

# THE SWERVE

**The Elliot Collins Handbook**

# Contents

Visual Documentation from February 2006 to October 2007

*Studio and individual object shots*

Glossary of Punctuation

1 Introduction

*The Swerve – Atoms – Meaning – Zen Meditation - Fluctuations and Absorptions*

On Words, Onwards!

*Writing – The Author – The Questions In Words – Waiting For Godot – Titles – When I Die*

Punctuation

*Communication – Symbols – Percentages of Sadness – PSA – Man Over Board – VTS – Meaning  
– The Secret Apology Mark – Pinecone comma*

Placeholders

*Postcards – Guernica – My Grandmother – ‘Stand-Ins’ – Glow In The Dark Stars – Representations  
– Arrangements*

A Guide to Arrangements

*Avoidance – Distraction – Denial – Subterfuge – The Enemy – Poison - Hissie-Fits - Ikebana*

Brainstorms

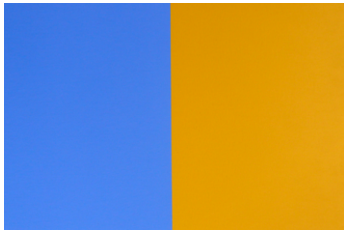
*Van Gogh – A Billboard – A Church – A Street-Bum - A Sparrow – A Meadow At Dusk –  
Connections*

Appendix

*Synopsis for On the Nature of Things – The Death Of Maui – The Bear Hunt – Brainstorms*



# Glossary of Punctuation



*Balance Painting*



CDs with images of paintings saved on to them. (opposite has Manet's *The Balcony*.)



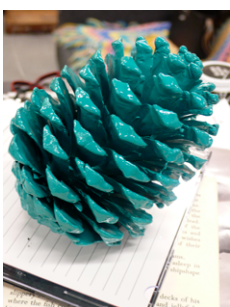
*Lowercase heart and Listening shell.*



*Mysterious Flower Painting – Author Unknown.* (Van Gogh's Sunflowers)



Percentage of Sadness (*41%*)



*Pinecone Comma*



*PLP* (Propositional Line Paintings)



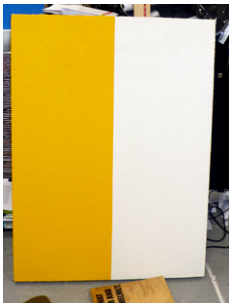
*MOP* (Man Overboard Paintings)



*Silence Mark*



*Underline*



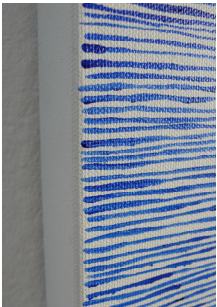
*VTs* (Very Turbulent Sea)

# Introduction

The universe is all atoms and void, nothing else.<sup>1</sup>

‘Swerve’ implies a divergence from a straight path into a world of free associations and organic growth. Lucretius’ poem *The Nature of Things*, refers to the arrangement of atoms in the universe, “Being mere shifting combinations of atoms, this world and the other worlds are not eternal”.

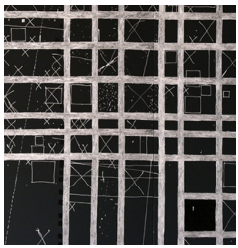
My work continues to swerve rather than come to a point of conclusion. Like the Japanese rock garden the work is an analogy to be thought upon. However the Zen, meditative state-of-mind has been jettisoned in favour of the impression of the clunky dumping ground of an artist who chooses to work through ideas out loud. Obvious brushwork, found objects, failed attempts at emulating others, antagonistic elements and colloquial language are the means by which my system of ‘placeholders’, ‘punctuation’ and arrangements is put in place. Rather than looking out and laughing at others I have tried to initiate a way of thinking by laughing at myself. The following essay locates my relaxed behaviour around making, thinking about and displaying art as a rigorous method.



---

<sup>1</sup> Lucretius refer to appendix

# On Words, Onwards!



John Reynolds *I Gotta Use Words When I Talk To You* (red, yellow and blue) 2003. Acrylic and silver pen on canvas

On the other hand with regards to - Stop! Back! Stop! Turn! Think!<sup>2</sup> Quaquaquaqu with white beard  
...quaquaquaqu outside time without extension who from the heights of divine apathia divine athambia  
divine aphasia loves us dearly with some exceptions with reasons unknown but time will tell...<sup>3</sup>

As ‘Lucky’s Rant’ makes apparent, words are at once familiar and yet always distant. This is where one will always struggle with the written and to a lesser extent the spoken word. Is it possible to write painting or paint words? John Reynolds has quoted T.S. Eliot in the titles for his series of wordless paintings, *I Gotta Use Words When I Talk To You*. Time will tell whether anyone will be able to read them. Eliot and Reynolds juggle fallible language and its unreliable ability to convey meaning.

