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 Centre for Recent Drawing, London

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Maps of Motion Morgan O'Hara: Live Transmissions from the English National Ballet

Centre for Recent Drawing, London
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by MK PALOMAR

The Centre for Recent Drawing, an exhibition space dedicated to drawing in north London, describes itself as "London's museum space for drawing".¹ Being a member of the Museum Association entitles it to this claim, but rather than a dusty series of rooms hung with polite pencil drawings C4RD (this acronym is how you will find the space online) has been celebrating contemporary drawing (work made by living artists) since 2004.

This unique space provides "...for those whom drawing is a core part of their practice,"² a substantial and broad programme; in house residencies, exhibitions, Salo(o)n events, curatorial internships, publications (D4RD and Z4RD). "... the C4RD Community registry, Special Projects, and Online Residencies."³

Clearly if you draw or are interested in the state of contemporary drawing then C4RD is an important place for you to visit, and until 8 June C4RD is showing an intriguing exhibition by the American performance drawer Morgan O'Hara.⁴ O'Hara has been making her *Live Transmission*⁵ drawings since 1989. If you have not seen O'Hara in performance then you might imagine her marking paper to record the motion of another's actions (like a human seismograph) to be as eye catching as the subject she is documenting. But O'Hara has a unique self-contained grace – perhaps this quiet presence is influenced by having spent her childhood years in Japan.

Either positioned among the audience, with the performers on the stage, or located at the workplace of her subject, O'Hara is calm while her eyes follow the performer and her hands follow the motion of her eyes. Rarely looking down to see how the marks she is making are building on the paper surface, O'Hara's drawings record the body's journey travelled in the process of various activities.

Most often focusing on the actions of the hands, O'Hara's field of examination is richly diverse and fascinating – from tea-making through jazz poetry to orchestral or presidential performance. While the drawings sometimes reveal the focus of the subjects actions (as hands massage a figure so the figure is constructed through O'Hara's marks recording the motion of those hands), O'Hara's ambidexterity (drawing with both hands at the same time) matches her self-contained grace, sometimes holding one pencil in each hand, other times bunches of pencils together (everyone delighting in the surprise of marking a surface unexpectedly should try this at home).

O'Hara's recent *Live Transmission* project exhibited at C4RD was completed during her collaboration with the English National Ballet. "... given unfettered access over a two year period to respond to the rehearsals and performances of the ballet dancers at work" O'Hara's drawings could be seen as a series of choreographic maps, documentations of collaborative motions activated through practice and direction. And while O'Hara's subjects undoubtedly have grace, independent of any documentation, it is O'Hara's clarity in her observation and mapping of motions that identifies and reveals grace within her subjects. Such motion maps offer us new understanding and appreciation of different ways to move through the world.

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References

1. C4RD website *Drawing Mind on Line*, Andrew Hewish Director of the Centre for Recent Drawing. (accessed May 18th 2012)
2. Ibid.
3. Ibid.
4. http://www.c4rd.org.uk/C4RD/Current_Exhibition.html
5. <http://www.morganohara.com>