

Lineweight

Lineweight is an exhibition of drawing about drawing. I began this process with a question about what accounts for the weight given to drawing in contemporary critical discourse. I end with a variety of answers, and a sense that inter-disciplinarity, innovation, and universality are all at play in this heyday for drawing as an end in itself.

Drawing is not merely a means of communicating, it is a form of critical thinking. Like writing, we draw to find out what we know. We learn what it is we think through a process of making those thoughts incarnate. Drawing has its roots in an everyday universal human activity – a process of visualization we all inescapably resort to – on a napkin, giving directions, sketching a prom dress, etc. And drawing has branches too, reaching into all media, playing out in new variations, achieving the sublime and the startling.

I have a hard time deciding which of the artists in this exhibition are nosing around in drawing's roots and which are swinging in its branches. *Christina Ayala* and *John Morris* deconstruct the act of faith that lies at the heart of the relationship between artist and audience with their *Telepathy Drawings*. Placing the pencil in the hand of the audience they ask them to divine the message being sent by the artist, whose stand-in is seated silently opposite them. *Patti Jordan* and *Liz Leger* each create work that embodies that faith in the power of the expressive mark to convey more than objective visual facts to the viewer. Their drawings assert the primacy of a wordless means of sharing subjective states.

Matthew Best turns the sketchbook journal into an end in itself. He takes his tactic from the walking naturalists of the enlightenment, transforming their commonplace and utilitarian mode of drawing into an artwork about our relationship to our environment. *Mugi Takei*, *Ron Kovatch*, and *Carol Radsprecher* each explore another more populist dimension of drawing – the often raw nerve of vernacular drawing. Like *Best*, their work derives from the journal, and mimics the activities of countless non-artists. But they use their own idiosyncratic notations to record the relationship between points within ourselves rather than between ourselves and the world we walk around in.

The traditional model of drawing from nature has been complicated by the intervening filter of technology through which we experience so much of what we know. *Sam King*, *Lynn Tomaszewski*, *Vicki Sher*, and *Susan Maakestad* all create mediated drawings, alluding to these new frames, lenses, and ways of seeing. These works say as much about how we see as what we see.

William Pittman Andrews and *Erin Holscher Alamazon* give us spare explorations – one wide ranging, the other delicately focused – of the simple act of assembling lines on a page. They make us conscious of the process of representation, of the point at which marks become images or images dissolve into marks. Finally *Fiona Robinson* and *Barbara Milot* take up Paul Klee's proposition that a line is a point going for a walk. Their lines go on walks that become maps. They chart space in the world, in their minds, and on a piece of paper – and thereby describe how each maps onto each.

When we look at a drawing we see the artist thinking out loud. And when we make a drawing we literally think concretely and visually. Whether an artist is drawing from nature, drawing from culture, or working in a mode of abstraction the process of drawing allows them to think critically not just about how things look but also about how we look at things. The drawer is engaged in the visual world and also in the nature of their own limited perspective and means of perception. The best drawing not only involves discovering knowledge of the visual but also asks questions about how we know what we know.

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