



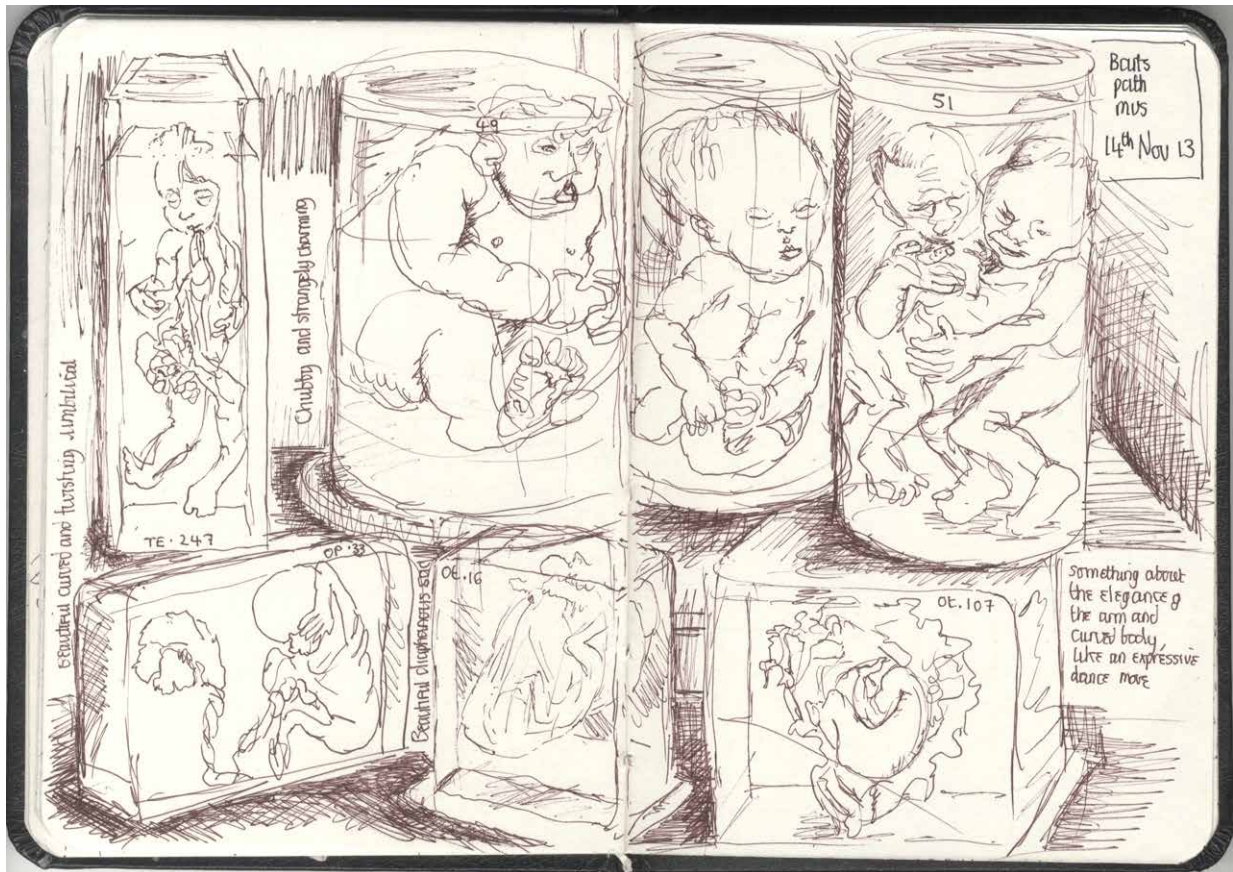
Essay

Stuff in Jars

There are three classes of people: those who see. Those who see when they are shown. Those who do not see

