



Morgan O'Hara

Morgan O'Hara's work presents us with a rare quality of being both extremely disciplined and completely unpredictable. Her drawings are by no means figurative, yet they are intimately connected with representation. Morgan O'Hara draws people in action: she registers their actions by directly transcribing their movements, both on a macro and micro scale.

During her recent visit to the Drawing Studio, she guided students and staff through an overview of work in the last twenty years and performed a live transmission using Heitor Alvelos, Lúcia David and Laura Malacart as her subjects. The following day, she conducted a college-wide workshop that made some fingers bleed out of intensity. What follows is the transcript of a brief talk with Heitor Alvelos about her work.

Your work seems to focus on methods of creation, rather than the finished piece. How important is the end result to you?

I am actually interested in both process and product, but I have been focusing on process for a long time now, having taught psychology of creativity for thirty years. However, being seven or eight years younger than the American Minimalist generation, I never had a problem with an object that looks like art. Process interests me in the sense that it threatens the life of methodology. It brings the unpredictable and unexpected into the live situation, which might otherwise turn out to be a simple fulfilment of previously set tasks. The difference between my work and science is that science has to stick to its established methodology; if they change mid-stream, they render the experiment invalid. In my work, I am free to expand all the time and reformulate the parameters as my performances take place. As a matter of fact, expansion invariably happens in an unexpected live context.

Is instinct important in your work, then?

Very much so. From the choice of subjects to the actual making of the pieces. It involves a state of relaxation and a constant awareness of everything taking place around me. It often forces me to respond before I have time to think. For example, using a bunch of pencils held together in my drawings came out of my frustration for

not being able to capture the intensity of Anthony Braxton's saxophone playing at the Knitting Factory in New York. His playing was so strong that I had to respond instinctively and grabbed as many pencils as I could, using them as one.

What do you see as the greatest asset of your work?

I see myself creating portraits. More than that, creating an archive of representation of human activity and diversity. Some experiences I seek out, such as the big rituals of tourist attraction (the changing of the guard here in London, for example), some come out of specific, casual activity such as a man elaborately tying his shoelace at an airport waiting area.

Essentially, I have the acute perception of how every single second is so fully charged with activity. At this very moment, someone is dying. At this very moment, someone is making love. At this very moment, someone is eating. At this very moment, someone has just won the lottery. At this very moment, someone is changing their lives irreversibly. I simply want to contribute to that richness. This approach resonates socially, politically, aesthetically.

Heitor Alvelos

