

1. it is difficult to see / 2. things are hollowed out / 3. of things as they are when we try and represent them / 4. this is where I am in this time this is what I can use / 5. unless we use science and study at it for years / 6. take things apart and make them wilfully un-useful / 7. if things weren't so in the middle / 8. like a drawing waiting to happen / 9. the title of the work names the work in such a way that it suggests the truth of the work / 10. the mystery which is not there / 11. we will end / 12. at the moment these are the most important things / 13. [Ruin, 2005] / 14. it is a ruin the ruin of a moment / 15. from where we are there is only the trace / 16. [a footnote]

1. looking at the work the herd of unending blue I am looking at the herd of unending blue and it is difficult to see the work is either a representation or a schematic description of a thing Mira's work is not about anything that is in the world that is things it is not a representation of anything other than the thing that it is the work shifts constantly between states states of the pictorial and the actual or the physical or the abstract the work is continuous linear drawing and the lines are blue and the lines make shapes make representations of antelope but it is not a representation of an antelope or a herd of antelope the work is an idea about the herd what the herd means a pointing somewhere other than appearances the work is collectivity and multipleness the work is made of multiples of the one thing each one thing being a slight variation on the ideal or the actual thing that it is modelled after the herd the collective the repetition of the one thing with slight variations making a kind of blur a blur of not seeing not being able to distinguish or decide where the eye rests and blue buzzes it is like an optical trick camouflage and this is how the deer seem in the work the deer are just outlines in Mira's work it is the work of outlines things are hollowed out emptied of their contents and what is left is really all that we will ever be able to know without somekind of supernatural knowledge or see through eyes or x ray vision or a kind of transcendent knowledge that looks through all time all walls all appearances and perceives what is ultimately there the truth the essence of the thing
2. looking at Mira's work I am looking at things but to describe these things as things is a deception a trick a rhetoric of saying it is not the way that I look I experience things it is the way that a writer writes reducing the work down to its component parts and then reassembling the world as a schema a diagram an outline or a sketch not the inside of a thing not the way that it works by experience and our experience works with our memory of the way that things are in the past and the way that things are now and the way that we think that they will be or that we desire them to be in the future when and I think that this is what's happening what is happening is that we pass through time time as Mira remembers time as if she were outside it which is what happens when we sit down and think about how to represent things we sit outside time we site ourselves outside and away from time the being in the thick of things and we end up out in the thinness the meanness of things as they are when we try and represent them as ideas or schemas of the world the experience is richer but is it not language or pictures it is in time and we are outside time and not in the moment when we try and realise thing as an idea what happens we are in the exhibition is that we pass through the archway and we were in 1998 and then we are in 2005 and when we are in 2005 and we look back we see nothing
3. only there is no past or future and there is no now and all there is is ideas ideals sketches outlines of things it's like Plato and Plato would be unfashionable I guess but I think of Mira and Plato what she does or what she seems to do is look look hard at the time and know it and feel it and think this is where I am in this time this is what I can use but I can remember the past and will take this from the past and I will make it something living in the present I will take the beautiful sensuous line that was used to describe things in a freer way before to get at the essence of things or perhaps to describe the essence of the artist drawing the line but that was modernism and perhaps modernism was all about personalities *EXPRESSING* themselves and putting them up high outside the normal range and pitch of being human Susan Susan Sontag saying oh so tongue in cheek that the artist goes to the limits of experience and only "He" can go to the limits of experience and bring back things from the absolute outer frontier and give them to us as shadows
4. flickers on the other side of the wayang kulit screen of what is out there in the really living oh you're really living now world the line the line the line that Mira takes from the past the continuous line the practice actual practice of drawing as thinking and not drawing as style or drawing as works on paper but drawing as the artist thinking and wondering and trying to translate the world the line that Mira took to the open plains zoo sitting on the bus and trying to draw the
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blackbuck as they ranged on the plain like an explorer seeing and thinking and writing down loops on the page loops and straight lines lines writing and drawing and Mira takes this line and says I will make some antelope are they antelope or are they deer but they are this they are collective and they are confusing to the eye and they have a certain vulnerability and even though the work is not a picture I am quite sure of this it is not nature illustration it is about an idea I think that what is important is that Mira has captured something of the attitude of the deer they stare at us and they are aware of us but they're not aware of us as us as people or as individuals I think that the deer are only interested in us as we threaten them or we ignore them wary watching but they are indifferent to our personalities they know our smell they might know thousands of things about us that we will never know about each other unless we use science and study at it for years they know things about us about the language of our movement and the different signs that we use and the way that we behave like antelope or blackbuck when we think that we are so different from them like a flash we cannot see us from there and they cannot see them from here we are on the other side of the divide the herd of endless blue