Lucy Lyons

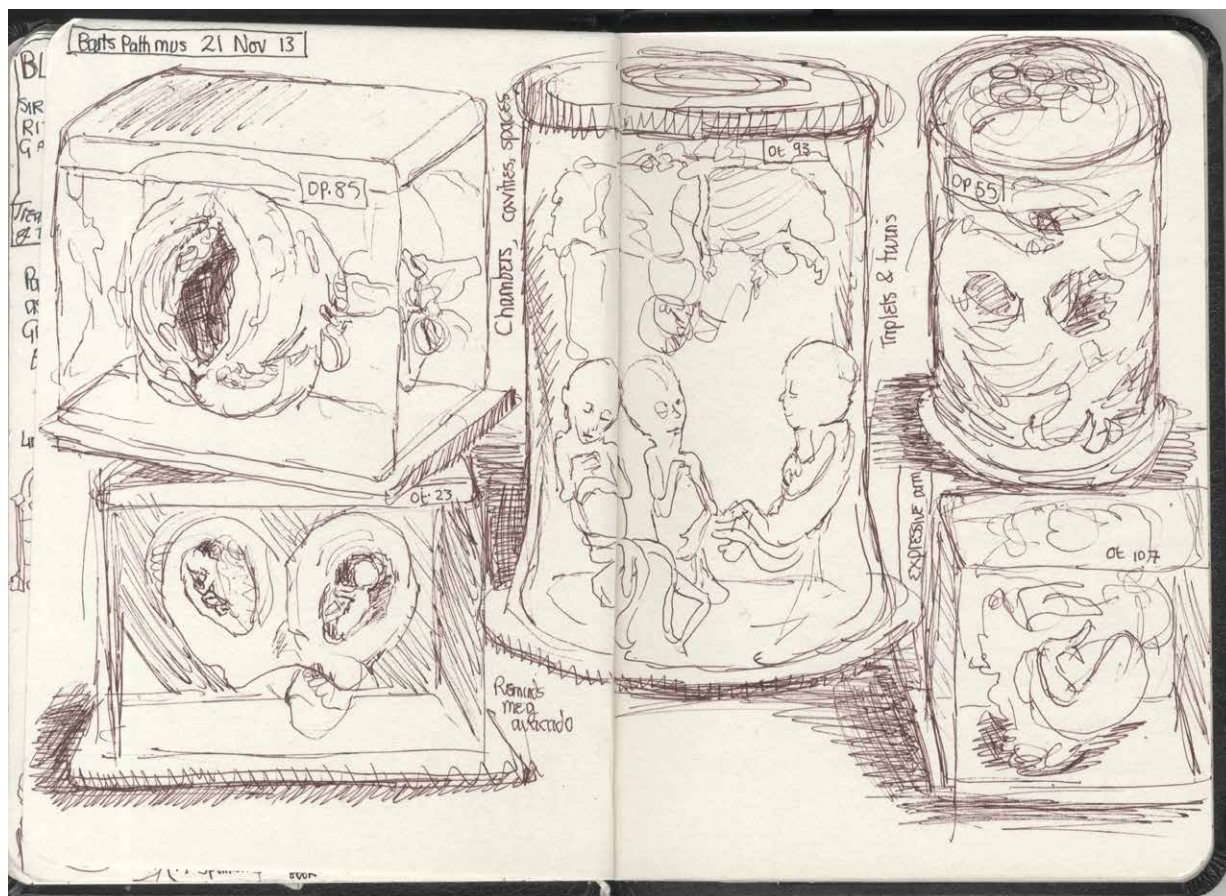
The Margate School (ESADHaR) and is a tutor in anatomy and art at UCL



NoteBook415

The spaces I occupy to create my work are usually in situ; in museums, medical collections, archives, conservation rooms, anatomy labs, galleries and storerooms. Fascinated by specimens and prosections most of my time has been spent drawing stuff in jars.

I make visual notes in A6 notebooks of everything around me. When I visit a museum I draw the objects, I draw the sculptures and paintings I see in galleries and I draw the people at talks and conferences. These notes make use of text and visual notes, each mark being



NoteBook418

placed on the paper in the moment. They capture and record each unique moment as it happens. When I look at them again I am taken back to that exact moment and recall the sounds, smells and sensations as well as the object being viewed.

