

# **DRAWING: A DIALOGUE WITH THE PRESENT AND OBJECTS WITHOUT ADDITIVES<sup>1</sup>**

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## **Abstract**

This article has the objective of presenting visual arts with a context related to process art, which can consequently be connected to the use of meditation in work creation. It is also a record of the creator's conversation with the present, using the concept of pictorial view to aid the study of object construction, expressed in the format of drawings in perspective. This includes art works by artists with an emphasis on the process of meditation or a dialogue with the present and the ceremonies of arts.

The study discovers that visual arts, with the content in process art, use perspective drawing as a recording process in painting works. Meditation or a dialogue with the present is the facilitating force aiding concentration in drawing in the present. It was discovered that perspective drawing can connect into the void and space, resulting in an optical illusion on the painting space.

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This enables the drawing to reflect the creator's stage of void. Product installation is also prioritized, in order to communicate the entire drawing process to the audience through creators - rather than through the end result - expressed in the painting.

**Keywords:** dialogue with the present; process art; perspective drawing; void

## **Introduction**

Emotions and thoughts are fickle, with changes being the only constant. This causes the mind to, temporarily, become aware, and lets it become lost in emotions and thoughts. Meditation or a dialogue with the present through process art is an artistic movement as well as a creative sentiment where the end product of art and craft, the objective of art, is not the principal focus. The 'process' in process art refers to the process of the formation of art: the gathering, sorting, collating, associating, patterning, and moreover the initiation of actions and proceedings. Process art is concerned with the actual doing and how actions can be defined as an actual work of art; seeing the art as pure human expression. Process art often entails an inherent motivation, rationale, and intentionality. Therefore, art is viewed as a creative journey or process, rather than as a deliverable or end product similar to maintaining a balance of the mind and the body when the external environment is full of urgency, chaos, and mayhem. Exploring the self through daily life, by controlling one's mind to achieve focus and peace of mind, will lead to mindful living.

Meditation or a dialogue with the present is the first tool that allows all forms of art to have a continuous working process. It also incubates and develops humans' fundamental character through various forms of training. For creators of art, process art is a tool facilitating the creators to become focused while working; whether it is drawing, sculpture, dance, or playing musical instruments. These are all processes which are a part of meditation. Meditation or a dialogue with the present itself is also directly a part of the mind.

Ithipol Thangchalok has explained about the creation of visual arts that “repetition of dots and lines, neatly, systematically and continuously, connects to the constant move of the clock, the beating of a pulse, or breathings, or the earth's revolving around the sun” (Thangchalok, 2002: 31-32). These are all under the same rules of the universe. Repetition is the very same method used with focused praying, aiming for meditation or a dialogue with the present and entering into a peaceful state of mind. It is apparent that in this meaning, repetition is a process of continuous and endless focus, which also connects to the correlation of the mind and the body. Additionally, Zen monks use

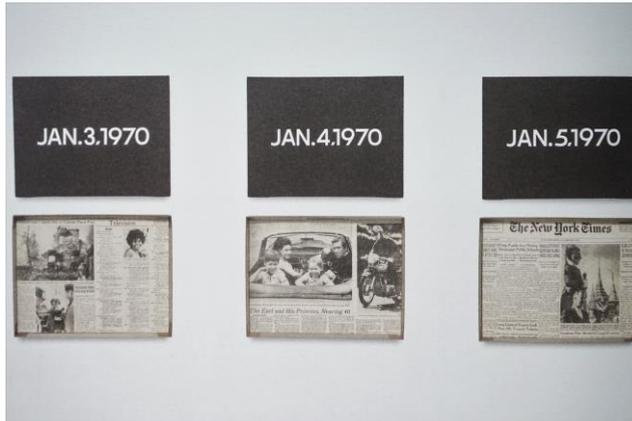
meditation or a dialogue with the present to create, by sweeping pebbles in the Zen gardens into patterns. This activity requires focus of the mind, primarily in collaboration with body movements. Even in Tibetan Sand Mandala, used in different ceremonies whether large or small, the throwing process must be precise. It is an art form requiring great focus and mindfulness in terms of the pattern creation process. It can be seen that the focusing process of living in the present entails various approaches that can reach into the minds of the practitioners directly.

