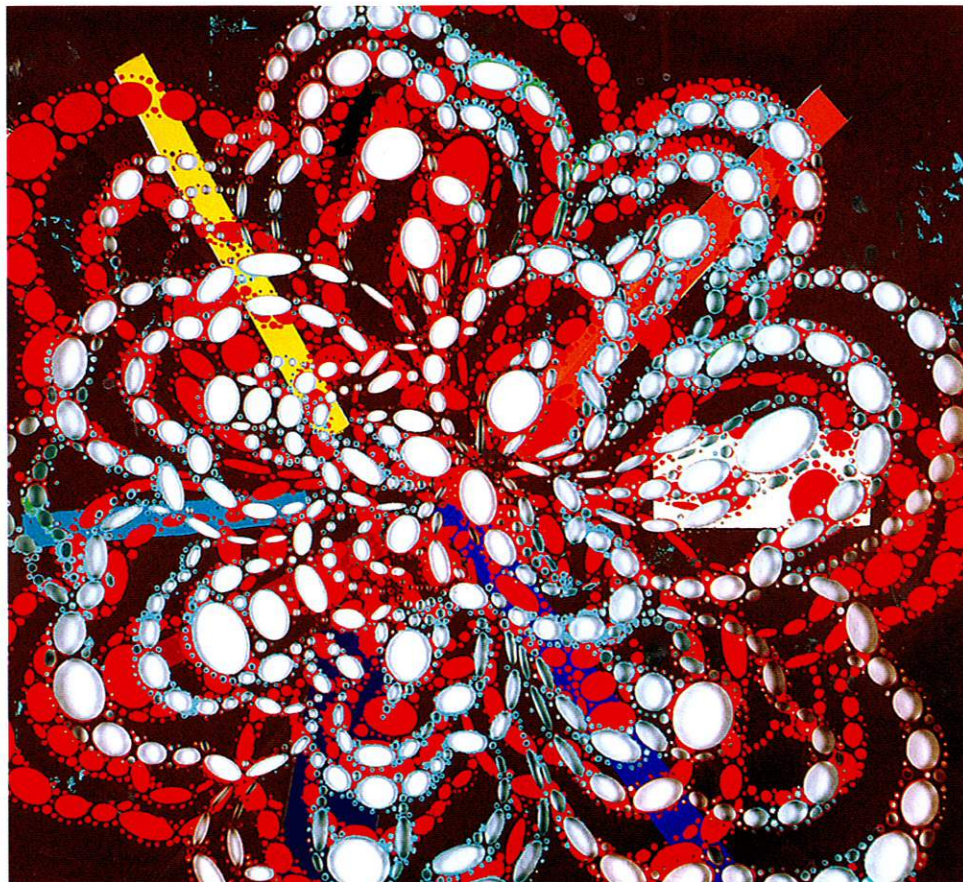


11TH NATIONAL DRAWING INVITATIONAL
New York, Singular Drawings
April 20 – September 9, 2012
ARKANSAS ARTS CENTER | LITTLE ROCK



WORKS BY Reed Anderson ■ Dawn Clements ■ David Kramer ■ Il Lee ■ Ati Maier
John O'Connor ■ Morgan O'Hara ■ Karen Schiff ■ Michael Waugh ■ Daniel Zeller



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After a brief hiatus, one of the Arkansas Arts Center's signature exhibitions, the *National Drawing Invitational*, is back. Now in its 11th installment, the re-vamped *NDI* highlights the stylistic trends in drawing in a particular geographic region—this year it's New York. The ten artists represented in the *National Drawing Invitational: New York, Singular Drawings* explore ideas of the obsessive as well as challenging the very nature and definition of a drawing. The works in this exhibition were carefully selected by Charlotta Kotik, Curator Emerita at the Brooklyn Museum of Art, and represent common threads reflective of the New York art scene today.

The National Drawing Invitational has historically been a beacon for both established artists and fresh faces, and has served as a conduit for many of the finest sheets of contemporary drawing in the Arts Center's collection. By focusing on a particular city, we are continuing our dedication to exploring what is the best and experimental in the world of drawing and at the same time shining a light on the very real and observable local influences on art in an ever more homogenized/connected world.

