

## Making Marks – A Personal Journey

### Stuart Mason

This is a transcription of my notes from Stuarts lecture, with images added when I could find them. If you want to see images of his work, especially the doodles you can go to his website

<http://stumasonart.co.uk/portfolio/>

\*\*\*\*\*

When Stuart started Art College his tutor took them to a field and said “Draw the grass, but I don’t want to see individual blades of grass” Later he explained he was trying to destroy the student’s preconceptions.

This Stuart later realised was a Bauhaus philosophy where teachers and students included Klee and Kandinsky.

\*\*\*\*\*

The Large Piece of Turf, Albrecht Dürer 1503, every blade of grass and detail beautifully observed





Daubigny's garden, Van Gogh, 1890, directional marks and colour giving the impression of the foliage

\*\*\*\*\*



Early influence on Stuarts drawing style was Cezanne– example landscape with bare trees and a roof

\*\*\*\*\*

After transferring to the sculpture department his early drawings were made for working out form, for translation into 3D , mark making not an issue

\*\*\*\*\*  
later he started drawing dogs, where mark making was needed for differentiating types of fur, noses etc  
\*\*\*\*\*

10 years into teaching his style changed. Along with another teacher, John Bevan (Lostock Hall) they decided to teach only drawing to students.

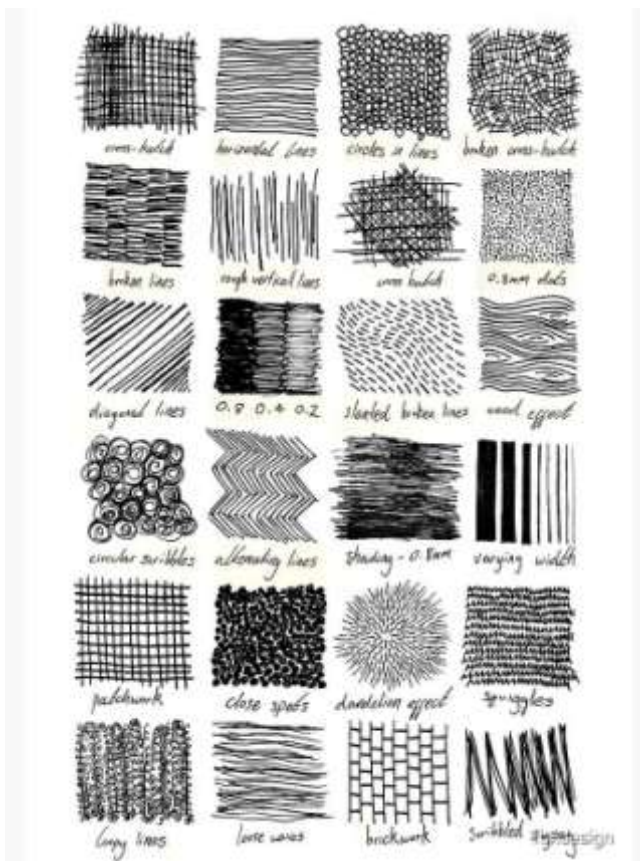
They started exploring small objects (such as a pencil stub) on A1 pieces of paper

Very simple structures but they work because of the textural mark making. Blowing it up makes you look to decide what marks to make, different areas need different marks

Subject matter stuck on card, drawn life size, blow up with grid, then look at tone and colour on large scale.

Other subjects included burnt matches, twigs with buds , sweets and bits of wrapper, key and string, bulb and playing card, things with different textures to give mark making opportunities – glass, bark, string etc

\*\*\*\*\*  
Another approach Series of rectangles on page, make different types of marks in each can also add tone  
\*\*\*\*\*



\*\*\*\*\*

From this you can develop images by starting with a bit of texture in centre of page , working round adding different textures instinctively to make an image. Start from the marks, see what happens. Stuart prefers industrial decay, machinery, pipes etc but could just as well be developed into a landscape with trees

On retirement moved doodling onto good paper, which in turn turned into a 6ft long drawing in a concertina sketchbook. and later onto the ipad using procreate. Using procreate means you can working in layers recording drawing adding colour

