

WILEY BLACKWELL COMPANIONS TO ART HISTORY



A Companion to Contemporary Drawing

Edited by Kelly Chorpene | Rebecca Fortnum



WILEY Blackwell

A Companion to
Contemporary Drawing

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A Companion to Contemporary Drawing

Edited by

Kelly Chorpening and Rebecca Fortnum

WILEY Blackwell

This edition first published 2020
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Registered Office(s)

John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 111 River Street, Hoboken, NJ 07030, USA

John Wiley & Sons Ltd, The Atrium, Southern Gate, Chichester, West Sussex, PO19 8SQ, UK

Editorial Office

The Atrium, Southern Gate, Chichester, West Sussex, PO19 8SQ, UK

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Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Names: Chorpening, Kelly, editor. | Fortnum, Rebecca, editor.

Title: A Companion to Contemporary Drawing / edited by Kelly Chorpening & Rebecca Fortnum.

Description: First edition. | Hoboken, NJ : Wiley-Blackwell, 2020. |

Series: Wiley Blackwell companions to art history | Includes bibliographical references and index.

Identifiers: LCCN 2019045090 (print) | LCCN 2019045091 (ebook) | ISBN 9781119194545 (hardback) | ISBN 9781119194569 (adobe pdf) | ISBN 9781119194576 (epub)

Subjects: LCSH: Drawing--21st century--Themes, motives.

Classification: LCC NC96 .C66 2020 (print) | LCC NC96 (ebook) | DDC 741--dc23

LC record available at <https://lcn.loc.gov/2019045090>

LC ebook record available at <https://lcn.loc.gov/2019045091>

Cover Design: Wiley

Cover Image: Łukasz Surowiec (2015) "Daddy, don't cry. Zosia". Painting on the wall and drawing of miner's daughter transferred onto the wall of family house, Katowice. Photo: Dawid Chalimoniuk, courtesy of Łukasz Surowiec, Davido/Katowice City of Gardens. Emma Talbot (2013) Candlewick. Watercolour on paper, 24 × 30 cm. Reproduced by permission of the artist; Andrea Bowers (2015) Badass Girls (May Day, Los Angeles 2014), detail. Graphite on paper, 62 × 43 cm (24.4 × 16.9 inches). Source: © Andrea Bowers. Courtesy the artist and kaufmann repetto, Milan/New York. Photo: Andrea Rossetti; Jade Montserrat (2018) Untitled (The Wretched of the Earth, After Frantz Fanon). Drawing Installation, 'The Last Place They Thought Of' exhibition, Institute of Contemporary Art, University of Pennsylvania. Photo: Constance Mensh. Reproduced by permission of the artist.

Set in 10/12pt Galliard by SPi Global, Pondicherry, India

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London (2017), and “In Nomine Luce” at the Museale Complesso Santa Maria Della Scala, Siena (2017). He has also shown work at the Venice Biennale (2015) and Ars Musica Brussels (2018).

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Acknowledgments

We would like to thank everyone involved in bringing this book from its conception to its final production in print. There are too many to mention but we wish to specially acknowledge the contributions made by the following:

CCW Graduate School, University of the Arts London
Camberwell College of Art Undergraduate Fine Art Programme
Royal College of Art Research Office and RCA School of Arts and Humanities
RCA & CCW staff: Juan Cruz, Chantal Faust, Johnny Golding, Nick Gorse, Sophia Phoca, Malcolm Quinn, Daniel Sturgis and Emma Wakelin
Trish Scott and Murray Anderson for their thoughtful and efficient editorial assistance
Mary Malin, Transtype copyeditor, and the editorial team at Wiley Blackwell
Christina Riant for assistance with transcription
Foster Spragge for making the Berger event happen
Anne Massey whose suggestion initiated this book
Matt Franks, Theo Franks, Richard Elliott, Eve Fortnum, Marlow and Stella Elliott-Fortnum for support during the project
All the authors and artists who have contributed to this book for their tenacity and generosity.
Ian Heywood for his help with Beth Harland's chapter
The editors would particularly like to acknowledge Beth Harland (1964–2019) as an inspirational artist and writer and pay tribute to her powerful and important contribution to this volume.

Introduction

Kelly Chorpene and Rebecca Fortnum

This Companion explores the way drawing is being used by contemporary artists to understand and comment on the world. As several of the book's contributors have pointed out, the word drawing is embedded in our language as a verb as well as a noun, allowing us to both reflect upon the world and actively engage with it. Drawing can, and does, effect change, often starting with the way artists themselves choose to respond to their experience and environment. Across this volume's twenty-seven new essays, drawing is explored as potential and as catalyst. Crucially for us, it is the practitioner's perspective that is central throughout these contributions and, as that champion of drawing John Ruskin demonstrated, the artist's viewpoint can also embrace that of the critic, theorist or historian. Rather than seeing art as an activity that takes

