

Drawing the Line, March 30, 2001-June 10, 2001

This exhibition was inspired by the many RISD classes, but particularly those of first-year Foundation Studies students, who visit the Museum's Department of Prints, Drawings, and Photographs to study and learn from work in this collection of some 20,000 objects. Many exceptional works of art on paper are seldom seen in the galleries because of their sheer number, the amount of appropriate exhibition space available, and because works on paper are especially vulnerable to deterioration with prolonged exposure to light which weakens the paper fibers and fades many media.

Drawing the Line is intended to suggest the unbounded variety of visual effects feasible primarily through the use of line. In the prints, drawings, and photographs on view, which date from the 16th century to the present, one sees the many decisions an artist makes in the seemingly simple process of drawing a line. An artist first decides upon a medium and then chooses the tool or tools to apply it and the support on which to work. As you look at the exhibition, you might think about how the artist's manipulation of line contributes to the meaning of the piece. What is the weight of the line? What direction does it take? Is the line studied or spontaneous? What is its relationship to other lines in the picture? Does the line create boundaries or suggest depth? These are just a few of the questions students consider as they look at these works in relationship to their own drawing assignments.

CHECKLIST OF THE EXHIBITION

Utagawa Kuniyoshi, Japanese, 1797-1861

Preliminary sketch from an album of drawings, ca. 1840 -1860

Brush and ink on Japanese paper laid down in an album of reused paper

Museum Collection 49.437

This preparatory drawing of a samurai warrior conveys Kuniyoshi's deft handling of the brush. The lines feel confident and are swiftly executed, emphasizing the power and energy of the figure. This exciting drawing reveals much evidence of the artist's thinking. Kuniyoshi seems to have begun with the sheet oriented differently; note the head between the warrior's knees. Dissatisfied, he turned the sheet upside-down and began again. The conclusive decision for the head was drawn on a small piece of transparent Japanese tissue attached to the final drawing. When folded back, an earlier, rougher design is revealed. The geometric drawing underneath the samurai figure is simply what happened to be on the reused sheet used to make the album.



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Harry Callahan, American, 1912-1999, (RISD Faculty 1961 - 1976, Photography)

Twigs in Snow #320, 1900s

Gelatin silver print

Museum purchase with funds from the National Endowment for the Arts 75.100

The lines of these images were not drawn but captured with a camera. In the top photograph, Harry Callahan framed telephone and/or electric wires against an overcast sky and transformed them into an elegant, spare abstract composition. The delicate pairs of lines soar diagonally upward, conveying the energy they embody. In the bottom image, the energy is condensed in a tight composition of entangled plant stems at the center of the picture.



Mary Cassatt, American, 1844-1926

Mother with Child seen from behind, 1890

Drypoint on paper

Museum Collection 45.219

Mary Cassatt executed this work in drypoint, a print technique in which a needle is used to inscribe a design directly into the surface of a metal plate. The plate is inked, wiped (the incised lines hold ink), and pressed onto the paper. Cassatt's image shows clearly two of drypoint's most characteristic qualities. The baby's back and right leg are delicately shaded with thin marks lightly scratched into the plate. The rich, velvety lines used to establish the baby's contours and the left-hand edge of the mother's dress were produced by gouging deeply into the plate and allowing the ink to cling to the metal burr displaced by the drypoint needle. The line describing the mother's skirt is an especially beautiful mark that seems to ground the drawing and forms a counterweight to the denser work at the top of the sheet.



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Albrecht Dürer, German, 1471-1528
Madonna with the Pear, 1511
Engraving, trimmed to platemark
Gift of Mrs. Murray S. Danforth 32.184

Viewers today continue to marvel at Albrecht Dürer's unsurpassed printmaking skills. It is difficult to control an engraved line, as it is created by gouging into a metal plate with a v-shaped tool, called a burin, which must be pushed through and across the surface. Once the plate is inked and wiped, it is printed under great pressure, forcing the ink from the engraved lines of the plate onto the paper. The engraved line is typically sharp and crisp.

In this image, Dürer fills the sheet with fine, tightly-spaced lines consistent in their width and strength. The surface seems woven together in patterns of undulating parallel and cross-hatched, broken and unbroken marks. From a distance the lines read as tone; close up one can see how they curve to give volume to the figures and trees, how they describe surfaces, and how ornamental they are in and of themselves.



