

NOTES

1. Quoted by Xavier Salmon in the catalogue here under review [hereafter Paris 2016], p. 45.
2. Inv. no. 96.GB.19. Two shades of black chalk, with stumping, heightened with white chalk and opaque white, on blue paper; 321 x 524 mm; see [www.getty.edu/art/collection](http://www.getty.edu/art/collection).
3. See Catherine Voiriot, "Jardins," in Guillaume Faroult, ed., *Hubert Robert (1733–1808): Un Peintre visionnaire*, exh. cat., Paris, Musée du Louvre, 2016, pp. 346–49.
4. See Paris 2016, p. 57.
5. Inv. no. C 740. Pen and brown ink, with watercolor and opaque white heightening, over black chalk, on blue-gray paper; 244 x 338 mm; and <http://skd-online-collection.skd.museum/de>.
6. Inv. no. 1960.206 (Helen Regenstien Collection). Black chalk, with stumping, heightened with opaque white, on blue paper; 302 x 444 mm; see [www.artic.edu/aic/collections](http://www.artic.edu/aic/collections).
7. Inv. no. 31490. Two shades of black chalk, with stumping, heightened with white chalk and opaque white, on beige paper; 324 x 472 mm; see <http://arts-graphiques.louvre.fr>.
8. See Paris 2016, p. 89.
9. See *ibid.*, p. 62.
10. See Louis Gougenot, "Vic de M. Oudry" (1761), in *Mémoires inédits sur la vie et les ouvrages de Membres de l'Académie royale de peinture et de sculpture*, Paris, 1854, p. 380.
11. See Paris 2016, p. 76.
12. With Graphik-Art SAS, Paris. Two shades of black chalk, with stumping, heightened with white chalk and opaque white, on blue paper; 290 x 510 mm. IMAGE: courtesy of M. and Mme. Martel.

## *Drawing in the Twenty-first Century: The Politics and Poetics of Contemporary Practice*

Edited by Elizabeth A. Pergam. Ashgate Publishing, Farnham, 2015. ISBN: 978-1-47244-576-6. 209 pp., with 56 illus., 8 in color. \$104.95

A remarkable development in the art of the last twenty years has been the expansion of the definition of drawing. While still valued as an intimate form of expression and an essential vehicle for visualizing the artist's first thoughts, drawing has extended beyond the private confines of the studio and acquired a more public presence. The proliferation of exhibitions devoted to it and the increasing number of artists who choose drawing as their primary medium have also contributed to a dramatic change in the status and perception of drawing. This widening of the field, which Elizabeth A. Pergam sees as "the unifying characteristic of drawing today" (p. 21), is the common thread of the essays she collected in *Drawing in the Twenty-first Century*.

The book gathers the papers delivered at the 2011 College Art Association's annual conference in a session devoted to the current practice of drawing.<sup>1</sup> Written by academics, curators, and artists, most papers focus on one particular group

of artists or specific type of drawing. Pergam provides a broader perspective in her opening and closing essays, in which she examines the changing definition of the medium and surveys recent exhibitions devoted to it. To flesh out the book, she included a few additional contributions, notably an interview with Allegra Pesenti (former curator of the Menil Drawing Institute), focusing on the relationship between contemporary and Old Master drawings.

As Pergam and several of the authors note, the current shift in the perception and status of drawing can be traced to the 1960s and '70s, when the medium acquired a new importance and greater autonomy in the wake of Minimalism, Process art, and Conceptual art. Concurrently, exhibitions of drawings became more frequent and, in 1977, the Drawing Center in New York was founded, an event Pergam describes as "the turning point in drawing's history of display" (p. 168). The prevailing, institutional definition of drawing at the time was that of a "unique work on paper." In the last two decades, however, the focus on the support has been called into question. Emphasis on line as the dominant element of drawing has led

to a move away from the paper support toward an expanded conception of drawing in space and as an environmental practice. “The linear definition of drawing has become a dominant strand of the discourse” (p. 5), Pergam states, an assertion supported by the title of the Museum of Modern Art’s 2010 survey exhibition, *On Line: Drawing through the Twentieth Century*.<sup>2</sup> With the broadening of the field came a reconsideration of the medium’s specificity, as certain forms of sculpture and dance were now included in the category of drawing.

