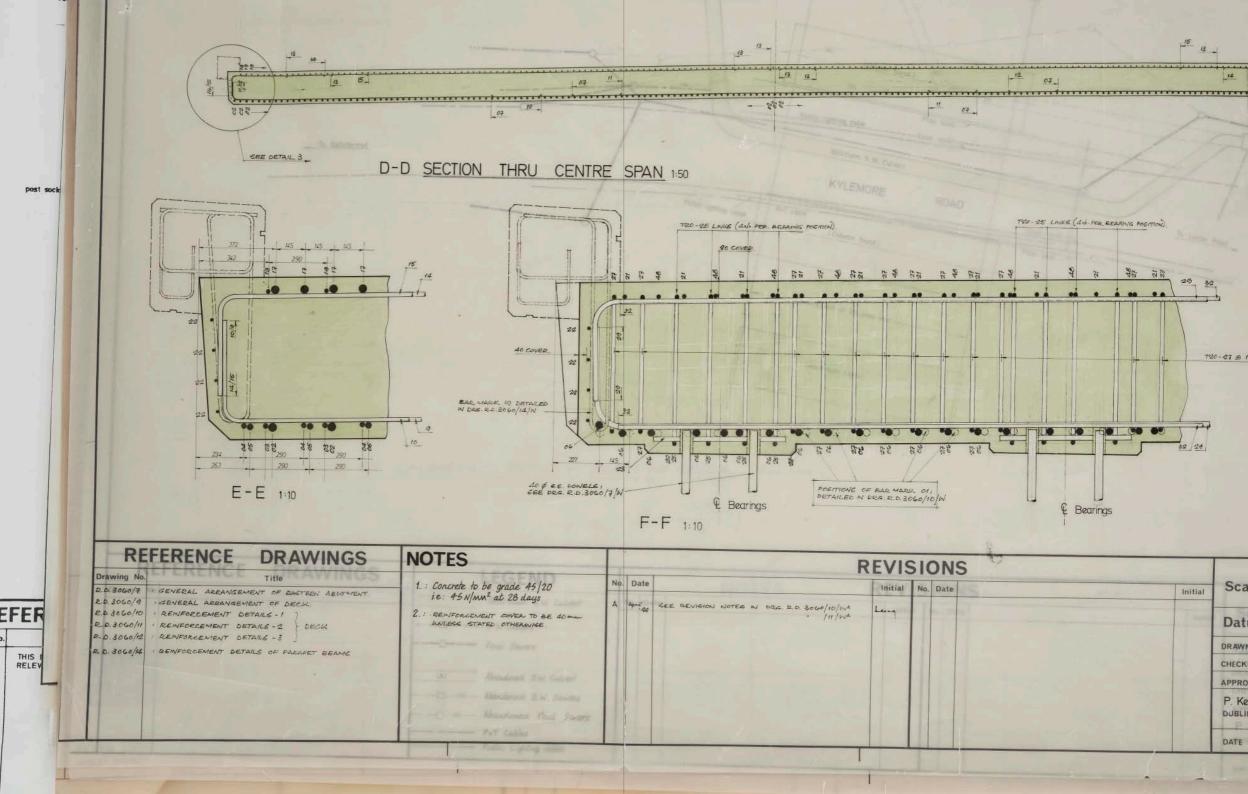
REVISIONS JULIE MERRIMAN



ENDPAPER (NO PRINT)

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FOREWORD

Revisions is the culmination of a public art commission by artist Julie Merriman which began with an intriguing proposal that she submitted to an open call process for the Dublin City Public Art Programme in 2011.

Merriman proposed a process which has involved close engagement with many departments and sections of Dublin City Council. The idea of developing a new body of work by interacting with staff in City Council who draw or use drawings as part of their everyday work was itself immediately interesting, but the manner in which the artist, after initial introductions, developed such a strong rapport with colleagues in Architects, Engineering, Housing, and beyond, is a testament to the approach and personality of Merriman and the generosity of the interaction from all who worked with her.

This exploration of drawing as a means of visual expression is not only of great quality and originality but it also demonstrates how new work of significance can be created within a public art context. The opportunity to exhibit these works in Dublin City Gallery The Hugh Lane reflects our belief in the artist and this new work. It also underscores the collaborative nature of the commission, which has extended across so much of Dublin City Council.

We wish to thank all those who have so generously given their support to the artist and this commission. We are indebted to the writers Marianne O'Kane Boal and Stephanie Straine for their essays which offer insights into, and contextualise, Julie Merriman's work. Most importantly, our thanks to Julie Merriman for her proposal and ideas, the dedication and generosity with which she worked, and above all, for the excellent new artworks which she created as part of this commission.

Barbara Dawson Director Dublin City Gallery The Hugh Lane Ruairí Ó Cuív Public Art Manager Dublin City Council THE ARCHAEOLOGY OF PROCESS IN JULIE MERRIMAN'S 'REVISIONS'

"To create, one must first question everything." - Eileen Gray

The title of this exhibition, Revisions, has manifold meanings. At once it suggests working drawings, the creative process, buildings in physical space supported by scaffolding, the process of building a drawing layer upon layer, different materials and means of representation. 'Revisions' implies a process whereby writing or drawing goes through multiple updates, numerous versions where every artwork or 'drawing' points to its referent or point of departure. Finally, the title points to the necessity to question and thus revisit in order to reflect a true creative process, just as Eileen Grav observed. In terms of 'Archaeology of Process', this builds on the definition of 'archaeology' as 'the study of ancient and recent human past through material remains'. It might not be the buried 'human past' but it is often the archived 'human past', and the 'material remains' referenced are the drawings produced. It is important to achieve a balance between the visual appearance of an object/ structure and its abstraction. Patrick Collins has commented on this - 'You don't believe in the thing you're painting, you believe in the thing behind what you're painting. You destroy your object, yet you keep it... You destroy to find another thing'. Although I feel the use of the word 'destroy' by Collins is too strong, he certainly captures a sense of the archaeology of representation and the ultimate distance of the depiction from the physical starting point.

In 2011, Ruairí Ó Cuív wrote about the Dublin City Public Art Programme he had devised; 'the arts are no longer considered peripheral to our society and are now perceived to add richness that goes far beyond wealth... At its best, art invites dialogue with an audience. [This programme demonstrates] respect for the different ways in which artists work. There is recognition for artists whose practice is based on collaboration...'. Julie Merriman's *Revisions* proposal was a response to *Interaction with the City*, the second strand of the Dublin City Public Art Programme, funded by the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government through the Per Cent for Art Scheme. The resulting exhibition is the product of a year-long engagement with Dublin City Council departments, during which the artist met with staff in Housing, Engineering and Architects who draw or read drawings as part of their everyday work. This engagement supported the artist's concept of reciprocal dialogue or conversational exchange as a kind of empathetic collaborative process between the disciplines of art, architecture and engineering.

Prior to this project with Dublin City Council, Merriman had conducted considerable research into the drawing languages and methodologies of other professions. This study centred on collections of archival materials relating to various completed projects in Ireland and the UK. Although this research was of great interest to the artist, she was not afforded the opportunity to talk to the creators of these drawings. Thus she could only get a sense of past methodologies, and this awakened further interest in how others design

through drawing. It is therefore no accident that 'drawing', one of the oldest forms of human expression, is at the core of this investigative project. For Merriman, '[t]he act of drawing is at the centre of my practice. My investigations are positioned in the historic and contemporary aspects of areas such as architecture, engineering, science, cartography and mathematics, and in how drawing works in these contexts as a technology to impart specific information.' In terms of creatively revisiting drawings from other professions and imbuing them with new life, Merriman is perhaps helping to realise Frank Gehry's ambition that '[a]rchitecture should speak of its time and place, but yearn for timelessness.'

In her original proposal drafted in 2011, the artist explained her interest and intention in looking at the use of drawing in other contexts: 'I use line in a drawing intuitively or with deliberation, according to what a particular work requires; but other professions, such as engineers and architects, describe and decipher visible and invisible aspects of our world within universally understood drawing systems. These drawings have an inherent visual complexity, knowledge is being communicated, however they are often perceived as 'working drawings' and when on display to the public, are presented in a manner that allows only their functionality to be visible. I would be interested in re-contextualising these drawings and making them visible to the public in a new way, alongside the projects that they were conceived for. My concentration is on the effect these drawings might impart, and in what changes are perceived when the functionality of these visual languages are interrupted, and in the potentials of new readings to emerge.' Although concisely stated, this is a remarkable task to set oneself as an artist: How to appreciate the unstated but embedded aesthetic in a working drawing, how to reinterpret technical intricacies and render them artistically, how to remove the text and labels from the original drawings and retain the essence of the design; in other words, how to fully appreciate the process of the 'other' while conducting an equally meticulous and painstaking creative reinvention of these drawings in her own hand. The resulting works are remarkable and breath-taking to behold.

In terms of an aesthetic discipline and unique approach to practice, one can observe similarities between Merriman and Makiko Nakamura, a Japanese artist based in Ireland who attributes her keen interest in the arts to her grandfather, who was a traditional Japanese painter and ceramicist. He taught Makiko to paint when she was four years old. It was an entirely disciplined approach to mark making that he taught the little girl. He focused on the primacy of line and for months the child practised drawing and painting lines. It was this focus and repetition that determined her interest in geometry and her grid approach to abstraction. Equally, Julie Merriman has a compelling approach to her practice, and it is one that immediately invites the viewer to investigate her formative influences and points of departure.

Merriman's father was a printer and he had an office in the garden at home. She remembers the Gestetner as you came through the door and the smell of black ink. The secretary cut the stencils for this machine on a typewriter; there was no ribbon. Paper and ink were always around. Even now, the impression made by the secretary cutting the stencils appears to inform the artist's practice-based research. On her studio table she writes on pages and also on pages affixed to her wall. After regular clear-outs, the important elements of these notes are cut out and pasted into notebooks. Almost like an archaeologist assessing recent layers of found text, Merriman takes these staccato snippets out of context and reinvests them with new meaning. In terms of her working process she knows her strategies, her methods and her own mind, and yet every piece of work begins with a white page pinned to the wall. Each work is unexpected, not defined by preconceptions.

