

TODAS AS ARTES TODOS OS NOMES

PAULA GUERRA

SOFIA SOUSA

[ORGS.]

VOL. 3



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Paula Guerra & Sofia Sousa (Org.)

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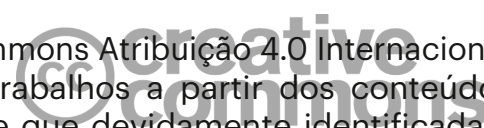
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DRAWING RESEARCH: CREATIVE APPROACHES TO ARCHITECTURAL RESEARCH | **DESENHAR UMA PESQUISA: ABORDAGENS CRIATIVAS PARA A PESQUISA ARQUITETÓNICA**

O desenho é generativo, tal como a fotografia, a escrita e a pintura, que podem ser considerados formas de design que utilizam a criatividade, podendo ser úteis à investigação. O *Critical Spatial Practice* (Rendell, 2011) utiliza a sinergia entre Arquitetura e Arte, em intervenções críticas e reflexivas. Coletivos como "Rael San Fratello" exemplificam como métodos criativos ampliam o processo de design, sugerindo que essas abordagens podem ser incorporadas na investigação arquitetónica e no geral, apesar de parecerem incompatíveis com o método científico. Através de desenhos produzidos para uma investigação de doutoramento, pretende-se demonstrar o potencial analítico e visual do Desenho.

Drawing it's a generative tool. In a broad sense photography, writing, and painting can be considered forms of design that utilize creativity, which can intertwine with other generative processes like research. *Critical Space Practice* (Rendell, 2011) emphasizes the synergy between Architecture and Art, marked by critical, reflective interventions. Collectives like "Rael San Fratello" exemplify how creative methods expand design inquiries. Suggesting these approaches can be embraced in architectural and broader research despite appearing incompatible with the scientific method. This article showcases drawings from a Phd research, that enriched research questions and hold potential in conveying findings through visual essays.

ARTE — ARQUITETURA — INVESTIGAÇÃO
DESENHO — METODOLOGIAS CRIATIVAS
ART — ARCHITECTURE — RESEARCH
DRAWING — CREATIVE METHODOLOGIES

1. Introduction: drawing and research

This article aims to explore the use of “drawing” as a research methodology from the experience of applying it in the planning and starting phases of my own PhD research. Instead of attempting to explain “what is drawing”, which might prove to be a very wide concept to be effectively defined, there is a need to explain the positioning taken towards it, from which the experiences described in this text start. There are 3 important concepts related to drawing that are relevant to this text.

The global skill of drawing a perceived object, person, landscape (something that you see “out there”) requires only five basic component skills, no more. These skills are not drawing skills. They are perceptual skills. (Edwards, 1999, p.17)

Drawing has a lot to do with perception hence why some authors, like Edwards, regard it to be a way of “seeing” and perceiving the world around us. In this way, Drawing can be both a skill and a tool that allows us to interact with the physical world. On the other hand, Drawing is also a way of thinking:

Drawing, like dancing, is an exploratory, sense-making process where the observer, and the thing or idea observed, are inextricably bound together in a physical, material space/time relationship. Drawing is both an active and subjective engagement, valued by artistic researchers, not only for what may finally be encrypted in the drawing, but more significantly for the access provided through drawing to thinking that is close to the unconscious. (Mäkelä *et al.*, 2014, p.4)

As it is used in any design practice, drawing is also an activity close to the domain of ideas. Despite starting from the physical, drawing is also an analytical tool that can allow us to critically interpret reality. Finally, as a result of the last two, drawing might be the start of any transformation of reality since, by capturing and analyzing it, drawing is the ideal starting point of any creation process. Thus, the meanings of the words “drawing” and “design” are very close, in the sense that both are processes of creation and change so, in a broad sense, photography, sculpture, painting or even writing can all be examples of ways of drawing or designing something new. “Drawing and design constitute two, partly overlapping, sets.” (Sacchi, 2022, p.1).