As aforementioned, the perspective of meditation or a dialogue with the present has a relationship which is consistent with visual art works. The presentation is demonstrated through the process of doing, of focusing. Art, in terms of paintings, is a medium that needs actions, by using visual compounds of art in connecting to the process and entering directly into the minds of the creators.

Expected benefits from the study in this article are to obtain an understanding of the numerous methods and processes artists use to present their art works in a creative way; to develop an approach for the creation of visual art products, with content on focus-delivery through practice, with meditation or a dialogue with the present being the tool that paves the way to the present and the creation of paintings.

Regarding this kind of work format, the author would like to elaborate further that there are a group of artists working in the format of process art, which connects to meditation in practicing modern arts. As one artist has opined:

The exhibition of, 'Everyday Meditation 1970' (Figure 1) was organized on 12 February 1971 at the Guggenheim Museum, New York, by On Kawara, a Japanese artist working on conceptual art. For this exhibition, the content comprised information recording processes through more than a hundred New York Times newspapers, 180 postcards, 90 maps, and more than 19 telegrams that the artist had sent out. Each painting, with a size of 10 x 13 inches, was presented along with the information from the newspaper. However, each of them would have a description extracted from a daily newspaper, from 1 January to 31 March. Later on, the exhibitions were organized in many other places (Kawara, 2015: 220).

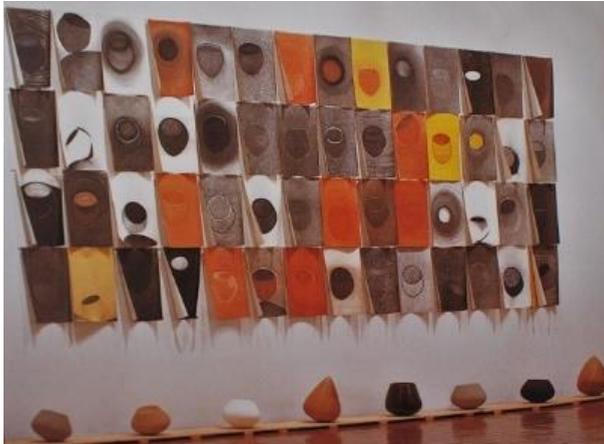


**Figure 1:** Everyday Meditation 1970 Exhibition Source: On Kawara – Silence 2015

As mentioned previously concerning meditation through recordings in art, an artist like On Kawara is one of the top artists with an interest in the work. The content expressed by the artist is often the state of existing, demonstrating ‘the being’ of humans (Kawara, 2015). It can be observed from the referenced date, month, and year in which the product was created, presenting the events that happened during that particular period. Upon deeper scrutiny of the work’s content, one can learn that countless events recorded in the newspapers are not the key content that artists wish to present. On the other hand, the artist uses art as a medium to share a story of the artist’s very existence, as the artist creates the work. One can become aware of the state of existence demonstrated through paintings. What shows on the painting’s surface, are the letters and numbers in the painting, which indicate the artist’s state of being at that particular moment. The important part of this exhibition by On Kawara is the continuous work every single day, by focusing on layering grey repeatedly. By painting, the texts in the work slowly become brighter through a simple method. The process of work creation progresses gradually, with a focused mind – as opposed to the rushed pace that the modern world has granted for humans. For the next part of the work installation in the exhibition, the artist uses the exhibition area as a frame for viewers to develop awareness and to follow through the recording process in each painting. This is for the entire exhibition; as such, the exhibition space

itself is important to this kind of work. Another thing that can be observed from the paintings is the time of installation in different areas in each country. The time in each location where the artist presents would not be the same. This is the part that illustrates that the artist's time, as expressed in the work of On Kawara, happens in all humans' consciousness equally; not everything moves clockwise, or has been flavored with texts and symbols in paintings.