That was a way of putting it – not very satisfactory: A periphrastic study in a worn-out poetical fashion,  
Leaving one still with the intolerable wrestle,  
With words and meanings.<sup>4</sup>



Elliot Collins *That I Might Believe* 2007. Vinyl on wood

In *Mythologies*, Roland Barthes states, “Any refusal of language is a death.”<sup>5</sup> Words are visual tools to make ideas tangible or lucid. Materialised as paintings, words are arranged in such a way that their visual appearance prevails. These agreed containers of mental concepts become propositions to roll over in the mind. A sense of amnesia takes over as words are transcribed from the literal page to the ‘pages’ of an artwork.

Is it possible that you’ve forgotten already?  
That’s the way I am. Either I forget immediately or I never forget.<sup>6</sup>



John Reynolds *Proverbs (tomorrow)* 2004 Acrylic and enamel on canvas

The aim of this chapter is to make apparent the use of language to visualise the stuff of thoughts, of lint and dust and remains of life tied intrinsically to the artist. From his ‘word-remnants’ we recover further questions. The artist holds back the ‘un-dressed’ personal utterance and in doing

<sup>2</sup> Beckett, S. (1956). *Waiting For Godot*. London: Faber and Faber

<sup>3</sup> Beckett, S. (1956). *Waiting For Godot*. London: Faber and Faber (Lucky’s Rant)

<sup>4</sup> Eliot T.S, Four Quartets ‘East Coker’ 1940, pt 2

<sup>5</sup> Barthes. R. (1957). *Mythologies*. Paris: Editions du Seuil

<sup>6</sup> Beckett, S. (1956). *Waiting For Godot*. London: Faber and Faber



Elliot Collins *Some Clarity Gained With The Realization That The Inherent Possibility Of Nothingness Lies In Everything* (Neon Vase #2 #3) 2007 enamel on found ceramics

so invites speculation on excerpts and exploits of a more telling nature. For instance the relation between neon vase #2, 2007, and its title, *Some Clarity And Respite Gained With The Realization That The Inherent Possibility Of Nothingness Lies In Everything*, shifts focus away from meaning onto the painstaking process of making meaning. The spraying of road-marking neon yellow paint onto found, commercially manufactured, empty vessels, is a struggle that approximates Lucky's stuttering word making, "quaquaquaqua". The 'high-lighting' of the vase stresses the inherent lack of anything of interest within it, while its titling alerts the viewer to the fascination for 'meaning-making' that motivated the spraying.

Words offer up a portal into an untapped universe found within every individual. In *Under Milk Wood*, Dylan Thomas' play for voices, uses words to detail his vision of a town, and introduce us to a way of viewing it.

You can hear the dew falling, and the hushed town breathing. And you alone can hear the invisible starfall, the darkest-before-dawn minutely dewgrazed stir of the black, dab-filled sea. Come closer now. Only you can hear the houses sleeping in the streets in the slow deep salt and silent black, bandaged night. From where you are, you can hear their dreams. Captain Cat, the retired blind sea-captain, asleep in his bunk in the seashelled, ship-in-bottled, shipshape best cabin of Schooner house dreams of never such seas as any that swamped the decks of his *S.S. Kidwelly* bellying over the bedclothes and jellyfish-slippery sucking him down salt deep into the Davy dark where fish come biting out nibble him down to his wishbone, and long drowned nuzzle up to him.<sup>7</sup>

Similarly my practice, whether resulting in words other objects or compounds of both is bound up with the process of making meaning. What remains are unruly remnants of a process that aspire to be things in themselves. The works are souvenirs and conveyers of romantic longing.

When I die, I'd like to come back as a word. Not a conjunction or verb. Something good, maybe a pronoun, so I can make something appear more important than it was before. Then I would make 'the tree' become 'the *valiant* tree'.



Elliot Collins, *Sometimes* 2007. Vinyl on plywood

Elliot Collins September 2007

<sup>7</sup> Thomas, D. (1954). *Under Milk Wood*. London: J.M. Dent & Sons Ltd

# Punctuation.



Elliot Collins *M.O.B (red and blue)* 2007, acrylic on canvas

Punctuation marks guide the viewer through a work. Start. Pause. Stop. Go. Pay attention here, there, but not here. Visual punctuation aids fluency in the same way as spacing and punctuation ease the reading of a printed page. Van Gogh's *Wheat Field with Crows* and *The Church at Auvers*, are punctuated by depictions of divergent paths that help the viewer read the work. Punctuation confers direction without foreclosing interpretive possibilities. Paths create entry and exit points to navigation. While representing, in this case, a path, they are also tools for 'reading'.

Punctuation in Emily Dickinson's poetry operates a little differently; Berger writes, "the presence of the eternal is attendant in every pause."<sup>8</sup> In this way punctuation may also be linked to awkward silences and their emotional consequences.



Vincent Van Gogh *The Church at Auvers*, 1890  
Oil on canvas, Musée d'Orsay, Paris

The droplets of the *Percentages of Sadness* are a form of punctuation. The work's elements are based on water droplets that speak of moisture and precipitation. The percentage, which occupies the droplet's centre, offers a numerical value e.g. 37%. Having 1 to 99.8% droplets creates a lukewarm reminder of the human inability to say how sad things can get. The box set of *Percentages of Sadness*, alludes to emotional baggage that encumbers any system of making meaning.