The use of drawing in research is often associated with the possibility of illustrating knowledge and facilitating its communication. In social sciences, particularly anthropology, there are a lot of examples of its use as an observational ethnographical tool (Silvano, 2018). More recently, the work of some authors raised awareness of its importance as an analytical method (Taussig, 2011; Weaver-Hightower *et al.*, 2017), particularly in the field of comic-based research. However, the experiences described in this document intend to question what the place of artistic drawing in the world of scientific research might be. The word “artistic” is chosen to describe drawings that are to be created in a process similar to art production and not to judge their artistic value as a product. In other words, the interest of this research in drawing concerns the process and not the finished product, given that a drawing does not have to be a finished piece. At this point, it is relevant to cite the painter Paul Klee’s positioning toward Drawing, which looks at it as an experience with endless possibilities, like a walk, that takes its author to a place where he may be enriched or completed by the event upon return.

An active line on a walk, moving freely, without goal. A walk for a walk’s sake. The mobility agent is a point, shifting its position forward. (Klee, 1953, p.16)

2. Creative approaches as a methodology

Starting from the title, it is important to explain the meaning of the expression “creative approaches”. The objective of this article is to describe the experience of applying methods from art-based research in work whose main goal is not art production. These methods are also close to design research since both fields of research share a generative goal and aim to produce something. In doing so, these methods might bring the possibility of uncovering new “types” of data that could not be gathered by traditional research.

A group of student participants could be presented with materials commonly used in collage making (magazines, newspapers, colorful selection of paper, drawing tools, pens, scissors, glue, tape, etc) and asked to create a collage or drawing that represents their perception of the drinking culture on their campus and how it makes them feel. Students also could be asked to provide a textual description of their collage. Both the visual art and their textual descriptions could be analyzed. This approach has the potential to bring forth data that would not emerge with visual or verbal communication alone. (Leavy, 2017, p.20)

Although design is familiar to creativity related methods, art-based methodologies might create the opportunity to expand these already existing approaches from the individual use of the author to an enrichment of the creative process through participation, where drawing might become participatory drawing.

Creative approaches act as experimental and innovation-driven tools towards that goal. Whether this can be applied in less “productive” steps of a research process is the main question behind this paper. Hence, the word creative is used in the title to designate approaches borrowed from art and design-based research, while also referring to their closeness to creative processes and experimental trials.

Creative approaches might include painting, photography, writing, sculpture, and many more. All these methods might be understood as a way of “drawing” something, even research. Research starts with the selection of one of the many possible approaches to apply, since their different purposes allow the gathering of different types of data regarding the subject of research. What art knowledge brings to the table is the possibility of working with abstract ideas, opening the door to use interpretation as a way for researchers to learn from the ideas of other individuals.

In one sense, visual arts-based practices are necessarily participatory—that is, visual art has an audience that experiences it. (Leavy, 2008, p.242)

Interpretation is also a fundamental concept in the critical analysis of a subject. Therefore, creative approaches might be useful in any phase of research that requires the researcher to be analytical. For interpretation to happen, visual methods must be, not only representative or illustrative but also “artistic”, with the ability to induce subjectivity and therefore enrich creative processes. In this sense, subjective is both what nourishes creation and interpretation of what is. This is also why creation and interpretation are not independent of each other.

Since creative arts research is often motivated by emotional, personal, and subjective concerns, it operates not only on the basis of explicit and exact knowledge but also on that of tacit knowledge. (Barrett & Barbara, 2007, p.4)

Creative approaches might also be understood as processes that indulge in this sort of tacit knowledge making it visually readable as an addition to the knowledge generated by traditional methods. Through the experience of using Drawing as a research tool, described and shown on this paper, it is expected to make a valid contribution to drawing research by providing a report of its use in a Phd research context.

As well as opportunities, art-based research methods, also present some ethical challenges. Artistic work brings the question of authorship and ownership of the work. The telling of personal “stories” also calls into issues of privacy and confidentiality, this presents a very challenging terrain for conducting research. Another concerning question is that the subjectivity that allows interpretation is a field where emotion plays a huge part. With this being said, it is hard to measure and classify the influence that emotion might have on the research data. As well as the likelihood of making positive or negative impacts on subjects or participants by being experiencing the artistic approach (Cox & Boydell, 2015).

