

Additional reading accompanying *Paper Space: Drawings by Sculptors*



James Surls, *Seeing Silence*, 2010; pencil on paper; 20 x 16 inches; courtesy the artist

Sculptors Drawing

Kurt Mueller

The fact that sculptors draw—not to mention an exhibition built around this idea—may be obvious or a surprise. One can just as easily surmise why an artist working in three dimensions would also work in two dimensions, as one can suspect a contradiction, or at least an inequality in the equation. Isn't it three instead of two dimensions that mark a sculptor?

Traditionally, one could contrast drawing as line, shape, and illusion against sculpture as form, with physical edges, mass, and volume. Historically, drawing was a procedural step, much like the architect's plan, to develop an idea before committing to the expenditures of labor and material that make a finished product. Drawing typically occurred in a space of ideation. It was provisional, ambiguous, potential, and intimate. Sculpture, meanwhile, offered a site of concrete, immutable, public, and often muscular matter. However, since the 1960s sculpture has "expanded" and dematerialized to include all manner of production, from objects to processes to spaces and onward to relations. At the same time drawing, loosely defined as a unique work on paper, has inversely emerged as an independently valued, critical, and collectible art form.

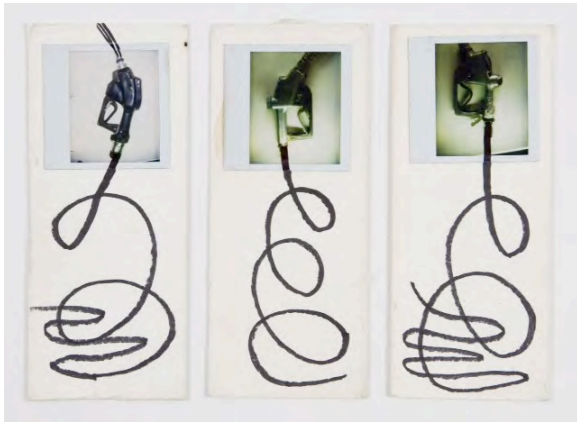
How, then, in this ostensibly post-medium moment do these two mediums relate? Assembled here at Inman Gallery is a body of evidence, thirty-plus drawings by an international roster of sculptors dating back to 1940. Soliciting the intentions of each artist, as well as looking at each work individually and in relationship to others, we've sketched out six possible reasons why sculptors draw. These markers are by no means comprehensive or exclusive. The artists presented here often make drawings following diverse and multiple impulses, complicating if not erasing the distinctions drawn below.

1. For its speed and ease, drawing is a ready tool for brainstorming. Sculptors often draw to inspire, manifest, and explore ideas for future works. This may be a directed activity (sketching or proposing) or a less conscious habit (doodling and scribbling). The results are also often noncommittal and diaristic. Sketches may be fragmentary, recording parts and qualities rather than inventing wholes, and they may never lead to realized sculpture, let alone ever be shared. Louise Bourgeois's untitled 1970 drawing collages together seven similar sketches onto a single page, establishing a phallic and ovular motif for several sculptures to come. James Surls' stream-of-conscious drawings of poetic symbols as well as Alan Saret's haphazard marks made with a "gang" (fistful) of colored pencils, such as *Ensoulement of Multiple Origins United*, 1970, also deliberately yet freely generate designs for sculpture. On the other hand, Phoebe Washburn's *Information Sharing in the Wormhole*, 2011, with its cartoonish machine



Phoebe Washburn, *Information Sharing in the Wormhole*, 2011; graphite and ink on paper; 6 x 12 inches; courtesy Zach Feuer, New York, NY

illustration, and Alice Könitz's untitled 2012 image of cascading, colorful geometric forms both picture purely imaginary sculpture. As Julia Haft-Candell describes, drawing provides space to experiment, giving "total freedom" from the physical and technical realities of sculpture, gravity foremost among them.