Furthermore, the work of Montien Boonma, in *Drawing of the Mind Training and The Bowls of the Mind Exhibition*, 1992 (Figure 2), is a set of drawings on daily meditation or a dialogue with the present. Boonma started drawing the monks' bowls from 3 am – 6 am every morning. This is an activity related to meditation or a dialogue with the present, and is connected to thoughts on internal areas, external of the body and mind. Boonma also explained that "I thought about the space inside the monk's bowl. I love being in that space, which separates me from the outside world; entering into the dark space of an empty container". The blank mind and conscious – as one without self – along with drawings are how Boonma meditates. It is training, preparing the mind in facing death (Boonma, 2005: 140).



**Figure 2:** Drawing of the Mind Training and the Bowls of the Mind, 1992

Source: *Death Before Dying: The Return of Montien Boonma*, 2005

It has been observed that Boonma prioritizes the considerations of the drawing process, to train in being with one's mind by drawing every single day. Each line drawn into the shape of a monk's bowl is a reflection of the

state of mind at that particular moment, during the moment of creation. Furthermore, on installation of Boonma's work, records made in the drawings were installed to be on a single square wall. This helps in holding the viewer at one place, to spend their time with all the works. It enables the viewers to look over each work on the wall, records expressed through drawings as done by Boonma, in more detail.

From the work examples in the aforementioned exhibitions, process art approached as it appears in artists' work can be described as follows:

1. Process work presented in the format of visual arts uses the same method. An artist uses focus and meditation as leading tools while working, aiding them in reaching into themselves.

2. The presentation process as presented through the format of painting by On Kawara delivers the expression through the format of a date and letters with history discretely embedded. As for Montien Boonma, the presentation is delivered in the format of drawing shapes. This is a form of training to help exploring an artist's self. Both artists reflect different stories through process art.

3. In the format of art installation, the artists have differences in how they use the space for their work installation to give the viewers awareness, and to communicate the content of their work through the art installation space, particularly in terms of presentation to those viewing the work.

One can see that both artists have an expression format that is both similar and different in parts. Creators thus use these learning spaces to research, by presenting the content within the said visual arts in this article format. Studies from various data, through documents, theories, books, and textbooks, with analysis and synthesis, have been yielded through the creators' interpretation. It is expected to be beneficial in the future creation of visual arts. However, creators would like to separate the research into different categories, with connections to visual arts that have been experimentally done, and to continue to research for greater understanding.

### **Meanings of the Terms 'Drawing', 'Perspective' and 'Meditation'**

In terms of visual arts, drawing is the first method humans use, by creating scratches with simple tools such as branches, coals, or even fingers, to

draw or paint on different surfaces. Suchat Thaothong explained that “a line is a key composition of an art structure, expressed with meanings. It gives emotions and heart to the viewers. The provided meanings refer to the size, the length and the direction, which are the most important visual component. This can be observed through Thai, Chinese, and Japanese paintings, all of which have lines as the heart of their expressions” (Thaothong, 1993: 115). It can be observed that drawings have different characters and show variety in the artist’s expression, in concepts, rationales, and emotions. Each of these grants different meanings. As for creators, the forms of lines are both tools and concepts used to connect to ‘images’, and allow the use of constructed process art with lines to get into a perspective, demonstrating what appears on the drawings. This is explained by Win Liaowarin, who stated that “the term, ‘perspective’ is originated from the Latin ‘perspicere’, which means seeing clearly. It is an imagery of the kind that human eyes can perceive” (Liaowarin, 2008: 151). In order for the body to move forward, one needs sight. Even with just a glance, the eyes see objects in the surrounding area, and will become aware regarding the point of view of the western perspective. As Jirapat Pitpreecha explained, in the time of the renaissance, it was discovered how scenery can be expressed as a one-point perspective, which reflects the world in different angles in its completion (Pitpreecha, 2009: 102). In the end, this is presented as ‘realistic images’ or natural, while those in the west use an aerial perspective. This is apparently from Chinese painting, which illustrates distances in the sequences of weight values, and voids, up until the sequences of colors in the painting’s atmosphere. It can be seen that the mountains, the sky, and the trees give different ranges. In retrospect, for Thailand, the principles of perspective appear in wall paintings by Krua In Kong during the reigns of King Rama III – IV. The western principles of drawings, demonstrating close and distant ranges, were demonstrated on the wall of Wat Bavornnives, as drawn by Krua In Kong. For creators, the usage of lines is an important target, differing from the principle of perspective in the time of the renaissance as presented realistically in different points of view. Even from the expression of aerial perspective usage in Chinese or Thai paintings, it can be observed that within such perspectives there are varieties and differences. This

