A Space of Encounter

A dissertation submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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BOOK THREE : CONVERSATION PIECES
CONVERSATION PIECES

ES: ‘When you began your practice, how did you go about figuring out how you would work together?’

AC + CM: ‘I suppose we established our practice based on conversation. When we began we were both living in different cities, Andrew in Paris and Colm between London and Dublin. So, the practice became a conversation between us both and, in some ways, those two cities. Our working process developed from this dialogue. Every project begins with a conversation, sometimes vague, sometimes specific or detailed. We try to develop a sketch quickly to focus this discussion, a sort of conversation piece. This sketch now generally takes the form of a crude model, something direct and inarguable. These cruder studies are distilled and tested against the plan repeatedly as we move through the project stages.'
For us, it took time to learn how to work as a partnership and also to develop a way to work, as this is inextricably linked to your practice, the nature of the work you wish to produce. We think this idea of method, process and practice is often overlooked in architecture education.  

1 Emmet Scanlon, “Practice Profile: An interview with Clancy Moore,” New European Architecture 34 (July/August 2010).

ills 3.2 Cast-offs, model storage studio at Castle St., Dublin
THE ALCHEMIST

In our conversations with students we often refer to the idea of the alchemist when we discuss how they might find the position by which to develop a thesis project. In particular, we discuss the painting by Joseph Wright of Derby, entitled *The Alchymist Discovering Phosphorous*, from 1771. We commenced our PhD research with the presentation of this image at PRS 1. The glow of the excited phosphorous and the romantic chaos of the laboratory captured on canvas embody our ambition for the studios in which we teach and practice architecture.

Of even greater importance is the supposed narrative behind this large painting. The alchemist, thought to be Henning Brandt, is depicted in a moment of surprised joy, perhaps later replaced by disappointment, as his experiment to discover gold by boiling urine accidentally creates phosphorous. In this manner, much happens within the architecture studio through intuition, energy, and risk by accident. An alchemy of sorts. We understand it as a place where clear intentions are subverted by careful accidents. This is a messy process and one that is difficult to anticipate or structure.

2 Both partners in Clancy Moore teach an MArch studio unit together at Queen’s University, Belfast.

ills 3.3 The Alchymist, In Search of the Philosopher’s Stone, Discovers Phosphorus, and prays for the successful Conclusion of his operation, as was the custom of the Ancient Chymical Astrologers, by Joseph Wright of Derby, now in Derby Museum and Art Gallery, Derby, UK.
In a similar spirit, the film work of Swiss artists Fischli and Weiss entitled *The Way Things Go* or *Der Lauf der Dinge* (Fig. 4) describes the paradoxically controlled indeterminate nature of this work in the studio. The film, perhaps made famous, contentiously, in the “Cog” ad for Honda cars, is a game of comedic dominoes where very ordinary things – ladders, trash bags, old shoes – are set on an extended chain reaction of miraculous cause and effect. Ultimately, the film is charged with contingency and entropy, perhaps another sort of alchemy, and a unique understanding of time and process. The result is a grand performance of mischief, humour and experimentation that describes our understanding of the spirit of studio practice where ideas, anticipated and unexpected, combine with material exercises and a process occurs mysteriously and often apparently independent of control. It is a process closer in description to the direct translation of *Der Lauf der Dinge*, ‘the course of things’, bringing to mind the course of a river, meanderings and all.


4 Mentally concerned with motion. Both pieces of work clearly resonate. Rube Goldberg believed that most people preferred doing things the hard way instead of using a more simple and direct path to accomplish a goal. In the words of the inventor, the machines were a ‘symbol of man’s capacity for exerting maximum effort to achieve minimal results’. His drawings became so well known that Webster’s Dictionary defined the term Rube Goldberg as ‘accomplishing by extremely complex, roundabout means what seemingly could be done simply’. Perhaps a worry for the business model of our studio methodology.

ills 3.4 Rube Goldberg Illustration – *A Device for the Extermination of Moths*. Artwork © and TM Rube Goldberg Inc. All materials used with permission.
THE WORKMANSHIP OF RISK

Essential to this process is the careful consideration of time, method and the many vehicles of discussion that propel a design towards its essential character. Working in our studio, intuitively, we have developed a personal process of large-scale iterative model making to facilitate a necessary risk and experimentation where incidents “intended or otherwise” develop towards a proposition.