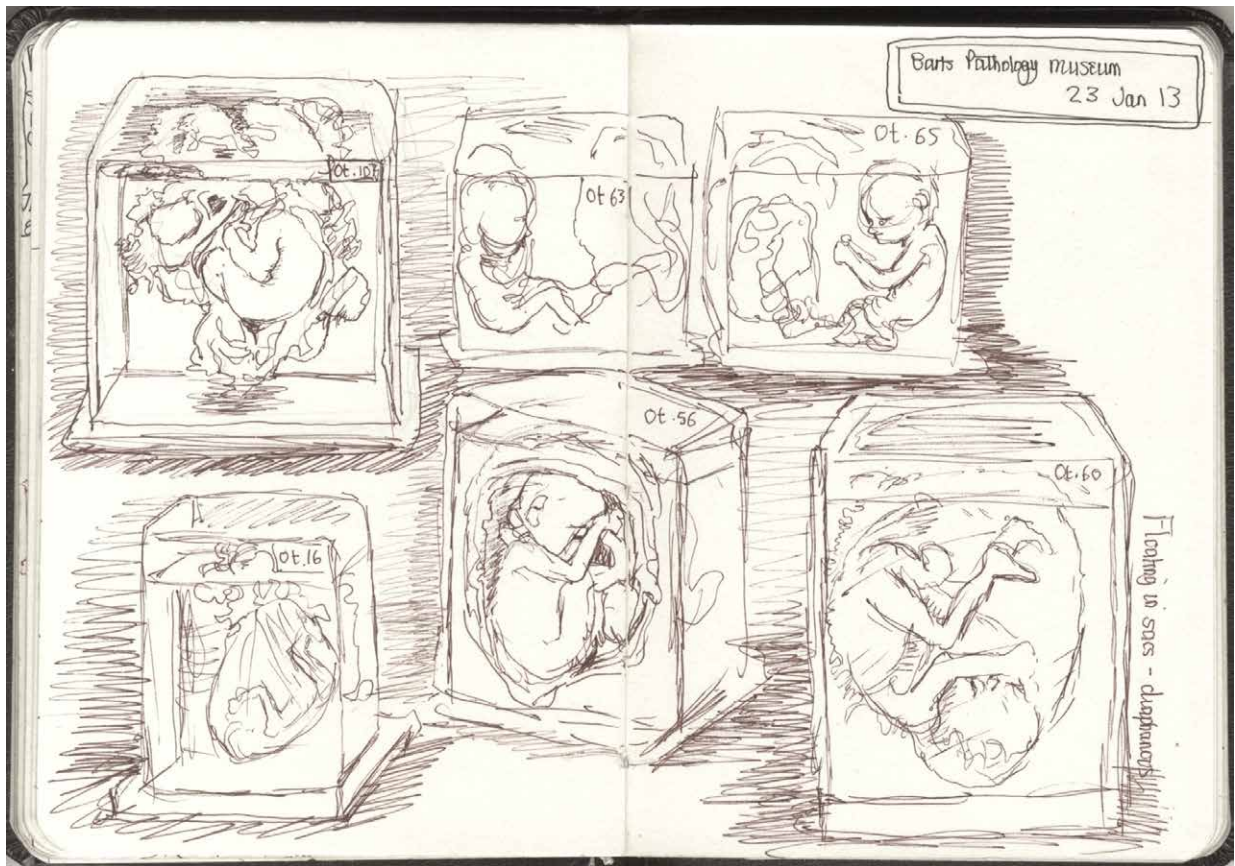
The drawn information is equal to the text. There is no hierarchy in the marks and they equally describe the experience. But the visual stays longer, remaining imprinted on the brain. The visual notes trigger a memory of that moment far more quickly and more clearly than the text.

Looking at the world through the tip of the pencil

The visual notes are made quickly but they stem from the premise of my work - the notion of "Slow Looking." This begins with the act of stopping, and spending time looking, really looking at the things around us. The dull and overly familiar and the shocking and unfamiliar, are all of equal importance when closely observed and investigated through drawing. Once the pen touches the page, a bridge is formed between looker and object. The pen reveals the moment the object becomes seen and the presence of the looker.

Visual note taking often, I look at a scene but I am not sure what I am trying to see. Too much information and too many distractions around the periphery of my vision prevent me really seeing clearly what I am trying to engage with. The pen narrows this down and clarifies my focus. The experience of the general scene, the noise and feelings surrounding the object all remain embedded in the notes through the activity of drawing, without drowning out the presence of the object. I use pen rather

