

Drawing a Hypothesis

Figures of Thought

A Project by
NIKOLAUS GANSTERER



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Drawing a Hypothesis

Figures of Thought

A Project by Nikolaus Gansterer

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

INDEX OF FIGURES	9
PREFACE	21
<i>Drawing a Hypothesis</i> <i>Nikolaus Gasterer</i>	
HYPOTHESIS #1	29
<i>A Line with Variable Direction, which Traces No Contour, and Delimits No Form</i> <i>Susanne Leeb</i>	
HYPOTHESIS #2	43
<i>I Must Be Seeing Things</i> <i>Cleante Krümmel</i>	
HYPOTHESIS #3	57
<i>Subjective Objectivities</i> <i>Jörg Piringer</i>	
HYPOTHESIS #4	65
<i>Graphous Was Here</i> <i>Anthony Acquaviva</i>	
HYPOTHESIS #5	77
<i>Asynchronous Connections</i> <i>Kristina Mathews</i>	
PLATES I	81

HYPOTHESIS #6	97
<i>Distancing the If and Then</i>	
<i>Emma Cocker</i>	
HYPOTHESIS #7	109
<i>Drawing Interest</i>	
<i>Recording Vitality</i>	
<i>Karla Harvasser</i>	
HYPOTHESIS #8	121
<i>Nonself Compatibility in Plants</i>	
<i>Monika Rokke</i>	
HYPOTHESIS #9	127
<i>Hypotheses Non Fingo or When Symbols Fail</i>	
<i>Andreas Schimmer</i>	
HYPOTHESIS #10	141
<i>Wiry Fantasy</i>	
<i>Ferdinand Schuster</i>	
HYPOTHESIS #11	149
<i>Reading Figures</i>	
<i>Hebert Todor</i>	
HYPOTHESIS #12	153
<i>Figures of Thought</i>	
<i>Gerhard Dinecker</i>	
COLLECTION OF FIGURES OF THOUGHT	161
<i>Gerhard Dinecker</i>	
HYPOTHESIS #13	177
<i>Radical Cartographies</i>	
<i>Philippe Bekman 177</i>	

HYPOTHESIS #14	185
<i>3 Elements</i>	
<i>Andr� Stockburger</i>	
HYPOTHESIS #15	195
<i>Dances of Space</i>	
<i>Mark Doeckler</i>	
HYPOTHESIS #16	201
<i>Collection of Emotions and Orientation</i>	
<i>Christian Roder</i>	
HYPOTHESIS #17	215
<i>On the Importance of Scientific Research</i>	
<i>in Relation to Humanities</i>	
<i>Walter Sedlitz</i>	
HYPOTHESIS #18	221
<i>Interpersonal Governance Structures</i>	
<i>Kolja Meyer</i>	
PLATES II	225
HYPOTHESIS #19	241
<i>The Afterthought of Drawing: 6 Hypotheses</i>	
<i>Jean Tornay</i>	
HYPOTHESIS #20	259
<i>The Hand, The Creatures, The Singing Garden</i>	
<i>& The Night Sky</i>	
<i>Maira Ruli</i>	
HYPOTHESIS #21	265
<i>The Unthought Known</i>	
<i>Felix de Mendelssohn</i>	

HYPOTHESIS #22	271
<i>Processing the Routes of Thoughts</i> <i>Arsenio Borwick</i>	
HYPOTHESIS #25	281
<i>An Attempted Survey</i> <i>William P.</i>	
PLATES III	289
HYPOTHESIS #34	305
<i>The Line of Thought</i> <i>Hansde Gendelink</i>	
HYPOTHESIS #35	315
<i>Strong Evidence for Telom-priming Cell Layers</i> <i>in the Mammalian Olfactory Bulb</i> <i>M. F. Roach; A. Aho; P. Braudhoque; B. E. Fisher</i>	
HYPOTHESIS #36	325
<i>Expected Anomalies Caused by</i> <i>Increased Radiation</i> <i>Christina Stadthauer</i>	
HYPOTHESIS #37	329
<i>On Pluto 86 Winter Lasts 92 Years</i> <i>Rita Moore</i>	

