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## Curiosity and a curator

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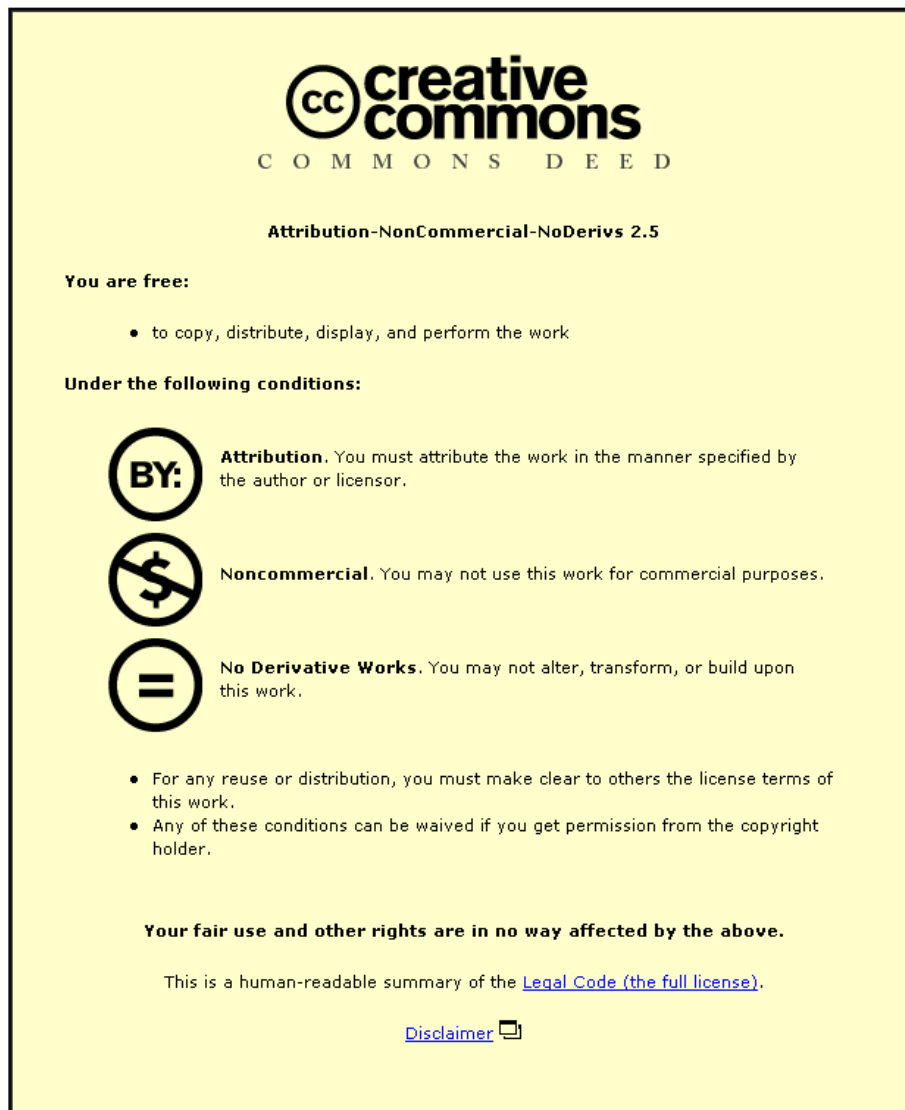
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## Curiosity and a Curator

Words by Phil Sawdon & Marsha Meskimmon

“**LOOK**, there is a wounded drawing and some sheep; it is carrying the carcass of another.”

“They are all evictees, rejected by the *House of Le Singe*.”

**That which might be called *a wonder* is sometimes perceived in the shock of the extraordinary as it ruptures the skin of the ordinary. In such an unusual encounter, the realm of the familiar pushes against the limits of our recognition but offers no threat to us. We are instead curious, fascinated or enchanted.**

Reluctantly they reach the wooded environs of *The Fictional Museum of Drawing*. *The Uncanny* [in Drawing], a charcoal-burner’s conundrum, a legless soldier and *The Nurse*, note their arrival through a tiny window in the museum vaults. Their vellum is crudely and bloodily scratched with an exceedingly corrosive fabrication, an amalgam of [set] theory, dry hawthorn branches, and iron gall ink. Their line is as thick as a wrist. They each have three to five punctures through which haemorrhaging and inky humors lazily pour.