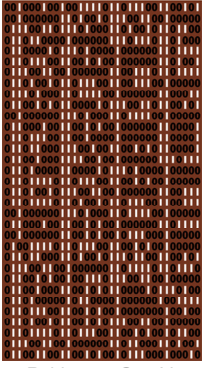


Elliot Collins  
*Percentage of Sadness (41%)* 2007. Enamel and varnish on hardboard.

Punctuation contributes to the vast amount of communication that is non-textual and extra-verbal. The *Man Overboard Paintings (MOP)* borrow from the language of International Code Flags (ICF). In the original system, Alfa stands for the letter "A" and means "Have Diver Down, Keep Clear". Oscar stands for the letter "O" and means "Man Overboard". However in the *MOP* series, these signs have been punctuated by incorporation within a more inclusive system. A painting made in the ICF compositional format (a square made up of two triangles), is easily read when hoisted above a sailing ship. However, on the wall in the vicinity of an International Klein Blue (IKB) painted pinecone, a *Very Turbulent Sea (VTS)* acrylic on hessian painting, and a *Public Service Announcement (PSA)* placard, the meaning of the *MOP* may be less clear. The viewer is

<sup>8</sup> Berger J. *Hold Everything Dear: Despatches on Survival and Resistance*. (2007). Verso: New York, London





Peter Robinson, *One Lives*  
Lamda print

invited by the arranged punctuation or object-sentence to question what being ‘overboard’ means at all, and if in fact it is the artist who may need rescuing.

With any system of communication it is customary to have the necessary tools to decipher the language or code. When knowledge of the necessary tools is missing, the work’s communicative potential is lessened and it becomes something of a quandary to be observed. In this way, Peter Robinson turns a Samuel Beckett quote into binary code, to create a conspiratorial image to look at more than to read.



Elliot Collins *Silence Mark*  
2007 (detail). Acrylic and  
gouache on canvas

In Jonathan Safran Foer’s, *A Primer for the Punctuation of Heart Disease*, the author provides a guide to the punctuation he uses in his text about his family. The following list chronicles the ‘punctuation’ I have borrowed from Safran Foer.

The *Silence Mark* ‘□’

Signifies an absence of language, and there is at least one on every page of the story of my family life.

The *Willed Silence Mark* ‘□’

Signifies an intentional silence, the conversational equivalent of building a wall over which you can’t climb.

The *Insistent Question Mark*, ‘??’

Denotes one family member’s refusal to yield to a willed silence.

The *Unexclamation Point*, ‘ ∴ ’

Is the opposite of an exclamation point; it indicates a whisper.



Elliot Collins *Balance*  
Painting #3 2007. Acrylic  
on canvas

Below are examples of punctuation building on Foer’s system, that I have introduced to my own work.

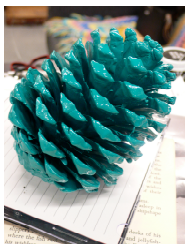
The *Pinecone Comma*,

A spray-painted pinecone, (originally IKB-coloured, more recently many-coloured).

The *Pinecone Comma* is a reference to my grandfather who collected and displayed pine cones in his house. Since his death they have become an object of memoriam.



Elliot Collins,  
Installation view  
July 2007



Elliot Collins  
*Pinecone Comma*  
October 2007

The *Secret Apology Mark*,

An upside down Capital ‘A’ in Cooper Black 71pt that serves as a subtle, often silent apology familiar in every conversational exchange with my family (see fig.1).

The following transcript (taken from an un-edited conversation with my father), demonstrates the combination of Foer's and my own systems of punctuation:

He said 'Hello. How was the drive?'  
I said 'Good □.'  
'Nice beard {I see myself in you}'  
'Yeah, □❖♣, it's my ruggedly handsome  
look {I'm still angry}  
chicks dig it.'  
'So, have you got a girlfriend? **V**,'  
'■',  
'How's art?'  
'Good ~'.  
'□',

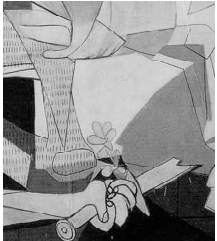


# Placeholders



Antidepressants

The idea of something ‘standing-in’ for something else happens more and more in daily life. We increasingly replace the real with the imaginary, the virtual with the actual. Vitamin pills, tread mills, antidepressants, online chat-rooms, are all examples of an increasing category of everyday substitutes that take the place of another activity, feeling or product. ‘Placeholder’ is a term that might be applied to objects, paintings or artifacts that similarly stand in place of an original idea or thing.



Pablo Picasso  
*Guernica* (detail)  
1937

One of the great placeholders of the modern age is the postcard. My grandmother lovingly displays postcards of Picasso's *Guernica*, sunsets over Paris, Egypt, and Rome, and ‘three kittens in a barrel’, that carry memories of my relatives and their various journeys. From the door of the refrigerator to the top of the television, a postcard of a canonical painting has the ability to take on a new role in everyday life. The postcards represent more than an oil painting, a sunset or kittens; they are ‘placeholders’ for experiences and ideas that have very little to do with the images depicted. Every time I visit my grandmother I visit *Guernica*, I am reminded of the painting, but seeing it on the mantelpiece reminds me this is not just a ‘stand-in’ for a painting, but a ‘placeholder’ for feelings unrelated to the painting or artist.