3. Drawing as critical spatial practice

The PhD research from which this paper originated started by studying the relationship between Architecture and Participation. Participation is a wide and interdisciplinary field of knowledge. Regarding Architecture, many scholars’ work shows the benefits of a participatory approach to architectural design. (Arnstein, 1969; Edwards-Groves *et al.*, 2016) At the same time, others identify the need to critically evaluate these processes, from their successes but also failures (Schelings & Elsen, 2022). In an interview Jeremy Till remarks that many times participation tends to become a sort of political obligation, not actually engaging the public in a way that is meaningful to the design process (Upmeyer, 2016). Some of the difficulties concerning participative architecture are a symptom of some

disciplinary paradigms (Foster, 2017; La Cecla, 2008) that result in some incompatibilities between architecture and participation. Furthermore, the work of interdisciplinary architecture collectives, like “forensic architecture” or “assemble studio”, suggests a way of designing or thinking about space with contemporary city problems at its core. So, this incompatibility is something to work on, in order to use participation to produce better results in design. Empirically, rt and creative methods seem to allow the establishment of connections where there are gaps in Participatory Architecture.

“Critical Spatial Practice” is how Jane Rendell designated a field of activity where art and architecture meet (Rendell, 2009). This is a kind of intervention where spatial context is the main motivator. Unlike Architecture, their primary goal is not to provide solutions to problems but rather to elaborate a critical and analogical essay about that same space. In 2019, Rael San Fratello studio made an intervention on the border of USA and Mexico with the same characteristics. The intervention “Tetter-totter wall”. By placing playground toys between the border wall, no direct solution was provided to the place, however the political discussion and questioning about it was amplified by the intervention.

The Critical Spatial Practice approach is a kind of action-based research where the chosen place is the object of research. The creative methods are used to amplify the analytical discourse around the place and consequently the questioning around it. In this sense, Critical Spatial Practice might be understood as a less traditional methodology of design and research where creative approaches might be used as tools. Markus Miessen work follows the notion that Critical Spatial Practice is the most compatible way to use participation in architectural design. Miessen looks at conflict as something that is part of the participation process and therefore needs to be worked on with a critical approach (Miessen, 2011; 2017).

In a general sense, utilizing creative approaches to generate something material might be seen as a form of drawing, and what is design if not a form of drawing space?

4. Drawing my PHD research

The choice of the theme that would motivate the referred PhD research was followed by all the classical obstacles of this phase. The “problem”, with its related literature and case studies, became more complex, while there was also a need to find a starting question that was to be provided with a hypothesis.

The research was to be planned with the goal of looking into Critical Spatial Practice as a tool and ultimately a compatible way of practicing participative Architecture. To do this, experimentation on this methodology was to happen. In this sense, the object of study would be a methodology, so it would be possible to apply it and therefore test it in specific situations, but in the very own research, as well.

Drawing started to happen naturally in parallel to reading. This creative approach was found to be a way to promote critical analysis of the case studies and literature so, it was decided that drawing would happen as part of the research to be practiced and organized in a sort of visual and conceptual diary. This set of drawings was fundamental to problematizing and synthesizing the literature review in order to pose the research question.

On the catalogue for the 1990 Louvre exhibition: *Mémoires d'aveugle: L'autoportrait et autres ruines*, Jacques Derrida describes drawing as a purely exploratory activity by calling it, and the person who draws, blind. Then the author explains this comparison. When trying to draw a blind man (as the subject), the person who draws (who is also blind) has no other option but to produce a sort of self-portrait, by gathering information within himself. (Ponzio, 2019, p.118). A sort of activity that has the capacity to allow a blind man to represent blindness suggests that the great advantage of drawing it is not in its final product (an image) but instead in its process, and in the underlying events that happen within the drawer subconscious. (Alphen, 2008, p.61). Similarly, the drawings that are present in this article, are but representations of a moment in research where some qualitative information gathered in literature needed to be critically analyzed. So, each of these drawings is a memory of those moments and not a visual representation of the gathered knowledge.