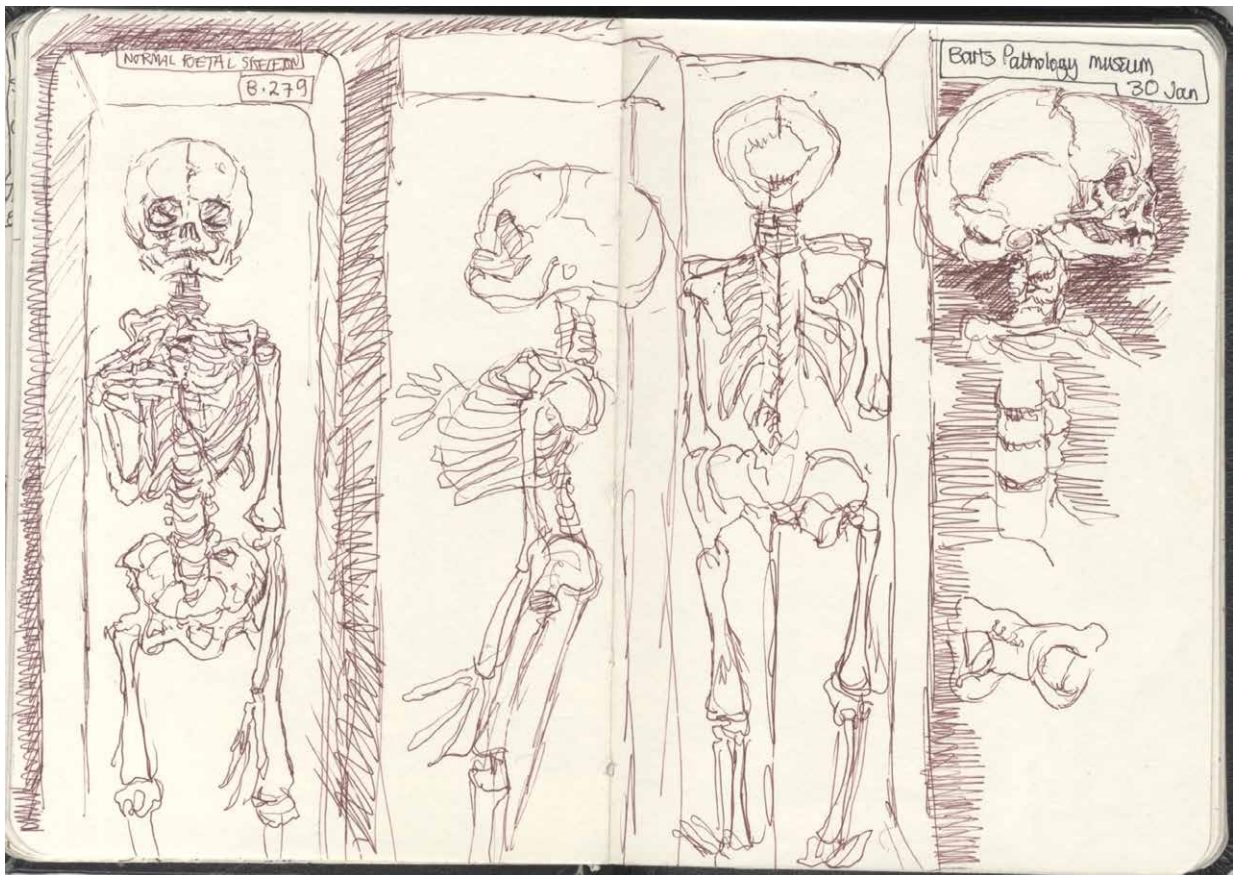
than pencil in my notebooks. This is for several reasons. Pencil has too great an impermanence and fragility for note taking. You can't correct pen so it is more immediate and direct and I am prevented from being overly concerned with the image as a finished drawing. When sitting in lectures it would be more natural to use a pen to write notes and these are the same but make greater use of visual notes.



NoteBook425

This places these images into the category of note taking rather than drawing. They are used to gather information by visually collecting everything around me. They become a journal of the journey of my experiences and gaining insight into the subjects and world around

me. They demonstrate to others and myself where my interests and obsessions lie. Upon returning to them, I am transported back to the moment of each encounter. They stop being a memory or even forgotten and become present again.



NoteBook426

Many of the visual notes are made in medical museums. They reveal first encounters. I sometimes think of them as shaking hands with the object, introducing myself to them and trying to get the measure of them in our first meeting.

Looking slowly but note taking at speed allows me to try to look beyond any shock or misunderstanding I may have. It attempts to shake off the preconceptions and assumptions we all carry with us. I may think I dislike something, or find it uninteresting, but this is because I haven't given enough time and care to the act of looking at it.

