

## EXTRAVAGANT DRAWING

NATALIE ALPER, TAYO HEUSER, MASAKO KAMIYA, IRENE LAWRENCE,  
JILL MOSER, JESSICA DEANE ROSNER, FRAN SIEGEL, SARAH WALKER  
AND HEESEOP YOON

Curated by Judith Tolnick Champa

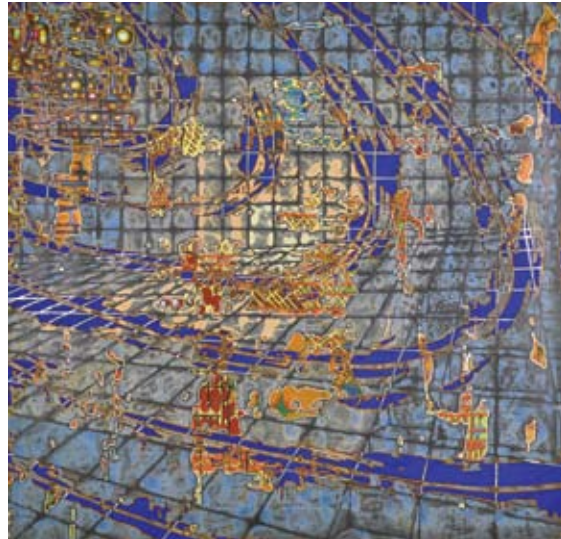
February 6 – April 10, 2011

Opening reception: Sunday, February 6, 2:00–5:00 p.m.

As the second decade of the 21st century opens, drawing has emerged as a remarkably renewed medium supporting an impressive range of visual expression. Its definition has grown wide and deep as it vigorously attracts and collects diverse and committed practice internationally.

Distinct from, but responsive to, the increasingly vexed virtual world, drawing's qualities — the directness of its hand-made mark-making, its closeness as an original object to artistic conception itself — engages and sustains the attention of innovative emerging and established artists and creates avid audiences. In part as a challenge to the omnipresent virtual domain, it is likely that drawing has come to operate with renewed intentionality, even *extravagance*. It achieves this in the notably “expanded field” of physical/inter-disciplinary space, or by adhering quirkily to a lavish preciousness of touch. Drawing today is a dominant medium and topic in exhibitions of all sorts, art fair to biennial. As of this writing, *The Drawing Show* is scheduled to debut at the Verge Art Fair, Miami, as part of its program to promote “unique approaches to the current state of visual art.” Elsewhere, the curators of SITE Santa Fe's Eighth Biennial, *The Dissolve*, treated the productive pervasiveness of dissolving media boundaries through contemporary animation. They were fundamentally stimulated by the Edison Manufacturing Co.'s magical introduction of stop-motion animation in 35 mm. Pointedly, the first work projected in the Biennial was Edison's tricky *Enchanted Drawing*, 1900, featuring an astonishing hand-drawn materiality.

Recently, on the New York scene alone, the number of monographic museum and gallery exhibitions featuring modern and contemporary drawing has been diverse and revelatory. Monographic presentations of early drawings by Roy Lichtenstein and Hannah Wilke, among many others, have offered generous and thick access to a history and survey of multi-directional generative artistic ideas. Finally, The Museum of Modern Art's *On Line: Drawing Through the Twentieth Century* provides a wide-ranging



Sarah Walker *Preservatory*, 2009

investigation of drawing's centrality and multi-performative role over 100 years and counting, emphasizing drawing's having transgressed traditional boundaries as it moved chronologically from *Surface Tension* through *Line Extension* to *Confluence*. Significantly, the catalog of MoMA's exhibition refers to it as a speculative project meant “to invigorate the discourse around drawing.”

The slipperiness of drawing, with its immediacy and sense of becoming, is an expressive quality that stimulates a broad stylistic swath of contemporary artists. Drawing is a liberating point of origin and point of return for many accomplished artists working in and across various media today. In the present exhibition, there is a collective *extravagance* that unites the work of 9 distinctive women artists shown.

While geographically and stylistically diverse, the artists are collectively extravagant in their practice, as each individually expands the range and meaning of what drawing is, and may engender. None of the artists relies on pre-existent sensuous materials but all achieve extravagance confidently, even stridently. Each works out her position, her own sensibility to draw in a way peculiar to herself. Taken together they release drawing from any residual confines, emboldening it as a subjectively inflected, mutable medium. Intentionally ambiguous closure, the refusal of narrow visual/grammatical practice, serves to cross-reference the operations of these artists. Whether born in Japan or the U.S., whether manipulating vibrant colors or monochrome, the artists also attest to abstract drawing's power to envision, to allow nothing to be static, to court the subversive.