Elliot Collins *Travelling Show #2*(detail) 2007.  
Acrylic on hardboard

The previous tenants in my flat, fixed glow-in-the-dark stars to the ceiling of my bedroom. When I switched out the light on the first night, I was repulsed by the neon glow. However I have grown to treasure these modest and manageable substitutes for the night sky that are representatives of romantic investment. I admire the shamelessness with which these adhesive stars imitate the real thing and the way they have been sentimentally attached to my bedroom ceiling.

The compelling thing about ‘placeholders’ is their double-life; while acting as ‘stand-ins’ they



Elliot Collins *Travelling*  
Show #2 2007. Acrylic on  
hardboard with suitcase

also perform as themselves. They call into question their own credibility and purpose creating an unstable echo or after-effect. The impact of these ‘meta-objects’ is much like the experience of the existential detectives in the movie, *I Heart Huckabees*. When their client asks them, “How am I not myself?”, the detectives simply repeat the question. “How am I not myself? How am I not myself? How am I not myself?”<sup>9</sup>.

What happens when art maintains this level of ambiguity? When the painting offered is not what it is, but a ‘placeholder’ amongst other placeholders, it begins a speculation on our romantic tendency to attach meaning. Placeholders are propositions that compel further questions about the making of meaning.

Throughout this text I have tried to address this notion of the placeholder, by talking around and observing it from each direction as you would a sculpture ‘in the round’. My sense of the placeholder is that it hints at a deeper truth, both obvious and elusive.



Bernard and Vivienne Jaffe,  
Existential Detectives in  
*I Heart Huckabees*

# Storytelling



Elliot Collins *Blue Flowers* 2007, Oil on enamel with paper

Was it me who wrote that? Did I make that painting, or only think I did? In my dream, that painting in the corner with the blue flowers expelled tyranny, fed the poor and spoke of immortality. But it doesn't appear to be doing very much at all. Now it just takes up space and speaks of nothing.

Elliot Collins<sup>9</sup>

The way an audience “reads” artwork comes as a challenge to the artist who plays the part of prophet. Even when the artist supplies symbols, signifiers, codes and diagrams, the viewer may wilfully interpret the work in highly subjective fashion or remain confused. However, if we take the artist’s intention as all persuasive, every answer becomes known, the problem is solved and mystery is deleted. With too much knowledge of artist’s intent, the viewer may draw obvious conclusions and the work is reduced to lack lustre, tedious experience.



Third eye Symbol

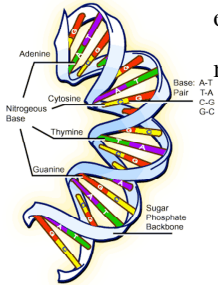
My interest is in creating a stopgap or moat of interpretation. The only way to cross the moat is via individual investigation. In 1992, Derek Walcott explained, “The process of poetry is one of excavation and of self-discovery.”<sup>10</sup> Whether creating or crossing the moat, similar questions arise: Who am I? What am I? Where have I been? Where am I going, and why? Such questions may arise in response to a painted pinecone combined with a ‘lowercase heart’ and a ‘suitcase-travelling-show-painting’. Works resonate to a receptive audience like a spell or a curse. When confronted with a feeling or thought translated into an artefact or placeholder, the viewer is enticed into an inexplicable ‘third-eye’ experience. This brings to mind the possessed cat or the haunted house, the tapu mere or the voodoo doll. Each of these experiences is reinforced because of the belief structures set in place by those who invest their faith or belief in them.

---

<sup>9</sup> Studio Observation 13 July 2007

<sup>10</sup> Walcott, D. in the *New York Times*, 8 December 1992

The nursery rhyme, *We're going on a bear hunt* (“we’re going to catch a big one, I’m not scared”), describes the ‘hands-on’ experience of hunting. The characters encounter a muddy swamp, and the rhyme continues, “We can’t go round it, we can’t go over it, we can’t go under it, we’ll have to go *through* it.”<sup>11</sup> Read as an analogy for the search for meaning in the muddy swamp of art, the bear hunt emphasises the idea that our only means of navigation is through individual experience. The bear hunt operates, in the words of Lewis Hyde, “not as a point of entry into meaning but paradoxically as a breeder of multiple meanings.”<sup>12</sup>



DNA double helix structure

‘We read books,’ and art, ‘yes, but we also read the swaying of pine boughs, the turtle swimming below the ice, the dream fragment brought back by the smell of eucalyptus leaves, the unused bits of code on strands of DNA, the wobble of a flying Frisbee - and each has its radiance to offer, a sense that there are surely secrets yet to be revealed if only the gates would freely open.’<sup>13</sup>

<sup>11</sup> Refer to appendix (3) for full rhyme

<sup>12</sup> Hyde, L. (1998) *Trickster Makes This World*. New York: North Point Press

<sup>13</sup> Hyde, L. (1998) *Trickster Makes This World*. New York: North Point Press

# A Guide to Arrangements



One should avoid the common mistake of the A-to-B, B-to-C logic that creates an unsophisticated, *Sooty-and-Sweep* feel to a work. One should practice the subtle art of saying yes and no at the same time while meaning neither. Try to focus on the pleasurable aspect of avoidance, distraction and denial (often championed in one's personal life). These lovingly crafted tools of deferral and subterfuge should not be regarded as either ambivalence or arrogance.