Anthony van Dyck, Flemish, 1599-1641
Study for Malchus, before 1621
Black chalk on paper
Gift of Mrs. Gustav Radeke 20.443

This drawing is a preparatory study for Anthony van Dyck's painting *Betrayal of Christ*, now in the Prado Museum, Madrid. It shows Malchus, a priestly attendant, attempting to avoid an assault by the apostle Peter, who will soon slice off Malchus's ear. Much of the point of the drawing is to generate a sense of lateral thrust away from Peter's hand, which grips Malchus's tunic at the left of the image. To achieve this aim, van Dyck aligns various parts of Malchus's body on a diagonal axis and rhymes them with broad, insistently diagonal, shading strokes. In counterpoint, short, stubby marks interpret the outstretched hand as a point of splayed stoppage. A careful look at the contours reveals that they are not made with a continuous line, but with many short concave strokes that give volume to the figure.



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Lucian Freud, English, 1922-2011
Lord Goodman in His Yellow Pajamas, 1987
Hand-colored etching on paper
Collection of Mr. and Mrs. Stephen Linder
Scott and Cindy Burns Acquisition Fund 1988.020

Lucien Freud here uses a dense, wiry etched line to explore the complex topography of Lord Goodman's face. Although this image appears to be all line, it is worth noting the important descriptive role played by white space. In some spots, such as in the area along the sitter's upper lip, Freud uses white space to indicate passages of reflected light. The white is the result of the technique of "stopping out." To make an etching, a needle is used to inscribe a design into a waxy resin that coats a metal plate. The whole is then plunged into an acid bath, and the acid attacks the areas of metal left bare by the needle, etching the design onto the plate. To "stop out" is to apply a varnish over lines already made by the etching needle, in order to make these areas resistant to acid once again. Stopping out may thus be used like an eraser. In the case of Lord Goodman's upper lip, we can detect the traces of erasure by looking at the lines nearby, which seem to extend underneath the white mark.



Vincent van Gogh, Dutch, 1853-1890
View of Arles, 1888
Reed pen and ink and wash over graphite on paper
Gift of Mrs. Murray S. Danforth 42.212A

Vincent van Gogh's landscape is built primarily, though not exclusively, of vertical marks varying in size, breadth, and tonality. In the foreground, irises are described with a heavy application of ink with a brush. Many marks, though, are made with a reed pen, recognizable by the split in their center. The marks defining the field become smaller and lighter toward the center of the picture, giving the illusion of distance. In the background, the buildings of Arles are carefully detailed in sharp contrast to the sketchier description of the rest of the picture. Most marks are isolated so that they vibrate against the light of the paper surrounding them. Their repetition creates pulsating, rhythmic patterns that suggest color and even sound.



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Peregrine Honig, American, b. 1976
Jack Lemon, American, b. ca. 1936
Landfall Press, Inc.
Ovubet: 26 Girls with Sweet Centers, 1999
Etching with watercolor on paper doilies
Mary B. Jackson Fund 2000.93

Honig uses a very tentative, spare line to describe the 26 young women alphabetically portrayed in this series. The vulnerability of her subjects is emphasized by the delicacy of her line, the watercolor additions, and the doilies.

Harry Callahan, American, 1912-1999, (RISD Faculty 1961 - 1976,
Photography)
Wires, Providence (No. 111), 1965
Gelatin silver print
Museum purchase with the aid of the National Endowment for the
Arts and Neuberger Fund 74.091

The lines of these images were not drawn but captured with a camera. In the top photograph, Harry Callahan framed telephone and/or electric wires against an overcast sky and transformed them into an elegant, spare abstract composition. The delicate pairs of lines soar diagonally upward, conveying the energy they embody. In the bottom image, the energy is condensed in a tight composition of entangled plant stems at the center of the picture.



