

**FOUND IN TRANSLATION: Gosia Wlodarczak at Deakin University
Art Gallery**

29 April - 30 May 2015

Emma Cox, Curator, Deakin University Art Collection and Galleries

One mode of communication is language. Language is a code. When words are the mode of communication, each individual uniquely 'remakes', 'interprets', 'translates', 'de-codes' words. Another mode of communication is drawing. Drawing is a language. Like language, drawing is a code.

Gosia Wlodarczak, 2014



Drawing performance and installation at Western Gallery, Western Washington University Gallery, Bellingham, USA. Pigment pen on primed canvas wrapped over the Eero Saarinen Womb Sofa, 2012
Gosia Wlodarczak

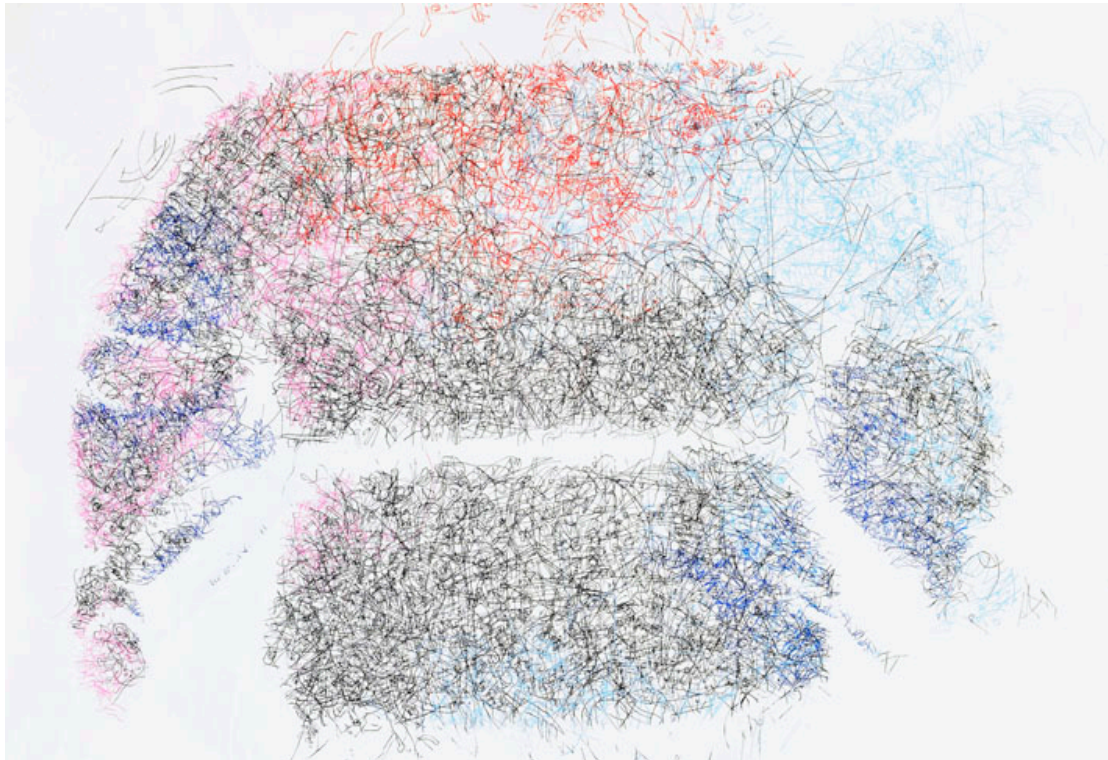
Courtesy the artist, Western Gallery and Fehily Contemporary

Photo: Longin Sarnecki

FOUND IN TRANSLATION: DEAKIN UNIVERSITY ART GALLERY is the second installation in Gosia Wlodarczak's ongoing Instruction Drawing project, in which the artist explores the idea that drawing and language are coded modes of communication.¹ Here, Wlodarczak responds to and engages with the specific environment and audiences of the University art gallery, in both the framework and development of the project as well as in the execution of the artwork itself.

¹ The first project was at Tarrawarra Museum of Art from 29 November 2014–15 March 2015, where the artist translated a poem from Ian Fairweather's *The Drunken Buddha* (1965), and produced **INTERPRETATION DRAWING #1**.

A drawing produced during a 2012 residency at the Western Washington University Art Gallery is the departure point for the project at Deakin. The drawing, *DUST COVER EERO SAARINEN WOMB SOFA* (2012), is the by-product of this project, during which Włodarczak worked with the modern furniture and design collection of the University. The drawing, a complex network of lines and impressions that evidence the contours of the Eero Saarinen Womb Chair sofa, captures the machinations of the University gallery space and various activities within. It is from this drawing that the artist developed two pictorial alphabets (one more intricate than the other), each letter of the English alphabet (and some punctuation marks) represented by a small detail of this drawing.