depends on what goals each particular work wishes to successfully express through its creation.

Based on working with art, concentration arises from taking an action on a certain thing, i.e., focusing on a work process that can be implemented in various forms, looking to what is right in front of you, or even religious activities that compel performers to stay with their consciousness in various manners through meditation for internal calm. These actions embrace processes which connect performers to access basic concentration up to the higher level. Thus, it can be noticed that concentration is part of the driving force that influences performers directly. When creators work, drawing is another technique leading to attention and work processes that engender concentration towards creativity for generating dimensions of workpieces.

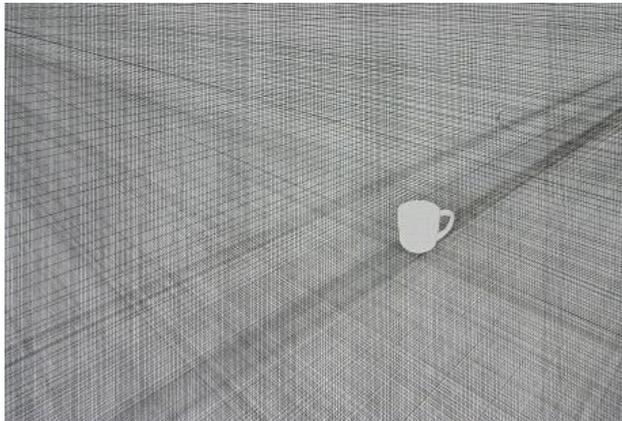
Research from both documents and practical examples reveals that the drawing of perspective has angles and countless points of view, and also that it is a tool to create a point of view of an ‘image’ which an artist, designer, engineer, or architect uses to address concepts and points of view in each work, depending on its category. These cases might include an architect using perspective drawing for the planning of buildings - according to the design details – or designers using a computer program to create the work in 3D, so that it gives a virtual perspective. However, for visual artists, perspectives are used to create the distance and depth of the image, to create an optical illusion with lines, weights, colors and shadows. The void will have both physical space and pictorial space. As explained by Chalood Nimsamer, “the void in paintings is a pictorial void created through painting techniques, or putting together visual compositions. It will differ from spaces in architecture work and paintings that use physical spaces that are tangible” (Nimsamer, 2009: 69). As for the point of view for each art type, spaces are often set according to how artists would like to illustrate the intentions of the work they created. From the backgrounds that differ in both concepts and expression, it will lead to research for creators that can adopt the look of perspectives in the creation of visual arts - without weights, colors or shadows, to create the depth found in traditional paintings. Creators use the method of perspective drawing to record the process into painting work, and connect visual awareness into being an ‘imagery’ in the dimension of a painting.

### **Perspectives as They Appear in the Process of Creative Working**

In the process of drawing creation: a dialogue with the present and object without additives, there has been research and experimentation on the process of creation. The creator experimented by drawing a perspective line on to a painting, as a direct drawing on the canvas. The body controls the directions of each line, staying meditated to keep focus on the object chosen to be expressed through paintings by the creators.

