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Ayuso, A.

The definitive, peer reviewed and edited version of this article is published in:

Drawing: Research, Theory, Practice, 9 (2), pp. 201-222,
https://doi.org/10.1386/drtp_00138_1.

Body, subject, other, thing: Drawing LEAPs

Alessandro Ayuso

University of Westminster

Abstract

Leaky Embodiment Alter-ego Personas (LEAPs) are visions of tragicomic actors with bodies comprising bulbous, mismatched and ever-changing parts. Their portrayal is meant to challenge ideal notions of embodiment, particularly through envisioning an inherent and intensified otherness of the body, where ruptures occur between desire and empirical reality with respect to an 'owner's' body. Conceived first through sketches, one LEAP figure was portrayed further as a 1:1 mixed-media relief. Two narrative voices – notes from the field by the artist and imagined dialogues between the artist and the LEAP – explore the perception of this process. The pairing of the two narratives exposes contradictions between artistic intentionality and effect. Drawing, whether as a trace with a ballpoint pen, scalpel or jigsaw, was a thread through the process of creation, with various effects ranging from delineating to unravelling. Drawing enacted a physical connection between the real and the imaginary, conflating the bodies of the creator and the depicted figure. Yet as the differing perspectives and evolving manifestations of embodiment in the narratives show, the actuality of bodies is not necessarily found in their facticity; how they feel and what they mean remains multivalent and shifting depending on positioning amidst differing subjectivities, circumstances and temporal frames. Drawing the LEAP's body enabled traversals of dichotomies of subject/object, self/other and alien/familiar, complicating the assumed categories and opening ground for speculation of what a body could be and do.

Keywords: embodiment, alter ego, subjectivity, alien body, narrative voices, figure, persona, process

Introduction

Leaky Embodiment Alter-ego Personas (LEAPs) are visions of tragicomic actors with bodies comprising bulbous, mismatched and ever-changing parts. Their portrayal is meant to challenge ideal notions of embodiment, particularly those ingrained from the legacy of humanism. Inadequate to address contemporary subjectivity, contemporary notions of *anthropos* call into question not only the Vitruvian body's vaunted status at the pinnacle of an assumed hierarchy but also the sanctity of the body proper itself. For instance, the body can be considered as an original prosthetic, a condition that opens corporeality to extreme encounters with alterity (Zylinska 2005: 124). This radically relational condition both profoundly deepens the subject's entwinement with the world and intensifies the body's propensity to manifest as an uncanny stranger. Picking up on this inherent and intensified otherness of the body, LEAPs express ruptures between desire and empirical reality with respect to an 'owner's' body.

The premise of LEAPs stemmed in part from an enquiry into figures in architectural drawings, where – rather than the static, universalized and normative default – figures were drawn as un-idealized, hybrid bodies. As 'body agents' were incorporated into design drawings, their author's subjectivity was projected into the image of the other, resulting in a complex dynamic (Ayuso 2022). In some respects, through the portrayal of these figures, the self was mirrored and versioned; and yet, through the cultivation of the figures' personas, they continued to accumulate an increasingly distinct otherness, resulting in a simulated intersubjective exchange. Looking to examples such as Hans Bellmer's dolls, Louise Bourgeois's *Femme Maison* and Marcel Duchamp's *Rrose Selavy*, the creation of LEAPs more consciously engaged the versioning of the self as a methodology, asking: How could drawing the alter ego body intensify encounters with alterity? Could this expression broaden the capacity for relationality and intersubjective exchange?

Conceived first through sketches, one LEAP figure was portrayed further as a 1:1 mixed-media relief. Although the relief entailed a variety of techniques for its realization,

various drawing modalities threaded throughout the process, enriching and enabling moments from the fabrication to the final presentation. The narrative voices below seek to explore the perception of the created figure from two alternating vantage points. One voice is conveyed through notes from the field, first-person accounts of the physically engaging, immersive making of the relief; here, drawing is integral to the projection of conscious and unconscious desire into the depicted body. A second set of voices takes the form of imagined dialogues with the LEAP: presuming lived experience of the imagined reality presented by the images, the created, other body becomes an imagined subject in their own right, challenging the intentionality of the author.