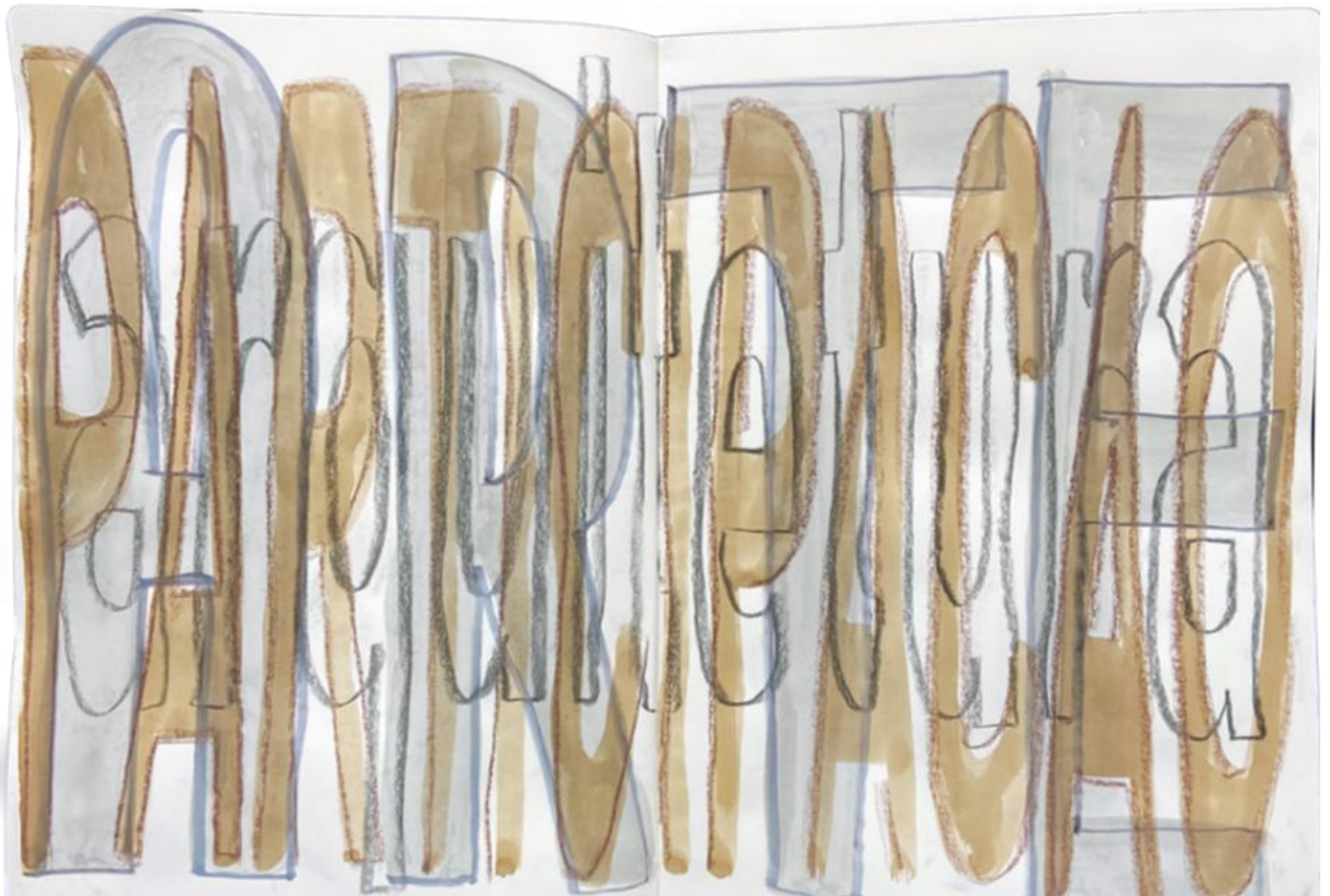


Figure 1: Visual diary – page 1

Source: Henrique Andrade, 2023

The drawings start from the recognition of a conflict but also a dialogue between the topics of Architecture, Participation, and Art. From here, each page of the diary was used as a parallel practice since it was happening at the same time as research, drawing information from it, interpreting it, and then giving it back. This could be referred to as a complementary methodology working in permanent dialogue with the main methodology of research. This use of creative approaches (drawing, writing, collage...) was again in line with the Critical Spatial Practice approach, of providing questions rather than answers. Better questions should generate better responses.

