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ART REVIEW

## Opening a Window on the Creative Mind

By [BENJAMIN GENOCCHIO](#)

The exhibition of drawings at the Garrison Art Center gets a welcome blast of spring color from a collage made of strips of paper and plastic by Jeessoo Lee installed at the entrance. But the austerity of black on white is dominant in the dozen works here, making this show look and feel like an essay in contemporary minimalism.

Closer inspection reveals a greater formal diversity, with the practice of drawing explored from many points of view. There is also an absorbing short video of the artists in their studios, produced by the curators Susan English and Jaanika Peerna in an effort to reveal the artists' working processes. It brings the studio into the gallery. It also reminds you that until quite recently, drawing was viewed as a preliminary process in the evolution of a work of art — a method of thinking through ideas, a tool for mapping out structure — rather than as an end in itself. These days, drawings are often displayed as independent artworks.

The modern enthusiasm for drawing is not entirely new, for in the 16th century there was a lively trade in drawings, not only among artists, who collected drawings by other artists, but also among wealthy patrons. Drawings by [Leonardo da Vinci](#) and Michelangelo sold for tremendous sums — those of the Sistine Chapel were especially prized.

We tend to value drawings for their immediacy and freshness, perceiving them to be a more authentic, unadulterated impression of the artist's original creative vision. In them, we believe we can discern the purest manifestation of the mysteries of artistic inspiration and apprehend a creative idea in its essential traits.

In the present show, first impressions are mapped out — sometimes on paper and sometimes with the aid of objects and other materials. The most conventional example of preliminary sketches is Ken Landauer's group of simple line drawings for a public art piece presently installed in Socrates Sculpture Park in New York City. They reveal both a fluid stream of his first working ideas and his subsequent thinking process.

Similarly, Stan Stroh makes large-scale charcoal drawings of abstract shapes and forms that function as preliminary drawings for sculptures, though they also read well as independent works of art. Indeed, Mr. Stroh's drawings consistently aspire to the real mass of three-dimensional objects. They also have a marvelous energy to them, suggesting movement and play.

Nancy Bauch, less conventionally, is a ceramicist who uses a table in her studio covered in found objects, like shells, stones and ceramic shards, as a kind of sketchbook, the artist rearranging the objects on the table as inspiration for her ceramics. Sculptural shapes, forms and arrangements catch her eye, helping her conceive future works. For the exhibition, the curators have transported the artist's sketching table to the gallery.

Other artists present drawings as finished works. Ula Einstein draws with thread and fine wire, weaving delicate, minimal patterns of her own devising onto sheets of drawing paper. For her purposely chaotic collage drawings, Jeessoo Lee uses scraps of colored paper, wire, plastic and other materials, including drawings that have been torn into little strips.

Charlotte Schulz, among the better known artists in the show (she has a solo exhibition this month at the [Aldrich Contemporary Art Museum](#) in Ridgefield, Conn.), draws detailed, fantastic home interiors with charcoal on sheets of smooth white paper — the forms feel hollowed out of the surrounding lightness. Closely observed, they have the matter-of-fact, almost impersonal essence of photography.

Ms. Schulz's painstaking attention to detail is at odds with much of the other work here, which prides itself on being messy and not fully formed. But I love the heightened level of her finishing, for it shows off her skills; most admirable is her control of the charcoal, which gives a mist or shadow effect when lightly used, and when it is applied with more vigor delivers an intense black.

Other displays are accomplished if perhaps more conventional takes on drawing in contemporary art. Thomas Huber's installation of sketches, notations and doodles mimics processes of layering and collaging in his paintings, while Jaq Belcher cuts hundreds of similar shapes out of a large sheet of paper to create meditative designs.

Over all, though, this show is as entertaining as it is lively, a fun and instructive survey of developments in contemporary drawing in a lovely waterfront location known for its popular art classes.

*"Drawing Revealed," Garrison Art Center, 23 Garrison's Landing, through Feb. 17; (845) 424-3960 or [www.garrisonartcenter.org](http://www.garrisonartcenter.org)*

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