See doodles on Stuarts website

\*\*\*\*\*

Later moved to moved to animas in oil paint - different brushstrokes for different types of fur etc  
Works from photographs – cats move too much

Ipad especially useful for animals, working fur in layers, and can also be the source for a painting

When he uses photos they are not straight copies, can combine more than one, leave things out , straighten etc

\*\*\*\*\*

Durer, young hare, 1502

Look at detail, every single hair drawn



Rembrandt elephant 1637

Rougher sketchier feel but still leathery texture in the skin, movement in trunk



Cy Twombly Bachus

A canvas that may tell a story (especially if you understand something of the artists background and other works) but can also be appreciated just for the texture and mark making



\*\*\*\*\*

Stuart reckons that marks are a matter of taste like food When you are young you prefer sugar (cake), get a little older and prefer more savoury (fish and chips), older still move to fine dining then finally to sophisticated tastes (snails, oysters)

He thinks he's reached the fine dining stage I his practice but appreciated the sophistication of other artists

\*\*\*\*\*

Turner, Monet, Twombly exhibition Tate Liverpool

Turner layered marks, swirling, scribbling brush ends, building up impasto in parts and drawing through/into it



Turner influenced Monet. Monet outside painting, less time to spend on canvas than Turner who worked in studio, so less building of surface but responding in brush strokes to colours, textures he sees



Twombly influenced by both but not interested in making a recognisable image of place or thing  
Scribbles, loops, marks that look as though they mean something but don't directly reproduce a form (was in cryptography dept in army - deciphering marks? Have an influence?)



<https://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/twombly-quattro-stagioni-autunno-t07889> link to tate notes on autum if interested

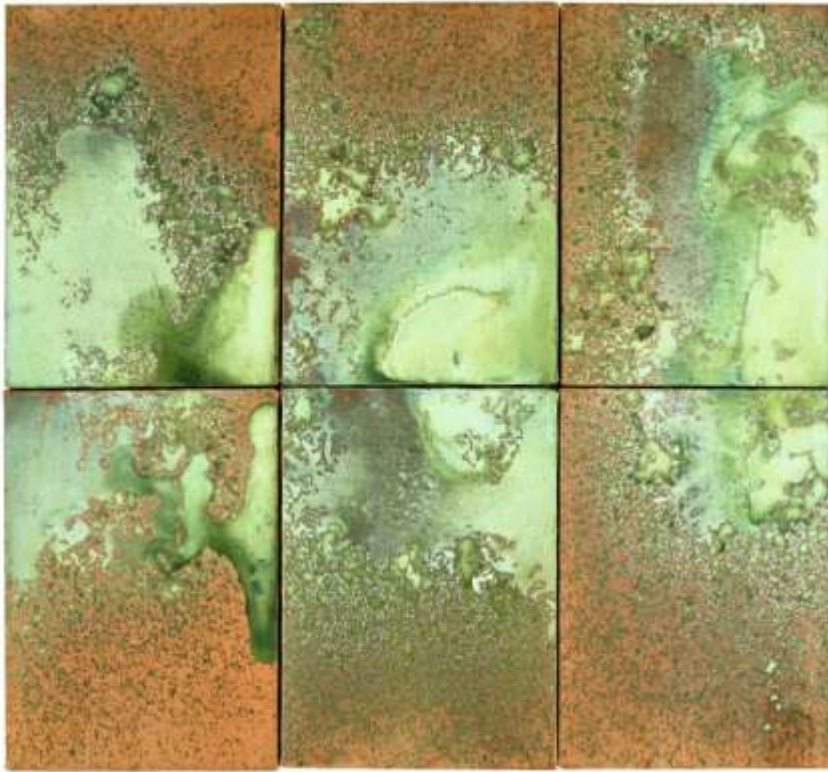
\*\*\*\*\*

Different ways of mark making

Cai Guo Quang – explodes gunpowder on surface



Warhol Oxidization paintings, covered canvas with copper paint , people weed on it, chemical reaction produces mark and texture



Goldsworthy, body stencil in the rain



\*\*\*\*\*

Mark making can go from one extreme to the other

photorealist – copied from photos, smooth surface trying to eliminate all surface texture and reproduce feel of a photo with ‘realistic’ image Richard Estes





Other extreme , all about marks layers and textures. Pollock, dripping and splashing.



