

RISD MUSEUM

On Paper: Gifts from Paula and Leonard Granoff, Oct 29, 2022 – April 16, 2023

This selection reveals a variety of approaches to drawing in recent decades, primarily by artists who have a sustained practice using paper as a site for independent works of art. Some of the works here might even challenge ideas about what a drawing is.

Museum collections are built through the interest and generosity of benefactors and this exhibition celebrates the support of Paula and Leonard Granoff. For the past 40 years they have championed the museum through gifts ranging from 18th-century Japanese woodblock prints to contemporary fashion and art, as well as through contributions to numerous museum projects. In 1987 they created an endowment to fund the purchase of contemporary drawings. The works displayed here have been purchased with their fund or were direct gifts from them.

Jan Howard

Houghton P. Metcalf Jr. Curator of Prints, Drawings, and Photographs

Special thanks to Grace Xiao, Mellon Summer Intern 2022 | Brown BA 2024, for her assistance with research and writing.

Paula and Leonard Granoff, through the Paula and Leonard Granoff Fund and direct charitable giving, have facilitated the acquisition of more than 200 objects into the museum collection, including those featured in this exhibition. RISD Museum is supported by a grant from the Rhode Island State Council on the Arts, through an appropriation by the Rhode Island General Assembly and a grant from the National Endowment for the Arts, and with the generous partnership of the Rhode Island School of Design, its Board of Trustees, and Museum Governors.

CHECKLIST OF THE EXHIBITION

Laura Owens (RISD BFA 1992, Painting)
b. 1970 in Euclid, Ohio; works in Los Angeles
Untitled, 1999
Graphite and acrylic on paper
Paula and Leonard Granoff Fund 2001.60

Spindly flowers are drawn in graphite over this lattice of aqua brushstrokes. Small circles of red acrylic applied straight from the paint tube animate the drawing and give it dimension.



In the 1990s, Laura Owens challenged ideas about painterly abstraction with her sparse compositions, casual approach to materials, and flirtation with femininity through color and subject matter. She described her work of this time as being “less about what you do than how you do it.”

–Jan Howard, Houghton P. Metcalf Jr. Curator of Prints, Drawings, and Photographs

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Lari Pittman

b. 1952 in Los Angeles; works in Los Angeles

Optimal setting for atmospheric conditions that can induce melodrama in the male, 2001

Acrylic, alkyd paint, aerosol enamel, and gesso on paper

Paula and Leonard Granoff and Museum Acquisition Funds 2001.63



These crisply articulated images seem visually organized yet disconnected from each other. Arrows suggest navigational paths or settings on a dial. Previously an interior designer, Lari Pittman borrows imagery from the world of decorative arts. He invents titles to guide his content, looking here “at words that have been degraded to rehabilitate them.” The works in this series are variations on “Optimal setting for atmospheric conditions that can induce _____ in the male,” with this piece focusing on melodrama. Pittman says that through his maternal Columbian family he learned “about sentimentality and the melodramatic and its cultivation and its indulgence.”

–Jan Howard, Houghton P. Metcalf Jr. Curator of Prints, Drawings, and Photographs

Sol LeWitt

1928–2007, b. in Hartford, Connecticut; worked in New York; Spoleto, Italy; and Connecticut

Web-like Grid, 2001

Gouache on paper

Paula and Leonard Granoff Fund 2003.9



Long, loosely parallel brushstrokes flow across an undulating blue background, their intersections creating denser areas of marks. Sol LeWitt designed wall drawings, structures, and prints that were created by others according to rules and directions that he wrote, often in the works' titles. His later works, such as this example, allowed far more improvisation. By creating unique works on paper with his own hand, he developed new ideas.

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Marlene Dumas

b. 1953 in Cape Town, South Africa; works in Amsterdam, Netherlands

White Lies, 2001

Watercolor and graphite on paper

Paula and Leonard Granoff Fund and Mary B. Jackson Fund 2003.78

Marlene Dumas portrays a woman on her back, with her hands at her bare breasts. The writing at the top begins with "White lies" and goes on to discuss psychological turmoil and deceit. This text could suggest multiple readings, including an inner monologue about a personal relationship or a reference to the history of apartheid in South Africa, where Dumas grew up. Her work, she says, "suggests all sorts of narratives, but it doesn't really tell you what's going on at all. . . . I think the work invites you to have a conversation with it."