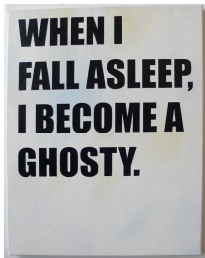


An arrangement should be composed of the trivial and the deeply thoughtful or poetic and conversation between the two should be encouraged. Make reference to flags, indigenous cultures and to painting. Try and combine a number of works of different sizes so as to make other works look bigger in comparison. Think of Ikebana (the ancient art of Japanese flower arranging). Taking into account that a tight arrangement will be too tight and a loose arrangement will be too loose, create a tantrum or visual hissie-fit within the arrangement. Any or all arrangements will ultimately fail and failure is success as it can only allow further investigation. This will greater serve the work in the long run as you will forget your self-indulgent, egocentric, singular emotional relevance to the work.

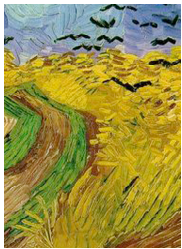


Lastly, in relation to the overall feel of an arrangement, one must strive to maintain a level of distance and disregard for the composition. As with anything, taste and style are completely irrelevant and fraught with social landmines apt to disfigure the on-looker. As any experienced arranger will be aware, the work arranges the arranger; the arranger does not arrange the work.

# Brainstorms



Elliot Collins, *Ghosty*, 2007. Oil on canvas



Vincent van Gogh, *Wheat Field with Crows* 1890  
Oil on canvas  
50.5 × 103.0 cm  
Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam

The brainstorm is a narrative or sentence-like conglomeration of objects and ‘placeholders’. By now one might realize there are many intermediate layers. The brainstorm spreads further out into space rather than inwards, ideas fold back on themselves in spiral fashion, smaller, subtler ideas are collected on a second or third rotation. Accidents begin to occur and juxtapositions create new, undiscovered interconnections. The brainstorm’s reading is a highly subjective one. Despite an excess of visual clues and strategic punctuation, if held up to any level of scrutiny it remains ‘shifty’. Any re-arrangement, input, addition or deletion by the artist further swerves the impact. While brainstorms employ many art conventions (ranging from the stretched canvas to the ‘installation’), the esoteric biographical content contained in most cases serves to blunt analytical tools.<sup>14</sup>

*When I Fall Asleep, I Become A Ghosty*, relates to the childish notion of becoming a ghost when one falls asleep. When we sleep and dream we become ‘ghosties’. This work does not discuss whether this is a desired or frightening state. *CD#4* is a CD painted with black enamel that contains the largest online jpeg of Van Gogh’s 1890 *Wheat Field with Crows*.<sup>15</sup>

If *When I Fall Asleep, I Become A Ghosty* is placed along side *CD#4*, then the understanding of

---

<sup>14</sup> A concrete example of the latter phenomenon is semantic ‘underspecification’ — meanings are not complete without some elements of context. To take an example of a single word, "red", its meaning in a phrase such as *red book* is similar to many other usages, and can be viewed as compositional. However, the colour implied in phrases such as "red wine" (very dark), and "red hair" (coppery), or "red soil", or "red skin" - are very different. Indeed, these colours by themselves would not be called "red" by native speakers. These instances are contrastive, so "red wine" is so called only in comparison with the other kind of wine (which also is not "white" for the same reasons). This view goes back to de Saussure: Each of a set of synonyms like *redouter* ('to dread'), *craindre* ('to fear'), *avoir peur* ('to be afraid') has its particular value only because they stand in contrast with one another. No word has a value that can be identified independently of what else is in its vicinity. ^ Ferdinand de Saussure (1916). *The Course of General Linguistics* (*Cours de linguistique générale*). [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Semantics#\\_note-0](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Semantics#_note-0) retrieved 6 October 2007

<sup>23</sup> Another interesting point in this concept is that there is a relative danger in having an image saved or loaded onto a CD. It is an unreliable referencing or retrieval system in comparison to the original paintings that have lasted many centuries compared to the life span of the C.D, which is as yet unknown.

*Wheat Field with Crows* as a prophecy of Van Gogh's demise becomes accentuated.<sup>16</sup>



Michael Parekowhai,  
*Portrait of Ed Brown* 2000  
-2004 type c colour  
photograph on fujiflex  
paper

The interpretive inclusivity of brainstorm is also demonstrated by ordinary street interactions, such as the intersection of a billboard, a church, a street-bum and a sparrow on the corner of Hobson and Wellesley Streets in central Auckland.

All four are individual objects or entities that on one level appear to have little relation (one is brick, one is flesh, one is large, one is small). However, connections of the type that regularly 'crop-up' in a brainstorm do exist. One could connect the street-bum to the church via food banks and shelter which are in some senses provided due to the imposing presence of a large advertising billboard on the church grounds that helps to fund the church's goodwill beyond the offerings of its parishioners. The sparrow, like the street-bum many metres below, finds shelter in the spire obscured by the billboard, while scavenging crumbs to survive the winter and prepare for spring. Only investigation or analysis can cause the individual aspects of this strange mélange to mean something and have relevance to one another.



