

# In The Arts

## 'Drawing National': expanding the definition of drawing

Defining drawing is virtually impossible. Is it line? Then what about Leonardo da Vinci's *chiaroscuro*? Medium? Robert Smithson's "Spiral Jetty" is a line drawing in rock. Must it be on paper? There are myriad examples to the contrary. How about spontaneity? Jackson Pollock's or even Franz Hals' works would then be drawings rather than paintings. The border between painting and drawing in Western art has become increasingly blurred and today we must question whether the term has any real meaning.

In jurying the "Drawing National" exhibition for Montgomery College-Rockville, Professor Sarah Stecher has allowed the

### OnView

by Nancy Ungar

artists to decide what to call their work. If they decide that their work — be it charcoal on paper or paint on wood — is drawing, it is. By allowing the artist to define the term, Stecher ceded her curatorial power and juried the show solely on the basis of quality. The results are positive. Rather than an exhibition that reflects academic or unorthodox approaches, Stecher arrived at a global, multifaceted representation of what artists are doing today that may or may not be called drawing.

The works of these 72 artists from 30 states varies widely by style and medium. Academic drawings such as Carol Herren Foerster's "Violin" yield to unorthodox representations; drawings in flocking, rubber stamp, etched wax and paint push at the boundaries of media.

D.C. artist Scott Hutchison created two of the most striking pieces, in part because of their large size. Working in charcoal, he depicts humans entrapped by or ensconced in fantastic geometric structures. In "Reach," a dramatically lit pregnant woman dressed in panties and a shirt, stands with her large feet planted firmly inside the base of an inverted geometricized egg while, with head thrown back and arms overhead, she reaches through the rectangular opening at the top to the open sky above. The stretch of her arms pulls her shirt up over a bulging belly, emphasizing her fertility and rendering her gesture a proclamation of life.

Jeffrey S. Haupt's "Trust," a charcoal of a bald, middle-aged man, is a paean to individual spirituality. Caught in an informal moment, wearing a hooded sweatshirt and a T-shirt, the man is elevated by light that sculpts his features. It glances off his forehead, nose and cheekbones, highlights the pressure of his large closed eyelids, transforming him into a peaceful Buddha, com-

pletely trusting and eternally open to the glaring light.

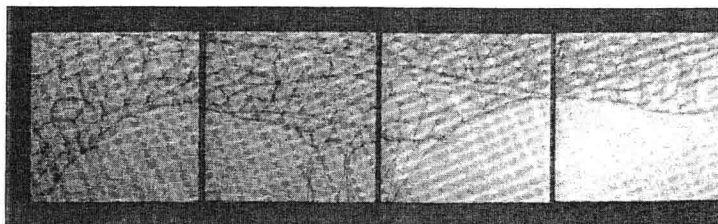


(Clockwise, from top right) In "Substratum #1" (12 by 51 inches), Melanie Shymkiw has incised four square, wax-covered boards with delicate webbing. Jeffrey S. Haupt's charcoal, "Trust" (24 by 18 inches) is a paean to individual spirituality. Kelly L. Adams ventures into romanticism with her moody and detailed charcoal on paper, "Sanctuary" (26 by 30 inches). Scott Hutchison's charcoal on paper, "Reach" (40 by 80 inches), depicts a woman ensconced in a fantastic geometric structure.

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These drawings might be described as "realism" and "surrealism." There is also photo-realism in Melissa B. Tubbs' "Bank Regions."

Kelly L. Adams ventures into romanticism with her moody and detailed charcoal, "Sanctuary." Adams places us at the edge of an opening in deep woods. The sky is damp and gray and the leaves have mostly fallen, exposing bare skeletal branches. Close to our eyes, some leaves are falling or barely holding on to a branch, curling tightly in their death throes. This complex autumnal scene is punctuated by a large, cabbage-like growth in the left foreground: The bulbous form's lively twisted jumble of tendrils splays out from its base; its flowers have given way to two huge phalluses



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that push up life while all else falls.

Skirting the borders of realism is Haig Demarjian's humorous "Double Portrait of Bela Lugosi." Demarjian has repeatedly used a rubber stamp frontal portrait of the actor to create a second profile image. While this easily might have succumbed to gimmickry, the subtly varied stampings give the head a sense of movement and draw you in for a better look.

Several purely abstract pieces that line one short wall further strengthen the show with their own internal range of styles. Kathleen E. King's "Rev. 1" uses calligraphic ink strokes to create a small Franz Kline-like painting; a lively Rorschach test in black, white and peach. Mark Pomilio's charcoal, "Untitled #3," bespeaks the mysterious attraction of geometry with neatly ruled lines in black overlaying tracings in deep gray. The involving image has one velvety black

area seeming to grow from its gray penumbrous surroundings. Geometric forms fade in and out in a poetic shadow dance as regulated as a minuet.

"Substratum #1" is a more organic play of line. Melanie Shymkiw has incised four square, wax-covered boards with delicate webbing. Red brown against the creamy surface, rising to the top edge and falling back, they form links across the gaps between the squares. One can imagine the unseen fisherman lifting these nets, pragmatic and yet beautiful, from the docks.

"Drawing National" will continue in the Art Building of Montgomery College, 51 Mar-nakee St., Rockville, through Oct. 19. Call 301-279-5115.

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