In his ode to craft, *The Nature and Art of Workmanship*, David Pye explores the meaning of skill and its relationship to design and making. He proposes that craft supports what he terms a workmanship of risk by defining craftsmanship in the following terms:

“If I must ascribe a meaning to the word craftsmanship, I shall say as a first approximation that it means simply workmanship using any kind of technique or apparatus, in which the quality of the result is not predetermined, but depends on the judgement, dexterity and care which the maker exercises as he works. The essential idea is that the quality of the result is continually at risk during the process of making; and so, I shall call this kind of workmanship ‘The workmanship of risk’.”

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6 Ibid.
Be it in foam board, card, paper or cast in plaster, the models we make are painstakingly crafted. While they are intended as maquettes, working studies, we see this care as necessary in order that they represent both the experience of the space and our ambition for how the work should ultimately be made. In this way, the craft of building the model may in some way be seen as a displacement of the craft of constructing the building. Returning to David Pye’s definition of craftsmanship, we could perhaps consider the craftsmanship of these objects in another way. While the models are made precisely they are also paradoxically loose or open. Most simply described, this is evident in the fact that there is no single viewpoint, unlike the perspective drawing or the deadly computer rendering. In their fragmentary nature they are incomplete. As objects they are alive with possibility, unscripted with possible interpretations. With this attitude, working with models can be a non-determined open way of communicating, not only amongst ourselves but also with our clients and, increasingly, contractors who embrace these objects as tangible and direct.
A CONVERSATION PIECE 1: A STUDIO PORTRAIT

This is why, in our conversation with Emmet that opened this essay, we refer to these models as conversation pieces. Originally, a ‘conversation piece’ was a term for an informal group portrait, especially those painted in Britain during the 18th Century. They can be recognised by their portrayal of a group of people engaged in conversation, notably, sometimes about an object linked to science or scholarship. A good example is Tribuna of the Uffizi, painted by Johan Zoffany during 1772-78, in the Royal Collection, England. The painting portrays the north-east section of the Tribuna room in the Uffizi in Florence, Italy. The Tribuna is displayed with the typically cluttered salon-style hang popular at that time. To this clutter, Zoffany has added further works from the collection into the small octagonal gallery. Amongst this stand various groupings, gesticulating mid-conversation. In one instance, a gentleman would appear to be talking animatedly to the carved marble statue of a dancing faun. With its mess of speaking objects caught mid-conversation it could describe another portrait of our studio. Later, the term ‘conversation piece’ acquired a different meaning, referring to objects that would spark or enable a conversation. Things that talk back. This second meaning describes how we work with models in the studio.

The Tribuna of the Uffizi, by Johan Zoffany, 1772-8, Royal Collection Trust / Copyright Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II 2017
A CONVERSATION PIECE 2 : A MODEL FOR PRACTICE

Our practice began with a model – a poorly constructed one, made on a kitchen table in light balsa wood by Andrew and myself. Neither of us can make models ‘well’. No matter. This large model represented the relationship between the landscape and the proposed form of the houses for our Slievebawnogue project.\(^7\) It also produced our working relationship. Unlike many of the models we make now, it was constructed intentionally as a presentation tool.

The project, which existed in a sense before the practice did, had been met previously with scepticism by a conservative planning authority. A meeting had been agreed to, under some duress, by the local area planner, presenting a sort of last gasp for the project. Understanding that both the spatial and conceptual aspects in this situation, by necessity, were complex, we decided to make a model as the most direct means of communicating both.