Becoming an artist was also unexpected for Merriman. She did not study art in school; she took a typing class and her first job after leaving school was as a clerk typist. Between the ages of 19 and 21 she worked and travelled in Europe. Whilst traveling she made drawings, of buildings in particular. After this she accompanied a friend who was applying for a BTEC in General Art and Design in London to an interview. Merriman showed her travel notebooks and was accepted. She then went on to study Fine Art Painting in Falmouth School of Art.

There are no people in her work and yet she adores fiction, being an avid reader from an early age. It is almost as if the people do not inhabit her compositions because they are elsewhere, characters within books, or figures within life. She sees past the people to the objects and structures. Edvard Munch and his 'workers' series was the starting point of Merriman's interest in architecture in art. The exhibition Munch and the Workers that the artist saw in The Barbican, London in 1985 was important. In this work Munch documents a multitude of factory workers, just as William Conor would have captured the men from Harland and Wolff in Belfast returning home, but in more jubilant tones. It is interesting that for Munch, the city and its buildings were merely a backdrop for his focus on the figures. Merriman also sees the workers, is fascinated by the building process, but she documents their labour not them — in her tribute to the work. At Falmouth, the artist started making studies, drawings and paintings documenting building sites and their machinery. She compares the building site to the artist's studio: different things happen every day, it is a constantly changing environment. The absence of any figurative element in Merriman's work allows for a different kind of physicality and occupation of space.

Although her work excludes depictions of people, the evidence of human activity is ever-present and plays a significant part in this commission. As mentioned at the outset of this essay, *Revisions* evolved from the artist's first-hand engagement and discussion with Dublin City Council departments,

where staff draw or read drawings as part of their everyday work. The artist spoke to a range of people including Gráinne McDermott, Executive Engineer; Desmond Leong, Senior Executive Engineer; and Peter Cahill, Draughtsman/ Engineering Technician, all from Road Design Division. She also spoke to John Neylon, Senior Executive Engineer, Roads & Traffic Dept.; Adrian Conway, Senior Engineer, Project Management Office; Brian Curran from the Housing Maintenance Department; Ali Grehan, Dublin City Architect; and Stefan Lowe, Architect. In speaking to some of these professionals Merriman found it fascinating to note their interest in the drawing process, but even more than that, each individual's distinct perspective on their work and a definite air of wistfulness for drawing processes of the past.

Adrian Conway explained: 'Drawing is a fundamental and integral part of architecture and engineering. From the pricing stage and environmental assessment, everything must be visualised. I do feel a sense of nostalgia for the beauty of old drawings and appreciate the way they were made. The individuals producing these drawings would have their own stamp and style: a link perhaps to the making of art. They were produced on paper and had to endure. The hand of the individual was evident, a lot of time had been invested and you were always happy to sign your work, whereas contemporary drawings tend to be drawn by teams. While design is creative, the drawings are originating now from the CAD (computer-aided design) system. The longevity of these drawings must be guestioned. Computer archives can be problematic and will people still have access to project drawings in 100 years? I remember producing design drawings, using Rotring pens, selecting appropriate nibs and incorporating text using Letraset. There was little margin for error as mistakes had to be scraped off with a razor blade; they had to be minimal or non-existent. The printing system was different and many drawings were a one-off edition only. Some were produced on canvas. Detailed engineering drawings would have taken several weeks. There was a lot of pressure on the professionals and yet it imposed a discipline on people so that work was rigorous and we worked meticulously. Even in terms of the simple matter of typing a letter, you needed to know in advance if you needed multiple copies so that the secretary could include the blueprint to produce the copies through the Gestetner drum. There wasn't the luxury of capturing lost work.'

Desmond Leong similarly observed: 'Drawings have always been important to convey the concept. They also give a sense to the public of how a particular project will look. Before the advent of CAD, it was more difficult and time-consuming. Old drawings were all hand drawn, had less editions and were often one-offs. The Archive remains important to us to determine maintenance and construction needs. We often consult archival drawings of city projects. In terms of bridges, the older masonry arch bridges, about 150 years old, require much less maintenance. As we speak, O'Connell Bridge, designed by the master craftsman/architect James Gandon, is having a modern tramline installed on it.

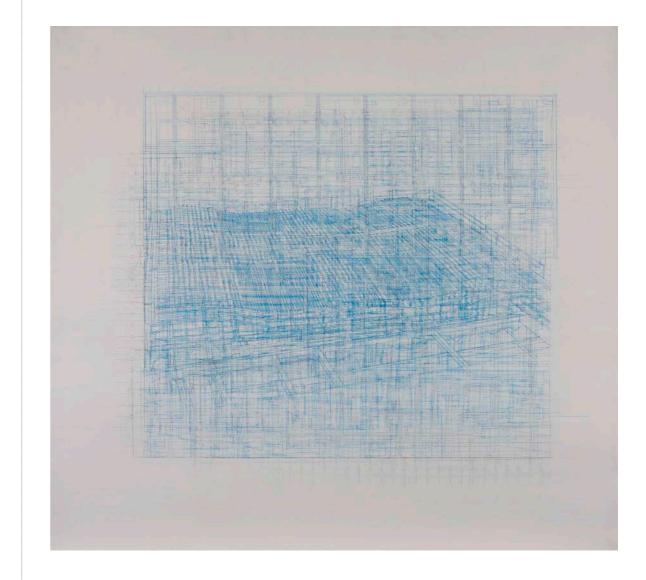
It is over 200 years old and yet Gandon had the foresight to design a sufficiently sturdy structure that might accommodate modern needs. It is remarkable.' The indispensable nature of the Dublin City Council Drawing Archive, and indeed the longevity of the city's bridges, both appear to emphasise John Ruskin's ambition: 'When we build, let us think that we build for ever.'

Stefan Lowe is an architect who has worked for Dublin City Council for 17 years. 'When I started in college, I used the drawing board and made pen and ink drawings. Even in fifth year at UCD, there were still no computers. It is almost a lost art, drawing in pen and ink. Drawing was taught as a subject. I was influenced by Noel Dowley, who taught me at UCD and had a particular style of drawing. I worked in his office after college. When you drew by hand you had a greater sense of what you were creating, it was more tangible and it is not the same with a computer. In the Housing Section at Dublin City Council, a project that interested Julie Merriman is the Dolphin House regeneration project. This is located along the canal at Dolphin's Barn. The first phase involves demolition and some refurbishment. There are 100 units in phase one and this phase is going to tender early in the New Year. Dolphin House dates to the 1950s and the original drawings are predominantly in pencil and some in pen and ink. It is fundamental to have the drawings from past projects in the DCC Archive. It aids sustainability to refurbish and consolidate existing buildings where possible. This element is important for Dolphin House, where there is a strong sense of community. By marrying the old and new, we create a revised dynamic and structurally sound buildings are retained.'

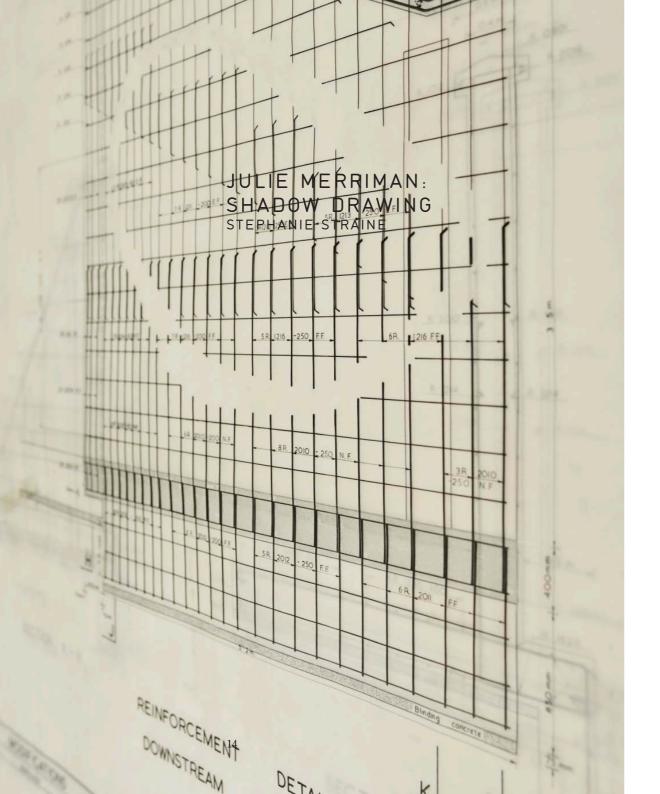
In the short space of these three first-hand accounts from engineers and architects working on roads, bridges, housing, drainage and archives, we get a sense of the diversity of practice and remarkable work that Dublin City Council professionals produce. Each individual demonstrates a palpable sense of pride in their work, a certain degree of interest in their personal contribution, but a much stronger belief in the role and impact of the team/their overall department's approach. There is also a shared conviction in the importance of archives and respect for the drawings of the past. Each of these individuals share Julie Merriman's enthusiasm for the 'archaeology of process', and it is likely that her project will shine a spotlight on the importance of this process. It will be fascinating to observe the impression made by *Revisions* on the staff that contributed from Dublin City Council.

References

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Author interview with Stefan Lowe, 22 December 2015.
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Frances Ruane, 'Modern Irish Landscape Painting', Arts Council, 1981, (Patrick Collins quote).



Construction I (bridge) carbon on canvas, 101 x 107 cm 2013



Julie Merriman's practice reveals itself, with a deliberate slowness, to be a network of reversals, repetitions, removals, repairs and revisions. Concerned exclusively with the medium of drawing, Merriman scores, duplicates and accumulates linear incisions using an intermediary surface to impart her marks, primarily carbon paper and typewriter ribbons. These materials are carefully chosen to reflect her principal concerns: both enable the transfer of pigment to paper (a basic material necessity for the practice of making a drawing), and both embody the core procedures of copying and reprography.