To Heeseop Yoon, urban life is a potent source of visual sensation, and drawing references its pace, its sense of open-endedness, limitlessness, even precariousness. Her large-scale black tape drawing, applied freehand on the wall at the start



Heeseop Yoon *Basement*, 2010



**Fran Siegel** *Overland 2*, 2007

of this exhibition, thrusts the medium fully into the gallery ambience and hence the viewer's experiential space, likely recalling the surprise of the expanded performative "arena" of original Abstract Expressionism. With her low-tech, all linear medium of tape that can go anywhere (evoking Fred Sandback's portable kit of yarn, used as his personal minimalist toolbox) she also conjures the earlier Ab-Ex tradition that released figuration and gesture from the merely incidental to the expressively prime or emphatically allover language of structure. Like her predecessors who extended and commanded a large-scale, preexistent field of truly (museum) wall dimension, she affixes an independent figuration to a given space. The wall's neutral ground is where illusionistically nearly sculptural scaffolds rather than strictly pictorial energies are unleashed and then formed.

Yoon's emboldened sense of drawing is seen productively against that of **Sarah Walker**. Walker's near-square format large acrylic drawings, "interpenetrating information fields" as she describes them, are remarkably fluid alignments of color forms and precipitously deep space. Plausible and theatrical currents of design, from allover vortex to multiple digitally inspired energies, exert perceptually charged meetings or near-meetings of edges, axes, and smaller intersections that shift, restart and nod to one another. High-keyed color seems to be discharged from but inevitably susceptible to pressures of design. Conceptually, aesthetically, and as a self-mandated principle, Walker is attached to retaining layers of paint as layers of meaning — none of which is entirely concealed — and the density and prolixity of her extravagant accumulated network is marvelous and even confounding. "It is here in this nexus of physical and virtual space that I aim to build a set of terms for thinking and being," she writes in her Artist's Statement posted on her website.

**Fran Siegel** has long been productively fascinated by suggestive, mobile punctures and traces that conjoin absence

and presence, forward and back, a sense of the overlay and the palimpsest. Her increased bicoastal travel (she made a transit from New York to Southern California in 2002) has yielded the visceral experience of multiple views of land from the air. This has motivated elaborately collaged drawings raising questions about a sustainable earth that have a pronounced sense of topographical and also topological traversing and exploring. Siegel seizes upon environmental patterns and contours and finds inspiring, unpredictable means for their expression. Torrance Museum Curator Kristina Newhouse has noted Siegel's spatio-temporal sensitivities expressed elsewhere as a "coaxing of light... with materials such as reflective or translucent polyester film, synthetic monofilament, wire, mirrored glass." The *Overland* density drawings, 2007-present, share an unstable pliant ground, uncertain rectilinearity, and combine very mixed media — pigment, pencil, ink, thread or string on cut and collaged paper and Dura-lar film. Procedural decisions are multiple yet precise. There is even a painted wall behind (or beneath?) *Overland 1*, 2007. Siegel's particular extravagance lends her drawn fields the character of impacted installations.

A very different sensibility obtains in the work of **Tayo Heuser**, who also practices sculpture when she is not immersed in a slow, deliberate drawing technique of colored inks on unfurled sheets of burnished paper, or



**Tayo Heuser** *Vertical No. 6*, 2008



related drawing campaigns. Born in Washington, DC, Heuser was raised in Africa. She is able to read and write in Arabic. With a formula derived from a Persian scribe her hyper-refined, labor-intensive surfaces are finally burnished with stones so that her inks seem to be suspended weightlessly. Her long vertical, carpet-like format combines with the finely drawn linear control of a miniaturist to forge an extravagant exoticism. Heuser's panels resemble portals, but their frontal, impenetrable character provides a controlled reading along the surface, up/down, left/right. Unlike the trajectories of Yoon, Siegel, and Walker, these geometric patterns resist penetration. For all their calligraphic underpinning, they exist for the eyes alone.

