

FEATURING NIKOLAUS GANSTERER

PROPS: What is the role of images in your research?

NG: For years I have had a strong fascination with diagrams (in German "Schaubilder") and I was questioning how these relational visual artifacts—graphic forms visualizing complex associations—could be comprehended from an artistic point of view. In an intensive exchange with artists and scientists, I developed new forms of narratives and hypotheses by tracing the speculative potential of diagrams. Based on a discursive process, I sent my drawings to various interpreters with a request for a written interpretation (which I call "micrology"), so that in return I could react to their texts with diagrammatic drawings and models. In 2011 a publication resulted from this five-year exchange of figures of thought and figures of speech, describing, from various angles, the reflexive and dynamic character of diagrams.

fig. 01-35

Drawing plays a crucial role in producing and communicating our knowledge(s), due to its ability to mediate between perception and reflection. For me drawing is a way to watch the mind working in the making of ideas, revealing thinking as an inter-subjective and translational process. It's a balancing between visibility and invisibility.

For me a "figure of thought" describes something dynamic and flexible, shifting rather than solid and static. My conception of the figure and figuration is deeply rooted in the Greek understanding of the term, which has a choreographic and performative notion, like "a body's gesture caught in motion." (See also Roland Barthes: *A Lover's Discourse*, 1979.) It is both an elusive and highly lively form and, for me as artist, also a method to frame, name, and question a phenomenon by entering the field of my inquiry with a specific attitude, attention, and awareness. Due to the ambivalent character of the figure of thought, it's interesting to use it as a vehicle and specific set of frames—maybe comparable to a system of lenses—to operate with.

In this project the potential of drawings and diagrams to activate the mind comes clearly to the forefront. I would argue that a diagram is a reflexive sign, empowering the reader in the process of reading and sense-making as it functions in a non-linear way. Thus it is probably closer to the nature of how our mind is organized and operates.

In my recent research project *Choreo-graphic Figures: Deviations from the Line* (<http://www.choreo-graphic-figures.net/>), I am further exploring the nature of 'thinking in action' or 'thinking-feeling-knowing' operative within artistic practice, especially produced within collaborative exchange, between the lines of drawing, choreography and writing. Together with an interdisciplinary team we are enquiring new forms of notation systems for reflecting on this often hidden aspect of the creative process, by developing shared figures of thought, speech, and movement – which we call choreo-graphic figures. Here we seek to give tangible articulation to the meaning and weight of relations as generative forces within the making of knowledge, through a live diagramming of the flows of thinking (with and between) operative within artistic enquiry towards embodied diagrammatics. In 2017, a compendium of *Choreo-graphic Figures* will be published.

In my work, the intuitive part of knowing is as vital as the so-called cognitive part. Drawing— which is for me always a performative act in time and space—offered a way to combine these modes of thinking and sensing (in) correlations. Based on my method of "reverse engineering a theory" (by initiating the process of knowing through a speculative approach to reading diagrams, inferring the information they represent), the resulting hypotheses are naturally of very different kinds, reflecting their authors' particular fields of knowledge in this fractious zone between art, science, and fiction. Each collated reflection— be it a theoretical essay, a poem, or a drawing— produces a very specific form of knowledge, revealing an enticing glance into our sub/consciousness and the possible mental spaces between recognizing and naming. For me "not-(yet)-knowing" is more exciting and inspiring than mere knowing.

More of Nikolaus's work at www.gansterer.org.

FRONT MATTER: "TO KEEP UNDER CONTROL": THE TOTEMIC OPERATOR, CLAUDE LEVI-STRAUSS, SAVAGE MIND, 1962 ... REVISITED.

