van Schaik's montages are accounts of his observations and conversations with the
simultaneously recording, questioning and propositioning. montage to arrange text, figures, objects and images in a virtual world-in-a-room as a way of
has been influential in van Schaik's practice. There is a resonance with Hamilton's use of
Pop montage 'Just what is it that makes today's homes so different, so appealing?'
interests, a sort of montage of things that constitute the moment of the thinking. Richard
this exhibition will discover, but also the spatial placement of these in relation to contrary
allow for the location of historical reference, precedents and even key texts as observers of
rather than through the citation of historical linkages made post-factum. The ideographs
It is van Schaik's purpose to find other ways to bring light to the mysteries of the creative
Gardner's proposition simply articulates something already felt in this drawing practice.
It is tempting to explain such an idea by describing van Schaik's frequent references to
the work of Howard Gardner who proposed that intelligence manifests itself in multiple ways
as a collaborator rather than commentator, producer rather than recorder.
These are not easy ideographs to penetrate. They are like bodies to be discovered rather
symbols or texts in that there is no quick message and no particular beginning; one just picks
a point and begins feeling around like a blind person reading a face. The form of the drawing
takes shape but only after several tracings across its surface. This is indeed what makes them
so engaging. They are an adventure and their venturous quality is reminiscent of the drawings
of Archigram whom van Schaik names among those who have influenced his practice.
There are a couple of way-finding tips that may be of use in coming to know these
ideographs. van Schaik uses the outline of a face to remind him of the subjective reality of
the ways we see, that we see through our own baggage. The outline of the face, and in some
ideographs a pair of glasses, introduces the idea of the observer observing the observer doing
the observing, a sort of cybernetic, iterative loop. An idealized theatre is used in some ideographs
as a way of practicing the thinking in a three-dimensional space: the proscenium arch, stage
curtain, backing screens, and side screens providing props on which to locate key elements.
van Schaik produces two kinds of ideograph; one that is created as an act of private
thinking, a sort of reflective practice; and the other as an act of public thinking, a communal
activity. This second kind allows participants a special insight into how these ideographs
come to be. To pay witness to their construction, to see the sequence of mark-making and
arrangement provides a kind of punctuation to the drawing. In the past I have pointed out
to van Schaik that his ideographs are more easily grasped if you see their construction as
it happens. I have recommended that, rather than talking to already completed versions,
a re-construction would be more engaging. He has been reluctant. In retrospect my
recommendation may be misplaced. While witnessing their formation is indeed a privileged
moment, to re-produce them in a rehearsed way may rob them of their greatest attribute
- that is, a spontaneous quality of action-thinking - something much more wonderful, and
never fully recoverable, in a repeat performance.
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Innovative Architecture will be released by Routledge in 2010.

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