One of the more serious failings of some so-called public art has been (...) to produce public spaces and objects that provide solutions– answers rather than questions.” (Rendell, 2009, p.1)

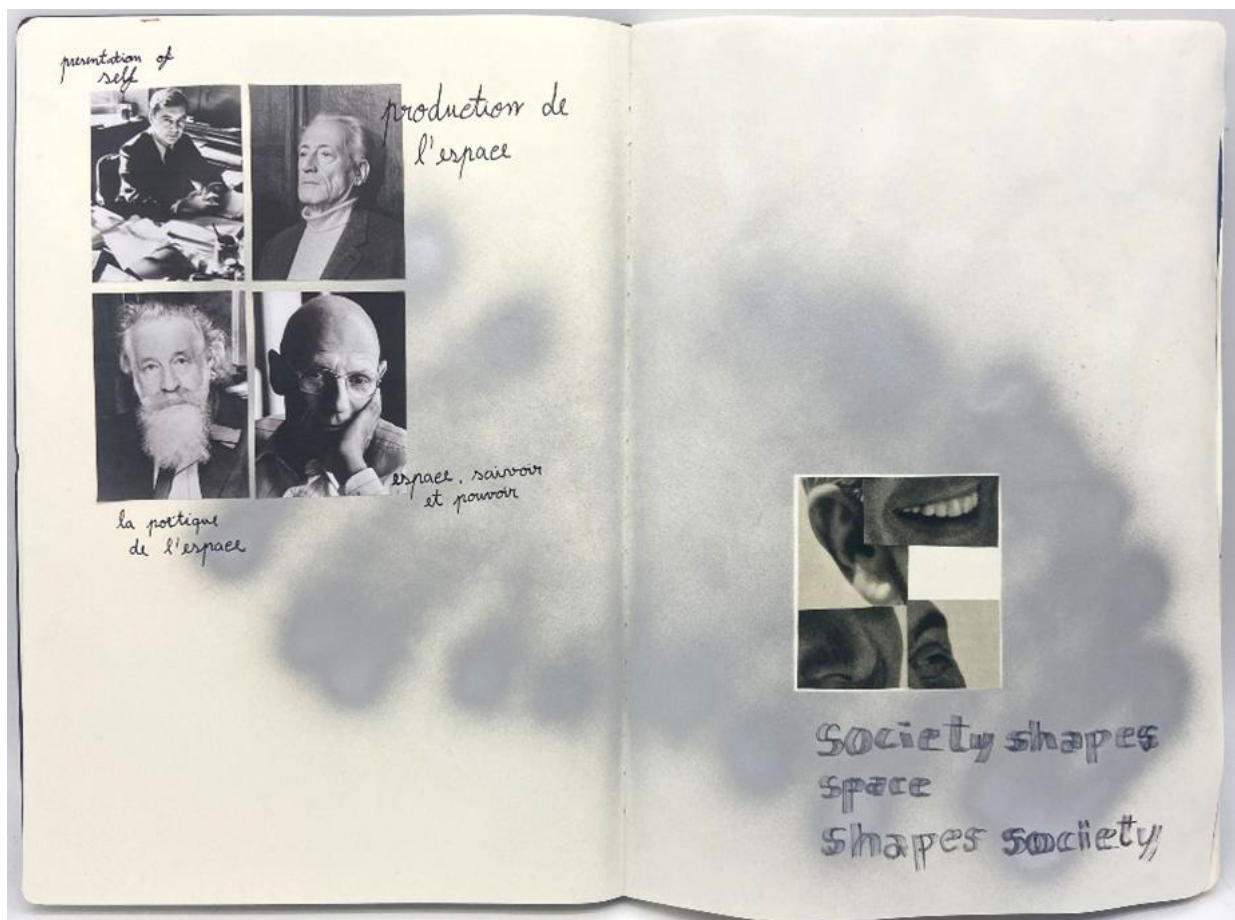


Figure 2: Visual diary – page 2

Source: Henrique Andrade, 2023

This use of Drawing as an analytical tool is also useful when dealing with study case examples, particularly those of the Art practice domain that need abstract interpretation. The next drawing is connected to the 1981 public art sculpture by Richard Serra: “Tilted Arc”. This piece, made to be put in a square in New York City, was not well-received by the public. The result was an organized movement involving users of the square that managed to get the object removed from the public space, in a sort of “inverted participation” process (Mundy, 2013).



Figure 3: Visual diary – page 3

Source: Henrique Andrade, 2023

Another case study that shows the critical awareness that art can bring to participation projects, is the 1974, intervention by Marina Abramovic, called “Rhythm 0”. This work was a six-hour performance where the artist surrendered herself completely to the public, with a table of 72 objects disposed to be used as participants saw fit. Among these objects were everyday items but also life-threatening objects like a gun and some razor blades. Though it started in a relatively innocent matter, the public attitude would later change towards placing the artist in harassment and life-threatening situations (Bortoluzzi & Biancalana, 2018).

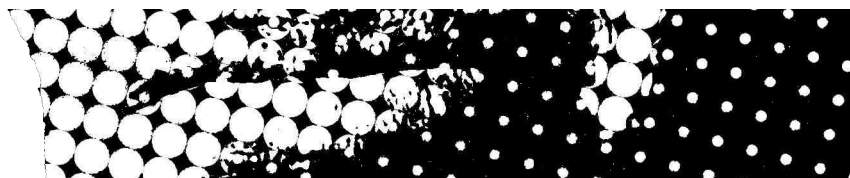




Figure 4: Visual diary – page 4

