger. <<https://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/metzger-recreation-of-first-public-demonstration-of-auto-destructive-art-t12156>> (accessed 26 June 2025).

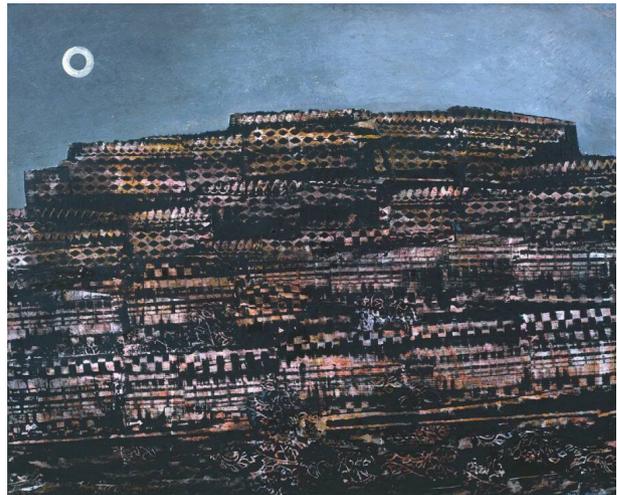


Fig. 6. Max Ernst, *The Entire City, 1934*, oil on paper laid on canvas. Image credit © Copyright www.Max-Ernst.com. <<https://www.max-ernst.com/the-entire-city.jsp>> (accessed 2 February 2025).

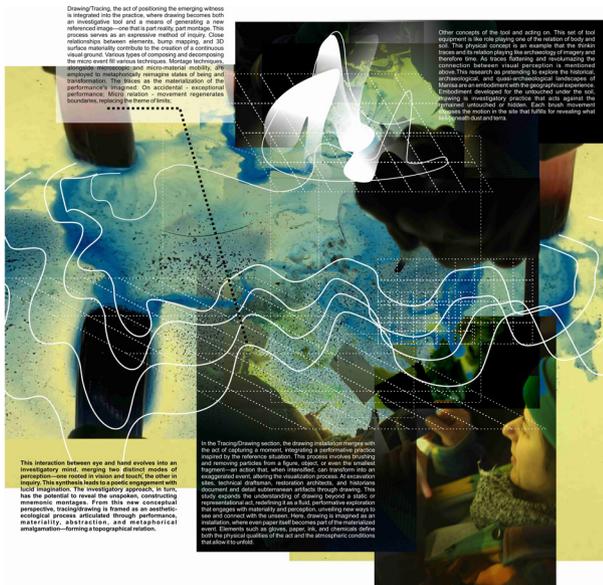


Fig. 7. Practice for witnessing micro relation [2]. Collage by author. <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GTdQOxdwO9Q>> (accessed 2 April 2025).

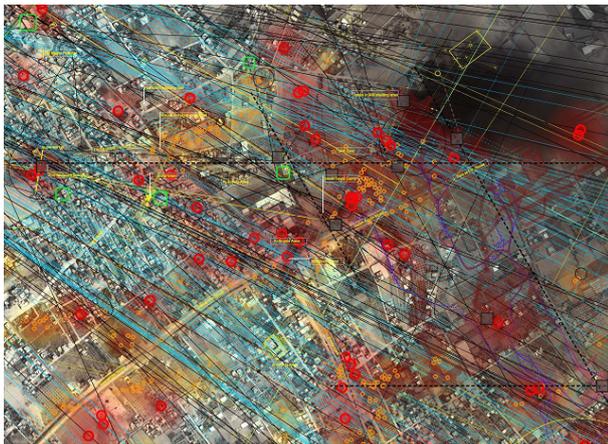


Fig. 8. A composite image by Forensic Architecture and Amnesty International regarding Rafiah on August 1, 2014. <<https://ceasefiremagazine.co.uk/arts-culture-exhibition-forensic-architecture-cloud-studies-whitworth-gallery/>> (accessed 26 June 2025).

inside. This process mimics the act of brushing away material, creating traces during the performance. The materials crystallize, forming a heterogeneous mixture that directs the eye to follow the traces as particles, moved by the force of the brush. At certain points, the material settles into a final form, yet it is once again displaced by the introduction of another substance (Sparagum, a chemical used to remove ink from the mold), continuing the cycle of transformation. In this part of the research, the designed drawing set is both explained and performed by the author as a tracing machine, producing images without causal relations and vocalizing the drawing/tracing act. This process aims to establish a new ecological regime, positioning tracing as a consequential system of relations.

The entire practice of tracing, performed as drawing, creates a highly imagery-rich moving picture. This process reflects a state of becoming, but ultimately, when the Sparagum vaporizes, the traces freeze on the surface. The memory of this practice begins with the displacement of the surface cover and culminates in a spatial condition where the material naturally stabilizes itself, leaving a contour and, most notably, a trace. What the video recording and its montage demonstrate is the endless displacement through the materialization of drawing, forming an ecological model in itself (fig. 7).