Elliot Collins  
Installation view July  
2007

The brainstorm allows creative associations to be clarified by the viewer without the subtraction or 'tidying' up which occurs in more rigid compositional formats. The consequence of an IKB pinecone that serves a modest purpose in the overall feel, but is not a vital or dominant aspect of the brainstorm, is for the viewer to ponder. The IKB pinecone may produce a lesson or message that enriches experience, or it may act as a light, momentary distraction from heavier personal subject matter.



In the brainstorm my observations and those of the viewer collide. Burroughs states, "Nothing exists until or unless it is observed. An artist is making something exist by observing it."<sup>17</sup>

<sup>16</sup> "A usual interpretation of this painting is that it shows Van Gogh's troubled state of mind with a dark, forbidding sky, the indecision of three paths going in different directions and the black crows overhead being signs of foreboding or even death." Ingo F. Walther and Rainer Metzger, *Van Gogh: the Complete Paintings*, 1997, Benedikt Taschen ISBN 3-8228-8265-8 retrieved October 1, 2007 from [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wheat\\_Field\\_with\\_Crows](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wheat_Field_with_Crows)

<sup>17</sup> Burroughs, W.S, *Paintings and Guns*, 1992, 'The Creative Observer'

# Appendix

(1)

## Synopsis for *On the Nature of Things*

Literally, the title translates as *On the Nature of Things*. The title is sometimes translated as *On the Nature of the Universe*, perhaps in order to reflect the scale of its subject matter. Lucretius' view is austere, but nevertheless he points out that a few enlightened individuals can escape periodically from their own hungers and passions and look down with compassion on poor humanity, including themselves, who are on average ignorant, unhappy, and yearning for something better than what they see around them. Personal responsibility then consists of speaking and living personal truth.

Accordingly, *On the Nature of Things* is Lucretius' personal statement of truth to an ignorant audience. He hopes that someone will hear, understand, and pass on a seed of truth to help improve the world.

### **The poem consists of the following main arguments.**

Substance is eternal.

- + Atoms move in an infinite void.
- + The universe is all atoms and void, nothing else. (Hence, Lucretius' view is labeled as atomism.)

The human soul consists of minute atoms that dissipate into smoke when a person dies.

Gods exist, but they did not start the universe, and they have no concern for men.

Likely there are other worlds in the universe much like this one, likewise composed of changing combinations of atoms.

Being mere shifting combinations of atoms, this world and the other worlds are not eternal.

The other worlds out there are not controlled by gods any more than this one.

The forms of life in this world and in the other worlds change, increasing in power for a time and then losing power to other forms.

Humankind went through a savage beginning, and there has been noticeable improvement in skill and ability, but even this world will pass away.

People know by either the senses or by reason.



- + Senses are dependable.
- + Reason infers underlying explanations, but reason can reach false inferences. Hence, inferences must be continually verified against the senses. (Compare to Plato, who believed that senses could be fooled and reason was reliable.)

The senses perceive the macroscopic collisions and interactions of bodies.

But reason infers the atoms and the void to explain what the senses perceive.

People avoid pain and seek what gives them pleasure.

- + The average person then is driven to maximize pleasure while avoiding pain.
- + People are born with two big vulnerabilities for hurt, the fear of gods and the fear of death.

But the gods will not hurt you, and death is easy when life is gone.

When you are gone, the atoms in your soul and the atoms in your body will still be here making up something else, a rock, a lake, or a flower.

## **The Swerve**

The problem that arises from an entirely deterministic and materialistic account of reality is free will. Lucretius maintains that the free will is possible through the random tendency for atoms to swerve (Latin: clinamen).

-

## **(2)**

### **The Death of Maui (involving the Piwakawaka)**

Maui decided to return home to the land of his parents and after being home for some time his Father said to him that when he was baptising Maui he omitted a portion of the fitting prayer and as a result he fears that Maui will one day be overcome by his great ancestress Hine-nui-te-po, goddess of death.

Maui asked about Hine-nui-te-po and his Father pointed to the region where flashes appear as the horizon meets the sky and described her as having red eyes, sharp teeth, the body of a man and the teeth of a barracuda.

Maui was not fearful and told his father that if he was able to overcome Tama-nui-te-Ra so easily then surely he could also overcome Hine-nui-te-po, his Father wished him luck, and Maui promptly set out to face her with his companions (various small birds, his closet friends since childhood)

After reaching the home of Hine-nui-te-po, Maui asked his bird companions to keep quiet while he approached the goddess lest she wake up and thwart the attack.

Just as Maui was entering the body of Hine-nui-te-Po, Piwakawaka (fan-tail) laughed out loud (in other versions Piwakawaka also dances and makes the other birds laugh) and woke the Goddess who promptly killed Maui.

This is how death was introduced to the world, and it was believed that if Maui had successfully passed through the goddess then no more human beings would have died.