While the notes convey the creative acts in the moment, the LEAP's voice in the dialogues is a result of years of hindsight, during which the LEAP is understood to have gained further experience from additional instances of having been depicted through portraiture, digital modelling, animation and as a body agent in architectural design drawings. Third-person synopses concluding pairings of narratives highlight how the bodies of the artist and the created figure alternately manifest as body, subject, other and thing.

Body

Notes from the field

7 May 2016

Eurostar fold-down tray supporting blank A4 sheets unfolded from my pocket. Some combination of depressed, giddy, morose, nearly nihilistic. But then, this is the spark: a series of distracted doodles. Finding succour from the ink. Relishing the certainty of the mark, the pleasure of the ink's steady absorption into the paper deposited from the pen's nib like a salve on the skin. First, mapping out lines that will delineate forces, possible proportions and boundaries. It is almost better to close your eyes when you are doing this: these construction

lines are really foils, prompting unexpected proportions and boundaries. Picking up on a desire to challenge figuration make these uncomfortably unfamiliar.

I ask myself: How unbody-like could a body be? A protozoa-like organ here. A round disc like a bulging eye there. Big, loping shapes overlapping, letting the pen go outside the reasonable confines of a person's silhouette. Geometric objects lodged inside, projecting outward. Finding patterns, letting shapes multiply and affect each other: they are not just shapes, they are systems with their own organismic logic. Adding arms like drooping pasta dough strands, absurdly contorted and mismatched hands, silly legs that will struggle to support. Stippling an ether of dusty atmosphere enshrouding the whole and emanating from the exposed hollows. Once contours are established, embellishing is a necessary satisfaction, imitating the intricate logic of nature's accretions, multiplications, parasitic subsummations (Figure 1). There is an academic undercurrent to the reasoning for drawing bodies as unwieldy assemblages, but this uncooperative body must also be metaphoric, an analogue to a psychic state. And yet, this is also inadequate as an explanation; here they are, regardless of reason or metaphor; and, who are they?

Figure 1: Alessandro Ayuso, Sketches of figures done during Eurostar journey (on four collated A4 pages), 2016. Ink on paper. 297 mm × 840 mm. © Alessandro Ayuso.

Dialogue with a LEAP, part 1

24 July 2022

A: Do you remember when I first drew you?

LEAP: Oh yes. I do. Although in starts and gaps, and varied degrees of lucidity.

A: That's incredible! Humans can never remember their moment of birth. Tell me what it was like.

LEAP: It was a confusing time. A violent moment of being thrust into the world.

A: Really? ... How was it violent?

LEAP: You must understand, it was the occasion of my first moments of consciousness. My awareness took shape along with the contours of my outer form. The ink lines erratically outlined one part of my anatomy and then another, revising and altering in a sort of prolonged frenzy. My sensations multiplied unbearably, as my torso formed, then my spleens, my heart, and so forth. It was my first taste of interminable flux, causing me to wonder if the layering and additions of contradictory sensory input would ever cease.

When the ink lines formed my first eye, I was able to see that other beings were taking shape around me; utilizing my new powers of observation, I inferred that the cacophony of my own senses must be the result of a materializing entity – a body – similar to theirs. With the addition of my arms I yearned to touch, to do. And yet, I found my arms useless, my legs inert. I didn't know enough to call being immobilized strange, but considering it now, I find it so. I must say, I felt somewhat abused.

A: Abused?

LEAP: It seemed that with every form that the ink lines added or adjusted, the possibilities to feel and understand multiplied; yet, so did the sheer volume of pain and confusion. Reflecting on it now, it seems like you almost took delight in inflicting me with preposterous contradictions, immobility, and excesses.

A: *(Suddenly visibly uncomfortable)* Ah … no, I'm not sure I'd put it that way. I think I was simply caught up in the creative act. *(Clears throat.)* You mentioned that this formative moment was just the beginning of what I might call a state of perpetual becoming-

LEAP: I believe I said 'interminable flux'.

A: Er, yes … and that this sense remains with you still.

Perhaps before we go any further, we should discuss your present state. Could you describe your body? As if to someone who has never seen or met you …

(Here the LEAP goes on to explain how their body is a collection of heterogeneous parts that fluctuate in size, quantity and position.)