APPENDIX

Personalia	336
Subject Index	340
Index of Names	345
Colophon	348

Index of Figures

INDEX OF FIGURES I

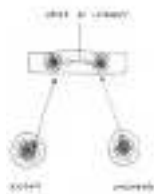


Fig. 01-01
→ p. 98, 314



Fig. 01-12
→ p. 124

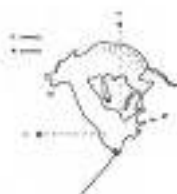


Fig. 01-20
→ p. 110, 125, 307,
309, 320



Fig. 01-28
→ p. 151, 222, 320

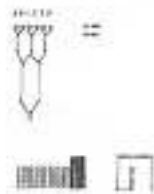


Fig. 01-29
→ p. 147, 311



Fig. 01-32
→ p. 327



Fig. 01-33
→ p. 323

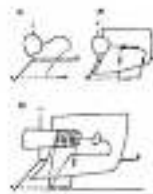


Fig. 01-35
→ p. 330

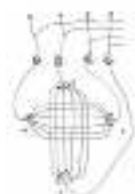


Fig. 01-38
→ p. 122



Fig. 01-39
→ p. 323

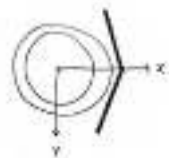


Fig. 01-42
→ p. 320

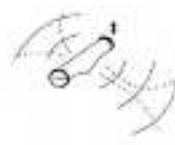


Fig. 01-43
→ p. 334



Fig. 01-49
→ p. 216

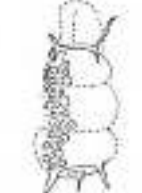


Fig. 01-50
→ p. 331



Fig. 02-01
→ p. 270, 327



Fig. 02-08
→ p. 233, 322



Fig. 02-09
→ p. 223, 317



Fig. 02-10
→ p. 45, 244, 246



Fig. 02-11
→ p. 58, 119



Fig. 02-12
→ p. 58, 119



Fig. 02-13
→ p. 58, 119



Fig. 02-14
→ p. 60



Fig. 02-15
→ p. 111



Fig. 02-16
→ p. 59, 111



Fig. 02-17
→ p. 318, 321



Fig. 02-18
→ p. 225



Fig. 02-19
→ p. 112



Fig. 02-21
→ p. 61



Fig. 02-22
→ p. 150, 277



Fig. 02-23
→ p. 279



Fig. 02-24
→ p. 262



Fig. 02-26
→ p. 262, 265, 274

INDEX OF FIGURES II



Fig. 02-27
→ p. 199, 236



Fig. 02-37
→ p. 78, 282



Fig. 02-38
→ p. 287



Fig. 02-39
→ p. 285



Fig. 02-40
→ p. 285



Fig. 02-41
→ p. 285



Fig. 02-42
→ p. 39, 151, 286



Fig. 02-44
→ p. 151, 284



Fig. 02-45
→ p. 308



Fig. 02-46
→ p. 62, 327



Fig. 03-04
→ p. 261, 275



Fig. 03-05
→ p. 79, 275

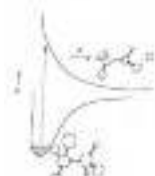


Fig. 03-06
→ p. 278



Fig. 03-07
→ p. 263, 275



Fig. 03-08
→ p. 261, 275



Fig. 03-09
→ p. 265, 274



Fig. 03-11
→ p. 261, 273



Fig. 03-12
→ p. 263, 274



Fig. 03-14
→ p. 260, 272



Fig. 03-16
→ p. 278



Fig. 03-17
→ p. 260, 262, 273



Fig. 03-19
→ p. 260, 272



Fig. 03-24
→ p. 63

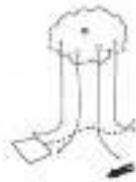


Fig. 03-25
→ p. 63



Fig. 03-27
→ p. 260, 327

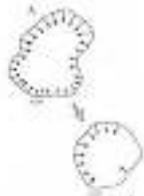


Fig. 03-28
→ p. 326



Fig. 04-08
→ p. 216, 327

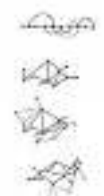


Fig. 04-09
→ p. 284, 306



Fig. 04-10
→ p. 283



Fig. 04-11
→ p. 284



Fig. 04-12
→ p. 216, 267



Fig. 04-15
→ p. 216

INDEX OF FIGURES III



Fig. 05-06
→ p. 192



Fig. 05-07
→ p. 313



Fig. 05-08
→ p. 105, 312



Fig. 05-09
→ p. 36, 312, 326



Fig. 05-10
→ p. 196



Fig. 05-12
→ p. 326



Fig. 05-15
→ p. 247, 252



Fig. 06-01
→ p. 34, 36, 178



Fig. 06-02
→ p. 179



Fig. 06-03
→ p. 188



Fig. 06-04
→ p. 37, 180, 306



Fig. 06-05
→ p. 117, 179, 213



Fig. 06-06
→ p. 110, 183



Fig. 06-07
→ p. 182, 197



Fig. 06-08
→ p. 35, 182



Fig. 06-12
→ p. 32, 33, 41, 110



Fig. 06-16