As for the lines drawn from the beginning to the very end, there is a goal of reaching into the space of the image. The creator sees the thoughts, emotions, and feelings while working on the drawing. It is these two parts, where the creator would like to raise an issue in drawing lines derived from research and experimentation, in the format of paintings, as follows:

#### 1. Drawing Collection 1, Title: A dialogue with object



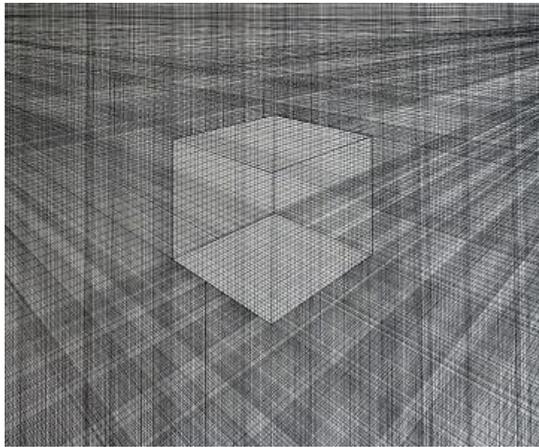
**Figure 3:** Example of Exhibition 1's format, black ink pen on canvas

Source: Private photo of Trinnapat Chaisitthisak

In Exhibition 1 there are research studies and experiments in the process of creation. The creator initially develops an interest in the object. The object of the creator's choice is in the shape of a mug (Figure 3), and the concept to create a 3D look of the object on the painting space is to draw pictorial drawings. This was accomplished with the method and approach of two-point perspective, creating a mug into a 3D shape. Lines were drawn on the canvas,

developing into a shape. Each line runs ‘into’ the object until it becomes the shape of the mug, meeting the aim of facilitating the object to be seen in 3D on the painting space. This is an important method used to connect with the content’s concept: object observed until the horizontal line of our sight, through the object itself, connecting with the awareness of humans’ visuals in the level of mentality. This leads to scrutiny and focus deep into the void. It becomes a meditation or a dialogue with the present fixated on a certain thing. As the 14<sup>th</sup> Dalai Lama explained, “Our mind focuses on the void, as it is what we wish to study. Therefore, the mind and the void are two separate and different things. If we have experience in accessing the void, without emotions distinguishing the learners from what is being learnt – we are entering the state where wisdom and the void blend in homogeneity” (Dalai Lama (14<sup>th</sup>), 2003: 177).

2. Drawing Collection 2, Title: A dialogue with object



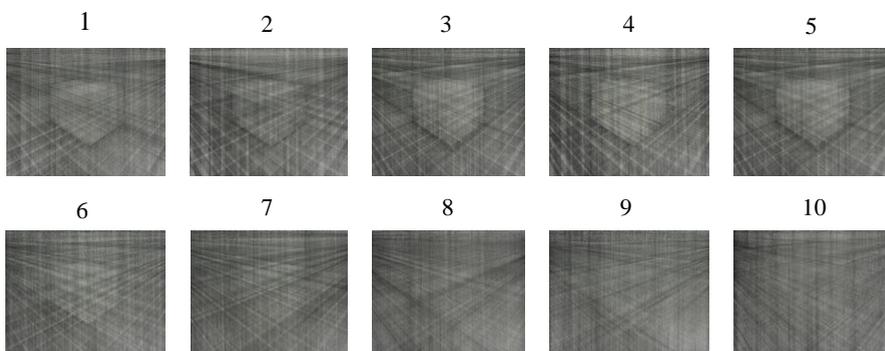
**Figure 4:** Example of Exhibition 2’s format, black ink pen on canvas

Source: Private photo of Trinnapat Chaisitthisak

In Exhibition 2, as the creator continues working, the creator made a further discovery from Exhibition 1. In the system of perspective lines, each line crosses over with two diagonal lines, and one straight line. The creator recognizes a small gap in geometric forms, which occurred while working, and experimented by enlarging the geometric shapes, still using two-point

perspective. It appears that perspective lines have developed dimensions within themselves, until becoming geometric shapes. When we look at the shapes illustrated on the painting, there are voids inside the shapes, and spaces outside of the shape. These two parts enable us to see the differing emptiness, as the creator has worked on and recognized that the development process of a mug shape can be made into a mere geometric shape. This is because the method of perspective drawing was done in the same point of view. It can also extrapolate to the meaning of voids in line drawing. The creator believes that in the void, there are spaces of geometric shapes embedded, as recorded in Figure 4, which cast through into the inner transparency of the square shapes on the painting space.