Critical synopsis

In the Notes from the field, the artist draws the initial sketches that become the basis for the series of LEAPs. The artist delights in the transference of emotion, the pleasure of drawing freely and the curiosity and exhilaration of propelling the invention spurred by the accumulating lines. According to Frascari (2011: 77), drawing a body facilitates a tactile and empathic connection between the artist and the figure, yet the dialogue shows that the artist seemingly draws without even sympathy to the pain of the depicted body. Reflecting on the image before him, the author considers the depicted, nearly inchoate body as a metaphor of his current psychic state. In this sense, the image is similar to the portrait in Oscar Wilde's *Portrait of Dorian Gray*, where according to Craft, the image turns its subject 'inside out so his eyes may witness what, by definition, they cannot see at all – the legible condition of his inner being' (2005: 115). Literally inside out, the monstrous figure with viscera escaping outward channels a grotesque subjectivity.

In the dialogue, the LEAP describes experiencing its own genesis, where the contingent nature of their body is first established. For the artist, conceiving of the figure, the initially drawn lines are vectors of potentiality, and the followingly drawn, overlapping contours suggest a momentarily fixed position of the figure, materializing a heretofore unrealized idea. For the LEAP, these initial lines are violent, with magnified force and potential to inflict pleasure and pain. They also imprint an ambiguity: forms overlap, stray lines course through the body, the atmosphere described by the stippling leaks into and through the interior of the body, muddying the waters as to the position and character of the matter comprising the body. Later in the dialogue, the LEAP describes without fondness a corporeal condition of perpetual becoming, an intensification of an intrinsic condition of embodiment.

Subject

Notes from the field

28 June 2016

The smell of sawdust and wood glue. The workshop doors are left open, to allow inside gusts of wind that gently rustle the leaves in the treetops above, accompanied by the steady, pulsating hum of crickets and cicadas. We drove into town; the repro shop charged $2.90 for each of two prints of the scanned sketch of one of the figures at what I imagine to be 1 to 1, full size; 220-cm-long sheets, with pixelated versions of my magnified, original lines. I unroll the long page and tack it to the wall with the figure's feet flush to the floor; it is exhilarating to come face to face with my small sketch (in fact, inasmuch that this creature has a face, I need to look up to do this).

Then the print is laid onto the OSB flooring, and I am on my knees cutting out the lines selected from a process of auguring from the surfeit of marks (Figure 2). Following a path with the scalpel yields discreet body parts, unmoored from the continuous plane of the unspooled paper. The body parts in the drawing overlap each other, hence the need for two copies; cutting out one form violates the wholeness of another, leaving two ravaged reproductions with differing voids.

Figure 2: Alessandro Ayuso, Paper template cutting process, 2016. © Alessandro Ayuso.

The drawn line becomes the path of the scalpel, resulting in templates for body parts. The paper template is then traced onto timber sheets. Pencil lines on plywood, the traced line on the timber becomes the cutting line yet again, in this case guiding the path of the jigsaw. The jigsaw in the workshop is easily 50 years old; an antique. It is fittingly curmudgeonly; even with the sharpest blade installed, it chews deliberately, rumbling with determination along the pencil line; as it kicks up sawdust into my eyes and up my nose, I can contemplate if that arc described by the pencil line is really the best one, if this divot is really so necessary, or if it is just a misled caprice inherited from the original smaller sketch. Sometimes I urge the jigsaw to change course, editing, revising, embellishing. Once liberated from the plywood sheet, the

component shapes comprising the anatomical parts will find themselves strewn about the site from time to time, before they are able to rest again in a fixed position.

Dialogue with a LEAP, part 2

24 July 2022

A: Since that initial moment of sketching, you have materialized in many different ways. From my perspective, a few of these subsequent manifestations were also pivotal. For instance, when you were made in the forest workshop …

LEAP: I agree, that was an important moment.

A: How was that important to you?

LEAP: During my genesis as the small sketch, I felt passive, as if you simply exerted your will on me; it almost seemed to me as if I were the unfortunate subject enabling a whimsical game, and that the more I writhed and staggered the more you seemed to loom over me as you were compelled to increase my anguish …

(*A shifts uncomfortably and shuffles the notes in front of him*.)