One of the most interesting contributions of the book in this regard is Anna Lovatt’s study of drawing as “a new form of site-specific practice” (p. 75). Lovatt locates the origin of this development in sculpture conceived as “drawing in space” by artists such as Alexander Calder (1898–1976), Pablo Picasso (1881–1973), and David Smith (1906–1965). Most of her essay, however, is devoted to a comparison between three-dimensional linear works from the 1960s and ’70s—by Eva Hesse (1936–1970), Sol LeWitt (1928–2007), Gego (1912–1994), and Fred Sandback (1943–2003)—and recent examples of drawings in space

by Monika Grzymala (b. 1970), Ranjani Shettar (b. 1977), and Alyson Shotz (b. 1964). While in the earlier works the focus was on the piece itself (for instance, the materiality of Hesse’s latex-covered strings) and its relationship to the viewer’s body, the new works entertain a more violent and destabilizing relationship to the spatial environment. Thus Grzymala’s kilometers of adhesive tape stretched on and between walls radically transform the architecture of the room, creating a vertiginous effect (e.g., Fig. 1).<sup>3</sup> Such installations reconceive drawing “as an immersive, emancipatory, and participatory practice” (p. 85). Particularly thought-provoking is the relationship Lovatt establishes between these drawings and new visions of space brought about by digitization. Many of the effects created by Grzymala, Shettar, and Shotz recall forms of spatial suggestion in digital imagery, which gives priority to the spectacular over the phenomenological experience. In constructing a space that, like digital representation, “subordinates direct experience in favor of hypnotic visual simulations,” these artists, Lovatt concludes, create work that is “more ludic, more dazzling, and more disorienting than what came

Figure 1

MONIKA  
GRZYMALA

Transition, 2006

Installation (partial  
view)

New York, Marian  
Goodman Gallery  
(© Monika  
Grzymala)

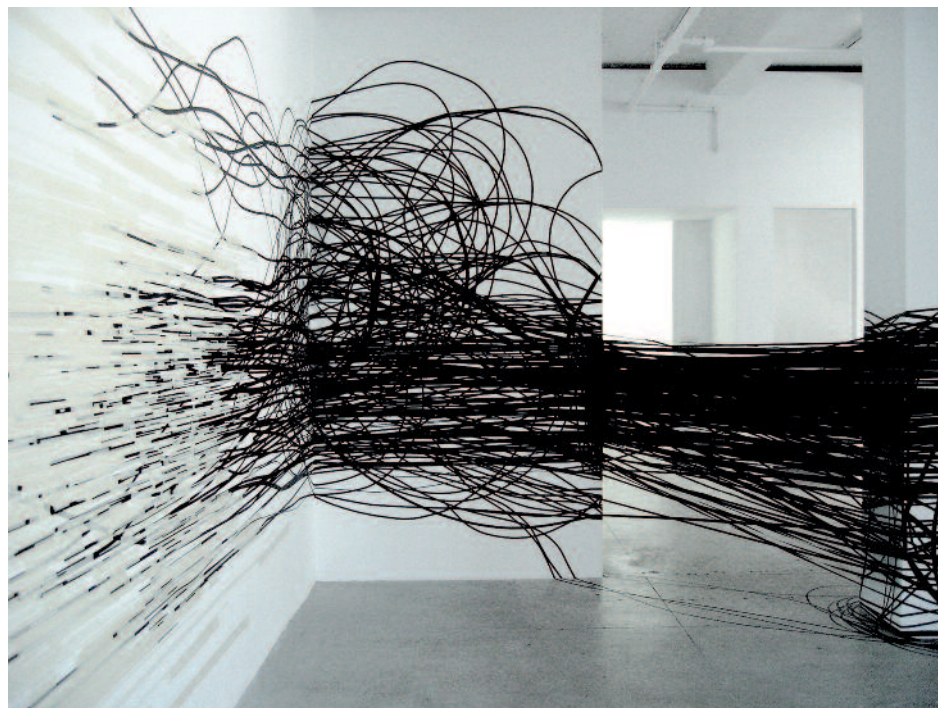


Figure 2

BARBARA  
BERNSTEIN

Things Are Not  
What They Seem,  
Nor Are They  
Otherwise, 2009

Installation by  
author (partial  
view)