DUST COVER EERO SAARINEN WOMB SOFA, 2012

Gosia Włodarczak

Drawing performance and installation at Western Gallery, Western Washington University Gallery, Bellingham, USA. Pigment pen on primed canvas wrapped over the Eero Saarinen Womb Sofa, 140 x 203 cm

Courtesy the artist, Western Gallery and Fehily Contemporary

Photo: Longin Sarnecki

As the framework for the project at Deakin developed over meetings and discussions, texts were selected, both by the artist as well as by the staff of the Deakin University Art Gallery at the behest of the artist, to be encoded within three, site-specific wall drawings, composed from the pictorial alphabets. *INTERPRETATION DRAWING #2: SIGNS* encodes an excerpt from Italo Calvino's 1965 short story *A Sign in Space* from his *Cosmicomics* anthology, selected by the artist as illustrative of the ideas behind her *FOUND IN TRANSLATION* project. *INTERPRETATION DRAWING #3:*

WORLDY encodes a message selected by Deakin University Art Gallery staff, related to the specificity of the University setting and of significance to Deakin University. This work was also executed by the Art Gallery staff, via a set of instructions provided by the artist, *INSTRUCTION FOR THE MAKER*. *INTERPRETATION DRAWING #4: THE CONCRETE POEM* will be in development during a four day artist's residency from 28 April to 1 May, and will culminate, as the title suggests, in a concrete poem composed of eight words contributed by the University community and visitors to the exhibition. During her residency, Wlodarczak will encode two words per day, randomly selected, to complete this work. The texts encoded within the drawings may be decoded using a set of instructions available in the exhibition: *INSTRUCTION FOR THE VIEWER*.



The *FOUND IN TRANSLATION* ALPHABET #2

^ ^ ^ ^

Italo Calvino's 1965 short story *A Sign in Space* describes a moment in the early history of the universe, charmingly characterized by narrator Qfwfq, an anthropomorphized, amorphous presence/being and observer of the revolving galaxy. Qfwfq creates and leaves a 'sign', ('the first sign ever made in the universe, or at least, in the circuit of the Milky Way,') on (his?) path along one rotation of the galaxy, with the hope of meeting his unique creation again on the next celestial turn. After patiently waiting out the requisite six hundred million solar years for the sign to reappear (all the while exchanging taunts at intervals with unseen competitor-rival, Kgwgk), Qfwfq realizes that the sign has been defaced, it is changed; lost in an expanse of universe now crowded with signs. This gently humorous story describes the anxiety of artistic endeavor, and also parodies the theory of semiotics.²

In her *FOUND IN TRANSLATION* project, Gosia Wlodarczak explores the structures of communication through the possibilities of drawing, and in doing so, delves into the realm of semiotics – meaning-making – and employs her own system of visual signs as the conduit for this meaning.

² M Riva, *A Sign in Space: The Paradox of Presence and Visibility*, *Narratives for the Next Millenium*, retrieved 3 April 2015 http://www.brown.edu/Departments/Italian_Studies/n2k/visibility/sign.html

Daniel Chandler captures the central concept of this rather complex field of study:

Distinctively, we make meanings through our creation and interpretation of 'signs'...Anything can be a sign as long as someone interprets it as 'signifying' something - referring to or *standing for* something other than itself.³

Roman Jakobson held that meaning resides in the total act of communication: it is not a stable, predetermined entity that passes unimpeded from sender to receiver.⁴ In other words, an act of translation occurs in the process of communication of a message and in the ultimate construction of meaning.



Gosia Włodarczak installing FOUND IN TRANSLATION, Interpretation Drawing #2: SIGNS, 2015

The idea of an artwork being created by someone other than the artist via a set of instructions has been explored by conceptual artists before, but the idea of the museum's public being an active participant in the construction of knowledge and meaning is a more recent phenomenon. The rise of participatory experiences in galleries and museums is a part of a shift away from the traditional, authoritative, top-down institutional didactic towards a more collaborative experience of cultural meaning-making: an acknowledgement of the active role of audiences and the two-

³ D Chandler, *Semiotics for Beginners*, University of Wales, Aberystwyth, 1994, <http://visual-memory.co.uk/daniel/Documents/S4B/>, retrieved 5 April 2015. Italics in original text.