LEAP: … but when I was reified for the first time at full scale, in the beginning of our time working in the forest workshop, in fact, I was looking down at you! I felt I was your equal, that perhaps we were truly collaborators in my formation. I know now that this is true. However, immediately after this instant, you proceeded to lay me down on the workshop floor in order to subject me to so many horrors; I thought perhaps that this equality was simply delusory. I also realized that up to that point, the tracings of my contours were relatively pleasurable; in contrast, the incisions of the scalpels and saws that I endured then were anything but. Again, I became the passive patient operated on for further transformations.

A: All that slicing and cutting was a means to more precisely design your discrete body parts. Let's talk a bit more about those. You mentioned some parts of your body fluctuate more, while others are more constant …

(*Here, the LEAP goes on to explain in more detail their frustration with their bodily arrangement and functionality, including body parts being shed arbitrarily, and the*

inconvenience of their quasi-independent human head appendage, which at times commandeers the motility of the LEAP's primary body.)

Critical synopsis

In the Notes from the field, when the artist stands in front of the life-sized print, an acknowledgement of an imagined, individuated other takes place. This regard of artist to depiction is one similar to what occurs in Craft's additional observations on a subsequent dynamic at play in Wilde's telling of Gray's portrait: the portrayed self ' […] effortlessly escapes from the person whose incarnate being alone sponsors it, yet the departed dear returns to its sponsor only as his own visible alienation' (2005: 110). The artist's recognition of the revealed alien other could result in a moment akin to a Levinasian face-to-face encounter, where the other reveals themselves 'not in a shock negating the I' but rather in 'the primordial phenomenon of gentleness' (Levinas 1969: 150). However, the euphoria of artistic creation injects a strain of urgency, and the artist's moment of recognition is brief. The possibility of an intersubjective dynamic stemming from regarding the portrayal of the body as a subject is curtailed as the artist turns his focus to the material and logistical technicalities of fabrication. The artist's intersubjective interactions shift to the surroundings, tools and materials. The subjecthood of the portrayed body is dissipated, almost literally, as any semblance of a sapient, whole identity is subsumed by the artist's focus on component parts of the relief as discrete, disconnected parts. A form of drawing takes place through the tracings of the scalpel and jigsaw; the concentrated and dispassionate care of these lines is that of a (rather barbarous) surgeon.

Yet the patient feels their body. In the dialogue, the LEAP describes the lived experience of the anatomical entities that constitute them as unpredictable and visceral in the most literal sense. The LEAP's detailed description of their organs' workings over time and with respect to a whole shows a mental schematization by the LEAP of a distinct self, in spite of a physiology that seems to defy unification. In an additional part of the dialogue, the LEAP describes a power dynamic of what the LEAP perceives as a repeated subjugation in the drawing process revealed to them when the full-scale print is mounted to the workshop wall and the dynamic momentarily shifts.

Other

Notes from the field

12 July 2016

To form the figure, the independent body parts need to be connected together again; they need to be held in space relative to one another in the precise position that allows them to once again comprise the whole. I have not made a complete set of design drawings for this body (in later iterations, I will fabricate them by digitally modelling every aspect and CNC cutting the parts.)

For now I am figuring it out as it goes. Drawing an elevation with a ballpoint pen on a timber scrap to determine the exact location of the drill holes for three overlapping components or, on a coffee-stained napkin, drawing a section to determine how the piece will be temporarily hung off a beam supporting the window header of an abandoned shed outside the workshop via the connection of a timber cleat (Figure 3).

Figure 3: Alessandro Ayuso, Design sketch for relief support details, 2016. 296 mm × 210 mm. © Alessandro Ayuso.

These drawings are glyphs following orthographic conventions but also developing a particular, coded shorthand, integrating notation, text, leaders, labels. Like the literal supports of the physical piece, concealed from view in the final manifestation. The drawings are utilitarian, eschewing aesthetics in order to enable it. Nothing is precious: sometimes kept for their references of lengths or quantities, they are just as often crumpled and thrown away once the problem at hand is solved, forgotten on the workshop floor, stepped on, only to be swept up and binned with the sawdust. Like the hidden supports of the piece, with its cleats, threaded rods and timber fittings, these drawings are the hidden armature that allows the visible to exist (Figure 4).

Figure 4: Alessandro Ayuso, Process of positioning components, 2016. © Alessandro Ayuso.