Roanoke, VA,  
Hollins University,  
Wilson Museum  
(© 2016 Barbara  
Bernstein)



before, capturing both the giddy pleasure and the profound sense of alienation inherent in the spectacle” (pp. 84, 88).

The more personal essay of artist Barbara Bernstein considers drawing as an “immersive experience” through a range of examples, from the Altamira caves and Tibetan mandala to Jackson Pollock (1912–1956) and Fred Sandback. These precedents set the stage for her own work, in which she uses drawing to transform and destabilize our experience of the most familiar objects. In *Things Are Not What They Seem, Nor Are They Otherwise* (2009; Fig. 2),<sup>4</sup> for example, she drew over every part of a room—from floor to ceiling—creating effects of anamorphosis for the viewer, whose perspective shifts constantly as he or she walks around the room.

As line is breaking free from the page, so too new relationships between drawing and the physical and social environment have emerged. The essay of artist Ben Schachter (b. 1974) examines

the relevance of the Jewish concept of the *eruv* to contemporary drawing. A symbolic enclosure that controls the movement of a community during certain periods of time, the *eruv* has been used by several artists as a point of departure to challenge the traditional definition of drawing. In fact, as Schachter noted, the *eruv*, which is materialized by poles and wire, has a direct connection to contemporary drawings in which artists use wire and string to create lines in space, as in the work of Gego, Sandback, or Richard Tuttle (b. 1941). But for Schachter and the other artists whose work he discusses—Mark Wallinger (b. 1959), Elliot Malkin (b. 1974), Sophie Calle (b. 1953), and Maya Escobar (b. 1984)—it is the idea of the *eruv* as “a freehand tracing over an urban space” (p. 57) that is most relevant. These artists delimit areas of a city by various means: wire for Wallinger, laser light for Malkin, or, more conceptually, through the experience of the inhabitants in Calle’s photographs of the Jerusalem *eruv*. All explore the

implications of drawing as the delimitation of a social space. Schachter’s analysis relies on the description of drawing proposed by Catherine de Zegher (co-curator of MoMA’s *On Line* exhibition), according to which “line is no longer a tool for representation but a strategy that changes the meaning of space” (p. 57).

Harking back to the description by Paul Klee (1879–1940) of the act of drawing as “taking a line for a walk,” the concept of walking as drawing was explored in the 1960s by artists associated with the Land Art movement, such as Richard Long (b. 1945). It has been developed and expanded in contemporary performances, most famously in the *Walks* projects by Francis Alÿs (b. 1959). Kathy Battista’s chapter looks at the intersection of walking and drawing in the work of Katie Holten (b. 1975) and Mariateresa Sartori (b. 1961), two artists who “tell stories through various forms of mapping” (p. 66). Sartori, like a twenty-first-century Canaletto (1697–1768), produced series of drawings of Venice generated by video footage recording movements of people across the Piazza San Marco (e.g., Fig. 3).<sup>5</sup> The celebrated square becomes a complex network of patterns reflecting the activity of Venetians and tourists (typically straight lines for the former, meandering ones for the latter). In a similar fashion, as part of an exhibition on New York’s Lower East Side in 2014, Holten captured daily walks she took in the neighborhood with a GPS. Each walk resulted in a small drawing, to which she added found objects collected along the way.