—Jan Howard, Houghton P. Metcalf Jr. Curator of Prints, Drawings, and Photographs



Rosalind Chast (RISD BFA 1977, Painting)

American, b. 1954 in New York; works in New York

Autumn in New York, 2003

Pen and ink and watercolor on paper

Paula and Leonard Granoff Fund 2003.84



Amy Cutler

b. 1974 in Poughkeepsie, New York; works in New York City

Elephant Ferries, 2006

Opaque and transparent watercolor on paper

Paula and Leonard Granoff Fund 2007.55

Exhausted women drape themselves across elephants carrying them through a flood. Amy Cutler's detailed descriptions of the figures and trees contrast starkly with her use of the white of the paper to indicate water. Fine patterning on the garments adds to the narrative Cutler invites viewers to imagine. "There is something about line made with a brush—it undulates and you can't get it with anything else. I don't use any painterly techniques," she stated. "I am actually trying to hide that so that it's more about the image."



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–Jan Howard, Houghton P. Metcalf Jr. Curator of Prints, Drawings,
and Photographs

Mie Yoshinaga (RISD MFA 2007, Printmaking)

b. 1979 in Japan

Barely There, 2007

Drypoint and roulette on paper

Gift of Paula and Leonard Granoff 2007.102



Mie Yoshinaga's loose, delicate linework creates a certain tension in this portrayal of two figures—both self-portraits of the artist—pushing two bears from behind. This scene becomes a humorous metaphor for the frustration of human struggles. The residual marks in the image result from Yoshinaga's reuse of old copper plates. She stated, "I am honoring the presence and absence of partially erased projects, the light and shadow of information the plate holds, the silence and noise within the marks, the time and memory of its creation, and the gravity and weightlessness of the imagery itself."

–Grace Xiao, Mellon Summer Intern, 2022; Brown BA 2024

Andrea Zittel (RISD MFA 1990, Sculpture)

b. 1965 in Escondido, California; works in Joshua Tree, California

Smock Shop, 2007

Opaque watercolor on paper

Paula and Leonard Granoff Fund 2008.10.2



A seated figure wears a simple outfit described by the word smock, written vertically at left. This drawing was made for Smock Shop, a clothing enterprise that sold a wraparound garment intended to be worn every day for a season.

Andrea Zittel started Smock Shop in 2006 in response to her work at a New York gallery. Unable to afford designer clothing, she developed a smock as a uniform. For the shop, she hired a crew of artists, who could make their own choices about fabric and ornamentation, to produce the garments. Lasting until 2010, Smock Shop provided a creative livelihood for artists and inspired sustainable design. The RISD Museum collection also includes one of the smocks.

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–Jan Howard, Houghton P. Metcalf Jr. Curator of Prints, Drawings,
and Photographs



Maude Benson, Andrea Zittel,
Smock #0097, 2007. Georgianna
Sayles Aldrich Fund

Pat Steir

b. 1938 in Newark, New Jersey; works in New York

The Austria Group. No. 2, 1991

Graphite, ink, tempera, and blue watercolor pencil on paper

Purchased with funds from the Paula and Leonard Granoff Fund and Donald Stanon 2009.28

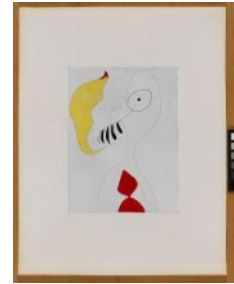


Long brushstrokes in black and white repeat in rhythm. Flung ink, inspired by Japanese painting, adds depth and dynamism. Pat Steir's mark-making is more deliberate than it may appear. "From Japanese calligraphy I learned the art of the finely gauged gesture: a moment of total concentration that is channeled into a sudden burst of energy." Dripping brushstrokes are a signature motif in Steir's work, balancing control and chance. This work creates the illusion of a waterfall and—with its reliance on gravity to pull the pigment down the sheet—literally becomes a waterfall.