The proposition worked. In some sense, the concept became a reality that day in the offering of the modelled space. The model almost completely filled the table we sat around, so the meeting took place within the model. In the discussions, each of us found a place

\(^7\) See Practice Chronology.

ills 3.8 Presentation model for planning meeting, Slievebawnogue project.
in the landscape it represented. That day, the model represented a simulacrum and a real space, the represented meeting of our proposition with the existing landscape and a public space of dialogue for our meeting with the local authority. While the limits of the model and the table it sat on were defined, the limits of the conversations that transpired were not. The model as the focus of our conversations that afternoon welcomed the two planners present as part of the process of design. And so it was that this model became a model for how we practice.

ills 3.9 First visit to the quarry site – note Andrew and I (bottom left) for scale – Slievebaawnogue project
CONVERSATION PIECE 3 : ANOTHER MEETING IN A MODEL

It must have taken some time for the intricately imagined interior to emerge out of the shadows – gradually, the eye growing more accustomed to the darkness, as if having entered a dark space on the brightest of summer days. One might have begun by picking out the gilded details of capitals; then, from the gloom the false relief of columns, and all the time growing in definition, the vast space of the knave and dome coming into form from darkness. No doubt the king must have been thrilled at the immersive magic of that moment, the outside world having completely subsided to leave him as if having just entered the great west door of the cathedral and sitting, as he was, looking towards the largest dome ever built in the world. Surely, even though it would take nearly 40 more years to build, in that moment the king’s grand vision was real.

Just then we can imagine that a second head appears inside the great model. The face of the magician to dispel his conjuring. The architect and client now ensconced by the shape of their collected ambition returned to model form. Wren’s head, too big, 25 times too big to be exact, almost god-like, perhaps. The spell spoiled.

8 The “Great Model” of St Paul’s Cathedral, designed by Christopher Wren, oak, plaster, lime wood, 1674. ill 3.10 Inside the “Great Model” of St Paul’s Cathedral
Or is it? One can’t help but wonder if this intimate scene of Charles and Christopher building a world together below a table may not have been a brief return to the reverie of childhood games at Windsor. After all, as his father was the king’s chaplain, Wren spent his early years at the castle where he became close friends with the young Charles. In which case this extraordinary moment may have been a very familiar experience to them both. A return to the intimacy of play within a shared space of the imagination. The joy of the model.
CONVERSATION PIECE 4: A MODEL OF PLAY

Shortly after our meeting for our Slievebawnogue project we constructed another model for a proposal to alter the Church of St George and St Thomas. Again in recollection, I believe this model was intended to seduce, made as it was for ‘presentation’ to the client committee not as a working tool. The project was so small the scale of the model had to be very large to capture it. Given that the detailed material relationship between our proposal and the existing structure was so crucial we decided to construct the model at a scale of 1:30. This seemed extreme and exciting to us at the time but since then it has become the primary scale of model study in our studio and it is indeed a method now common to many other practices.

The model, constructed in balsa wood, cut a section the length of the nave to the church allowing us to demonstrate the spatial relationship between our intervention and the existing structure. Our proposal delicately positioned a new entrance within the main body of the church. Its form mediated a spatial ambition for a sort of forced perspective, constructed in the boundaries of the nave and side.
aisles of the existing structure. In conversation, a slip of the model provoked a chance discovery. Perhaps we were being too tentative in establishing the relationship with our new piece of ‘furniture’ and the columns defining the side aisle. Instead of the assumed clarity of our initial scheme, the model demonstrated a possibly more profound and ambiguous relationship between the existing columns and the form of our proposal. The greater the autonomy gained by the insertion, the greater the tension, the better the dialogue. Perhaps we could be more respectful by acting with a greater independence? In this chance sleight of hand, the proposition went from being an alteration to an insertion.\(^\text{11}\) In the play of the model, the project and, indeed, a future position for our practice arrived.

\(\text{ills 3.13 Interior study of studio, Albert Park}\)
Here, the model would appear to have consumed the architect entirely. In this case, the immersion is total and complete. It is, of course, a photograph documenting one of many studies made in the development of Eero Saarinen's TWA Terminal. By anecdote we understand that the form of this building owes yet more to consumption. The Irish-born architect Kevin Roche, then one of Saarinen's principal design associates, recalls that while they were trying to find the right shape for the roof, ‘Eero was eating breakfast one morning and using the rind of his grapefruit to describe the terminal shell. He pushed down the centre to mimic the depression that he desired, and the grapefruit bulged. This was the seed for the bulges in the shell.’