While most of the essays tend to deal with abstract and Conceptual art, two chapters look at representational drawing—though from radically different perspectives. Peter Kalb’s insightful analysis of the photorealist drawings of Andrea Bowers (b. 1965) shows how her approach introduces political consciousness into a tendency that has historically—when the style emerged in the 1960s—been associated with a conservative ethic. Bowers’s drawings are based on newspaper photographs of political demonstrations, from which she selects details that she meticulously reproduces (e.g., Fig. 4).<sup>6</sup> Bower’s labor-intensive practice



Figure 3

MARIATERESA SARTORI  
All people going, Piazza San Marco, Venice, from 2:05:00 to 2:07:43 on 25 February 2006, 2009

*Courtesy of the Artist and Galleria Michela Rizzo, Venice (© 2016 Mariateresa Sartori)*

Figure 4

ANDREA BOWERS  
Nonviolent Protest Training: Abalone Alliance Camp, Diablo Canyon Nuclear Power Plant, 1981, and San Louis Obispo County-Telegraph Tribune, 14 September 1981 (detail), 2004

*Courtesy of the Artist and Andrew Kreps Gallery, New York (© 2016 Andrea Bowers)*

signals her commitment to the socio-political cause referred to in the image. Kalb credits Bowers, who also extended her drawings into video and performance, for having “transformed photorealism to make it an effective means to convey social content and model political action” (p. 28). By contrast, Peter Trippi’s chapter on the current popularity of the nineteenth-century drawing course of Charles Bargue (1826/27–1883)—a method based on copying the Old Masters—calls for a renewed attention to drawing in the academic tradition as a reaction against contemporary practices. Noting the growing number of independent ateliers and academies across North America and Western Europe, Trippi champions regimented academic instruction as the alternative to what he describes as the “do-what-you-feel classes” offered by university art departments, which encourage students “to do whatever they can manage, without having to attain measurable goals” (pp. 132–33). Trippi’s emphasis on drawing as a pedagogical tool and his conservative stance stand out from the rest of the book. It is unfortunate, however, that his contribution does not take into account the large number of artists working in non-academic representational styles. Vija Celmins (b. 1938) or Catherine Murphy (b. 1946), for instance, apply their highly skilled draftsmanship to the creation of works that are engaged with the contemporary world—notably in their relationship to photography—thereby offering a fresh approach to figurative drawing rather than the stale reproduction of academic formulas.

*Drawing in the Twenty-first Century* is not a survey of contemporary drawing but a reflection on the changing definition of the medium.<sup>7</sup> As Allegra Pesenti reminds us in her conversation with Pergam, the widening of the field has not eliminated the appeal of drawing as a private, inti-

mate practice, in which many artists are still involved. Indeed intimacy—a notion to which Pesenti returns repeatedly in the interview—is the main “binding line” she sees between Old Master and contemporary drawings. Her claim, however, that “essentially artists are still making drawings today for the same reasons they were in the Renaissance, and with the same tools” (p. 143) leaves aside an essential development of the last twenty years. To be sure, drawing is still the medium of choice to jot down thoughts, sketch ideas, or capture quick observations, but, as this volume amply demonstrates, it has expanded today far beyond this function. The many directions into which artists are taking drawing today attest to the vitality and relevance of the medium at the beginning of the new millennium.

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#### NOTES

1. *Contemporary Drawing: Purpose, Practice, Performance*, session chaired by Elizabeth A. Pergam, College Art Association 99th Annual Conference, New York, 2011.
2. See Cornelia H. Butler and Catherine de Zegher, *On Line: Drawing through the Twentieth Century*, exh. cat., New York, Museum of Modern Art, 2010–11.
3. Black and white masking tape; dimensions variable. IMAGE: courtesy of the Galerie Crone, Berlin.
4. Foam core, tape, and/or paper; dimensions variable. IMAGE: Courtesy of the artist and Andrew Kreps Gallery, New York.
5. Pen on paper; 140 x 240 mm. IMAGE: Francesco Allegretto.
6. New York, Museum of Modern Art (partial and promised gift of Steven G. Perlman). Diptych: graphite on paper (965 x 1264 mm) and newspaper page (584 x 356 mm).
7. For such a survey, see, for instance, Katharine Stout, *Contemporary Drawing from the 1960s to Now*, London, 2014.