it is a distance or it is a sadness it is the sadness of distance and the sadness that the world is indifferent to us the world will continue the world will continue things in the world might be as Stanley Cavell says "standoffish" it cannot care for us because it is not us the herd of unending blue is literal and it is representational and it is symbolic and these things are I know not quite distinct but not quite the same but I was going for the idea that Mira's work is this and this and this three different things all at once but it is none of these things it is what is in between it is the space that is contained by the outline it is the thing that we do not know and the thing that we are sad to not know and the thing that we are amazed by not knowing the not knowing is a kind of faith in being in the world it is a joyful thing about being in the world that you do not know it all it is the space between the way that we are able to know things the way that the world become knowledge and becomes useful there is a compulsion to take things apart and make them wilfully un-useful to take them apart and to defy the world and this is why it is so hard to say of the joy and the beauty that is in Mira's work because it is not something that you can tell it is something that you see and feel not in a photos not in words I will try and put this into words all my attempts come to nothing

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I begin I begin I begin and there I still am standing in the space and just wanting to say how I love the work that you make and I think even though it is perhaps unfashionable in a way that even the people who are most willingly and carefully unfashionable it is the secret between the left and the right of things that both say that they hate the fashionable and if things weren't this or that then we could get on with things in common sense if things weren't so in the middle or in the in between we could go on with commonsense with getting on with things things wouldn't be so bad if people who control the agenda weren't making such ridiculous statements about stuff which is just plain nonsense if we didn't have to compromise if we didn't have to please the electorate or the interest groups or the right wing or the intellectuals or the politically correct or the common denominator there is always someone to blame and we are in the herd and the herd looks at us we come into this space where drawing is sculpture and painting is drawing and sculpture and we might spend alot of time thinking about the correctness of this the work is not correct it is "disobedient" in the way that Thoreau says that he is disobedient he listens and looks and sees the world in a way he sees he sees great things in the world when we see what we see and what we are told to see obediently this is one of the joys of the work that Mira makes she sees things in a way that is disobedient and sometimes we look we don't quite believe that this is possible it is not in the way of "great art" Susan Sontag and friends and friends say that great art is triumphant and exclusive and kind of snobby Mira is not the first person to look at a piece of wire and say it is like a drawing it is like a drawing waiting to happen and I will tangle and I will make and will describe something and in the shadow and the tangle and buzzing of the blue there will be the antelope looking out at us not seeing us seeing danger or not depending on how we stand or how we smell not seeing like us at all in fact I think that most animals don't even see in colour Mira's art is for humans the creature that thinks and sees and uses the world like a predator with a hand and voice we name and we make and unmake and we consume with our eyes and our hands consuming and using the world and the antelope looks out at us like maybe the antelope looked out from the cave painting and thinks predator predator predator not safe it is a reminder of our danger when we look at the work disobediently we look at the world as something other than material to be used we see what the material says just says without us doing anything it restrain yourself!! Heidegger says stop thinking like a scientist or a fat industrialist or a philosopher and think like a poet goddammit and see that the world says and speaks and communicates something

like an essence but that I will call a convoluted German world which has roots in Greek because when we say a word the etymology of the word speaks through the word through our voice and it says something different to what we intend and our meaning is not our meaning if we only listen we can hear the word speaking of itself and speaking something like the truth about itself the same way the wire will speak of being coiled and then being straitened and then being twisted and the wire that is now a deer and not a deer but the idea of a deer it is all those things but once it was only wire and Mira looked at it and thought wire is a drawing waiting to happen wire is a line it is a line from here to there and I will take the wire for a walk like Klee making the invisible visible I will make a drawing with this wire and will look for something to make the drawing of is this really the way that it happened with the herd of unending blue or did it happen in a different way did the idea of the deer come first followed by the suggestive wire and finally the colour or were the words that make the title of the work always there swimming around in Mira's head like a kind of creature waiting for the right conditions to pounce out and replicate in the world there is a fashionable term for this that I will never learn to use with confidence I will rely on Burroughs who said it first or said in a way that I understand maybe Chomsky said it first on the side of what has always been a kind of truth in the world that language makes the world as we see it language is our condition our lens and it controls us apart from when we break free and we see without language and this is what some people suppose that art does this is nothing new and I am a little afraid to say it because I can't use the words with confidence what I want to say is that the title of the work names the work in such a way that it suggests the truth of the work and that is all that I can say about the title of the work here

here I am standing in the room and I want to say that Mira's work describes something in such a way that leaves the mystery intact the work does not help with the mystery it allows it and says this is the state of things in the world it is not fixed it dances and shimmers before our eyes and when we see we do not see we remember and we fix this memory of the world over it we do not see things as they are it is not mystical the way the world is the world is made of things and the things do not see us the way that we see them the things are not us and they will forever be unknown quantities we stand apart what is interesting is that we keep trying to penetrate the mystery which is not there it is our efforts which mystify and things seem strange when we see them in a way which confounds our common sense we think we are seeing something of the highest order of mystery but really we are just seeing it in a different place or from a different

