



TWICE DRAWN

MODERN AND
CONTEMPORARY
DRAWINGS
IN CONTEXT

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IAN BERRY AND JACK SHEAR, EDITORS

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Drawing is often characterized as the most intimate art form. Tradition dictates that a drawing is the first fleshing out of a thought into form—but whether this thought represents a spontaneous gesture, an intently studied likeness, or a hallucinatory rendering of an imagined world, there remains a sense of closeness within a drawing. The work itself invites intimacy by begging for close scrutiny. Even further, a drawing can seem a secret window, opening onto the thoughts and process of its maker.

Intimacy goes hand in hand with transparency, making the window an apt metaphor for a second reason. It is difficult for a drawing to hide: it is what it is. And in the act of looking at a drawing we tend to see *through* it. We read its meanings, but we also read the language of drawing itself. As John Berger points out in his essay reprinted in this volume,

The paper lends itself between the lines to becoming tree, stone, grass, water, cloud. Yet it can never for an instant be confused with the substance of any of these things, for evidently and emphatically, it remains a sheet of paper with fine lines drawn upon it. This is both so obvious and, if one reflects upon it, so strange that it is hard to grasp.

Twice Drawn began as an ongoing conversation about our mutual admiration for drawings. Thinking about drawing as a way of seeing, we immersed ourselves in several private collections—and traded notes and lists of our favorites. The checklist began to form, supplemented with other works we discovered along the way. The assembled drawings represent a wide array of genres and styles, from portraits and landscapes to surreal scenes and conceptual experiments.

We desired to focus on each artist more than a regular group exhibition or collection show might. Through the simple action of displaying two works by each artist, whole worlds of comparisons emerge. In two drawings by Philip Guston, for example, unfolds a brief history of modernism. Some combinations reveal stylistic shifts in an artist's practice over time, while

others focus on subtle variations within a single series.

We complicated the project with a second hanging. Thematic concerns guided the organization of this alternate view to explore how context affects our understanding of art. Drawings in a range of styles, including many works seen in the first installation, hung thematically in a radically reconceived presentation. Groupings by traditional genre, such as portraiture, landscape, and abstraction, contrast with clusters organized according to less conventional principles. For example, drawings created in the years 1968, 1975, 1985, 1993, and 2005 form sets that offer an alternative way to examine relationships among style, contemporaneity, and chronology. Focused solo presentations examine in depth the work of four artists—Lee Lozano, Ed Ruscha, Jim Shaw, and Susan Turcot—each accompanied by texts contributed by Skidmore students.

This book documents all aspects of the project while adding a selection of drawings not seen in the exhibition, making the book itself a third display space. You might think of its white pages as empty walls where new hangings have taken place. You can also see the drawings in this book as a visual essay, complemented by texts by John Berger, Jean Fisher and Stella Santacaterina, John Torrealano, and six students.

Drawing has long constituted part of the so-called classical education, where it is closely related to ideas of copying, repetition, and learning from the masters. But etymologically speaking, the Latin root of the verb *educare* is derived from even earlier terms meaning to bring up, to lead, or to draw—as to draw up from a well or draw out a line. In crafting this project, we honored that didactic impulse while celebrating a much-loved medium and presenting a time capsule of the state of drawing now. We left ourselves open to play and experiment in a curatorial sense, but above all sought to provide an extended lesson in looking.

—IAN BERRY AND JACK SHEAR

bottom:
PATRICIA CRONIN
Untitled #104, 1994
Watercolor on paper
20½ x 26 inches