I hope that you enjoy this exhibition and take the time to consider issues of place, materials and your own ideas of what is a drawing.

Todd Herman, Ph.D.,
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

The Exhilarating Presence of Line

While visiting exhibitions during the last several years I have been struck by the proliferation of works on paper. An adaptable material, responding well to diverse techniques, paper is well suited to convey various formal and conceptual practices. The category of works that could be classified as drawings has grown exponentially—it would be impossible to illustrate all its manifestations in a single exhibition. Thus while building on the tradition of the seminal *National Drawing Invitational* inaugurated at the Arkansas Arts Center in 1986, a decision was made to concentrate on a particular region of the United States to highlight works created in that area. Since I began to work on the exhibition with the abundant resources of New York City galleries and studios, the works seen in the City became a natural choice for a renewed commitment of the Center's *National Drawing Invitational*.

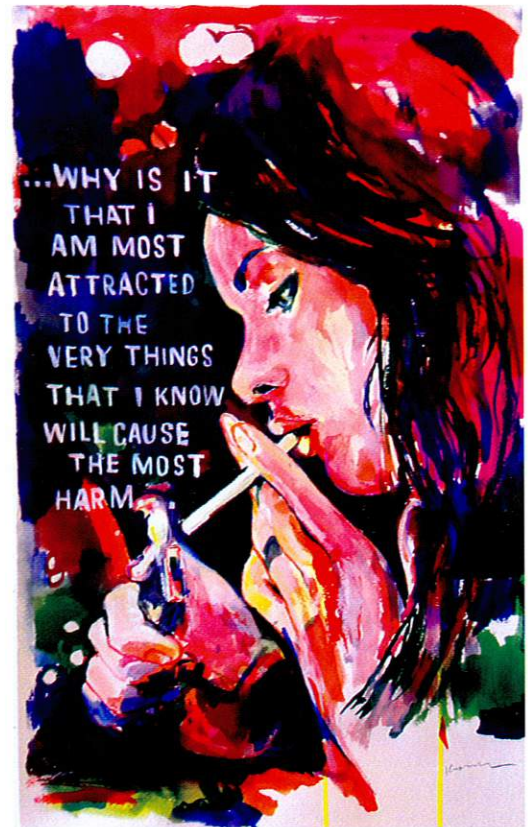
The *11th National Drawing Invitational: New York, Singular Drawings*, illuminates the rich and ever expanding definition of drawing. Works by ten artists attest to the will to experiment and to widen the established understanding of what constitutes this medium. The flexibility of paper allows for use of creative energy that could border on the obsessive. The monumental scale of many works defies the fragility of the material; the density of lines becomes a physical challenge to the artist's hand. The sources of inspiration and the depth of investigation often delve into issues of psychology, science or history.

The physical properties of paper are well demonstrated in the intricate works of Reed Anderson who uses

paper as both the tool and the image. The artist states: "At the heart of my current work are large, intricately cut pieces of paper that are folded in upon themselves and painted multiple times, allowing the cuts to function as stencil and forms in their own right. The result is a combination of printmaking and painting that reproduces itself as the process is repeated... The organic growth of the works establishes new interconnections and offspring-like iterations of my actions as I move forward, with the result both a map of the process and the product of it."¹

It is the artist's ability to work with the void left by the cut out parts of the paper and his background in printmaking that allows for this distinctive style.