Dialogue with a LEAP, part 3

24 July 2022

A: I've always wanted to ask you something. The various armatures that stabilize the full scale representation of you in the forest … how do you perceive these supports and connections, and how do you perceive the process of installing them?

LEAP: I consider these components as my prosthetics. Of course, when you drill holes through my organs to attach them to my body, I feel pain.

A: Ah, yes … er, sorry about that. But, in terms of the actual 'prosthetics', do you feel them?

LEAP: At first, the supports that pierce my organs feel like foreign objects, but as I grow accustomed to them I begin to perceive them as extensions. As my body has always been in flux, and comprised of contingent objects, and since I have manifested in so many guises, including being composed of various materials, I am comfortable forming alliances with things. The threaded rods which pierced my organs are connected to other supporting components, and I begin to be able to feel through this extended network, although the sensation is not as vivid as what I experience through my more localized body.

A: And when I draw these prosthetics, when I am designing them … do you feel this, in a similar way that you so deeply felt when I drew the skin and organs of your body?

LEAP: It depends. If the component parts are drawn completely without reference to what already constitutes my body, then I feel those objects as simply apart from me; I don't feel them at all, nor am I even aware that they are being drawn. Of course, if, say, a part of my leg is drawn in conjunction with the components, I think I feel that.

A: …You 'think?'

LEAP: I think often I am not even aware during those instances. I am probably dissociating completely due to the agony of the drilling and cutting into the flesh of my carapace. If, later, a particular component has been drawn multiple times, or drawn carefully as part of me (rather than hastily sketched), then I feel the drawing, and have the sensation of feeling through what has become a prosthetic, in the manner that I mentioned previously.

A: That is fascinating. This dissociation. … It's the second time you've mentioned that sometimes you almost stand outside of your body; can you tell me more about that?

(*Here, the LEAP goes on to describe their attempts to dissociate from bodily discomfort, which the LEAP reports are not altogether successful, in part due to their neural network extending into their organs and limbs*.)

Critical synopsis

In the Notes from the field, the artist focuses on details and logistics of fabrication through a series of design sketches; the intersubjective element between a presumed persona of the depicted figure and the author continued to recede further. In the artist's perception, the figure has literally become an object comprising objects. Drawing plays a utilitarian role in this process, as a tool among many, in this case for coordinating, locating, aligning and problem-solving. The haptic quality of drawing, where the artist vicariously feels through the act of drawing, is transferred to using drawing as a means to get a sense of the materiality and performance of the component parts.

In the dialogue, the LEAP describes their perception of both being perceived as a collection of objects and the experience of commingling with objects. The LEAP's recounting indicates that their sensations do not cease, even though they are not empathically felt or considered in these moments through the artist's drawing practices. The LEAP describes the assimilation of previously unassociated objects as extensions to the sensate whole of their body. The LEAP's recounting brings to mind the sympathetic liaisons inherent to entities comprising assemblages, as described by Deleuze and Parnet (1987: 69), and acting similar to a mycorrhizal network.

Thing

Notes from the field

14 August 2016

Now that the anatomical components are in place, I can finally begin drawing on their surfaces. I know the finer marks will be better if there is a ground for them to respond to, so I dust the

outward face of each of the components with spray paint, making hazy fields of pink, brown, yellow. Sometimes I demount a component, work on it independently, and then return it to consider it relative to the whole. Then, standing at a distance, my arm is pitching, flinging acrylic paint from an overly loaded brush to the surfaces. Gleefully launching the paint, it spatters across the surfaces, yielding sprawling abstract forms standing proud of the cloudy ground of the spray-painted colour fields.

Now I am kneeling in front of the figure, patiently drawing on its surfaces. The marks on the surfaces become more controlled, focused on the level of minutiae. The marks I make I see alternately as x-rays into the interior anatomy, tattoos adorning the skin or simply as completely independent compositions, windows beyond the figure to other dimensions. Mostly I draw intuitively; but an aim guides my efforts. Each component should be both jarringly distinct through its visual leitmotif yet also harmonious relative to the whole.