–Jan Howard, Houghton P. Metcalf Jr. Curator of Prints, Drawings,
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Sherrie Levine
b. 1947 in Hazelton, Pennsylvania; works in New York
After Joan Miró, 1984
Graphite and watercolor on paper; mounted on wood
Paula and Leonard Granoff Fund 2010.111

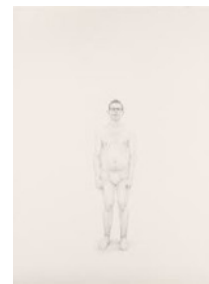


This watercolor was meticulously copied from a reproduction of a watercolor by the Spanish surrealist Joan Miró. It was part of Sherrie Levine's larger project copying and photographing reproductions of the work of iconic modern artists. This work has roots in Marcel Duchamp's "readymades," first created in the 1910s, in which he presented objects that already existed in the world as works of art.

Levine has questioned whether any art can be completely original, stating that "choice becomes the central creative gesture when you're working this way. . . . One of my parameters is that I only appropriate work by deceased, white, male artists." Her intention was to subvert authority.

—Jan Howard, Houghton P. Metcalf Jr. Curator of Prints, Drawings, and Photographs

Cobi Moules
b. 1980 in Oakdale, California; works in Philadelphia
Untitled, 2010
Graphite on paper
Paula and Leonard Granoff Fund 2010.113



In this detailed self-portrait, Cobi Moules depicts himself wearing only socks and underwear in an otherwise empty space. The softness of his graphite marks lends a quiet intimacy that encourages close looking. Moules makes visible the vulnerabilities of his trans body, including his scars from top surgery, which can themselves be considered drawings on the body. Moules notes that his "relationship to drawing is much more intimate than it is with painting," as he sees his drawings "in a much more soft and delicate way."

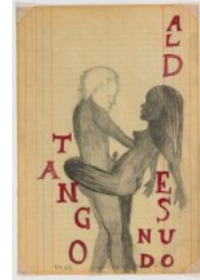
—Grace Xiao, Mellon Summer Intern, 2022; Brown BA 2024

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Sandra Vásquez de la Horra
b. 1967 in Viña Del Mar, Chile; works in Berlin, Germany
Tango al desnudo (Nude Tango), 2011
Wax, graphite, and watercolor on lined paper
Paula and Leonard Granoff Fund 2012.9

This depiction of a couple's erotically intertwined dance is accompanied by freehand text that suggests an antique advertisement. The figures are sketched in graphite on lined notebook or ledger paper, the red vertical lines at each side like the curtains of a stage. Sandra Vásquez de la Horra often dips her sheets in wax, which "gives the paper a patina, and transforms it into an almost transparent surface that looks like skin." This supple coating adds to the drawing's sensuality and mystery.

—Jan Howard, Houghton P. Metcalf Jr. Curator of Prints, Drawings, and Photographs



Louise Bourgeois
1911–2010; b. in Paris; worked in New York
Le Regard (The Look), 2003
Gouache, watercolor, and graphite on paper; mounted on aluminum
Gift of Paula and Leonard Granoff in honor of Jan Howard 2014.104.3

This pink circle with smaller concentric circles may call to mind a breast, although the work's title, *The Look*, also suggests an eye or pupil. Abstracted body parts, particularly referencing breasts and eyes, recur throughout Louise Bourgeois's work. The act of looking, being seen, or consciously not seeing are frequent themes. She stated, "Nobody is going to keep me from seeing what is instead of what I would like." Another work by Bourgeois, *Still Life*, is in the gallery across the glass bridge, as part of *Art and Design from 1900 to Now*.