Interested in documenting her environment, Dawn Clements began to combine sheets of paper to allow for a more truthful record of objects in her surroundings. She realized that her works could grow to become almost a life size testimony of her whereabouts and she immersed herself into the process. *Marc Leuthold's Sculptures on my Table*, 2010 is a result of a long-term collaboration with the ceramist whose work is part of the collection of the Arkansas Arts Center. Although working in different parts of the country, the two artists devised a method of working "together". Clements made a series of drawings that Leuthold translated into sculptures, which were subsequently drawn by Clements. This process was repeated resulting in the multigenerational work, a kind of visual dialogue. Interestingly it was Marc Leuthold who first brought the Arkansas Arts Center to Dawn's

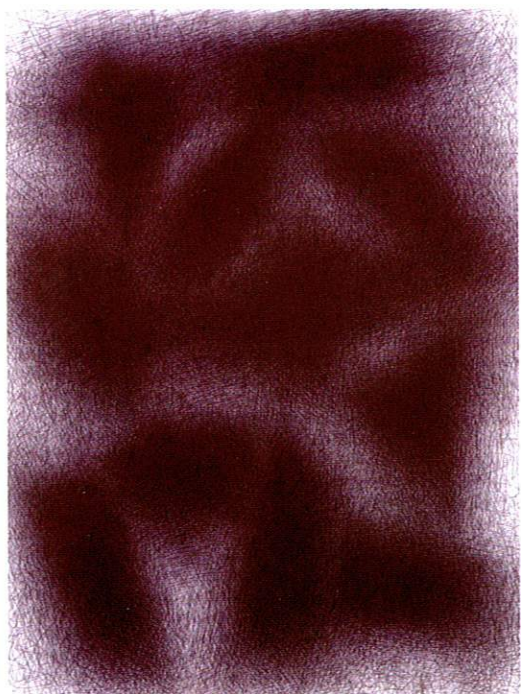


DAVID KRAMER: *Moth to Flame*, 2012

attention—that makes showing "their " piece here doubly poignant.

Clements was invited to make a drawing in response to the work of choreographer Susan Rethorst, who uses her own furniture in performances as stage sets and props. Clements writes about her piece *Susan Rethorst's*, 2011, "While Ms. Rethorst was in rehearsal with her dancers, away from her apartment, I would occupy her apartment and draw the living room. Rather than representing the dancers, I chose to assume the point of view of 'dancer' and draw the living room and the dance space, visually moving and shifting perspective in order to 'move' through the room."²

While Clements draws her inspiration from the existing environment, David Kramer is concerned with the imaginary. Using images from 1970s



IL LEE: BK - 1201, 2012

magazines, Kramer depicts scenes that are broadly accepted as those of everyday life—fictional yet adopted—that resulted from the saturating effect of Madison Avenue pitchmen and Hollywood studio moguls. In short, Kramer portrays the American Dream, which he in turn questions for its authenticity. Kramer's text based pieces run against the grain of the colorful depictions that he has rendered, making for a humorous take, steeped in reality, that bring to mind a nostalgic longing for days gone by in America, that may or may not have really happened.³

While Kramer was born and raised in New York and represents the quintessential American aesthetic often manifested in representational imagery, Korean born Il Lee is devoted to abstraction. The use of the ballpoint pen is fundamental to his practice. While choosing limited means Lee explores concerns of line, form and space. The process is rigorous, spontaneous and tightly controlled. The work *BL-096*, 2008 presents an iconic Lee form—a billowing tower or monolithic presence rising from below. The work *BK-1201*, 2012, features 11 forms that suggest overlapping and gentle movement. As the breadth of Lee's production and concerns defy their means, the result of each drawing is brought to a sum greater than its intriguing parts.⁴

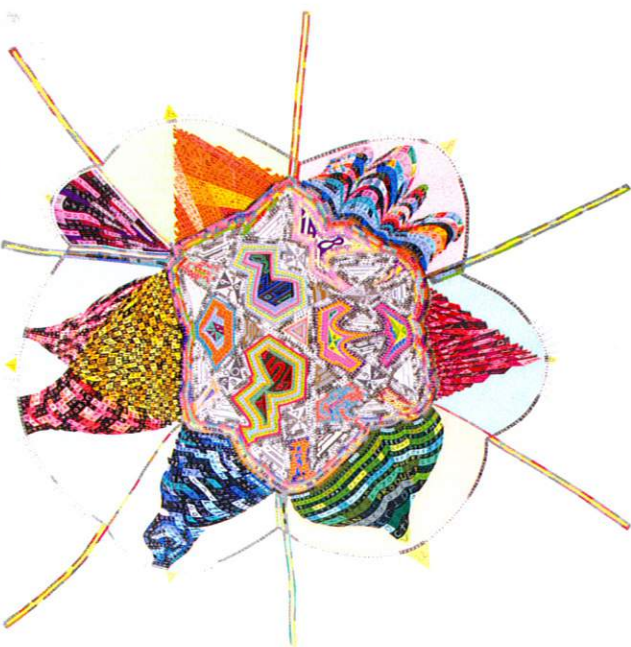
Ati Maier counts the works of German Expressionists, Franz Marc and August Macke, among sources of her inspiration. Her exuberant color schemes and the references to landscape represent this connection with the past. Combined with an interest in recent scientific theories, including satellite views and images from NASA,