→ p. 53, 142, 266, 327



Fig. 07-00
→ p. 39, 181



Fig. 07-03a
→ p. 150



Fig. 07-07
→ p. 188



Fig. 07-08
→ p. 186, 187



Fig. 07-17
→ p. 202



Fig. 07-19
→ p. 204



Fig. 08-01
→ p. 208



Fig. 08-12
→ p. 211



Fig. 08-14
→ p. 203



Fig. 08-15
→ p. 203



Fig. 08-16
→ p. 203



Fig. 08-17
→ p. 206



Fig. 08-18
→ p. 206



Fig. 08-19
→ p. 207



Fig. 09-03
→ p. 145, 158

INDEX OF FIGURES IV



Fig. 09-05
→ p. 330



Fig. 09-05a
→ p. 145



Fig. 09-05b
→ p. 69, 70



Fig. 09-07
→ p. 52, 106, 146, 248,
250, 251



Fig. 09-08
→ p. 142



Fig. 09-11
→ p. 143



Fig. 09-15
→ p. 144



Fig. 09-17a
→ p. 143

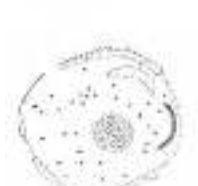


Fig. 09-19
→ p. 204



Fig. 10-06
→ p. 75, 312



Fig. 10-07
→ p. 193



Fig. 10-08
→ p. 147



Fig. 10-25
→ p. 48, 49



Fig. 10-26
→ p. 40, 317



Fig. 11-06
→ p. 44, 52



Fig. 12-21
→ p. 99



Fig. 12-23
→ p. 107



Fig. 12-27
→ p. 103



Fig. 12-55
→ p. 257, 258



Fig. 12-65
→ p. 332, 334

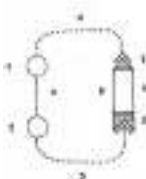


Fig. 12-72
→ p. 136, 331



Fig. 12-80
→ p. 118



Fig. 12-81
→ p. 102



Fig. 12-82
→ p. 102



Fig. 13-12
→ p. 243, 254



Fig. 15-03
→ p. 66, 71, 73



Fig. 15-04
→ p. 75



Fig. 15-09
→ p. 67, 72, 76



Fig. DF-A2231
→ p. 155, 174



Fig. DF-B6709
→ p. 164

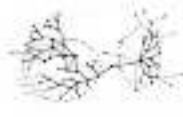


Fig. DF-C4443
→ p. 156, 170



Fig. DF-D4450
→ p. 160, 171

INDEX OF FIGURES V



Fig. DF-F6008
→ p. 172



Fig. DF-H17711
→ p. 170



Fig. DF-J8943
→ p. 168



Fig. DF-K0089
→ p. 167



Fig. DF-K8922
→ p. 159



Fig. DF-P9685
→ p. 160



Fig. DF-R6565
→ p. 167



Fig. DF-R0987
→ p. 155, 173



Fig. DF-R2224
→ p. 157, 175



Fig. DF-R5870
→ p. 161, 165



Fig. DF-S4587
→ p. 162



Fig. DF-V6788
→ p. 175



Fig. DF-Y4445
→ p. 165



Fig. N01-00
→ p. 130

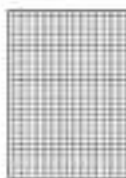


Fig. N01-01
→ p. 138



Fig. N01-02
→ p. 134



Fig. N01-03
→ p. 129



Fig. N04
→ p. 136



Fig. P01-01
→ p. 55



Fig. P01-02
→ p. 50



Fig. P01-03
→ p. 47, 101



Fig. P01-04
→ p. 46

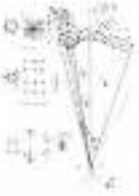


Fig. P01-05
→ p. 54



Fig. X01
→ p. 217



Fig. X02
→ p. 217



Fig. X03
→ p. 113



Fig. X04
→ p. 115



Fig. X05
→ p. 218



Fig. X06
→ p. 219



Fig. X07
→ p. 114



Fig. X08
→ p. 113

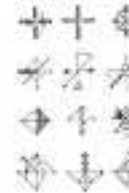


Fig. Y01
→ p. 189, 190

— Preface —

DRAWING A HYPOTHESIS

Nikolaus G. Trübner

The idea for this book originated during a two-year research project of the Jan van Eyck Academie in the Netherlands. My long-held fascination for diagrams, maps, networks and the graphical focus of visualising complex, non-linear, abstracted or to quote the title, from an inside point of view. This book has arisen from a five-year exchange with theoretical, scientific and artists on the question of the (political) potential of diagrams.