Before becoming an architect, Eero Saarinen trained to be a sculptor at the Académie de la Grande Chaumière in Paris from 1930 to 1931. Of course, we can see his obsession with form making and material intelligence throughout his many designs for furniture and buildings. Yet perhaps more importantly there are also aspects of the sculptor’s studio practice in the development of the work. In the studies for the
TWA building, the model is deployed as maquette and armature to the developing design – very much as a sculptor might have done in the studio – with the multiple iterations of wire frame and rough card models becoming a scaffolding for conversations around the building to come, not merely a depiction of it.

Saarinen and his team’s commitment to this way of working is demonstrated by the requirement for the office to move studio in order to accommodate the many large-scale study models produced as part of the TWA design process. When close to the final iteration, someone suggested breaking the long axis of the roof to align to the curve of the road. It is said that, again, Kevin Roche took a saw and roughly cut the shell in half, creating what would become the final form. The thrilling crudeness of this endeavour is clearly lost on the elegance of the final result. In this manner, the models became a vehicle for a slow, reflective and critically collective studio process. ‘Gradually,’ Saarinen said, ‘We evolved a more flowing line.’
CONVERSATION PIECE 6 : SERIOUS MODELS

‘You take your models seriously’

Sometimes we make our models in grey or brown card. Sometimes foam board covered in coloured paper or printed textures. Sometimes they are only as thin as the white paper that makes them. Other times we construct them. When we choose to construct a model in its production we try to emulate the material and process of the proposal. So, we have made simple models using hardwood timbers in sheet and solid sections and cast models using concrete and plaster.

The model for the Hayden Mitchell house was cast in concrete. In its construction, we thought carefully in the most part about the formwork. A subdued form with a deep square plan and central top-lit courtyard or oculus. The wash of light across all the interior surface planes would define the interior character of the house. We were careful to construct the card formwork in order to achieve the fair-faced finish we required. Yet, the card used as the base of the formwork for the roof slab was different; it had a plastic coating. The resultant ceiling had a slight reflectivity, which we were delighted by. The ceiling was dematerialised, the space doubled in reflection. In later
studies this lightness was elaborated and made in white paper; the roof was inflated as a volume suspended above the floor. Although this project did not proceed to construction, the inflated figure of this roof form has drifted across the plans of multiple projects but has yet to land in construction. Such discrepancies or accidents that inevitably occur in the creation of these models are taken as seriously as if they happened on the real site of construction. In both cases, we are prompted to improvise, to explore the latent possibilities in the unexpected arrival.

THE MODEL MADE STILL.

The illustration by Saul Steinberg published in The Art of Living (1952) is said to have been an influence on Georges Perec’s book, Life: A User’s Manual. The narrative of Perec’s book is a tapestry of stories based on the lives of people in a fictional block of apartments in Paris. The main tale concerns a millionaire’s project. At the age of 20, Percival Bartlebooth, not interested in money, power, art, women or gambling, decides he wants to do nothing with his life, which he believes represents a certain idea of perfection. His life plan unfolds as follows. For ten years he learns to paint watercolours with Serge Valène. For 20 years he travels the world, painting and sending his pictures to a jigsaw puzzle creator, Gaspard Winckler. Twenty more pass in completing the puzzles Winckler makes of the paintings, and his final ten years are spent returning to the original places of their creation, dissolving the paint from the paper, leaving nothing.