Ellsworth Kelly, American, 1923 - 2015
Feuilles, 1964
Crayon transfer lithograph
Twentieth Century Graphic Arts Fund 70.038

At first glance, Ellsworth Kelly's image seems similar in its sparseness to Egon Schiele's drawing nearby. On closer inspection, however, it may be seen that they use quite different types of line. Where Schiele's line appears to have been drawn with considerable pressure, Kelly's crayon line glides continuously across the surface, propelled by movement of the arm rather than the tight wrist work of Schiele.

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Kara Walker, American, b. 1969, (RISD MFA 1994, Printmaking)
Peter Norton
Typecraft, Inc.
*Freedom -- A Fable: A Curious Interpretation of the Wit of a Negress in
Troubled Times*, 1997
pop-up laser-cut book
Anonymous gift 1997.107



Kara Walker is best known for her large, wall-sized silhouettes portraying stereotypical imagery of African Americans in the antebellum South. The linear cut-paper silhouette is closely allied with the period of her subject matter, and its black-and-white contrast mirrors the racial issues of her subject. The exquisite detail of this book, printed in an edition of 4000, was made possible through the use of commercial laser-cutting following the artist's design. In addition to using the pop-up format, most typical of a children's book, this page includes a movable lever to birth a string of babies.

Pablo Picasso, Spanish, 1881-1973
Two Nudes, 1900s
Pen and ink on paper
Gift of Paul Rosenberg 35.534



Similar in its suggestion of speed to Tiepolo's *Head of Youth*, this drawing in fact exploits the possibilities of the pen-generated line in different ways. Whereas Tiepolo deploys a smooth line of even thickness, Picasso explores a range of line widths in his image. Note, for example, the bottom left of the chair, where Picasso uses variations in the thinning and thickening line to describe the impressively curved chair foot.

Rembrandt van Rijn, Dutch, 1606-1669
*Landscape (Farm Buildings at the Dijk) (recto); Partial Landscape with
Trees and Fence (verso)*, ca. 1648
Pen and ink, brush and wash, gouache on antique cream laid paper
(recto); black chalk (verso)
Jesse Metcalf Fund and Mary B. Jackson Fund 49.134

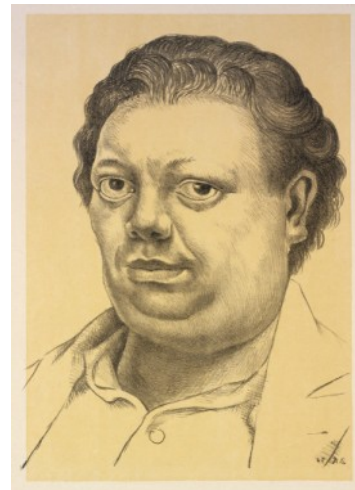


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Whereas Dürer obsessively fills the sheet with line, Rembrandt's drawing is distinguished by his economy and his use of the white of the paper. Rembrandt built the structure of the picture with condensed areas of mark-making, leaving most of the sheet empty to convey the light and atmosphere of the landscape. His line feels quick, sure, and free. In the bottom center, Rembrandt's dark, broad, and bold strokes suggest the foliage at the edge of the canal and carry the viewer's eye into the picture and over the bridge. At the right edge of the picture, dry vertical pen strokes of varying width define the rugged embankment. The shape of the figure at the center repeats throughout the image -- in the door of the house, in the cluster of trees, in the figures at the horizon line -- to keep the viewer moving through the landscape, as do the figures populating the scene.

Diego Rivera, Mexican, 1886-1957
Self-portrait (Autorretrato), 1930
Color lithograph
Museum Works of Art Fund 52.315

The soft fullness of the crayon is well suited to the artist's ample size. Rivera's face fills the sheet, and his eyes convey an intensity that matches his reputation. Over much of the picture, lines are densely placed to convey tone, yet the artist has been careful not to fill in the dark areas completely. The individual marks add a depth and richness to the image, enhanced by the layer of ochre ink printed on the gray paper.