I began intuitively, by feeling, ordering and studying diagrams from books and the internet. Looking to understand how information is visually constructed within these representations, I internalised the language of images for myself by removing it. From this emerged a constructive practice which is still growing. The longer I worked with the material, the more I found myself asking how these figures were to be read, prior to their conventionalized meaning, symbol and drawing. Moreover, how do they in turn configure our thought processes? What narrative forms can be found in these drawn objects or images? And what happens when figures are removed from their original context? What action potential is the other than?

Thinking Drawing – The part of diagrams and images and symbols is a permanent part of our daily perception. The cognitive act of perceiving, translating and ordering occurs continuously when we experience thoughts and receive or process information. This process always happens through the establishing of relations and through drawing connections: the structures of the semantic relationships established in the cultural organization of our brains allows us to interact with others through language and behaviour. Since drawing can mediate between perception and reflection, it plays a constitutive role in the production and communication of knowledge. From my perspective, the genesis of ideas is often directly connected with graphical thinking. On the one hand, it is a creative practice

¹ For example, Luke Wittwer has carefully developed his *Diagram of a Day* (a small list of 24 hierarchically set in order) with 16 thick, horizontal and figures. In the case of Chloé Sauter there are small figures that will help you figure out

did and do begin with a quick draft to capture an idea, no place (for oneself or other), on the other hand, hardly any, they reflect as forms of visual representation when communicating its contents. The drawing of figures thus reveals itself to be one of the oldest of all mankind's natural techniques, and remains to this day a fundamental instrument in any kind of artistic or scientific praxis.

Reverse Engineering of a Theory It was soon clear to me that I would have to open up my archive of figures to make them accessible to others, so opening them up to research into the potential of drawings. The figures I had drawn myself served as a starting point for the here collected hypotheses. They quickly became associative catalysts of an animated exchange with the most varied people from the most widely differing fields (artists, writers, scientists).

I sent my drawings to various correspondents with a request for a written interpretation (*Interpretation*), so that in turn I could read in their texts with their graphic drawings. The process worked much like a potlatch, for action was exchanged? Thought's role in intense processes and exchange of thoughts, the most varying ideas, symposia, theses and in relations developed, eventually receiving the form of captions (scientific notes, longer essays or the forms of figure, drawing, hypothesis and diagram). The resulting contributions are of very different kinds, reflecting their authors' particular fields of knowledge in the innumerable borderland between art, science and fiction.

Out of this has emerged a complex and so-called *zone of thought* which straddles the border between scientific representability and artistic means. Without pretension to completeness, it reveals a *lingua* which touches, penetrates and goes beyond significant aspects of the *lingua*. The figures I contain should always be understood – and here I would like to take up Karin Hausler's reference to Roland Barthes' thoughts¹ – as something moving, changing, living, flexible and fluid in themselves. Through their ambivalent character they

¹ In the context of *semiology* (communication and scientific theory), the *lingua* is here, that is informally or structurally, the author's prior (background) knowledge, or what is already known (research).

² In *semiotics* (like *semiotics* work from other authors) *epiphany* is not (general) or (included) as process of the kind of an *epiphany*, or *epiphany* (which is the process of *epiphany*).

³ See *epiphany*, p. 110.

reveal, to us a cutting plane into the near-invisible matrix of our consciousness, of the invisible mental spaces between meaning-making and meaning.

Index of Figures – The figures themselves and the diverse ways of reading them are the perturbation of the publication. All the figures given in this book were drawn by hand by me. Many of them were sent to more than one person, for parallel interpretation. Consequently, these appear in several places in the book. To ensure easy tracking, each figure has its own number. The numbering follows the logic of their creation and indicates their place in my sketchbooks. The identifying number is given beside each particular figure as (Fig. XXX). A times and collection of all figures used in the publication can be found at the front. This provides both a visual list of contents and an orientation guide. The reader is invited to navigate through the book, to cut through and read into it, with the help of the Index of Figures.