10. angle or perhaps it is painted a colour and we think aha the world is very mysterious thing indeed we stand in the room and we see the deer which are not deer but an idea and through the door in the room we see the deer arranged on the wall like a herd shifting and changing and defying us to pick one pick one but we can't it's a tangle and if we shift it shifts and it is saying something about leaving painting behind it was an important thing to say in 1998 about leaving pictures and thinking more about things leaving the wall the plane of vision and concentrating more on the experience of the world even the small fact that they aren't exactly flat is a reminder that it is a different kind of drawing that is happening here a drawing that is old and a drawing that was new and is new and is new again drawing as thinking tracing the shifting of ideas as they shift and we catch them shifting and we are with them shift and we think aha I have solved the mystery but the mystery is still there the mystery is the mystery of what the idea is or was

or what comes first or last (only that we will end and end in blue and slowly we will be distanced and replaced and interpreted as we are told and retold and fade as we are remembered) we will never know what was she thinking that was hidden in the work and it cannot be made again with something as precise as language the futurists tried they tried to describe one thing one aspect of the shifting nature of living in the world full of shifting things they thought it was speed or dynamism or movement it echoes and still repeats and we see it all around us people trying in new ways to repeat the experiment of trying to say with things that are fixed something of the way that it is to be in the world and to feel the world around you shifting and changing and what it is to be caught up in this and to suddenly understand the moment that you understand it is lost it slips away from your fingers as they try and grasp and clutch the world is moving moving without us and it does not care we care for the world in a way that world cannot care for us the world does not think it doesn't have language it doesn't even have language 'if a lion could talk, we could not understand him' and 'the human body is the best picture of the human soul' (Wittgenstein from I don't know where) it is hard

11. we are in a room and the room is one half of a gallery which consists of two rooms in one room  
12. Mira has placed a work from 1998 and in the other room there is a work from 2005 and I think that it is kind of like a retrospective except that artists don't make their own retrospectives it's kind of

like arranging your own funeral it is and it isn't like a retrospective but it was one of the main points that I wanted to mention it seemed so important to say there is a movement implied here between 1998 and 2005 a kind of development a retrospective I thought it was a grand unifying idea about Mira's work that it is all outlines and it is like drawing and in the same way Mira gives us the outline of a retrospective of her work she says at the moment these are the most important things this is what I can say about my work and the rest is up to you I will not speak further I will not show more but I will speak and show most carefully what is most important and the rest is up to you it is like the way that I know Mira it is like the way that we know anybody we get the outline and rest is interpretation people are mysteries to us the rest is interpretation or it is faith the way we know is to want things fixed static and unchanging but this is not the way things are and this is what Mira shows us in the most careful way that she can we can never know what someone's 'motivation' is all we get is the outline the trace the way that it is in the world when we see and speak and the rest is faith or it is a mystery there are no other choices this is an abbreviated retrospective so when I pass through the arched door that lead from 1998 to 2005 I imagine that I am passing through time I am in a time machine that Mira has built I turn around I see through the door back to 1998 and there is nothing there well there is the room and room has a floor and walls and it is a spring day and the room has windows and there is the smell that is the pub smell and there are the sound of the street and the sounds of people coming up the metal stairs that lead to to the gallery and they are talking but there is nothing in the room nothing to see "nothing to see" through the arched door now that I am in 2005 but the view of the room and the view out the door and I think "we cannot see the past from the future anymore than we can see the future from the past" it is as Justin Clemens has remarked elsewhere Mira's work makes us aware that time does not exist really exist which I guess he leaves aside that time exists as a by-product of us being alive and experiencing the world but what is to say if we could actually be outside of it that it exists or exists in the way that we experience it perhaps it is a series of discrete moments and what we do is to string them together in no particular order but it seems consistent because if we actually experienced it we would live and die in the same moment we would do everything at once or we would be several million million different people and that would not make sense to our brains structured in the way that we are we are structured like straight lines and not tangled like wire we are not 'dreams or dots' (Walt Whitman) we are and speak and experience like this and so we have all the rest the making sense of things in the world in the way that we can only make sense of them we are confined to this fact of the body that we are that is the best picture that we have of the "human soul" which is all outsides and no insides just a quick summary of things that we don't know and will never know unless we stop thinking like bloody fat industrialists and start thinking like poets and allow the world to speak its truth the truth of the matter is that truth happens in this moment when are in motion and when we stop and try and describe with language with a picture of the thing the world lies in ruins before us because we have paused and not allowed things to speak to us in their own language or to speak our language to us in the way that our language speaks the truth which happens when we listen carefully in a certain way attentively or when we listen disobediently if we allow things to be things material to be material and leave well alone this is the ruin the ruin in 2005 it is a thing taken apart and carefully arranged and presented to us we have travelled from 1998 to see this ruin and we expect that it will be a culmination or somekind of pure and final statement about what Mira does and is but the ruin we notice is just a door and wax the artist has written this on the wall behind us

