

Lee Deigaard—*Artist Statement*

The perceptual language of drawing, how it notates and translates the processes of looking, informs much of what I make regardless of medium. I often work in parallel on more than one idea, revisiting bodies of work over time so that concepts and processes inform one another.

Drawing is a kind of perceptual mapping. To me, a living drawing doesn't render so much as harmonize the accidental and reckless with the considered and deliberate. I look for the lines and arcs the eye travels when investigating space. I want to record the vibrations and shifts that drive perception. I don't finish a drawing so much as tune it to the right frequency.

An infrared aerial photograph of the Mississippi Delta looks like a tree. Histologies from the cerebellum, the brain's seat of sensory and motor control, look exactly like trees. Employing trees as subject, collaborator, muse, and metaphor, my drawings explore the neural mechanisms of perception, in particular, the experience and velocity of looking at a tree.

*Photogenic Drawings* are digital reworkings of Victorian techniques for cataloging botanical specimens. Equal parts life drawing and photography, they derive from early photograms whereby subject matter collaborates with medium to render a likeness, i.e. nature "draws herself." As muses, trees surpass the traditional nude by providing both subject and substrate.

*Encephalograms* are the tracings of a nonexistent machine whose freeze-frame technology captures the brainwaves produced by emotions. The machine draws from life. In making them, I considered ideas of attribution and authorship as belonging not to an artist's hand but to an imagined clinical collaboration between a technician, a machine scribe, and a feeling, imagining subject. Results are entirely fanciful and therefore irrefutable.

Others in the series *Photogenic Drawings* consider what the machine sees when it looks into viscera. Sutures, needles, parasites, lost trains of thought float, contort, and scribble themselves into the haze. Medical imaging, like drawing, requires interpretation and conjecture. Could a benevolent machine lens record not physiology but autobiography?

*Sagacious Creatures*, in conjunction with an eponymous website and blog, explores human conceptions of the Animal Other. An ongoing body of work consisting of photographs, video, drawings, and sculpture, it looks at animal-human communication and the animal protagonist.

*Nocturnal Portraits* consider the power of the gaze at the interface of pixellated consumer gadgetry and nocturnal wilderness. They regard us in the darkness without technical aid. What we see later in their faces-- the *tapeta lucida*, source of their superior night vision, reflecting as blank white discs—is eerie, seems somehow impersonal. The animal gives little away, sees through you, in fact. The viewer trespasses.

*Hybrid Woman* is an animal protagonist in a human world. As "the elephant in the room" self-consciously bumping her head on the ceiling, she asks that we relate to her. Her hybrid nature invites us closer even as it may repel us; she is legible if perhaps unintelligible.

*Memorial to Topsy* commemorates Topsy, the elephant who was electrocuted by Thomas Edison at Luna Park, Coney Island in 1903 in front of a mob of onlookers. In memorializing her and making a mutoscope reel from Edison's notorious film, I wanted her individual reckoning to be witnessed through the private space of the mutoscope viewfinder, to subvert the voyeurism of the "peep show" into an act of remembrance and private conscience.