The world around us is fascinating, breath-taking and often overwhelming. The only way I can grasp evidence

of my encounters, begin to get better understanding of them and to learn from these is through the act of drawing. Visual note taking allows me to do this in the moment. These notes generate the essence of the experience as well as document the information about the object.

I use sepia pen to make the visual notes. I use a black pen to make notes that are given as fact, i.e. labels, quotes and information given by speakers at lectures and conferences. I use the sepia pen to write my own thoughts and information I wish to add. These are written on a different orientation on the page so they are separate but are visually interwoven with the experience at the time.



NoteBook607



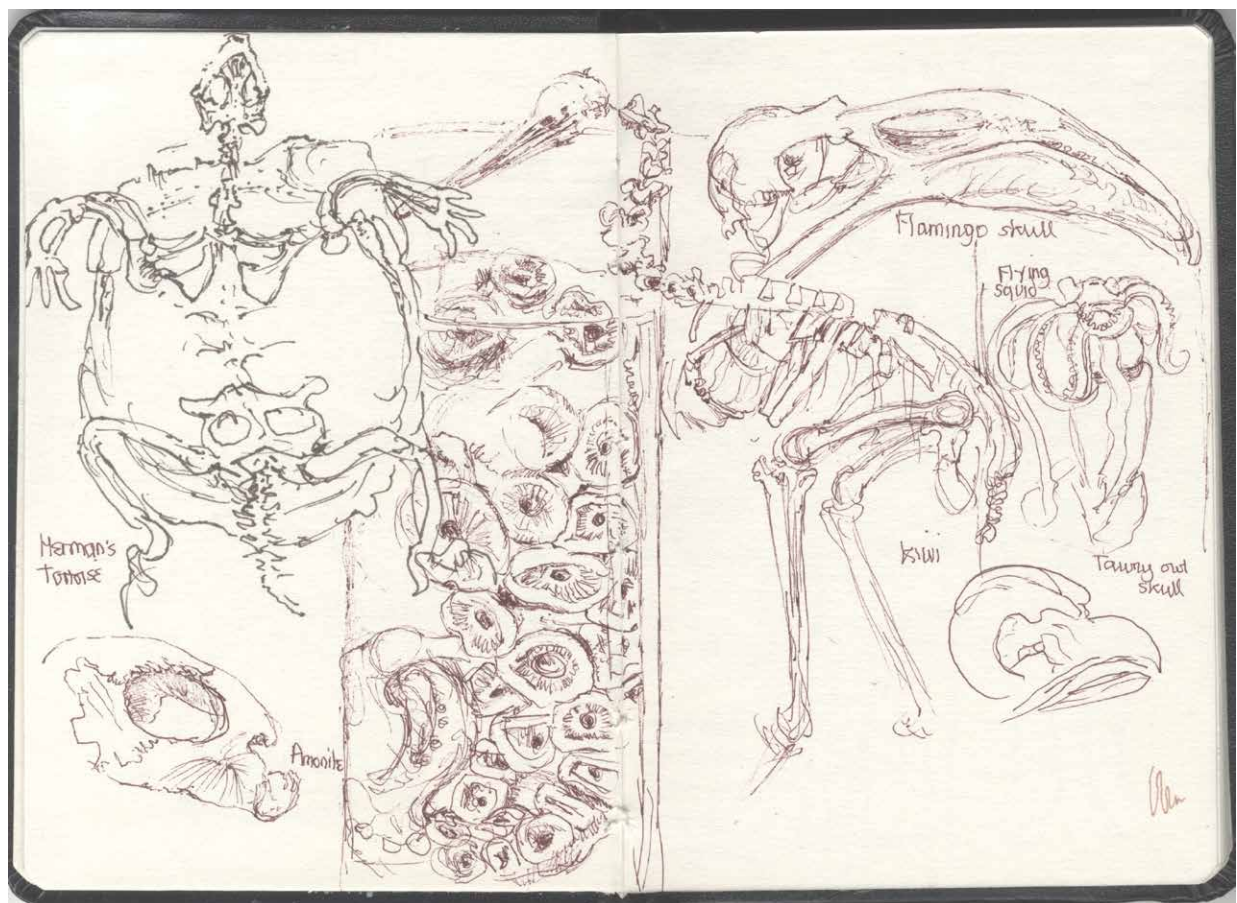
NoteBook612

Stuff in jars

Most of the things I draw are hidden away and inaccessible. For some, these specimens and prosections are things they would be very interested in seeing but they don't have the opportunity to see them. For others they would not wish to see them and have concerns about them.

