



Simon Finn
Synthetic Surge

1 August - 1 September 2012

Beam Contemporary, Level 1, 30 Guildford Lane Melbourne Australia 3000

Images. Front: Liquid Surge. 2012. Charcoal on Paper. 150 x 85 cm

Inside: Pier Collapse. 2011. Charcoal on Paper. 200 x 100 cm

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It is tempting to read Simon Finn's recent charcoal drawings simply—that is, singly¹—as being direct and uncomplex depictions of the real world, and indeed as being all the more affective because of it. But to understand the singularity of an artwork is always to draw out its complexities.

The first complexity is at the level of process. Finn's process centres on his skills in computer animation and 3D modelling. Driven by the desire to understand the force and motions involved in the event of a tsunami (a desire which now carries greater gravitas following the tsunami that ravaged Japan in 2011), Finn created a 3D computer model of a wave crashing into a pier. Once constructed, the computer model allowed Finn to view and deconstruct the event as a series of images much like a film, but with an important difference—Finn's model allowed him

to not only to break the complex motion of the sequence down into a series of moments in time, like film-stills, but also to reinvest each of these frozen moments with a new complexity, as each moment could be viewed from any angle, in any light and at any scale. Finn then used these re-energised 'stills' to extract singular images, on which he based his charcoal drawings.

The conceptualisation of this process opens onto another complexity. Finn's work can be seen as about animation—a playing about the strange gap between two still images that, when those images are shown in sequence, gives rise to motion. As such, Finn's work engages with a tradition that includes the ancient hoofed animals on the walls of the Chauvet caves, the high-brow art experiments of Degas, Duchamp and the Futurists, and the low-brow arts of comic strips and cartoons.²

But, in the end, the complexities must lead us back to simplicity—the blunt affective force of each of Finn's charcoal images tells us this. Indeed, it is only in recognising these fluctuations between simplicity and complexity that we can understand how art binds process, meaning and form together.

Finn's drawings (and for that matter the accompanying sculptural works) are a simple (and singular, in the sense that they embody one out of a possible many) demonstration—a demonstration of the way computer technologies can open onto new ways of seeing movement in the stasis of the image. And it is this singular opening onto possibility that sits metaphorically in the broken plume of the wave breaking across the face of the page, just as it sits in the rocky dust of the charcoal breaking across the whiteness of the paper.

[Nicholas Croggon](#)

Nicholas Croggon is a writer based in Melbourne. He is co-editor of the peer-reviewed art history journal *e-maj* and co-editor and co-founder of the contemporary art journal, *Discipline*.

¹ The word 'simple' has its etymological root in the Latin *simplus*, meaning single.

² On the complex relationship between expression and content, animation and drawing, and process and meaning, see Rosalind Krauss, "'The Rock": William Kentridge's Drawings for Projection', in *Perpetual Inventory*, MIT Press, 2010, pp. 55 to 88.

