



Drawing From Women

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The exhibition *Drawing From Women* is a diverse collection of drawings from an equally diverse group of women artists and designers. Whether the work is ink on paper or chemicals on metal foil, representational or expressive, each drawing on exhibit addresses the act of mark making, an activity and skill that directly connects the eye to the hand. Through drawing, the vision of the eyes and mind become tangible, creating images of the seen as well as images of the imagined and ineffable. Meaning and expression are conveyed through a poetic and limitless language of gestures and marks.

The underlying theme of this eclectic and diverse exhibition is semblance. Drawing is a common thread between designers and artists; it is a medium for explanation and a tool for exploration as well as a means of expression. The gestures and marks become the voice the artist and designer employs to communicate their vision. Through a shared language of mark making, expression, and representation, the commonality of the work becomes apparent.

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Karl Burkheimer
March, 2004

”رسومات بريشة نساء“

يشتمل معرض ”رسومات بريشة نساء“ على مجموعة من الرسومات ابتدعتها ريشة مجموعة متنوعة من الفنانات والمصممات. وسواء استعانت الفنانات في رسوماتهن بالحبر على الورق أو اختارت مواد كيميائية على رقائق معدنية، وسواء كان الرسم تمثيلاً أو تعبيرياً، فإن كل رسم من هذه الرسومات منوط بعملية ترك الأثر والبصمة وهي عبارة عن مهارة تربط العين باليد ارتباطاً مباشراً. ويمكن للبصر والبصيرة أن يصبحا من خلال الرسومات حقيقة واقعة حيث أنها تظهر الصورة التي تراها العين والتي ترسمها المخيلة بشكل يفوق الوصف. وتستخدم للتعبير عن مقاصدها لغة شعرية لا حدود لها هي لغة الحركات والإشارات.

يتمحور هذا المعرض المتنوع والانتقائي حول موضوع كامن في عمقه هو الشكل الخارجي. فالرسم يشكل صلة الوصل بين المصممين والفنانين فهو الذي يقدم الشروحات والتفسيرات تماماً كما يستخدم كأداة للاستكشاف ووسيلة للتعبير. وبالتالي تصبح الحركات والإشارات الصوت الذي يستعين به الفنان والمصمم للتعبير عن رؤيتهم. ومن خلال لغة مشتركة تندمج ضمنها الإشارات والتعبير والتمثيل، يظهر جلياً العنصر المشترك في الرسم.

لا يسعنا سوى التعبير عن شكرنا لمؤسسة قطر وجامعة فرجينيا كومولث – كلية فنون التصميم في قطر لما قدماه من دعم واللجنة معرض الجامعة لما بذلوه من جهد في تنظيم هذا العرض ولبورنيرابا بتاناتيشا لتصميم الكاتالوج ولكل من إيمي مورفيلد و بيتي غريل وكل فنان يعرض عمله لدعمهم وتعاونهم ومشاركتهم في المعرض.

كارل بوركهيمر

مارس ٢٠٠٤

EXPRESSION:

DRAWING AS VISUAL LANGUAGE

Moorefield is the Assistant Director and Curator of Collections of VCU arts' Anderson Gallery and holds the rank of Assistant Professor. Most recently she curated the exhibition, *Origins: Works on Paper by Jackson Pollock* and was the 2003 Virginia Curator for the exhibition, *Select*, for the Washington State Museum of Arts, Corcoran Museum of Arts.

Moorefield

In these fifty images by twenty-five women artists and designers, an infinite diversity of cultures, approaches to mark-making and personal artistic visions are apparent. Woven through these images is a sophistication of the medium of drawing, utilizing traditional materials such as pastel, conté crayon, charcoal, and watercolor to the more unique such as nail enamel and chemicals. Those media are applied on a variety of grounds such as mylar, paper, composition board and egg tempera.

The act of drawing or mark making is a fundamental method of human expression. It is a language or dialect that through the use of its varied medias can document ideas, personal thoughts and viewpoints and convey more outward functions such as render the bones of a building, the outline of a garment, a portrait, or construct a storyboard. Functionally, one can always tote a sketchbook, as the act of drawing is a portable art form. You can bring the materials to the inspiration, *per se*. In contemporary art, the defined boundaries of drawing are still held sacred unlike others such as painting and sculpture whose edges have continued to blur together into hybrid art making methods.