Source: Henrique Andrade, 2023

Drawing is a meditation from which I can access inner vision. I put down something on paper and then react to it. Once I make a line, it becomes a condition: does it look like what I thought? Does it make me want to draw another or shall I erase it? It encourages me to make decisions only I can make. (Fitch, 2011, p.147)

Drawing as a method to follow reading can work to establish “dialogues” with authors or their work. The next drawing was made while reading Jane Rendell’s text in a sort of response to the phrase: “You can’t design art” (Rendell, 2009, p.1). The drawing allowed me to reflect on this affirmation and rephrase it. Art cannot be deNsigned, but art “can design”, by having effects on people and space. Therefore, art can and should be a design tool.



Figure 5: Visual diary – page 5

Source: Henrique Andrade, 2023

Sometimes a drawing may motivate another drawing. This happens when new ideas arise from the first drawing, or the analysis is not finished. The last drawing motivated a new one, reflecting on the comparison of art projects and architectural design. Abstract representation of an idea brings the opportunity to compare by establishing metaphors that promote discussion and questioning. In this drawing, architectural design is represented by the tamed horse and the linear route. Since architecture's goal is to materialize an idea by limiting the creative process until a solution is found. On the other hand, art projects tend to be much less limited, and restless, leaving a lot of questions open. Here represented by the untamed horse and a random route.