Tracing as event

These conceptualizations are given below left a question about the drawing/traces unity because it is not only figurative consequences. How does tracing/drawing engage with hidden dynamics and potentialities, transcending aesthetic and eye-centered perceptions? The avant-garde definition also related to creating traces on the thing hazard made realized itself through the appearances of trauma. Such as dirt, garbage and other ruination appeared as romantic encounters that is because creating new adventure points unconsciousness.

Generating layering of movement as a time

Drawing and its time relation is becoming an entangled relation. The developed tool for drawing is transforming the recreating not only figure of the seen but also lost thing. When drawing is offering distance, relation is extreme, happening in the lost dimension as time and rapid destruction is kind of an investigating setup. Therefore, traces are



Fig. 9. Jananne Al-Ani, *Timelines* (film still), 2022, Panoramic Video Installation. Image source Film and Video Umbrella [FVU 2022]. <<https://www.fvu.co.uk/projects/timelines>> (accessed 2 February 2025).

decomposed through thinking about its occurrences and presentation over forensic gaze. Below the forensic architecture groups work is presented as a composite image. This is a representation of ephemeral movement on the site that causes an unexpected physical deformation in a certain area (fig. 8).

Analogies and its potential occurrences for a new context

In her work, Jananne Al-Ani [Al-Ani 2024] illustrates how the visible depressions of a surface in close-up photography act as witness marks, drawing connections between the object's space and the image within the object. This narrative explores the scales of visualization, particularly landforms, and their context independent of the landscape (*paysage*) (fig. 9). The witnessing of traces that comes from its functional attitude in the forensic side become decomposing itself for the reimagining of the situation or happening beyond. To reach topography as Al-Ani's work is not a solely phantasmatic image it makes the topography as a tool transform its geographical meaning into metaphysical and connection with the *paysage*.

An intersection of spatial data converges into spatial representations, much like Al-Ani's concept of a 'timeline'. In her work, Al-Ani presents a collection of objects that possess tangible physical references, using sectional, planimetric and scenographic representations. This synthesis of objects, physical space, land and atmospheric events parallels the creation of new realms –planetary systems of objects– within our spatial environment. In this sense, it extends far beyond traditional representation. It becomes propositional, visionary, imaginative and performative. A reciprocal dialogue gives rise to a space of convergence and articulation, allowing the two realms to intersect and become intertwined.

Generating clues

Becoming many, image material traces are dynamic data that shape the material, and these traces blur the boundary between the object and its representation. They continuously reproduce images, marking a critical point for the perception of the environment. The environment is in constant change, with traces materializing time and becoming the present form of things. According to Roberto Matta, traces as clues enable us to think about appearances in a highly creative way. He defines this state as a kind of "*mathématique sensible*" [Lash 2009, p. 268] (fig. 10).

Drawing transforms into a trace of an event in which the separation between things disappears, and they converge like a map that has merged with the very object it represents.

In forensic gaze, one political issue is the reason for looking at these traces. It more spatially occurred in the ruined areas establishing their own distinct methods of information processing aesthetic is becoming a writing about space and time. This endless desire for reorganization symbols both the danger and the power of disorder, as noted by Mary Douglas. The power of disorder arises from the infinite possibilities and high potential for patterning contained within its contents. Thus, "disorder disrupts the pattern, but also provides the very material for the pattern itself" [Douglas 2007, p. 104]. The image, therefore, is not just a cartographic past but also holds the capacity for patterning.

Emerges as a material process itself

Tolon's works, in their way of making sense of loss through traces unexpectedly occurred on the painting, present an experience of a deep awareness of the forces overlooked

in the ordinary course of daily life [Ceylan 2022]. Traces that exist as a flatten record of objects serve as time necessary for illuminating an event. In destruction, the symbolism of crumbling and turning to dust leads us into situations that unfold within one another. Destruction, when viewed through a different experiential lens, presents itself as a spectacle, a departure from past forms of vision. There is an architecture of destruction that occurs not only externally but also internally, where disintegration and the process of becoming dust take place [Küçük 2023]. Particles as an unfolding body that exposes itself moves inward from external spatial relations to create a new interaction between the body and space.

Schuppli uses the term "extreme image" to understand anthropogenic matter, where there is not only a reorganization of geological layers but also the emergence of aesthetics within this realm [Schuppli 2020]. Traces physical experience in its backside appear on the representation table makes environmental boundaries even any physical forms that are constituted place of embodiment. Traces, even micro relation, give back to reimagined topographies as macro scale connection. This scale full embodiment fulfilled by the traces technically acts as anonymous witnesses to interventions in the object, particularly those that record a non-presence or absence.

