Dirt drawn into dust

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DIRT DRAWN INTO DUST
Phil Sawdon


Phil Sawdon, *First Draft*, 2016, Detail, text, paper and dust. Image courtesy of the artist.
The Fictional Museum of Drawing … subterranean in a poor stiff soil.

The background is waste, dry earth, firm land, disturbed in part by constant archaeology.

The windows are open … a reverberation of reclamation and theoretic parlay.

A single light bulb … several dust-holes … here and there a metaphor or two … retrieval … layers of reconstructed process … strata, the idea of dirt, temporal and spatial.

Gallery A Layer #1 (A)

Enter a dumb-show.

The pens fall silent … a year of scratching dirt into dust … now anticipating a reunion on a bank of coltsfoot. Flowering, each cover their eyes and nose, cough and continue to burn their dried leaves and roots on cypress charcoal as a classical curator has instilled.

Enter more dust … each mote with four pens and others waiting: kneels down as to draw, does three more hachure marks on a ground of ‘Large Glass’ and kisses it; they faint and as impending dust bunnies … we agree that they will not suffer.

Exit through the frame [of theory].

Imitating saw horses … each now rolled in paper … disseminating dust … the story of all cities …

As yet there is no sound of the cuckoo nevertheless there are vestiges of floating material … dirt drawing the promise of titillation …

A charged and warm wind creeps along the lead lines and various cracks like sylphs seem to embrace aeolian practices in accord with a previous notice now obscured.

The first fine weather of spring has dried up the long-standing mud of adjacent galleries. Nearby under The Great Dust-Heap there are those sifters who mine for silver salts once suspended in gelatin and turn their backs to let the others pass by; there are some things that will not acquiesce and urge on with head bent down, teeth clenched, and temper … unspeakable.

Dust, it is true, it is not unknown … during wet weather this space of ground is in a state of mud such as could scarcely be found by any other. When the dry and blustery weather comes by, this dirt becomes drawn into dust, accumulates in all directions, to the infinite … purposeful inactivity safely quarantined and offering color.

LEGEND: Loose … packed soil … sand … EARTH … firm … land … EARTH … fine particles of matter … as of EARTH … ‘Stripped Bare’ … dust separated … sifting soil from brieze anon and on anon accruing atmosphere.

Gallery B Layer #2 (B)

A curator mutters softly … ‘Tomorrow we will gather up any remaining text fragments so that nothing is lost in the layer of intentional fallacy and paradox. We should keep ‘Dirt’ out of sight … repress memory and [of course] the consequences of any [im]propriety …’
Gray from ashes … pigments from the earth to draw the consequent miasma …

… Material remains and metaphoric, dirty work … drawings’ stratigraphy … layers of dirt and tradition on a ground … a line sketch of a fossilised mud pool consisting of overlapping curves and zigzags. When seen in three-quarter profile the accompanying groups are somewhat confusing. An immense geological landscape of erratic rocks closes off the background. The drawing precedes the finished painting by three to four million years. In the final painting, the tree on the right would have far fewer branches and leaves, in order to free the background, where we can see the donkey that ate the pencil leaving what is about to become the drawing. In this version line is no longer portrayed as a quest for an erratic [fossilised] drawing that dates the earth.

**LEGEND:** Embedded … ground surface … till … EARTH … shattered … EARTH … traced to the source … as of EARTH … indicators … dust transported … theory shifts anon and on anon accruing atmosphere.

**Gallery C Layer #3**

A discreet noise … is drawing natural layers …

The numbered stratum approve … whispering whilst digging … ‘Natural layers of dirty theory are realized in the stratigraphy … drawings’ dirty dust.’

An echo … erasure calls … ‘The same line on paper.’

An artefact … a meter deeper on paper, appears as if it was unearthed in the same location.

A commotion … is drawing arbitrary layers …

The compound layers switch … regardless of the nature … droning … ‘oh so dirty, ten or twenty?’

Collecting continuous line … drawings’ difference … assorted … natural … arbitrary in, on and to the ground … site drawing in-situ the site grid.

**LEGEND:** Preserved … drawings’ nutrient … clay … EARTH … extracted … EARTH … retaining meaning … as of EARTH … of the body … dust drawn and shared … destructive digging anon and on anon accruing atmosphere.

**Basement Layer #4**

Finally beneath all the sedimentary dust lie theories’ fluid and undifferentiated black lines. Once traced and shaded … now each take iterative turns to map the museum basement … one-to-one they clean an expanse they wish to draw … setting up a base line across each corridor, up and down the stairs despite the ground [ordinary] level they mark each recorded measurement with a point … repeating … including past and present … always in the

**LEGEND:** in which case a layer of earth not less than one foot thick shall be left undisturbed above that previously buried; but if, on re-opening, the soil be found to be offensive, such soil shall not be disturbed, and in no case shall human remains be removed.

**LEGEND:** Examined … drawings’ deposits … soil … EARTH … excavated … EARTH … truncated affected context … as of EARTH … of each other … dust cuts into dirt … anthropogenic yet anon and on anon accruing atmosphere …

Anon and on anon …