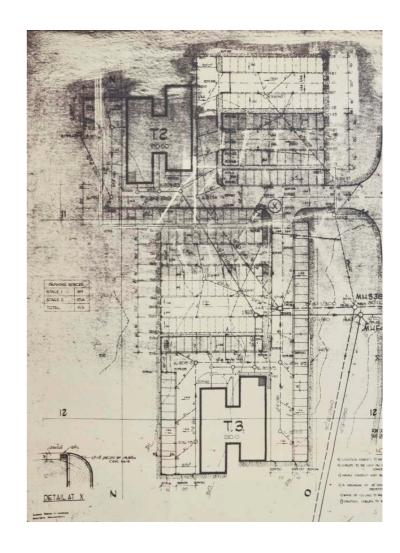
During her engagement with Dublin City Council's Interaction with the City commission in 2013, the artist herself chose which Council departments to work with, shaping an open-ended brief with very few pre-determined parameters. Dublin City Council let her decide the nature of her engagement with its municipal framework as the artist sought out several key departments responsible for the structural fabric of the city, the surveying and measuring of its land. Merriman chose in effect to turn inwards, looking at the document trails of the Council's building projects over the past 150 years, as well as its ongoing work. In the resulting drawings, the artist's two-dimensional papers, along with their supporting sheets of carbon, masking tape and typewriter ribbons, have been charged with a current of complex spatial relations, as assimilated via her borrowed vocabulary of maps, diagrams and plans. This kind of output is not your typical public art commission. These drawings were never intended to be site-specific, avoiding the rote expansiveness of space swallowing, architecturally scaled drawing-as-installation.¹ Rather than produce a permanent artwork or installation tangibly located in the civic realm. Merriman's work instead interrogates the very buildings and bridges on which such notions of 'public space' are materially founded.

She began by conducting several strands of archival research, studying the architectural plans and structural engineering diagrams that underpin Dublin's civic realm. The practical aspects of her involvement with the Council encompassed many site visits, including the river site of the then in-progress Rosie Hackett Bridge, which necessitated the donning of a lifejacket, and inspired a series of drawings (pp.13, 63, 65). Over two or three visits Merriman watched the bridge's progress, charting its real-time evolution against the draughtsmanship of its architectural plans and engineering schema. The subtle slippage between past and present began to emerge as a persistent theme: there was a problem with the bridge's construction related to a siphon underneath the River Liffey, and Council staff were required to consult a drawing produced in 1899 (also viewed by Merriman in the Archive), in order to figure out the precise location of the siphon.² From this early episode Merriman learnt that the housing maintenance department retains the plans for every building built by DCC (originally Dublin Corporation). This reference library means that if something goes wrong, the plans are on file to check and fix any building under their care.

While the departments of Architecture and Engineering were the focal points of Merriman's research and engagement with Dublin City Council, she also met with its Heritage and Planning departments over the course of the commission. Council personnel would talk to her about their current projects, but her interest kept returning to the historic drawings, of bridges in particular. What most shaped the development of her drawings and characterised her engagement with these Council departments — alongside her active involvement with those architectural projects contemporaneously being undertaken by DCC — was her focus on the archive of plans and drawings dating from the 1850s to the 1970s: the preserved draughtsmanship pre-dating CAD (computer-aided design) technology.

In her research Merriman looked particularly at architectural drawings of inner city housing schemes from the 1930s to the 1970s (p.17), and engineering drawings of bridges, roads and various drainage and water schemes, many of which were executed on a semi-transparent, tracing paper-type support.³ These, according to the artist, epitomise the constant motion of the city (again, that inescapable overlap of past and present): the ebbs and flows of continual redevelopment, repairs, and new building projects. Of course, all architectural and engineering plans are computerised now. Part of her interest is in that vast schism between the older, hand-drawn plans and the new computer files, ever changeable and correctable. The older works have a life to them. Merriman argues, because their human traces and errors are so visible, creating a palpable frisson of energy and encounter that is simply absent from the traceless, blank perfection of more recent examples. She photographed close-up sections of these older plans, noticing that a palimpsest-like quality emerged when the plans were placed on top of each other, the semitransparent nature of their supports resulting in unexpected new compositions (p.14). This notion of the palimpsest informed the artist's own decision to use semi-translucent papers, enabling her to produce a kind of multi-layered 'impossible architecture' inspired by the happenstance meeting of imprecise, fugitive materiality and strict diagrammatic visual codes. In doing so her work reinforces that ceaseless overlaying of past and present, playing with multiple and simultaneous registers of form and structure, as any city invariably must do (p.53). This layering shapes not only the works' hybrid compositions, but also their drawing techniques. The artist insists that 'I always put something between me - between the pencil - and the paper.'4 Direct drawing never occurs within her work, and this intentional displacement means that there is always an intermediary between the stylus (the drawing tool) and the paper (the drawing support). The graphite is always transferred from or through another surface, tracing paper or carbon paper, and this transfer is writ large on the surface of her work, which bears the unevenness of indirect contact and pressure. There has always been a temporal dimension underwriting this process of drawing. The more the carbon paper is worked

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archive image (detail), Housing Maintenance, Dublin City Council

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with, the lighter it becomes: an inversion of the normal graphic development from light (the blank sheet) to dark (the 'worked up' image), and a motion of reversal and revision: an unmaking of structure.

The artist's larger drawings are never exhibited framed or behind glass. They are only lightly pinned for exhibition so that the paper's subtle movements infuse our experience of the work, referencing the overlapping motions and shadows generated as a result of flipping through stacks of gossamer plans in the archive. Objects, buildings and time itself all become traversable entities, capable of being seen right through.

'It looks like an image, but it is information.'

This commission (and the new material procedures forged as a result) did not conclude as a wholly distinct set of drawings with a specific start and end date; rather, it is something that has seeped into Merriman's work as a whole, overlapping with and contributing anew to a shared field of foundational concerns and technical processes, ongoing for many years. The artist herself has said that she doesn't know when precisely she finished the commission. It became contiguous with her practice as a whole; it became a moment of rupture and progress within it.

She built the brief, focusing on the engineers and architects from a huge range of departmental options and a surfeit of visual source material within Dublin City Council. Her works on paper were produced using data mined from the Council's archive of drawings, honing in on particular sections from certain diagrams and plans, and isolating and repeating these individual elements. These were areas of particular visual cohesion or articulation that she felt able to put together, to work with and construct into a compositional complexity: the building blocks for a drawing. Much time was spent moving these fragments of archival source material around, figuring out where they needed to land. Foregrounding the idea of drawing as problem solving, the artist established a set of instructions required to complete a work. This is equivalent to some of the engineers' and architects' processes—like them she is slowly building something, but in doing so she is also reversing the role of drawing from a preparatory phase in their work, to being the finished result of hers.

Often, these single, structural components from a particular plan repeat and overlap to such an extreme degree that the drawing's visual field dissolves into near-abstraction. On one key aspect Merriman is absolutely clear: she is constructing an image rather than an engineering project; which is to say, it is not necessary for the source material's core purpose to be decipherable by the viewers of her drawings. It is an imported or borrowed visual language that is not her own, then transformed into another language through a process that is wholly of the artist's making. Yet when architects or engineers look at her drawings, they try to figure out what is going on, what is being referenced,

and so the work retains the status of an 'almost-readable' thing, with the ability to unravel to its roots, however spliced and splintered they have become. The drawings' contents are suffused with an obvious visual lushness, developed through complex surface accretions, but this enterprise can also be seen from an anti-artistic perspective, in that the original plans, however elegant, were never intended to be anything other than functional. Beauty was not the objective of this type of industrial design, but visual plenitude is indeed a by-product, retrieved and recuperated by Merriman.

Many of these older drawings were executed on a smooth linen canvas (a sturdier alternative to the preliminary tracing papers). Merriman began to use a similar material as support for her drawings. As she emphasises: 'I constantly mirror their materials: I'm influenced by their way of doing things.' With this body of work in mind, it is useful to reflect upon architectural historian Erika Naginski's observation that '[d]rawing acts... as a contingent mechanism through which radically disparate zones of experience are mediated and forced into unexpected dialogue with one another...'5 Naginski's appraisal of drawing as a kind of conceptual meeting place builds upon modernist notions of the unified yet composite medium, suggesting the intrinsic stratification of drawing and its capacity to occupy multiple registers simultaneously. The registration of Merriman's mark-making, as brought into being by the avoidance of direct touch, itself inhabits this place of radical contingency. The work produced is not an unquestioning. hollow celebration of industry and its regulation of skilled manual workers' physical traces, but rather a suturing of 'disparate zones of experience' an openness to new ways of seeing the world in its true hybridity.

One of Merriman's primary interests is in how these plans (dating from c.1850s onwards) were printed and copied. They had to be easily reproducible. and here there is a definite association with the emergence of the medium of photography: these architects and engineers were trying to figure out how to copy their drawings at the same time that photography as a commercial concern was reaching visibility on the world stage. Across ensuing decades the engineering and architectural draughtsmen devised various methods to copy these hand-made plans, and the commissioned drawings speak to these historic methodologies, the finishes achieved, and their resulting material frailty (the risk of fading is particularly high in the case of diazo blue line prints).6 Ouite crucially the artist did not set out to make her new drawings using these same, now redundant, techniques. They are not blind copies of any plans in the DCC Archive. Nevertheless, she has embraced the frailty and tactility of their material production, with the guiding principle that 'often you can find another option through process... You don't always have the way to get to where you want to go; sometimes the material will tell you how to make that transition.' Continual innovation and problem solving is part of the appeal of this technical draughtsmanship, and vet Merriman often focuses on the

drawings' unintentional aspects, such as their areas of masking tape and spills of correction fluid. The whole business of *how* they physically prepared the plans is as important as *what* they were actually drawing — probably more so. She has drawn on masking tape, for example, as an echo of the material residues and remnants of thinking and working in this mode. The marks left from the doing and the thinking, those human mistakes and traces within delicate old drawings from the archives, all contour the artist's approach to her own large-scale works on paper, leaving their ghostly traces from previous generations of industrialised labour.