Like Heuser, **Masako Kamiya** practices a concentrated, near-microcosmic mode of working that has about it a lavish preciousness, a refined Otherness. Watercolor paper supports scattered pebble-like deposits of opaque gouache, creating organized patterns that she then variously builds as three-dimensional mounds from thousands of brushed applications. The potent optical character of the drawing material itself — its ability to structure and to contain perception — is Kamiya's own invention, while she refers to the breathing colored atmosphere of oil painting or Renaissance fresco models in tempera. The drawings inevitably also resonate with neo-impressionism, but Kamiya's weight and density migrate physically to gouache skins so the play between relative relief weight and color's fictive weight achieves an exquisite and idiosyncratic luminosity. Kamiya finally transmits to viewers extremely unconventional and exciting emotional signals through an acute sensitivity to her medium and her self-described "looking and responding" in process. Her drawing is made to flicker illusionistically close, then away from certain perceptual understanding.

The work of **Jessica Deane Rosner**, also precious in character and concise in scale, demands a different sort of concentrated making and viewing. With a highly skilled, uncanny ability to create *trompe l'oeil*, Rosner sometimes might convince us of the presence of bonded chine collé rather than hand-drawing. We are made alert in our double-take looking by following the movement of her hand as its drawing instrument describes an intricate line or web or overlay in the spirit of scientific illustration. With stunning intricacy, drawings in colored and metallic ink, sometimes with added graphite and marker on warm toned paper, refer fluidly to gossamer textile weaves, quilt patterns or metallic slinky toys in action. But the geometric character of these objects is then abstracted — never copied from life — as an intense linearity, generating insistent form/content unities between the act of drawing and the objects of its inspiration. "I like my work to illustrate a certain density of the page, so that even if all there is, is line, there will be many of them and the final image will be as complete an exploration of line I can achieve," Rosner explains in an Artist's Statement.

The drawings of **Jill Moser** have a very different intent. Her latest project is an extraordinary collaboration with poet Charles Bernstein. *The Introvert*, 2010, in the *livre d'artiste* French tradition, is one of 12 original, intentionally "activated" portfolio books, each an eccentrically printed poem in letterpress with unique hand-painted drawing by Moser. The interdisciplinary space of the book is a rich dialogic project that spawns at least a double narrative as both visual artist and poet are committed to seeking a plurality of languages and idioms. Suited to Moser's longstanding linguistic approach to drawing, here she takes on each page of provocative poetry as readymade figural elements, including the challenging intermittent architecture of pre-made



**Jessica Deane Rosner** *Blue-Black Quilt*, 2008



**Jill Moser** *The Introvert*, 2010

diagonally sliced pages. Drawing operates freely in tandem with the shifting sense of the poem, privileging or nearly concealing portions of the text with the improvised cadence of emotional color. Water and vinyl based paints in fluorescent and metallic colors, reflective and recessive, are applied with brushes, squeegees, blotting papers and other distinctive descriptive devices, indexical ways of making from an arsenal of instruments maintained by this artist who is also a prolific painter/printmaker. Visual dynamism and disguise alternate through shifting modes of drawing, seeming to emphasize the contradictory character of Bernstein's poem. "The articulated image flirts with being named," says Moser.

Selections from a previous series of drawings are shown alongside *The Introvert*. Moser's buoyant *Sixteen Street*, 2008

gouaches feature autonomous elastic gestures that act as suggestive suspensions, slippages or submersions against contrasting grounds. These personable clusters whose freeform linearity is bracketed by or skirts shifting horizons prefigure the book's performative pages that respond to the poem as a figure, while managing themselves "to draw writing."

**Irene Lawrence** is also interdisciplinary in her aesthetic outlook that arguably foregrounds musical analogies. She is a classical musician as well as a painter and etcher. Her *Running Ink*, 2010, is an unbound, warmly toned canvas book akin to a musical score for a symphonic tone poem, or poem in sound instead of words, although here is sound expressed by gesture. Lawrence adopts the format, sequencing, and even scanned reading of a musical score bearing thick and thin marks as if from some private, staveless, rhythmic notational system. She chooses a broad format in which her drawn gesture operates comfortably and her marks correspond with the open book's central "gutter" and eight edges, a diptych format that has long engrossed her. The musical analogy persists in several inventive ink drawings on Japanese paper where bold calligraphic marks nearly overcome their supporting ground, like the independent sounding of a note within a chord or overall composition. The drawing called *Vocalise*, 2010, is another sort of visual utterance. Lawrence brings into play its delicate handmade paper, a body to which she gives voice (meaning) by selective over-drawing in silver leaf, charcoal, and ink.

