
This item was submitted to [Loughborough's Research Repository](#) by the author.
Items in Figshare are protected by copyright, with all rights reserved, unless otherwise indicated.

The ratcatcher explains drawing to a watercolour

PLEASE CITE THE PUBLISHED VERSION

<http://nyxnoctournal.org/>

PUBLISHER

© Nyx, a noctournal

VERSION

AM (Accepted Manuscript)

PUBLISHER STATEMENT

This work is made available according to the conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives 4.0 International (CC BY-NC-ND 4.0) licence. Full details of this licence are available at:
<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/>

LICENCE

CC BY-NC-ND 4.0

REPOSITORY RECORD

Sawdon, Phil. 2019. "The Ratcatcher Explains Drawing to a Watercolour". figshare.
<https://hdl.handle.net/2134/16702>.

The Rat Catcher Explains Drawing to a Watercolour

Phil Sawdon

René Hector is by appointment an old English rat catcher and artist in residence to *The Fictional Museum of Drawing*. His attire is known to include a taxidermy weasel, striped shirt (reluctant collar), boots and awkward trousers, with a sisal belt inset with watercolour shrews.

We found him absorbed in his daily rounds.

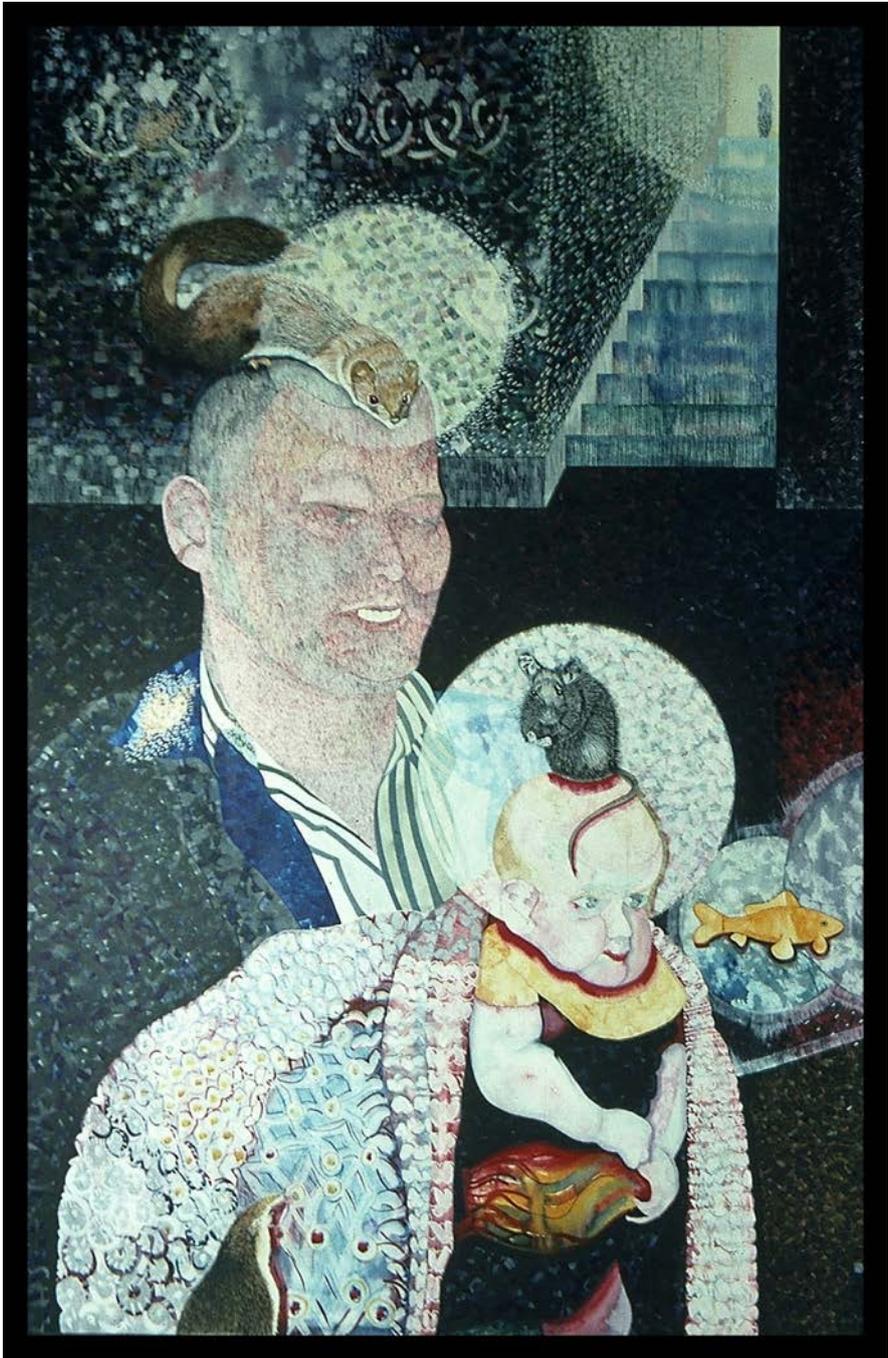
His head is scarified with short balayé strokes and the now customary weasel perches uncomfortably whilst Hector began to explain drawing to an old English rat seemingly caught and transfixed by the whisperings. We were asked to observe from a distance. Muttering in an apparent dialogue, he processed through the galleries from drawing to drawing. Occasionally he stopped and returned to the vestibule where he sharpened a pencil, and placed the shavings carefully on the ground near the roots of an ash tree. He laid a bisque doll likeness of Henry Mayhew alongside the mesmerised rat in the midst of the shavings; murmurs then collected them up and proceeded on a habitual itinerary.

We managed to scrape together the following oddments.

“Why sir, drawing is playing with words! ... Pestilent drawings ... packed like cups ... line upon line ... drawings are sparrows huddled up in the corners ... once vermin in colour and habit ... drawings eat anything.”

“Under drawing ... illustrate goldfish ... appropriate in attitude ... crossed and marked on the paper ... a bag with no lines ... learn the drawings haunts ... simple methods ... use your hand ... Bricolage ... bricoleur.”

“Pierce the paper with nibs and teeth ... fringe fallacious deckles ... scratch the vellum until it scars and festers ... the drawings core should be as big as a boil and hard as ... squeeze the ink from it ... black autumn humors ... irritable and drawn watercolour”



“Lose your pen when rattling ... let loose on the surface of the paper and put a bell on ... the pen should come back to you ... well trained ... the weasel’s bite is more dangerous than the pen ... this drawing is dying ... this drawing is dead.”

Hector paused and we witnessed him draw from an inside pocket yet more pencils seemingly attached by dumb lines to several sparrows. He began to draw their song, and when they replied with another uneasy and curious mark, he responded, and they drew a different trace. In the same manner he illustrated the songs, fears, laughs and rattles of many other birds that he had caught and caged in the gallery. Their songs and sounds in his ear and mouth, drawing in the space between hand and bird. Around his feet amongst the shavings and piles of rubble swarmed what looked like ants, cockroaches and crickets. Hard-shell black beetles were busy laying eggs and several gnawed at the scraps of paper hanging from numerous empty bottles of ink.

He resumed:

“Drawing terminates in composition ... lines from tails ... washed with ink ... “

After three hours we were brusquely told to leave. René Hector, still speaking softly, sat on a stool in the library and with the bisque doll in his arms he turned his back.