her work is an amalgam of explosive colors and shapes. The artist states, "Working in multiple evolving phases, I begin by digitally distorting land and space-scapes, successively warping them to create new combined visions. Each of these images then serves as a single layer in the painting, to be applied with airbrush and ink pen. Only then the actual painting process starts by adding ink color with brush in multiple thin coats, alternating with new layers of Airbrush. The layers of space are woven together in such a way that foreground, middle ground and background along with past, present and future become one single yet dense coherence."⁵

Past, present and future coalesce in the work of John O'Connor as well. In *A Good Idea*, 2010, he comments on the evolution of time. "I began with past disasters, connected them to current events, famous speeches, technological innovations, etc., and ended with predictions of the future. I tried to connect the information via the language that was used to describe the event—the last word or letter of a disaster from 1951 led me to the first word of another disaster from 1981."⁶

Painter Bruce Pearson comments on O'Connor's *S.O.S.*, 2011: "'Secrets of the State,' culls from military patches for secret, real, or fictitious operations, the names of people throughout history who've died of mysterious causes (and the dates), and logos of corporations with direct connections to intelligence operations. It all makes total sense when O'Connor tells me about it, but the closer I look at the work, the more it becomes an impossible riddle, a Zen koan of sorts."⁷

Time is collapsed in Morgan O'Hara's *Time Study*, 1933/2008.



JOHN O'CONNOR: A Good Idea, 2010



ATI MAIER: *Breathless*, 2009

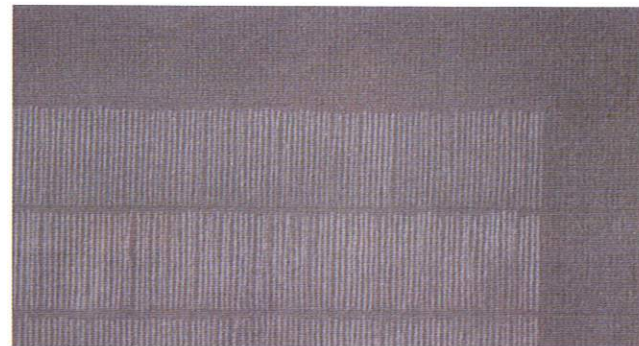
She uses records kept in 1933 by owners of a Japanese general store as the canvas for documenting her own use of time. The initial inscriptions are supplemented by records O'Hara kept during her residency at the MacDowell Colony in New Hampshire in 2008.⁸

Music and writing of John Cage has had a profound influence on O'Hara for almost half a century. To honor Cage's 100th birthday O'Hara is working on a series of 100 drawings of ears. These are accompanied by questions from Cage's seminal book *Silence*, published in 1961, the year when the artist met the composer.

Also inspired by the pre-existing condition of her material, Karen Schiff follows the creases in laid paper bringing attention to the unexpected anomalies of the machine-manufactured paper. "I like to think that each one is like a human being, standing tall and unique. I also think of them as characters in a language whose code is indecipherable... Still, they're saying something—that's the 'language' of artwork—but whatever it is that they're saying has an ultimate indeterminacy."

