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**School: Bath School of Design**

**Researcher: Tim Vyner**

**Project Title: Mount Athos**

**UOA: 32 - Art and Design: History, Practice and Theory**

Critical Reflection on the Research

The research questions for me in this portfolio are clear: can I get close to understanding this private community as a non-orthodox person through drawing, can I contribute as a 'journalistic' illustrator to the long history of artists who have visited and drawn on the Holy Mountain, and how might the methods I employ connect to external audiences in the 21st Century.

Mount Athos is a place that has changed very little in over 1000 years. Artists have visited to capture a sense of time and place for centuries, and while the landscape has changed very little, the methods and processes employed by artists have evolved. The Russian monk Vasily Barsky recorded the monasteries in the 1700's in a set of architectural line studies that captured the lives of the monks alongside the monastery buildings and the landscape of Athos [<https://athosweblog.com/tag/barsky/>]. One of the most striking things about these drawings is how contemporary they feel when you see them. They are of their time, but they are also timeless. One of the ways technology has been an important drawing tool in this research is how it has connected to a wide range of audiences that otherwise would not have learned about life on Mount Athos.

During three visits over a calendar year, to a place I had no previous connection with, it was the practice of drawing that allowed me access and permission to work among the monasteries and the fathers. I adopted the traditional analogue drawing techniques from Barsky, [ink and line observed on location] as well as an iPad to create a series of digital drawings. My intention was to see if digital drawings could have the same instinctive observational qualities as analogue techniques. Victor Ambrus, the illustrator talking about this own historical work says: 'a pencil drawing gives you the impression of how things might have been, whereas a camera or a computer says this is how it is'. [South West Heritage Trust [Youtube video https://youtu.be/gswlhoZ6rP0](https://youtu.be/gswlhoZ6rP0)], however, when I use an iPad, I produce artwork that shares the same 'authenticity' of a drawing made with a pencil. And the digital drawing has the facility to reach wider and broader audiences. This is a development from the Ambrus point of view that became apparent during this project when the work went on display. The moving images and digital drawings shared via social media and online as well as being exhibited alongside the traditional drawings and paintings were seen as critically equal, sharing the same gallery wall space and also connected with audiences who cannot visit Mount Athos in person, e.g. women and schools. The Mount Athos Centre hosted a series of visits during 2015 during the exhibition, which was extended by 3 months before it went on tour to other European venues.

**Additional note:** A planned workshop to revisit the Mount Athos Centre in 2020 to hold a series of talks, workshops and discussions around this body of work was cancelled due to the Covid-19 pandemic.