In an unintentionally similar exercise, as part of a precedent study of top-lit space, our students in Belfast were given a photograph of a completed building, in this specific case, Hélène Binet’s photograph of a brick house by English architects Caruso St John, one of 20...
precedents chosen for this study. Through a detailed analysis of this image, the students were asked to make projections of its plan and section and to use these drawings to construct a 1:10 physical model of the depicted space. Finally, each student used this new construction to replicate exactly the original photograph. In a gesture worthy of Perec’s narrative, the students of this model then posted their photograph back to its author and no doubt dispatched all physical traces of the exercise to a parent’s attic. Choosing a different device – the stairs, the roof, the window, the floor – each year the proceeding project from this precedent study employs the same methodology of working in the studio, constructing and photographing large-scale physical models of individual spaces followed by simply documenting the model as plan and section. Unlike our French millionaire, this is not an idiosyncratic process for its own sake. Instead, the rare discipline of deeply reading the original photograph instils an understanding of how detailed construction tunes the overall character of a building. Thus, these models are a means of sketching a resolution of strategy and detail in three dimensions. In our studio practice we sometimes construct models to be photographed. Sometimes not. Through this text I would like to reflect on the camera’s multiple uses and possibly opposing roles in this process. Sitting at the interface of concept
and experience, object and real space, models are seductive things capable of distraction in their ability to captivate. We can spin them endlessly with delight, uncritically observing the effect. Through the camera the model is made still. Photographed as being virtually indistinguishable from the actual space, the model can be seen as almost jealous of the building it represents. Echoing the artist Thomas Demand’s declaration that ‘nothing is real until it is photographed’, now made image, the model purports to present architecture, not represent it. Perhaps given the currency of the image in our communication of buildings this treatment further legitimises the model as architecture. In this process the camera serves to capture the space by removing us from the object and placing us in the image. We physically inhabit the model through mimicking the conventions of architectural photography, translating its scale through the image – the height of the lens, at eye level, implying the presence of a non-present viewer, our double in model space. The experience is compelling and uncanny. The character of this image elicits an emotional response as judged on ephemera not present in any other means of conventional representation. The photographer’s choice of vantage point, light and perspective provide a means to describe and edit an experience that tests a proposal’s spatial character and atmosphere.
While model is posing as a simulacrum of reality, the camera provides a means for our willing suspension of disbelief. We could say that this photographic image at this point, rather than representing 'reality', produces 'a new reality'.

However, this is an ersatz reality; the charade being endearingly by mutual agreement. The light is too intense, the grain of the material incongruously large. There is a shift in space and time. In this understanding, the model is returned to abstraction, its photographic image possessing the character of documentary. A moment of objective analysis. Referring to her work process, the Irish painter Eithne Jordan, whose works often have a model-like character, recently stated, 'Digital photography changed the way I work. I think, with a camera, you’re framing things from the start, and the camera itself creates a certain distance.' The photographic image in her work becomes a device used as a method to create distance between what is real and how it can be manipulated and edited. This recalls Susan Sontag's statement that photographing is 'essentially an act of non-intervention' that engenders a distanced relationship with the world. In this manner, through the image, the model is returned to a thinking object. In the studio the camera becomes a critical eye, providing a
distance that allows us to view each model afresh, the image’s clarity highlighting chance occurrences in aspects of a model’s aspiration for real construction that our mind and eye willingly dismiss. If these magnified traces of the hand were not there the space would be different. In this process, it is often the mistakes highlighted in snapshots that enable chance discoveries. Two misaligned edges\(^{13}\) suggesting a tension in plane or the pockmarks of a cast surface happily undoing an ambition for a perfection of edge. So, the image is capable of redefining our conceptual understanding of the proposal. In spite of the often elaborately detailed resolution of these large-scale objects the photograph is capable of re-presenting them as maquettes, sketches in space.

While still being an open medium, in each iteration the model forces a proposed resolution in three dimensions. In their scale we immediately confront crucial details often only considered by others much later in the design process. For example, the height of a skirting board or the depth and lining of a window reveal\(^{14}\). In this process, a certain grammar of the interior is brought to the foreground.

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\(^{13}\) For example, in our model for the Albert Park Studios, the accidental pour lines in the casting of the model led us to a constructional proposal of form work exposing the horizontal day joints on the concrete facade. A methodology that would appear to have predicted the suggestion by the council that parts of the structure be constructed by day-labour release from a nearby prison.

\(^{14}\) Working models for the opening stages of Aoibhneas and West Cork Arts Centre competitions both demonstrate this engagement at the outset of the design proposal.

ills 3.22 Photographed model, competition entry for Aoibhneas, Stage 1
in our consideration. The production of these images establishes an emphasis on the interior, in particular providing for comfort by enabling moments of inhabitation at every scale in our work. Judged merely on their experience beyond any understanding of order, the picturesque quality of these images allow us to see the work outside of any conceptual understanding. In some ways, they are a foil to the abstraction of our thinking, talking and the hegemony of the plan projection.