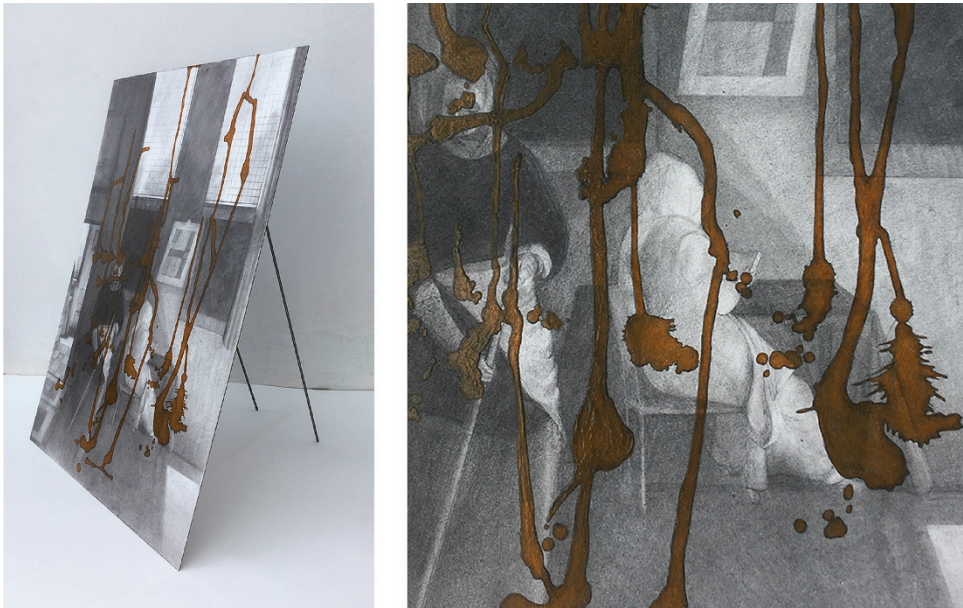


FIGURE 0.1 Kelly Chorpene (2019) *A Quiet Interior*, Pencil and acrylic on paper mounted to steel 77 x 65 x 64 cm. Source: Courtesy of Kelly Chorpene.

place within an ivory tower, the practices explored in this Companion demonstrate ways drawing is intimately involved with the world.

As artists and educators, our editorial choices emerge from a long-standing interest in the way drawing is simultaneously at the heart of fine art yet also expands beyond it, running through science, humanities and design as a tool for thinking and communication. This book comments on the importance of drawing as a tool for thought across disciplines, yet focuses primarily on contemporary art practices that utilize drawing as both process and finished artefact. This Companion is not a history of drawing, but instead proceeds from an interest in how shifts in attitudes to the practice of drawing reflect the contingencies of their particular historical moment. In commissioning chapters, we have been concerned with exploring the working conditions of artists, noting how expression develops in relation to context. It has often been pointed out, that even the most subtle moderations in mark-making enable the viewer to identify the general time period or national context in which a work was produced. The precise way an era stamps itself onto work is a source of fascination; the elasticity of drawing is especially beguiling when social and political concerns make themselves known through extremely limited means, using only a pencil and sheet of paper.

In thinking about the current moment, it is also easy to see that technological innovations over the past 150 years, including the development of photographic processes, have utterly transformed drawing's arena, allowing artists to re-think its mechanisms or apparatus. Notions of observation, representation and audience have been challenged in the digital era as never before and the essays in this volume trace back the lineages of these concepts in relation to drawing. Key terms that have always defined the discipline, such as line, erasure, positive and negative are now deployed within frameworks where they hold multiple meanings, expanding our understandings of their function across all forms of drawing. Indeed, acknowledging the ease with which drawing today is seen and disseminated via web, print-based media and international art fairs, there is danger work created with particular intent under a variety of conditions, might be appraised context-free. And although, as is noted in several of the essays in this volume, drawing has a compelling immediacy, the meaning of techniques and approaches change over time. Therefore, these chapters proceed from the belief that contextualisation remains a crucial and ever-evolving critical act, as technological change enables the mass-sharing of (networked) images and allows for new virtual, spatial and cross disciplinary understanding of drawing. With this in mind the collection of essays aims to re-appraise drawing within place and space as well as history, highlighting the paradigm shifts in attitudes towards practice relevant to the current moment.

Seminal drawing exhibitions, along with their accompanying catalogues, have been particularly influential to thinking within this Companion. For example, the Museum of Modern Art has been a leader of debates through the staging of exhibitions such as Bernice Rose's 1976 *Drawing Now* and 1992 *Allegories of Modernism: Contemporary Drawing*, Laura Hoptman's 2002 exhibition *Drawing Now: Eight Propositions* and Cornelia Butler and Catherine de Zegher's 2010 *On Line: Drawing Through the Twentieth Century*. A number of publications have helped expand notions of what drawing can be, such as Tania Kovats' 2006 *The Drawing Book, Vitamin D; New Perspectives in Drawing*, edited by Emma Dexter of 2005 and its 2013 follow-up *Vitamin D2: New Perspectives in Drawing*, Deanna Petherbridge's *The Primacy of Drawing: Histories and Theories of Practice*, 2010 and Katharine Stout's *Contemporary Drawing: From the 1960s to Now* of 2014. Two exhibition spaces dedicated to drawing, Drawing Center New York and Drawing Room London, have also had an important