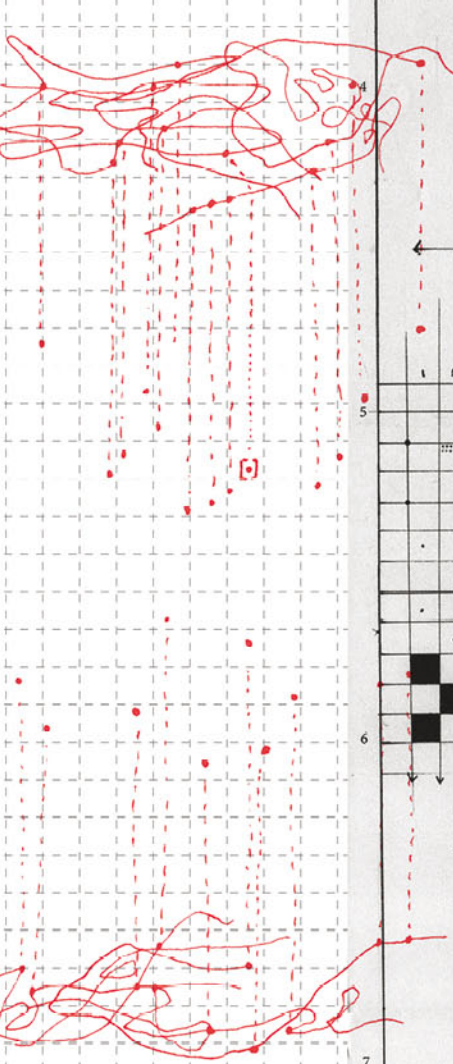
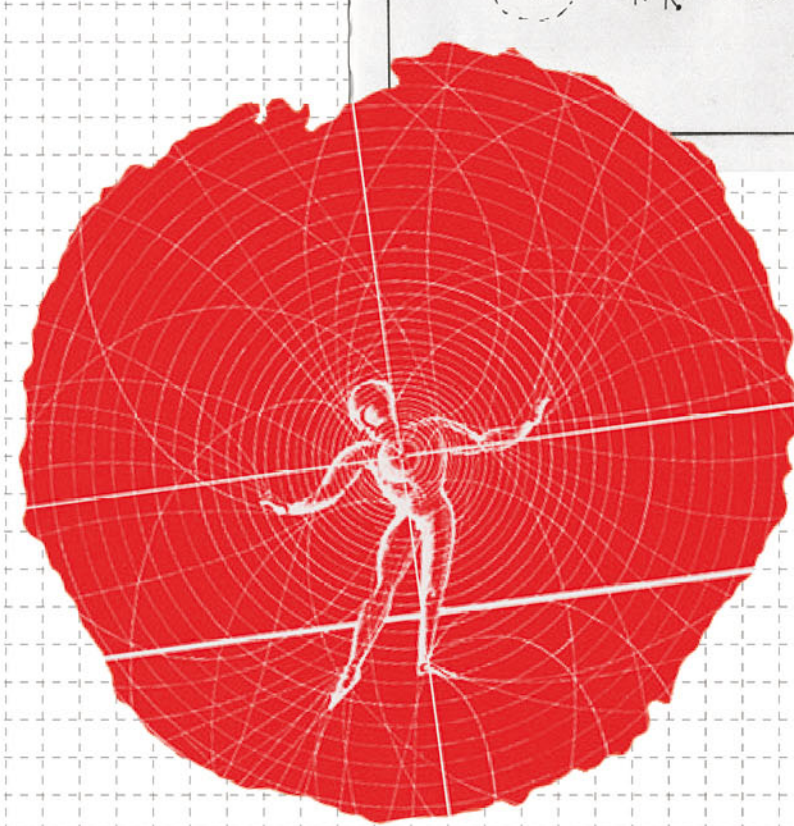


fig. 05-07



SCHLEMMER, OSKAR, L. MOHOLY-NAGY, AND F. MOLNAR. "THE THEATRE OF THE BAUHAUS (MIDDLETOWN, CONN.)" 1961.



DIAGRAMS AND FIGURES FROM DRAWING A HYPOTHESIS, A PUBLICATION PROJECT BY NIKOLAUS GANSTERER. 2011.