For her hyper-active *Energy Field*, 2009, ink drawings on iridescent interference grounds on paper, **Natalie Alper** looks outward, with eager interdisciplinary curiosity, to the abstract world of science. Her drawings invoke chaos theory and other situations of matter and energy in flux, along



**Irene Lawrence** *Vocalise*, 2010



**Natalie Alper** *August #2*, 2009

with conditions of contingency and entropy related to physics. Dense drawing fields vibrate to the point of appearing nearly mobile. Refusing predetermined results, Alper subverts open and closed, volume and void, materiality and immateriality. De-stabilized forces abound through her very technique of thick and thin ink accumulations, sometimes transparent, sometimes opaque, always inscribing a weirdly selective luminosity. The *Energy Fields* seem simultane-

ously to drive and distill the artist's parallel painting project, where a graphite underpinning supports a layering of metallic surfaces and crawl of negative webbing.

Contemporary drawing arguably has emerged as the most porous, reinvigorated territory of hand-made artistic practice. As 2011 begins, its tangible momentum yields what I have insisted on as *extravagance* — an emphasis on dynamic, expansive and versatile creative expression. Drawing is extravagant whether it is confidently large in scale, or interdisciplinary in nature, or precious in scale, and concentrated in its domain. This exhibition has limited its sampling to women artists, a considerable and increasingly visible source for extravagant drawing. Consciously experimental women artists seem to mine the medium remarkably, to engage with it as a singularly available, mutable expressive force. In this installation the drawings converse some-

times loudly, sometimes softly, generated by their variety of individual aesthetic intent and purpose. The conversation propels our participation, encouraging our complementary speculative discourse to thicken.

— *Judith Tolnick Champa, Providence, RI*  
January 2011

## BIOGRAPHY

**Judith Tolnick Champa** is an independent curator and critic. She serves on the Board of NEMA (New England Museum Association) and is a member of ArtTable and IKT (International Association of Curators of Contemporary Art). With co-curator Viera Levitt, Rhode Island/Slovakia, she has initiated planning for a first-ever Providence Biennial. Tolnick Champa served as director of the former Fine Arts Center Galleries at the University of Rhode Island, where she curated three galleries, including a dedicated photography space. This followed her work as Curator for the David Winton Bell Gallery at Brown University, an exhibiting and collecting facility. In her career, Tolnick Champa has curated well over 50 solo and focused group exhibitions.

## CHECKLIST

### NATALIE ALPER

*AUGUST #1*, 2009  
Mixed media on iridescent ground on paper  
24 x 18 inches

*AUGUST #2*, 2009  
Mixed media on iridescent ground on paper  
24 x 18 inches

*AUGUST #5*, 2009  
Mixed media on iridescent ground on paper  
14 x 20 inches

*JANUARY #6*, 2009  
Mixed media on iridescent ground on paper  
18 x 24 inches

*SEPTEMBER #8*, 2009  
Mixed media on iridescent ground on paper  
14 x 40 inches

All courtesy of the artist and Seraphin Gallery, Philadelphia

### TAYO HEUSER

*VERTICAL NO. 3*, 2007  
Ink on burnished paper  
79 1/4 x 42 inches

*VERTICAL NO. 6*, 2008  
Ink on burnished paper  
67 x 39 inches

*VERTICAL NO. 7*, 2008  
Ink on burnished paper  
68 x 41 1/4 inches

All courtesy Cade Tompkins Projects

### MASAKO KAMIYA

*AFTERTHOUGHT*, 2010  
Gouache on paper  
20 x 16 inches

*BLUE ANGEL*, 2004  
Gouache on paper  
34 1/2 x 26 1/2 inches

*HOUSE OF SNOW*, 2010  
Gouache on paper  
20 x 16 inches

*RECOLLECTIONS*, 2010  
Gouache on paper  
30 x 22 inches

All courtesy of the artist and Gallery NAGA

### IRENE LAWRENCE

*RUNNING INK*, 2010  
Unbound book, ink on canvas  
24 x 39 1/2 inches

*UNTITLED DRAWINGS I-V*, 2007  
Ink on Iyo paper  
12 1/2 x 9 3/4 inches

*VOCALISE*, 2010  
Silver leaf, oil, charcoal, ink on paper  
13 3/4 x 19 3/4 inches

All courtesy of the artist

### JILL MOSER

*THE INTROVERT*, 2010  
1 of 12 unique, hand-painted collaborative artists books on BFK Rives paper  
13 x 19 1/2 inches  
Poetry by Charles Bernstein/  
Drawing by Jill Moser  
Gervais Jassaud of Collectif Generation, Paris  
Courtesy of the artist