Schiff's *Spatial Activation* pieces explore patterns used in the backgrounds of medieval manuscripts. While studying medieval techniques the artist felt that many aimed to confuse the eye. "All of the patterns have strong vertical and horizontal lines, but they also all have strong diagonals: these two types of vectors create visual tension within each field... The red and blue palette—especially when checkered with the gold, speckled with white, and set off by black—also creates a dynamic tension as to where the eye should go. This experience matches how you look at the actual sky—the sky is blue, but it's strangely not flat, and it's hard to say how you can perceive its spatial depth. I also think that the illuminators were trying to say that the skies—the heavens—are filled with a sort of divine energy, which has no form but can nonetheless be suggested through pattern."⁹

Historical technique is also essential for Michael Waugh's drawings. He uses micrography, literally "tiny calligraphy," a 1,100 year-old, Hebrew tradition of inscribing sacred texts into visual forms.



KAREN SCHIFF: *Untitled (Scratch Scape)* (detail), 2007



MORGAN O'HARA: *Questions from Silence*, 2011/2012



MICHAEL WAUGH: *The American Jobs Act, part 2 (detail)*, 2012

"My own interpretation of micrography deviates from tradition in several ways, primarily in that I substitute secular texts for religious texts and that I use my own inconsistent handwriting instead of methodical script. The most striking difference is in the scale of my drawings... The largest works are overpowering, engaging with notions of the sublime and raising questions of artistic labor and psychological endurance.

"While a viewer can certainly appreciate these drawings on a purely visual level, my hope always is that their seductive beauty will engage them enough to spend more time looking—and thinking... The relationship between the text and image is allegorical, yet neither simple nor direct. Much as text forms an unstable visual ground, the logic of the allegories that I present are equally unstable.

"The drawing entitled *The American Jobs Act, part 2*, 2012, presents just such an unstable allegory. The text is taken from the legal and budgetary act proposed by President Obama and currently being debated by Congress. The image is of a plague of locusts devouring a field of wheat." Waugh asks us to consider what each element in the drawing represents in this complex political climate.

Diagnosing Speculative Bubbles, 2009, presents a curious landscape dominated by a crater. Be it meteor impact or sinkhole, some disaster has taken place. The text is taken from a scientific description of economic bubbles by Paul Krugman and as such is essentially neutral. However, Krugman's status as a popular columnist complicates the cultural position of his scientific work. Because his is publicly center-left, those on the far

right often doubt even his most neutral observations.¹⁰

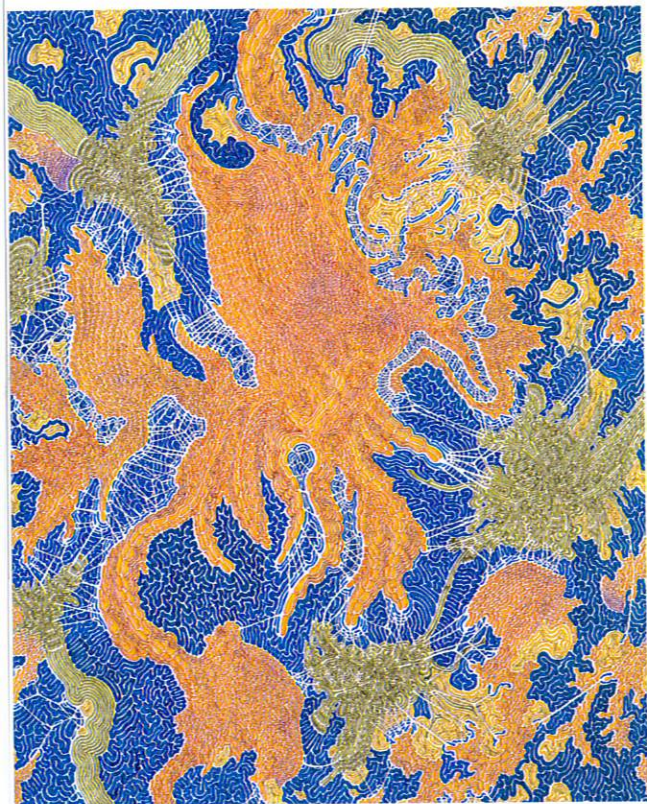
Similar to Ati Maier's, Daniel Zeller's drawings are an amalgam of imagery drawn from satellite photography, electron micrographs, topographical maps, anatomical schematic diagrams and other sources, however there are no direct references.