Conclusion

By extending the concept of tracing beyond traditional practices, this research conceptualizes tracing as a performative setting. It reflects on the very existence of drawing as a dynamic process. While drawing is often understood as the act of marking a surface, it also embodies a transformative interaction between the eye and the hand –a space where traces of thought materialize into different forms of becoming. This research deepens that understanding by framing drawing as both a political and technical act, and by situating tracing within a broader analogy of geographical representation –drawing as a topographical map that makes visible what is otherwise tacit.

In the space between reality and censorship, the dark path of drawing and tracing reveals itself through the work of professionals who transition from trace to drawing

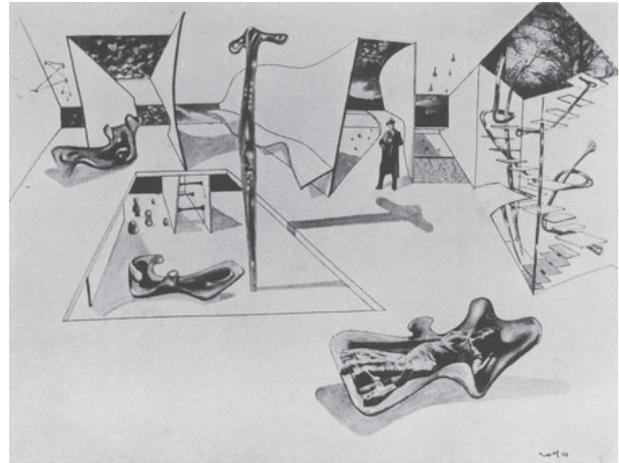


Fig. 10. *Mathématique Sensible. Architecture de Temps Model of an Apartment Unit [3]* [Matta 1938, p. 43].



Fig. 11. View from Canan Tolon's exhibition called *Tedbir* in Arter - Looking at the image of destroyed painting. <<https://www.world.gazetesanat.com/new-group-exhibition-from-the-arter-collection-precaution-has-opened-at-arter/>>. (accessed 2 February 2025).

and vice versa, challenging traditional production methods. This ephemeral time, in turn, holds the potential to develop a new epistemological understanding of delineation. Ceylan explores the concept of 'loss' through traces' dialogues and monologues. In addition, Al-Ani reflects this dialogue through land topography as a form of narration. Previous heading also conceptualizes trace/drawing relation feed from the trace itself in order to narrate something and transform them into events. In this regard, traces become the narrator and it changes the way the narration of the environment on the flattened surface.

Ultimately, the making of micro-relations has an active relation with the image. Tracing is thus reimagined as a performative act that includes choreography, erasure, and the continuous transformation of imagery. By analyzing how traces function in installations, tools, and materials, they contribute to meaning-making. The dynamic interplay between objects this conceptualized drawing engages both physical and abstract phenomena in various forms. Within this framework, rethinking and restructuring the drawing environment allows us to perform time and space, rather than merely depict them. This perspective expands the act of drawing beyond figural representation, transforming it into a spatial and temporal practice. Representation –traditionally understood as the projection of what is seen onto another

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Notes

[1] Moreover, considering the meaning of the psychogram, as Einstein stated, *écriture spontanée* ("environmental writing") is a record of undirected psychic processes, incorporating the traumatic memory of the 20th century [Einstein 2019, p. 271].

[2] For the full performance, please visit the video link: <[https://www.you-](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GTdQOxdwO9Q)

surface—is now reinterpreted through a forward-looking vision shaped by traces.

The nature of the traces is given as flattening the distances through various cases to investigate the aesthetics of the sign. The case studies are subjected to go in-depth this nature of traces through various forms that create a fraction in the representational theory. On the other hand, this also constitutes the political reflection of creating an image. They all are issued the not only figurative aspect but also the event behind which is conceptualized as distancing the things. To discuss the drawing in terms of tracing context is expanding the nature of the figure that appears.

All things considered, this research contributes a new example to the case studies by questioning drawing not as an abstract practice, but as a materially and conceptually grounded act. Additionally, the technical outcomes of the research establish a thoughtful link to the conceptualization of drawing. It involves assembling various forms of image production through an installation-like, dynamic visual structure. As a result, the work evokes an experienced –yet lost or forgotten– landscape of drawing, deepening the understanding of drawing within this conceptual framework. This final composition also introduces new modifications and a sense of unity around the subject. Through this practice-based exploration, the work restructures both the narrative and structural dimensions of drawing.

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[tube.com/watch?v=GTdQOxdwO9Q](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GTdQOxdwO9Q)> (accessed 2 April 2025).

[3] The space is designed to cultivate an awareness of the vertical human experience. Various planes and railing-free staircases allow for a sense of control over the void. The Ionic-style column carries a psychological dimension. These all-object experiments are referencing their impression and traces on the memory [Matta 1938].

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