*SIXTEEN STREET 4.8*, 2008  
Gouache on paper  
30 x 22 1/2 inches

*SIXTEEN STREET 4.11*, 2008  
Gouache on paper  
30 x 22 1/2 inches

*SIXTEEN STREET 5.3*, 2008  
Gouache on paper  
22 1/2 x 30 inches

*SIXTEEN STREET 6.5*, 2008  
Gouache on paper  
22 1/2 x 30 inches

*SIXTEEN STREET 7.1*, 2008  
Gouache on paper  
22 1/2 x 30 inches

*Sixteen Street Series* courtesy of the artist and Lennon, Weinberg, Inc.

### JESSICA DEANE ROSNER

*BLUE-BLACK QUILT*, 2008  
Ink on paper  
12 x 20 inches  
Courtesy of the artist

*CROSS-HATCH SLINKIES*, 2010  
Ink on brown paper  
12 x 22 1/2 inches  
Courtesy of the artist

*MULTI-PLAID WITH RECTANGLES*, 2010  
Ink, color pencil, graphite, marker on BFK Rives paper  
8 x 8 inches approximately (image); 14 x 14 inches (sheet)  
Courtesy Cade Tompkins Projects

*THIN RECTANGLES WITH FLAME TIPS*, 2010  
Ink, metallic ink, graphite on BFK Rives paper  
8 x 8 inches approximately (image); 14 x 14 inches (sheet)  
Courtesy Cade Tompkins Projects

### FRAN SIEGEL

*OVERLAND 1*, 2007  
Colored pencil and pigment on Dura-lar and cut papers, painted wall  
108 x 108 inches  
Courtesy of the artist and Margaret Thatcher Projects

*OVERLAND 2*, 2007  
Colored pencil, ink and string cut papers  
108 x 108 inches  
Courtesy Margaret Thatcher Projects

*OVERLAND 12*, 2010  
Pigment, pencil and thread on cut and collaged paper and Dura-lar  
48 x 60 inches  
Courtesy Margaret Thatcher Projects

### SARAH WALKER

*GRAIN BOUNDARY*, 2004  
Acrylic on paper  
48 x 48 inches

*PRESERVATORY*, 2009  
Acrylic on paper  
45 x 47 inches

*PRISM*, 2008  
Acrylic on paper  
40 1/4 x 42 inches

All courtesy of Pierogi Gallery, Brooklyn; Gregory Lind Gallery, San Francisco, and the artist

### HEESEOP YOON

*STILL-LIFE #9*, 2010  
Pen collage on paper  
44 x 60 inches

*STILL-LIFE #10*, 2011  
Tape Installation  
Masking tape on Mylar  
Dimensions variable

All courtesy of the artist

Cover: **Masako Kamiya**, *Recollections*, 2010

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Deepest thanks are due to the inspiring Dorsky Gallery Curatorial Programs team for their rare mission supporting the role of independent curators in the exhibition of contemporary visual art. Their professional commitment to this special drawing exhibition was evident in myriad ways throughout its development. It certainly could not have been realized without the considerable expertise and "in-house" oversight of David, Noah and Karen Dorsky together with Stacy Koon, Registrar, and Deborah Rising, Graphic Designer. I am grateful to the artists whose impressive works are represented, and to the directors of their associated galleries who have generously permitted the loan of works, effectively removing them from the marketplace for the sake of this exhibition. In addition to the artists, lenders are Gallery NAGA, Boston; Lennon, Weinberg, Inc., Pierogi Gallery; and Margaret Thatcher Projects, New York; Seraphin Gallery; Philadelphia; Cade Tompkins Projects, Providence; and Gregory Lind Gallery, San Francisco. Informing my essay, I acknowledge important contributions to the critical literature by Daniel Belasco and Sarah Lewis; Cornelia H. Butler and Catherine de Zegher; collaborative authors Eleanor Heartney, Helaine Posner, Nancy Princenthal and Sue Scott; Gervais Jassaud; Tim Maul; Kristina Newhouse; Bernice Rose; and Nerys Williams.



Ancillary programming in connection with this exhibition is supported in part by public funds from the New York State Council on the Arts.

D O R S K Y G A L L E R Y | Curatorial Programs

11-03 45th Ave., Long Island City, NY 11101 | T: 718 937 6317 | F: 718 937 7469 | E: info@dorsky.org | www.dorsky.org

A not-for-profit 501(c)(3) tax deductible organization.