*The Fictional Museum* has an antechamber that is so dilapidated it is easily mistaken and always disappointing.

"This place is full of holes."

**The state of wonder may be experienced as a form of a temporal suspension further characterised by close attention to specific objects.**

An erstwhile academic and occasional charcoal-burner, with eight white monkeys (*Les Singes*), is carelessly chopping wood nearby.

“Hallo, can we go in?”

“I’m not *The Keeper* of the museum, go through into *Gallery #1* and talk to *The Warden*.”

They tediously labour through to *Gallery #1*, it has several elisions in and on the walls and there are fragments of testimonials, some can still be read ... ‘*can’t have a point of view.*’ They forcefully extract *The Warden* who is buried up to his waist in pencil shavings in front of a cartoon of *The Paramour Plumbago*. He is repeatedly blowing on the liquid surface of an antique ink well in the vain attempt to revivify the contents and clutches the remains of an eviscerated sketch.

**As the familiar is rendered unfamiliar and the extraordinary tears through the ordinary, we experience a visceral, vertiginous and immediate response.**

“Hullo, can we enter?”

“I’m not *The Warden* of the museum, go through into *Gallery #2* and talk to *The Guardian*.”

Dragging a bloodied deckle edge and the cadaver of the sketch they approach *The Guardian* who is fettling and whittling a strange stick whilst surreptitiously between strokes adding entries to a catalogue of what we assume are works on paper.

“Hollo, can we look at the works?”

“I’m not *The Guardian* of the museum; you will need to talk to *The Custodian*, who’s practising some more sleight of hand in *Gallery #3*.”

They approach *The Custodian* busy with cups and a ball. An owl or perhaps it’s a monkey and a frog wait to be included and *The Custodian* presents a large pearl.

**We are lost and found within the state of wonder, where our curiosity for the new and extraordinary emerges in the midst of the profundity of the quotidian. Attention arrested, we are opened to the pleasures of difference and irrevocably – wondrously - changed.**

“Hillo, can we view?”

“I’m not *The Custodian* of the museum; you should talk to *The Steward* who is in *The Library*.”

*The Steward* emerges from the stacks and proceeds to hold an hourglass over an open book, revealing an enigmatic figure drawing with an undisciplined hobby horse. The trio revel before the visitors in an evasive display of scholarship mindful that they are bent on theft.

“Hello, can we access any further?”

“I’m not *The Steward* of the museum; you should talk to *The Superintendent*.”

*The Superintendent* is in a practicum demonstrating how to pull a cart laden with hay.

They approach the cart. *The Superintendent* appears to be part fish with human legs and the face of a mouse.

“Holloa, can we be guided?”

The silence is interminable and is almost as extended as the reaction.

**Pausing, lingering and taking pleasure in an encounter with the unfamiliar, we participate in wonder – we seek it, we follow it – it *leads* us astray.**

“I’m not *The Superintendent* of the museum; you should talk to *The Curator*.”

*The Curator* is hanging from the gibbet in the gloom cast by the closed doors of *The Information Point*. The sheep are grazing the scrub beneath. The wounded drawing and the carcass stare up at the ash-white likeness of a face.

**Wonder compels an attitude of embodied and engaged enquiry: *where are we, how have we come to be here, what do we make of this place?***

“**GOOD DAY**, are you open?”

There is a low drone like muttering, “*The Fictional Museum of Drawing* is open throughout the year.”

The mumbling voice continues:

“ ... Sunday Closed, Monday Closed, Tuesday Closed, Wednesday Closed, Thursday Closed, Friday Closed ... Saturday Closed. Last admission is irrelevant. Note that the café is closed.

If you wish to closely inspect or research any particular collection you should make an appointment in advance with the keeper and the request will be denied. The displays are subject to change. If you are keen to view particular items you are advised to confirm with *The Keeper* that the items are on display and will remain on display when you are denied access to visit. If the items are not on display then it will be necessary to make an appointment to view said items and the request will be ... **DENIED** ...!”