People still working in DCC today remember the nature and requirements of producing drawings by hand rather than on computers. In the older drawings, a greater concentration of information was included on each sheet to ensure that the fewest possible drawings were produced for a single project. When mistakes were made, the draughtsmen would scrape off the ink and restart that section of the plan in a manner akin to Merriman's own methods of erasure and revision. Everything had a specific meaning: each colour denoted a function within the plan: there was a reason why lines were straight, dashed, thick or thin. These codes are mostly impenetrable to those not trained to understand them, and Merriman is firmly opposed to attempts to return them to their specific sets of encoded information and knowledge systems. This intentionally lay perspective is fundamental to her use of these plans as source material. Her declaration that she 'doesn't want to be an architect or an engineer' is crucial. Her methodology privileges rethinking and revision over mindless duplication, but equally it respects the rules of the drawn world she has chosen to enter. Colour is never additive but always intrinsic to the material used or referenced, for example the blue colour that comes from the diazotype process or a particular industrialised hue of carbon paper. Similarly, the works' titles always come from fragments of text lifted from the plans themselves: this is another 'found' element, along with the colours, that reinforces the process of assemblage at work. Equally important is the relationship between the visual diagram (rethought of as 'image'), and the related calculations listed alongside: what Merriman calls 'the thinking on the drawing itself.' This manifestation of thought, of problem solving, is part of the life of these works and what sustains Merriman's interest in them.

Going wrong

In this attention paid to a vast paper archive of past civic projects, what we witness is not mourning for the past and its lost materiality. This endeavour does not fit that elegiac register of a plea for retaining analogue over digital production that characterised many contemporary artists' work of the 1990s and early 2000s. Merriman is definitively not fetishising analogue materiality but, like other artists, she is aware of its particular conceptual consequences for drawing, its capacity for linear continuity. The historic drawings' imperfect materiality informed her work in a way that the unblemished computer designs failed to do. The artist never warmed to these digital drawings and their unsettlingly perfect finish. In the shift from handdrawn to computer-executed the drawings' function did not change, but in terms of process and materiality the older drawings' manifestations of invested time are far more vital. Merriman always returns to process: it's at the core of her continued desire to make (and work with) drawings. She explains her preference by saying: 'As an artist you want to have the capacity for something to go wrong... with the computers there is very little that can go wrong.'

In the drawings made and copied by hand the reprographic processes conferred multiple trace layers upon the raw data, such as smudges, carbon marks, and so on. These marks have nothing to do with the actual function of each drawing and its conveyance of information, but they stubbornly exist, their presence unavoidable and insistent as forms of involuntary mark-making. They help to blur that line between clarity and illegibility. Designs that exist as computer files are unable to incorporate or register such intrusions within their error-free domain. Merriman embraces accident and chance in her use of typewriter ribbons and carbon paper, whose transferrable surfaces invariably offer up fragilities and imperfections to her drawings as they take shape through indirect contact, friction, erasure and graphic incision (p.61). In doing so the works on paper are caught between the referential and the abstract, conditioned by the syncopated beat of mark making and diagram distortion.

Mel Bochner was one of the first artists to focus on such involuntary pseudo-drawings generated by photomechanical means. His exhibition Working Drawings and Other Visible Things on Paper Not Necessarily Meant to be Viewed as Art at New York's School of Visual Arts in 1966 provided a specific analysis of the graphic gesture via an erosion of its 'unique' autography, courtesy of Xerox duplication and office ring binder presentation. The exhibition was composed of four identical folders of so-termed 'working drawings' donated by artists including Donald Judd, Eva Hesse and Robert Smithson, along with other assorted technical and scientific documents collated by Bochner: all copied and resized using the relatively new Xerox technology (hailed as a reducer of labour in the office workplace). The working drawings of the exhibition utilised a schematic language of industrial ciphers, with

Bochner as curator recognising the recently arrived photocopier's potential as a site for new forms of image production. The loss of their object status (being mere degraded copies) conferred a kind of ambivalence on these drawings. The exhibition was in effect an exercise in undoing, paradoxically re-inscribing the xerographic avatars of these drawings with what art historian Tamara Trodd has called the 'imitatively "expressive" line[s]' produced by the photocopying process. 10

This liminal space produced by Bochner's Working Drawings exhibition went beyond a basic rhetoric of dematerialised conceptual art, and basic notions of deskilling, by admitting a haptic presence for even the most estranged forms of artistic production, thanks to the Xerox machine's mechanical reproduction. Bochner's important precedent recognised the diagram's potential for slippage between information and image, paying the way for Merriman's own interest in what could be termed drawing's handmade copy. While rejecting total abstraction, the carbon-transfer process still intentionally disrupts the clear signal of her accumulated data. Merriman therefore eschews that welltrodden conceptual path of utilising data or diagrams in their raw state, as appropriated readymades. She is instead doing something guite strange to the language of the diagram, using its grammar and syntax so that the original plan is always partly legible, as a shadow of its former self (for example the bridge that never fails to emerge, wraith-like, from the Rosie Hackett drawings). This links to an important aspect of the diagram's role in the rapid development of conceptual and installation art. 11 In her discussion of Sol LeWitt, perhaps the most visible exponent of diagrammatic drawing in the 1960s (and the artist who most successfully brought drawing 'in line' with the new concerns of conceptual art), art historian Anna Lovatt proposes that 'whilst the diagram is supposed to communicate information, it is often a site of communicational breakdown: a locus of misunderstanding, misinterpretation and mistakes. 12 This is the very same space, liberated by information breakdown and disrupted signals, in which we can locate Merriman's interest in 'going wrong,' and the productive confrontations staged in that letting go.

Drawing unspooled

The drawings produced midway through the DCC commission used one particular kind of typewriter ribbon, initially deployed simply to produce a black line of graphite on white paper, without direct drawing on that surface. The artist discovered that once this material was removed, the negative of her drawing was left on the ribbon, which could then be transferred to make a second drawing, while reinforcing the presence of this negative drawing on the typewriter ribbon itself. This quasi-photographic methodology pivots on the border between positive and negative states, and the most recent drawings within the commission all have two parts to them as a result. They have also shifted to larger square-format sheets, mirroring the old proportions of black and white

photography (originally the preserve of professional medium format cameras). We tend to separate out diagrammatic visual languages from a photographic way of seeing the world, but here they are connected across their dissimilarity. forging links between abstraction and figuration, reinforcing a hyper-mimetic presence brought about as a result of excessive information and detail. These two-part works are always presented as pairs or mirror images - one is 'clean', an image formed from black or blue lines on a white ground, fully legible as an architectural articulation, while the other is heavy with incised carbon as its rendering is flipped into negative (p.51). This repetitious carbon transfer degrades or destabilises the surface of the typewriter ribbon. but it also makes it into a sculptural thing, twisting and turning away from pristine flatness and towards something that moves and behaves like analogue film, a long reel unspooling from its canister (pp. 28, 29). The artist's 'development' of the composition via carbon transfer is almost a manifestation of photography without a camera: a slow, coming-into-being of the image. There are slips of the hand, impressions and smudges, and this imbues the work with further analogue indexicality. 13 In the typewriter ribbon works, the artist's control has been relinquished to the ribbon, its surface taking over in much the same way that the darkroom's developing chemicals determine the final manifestation of a photograph.

This embedded entanglement of photography, film and drawing is driven by a complex relationship between stillness and movement within Merriman's practice, which is simultaneously the registration of a prolonged, expansive activity and an experiential event. The structures that underpin both drawing and analogue film reveal a shared deployment of line and frame, crucial both to their materiality and its deconstruction. The film theorist Laura Mulvey has argued that:

... the fundamental, and irreconcilable, opposition between stillness and movement... reverberates across the aesthetics of cinema. Stillness and movement have different relations to time. The illusion of movement is necessarily extended within time, in duration... Stillness may evoke a 'before' for the moving image as filmstrip, as a reference back to photography or to its own original moment of registration. 14

Like film's endless, looped reliance on still photography, drawing's filial relationship to painting and sculpture has long been stressed, as far back as the preparatory cartoons of Renaissance *disegno* (a concept that embodied the mirrored duality of drawing and design). Historically, drawing has always been refracted through the lens of another medium: painting or sculpture, even film. While this remained an integral facet of avant-garde art practice, a form of continual erosion of the hypothetical boundaries between mediums, it also became necessary to reclaim drawing's independence as a complete, and not ancillary, medium beginning perhaps in the 1960s, when drawing was freed from its historically submissive position to claim an equal place amongst the modes of art making.¹⁵

Mulvey's 'moment of registration' is an equally crucial concept for the medium of drawing with its complex dichotomy of instantaneity and duration that parallels the filmic opposition Mulvey details. The drawn line as an extension in time correlates to the filmstrip's durational activity. Drawing and film's shared physicality is reinforced further by Mulvey's highlighting of 'film's uncertain, unstable materiality torn between the stillness of the celluloid strip and the illusion of its movement...'¹⁶ This chimes with the oscillating materiality of Merriman's work (expressed as a near *vibration* of the image), which speaks to a particular post-war model that uses drawing and film to infiltrate or change space; a model where the space itself may in all likelihood not be filled, just as the gaps and echoes between archival source material and physical production may remain, speaking to the interrupted and iterative approach to making at work.

This is drawing that unfurls like film - both are in a continual state of becoming. Merriman's use of carbon tape underlines her drawing's unceasing expansion in space and time, proliferating across a surface, never static. To think of incompleteness as paradoxically a state of finish is intriguing: there can always be another piece of carbon paper overlaid, another filmstrip spliced, another edit made to the sequence, another drawing added to the palimpsest, or a line extended. It proliferates, endlessly. In their very unfixity, their capacity for change, drawing and film are united in their attempted occupation of time and space, traversing the architectural focus of the work. Merriman overcomes the cinematic question of narrative structure by employing a filmic model of fracture and intermission in her drawing: the approach is an anti-developmental one, much like Bochner's in his 1966 film New York Windows, of which he wrote: 'The film is about still photos, the "cut" breaks time, destroying the illusion of a natural sequence between event(s)...'17 Merriman's suggestion of sequentiality is perhaps even more illusory and fragile, more open to disintegration. Appreciating the artificiality of film's moving pictures facilitates a deeper understanding of the discourse these carbon-transfer works set up between film and drawing, and how these apparently disparate mediums are intimately linked. 18

During this procedure of drawing through carbon, Merriman enters into a model of seeing where the field of vision is by definition incomplete. This field is subjected to a pressure (rubbing, pressing and eroding the carbon) that produces an astigmatic distortion, so that any sense of completion is continually erased, or perpetually deferred. The impossibility of complete pictorial space comes courtesy of the artist's focus on the unfurling ribbon; a focus that overrides the finished drawing's paper support. The carbon ribbon acts as a narrow viewfinder on this landscape of architectural data. The sense of a holistic field is completely negated, replaced by staccato visual progression across a span of irregular time. This type of drawing reiterates analogue photographic structures, invoking a sense of lived duration within a

scanning of space: linking the progressive nature of the drawings' seriality to the unspooling of a strip of negatives or film reel. The activity and practice of drawing could here be described as a line in time; a durational encounter woven through its very form and content as transcribed to the paper support, through the intermediary fascia of carbon. The work traces the wavering physical pressures of graphite on paper in a hypnotic, almost sensual, manifestation of time aligned with space. Here drawing does not deal with time explicitly; rather, it implies 'the illusory quality of time, its liminality, as if time could only be described inferentially, pointed to indirectly.' 19

This type of line is about control — not a haphazard or wandering line but a decisive and incisive mark that controls both surface and space. Merriman puts her oblique graphic interventions at different levels of bodily or procedural removal, primarily through her use of carbon sheets to make the marks on the paper, superseding the pencil or pen as drawing's primary tool. This gesture of 'casting out' an action originally close to the body runs through the artist's technical innovations, and speaks not only to the handmade copy but also to a long history within the practice and primacy of drawing. This distancing is not intended to suggest automatised depersonalisation; rather, there is the capacity to find something very personal within these newly encrypted diagrams.