Christian Rohlf's, German, 1849-1938
Bauhaus, German
Frederik Muller & Cie.
Two Figures, Bauhaus Drucke. Neve Europaeische Graphik. 5te Mappe Deutsche Künstler, 1921
linocut
Museum purchase: anonymous gift 53.305.11

In this print, Christian Rohlf's uses bold, continuous, curving lines that complement the raw, sensuous energy of his subject. The image was printed from a carved linoleum block. All the white areas of the image were cut away, leaving the line drawing in high relief. The relief areas

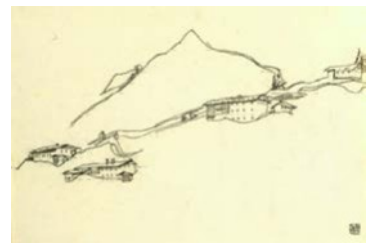
RISD MUSEUM

were then inked and printed onto the paper. This technique is ideally suited for making starkly graphic images with strong light-and-dark contrasts and broadly designed areas.

Egon Schiele, Austrian, 1890-1918
Mountain Landscape, 1917
Crayon on paper
Anonymous gift 1989.109.1

Egon Schiele's spare drawing was made with a soft graphite pencil applied with equal pressure throughout. Schiele held the pencil on its side so that the point gouged into the paper on one edge, but the opposite edge is much softer. His line has a uniquely considered quality.

Perhaps most fascinating in this drawing are the breaks and contingencies of the line. Note how the line that describes the right side of the mountain connects to the tree, the horizon, and the house at the right edge, while the line describing the left side of the mountain stops, providing a sense of distance between it and the houses below. The contours under the houses suggest the abundance of snow, further conveyed by the large white areas of empty paper.



Sumiyoshi
The Tale of Genji, late 1600s
Ink, slight color, gold and gold leaf on paper
Mary B. Jackson Fund, Jesse Metcalf Fund, and Helen M. Danforth
Acquisition Fund 82.103.1

The Tale of Genji, written in about AD 1000 by Murasaki Shikibu, is one of the great works of Japanese literature. Set in the courtly world of Heian society (794-1185), it tells the tale of Genji ("the shining prince") and his son and grandsons.

This two-volume album, executed in the Japanese painting style known as *yamato-e*, is characterized by cut-off roofs and bird's-eye views into schematized architectural interiors; cloud bands that define spatial recession; and native Japanese subject matter. The



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Chinese technique of line drawing (*baimiao*) codified in the 11th century is utilized here in a uniquely Japanese interpretation known as *hakubyo*, where pale additions of color enhance the abstract patterns of black created, for example, by the flat areas of black ink defining the women's hair and the screens and fences of the buildings. The overall impression is one of refined detail and patterned abstraction in line.

Japanese
Sumiyoshi

The Tale of Genji, 1600s

Ink, slight color, gold and gold leaf on paper

Mary B. Jackson Fund, Jesse Metcalf Fund, and Helen M. Danforth
Acquisition Fund 82.103.2



Giovanni Battista Tiepolo, Italian, 1696-1770

Head of Man, 1700s

Pen and ink, brush and wash over traces of graphite on paper
Museum Appropriation Fund 38.157

Head of a Man is set down on a fine, hard-surfaced paper, which is ideal for allowing a fluid pen movement. Although there is black chalk to guide the design, Tiepolo does not closely follow it. Instead, he takes advantage of the paper's properties and uses long and free-flowing strokes to detail the head. Onto this framework he overlays a set of closely-toned washes that combine to give slight plasticity to an otherwise open drawing.

Historians have referred to Tiepolo's light and airy style of 1740-45 as *penne volante*, "flying pen."



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Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres, French, 1780-1867
Study for Portrait of Mme. d'Haussonville, 1861
Graphite on wove paper mounted to paper
Museum Appropriation Fund 32.227

Formerly thought to be a study for the painting in the Frick Collection, New York, this drawing is now believed to have been made by Ingres as a model for an outline engraving after the painting's completion. All parts of the painting are described with a careful and even line so that the whole may be reproduced effectively, making this unlike other portrait drawings by Ingres in RISD's collection, which distinguish strongly between a highly finished head and a more loosely described body.

The exhibited drawing's function is also signaled by the absence of any attempt to describe light and shade with areas of modulating tones. The line itself is made to carry out this representational work. Well-lit areas are reproduced in a darker, heavier line; shadowed sections are more lightly treated. This drawing represents a rare opportunity to witness an artist working in the space between original and reproduction. Ingres grapples with the difficulties involved in translating hue and tone into line.