—Jan Howard, Houghton P. Metcalf Jr. Curator of Prints, Drawings, and Photographs



Sophiya Khwaja (RISD MFA 2007, Printmaking)
b. 1982 in Pakistan; works in Dubai, United Arab Emirates
Break Away I, 2007
Etching and spit bite on black paper
Gift of Paula and Leonard Granoff 2014.104.15



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Rather like dance notation, lines between points overlay this mass of figures. A figure at the left breaks away, its multiple iterations seeming to track a fall. Trained in South Asian classical dance, artist Sophiya Khwaja represents emotion through the body. This work may suggest the sense of safety within numbers and the excitement and risk of pulling away.

Inspired by comic-book illustration, Khwaja's linework tapers and swells with the contours of the body. She says this approach "is somewhat exaggerated and deliberate, making it a vital tool in the first step away from the reality."

—Jan Howard, Houghton P. Metcalf Jr. Curator of Prints, Drawings, and Photographs

Kara Walker (RISD MFA 1994, Printmaking)
b. 1969 in Stockton, California; works in New York
Whip, 2014
Watercolor on paper
Paula and Leonard Granoff Fund 2015.15.2



With fluent brushwork, Kara Walker depicts a brutal scene. Two slaves harvest sugarcane in the foreground, an overseer stands with a whip in the middle ground, and, in the background, a figure defecates while being branded. The crimson wash seems to suggest the blood shed for the sugar trade.

Walker made this watercolor in the wake of *A Subtlety*, her monumental 2014 installation in a former sugar refinery in Brooklyn, New York. *A Subtlety* examined the violent history of sugar production in the Caribbean and the enslaved people who fed the desire for sugar in all its forms.

—Jan Howard, Houghton P. Metcalf Jr. Curator of Prints, Drawings, and Photographs

Louise Despont
b. 1983 in New York; works in Mallorca, Spain
Untitled, 2015
Graphite and colored pencil on antique ledger-book pages
Paula and Leonard Granoff Fund 2016.21



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Using pencils, compasses, rulers, and stencils, Louise Despont works intuitively and meditatively to create intricate, symmetrical designs on old, gridded sheets. She first found this type of paper, which has been central to the development of her compositions, at a Portuguese market in Providence while she was a student at Brown University.

Despont's father is an architect and her mother studies the movement of energy in plants. Her own work often makes architectural references; this example might recall formal garden design. She is interested in "drawing that acts as a battery. . . . It has a charge, an ability to affect and act upon you. It opens up a space like a window."

—Jan Howard, Houghton P. Metcalf Jr. Curator of Prints, Drawings, and Photographs

Arghavan Khosravi (RISD MFA 2018, Painting)
b. 1984 in Shahr-e Kord, Iran; works in Stamford, Connecticut
There's So Many of Us (2), 2017
Color inkjet print overpainted with acrylic on paper
Museum purchase: gift of Paula and Leonard Granoff in honor of Jan Howard 2017.76



Most of the faces on this sheet are concealed. The most prominent central figure disappears behind a cradled bomb; a pair of legs gently balancing on the weapon's tip. This scene is layered over an enlarged scan of the artist's expired Iranian passport. After former president Trump instated a ban on Muslims entering the US in 2017, Arghavan Khosravi began a body of work that explores the creation of narrative and gives agency to women. "My work is a vehicle for shifting power, validating personal storytelling, and connecting to universal messages about human rights," she explains.

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RISD MUSEUM

Toyin Ojih Odutola

b. 1985 in Ife, Nigeria; works in New York

Last Portrait of the 18th Marquess, from the series *When Legends Die*, 2018

Charcoal, pastel, and pencil on paper

Paula and Leonard Granoff Fund 2018.92

There is mystery in this portrait's title and the way the subject's face is partially obscured by foliage. It is part of Toyin Ojih Odutola's series of works about a fictional Nigerian aristocratic family helmed by a nobleman and his husband. She explored this narrative through the conceit that each series is a new exhibition from the patriarchs' collection. The final exhibition, for which this drawing was made, provides a more intimate look at the family. The artist explained, "I need text to give me the permission to draw. They are two intertwining paths."