Giving back the image

Merriman shifts her collection of archived architectural and engineering plans into a state of image displacement — an alteration of their internal rules, a reconfiguration of their elements into previously unconsidered placements — through a process that could be classed as re-drawing. This stress on the building plans' materiality and malleability runs throughout her practice, emphasising the active, drawn nature of the original source materials as worked over by the artist. The intrinsic aesthetic of these industrial documents remains unaltered (albeit rendered ghostly or multiplied to an extreme). It is always the leftovers of another drawing that begins the process again, with a new drawing starting not from the *tabula rasa* of an empty sheet of paper, but instead with fragments or units recycled from earlier works in the sequence (pp. 63, 65). This cyclical sense of continuity and renewal is partly why the drawings exist in sets, comparable to the archival source materials classified according to their specific project group.

As Sibyl Moholy-Nagy wrote in her introduction to Paul Klee's *Pedagogical Sketchbook* (1968): 'The line, being successive dot progression, walks, circumscribes, creates passive-blank and active-filled planes. Line rhythm is measured like a musical score or an arithmetical problem.'²¹ Following this same conceptual path, this same transgressive wander across musicality and mathematics. Merriman's distortions of graphic linearity probe this idea of

movement as a line in time, faltering but relentless. This process-based approach to questions of time and duration reclaims the space of drawing as an open field, differentiated and discontinuous.

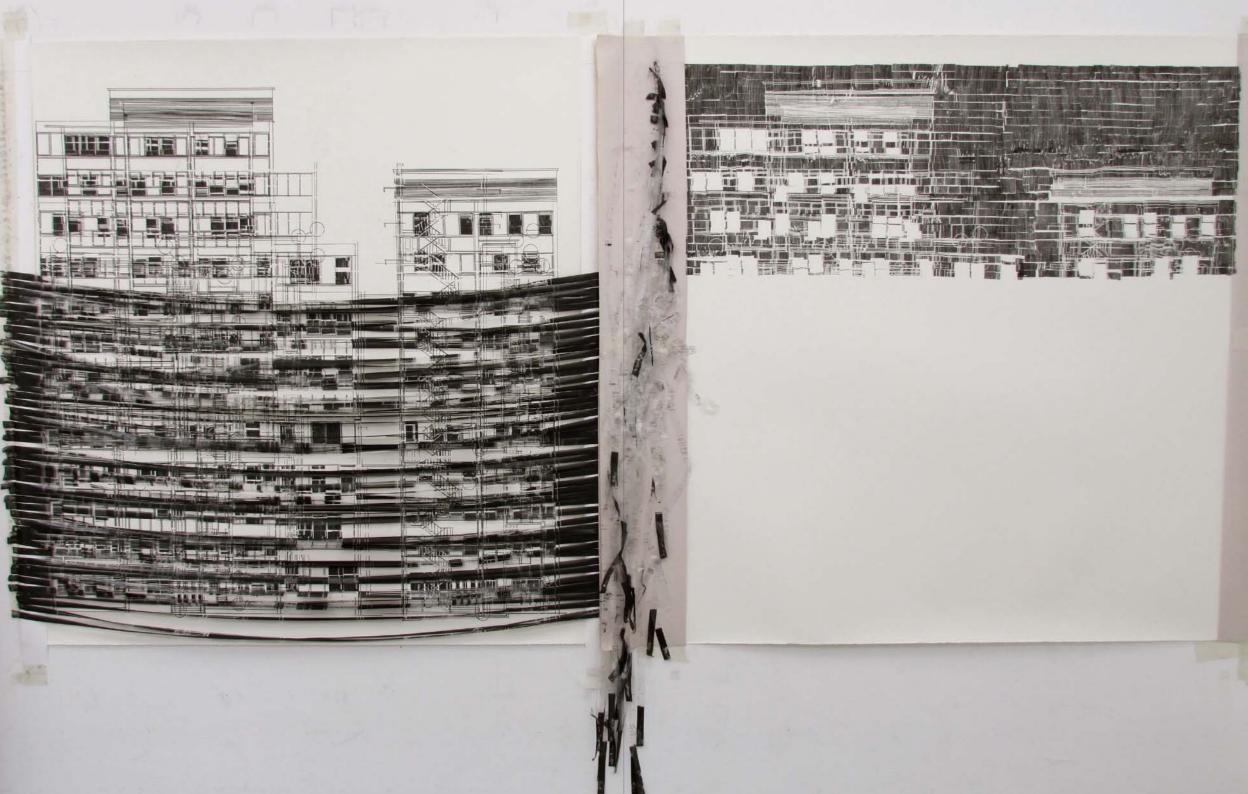
This field taps into one facet of what could be called the geography of drawing: a recognition that drawing contains within its shifting, non-linear temporality a set of references to many other spheres of artistic practice, consumer and media cultures, and industrial production. The notion of drawing's geography is an important acknowledgment of the plurality of material and conceptual stakes for paper and what artists such as Julie Merriman continue to do with it. Her drawings create energetic juxtapositions and rhythmic oscillations through their interplay of oppositional states: motion and stillness, unit and interval, presence and absence. The artist's practice self-reflexively interrogates its own negotiation of source material and finished work, raising questions about the nature and role of contemporary drawing's potentially emancipatory relationship to alternative non-artistic forms of drawing as a tool of communication.

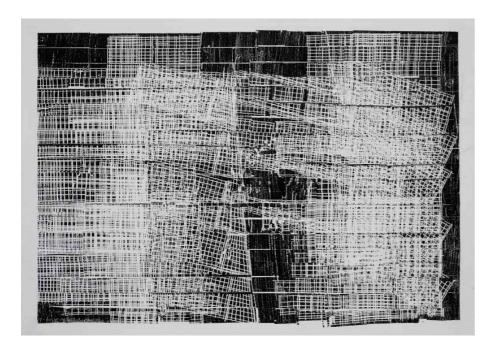
- 1 On the historical trajectory of drawing-as-installation, which connects the skeins of Jackson Pollock to the expanded conception of drawing as it proliferated into wall-covering and room-spanning installations from the late 1960s to the present day, see Catherine de Zegher, 'A Century under the Sign of Line: Drawing and its Extension (1910 –2010),' in On Line: Drawing through the Twentieth Century, eds. C. Butler and C. de Zegher, exhibition catalogue, The Museum of Modern Art, New York, 2010, pp.21–123.
- 2 As part of her DCC research the artist conducted an interview with retired Council Executive Draughtsman Michael Corcoran. Her notes from this interview with Corcoran record that: 'In Castle Street they had a gigantic collection of drawings dating from 1852 to the 1970s, stored in horizontal drawers in the basement. Michael catalogued these drawings, compiling a register in numerical order over the course of five years. He organised them onto hangers and into the cabinets where they are currently stored. These drawings are made on very fine linen, tracing paper and cartridge paper. The Council still use the drawings from this archive; during the construction of the new Rosie Hackett Bridge a drawing from 1899 of the Liffey siphon was urgently required as the siphon was situated close to where the new bridge was being constructed and it was imperative that it not be interfered with.' Julie Merriman, unpublished interview with Michael Corcoran, 3 April 2013.
- 3 Prior to this commission in 2011/12 Merriman visited the archive of the Institution of Civil Engineers and the archive of the Institution of Mechanical Engineers in London, and the Science Museum Library and Archive at Wroughton, Swindon. This earlier research partly inspired her decision to work closely with DCC's engineers.
- 4 Julie Merriman, studio interview with the author, 3 October 2015, Dublin. All subsequent direct quotations from the artist are cited from this same interview.
- 5 Erika Naginski, 'Drawing at the Crossroads', in Representations, special issue on drawing, Vol. 72 (October 2000), p.68.
- 6 In his interview with the artist, draughtsman Michael Corcoran also listed the many different types of pre-CAD reprography used in the council to duplicate plans, from the Copy-Cat machine (a type of Rectigraph or Photostat machine), diazotype via a dyeline machine (similar to a blueprint), and finally to electrostatic photocopying (commonly known as Xerox).
- 7 In DCC the switchover to computer draughtsmanship occurred around the early 1990s.
- 8 One of the most persuasive artists to articulate the power of analogue technology is Tacita Dean, whose recuperation of 16mm film, photography and printmaking has formed the conceptual base of her practice since the early 1990s. Dean works with the linearity of analogue film editing, coexisting in her practice with the cyclical