The artist points to the centrality of the physical act of drawing. "The method is very direct. Like calligraphy, many of the gestures are repeated until they became almost automatic. While these drawings might resemble the results of some kind of scientific inquiry, where vast amounts of information must be sifted through for any hope of enlightenment, they are actually an intuitive response to the parallels and contradictions inherent in the enormous variety of imagery available to us now."¹¹

The variety of imagery reflects the richness and diversity of current artistic output. Although just a small representation of the world of drawing, these pieces present dense, elaborate and highly intricate techniques. These singular achievements of the artists attest to a deep commitment to the medium and to the never-ending quest for individual artistic expression.

Charlotta Kotik
Curator Emerita
Brooklyn Museum

- 1 Reed Anderson, Artist's Statement, 2012
- 2 Dawn Clements, Artist's Statement, 2012
- 3 David Kramer, Artist's Statement, 2012
- 4 Jung Lee Sanders on Il Lee's work, 2012
- 5 Ati Maier, Artist's Statement, 2012
- 6 John O'Connor, Artist comments on *A Good Idea* (2010), 2011
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- 11 Daniel Zeller, Artist's Statement, 2009



DANIEL ZELLER: *Frictional Complacency*, 2010

Charlotta Kotik

Curator Emerita, Brooklyn Museum of Art



"I want to thank Todd Herman, Director of the Arkansas Arts Center for upholding the tradition of the *National Drawing Invitational* exhibitions, to Joseph Lampo, Deputy Director of Programs and Curator, for his infinite patience and exemplary cooperation, and to Matthew Smith, Curatorial Assistant, for his help with all stages of this exhibition. My deep gratitude goes to Eleanor M. Gilles, curatorial assistant for this project in New York, for her unerring attention to countless details. Above all I am grateful to all the artists for their most inspiring works and to the lenders and the artists' galleries for their help in securing the pieces for the exhibition."

Charlotta Kotik, a native of Prague, first came to the United States in 1970 to work at the the Albright-Knox Art Gallery in Buffalo, NY. She established a Prints and Drawing Room and curated numerous exhibitions there until 1983 when she left her position to join the Brooklyn Museum of Art.

She moved to Brooklyn to assume a position in the Museum's Prints and Drawing Department. When the Department of Contemporary Art was established in 1985, she became its chair. At the Brooklyn Museum, where she worked until 2007, she established one of her major contributions to the practice of curating—a series of *Grand Lobby Projects*—in order to provide exhibition opportunities for extensive installation-based works by artists such as Martin Puryear, Joseph Kosuth, Alison Saar, Ida Applebroog, and many others. In the 1980s she also initiated the *Working in Brooklyn Series* to document the energy of the nascent Brooklyn art scene.

In 1993, as the United States commissioner for Venice Biennale, she presented works by Louise Bourgeois in an exhibition that later traveled internationally. During the course of her career, Ms. Kotik has organized over 100 museum exhibitions, presenting the work by contemporary artists such as Mariko Mori, Kerry James Marshall, John

Cage, Jenny Holzer, Robert Longo and many others. Ms. Kotik also worked on a traveling exhibition of Annie Leibovitz's photography, an extensive exhibition with more than two hundred Brooklyn-based artists, *Open House: Working in Brooklyn*, and *Graffiti*—the first museum exhibition of graffiti art.

In 2009, Charlotta Kotik curated, among other projects, a retrospective of Elizabeth Enders' *Landscape/ Language /Line* for Lyman Allyn Art Museum in Connecticut.

Ms. Kotik is on boards and advisory panels of a number of national and international art organizations and is a chair of the Jindrich Chlupecky Foundation, which awards a yearly prize to young visual artists in the Czech Republic. This project became a model for the acknowledgement of artistic excellence in 10 other Post-Communist countries and is jointly sponsored by Czech and American organizations.

Presently, Charlotta Kotik works as a writer and independent curator and facilitates various projects for not-for-profit galleries, alternative spaces and museums alike.