—Jan Howard, Houghton P. Metcalf Jr. Curator of Prints, Drawings, and Photographs



Peter Doig

b. 1959 in Edinburgh, Scotland; works in Trinidad

Pelican, from the series *Black Palms*, 2004

Color etching with combinations of aquatint, sugar lift, spit bite, surface roll, and/or burnishing on paper

Gift of Paula and Leonard Granoff 2019.125.1



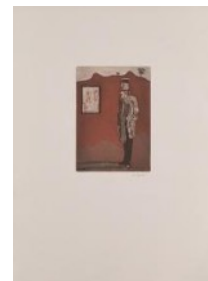
Peter Doig

b. 1959 in Edinburgh, Scotland; works in Trinidad

Haus der Bilder (House of Pictures), from the series *Black Palms*, 2004

Color etching with combinations of aquatint, sugar lift, spit bite, surface roll, and/or burnishing on paper

Gift of Paula and Leonard Granoff 2019.125.2



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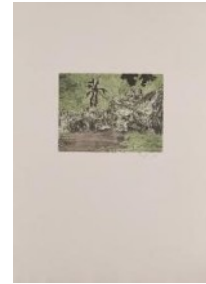
Peter Doig

b. 1959 in Edinburgh, Scotland; works in Trinidad

Black Palm, from the series *Black Palms*, 2004

Color etching with combinations of aquatint, sugar lift, spit bite, surface roll, and/or burnishing on paper

Gift of Paula and Leonard Granoff 2019.125.4



Peter Doig

b. 1959 in Edinburgh, Scotland; works in Trinidad

Boathouse, from the series *Black Palms*, 2004

Color etching with combinations of aquatint, sugar lift, spit bite, surface roll, and/or burnishing on paper

Gift of Paula and Leonard Granoff 2019.125.6



Most of these prints are landscapes with enigmatic narratives. They were created shortly after Peter Doig moved from London to Trinidad, where he had lived as a young boy. Only *Black Palm* directly portrays his new home.

Doig often works from photos, and some of these prints were inspired by postcards he found years earlier that reminded him of Trinidad. The print series was a first step in exploring his new home as subject matter. He explains, "I have found that making etchings prior to making paintings is a useful way to familiarize myself with the subject and imagery."

—Jan Howard, Houghton P. Metcalf Jr. Curator of Prints, Drawings, and Photographs

Michelle Stuart

b. 1933 in Los Angeles; works in New York

Strata Series: Jocotan, 1979

Earth from site in Guatemala on paper; mounted on muslin

Paula and Leonard Granoff Fund 2022.62

This drawing, with its pitted and velvety surface, was created by laboriously pounding soil from Guatemala into heavy paper lined with muslin, literally impressing the landscape onto it. The color of each sheet—rich gradients of brown tinged with reds and yellows—reflects the various locations from which the earth was taken.

RISD MUSEUM

The drawing's materiality and its layered structure reveal Michelle Stuart's appreciation for geology and geologic time. She has said, "It is the depiction of the passage of time that is the most salient characteristic of my vision. That idea started with interest in what was visual about time in nature."

–Jan Howard, Houghton P. Metcalf Jr. Curator of Prints, Drawings, and Photographs

Faith Wilding

b. 1943 in Paraguay; works in Providence

A Paraguay Herbarium: Unknown Specimen, from the series *Paraguay: Republica de la Soya (Paraguay: Republic of Soybeans)*, 2016

Watercolor, ink, collage, graphite, and tape on paper

Museum purchase: gift of Paula and Leonard Granoff 2019.44.2



In this drawing, a reproduction of an extinct plant specimen is surrounded by lush depictions of healthy vegetation. Faith Wilding created this series after returning to Paraguay for the first time since 1961 to study botanical collections. The series responds to the dominance of soybean cultivation in Paraguay, and to its devastating impact on the landscape.

Wilding has made observational drawings from nature since she was a child in Paraguay, but since that time, she explains, her "eyes were opened to realities about what post-colonial, capitalist globalization looks and feels like, especially the massive deforestation."

–Jan Howard, Houghton P. Metcalf Jr. Curator of Prints, Drawings, and Photographs