

draw in
COLOUR

Raphael Pepper

I use coloured pencils because I draw in colour. I'll start at the studio – mine is officially at so and so address (in actual fact I don't have a studio as for me the studio has to be primarily a state of mind). I always wanted to draw in colour and I knew how, but only hard work and concentration makes you any good at it. Wanting to draw is crucial, it can't be an accessory to something else, and if it is then the drawing won't feel sincere. Forty years ago William Eggleston broke through tradition with his colour photo *The Red Ceiling*; now it's the turn of drawing to come into the real world and leave behind the barrier of black, white and grey.

My pencils are stored in jam jars, separated not by colours but by bands. One jar may have pinks and lush reds, another darker reds and carmine, another may have wooden browns and other more earthy tones. Each colour is used separately, sometimes for one month or a year if necessary. On occasion colour and graphite are mixed: when I was in France some years ago the intense heat bounced off the ocean like darkness, so I used graphite again. You have to feel each colour coming at you, in the same way you have to use intuition when meeting new people. Looking at your drawing is vital, never hide them away; I put them straight up on the wall when I get home. It's not essential for me to know what I am drawing, I just draw and it appears. Often I stare at the drawing for hours and then the following day when I work everything is better. Sometimes the

middle stump of the pencil is cut out and ground up using my scalpel knife. This residue is then pushed in using my fingertips. I'm closer to the colour when I work like this. There is no obvious categorization, as there would be with a painter or sculptor, though most of my drawings have torn surfaces which show the drawing's physical rawness.

I don't own a camera as I don't need one, and have no interest in taking snaps. A friend once said that photos are for people who don't have memories, and I link this point to my art in that my drawings are alive for a while and if they remain incomplete by a certain point, then I throw them away (which I do a lot).

People find my work difficult to define. They may consider my art as painting, but I do not. When you paint an area of monochromatic colour it's abstract; this is never the case when drawn. Museums these days expect to exhibit drawings by grandees and installation by younger figures. Moreover drawings in colour can be viewed as craft or too old fashioned by contemporary galleries, but too modern by some public collections.

In 2006 I briefly stopped making any art, after I realized that most people don't care about it. I felt I was in a kind of exclusive club where you could visit any exhibition without liking it but still appreciate and enjoy the experience. The consequence of this was that I stopped justifying and accepted my art. I am not driven to create by philosophy, reason or ideas. There is no attempt to find



Splinter (2004-7)
Four Trees, London Bridge (2003)

any meaning in the use of subject, motif, approach or content. There is a quite deliberate avoidance of any political or historical reference. I think that drawing stops us from becoming disconnected from the root of what we make. Acknowledging the root is essential if we expect other people, especially those with little experience of art, to connect to it. A recent piece, *Farewell to Childhood* sums this up: drawing is one of the only things you keep from childhood, and when you draw as an adult you become aware of the distance from one lost part of yourself. Having completed a drawing I will wrap it up in tissue paper and then put it into my portfolio case if it fits, or roll it up instead. No art is kept permanently on the wall. I have the odd postcard up (of a Bassano at the moment), and a picture of a place I went to and loved (Lednice), but tomorrow is a new day.

Raphael Pepper is a London based artist. His work is included in *Anonymous Drawings at Kunstraum Kreuzberg/Bethanien, Berlin until January 17*. For more information visit his website at www.raphaelpepper.com