Historically the act of drawing was considered a means to an end. A method for the artist to render a thought process on a temporal surface as a reference for the desired finished structure whether that is a painting, sculpture, or architectural construction. Additionally in many cultures, mark making



Christine Hartmann
"Maghreb Impressions"
Ink and watercolor
19.5" x 14.75"
1993

was regulated as a unique feminine skill such as needlework, whereas painting was sacred-masculine and beyond the feminine skill set. Rosalba Carriera, a Venetian born artist was a revolutionary for her time in 17th century Europe for crossing the established boundaries into aristocratic portraiture rendering creating competition for her male counterparts and forging new ground in the media of pastel drawing. Contemporary artists such as Shahzia Sikander have transformed the field of mark making by employing techniques and religious iconography of her native culture of Pakistan into beautiful drawings and minutiae paintings depicting such worldwide themes of immigration and cultural boundaries (border crossing) in her work. Iraqi-born architect Zaha Hadid just was awarded the Pritzker Architecture Prize for 2004 in part for her unusual and innovative design renderings, some that were realized as finished structures and for others never completed past paper. She incorporates markers of her native language into her international designs and buildings, melding eastern and western philosophies.

In *Drawing from Women*, the exhibited artists are also forging new grounds and trends in drawing as a visual language. In looking at the individual works, certain focuses simmer to surface whether the artist employs realism or abstraction. A sense of isolation conveyed through the artist's repetition of imagery is apparent in many of these images such as seeing the ink rendering, *Women from My*

Country by Shetha Faraj Al-Numan. Against the stark ground of paper, linear contour renderings of women's heads wearing the abayah float in space in front of the outline of a mosque. The undefined feminine heads are undistinguishable from each other and their form mimic the architectural shape in the background. Vanessa Yanow's work on paper, *Blind Consumerism* further communicates isolation via rendering a progression of unaided empty shopping carts marching across the paper and out a darkened doorway. Yanow states that drawing "provides... a non-threatening means to communicate intimately with the viewer."

Other artists create dramatic visual documentaries of their artistic journeys such as seen in the lithograph, *Verna Hates the Desert* by Bonnie Greene. She states in her quote, "I draw to exorcise memories and record my path." Alone, elderly woman sits in the center of the composition, starkly rendered with a thin contour line and a few splotches of yellow color. She glares out at the audience, daring us to make assumptions of her vulnerability. Barbara Bughart-Perreault permanently immortalizes her family members in haunting psychological portraits as seen in the beautifully detailed graphite rendering, *Winds of March*. By carefully juxtaposing her subject against an eerie tree lined landscape, connections and personality between the two are inferred and implied.

Many of the works on paper are masterpieces of the media and convey the limitlessness of the artist's creativity. Diane Detamore's facile handling of her rendering tools (oil pastel and paint stick) creates a tromp l'oeil effect as seen in exquisitely beautiful oil pastel and paint stick drawings, *Three Magnolias* and *Bowl with Red Leaf and Feather*. She comments on her inspiration, "Historically, mark making is a primeval activity endowed with magic." Jill London expresses her fascination with internal energy in her abstract work, *Freedom Drawing I*. Creating beautiful lyrical impressions drawn with chemicals, London renders on precious metal creating works that glow with energy and expressive lines. London's current focus in mark making is documenting the passing of time. She comments, "the work is influenced by our ever-changing world."

Other artists utilize mark making as visual exercise for self-reflection and as an alternate form of therapy. Gabrielle Kilan Sims' charcoal rendering, *Reeds in the Wind* acts as a visual marker of her struggles with arthritis. Referencing landscape, she traces her hands in charcoal to create relief silhouettes of the effects of the disease over time. Marking over those silhouettes, her lines reference nature, her body mimics landscape. Jennifer Long employs drawing as a form of automatic writing. In her ink on paper work, *Climb-Fall*, representational images appear and retreat through hazy lines, washes and gashes of color. Giving the appearance of continuing beyond the paper,

Long states, "it's hard to determine where the 'drawing' stops or starts even when I am using strong areas or washes of color."

The act of drawing, marking a surface with pigment and leaving a residue impression allows us to translate our desires into visual physical documents. The selected artists in the exhibition, *Drawing from Women* are a global group drawing artistic inspiration and techniques from their own cultural traditions yet using the universal artistic language of mark making to convey individual interpretations and personal visions into permanent imprints of life.

Amy G. Moorefield
March, 2004



Shetha Faraj Al-Numan

"Abayah"

Ink on paper

5" x 7.5"

2003

The gallery committee of the Virginia Commonwealth University,
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