The visual notes places them very clearly into a place where they can be accessed as a gateway connecting them to the object without being the object or having a great likeness to the original. They emphasize the initial moment of encounter and the experience of that.

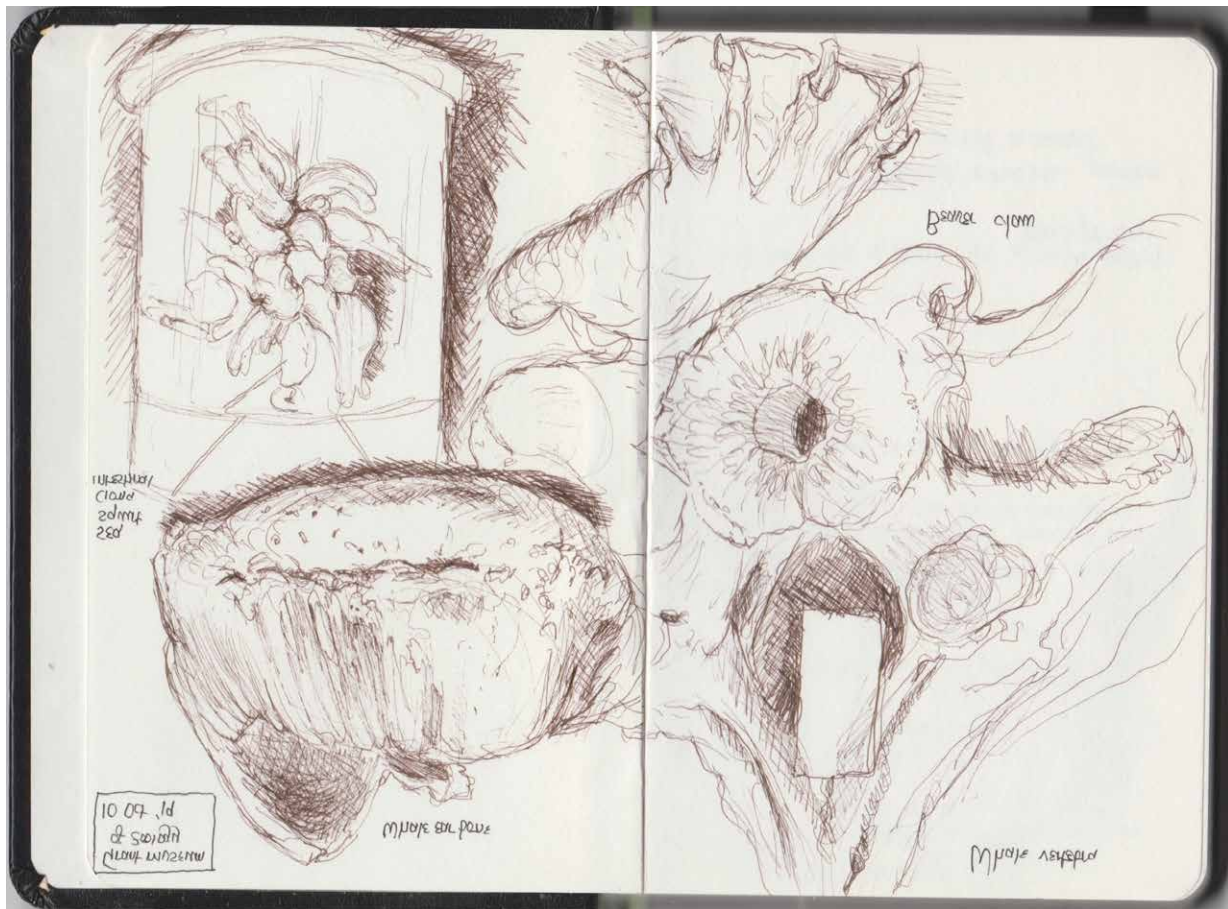
As a collection, these visual note books share my journey of looking at stuff; the stuff that is everywhere, stuff in galleries, in museums, in medical collections, stuff lying around, people doing stuff and people talking about stuff. The stuff that isn't in these notebooks is the stuff in my head. This is real stuff, things, material, bodily, shocking, boring and beautiful. These are my collections of stuff, the moments of encounters with them and my understanding of them.