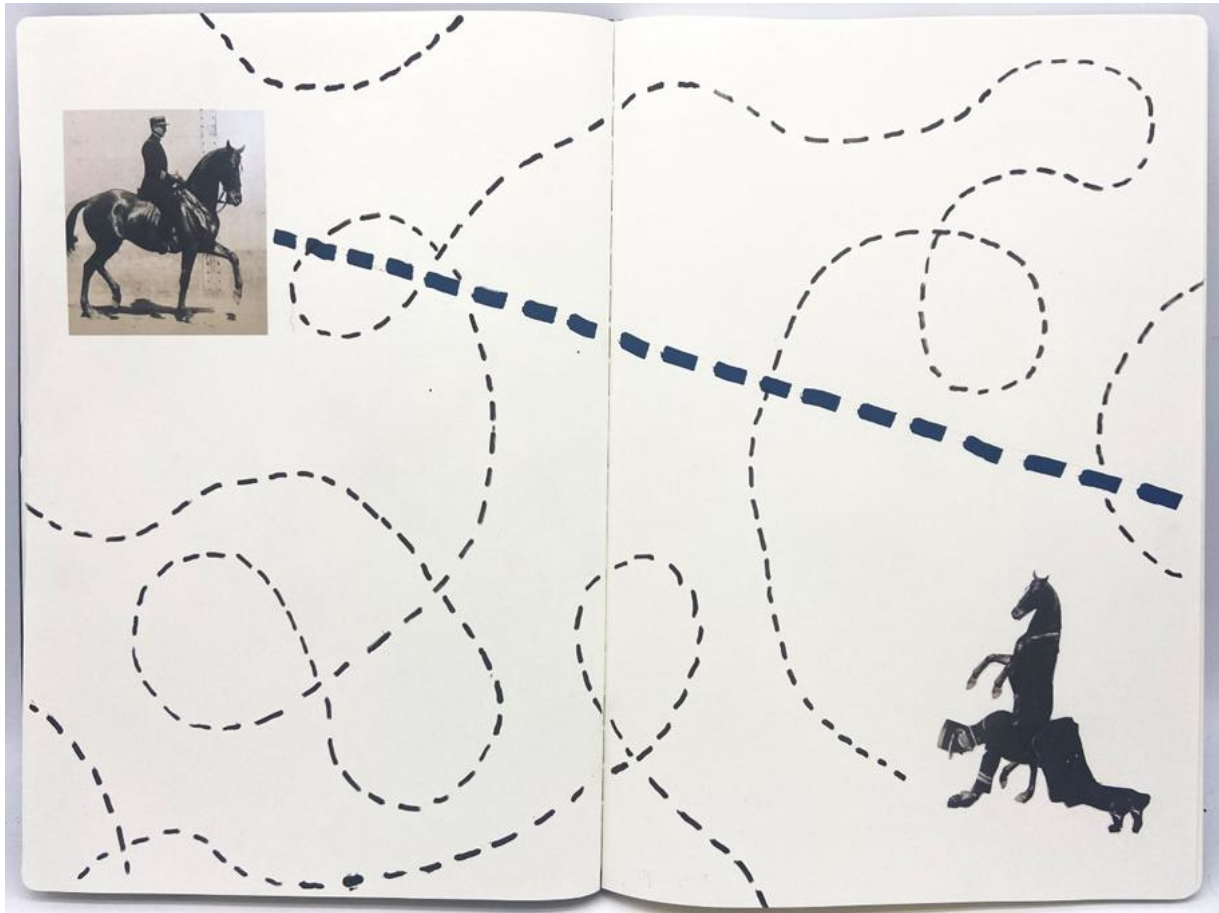


Figure 6: Visual diary – page 6

Source: Henrique Andrade, 2023

This last drawing helped to raise the question: are there moments where architectural design and research could use artistic methodologies to help raise more incisive and rich questions and therefore build better responses? In this way, drawing helped to pose the starting question of research by synthesizing, conceptualizing, and problematizing the knowledge gathered in literature and case studies. This question was the following: “In what way can creative approaches be a participative, operational and compatible methodology to architectural research and design?”.

After the starting question was found, drawings remained useful to the research every time analytical analysis or abstract interpretation was needed. Moreover, the set of drawings produced might be useful for knowledge visualization and communication when needed. Drawing as a method continues to make sense during the research after the starting phases. This can be seen in some other drawings produced after the first set.



Figure 7: Visual diary – page 7

Source: Henrique Andrade, 2023

This last drawing attempts to be a representation of a participative process through creative approaches. The motivation was the need to understand what the place of participation in could be this processes. The drawing brought the idea that participative creative approaches could bring the public to the creative process of architectural design through interventions that would include all the actors of an architectural design project and its inhabitants. In such a manner, drawing allowed us to find new connections with literature like with Robert Smithson's concept of "non site" (Shapiro, Smithson& Flam, 1998) (as an image of where this participation would happen), but also to "draw" new questions from the main question of the research. In this way, makes sense that drawing should be kept as a complementary practice within research methodology.