Life experiences can influence how and what artists use marks eg Basquiat early life was graffiti artist, can see this style of mark making in his later works

\*\*\*\*\*

the balance of marks with subject, relationship of the two is decided by what is important to the artist, what is the object of the painting

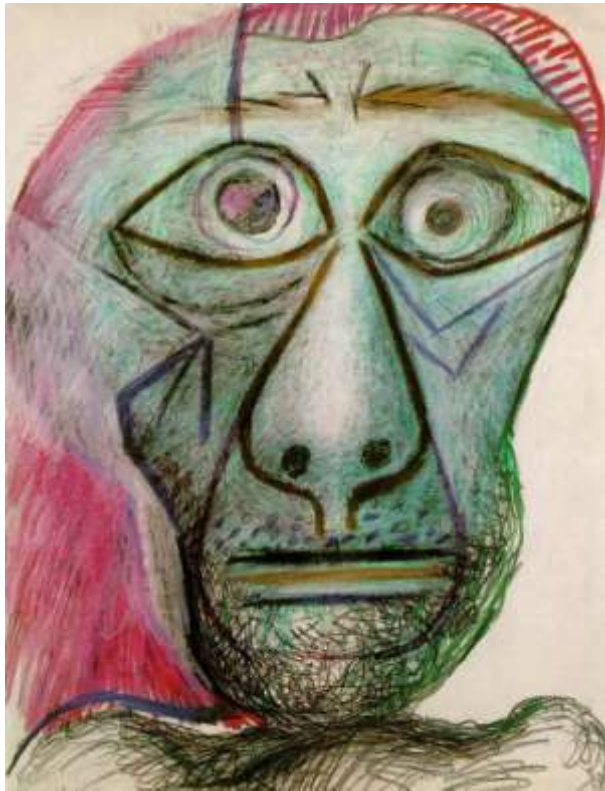
Stuart, image as object, subject matter is the object- often doesn't use a background (the portrait or animal is against a simple pale ground) The figure is the most important thing in the work. Marks are important, is how the image is formed, but they don't dominate.

John Bevan, surface and marks predominate. He starts with subject, eg a beach scene or drawing of feet, but this is a thing to hang the texture and marks he on. These marks develop on his canvas. Visible likeness not important the subject is the painting/drawing/canvas itself

\*\*\*\*\*

Keeping it fresh-how not to be predictable

Picasso seemed to do it by instinct portraits of in his 90s still fresh experimental, (Can see how he explored self portrait through his life here <https://www.boredpanda.com/pablo-picasso-self-portrait-style-evolution/>)



John Hoylan, uses strategies to make initial mark making accidental then works into them, eg covers paper in paint and slaps or drags across the canvas, scrapes into it, drips





Maggie Hambling, starts the day drawing with the wrong hand, (doodles using dripper from ink bottle)

Debbie McKinnon makes own drawing implements from find on walks



<https://www.facebook.com/debbie.mackinnon.artist/videos/mark-making-with-homemade-brushes-made-from-beach-foraged-material-trying-out-my/701928107028213/>

\*\*\*\*\*

Found marks

Textures on bits of girder at preston station , remnants of human activity layered, worn decayed, stencils, worn notices, rust

Trees with carving on bark, arrows, initials etc

Marks in the landscape, paths and roads are often used by artists to lead oureye into a painting but artists such as Richard Long make the paths as part of the work



Marks on cars in the dust and mud, fingerprint and smears esp round handles

\*\*\*\*\*

Could lead to finger painting, fingers dipped in paint and dabbed on the canvas – digital painting!  
Look pixelated. (Cannot find stuart's figure painting online)

\*\*\*\*\*

Think Marks Make Marks