Willie Cole, *Gas Snake Studies* ca. 1995; triptych: Polaroid photograph with felt-pencil and gouache on watercolor tip ink marker on watercolor paper; 17 1/4 x 21 5/8 inches (framed); courtesy Alexander and Bonin, New York, NY

2. Perhaps most regularly, sculptors utilize drawing to address and overcome construction concerns. Preparatory studies and schematics here by Alexander Calder, Barry Le Va, Roxy Paine, Fred Sandback, Jesús-Rafael Soto, and Jessica Stockholder plan for the execution of specific sculpture (or installations). These annotated bird's eye, perspective, and axonometric views translate a 3D idea into a two-dimensional image so it may be understood, communicated, and then engineered with 3D material. Such works range from technical and precise diagrams as the blueprint-like *Study for Untitled (7-01-10)*, 2007, by Richard Rezac to loose and gestural investigations like Willie Cole's looping three-part *Gas Snake Studies*, ca. 1995. Studies are often serial; Luis Jimenez's *Print Study Progress I*, 1975, is one of several drawings and lithographic prints the artist drafted to determine the flowing contours and colors of his mounted warrior and buffalo subject, later realized as a polychromed

fiberglass sculpture. Studies also offer a space to troubleshoot, develop, and revise. Dario Robleto's *Untitled (Billie)*, 1998-99, for instance, reveals the young artist editing an existing conceptual text-based gesture into one of his first visual forms.

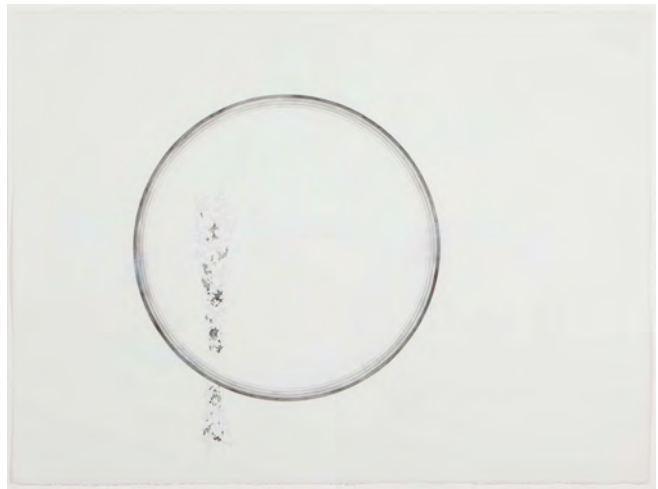
3. In the particular instance of James Drake's *Artificial Life*, 2009, the artist drew and sculpted concurrently to produce a drawing that is an independent, albeit complementary work of art. His cut-paper drawing translates a sculpture, a snakeskin-covered motorcycle engine, into a cut paper and graphite relief that mimics the unexpected texture of sculpture while adding an even more delicate dimension to the form. Drawing, as an alternate space, provided Drake a way to advance a relationship to his sculpture. Linda Ridgway's meticulously drawn apron in *May 21, 1982*, 2011, and Yasuaki Onishi's untitled 2012 glue drops on tracing paper further exemplify drawing as iteration. Ridgway uses enlarged photographs or direct print impressions of her finished sculptures to initiate graphite renderings of the sculptures retrospectively. She brings 3D form back into a two-dimensional, or "paper space" to, as she describes, "see the sculpture in a different way or to see it again in a new way." Many artists, including Alberto Giacometti, Richard Serra, and Al Taylor, have drawn their own finished sculptures, though the resulting images are not typically well known to the public.