13. "Ruin, 2005  
door, wax"

14. as if it were a passing thought a notation in a note book a "note to self" a quick way of noting down something that is to be returned to later or returned to Time and time again until we understand or can make use of the significance of these words the ruin meets us at the door and we walk around I do not keep going through the room and out the door into the future I stop here it is all that we can know at the moment 2005 it is a monument to a moment a futurist kind of monument that takes a moment and makes a monument out of it it is in passing it is a door a monument to a door a passing through and being in motion it is the door that blocks the way that has been opened up we can see the moment of passing but we cannot enter the door this monument it is a ruin the ruin of a moment and the ruin of time passing it is past use and has a new use which it to be looked at and thought about and remembered remember this moment this

moment has been taken apart and stretched out not stretched like time's arrow stretched around and in on itself it leads in no direction not to future or past to to itself and it is held together with little yellow patches of effort to make it stand make it balance it is an impossible thing this door not door a moment with lichen growing on its joins and joints it is oddly many things it is a door we see the door in it because we see things that we recognise the thickness and thinness and the places where the wood joins and we recognise that this was once a door and we see that the door has been carefully taken apart with a power tool cutting though following the outline make the solid into a number of outlines each one smaller than the other it makes a sequence it is a sequence from larger to smaller smaller to larger a progression from normal door size to something so narrow that you might say that even a child could not pass through we know that the artist has stood there with these outlines and made them stand together lean and support each other in way that they are not meant to and held them there there is a kind of dance or a kind of lurching a confusion of forms like a thicket of trees and the lichen growing there the hands holding at all places the body moving in a way of describing what the work is or is intended to be we see the tracing the tracing of the line the line is in space we have left the plane behind or the plain or the fields they are back behind us in 1998 in the past that we cannot see anymore than we can see the future from where we are there is only the trace the weakening through memory and distancing and interpreting what we remember we remember the past and future they do not happen we make them we make them over and over and time and time again there is a moment

16. a footnote

The text was written in a single sitting following my final visit to Mira Gojak's exhibition "Time and time again" at Clubproject during November 2005. It has been edited to correct some spelling, and some text has been removed.

The text contains many references to philosophical texts that I have decided not to footnote. This is because they are ideas or phrases as I remember them, usually from secondary sources - for example, the reference to William Burroughs is taken from Laurie Anderson's "Home of the Brave" which I saw on video almost two decades ago, similarly the reference to Chomsky is from a radio discussion of the concept of "memes" heard at some point in the past. I can't guarantee the accuracy of my memory.

I refer to Henry Thoreau's *Walden*, and to an essay by Ralph Waldo Emerson called *Experience*, but in both cases my understanding of these works is framed by the writing of Stanley Cavell in *This New Yet Unapproachable America* (1998) and the essay *Words and Sentences*, which is reproduced in *The Cavell Reader* (ed. Stephen Mulhall, 1996).

Susan Sontag's comment on going to the limits of experience is from her introductory essay to George Bataille's *Story of the Eye*. I have lent this book to someone and cannot verify its publication date.

The two aphorisms quoted from Ludwig Wittgenstein are from *Philosophical Investigations* translated by G.E.M. Anscombe, published by Blackwell (1967), pages 223 and 178 respectively.

The reference to Walt Whitman's phrase *He does not see men and women as dreams or dots* is remembered from a recording of a work by Nigel Butterley for three voices, strings and woodwind instruments which I heard sometime between 1983 and 1985. I cannot locate this phrase anywhere in the edition that I have of Whitman's complete poems.

The text also draws on my memory of Justin Clemens' essay for Mira Gojak's exhibition *Wax me to the vapour and the dusk, sometimes* Gertrude Contemporary Art Spaces, 2003.