5. Science, art and research

In concluding an article, it is common to review the research results. In this case, the results are the set of drawings produced in order to raise the starting question of the research. So, drawing served as a method to problematize the gathered knowledge, similar to problematization methodologies. The most common way to pose a research question is "gap-spotting", where the researcher looks for blank spaces in existing knowledge and does not challenge it. What is most interesting in the problematization that is made possible by drawing is not only to question knowledge but also the researcher's beliefs and positioning. (Alvesson & Sandberg, 2011)

... our idea is to use problematization as a methodology for challenging the assumptions that underlie not only others' but also one's own theoretical position and, based on that, to construct novel research questions. (...) The ambition is therefore not, nor is it possible, to totally undo one's own position; rather, it is to unpack it sufficiently so that some of one's ordinary held assumptions can be scrutinized and reconsidered (...) (Alvesson & Sandberg, 2011, p. 252)

The drawings shown in this document allowed us to build the positioning from which the question arose. A positioning of recognizing participation as a solid field of knowledge, with proven benefits. However, also a positioning that recognizes a need to be critical towards Participatory Architecture Design and approaches that allow a more meaningful and engaging participation within the design process. Although this logical construction is built from the research, it also links to literature. (Arnstein, 1969; Lawrence, 1982; Miessen, 2011, 2017; Schelings & Elsen, 2022)

...visualizing ideas through drawing as a successful strategy to locate the "white/open space" of possibility, which encourages intuitive thinking and enables the imaginative leaps that are so necessary for creative design action and innovative change to emerge (Mäkelä et al., 2014, p.8)

Drawing as an inquiry method differs from the typical way that drawing is used to represent something. However, when looking at the art or design process, both approaches can be identified as working together towards the design goal. This is because design and art also have a degree of investigation, which raises the point of questioning whether the distinction between architectural research and practice continues to make sense.

Contemporary research questions demand a more fluid conception of where one discipline ends and another begins. (Brew et al., 2011, p.7)

...visualizing ideas through drawing as a successful strategy to locate the "white/open space" of possibility, which encourages intuitive thinking and enables the imaginative leaps that are so necessary for creative design action and innovative change. (Lecanides-Arnott, 2014, p.13)

Regarding research in general, Drawing is always present. Writing could be a form of drawing, even a form of creative drawing, sharing a lot of similitudes of a creative process (getting informed by references, moments of frustration) This is why drawing is compatible with research, and even a complementary method. In one sense, it gives a new platform for knowledge analysis much more oriented to questioning, but also a way to say what is not possible to express by words.

Arts-based practices have posed serious challenges to methods conventions, thus unsettling many assumptions about what constitutes research and knowledge. (Leavy, 2008, p.11)

Drawing as a method of research offers the opportunity to engage in generative moments, where something is created. This is why it is most common in art or design based research, and also why it could prove very useful in action research. One of the greatest challenges that the implementation of this approach faces is convincing researchers outside of the art-based field, that this is a beneficial, compatible, and possible tool for research. The notion that practicing drawing is only possible with academic training in the field or some kind of talent, increases that difficulty. Drawing can be practiced by anybody who can trace on a surface. Much like writing, it can be done with more or less “ability” or mastery, and in that case, the benefits of writing are widely recognized by researchers. This does not mean that these processes should not be guided and advised by experts in arts-based fields, but instead calls for the importance of their presence in research centers, towards a more creative and humane research as well as opportunities to mutually enrich scientific and artistic knowledge.

Furthermore, drawing holds the potential to be participatory, creating opportunities to practice more inclusive research and access to academic knowledge. On the other hand, drawing can have an important role in any type or phase of research where there is a degree of abstraction or a need for interpretation. These moments are present in every research, even the ones closer to natural sciences because research is a human activity and therefore prone to mistakes and abstraction. Drawing might be a way to enrich these moments without replacing traditional research, accepting them as something fruitful toward a more humane research practice. The usefulness of these methods resides in their ability to question a subject, for that reason, they can be used to pose the questions that motivate research. In conclusion, to science that makes questions Art can raise questions, and better questions produce better answers.

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