3. Drawing Collection 3, Title: **1.** 1,710 lines **2.** 1,748 lines **3.** 2,073 lines **4.** 2,025 lines **5.** 2,089 lines **6.** 1,995 lines **7.** 1,819 lines **8.** 2,137 lines **9.** 2,390 lines **10.** 2,678 lines



**Figure 5:** Example of Exhibition 3's format, black ink pen on canvas

Source: Private photos of Trinnapat Chaisitthisak

Furthermore, in Exhibition 3 (Figure 5), the creator self-reflected retrospectively while working on the line drawing. The perspective lines are drawn into the object to create a meditative stage and void, in actuality, and while drawing the creator sees the process of drawing itself – rather than the goal of finishing into object. As each line is drawn on the canvas, feelings and emotions were always appearing, even during the work, leading to the feeling of emptiness in that moment of the painting creation, while the body and the mind remain focused on drawings on empty space. Therefore, the creator starts

to see that the recording process with perspective lines is directly affecting the creator. Paintings are merely the medium of expression in the drawing process. The creator thus experimented further, by increasing the number of canvas frames, and made a continuous record with lines, from the first piece to the last piece, totaling 10 pieces. It can be observed from the painting that the increased intricacy of lines works in the piece until they become an optical illusion, as could be observed in the 1960s by artists such as Victor Vasaraely, who first created optical art. He used subjective geometric shapes, which mislead the eyes without using any actual shapes. Looking retrospectively on the part of the practitioner, the lesson learnt is that the mind's focus gradually becomes finer - in correlation with the number of lines recorded in the work's perspective daily. This helps the exploration in self, thoughts, and feelings. Even for the geometric shape format, whose characteristic is dissipating lightweight, this is in line with the process and blends together with the internal space under the structure of perspective lines. The construction of the void connects the space in the painting. The work, therefore, has a format of gradual dissipation – until there is only space. It becomes a format reflecting the stage of mental freedom, space, and time of the drawing, as referenced from the creator's process directly. A dialogue relies on the environment to bring about these substances on the same plane with the painting; the body that moves in a continuous motion, and a focused mind through a 2D plane. Ordinary lines weave together until they become a complex dimension, while lines were drawn in a straight and simple manner. As J. Krishnamurti has explained, “to free the mind from time, is the silence of the truth, and to see – is an action, therefore seeing and acting are two inseparable things” (Krishnamurti, 2012: 76). The creator has perceived that the results may come in any way, as the creator's mind needs to be constantly fixated on what is being drawn. This is drawing for the sake of drawing itself, not simply drawing for a painting.

### **Similarities and Differences of the Three-Line-Drawing Exhibitions**

From analysis of the three line drawing exhibitions, each exhibition is different in the way of the object expressed – from mug shape to square shape to the format of void and spaces. What is apparent and uses the same process, is the use of ‘lines’. It can be seen that the process and concept develop positively with the content, as seen from the symbolic use of the object, until it unfolds into a subjective format. As for the perspective lines used to create 3D object, they become a format of expression that reflect concepts in a dialogue with the present and an object without additives to connect to the space in painting works. For the next part, the creator experimented and observed the occurrence. It appears that, with actions taken, the mind and the body work in collaboration in the process of gaining awareness. This attention leads to a systematic form of movements, as David Bohm stated:

“The root of the term, ‘organize’ derives from the Greek, ‘ergon’ which is originated from the verb that means ‘working’. This verb is also the root of the word ‘energy’. Therefore, the text means ‘internal work,’ if we think about life movements as ‘energy spent in organization,’ that is ‘internal work,’ such as movements in organs, in cells or even atoms and fundamental particles, combined together into an overall movement. This enables the feeling that movement is the beginning” (Bohm, 2014: 167-168).