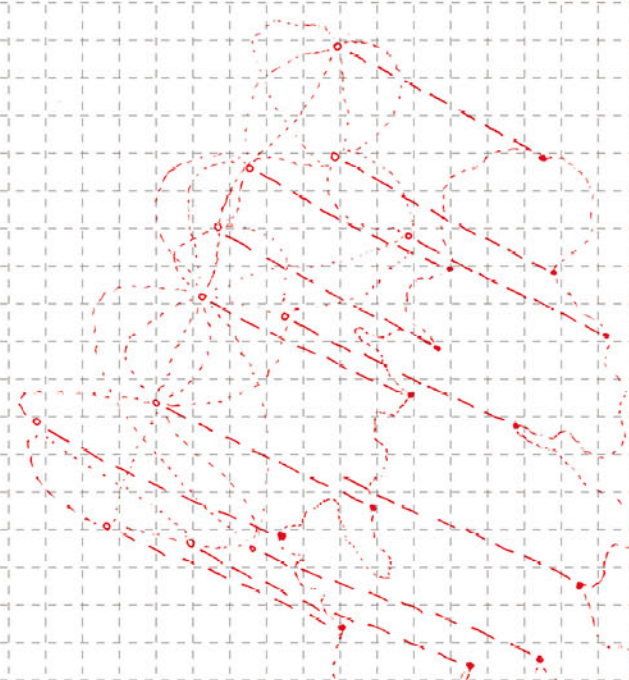


fig. 05-08

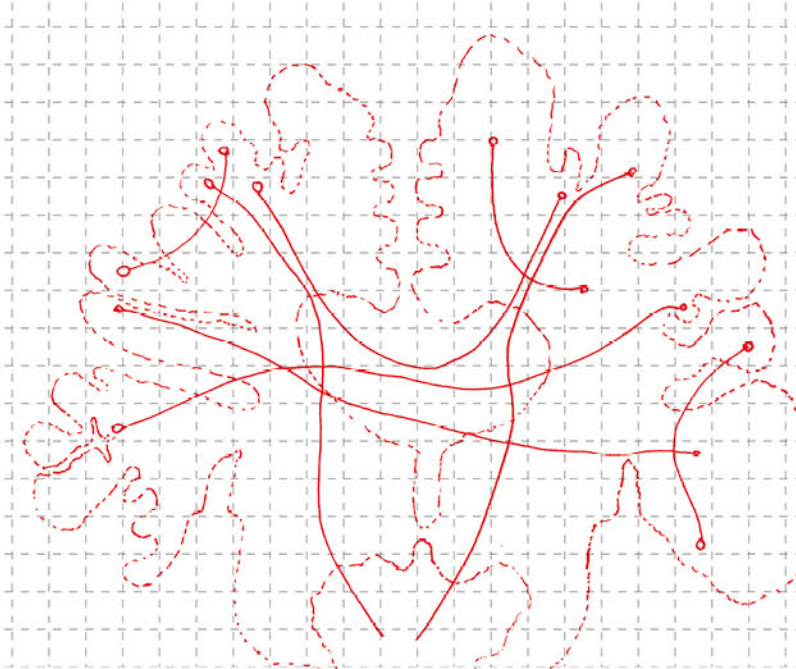


fig. 02-37

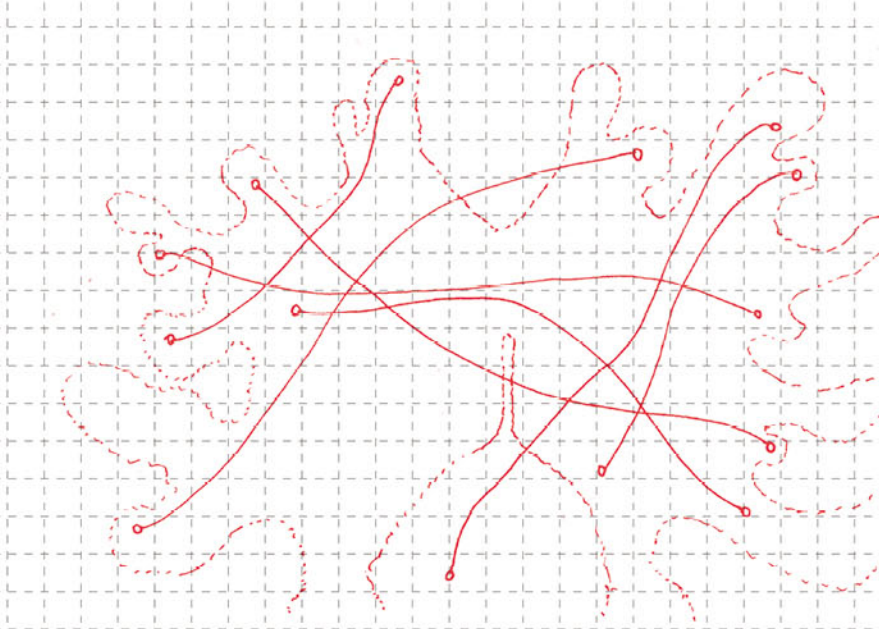


fig. 02-38

PROPS 06
CONTEXT
DIAGRAMS WITHOUT
NOV 2016

PROPS IS A WEEKLY PAPER OF IMAGES. PROPS DISREGARDS DISCIPLINARY BOUNDARIES AND PROPOSES AN ALTERNATIVE VISUAL ATLAS OF JUXTAPOSITIONS. PROPS IS AN EXPANDED ARCHIVE OF WORK BY IMAGE MAKERS, IMAGE COLLECTORS AND ACCIDENTAL IMAGE CONNOISSEURS. PROPS IS A RESEARCH EXPERIMENT CONCEIVED BY LUCY LIU AND MATTHEW BOHNE TO EXAMINE VISUAL KNOWLEDGE AND DESIGN.