Returning to Paris, Perec’s novel, like much of his writing and that of the Oulipo group, looks to examine the relationship of constraint and chance in the creative process. The characters Valène and Winckler can be seen as personifications of contrasting dimensions that define the messy process of our studio practice. Winckler, the puzzle creator, represents order, discipline, technical virtuosity, intellect and abstraction. While Valène, the watercolourist, embodies sensual awareness, emotion and chance. Like Bartlebooth’s aides, the camera as a tool in the studio enables us to mediate the quasi-real space of the model between representation and actuality, abstraction and phenomenon.
SLIPPERY DRAWINGS

‘You make slippery drawings’

Here, I would like to return to drawing and the conversation piece. The production of these drawings has given us a means to clarify the essence of our projects. Crucially, they are drawings made in retrospect as reflections. Although presented as pristine, projected in an ideal form, they represent the many messy moments of drawings made, often with flat lead on soft deal or boarded gypsum. Sketches drawn, on the hoof, on-site. In effect, we understand these as edited renderings of conversations, depicting the difficult discussions in which improvisations emerge, new understandings so important to a project’s developing character. They do not exist within any conventional representation of the project arriving post the final drawing of set-out on the site of construction. While explicitly architectural in their representation, they capture something else, less tangible, slippery even. Profound conversations that can all too easily pass. They are emblematic, seeking to seize what has passed and frame it within our present understanding. As such, they are no longer merely forms of documentation but become forms of speculation.

15 Kester Rattenbury, PRS number 2.
16 Robin Evans, Translations from drawings to buildings and other essays (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1997).
ills 3.24 Study For Renovation To Warehouse, Portobello, Dublin, 2017
They frame the project within the reality of our current practice. In this perfected state they function as an expanding lexicon. They do not represent the building but seek to reveal a form from which a project can be deduced, both past and future.

These drawings are sometimes plans but mostly take the form of axonometric projections. The school of architecture where I was educated valued the hand drawing, with a preference for it and the plan above all other means of representation. At that time, the sound of the studio in Richview\(^\text{17}\) was not the insistent clicking of two-buttoned mice snapping but the whirr of parallel motion boards and the whip of sketch roll torn for the next overlay. I was a lazy and truculent student. I still am. When each new brief arrived with its schedule of areas and drawings to be made my response was to immediately deduce a means to subvert the requirements, in some ways to evade the workload. Laziness as a positive motivation, perhaps. I would do so by attempting to make one drawing that encapsulated the project. Something that would aid my persistently brutal verbal descriptions at reviews. Invariably, it was an axonometric projection. Many of the staff in the school at the time were of a certain generation, beholden to Aldo Rossi and returned from the offices of James Stirling. The axonometric held an especially revered place in this culture. It still

\(^{17}\) The School of Architecture located at Richview on the edge of University College Dublin’s campus.

ills 3.25 Study for renovation to warehouse, Portobello, Dublin, 2017
holds a significant place in the broader culture of contemporary Irish architecture. A recurrent joke being that no entry to the Architectural Association’s annual awards can be successful without an exploded axonometric representation of the parti. Indeed, it might be said that no project is considered complete without such a drawing.

To return to Kester and her book on architectural representation,\(^{18}\) she describes the axonometric and in particular the worm’s eye view as having a peculiar culture between geometrical puzzle and a child’s drawings or diagram of a toy. She is referring to Stirling and Gowan’s drawings or, more specifically, Leon Krier’s rendering of the Florey Building for Queen’s College in Oxford (another toy\(^{19}\) – itself a drawing made in retrospect to define a practice\(^{20}\). Of course, I was and still am besotted by that drawing as much as the building.\(^{21}\) Stirling intended these drawings as a means to capture the essence of each project – for him, the form of functional relationships within the building. They define every commission as an organisation with each drawing describing pure relations – the unique set of


\(^{19}\) Colin Rowe, ibid.