4. Another fascinating, seemingly atypical case is that of a sculptor making drawing unrelated, or at best indirectly related to her sculptural practice. Drawing in these instances—drawing as breathing space—is likely an end rather than a means, done perhaps for a pause or the pure pleasure or mark making. For example, Dan Flavin, known for his minimalist fluorescent light installations, was also a lifelong draftsman and collector of drawings. Among other subjects, he produced a series of drawings of sailboats. Upon first glance, the charcoal and pastel marks of *Sails*, 1986, may appear anomalous to his sculptural practice of configuring industrial objects. However, Flavin conveys a dynamic energy with an economy of line and composition that is not unlike his iconic sculpture *Diagonal of May 25*, 1963, 1963. Any correlations are speculative, but still perhaps the perceived peculiarity of such drawing speaks more to the interests of art history than of the artist.

5. Since Flavin's time, contemporary artists increasingly evince, and are embraced for a broad interest in making art in multiple media. Many artists who routinely make sculpture, but who also produce some combination of painting, performance, video, and drawing have sidestepped critical and historical categorization as sculptors. Identifying instead as a mixed-media artist, each creates drawings that do not

illustrate, depict, or otherwise represent her sculpture before, during, or after the fact. Rather, the artist's drawings tangentially complement her production conceptually and/or visually by sharing ideas, attitudes, and/or imagery. These drawings are often finished independent works and regularly include other media. Martin Kersels' *Flotsam (Arms Lightning)*, 2012, Katrina Moorhead's 2012 untitled work, and Kishio Suga's *area of dependency*, 1973, each reflect concerns common to the work of their maker, respectively: sound and the body; the corporeality of light; and, to quote Suga, "the materiality and arrangement of space." Michael Jones McKean's untitled 2006 riverboat vignette further demonstrates how, though drawing, a mixed-media artist can develop a narrative thread for a body of work as well elaborate shared formal and thematic qualities.

6. Like mixed-media artists, self-identified sculptors produce drawings that parallel their sculpture in concept and form, but do not depict sculpture. Besides drawing as preliminary gesture, this approach to drawing as a parallel practice is perhaps the most common. Works here by Lynda Benglis, Daniel Cummings, Melvin Edwards, DeWitt Godfrey, Christiane Löhr, Sheila Pepe, and Carl Suddath each in their own way express concerns of a three-dimensional practice within, or upon two-dimensional space. Frequently, the drawing functions not as space for picture-making, but instead as a span and substrate, a site of material processes and a set of relations between forms, borders, and the viewer. Serra, who is not included here but whose recent drawing retrospective at the Menil Collection (March 2 – June 10, 2012) provided a catalyst for this exhibition, is exemplary in this regard. He uses paper and oil stick to experientially evoke, much like his monumental steel sculpture, issues of scale, mass, and architectural contingency. Similarly, DeWitt Godfrey's graphite rubbing *Spear No. 2 cafe*, 2009, relates a system of finding forms and dynamic relationships akin to that of his site-specific constructions. Identifying and recording abstract shapes in masonry patterns, woodpiles, and tiles echoes his practice of identifying and inserting his vocabulary of ribbon-like metal forms into public places. Melvin Edwards' *Avenue B Wire Vari #5*, 1973, shares the barrier-like configurations of line, space, and material of his installations of the period, in which stretches of barbed wire extend across gallery spaces. In the drawing strokes of spray paint capture, photogram-like, the silhouettes of lengths of barbed wire crossing paper.



Katrina Moorhead, *Untitled*, 2012; pencil and gouache on watercolor paper; 22 x 30 inches



Lynda Benglis, *Untitled (#26)*, 1979; collage on handmade paper; 26 x 33 inches; courtesy Texas Gallery, Houston