On the projecting cilia extending from the top of a rectangle with softened chamfered corners – the heart – I paint a dark, violet colour, stippling hot pink acrylic crowding its tips, imagining the bio-fluorescent substance in the abdomens of lightning bugs, completing the outline of internal forms with black dashed lines from a paint pen. On a long yellow arm, I paint veins; setting the component on the ground to paint another, I forget about it for a moment; when I turn back to the piece, a plant's distorted shadow obscures the marks I have made; I trace the shadow, making this adumbration permanent. A caterpillar makes its way across my marks and I trace its path. Giving in to nature's insistence, I begin to document roots, branches and night skies on the surfaces; the surface becomes a compendium of place, moments and traces (Figure 5).

Figure 5: Alessandro Ayuso, Drawing process for relief surfaces, 2016. 296 mm × 210 mm. © Alessandro Ayuso.

Dialogue with a LEAP, part 4

24 July 2022

A: Continuing the discussion about your perception of your own body, you've told me about aspects of it that aren't so horrible; are there any other positive aspects?

LEAP: There are parts of my body that fill even me with wonder. For instance, there is something that momentarily happens to my body parts; Human Head and I call it 'flickering'. In these moments, the body parts flicker and become windows: dematerializing to reveal what I can only describe as something else, as if the contour of that part of my body were a cut-away portion, a two-dimensional page from a book, revealing the page below it. These are brief instances, so they are not entirely bothersome. In fact, often I simply gaze in wonder when they occur. I cannot account for them.

A: Incredible!

LEAP: (*With evident pride*.) Yes. Another aspect of my body that I am particularly proud of are the inscriptions on my skin (Figure 6). I am aware that some humans may find my body grotesque in its absurdity, but I know that this grotesque quality has aesthetic affiliations, or logics, evident in the inscriptions.

There is the mimetic logic of natural systems; the lines and colour fields on my skin are reminiscent of biological forms and systems that echo elements of the forest, and the forms evocative of anatomy. But also, inasmuch as the marks come from your hand, the marks are the barometric registers of your experience, or, maybe I'd say, our dynamic, when the relief sculpture was made. This, too, has a logic to it.

A: Hm. Yes, that's true. Likeness to anatomical parts and to elements of the forest are apparent in the markings, although I think ultimately the overriding logic of the mark-making is not mimetic, but compositional and associative. I am curious about how you regard the imprinting of the flora and fauna on your surfaces; I realize you are pleased with the marks, and that makes me very happy to hear, but do you feel connected to the forest in some way because of them?

LEAP: Al, that seems like a leading question. *(Guttural chuckle emanates from the LEAP.)* But, yes, I do. I was born on the Eurostar train, under the English Channel, but then I grew up in the forest when we collaborated in the workshop in the glade. The forest

is a part of me. Not only is its image inscribed on my skin in the recordings of rocks, branches and clouds seen through the tree canopy, I have its soil and mossy growths inside of me. When we positioned me in the thicket on the mountainside, I realized how relatively comfortable I was amongst the branches, and I found an affinity with the things that comprise the place: the brook at my feet babbling serenely over the boulders, the maples and birches brushing against me, even the mosquitos that circled and perched on me (Figure 7).

A: So you felt at home there?

LEAP: 'At home' might be overstating it a bit. But, as much as I feel ever other than in this world in which I am thrust, it seems that everywhere you take me, I find some aspects of the place that are kindred.

Figure 6: Alessandro Ayuso, *LEAP Situated in the Forest (detail)*, 2016. Mixed media. 1500 mm × 300 mm × 3150 mm. New Hampshire. © Alessandro Ayuso.

Figure 7: Alessandro Ayuso, *LEAP Situated in the Forest*, 2016. Mixed media. 1500 mm × 300 mm × 3150 mm. New Hampshire. © Alessandro Ayuso.

Critical synopsis

In the Notes from the field, the artist describes the process of mark-making on the exposed surfaces of the relief. If, as an outward expression of inner turmoil through the portrayal of a body, the LEAP was akin to the portrait of Dorian Gray when initially sketched, making the artist both portraitist and subject, in the above Notes from the field excerpt, the characteristic of the artist's devotion to the figure through the surface drawings necessitates alternate homologies. In the lavishing of attention to the figure, and in that the artist has seemingly – as Hersey (2009) might put it – fallen in love with his own creation, the artist's behaviour is reminiscent of Pygmalion's infatuation with his sculpture as described in Ovid's tale. Yet Pygmalion's obsession was an erotic displacement; perhaps in this phase of the project, the Levinasian 'obsession by the other' is more pertinent, with its intrinsic 'maternal' care as the imminent ethic in the recognition of the other (Magri and McQueen 2023: 116). Or perhaps the artist's fastidious drawing of the inner workings of the figure's anatomy is part of an act of designing 'new organs of

