

# notebook

These notes arise from sitting in a photography class called "Looking out" as a teaching assistant to Philip Perkis, in an open dialogue with him and his students. They keep emerging from sharing questions, experiences and insights with artists, students and researchers of different kinds.

There is no order, sequence or conclusion to be drawn. There is no intentional relationship between the pictures I keep taking and this text, but hopefully they complement each other (fugue).

#

Art and resistance, science and resistance. Without friction nothing to hold on to, no way to move.

Any creative act happens in an unknown space, given a certain friction (the metaphor of the spark and a version of the second law of thermodynamics).

(Digital) technology eliminates a specific kind of friction having to do with autonomy, physicality and craft. How to get it back into the process is part of the work.

#

Emotional truths and factual truths: could it be said that art is about emotional truths and science is about factual truths? But also vice versa. Factual truths are emotional truths and emotional truths are factual truths.

The link between perception, sensation, feeling and emotion. Different roots.  
The entanglement between facts and values.

#

In art making specific time and place can be catalytic: like experimental setting?

Information versus atmosphere: fuzziness (purposively withdrawn information) is the art sauce (it can cover low quality ingredients).

Vocabulary is different from subject matter: subject matter can be limiting or expanding.

#

Integration of background/foreground: the eye composes the image by going from place to place, the camera sees everything in the frame equally. This means that you can't control everything when you take a picture: your eye doesn't have the time to wander around and recompose the image before you click (unless it is a staged or a landscape, but even then...). The complexity of the world is not rationally resolved, but intuitively. There is an element of chance and an element of surprise (wonder).

(Good) pictures tend to *happen* in the tension between intention and chance.

Is there an equivalent in science? Creating the arena for suspending associative mind. Intention,

chance and surprise in scientific research.

Insights tend to happen in the tension between intention and chance.

#

Without motion there is no need for a nervous system (the mystery of plants).

Basis of nervous system: sensorial cells, motor cells and cells that connect these two (neural cells).

Behavior as the result of a connection between sensorial and motor cells.

#

Body is central to the work. Animal grace (in physical movement).

Photographing is about coordinating motion and perception. The camera is neutral with respect to reality. It doesn't make choices within the frame. The eye does. The mind constantly associates.

Can the action of taking pictures be driven by grace? Because of the gap between the camera and the eye, one has to give up the illusion of a control over reality. The camera can act as a bridge from self-consciousness to grace.

#

I took off my shoes in the woods. I realized I don't take pictures with my eyes, but with my feet. And with my body. It can be a ritual.

If you give up the physicality (physical movement) what do you lose? And what do you lose in science?

Zoom lenses create the illusion of intimacy. Something is not there.

#

"Position is where everything happens from." Frederich Sommer (quoted by Philp Perkis).

Taking a position implies the awareness of one's own existence in a given time and space. It implies assuming an inner and outer posture.

Any creative act implies and determines a posture shift.

#

The line of risk: all good art is on the edge.

Risk is taken in the space between intention and chance.

Risk as a mechanism for who is at the edge to shake the center, for *what* is at the edge to shake the core.

When the core shakes, it *resonates*.

Is it true for science? What is good science?

Modern (normal) science has always avoided risk and uncertainty as something not belonging to science.

Post normal science: from assessing (avoiding) risks to assessing (searching for) quality.

#

Enough perfection makes good art.

Is art about perfection, the search for perfection? Perfection involves the risk to fall and fail. The core has to be shaken.

What about science and perfection?

Corrected-ness is different from perfection. Perfection as presence.

Beato Angelico's frescos in the cells of San Marco are not exact but perfect. They convey a presence. They encourage (remind) to be present.

Presence, present and eternity are related (isomorphism).

Art is about presence, not about being correct (or exact).

And science? Science and corrected-ness, science and presence. Back to quality.

#

The idea that by over applying rationality one gets to a point of inherent, irreducible contradiction. There is no foundation to rational thinking.

Contradictions manifest the limits of our assumptions. They can map our blindness.

Contradiction in art?

#

Experimenting in science; experimenting in art. Craftsmanship and art; craftsmanship and science. From experience to experiment, from experiment to simulation.

Style is the result of working with the same medium for a while. Style is putting what you are in what you do. Style is factual. What about style and science?

#

Science, ideology and dogma. Art, ideology and dogma.  
The work is about undermining certainty, the temptation of certainty.

#

General misconception: art is subjective, science is objective.

Breaking values free rationality not by derogating the significance of reason, but rather by expanding its ambit.

Subject matter vs. form of expression (back to factual truths and emotional truths).

#

Any creative act begins with the conjunction of experience and intuition.

“The system begins with the immediate...” Kierkegaard, Concluding Unscientific Postscript.

The system as any conscious expression of a creative act.

We all have the intuition of crisis and we all have the intuition of joy.

We all have the immediate experience of wonder.

“Information leads to pessimism. Yet is still possible to find joy and wonder in immediate experience.” David Rothenberg (in A. Naess, Ecology, Community and Lifestyle)

“I’m not much interested in ethics or morals. I’m interested in how we experience the world...Ethics follows from how we experience the world. *If you can articulate your experience, then it can be a philosophy or a religion*” (Arne Naess, Ecology, Community and Lifestyle).

Also: if you can articulate your experience, then it can be art or science.

Our immediate experience is not hierarchical. We impose order and hierarchy on our perception. Could we learn to suspend it for instants? *Overcoming fear*.

In science: do we find hierarchy in nature or do we impose it on nature?

#

Leonardo’s drawing

Pure observation. Drawing as the expression of internal and external detached observation. The internal and the external observation meet in the drawing. Encounter.

Also, drawing as imitation of phenomena. We imitate to comprehend (feel) the quality of our presence.

Drawing translates the experience of perception into motion. Back to neural system.

Perception is different from observation. How? Observation implies an encounter between the inside and the outside.

Science is about observation, about constructing order through observation.

#

Fragility of the body stands out as tragic when compared to the human search for the absolute.

Tragic here (Greek tragedy): a quality intrinsically unsolvable, in perpetual evolving contradiction

and therefore essentially human.

Search for some form of truth by setting up an arena and becoming available (prayer). Creative act as 'prayer'.

#

When approaching an art piece, one often makes a judgment before a clear observation. An emotional approach to the work prevents (blocks out) a clear, responsible observation.

Both art and science are about observation and response to observation.

#

Science is about control, prediction and explanation.  
But also about “feeling at home in the universe”.

Does explanation make us “feel at home in the universe”?

Why is it that we need equations and laws, and theories to “feel at home in the universe”? Do we?

What about art? Is art a way to “feel at home in the universe”?  
Does art explain anything? Should it?

#

Science and truth, art and revelation.

Revelation as the result of openness, becoming available.  
Truth as something out there to grasp.

The opposite holds as well.

#

The work is about the interstices between pockets of order.

#

The illusion of progress towards truth (and good) in time. In this we assume that truth (and good) have something to do with our increased power to manipulate nature according to our own interest and ease.

Good museums carry essential truths from the past.

Ignorance and forgetfulness progress with knowledge and memory, sometime faster.

Science and the illusion of progress. Art and the illusion of progress.