⁴ R Jakobson, quoted in E Huhtamo, *Visual Communication and Semiotics*, UCLA Department of Design, DESMA 103 Visual Communication, 2003, http://www.infoamerica.org/documentos_pdf/jacobson1.pdf, retrieved 6 April 2015

way process of effective communication.⁵ Participatory and interactive experiences in galleries help facilitate a shared construction of cultural knowledge and balance the authoritative voice / passive receiver dichotomy of the traditional gallery/museum institution. A practice that is analogous to the active processes of communication as explored by Gosia Wlodarczak.

FOUND IN TRANSLATION: DEAKIN UNIVERSITY ART GALLERY will run 28 April to 29 May 2015 at the Deakin University Art Gallery, 221 Burwood Hwy, Burwood, VIC 3125.

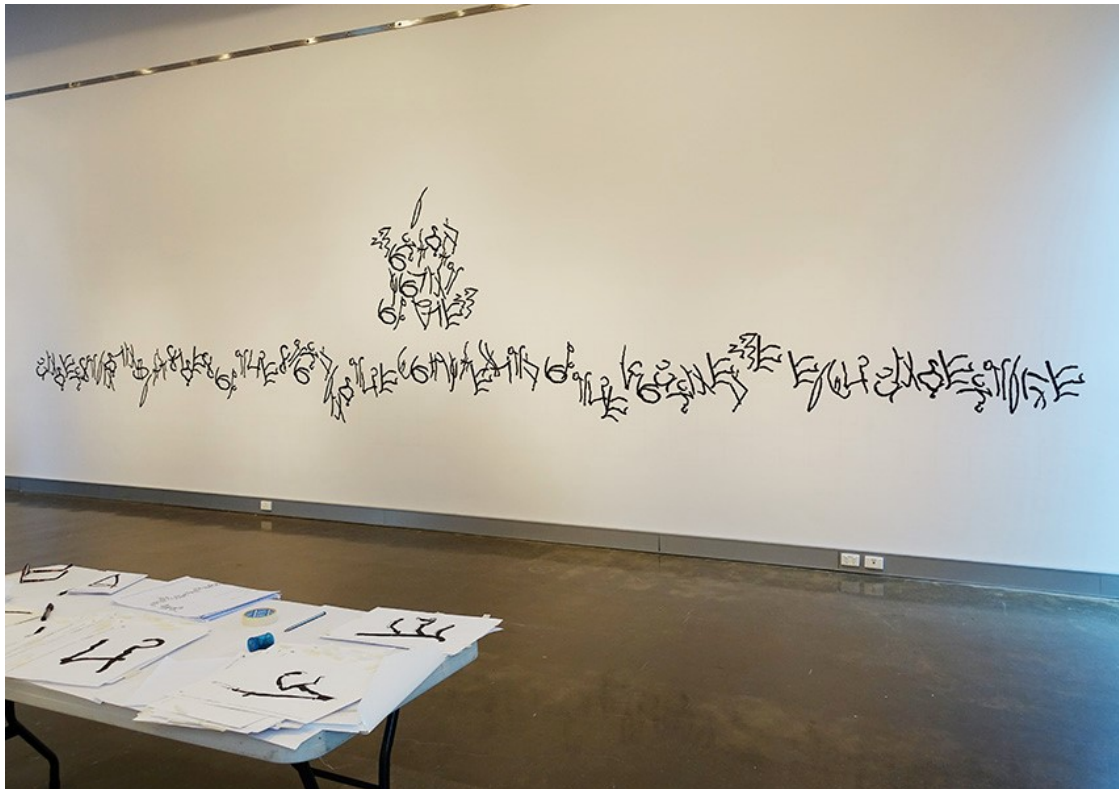


Day 1, installation. Gosia Wlodarczak instructing Brad Rusbridge and Emma Cox from Deakin University Art Gallery on the installation.

⁵ Hooper-Greenhill, E., Changing Values in the Art Museum: rethinking communication and learning, *International Journal of Heritage Studies*, 6:1, 2000, pg. 9



Deakin University Art Gallery staff installing INSTRUCTION DRAWING #3: WORLDLY using INSTRUCTION FOR THE MAKER, 2015



FOUND IN TRANSLATION, Interpretation Drawing #3: WORLDLY (with Instructions), 2015
26 stencils, installation layouts and grids; graphite, pigment pen on wall; 520 x 1034 cm
Text: 93 characters, a message by the Deakin University Art Gallery
Makers: Brad Rusbridge, Emma Cox, Roxanna Richens, Julie Nelson, Julie Nolan, Leanne Willis and Callum Ross