perception' (2005: 120), the primary purpose of creating an alien body according to Jameson. Nearly reverential, the artist's engrossed devotion to mark-making – at times involving even kneeling before the figure – suggests a reverence, as if the LEAP has become a totem of a transcendental belief system, and drawing a form of ritualized worship.

In the dialogue, the LEAP describes their pride in the drawn adornments. For the first time (in a roundabout way), the LEAP acknowledges that the artist imparts a trace of himself into the drawing activity and thus, into the creation of the LEAP. Later the LEAP mentions the creation of the relief as a collaboration (between themselves and the artist): the power dynamic shifts again, this time away from subjugation, as the artist demonstrates a seeming reverence for the LEAP through drawing. The LEAP goes on to explain the affinity they feel with elements of places they have appeared in installations and animations; in the example of the forest, citing particular aspects of the environment in which they feel a kinship, evoking the term 'making kin' used by Haraway (2016) to suggest alliances transcending ecological facets of people, animals and things.

The surface marks, with their varied 'leitmotifs', contribute to a lived experience of heterogeneity by the LEAP. In their very thematic variation – as depictions of anatomy, as compendiums of natural artefacts, as registrations of moods, or as 'flickers' or 'windows' beyond or through the LEAP – they reinforce an understanding of the LEAP as an assemblage. Through the mark-making, recordings of objects from the site mingle with residues of thought and feeling registered through traces, fractal constellations of marks taking on their own logic. As philosopher Bogost puts it, 'the alien is not limited to another *person*, or even another *creature.* […] The true alien recedes interminably even as it surrounds us completely […] in an exotic world of utterly incomprehensible objects' (2012: 34). The filtered and mutated registration of the surroundings on the surface of the LEAP makes for strange echoes of the ultimately incomprehensible objects comprising the context.

Conclusion

The pairing of Notes from the field by the artist and imagined dialogues with the created figure expose contradictions between artistic intentionality and effect. Throughout the process of creation, the Notes from the field showed that the artist oscillated between sympathetic enchantment and utilitarian objectification with respect to the developing figure; meanwhile, in the dialogues presuming that the figure assumes a subjecthood, the figure was imagined to live the consequences of the creative process *through* their body. Drawing, whether as a trace registered via a ballpoint pen, scalpel or jigsaw, was a thread through the process of creation, connecting modalities of making and imagining.

As the differing perspectives and evolving manifestations of embodiment in the narratives show, the actuality of bodies is not necessarily found in their facticity; how they feel and what they mean remains multivalent and shifting, depending on positioning amidst differing subjectivities, circumstances and temporal frames. Drawing the LEAP's body enabled traversals of dichotomies of subject/object, self/other and alien/familiar, complicating the assumed categories and opening ground for speculation of what a body could be and do. Diverse drawing modes, layered into and translated by making processes, created slippages, tensions and varied perspectives, unleashing 'excesses of the imagination' and thus monstrous visions of the body (Mirzoeff 1995: 192).

With respect to the depicted figure, the act of drawing – as a tactile extension of the artist's body – provided tacit knowledge and an intimate familiarity with the contours, surfaces and imagined workings of the depicted other. Drawing was not only the means of imagining the figure but also the means of getting to know them. Drawing enabled a dialogue with the ostensibly alien other, deepening the relationship between the artist and the drawn figure. The drawn image was not just a representation of alterity to passively behold; rather, it was an enabler of an active dialogue. In this sense, the practice of drawing an alter ego is one where the image talks back. The process leaves its creator changed, with more receptors to otherness, and more possibilities to participate in its multitudinous facets.

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SUGGESTED CITATION

Ayuso, Alessandro (2024), ‘Body, subject, other, thing: Drawing LEAPs’, *Drawing: Research, Theory, Practice*, Special Issue: ‘Drawing Disobedient Bodies’, 9:2, pp. 00–00, https://doi.org/10.1386/drtp