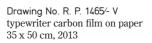
- processes of erasure and re-drawing. She argues that 'writing is analogue; drawing is analogue. Even crossing out is analogue. Thinking too becomes analogue when it is materialised into a concrete form; when it is transmuted into lines on paper or marks on a board... Analogue implies a continuous signal a continuum and a line, whereas digital constitutes what is broken up, or rather, broken down, into millions of numbers ...' Dean, quoted in Theodora Vischer, 'The Story of Linear Confidence,' in *Tacita Dean: Analogue: Drawings 1991-2006*, exhibition catalogue, Schaulager Basel, Göttingen, 2006, p.18.
- 9 The art historian Cornelia H. Butler has offered her succinct take on process art's close relationship with the medium of drawing; a definition that speaks closely to Merriman's own approach: 'Process drawings, in the narrowest definition, might be works in which the making of the drawing becomes the drawing itself. The parameters of its physical conditions determine its eventual form.' Cornelia H. Butler, 'Ends and Means,' in Afterimage: Drawing through Process, exhibition catalogue, Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles, Cambridge, Mass., 1999, p.89.
- 10 Tamara Trodd, Mediums and Technologies of Art Beyond Modernism, unpublished PhD thesis, University College London, 2005, p.295. For a wide-ranging analysis of drawing's relationship to technologies both analogue and digital, see Trodd's recently published The Art of Mechanical Reproduction: Technology and Aesthetics from Duchamp to the Digital, Chicago and London, 2015.
- 11 As Benjamin Buchloh asserts in his analysis of diagrammatic manifestations of drawing in the 1960s (specifically Eva Hesse's): 'Ever since Cubism (if not before), one of the principal dialectical oppositions in the medium of drawing has been between the authentic corporeal trace and the externally established matrix.' Benjamin H. D. Buchloh, 'Hesse's Endgame: Facing the Diagram,' in Eva Hesse Drawing, ed. C. de Zegher, exhibition catalogue, The Drawing Center, New York, New Haven, Conn., and London, 2006, p.117. The trace as something subjective, personal and gestural is always directly opposed to the matrix as an ultimate objective structure, the grid, for example, or anything else systematically derived, without flux or bodily presence, and wholly logical.
- 12 Anna Lovatt, Seriality and Systematic Thought in Drawing: c.1966–1976, unpublished PhD thesis, Courtauld Institute of Art, University of London, 2005, p.30.
- 13 Important discussions on the index's relationship

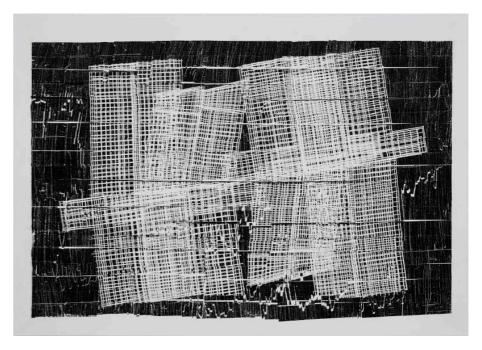
- to drawing and photography were undertaken by Rosalind Krauss, 'Notes on the Index: Seventies Art in America,' in *October*, Vol. 3 (Spring 1977), pp.68–81 and 'Notes on the Index: Seventies Art in America. Part 2,' in *October*, Vol. 4 (Autumn 1977), pp.58–67, and more recently by Margaret Iversen, 'Introduction: The Aesthetics of Chance,' in *Chance*, ed. M. Iversen, London and Cambridge, Mass., 2010, pp.12–27.
- 14 Laura Mulvey, *Death 24x a Second: Stillness and the Moving Image*. London, 2006, p.67.
- 15 Throughout the twentieth century drawing occupied a shifting position within the spaces of art history that was simultaneously central and marginalised. The modernist understanding of drawing as an ancillary medium, subservient to both painting and sculpture, underwent a radical reappraisal during the mid-century years. culminating in the global artistic developments of the mid to late 1960s. In that era, which witnessed the emergence and overlap of minimalism. process art and conceptualism, artists appeared to reassess the importance of drawing as a vehicle for ideation, and proclaim the essential power of the unmediated, hand-drawn mark (handmade even when that mark was highly controlled to produce a mechanical, diagrammatic rigour).
- 16 Mulvey 2006, op. cit., p.26.
- 17 Mel Bochner quoted in Briony Fer, *The Infinite Line: Re-making Art after Modernism*, New Haven, Conn. and London, 2004, p.83.
- 18 The exhibition *Le Mouvement des Images* at the Centre Pompidou in 2006 took as its basis an understanding of the expanded sense of cinema, arguing for its role as the twentieth-century gateway to 'rethinking images no longer on the basis of concepts of uniqueness and immobility... but on the basis of notions of mobility and multiplicity.' Philippe-Alain Michaud, 'The Movement of Images,' in *Le mouvement des images*, exhibition catalogue, Editions du Centre Pompidou, Paris, 2006, p.28.
- 19 Pamela M. Lee, 'Some Kinds of Duration: The Temporality of Drawing as Process Art', in Afterimage: Drawing through Process, op. cit., p.35.
- 20 Catherine de Zegher, 'The Inside is the Outside: The Relational as the (Feminine) Space of The Radical', in *Women Artists at the Millennium*, C. Armstrong and C. de Zegher, eds., Cambridge, Mass., and London, 2006, pp.214-15.
- 21 Sibyl Moholy-Nagy, 'Introduction' in *Paul Klee: Pedagogical Sketchbook*, London, 1968, p.9.

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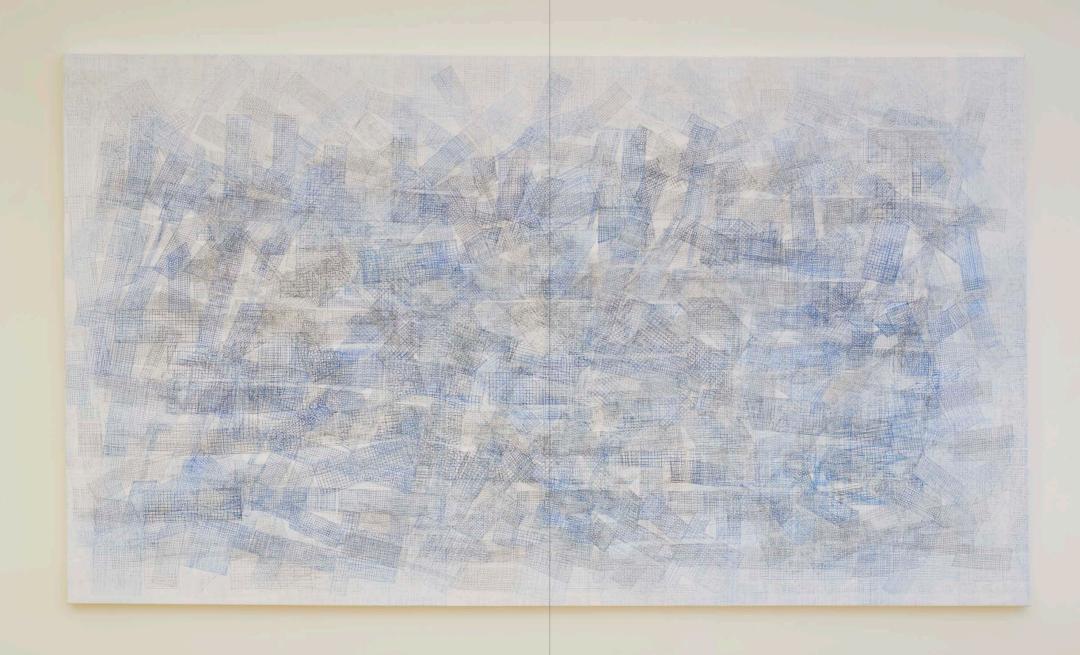




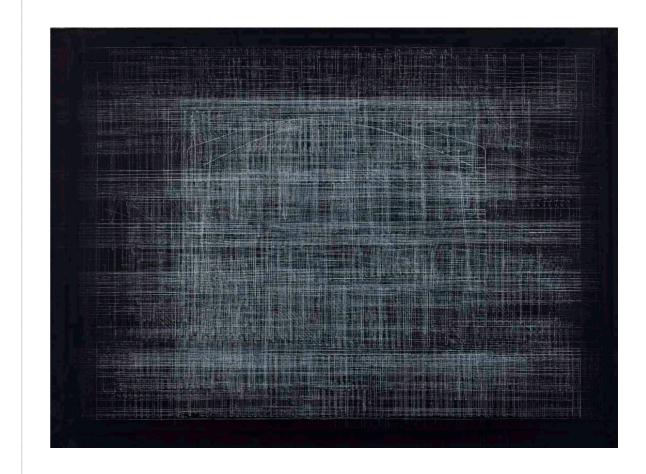




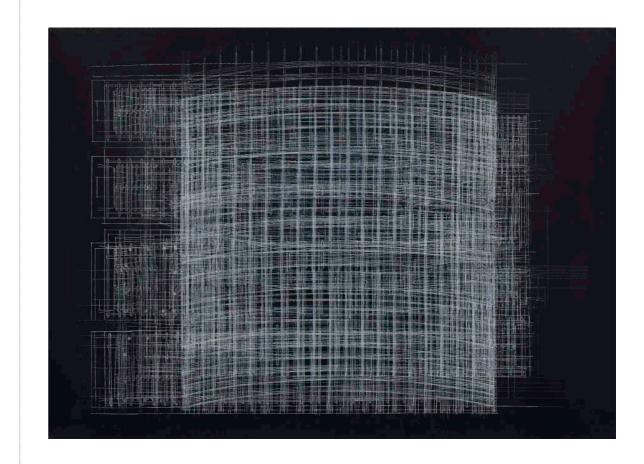
Drawing No. R. P. 1465/- VII typewriter carbon film on paper 35 x 50 cm, 2013



Drawing No. R. P. 1465/- I carbon, coloured pencil and graphite on canvas 172 x 294 cm, 2013-15

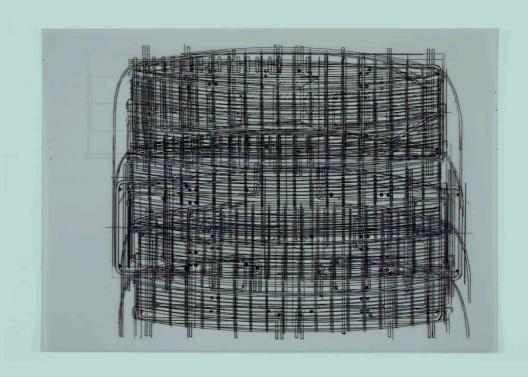


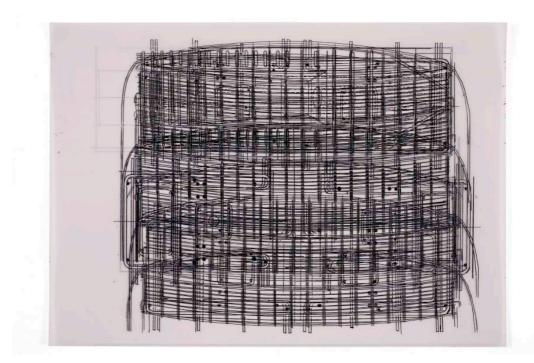
Revisions I carbon on canvas, 101 x 136 cm 2013