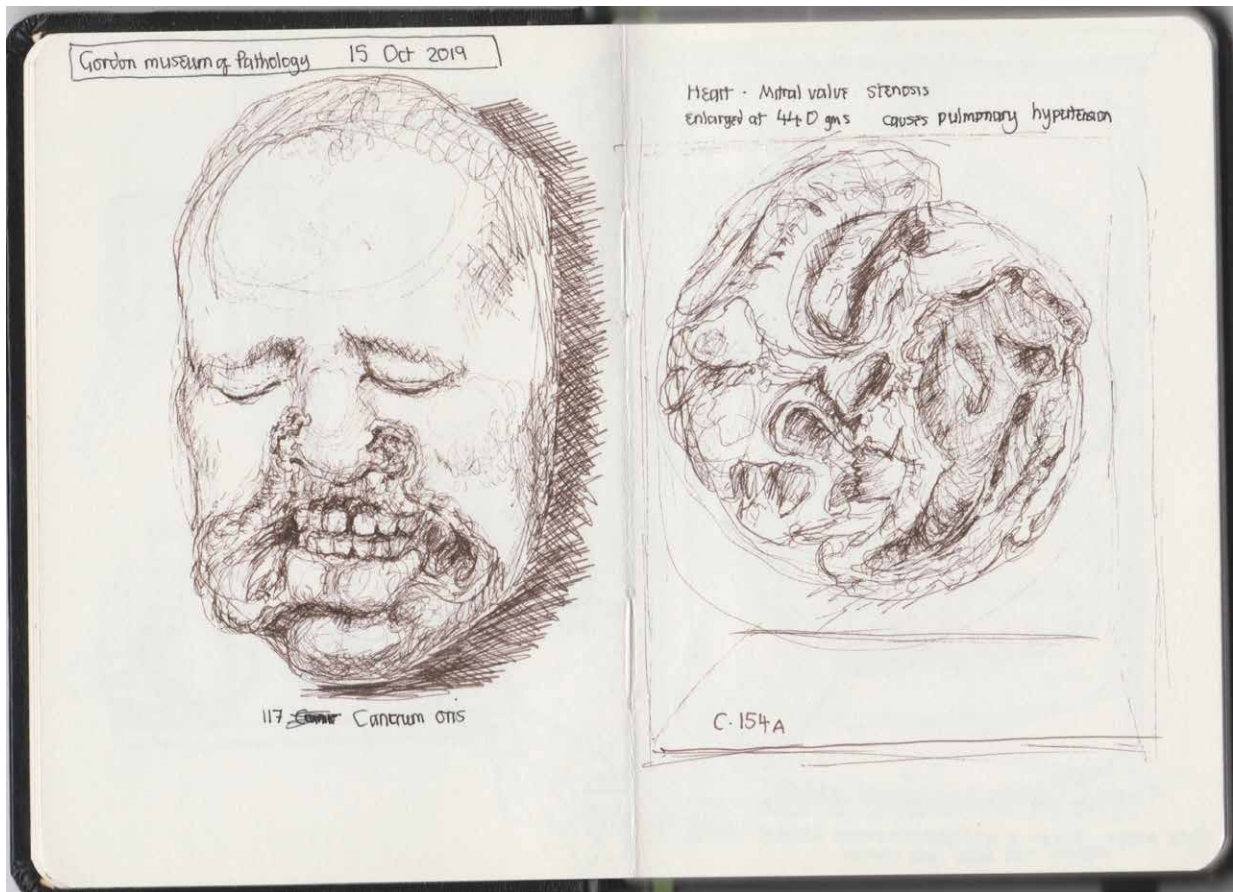
NoteBook703



NoteBook61224



NoteBook1301



NoteBook61305

Dr Lucy Lyons uses drawing as intervention into different disciplines, researching how the activity of drawing leads to better understanding through “slow looking.” She currently lectures in drawing and in contextual studies at The Margate School (ESADHaR) and is a tutor in anatomy and art at UCL. She is also involved in collective multi disciplinary practice, and hosts artists’ residencies and facilitates performances and exhibitions in her home, Gordon House Margate.