The coloured image parts (Plate I-III) are distributed in three sections. Inspired by Aby Warburg's *Mnemosyne Atlas*, associative images are collected, which emerged in the course of the project as a visual response to the contributions. These draw a visual reference line between my own artwork and the figures found. At the end of *Let's Look* is a colourable folding map (→ Questions of Order and Relational Characteristics in Figures of Thought) which places key figures of thought within an ordered system.⁵

Acknowledgments – I would like to express my thanks here to all the authors for their fascinating interpretations and contributions, and for taking part in this experiment. Particular thanks are due to S. Maria Krieb, for investing so much time, inspiration, and time into the project, and for bringing it to fruition with me, in the form in which you now hold it in your hands.

I would also like to express my gratitude to the Jan van Eyck Academie, Maastricht; the University of Applied Arts, Vienna; and Bernak, the Austrian Federal Ministry for Education, Arts and Culture, for the excellent financial and creative support which has made this project possible.

Nikolaus Ganssauer, Vienna 2011

⁵ This is called 'Index of Figures in Figures of Thought' (see also Typotheca 21). I would like to mention here the notion of 'Index of Figures of Thought' as introduced by Hansson (1980).

⁶ <http://www.letslook.at/index.html> (p. 34).

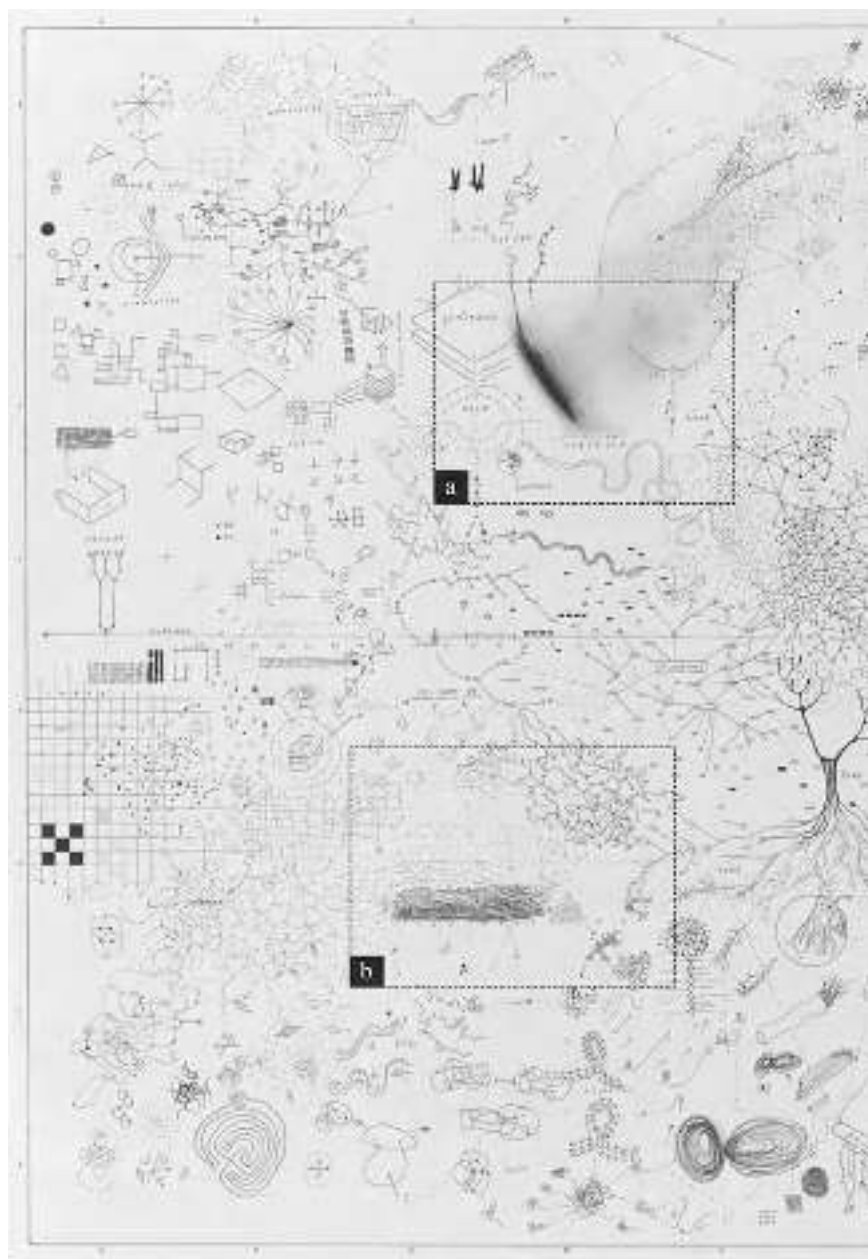


Fig. Questions of Order and Structural Characteristics of Figures of Thought
 (—removable folding map at the end of the book)

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