\(^{20}\) These drawings were prepared after the partnership of Stirling and Gowan had dissolved. Leon Krier was employed for many months by Stirling, re-presenting the early projects for a retrospective monograph, now called ‘the black book’. Its colloquial title presents an interesting resonance with the black box or black box theories – things defined only in terms of their function.

\(^{21}\) We had the pleasure of staying there during the AF Summer School prior to its renovation last year.
circumstances that formed the project. This collection of ‘highly figured distinctive spaces’ was only capable of being discovered in a type of abstracted drawing. ‘Stirling himself added that their clarity related to how we understand a building as distinct from the way it might look in reality.’

Interestingly, in these drawings lies a particular preference for the worm’s eye axonometric. A drawing that, for me, always takes a second to ‘tune into’. There is an inevitable fleeting moment of confusion before the projection snaps into comprehension. In this space, the drawn composition is reduced to pure abstraction and, briefly, the drawing becomes live. Dancing on the eye, up and down, in and out, there is a moment before you enter it. In this instant, it could be said to function like the mirror in the painter’s studio, with the inversion and rotation of the image offering a moment of disarmed analysis, however fleeting.

23 Ibid.
ills 3.27. Study for addition to house, Inchicore, Dublin, 2015
IN THE MARGINS

I have seen the photographs. Architect couples, rendered in black and white, studiously, even timelessly sketching side by side, a shared arm at work. We do not work like this. We sit on opposite sides of a table. This is not to set up some easy argument of oppositions. In fact, it is intended to enable the opposite, a shared conversation. Generally, there is a drawing offered up. The table, the sheet, as a shared territory. We skirt the margins of the page. And as with all marginalia,24 we draw from the edge towards the centre in order to critique and illuminate what is before us. Crucially, the edge makes a space for each of us to work out or, in this case, into the project before us. Sitting and talking into the drawing, a space is opened up. We rotate the page only when necessary. In this manner, like the oblique projection, the drawing remains live, at times elusive. This way of working is very flexible; it is not absolute. Doubt is present always. We can keep adding things. Building into the drawing without losing what has come before, these drawings remain both reflective and projective, introverted and gregarious. While the axonometric drawings contain and describe relationships, these drawings enable relationships.

24 Marginalia refer to the notes written in the margins of text. Famously, Fermat’s ‘Last Theorem’ was written in the margins of a copy of Arithmetica, an ancient Greek text written on mathematics by Diophantus.

ill. 3.28 A Conversation Piece, drawing from an office design session with Andrew. Note: Andrew is sitting bottom left and I am sitting at 90 degrees to his right. Andrew elaborates on this in his particular drawing in his dissertation.
ENABLING DRAWINGS

We have tried to work repeatedly with the same craftsmen in order to establish a productive correspondence in the making of things. For example, Mathew O’Malley built both the insertion to the Church of St Thomas and our houses in the Quarry. Likewise, Joe Denvir completed construction of our extension and renovation of a house on Belgrave Square and moved his team directly to our site on Albany Road.

We value these relationships as when the inevitable issues arrive on-site the ensuing conversations are productive. Joe is an excellent contractor and an excellent businessman. His own solution was invariably the most elaborate. Yet, the investment of his own enthusiasm and his ownership of said solution meant that labour came at no extra cost.

Andrew recently interviewed the Barcelona-based practice Flores Prats\(^\text{25}\) for his *Register* podcast\(^\text{26}\). In a discussion on the intricacies of their drawings, Eva Prats describes a strategy for making drawings where the project and the drawings overlapped. The drawings were very precise but complex such that the contractor required the

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25 Eva Prats is enrolled in the PhD programme.
26 https://soundcloud.com/user-529336343/register-an-introduction/recommended
111 3.29 Conversation piece drawing from an office design session with Andrew. Note: Andrew is sitting top right, I am sitting bottom left.
architect to explain them. In their complexity lay a sleight of hand; interpretation was required.

Now we wonder how to make our drawings work or our working drawings with gaps, spaces for productive disruptions and elaboration by others. If drawings define relationships – for example, the relationship between building elements or the relationship between programmatic elements – how can we make enabling drawing, where ambiguity acts as positive form of communication?

ills 3.30 Sketch for a house at Ventry, 2017.