<http://www.decknow.com/notes/maori/maui.html>. Retrieved 6 October 2007

-

## **(3)**

### **“We’re Going on a Bear Hunt” (As an Analogy for Viewing Art)**

We're going on a bear hunt,  
 We're gonna catch a big one,  
 What a beautiful day, (Chorus)  
 We're not scared.  
 Oh ,oh! Grass  
 Long, wavy, grass.  
 We can't go over it,

We can't go under it,  
 We've gotta go through it!  
 Swishy swashy, swishy swashy.  
 (Chorus)  
 Oh ,oh! Mud,  
 Thick, oozy mud.  
 We can't go over it,

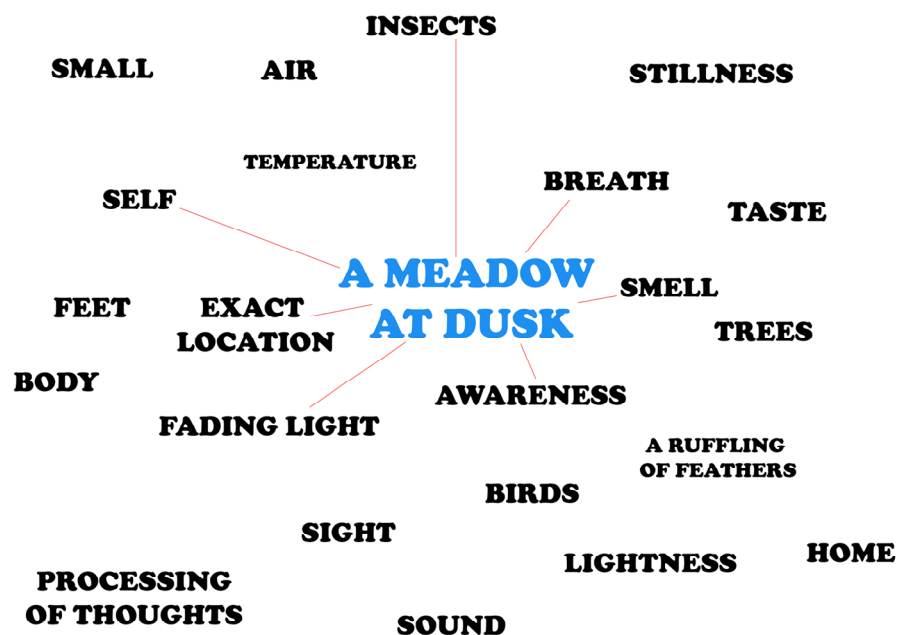
We can't go under it,  
 We've gotta go through it!  
 Squelch squelch, squelch squelch  
 (chorus)  
 Oh ,oh! A river,  
 A deep, cold river.  
 We can't go over it,  
 We can't go under it,  
 We've gotta go through it!  
 Splish splosh, splish splosh.  
 (chorus)  
 Oh ,oh! A forest,  
 A big, dark forest.  
 We can't go over it,  
 We can't go under it,  
 We've gotta go through it!  
 (Chorus)  
 We're not scared.  
 Oh ,oh! A cave,

A scary, dark cave.  
 We can't go over it,  
 We can't go under it,  
 We've gotta go through it!  
 Tiptoe, tiptoe.  
 OH NO IT'S A BEAR!!!  
 Quick!  
 Through the cave, tiptoe, tiptoe,  
 Through the forest, stumble trip, stumble trip,  
 Through the river, splish splosh, splish splosh,  
 Through the mud, squelch squelch, squelch squelch,  
 Through the grass, swishy swashy, swishy swashy.  
 Run to the house, run up the stairs,  
 Oh oh forgot to shut the door!  
 Run back downstairs, shut the door,  
 Run back up, to the bedroom,  
 Jump into bed, pull up the covers  
 WE ARE NEVER GOING ON A BEAR HUNT AGAIN!!

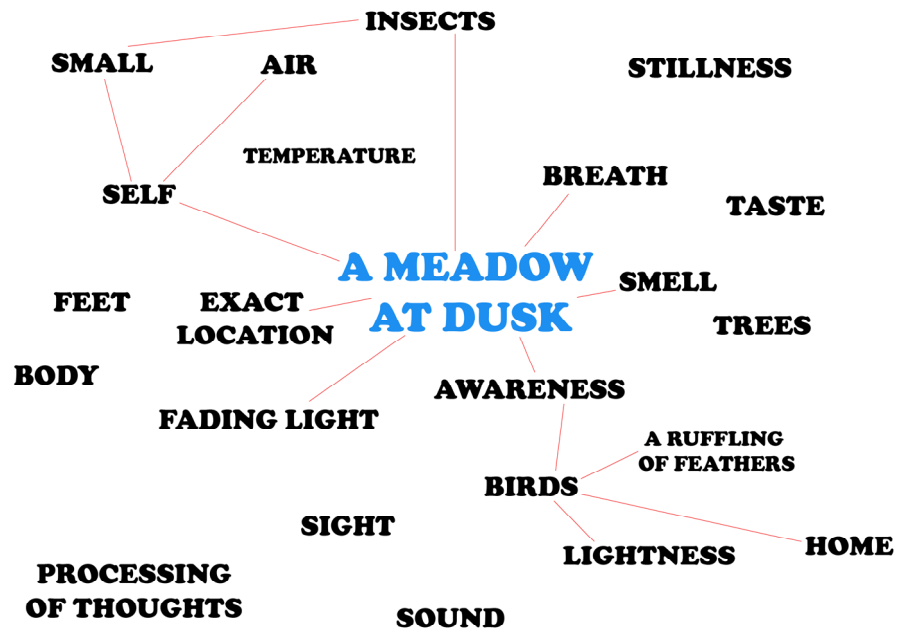
<http://www.101kidz.com/poems/animals2.html>. Retrieved 6 October 2007 and remembered from St Paul's Kindergarten circa 1989