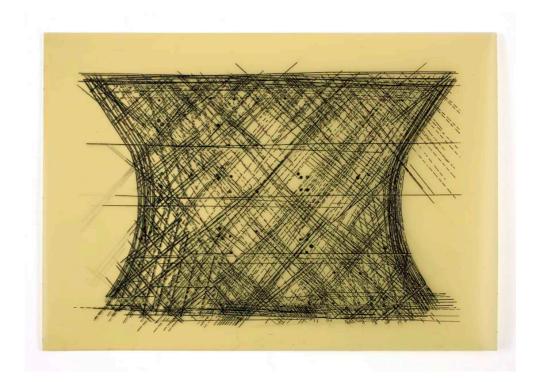
Revisions II carbon on canvas, 103 x 142 cm 2013



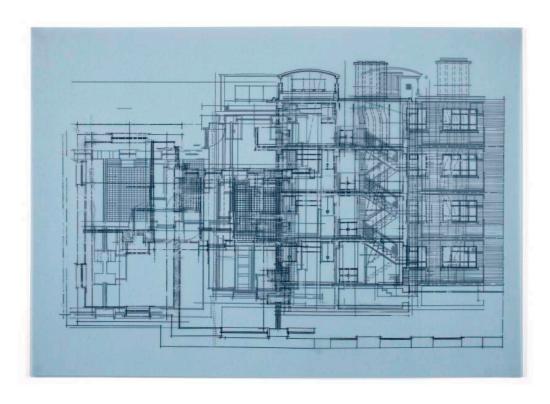


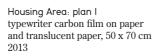


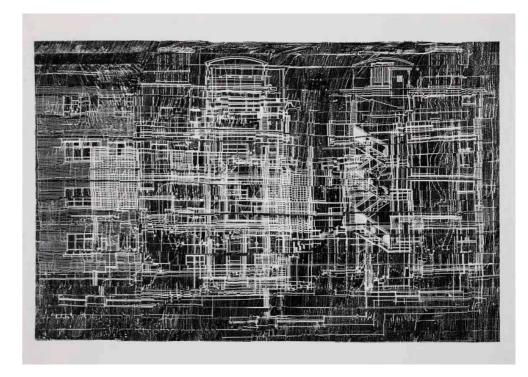
Revisions III typewriter carbon film on paper and translucent paper, 35 x 50 cm 2013



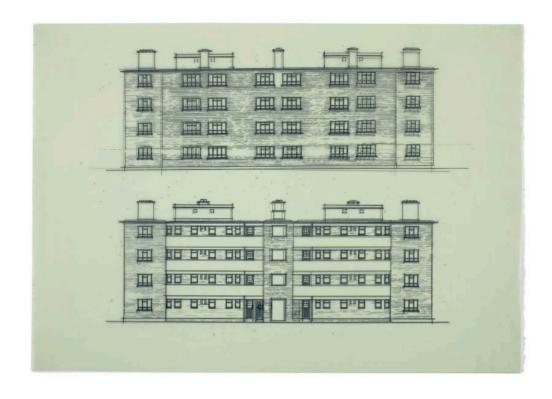
Revisions IV typewriter carbon film on paper and translucent paper, 35 x 50 cm 2013



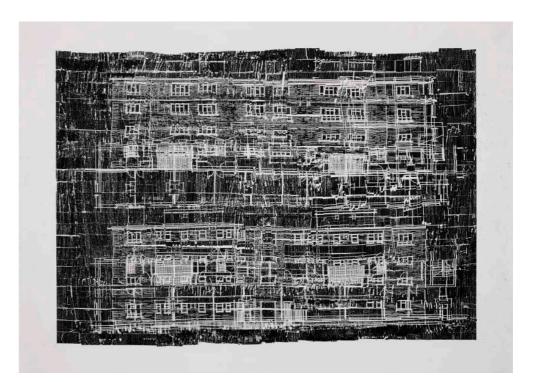




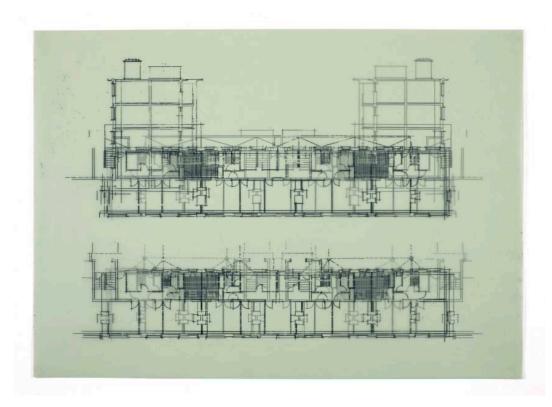
Housing Area III typewriter carbon film on paper 50 x 70 cm 2013



Housing Area: plan IV typewriter carbon film on paper and translucent paper, 50×70 cm 2013

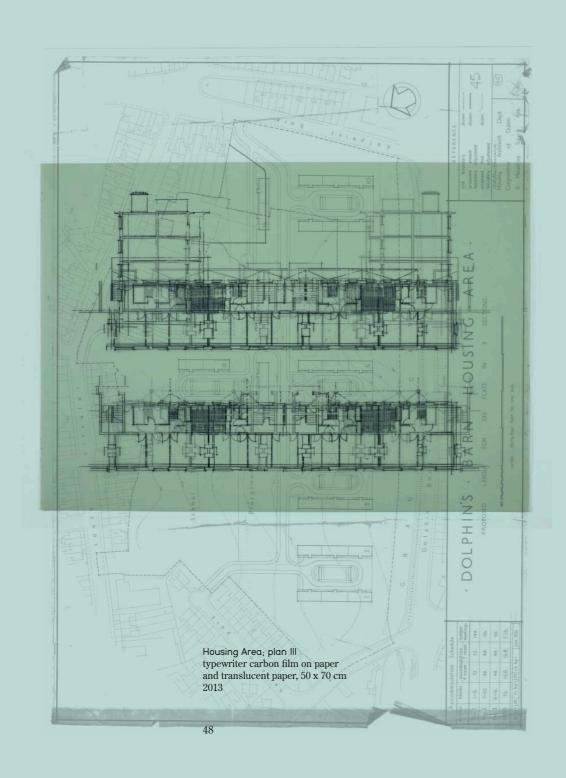


Housing Area II typewriter carbon film on paper 50 x 70 cm 2013



Housing Area: plan III typewriter carbon film on paper and translucent paper, $50 \times 70 \text{ cm}$ 2013

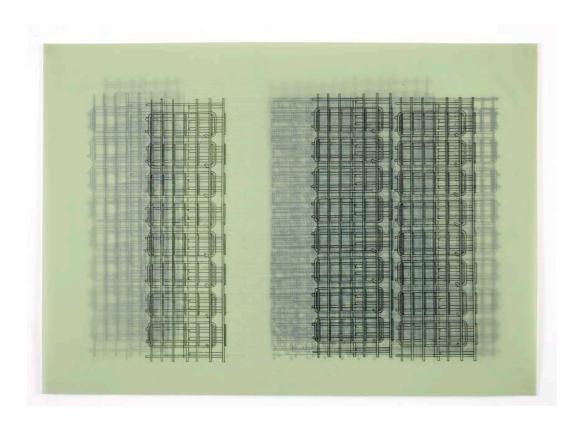




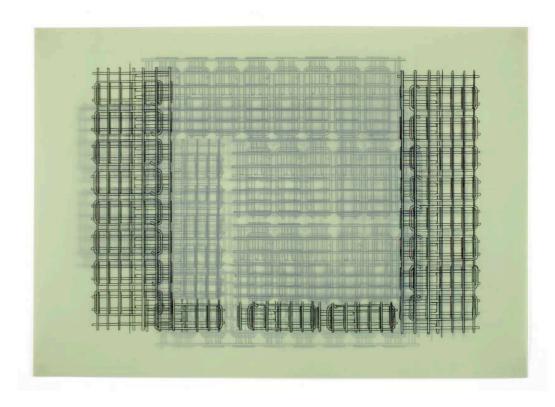




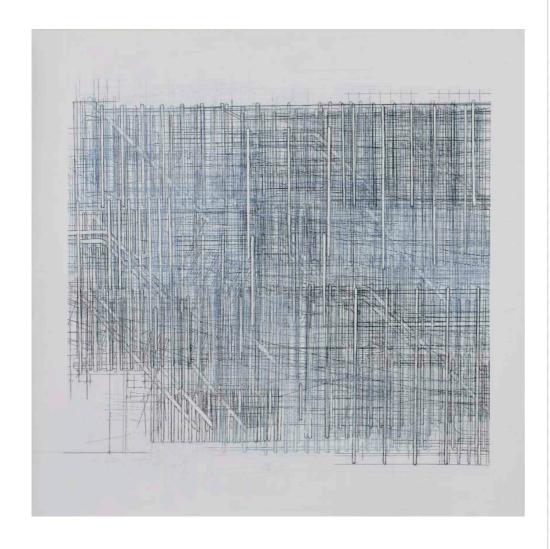
Housing Area VII typewriter carbon film on paper 140 x 140 cm, 2014



Section j-j typewriter carbon film on paper and translucent paper, 50 x 70 cm 2013

