



## The Post-Standard

### Drawing's Comeback

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Drawing, one of the oldest art forms, is also becoming one of the most dynamic.

Artists have put their pencils to paper for centuries, but usually as part of a developmental process related to their primary art form. They sketch out an idea for a painting or capture a quick remembrance of a landscape using the medium as a type of visual shorthand, engaged as a means to an end. But times are changing.

An interesting exhibition on view at the Schweinfurth Memorial Art Center in Auburn reaffirms what many have recognized over the past 10 years or so. Artists are now claiming drawing as their principal art form and with that, they are pushing the conventional boundaries of the medium into new terrain, resulting in new forms of art. As this show highlights, contemporary drawing no longer is limited to a gray mark made by a mere pencil on a clean sheet of white paper.

The show, "Drawing on Purpose," brings together the works of 15 regional artists who are working with traditional and non-traditional drawing media and subject matter. The show represents a small region out of the vast landscape that is contemporary drawing, but provides a very engaging mix of interpretations.

One of the most unconventional drawings of the show greets you on the left wall of the main gallery as you enter the exhibition. Masha Ryskin of Honeoye Falls shows a site-specific wall drawing titled "Gossip Travels Far, 2007." Her media includes coffee, gesso, wire, graphite, the wall and the thermostat at one end of the wall.

Ryskin creates a sweeping landscape of peaks and valleys with the sepia stains and drips of poured coffee, which she accents with collaged elements. A thin, pliable piece of wire courses across the wall like a winding stream. Ryskin's choice of materials and imagery suggest the human touch is forever linked to the natural world.

Artists also challenge the process of drawing as four compelling pieces by Oswego-based artist Juan Perdiguero indicate. Perdiguero works on photographic emulsion using etching ink, asphaltum (a bituminous material in oil of turpentine) and linseed oil as his media and the elegant greyhound as his subject.

Initially, the drawings seem like manipulated photographs of dark and slightly scary dogs, but as you approach the pieces, you see the artist's hand emerge in distinctive strokes of ink.

Found objects appear in the pieces of Rochester artist Anne Havens and Ithaca artist Amaechi Okigbo. Havens uses discarded architectural drawings as her canvas and draws

over-sized water-based paint and ink drawings of her grandson's hand on top. She sets up a nice tension between qualities of lines and their applications.

Okigbo's largest mixed-media piece, "Graffito Project Series: Labyrinths," (60-by-60 inches) begins with a canvas of newspapers and other printed media, which he then paints back over. The work explores the improvisatory nature of the making of a mark and the characteristics of the spaces between them. This piece seemed to be the least "drawing-like" in the show, striking me as the finished painting inspired by two studies hanging nearby.

Traditional approaches to the medium take a stance in the line drawings of Oneonta artist James Mullen, the charcoal and conte pieces of Morris artist Danielle Boudet and the striking charcoal/pencil drawings by Syracuse-based artist Elena Peteva.

Mullen's works reflect the fluidity of line and its infinite variations. Boudet's representational works use kitchens as "portraits of the people who inhabit them" and Peteva demonstrates stunning technique and a distinctive hand in a set of five portraits I will long remember.

The other artists in the show are Douglas Anderson (Geneseo), Jonathan Brower (Syracuse), Colleen Buzzard (Rochester), Susan D'Amato (Syracuse), Sarah McCoubrey, (Fayetteville), Elizabeth Riker (Camillus), Michael Sickler (Minoa) and Rainer Maria Wehner (Utica).

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