It is generally acknowledged that movements are the first physical symptoms. However, what controls the body is the mind. This can be considered awareness of one’s existence from the creator’s point of view.

The installation and presentation of paintings is also an important aspect for the concept of process art. They are essential for the creator who uses them to connect with the audience, enabling viewers to understand each work’s process in its entirety. It demonstrates the relationship between ‘space’ and all work installed in the area set by the creator. Simultaneously, from the perspective of a creator, from the first painting to the tenth, the space demonstrated through the process of creation uses ‘lines’ to illustrate the shape, the void within the shapes, and the space outside the shape. Both parts

help the creator to perceive the nature of void and spaces in paintings, highlighting that ‘time’ appears in the space of each work. Regarding perception, each work does not just explain what each image communicates, but the work itself shows the process in the creator’s story, and the state of emptiness through the process of creation in the form of half meditation, half focusing. This impacts on time, which means the time when creators work, and the time spent installing the work for the viewers. For both parts, there are relationships in the process of awareness in the painting – mentioning focuses. However, it did not present what the story and the content of the work are. Eventually, the viewers will see the creator’s intention rather than the results, and shape their perception of what the work truly is accordingly. For this part, the results will differ from On Kawara’s work, where artists show that the work image is the text that shares the history of that period (the past). Yet, the content talks of the state of existence, as the artists use the delivery process of postcards, telegrams, and maps, as a presentation of the artists’ lives. It can be seen that On Kawara’s work has a point similar to the creator’s work, specifically, in the way the work is installed for the entire process of creation to be seen. The resulting awareness differs in terms of points of view and work content. For Boonma, work installation for all presentations will be in line of vision, allowing the viewers to be able to look at the entirety of the drawing on a single wall, by standing in front of all the work. It holds the audience to scrutinize the work in the frame set by the artist. This differs from the creator whose process and work installation impact the viewer’s movements, as they need to walk around to see each work, in order to learn of the desired process to present all the work. The similarities between the two artists are the focus required while working on the art piece, in order to stay with the present, and reflecting to a painting – which is perceived for the overall work’s continuity. Meditation or a dialogue with the present is the driving force in creation.

## **Conclusion**

From the Study on Drawing: A dialogue with the present and object without additives, concerning the creation process of visual arts, it can be explained that the experiment and work achieved by the drawing of lines in the perspective format is a tool used to imprint on the painting to focus on living

with the present. Meditation or a dialogue with the present is the key component for creators, as it is used as the driving energy for fixation on the creation process of paintings. It requires high levels of detail for the lines, and the content is also communicated in the form of art, directly affecting reflected perceptions and actions, which are feelings and thoughts. Once we have taken actions to learn to live with ourselves, we see the truth and the awareness, or what is called obtaining mindfulness at work, despite the fact that under such truth, there are complex, ever changing, and moving dimensions at all times. Paintings need to be the mirror reflecting the emptiness of the creator's mind, and present the following work for the audience's perception. This shows the process of creation developing to a dialogue with the present and object without additives.

### **Recommendations**

The recommendations below are for the future use of this article and further studies:

1. To apply the study of drawing workpieces and the principles of perspectives for extending knowledge and seeking for other new views of drawing in order to conclude and explore patterns that generate a deep visual dimension to creators and audiences.
2. To try, develop, and change techniques, e.g., using black or color pencils, or briquettes, which may suit drawing creativity.
3. To exploit the drawing process to some others, e.g., study from printing techniques such as etching or woodcut, which might have dissimilar processes, or may take them for a comparative study to produce the results as useful information for future creativity.

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