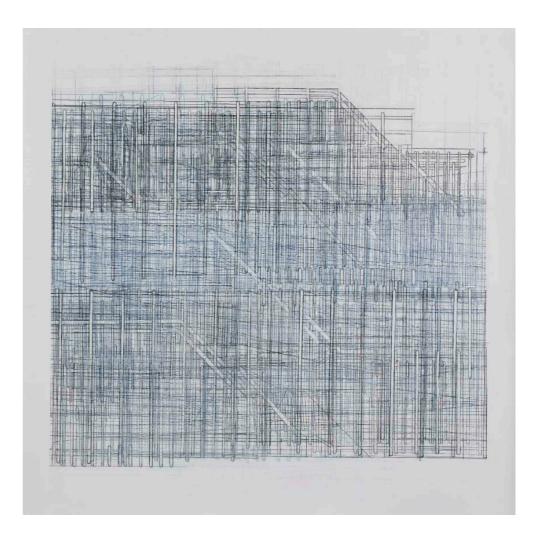


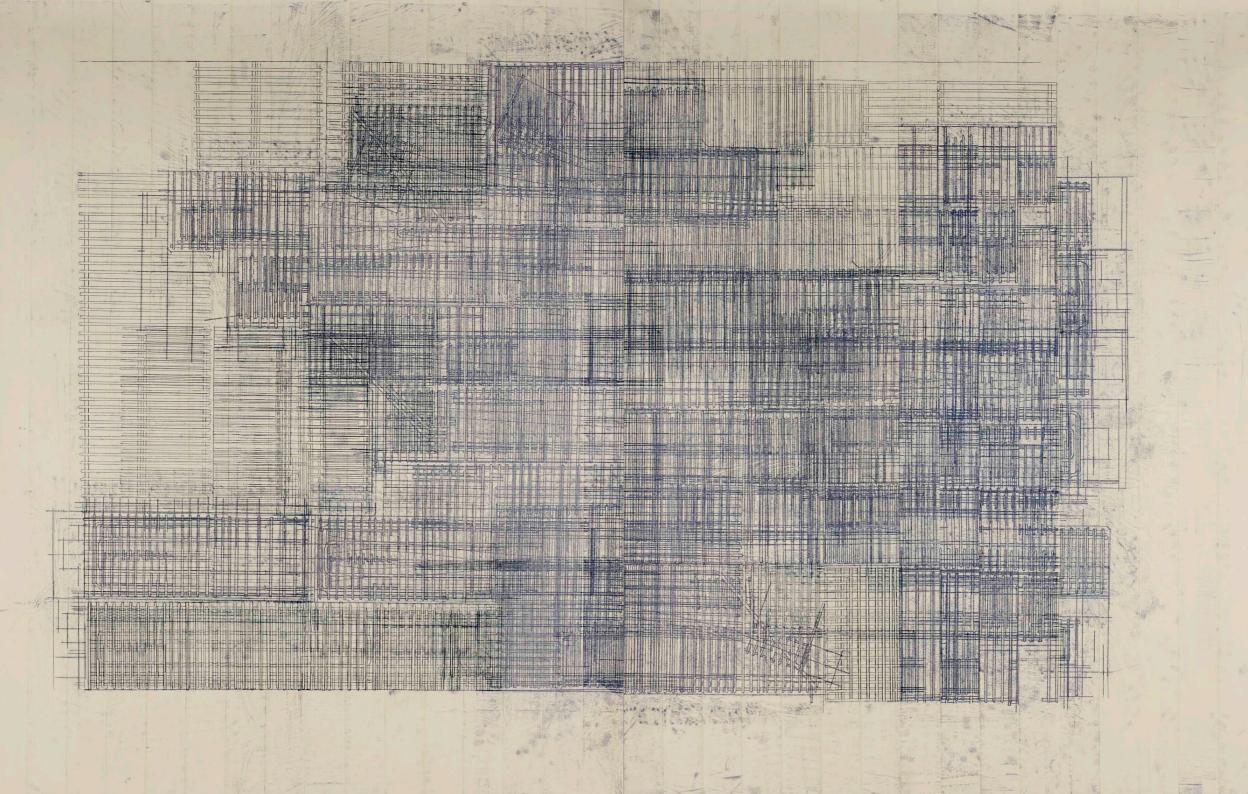
Section k–k typewriter carbon film on paper and translucent paper, 50 x 70 cm 2013

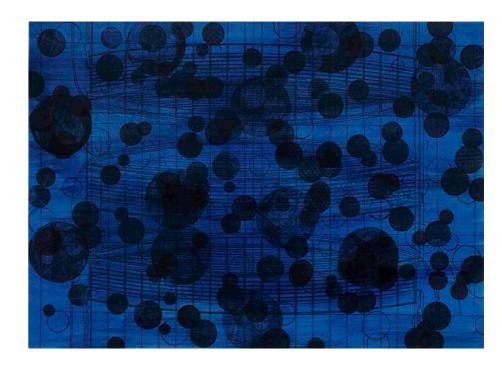




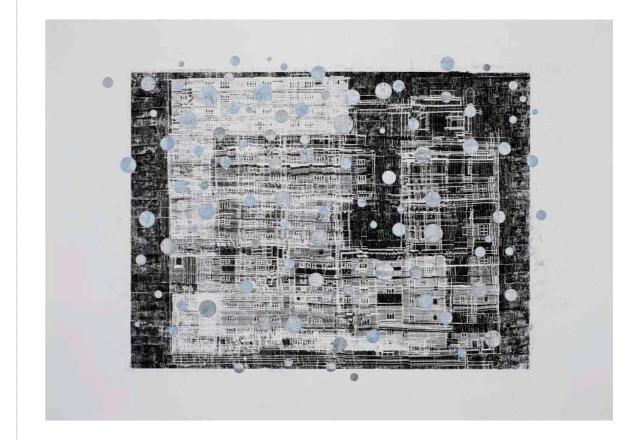
(overleaf)
Approach span II
carbon on masking tape on paper
150 x 310 cm, 2013



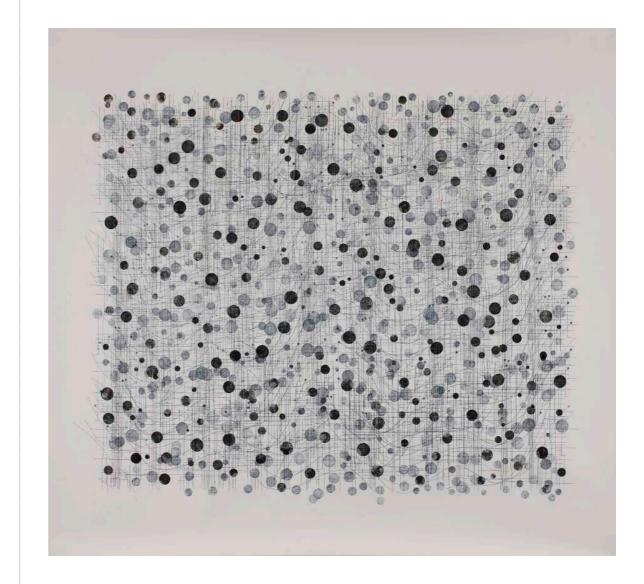




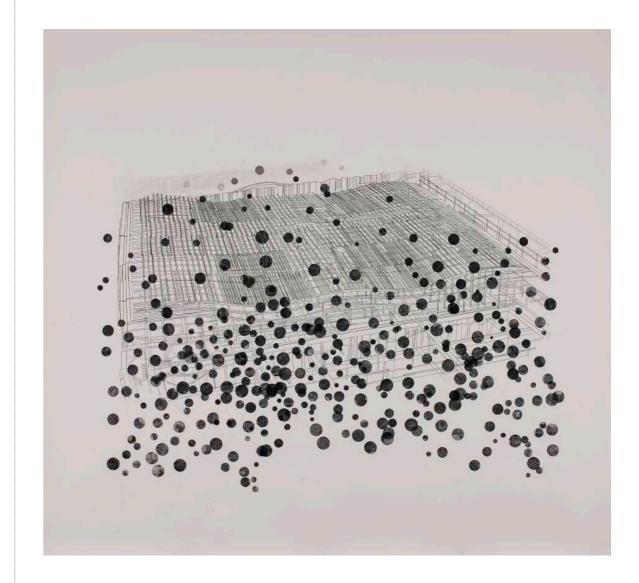
Legend carbon and ink on paper 40 x 50 cm, 2013



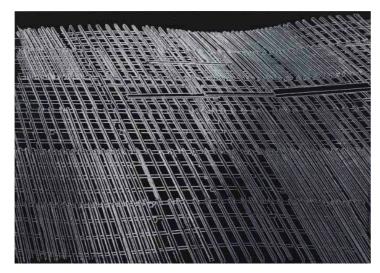
Housing Area I typewriter carbon film and carbon on paper 70×100 cm, 2013



Construction II (bridge) carbon on paper, 141 x 150 cm 2013

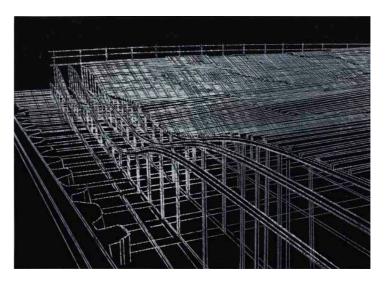


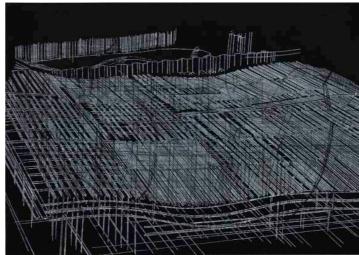
Construction III (bridge) carbon on paper, 141 x 151 cm 2013





Construction, IV–VII (bridge) carbon on paper, 21 x 28 cm 2013







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Editor: Ruairí Ó Cuív Design: Peter Maybury

Photography: Denis Mortell, Ros Kavanagh

Proofreading: Sabina Mac Mahon Printing: MM Artbook printing & repro

Binding: Schwind

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Acknowledgements

Dublin City Council staff who worked with the artist:

Environment and Engineering

Peter Cahill Adrian P Conway Michael Corcoran Kevin Crotty Conor Evans Patrick Gorman

Karen Kennedy Dermot Kinane Paddy Kindillon Desmond Leong Gráinne McDermott

John Neylon Yvonne Patterson Gordon Rowland

City Architects

Ali Grehan Stefan Lowe Owen O'Doherty

Housing Maintenance

Brian Curran

Heritage Office

Charles Duggan

City Archivist

Dr. Mary Clark









ENDPAPER (NO PRINT)