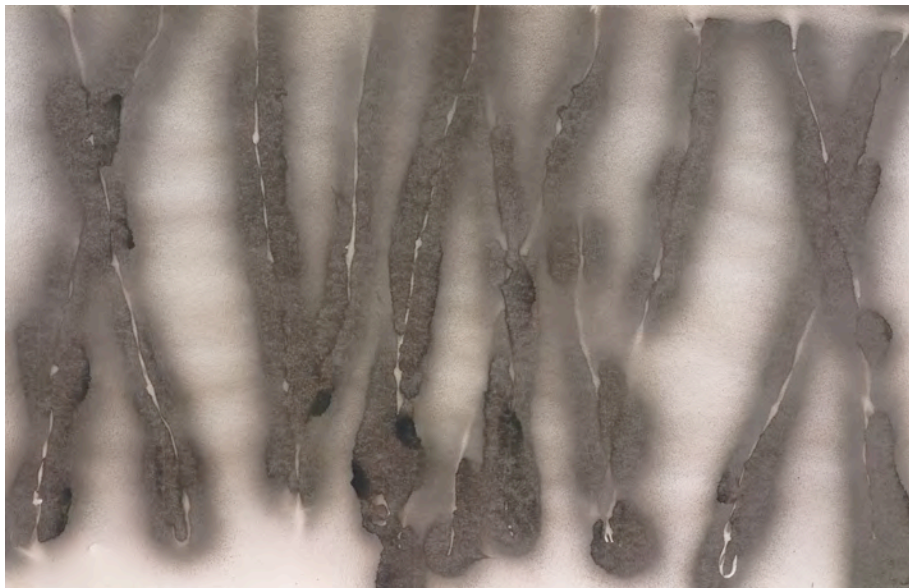
It's worth noting in conclusion that Edwards thinks of his barbed wire installations as drawings in space, which instructively flips the relationship we've considered through the six explanations above. The notion of sculpture as drawing explicitly informs the work of Cummings, Haft-Candell, Pepe, Sandback, Saret, and the unique hybrid practice of Taylor (not to mention several others less obviously). These artists' sinewy, abstract 3D objects and installations foreground the complexities of seeing line at depth and

experiencing line as direction and structure. Sculpture as drawing, often suspended and defying gravity, brings the imaginary potential of "Paper Space" into lived space. Meanwhile drawing as sculpture similarly extends thought into a corporeal experience. From either direction, the act of sculptors drawing equally expounds our perception of sculpture and our view of drawing. It locates *Paper Space* not just between the hand and eye, but also between the body and mind.

Paper Space: Drawings by Sculptors is on view at Inman Gallery from September 7 – October 27, 2012. Artists in the exhibition include Lynda Benglis, Louise Bourgeois, Alexander Calder, Willie Cole, Daniel Cummings, James Drake, Melvin Edwards, Sérvulo Esmeraldo, León Ferrari, Dan Flavin, DeWitt Godfrey, Julia Haft-Candell, Luis Jiménez, Martin Kersels, Alice Könitz, Barry Le Va, Christiane Löhr, Michael Jones McKean, Katrina Moorhead, Yasuaki Onishi, Roxy Paine, Sheila Pepe, Richard Rezac, Linda Ridgway, Dario Robleto, Fred Sandback, Alan Saret, Jesús-Rafael Soto, Jessica Stockholder, Carl Suddath, Kishio Suga, James Surls, Al Taylor, and Phoebe Washburn.

Inman Gallery would like to remember the late Barry Walker, former curator of Prints and Drawings at the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston. Barry's enthusiasm for drawings by sculptors helped inspire this exhibition. We would also like to thank the galleries who have loaned work to the show: Texas Gallery, Houston; Moody Gallery, Houston; Sicardi Gallery, Houston; ACME, Los Angeles; Alexander and Bonin, New York; Alexander Gray and Associates, New York; Carroll and Sons, Boston; Cheim and Read, New York; James Cohan Gallery, New York; Jason McCoy Gallery, New York; Lawrence Markey, San Antonio; Talley Dunn Gallery, Dallas; Tomio Koyama Gallery, Tokyo; and Zach Feuer Gallery, New York.

For more information, please contact the gallery at 713.526.7800 or info@inmangallery.com.



Melvin Edwards, *Avenue B Wire Vari #5*, 1973; spray paint and ink on paper; 22 3/4 x 35 inches; courtesy Alexander Gray and Associates, New York, NY