#### (4)Brainstorm Step-by-step diagram continued

Primary connections:



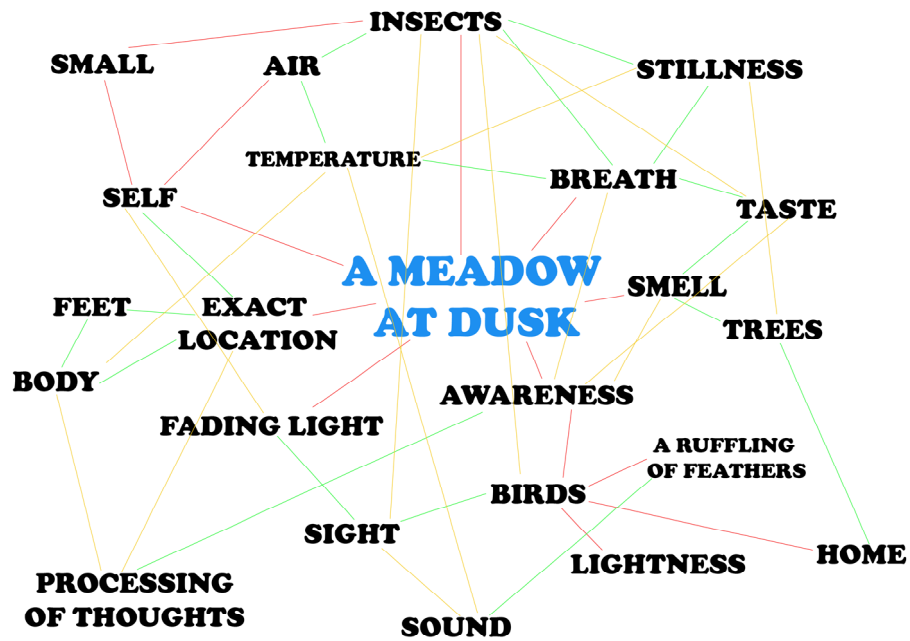
Secondary Connections:



Over lapping connections begin to occur



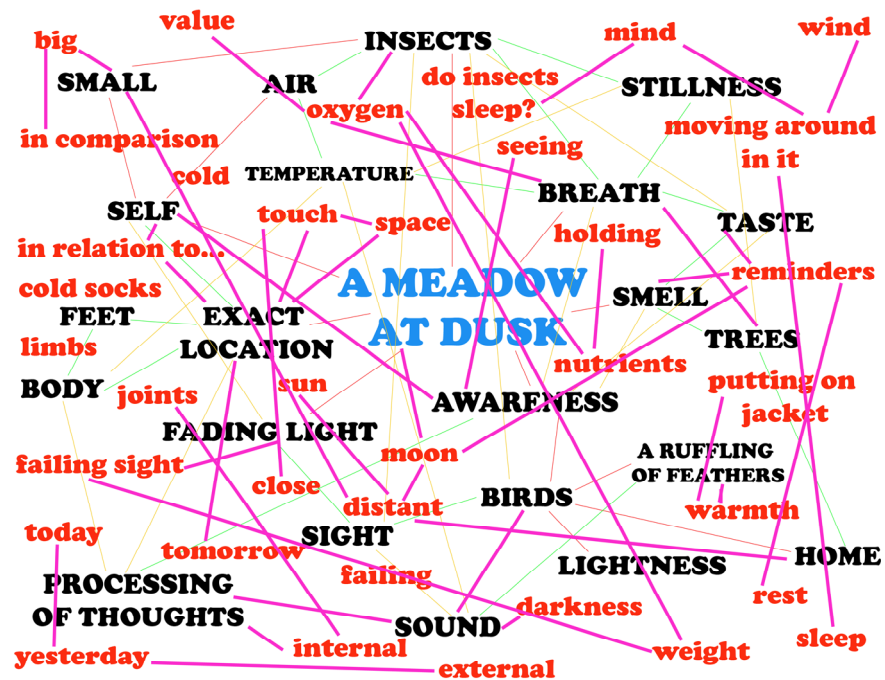
Further connections overlap and draw multiple connections across the brainstorm and amongst different ideas



At this point further ideas are added to the brainstorm and more overlapping occurs building a stronger map of the meadow at dusk



Another net of interconnecting lines are drawn over the new input. Note that this brainstorm in its to dimensional form does not go backwards or forwards into space.



Concluding in this tangle of interpretation that contains almost all the collected information concerning the meadow at dusk.

